



Editorial...

Dear Readers

Greetings and a very warm welcome. It is our privilege to present you 'CASA in Action' (2016 Issue 1) where we have tried to uncover realities of life and emotions of people in different situations.

From the trauma of being homeless to the joy of getting rehabilitated, the newsletter brings you a range of emotional discoveries through the peoples' eyes.

What was left to the people of Manipur, after a massive earthquake that tore the land apart, was their extraordinary will to "not give up". CASA's relief work in the disaster-affected areas would not have been smoother if the people hadn't shown an amazing strength to support our relief operations.

'Lymphatic Filariasis – What the disease is all about' is an in-depth coverage which will intrigue readers to dig deeper into the subject. We bring you heart wrenching stories of children and elderly, who waited for a God's touch to heal. The disease has been paralyzing the victims physically (and mentally), and could be termed as the 'childhood destroyer' for minors.

The newsletter uncovers challenges faced by women when their daily incomes were taken by their husbands for substance abuse and addiction. The stories are about how women have put up a strong fight against alcoholism in a small village of Varud Bhakt in Maharashtra.

Uplifting the tribal community and vulnerable groups, and ensuring that they are given food and livelihood security is a matter of national importance. We bring you events held by CASA in giving the power to these people through rights-based approach.

Lastly, a child deserves books in her hands and not bricks on her head. The story of a girl child - from being a child labour to receiving education at CASA's Bridge School Centre – is an interesting read.

Please feel free to contact the editorial team with your feedbacks and suggestions. You can download the current edition on our website at: www.casa-india.org

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Vision of CASA



CASA's vision is inspired by the Christian Faith and values. CASA visualises a society in which peace, justice and equality prevail and wherein all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, language and religion—live in peace and communal harmony. CASA also envisages a society where the poor, women, the marginalised and under-privileged lead a quality life with dignity and have equal opportunity for their involvement in the development process which is value based and sustainable, and also have an appropriate environment to develop their fullest potential.

Mission of CASA



CASA actively supports and works for a just and sustainable society by creating opportunities for the participation of socially and economically marginalised sections in the development process through networking, alliance building and strengthening of their organisation. CASA also supports local self-governance, protection of human rights, peace and reconciliation and sustainable livelihood measures and responds to the environmental issues, natural and manmade disasters and strives to bring the victims to the mainstream while upholding the human dignity. CASA promotes gender mainstreaming at all appropriate levels, mobilises resources in favour of the poor and optimises all potentials and capacities existing within the organisation and other partners.

MANIPUR EARTHQUAKE

Quake shook the land, But not people's will



On January 4, an earthquake of magnitude 6.7 hit north-east India at IST 04:35 about 29 km (18 miles) north-west of Imphal, the capital of Manipur.

The tremors caused vast devastation across the state of Manipur, killing 10 people and injuring 106 others.

As many as 339 structures including houses, government offices, market sheds and a bridge were severely damaged.

The worst affected village was Kabui Khullen (located under Haochong sub division of Tamenglong district) where 40 houses out of 55 were severely damaged.

Most of the affected persons belonged to the rural areas and the marginalized families who could not afford to reconstruct their houses with their own resources.

The victims were traumatized and living under the sky. Panic and fear had struck them.

MANIPUR EARTHQUAKE



Quake brings misery in 79-year-old Lemtui's life

Imphal: 79-year-old Lemtui lived in a 'kaccha' (temporary) house in an interior village New Tousem of Tamenglong district of Manipur. She lived alone as her only had migrated and settled in the nearby state Nagaland.

Lemtui worked as a labourer to support her 76-year-old physically-challenged brother.

On January 4, Lemtui struggled hard to cope-up with the circumstances as tremors devastated her habitat. She lost all her hopes and expectations. Lemtui had no food to survive upon, and no place to sleep. Being an elderly, she remained traumatized for days as the disaster took away her life savings and all modes of living.

Young Meena was trapped for hours...

Imphal: 37-year-old Meena tried to run out of her 'kaccha' house and rescue her physically-challenged husband when the quake struck her village. Her ankle was broken and she was severely hurt after a wall collapsed on her. After a long struggle by the locals, she was rescued along with her husband. Her house had turned into debris.

Meena belongs to Nepali community and lived in Leimakhong village of Manipur. Meena was the only earning member in her family. Due to lack of livelihood opportunities in the village, the monthly income could not satisfy the family demands due to which her children had to live in an orphanage.



CASA – on the right time

CASA teams reached the affected areas of Manipur to interact with the victims of the natural calamity. Persons like Lemtui and Meena shared expressed their grief and opened up about their plight. CASA aid reached villages located at altitudes where transportation modes remained shut for days due to the jolt that shook the region. The teams realized that the foremost relief would be to provide food packets and sleeping material in the biting cold. The children, women and elderly from the marginalized villages were given special care as they had virtually lost everything in this disaster.

In their own words



Lemtui with Relief material

...Lemtui

“Many people came and asked about my condition but no one supported me. In this age, I do not have any strength to cope-up alone without any outside support. Many earthquakes have occurred in the past but I have not seen as deadly a disaster as this one. For the first time in my life, I am receiving relief material and I am really touched with this gesture. CASA has helped an ailing elderly in a situation like this, and they will receive a lot of blessings from the Lord.



Meena with Relief material

...Meena

“I live in an interior part of the state and the quake took away whatever little I had. I was living in a hand-to-mouth situation before. I lost all hopes of me and my family's survival. When CASA came to rescue us, I had a broken ankle besides other injuries. They supported me in this grave condition. I am thankful to the organization for helping my family to cope-up with the stress. I feel good to know that someone is there for you.



CASA provided shelter materials, non-food items including hygiene kit to 810 families in the worst-flood and earthquake-affected areas in Senapati and

Tamenglong districts of Manipur. The relief items were decided based on the urgent need of the victims observed and listed by the CASA survey team.

S. No.	Details of Items	No of Families covered
1	Fleece Blanket 4 piece per family	810
2	Hygiene kit (Each hygiene kit consists of 1 Dettol bottle of 100 ml, cotton roll 200gm, 1 kg detergent powder, 1 toothpaste 100gm, 5 tooth brushes, 1 pack sanitary napkin (8pcs.), 2 towels, 4 bath soaps, 1 soap case, 1 sewing kit (2 rolls of thread, 8 needles & 10 buttons), 1 mirror, 10 shampoos sachets and two combs).	810
3	Solar Lantern	810
4	Silpaulin tarpaulin 22' x16' for Roof.	810
5	Silpaulin 20' x10' Ground sheet	810

REGIONAL NEWS

CASA's WB package brings hope to people in distant lands

CASA kick-started its work on the 'West Bengal Package' programme in January this year, aiming to improve the quality of lives of Sunderbans islanders, tea garden estate workers and hill dwellers.

After CASA team found out that the climate change (including disaster unpreparedness) and food insecurity - the two burning issues - have been affecting the lives of people on the islands and hilly terrain, it sought its intervention in the region.

With support from Bread for the World (Germany), the three-year-long project will be a collective form of cooperation (CFC) programme to achieve dignity in the lives of the indigenous people in the distant lands.

The project needs more networking with various counterparts. So far, CASA has taken an initiative to bring groups like international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and universities together to know each other's interventions in the World Heritage site Sunderbans as well as Duars and Hill.

The programme aims to include 21 voluntary organizations from Hills, Duars and world's largest mangrove forest Sunderbans along with State Platform of West Bengal.

Recently, a few groups in Sunderbans have demanded from the political parties to include the climate change issue in their manifestoes for the West Bengal Assembly elections.



People participate at the hand-holding training session in Sunderbans

The first phase of the CASA's project will focus on the climate change issues and educating the locals about Disaster Risk reduction (DRR), besides working on food security for all.

The organisation held two meetings with Principal Secretaries of Dept of Disaster Management and Department of Food and Supplies of West Bengal Government and ensured necessary support from the administration on the effective implementation of the project at the grass-root level.

CASA also backed an assignment from West Bengal government to review the State Disaster Management Plan by May 2016.

Digital Data Collection during disasters, an urgent need!

A two-day workshop was organized on the need for a digital survey tool which can be used by organizations to collect reliable information at the time of humanitarian crisis, especially when a region is struck by a natural disaster.

Light-weight and mobile-friendly software like 'KoBoToolbox' will be useful for the volunteers working in the disaster-affected region.

The tools will give an in-depth understanding of the population's needs and a better assessment of the situation for quick and accurate response from the aid groups.

The event was organized by Department of Disaster Management of West Bengal in association with State

Inter-Agency Group (IAG), where partners like CASA, Save the Children, Sphere India and Swiss child relief agency 'TdH' also stood in support for digital-data gathering tools.

Also, the data collected can be used later to assist in disaster-preparedness.

The overview of the workshop was on the orientation of conducting Joint Rapid Need Assessment (JRNA) to humanitarian workers at local level.

The learning objectives were designing of rapid assessment in post disaster, describing the content of the JRNA tool, demonstrate the specific questions to be asked during the assessment and identify immediate, mid-term and long-term need of affected population.

The story of **untouched** village

Bihar's Virti Tola village has majority of population from marginalised sections of the mainstream society, where the benefit of the government schemes barely reached the people even after 68 years of independence.



Members of Ambedkar Gram Vikash Sangarsh Samiti conducting the initial survey of road construction.

In this Mathia panchayat of Bihar, one of the marginalised and untouched villages is known in the name of Virti Tola.

The village has a majority of population who are very marginalised and away from the mainstream society where the benefit of government schemes never reached even after the 68 years of Independence. As a result, the people remained deprived of the basic amenities like water, road, electricity and medical facilities.

With the support of CASA, Fakirana Sisters Society started a project in the area from June 2015.

In the beginning it was very difficult for the staff to bring the real problems and issues of the community in the forefront as the people here were suppressed over decades by the higher castes and class communities. "The people were very fearful to say even a single word about their

sufferings. They started sharing their problems with the staff once they started to trust them," a CASA member said.

The deprived people of Virti Tola came forward and formed a community group and a community based organisation called 'Ambedkar Gram Vikash Sangarsh Samiti', in which the officials were elected democratically.

The people in their first meeting identified that the main problem of the area was the road connectivity leading to their village. The poor connectivity and structure was also responsible for water-logging in the area.

Virti Tola remained cut-off from the block and district headquarters for decades as no transport facilities were available in the area.

The community members passed a resolution to negotiate with the

authorities for construction of the road and they all together met the village head Baidhnath Paswan, Vikas Mitra Ramesh Ram, Panchayat Secretary Rajbali Ram and discussed the problem of the area to do the initial screening of the road.

In response, all the officials came forward and assured the people about the construction of the road at an early date. The first step of the initiative of the community with their representatives showed good result towards realisation of their rights. Virti Tola is no more a secluded village at a deserted corner of the country. Now the people here use transport facilities to ferry materials up and down to the cities.



Road construction in progress at VirtiTola of Mathiya Panchayat

Project area Mathia Panchayat (in Bihar) is situated 26 kilometres from district headquarters Bettiah and 6 kilometres from south of block headquarter Lauria. Virti Tola village is part of this Panchayat.

THE **NEGLECTED** TROPICAL DISEASE



Gajendra Sethi - a Lymphatic Filariasis patient in the last stage of the disease

“I will never be normal again - physically or mentally”

The tumour on Gajendra Sethi's limb weighs 10-12 kgs. He can barely wear slipper on the left leg as the swelling, extending from knee till ankle, has completely deformed his heel and the foot.

The 44-year-old noticed symptoms of filaria some 10 years back, which means the disease had already started spreading much before. Sethi is in the last stage of Lymphatic Filariasis which has no cure.

The deformity has been torturing him physically and mentally ever since. Not able to control his emotions, a teary-eyed Gajendra says, “My condition became bad 6 years ago when my leg started swelling. I

couldn't walk for weeks due to extreme pain in my joints and muscles. And my condition started to worsen when I became bed-ridden suffering from acute attacks at night along with high fever.”

Gajendra's son, who left his schooling to support the family financially after his father became weak, said, “Only God can help my father. The medical science has already termed his case out of scope or recovery.”

About 10 years ago, Gajendra was fit and labouring hard to meet his family's financial demands. He worked at the construction site in various places, but little did he know that he was bitten by mosquitoes that caused him this condition.

From a “very hard working man to a bed-ridden man”, it has been a very emotional journey for Gajendra who fights social stigmas like untouchability and alienation daily in the society.

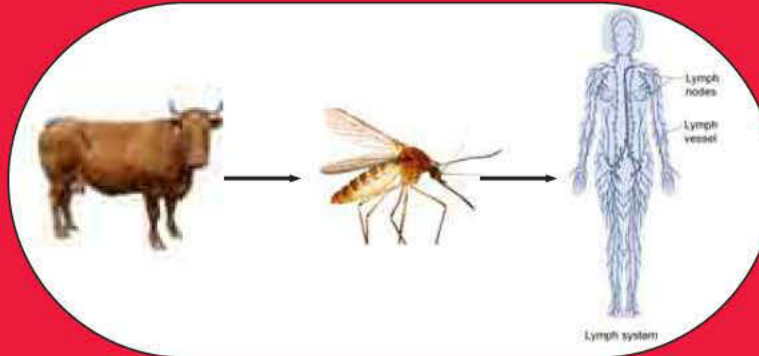
“God has cursed me. I know that I will never be normal again – physically or mentally,” grief-stricken Gajendra says.

Unlike all the other men of the village, Gajendra spends most of his time at home as his condition does not allow him to labour hard, and at other times he is seen giving agriculture lessons to his children.

What causes Lymphatic Filariasis?

Lymphatic filariasis is an infectious, parasitic disease caused by nematodes (roundworms). The disease is caused by three species of thread-like nematode worms, known as filariae – *Wuchereria bancrofti*, *Brugia malayi* and *Brugia timori*.

Mosquitoes are infected with microfilariae by ingesting blood when biting an infected host. Microfilariae mature into infective larvae within the mosquito.

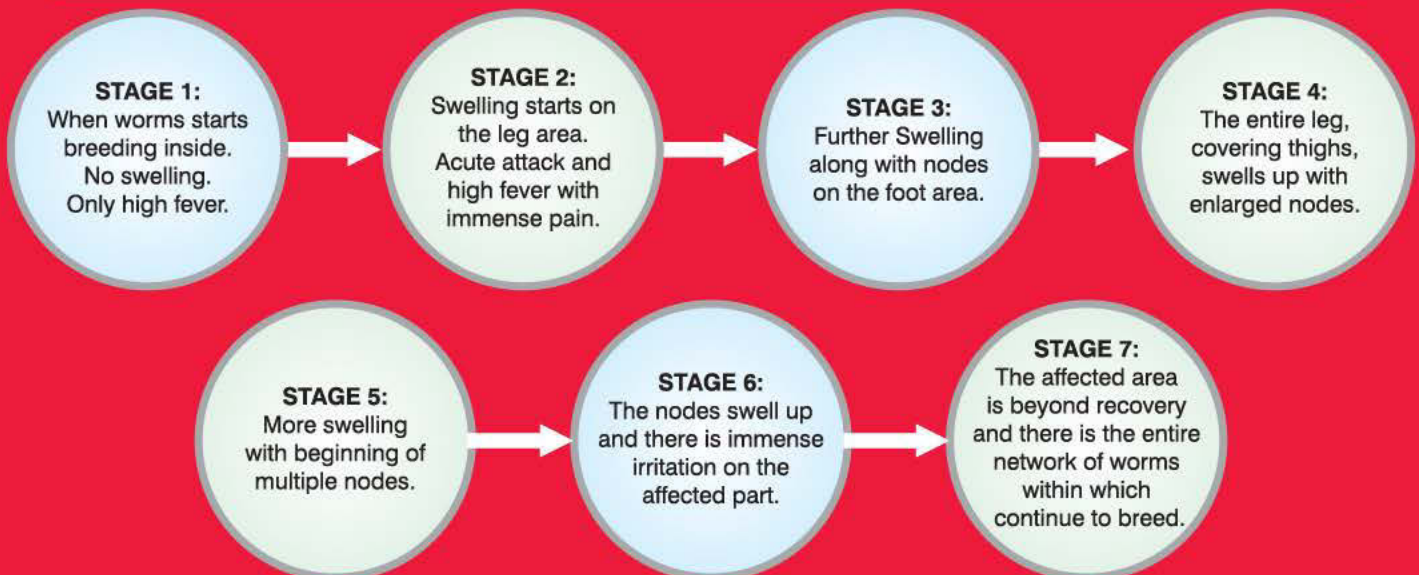


When infected mosquitoes bite people, mature parasite larvae are deposited on the skin from where they can enter the body. The larvae then migrate to the lymphatic vessels where they develop into adult worms, thus continuing a cycle of transmission.

Where? Mostly seen in the tropical countries. In India, Lymphatic Filariasis is very prevalent in eastern states like Kerala, Odisha, Andhra, and West Bengal.

How to identify the stages?

There are seven stages of Lymphatic Filariasis. While the infection may be acquired during childhood its visible manifestations may occur later in life, causing temporary or permanent disability.



Is there a cure? While the patients in the first stage can be cured with regular yearly doses of albendazole (400 mg) and half-yearly doses of diethylcarbamazine citrate (DEC) (6 mg/kg) for five continuous years, the patients starting from second stage till the last stage cannot be cured at all. But with daily cleaning of the affected areas and intake of medicinal doses can suppress the breeding of the worms inside and prevent from spreading further.

LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS

“I was born with God’s curse on me”

Kundan Sahu (62) believes that she must have committed sins in her previous life because of which she is getting this punishment. A 5th stage filariasis patient, Sahu believes that if she worships the Lord with full heart, she might get rid of the disease.

But little does she know that she needed to prevent mosquitoes to prevent this disease from happening.

“I know I was born with God’s curse on me, that is why my leg swelled and I was not able to walk properly. It is not just the deformity, but I get acute attacks and high fever at night which prevents me from sleeping peacefully,” she says.

Asked about the belief related to the disease, she says that “of course no one will tell me on my face that it is as bad as untouchability, but I feel the vibe of discrimination.”

A few kilometers from my village, a festival called 'dandh naach' (a dance on the bed of burning coal) witnesses huge inflow of patients suffering from filariasis. The victims believe the festival is a key to get rid of the disease by appeasing the Almighty.

She was affected by the disease after she was married and came to know about it only after she became pregnant.

“I noticed the symptoms (leg

swelling) only after my pregnancy. It was a very difficult period as it used to pain a lot and then I started becoming very weak,” she says.

It is not a widespread practice among the community to see doctors, so for 10 years Sahu “managed to survive.”

There are a lot of women like Sahu, who waited years for the disease to disappear – but that never happened.



“Abandoned, unfriended, lonely”

Kanha likes staying within the periphery of his house because he doesn't claim to have many friends. He loves to read and write, which is why he likes going to school every day.

But it is not so simple for a 14-year-old with deformed legs.

At times, he broods if he could defeat those kids on the muddy race tracks and earn respect among his peer group.

Lymphatic Filariasis along with social stigma had stung Kanha when he was an infant. Since then, the urge to get acceptance in the society has scarred his adolescence forever and made him an emotional recluse.

His mother, Tauni Nayak who is herself is a 5th stage filariasis victim, said, “Kanha (the stage-3 filariasis patient) does not share anything with me.

“His sister, who studies in the same school, informs me whenever Kanha is verbally abused or harassed by his schoolmates.

At times, they push him out of the playground. His classmates call him a cripple and do not let him drink water from the same tap. Sometimes he remains thirsty in the summer heat.”

A minor cut and wound on the affected limbs will only aggravate the swelling leading to feverish nights

and acute attacks.

WHO reports that India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Bangladesh alone contribute about 70% of the infection worldwide.

A total of 250 districts across India have been identified to be endemic for filariasis with a population of about 600 million at risk.

Two years back, Kanha and other filariasis-affected patients of the Bhejiput village had no prior knowledge about the methods to control the spread of the disease.

Applying 'haldi' on the affected portions certainly did not improve their condition.

LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS

CASA intervened

in the region in 2011 and helped people understand that it was caused due to mosquito bites and not “God’s curse.”

Breaking the social stigma attached with the disease became the first task of CASA team. The teams went village to

village to create awareness about the spread of the disease.

As Odisha had one of the highest Lymphatic Filariasis patients in India, the teams targeted the interior villages of the state where health amenities were either not enough or out of people’s reach.

CASA took a survey of how many people were affected with the disease and what problems they faced.

It held meetings with the patients and villagers to help them understand the causes and management of filariasis.



CASA team cleaning the foot of a lymphatic patient with disinfectants.

CASA's leg cleaning process

CASA broke the stigmas related to the disease by introducing a programme called 'Foot Care Management' for the patients, where the volunteers washed their legs and feet with soap and water.

The volunteers cleaned their legs with bare hands and told the people that it

was not a contagious disease as perceived earlier.

The workers taught them to manage the disease and the pain caused by it by daily cleaning the affected portion, which could reduce inflammation and swelling.

The workers also encouraged them to apply ointments on the parts.

CASA volunteers always on their toes



“My immediate mission was to make people understand that it was not contagious”

Volunteering for CASA, 20-year-old Kalpana believed that if people saw her working with these patients and still come out as “not infected”, then the people of her village would pay serious attention towards curing filariasis.

“Many discouraged me to not work with these patients, but I always wanted to help my people as medical facilities are not

enough here to tackle the problem. I wanted to convey that that with personal care, they can cure and manage the disease.”

Kalpana has been going door-to-door to spread awareness about the cleaning habits, using mosquito nets, mosquito fumes and wear slippers while walking.

What the volunteers are doing

- Administering anti-filariasis drugs along with government ASHA workers
- Spreading door-to-door awareness about the causes of the disease
- Checking the identified patients regularly with the help from government ASHA workers
- Building motivation among the patients that they can continue working if they take proper care of their legs
- Advising them to wear footwear while walking or running
- Clean the affected portion daily to not let the infection spread any further

LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS



“ **KUNDAN SAHU**

If I knew that it was not a curse but a disease caused by mosquito, I would have taken measures for me and my family. CASA helped me to understand that I can

manage the swelling and become fit again. Now I take medicines regularly and clean my foot every day. It gives me a lot of relief.

”

“

My mother washes my leg every day, and then I go out to play with my friends. After taking medicines, I feel a little stronger. I don't feel that my condition right

now makes me any weaker than my friends. When I'll become doctor, I'll find a solution to this disease.

KANHA



”

“ **CHANDU**

Now the swelling on my leg has reduced. The nodes or the folds on the leg are not there. I feel a little energetic now. I have joined a new workplace and earn enough for a living.

The home-based care treatments have given me, and other people like me, strength and hope to lead a normal and self-sufficient life.

”

Women fight against **alcoholism** abuse

Varud Bhakt village in Maharashtra has a population of around 300 families where women faced domestic violence and abuse (and insecure livelihood) as their husbands spent most of their incomes on liquor.



Women SHG members of Varud Bhakt village discussing their problems with Birajdar, Coordinator - CFSP, Arni.

Varud Bhakt village has a population around 308 families and agriculture is the main source of livelihood with cotton being the main and mostly-grown cash crop.

Other than agriculture, the people migrate to bigger farms to work as daily-wage laborers and at construction sites on meager wages.

Crop failure due to three consecutive droughts, leading to heavy debts, have worsened the economic conditions and enforced a lot of pressure on the farming community.

A country-liquor shop was situated in the corner of the village for the past 5 years.

The men of the house spent of their time and income on liquor consumption while

the women struggled hard to bring income into their families to support food and children education.

The liquor addiction had destroyed family peace. Most of the families started reeling under food insecurity and poverty.

Besides, the women faced domestic violence and abuse most of the time. No food for children, no finance for children to go to school and total neglect of health prevailed in the village.

CASA started working in Varud Bhakt village from January 2015. Through perspective and capacity building programmes, the community was motivated to approach government for their rights.

At village meetings, women expressed

their concerns on alcoholism which was bothering them. CASA staff empowered and supported the women (Self Help Groups) in their fight against alcoholism.

The SHGs took an initiative and met the village Sarpanch and issued him a memorandum demanding the closure of this liquor shop. A copy of this memorandum was given to Arni Police Station.

Soon after, the police ensured the closure of the liquor shop and the owner of shop was nabbed and fined by the police.

Today, there is no liquor shop in the village. Women and children are at peace. The hard-earned income is spent on food, agriculture and education purpose. The quality of life in the village is slowly and gradually improving.

A fight for **Food and Forest** rights

LOKSHAHI JANHAQUE ANDOLAN - MAHARASHTRA took an initiative in addressing the food security and forest rights of the people.

The Lokshahi Janhaque Andolan Maharashtra – a state network of the Gramin Vikas Karyakarta Parishad (GVKP) is working in 5 districts - Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Nandurbar, Gondia, Mukhed – with the help of local NGOs.

The organization has an advocacy-based approach to address issues like proper implementation of National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013, Forest Rights Act (FRA), MNREGA and other social security schemes in 5 villages each from every district and Yavatmal.



Representatives of state platform submitting memorandum to Shri Hemant Wadhekar, Chief Secretary - Food and Civil Supplies Mantralaya

The following strategies were planned and initiated:

- Tracking the existing loopholes in the implementation of NFSA 2013, FRA, MNREGA and other social security schemes such as Mid-Day Meal and Janani Suraksha Yojana from 5 villages each from Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Nandurbar, Gondia, Mukhed and Yavatmal districts.
- Assessment Report was prepared by State Platform on malfunctioning of NSFA 2013, MNREGA in consultation with GVKP and taken up in the main Gram Sabha.
- The findings are documented and a memorandum was submitted to Chief Secretary, Food and Civil Supplies Ministry - Hemant Wadekar and other concerned offices of the Education Ministry and Women and Child Ministry at Mantralaya, Mumbai in March, 2016
- Immediate response was received from the concerned Ministry as letters were shot out to the 6 districts to see that the Acts and schemes were implemented properly.



Members of Lokshahi Janhaque Andolan, Maharashtra

Chhattisgarh tribals raise **MGNREGA, Food Security, Forest Rights** issues at workshop



Tribal community from Chhattisgarh participates in the Annual General Meeting

Proper implementation of MGNREGA, food security, forest and land rights were some of the issues that were discussed at the 'Annual General Meeting' workshop held in Chhattisgarh from 30th to 31st March.

The event was organized by Lok Aahwan Maanch (LAM), an organization representing marginalized communities. The programme also witnessed the participation of as many as 305 gram panchayats spread over 18 districts.

The members agreed for a "stronger role" of LAM in fighting for people's rights and raise voices against social injustice.

People felt that livelihood security can be achieved if government schemes like MGNREGA are properly implemented.

Ensuring smooth implementation of Individual Forest Rights (IFR) and Community Forest Rights (CFR) under Forest Rights Act 2006 was the second most important issue discussed at the workshop.

LAM was also given the responsibility to monitor the effective implementation of food security among the tribal and other

marginalized communities. The ways of strengthening institutional and leadership building and governance was also discussed during the workshop.

Lok Aahwan Maanch was appreciated for its strategic and planned work last year.

A study was conducted by the organization last year on the 4 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) - Korwa, Kamar, Baiga and Pando. The findings indicated that most of the targeted population were left out from various government schemes and even were excluded from the tribal sub-plan.

"With the help of LAM members, 558 PVTGs were identified and enrolled under the tribal sub-plan and various government schemes. It has been observed that around 700 people from the marginalized families have been benefitted from this effort," a LAM member said.

LAM also did a pension study and advocacy on the irregularity in the pension provisions of the Chhattisgarh government. This study and advocacy at the community level has helped in enrolling the people who are entitled to get pension but their names have not been enrolled.

A two-day national level consultation on Forest Rights Act 2006 and proposed Land Acquisition Bill was also held in Raipur on 27th and 28th March last year to empower tribal people.

LAM conducted debates on the status of forest and land rights and developed a plan of action to address the emerging issues in this regard.

Campaigns on ecological farming came as a success to Aahwan Maanch as 250 tribal farmers (LAM members) were promoted for the cultivation of nutritional harvest like millets with support from state agriculture department.

LAM general body decided that the election will happen in the last week of May 2016. Nomination forms along with election-purpose bylaws, rules and regulations were shared and distributed to all the POs leaders who were participating in the AGM.

“Want to live with our **identity and dignity**,” Vulnerable groups

Sixty eight years have passed since independence but communities falling in the vulnerable sections like Kal, Sahria, Dharikaar, Gond, Kharwar and Vantangiya are still struggling to receive government entitlements. A state-level platform was formed to improve their condition and confidence of the vulnerable community.

A state-level meeting was conducted on 9 March 2016 in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) on livelihood, identity and dignity of Vulnerable Groups in Uttar Pradesh. 500 members from vulnerable community from 13 districts attended this meeting, including 250 female participants.

“Lok Haqdaari Morcha” facilitates the vulnerable sections to come into the mainstream to improve the condition and confidence of the community.

A survey was conducted in UP's 12 districts – Maharajganj, Kushinagar, Sonbhadra, Chandouli, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur, Banda, Chitrakoot, Hamirpur, Lalitpur, Jaloun, Gajipur, Pratapgarh.

The findings of the survey were discussed in the meeting. The findings suggested that the vulnerable people are living in a pitiful condition and are deprived of the government schemes. As they are landless, hence they have to work as labourers.

Agricultural labour is also facing several hindrances due to mechanization, high input cost, drought, hailstorm and others. The community members are facing problems in accessing the basic necessities such as safe drinking water, education, health and cleanliness.

Survey at a glance

- In 2014-15, numbers of families surveyed were 2,440. The families surveyed increased to 2,847 in 2015-16 indicating increased participation of the community members.
- In 2014-15: Only 3,651 families had voter-id cards and 2,161 families had Aadhar cards. In 2015-16: There is a 36% jump in voter-id cards issuance with 4,742 families and 26% jump in Aadhaar cards issuance with 3,467 families.
- 309 families had ration cards in 2014-15, which in the year 2015-16 increased to 415 families.
- In 2014-15, 10,845 people received their pensions whereas in 2015-16 it increased to 13,047 people.



Leaders from the vulnerable communities shared their thoughts:

Ramdas from Gajipur says that he is from **Bansfod community**, whose traditional way of livelihood is making household items from bamboo. This was their traditional business but it has been closed. The community is applying regularly for job under MGNREGA but they get only 30-40 days of job instead of 100 days. Besides, the payment is also irregular. Because of these factors, the community joined the people's organization so that they can raise their issues with the administration.

Jyoti Devi of Kushinagar belongs to **Musahar community** says, “The community had no work earlier but after joining the people's organization, the community raised the issues through sit-in protests and memorandum to the district officers.” Landless people got their land, houses were constructed under Indira Awas Yojana, toilets and drainages were constructed in her village.

After a day-long discussion, a memorandum was passed which was given to the Uttar Pradesh government. The memorandum clearly points out that...

- Surveys should be done separately for the vulnerable community by the government or other government agencies
- Evaluation should be done on social and economic status of the Dalit community
- Landless community should be provided with land so that they can perform agricultural work for their livelihood
- Special provisions should be made for the vulnerable section in the government schemes such as MGNREGA, PDS, Pensions etc
- In order to provide a sustainable livelihood, the community people need to be capacitated and motivated for self-employment
- The vulnerable community should be given equal and regular payments in agriculture and allied sector.
- Special school should be made for children belonging to vulnerable sections and better health facilities should be provided.

CASA along with its 21 partner organisations is working in 18 districts of Uttar Pradesh on empowerment of Dalits, tribals and women in Uttar Pradesh. Some of the vulnerable communities are identified as – Kal, Sahria, Dharikaar, Gond, Kharwar, Vantangiya, among others.

Workshops on **violence against women**



Girl students take lessons from officials on various forms of violence against women

The workshop aimed to make women and people aware about the injustice done to women. **All the issues related to women such as female feticide, domestic violence, rape, assault, molestation, sexual harassment etc. were highlighted. Women were sensitised about their rights and dignity.**

During the workshops women and girls were provided information on helpline numbers 1090, child helpline number 1098, Domestic violence act 2005, PCPNDT act and other information related to their safety and security.

They were also told how this information could help them at the time of danger and risk. Women were also made aware about the need to raise their voice against injustice done to them fearlessly.

Distribution of IEC related to IPC Act and,

Police control room number district, control room number and other related information were also done. **The programs were very effectively channelized; various videos on women empowerment, training and techniques of karate were shown to protect themselves in danger.** Many skits and street plays were performed during the workshops.

Efforts were also made to facilitate to form networks of civil society and govt. officials including police personnel at district and state level, so that these networks can collectively take up cases of violence, lobby and advocate on issues related to women's human rights at the local, national and international levels.

The objectives of these workshops:

- To mobilise communities at the grassroots level to change the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence at different level.
- To ensure the effective implementation of Law Enforcement agencies in the State.
- To advocate for policies addressing the problem of violence against women in the State.
- To build the capacity and liaison of State and community leaders and professionals (e.g., State and Local Council members, court officials, police, teachers, religious leaders, health care providers, etc.)
- To understand the impact of violence against women and motivate them to initiate change within their own environments to uphold women's rights and priorities.
- To advocate for change within existing community structures (e.g., division health clinics, police stations, other NGOs, social welfare offices, etc.).
- To create an environment supportive of women's rights and priorities, particularly the right to safety and too increase the knowledge and awareness about human rights and legal rights.

CASA along with Mountain collective members of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand i.e Manav Seva Sanghtan Bilaspur, Ekal Mahilla Aevam Kalyam Samit, SEED & Kumon Seva samiti, organized Series of workshop on violence against women in the month of December to march in Solan, Rishkesh, Bilaspur & Dehradun. Content of the workshops were focused on Violence against women, children and Role of Panchayat.



Participants of workshop on violence against women

Two-day dialogue on **land and livelihood**

CASA and RAJAMERU with collaboration with Rajasthan Vikas Manch (RVM) organised 2-day State Level Dialogue at Rajasthan Prodh Shiksha Samiti, Jaipur on 29th – 30th March, 2016. Representatives of people organizations, partner organisations, print and digital media members etc. participated in the dialogue.

The main agenda of the discussion was sharing the results of different surveys conducted for finding the actual status of National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 across Rajasthan and to find out the status of accessibility of Dalit community to resources in western Rajasthan.

Objectives of the Dialogue were to share different studies undertaken by CASA and RAJAMERU; An analytical discussion on implementation status of NFSA in Rajasthan; Overview of Dalit's access to land and other resources in western Rajasthan & Emerging Challenges and way forward.



Ashok Khandelwal, advisor to Supreme Court Commissioner for Food Security Act in Rajasthan, shared that there is need to strengthen the food security act implementation status in the state. Further, he shared that Government has brought a proposal to associate Aadhar Card to each and every social security scheme which is provided by the Government. So in this regard, Government as well as Administrative structure will have to be ready to face the problems which will be coming by implementing this proposal.

Amit Kumar, member of Vigilance Monitoring Committee of Rural Development Ministry, also focussed on the problems in implementation of NFSA and invoked the participants to bring the problems from grassroot level to state level.

On second day, Gopaldas - specialist of Dalit Lands/ rights issues, addressed the participants and developed their understanding on Dalit Land Rights.

Gopaldas also shared his views on Dalit

atrocities in present time as well as on Dalit Land encroachment, Dalit rights etc.

He further shared that there is need to bring an Ideological revolution in society to overcome these issues because there are several Acts and Laws made for Dalits but until there is no impact of those laws due to ideological divergent in society.

Dinesh Vyas from CASA also shared the main provisions of Rajasthan common

land policy and developed the understanding of participants. Sushreeta shared the findings of Dalit Land survey conducted in western Rajasthan.

Later, Gopilalji Rao from CASA concluded the proceedings of both the days and put the recommendation/ suggestions in front of all the participants.

He also invoked all the participants to work upon these issues and on future strategies in this regard.

CASA implements FSCM programme in **drought-hit** regions of Karnataka

CASA South Zone has been implementing 'Food Support for Community Mobilisation' (FSCM) project in Bidar block of Karnataka since 2014 and helped people convert vast areas of uncultivable land into productive and cultivable patches.

At present, the organisation is supporting four 'vulnerable' villages of the state namely- Nagmarpally, Manoor (k), Chikly (j) and Gammathanda.

This year the project will benefit at least 630 families. The main objective of this programme is to motivate community on rights basis by providing food security in lean period.

Villagers have been working in hot weather conditions with mercury touching around 45-47 degree Celsius. This year CASA will be developing 352 acres under land reclamation activity. Farmers are planning to cultivate Jowar, Redgram and Soyabean.



Francis Joseph, Project Officer-Emergency Department, looking after the FSCM work.

Take aways from CASA's initiative

1. Most women of the communities responded with joy that now they have food security for 6-8 months and three meals per day.
2. Only one member from a family participates in the FSCM activity while the remaining members work for

- various other labour activities like MGNREGS, earning more money.
3. The FSCM activity along a family's planned labour work helps them to save their money in their bank accounts. Some farmers have also cleared their debts. Borrowing money from other financiers at high interest also stopped, now they strengthened self-help groups.
4. They can purchase vegetables and other food items, health conditions improved.

5. Due to Land reclamation activity, many acres of land were converted into cultivable patches, many farmers cultivating first time. Crop yield has been increased in already cultivated lands.
6. Due to Human-Protection Programme, more number of people were made aware of their rights and are now raising their voices.



An infant rests under a shade in almost 45° celsius while his parents are working for FSCM

How things got better with time

Children who used to work as daily-wage labourers, now go to school regularly as they can afford to pay their school fees regularly.

Migration also decreased. Before FSCM, most of the families in the villages migrated along with their children to the nearby town for employment. But now the migration has come to a partial halt.

Women participation has increased in the community works as they have now become more self-confident and self-reliant. Whether they could continue the function without CASA's help in future, they replied "yes, we can" with confidence.

Children roped in to fight **climate change**



Climate Change Awareness Programme

CASA staff mobilising children for various activities in Dindigul district of Tamilnadu.

In the midst of frequent natural calamities across India due to climate change, CASA initiated a campaign to create an awareness among people about the possible causes of increase in temperature and importance of conserving nature.

In Sengurichi panchayat of Tamil Nadu's Dindigul district, CASA started its campaign in 23 villages about the importance of saving nature from climate change.

- The active participation of children in spreading the message helped people realise that Climate Change was a reality and needed to be addressed with promptness.
- Children's motivation to segregate plastic waste from the garbage and planting more saplings in the villages was one of the practices applauded by the community.

Many strategies were used to create awareness on climate change. Groups of children were formed and they acted like 'change of agents' to spread the message among people.

Children were organised in 12 groups, whose main role was to know the problems caused due to climate change and discuss the issue to resolve it at their level.

Children group meetings were held every evening in their respective villages and

the purpose of the meeting was to receive awareness about the problems due to climate change and spreading the message across the communities.

They also came up with a plan to collect waste materials from each household in their village for safe disposal and requested people to reduce plastic use.

Children started implementing this practice in schools and inspired others to do the same in their villages.



Campaign on Environmental Protection and promotion:

Two separate campaigns were organized on environmental protection and promotion. Children from all age groups actively participated in the event. They distributed awareness pamphlets door-to-door in villages. The main purpose of the campaign was to create awareness on the importance of 'protecting the environment from harmful conditions' and sensitizing people on issues faced by climate change.

This is Sindhu, now a free bird

Chatrai mandal (block) is one of the most backward areas in Tamil Nadu's Krishna District. Illiteracy rate is very high in the region and a majority of the people belonging to the Backward Class (BC) communities depend on agricultural labour.

There is high rate of school dropouts from this community. Incidentally, parents from BC communities think that sending children to work would earn more income for the families than sending their kids to schools. At the same time, many farmers hired children to work as field labourers as the minors were hired on low or minimal wages.

The condition was no different for Sindhu. At the age of 12, Sindhu from Vadrigudem village discontinued her education while she was studying in 6th standard.

Everyday Sindhu would pack her food and leave for work while her younger brother would get ready for school. It has been almost three years that she had been going for agricultural-related labour to other farms. The trap of child labour forced the childhood out of Sindhu along with her right to receive education.



CASA initiated Child Labour Free Zone (CLFZ) project in this backward area and started working towards the protection and promotion of children rights. CASA started a bridge school in this village in which Sindhu was enrolled. Her brother continues to go to a government school, unlike Sindhu who is irregular to the bridge course centre.

There were many times when the CLFZ project staff and women groups requested her parents to send Sindhu regularly to the Bridge Course Centre (BCC) as Sindhu was found absent most of the time. Finally, CLFZ project staff met her parents and motivated them to send Sindhu to BCC.

CASA decided to extend financial support of Rs 10,000 to the family and motivated them to start a shop in the village. Sindhu's mother, Lakshmi, started a petty shop and now she earns at least Rs 500 every day from the business. Now the parents are very happy with the additional income and they are sending Sindhu regularly to the BCC. And Sindhu also decided to continue her education by appearing 10th class exams next year.



FELICITATIONS



Debadrita Hazra, Programme Associate, CASA, East Zone tied the knot with Samitendra Narayan Thakur on 6 February 2016
We congratulate and wish the couple all success in their married life.

REMINISCENCES

(A glimpse of CASA's Newsletter in this quarter way back in 1967. Then CASA was known as CORAGS (Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies) and was a programme of the NCCI (National Christian Council of India)



INFORMATION BULLETIN

MARCH 1967

Seven Lakh Children Fed by National Christian Council Relief Committee

The National Christian Council Relief Committee is feeding 702,250 children all over India through its food distribution nutritional programme, statistics prepared recently reveal.

These children receive 834,500 pounds of milk, 6,556,000 pounds of staples, and 308,000 pounds of oils and edible fats each month.

The normal feeding programme of the National Christian Council Relief Committee covers some 409,800 children, receiving 2,563,000 pounds of staples, 820,000 pounds of milk and CSM (Corn, Soya and Milk), and 308,000 pounds of oils every month. The emergency programme caters to another 285,200 children who get 3,993,000 pounds of foods every month.

In addition, there are 7,250 Tibetan children, receiving 14,500 pounds of milk each month.



Children queue up to receive their rations in a feeding programme of the National Christian Council Relief Committee.



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IN CO-OPERATION WITH MANIPUR BAPTIST CONVENT
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