

Integrated Rural Development: Reducing rural-to-urban migration

Letter n°52 – March 2025

While 80% of the Indian population resides in rural areas, many NGOs focus their efforts only on urban populations. On the contrary, OFI has chosen to work in rural areas.

The objective of OFI's Integrated Rural Development program is to empower rural families living below the poverty line by enhancing their quality of life and fostering comprehensive development. The aim is to help prevent people from rural areas from migrating to urban areas for economic reasons, as they often end up living in precarious conditions in the cities.

Integrated Rural Development implemented in Tamil Nadu



Bottle gourds harvested in Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu, OFI has developed a replicable model of integrated rural development in collaboration with four NGOs, it is based on 3 areas: **natural resource management, initiatives for women and education and skill development.**

This model enables rural populations to remain in their villages, fostering a safe environment that preserves their culture and provides a decent income. By preventing unsafe migration, this approach not only shields individuals from its associated dangers but also proves to be a more cost-effective investment compared to rehabilitating migrants in urban areas.

Natural resources management: water, culture and reforestation



OFI advocates for natural resource management to ensure the sustainable use of land, water, and air, enhancing the economic viability of farming communities. To achieve these objectives, OFI promotes the following initiatives:

- ✓ **Watershed Rehabilitation:** 100 large tanks to facilitate rainwater percolation into the water table.
- ✓ **Land Rehabilitation:** 250,000 acres of non-cultivable land irrigated.
- ✓ **Organic Agriculture Promotion** to improve soil health and sustainability. In 2024, 400 farmers trained in the use of organic fertilisers and pesticides
- ✓ **Tree Plantation:** over 200,000 trees planted to promote reforestation and environmental conservation.
- ✓ **Access to Drinking Water and Sanitation:** reliable access to clean drinking water and improved sanitation facilities for communities. In 2024, 10 wells for access to drinking water have been drilled

Women empowerment: Self Help Groups and training



Weaving training

Women's empowerment involves equipping women with the power to make their own choices and take control of their lives. To achieve this, OFI focuses on the following intervention areas:

- ✓ Empowerment through Self-Help Groups (SHGs): **15,000 SHGs** to date, fostering community and mutual support.
- ✓ **Access to Micro-Enterprise and Micro-Credit:** facilitation of economic activities that provide financial independence.
- ✓ **Skill Training:** short courses in various skills such as embroidery, tailoring, snack making, and mat weaving to enhance employability and self-reliance. In 2024, 500 **women** trained in income-generating activities.

Education and skill development for young people



A young woman following a computer training in one of the labs supported by OFI

To mitigate economic migration, OFI is committed to promoting better education in rural areas at various levels:

- ✓ **English Medium Education:** enrolment of children living in rural areas to enhance language skills and broaden opportunities. **More than 3,500 pupils** are supported by OFI.
- ✓ **Supplementary Education:** **45 supplementary education centres** that complement government school programs.
- ✓ **Bridging the Urban-Rural Gap:** several **computer labs** in partnership with 5 NGOs to equip rural students with essential digital skills.
- ✓ **Youth Skill Training** to enhance their employability and prepare them for decent jobs in local companies or cities.

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Michel Cotillon, co-president of OFI, on January 11th. Michel was a cornerstone of our organization for many years, particularly in his role overseeing our young civic service volunteers. His charisma and warmth will be deeply missed.

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THANK YOU TO ALL (individuals, foundations, institutional donors, OFI members) for making these projects possible through [membership](#) and [donations](#) ! Each donation entitles you to a tax reduction of 66% of the amount paid. A donation of 60 euros therefore only costs you 20 euros.