



the ant

ANNUAL REPORT

2021 - 2022

*" If I tell you my dream, you might forget it.
If I act on my dream, perhaps you will remember it,
but if I involve you – it becomes your dream too "*

Twenty-one years of working with communities has built a relationship of trust. Over these years, somewhere our dreams might have aligned as we feel grateful for the support for our initiatives from the communities in most parts of our constituency. Often we feel we can't do enough: as much for the fact that we can't possibly be an expert on every issue that needs to be addressed, but also because unlike Bangladesh, the Indian ecosystem to support NGOs with big teams and budgets just doesn't exist.

The CoViD-19 pandemic had brought uncertainty in our lives as well as our work. Our ants had planned a whole lot of activities to address the different issues concerning the communities. The increase in the number of cases and CoViD related deaths – in the media at least – had brought an air of distrust within the communities, but when the Government institutions such as schools closed down, the communities supported ~~the~~ **ants** by giving space in their villages where we could carry out our activities related to child development. Without the support of the communities, we wouldn't have been able to fulfil their objectives for the year 2021.

Some carefully selected SBI Youth for India fellows started joining our programmes last year but as the relationship was " The CoViD-19 pandemic had brought uncertainty in our lives as well as our work. Our ants had planned a whole lot of activities to address the different issues concerning the communities. The increase in the number of cases and CoViD related deaths – in the media at least – had brought an air of distrust within the communities, but when the Government institutions such as schools closed down, the communities supported ~~the~~ **ants** by giving space in their villages where we could carry out our activities related to child development. Without the support of the communities, we wouldn't have been able to fulfil their objectives for the year 2021.

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In the last report, we had reported that a young and energetic woman, Pranami Garg had taken over as the Executive Director. Though we had expected her to work for five years, she resigned and left at short notice by mid-January. Sunil had to step in yet again to fill in the gap and thanks to the Board and the senior team members of **the ant**, we have been able to convince Rhonden Kikon who hails from Nagaland – and had earlier worked with us before leaving for the Netherlands to study further – to return to **the ant** and direct the field operations. As we end the financial year, she has just joined and is taking stock of the diverse activities and increasing teams of **the ant** – which has nearly 220 staff members including 25 post graduates and professionals! We have to undergo yet another transition, but the maturity of the second line leadership and the unflinching support of the funding organisations and supporters helped us tide over the period quickly and without much ado!

OUR KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION



LIVELIHOODS



**QUALITY
TREATMENT OF
MENTAL
HEALTH IN
RURAL AREAS**



**WOMEN AND
GIRL
EMPOWERMENT**



**CHILDREN'S
DEVELOPMENT
&
PROTECTION**



**CAPACITY
BUILDING OF THE
VOLUNTARY
SECTOR OF THE
NORTHEAST**

Empowering Children and Women Through Peace Building

BUILDING PEACEFUL SOCIETY THROUGH JOYFUL LEARNING AND RECREATION

The Bengtol cluster at Chirang, Assam has witnessed some moments of conflict and communal disharmony in the past, hindering the progress of the youth and children of the place. In order to help children emerge from this situation of distress, Project Dolphin (redesigned as 'Project Fab' – please see below) had been designed to work towards empowering children and youth of Bengtol.

a. Community Classes

As the basic vehicle of intervention, i.e., Govt Lower Primary and Middle Schools remained shut after the breakout of the second wave of CoViD, the Dolphin team worked towards ensuring that no child should drop out of education due to the closure of schools. Dolphin staff took the classrooms to the community and continued joyful learning activities by conducting classes with children's groups. Once in a week, the team carried out Aflatoun sessions with children that covered topics on self-understanding and exploration, their rights and responsibilities, etc. Activities for Conscious Citizenry sessions were also held once in a month. To make these classes interesting and to ensure that the children get a clear understanding of concepts in a joyful manner, teaching learning materials and science lab materials were also introduced.



63 children's groups



24 children



326 youth reached

b. Inculcating a Culture of Mutual Respect

In order to instill feelings of love and respect for all, children and youth have been organised into multi-ethnic groups. The objective of the multi-ethnic groups is to build camaraderie amongst children across religious and linguistic boundaries. The activities also inculcate in children and youth a greater sense of responsibility towards their society and environment, where they not only work towards ensuring their own rights but also for the rights of all the communities.



The youth volunteered in conducting classes for the children's groups which shows that they are getting more responsible towards supporting others. Forming of multiethnic children's groups has made the children realise that they share the same vision for their future. Their participation level shows that they are now comfortable in spending time with children from other communities.

c. Ensuring Children's Protection

Apart from making children aware of their own rights, it is important that parents and adults in the community are aware of various issues that affect children's healthy development, and they should work towards creating a safe space for the children in the society



Regarding the education of the children, the energetic team of Dolphin had conducted regular meetings with parents and school management committees (SMC) to sensitise them on the issues and make them more responsible towards their children's education. The regular sensitisation efforts have shown results as the communities took active part in forming the 63 children's groups on their own accord and in ensuring that regular classes were held during the lockdown.



11 Village Level Child Protection Committees (VLCPCs) were formed and these have been recognised by the district administration. These VLCPCs have started intervening in preventing child marriages. Three of the VLCPCs have also started regularly conducting monthly meetings at their respective villages of their own to discuss issues related to children.



19 children groups formed



686 children



7 communities



More than 90% participated in events



8 youth groups formed



184 members

d. Career Development for Youth

During the lockdown in the pandemic, many people lost their jobs. This made the future of the youth from poor economic background bleak and vulnerable. In order to make the youth capable of finding and creating means of a livelihood, the ant team had taken various sessions for the youth to guide them in building their professional careers. A two-day career counselling session was held with the youth to introduce them to different career options in the employment market, and they also received personal career counselling. The team facilitated Dream Mapping and SWOT Analysis sessions with the youth to help them with mindful career choices. A few youth were selected based on certain criteria for skill-based training



35 youth from different ethnic groups



16 girls



19 boys

Friends Across Barriers

Supported by BMZ, Germany through terre des hommes .(TDH), Project Dolphin was given a more focused objective. Conflict doesn't only affect children, but also curbs the rights of women. Children and women are the worst affected in situations of conflict. The new name Friends Across Barriers (F.A.B) was given reflecting the new project's aim to protect and strengthen the rights of children and women through conflict resolution and peace building mechanisms in a multi-ethnic society.



Community Peace Building Workshop

End Violence Against Children: Soch Badlo

The first step towards strengthening children's and women's rights is to make them aware of the rights. When conflict disrupts the harmony between communities at large, violence erupting from the conflict can trickle down into the personal spaces of families, perpetuating a culture of violence. Children being most vulnerable become victims of violence in their day-to-day lives. In that manner, children must also be considered as important stakeholders in the peace building process and discussions on their rights and protection should be a part of the process. With this objective in mind, the team conducted a workshop at No. 369 Anthaibari Lower Primary School on community peace building with three issues on its agenda, – to explain the concept of violence against children to parents and guardians from different communities, to introduce conflict resolution strategies with the principle of non-violence at the core, and to forge a relationship between different communities on the concept of peacebuilding through a process of discussion and exchange of ideas.



No. of participants: 26 males • 52 females from 2 communities

AGAINST VIOLENCE AT HOME — ACT NOW! (AVAHAN)

The pandemic has adversely affected many projects and their activities, but of the many setbacks the greatest threat to human dignity came from the visibly increased risk of domestic violence on women inside their domestic spaces. Despite this threat and restrictions on movements, team AVAHAN worked relentlessly to garner some achievements in the past one year. One of the biggest achievements for the team has been to witness stability of peace in some of the households they have been working with. According to the data collected by the team, 38 families have now been living violence-free lives since the past one year. 51 families have reported an absence of violence in their homes for the past six months. This achievement is a tribute to the passion of the community-based Response Groups (RGs) motivated and guided by the AVAHAN team. They have worked tirelessly and with courage often in the face of strong opposition from their own community members who are steeped in traditional patriarchy. Response Groups act as an immediate response and support system for the survivors. Their members provide counselling to the survivors of violence and connect them to legal aid and the police. Without them, peace wouldn't have come to these couples who have worked hard to avoid violence in their lives and treat each other with dignity and respect. Response Groups are the bedrock of this Azim Premji Foundation supported project and kindle our hope of having made a sustainable change in society.

Other Key Achievements at a Glance

the ant has been recognised as a 'Service Provider' under section 10 (1) of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 for a period of three years by the Assam State Directorate of Social Welfare. It allows the ant to help the victims of domestic violence all across the Chirang District in conducting a quick investigation and file a Domestic Incidence Report. This is official recognition for its opinion in front of the police and judiciary that was unofficial for a long time.

An MOU was signed between the ant and the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission (ASLRM) so that we can upscale our ideas through the hundreds of Self-Help Groups engaged by the Govt's flagship programme. We believe that violence against women has got entrenched as a culture and working in small pockets is not enough and we need to spread the culture of a violence-free domestic life through a ripple effect!

Activities

a. Free Legal Aid & Counselling: the ant provides free legal aid and counselling for people with lower economic background with a view to assist them as part of their right to attain justice. Due to the pandemic that also curbed offline court cases, families could not attend legal aid camps due to which the team often conducted legal aid camps in the rural clusters that we work in. Despite these challenges, the team was able to handle many such cases of domestic violence.



- 71 domestic violence cases
- 4 cases of restitution of conjugal right
- 5 cases related to land
- 2 cases of breach of contract
- 1 case of job card scam



b. Life Skills Education for Students: The lockdown of schools had initially hampered our plan to conduct workshops with school students on Life Skills education. Schools remained closed for almost two years. Finally, the communities came out with support for team members of AVAHAN to help them conduct 3-day summer camps in 6 locations with adolescent children.

c. One Billion Rising: Rise. Rise. Rise. "RISE for the Bodies of All Women, Girls & the Earth" - this was the clarion call given by the One Billion Rising campaign for a global movement towards creating an ecosystem where 'the bodies of all women and girls are honoured and respected, not commodified, objectified or exploited.' Our ants carried this message with each movement they made while dancing on the theme song of the campaign in the markets at Dhaligaon and Kajalgaon, and Bongaigaon railway station. Around 200 to 500 passersby paused on the streets to listen to their message.

d. Impactful Training: 24 groups of women village organisers (VOs) - groups of SHGs, many under the ASRLM - were given a 3-day training on sex, gender & violence, and on domestic violence. Out of the 1505 women participants, 81% of the participants clearly understood the issues by the end of the training.



Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Some stories really show us that courage and resilience can change even the most hopeless situations into stories that would inspire others to persevere against violence and injustice. Breaking a cycle of violence is not easy; it is often a long and tedious process that demands patience and a strong will. A series of violent attacks couldn't deter Pallabi's will to live a life of love and dignity. Certain unfortunate incidents pushed 19-year-old Pallabi's life into a never-ending vortex of domestic violence. Born to a farmer couple, Pallabi could not pass the matriculation examination at her first attempt and never appeared for it again due to a strained relation with her brother. When she turned 19, her parents decided to marry her off to Amol who earned his living through daily wage labour. Initially her husband and in-laws were loving and supportive of her. They even encouraged her to reappear for the matriculation examination, but she refused to do so because of household responsibilities. Her husband's and in-law's behaviour started to change gradually and slowly they started inflicting physical and emotional abuse on her that continued for more than two years. As days were passing, her in-laws became more domineering as they would not allow her to visit her parents anymore. Soon, her husband also got influenced by her in-laws' attitude towards her and he too started mistreating her.

Months passed after their marriage, and the fact that Pallabi hadn't conceived after six months of the marriage started to irk her in-laws, especially her mother-in-law, who started abusing her verbally and calling her 'baanjh' (a term for infertile women). The constant verbal abuse and name calling by her mother-in-law slowly got into Amol's head and the toxic environment spiralled into Amol hitting Pallabi for the first time in the eight months since their marriage. Pallabi tried to communicate with her husband on how his and her mother-in-law's behaviour towards her made her feel humiliated and worthless. This stopped his physical violence, but for a short while.

After six months of marriage, Pallabi finally conceived but this too couldn't bring any peace in her life. Consumed by superstitious belief, and deep rooted in their patriarchal mindset, Pallabi's in-laws organised a ritual to determine the sex of the unborn baby.





To add fuel to the fire, the ritual revealed that Pallabi was carrying a girl child in her womb. This triggered a cycle of emotional and physical violence. Her mother-in-law was trying to convince Amol to abort the baby. Pallabi vehemently refused to do so which didn't sit right with her in-laws and husband, and they inflicted violence on her. Contrary to the ritual's prediction, Pallabi gave birth to a baby boy, two months after a violent incident where she fell unconscious from a kick from her husband. The arrival brought a short period of calm and happiness before the cycle began yet again.

Pallabi continued to endure all the violence until 2018. She met Mrs. Babli Dey, an SHG member from Palangsuguri who came to know about her situation and connected her to Haseena Khatun, a field facilitator of AVAHAN. Haseena showed her ways to come out of the cycle of violence. Initially Pallabi was hesitant to register her case with the ant for fear of legal repercussions. But after gathering some courage, she finally registered her case at the ant's legal aid centre on 24th July 2018. Since then, Haseena visited her house every alternate day, and conducted individual, couple and family counselling sessions. Pallabi too regularly visited the AVAHAN legal aid centre on appointed dates. It seemed like a slow and steady progress, but one day her husband hit her so hard in the public that she fell unconscious attracting the attention of the entire village. A meeting was held in the village where he signed an agreement stating that he would never hit her again. Both Pallabi and Amol persevered. The case was considered a success when Amol himself visited Haseena Khatun and assured her that he will never inflict violence on Pallabi. Mrs. Khatun also helped Amol to get out of his behavioural issues and connected him to an anger management course that was held at the ant campus. In Pallabi's words, Amol has changed a lot since then. She says, "now when he returns back from work, he walks through the house calling my name with love. Now, he takes all my suggestions and we take decisions together". Another turning point came in their life when the couple started living away from their relatives. They bore the fruit of their emotional labour to come out of this cycle, and there haven't been any violent episodes in their life for the past one year.

BRING THE CHANGE (BTC)

Economic inequality caused by underdevelopment and conflict in Chirang and Udalguri districts has pushed many adolescent girls into traps of child labour and early marriage leading to a bleak future. Many such girls come from economically disadvantaged families with most parents engaged in daily wage labour. These girls are left with little choice but to drop out from education and look after their families while their parents go to earn their daily wage. Often, they are married off early to reduce the economic burden. So many chances and opportunities in life are missed by these girls.

Our goal here is to cultivate leadership skills in the adolescent girls of Chirang and Udalguri, and to empower them to lead other girls and the communities out of this sinkhole. In order to achieve this goal, ~~the ant~~ works with girls from the age of 12 to 17 years and guide them in decision making, build perspectives and raise their aspirations. Bring the Change, with kfb, Austria as the lead funder, is a programme that trains adolescent girls through activity - based sessions to develop 7Cs (Caring, Communication, Confidence, Competence, Character, Connection and Career). The programme is divided into four stages – Bronze, Silver, Gold and Diamond. The project team helps the girls learn comprehensive life-skills, gives them skills-based health education and engages them in intensive community-based work to develop their leadership qualities.

-  551 sessions completed in 2021
-  164 girls reached Bronze Phase in 2021
-  160 new girls inducted since January
-  121 girls promoted to Silver in January



a. Emerging Leaders

The project Bring the Change has seen some significant changes in the girls who took part in the sessions. They can now understand their interests and communicate their needs better to their families and peers. Slowly but steadily, the girls are gaining the confidence to take matters in their own hands to improve the situation of their surroundings. Krishna Biswas and Aroti Barman from Diputunkubari, Chirang are the leading examples of the vision of this project. These girls identified that this area has quite a number of school dropouts due to various reasons that hinder these students to pursue their studies. They found out that girls leave their studies early due to unwanted household responsibilities, poor economic condition of the families and poor foundational literacy and basic numeracy skills. Krishna and Aroti have started a remedial study group where they are supporting 12 students with their lessons and are also teaching basic reading and writing skills to the children of their village.

b. Supporting The Girl Child

Empowering girls is deeply connected to empowering the communities and their parents/ guardians. Without creating a supportive environment for these girls, the intervention by our team will only solve their problems at a surface level. After conducting many meetings and sensitization drives with the communities and the parents/guardians, they are now able to understand the importance of child rights and education of girl child. When we say community, it includes various stakeholders from a village – parents/guardians, religious leaders, student unions, SHGs, etc. They are now active advocates of child rights and raise their voices against incidents of child labour and child marriage.



15 Parents/Guardians Meetings Conducted



11 Community Meetings Conducted



Stories of Impact....

A positive change was witnessed when the community of Paltan Chowk village in Udalguri stepped up to stop the marriage of a minor girl. Together with the help of the police and District Child Protection Office, the village members were able to send the 21-year-old man who was about to marry a young girl, to jail! The man even threatened to kill the girl and her family after his release from the jail. The village community stood like a rock behind the girl during this time too. The president of the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) informed, "We have been holding meetings in the village and the community has decided to take strict action against the boy and his family; if they threaten to harm, we will boycott them from the village itself." Hearing such stories of community action really gives us hope!

SUPPORTING LIFE OF DIGNITY FOR MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS

Mental Illness Treatment Alliance (MITA)

An endeavour by the MITA team to reduce the waiting period for the patients during the camps resulted in an app that could record all the initial symptoms and signs of the patients, enforce discipline in the doctors to choose a diagnosis before prescribing and to ensure that psychiatrists in the new centres with new partners in other districts followed our medicine protocol. This was designed at a very low cost by a software developer, Purvish Khalspada. Funded by the surplus generated from the 300 rupees per month taken from each of the 1300 patients – for all services inclusive of a month full of all the required medicines – this app was developed during CoViD, and though the staff went through considerable trouble in the first few months, it has helped in more ways than those listed earlier. It has improved data retrieval, improved record-confidentiality and reduced waiting times too! A CSR support from Globalworth Securities helped us distribute digital tablets and handhold our existing partners to roll out the app across all the programme locations.

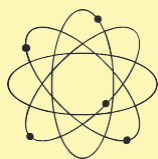


Driven by the mission to provide affordable and quality mental illness treatment in rural parts of Assam and the Northeast, the team MITA (Mental Illness Treatment Alliance) has worked relentlessly to innovate new ways to reach maximum number of people in need of the service in the face of looming pandemic. The hopelessness of the lockdowns didn't deter the hope of the rural communities from seeking treatments. The mental health team, in fact, saw an increase in the footfall of patients in 2021. As reported last year, almost 80% of the patients continued attending the camps despite the strictest enforcements of lockdowns. In fact, the mental health team, saw an increase in the footfall of patients in 2021. The number of registrations increased consistently with every successive month. The trend of developments also varies across the districts.

FOUR PILLARS OF THE MITA MODEL



Patient Centric



Doctor and Science Driven



Ethics and Programme Centric








NGO Partner Centric



a. Patients' Participation

A positive development in the programme is the increase in the number of follow up consultations. The increase has been consistent throughout the last three years.

Increase in the follow ups only shows that the patients are willing to continue treatment. The total number of follow up consultations in 2021 was 22,278. Since 2019 till 2021, the follow up consultations have increased by 105%. This increase in follow up patients can be attributed to the intensive follow up by our volunteers. Out of the total consultations, new patients make up only 7%. The number of new patients has also decreased since 2019 with a decline from 16.50 % registration of new patients to 9.1%, but this was mainly because of higher number of total patients. The number of new registrations has gone up in Dhemaji district. One of the facets of the programme that is being noticed is that more and more patients of common mental disorders are seeking treatment than earlier years. Obsessive Compulsive Disorders make a big chunk of this change, and we wonder if it is driven by the CoViD pandemic!

-  23,981 patients reached in total to date
-  2700 patients accessing the 23 camps every month
-  41 % severe mental health disorder (SMD) patients
-  37% common mental health disorders (CMD) patients
-  22% epilepsy patients



b. Annual MITA Partner’s Meet

A seven days training cum meeting was held by MITA for newer partner organisations and the advisors. The facilitators/resource persons for the training involved the participants in intensive sessions and exercises on different concepts of mental illness and intellectual disability. The participants took part in roleplaying, skits, storytelling, etc. to understand the conditions and situations of people with mental illness and intellectual disability. Apart from sessions on the concepts, the participants were also guided through the tools for diagnosing and communicating with patients, and management of mental health camps.

c. De-stigmatising MentalIllness

MITA has been working systematically to de-stigmatise mental illness amongst the communities to reach the maximum number of people who are in need of proper treatment. In the last three years, 2021 saw the highest number of awareness programmes. There was a 35 % rise in the number of awareness programmes organised by all partner organisations. A total of 259 awareness camps were held across all campsites in 2021.



CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Learning Ecosystem Augmentation Project (LEAP)

Supported by BMZ, Germany through Childaid Network, Germany, the LEAP project has three different wings of activities. The first wing works on improving the quality of education in Government lower and middle schools in 12 clusters, the second wing works on making Assamese learning materials easier for non-Assamese students to understand, and the third wing works towards making education accessible to 680 children in forest villages bordering Bhutan where there are no government schools for ‘forest enchroachers.’

a. Community Classes Children’s Education and Development

The second wave of CoViD has brought many challenges and changes to the project plans. The main area of intervention for LEAP i.e., LP and ME schools remained closed for most of the planned period. The team had to shift its approach from training teachers every month to conducting community classes for the students. Since there was some resistance by the communities to work with us due to more CoViD 19 positive cases in their villages than in the year 2020, the team had to start awareness campaigns and make the villagers ready for worst case scenarios.

🐜

81 villages reached

🐜

126 community class groups

🐜

80 schools covered



After having dialogues with the village communities, the Education Facilitators (EF) could start taking community classes from July in their own villages. Initially, the classes were taken for three hours per day and in the remaining hours, the EF would visit other villages to start community classes. Later in the month of August, the plan changed to taking community classes in their own village for two hours daily, and taking two to three hours weekly classes in another village in order to cover more children. (N.B. Despite our best efforts however, we could reach out to only 25 to 50% of the children we should have reached out through the Govt teachers!)

- 440 children reached in July • 234 girls • 206 boys •
- 1023 children covered through regular community classes in two months
- 880 children covered through weekly classes

b. Taking Quality Education to Forest Areas

i. Spreading Its Wings: In the face of challenges due to the pandemic, the LEAP team worked relentlessly to make quality education accessible to the children of villages situated deep inside the forest. 11 new Forest Learning Centres (FLCs) and 2 Model Learning Centres (MLCs) were opened. Initially only 8 FLCs were planned for opening, but it was found out by the Education Department that in some hamlets the drop-out rate of children from schools is huge due to migration of children from those hamlets to other parts of the country. As such, on the request of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Chirang, 3 more centres were opened in collaboration with them.



- 73% attendance rate in community classes •
- 73.6 % attendance rate in regular lower primary community classes •
- 64 % attendance rate in weekly community classes
- 55.41 % attendance rate in middle school section of community classes
- 515 enrolled in FLCs
- 158 enrolled in MLCs
- 58% attended FLC in a year • 55% attended MLC in a year

ii. Remedial Learning Centres (RLC): As per the project plans, 10 Remedial Learning Centres have been running in Deosiri and Santipur educational clusters. The remedial classes aim to improve the learning of students from class III to IV who are lagging behind by providing extra two hours of lessons in the learning centres. The annual rate of attendance in the centres was 61%.

• 327 students enrolled from class I to V • 181 boys • 181 girls

iii. Training the Teachers: To build the capacity of the teachers, training was conducted for the teachers in all the learning centres in forest areas separately throughout January to December. Eight trainings sessions were held each for FLC and MLC teachers. And seven training sessions were held for RLC teachers. They were trained on classroom processes, using teaching learning materials (TLM), conducting baseline test, etc.





SHIKSHA


For the children in villages located in the forests and forest fringe areas near Bhutan border, quality education has been a luxury that their parents cannot afford. Only a few families could send their children to private schools and other Govt. schools far away from their homes. Even the education for the latter stopped when the pandemic forced them to return home when all the schools closed down due to lockdown. During this time, the Child Development Centres (CDCs) and the Middle Elementary Study Centres (MESCs) continued to provide support for these children. What started as an after-school support system became the only source of education for these children during lockdown.

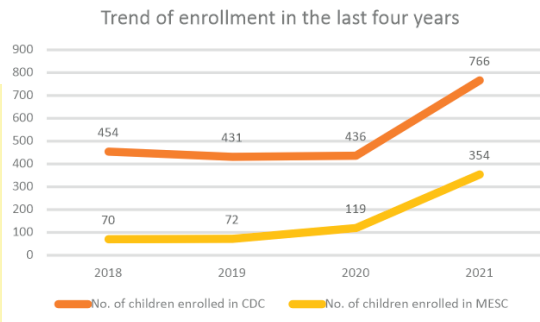
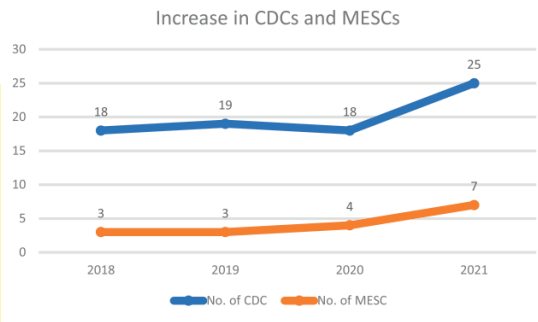
a. Child DevelopmentCentres

These centres provide support for children at the lower primary level in the age group of 6 to 10 years (except for 3 centres where the age group is 8 to 10 years). These children are taught the curriculum of the Assam State Education Board in supervised study sessions. The teachers use teaching learning materials (TLMs) produced by them and engage children with action songs, story-telling or participatory learning to make learning joyful for the children. The classroom is managed by a multi-grade multi-level method where a senior children will guide a younger child especially in a classroom with single teacher.

 25 CDCs

 43villages


 766 Children enrolled





b. Middle Education Study Centres

These centres look after the study needs of the children in the age group of 11 to 15 years of age and work on increasing their aptitudes in English, Mathematics and Science.

Since the CDCs and MESCs became the only source of learning space for the children in those villages, classes were regularly conducted in that period. The number of CDCs, MESCs, and children enrolled in these centres have increased in the past four years. This year, the Shiksha centres have also reached out to more villages to open Child Development Centres. The CDCs and MESCs took 2 hours of classes for 6 days every week.



7 MESCs



13 villages



354 Children enrolled


c. Supporting the Existing Institutions

Supplementary Teacher Aided Centres: Schools without teachers are just hollow structures. Many Govt. schools in rural areas suffer from this problem due to inadequate posting and high number of students in proportion to the number of teachers in a school. Acting on the request of the communities, we informed the Education Department about their plight and with permission made available 6 supplementary teachers in 7 schools supported the regular teachers in schools during school hours, and also take community classes when schools are closed.


6 teachers provided



7 schools supported


8 villages covered


287 children reached

d. Library in a Bag

Books can become a gateway to myriads of cultures, knowledge and worlds that are far away from us. Reading books outside of curriculum-based books can open up the curious minds and to cultivate interest for books in these children, the 'Library in a Bag' sessions were initiated and it continued even in the uncertain times of the pandemic. The books are rotated between the centres in a planned manner so that every centre gets the chance to involve the children in reading the books. The mobile library has many titles including books in vernacular languages too. In each session, children are encouraged to read aloud the books in 'reading sessions'


573 reading and library sessions held

COLOURING THE RAINBOW (CTR)

Amidst the clouded future of the pandemic, a few rainbows appeared in the sky. Along with disruption in the regular schooling of children, the lockdown-induced restrictions in movements also affected children's day-to-day physical activities. Started in 2019 with financial support from DKA-Austria, the Colouring the Rainbow Project (CTR) aims at providing children and youth with play-based curricula for their physical, mental and socio- emotional development. Colouring the Rainbow is not only about games and sports but creating a space where children from different communities can come together to learn. The target group i.e., children and youth are divided into three programs – Sports 4 Development or S4D (aged 7-10 years from different communities), Manoranjan (aged 11- 14 years playing Ultimate Disk within their religion/community) and Rainbow (aged 15-25 years playing Ultimate Disk amongst at least 3 religions and 3 language groups). Five domains are focused in the program modules for S4D– Education, Health and Hygiene, Gender, Socio-Emotional Learning and Child Rights.



a. Involving Parents and Communities

Community Meetings – Community meeting is the first step towards building an environment of trust between the communities and us. These meetings are held before implementing the project activities in a new village to understand the issues concerning children’s development such as child marriage, child labour, children dropping out of school, drug abuse, etc. in that particular village.

The meetings are also held with the aim to make the people aware of these issues and the need for their cooperation in interventions. These meetings have made the people in the villages more aware of their village issues and have prepared them to take collective action towards resolving them. Now they proactively take part in facilitating the sport sessions by arranging playgrounds and supporting the children in attending those sessions.

🐜 64 community meetings 🐜 5 clusters



b. Capacity Building:

Young men and women who we call Community Youth Mentors (CYMs) are an important part for the functioning of this programme. Training of Trainers (TOT) and refresher training sessions on curriculum were organised to build the capacity of the CYMs. TOT sessions focused on training them to understand the S4D concept, child safeguarding policy, and to understand their roles and responsibilities. The refresher training was done to train them on the five domains of the programme modules.




c. S4D Sessions

Regular game-based sessions on the five domains have seen some impact on the children. Those children who have attended the sessions are seen to be more aware of their health and hygiene. Their attitude towards sharing the space with other genders and persons with disability has been more inclusive. More importantly, boys and girls no longer feel shy to play together.

 1854 sessions held  Involves 487 girls and 562 boys

d. Sensitising the Communities

Creating a sensitive community is a step towards creating an inclusive space where everyone feels safe and respected. The CTR project is striving to work on eradicating various issues concerning children's development and has been working towards sensitizing the communities which include the local leaders, village people and other stakeholders and village people on child related issues such as right to education, empowering women and children through stopping child marriage, child trafficking, ending drug abuse amongst children and youth, etc. Total 4 sensitisation meetings were held in the year.

 4 Clusters covered  1144 People reached

e. Weekly Ultimate Sessions

Regular weekly Frisbee sessions for Manoranjan (same community, same religion, same language same village) and Rainbow teams (Group mixing 3 members from different community and 3 different religions in one group) age group 11-25 years have been conducted for all groups in all clusters. These sessions are conducted by CYMs once in a week in each team. The sessions have helped the youth to improve their communications skills, to speak up for oneself and for others, to aspire big and to become better human beings.



2483 Manoranjan Sessions held • 559 females reached • 699 males reached
 1117 Rainbow Sessions held • 389 females reached • 510 males reached

To us, the choice of Ultimate Disk (see ~~the~~ ant's website and older annual reports) for engaging children has been a very important decision by us in the past few years. Self- discipline, courtesy, inclusiveness – these results have encouraged all our other programmes with children to include this sport in their curriculum also.

f. Creating Disability Friendly Space:

Socio-emotional development of children and youth is incomplete without learning how to respect others and create an inclusive space in their attitude and works. Since the beginning of this project, ~~the~~ ant has been taking initiatives to include children with disability (CwD) and youth in the programmes. The children and youth participating in the game sessions are made aware of the problems persons with disability (PwD) face so that they understand and respect them, and create space for the PwDs in their activities. The Community Youth Mentors (CYMs) ensure that children and youth with disability are given the opportunity to take part in the game sessions. The project also supports persons with disability in availing various Government schemes. Through these sessions, the persons with disability and their families are now aware of the different Government provisions available for them and as such many of them were able to avail PWD certificates for themselves.

1165 sessions completed 42 children included 71 youth engaged
 74 adults assisted

MAKING OPPORTUNITIES AND UPLIFTING OF LIVES IN DEOSIRI (MOULD)

The communities in Deosiri, which is one of the poorest regions of Bodoland have been struggling to find sustainable means of livelihood. Most of the people in Deosiri are engaged in daily wage labour which doesn't give them any job security. The closure of the Bhutan border ended their chances of getting decent wage rates across the border and also depressed the wage-rates in the area. The Making Opportunities to Uplift Lives in Deosiri (MOULD) project was started in Deosiri fairly recently in the month of November in 2021 thanks to the support of Kadoorie Charitable Foundation, Hongkong. As such, the first few months of the project was spent in orienting and training its team members on the project, conducting meetings with the village communities, and preparing for a baseline survey on the socio-economic situation of the area.

a. Introductory Community Meetings

In order to familiarise the village communities with the ant and the activities it has been doing in the past several years, introductory meetings were organised with the community members. The agenda of these meetings was to explain the project objectives to the communities as well as to document the current socio-economic status of the communities especially the 5Cs – Financial Capital, Human Capital, Social Capital, Natural Capital and Physical Capital – to identify the gaps and design frameworks for intervention.

b. Capacity Building

Two-Day Orientation: A two-day orientation was conducted to create an in-depth knowledge of the project activities, outputs, and outcomes. The orientation was facilitated by Enakshi Dutta, Director of the IDeA team who engaged the team members in group activities to reflect and present their perspectives about the approach and to note the already existing level of understanding in the team. The orientation helped to fine tune all staff members together to an equivalent level of understanding and clarity at an individual as well as at team level. Roles and responsibilities were

clarified to mitigate overlapping of efforts and to enhance efficiency. It also emphasized team coordination to understand how it is crucial as we work in the same communities. The training also discussed the activities along with discussions on the identification and analysis of the stakeholders involved in the project.

PRA Training for the Staff: Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is an important tool for gaining knowledge on the existing resources of the villages that the project is targeting to work with and to identify their problems which helps the team to plan their activities. It also involves the communities in the process that helps in building their ownership of the project objectives, and building rapport between the communities and the project team. In order to equip the team members with the constituent elements of PRA such as Transect Walk, Social Map, Resource Map, Seasonal Calendars and Matrix Rankings, training was conducted at the ant cluster office at Deosiri in the month of November 2021. The training entailed a field- testing segment, for which the team was taken to No. 1 Aie-powali village to practise what they have garnered through the training session and to cement the knowledge of conducting high-quality Participatory Rural Appraisal.

Project Orientation and Training on SHG: One of the aims of the MOULD project is to work with the self-help groups (SHGs) to make them financially empowered. The members of the project were given training in two phases on SHGs. The first phase familiarised them with the concept and functioning of SHGs and the fundamentals of funds and credits that can be linked or sourced to existing SHGs. The second phase was more activity-based where the participants learned about the process of forming SHGs. The highlight of the second phase was a visit to an SHG and village organization (VO) to meet the members and get first hand experience on the functioning of SHGs.

c. Livelihoods Feasibility Study: To understand the current livelihoods situation of the people in Deosiri, a livelihoods feasibility study was conducted through a consultant who has worked in the region for a long time. Through focused group discussions (FGDs), interviews, field visits including visits to local markets, interaction with traders, block level and with district level officials from agriculture and animal husbandry departments, etc., the team guided by the consultant studied the current livelihood patterns and practices of the rural households, and identified the gaps in their existing knowledge on markets, management, technology, etc.



d. New SHGs Formed : There were already 54 SHGs functioning in the area. In addition to that 10 more SHGs were formed. Out of the existing SHGs, 6 were never registered under ASLRM.

CoViD RELIEF LIVELIHOOD

The second wave of lockdown again pushed many people to unemployment. Kuklung is an area where people have very few means of livelihood. Many of them were engaged in daily wage labour. Due to lockdown protocols, their movements to other villages (where they go to earn daily wages) were restricted and this affected their income generation during the period. Rendered jobless and without any means of employability, they turned to agriculture. ~~the ant~~ with support from APPI and later Dasra provided aid to these farmers by distributing seeds for cultivation so as to access the only markets that continued during the lockdowns – the local haats. In order to enhance their skills and production, the livelihood team in Kuklung conducted several training sessions with the farmers on how to sow the seeds scientifically, use of vermicompost, pest control, mushroom cultivation, juice production and

kitchen garden. The project also aimed to connect these farmers to different markets in the area so that they can generate some income from their seed cultivation.

🐜 290 farmers reached for summer crop

🐜 293 farmers reached for winter crop 🐜 11 summer crops cultivated

🐜 6 winter crops chosen

Towards a sustainable livelihood practice:

The aim of the project was not only to provide them with seeds, manures and pest control materials, but to involve them in producing their own raw materials for cultivation. The aim was to build a sustainable farming model with the farmers. The farmers are now more aware of organic farming methods and have got adept at cultivating vegetables to maximise their nutrition value. The farmers also collect and conserve the local varieties of seeds for the next cycle of cultivation.

The livelihoods project was not only focused on production of vegetables and marketability, but it aimed to work on wholesome development of the farmers. The initiative to start kitchen gardening is both a step to improve the nutrition intake of the poor farmers as well as a method of generating income.

🐜 14,68,170 rupees earned from both summer and winter crops

🐜 29 training sessions



Stories of Impact...

Kamini Ray, a 38-year-old farmer used to cultivate half a bigha of land in the traditional method. She used to grow plants such as mustard, greens, spinach, coriander, radish and roselle plants. In a year, she used to earn around 5000 rupees. She was later selected as a beneficiary for the CoViD Livelihoods Project which gave her the opportunity to learn new farming techniques in a series of trainings on kitchen garden. After receiving the training, she also expanded the variety of vegetables grown on her land. She was very sincere and followed every small step in growing the plants. As a result of the enhanced production from the kitchen garden, she earned 18,200 rupees in a year from selling the surplus in the local market. Kamini is saving the profits to invest in the cost of ploughing the land by tractor to cultivate black gram next year. She has also started saving the seeds for the next cycle of season.



CAPACITY BUILDING

Institute of Development Action (IDeA)

Institute of Development Action (IDeA) has been working for 15 years on guiding and supporting other emerging voluntary organisations in the Northeast. It started as an initiative to support the efforts of civil society to hasten the pace of development in the Northeast region of India and to build a vibrant voluntary sector in the region.

THREE STRATEGIES OF IDeA



**CULTIVATE
&
INCUBATE**



**CONNECT
&
ORGANISE**



**CONSULT
&
ADVISE**

CARING FRIENDS - Our Constant Support

This support allows us to provide monetary support to organisations to design and run rural development projects, but the main aim is to build the capacity of the voluntary organisations to work with – instead of 'for' – communities, create sustainable models of development and to get ready with administrative systems to get legally compliant so that they can grow enough to access resources including funds from other funding institutions. Despite lockdowns and restrictions on mobility, the year 2021 was a very hectic year for IDeA. Along with partner organisations, IDeA had engaged in CoViD relief activities. As the situation improved, the partner organisations with constant support from Caring Friends and IDeA revived their activities and quickly gained the momentum towards some achievements.



Some of the key activities carried out by the organisations include identifying new project villages in West Khasi Hills, engaging children in joyful and creative sessions in the districts of Dhubri and Sibasagar, working with students participating at learning centres in Jorhat and Kamrup, visiting households of persons with disability in Kokrajhar and Sipajhar, forming adolescent groups in Dimapur, and training farmers on mushroom cultivation in West Jaintia Hills. As the new situation demanded, the partner organisations adapted and made changes to their strategies which enabled them to constantly engage with their target groups. This consistency in efforts garnered them some achievements –



6 partner organisations received certifications such as 12AB, 80G and CSR during the reporting period.



2 partner organisations developed policies on HR, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace and Child Safeguarding Policy



51 Persons with Disabilities were able to get disability certificates due to initiatives of our partner organizations



2220 children and adolescents continued their learning through the student resource centre/learning centres facilitated by the partner organisations.



469 farmers have received training on improved farming practices and 129 farmers supported with input services



224 farmers and SHG members were engaged in livelihood activities





PAN NE - PRE - INCUBATION PHASE

For nascent organisations or even individuals wanting to start development work, IDEa initiated a pre-incubation programme last year in 2020-2021, with help from Weitschiet Foundation, a family foundation in Germany. The team has been providing critical technical inputs and hand-holding support to beginners from across the region. IDEa has supported 10 organisations till now spanning Assam, Meghalaya, and Manipur. 6 organisations have completed the 12 months program and 3 organisations have received the IDEa Incubation Grant.

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 Childaid Network, Germany. Throughout 2021-2022, the partner organisations worked with over 3500 children through 88 children's clubs.

Participatory learning exercises were conducted with children and community stakeholders, based on which projects for the 5 locations have been developed. Appealing resource materials such as Facilitators' Manuals, Moina's Story Flip charts, Fun Books, and posters have been developed and are being used by our partners during the Children's Club sessions known as 'Rhino clubs and Super Rhino clubs'. Engaging with and building the partners' capacities and understanding of various aspects of children's development such as 'Child mental health & counseling', Sports through 'Ultimate Disk', are crucial components of the project.





Through these workshops, the partner teams learned about mental health issues, their causes, and how to deal with such cases sensitively. Partners are now also focusing on the formation and strengthening of Village level child protection committees, and have initiated discussions with concerned stakeholders such as the District Child Protection Unit, Block Development Officers, etc. IDeA has developed a Facilitators' Manual for VLCPC formation and a handbook for VLCPC members.



IDeA has been the technical support for project Friends Across Barriers (FAB) funded by BMZ through terre des hommes (TDH). This was started in November 2021, supporting the four NGO implementation teams carrying out the project activities through capacity building of the staffs and designing materials for project activities. To have uniformity in the formation process of children clubs, IDeA designed manuals and facilitated the training of the project staff. The sessions are activity based and being enjoyed by the children as the staff facilitates the session. A total of 65 children clubs are formed in 58 villages. Approx. 1600 children in the age group of 9 to 14 years are part of these child clubs.

A large many number of children are afraid of mathematics in schools because they were introduced to concepts that seemed abstract, and the fact that the subject is full of rules and symbols. The school system of teaching mathematics fails to convey that mathematics comes from the puzzles we face in our real-life situations. IDeA collaborated with Jodo Gyan Shiksha a Delhi-based research and resource organisation and introduced experiential methods of teaching math to the primary school teachers using kits of colourful teaching learning materials (TLM). Teachers from 48 government and private primary schools attended the training to find out alternative ways of teaching math such that children can learn through reflection and gain concrete experiences.





OTHER ACTIVITIES.....

a. Teachers' Exposure Visit

A five days exposure visit was organised for the teachers of LEAP and Shiksha Projects to the Hummingbird School at Majuli in the month of November. The teachers visited the school to observe the participatory and child-friendly classroom for which the school has garnered a lot of appreciations.

b. Teaching Learning Material (TLM) Mela

In order to create an environment where all the teachers and education facilitators can share their teaching tools with each other, Teaching Learning Material (TLM) Mela was conducted at the Rowmari campus. It was a programme where the participants shared the tools and methods that they use in their classrooms that makes learning interesting for the students. The Deputy Commissioner, Chirang, officials from Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Chirang and the Director of Education of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) participated in this mela and greatly appreciated the effort and hoped that they could use them for the Government teachers across all the BTC districts.



c. Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY) Village Development Plan

the ant agreed to be part of the implementation of PMAGY scheme by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) government for the period of 2021-2022 in 11 villages identified for integrated area of development of villages with





a majority of Scheduled Castes population. **the ant** was commissioned by the Council to conduct a “Baseline Assessment and preparation of Village Development Plans” during the period of November 2021 to February 2022. The Village Development Plan process involved collecting household and village-level data in consultation with community stakeholders. During the process of this assignment, **the ant** was responsible for training of surveyors, management and quality assurance of collection of household and village level data, preparation of Village Development Plans through participatory methods, facilitation of VDP approvals by Gram Sabha and uploading all the data and VDPs in the PMAGY MIS portal. A total of 2896 households were surveyed in the process. As a result of this process, **the ant** was able to prepare interim VDPs with budgets for all the 11 villages and facilitated their approval in the Gram Sabhas conducted by the respective VCDCs. This was the first time in the history of **the ant** in 21 years that we received funds from any Government agency directly, and wonder if and when the entire amount will get to us!

d. Community Media initiative

With the support of Caring Friends, Dinananth Daimary, who completed a Fellowship on film-making for one year with Green Hub has got together a team and equipment to make short films/ videos on local issues, **the ant's** projects and to dub/adapt other relevant and informative videos to Bodo and Axomiya languages. These are available on our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@theanttheactionnortheasttr7927>) that you can subscribe to and share your feedback with us in!

e. CoViD Response

As the country was battling with deadly second wave of CoVid, **the ants** were busy formulating ways on how to keep the communities we are working with safe and yet, carry on the activities so that our work on sustainable development in the communities do not setback. **the ants** made adaptations to their plans accordingly and worked on awareness campaigns within the communities. The team in project LEAP started awareness campaigns in the project intervention areas on social distancing, washing hands regularly, wearing masks properly, steps to follow during infection, and training of ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activist) on handling CoViD related situations in their respective areas. The team members were given training and they also provided oximeters to



the people suffering from CoViD in their villages. IDeA supported the partner organisations in providing CoViD relief in the areas they are working in. Collaborating with the community stakeholders, the team IDeA and the partner organisations could work in communities in 125 villages which rendered the timely response to crises.



17000 households covered through awareness campaigns, vaccination drives, support to Covid-19 positive patients and joyful activities with children.



185 frontline workers such as ASHA workers and village volunteers were equipped with personal protective items and provided training.



195 Covid-19 patients were provided ration, medicines and follow-up support by ASHA, village volunteers and partner organisation staff.



1914 children received 'activity kits' to engage in home-based joyful activities and follow-up sessions were conducted with them by partner organisation staff. A set of design materials for awareness and home-based activities for children was designed and printed by IDeA and delivered to the partners for use in the field.



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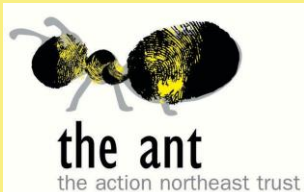
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