



**the ant**

the action northeast trust

# 19

Annual Report  
2019 – 2020



While we share the report with you in 2020, a year of tumultuous happenings, we see 2019-20 very fondly. We recognize it as a year of stabilization and consolidation in the ant that allowed the Board to take a decision to authorize a transition in the executive.

In October last year at Siloam in Umiam (Meghalaya), all project coordinators and their deputies sat together to list out a set of criteria to select the new Executive Director of the ant. The Board of Trustees requested Gita, Angela and Netaji from amongst them to decide on the next ED. Consequently, a call for applications was made in November 2019 and more than 150 applications were vetted. Based on the CVs, 6 names that were on the consensual list of the 3 trustees were then interviewed on Skype. Ms Pranami Garg who made it to the top of the list was then invited to the campus for 5 days where she went to the field, saw the projects and also interacted with the staff. At the end of this process, she has been selected as the next Executive Director and has agreed to the appointment and move back to Assam. A post graduate from Gauhati University, she has more than 17 years of programmatic and administrative experience with the social sector of which a majority of her years have been spent with children's programmes. She will





join as an ED designate and would take over all responsibilities as the Executive Director from sunil after 3 months.

Children's projects have continued to be the mainstay of our programme. 2 programmes have got an extension for another 3 years. Our largest education project, LEAP will reach out to 12 school clusters and 140 odd Govt schools while the Project against Domestic Violence – AVAHAN – has also grown and we shall test the model in 2 other districts with NGO partners. **the ant** has grown in size and we have got used to systems that are needed to grow to handle larger Grants and Donations, which in turn means more staff and administration to help more people and institutions.

2020 has brought in a lot of uncertainty thanks to the teeny-weeny virus and because of the decisions that the authorities have taken. As residential training sessions have plummeted, it has got difficult to fund the campus admin staff. However, except for one odd staff member, we have decided to cushion the shock on some of the admin staff by requesting specific donors to support the salary of some of them. The coming year will

see bigger projects coming up with part-time and full-time staff size going upto 170 and the monthly salary bill rising to ₹ 2 million!

Yet, as we grow we do understand that **the ant** has to keep improving the quality of its work as many look up to us to show the way. With a younger leadership at the helm, we and the people of the region have much to hope from **the ant**'s future.

Even though it is not easy to hope in the times of CoViD, we are certain that the pages which follow shall please you. So read on . . .



# COLOURING THE RAINBOW



Colouring the Rainbow picked up from where the previous Sports for Development program had left but added specific emphasis on the Ultimate Frisbee and on inclusion of the differently abled. The project has already opened up avenues to engage the youth of different communities via Ultimate Frisbee. Our sessions with parents and community have enabled them to procure play areas for children, in allocating time for weekly sessions and in addressing the pertinent issues of the villages. The children who are a part of the S4D groups learn about their rights and responsibilities through games and discussions. Their teachers report an improved attendance at school. In a society still stalked by child marriages several girls have found their voice of resistance!

## Frisbee Tournaments

Four Ultimate Frisbee tournaments were held as qualifiers for the Ultimate Frisbee National Tournament in Bangalore. Over 800 players from different part of Chirang



across religions, linguistic groups and communities took part in it. Among the four tournaments one was an all girls tournament which saw 33 teams. The best performers of the cluster level tournaments competed in the Regional tournament at Rowmari.

Manickam Narayanan, President of the Ultimate Players Association of India (UPAI: [www.indiaultimate.org](http://www.indiaultimate.org)), has been taking personal interest and guided our staff prior to the tournament in tallying spirit scores. His was a supportive presence during the regional tournament as well. From the 11 teams that competed, Daugasar from Patabari booked their place at the National tournament in Bangalore!

The cluster tournaments were noted for the regular presence and support of the villagers. The community contributed by setting up kitchens, serving hot and healthy lunch and were always ready with an extra helping. The players made sure that they avoided plastic plates and cups by bringing their own utensils and contributing in keeping the tournaments green.

Rainbow Frisbee (reported as Most Ultimate Frisbee in the last report) groups with not just gender parity, but also at least 3 religions and 3 linguistic communities, took time to be formed as old areas had to be left and new areas were chosen where such communities were staying closeby, so that children didnt have to travel too far. Such team members were trained in the rules of Ultimate Frisbee and then given frisbees to form Frisbee groups in their own villages so that they can play and hone their skills through the week. Our staff calls them Manoranjan (or entertainment) Frisbee groups!







## Disability

The erstwhile Sports for Development project staff were in a fix – how do they engage with differently abled children and the societal response to disability? Invoking dignity in the face of patronising attitudes and derogatory comments was the challenge the team rolled up their sleeves to. As the language of rights disseminated to the veins of society, early signs of inclusion surfaced - differently abled children being escorted from home to the field and back by their peers, their confident participation in the Frisbee tournaments and their parents expressing their gratitude as they got aware of the rights of their children.

Under this project funded by DKA, Austria and individual donations coming through Arpan Foundation, USA, we also hired the first “overtly” differently-abled staff member who is wheelchair-bound and he also brought to fore our own shortcomings in dealing with PwDs sensitively. He led the initiative and not only made sure that others develop empathy with the “divyangjan”, but also liaised with the Social Welfare Department in getting Disability Certificates for people of our district and also hearing aids for the hearing impaired and mobility aids for locomotor disability!

- COVERED 1562 CHILDREN (794 GIRLS & 768 BOYS) AND 1524 YOUTH (722 GIRLS & 802 BOYS)
- SAFE PLAY SPACES CREATED – 89 • CHILDREN'S GROUPS CONTINUING S4D – 56
- RAINBOW (MOST ULTIMATE) FRISBEE TEAMS 2 33 • MANORANJAN FRISBEE GROUPS AT VILLAGE LEVEL – 42
- DISTRIBUTED DISABILITY CERTIFICATES – 44
- ARRANGED PENSIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY (PWD) – 10

# LEARNING ECO-SYSTEM AUGMENTATION PROJECT (LEAP)



The school bell rings and the students get seated in a horseshoe - shaped semi-circle. They engage with one another in groups – their peers of the same learning levels (not necessarily of their age-wise classes) – and even individually during the course of the day. The Govt school teacher supported by the Education Facilitator of **the ant** ensures the longevity of the learning atmosphere by assuring participatory dissemination and development of knowledge. The Quality Learning Initiative (QLI) utilises the support of Education Trainers and Facilitators from India Education Collective – as our own staff is yet not proficient in Education training – and is gaining popular support amongst the teachers from hundred-odd Primary schools of 10 educational clusters where we intervene in Chirang district with support from Childaid Network, Germany.

The team also conducts quarterly training sessions for Science and Maths teachers of 16 Middle schools on science and mathematics to upgrade their skills for teaching these “difficult” subjects with practical methods.

*The science mela*



The teachers collectives also helped in analysing the status of the process. The initial days of the collectives witnessed dwindling participation and hesitation among the teachers. The hard work and belief of our staff in the alternative learning philosophy managed to convince them.

Our education facilitators also made sure that extracurricular activities are a part of the children's learning years. In middle schools, children learnt about their constitutional rights and responsibilities in sessions to help become conscious citizens. The facilitators also assisted the teachers with the science practicals in middle schools and conduct science fairs where students exhibited their models based on science concepts they had learnt in the class. The best projects later competed at the district level where the Govt functionaries praised the initiative and gave away the prizes to encourage the teachers and students.

*Mural art in schools*







Top left: Open library. Top right: Recreation session. Bottom: Morning assembly.

The project is poised to make inroads into the impassable forest terrains bordering Bhutan where the prospect of quality education is as murky as the swampy paths during annual monsoons. With identification of around 400 children who either walk long distances to attend school or are forced to stay away from parents or have not been to school at all, the project is to start a Model Learning Centre in Khorairbari and many Forest Learning Centres in Khungring forest areas. Under a BMZ (the development agency of the German Government) and Childaid Network Germany funded project the new fiscal year will see the expansion and confirmation of our LEAP project. Remedial Learning Centres are also to be set up in Shantipur and Deosiri clusters under the project adding to the outreach of our efforts in the region. Caring Friends partner, Shree Raj Foundation has granted us financial help to add some educational infrastructure in the forest areas that get covered next year and to repair schools that for long have not been able to repair their windows, floors, roofs or furniture.

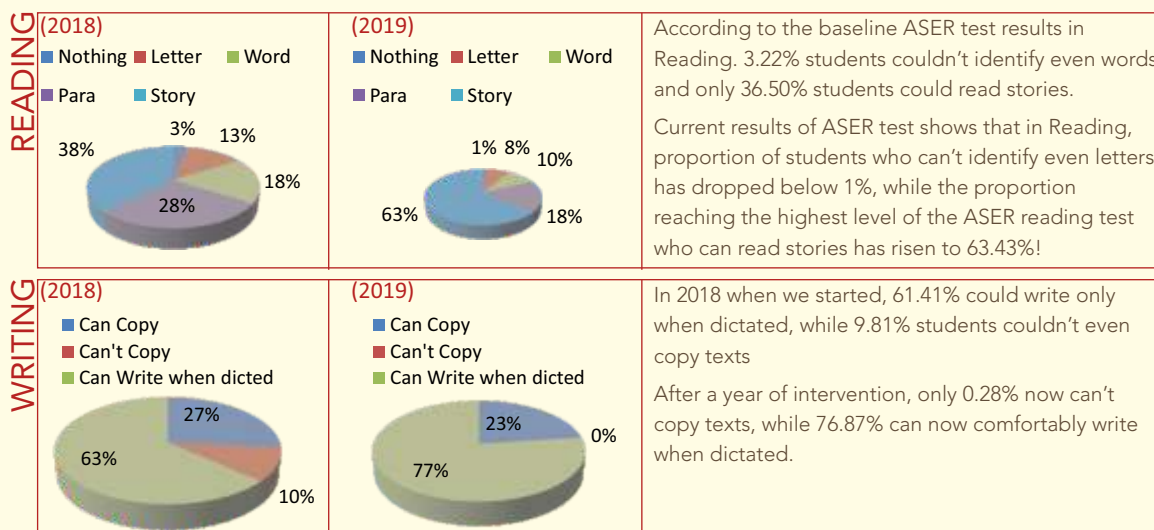
- IMPROVING LEARNING LEVELS OF 1794 STUDENTS OF 11 MIDDLE SCHOOLS (16 SECTIONS IF WE COUNT ASSAMESE AND BODO LANGUAGE SCHOOLS) WITH 19 SCIENCE AND 25 MATHS TEACHERS INVOLVED.
- IMPROVING LEARNING LEVELS OF 2444 STUDENTS THROUGH 184 TEACHERS OF 106 LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS (123 SECTIONS).

At Dolphin we try to inspire teachers to traverse beyond textbooks in developing conscious citizens who are aware of their rights and contribute positively to the society. As earlier reported, this TDH Germany-funded project – with funds from BMZ (Govt of Germany) - that is located in two VDCs of Bengtol area is part of a larger 4 NGO project that enhances child rights in conflict prone areas.

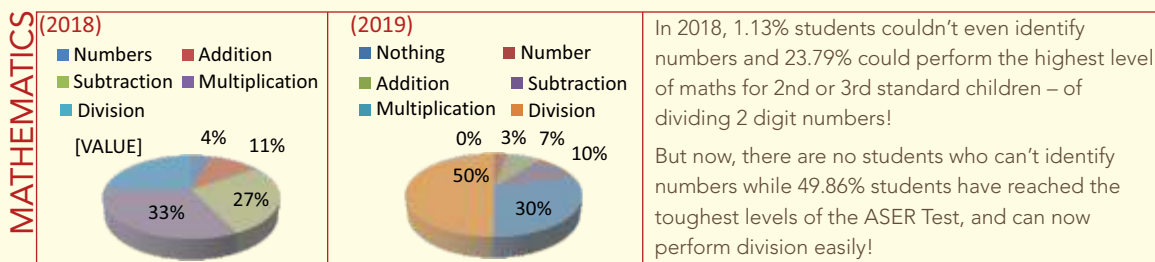
Assimilation of our methods is crucial to the sustainability of the process and so did Ranisundari LPS and Bandugiri LP School (Venture) showed the way. The former now has weekly cultural programs while the latter has banned plastics in the school premises. In 5 of our intervention schools children have started savings and are practising judicial spending of their savings. The savings are from Rs 1 to Rs 10 every week and children also use passbooks for reference. The intervention schools conduct daily assemblies and prioritize cleanliness. Meljol, Mumbai is our consulting partner for training our staff on social & financial programme, nicknamed Aflatoun.

Our staff teach in two schools each with methods that are joyous and participatory. If the proof of the pudding is in the eating, here are the results based on Pratham's ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) methodology.

## ASER Results







While many youth imbibe pride in their own culture and traditions, they need to recognise that all communities have the same right to feel proud and hence the team focused on folk traditions of the region to prevent conflict later. This has charmed 36 youth from Bodo and Santhal communities to initiate, revive and sustain their traditional art forms. Most of them had no prior experience, but now practise on a weekly basis, challenge the existing conventions and try to democratise the cultural space. One is left with no choice but to tap one's feet to the beats of the dhol or kham as its known (the drum traditionally played by boys) which is now played by Bodo girls accompanied by the serja (a kind of fiddle) and sifung (the Bodo flute) and to sway with the steps of the Santhal dancers.

Youth from Chirang are also part of the Assam Youth Network where they engage with peers from neighbouring districts, discussing and sharing ideas to address and resolve issues endemic to their regions. They have attended 2 Workshops as a part of the

*Recreation session.*





Top: Bodo cultural troupe. Bottom: Santhal cultural troupe

network, where they review their work, attend socially relevant sessions and make action plans till they meet next. They also experimented with the Samvidhan Box – developed by COMMUTINY in Delhi which is akin to a Board game that helps youth learn about their constitutional rights and duties.

The last year saw the formation of Youth Parliament in Bengtol. Representatives were elected under Education, Environment, Sports and Culture ministries. They took the lead in organising the local Fridays For Future campaign and raising awareness against excessive mobile phone use among youth.

From children, youth and schools, our work on child rights extends to strengthening the local village institutions. The team has successfully initiated School Management Committee (SMC) dialogues in all the intervention schools, which otherwise hardly meet





Left top: Poster display during Fridays For Future event. Left bottom: Aflatoun hand signal. Right top: Women's Day Celebration. Right middle: Oath taking by youth against drug abuse and child marriage. Right bottom: School session.

or discuss. The team was instrumental in the formation of 11 Village Level Child Protection Committees (VLCPCs) also, and in training them about their roles and responsibilities. Though common elsewhere, this initiative is the first of its kind in Chirang.

- 21 SCHOOLS - 1121 STUDENTS • 18 YOUTH GROUPS WITH 242 YOUTH (121 BOYS & 121 GIRLS)
- 10 YOUTH (5 BOYS & 5 GIRLS) FROM BENGTOLE WENT ON AN EXPOSURE VISIT TO DIMAPUR, NAGALAND
- CAREER COUNSELLING WAS HELD WITH 80 STUDENTS (46 BOYS AND 34 GIRLS) OF CLASS 10TH.
- LIVELIHOOD TRAINING ON POULTRY REARING WAS HELD FOR 17 YOUTH (10 BOYS & 7 GIRLS)

# SHIKSHA



In the delicate rays of the evening sun, the study centres of Kuklung & Deosiri forest fringe areas come to life with the bustling din of children rushing to secure their places in the classrooms. The lessons on literacy and numeracy are held from 3pm to 4pm as per the lesson plans developed by the teachers, who assure the maintenance of a joyful learning atmosphere. Focusing on laying and strengthening a strong foundation of numeracy and literacy prepares them for higher classes and for their daily life. The next one hour is dedicated to an amusing assortment of traditional and modern games, or if raining, with art or indoor games. The children bask themselves in the setting sun playing Frisbee, Kabaddi, Kho Kho, Khikor etc.

What started as evening centres where parents wanted us to provide child-minders to ensure that children could study or complete homework in the evening – as they were unable to ensure an environment to do so, and the children would while away the evening fishing or bird hunting – the project has come a long way. We have trained the 'child minders' to 'learning facilitators' who can make teaching-learning materials, teach more joyfully and lead the children more effectively. Funded fully by Caring Friends and its US counterpart, Arpan Foundation, the Child Development Centres (CDCs) and Middle Education Support Centres (MESCs) are now like Remedial Learning Centres, and parents in many places help in monitoring the attendance and often the quality of learning in the centres. The project also helps provide teacher assistants to schools in the area where teachers are deficient.

Since last year, we have also provided the parents of one of the day-time schools (in Khoraihari, where the Govt has not opened any school as yet – for more than a !00 children) goats to breed where the villagers pay back one of the two goats that are born every 6 months to pay for the teachers' salaries or the upkeep of the school. All with support of the Sobotis from Singapore!

• CDCs - 24 • MESCs - 4 • NO OF CHILDREN: 1143



# GIRL ICON

“The trees won’t bear fruits and perhaps die if you climb the trees; the doors of temples are closed at you during ‘periods’; pickles, bananas & eggs are a no no and don’t even think of washing your hair while you bleed.” Because you’re bad luck, because you are impure, because you are going to bleed buckets, because your periods are going to be delayed or that’s a full stop! Thus begins the mutilation of women’s dignity and the eternal baggage of embarrassment – their bodies right when they step into adolescence. As part of a project in collaboration with the originators of the idea, Milaan Foundation and financially backed by kfb, Austria – 38 determined girls, our Girl Icons in Chirang and in Udalguri district spear-headed an initiative in busting these myths to help their bodies and to promote healthy menstrual practices.

The decision to do so resulted from an urge to share the learning of their residential training with their peers who share the same plight. Most of the schools welcomed the initiative and provided the necessary support. Initiating a conversation in a society stuck in time and marred with awkwardness around menstruation, helped to break the silence

*Peer meeting.*





*Social Action Project on Menstrual Health & Hygiene*

and most importantly, helped to address the neglected rights of a girl to decent sanitation. They discussed menstruation loud and clear. They involved the boys too in a couple of schools and demonstrated the use of sanitary napkins and stressed the need to shift to reusable cloth pads and menstruation cups as the latter are eco-friendly.

The icons are aware of proper disposal of sanitary pads, and have started to dry their cloth pads properly and to track their cycles. Some schools also cooperated in their endeavour and made arrangements for appropriate disposal of pads and to ensure the hygiene in washrooms.

While this was part of their Social Action Project which was the highlight of the program this year, the girls also underwent 2 residential training events. The training helps the Girl Icons to design the topics for the peer meetings and fine tune the girls for the sessions. The trainings are a perfect assortment of learning and fun. While the sessions are largely on leadership building, gender, ethics & values, communication skills, rights, relationships and so on, there are hands-on sessions on art and craft as well. The evenings vibrate with songs, dance, special day observations or movie screenings.

- ICONS – 38 (THOUGH WE STARTED WITH 55, THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT DROP-OUT)
- PEER ICONS WHO THE ICONS FURTHER MOTIVATE AND TRAIN – 600



Three years of AVAHAN have seen a struggle against the historically perpetuating unequal gender dynamics (of the region) that put individuals into two strict categories denying them their freedom. The longer they live in these tightly wound binaries, the greater is the violence that they perpetuate. The efforts of the AVAHAN team were to stop the violence by exposing the injustice in the dynamics.

If wives were beaten up in public, the society would intervene only if she was seriously injured. Even then the local bodies, dominated largely by men fared insensitively. Domestic violence was not even recognised by women as an issue that needs public attention. But these three years have created a kernel of revolution in the district. Women have not only started reporting violence faced at home, they are now able to differentiate the various kinds of it also – physical, mental, financial, emotional, sexual as mentioned in the Act.

71% of participants from Village organisations and response groups in our end-line survey now agreed that husbands can't beat their wives. It was also reported that the techniques taught in our stress management sessions were used by men and are helping families to prevent escalation of potential situations. Our work with local village bodies and police has

*Women for equality in Deosri – Women's Day 2020.*



also helped in more empathetic reactions towards the victim. Women coming forward to raise their voice against Domestic Violence have been one of the promising changes in the 3 years. The team has reported that men are now aware of the seriousness of the act, are afraid of the law and are now being questioned publicly. The team was successful in unearthing some of the chief triggers of Domestic Violence of the region namely dowry, gambling, alcoholism, pornography, polygamy, and the reluctance to use contraception.

The cornerstone of the model's success is the relentless input of our staff at times of crisis in the field. Empathy and flexibility were the need of the hour and our staff responded with both while changing strategy or in altering plans to suit the context. From decisions to carry

*School session on Gender & Equality – M.E. School, Deosri.*







*DC Chirang addressing the key leaders on Domestic Violence Campaign.*

out family counselling instead of individual counselling of the victim, or to do monthly meetings instead of meeting Response Groups – village level groups of men and women motivated and under oath to intervene in Domestic Violence – once in three months and suggestions to engage more with men and youth – all were invaluable in improving gender relations in the region. The team could provide counselling and legal support to the victim, which wasn't easily accessible before AVAHAN. The efforts have also paved way to the reporting of the often silenced cases of Sexual Violence.

Love being a contested term was often used as a misnomer to legitimize violence and now women can identify the two as separate entities. "We have learnt to call a spade a spade," replied one of the team members when asked about the impact of the project. With the learnings from the three years, **the ant** plans to use the next phase of the grant from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives to further gender justice by addressing concerns on sexual & reproductive health, by strengthening the local Response Groups to address and reduce Domestic Violence and to help replicate the model beyond Chirang (in Cachar & Bongaigaon districts) in the coming years.

- BASELINE: MORE THAN 50% WOMEN OF A SYSTEMATICALLY SELECTED SAMPLE OF RURAL WOMEN IN CHIRANG DISTRICT REPORTED BEING PHYSICALLY BEATEN IN THE PAST ONE YEAR • CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORTED IN 3 YEARS - 383 OF WHICH 189 CASES HAD DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY IN REPORTING, SOMETHING THAT WOULD EARLIER BE UNHEARD OF • LEGAL COUNSELLING TO 139 SURVIVORS • LIVELIHOODS SUPPORT TO 19 SURVIVORS • 89% OF THE REPORTED CASES ARE OF PHYSICAL ABUSE WITH OR WITHOUT MENTAL TORTURE AND ECONOMIC VIOLENCE • 27 FAMILIES WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORTED OF ZERO VIOLENCE IN THE PAST 1.5 YEARS



# MENTAL HEALTH



It's during broad daylight that phantoms roaming the eerie corners of society unveil their ominous presence through the mortals haunted by them. While collecting case histories or during counselling sessions, the cause of most of the cases leads us to deep-rooted and diabolical social structures. One might heal the patient but the phantoms still lurk in the air that we breathe, unaffected.

From a society hesitant to receive pamphlets on mental health awareness fearing the "disease" to jump from the pages to the reader, to referring persons with mental health issues to ~~the ant~~, the community at least in Chirang has come a long way in handling the situation. Thanks to the strong foundations laid during the early years of sensitisation via street plays and mimes, says Rufala (store manager) and Sonima (data entry incharge), we don't have to reduce stigma now.

Apart from the outreach camps and central camps, the team also conducts home visits of patients who can't attend the camp due to financial or personal reasons. The team realises that in certain cases, the family or the guardians of the patient are in need of counselling more than the patient does. Sometimes it's also the case that the patients or the guardians vent their anger and frustration at the staff. Counselling and follow ups via phone remains unattended or are at times met with utter disrespect. The challenges are myriad but the visible impacts of the effort in the lives of people in leading a better life motivate the team manifold.





Opposite page and this page: At the Central Camp at Udangshri Dera.

The model that this initiative has established has run without a loss for 4 years now and it has been unfunded by anyone but the patients themselves at an average humble rate of Rs 10 a day or 300 a month that pays for their medicines, consultation, counselling and also blessings from the few patients who can't pay for themselves. The same model has now spread to 10 other districts and 800 more patients in Assam through 9 other NGO partners.

*Corona? No issues: The mental health team was sorting files of patients and arranging medicines, preparing for the Central Camp like any regular day at Udangshri Dera – the HQ campus of the ant – even amidst the CoViD -19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown that followed. While the rest of the projects came to a standstill with the looming uncertainty, the team synonymised normalcy. Threats, concerns and resistance from their villages and family didn't wane their commitment to the people. They did not miss a single camp, travelling to the outreach camps with proper safety measures and catering to the patients who turned up for their monthly medicines also lifted briefly the emaciated spirits of the ants. The Civil Society magazine did well to highlight their efforts.*

- TOTALLY TREATED SINCE 2007 – 6937 PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISORDERS
- TOTAL MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS CONTINUING TREATMENT -1213 • COMMON MENTAL DISORDERS - 45
- SEVERE MENTAL DISORDERS- 761 • SEIZURES – 407

# IDeA 2.0



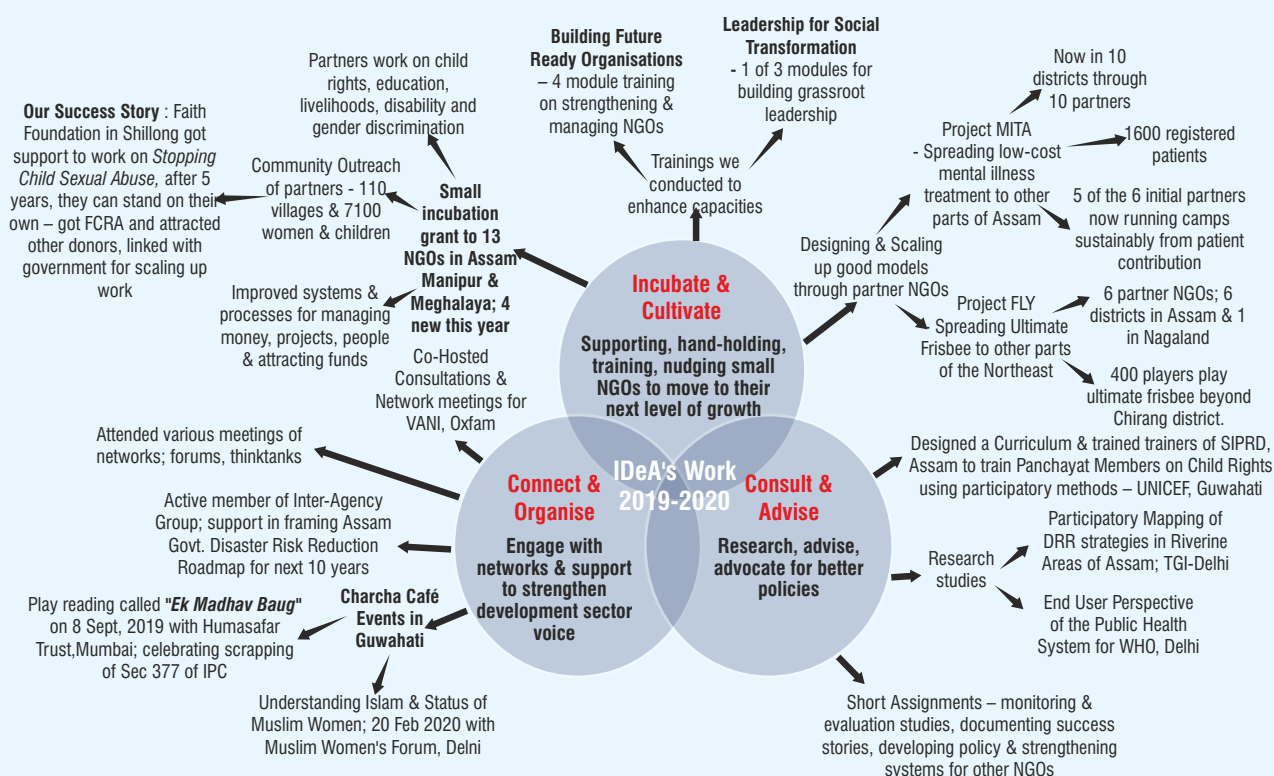
Mandated by ~~the ant~~ to help in building a vibrant development sector in the northeast region, IDeA which began in 2007 got a second avatar when its office shifted to Guwahati in March 2018. Having just completed its second year in Guwahati, it has made good progress.

This page – Below: *Inside NE – Education Fair-cum-Exhibition for Children*. Bottom: *Inside NE – Children engaging in learning through play activity in Shom-In*. Opposite page – Top: *Charcha Cafe on Understanding Islam and Status of Women*. Middle left: *Sanjog mushroom cultivation after receiving training and inputs from Sanjog*. Middle right: *MITA Handbook inauguration @ MITA Annual Meeting April 2019*. Bottom: *TGI-Participatory research using PRA in Char areas of Bongaigoan*.









Most importantly, we have built a great team! 7 professionals with development training and experience ranging from two years to over two decades work together in the Guwahati office. Driven by a passion to excel, the team has been able to balance the past year with a huge load of hard work along with excitement and fun in doing their work. We hand-held 8 interns to have an enriching learning journey with IDeA.

Guided by a 3C Strategy – in the past year, IDeA has supported, guided, trained and hand-held individuals and organisations in the development space to better the good work that they have been doing. Even as the world is being redefined by Covid-19, the team is gearing up for the challenges ahead and its impact on voluntary work and the voluntary sector. So, while celebrating its work of last year, the IDeA team looks forward to the many new challenges and learnings that are being thrown at it in the year ahead, despite the CoViD threat.



# TRUSTEES' MEET & RETREAT

A break from the everyday work setting to retrospect and improve the working dynamics of the organisation, and come back re-charged is what retreats are all about. This time, at Siloam, Meghalaya, the retreat was coupled with the half-yearly Trustees' Meeting. Making it the first trustees' meeting of **the ant** where the discussions and dialogues extended to the second layer of leadership.

From breakfast to dinner and beyond, **the ants** were engaged in both indoor and outdoor team building activities, leadership analysis and cultural programmes. In between the exercises on brainstorming to improve the efficiency of the grassroots work the team also found time to explore the area despite the intermitted rains.

It was there that **the ants** were informed about the imminent retirement plan of the executive director. Despite the initial surprise, the team sketched out their expectations and visions for the future of the organisation and also helped the Founders and trustees get an idea of what kind of leader that they would like as a replacement.

Below left and right: *Team building activities.* Bottom: *Group photograph of trustees.*





# ANNUAL MEET & FAMILY DAY

From the Brahmaputra plains, crossing the Teesta River, **the ants** climbed the hill tops of Sikkim to celebrate the 19th anniversary of a shared vision "A peaceful world where there is love, respect and dignity for all". Together **the ants** revisited their 19 years trail, came back with greater bonds of togetherness as music, dance, colours and ever wider smiles reverberated. Rejuvenated and focused for the miles ahead!!

On 7th January, **the ants** came together for a picnic by the banks of the river Aie to celebrate Family Day. Our staff from Chirang, Udalguri and Guwahati along with their families celebrated the day with incessant exuberance.









# IAS TRAINEES' VISIT

**the ant** is frequented by interns, volunteers, friends and guests whose perspectives and suggestions guide us in our endeavours. Unlike the yesteryears, **the ant** this year was visited by a group of 18 IAS trainees for an NGO exposure. Udangshri Dera became the seat of the confluence of two different approaches towards a common goal. With field visits and discussions, the nuances of grassroots work and role of NGOs were shared with the trainees while **the ants** got a peek into the relevance of a top-down approach especially in terms of policy making. The event left a strong message of the abundance of talent and qualification in the social sector and the need to complement one another on the road to social progress.





# the ant-NERSWN-JSIA CERTIFICATE IN BORDER STUDIES PROGRAMME



10 JSIA (Jindal School of International Affairs) students of JGU (Jindal Global University) underwent a 4-week credited Winter Internship and Field Placement via the Certificate Programme in Border Studies (CPBS). **the ant** has co-developed an immersion program along with NERSWN (Kokrajhar) and Jindal School of International Affairs. They were placed in locations along the Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Bhutan borders to understand international socioeconomic and cultural relations at the community level. Among these, 5 students were placed in the field area of **the ant**, bordering Bhutan. Students also spent 3 days in Gelephu, South Bhutan where they interacted with some key institutions and people as part of the pre-placement orientation program. They also successfully carried out a health and education survey for **the ant**.

## Solar Street Lights

Last year, Youth Volunteers Organisation, Mumbai had funded a large 40 KVA Silent Generator to take care of the entire campus's electricity needs during frequent breakdowns – in the six-month long monsoons the breakdowns are for 16 hours a day most days of the week! – they had also given us funds to fence the campus and for Solar Street Lights that could prevent us from stepping on snakes or frogs while walking in the dark. But we couldn't install the solar street lights until this year and now most parts of the campus are well-lit throughout the night thanks to the All in One Solar Street lights that has the solar plate crowning the LED lamps-case and switches on and off automatically at sunset and sunrise.

*Other tidbits: We now have a new-look website and much of the information has been updated – so readers, please visit [www.theant.org](http://www.theant.org) and give us your honest feedback.*

*We are also developing a mobile/tablet-based app for the Mental Health programme*

that now stretches across ten districts. It will help us eliminate paper and file records, help us locate old case records in a jiffy and also help us analyse patient data that can be of immense use in health research in the region.

Stop-Press: Ms Pranami Garg has been appointed the Executive Director – .designate and shall shortly take over charge of the operations of **the ant** in Chirang district. Hailing from Assam, Pranami is a post graduate with an administrative background and has worked with various children projects and organisations in different parts of the country.

## CoVid-19 and **the ant**

It was mid March when the spectre of the pandemic began to grip the country and the prospect of a lockdown was right around the corner. Across Chirang people woke up to phone calls of their dear ones, concerned if they drank black tea. “Black tea if consumed before sunrise prevents CoVid-19” was the fake news that circulated at mid-night and kept some of the staff also awake.

We at **the ant** made sure every one of **the ants** were aware of the disease and the precautions. We quickly distributed pamphlets and made announcements in our field areas spreading the word. An urgent meeting was called upon to decide the role of the organisation during the lockdown. Though the projects came to a standstill we tried to make sure that economically disenfranchised didn’t starve. We extend our gratitude to all the benevolent hands that supported us in this effort.



We gratefully acknowledge utilising funds from the following grants/donations in 2019-20:

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Donations made to the ant are exempt from Income Tax under Section 80G of the IT Act. Cheque/DD in the name of "the ant", payable at Bongaigaon may be sent to the ant, Udangsi Dera, Village Rowmari, PO Khagrabari, District Chirang via Bongaigaon, BTAD, Assam 783 380 India. For RTGS / online transfer of donations / endowments by Indian citizens and corporate entities to our Punjab National Bank account number 1201000100106170, please use the IFSC Code of PUNB0120100. We are eligible to receive foreign contributions but foreign citizens (including Indians with foreign citizenship) and foreign organisations may please write to us before donating to us to comply with Government of India procedures.

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**Admin** – Anjuli Brahma, Jabsri Islary, Jaiklong Basumatary, Mangal Brahma, Naren Basumatary, Nirila Brahma, Ulupi Biswas, Upama Brahma.

**Avahan** – Anil Muchahary, Anjali Basumatary, Anjali Biswas, Asghar Ali, Damayanti Brahma, Dilip Kr. Ray, Fala Khatun, Hasina Ahmed, Hasina Khatun, Laxmi Chetri, Leena Borgoyari, Mainao Basumatary, Passang Lama, Pinakshi Baishyab, Sankar Dev Basumatary, Sattar Ali Ahmad.

**Colouring The Rainbow** – Abdul Hussain Mandal, Anjalu Basumatary Baburam Mardi, Bijir Daimary, Biswajit Goyary, Himani Patgiri, Isahak Narzary, Kabita Narzary, Kwmdwn Basumatary, Mahananda Koch, Mirosh Narzary, Nani Bhagat, Nayan Muchahary, Parmeswar Roy, Rajib Brahma, Rina Rani Brahma, Salman Ali, Soleman Ali.

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**GIF** – Daffodil Basumatary, Haina Hajwary, Purnima Basumatary, Ranjita Basumatary, Rina Boro

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**the ant**

the action northeast trust

Udangshri Dera, Village Rowmari,  
PO Khagrabari, District Chirang  
via Bongaigaon, BTAD 783380  
Assam, India. Ph: 084720 10563  
Email: [mail@theant.org](mailto:mail@theant.org)  
Web: [www.theant.org](http://www.theant.org)

