

Twenty-one long years and we haven't been so late in bringing out the annual report. Our apologies! But here we are anyway. The year 2020-21 had set for us a never-before experience where we had to change our strategies and approaches to meet our goal of standing by those who needed us the most. As an organization in general and projects in specific, we vouched to fight the deadly virus while on the other hand, we worked on strategies to reach out to the poor, marginalized and voiceless communities including women and children who were simultaneously fighting hunger, joblessness, academic and other developmental losses for children.



THE BEGINNING OF APRIL 2020 was an exciting time for the ants because a young, energetic woman, Pranami Garg had been selected as the new Executive Director as Sunil was stepping down on turning 58. She took over in tough times in May as CoViD was very much on the horizon all over India and soon we were to see the most horrific scenes of death that we could ever imagine. But mostly on telly. We would hear about old people dying, and how hospitals were overcrowded, but in Chirang or almost anywhere in Assam except the big cities like Guwahati, we weren't hit badly. By the second wave, we were treated to visuals in the media which had to be seen, tolerated, understood and.....never to be forgotten. They were shameful. The madness of quarantines, isolations and





lockdowns was frustrating, but we knew that other people were even worse. We can write articles of our own about how some of us were quarantined for weeks together and repeatedly tested only on suspicion, but then this annual report is not about that. We hoped like hell that the horror which we saw in the second wave in March 2021 would not happen to us. And for whatever it was worth, we tried to learn from what the rest of India did and DID NOT do to be able to see our face in the mirror. We chalked out community-based plans – that is what the northeast is all about, isn't it!! – and started getting oxygen concentrators together for ourselves and for the Government too, as letting them down would mean letting people down.

While some of you may not believe us, it was from 15th May 2020, that EVERY SINGLE ANT in Chirang and Udalguri districts was in the field! So, while we needed to be watchful, we couldn't be sitting in our homes while people suffered the lockdowns even more than the CoViD virus. *When the going gets tough, the tough jolly well get going!* We learnt about the virus well – thank heavens we had public health people within the team! – and understood that the chances of catching the virus in our 95% rural area were rare. Of course, protocols were to be followed but practically the entire team continued work with meetings and games in groups of five and always in the open! Gradually, with lesser Govt restrictions, the groups increased to ten! The team was fortunately young and covered with CoViD Insurance, and all ants dared the virus to be where they best knew to be. In the field, of course! Who knew then that an effective vaccine would be found in an year's time? Who knew when the pandemic would end? All that one knew was that the show HAS TO ALWAYS GO ON!!



Pranami had taken over fully by October and by the end of March 2021, she had led the team to reach out to 21,117 children and adults directly impacting 58,759 families in 981 villages of Chirang and Udalguri districts. Not a single mental health camp was cancelled! Relief to the poor and marginalized communities on account of the CoViD-19 induced lockdowns, restrictions and subsequent floods occupied a major chunk of our work in the first quarter of this year.

The lockdowns the world over and the high rates of death in the western countries made us fear that businesses will be hit very badly and our donations may dry up sooner than later. We could foresee that people would be saving every penny to save them from the hard times that seemed inevitable! But we must compliment the funders and donors that they not only stayed the course, they often called us up to check on us and motivated us. Many of them assured us that they fully understood our plight and were ready to make large cuts in their expectations of work from us. While many surveys came up asking us how badly we had been hit in terms of funds for our work, we had to honestly tell them after the first quarter, we had increased our work in terms of money, staff and non-relief development work!!

RELIEF AND REHABILITATION



COVID-19

Joining hands with the district administration of Chirang, we started mass awareness programs through women, children and youth groups in more than 500 villages and hamlets. IEC materials were developed, printed, distributed and pasted at prominent places throughout the year.

- Personal Protection Equipment in the forms of masks, hand sanitisers and PPE suits worth Rs 1,63,877.50/- was handed over to the Dist. Chirang Police for CoVID-19.
- 152 full time & part time staff (and regular consultants too) contributed from their pockets and handed a cheque of Rs. 1,36,744 to the District Commissioner Chirang towards the Assam Arogya Nidhi.
- 14,500 sanitarily packed, candle-blow tested, reusable and skin-friendly handwoven masks were distributed to all staff, senior citizens, citizens with co-morbid conditions, frontline workers and to children studying in different schools and learning centres run by the ant. We are thankful to HDFC Ergo who sponsored 10,500 of these masks for children.
- 5,807 families were provided with money during the year who had lost income opportunities on account of CoViD lockdowns and their survival rights were under threat. We are thankful to Child Aid Network, DKA Austria and Caring Friends, besides friends and relatives for providing us the resources to stand by these families.
- Besides, we also helped the administration in repatriating migrants from other States to their homes.
- We have also been a member of the District CoViD Task Force formed by administration of Chirang district and participated in all efforts to minimize the impact of CoViD on people's lives.



FLOODS



While India was battling the constant increase in CoViD-19 cases, heavy rainfall created a double whammy by wreaking havoc in Assam. As if the virus was not enough, rains in June flooded the Brahmaputra and inundated almost all the districts of Assam. Unlike before 2015 when flash floods were known to temporarily flood the households, this year too affected people in all blocks of Chirang.

As done in the previous years, despite CoViD lockdown restrictions, our ants reached the remote flood-affected areas and tried to help people in dealing with the situation. The initiatives ranged from distribution of food and non-food items to repairing of traditional irrigation channels or dongs in the affected areas. We reached out to 2531 families in 6 flood affected clusters and villages through this effort.

Since some of the households and the neighbouring fields were washed away, rehabilitation and rebuilding of the destroyed houses of flood-hit families was carried out. 495 families from 11 villages who were in vulnerable situations were identified. The poorest identified by their neighbours, households with pregnant and lactating mothers, senior citizens living alone, families with children and disabled, women-headed families from scheduled tribes/religious minorities and other backward classes were supported for labour work. Beneficiaries who could physically start the repair work but needed financial assistance to complete it were given a daily wage of Rs 300 a day per family for 7 working days, thus helping each family earn a total of Rs 2100/- per household.

From amongst these, 50 poorest families were also selected for support for material to initiate the construction work. These were either single women or disabled or senior citizen run families who could not manually get involved in starting the house repair work. Therefore, they were given cash in advance and were supported with Rs 1000/- per family for buying materials and initiate their own house repair or maintenance work.

GRASSROOTS LEVEL INITIATIVES

Continuing our efforts from last 2 years, we ran grassroot level interventions in the districts of Chirang and Udalguri in the Bodoland Territorial Region of Assam. These activities broadly may be categorized into the following sectors:

PEACE AND JUSTICE

Dolphin and Avahan are two initiatives of ~~the ant~~ that directly try to bring peace and promote justice in the areas. While Dolphin caters to 33 villages in 2 VDCs (Village Council Development Committees, the equivalent of Panchayats elsewhere) of Bengtoli, AVAHAN is spread across 123 villages in 20 VDCs of the district. We will try to give a glimpse of both the projects here.

AVAHAN



Peace building starts at home. It is with this belief that Project AVAHAN (Against Violence at Home – Act Now!) supported by the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives started its second phase with deeper penetration and widening its reach to more geographical locations in Chirang as well as in two





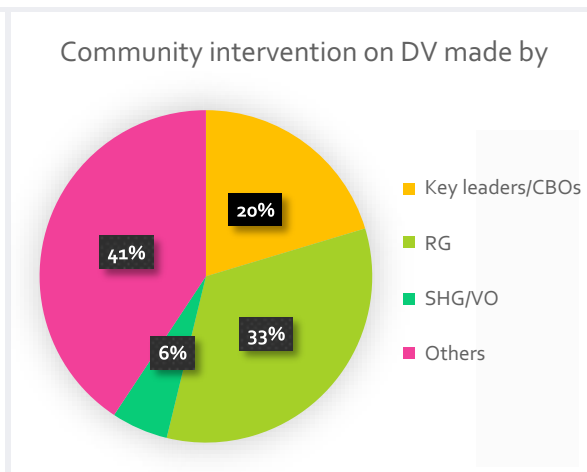
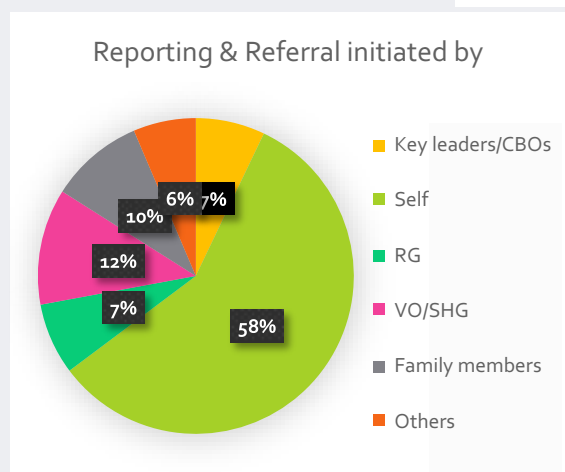
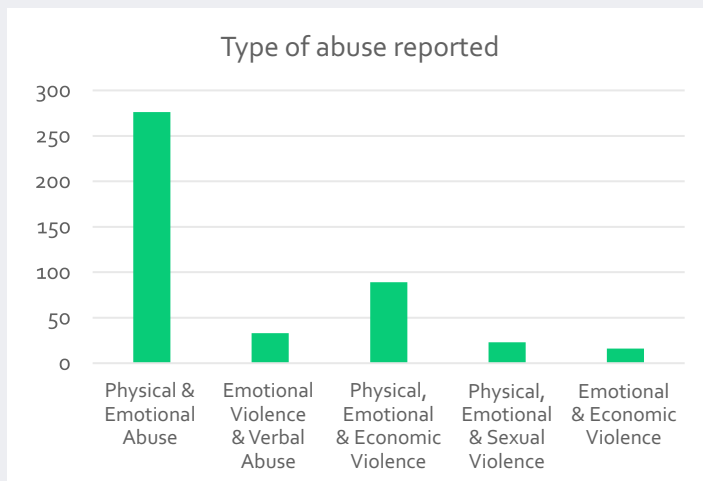
other districts in Assam, of Bongaigaon and Cachar through partner organisations, Jubair Masud Educational Charitable Trust and Sanatan Unnayan Sangstha respectively. The initiative that started with a goal of reducing domestic violence in Chirang by 60%, crossed several milestones in terms of increased awareness, higher reporting of Domestic Violence (DV) cases by the survivors and by the community besides seeing community-based Response Groups taking charge and providing legal services, etc.

- 147 survivors have received legal advice from our Advocate via the Legal Aid Centre (LAC). This advice has resulted in 43 couples deciding to live together with mutual agreement.
- 26 DV survivors have filed legal cases against the perpetrators – mainly spouses – and these have been booked under the PWDV Act.
- 12 cases are being heard in the District Court.

- 14 cases have been disposed or dismissed due to Non-Prosecution and Non-appearance of Petitioner herself. These have often been preceded by remarriage. Three compromises were also mediated by our team between the two parties.
- 2 Domestic Violence survivors received a maintenance order from the court.

The team used colour coding as a tool to measure the impact of interventions in all reported cases, Red cases signified the most active cases requiring frequent follow-ups, while Green were the ones closed after observing non-occurrence of violence by the spouse/ relative for last one year.

Additionally, the local community was strengthened. Response Groups (RGs) formed for the purpose of



starting a community-based response to DV, managed to provide support to 35 Survivors as mediator, counsellor and referral points. Self Help Groups were trained on Gender and peace building at home. Child Friendly sessions were taken with children in schools and youth in colleges to empower them to stand against violence and maintain peace at home and in the community. Similar activities were initiated in Bongaigaon and Cachar districts too.



DOLPHIN

In Bengtol area of Chirang district, project DOLPHIN envisaged to bring peace by engaging with children and youth of different ethnicities so that they overcome prejudices and aversion against each other and can build a peaceful community life through better quality of education as well as by establishing protective structures at the community level. Crossing several hurdles, CoViD being one of them, Dolphin stepped in the final year and achieved quite a few milestones.

- Despite Lockdown and school closures, 60% of the children were reached through community classes in groups of 5 and 10 children. Their education continued through joyful learning methods.
- As the schools opened only for the last three months of the year, a number of changes were witnessed. The teachers continued to organize morning assemblies and to use joyful learning methods including games, action songs and the Teaching Learning Materials taught by our team.
- 500 saplings were planted in 21 schools in the area and each sapling was adopted by a child.
- 28 out of 30 youths trained in different skills got self-employed and managed to thrive through the pandemic.
- During the lockdown, youth were kept connected through WhatsApp groups and weekly video conference meetings.
- Two Boro and Santhali cultural groups were formed and after receiving training, started performing on different platforms which gave them confidence.
- Dolphin Mela was organised for children and youth focusing on
 - Understanding Rights & Responsibilities
 - Exploring Diversity & Harmony
 - Multi-Ethnic Community Children & Youth Coming Together
 - Counselling for Children & Youth
 - My Planet, My Right
- Village Level Child Protection Committees were formed in 11 villages and trained on issues

concerning Child Protection and safeguarding. 4 child marriage cases were stopped by these empowered VLCPCs.

the ant is committed to work with the poor marginalized and voiceless communities. During the last 20 years of existence, we have perceived that single women, disabled, and poorest village dwellers form the lowest strata of the voiceless communities. We decided to pay special emphasis to this stratum of society. Core areas that we tried to focus on are quality education, resilience building through sports, and empowerment of girls and women.

QUALITY EDUCATION

LEAP

Learning Ecosystem Augmentation Project is one of the largest initiatives of the ant. Spread across 12 educational clusters of Chirang district, it envisages: (i) improvement in the quality of education in 140 Lower Primary and 15 Middle Elementary Schools, (ii) improving understanding of Assamese language and making it easy to accept as a medium of instruction for the children not speaking the language at home, and (iii) arranging opportunities for learning for children who do not have access to any educational institutions.

- Despite closure of schools during the pandemic, we managed to reach children from 44 government schools in small community-based classes. 1200 children in 127 small groups received academic support during the period.





- With help from Vikramshila Education Society, Kolkata we developed baseline assessment tools for assessing the level of knowledge and understanding of children. This was done in order to design suitable interventions for children and teachers of government schools.
- Learning aids and Teaching Learning Materials have been developed by the team and a resource pool has been created imparting lessons in the classes in a child-friendly manner.
- Reading books is a habit that increases competence of a child manifold. We vowed to reinstall this habit, and in the process the team translated and compiled contents from different sources to develop a mobile/makeshift, user-friendly library (Library in a Bag). This was distributed in the schools. Weekly library classes were also initiated in the schools and community classes.

- Ownership of the community in every learning centre and school is indispensable for sustainability. Realising this fact, we imparted training to 140 School Management Committees on their roles and responsibilities and also the powers allotted to them under the SSA guidelines. Samagra Shiksha Assam officials from Chirang also joined hands with us in this endeavour.
- Teachers in all 15 Middle Elementary schools of project locations received trainings on conducting science practicals with the help of 'Laboratory in a Box'. Equipment for science practicals has been kept in all the schools so that teachers and students can conduct experiments on their own.
- Assamese as Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) tools are meant for the children who do not speak the language at home. Children who speak Nepali, Bangla or Santhali language at home go to Assamese medium schools and face a lot of difficulties in understanding, reading and writing Assamese. The lag created by this impacts their learning process and when not addressed at the right time leads to chronic learning difficulties. We developed a set of "pictionaries" and designed session plans around them for beginners so that the transition from understanding in mother tongue to Assamese is easier. More such tools are being developed and shall be used in 40 schools where a majority of the children are from multi-ethnic communities.
- During the last 20 years of existence in Chirang we have realized that there are more than 500 children close to the Indo-Bhutan border area who do not have access to education. In order to ensure that every child receives education, with support from Child Aid Network and BMZ, Germany, we initiated the following:
 - 12 Remedial Learning Centres and 3 Supplementary Teacher Aided Centres that are being run for 308 children
 - 7 Forest learning centres have been established in Laimuti area with 7 teachers and 169 children.
 - A Model Learning Centre has been set up at Koraibari Forest village. The infrastructure at the Model Learning Centre was completed with community initiative and 5 teachers after being trained on pedagogy started their journey with 89 children who otherwise would have never been able to get enrolled in any school. The community also came forward to make the centre sustainable by rearing goats and depositing profits in the name of the centre. The community thus has been able to save more than Rs 1 Lakh which they will be using once we exit from the locality.



SHIKSHA

Project Shiksha is also run on the eastern side of Aie river in villages along the Indo Bhutan border. Project Shiksha started initially as two-hour after-school centres where children could be supervised or 'minded' to complete their homework or to study. This may otherwise not happen as there was no environment to study in first generation learners. This work is now a full-fledged *after-school* initiative for promoting quality education. Funded by Katherine and Kamal Agarwala Foundation (that funds through the Arpan Foundation in USA), the project runs through 25 Child Development Centres, 6 Middle Elementary Study Centres and 2 Supplementary Teacher Aided Study Centres. These Centres are reaching 525 children who despite being enrolled in different government schools were not receiving quality education due to various reasons. These centres have proven to be beneficial for children during lockdowns when all schools were closed but as these were set up in the community, they could continue *ad infinitum*.

In fact, enrolment in our Shiksha centres went on increasing as financial difficulties of families compelled the parents to take their children out of private schools and tuitions and from government schools that were not functioning. A few innovations started in the Shiksha Centres were:

- Baseline assessment of children was completed in all centres.
- Preparation of Child Progress Plan for each child wherein specific developments plans have been prepared for every child and weekly tracking of progress is being done.
- The teaching team developed 50 types of Teaching Learning Materials and joyful learning techniques.
- Community ownership was strengthened by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with Village Education Development Committees for monitoring of the centres and quality of education in each of the 33 Centres.
- Teachers' trainings were organised on pedagogy and learning difficulties.



RESILIENCE BUILDING



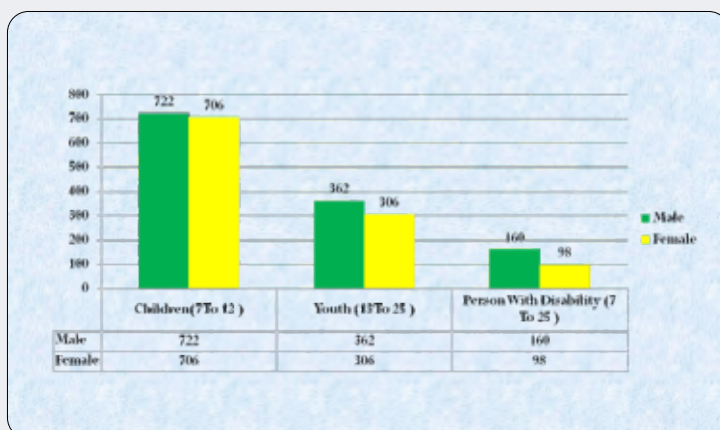
JAGRIK

Jagrik is a wordplay and a concept that combines Jagruk (Awakened and Aware) and Nagrik (Citizen). The Jagriks act as active citizens for the jag (communities). 'Jagriks' play this interactive game in pairs over five weeks and undertake tasks which are both self-reflective and social in nature. On completing their weekly tasks, the 'Jagriks' come together to share their learnings in weekly meetings called 'Jamghats'. Simultaneously 'Jagriks' post their experiences and learnings through videos, stories and pictures on a dedicated Facebook page 'Be a Jagrik!'. We as part of the Assam State Collective also decided to go on this Jagrik journey along with 144 youths who successfully completed 72 projects in pairs. The tasks taken by Jagriks were quite interesting. They ranged from exploring gender equality in playing musical instruments to efforts for making their villages plastic-free and preserving nature. The Jagriks pledged to continue their exploration throughout their lives and share the learnings from this journey with their peers, family and neighbourhood too. We witnessed the commitment among the Jagriks as despite the pandemic, they did not stop their efforts and with the help of Jagrik facilitators, even continued meeting through virtual means to discuss their experiences with peers. We would thank Commutiny and Assam State Collective for giving the youth of Chirang this opportunity of getting connected to the Jagrik journey.



COLOURING THE RAINBOW

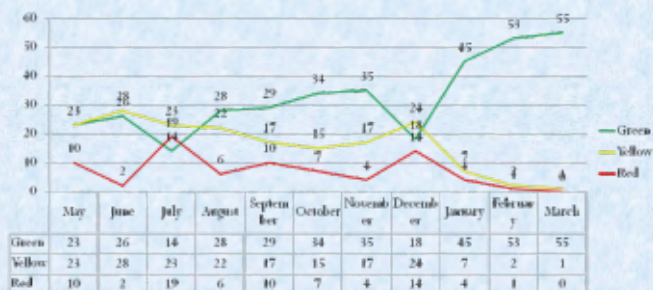
Initiated with the goal of achieving physical, emotional and social development of children and youth in Chirang district, project staff of this project 'Colouring the Rainbow' managed to reach out to 2,354 children and their parents despite CoViD-related restrictions



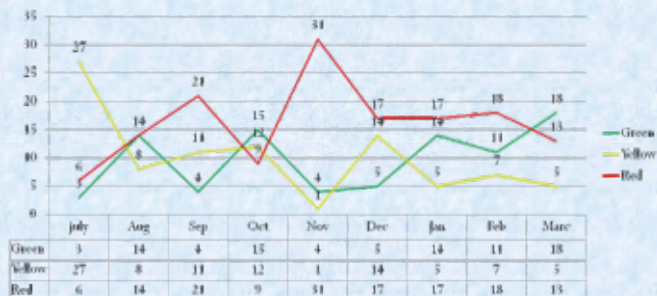


and health hazards. Game-based sessions designed around the domains of education, gender, health and hygiene, socio emotional learnings and child rights have enabled us to build resilience among the children. The self-disciplining game of Ultimate (Disk) has become quite popular now and is also being played across the project locations of Bring the Change, Shiksha and LEAP. Apart from regular sessions with children and youth, parents' sessions have given wings to the dreams and

Quality Assessment S4D



Quality Assessment Rainbow



aspirations to many girls and improve their confidence level. Girls have developed leadership skills, have become team captains who now aspire to become doctors or engineers or continuing education and finally become economically independent. Things have been changing from “girls need to stay home, get married and do household chores” to “girls can become anything they want”.

Teams comprising multi-ethnic communities, popularly known as Rainbow groups continued to inspire the youth to overcome ethnic and linguistic differences and join hands for development. Monitoring of interventions is being done through colour coding which has enabled the team to mitigate issues arising from time to time.

Developing empathy towards disabled persons is a major component of this initiative. With such sessions, persons with disability (PwD) and their families have become more aware of their rights and entitlements like PwD certificates and availing the government schemes. Others are taken through the challenges faced by the disabled in daily life. Activities in sessions children/youths have now made the children more accommodative towards disabled people in their groups.

CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE



We started our project in elementary education 2 years back realizing the deteriorating quality of teaching and learning. As we entered the government schools and community-based learning centres, we realized that many of the government schools do not even have the basic infrastructure for children to sit, thus making it difficult to concentrate. So along with training and handholding of teachers in conducting classes on the basis of learning outcomes we also thought of refurbishing



some of the infrastructure to make schools safe and child-friendly. Accordingly, a baseline survey was done and some 55 schools were identified which required refurbishment urgently. The Model learning centre and 8 other forest learning centres set up by us in partnership with local community in forest-fringe villages were the additional infrastructure projects included in the list. With the support and benevolence of Shree Raj Foundation, replenishment of most urgent infrastructures in 11 academic clusters of Chirang district was started.

We decided that construction will be carried out only by involving the community. In each of the schools prioritized for the work, School Management Committees met and collected quotations from three parties for material supply, mason, carpenter and labour costs. They had discussions with the parties, made them bid and then selected the parties to be contracted for the work. This process not only encouraged Community ownership of facilities but by contracting local small contractors, labourers and material suppliers, it also pumped some money into the local rural economy that had been devastated by CoViD crisis!

The community led by the School Management Committee also agreed to contribute in some of the works requiring manual labour like earth filling, curing, clearing site, etc. With support from Nucleus Foundation, refurbished buildings in some schools were painted with mural art depicting stories and connected to pedagogy and learning outcomes. The environment in schools became lively and child-friendly. However, utmost care was taken in selecting and placing the murals so that the walls do not get overcrowded and children's concentration is not hampered.

EMPOWERMENT

GIRL ICON and BRING THE CHANGE



IF every girl is empowered, positive change in our society is inevitable. We agree with this saying and that is how we started our initiative named Girl Icon Fellowship in partnership with Milan Foundation two years ago. KFB, Austria and Mr. Chetan Shah supported us financially to run this initiative. Girl Icons selected by the schools from backward and underprivileged communities who are between the age group of 12-18 years were trained for capacity and leadership building. Through this leadership program, Girl Icons and their peers have learned to raise their voices and fight for their

rights and also helped to raise voices for other girls from their communities. The project was being implemented in 5 educational blocks covering 20 Village Council Development Committees (VCDCs). The Girl Icons belonged to 18 villages of District Chirang and 15 Villages of District Udalguri of Bodoland Territorial Administered Districts. The project covered different communities like Bodo, Assamese, Santhal, Koch-Rajbongshi, Nepali, Bengali Muslims, and Bengali Hindus. The project focused on residential and non-residential training for Girl Icons in order to build leadership qualities in them so that they can lead their peer members through peer meetings and SAP (Social Action Project)s. 37 Girl Icons and 33 peer groups comprising 574 peer icons completed the fellowship. During this journey, Girl Icons as part of their social action projects took initiatives like maintaining cleanliness in their communities, placing self-made dustbins, spreading awareness on



personal hygiene, busting menstruation myths by spreading knowledge about “our own bodies”, and by promoting healthy menstrual practices. The project was completed in December 2020.

However, the need is far more. There are other areas also where such initiatives are required. Besides, school closures on account of CoViD 19 hampered the way the project should have progressed. Thus began the journey of Bring the Change initiative.

In the project Bring The Change, a community-based self-learning approach will be followed. The girls in this project will be able to make their own choices of careers, become independent and act as agents of social changes. The project focuses on sessions which are based on modules designed to train the girls in 7 Cs (Caring, Communication, Confidence, Competence, Connection, Character and Career). In a two-year period, the project aims at reduction in early age marriage, teen pregnancy, addictions and child labour among the adolescent girls. The project in its First Phase is implemented at 6 villages in Udalguri district and 6 villages in Chirang where early marriages and school drop-outs among the adolescents were common. The project covers adolescent girls from various groups of community such as Boro, Garo, Nepali, Bengali and Adivasi (Santhali). In the First Phase, the girls between ages of 12 – 16 years are enrolled as Bronze Fellows. It is expected that Bronze Fellows will be able to create their own self-image, understand their feels and emotions and acknowledge others through sessions which will be given by trained field facilitators.

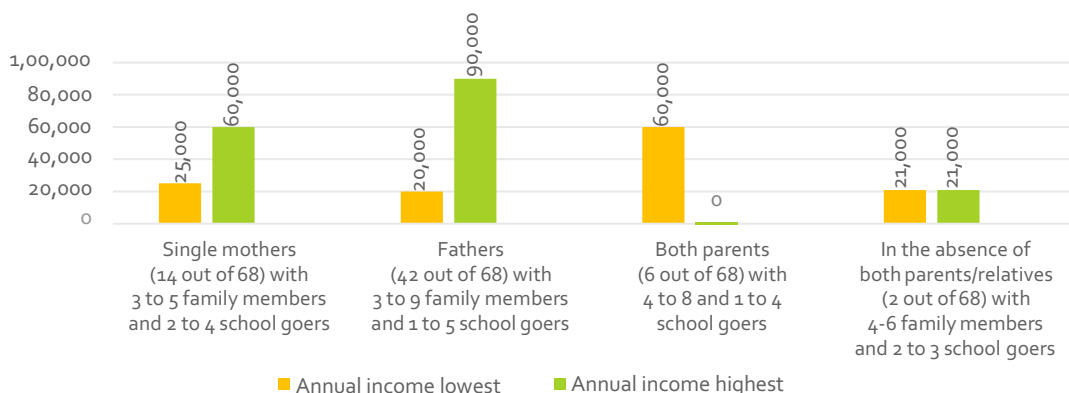
GIRLS' SCHOLARSHIP



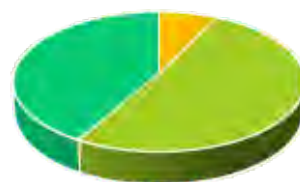
In its endeavour to support girls from vulnerable backgrounds to continue education, **the ant** has been trying to extended financial and nonfinancial support to deserving candidates since its inception. In 2020, a total of 68 girls hailing from 11 clusters – Kuklung, Amguri, Bengtol, Ulubari, Mongolian, Rowmari, Basugaon, Udalguri, Santipur, Borobazar and Deosiri of Chirang and Udalguri districts nearing Indo-Bhutan border, were selected for the ‘Financial support to Girls’. The scholarship was awarded in the year 2020.

The selected girls' were from some of the poorest families, very often brought up by single mothers who were working as daily wage labourers, vegetable or tea stall vendors, farmers, etc. or by fathers hardly managing any income. Annual income (in cash) of these families ranged from Rs 2000 to

Annual income of the girls' families: occupation of the earning members – daily wage labors, farmers, vendors, teacher, small businessman, cultivator etc.



Results of total 68 girls in HSLC & HSSLC



1st Division 2nd Division 3rd Division

No. of Girls	Type of support
7	Admission Fees
61	Books and Uniforms
38	Tuition support

20,000 per annum per family. Educational performance, number of family members and total annual income of their families were carefully scrutinized while making the selections. Selected girls were provided with financial support for purchasing books, stationery, uniforms, etc. In other words, we set up a not-one-size-fits-all model but customised to the requirements. 38 girls who were not able to cope up with studies specially in English, Mathematics and Science for their Board examinations were supported with short term tuition support as well.

Selected girls were provided with financial support for purchasing books, stationery and uniforms. 38 girls who were not able to cope up with studies specially in English, Mathematics and Science for their Board examinations were also helped with tuitions. This support has come from Urmila Asthana Endowment Fund created by her grandchildren and matched by other friends and relatives of the ant staff.



LIVELIHOOD



Chirang is one of the recently created districts of Assam under Bodoland Territorial Council. Most of its population is dependent on agriculture. Most people are either farmers or work as daily wage labourers. The economy of the area is mostly non monetized where families fulfil their day-to-day requirements by selling the produce from their courtyard in the neighbouring market. There is often no concept of savings or accumulation for their future needs. CoViD hit this practice as market places were either fully or partially closed down and as lesser people travelled, it was rendered costlier and made it difficult for village people to access the city markets. The daily wagers were the worst hit. For most of the last one and a half years, it has been pretty difficult for them as most of their potential employment opportunities have either slowed down or halted completely. With support from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, 290 families in Kuklung area were provided with farm-based livelihoods support. Selected women were provided with good quality seeds, nets, trainings and market linkages for continuing their agricultural practices.

CAMPAIGNS

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



International Women's Day (March 8) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. It also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. To commemorate the women's rights movement, bringing attention to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights and violence against women, five village organizations (VOs) took the initiative to celebrate Women's Day in the Deosiri playground on the 9th of March. It was encouraging to have 580 participants from Deosiri and Dadgiri area registering themselves for the event. This included 56 men who came forward to support the women in their journey of empowerment. The day started with flag-hoisting and was followed by games and sports, cultural program, speeches from dignitaries and ended with distribution of prizes.

GLOBAL ACTION MONTH



Keeping pace with the terre des hommes' International Youth Network (IYN)'s initiative 'Global Action Month (GAM) on Child Rights' in the month of November, children and youth of Bengtol took part in public actions to raise their demands in relation to realization of their rights. A cycle rally, an art session, understanding the triple Rs of minimising waste – Reduce, Re-use and Re-cycle – of plastic, dustbin making, plantation, rally, poem and song composition, etc. were part of this campaign.

CAMPAIGN FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND WOMEN ORANGE THE WORLD



The fortnight of 25th November to 10th December 2020 was observed as a Campaign to generate awareness on Violence against children and women across Chirang. The campaign was also taken to

parts of Bongaigaon and parts of Cachar districts by our partners, Jubayer Masud Educational Charitable Trust in Bongaigaon and Sanatan Unnayan Sangstha in Cachar. During the campaign children of different age groups, women's & youth groups and other stakeholders were reached through silent rallies, street plays, group discussions, sessions, community meetings, drawing sessions, posters and by 'dotmocracy' to build awareness on this sensitive issue of violence being encountered by children and women in the present scenario. This was an initiative of the Child Safeguarding Committee of the ant and it came across increasing instances of child abuse, child marriage, domestic violence and addiction during CoViD lockdowns.

MENTAL HEALTH

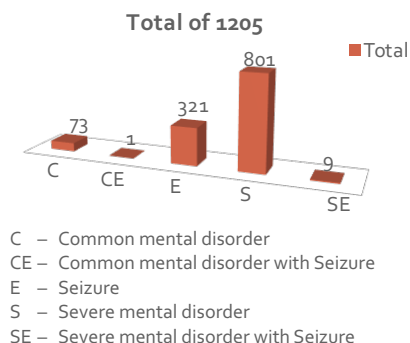


We treated over 1300 patients of mental illness and epilepsy through fixed day camps every month through a financially sustainable model where patients contribute Rs 10 a day or Rs 300 a month

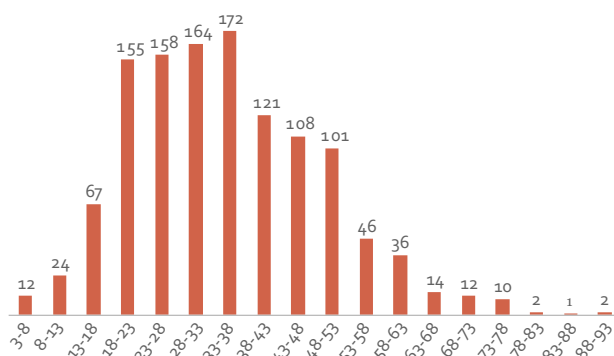




Patient details with illness type
September 2020



Age-wise patients
September 2020



currently to meet all the costs! In the last one year, one more location was added to the list of Mental Health Camps totalling it to 7 outreach and one central camp in Chirang district.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Reproductive Health Services are not something easily accessible by women in interior areas like Chirang in Assam. The villages are remote with limited access to public transportation and other amenities. Most of the villages have seen violence till a few years back and fulfilling the basic needs of food shelter and clothing tops the priority list. Reproductive services often do not even feature in the list of services required.

The pandemic and subsequent announcement of countrywide lockdowns has shown the real condition of health services. As part of Aman Network, and partnering with CommonHealth, a nationwide coalition of agencies and activists working on maternal-neonatal health and safe abortion, we conducted a qualitative research on “Access to safe abortion services during the pandemic situation in Chirang.”

IDeA

Institution of Development Action



IDeA was set up by the ant in the year 2007 and mandated to work at helping NGOs in the Northeast Region grow in strength so that the voluntary sector itself becomes even more vibrant. Earlier housed in the ant's campus in Rowmari, IDeA's office is now in Guwahati with a separate team there. Its current work can be placed under three strategies –

1. Cultivate and Incubate
2. Connect and Organise
3. Consult and Advise

As the rest of the world struggled with the pandemic and long lock-downs, so did the voluntary sector. Forced to redefine its programmes and restructure its activities, the changing laws and tighter legal compliance requirements made operations tougher. However, the pandemic also opened new doors to technology and innovations and despite all the challenges, our teams and partner organizations have worked tirelessly on the ground to help the communities combat the social and economic fallout of the pandemic while fulfilling their mandate. We believe we have grown stronger from the challenge and proud to present our work in an unforgettable 2020-2021 under our main strategies –



1. CULTIVATE AND INCUBATE

INCUBATION SUPPORT

Incubating NGOs: We are grateful for the support from Caring Friends (Mumbai) because of which IDeA partnered with 11 NGOs in Assam, Nagaland and Meghalaya this year. We supported both financially (the community work) and non-financially (trainings, hand-holding, linkages) to strengthen not just their programmes but also help them grow as institutions.

Pre-Incubation Phase: For really, really nascent organisations or even individuals wanting to start development work, we initiated a pre-incubation programme this year with help from a small family foundation in Germany (Weitschiet Foundation). We have been providing critical technical inputs and hand-holding support to beginners from across the region.

MITA PROJECT

MITA Project to ensure quality treatment for persons with mental disorders has now spread to over 10 districts of Assam through partners NGOs of IDeA. Through the monthly camps, over 2000 registered patients are receiving regular and affordable treatment of good quality.

IDeA has provided technical support in handling the MIS, in partner coordination, hosting annual review meet and in increasing the visibility and outreach of the MITA model.



PROJECT ENRICH

IDeA partnered with 4 NGOs in Lower Assam to initiate Project Enrich (Enabling Rights of the Child) to help create child friendly villages and ensure child rights in 5 districts of Assam with support from Child Aid Network, Germany.

Participatory learning exercises were conducted with children and community stakeholders, based on which projects for the 5 locations have been developed. A baseline survey covering 1500 children has been completed.



Appealing communication materials such as graphic workbooks, flipcharts, videos, songs etc. are being developed by IDeA to engage the children and bring about behavior change in the community.

TRAINING



Training activities that IDeA carried out reached over 100 NGOs in the Northeast region.

- Leadership for Social transformation: In partnership with HID Forum, Bangalore we had to hit the ground running thanks to the pandemic. After a great week-long residential training in Guwahati in February 2020, suddenly had to move it online after Covid disrupted our lives in March 2020. Overnight, we learnt to use the Zoom platform and could complete 3 modules of 'Leadership for Social Transformation, Assam 2020' for 35 trainees from over 22 grassroots NGOs in Assam.
- Legal Compliance in partnership with KCJM, Ahmedabad - 33 participants from across the Northeast.
- Documentation & Finance in partnership with Child Aid Network Germany & The Hub, Jorhat – participants from 25 NGOs attended.
- Organizational Development Training – 35 women leaders from 4 district federations promoted by Assam Mahila Samata Society, Assam had undergone training on OD training.



2. CONNECT AND ORGANISE

CHARCHA CAFÉ

Charcha Café is a space to bring together individuals, networks and alliances to discuss issues and concerns of the sector. This year two online Charcha Café events were held –

Lockdown lite: Our partner organisations had been working tirelessly to reach relief to those in need and supporting the government in this fight against the virus.



To appreciate the tireless hard work and to celebrate the spirit of volunteerism of these unsung warriors, IDeA organised a virtual musical concert called “lockdown lite’. Musical performances, poetry and sharing positive stories helped lift the spirit of many. The performance by Bottle Rockets India, a multi-lingual music band of talented youth from Guwahati, was the icing on the cake.

In another Charcha café event, a virtual platform was created for our partner organizations to communicate directly with Caring Friends, one of our donors. This gave them a chance to share about their work and discuss the opportunities and challenges facing the young organizations.



NETWORKS AND ALLIANCES

IDeA was an active member in the Assam State Coalition for Health-Nutrition-Livelihood security initiated by Oxfam India. Apart from helping in the drafting of the approach paper for health and nutrition, we also worked with a core group to design a study to look into the “Effects of Covid-19 lockdown on livelihoods and nutrition security of households in Assam.” The study was carried out by NGOs in 24 districts of Assam covering 1600 HHs approximately.

We provided technical support to FVSA (Forum for Voluntary Sector, Assam) a small group of grassroots organizations to adapt to virtual communication method. This has immensely helped them carry out their planned work like mapping of the member organizations, redesigning their logo, creating brochure, social media pages etc. The forum has also started connecting with other networks/alliances and resource organizations for the benefit of the member organizations.

3. CONSULT AND ADVISE



TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO ETP (Ethical Tea Partnership): Training of the community forum, strategy planning for the PCEP (Plantation Community Empowerment Programme and staff capacity building was carried out.

SUPPORT FOR ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT: We completed assignments with two organizations – helped one develop robust financial & programme MIS systems and for the other, we facilitated a sensitive participatory leadership transition exercise.

RESEARCH: A scoping study covering 300 tea garden workers for BSR, UK on work opportunities & women's experience of violence was completed. Documentation of case stories from their partner projects for TDH, Germany was also completed.

COVID ADVOCACY: Advocating & supporting the government with information for a sound & scientific public health response to the Covid crisis was attempted.

MATERNAL RIGHTS IN ASSAM: We partnered with Sahaj (Gujarat) & Pirmal Swasthya (Guwahati) to work at improving maternal health services in Assam. A study was done by the group to look at the "Impact of Covid 19 lockdown on pregnant women and lactating mothers". IDeA's specific role was to mentor 3 partner NGOs to activate the Village Health & Sanitation Committees in 3 districts for maternal health services and to prepare and give a report card to the government on maternal health status in Assam.

BOOK WRITTEN: Jennifer from the IDeA team co-authored a book called "Health Inequities in Conflict Areas" which was based on the study completed last year and was published by Springer Nature, Singapore in March 2021.

SIFUNG HARIMU AFAD



This was started with a vision to promote the traditional culture of Bodos – which is on the verge of extinction – to minimize the migration of unskilled youth or the brain drain and to mitigate the possibility of resorting to militancy, Sifung Harimu Afad has been able to re-initiate its work post the worst part of last year's pandemic. During the last quarter of the year 2020, they were able to spread out to 5 locations in the district and train youth on traditional music and dance. Breaking the stereotypes, Sifung girls are trained to play Kham (the big drum) and Sifung (the flute) which were considered a male domain. We heartily thank Mr. Aroon Raman for being the benefactor for Sifung. The group's spectacular performance has influenced the Bodos so much that the All Bodo Students Union has made it mandatory to start its meetings with a performance of Sifung Harimu Afad or by a woman's group from the local area, thus providing recognition to the importance of maintaining the traditional culture.

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We also acknowledge the in-kind contribution of many others that means a lot to us. One of them is Stet – The Media People who have been bringing out this Annual Report of ours *pro bono* for the past 20 years.

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 PUNBO120100. 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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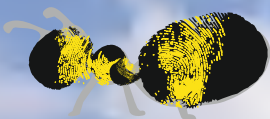
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