SURVIVAL of the fittest

Once regarded a well-paid profession, the present generation of tea garden workers are now staring to death and putting up a fight for survival.
CASA in Action
(For internal circulation only)

On the web
Download our Issue-2 Newsletter at http://casa-india.org

Uttarakhand
We Are Responding

Heavy rainfall accompanied with cloudbursts and floods in Uttarakhand took away lives of many and shook the ground beneath the people. Victims do not have clean water to drink, food to eat or shelter to stay. CASA is extending its support to affected families with food relief camps and other facilities in the worst affected areas.

Mission of CASA
Globalization respects and works for a just and sustainable humanity by creating opportunities for people to work with dignity and self-respect for their social and economic wellbeing. CASA is committed to creating a world of equal opportunities, where all social and economic rights are realized. CASA works towards building alliances and strengthening of their organization. CASA also supports and advocates for the poor and marginalized in their struggle for sustainable livelihoods and rights to the environment, education, health, social security, and human rights.

Flood
wrecks havoc in MP

Floods have wreaked havoc in MP with heavy rains and strong water currents washing away shelters of many and killing several persons in the disaster-related incidents. The situation remains intense in the state as MeT Department predicts more rain. CASA has initiated feeding program in the state.

Vision of CASA
CASA's vision is inspired by the Christian faith and values. CASA envisages a society in which peace, justice and equity prevail for all its citizens irrespective of caste, creed, language and religion--a true and democratic nation. CASA works for the benefit of the marginalised and underprivileged and its support to people, where the poor, women, the marginalised and underprivileged lead a quality life. We will dignity and have equal opportunity for their involvement in the development process which is value-based and committed to promote and empower the people to improve their material and spiritual existence and to develop their latent potential.

Follow us on Facebook
Like and Follow us @ CASA India to get updates.

Subscribe to our YouTube Channel
We bring to you the 22nd edition of CASA in Action newsletter with heart touching stories across different parts of the country.

Our coverage on tea garden workers in West Bengal’s Alipurduar district looks in the tale of the generations after generations of tea labourers who were brought by the British in 1860s to the doors and settled to work for the tea producing companies – considered an asset to India at that times.

Known for 3Ts (Tea, Tourism, Teak), Alipurduar for long had been known for being a settlement for tea workers. Now, several years after Independence and globalization, the 3rd and 4th generations of the tea garden workers are at the realm of crisis.

Starting with starvation deaths, the labour sections say that they have to find a new livelihood for themselves after having lived a part of their lives workings for the amazing tea estates.

Tea companies have abandoned these vast acres of precious tea gardens which are now retting and are at the mercy of the cattle and zero maintenance.

The coverage brings to you the stories and conditions of these workers, who are best the pluckers in this industry, but are forced to find a new livelihood for themselves. It is the question of the ‘Survival of the Fittest’ with hunger eating the living beings specially children and the elderly in these tea establishments.

On July 1, heavy rains across India triggered cloudbursts and floods in Uttarakhand, killing several people with many washed away in the strong currents.

Madhya Pradesh also faced a similar situation with floods damaging and blocking half of the important roads in the state.

CASA relief team reached the inaccessible areas to help the victims of the nature’s fury and provide them the basic necessities for survival. The newsletter depicts how our relief efforts helped those thousands of victims who were either stranded in the inundated villages or were left helpless without food and clean water.

Editorial Team
- Neha Sharma, Communication Officer
- Isha Banerjee, Exec. Prog. Associate - Communication
- Sanjeev Singh, Comm. Asst. & Graphic Designer

Contact us @
- neha@casa-india.org
- isha@casa-india.org
- sanjeev@casa-india.org
Contents

Stories and events from South Zone. Pg. 4

Tea Gardens - Trafficked Pg. 11

Events from West Zone Pg. 19

Flood washes North East India Pg. 27

Leave no one behind CASA’s SDG meet Pg. 29

Cover Story
Survival of the fittest Pg. 7

CASA in Dooars Pg. 16

#IndiaFloods2016 Pg. 23

Activities from East Zone Pg. 31
Students from Texas University help build Anganwadi Centre for underserved communities

Students from University of Texas along with CASA constructed an Anganwadi Centre and toilets in Nasampalli village of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh.

As many as seven students from Texas University came to India for their internship with CASA and constructed the “much-needed” Centre and toilets in the village for the 120 Dalit families.

The Church’s Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) and University of Texas - Projects for Underserved Communities (PUC) is an innovative project-based learning curriculum. The program provides the students an unique opportunity to interact with the communities, apply their knowledge and skills to the solution of real-world problems and to experience the joy of giving.

This Nasampalli Village comes under CASA’s CORE program area. The students stayed at CASA’s Mukkalathor Resource Centre for a month and made good rapport with the community.

Nasampalli village has 120 families and belong to the Dalit community. The state Government has been running the Anganwadi centre at a rented building.

Therefore, the need for the hour was to construct an Anganwadi Centre for the benefit of the children and the women will conduct meeting and other activities.
South Zone

The centre was inaugurated on 13th July 2016 and handed over to the community in the presence of Government officials.

The building was inaugurated by the District Revenue Officer in the presence of the ‘Hasildar’ and ICDS Project Officer of Chittoor District.

The elders of the community expressed their heartfelt gratitude to CASA and University of Texas for providing a valuable gift to the community and assured that they will utilize it for the benefit of the children and the community members.

Other big stories from South Zone

State Level Workshop on Right to Food

A two-day workshop on Right to Food was held at CASA Resource Centre in Bapatla on 21st & 22nd June. The objectives of the workshop was to sensitize the Regional Forums of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh on NFSA [National Food Security Act] - 2013 and its implementation process to discuss issues, gaps & challenges. And prepare the community to take up advocacy leaders to advocacy efforts for proper implementation. 41 leaders were participated in which 23 male and 18 female.
CASA's efforts in providing computer training to adolescents, school dropouts

CASA has identified 50 adolescents boys and girls to give them knowledge on computer education. The computer training centre was inaugurated under the Child Labour Free Zone Project in Polavaram village which is the center for 4 villages i.e., K.R.Colony, East SC Colony, Polavaram and Marlapalem.

The village sarpanch, ward members and local leaders came forward to support the training program. CASA has promoted CBO’s, Mahila Mandal and youth groups and these groups have come forward to maintain the centre and also provide space to run the centre.

The training program will provide basic knowledge in computer education and cover topics like understanding computer, functions of computer, understanding the hardware devices in computer, type master, MS Office, Excel, Power Point, MS

Environment Day: Children on climate change

CASA promoted 14 children groups to conduct regular meetings on the importance for creating awareness on climate change. In a recent meeting, a children assembly was conducted and they decided to take forward their appeal for increased community participation to tackle climate change.

Later, the children went to the Senkurichi panchayat and participated in slogan shouting with staff and volunteers - majorly focusing on “save rain water, save people and land from thirst”, “rain water harvest”, “grow trees”, “control pollution” and “save ground water.”

Networking and Collective Action

CASA has organized a one-day workshop for the newly selected villages in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. 30 leaders participated in the event. The Regional Forum leaders from the old areas shared their experience and encouraged the new area leaders to form village sangam and to address the issues which they have identified.
SUBURBAN
of the Afternoon
Once upon a time...

The East India Company in late 1850s started to show interest in the production of CTC or black tea in Darjeeling's region particularly in Alipurduar (previously a part of Bengal, but now a separate district) in northernmost part of West Bengal.

Situated on the foothills of the Himalayas, the town is still a gateway to Bhutan and North Eastern states of India. This town located in the Darjeeling region is known far its THT – Tea, Tourism and Timber, since the colonial period.

Several British companies like Dunsmur and Andrew Yale in the 19th century took over huge acres of lands, started cultivating tea gardens and manufactured strong flavoured CTC teas.

A huge workforce was required at that time to deroot the estate. The companies started bringing tribal clans from the neighboring states of Sikkim and Diruha. If you take a stand to these establishments, you would notice that a large chunk of the workforce here belong to Osuon, Munda and Santal tribes, originally from Jharkhand.

“Our grandparents, fathers were made to settle here during that time. They were given free ration, medical facilities, school for children, transportation, shelters near the garden. They did not know what was happening outside this tea garden world as we had all the facilities in this region,” said social activist Mohammad Kazimuddin, whose father and grandfather worked in the gardens.

“My father used to say that the British forced the tribemen to migrate to this place and were even beaten and tortured to work here. But slowly we became used to the occupation and learnt the art of leaf plucking. This became our only home now,” he said.

The tea produced from this region and the tea leaves from Darjeeling became a rage in Britain in those days. The demand started pouring in for Darjeeling tea as people loved its strong aroma and flavor.

The movement and transportation of labour continued in Darjeeling which led to a vast settlement of colonists and tea gardeners. Women became experts in leaf plucking and men were mostly employed for maintenance of the garden, including pest control centre.

Be it the top management of the tea industry or an ordinary garden worker, people left civil service posts to work as managers for these tea growing estates as it was considered a more noble profession in that era.

“Wealthy fathers preferred marrying their daughters to tea estate managers, more than IAS or IPS officers. Working in the tea industry was considered a respectable job. The conditions of the labourers started improving and they lived a happy life too,” said Kazimuddin, a resident of Ghumchik tea garden.
ABANDONED.

The East India Company in late 1850s started to show interest in the production of CTC or black tea in Dooars region – particularly in Alipurduar (previously a part of Siliguri, but now a separate district) in northermost part of West Bengal.

Situated on the foothills of the Himalayas, the town is still a gateway to Bhutan and North Eastern states of India. This town located in the Dooars region is known for its 3Ts – Tea, Tourism and Timber, since the colonial period.

Several British companies like Duncans and Andrew Yule in the 19th century took over huge acres of lands, started cultivating tea gardens and manufactured strong-flavoured CTC tea.

A huge workforce was required at that time to kick start the estate. The companies started bringing tribal clans from the neighboring states of Jharhland and Odisha.

If you take an arrow in these establishments, you would notice that a large chunk of the workers here belong to Oraon, Munda and Santal tribes, originally from Jharhland.

“Our grandfathers, fathers were made to settle here during that time. They were given free ration, medical facilities, school for children, transportation, shelter near the garden.

“They did not know what was happening outside this tea garden world as we had all the facilities in this region,” said social activist Muhammad Nazmul Hossain, whose father and grandfather worked in the gardens.

“My father used to say that the British forced the tribemen to migrate to this place and were even beaten and tortured to work here. But slowly we became used to the occupation and learnt the art of leaf plucking. This became our only home now,” he said.

The tea produced from this region and the tea leaves from Darjeeling became a rage in Britain in those days. The demand started pouring in for Dooars tea as people loved its strong tang and flavor.

The movement and transportation of labour continued in Dooars which led to a vast settlement of colonies and tea gardens. Women became experts in leaf plucking and were mostly employed for maintenance of the gardens, including pesticide control.

He is the top management of the tea industry or an ordinary garden worker; people left civil service posts to work as managers for these tea growing estates as it was considered a more noble profession in that era.

“Working in the tea industry was considered a respectful job. The condition of the labourers started improving and they lived a happy life too,” said Nazmul Hossain, a resident of Chansorchi tea garden.

---

An abandoned tea factory at Madha Garden

The garden in Daltighpur lies abandoned after the factory closed.
The closure of tea factories and non-payment of social security schemes directly affected the workers who had worked generations after generations in these tea plantations and had not thought about any alternative source of livelihood.

"With no official records, it is difficult to establish the scope of the problem. But anecdotal data suggests there has been an increase in starvation deaths since tea estates started shutting down in 2002, many unable to repay government loans," Al Jazeera reported on Sept 4, 2015.

A medium-sized tea factory, a Dakbanglow, a small hospital, a post office, and a Bengali medium higher secondary school at Madhub Tea Estate lays abandoned amidst the settlement of about a population of 1,600.

Around 2,600 workers of another tea estate - Dabhangpara Tea Garden - were left in lurch when the management allegedly fled the garden on February 9th 2003. The garden was opened again few years later but half of the workforce was sent suspension notice without any clarification, thereafter cutting off the ration and other supplies.

Functional or non-functional, the tea companies make sure that they do not have to bear any loss.

After having worked for 30 years in Madhub Tea Garden, Jamsen Orson finds it difficult to support his family of four. His health and vision of his left eye has been deteriorating day by day and he blames it on the poor diet and loss of livelihood.

"I was 14 years old when I took over the garden work from my father. I earned around Rs 1,400 along with rations and medical facilities. But the situation is different now.

We required three times what we are for the day and he replied, 'We ate buffalo (a food given to pigs) along with rice. We don't eat food sometimes.'

They told us that sometimes they survive on wild fruits or leaves, sometimes on bamboo shoots and many a times consume a local home-made liquor to fill the empty stomach.

40-year-old Subhan Khatua used to work for the Dabhangpara estate (considered sick) and was a permanent employee until 3 years when the company sent him, along with other workers, suspension notice.

"I have no work, no ration. I acquired the job from my father. Now I sell wood and earn Rs 100 per day. The company earlier gave me ration but now it becomes difficult for me to buy rations for the family. We survive on wild fruits when there is no food," he says.

"I have fever and cough for almost 15 days but I didn't go to hospital as I will not be able to afford expenses," he says.

Middage-aged Sushila Rudai had worked for Duncans Group in Haripara TC for 22 years. She says that after having spent her entire life amidst the tea estates, she finds it difficult to find another occupation to fill stomach of the family. "When the company was running, the wage was less but received all facilities like medical, ration and PF benefits," she says.

But she stands at a situation now where there is "no food, water, electricity, transportation, and no schooling for her children. she still plucks leaves from the garden and sells to the nearby dealer at Rs 8 per kg."
TRAFFICKED.

The companies started withdrawing from the areas where they could not afford to pay wages, or, as a matter of fact, run the vast acres of estates. This proved to be a heavy blow to the thousands of bread-earners who were solely dependent on these gardens.

As adults struggled to find different sources of livelihood, the children were purportedly hired by the labour contractors and agents to work in bigger cities like Jamnagar, Kashmir, Delhi, Punjab and Haryana.

With an increase in demand for work, more and more teenagers including girls dropped out of school and joined the labour force to support their families.

The locals informed that the influx of labour contractors and agents "drastically" increased in the abandoned and neglected villages in the recent years.

A large chunk of children were allegedly trafficked to these cities where they either worked as domestic helps or were forcefully involved in flesh trade.

The parents of the missing miners, who were later tracked down and rescued by CASH and its partner organisations, alleged that the agents usually stopped coming to their villages or changed their mobile numbers whenever they inquired about the well-being of their children.

The family members waited months for phone calls from their children, but that seemed a distant wish.

The means of the traffickers were a web of lucrative offers across these teenagers, especially young girls.

The teen girls, the families of whom were hit by poverty, were mostly sold into flesh trade and some to domestic work.

Some of the girls have been rescued by CASH and local organisations, and are now continuing school and leading a normal life. However, the condition remains unchanged for many.

"After the gardens closed temporarily or permanently, the alcohol consumption among men increased in this village. There is an increased domestic violence - Husband beating wife, brother beat sister. I wanted to escape all this and was about 14 when an agent took me to Delhi where I could earn more. The agent who came here to recruit told me that I would earn enough. But what I thought did not come true. I lived for 7-8 months in Delhi. The owner used to beat me a lot. Sometimes, the wounds were deep. Then I was moved to jaipur for two months. I wanted to call my parents but the owner did not let me phone my parents. I did not get a penny of my income. I reached a lot of people for help. One day, I escaped from the house while the owners where in the party. I went to an orphanage home and stayed there for three months from where I contacted some activists who rescued me." -

"An agent took me and my friend to Jamnagar and Kashmir for 13 months in 2015. We told our agent that we would only work together but he separated us. We both lived in separate houses with separate owners. The agents have one office in Kashmir from where the workers are distributed. Fortunately none of our owner beat or assault us, but they did not let us call our homes. We ran away from our house in fear of great money at the agent promised. We never got our salaries. Our families registered a case against the agent when they couldn’t find us anywhere. Police and CASH team helped in tracking us. The agent is arrested and in custody. The people in village are very careful about these situations now." -

"My wife worked in farm in Khanna for almost 20 years. After a while it was closed due to which the influx of labour contractors and agents increased in the village. My wife was also allegedly hired by an agent to Delhi and then to Dubai. After two years of agreement was over in Dubai, she came to Delhi for work. We last heard from her some 3-6 months. Her mobile has been switched off since and we have not received any communication from her life."
Amidst the gloomy gardens... some happy Tales

What keeps Andrew Yule tea company going...

"It is called tea estate because it’s like a mini-city. Here, I have to maintain the permanent benefits and the social security of the permanent employees. We have a proper structure to implement it as we have to take a social responsibility towards these workers."

Andrew Yule Tea Garden was established in 1898 during British rule by English businessman George Yule, the founder of the company. This was one of the biggest tea companies during that period. Eighty per cent of the world tea was imported by Andrew Yule from the Darjeeling region.

The Tea Division of the Company produces more than 12 million Kgs of quality CTC and Orthodox Black Tea from its 15 premium tea plantations spread over the well-known tea-growing areas of Darjeeling, Assam, and Donals of North Eastern India. (Source: Andrew Yule website)

In the Darjeeling region, 47 have plantations in Darjeeling (CTC), Kurseiba (CTC), New Darjeeling (CTC) and Chamchabhati (CTC) tea gardens which are running with full-hearted workforce.

In Chamchabhati factory, there are as many as 1,500 workers who get an average of Rs 152 per day along with ration, medical benefits, electricity and other facilities.

"If any worker gets bitten by a snake, we bring her to our hospital and give them immediate attention. We make sure that our tea workers get full support from our end," said the driver of the company TG.

The manager of the Chamchabhati TG believes that the reason why this tea garden (brought under Central govt) is still successfully functioning is that the company "re-invests whatever profit they get from this sector. This keeps the company keep going."

"We invest back, our first aim is not make profit, also not make losses. Whatever profit we make, we re-invest into it. With the prime concern, even if they make profit they don't re-invest to secure themselves during crisis or transformation period," the manager says.

Workers' benefits
- There is a dispensary and hospital for the workers. They receive medical attention by a MBBS doctor and a nurse at the dispensary.
- The workers receive Provident Funds, Gratuity.
- A planters has to collect at least 22 kg leaves. They get more money if they collect above the mark.
- 10 days off working hours
- Retirement age is 58. After retirement, employment is given to their heir.

Women pickers line up at the weighing station where leaves filled sacks are measured

AT factory worker segregates varieties of tea granules
**Who was Duncan?**

Water Duncan, a young Scottish merchant, comes to India in 1859 and sets up the playful Duncan company to cultivate the "nanny leaves" of the Darjeeling slopes tea.

The company begins the export of high quality tea to a growing market abroad, and within years the name Duncan becomes synonymous with tea.

Business expands, the Duncan Brothers Limited is formed, and the first seeds of diversification are set—the Darjeeling Tea Company in Alipurduar.

Around 1911, G.P. Goenka takes over operations of the Group’s tea gardens and by 1964, the company established itself in a major pocket tea player in India.

With the demand for Duncan's tea on the rise and expansion potential exhausted in the existing gardens of Darjeeling & Doars, the company decided to expand into a growing area.

In 1969, Doornans acquired about 2,000 hectares of land in Dooars & Jalpaiguri (including Alipurduar) districts of North Bengal, creating direct and indirect employment for the people of the region. (Source: Duncan Tea website)

**The last few years have been harsh for Duncan.** Increased workers large sums on gratuity and some Group allegedly left the thousands of workers dependent on the square meals a day.

**LOOKING BACK**

- Jan 20, 2016: Union govt wheels out Tea Act to take control of seven gardens associated with Duncan's.
- Feb 23: Duncan seeks Calcutta High Court against the order.
- Feb 20: Court interim order asks Duncan to deposit Rs 4 crore to clear a part of a worker dues, halting which Duncan's petition will be rejected.
- Feb 24: Duncan moves division bench against the order, which refuses to hear the company.
- March 15: Court dismisses Duncan's petition, approves central takeover of gardens.

Source: Telegraph

Battling an escalating financial crisis, the Duncan-Goenka group of industrialist Gouri Prasad Goenka is looking to sell its 1,200-hectare (ha) Dernima tea garden in West Bengal's Alipurduar district. – LIVEMINT (Nov 10, 2015)

The Centre has authorised the Tea Board to take over the management control of all seven gardens of the G.P. Goenka-headed Duncan Industries in Doors, saying they are being managed in a manner highly detrimental to the tea industry and to public interest.

TELEGRAPH (Jan 29, 2016)

The British manager bungalow, which is located inside the vacant Lastepara tea garden, is seen in a deteriorated condition. The house is here since British era when the tea industry was a fully-fledged enterprise. The wooden flooring and window panes of the house were intact and valuable items were stolen by the locals who vandalised the property in anger after the garden's closure.
I

in the absence of a fixed source of livelihood, the farmer tea garden workers are increasingly at risk of falling into a permanent or temporary source of income. This is especially severe for the third generation of tea workers, whose grandparents and fathers have spent all their working lives in the tea gardens, and those who are displaced under tenancy reform. For these workers, finding new opportunities is often limited to what they are able to earn from their smaller plots of land.

The situation is even more acute in smaller, remote tea gardens. For instance, in Darjeeling, where the tea gardens are smaller and more remote, workers often have to travel long distances to find work. In addition, the lack of opportunities for education and training can limit their ability to move up the social ladder.

Despite these challenges, there are some efforts underway to improve the lives of tea workers. For example, some NGOs are working to provide literacy and numeracy training to workers, as well as vocational training in areas such as hospitality and tourism. However, more needs to be done to ensure that these workers are able to access these opportunities and that they are able to earn a living wage.

CASA West Bengal has been closely monitoring the situation in these areas. The organization has identified a number of challenges, including the lack of access to healthcare and education for children, and the limited opportunities for work and income.

Debojyoti Chakraborty, Assistant Project Officer

CASA West Bengal, has been closely monitoring the situation in these areas. The organization has identified a number of challenges, including the lack of access to healthcare and education for children, and the limited opportunities for work and income.

Debojyoti Chakraborty, Assistant Project Officer

The most common disease seen in these ailing gardens is tuberculosis. We have tied-up with the government in getting them required treatment and other medical benefits.
The world celebrated International Day Against Child Labour on June 12

The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 to focus attention on the global extent of child labour and the action and efforts needed to eliminate it. ILO states that this year, the focus is on child labour and supply chains. With 168 million children still in child labour, all supply chains, from agriculture to manufacturing, services to construction, run the risk that child labour may be present. CASA's Bridge school in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh is an effort to provide formal primary and secondary education to children engaged in labour activities since childhood.
Advocacy initiatives by community at Sheldhara for drinking water

Marathwada region of Maharashtra has been facing drought for the past three years. However, the situation was worst this year which affected many households in Latur district specially villages like Clr, Lali, Dhurandar, Garnawadi and Sheldhara.

The state government this year announced several measures to address the drought issue like supply of drinking water, arrangements for construction of bore wells, water tankers for distribution of water, food and cash for school children, and reductions in electricity bills for the affected families.

But in reality the story in villages of Latur was bad. While the local NGOs and Forums assessed the implementation of Government's program it was a different scenario. It is very unfortunate that the Government support that came reached the needy households in Latur.

Jallot block of Latur district happens to be one of the four new Core Program areas since 2015 where GASA is working in 36 villages. GASA staff from Jalott, members of local NGOs, Anand Madhav Marita Kambale and Shri Madhav Thakare an ex-sarpanch shared the information about the Government's response to this situation in the village meeting and personally visited the accrued here well sites which they shocked to see that there was very little water in the bore wells and that it won't be able to suffice to the needs of the people.

The people from Sheldhara village had told 10 miles 5 to Kasthuri Nibbr water for the daily consumption and some women and children were mainly engaged in this job. This is affecting the education of the school going children women’s health and increased migration.

The concerns of the community was discussed with the Sarpanch, Parishad members and the Parshut Samiti. There was no favorable response. It was clear that the Government Officials had acquired the water source without any assessment and agreed to pay a meager of Rs. 11,500/- per month to the owners of bore well. It also emerged that there was some kind of understanding between the officials and the bore well owners.

The group visited the Block Development Officer’s office at Jalott and discussed about the situation but he too related to do nothing in this regard to help the affected villagers in the money was already paid. A meeting was held after the visit to the Thalai. The entire matter was shared with the community and people decided to go on a strike in front of the Jalott Taluk Commision 9th April, 2016 to get their demand: supply of water through tankers to water tank. Action was taken and within six hours the Sheldhara approved 12,000 ltrs. through Water tanker per day for the village. The community decided to collect the water to common water tank and distribute it through water taps to the people.

The Advocacy initiative of the people paid off at last. Since 9th April, 2016 160 families of Sheldhara village are getting water through water tank. Only the house of water harvesters resolved because of people’s participation, and willingness fight against corruption and through community mobilization directed GASA.

JAL HAL YATRA in drought hit latur

A campaign to address the issue of drinking water, unemployment and mid-day meal not being provided to school children during summer vacation was organized by Swaraj Abhiyan, Ekta Parishad, National Alliance of People’s Movement and Jalelindra called ‘Jal Hal Yatra’.

Shri Yogendra Yadav, Politician and Social Activist the patro created awareness about the recent Supreme Court order on the following demands and the failure of the government to address these concerns in villages.

(a) To provide Rs. 5,500/- as support to farmers who have lost their crops due to drought.
(b) To provide mid-day meal during summer vacation to anganwadis and primary and secondary schools.
(c) To stop recovery loan from debtor’s farmers.
(d) To provide Rs. 5,400/- as support who have lost their crops due to drought
(e) Provide mid-day meal to school children during summer vacation to anganwadi and primary and secondary schools.
(f) Provide 150 days’ work within 14 days and arrange wage payment within 15 days under MGNREGA.

The local NGOs and Lok shahi Jan haque Andolan Maharashtra interacted with the people of the villages which revealed that the people were not receiving the five legs of food grain per person and even the schools were not providing free mid-day meals to their children.

15 members from Lok shahi Jan haque Andolan Maharashtra, members from Gramin Vikas Sangh, PTU, Parshad, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad and Mulshi (old program) and Jalott from Latur district (new area) joined the yatra on 20th May, 2016 to support the above cause.

The yatra recommenced from Somru village in Latur district and covered more than 20 km passing through various villages of Latur including Kabulgaon and Kapur on 21st to 25th May 2016 and then move to Bundeshand.

The yatra received a good response as they were able to explain to the farmers their rights and how the government had neglected them. The Lok shahi Jan haque Andolan Maharashtra and GYRP shared the Supreme Court order with the farmers at our operational areas thus creating awareness among the farmers on their rights.
A portion of state road in Pithoragarh district, which leads to Darchula in Nepal, collapsed due to the cloudburst followed by landslide on July 1. The traffic on the route was affected for several days.
Uttarakhand Floods: Nature's Fury

With the onset of monsoon, the state witnessed heavy rainfall triggering flashfloods and landslides in several parts of Uttarakhand on July 1. The incessant rains and floods washed away many houses in two of the state's hit districts—Chamoli and Pithoragarh.

The water level in Alaknanda, Mandakini and other major rivers in Uttarakhand rose to danger mark following the flash floods. The devastation in Chamoli district caused widespread damage to the region, thereby damaging houses and taking lives of many locals.

Heavy flow of water mixed with rubble and mudslides,{
and destroyed many houses and small public places. Rains also{
caused landslides,{
leaving acres of farms inundated. Hundreds of villages in the{
region were cut off from the mainland, and{
resulted in} unrelenting rains blocked all the important{
routes in the hills.

While the injured were taken to base hospitals, hundreds of homeless were{
distributed in nearby hospitals and schools.

According to ReliefWeb, heavy rains lashed nearly all parts of Uttarakhand throughout the day, throwing daily life out of gear. The state Met office said that the rain activity will continue for the next two days and warned of heavy to very heavy rainfall in few places.

The rains also triggered recurring landslides which blocked National Highways leading to the hilly towns and villages. The Guptakashi-Badrinath highway (NH 58) was blocked at Lalsub and Ranchhet Gana in Chamoli district, while the Badrinath-Kedarnath (NH 109) highway was blocked between Dehradun and Guptkashi, according to the report.

Pilgrims going to Badrinath were temporarily stopped at different places in Chamoli district due to road blockades. The rains also led to a rise in the water level of major rivers in Uttarakhand including Ganges, Alaknanda, Doon and Mandakini, causing fear of floods in the low-lying areas of the state, they reported.

sweeps Land of Gods

CASA responded within hours of the disaster

Immediate response by CASA
Within hours of the disaster, the CASA staff reached the people in the areas which were inaccessible due to massive landslides. Most of the routes leading to Chamoli and Pithoragarh were left damaged.

As the roads were completely washed away, the team crossed the remote hills and forests to reach the families most affected by the disaster.

CASA has so far extended support to many people with food relief camps and dry ration kits. Food Distribution camps were organized from July 4-7 in which cooked food along with clean drinking water was served to the people two times a day.

1. Ready to eat food to 1146 persons 2 times a day from 4th - 9th July 2016 in Jalchhi, Ghat and other villages.
2. 110 families supported in RT Fund - 110 dry ration kit, 110 solar lanterns, sarees, dhotis, utensil set and 560 pcs. of Fleece blanket.
3. Rs. 8,87,990.00 was approved in IAF Mechanism to Gomti Frayan Jat Kalyan Parishad for support of 300 families with non food items and dry ration kit.
Floods wreck havoc in Madhya Pradesh;

Madhya Pradesh received unprecedented rainfall within a short duration this monsoon. In the city of Bhopal recorded rainfall of 125% within 20 days, which was above normal.

This was the third heaviest rainfall in the city in last 65 years. On the night of 9th July, Bhopal received 51.78 cm rainfall in a single day which triggered flood across the state.

The sudden and heavy rain on the night of 9th July led to flooding in almost all parts of the Bhopal affecting the people severely. The most affected areas included slums or slum alike Vikan Nagar, Anand Nagar, Baghmugaliya, Baghmugaliya Bus stand and Ganesh Nagar etc.

The area is mostly occupied by construction workers, scavengers, housemaids, masons, carpenters, house painters among others. Their 'bachha makaan' were left devastated in the incessant rains and flood caught the people unaware.

The drains, rivulets, nallas were inundated and flood water had entered the houses. It was on this dark night when people were asleep, their houses were flooded with heavy water. They were not able to protect their essentials as they evacuated their only shelter immediately.

The Baghmugaliya (Samaunghat) slum which is situated behind the Ramehwaran colony was submerged and around 100 houses had water up to fit inside.

The incessant rains affected the normal life of the people as they were not able to join their livelihood immediately after the floods.

Above left: People are vacating their houses after flood water enters the slum area in Vikan Nagar
Above right: A house inundated after heavy rains and flood water
Down: CASA staff distributing relief material to the affected people

Thousands rendered homeless

Team of the CASA Bhopal immediately responded to the situation. It organized feeding programme for the affected communities in six places of Bhopal for four consecutive days starting from 11th July 2016 to 14th July 2016. A total of 200 food packets were distributed to the affected families each day.

CASA Response:
1. Rs. 3,00,00,00.00 was approved for feeding program in Anand Nagar, Vikan Nagar, Baghmugaliya where 2000 food packets were distributed.
2. Rs. 9,67,300.00 was approved under HAF for 300 families in Sagar district where 300 dry ration kit and 300 non food items were distributed.

ANAMIKA, Program Associate, CASA - Bhopal

Being a woman in the response team during disasters makes me more accessible to affected women and adolescent girls who are at the high risk of personal safety during such incidents. They connect with me and share their stories to me very easily.

During disasters I make sure that I reach to as many girls and women as possible. Some of the affected women take us to their homes to make us see their sufferings during natural calamities.

I am most concerned about their safety. During the recent Bhopal floods, we provided tarpsulin sheets to the women members of the family which gives them a private space for themselves.
Flood washes North & East India

The Assam Inter Agency Group, of which CASA is part, has carried out a joint assessment of the region in view of the present emergency situation. Heavy rain has submerged agricultural fields and inundated houses leaving many families, as many as 1,579 villages in these districts have been submerged. People have been taken shelter on roads, bridges and relief camps, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said.

Flood water in Brahmaputra entered through the broken Ring Bund at Shupauri in Darrang district where the river has created panic by creating tremendous destruction of food and land.

The entire village in West Bengal's Tarapir-Ganjam district of Subarnapur gets submerged in heavy flood water.

A mother and her children gather themselves on a floating bamboo raft as the flood water inundates their home in Assam.

Person gathering the left over after the massive floods in Assam destroys his house.

In Bihar, an alert has been issued in East Champaran, West Champaran, Munger and Vaishali districts of Bihar. According to heavy rain in catchment areas of Nepal, according to the disaster management department (DMG).

Principal Secretary Yash conducted an aerial survey of the flood-affected districts on 23 July and later visited Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar about the situation. The affected districts are Purvi, Kishanganj, Araria, Katihar, Madhepura, Supaul, and Darbhanga.

CASA has provided water filters, plastic buckets, hygiene kits, dry ration kits, tarps, sheltering, garment sheets, blankets, district sets and tent kits to 1,413 families in Purvi District and 1,442 families in Katihar District.

A sum is hit by devastating floods triggered by rainfall, flooding at least 15 lakh people in 14 districts of the state. The situation is likely to deteriorate in the next couple of days as the mighty Brahmaputra River’s water level is rising beyond the danger mark.

Meanwhile, incessant rains in Nepal have caused floods in Bihar, claiming nine lives and affecting around 2 lakh people. The flood situation is likely to worsen as water reservoirs are full and there is forecast of heavy rain in Nepal over the next two days.

Torrential rains and floods have also rendered many households in North Bengal with those in the Jhargram and Alipurduar badly affected. The tea gardens in these remained inundated and shelters of many tea workers were ruined in the rains and floods.

Rs. 6,98,740.00 were given under DRF-IAF to CASA to carry out relief work in Jhargram district of West Bengal. We have since helped 620 families.
Leave No One Behind
17 goals to transform our world

A three-day talk was held in Kolkata from July 28-30 which sought to integrate all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit – officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, these new Goals, that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

A discussion was held on the difference between SDG and MDG (Millennium Development Goals).

On Day 2, senior Advocate and social worker Ajoy Jha moderated the discussion and gave a detailed presentation on how SDGs defines the need of the house. He said that the MDGs were not rooted in human rights standards whereas SDGs have been designed in such a way that they are inclusive and just and involves people's participation.

All the members were divided in the groups of four; who later gave presentations on the relevance of these goals for CASA, what CASA is going or should do in the framework of the selected goals and what CASA can do differently regarding the goals.

The groups agreed that the 4 SDGs – No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Gender Equality and Climate Action – were attainable by CASA.

Dr. Sushant Agrawal
Director, CASA
Elimination of poverty cannot be taken as a sole challenge if ‘dignity of life’ is not considered into the challenge. ‘Life and Dignity of life’ must be present in the goals and our targets.

Dr. Jayant Kumar
Head of Programme, CASA
The SDG goals are not just quantitative but also qualitative. As an instrument, civil society organizations have an important role to play in attaining these goals.
KAM MANGO ABHIYAN - The Right to Livelihood

CASA Amrapara centre organized a programme on MGNREGA and its implication under the NIPD Human Potential Development aspect of the FISCM programme on 18th of May. Beneficiaries under the programme for the villages of Balgop, Gopar, Sitlana were called for the programme and briefed of the issues of MGNREGA.

People keen interest in implementing it to address the issues of livelihood security and infrastructure development in the villages. The programme was aimed with an objective to build community understanding of the issues and also motivate community to apply for the scheme. The meeting was addressed by DISTRCT LOHPAL-MGNREGA, Pakar, Mr Ram Jhunh Abhart, Ms. Jyoti Kaha, India Osborne, Subhiguna.

The Solar village

The situation in this Dall and Adhous village of Balilpur started becoming worse due to frequent floods and drought conditions. The locals was on the verge of desolation. In an adverse situation like this, the community took an initiative to reduce the disaster risk to some extent through change in cropping pattern, diversification, using stress tolerant resilient varieties seeds. Given the experiences, there was a need for a shape at the ground level to climate smart disaster risk management, building on the ground level experiences.

Understanding the present livelihood status of the target community and the working intensively to facilitate various linkages required to strengthen the poor villagers and develop resilience in the commons strategy in the transition phase.

Finally, the villagers with access to supply of water to their small farm which will sustain all in time of water shortage and saving a big amount on hiring of pump set and buying of diesel at an exorbitant price.

The importance of DRR

Bihar Progressive Alliance (BPA), a forum of NGOs and People’s organisations from 15 districts of Bihar was promoted by Bihar State Secretariat organisations.

56 NGOs and 23 People’s Organisations are affiliated with this platform.

This forum has been formed by the like-minded NGOs and Networks to become a part of planning and implementation of programmes.

Interventions:
1. With PGVS one of the members of BPA, a workshop was organised to initiate a state level forum for Small and Landless Farmers and their land rights.

In Bihar a huge number of small farmers and landless agricultural labourers do not have the access to the rights and entitlements in normal time. Situation of this sector becomes miserable in any disaster like drought or flood.

2. Bihar has become first state who has DRR Roadmap, CASA’s Bihar State Secretariat is now a member of KSDI (Roadmap Implementation Support Unit). It was involved in planning and enactment of workshop of stakeholders to facilitate implementation of DRR Roadmap.

3. “State level Consultation on Rights of Sharecroppers in Bihar” was organised by member of BPA. Sharecropper’s problems were discussed in detail, sharecroppers and landlords. It was understood that the present provisions of acts and policies are not in favour of landless farmers and landlords also. List of amendments were suggested to the present acts and policies of government.
REMINISCENCES
(A glimpse of CASA's Newsletter in this quarter way back to 1964 and 1966. Then CASA was known as CORAGS (Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies) and was a programme of the RCCS (National Christian Council of India))