

## **A Day in the Life Of...**

### **A child who doesn't go to school**

I live in the central part of Odisha, near the mountains. This area is a rural area and it is inaccessible. I wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning and go to the small pond and take a bath. Then I come back home and I have my breakfast. We have rice water and green vegetables, whatever is in season. I play with my friends – I have so many friends here, I am really very happy here. After playing in the evening, I come home and have my dinner. We eat very early because we don't have electricity for the lights so it's not possible to eat at night.

My father is a farmer, so he goes to the fields. I go to the field and work with my father sometimes. In the home my mum is a housewife so I help my mum with housework like cooking, then washing the clothes until they are clean, my younger sisters' clothes and my father's clothes also. I also walk to the well twice a day to collect water to drink.

### **A child at a village school**

The mining company wanted our land so our family had to resettle to a small camp village in the Sambalpur district of Odisha. There was a 'school', up to class 5 in my village just three years ago. But, my school is now more like a World War-II concentration camp, where about 100 children of ten classes are forced inside a tiny 20/15 ft room community centre building. I do not really like this at all and don't feel like I am learning much. Sometimes my mum talks about sending me to the other nearest primary school, which is two kilometers away in Khinda; but she fears sending me there since there are heavy, speeding and reckless trucks that use that road, day and night. Life is far more precious than education, that's what my mum always says. My school is currently occupied by the mining company security guards and has no drinking water in the near vicinity. My mum missed out on her education and she doesn't want the same for me but because she is not educated she cannot fight for our human rights.

### **A child at boarding school (mainstreamed)**

I am fifteen years old. I'm from a tribal area, a remote area. I live in this school, the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences Tribal School in Bhubaneswar, and I go to my home in the summer holidays. I stay at home for one month and a half. I get up at 5 o'clock and then I go for a bath. At 6 o'clock I have breakfast and then we have a practical class from 7am. After practical class I finish at 9. After 9 I go to study for some time and then I go to pray to God and then class will start and I study and then lunch. The food is different to the food in the village. When I'm in the village, we get fresh fruits and vegetables because we produce them and sell them to make some money. At school we have rice and dhal (lentils) with vegetables mixed into the dhal. At home we have green vegetables and also some meat. We eat chicken and mutton (sheep). We have chicken and mutton at school sometimes too. After lunch we have classes until 4 or 5, then I go to my room and relax a little. After that I will study some more.

In the future I want to be an engineer so I think if I get a job in a multinational company I will get a campus placement. I think if I work in a multinational company I will provide money for our tribal development. They are very poor. I want to get them into the mainstream or if I got any job in government in India then if I work in a rural area as an engineer I think I will provide them with transport systems, electricity, piped water etc. I think I will help the tribal communities survive and develop. I would like to create a programme of awareness for the people, helping them to understand what government is, what society is and what the process is, meaning if you want to do something you have to go through a government scheme.

## **A Day in the Life Of...**

### **A tribesman living off the forest**

The main problem for me, as a tribal person, is loss of forest resources. During the pre-mining period, this area was full of sal tree (very hard wood; even more valuable than teak) forests. A patch of teak forest was also found in this area. The majority of us villagers were dependent on the forest resources for earning our livelihood. We were collecting various forest products like firewood, timber, mahul, toal, mushroom and resin, which we used to supplement our family income. But this gross reduction in forestland due to mining and associated activities has led to a reduced area from which to collect these resources and less to sell means a significantly reduced income for me and my family.

Every day I can see that huge areas have been dug for extraction of iron ores and that trees have been cut down and those that are left are in a very bad condition. My friends are the Baidya (traditional healers), they used to collect various herbs and leaves for their medicines, but many of them have left their occupation due to the huge loss of medicinal plants. Only 18% of us can read and write so the chances of us getting employment in any sort of industrial activity are very limited.

### **A tribesman forced off the land**

I am not educated and so am unable to work in the mines. Since I have been forced off my land, I am now not only landless but also unemployed. I used to use the forest resources to provide for my family, but also to sell and make a living. I used to sell sal tree (very hard wood; even more valuable than teak), timber and firewood. Now I have lost all of that. I am looking for work but it is difficult since I cannot read or write. I belong in the hills and I want to go back there. To me the hills are sacred and I should never have been asked to leave. I believe that that my God is in the tribal hills and my forefathers have been living there for many, many years. I will fight to get back my land. Vedanta Resources, the British mining giant who took my land, say that bauxite is the most important of the ores which when processed becomes stainless steel, a key input for manufacturing industry, a central driver of growth in developing countries whether India or elsewhere. I do not want India to grow and develop in this way. I want it to grow and develop with respect and dignity for all of its people, not just the multinational companies who took my land. I will fight.

### **An employee in the mines**

I used to be a farmer but luckily I got a job from Vedanta Resources, the British mining giant and I now work for them in the mines. I say lucky, since it means I now earn a living but it is really, really hard work. My boss told me that because I have a good level of skill and I am also cheap to employ, I should be ok for the next 10 years at least. That makes me happy. I need money to provide for my family and my dream is to send my kids to the best school so that they can get a good education and do something important for my country. I have seen good progress in India over the last few years; I have seen a change from an agrarian economy to a mineral-based one and I am part of that change. I used to spend my time in the fields but now I spend my time in the mines. I am always exhausted when I get home and only manage to get a few hours sleep before I get up and do the same all over again. The mineral that I mine is called bauxite and apparently when you process it, it becomes stainless steel, a metal that my company can sell for lots of money. It's a very hard job but I want a better life than the fields offered me so that is why overall I am happy.