

# the ant

## Quarterly Newsletter

(July - September)



### *Cultivating Young Scientific Minds*

Young enthusiastic minds were seen busy adjusting their science models on the tables spread across a large hall made by removing partitions between classrooms, waiting for the judges. Keeping up with our long-term effort to build scientific temperament amongst children in general, and to encourage their interest for scientific ventures, *the ant* has started science melas across ME schools in Chirang on 26th August 2022 and will cover 14 schools before the district level science mela to be held in November 2022. Students presented their models to a team of judges selecting winning teams. The winning teams in all these melas will be presenting their models at the district level science mela. To encourage the students for their participation, certificates are given to all the participants.







## Summer Camps

Schools may close for summer breaks, but learning never stops and so is the growth and development of children. Every year during summer break, **the ant** organises summer camps in different locations in Chirang. This year the summer camps were organised in the month of July and facilitated by project LEAP and Shiksha. Children participated in various activities such as talent shows, drawing sessions, performing action songs, games, etc., to give a space to children from these remote and underdeveloped villages without proper schools where they can socialize and learn through fun-filled activities building their confidence and communication skills.

## Girl Icon Fellowship Alumni Meet

34 Girl Icon Leaders emerged from the Girl Icon Fellowship Programme (GI) implemented during 2018-2020. Today they are applying their leadership skills in uplifting and empowering other girls in their communities. To realise their full potential as leaders, 31 Girl Icons have come together to form a collective of alumni from the fellowship to share ideas and work together towards their shared goal of girl and women empowerment. In July, the alumni forum had met for their third meeting this year where they identified their goals and set six months action plan.



## Upskilling Farmers in Vermicomposting

To support the farmers of Kuklung in maintaining organic farming practices in their farms, the Livelihood Kuklung project team supported by Dasra organised a training session on vermicomposting in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra Chirang. 50 farmers and 5 members from the staff were trained on how to produce and maintain earthworm-based compost manure at home and use them on the vegetables. The aim of the training was to upskill farmers on maintaining sustainable organic manure at small scale level to replace the use of chemical fertilisers completely.





## Institute of Development Action (IDeA)

### Library Workshop: More Than a Bookkeeper

Library can be more than a space for book keeping and reading for child development is a lesson that the participants of the training on running library programs learnt. The training was organised by the IDEA for all implementing partners under projects ENRICH, FaB, and IDEA's incubation Grant. The training was facilitated by Bookworm Goa in Panjim from 1st – 6th August 2022. The fun-filled and exhilarating training gave partners an insight into bookkeeping, storytelling, curating children's books, library and other things.



### Organisational Development Workshops for IDeA Partners

In the month of August-September, the IDeA team conducted Organisational Development workshops for 3 partners from IDeA's Incubation Grant and 2 partners from project ENRICH. The team undertook strategic planning exercises which included the formulation of the Vision, Mission, Values, and Strategies document. Additionally, for this year's Incubation Grant, 4 partner organizations from Assam and Meghalaya have been selected.

## New Media Projects



**Biyad : Love with Nature**  
**(A Community Media Unit Production, the ant)**



**MITA Cares (A Film by Minnie Vaid , co-produced by the ant)**

## Breaking Taboos

On a cold winter morning, a daughter observes her mother splash buckets of cold water on the floor of the bedroom and sweeping the remnants of 'impurity'. This ritual occurred every month and the sight of her mother cleaning the floor on which she would sleep during her menstruating days has left a deep impact on young Akadashi's mind. As she grew older and these rituals became part of her menstruation routine, Akadashi or more fondly known as Akadashi baideo found these practices more and more impractical and detrimental to women's health. One practice followed by her community that she finds disempowering for the women and girls of her community is that menstruating women cannot enter the kitchen of the household and so, non-menstruating girls and women within the village are called to cook food in those households. "In our village, whenever a woman menstruates in a household, a non-menstruating girl in the village was called by the family to cook food. But due to this the young girl would miss her classes during that time", said Akadashi baideo.



**Akadashi Barman, 33**  
**Adolescence Trainer, Bring the Change (BTC)**

Akadashi baideo's marriage was the turning point where she got the opportunity and a liberal space in the absence of any elders in her husband's house to do away with these rituals. Making changes were easier in the new household but certainly not without obstacles when her own husband believed in these rituals. But after many arguments and discussions with her husband, he finally came around and supported her cause. Her greatest wingman in the family is her son (studying in 6th standard) who would support her by buying pads from the market during emergencies, and in the process he is learning the importance of knowing about menstruation and menstrual health. "During emergencies I ask my son to get pads for me from the local store. Sometimes he complains when the shopkeeper taunts him for buying pads which is supposed to be used only by girls and women. I, then, explain to him that he should also know about menstrual needs and shouldn't be ashamed of it so that he can support his female peers during emergencies". The ripple of change that Akadashi baideo had created in her household slowly spread to her neighbourhood and community. Taking inspiration from her, married women from her community are slowly giving up following the regressive practices that compromises their menstrual health.

Akadashi baideo has always been inclined towards social work. Her commitment to the cause of spreading awareness on menstrual health and hygiene reflects in all the work she has done with the local communities. When she worked in a women's committee wing of a local student body, she would bring up the discussion on menstrual health in the meetings. Another turning point in her life that made her capable of spreading awareness on this issue to larger audience is her training in disaster management. She learnt about menstrual health and hygiene during the training and since then has been sharing her learnings with other women and girls. It was in one of the training sessions that she met one of our ants and later joined the organization. started her work with children on personal health and hygiene. Later she began working with adolescent girls on developing interpersonal skills, and maintaining their menstrual health and hygiene. "The girls I have conducted sessions with trust me a lot. They share their personal issues with me, sometimes even the ones that they don't share with their parents", said Akadashi baideo with a wide grin on her face.

### New Family Members

**We welcome our new ants Golokesh, Abinash, Norpline, Ane, Sanjita and Dipanjali to our family.**

### Upcoming Activities

**16 Days Campaign Against Violence on Women  
Community Cultural Event for Peace and Harmony  
District Level Science Mela**

