

Highlights of this Quarter (May-July 2015)

- Peace Initiatives of **the ant** – Building Peace Piece by Piece
- “*Magic*” dispels superstitions
- Launching *Ultimate Frisbee* in Deosri
- Girls make Music along with the Boys
- Agriculture work starting in Kuklung Forest area with small grant support from Mastek Foundation & Caring Friends

Building Peace – Piece by Piece!

In an area torn by repeated violence, people are wary about talking “peace”. In periods of calm, people are superstitious and scared that they will invite violence – like how one invites bad luck – if they talk too much about peace! On the other hand, we know that peace has to be pursued. Confidence building measures go a long way in preventing that next bout of conflict between communities. Our effort has been in finding all kinds of spaces for inter-community interaction without actually mentioning the word “peace”!



In a workshop we organized, Bengali-Muslims teach Bodo women to make their relatively low-wood and low-smoke chulhas. Otherwise, they hardly get a chance to interact and share.



Fight TOGETHER, Not AGAINST each other

Bodos, Bengali Muslims and Rajbongshis forget their differences and get together to save their land. They are protesting the government’s putting up power transmission towers and high tension wires on their land without even asking them. 500 people from Chirang and Kokrajhar sat in a dharna in Kokrajhar asking for clarity and proper policy in this.



Magic Dispels Superstitions

After having learnt more magic from Tom and Chris of *Magicians Without Borders*, our Science-on-Wheels team has been using it for their village awareness programmes. It is really interesting that just before the show in the village, some people thinking the team knows magic actually request them to come to their homes and help “cleanse” it of evil spirits. They even offer to buy whatever is required for the “puja” or pay whatever is required for the “services”! But after the awareness programme where the team performs magic and also shows some as tricks, many of them end up laughing and say they were stupid in believing in all these superstitions!



Girls make Music along with the Boys!

Girls dance while boys are the musicians. That's the way tradition runs. This year our girls in the Rowmari cluster managed to break that norm. Just 15 days in a traditional music workshop which we supported in July 2015, they have become as good as the boys in playing the *siphung* (traditional Bodo flute), the *kham* (traditional long drum) and also the 4 stringed *serja* (traditional violin). The girls are working side by side the boys to protect their musical tradition which is fast vanishing in the world of digital music easily available through mobile phones!



Ultimate Frisbee in Deosri

We are just discovering what a wonderful game Frisbee is – a disc costing less than 100 rupees and one is pretty much set. Rules are quite simple, no expensive equipment or gear required; girls and boys always play together and best of all, it promotes self-discipline and honesty as there are no referees We introduced the game of “Ultimate Frisbee” in our Deosri Evening Study Centres which are supported by Arpan Foundation. Anish Mukherjee, a young and energetic development professional from Kolkata is our guide and trainer. His enthusiasm is infectious. Not just the kids but also the Evening Study Centre teachers in Deosri are quite taken up by the game. We are getting 10 teams of around 150 Frisbee players ready in Deosri. Using a scale used internationally to measure skills and performance, Anish informs us that our Deosri kids score 5.5 in skills compared to the 7 scored by starter level kids in the U.S who play the game! This is only after 1 month of playing.

In our other areas, we have launched another programme on a much larger scale called S4D (Sports for Development). In this programme, through a curriculum based on sports and games, we will be working with over 3000 children for 3 years to improve health, school attendance, socio-emotional status and also bring better gender balance and child rights.



Other Announcements

- With support of a small grant from Mastek Foundation and other donors of Caring friends, we are starting work on agriculture in Kuklung Forest area on the Bhutan border. 170 families will benefit from horticulture & kitchen gardens, apart from a demo farm for training other farmers in the area.
- The vocational skills centre we started has been put on pause at the moment as we could not get proper jobs for the trained students. We are currently exploring other ways to make vocational skills meaningful in our context.

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
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