



CULTURAL

# Harmonising Society through Arts & Culture



Vicente Ferrer

Rural Development Trust

# At a Glance



Rural Development Trust



## Demographic Reach



# 120

Special Cultural Schools  
training over 5,000 children



## Youth Festival

# 20

young women won in group dance at  
state level youth festival and  
represented A.P. at national level

## Father Ferrer's Philosophy

A perpetual guiding light for all at RDT, Father Vicente Ferrer was loved and admired across the world not only by those who had to the privilege to meet him, but also those who got to know about his noble causes.

Following his principles of 'Work beyond duty' and 'Concern for others', RDT functions on the philosophy of action, and works closely with the needy. He believed that development institutions (NGOs) need to become permanent social organisations that work with poor and needy people at a grassroots level, and cater to their changing needs at all times. He supported long term strategic planning, aimed towards the

## Geographic Reach

# 2,737 villages covered

under the RDT cultural programme

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The Early Years



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More than

150

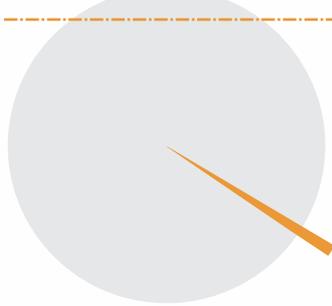
children with and without disabilities took part in RDT's Central Cultural Festival

13 students

currently studying in reputed music and dance colleges in Andhra Pradesh



### Fund Allocation



.1%

of RDT's funding is dedicated to cultural programmes

complete eradication of issues like drought, poverty, discrimination, etc. He considered people as the main actors in their development process, and always aspired to reach out to the poorest of the poor.

His work was dedicated to ensuring that the poor could live with dignity and self-respect and was a strong advocate of equal opportunities for men and women, the able-bodied and Persons with Disabilities, while encouraging all sections of society to live in peace and harmony.

"If we join hands, we will transform this world."

Vicente Ferrer  
Founder - RDT



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## ABOUT

# Rural Development Trust

The Rural Development Trust (RDT), also known as Fundación Vicente Ferrer (FVF) in Spain, has worked in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for nearly half a century.

Since its inception in 1969, **RDT has endeavoured to improve the quality of life among the rural poor, especially among marginalised and underprivileged communities, small & marginal farmers, children, women, Persons with Disabilities, those affected by HIV/AIDs and orphans.** The organisation's programmes today cover various

focus sectors in 3,589 villages spread across 111 Revenue Mandals across 6 districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, including 224 villages inhabited by the Chenchus in the Nallamala forest area of Srisailem district.

RDT has worked for all-round sustainable social transformations, assisted by the government and various agencies in working to ensure that the rural poor receive the same attention and benefits enjoyed by their better-off brethren. **Organizationally, RDT works in ten sectors, each involving the efforts of many individuals, from committed villagers, subject-matter experts, field staff, specialised development workers, trainers to RDT's senior managing team.** These sectors, viz. Education, Women, Community Health (including care for HIV/AIDs patients), Hospitals, Habitat, Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR), Ecology, Chenchu Tribal Development, Sports,

and Culture, look at addressing specific social issues. **The purpose of the RDT's integral development approach is to touch the rural lives through many sectors, simultaneously.** For instance, while programmes run by the Community-based Rehabilitation sector work to ensure that PWDs have improved opportunities to Education, Health and



3,589 villages spread across 111 Revenue Mandals in 6 districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

## Vision

A caring, just and environment-friendly society promoting social harmony and peaceful coexistence and balancing the needs of people and nature.

## Mission



Livelihood, the Sports and Culture sectors' works are essential for the growth, self-esteem and self-confidence.

RDT has stressed upon empowering community-based organisations (CBOs), whose members, irrespective of their social background, can participate in the process of bringing about socio-economic change. Over the years, CBO members have come to play a vital role in planning, execution, monitoring and follow up of programme interventions either carried out by Government or RDT.

**Today, RDT comprises 1,920 senior and mid-level managerial staff, professional and technical staff, grassroots and support-level staff who are highly experienced and suitably trained in their respective fields of work.** In addition, there are 3,037 volunteers including Community Health Workers (CHWs) and

Community-Based Teachers (CBTs) at the village level who are trained by the organization.

Among the trustees of RDT are members of the Rayalaseema Development Trust (RYDT) and the Women Development Trust (WDT). The former runs a family planning centre and professional school at Ananthapuram along with programmes related to culture and sports, while the latter runs a referral hospital at Kanekal as well as community health programmes. FVF extends support to these sister concerns of RDT to carry out these specific sectoral works.

In its efforts towards mobilizing resources for the cause of the poor, RDT set up its first Resource Mobilization Centre in Mumbai in 2012, and the next in Vijayawada in 2015, to engage with the committed individuals and having them participate in the struggle to ensure that the rural poor come out of poverty and lead a dignified life, on par with other members of society.

## Our Dharma



**Concern  
for the  
poor and  
needy**



**Work  
beyond  
duty**



**Reaching  
as many  
poor  
as possible**



**Pursuit of  
excellence  
in work**



- To eradicate extreme poverty and human suffering.
- To work towards implementing eco-efficient agriculture that ensures the sustainability of livelihoods and encourages harmony between human beings and natural resources.
- To ensure that educated youth from poor families have diversified job opportunities fetching a decent salary and affording an improved status in society.
- To ensure that Persons with Disabilities have access to equal opportunities and are the main actors in their struggle to lead a life of quality and dignity.
- To work towards the empowerment of women by helping improve their socioeconomic status and sensitising both men and women to deal with issues such as gender discrimination and violence.
- To be a value-based professional organization being dynamic and creative in nature, untiring in hard work and motivation, humanistic in approach, strong in its commitment to share the aspirations and struggles of the poor and permanent in time but flexible to adapt to the changing needs of people.

## MESSAGE FROM THE

# Executive Director



Our cultural art forms like folk dance and music contain the rich legacy of the past. With active support from the communities, RDT is working towards promoting these arts and encouraging people to be more actively involved in their organisation and participation.

**In my life, I have had the privilege to learn about two great nations - India and Spain. Though both of them are unique in their own way, they have something in common - the people of both the countries are very connected with their cultural heritage.** While Spain is world renowned for its artists, music and dance forms, India too have produced some great art, music and dance forms since centuries.

Such a rich cultural diversity has lots to offer to the present, as well as to coming generations, but there is a decline in the number of people following and appreciating our cultural heritage, and even though the government is making efforts to promote culture, their reach is lacking at the grass root levels of society. RDT works to promoting age-old, local art forms among young children at the school level itself, and amongst adults at the community level. **Great focus is laid on children with special needs and those in CBR institutions, because cultural skills tie in directly into boosting self-confidence and building personality and leadership skills.**

Also, by increasing awareness amongst parents and communities about culture, we believe they will encourage their children to train and participate more in cultural programmes. People still do not consider cultural arts to be a way of earning a living. To change these conventions, RDT is working towards making society more accepting cultural arts avenues in which students will seek out, have the opportunity to pursue higher studies and subsequently, a professional career.

**We also use known art forms as tools to build awareness about other social issues, by encouraging lyricists and role-play, we co-create cultural content that provoke thought and action against societal ills, like early marriage, HIV and AIDS, violence against women.**

It gives me immense pleasure to see that there are still a number of villages in the region that are well connected to this cultural heritage of theirs and regularly conduct public traditional dance forms, music and other performances of shows for the people of the community as well as village guests. **We hope that people from various states will come forward to support promoting of these art forms that are an integral part of our rich cultural history.**

Anne Ferrer

RDT is working towards making society more accepting of cultural arts avenues in which students will seek out, have the opportunity to pursue higher studies and subsequently, a professional career.



## MESSAGE FROM THE

# Cultural Director



When it comes to career choices, our society still prefers the new generation to follow conventional paths. With the help of art lovers and the common people, RDT is making efforts to get cultural art forms equal recognition both in academia and as a respectable and viable profession.

For many years, children from Ananthapuram and Kurnool districts have participated in various cultural festivals, not only at the Mandal and district level, but also at the State and National level and have won many prizes. We hope that in future, even larger number of children and youth will develop and demonstrate quality cultural skills that enhance their self-esteem and recognition in society.

**We want to build a society in which all the students who get enrolled in cultural studies at the college/university level are able to get jobs and earn a good living.** We have also appointed skilled music faculties in government residential schools. The demand for the art exponents is likely to increase in the future with rising interests of people in these fields.

Though comparatively less, there are many villages in the region that still undertake activities like puppetry, and some unique forms of dance like Kolattam (a form of folk dance) and Chekkabhajana (using wooden pieces as instruments while dancing). **We are also working towards increasing the percentage of villages that undertake public performances of traditional folk art by assisting them with organizing cultural shows.**

Providing children with various forms of cultural trainings not only will make them more connected to their heritage, but will also improve the basis of their education, besides enhancing their leadership qualities and developing personality. We have also promoted an increase in the participation of children with special needs in these cultural activities, the number of people encouraging them to do so and also the schools organizing them. **Being a valuable part of our cultural heritage, RDT aims to continue supporting and promoting them so they can be preserved and practiced by the future generations as well.**

E.F. Xavier



For many years, children from Ananthapuram and Kurnool districts have participated in various cultural festivals not only at the Mandal and District level but also at the State and National level and have won many prizes.

## THE EARLY YEARS

# Cultural

The villagers in rural Andhra are natural artistes, and when RDT began its interactions in Ananthapuram, they found settlements whose inhabitants expressed themselves richly through song and dance. This was the foundation of RDT's Cultural Sector.

**With Ananthapuram's caste lines being what they were in those days, song and dance performances were held only in their own settlements.** The classical arts, Carnatic vocal training and classical dance forms were almost completely inaccessible to adults and children from poor and marginalised communities. **There was no forum to perform for a broader audience, and no access to the respected performance venues of the time.** Their songs and dances were performed locally and set to stories of gods and goddesses and around life-passage activities like marriage rites. So while these villagers- from Dalit, tribal and lower caste communities- had talent, what they lacked was the confidence. They could not articulate their life experiences- which were defined by servitude, oppression by prosperous, higher-caste landlords. **Women and girls were reluctant to participant even in these local performances and only expressed themselves creatively in close family functions.**

Seeing that they found it easier and more natural to express themselves through song and dance, rather than by holding conversations about their lives, cultural performances served as RDTs ice-breakers in its early interactions with the rural poor. **RDT began its work in the Culture Sector starting with groups of youngsters in 1978.** The hope was to set children and youth off on a path of confident self-expression in order for a confident adulthood, unlike that of their elders. Performance was promoted as a tool for personal development and social upliftment. **RDT and these youngsters collaborated in putting together songs set to social themes – servitude, bonded labour and hard lives. Working with young boys and men to begin with, women were drawn into the performances later on.** Village elders were open to song and dance, and didn't resist RDT's workers interacting with their people to discuss their art forms.

This way, the early Sanghams



## Timeline

Milestones of Cultural Sector, which contributed to the success of many fine individuals

### 1978-90

Cultural activities commenced as a part of education sector



### 1985

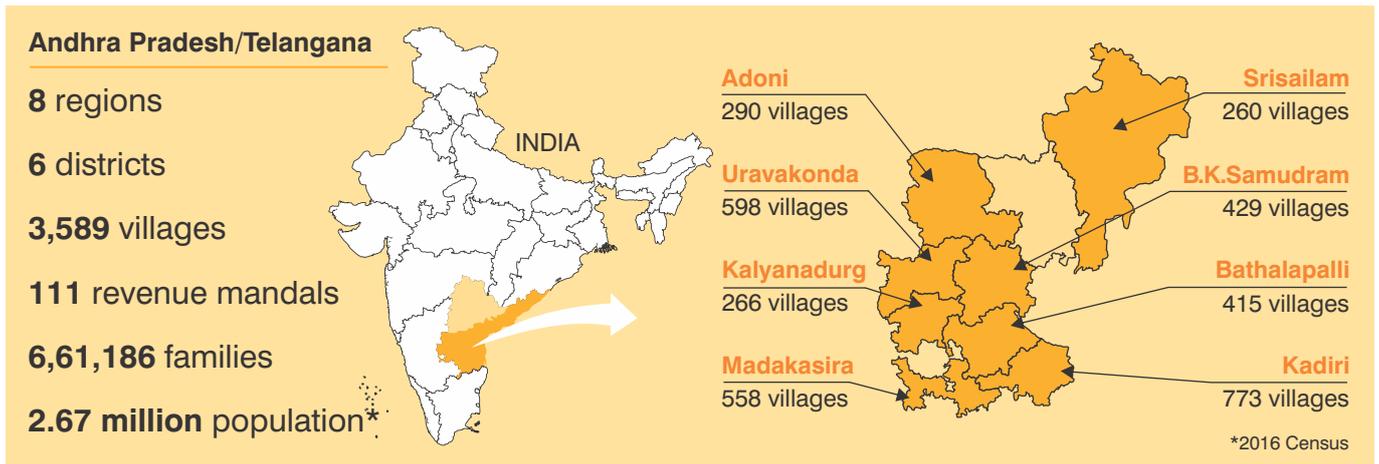
Setup of Annual Inter-area cultural competitions



### 1991-99

Separate Cultural Organizers appointed for each region





(collectives) were formed to write and perform songs about social uplift. Using existing art forms, RDT workers helped villagers with lyrics and themes of society's ills and set them in familiar contexts. **These performances at the village level opened communities' thinking to the constraints they were bound by, and encouraged them to think of positive solutions out of them. It dawned on villagers gradually that cultural traditions were a tool by which to engage with a broader audience and highlight the need for societal change.** The prominent ones were Burrakatha- an oral story-telling form using poetry, drums and solo drama, and Harikatha- dramatic and musical telling of tales of Gods.

By 1985, RDT's cultural sector was organising inter-area competitions in various categories like solo song/dance and group song/dance and drama - the judges were artistes from professional troupes from nearby towns. Also as performances

became more evolved, instrumentation went from the local drums Dappu, to Tablas to Harmonium- for which RDT trained select villagers, then keyboards and electronic instruments were introduced. Each year, certain social issues were addressed in these

performances. **In 2014, the focus was on migration, violence against women and girls, early marriages, girl's education, dowry, ecology, continuation of untouchability in certain settlements, HIV and AIDS, and so on.**

### Objectives

- Children, including those with disabilities, should be able to access training in quality cultural pursuits that will nurture their personality and leadership skills.
- Parents and communities should be sensitised to encourage their children to get involved in cultural training/participation in cultural performances.
- Children with intrinsic cultural talent should be able to access the opportunity to pursue higher cultural studies and a professional career in arts.
- Communities' folk art forms will be preserved and promoted as a valuable cultural heritage – E.g. Kolattam, Chekkabhajana, Puppetry, Urumulu, Thappeta, Keelugurralu, Maragaallu, etc.
- Increase community awareness about critical social issues like early marriages, dowry, violence against women, health issues, etc., to bring about a positive change in their mind-sets.

2000

Cultural Sector formed dedicatedly for cultural activities



2006

Started sending students to colleges of music and dance



2008

Commencement of Srujana Festival



2010-11

First batch of rural women were trained in make-up for theatre and stage



An arts and culture grounding in school lays the foundation for a confident personality, which adds value to a child's education and future.



## PROGRAMME ONE

# Special Cultural Schools

RDT Special Culture Schools, a path-breaking attempt to skim out raw talent from rural communities and to gift the platform of opportunity to every child willing to explore and kindle their innate talent, apart from adopting basic education.

**Special Cultural Schools were created with the purpose of ensuring a primary-level cultural education for 2 academic years between the ages of 5 and 10.** Five government schools from each area are selected, and various cultural skills are imparted to the students at their local RDT Supplementary School. The prerequisite for the village to conduct cultural classes at the Supplementary School is a enthusiastic Community environment, talent among the children of the village and Community Organiser to facilitate the activities.

Each of these batches hosts around 35 to 40 children drawn from the nearby government schools. The schools also conduct special cultural programmes, and assessments are done twice yearly- The first is a performance at the village level, the other is a classroom test, where all the children perform in front of the Sector Team Leader (STL).

**From music, art and dance to drama and mimicry, the students are trained under the guidance of their teachers.** To keep the curriculum updated, a Cultural Officer (CO) visits twice monthly to monitor the class' progress and introduce new modules which the CBT and children will practice an hour each day.

**The high point in the children's cultural calendar is the biennial (held every 2 years) Children's**



**Cultural Festival- this is a regional level competition held in the regions and a central level competition held at the RDT main campus covering song, dance and drama.**

RDT is also involved in secondary music education, but these are through weekly music classes held at select government residential schools that are enthusiastic to offer cultural education. To this end, RDT appoints trained teachers at such schools to impart advanced level skills to secondary school students.

Many areas are equipped with sound systems, musical instruments, costumes, CDs, cassettes and other items for practice and show days, which are at the respective area offices. **In the year 2014, the total number of Cultural Schools across regions were 120. Out of which, 10 are located in Srisailam; 20 in**

## Highlights

- **Children's victories in Kala Nilayam competitions at Chilakaluripeta: Our children won two first prizes, one third prize and one consolation prize in dancing, and first and second prizes in singing.**
- **4720 children in 118 villages learnt cultural activities regularly and performed in their own villages, RDT's festivals, public functions and internal and external competitions.**
- **Sunitha, an RDT-trained student received the 'Natya Praveena' diploma in Bharatanatyam. Henceforth, she can perform as a professional dance artiste.**
- **1511 children underwent a 10 day residential coaching in singing, dancing, acting, mimicry, miming etc., across the 7 administrative regions.**
- **Out of 16 old students who were trained in music and dance colleges, 4 got government jobs, 2 now work as Cultural Organizers - 1 in a private school, and the rest are freelancers.**
- **20 young women won in group dance at state level youth festival and represented Andhra Pradesh in the National Youth Festival held at Ludhiana, Punjab.**

## Evolution

Since

# 2000

RDT has been imparting cultural education through Supplementary & Government schools





## Staff Speak

“We all aspire to help in bringing about a radical change for the better in our country and immediate society. For some, accomplishing this is possible through donating to charity, but for most of us, hand-to-mouth survival takes almost every penny from our pockets. I am indeed blessed to be a part of RDT’s efforts. Being able to channelize my talent and expertise to groom these lovely children is an almost spiritual calling for me. I get to see the best of a child’s talent and personality bloom before my very eyes- such a blessing.”

**J Narayanaswamy,**  
*Classical Music Teacher*



appreciation for art and is an important part of RDT’s efforts to promote a socially harmonious society. **The students of RDT’s Special Cultural Schools have explored platforms beyond village festivities, and have made a mark in auspicious and prominent events like Republic Day, Independence Day and Andhra Pradesh Day celebrations, apart from state and national level events.**

Also, in the interests of encouraging exceptionally talented students at the secondary level, RDT conducts interviews after Class X exams, and speaks with the parents of such students to check if they’d be interested in pursuing Performing Arts education at college level. Students with remarkable potential in co-curricular activities have received tuition grants and gone on to colleges like Maharaja College in Vijayanagaram, Sharadha College in Kurnool, Venkateswara College in Thirupathi and Hindustani College in Gadag, to specialize in instruments like Tabla and Mrudungam (percussion instrument), Carnatic singing and dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi.

It is wonderful to see our children perform dance, songs and drama in public and win prices in the competitions within and outside Andhra Pradesh.

**Mrs.Marekka,**  
*Parent*

**Bathalapalli; 25 in B.K.Samudram; 25 in Uravakonda; 20 in Madakasira and 20 in Kadiri.**

Children talented in acting, perform in awareness related cultural programmes. These are either held at their own villages or at times at neighboring ones. To make sure that children get the maximum exposure, they are encouraged to perform for visitors in Anantpur. Groups of children perform in rotation. **RDT also makes sure, that quality talent should find the right stage and be assessed even by the outside world.** Hence, these kids are groomed and trained to participate in prestigious national and state level competitions and invariably they come out with flying colours. This primary-level cultural training, even if the children do not continue with it beyond those two years, helps in imparting confidence and an



## Up-to-date Quality Teaching

RDT has 24 C.O.s, 6 special C.O.s for the C.B.R. sector, and 5 Sector Team Leaders to each region. To impart cultural education, and make these children opportunity-ready to further explore any latent talent, RDT conducts special training sessions for their staff at regular intervals. They are trained at the RDT campus by outside faculty, and updated on several art forms, some being:

- Dappu training, the basic local percussion instrument used in almost all cultural activities.
- Classical dance forms like Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam
- Keyboard and Tabla training

## Paradigm Shift

When RDT approached us to include Carnatic singing training and Kuchipudi in our school's curriculum with the support of some of the parents who were a part of their CDCs, I was sceptical. We are fully-strained to meet our teaching requirements under our budgets allocations. But RDT was committed to the programme, and the CDC parents were willing to share part of the special teachers' salary pay-outs. It has been over a year now since the classes started, and I have seen the immense change in the

quality of the children's interactions, levels of concentration and respect for each other. I now inform other school principals in our seminars about the benefits the classes have made to our students' scholastic performances as well.

Smt. Rajalakshmi Reddy,  
School principal



489 & 52

in 15 govt. residential schools were given weekly music classes

RDT operates over  
**120** special cultural schools,  
each of which hosts 35-40 children

## Success Story

**Lakshmi's inspiring story of converting her passion into a profession, exemplifies RDT's commitment to ensuring that exceptional cultural talent is given the chance to develop into a job that the student can carry out with enthusiasm.**

Born to illiterate parents from Velikonda village of Yaravakonda, Lakshmi's interest in music was noted when she was still in primary school. Living a dream she never dreamt, she found a spot in Government Music College, Vijayanagaram, where she pursued her diploma in music.

Determined and dedicated, Lakshmi also completed her graduation in Arts. Luck smiled on her, and, within 6 months of graduating, Lakshmi was appointed as a music teacher at the Government Residential School at Bramhasamudram Mandal. Today Lakshmi earns more than that of most men in her village.

**“Initially, I feared going to college to pursue a degree in classical singing. Thinking that everyone belongs to a higher caste, I was nervous about**

**how I would be treated. But my faith in my talent, and gratitude for the opportunity provided by RDT steered me. To excel, it is crucial to work hard and pursue knowledge. Music is divine, and we need to dive deep in its ocean, to collect the pearls of true learning. Only complete commitment can help one excel in a career in the cultural arts- which is highly competitive”**

Cultural training has a great impact on the mind-set of children with disabilities.



## PROGRAMME TWO

# Training Children with Disabilities

RDT works extensively to bring dignity of life, equal rights and opportunities, and rehabilitation to Persons

with Disabilities (PWDs). If they can achieve confidence at young ages, then they grow out to be

independent individuals. Cultural training at our Special Schools helps them immeasurably in achieving this.

RDT has six cultural organisers to train teachers and children with disabilities the year-round at all of its Special Education centres as a part of its Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) sector. **Cultural studies are directed at helping children with disabilities build confidence and sociability. In total there are 18 centres operating under the CBR sector, of which 3 are for children afflicted by Cerebral Palsy, 6 for intellectually-disabled children, 4 each dedicated to visual and hearing impaired children, and 1 orphans' home.**

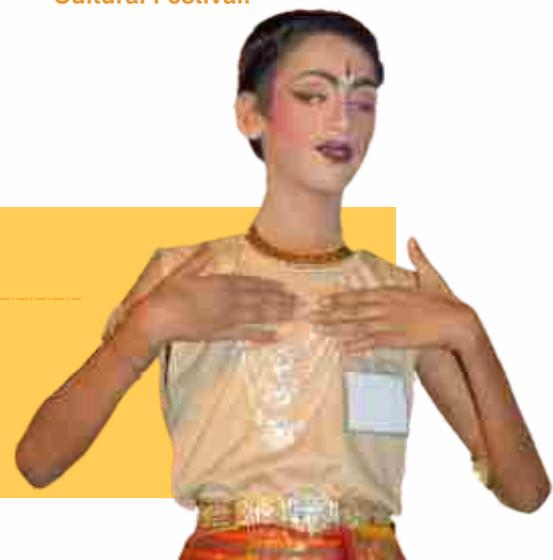
The classes follow a similarly

structured syllabus as in Special Cultural Schools. Students learn from a systematic yearly syllabus according to their division-junior or senior. Each cultural organizer takes care of 2 to 4 centres, taking a session every day. These children from RDT- CBR schools are trained by the teachers as per their interest levels and aptitude. After gauging their latent skills, the teachers nurture and facilitate them to develop if possible into capable professional performers.

**Apart from the regular classes and the platform to perform, which enhance each child's capabilities, it's interesting to note that students who are trained in cultural activities**

## Highlights

- **Srujana Festival 2014: Children with various disabilities - intellectual, cerebral palsy, visual-impairments, physical, and hearing impairments participated in group rhymes, mimicry, orchestra, mono action, solo and group mime and magic.**
- **Suseela- a hearing impaired young lady has registered herself as a magician with the All India Magicians Association.**
- **In 2014, 212 children received classical dance training and were assessed for their abilities.**
- **Children with HIV/AIDS joined in the annual celebrations held at Bathalapalli and Kanekal.**
- **A visually-impaired boy and a girl achieved the landmark feat of joining prominent music colleges.**
- **42 visually-challenged children underwent training in keyboard, Tabla, Dholak, drums, Dappu and Kanjeera.**
- **Over 150 children, both abled and disabled participated in RDT's Cultural Festival.**



## Evolution

# 2000

Started cultural activities for children with disabilities



## Staff Speak

"I am often asked- isn't my job risky. People feel that children with disabilities must be rowdy, moody and at times very aggressive. All I can say after working with these angels for the past 15 years is that, I feel bad for all those who can't experience the little joys of being with these darlings. Their innocence is unmatched, just like their love. I am glad for the opportunity to interact with them and bring in some change in their lives. For nothing in this world would I want to leave what I do."

**N Sasikala,**  
Cultural Organizer with CBR

have shown a marked improvement in their interest in education and theatre. Expressing themselves through their preferred art form hones their concentration and expression in other spheres. An interesting fact is that all 13 special athletes who went to Los Angeles, U.S.A. for the Special Olympics Games in August 2015 went through primary school cultural training.

The high point in the cultural calendar for children with disabilities is the biennial Srujana Festival held every even-numbered year since 2008. In this function, children with disabilities put up performances like the orchestra by children with visually-impairments, group rhyme recitations by children with intellectual-disabilities, solo and group mime by children with hearing and speech impairments, and magic acts by children with hearing-impairments.

At present, 42 visually-challenged children are being trained on a weekly basis in instruments like Tabla, Dholak, Dappu, Keyboard, Drums and Kanjeerain 2 primary level schools. 206 students with speech and hearing impairment are training in Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam under the guidance of dance masters.

Apart from this, quiz and art festivals are conducted once in 2 years where children with disabilities participate and compete in activities like making-collages, rangoli, clay modelling, paper craft and calligraphy.



"Working with children with disabilities is a learning for every person who feels competent in every way. There is so much courage in these children, and they inspired me to look beyond my petty personal problems."

**Lisselte-Teacher**  
RDT Special School



## Paradigm Shift

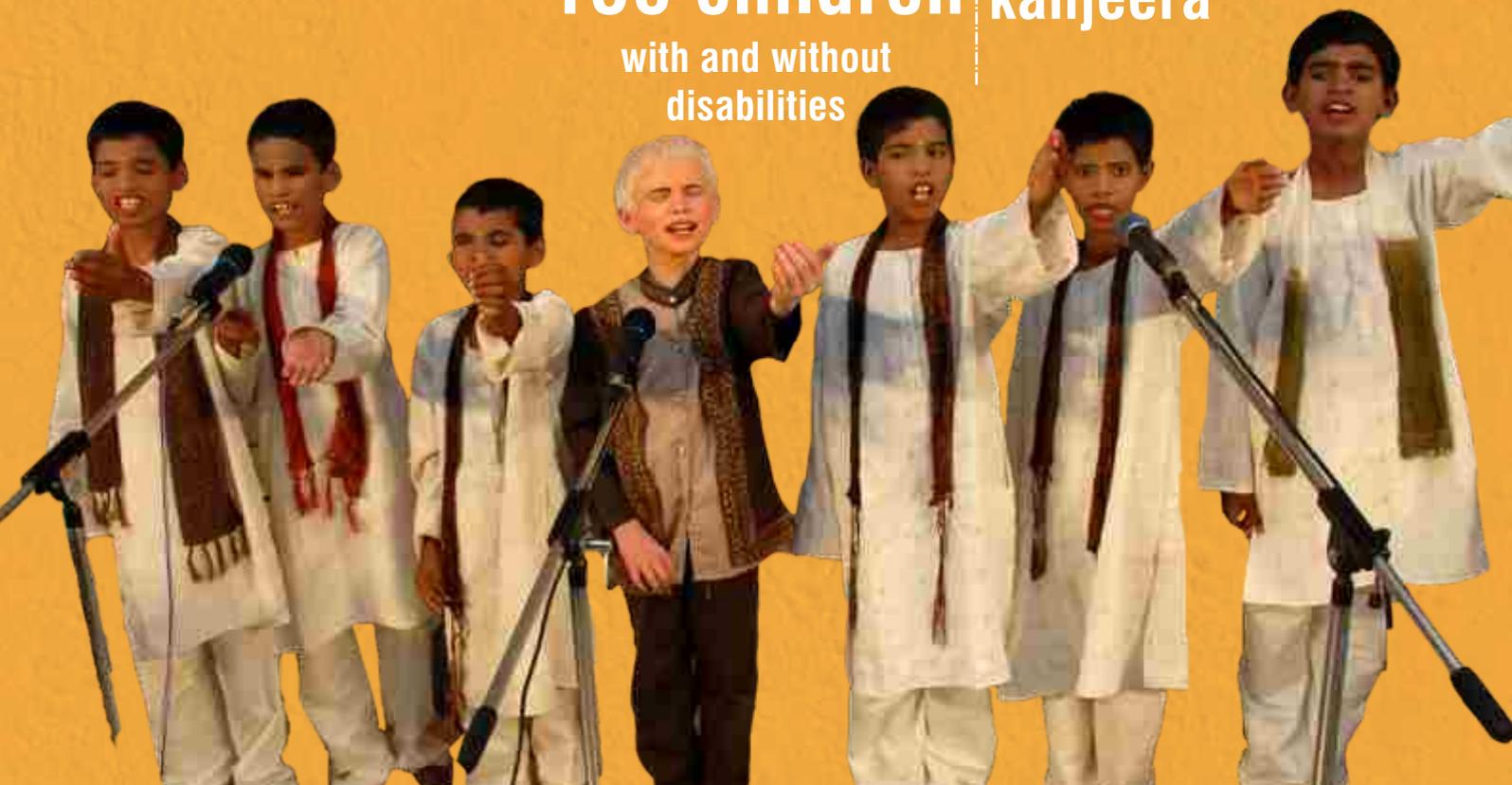
I have worked elsewhere with PWDs and children with disabilities. We are stretched to our limits to relax and engage our students in the time we spend with them. Once I took up work with RDT's Special School in Uravakonda, I realised that the additional input of cultural activity training, be it singing, mime, magic, dance and so on, made our jobs so much easier and pleasurable. Most of all, the children benefit so much more with the inclusion of such activities in their module.

Mrs. Padma Raju,  
Special School teacher, Uravakonda

## RDT's Central Cultural Festival

saw the participation of  
**150 children**  
with and without  
disabilities

42 visually-challenged children under went training in keyboard, tabla, dholak, drums, dappu and kanjeera



## Success Story

Every year the children are trained to exhibit their best through performing arts. The culmination of all this training and hard work is seen when these kids take to the stage and perform. Each performance is of immense joy and a very proud moment for the students, teachers and every member of RDT.

Out of 101 children trained by RDT, who participated in National Cultural Festival organised at Chilakaluripeta, 11 were children with disabilities. The competition saw many students emerging with flying colours. But,

RDT's special children indeed stole the show. Hearing-impaired children pursuing their special education at B.K. Samudram stood first in classical group dance, while a visually-impaired child, Reshma, bagged the second prize for singing with her sweet voice. The way the students connected with the audience, by the sincerity of their performances is commendable. While the emphasis remains on performing and not so much on the laurels brought home, RDT students have never failed to bring additional joy and raise the bar and beliefs of the organization.

***“There is a belief that cultural training is the preserve of the well-off. RDT's special students have proved that talent is not patented by anyone person, caste, or societal strata. RDT is to be appreciated for its initiative in tapping the rich cultural talent among these children and bringing them to limelight.”***

Sathyavati  
Chief Guest, National Cultural Festival

Throughout history the arts have reflected people's innermost feelings and helped them actualise their social needs- like dignity, equality, and freedom.



## PROGRAMME THREE

# Awareness through Cultural Campaigns

Spreading of awareness about people's issues, struggle and development through performances. The cultural campaigns are designed to address the key social issues in a most interesting and entertaining way. Even the sensitive of the serious issues are tackled through this creative approach.

With around 600 performances every year, 100 of them based on social issues, 150 HIV/AIDS-related, and around 350 on spreading awareness about various sectors, RDT's full-fledged cultural productions have made their impact in altering attitudes, disseminating information about the issues faced in RDT's other sectors and are making news.

After establishing the power of cultural expression, RDT channelizes it to deliver thought provoking, heart touching and action-prompting performances to spread awareness about social issues faced locally and by nation at large. Trainers and staff members map out deliveries in terms of lyrics, music, dialogues and dance forms. Issues such as violence against women, ecological preservation, un-touchability, migration of labour are some under the broad umbrella.

June, the month of Ecology, saw a play called 'Karthavyam', talking about the importance of water and forest conservation enacted by teams and included cultural and ecology staff. 'Gamyam', a play on 'violence against women and girls' was enacted by women on Anti-Violence Day in October. In Srisailam region, a role play- 'Vyamoham' along with a Harikatha performance about AIDS/HIV, 'Moham Daham', were performed on the World AIDS Day. The other days marked by performances



are International Women's Day and International day for PWDs. The role of creative performance is multi-fold:

- It draws attention in a straightforward, and engaging manner towards issues
- It galvanises and sensitizes the community over time to campaign against early marriages, dropping out of school, the spread of HIV/AIDS
- It encourages people's participation, management and leadership in all development programmes and resource mobilization. Thereby making them main actors in their own development
- It has drawn women out into the performance space

## Highlights

- 681 cultural performances for awareness about social issues, development programmes and HIV/AIDS were held in various villages
- During 2014-15, 4720 children in 118 villages learnt cultural activities regularly, and performed in their own villages, for Spanish visitors, in RDT's festivals, public functions and in competitions inside and outside RDT.
- The influence of cultural learning and practices and action-provoking public performances brought some remarkable achievements:
  - In Siddaracherla district, Narpala, construction of houses that were once stopped, saw reconstruction in the past year.
  - In Aravavandlapalli, dysfunctional women groups were revived and have since been important carriers of change.
  - Chenchu orchard-lands spanning around 38 acres, usurped by the influential, have been rightfully and completely regained.



## Evolution

Since

# 2009

Spreading awareness on social issues through cultural performances



## Staff Speak

“It's not only about what we believe. Until our words are translated into actions, nothing will ever be achieved. Even though we are many in number, we are just a few as compared to India's massive population. Through our performances, we just hope to unite the masses, inspire them to take action for a better society with higher and equitable living standards. What we have gone through, we wouldn't want our future generations to experience again.”

**S.Nirmala Devi,**  
*Cultural Organiser*



“It's moving to see these children and performers participate with such brilliance and perfection. That too coming from not-so-well-off backgrounds, it's simply commendable.”

**Christina Ramon**  
*Spanish visitor*

- It provides an avenue for personal growth.
- Helps explore new media, like A.V. production and archiving through tapes, VCDs, etc.
- Designed to preserve dying traditional art and dance forms, like Burrakatha, Harikatha, etc.
- Breaking social barriers, changing mind-sets for a better, more inclusive society.

Often parents of RDT-trained children, reflecting their financial conditions, feel apprehensive about letting their child/children pursue higher education in the field of arts. Many performances, hence are aimed to bring-in a difference in their mind sets, and have yielded positive results. Changing the conservative rural mind-set towards performing arts is a victory in itself.

### Cultural trainings for staff of other sectors

Staff of other sectors are given cultural training to make them use cultural expression as a part of their regular work with people, and to bring about more qualitative and effective participation from them. On an average, around 300 of RDT's other staff are trained in this regard.



## Paradigm Shift

"I am the CDC member in NNP Thanda village of Guntakal Mandal. In our village there are a few homes, where, due to sever domestic violence, women and children have been rescued by RDT's Women's sector workers and moved to shelter homes. The cultural sector has staged two dramas in our village about drunkenness and violence against women in the last year. Seeing them, the village elders started talking to the men of these families. Slowly, two of these men have interacted with sector workers to persuade their wife to come back and live with them. We are all aware of delicate situation in these homes and are ever-vigilant to ensure such things do not wreck any of our homes."

Hari Ummadi,  
CDC member



As many as **79**  
regional teams of staff

**118**  
area teams of  
staff & youth  
participated in  
these  
performances



## Success Story

**Progress in the field of women's empowerment, especially in rural India, has been slow paced. Despite consistent efforts, the results seem small and short-lived.** RDT's latest play -'Annadiga Aadapilla' was to promote awareness and action against discrimination of women and girls in various aspects of life. The premiere of this play was shown on the night of 30th September 2014 at Pullalarevu village in Raphthadu area.

**A well-crafted, yet true-to-reality story of a girl, neglected by both parents who grows up without proper food and nutrition and then goes to school just to drop-out before completing secondary education.** Her first pregnancy and delivery at the age of 16 becomes a nightmare for her. As days pass by, her husband, a drunkard, beats her every other night. And the sad story continues. The audience was then

questioned about the status of women in the country. Fathers were questioned about whether this was the life they desired for their daughters.

While some women shed tears, their eyes spoke deeply about the concern and need to bring-in change for themselves. **But the true victory of the act emerged when a couple walked up to the stage and expressed their discomfort with the current scenario and resolved on behalf of the village to make sure that no girl in the village will be forced into an early marriage, and be allowed to complete her education.** In just a few days' time, the village saw a body dedicated to work for the welfare of women.

After completion of the play, the Spanish visitors who watched the programme, met the director of

Cultural Sector and expressed their appreciation about RDT's '*Theatre for Social Change*'.

***"Performing arts has a language of its own. It reaches masses and fills the heart with emotions that words fail in drawing forth."***

Mr. R. Nagaraj  
Sector Team Leader, Women's Sector

RDT's multi-faceted culture sector offers a range of activities to train and specialise in.



## PROGRAMME FOUR

# Other Initiatives

The problems of rural India are extremely scattered. But the talent hidden in every diverse lane holds the power to cater to these, when nurtured and put to right use. RDT, branches out to extract talent and improve the current state of employment and living standards.

**Ananthapuram's rich culture of music and arts and RDTs own varied streams of work give the team of Cultural sector ample avenues to branch out and try out diverse ways to better engage with the people.** With every initiative we look to relieve



tedium, lift spirits, carve a viable career, create communal harmony, step into the digital future and lift the community at large.

RDT extends its efforts to diversify avenues for social development by addressing social issues with creative expressions, from time-to-time.

#### **Converting boring holidays to hobby classes:**

Every year during school holidays for Sankranthi, Dussehera and Christmas, children are grouped according to their location, and are coached through children's camps in activities like singing, acting, dance, Dappu and more. Each year, the number of students trained reaches an average of 2000.

#### **Magic Training:**

Select members of RDT's staff take training in Magic. And, train children with hearing impairments as part of the CBR sector initiatives.

#### **Clown Training:**

Trained by Spanish clowns, two teams of Cultural Organisers perform as clowns in three hospitals of RDT, once every month as a stress-buster for unwell children and their families.

#### **Makeup Training:**

About 13 women have been trained in makeup for theatre and dance, and are now regularly engaged in make up for

## Highlights

- 1491 children underwent residential coaching in singing, dancing, acting, mimicry, etc.
- A short film on 'India for India' called 'Spandinchu – Saayamandinchu' was enacted by RDT-trained children, motivating people to join in the 'India for India' movement, and is being projected across villages.
- Youth from 33 villages learnt the Ram Lakhn drums. This will enable them to get additional seasonal employment, give them occupational mobility and gain the status of professional artistes.
- Magic, used by staff in awareness performances, and by hearing-impaired students, has taken them places too. 4 cultural sector staff members and 1 student from B.K.Samudram High School are registered magicians with the All India Magician Association.
- From 1999 till date, 21 audio cassettes/CDs have been produced consisting of songs on various issues incorporating varied themes.
- An audio album called RDT 'Kala Brunda Geethalu', with a widely-taught prayer song, a few general awareness songs and songs on Father Ferrer was produced in 2013-14. This CD was distributed to all areas and CBR centres.
- A video film on disabilities called 'Kodigattina Dheepalu' was produced by the sector, amongst many which make up the collection. All these films are shown to the people as part of awareness performances.

## Evolution

Since

# 2006

Culture sector has been extending its initiatives into diverse avenues for social development



## Staff Speak

“When we say culture, we automatically stretch the meaning of the word to cover a huge range of activities and expression - it is seamless, limitless. Talent cannot be measured and expressing one's talent cannot be either. This is what we explore at RDT, the power of raw talent. We open boundaries and help people in exploring theirs' too. With every rupee we have, we wish to equip the underprivileged to gain from and make the most of their innate artistic abilities.”

**AK Samson Paranjyothi,**  
Cultural Sector Team Leader

all our cultural programmes being organized by RDT. This skill also helps them find professional work as well.

### Dance training:

Certain cultural organisers are regularly trained every year in south Indian classical dances like Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam to make them skilled enough to further pass on the talent.

### Vocal Music Training:

Some cultural organisers are trained in South Indian classical singing to impart the right skills topped with quality knowledge.

### Instrumentalists' Training:

Amateur instrumentalists from target communities and villages are continuously provided with more professional skills in keyboard and Tabla. On an average, 25 people are trained annually.

### Ram Lakhan Drums programme:

In order to ensure that people in the villages have an additional seasonal employment option, RDT introduced the Ram Lakhan Drums programme in 2006 and began training youngsters to increase their occupational mobility, upgrade them to the status of an income-generating and culturally-skilled artist.

### Digital training to be future-ready:

While producing sometimes path-breaking cultural work, it also becomes important to document it. Not only for archival reasons but also to reach out to more people and spread awareness about traditional art forms and current issues.

### Building performance venues:

Implanting a strong cultural foundation, without developing adequate home-stage to perform, is somewhat pointless. Which is why RDT has also constructed auditoriums for cultural festivals. Ananthapuram now has five open-air auditoriums on RDT premises at Kadiri, Mudigubba, Kalyandurg, Rayadurg and Narpala.



“I did not expect what I witnessed. This much talent and this level of performance are unmatched. Maybe this is what India's artistic and cultural legacy is all about.”

**Raduan,**  
Spanish Volunteer



# Youth of 33 villages learnt Ram Lakhan drums



**‘Spandinchu Saayam Andinchi’**  
a short feature film  
was enacted by children and  
produced by the Culture sector,  
motivating people to join in the  
**‘India for India’** movement



## Success Story

The uplifting story of Ram Lakhan Drums troupe touches hearts and at the same time is inspiring. A group of 13, under-35 year-olds from Malakarivpalli Village, are making news by replacing traditional drums with their, now branded, Ram Lakhan Drums.

They trained to perfection in a span of mere 4 months, the troupe comprising of ex-labourers, today earns a minimum of ₹ 10,000 per show. With over 15 big shows every month, the troupe boasts an earning of over a Lakh, something they could have never dreamt. Learning and practicing new beats to attract the youth, they are all set to win the hearts of the nation.

*“It is impossible to earn this much through other livelihoods available to us. We regularly practice this skill, and learn new beats. We named our troupe after the name of Father Vincent Ferrer whose life is dedication for the cause of scheduled castes and tribes. We are maintaining a common Hundi into which we contribute from our earnings. Last year we had saved an amount of ₹ 2800 which was donated to RDT on the eve of Father*

*Ferrer's birthday. We feel that we have a better status both socially and economically in society. There is no caste taboo and people from higher castes approach us whenever they organize their functions. There is recognition and self-respect in our village now. Those who considered us inferior are now appreciating our skill and we are considered an important part of the village.”*

Phani Kumar,  
Member, RamLakhan Drums troupe.

## WAY FORWARD

# The Cultural Rendezvous for a Better Tomorrow

With enthusiastic support from the villagers the cultural sector has grown from strength to strength in the last 3 decades. 'Rural children and youth will confront discrimination and exclusion, enhance their self-value and their status in society and gain cohesion, while improving their social and educational development.'

For many years, the over emphasis on education has diminished cultural development amongst children. **The cultural sector of RDT, therefore works towards increasing the awareness about the benefits of cultural activities by interacting with parents and school management committees and encouraging participation from all social backgrounds.** It will continue to widen the reach of its Special Cultural primary education programme to ensure more students are touched by cultural studies from their formative years. The staff members will interact frequently with parents providing them with information about various programmes and activities.

The Mandal Education Officers actively support the sector and ensure effective decision making. **Another major focus is on inculcating professionalism among students by enriching higher education,**

**developing cultural colleges and improving the overall facilities provided to the students.** Besides stage competitions, they will also be given a chance to perform on radio and television which will help their talent reach out to a wider audience. With the help of co-operations, RDT also intends to maintain constant and effective communication with its ex-students.

**Career counselling and guidance by Directors and SLT's is another aspect that will come up to ensure that a student knows how he /she can best invest his /her time and energy.** Improvement from the core would most importantly include better training of cultural staff by experts so that they can in turn impart better understanding to every student and the overall standard of performances

can be raised. These cultural trainings can be further extended to the staff members of other sectors which will enhance their creativity and bring out their true talents.

**Cultural activities can play a significant role in driving social change. With the help of special performances and short films, consciousness can be raised about issues like gender discrimination, farmer suicide, violence against women, untouchability, alcohol and gambling, that unfortunately still prevail in our society.** This will be especially beneficial in the rural areas where there is limited awareness about these concerns.

"Growth isn't just a number but progress in terms of change seen and hearts won."



INDIA  
*for*  
india



“Let your hearts respond and hands help”

India for India Initiative aims to encourage Indians, both people and institutions, to strengthen the hands of the Rural Development Trust in its mission against rural poverty and neglect in India.

India for India is an innovative concept initiated by RDT. It is based on the insight that an individual or community does not have to be affluent to hold concern for the underprivileged. In fact, empathy for the deprived is more likely among those who have known poverty first-hand. RDT also believes that this example by deed from within the marginalised communities will be acknowledged and receive whole-hearted support from donors across the country. Here we'd like to tell you about generosity of the poor, for it is among them that RDT launched its Hundis.

It all began in Ananthapuram district, where RDT has had its base since the 1970s, and among the populace it has worked with for over four decades. It follows the common

Over 1.4 lakh Hundis maintained every year



custom of depositing small amounts on a regular basis to a Hundi, a collection box, usually for offerings to God. RDT adapted the practice to pool together small donations from project areas to support the common cause. RDT has established the tradition of collating all the proceeds from these Hundis on April 9, Father Ferrer's birth anniversary. In 2014, there were over 85,000 of these Hundis. By the next year, this number had increased to 1,41,200. Likewise, from Rs 1.86 crores in 2014, the collected amount also grew to Rs.4.08 crores in 2016. This beginning evolved into the 'India for India' initiative, as many more villages lent momentum and the initiative spread across the boundaries of its project area.

The unique bottom-up approach of the initiative has inspired all sections of society especially students/youth and the poor people. It is they who are motivating their friends, colleagues, relatives, and neighbours to maintain Hundis.

Several of its slogans have caught on, and its message is carried forward simply and effectively. As for the sum collected, in accordance with people's wishes, it is being utilized to fund the education of more than 700 orphan children in and near Ananthapuram district. Also, about 5,550 were provided with nutrition supplement. The vitality of the 'India for India' movement comes from the fact that thousands of poor families and various sections of people, including educational institutions and private business enterprises, within and outside project area have reached out with their support by maintaining such Hundis. In addition, RDT receives support for various projects and programs from banking, insurance and other corporate institutions in India.

If you feel, you must help too.

Small change brings significant change.

To contribute, setup a SEVA HUNDI and register details with the Foundation. Add amounts daily, if possible, and deposit annual savings into the designated account, on the birth anniversary of Father Ferrer, 9th April.



Other means to help

You can write a cheque in the name of "Rural Development Trust" and send it to our Registered Office or Resource Mobilisation Center. You can also donate online or via wire transfer to the following account details:  
Bank Name: IDBI  
Account Name: Rural Development Trust  
Account Number: 0208104000122993  
IFS Code: IBKL0000208  
Branch Name: Ananthapuram, Andhra Pradesh.

All donations to RDT are eligible for tax exemption under section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.





**VicenteFerrer**

**Rural Development Trust**

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