

Dr. Joe Madiath

Executive Director, Gram Vikas

Joe Madiath completed his studies in English literature at Madras University. As a student, he was elected President of the Loyola College Students' Union and founded the Young Students' Movement for Development (YSMD) to harness positively the student disenchantment prevailing during that period. In 1969, as a student, he journeyed on a bicycle across India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka for a year.

In 1971, Joe led 400 YSMD volunteers to manage a number of relief camps for refugees from Bangladesh. Later that year, 40 volunteers along with Joe, moved to Orissa, which had been ravaged by a cyclone and tidal waves. Joe and a few colleagues decided to stay on in the area afterwards, to work as development activists. They moved to Ganjam District in southern Orissa in 1976 on the invitation of the Government, to initiate development activities among the indigenous communities. This resulted in the establishment of Gram Vikas in 1979.

Since its inception, Joe has been the Executive Director of Gram Vikas. Gram Vikas, today, is one of the largest NGOs in Orissa, reaching out to about 314,458 indigenous and poor families living in 943 rural habitations as on 31st March 2010.

Some of the pioneering efforts of Gram Vikas have been in biogas promotion, community forestry, rural habitat development and education. Gram Vikas' current approach to convergent community action with water and sanitation as the entry point is evolving into a movement influencing local democratic self-governance and poor people's control over development processes.

Joe Madiath is a founder of the Voluntary Association Network of India and the Orissa Development Action Forum. He currently serves on the Governing Board of several institutions including the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technologies (CAPART), the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and BASIX. He has been part of various consultative committees of the central and state governments.

Gram Vikas and Joe Madiath have received several national and international awards in recognition of their work, including the Allan Shawn Feinstein World Hunger Award for 1995-96 from Brown University, USA; the Dr. K.S. Rao Memorial National Award, 1998 for outstanding Lifetime contribution to the development of new and renewable sources of energy from the Solar Energy Society of India. Gram Vikas' 'total habitat development model' has been awarded the Most Innovative Development Project Award, 2001 (by the Global Development Network), the World Habitat Award, 2003 (by the Building and Social Housing Foundation, UK), Tech Museum Laureate in Economic Development (by the Tech Museum of Innovation, San Jose, California), Kyoto World Water Grand Prize, 2006 at the 4th World Water Forum (by the Kyoto Municipality and Soroptimist International) and Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurs 2006 by Skoll Foundation, California. Gram Vikas is also one of the winners in the Ashoka Changemakers competitions in 2006 - "Health for All" and "How to provide Affordable Housing for all". In 2006, Joe Madiath was named 'Water Champion' by the Asian Development Bank. In 2009 Gram Vikas won the "Best Water NGO Award" for the year 2009-10.

Joe Madiath is part of the group of Outstanding Social entrepreneurs selected by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, Geneva and Skoll Foundation, USA. In 2005, he was awarded the Social Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to improving the plight of the rural masses, from The Godfrey Phillips Red & White Bravery Awards. In July 2006, Joe Madiath was also awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree (Honoris Causa) by the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Chennai. In Jan 2010, Joe Madiath was awarded LOK SAMMAN for the year 2009 for his long 40 years of dedicated service in Socio-Economic Development of the Rural poor by the Commonman's Newspaper, Orissa.

Personal Information

Born in December 1950, Cheruvally, Kerala, India

Languages

Native fluency - English, Malayalam

Advanced - Oriya

Conversational - Tamil