INTRODUCTION

AVANI - FOR A BETTER EARTH

AVANI is a voluntary organization working in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, located in the middle ranges of the Central Himalayan region and exists since 1997 and is since 1999 formally registered as AVANI. The goal of the organisation is to make appropriate technologies available and create livelihoods in the small and remote villages in one of the highest mountain ranges of the world.

In the past years, AVANI has been able to build 4 field centres around the AVANI Campus in Tripuradevi (see map on front page). Around these centres, AVANI can promote and coordinate its several initiatives like rain water harvesting, solar technology, biogas, women’s self help groups (SHG), community health programs, adult education, child education, textile or sericulture.

After the construction of a new centre, AVANI staff members are in charge of the facilities and try to motivate people to work for AVANI and promote for example the institution of SHG or initiate health programs. The long-term goal is always, that a villager can be found who is motivated to run the centre. If the centre is self-sustaining, AVANI staff members can concentrate on other villages to initiate the construction of new field centres.

The field centres are of great importance for the Kumaon Earthcraft Self-Reliant Cooperative. This is the self-governing “AVANI Textile Business”. In every field centre, there are several looms installed and people come there for weaving. In addition, artisans from the villages around the centres are motivated and trained to spin silk or sheep wool, to knit and to collect dyeing material for the natural dyeing of the spun yarn.

The four field centres are located near the villages of:

- Sukna
- Digoli
- Dharamghar
- Chankanana

At the moment, the construction of an additional field centre building in Thanga is in progress. It is planned to be finished soon.

The purpose of the following pages is to provide an overview of the different field centres of AVANI as well as the main campus in Tripuradevi. This may be of use for further volunteers and employees of AVANI or for everyone who is interested in the various activities of AVANI Kumaon.

Tripuradevi, August 2011

Editors: Michael Zaech, Claudio Locher, Andreas Zumbuehl (University of St. Gallen, Switzerland)
TRIPURADEVI CAMPUS

Overview
Tripuradevi is the main centre of AVANI. Work for the textile business is carried out in 12 villages through this centre (Mehrodi, Bhandarigaon, Rai Agar, Bana, Tripuradevi, Mungraon, Manipur, Hasyuri, Berinaig, Pabhayta, Varsayat, Gobargara). For the textile business, all the dyeing, tailoring and administration is carried out in Tripuradevi.

The energy needs of this centre are met by solar power plants and a pine needle gasifier. The energy generated by these renewable resources is used for lighting, computers, calendering and ironing. There is internet with a WLAN router.

In Tripuradevi, 5 rainwater harvesting tanks with a total capacity of 355'000 litres are installed and collect rain water during the monsoon. Another 40'000 litre tank is in construction. Every year, about 800'000 to 1'000'000 litres of rain water can be used for the kitchen, the natural dyeing, textile processing and living. For about 4-6 months, it is possible to live on rainwater only. For the rest of the time, water has to be carried to the campus from 5 km away by truck. A slow sand filter provides clean drinking water. About 3'000 litres of wastewater are recycled per day. This water is used for farming activities.

AVANI is in the process of starting a school at the Campus, beginning with the preschool children for kids of AVANI employees and kids in the nearby villages. The idea is to teach these children by alternative child friendly methodology during the foundation years.

How to get there from Delhi:
From Delhi, you have to take the train or the bus to either Haldwani or Kathgodam (train is about 6-7 hours). In Haldwani or Kathgodam, you have to take a 4WD to Tripuradevi via Almora (the drivers will most probably know the next bigger village Berinag, which is 5 km away from Tripuradevi). This trip takes another 8 hours.

Living on the Campus
The campus is organised like a community, people work and live here with their families. Some workers have their own house on the campus, others sleep in the dormitory. There is a guesthouse for volunteers or visitors. The food prepared in the kitchen on the campus is vegan.

The two co-founders of AVANI:
Rajnish Jain (l.) and Rashmi Bharti (r.)
SUKNA CENTRE

Overview
Sukna centre is situated in the district of Pithoragarh. Years ago, most of the people around Sukna used to spin locally available marihuana fibres and worked with local bamboo. Due to a new government regulations, spinning of marihuana became unprofitable. To generate another source of income for the rural artisans, AVANI introduced silk cultivation, spinning of silk and wool, weaving and collecting of dye material for the natural dyeing. Through this centre, people from 5 villages could be reached out and trained to work for the textile program (Sukna, Ghangal, Dhaulani, Ram Mandir, Baneni).

The building was constructed out of hollow concrete blocks. A solar water heater with the capacity of 1 Wh is installed and a solar power plant generates electricity. All the land was donated by the villagers to AVANI.

How to get there from Tripuradevi Campus
To reach the Sukna centre, you have to drive for approx. 30 minutes by car and have to walk for approx. 30 minutes (down). The way back is to the other direction (also about 30 minutes down the hill).

Floors
Upper floor: kitchen, one bedroom (2 beds), working room
Ground floor: weaver’s working room with 7 looms
The toilet / shower is situated in a separate small house next to the main building.

Features
There is electricity and running water. You can cook with gas and the kitchen is the most comfortable one of all the field centres with a lot of space and sufficient sunlight. There is no internet connection.

Supervisor of Sukna Centre: Mr. Harish Chandra Pant
It is planned that Harish Chandra Pant will supervise the construction of the new centre and that Mr. Puran Singh Bisht will manage the field centre in Sukna.
DIGOLI CENTRE

Overview
Digoli is a village situated in the District of Bageshwar and is the most remote centre of AVANI, because it is up in the mountains. Through this centre, AVANI has been able to reach out and train people for the textile business from 15 villages around the centre (Mana, Digoli, Dhaulani, Matkholi, Nayal, Thanga, Aulani, Simayal, Kaligar, Dhanad, Paithan, Dhura, Talara, Karariagaon, Nargoli).

To construct this centre, locally available construction material such as stones, wood and mud has been used. The walls of the centre are appropriately thick and are insulated because of the cold winters. A solar plant generates electricity, which is used for light and the use of computers. In addition, a solar water heater with the capacity of 1 Wh is installed. A rain water harvesting tank with the capacity of 22'000 litres is used at the centre.

How to get there from Tripuradevi Campus
To reach the Digoli centre, you have to drive for approx. 60 minutes by car and have to walk for approx. 120 – 240 minutes up the mountain. The walking distance depends on how far you’re able to drive by car. Landslides during monsoon season are very frequent in this area. You should wear appropriate footwear. If it is raining it can be quite slippery and you have to cross a river.

Floors
Upper floor: kitchen, three bedrooms (2 beds each), toilet / shower, working room
Ground floor: weaver’s working room with 9 looms

Features
There is electricity, but no running water; you have to pump rain water from the rain water tank when you need water. The rain water tank is right outside in front of the centre. You cook either outside on the fire or inside on a small kerosene stove. There is no internet connection.

Supervisor of Digoli Centre: Mr. Govind Singh Bora
DHARAMGĦAR CENTRE

Overview
Dharamghar Centre is situated in the District of Bageshwar. Through this centre, AVANI has been able to reach out and train people from 7 villages for the textile business (Simgarhi, Saukyura, Dhura, Dharamghar, Majhera, Darati (Munsiari), Thuma).

The centre was constructed out of hollow concrete blocks. In addition, a broken house has been reconstructed with locally available materials such as stones, wood and mud. These two buildings are constructed to protect the people working and living there from the cold winters. Through solar power plants electricity is generated. Additionally, a solar water heater is installed. The centre has a rain water harvesting tank with the capacity of 30'000 litres.

How to get there from Tripuradevi Campus
To reach Dharamghar, you have to drive by car for approx. 60 minutes. The centre is located next to a road, so you don't need to walk at all.

Floors
Worker’s building (grey)
Upper floor: weaver’s working room with 3 looms
Ground floor: weaver’s working room with 4 looms

Residential building (brown)
Upper floor: bedroom with 2 beds
Ground floor: kitchen

Features
There is electricity, but no running water in the kitchen. There is a rain water tank right outside the building with a water tap. You use gas for cooking. The toilet / shower are separated and right next to the two buildings. There is no internet connection.

Supervisor of Dharamghar Centre: Mr. Ravi Upreti
CHANKANA CENTRE

Overview
Chankana centre is situated in the District of Pithoragarh and is the latest build centre of all four field centres of AVANI. Through this centre, work for the textile program is carried out in 9 villages (Chankana, Muni, Goda, Pungarkholi, Lingurani, Gad tir, Bhanelgaon, Puring, Patoli).

The building was constructed out of locally available stones, bamboo, mud and cow dung. In this centre, a rain water harvesting tank with the capacity of 30'000 litres is installed. A solar power plant is expected to be installed in 2012.

How to get there from Tripuradevi Campus
To reach the Chankana centre, you have to drive for approx. 20 minutes by car and have to walk for approx. 30 minutes to the centre, it’s down; the way back to Tripuradevi is up. You should wear good footwear, as it can be quite slippery when it is raining.

Floors
Upper floor: weaver’s working room with 7 looms
Ground floor: working room (warping), 4 beds, kitchen, toilet/shower (there are no doors, only walls that separate the two bedrooms - each bedroom has 2 beds - and the kitchen)

Features
There is no electricity yet (besides two lamps operated by solar power) and no running water, you have to pump rain water from the rain water tank every time you need water. The pump is situated in the toilet / shower room. If you want to charge your mobile phone or your camera, you can go to the shop 50 metres away from the centre. They have electricity and you can buy the usual things like chocolate, chips, cookies or Maggi there. There is no gas used in the kitchen of Chankana centre, you cook on a small kerosene stove. There is no internet connection.

Supervisor of Chankana Centre: Ms. Kamla Singh Bora