



# SACRED

Social Action For Child Rehabilitation Emancipation and Development

సోషల్ యాక్షన్ ఫర్ చైల్డ్ రిహాబిలిటేషన్ ఇమాన్సిపేషన్ అండ్ డెవలప్ మెంట్

## Bagunnanu

<b>Place and address</b>	:	Rachanpalli Post, Ananthpur Rural Mandal and Ananthpur District
<b>Date of Visit</b>	:	Saturday, 29 <sup>th</sup> September, 2001
<b>Venue</b>	:	Akkulappa's house
<b>Participants</b>	:	Akkulappa – Suffering from schizophrenia Rudramma – Wife Harikrishna – Eldest son Sunkamma - Neighbour Thippanna - Director SACRED Erryswamy – Staff member SACRED Sujatha – Village animator of Rachanpalli
<b>Writer</b>	:	Anil K Patil – BasicNeeds India
<b>Translator</b>	:	Thippanna - SACRED

When I arrived at Akkulappa's house in the village of Rachanpalli, he was out cutting firewood. He looked happy and smiled at us as we approached. I apologised to him and his wife, Rudramma for making them come back from the field, which meant they would lose the Rs 50/- they would have earned between them as coolies (daily labourers). But Rudramma immediately replied, "We can earn today's Rs.50/- tomorrow. You people coming from SACRED and Basic Needs is worth more than Rs.50/-. Because of your intervention my husband is going to work again and re-earning respect amongst our family members and in the wider community. No one came to the house when he was having mental health problems, not even our neighbours. Through this experience I have learnt the importance of people and the time they will spend with us – this is more important for me than earning Rs.50/-."



Akkulappa Cutting firewood

I took the permission to record his ideas in words and photos. Rudramma then proceeded to tell the story of her husband and the effects of his illness on the life of their family...

Three years ago Akkulappa and Rudramma went for coolie work. At the work place, two dogs were fighting with each other. The two dogs belonged to two different groups of workers. One of Akkulappa's relatives hit one of the dogs with a stone. This angered the people who owned the dog and later that day



**Rudramma inviting Thippanna and Anil into her house.**

they came to Akkulappa's house. Here they started shouting and beating Akkulappa's relatives who were gathered in the house. Five of his family were seriously injured and hospitalised with head injuries and fractures in the local town of Anantapur. They reported the incident to the local police and registered a complaint. Three days later Akkulappa went to visit his relatives in hospital where he conformed to them and reassured them that they would soon be better and back home. He promised to come back and visit them again.

But after Akkulappa came back from hospital he started talking continuously about the incident and began shouting and screaming at people. He became paranoid that the same group of people would come back and cause more trouble for his family and went around closing all the doors. His behaviour became increasingly

more aggressive. He used to climb roof of the hut from where he would shout, "I'm going to fall. I'm going to die. Please look after my wife and children!" Then he would start crying.

Meanwhile, his injured relatives were discharged from hospital and set about fighting their case in the courts. The process went on for more than ten months. Their case was strong and the people who had carried out the attack realised that they would be convicted and fined. They approached his family and asked them to settle the matter out of court. "We have made a mistake. Why do we all need to spend money on lawyers?" Eventually, Akkulappa's relatives met together with the opposing party, sorted out the issue between themselves and the case was dropped. The two parties still avoid each other and have not spoken since.

But Akkulappa was not involved in any of this process since his behaviour had become more and more erratic. He used to run around the village with a stick in the village, shouting at others people and swearing at them. Rudramma decided that for his own safety and the safety of others he should be tied up so she asked his brother Chikka Akkulappa to help her tie him to a tree. They continued this for six days, after which he calmed down and stopped screaming at everyone.



**Akkulappa's permanent place when he had mental illness**

However, Rudramma was still worried about her husband and thought he may have some kind of mental health problem. She took him to a nearby village called Kondurpuram where she had heard there was a faith healer who gave treatment for all kinds of problems including mental illness. The faith healer spoke to her, gave some herbal medicine to Akkulappa and then asked them to stay for seven days. At the end of the week though there was no change. This treatment cost Rudramma almost Rs.1000/-.

After coming back from Kondurpuram, Akkulappa fixed upon a place in front of his house where he used to sit and sleep. He rarely moved from this spot and never came into the house,

neither when it was raining and cold, nor in the hottest period of summer. After a few months of this, some of Akkulappa's relatives visited his house to see him. They suggested to Rudramma that she take him to National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) Hospital in Bangalore.

So, after suffering the pain of seeing her husband a totally changed man for more than six months, Rudramma made the journey to Bangalore, over 200km away in the neighbouring state

At NIMHANS, Akkulappa was assessed and given drugs for one month. Subsequently, he recovered well, so much so that he came back into the house and even started going to work again. After a month, the tablets were finished. Rudramma wanted to buy more so that he could continue the treatment, but they had lost the prescription. She urged her husband to go with her back to Bangalore to visit NIMHANS again but he refused. He was adamant that he did not want to go to hospital again. Rudramma believes that after the fight in his house and his experience of visiting his injured relatives in hospitals, Akkulappa had developed such a deep fear of hospitals that this was the reason that he would not return to NIMHANS. No longer taking the medication, Akkulappa's behaviour again became disturbed and aggressive.

After a few months, his elder brother Dodda Akkaluppa suggested that Rudramma take her husband to Gutti. "There are church people there who see all kinds of problems and who give medicine." His opinion was that it was very good treatment. So she decided to take him there for few weeks and see the results. In Gutti, he was given oil to apply to his head only on Sunday mornings and asked to come every week for at least seven weeks. The family followed the treatment for five weeks but saw no change. Every visit to Gutti was costing them of Rs.150/- as well as their travel and food expenses. So again they spent more than Rs 1000/- and saw no results. Finally it was Akkulappa who said that it was a waste for them to keep on spending this money with no positive outcome, so they discontinued the visits to Gutti.

One day a few months later, two women visited Rudramma at home. One of the women, Kanthamma, was known to her since she lives in the same village. Her husband also had a history of mental health problems. The other woman was Sujatha, a village animator for SACRED, a local NGO which works with disabled people and their families.



**From left to right Erryswamy – Mental Health Organiser SACRED, Harikrishna – Akkulappa's eldest son, Sujatha – village animator SACRED, Rudramma – Akkulappa's wife, Akkulappa and Anil BasicNeeds India staff**

They discussed the changes in Akkulappa and Rudramma shared her worries and fears. Sujatha invited her to attend a meeting of the sangam in the village. This is a group of disabled people and their families who meet together to support each other. Here she met other people who shared their experiences – their problems and the changes in their lives since coming into contact with SACRED. After listening to the group Rudramma became inspired and hoped that similar changes could perhaps occur in her life and the life of her husband and children. She kept in contact with the group and also met other staff from the organisation, to whom she related the story of Akkulappa and her family. At last she saw some light in her future and began to smile again.

With the help of SACRED, Akkulappa has attended monthly treatment camps conducted by doctors from NIMHANS in the nearby town of Gowribidnur. This means he does not have to travel to Bangalore but is still able to continue regular treatment and follow up. His condition has become much more stable and he has again returned to work. He has regained his self-respect and once more takes an active role in

the life of his family. So much so that he even advises his brother on how he should improve his life. He is not working and relies on his sisters and Rudramma to feed him. Akkulappa shows himself as an example and urges his brother to take more responsibility and make the most of his life. Rudramma looks to the future with confidence, thankful that life is returning to normal for all of them, not least her children.

Akkulappa and Rudramma have three children, a daughter and two sons. Their daughter Laxminarayankamma is married and lives in the same village. Harikrishna, their eldest son aged 15 is working. After his father became ill, there was nobody to support the family income so he left school and found work. This was his own decision – many of his friends had urged him not to discontinue his studies, but he felt it was his duty to support his parents and brother. He was grateful for the support of his friends at that time who used to advise him and encourage him to take his father to good hospitals and not waste money on treatment, which did not work. The youngest of the three children Raju is 11 years old and is studying in the village school.

I asked Akkulappa what he would like to do in the future. “I will continue in the same occupation. I am happy and since I do not have land this is the best option. But I want my son Raju to continue his education – he shouldn’t have to become a daily labourer like me. I would like Harikrishna to go back to school – it is my fault that he had to leave school and that upsets me. But now he wants to continue working. Ultimately it is his choice.” Tears fill Akkulappa’s eyes as he talks about his children.

Says Rudramma, “I never gave up hope and always knew that my husband would return to normal. Everyone else thought that he was useless, a burden to our family and a waste of time and money. They thought I was stupid to spend money on trying to find treatment for him.



**Akkulappa listening to Anil very carefully...**



**A happy family !!!**

But now, after the help from SACRED and Basic Needs, everyone can see the changes in him. Now he talks to every one and ask them about their health and their work. He never sits quietly now and wants to go to work every day. Every one in the village sees how well he is now and all of the landowners are happy to give him work – before they never used to trust him.”

Now Akkulappa has started supporting other people with mental health problems and telling about his experiences. He visits Kanthamma’s husband Gopallappa and enquires whether he is taking his tablets regularly. He also encourages him to attend the camps in Gowribidnur each month. “Look at how I was before and how I am now!” Sujatha the village animator relates how Akkulappa has attended the group meeting along with his wife and the two of them have shared their experiences to the sangam.

Their neighbour Sunkamma has the final word, “We never dreamt this day would come.” Now they cry with happiness.....