



Highlights of this Newsletter (Aug –Nov 2015)

- Faith healers Meet Modern Medicine
- Cloth for Work to Combat Cold
- Children's Rally to Demand Responsible Parenting
- Stop Wife Beating Campaign
- Ant team in Austria

Faith Healers Meet Modern Medicine

In our villages- as in many parts of our country - patients with mental illness are taken to traditional faith healers for treatment. Through herbs, prayers, rituals, animal sacrifices etc. they try to get rid of the "evil spirit" and "cure" the patient. Though we may not agree with their practices, they are important figures in treating mental illness in our villages.

So, instead of side-lining them and their practice, we decided to build collaboration and have an open knowledge sharing with the "ojhas". It took a lot of mobilising and convincing on the part of our team to get 31 ojhas (both men and women) to come to our campus on the 11th September for a day long sharing programme. Most of them brought a host of "disciples" to support them and convince us of their "skills". They were really unsure and fearful about what our agenda was. Normally, in public meetings, they are hauled up and scolded and ridiculed for their irrational practices.

But on insisting that we want the best treatment for our patients - and if we could jointly explore together, we won them over. They are now ready to come to our meetings any time and have been requesting more such programmes!



(Above) – Traditional Faith Healers (called "ojhas") attend our call for collaborating to heal mentally ill patients;

(Below) – a demo by our team on correct management of an epileptic patient



Cloth for Work to Combat Cold in Deosri

It has been a harsh year for the violence-hit people of Deosri, near the Bhutan border. Having lived in relief camps for most part of the year after the ethnic riots of December 2014, they lost a lot - their income, savings, home, crops, food and a sense of security. It has been tough building up life again even if they managed to return to their villages. Though some families did receive help from the government and other humanitarian aid agencies, it is not enough to prepare them to battle the cold Winter.... Many of the families are living in roof-less and wall-less "shelters". With help from "Caring Friends", we are carrying out a Cloth-for-Work initiative where we are supporting over 500 riot-affected families with 2 blankets and a tarpaulin sheet each in exchange for a day's labour in which they do community identified and some useful work.



Riot affected villagers work in building an approach road – in exchange for 2 blankets and a tarpaulin sheet which they will use to shelter against the cold Winter. Thank you Caring Friends for supporting this!


Children’s Rally to Demand Responsible Parenting

A unique rally was taken out in Deosri on 28th September, 2015 by children associated with our evening study centres supported by Arpan Foundation (USA). It was self-organised with the ant playing but a minor role! Children were demanding of adults and especially parents to be more responsible towards their education! 350 primary and middle school children and some of their teachers participated in this rally - raising their voice demanding “*books are our best friends, do not separate us*”. The rally covered many villages along a 7 kilometer route and even the hot September sun did not deter the children from making their voices heard.



Over 150 parents were present in the open meeting following the rally- adults hung their heads in shame and were moved to tears when child after child - especially girls - stood up bravely in front of the big crowd and pleaded with parents to allow them to go to school instead of keeping them at home to look after their siblings or sending them to fetch firewood or water.

Women Against Violence!



15 November – 10 December is the Fortnightly Campaign to “*Stop Violence Against Women*” all over the world. Every year, we too use this period as a time to sensitize and call for action to stop Violence Against Women. This year, 22 different programmes were conducted by our women’s groups and federations whose biggest concern was continued wife-beating in the community. Over the next 3 years, we will work at making 100% of the homes of our SHG members – violence free!

Children Raise Money for Children !

In Austria, every year around Christmas, more than 85,000 children are accompanied by 30,000 adults go house-to-house singing carols, blessing the homes and collecting money. They collect over 16 million Euros with which they support 500 development projects in 17 countries, largely child and youth development projects. This is their way of showing solidarity with children-in-need in other parts of the world. the ant’s work with children and youth is one such project. This year a team of 4 ant members were selected to go to Austria for 3 weeks in November. Breaking up into teams of 2, we went to different parts of the country doing sessions with children in schools, carol singers in the churches, youth and also.... sensitising them about India, the Northeast, Assam, lives of children in villages and also about what we do with the money given to our project. It was a wonderful exchange both ways!



(Donations to the ant are exempt from Income Tax as per rules under Sec 80G of the Income Tax Act)

We welcome any feedback.
Please do get in touch. Our contact is:

the ant
Rowmari, P.O Khagrabari,
Dist Chirang via Bongaigaon,
Assam – 783380;
Ph: 9859978991
email: jenny@theant.org ;
www.theant.org

Dino & Rwmwi (below) and Rashmi & Jenny (above) carry out sessions to sensitise children, youth and adults in Austria and talk about our project.



Rashmi dress up children to tell them about the different types of people in India.