Time has come again for us to report to you about the happenings in the anthill during 2013-2014 and we seem to have come a full circle. After a relative period of calm and peace through 2013, there is tension simmering again in the Bodoland districts. Once again the Bodoland areas are in the news for killings and post-election violence. But we are proud of our communities! Despite really grave provocation and desperate attempts by lumpen elements to incite ethnic and communal violence, people have desisted. Our own District Chirang remained peaceful this time around!

They give us hope that peace and sanity can and will hold.
I. Peace and Justice Programme

a. Invest in Peace

Army, Central Paramilitary Forces, State Armed Police, Reserve Battalions largely made of ex-militants, Home Guards, Militants of all hues – Cease-fire group, surrendered group, anti-India, pro-India but anti-state, Govt-backed militants, Govt sponsored militants – and the investments from various quarters that go into their weaponry, their lifestyles, travel and upkeep . . . so much money, talent and energy goes into keeping this violent machinery going. In contrast, how much do we invest in promoting peace? The jolt we received from the riots of 2012 taught us some important lessons.

**Lesson No. 1:** we need to invest in building peace because there is too much invested in keeping the cycle of violence churning. We have kept a bit of money aside and created an “Ant Peace and Justice Fund” to carry out peace building activities and when some friends donated some money in, it encouraged us further.

**Lesson No. 2:** Life does not automatically “become normal” for affected communities after a severe conflict. Cracks need joining, breaks need mending and wounds need healing. Peace building is becoming an important component of all of our work and in the past year months, we have started actively “doing peace”. We are rebuilding safe spaces for children and youth from various communities to come together, like holding mixed football and volleyball matches, having exchange programmes between communities, and getting children together in Summer and Winter activity camps. Along with Aman Biradri, an organization working for communal harmony and peace, we have been active in re-creating these invaluable spaces.

**Lesson No. 3:** In an atmosphere so vitiated by fear and intolerance, we need to have a multi-pronged, multi-layered strategy to make the smallest dent. Last year, we put together a Youth Peace Drama team of 25 young people from five different communities in our area. They were trained, and they created a half an hour drama which portrayed the situation of
sectarian violence and appealed for diversity and peace. The play was performed in villages affected by violence in Chirang and Kokrajhar districts as well as in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi when the team went for an exposure cum training to Delhi. With support from DKA Austria, this year we hope to take the team to a new level of non-violent action i.e. taking small actions of peace building and reconciliation in their communities. To take the message of peace further along, we have also worked with other NGOs in Lower Assam and carried out Peace Rallies, Candlelight Marches and Peace Festivals. We also know that justice is the other side of peace and so, we are starting a legal aid cell to start helping people access justice and entitlements. These are small steps but we are sure we are in the right direction to peace building.

b. Restoring Lives and Livelihoods

Thousands of families lost not just their homes but their livelihoods during the violence of 2012. These families had been living in the relief camps for over 6 months and though they started going back to their villages, most of them had lost their livelihoods. The breakdown of social and economic ties between the two communities means that one community (generally the Bodos) has land and the other community (generally the Bengali Muslims) has labour, but there is no exchange between them! Led by Mercy Corps and supported by ECHO, (European Commission Humanitarian Organization), we partnered in a project to support riot-affected families who had returned to their villages from the relief camps - both Bodos and Bengali Muslims to get back on their feet and start earning. 475 farmers who had lost their cattle and had no money were helped with seeds & hired tractors to start farming. 900 households were given toolkits to rebuild their houses and to work on their fields. These families were also given opportunities to earn some money through cash-for-work programmes which also helped the communities repair their roads, small bridges and
rebuild common assets that had been destroyed. Most importantly, we helped reduce the vulnerability of the families by helping 1169 women purchase small livestock which translated to cash during family emergencies. With the support of Mercy Corps, we were able to provide timely help in giving much needed relief materials after the riots and then in helping affected families restore their livelihoods. After the emergency support has ended, we are now planning to engage in long term community development with the violence affected villages.

2. Child & Youth Development

a. Charge of the Children’s Groups

Of the over 60 children’s groups we have organized, the children of our groups from the remote clusters of Koila Moila and Patabari face a daily challenge in their lives. Their villages along the Bhutan border have a larger than life presence of armed militants. Most children in these villages have access only to a government primary school with the nearest high school over 30 kms away and a higher secondary school even much further. Most children drop out before that. It is now three years since we have been organizing them and carrying out regular extra-curricular activities with them. Through sports, literary activities, arts and crafts, camps, learning exchange visits, etc. children who used to pass their time hunting birds and playing truant from school, have now started uniting and acting as one unit.

In one such village called 2 No. Gwjwnguri, the Dodere children’s group did something that no adults in their area had dared do before. Like many a time before that, on this Christmas too the militants picked up one of the goats from the village and feasted on it. But this time, the children from our Dodere children’s group sounded an alarm. While the men were terrified and tried to hush the children up, the women from the village – members of our Jagruti group – also gathered their courage and joined the protest when the children refused to let the matter be. For the first time, militants actually confessed their mistake and paid up a
fine for stealing. This same children’s group started a campaign and got villagers to stop throwing shampoo packets, soap covers etc around the only ring well in the village. It is encouraging to see children leading the way and the adults following their example! Their parents being too poor, we have organized the older children in the village to start saving so that they do not drop out of school due to poverty. The children’s programme is supported by DKA, Austria which itself is a fascinating organisation. Children in Austria go carol singing during Christmas and collect money and with the money thus collected, they support over 500 child and youth development projects in 16 countries!

b. Youth Power

India has the largest population of youth in the world, with over 50% of our youth under the age of 25 years. It is difficult to resist the enthusiasm and energy of the youth and we have been using methods to give young people in our villages an enriched learning environment. Sports to channelize their physical energy and build team spirit, youth groups to develop belongingness, cultural troupes to reinforce a positive pride in their tradition and culture, social campaigns that get them sensitized to social issues and let them be in charge of change, exchange-learning visits that help them develop tolerance and appreciation of others and goal-orientation and career guidance help them focus on the road to the future. This youth programme is also supported by DKA, Austria.

Youth Skills Development Centre: With our Multipurpose Community Centre almost ready, we are finalizing a partnership with organisations to start a Youth Skills Development Centre which we hope will cater to the vocational training needs of young people and help them get employed. We have built basic residential facilities for 30 youth and hopefully we will get at least 150 young people employed every year. This has been built entirely from support from individual well-wishers and supporters from all over India. We thank each and every one – especially Caring Friends – for having made it possible. We know it will be a useful resource to the community for years to come.

On World Environment Day on 5th June, youth groups plant saplings (top) and lead a rally for environment protection (middle)
Youth Keep Culture Alive

With taped music easily available (and now digital music played from the mobile phone!), the sounds of traditional Bodo drums, flutes and violins is lost. The rich culture of communities externalized by their traditional music and dances is fast getting lost and along with it an important part of their identity. We have started forming youth cultural troupes and started coaching young people in their traditional art forms. During the summer vacation in July, we are planning a residential workshop for training youth to play their traditional instruments.

Taking Tradition Back to the Village

During the Baisagu Festival, our Rowmari Youth Culture Team went dancing house to house and sought the blessings of their elders. This tradition had been looked forward to by the families in the villages but has almost disappeared from our area. It was a real pleasure to see the elders glow with happiness and joy at the children’s efforts. The children collected a lot of blessings and some money which they gave as loans to four of their group members to pay their school / college fees. If not for this support, these children would have had to drop out of their studies this year!
c. Science has gotten Wheels

The Science on Wheels programme was finally launched in the schools in the second half of April 2013. We now reach out every alternate week to 1100 students from Classes 6, 7, 8 from nine government schools. These children come from around 130 villages and in the first year, we conducted 118 science classes with them. We recently conducted a written exam on basic science concepts covered in the school syllabus such as air, water pressure, heat, chemical reactions, solar system, body functions etc. We wanted to see if the knowledge of children in these basic concepts after the science-on-wheels classes was any different from children in the schools that our team did not touch at all. The children in our partner schools scored an average of 21.4 marks out of 60 while students in the non-partner schools had an average of 7.45 marks in the same test. We are also trying to track performance in the school exams and see if we are making a difference in that. With a vision to see every child get “letter marks” i.e. 80% plus marks in maths and science, we have a long way to go. But then, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step and at least we have started on the journey! Apart from reaching out to middle schools’ students, every month we conduct day-long science workshops for High School students in the same partner schools thus giving the students of Classes 9 and 10 a chance to “do” science too.
During school holidays and when there are no regular classes, the science van reaches out to remote and hard to reach schools in our work clusters. This year, they did 9 outreach science exhibitions in which almost 2000 children took part. In tandem with our other field level teams, the Science Van team also carries out “Science Awareness” programmes for the women’s self-help groups, for the children and youth groups in villages etc. It is pure joy to see women gleefully take part in science experiments and do for themselves what they earlier believed was magic! Witch hunting sees at least a 100 people killed every year in the Bodoland areas and suspicion of being witches makes the lives of many hundreds of families miserable. Science and rationality needs to be promoted URGENTLY.

3. Empowerment of Women & Girls

a. Jagruti Groups and Jagruti federations

Organising women has been the backbone of the ant’s work since it began 14 years ago and we are proud that it is still a strong and reliable backbone. With the Government’s National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) taking on the responsibility of forming self-help groups and also federating them, we feel a bit free to work with the groups and federations to address issues of women’s inequality. We are trying to concentrate on increasing women’s mobility through our cycle bank and systematically training women and girls in resisting violence at home and outside, and getting women ready to take on leadership roles in their communities.

The Cycle Bank Chapter of Koila Moila is totally handled by Rwikhati (pronounced Raikhati) Jagruti Group.
For the 6th year in a row, the women’s federations of the ant have been taking over the Women’s Day celebrations bit by bit. This year, 1483 women registered and took part in 5 events in which our women raised over a lakh of rupees in contribution from the community. Apart from the awareness built about women’s equality and rights, the event has over the years, helped the federations gain in skills of planning and confidence of execution. This is also the first time after the 2012 violence that Bodo women and Bengali Muslim women in Rowmari were coming together to learn, celebrate, laugh and play. Feedback got from 100 women participants finds that 86% of the women found the quality of the speeches on women’s rights ranging from very good to excellent and almost 73% thought that the management of the event ranges from being very good to excellent (46%). It sure feels good to have the women take ownership of the programmes!

Similarly, for the past 4-5 years, from 25th November to 10th December every year, our federations have been involved in the Annual Campaign to protest Violence Against Women. This year for the first time our women wrote and enacted small plays calling for stopping violence against women and girls. It took them a lot of courage to overcome the shyness and fear of acting in the marketplace in front of their own known people!

Another major highlight of our work in organizing women is that we have now re-started our engagement with Bengali Muslim women. Hardly had the violence and tension abated that Domonti Brahma, one of our Bodo staff from Rowmari, overcoming her own fears and braving opposition from her own family and community, started reaching out to the Bengali Muslim women. Winning back their trust, she has formed 30 women’s groups and federated them. We thank Shree Raj Foundation (Mumbai) for their continued support for our women’s empowerment programme.
b. Sports for Girls’ Empowerment

Besides providing cycles to our girls, we have been supporting girls in their journey to equality. We have been supporting girls’ football and also their higher education through scholarships. Ten teams of girls have been trained in football and some of our girls even played in the District and State level teams. We are dreaming of having a

Women & their Set of Wheels!

A ‘ladiesμ cycle costs Rs.3500 but for poor families struggling for survival, and with no extra cash, it is a dream to own even this humble set of wheels. The 6 chapters of the ant’s women’s cycle bank gives cycles to women on loan which they pay back in monthly installments. Run by the women’s federations and women’s groups, it has revolved over 500 cycles and at any point of time, over 250 cycles are on loan to women. Other NGOs have been inspired to start cycle banks and we are fine tuning our cycle bank model to scale up, expand to other areas and hopefully grow the women’s cycle bank to its full potential.

Nilima Basumatary (left), Eri Silk worm cultivator; with a cycle she can travel far to fetch eri leaves for the worms; she also gets home early from the market and saves Rs. 70 a day on transportation! Habley Daimary (middle), a young widow who sells firewood in a market six kilometres away and has doubled her income to Rs 150 a day. Lina Narzary (right) of Oxiuri Village uses her cycle to fetch water; saves her 2 trips a day and she is now free from backaches!

Promoting sports among girls to build up confidence and leadership
well-trained District Level girls’ football team and hope to get support for that.

c. Scholarships for Girls

Under the Right to Education Act, education is free in Government Schools till Class 8. But from the 9th onwards, families with inadequate means struggle to meet expenses of fees, books, uniforms, as an average family has 2-3 children in High School and above. Most either sell their livestock to raise the money or take loans at high rates of interest. For many children, it is the end of their education road. With support from one individual Caring Friend, we gave scholarships of varying amounts to 191 girls last year. This was much appreciated by the poor families. This year, we are encouraging youth in the groups to set a target amount of money they might need at the end of the year for their education, and start saving this money every month. Instead of scrambling around at the end of the year when they need Rs.4000-Rs.5000, they could space it out and earn every month from doing a few days of labour work. This has resonated well with some of the youth and hopefully group pressure will enforce the much-needed financial discipline.

4. Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods

a. Organising farmers

We had planned to form 100 farmer groups with around 1500 farmers and support them to do organic farming. But organic farmers are a rare breed in our area and in our feverish zeal to push organic farming, we alienated the majority inorganic farmers! We toned down our missionary zeal and managed to organize 59 groups with 885 farmers. Even as we were training and consolidating them, the ethnic violence of 2012 disrupted our activities. We could not follow up a lot of the farmers’ groups and after a while, only 50% of the farmers’ groups we formed were active and by are still working well. Our follow up with the groups to see what is happening has been a happy revelation. 60-70% farmers, who we taught organic methods of farming such as vermi-composting, are still continuing with it. 7 out of 12 poly houses that we provided are still continuing as nurseries and are supplying quality saplings to other farmers. Of the 7 green houses we gave to the farmers, all are being used by the farmers but some are

Subiram Brahma of No. 4 Patabari learns to grow cucumber in a Green House
being used not as covered greenhouses but as semi-open nurseries in the stormy season as they run the risk of getting damaged due to the fierce winds. We provided partial support for 4 Power Tillers to farmers’ groups and of these, 3 groups are working well and money is getting revolved and they are even returning the loans. We hope this will further get revolved and more farmers will be able to get power tillers. Farmers are getting help in unpredictable weather as they are able to plough much faster and hence sow immediately. Because of the many agricultural demonstrations and farmer trainings we have carried out, vegetable production has increased e.g. production of chillies has more than doubled in many areas. We have also changed the way potato farming is done by our farmers i.e. instead of planting whole potatoes, farmers now cut the seed potato into smaller wedges and this reduces seed costs to one-third. Ginger is now grown in prepared “beds” and production has increased dramatically.

We also introduced commercial and scientific honey production and mushroom cultivation among farmer groups. Farmers we have worked with, have managed to double the production of mustard and also of paddy using the SRI method. Most of the farmers’ groups are now linked to the District Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) and they involve our farmers in various programmes – like taking them for exposure visits, agricultural meetings and trainings. Our farmers are also winning prizes at various competitions and were taken to participate in the International Farmers’ Mela in Guwahati earlier this year. We are thankful to the Ford Foundation for supporting our efforts all these years to promote livelihoods of the poor. We have formally closed down our agriculture programme, but our informal support to farmers will continue.
a. Treating Mental Illnesses

Around 1% of any population is estimated to have a serious form of mental illness for which treatment is required. Given that fact, our Chirang District though small should have around 5000 mentally ill people needing treatment and we are just reaching out to a tiny fraction of them. We continue treating around 700 patients in our monthly mental camp but of these, only 50% are from our own district. The rest come from neighbouring districts with some patients coming all the way from Guwahati and even West Bengal (!). This again highlights the huge gap that exists between the need and the availability of treatment for mental illnesses. It is a shame that people have no choice but to travel far, even coming in hired vehicles and paying for the medicines that we provide for one month. We will keep making a noise hoping that someday the government will wake up to giving mental patients quality treatment but till then, we guess there is no option but to continue with our monthly mental camps.

b. Community Mental Health Project

After dialoguing for over two years, the Community Mental Health Project (CMHP) was finally approved and it started in November 2013. Supported by the Jamshetjee Tata Trust (a
member of the Sir Dorabji Tata and Allied Trusts group), this is a part of a larger multi-partner initiative on community mental health in India. We hope to tackle both severe and common mental disorders in the community and work to prevent mental illnesses in about one lakh population in the next few years. We have Community Health Workers at the village level to identify new patients, follow up the patients already on treatment, counsel the family and through community education, reduce the stigma about mental illness. They are supported in their work by trainers and other team members. The team has been recruited and the community health workers have started their rounds of the selected villages. A rare and enthusiastic doctor from Guwahati has joined the effort to help the team twice a week to run outreach camps. For the ant, it is a challenging though interesting transition from a complete camp based treatment approach of mental illnesses to a more holistic community approach to mental health.

6. Remote Areas Development programme

a. Deosri Development

Our Deosri area is just 10 kms from the official entry gate to Bhutan at Gelengphu. Hunger, poverty, especially amongst the conflict-induced IDPs (internally displaced persons) complicated by the history of violence makes social relationships between the various communities rather difficult. The absence of government development efforts adds to a feeling of neglect. Over the years we have carried out various kinds of activities – big and
small – to help improve the situation for communities there, from organizing people to fight for their entitlements to mobilizing women's groups, to teaching small farmers new and sustainable farming methods to giving micro-loans to start businesses and to increasing mobility by loaning cycles to women etc. Though it has been 7 years since we started working in the Deosri area and tried out a range of interventions to help the people, the complexity of the situation continues to challenge our efforts. Till date, we have not had any fixed resources allocated for our Deosri work. It has been largely supported by small individual donations supplemented by contributions from the ant’s various other projects and teams. But we feel that if we are to see real results and an actual improvement in the lives of poor communities in Deosri, we need focused interventions with proper resource allocation to tackle the complex problems. Professional staff and a good team needs to work full time on some selected issues which can help improve the lives of people in such areas. Even as this goes to the press, we have just got a grant from Arpan Foundation – the US based extension of Caring Friends – to work for improving education, women’s status and also nutritional status of IDP families in Deosri. This we hope will help us push for development there.

b. Where is the water in the watershed???

After getting trained for 20 days during the month of April 2013 in Dilasa, Yavatmal (Maharashtra) – a Caring Friends partner and a truly wonderful institution - our team of 10 barefoot water engineers came back before the rains and we have taken the first steps in carrying out a small watershed project in Deosri Cluster. We are still confused about the technical details about water-harvesting and watersheds but we felt that we could also learn by doing! Then, we have the luxury of falling back on the expertise of Dilasa and other Caring Friends partners when in doubt. With support from Caring Friends, Mumbai and also with the community pitching in, we have put up 5 small check dams for storing water. We hope that the water thus stored will seep into the ground and over time, the water table in the area will rise and there will be enough water for drinking and also for farming. It is tragic but ever since we have put up the check dams before the Monsoons last year, there has hardly been any rain! With bated breath we have been waiting for the results of our first watershed effort so that we can replicate in other areas, but this is the second round of Monsoons and we have hardly had much rains again! We are missing the water in our watershed.
II. 
IDeA

1. Trainings & Building up capacity

With a mandate for strengthening the voluntary sector in the region, IDeA has been running trainings programmes of short and long durations on various issues. The programme supported by the Sir Dorabjee Tata Trust (SDTT, Mumbai) has reached out to a large number of NGOs over the past 6 years. This year, in response to the situation of ethnic conflict in Lower Assam, we did some rather interesting workshops for NGOs of Lower Assam. Apart from workshops in Trauma Management in which we had Barbara, a trauma professional from Austria volunteer as a resource person, this year we also did a workshop on Pluralism, Peace and Justice which was organized along with Aman Biradri in which Harsh Mandar and Ram Puniyani along with Prof. Monirul Hussain were present. Then, in order to prepare NGOs of Lower Assam for future emergencies, we partnered with Doctors For You to carry out a 3 days Disaster Preparedness Training where we came up with a Common Rapid Assessment Format and also locally relevant and adapted guidelines for dealing with emergencies.

Through the “Long Courses”, we worked with over 50 NGOs in different parts of Assam and now have partner NGOs in almost every region. When the SDTT Project got over in September 2013, these organizations who completed the long training decided to come together as a forum. Calling themselves ‘Forum for Voluntary Sector of Assam’ (FVSA) which was formed on the 8th of October 2013, their first meeting was held at Chabua in Dibrugarh District. The General meeting will be held twice a year. A Resource Group comprising of four members has been formed that shall meet four times a year and visit different organisations to see their work, help them with challenges they face, and to support them with technical inputs. They have selected a volunteer as a Convenor – from amongst themselves – who will be changed every year. This is exciting as the NGOs are taking charge to support and help each other in their journey at a time when the grant from SDTT for IDeA came to an end.

2. Research by IDeA

(i) Following our research on malnutrition last year, IDeA is currently carrying out a Project on “Action On Reducing Child Malnutrition Through Intervention In Children Of Tea Estate Labourers In Dibrugarh District Assam”. This study is conducted through two partner organisations of IDeA i.e. Prastuti in Chabua and
Rural Development Organisation in Naharkatia, both based in Dibrugarh District of Assam. In March, we have just started with the Initial Training for Volunteers and Supervisors and the Project will carry forward till the coming year. We hope to be able to change feeding behaviors in order to reduce Malnutrition amongst children in their most formative years of 0 to 2 years.

(ii) A Maternal Death Review (MDR) Training was conducted at IDeA for 12 organisations selected across the 5 batches of the long course of IDeA on the 27th – 29th June, 2013. The training was facilitated by Dr. Subhasri from Common Health. The organisations trained at IDeA have carried out Verbal Autopsy since August 2013 and these stories have been consolidated by Commonhealth (www.commonhealth.in) in their report ‘Dead Women Speak’.

3. Northeast NGO Support

The ant continues to be the northeast face of Caring Friends (CF) in reaching out to even financially support the work of deserving individuals and NGOs in the Northeast. Last year, we reached out to:

(i) Mr. Munin Dutta who founded Prastuti - a long term partner NGO in general area of Chabua in Assam – in helping him and his organisation to work for “Mainstreaming of drop out children to schools in three tea garden areas of Chabua”.

(ii) Eleutheros Christian Society in Tuensang in Northeast Nagaland, close to the Myanmar border for commencing the “Construction of a wooden bridge of 40 feet span” that may cut the distance for their Orange farmers to reach the market in Assam by over two hours besides reducing fuel costs and carbon footprint. The bridge is likely to be completed by June.

(iii) Ka Synjuk Ki HimaArliang-Wah Umiam Mawphlang Welfare Society, run by Mr. Tambor Lyngdoh, who have a tiny grant to handle their basic running expenses in reviving the “Sacred Groves” as part of the “Protection and Conservation of Community Forests” in Mawphlang, East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya.

(iv) Sanatan Unnayan Sangstha, another long term partner NGO that has Ashok Nath heading it - as a man ‘possessed’ – for a small project on bringing Safe drinking water to Chencoorie Tea Estate area of Cachar District in the Barak Valley of Assam.

In April 2014, Nimeshbhai of CF will be travelling on one of his “soul trips”, this time to the northeast and we hope to travel to Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland and Manipur to interact with a number of groups on the ground. With Caring Friends committed to supporting the good work done by small and deserving NGOs, this will surely strengthen the hands of the voluntary sector in the northeast region.
Aagor reached sales of Rs. 98.5 lakhs this year, just Rs.1.5 lakhs short of one crore. The team pulled and pushed real hard but could not make it cross the morale boosting Rs. 1 crore sales finishing line! Of this, around 28 lakhs have gone as weaver wages. They have returned part of their loans and also reduced to half the amount they owe as cash credit to the bank. On the small piece of land near the highway which aagor purchased last year, they have now started a new retail store. With support from Bongaigaon Refinery, aagor was able to build a small retail centre. This attractive store located right next to the road is open till 7 p.m. and has started attracting many more customers from in and around Bongaigaon, and crossing the One Lakh Rupees sales a month target.
IV.
The Ants Bangalore Store

In order to grow the business, The Ants Craft Trust is poised to metamorphosise into a company – the “The Ants Craft Private Limited”. With bank credit being really expensive and difficult to obtain, we hope to attract venture capital that is needed to grow the Trust’s scale of operation and with it, its idea of acting as the engine of growth for yet smaller organisations serving the northeast and other tribal regions. This year, the store saw a 22% growth in wholesale business with a total turnover of over 1.85 crores rupees and a five percent surplus. It also had an exponential growth in export orders mainly from Europe and USA. The retail and café business has been more or less the same as last year with a marginal growth in café business. Its main focus this year will be to identify the problem areas in the retail business with the help of experts and address these areas, so that it can replicate its success.

This year the store also launched its own online sales website www.theantsstore.com and is open for e-commerce. The store works with 15 to 20 dedicated suppliers from the NE for its retail sales. It also has 27 other fair trade suppliers from outside the northeast but these are largely on consignment basis. The Ants Craft Trust has been a Member of Network organization Fair Trade Forum-India (FTFI) since 2009. The CEO of The Ants Craft Trust is on the FTFI Executive committee of the National Network FTFI since 2012. TACT has also been recognized at the global level of Fair Trade Fraternity since 2010 as being an active member of World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO). It is now gearing up for The WFTO Guarantee System (GS), which is a revolutionary Fair Trade system that is credible, simple, and sustainable. Especially designed for small producers like us, it hopes to meet the ever growing demand for a more trustworthy Fair Trade recognition scheme in the international market.
Heartfelt Thanks:

OUR GRANT-MAKING ORGANISATIONS

The Ford Foundation for your support this past decade. We will always remember your role in the ant’s founding and growing years.

DKA, Austria for the care and quick response. THANK YOU.

Mercy Corps for stepping in to support not just during the Emergency but also after to help people move on in life.

Jamshetjee Tata Trust for helping us communitise mental health.

Arpan Foundation for being there to support us in our Deosri work.

NFI for helping us take action to improve nutrition of children in tea gardens of Assam.

. . . And every donor of Caring Friends! Your care and ever ready support remains our strength.

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