

# the ant

Quarterly Newsletter

(4th Quarter, 2023)



## **A Resounding Stand Against Gender-Based Violence in Chirang District**

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence in Chirang district, Assam, from November 25th to December 10th, 2023 marked a resounding success as women's groups organized impactful events across nine locations. Led by Village organizations, the campaign focused on messages about women's safety through methods like meetings, candle marches, slogans, drawing competitions, and marshal rallies. This year's campaign gained special significance as it shed light on a tragic incident involving a domestic violence survivor. Candlelight vigils were held, with participants expressing solidarity and protesting gender-based violence. Over 1000 people marched through the streets, conveying a powerful message of unity. Strategic slogans were shared on banners, posters, and social media to spark conversations about prioritizing women's safety and rejecting violence. The campaign challenged norms, advocating for a culture that prioritizes women's well-being. Women's groups took to the streets in organised marshal rallies in Deosri & Bishnupur of Chirang district. The rallies provide a platform for participants to voice their concern and demand justice for the survivors. A drawing competition in Betbari engaged adolescents. Overall, the campaign showcased community solidarity, emphasizing the urgency of prioritizing women's safety and calling for societal change to eradicate gender-based violence.

## Threads of Empowerment: A Journey from Dakin Makra to Aagor



On December 11, 2023, a group of nine inspiring Muslim women set out on an enriching exposure visit from Dakin Makra and Kaljalpara to Aagor. The primary goal of this visit was to delve into the intricacies of Aagor's business cycle, gain practical business insights, and immerse themselves in the daily lives of weavers. The women had the unique opportunity to witness the entire Bodo weaving process firsthand, from the creation of threads to the sale of exquisite garments.

This initiative aimed to instil motivation and empowerment in these women, fostering the potential for sustainable economic development in the village. The expedition was marked by a commitment to resilience, empowerment, entrepreneurship, and positive transformation, setting the stage for a journey toward progress and prosperity.

## Rainbow Tournament



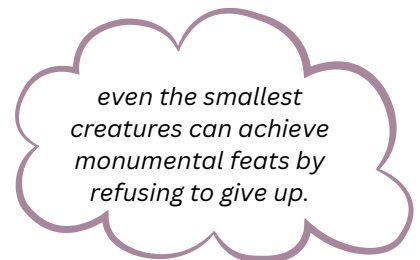
The Rainbow Tournament took place on December 17, 2023, at the Rowmari field near the ant campus. The primary focus of this event was to assess teams' demonstration of the Spirit of the Game (SOTG). Alongside the customary spirit circle for SOTG scoring, four observers were appointed to see the overall manifestation of teams' sportsmanship.

A total of 200 participants, comprising 116 males and 84 females, engaged in spirited competition representing 10 teams. These teams hailed from the five working clusters of the Chirang district in Assam. The Morning Star team from the Deosiri cluster received the best award of SOTG. The runners-up position went to Team Daogasar from Patabari.

## Recommencing Activities After FCRA Suspension

Following the suspension under FCRA, a significant portion of MOULD's activities had to be put on hold due to the absence of field staff. Despite this challenge, the team persevered by maintaining oversight of the revolving fund distributed to Self-Help Group (SHG) members through Village Organization.

In an effort to resume institutional building activities with the group, MOULD took proactive steps by hiring three part-time staff in three Village Cluster Development Committees (VCDCs). This initiative aimed not only to restart the institutional building exercises but also to sustain the quality monitoring of the revolving fund. Additionally, a training session was conducted for the staff on December 28th and 29th, 2023, at the ant campus. Notably, the training was facilitated by Dhananjay Ray from SeSTA.



*even the smallest creatures can achieve monumental feats by refusing to give up.*



## Capturing Change: a@c films spotlight MITA's impact

On November 26th, 2023, a@c films partnered with News18 to capture the impactful endeavors of the ant, shedding light on MITA and showcasing the visionary initiatives undertaken by the ant's founder. [For more information, visit <https://www.artistsatcore.com/>].

## Basic Counselling Skills Training

On 12th December, 2023, a training focusing on the basic skills of counselling was held at the ant. 15 participants attended the training. In this training, participants were made aware of what is counselling and what is not. Some basic skills such as empathy, non-judgmental attitude and active listening were discussed with activities. Lastly, the issue of self-harm and suicide was discussed.

## Visit by Researchers from APU



On the occasion of World Mental Health Day, Dr. Mintu Moni Sarma presented the MITA model at the Bhopal Campus of Azim Premji University. This presentation served as an introduction for APU's faculty members to the MITA model, prompting their subsequent visit for fieldwork during 2nd to 5th December, 2023. Their objective was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the MITA intervention for their ongoing research project entitled 'Community Mental Health Interventions: Learnings for Research and Practice.'

## Serja and Sifung Making Workshop

From December 16th to December 21st, 2023, workshop on Serja and Sifung Making was held at Sifung Harimu Afat office. The workshop, led by Ashak Basumatary, training facilitator, saw the active participation of eight male attendees. It was a dynamic and enriching experience for everyone involved.



**Sifung:** It means the long-sized Bodo flute having five holes only.

**Serja:** It is a kind of violin used by the Bodos and have four strings and traditionally played by a small bow made of bamboo strip. The bow string is made of a small bunch of hairs of a horse's tail.

**Bodo-language Adaptation by CMU for 'Agrobiodiversity, Climate Change, and Resilience'**



The documentary film titled “Agrobiodiversity, Climate Change, and Resilience”, produced by NEN in Chizami, Nagaland, has been dubbed in the Bodo language by the Community Media Unit (CMU), the ant. CMU, the ant, believes that the film holds significant relevance for Bodoland, Assam, leading to its dubbing in Bodo.

This compelling documentary captures the narratives of women farmers in Chizami, Nagaland, showcasing their experiential knowledge in adapting to climate change. Furthermore, it underscores the critical role of sustainable food and farming systems, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted global food security.

The documentary advocates for drawing inspiration from indigenous knowledge, fostering sharing and social bonds to bolster community resilience against the impacts of climate change. Ultimately, it highlights the importance of collective efforts in preserving the environment and ensuring sustainable food systems for future generations.



**Stories of Change**

**Journey of transformation with Ultimate Frisbee**



*Madhab said, “Without Frisbee I might had fallen into bad habit”. The help that Madhab identified was the intervention that the ant’s initiative under project Colouring the Rainbow implemented through the sport Ultimate Frisbee.*

Reflecting on his past, Madhab described himself as an introverted, shy, and less confident individual. However, his consistent participation in Ultimate Frisbee sessions facilitated a remarkable change. The sport became a catalyst for personal growth, enhancing his communication skills, overcoming shyness, and enabling him to engage in meaningful conversations. Madhab even began training junior players and delving into the diverse cultures of others.

The career guidance program initiated by the CTR project played a pivotal role in helping Madhab choose a career aligned with his interests. Balancing both sports and studies, he proudly declared that Ultimate Frisbee contributed significantly to his self-esteem. At present Madhab is taking active part and leading team Bahubali as a team captain. Apart from this he is also now able to trained the junior players demonstrating his leadership skill.

Expressing immense happiness, Madhab states, whatever he has achieved in his life is because of Ultimate Frisbee and career guidance in moulding his self-esteem. Now his immediate aim is to become a good Frisbee player and would love to train the juniors to expand the spirit of Frisbee.

**Some Photo and Video Documentation by CMU**



**3 days Bodo traditional dance TOT workshop at Rowmari organized by Sifung**



**3 days Kham (Bodo musical instrument) Learning workshop at Rowmari organized by Sifung**

**5 days Serja (Bodo musical instrument) making workshop at Rowmari organized by Sifung**



## IDeAting For Change

### Monitoring and Documentation Workshop for IDeA CF Partners

As part of the Caring Friends Incubation Grant Program, from 14th to 17th November, 2023, IDeA hosted the Monitoring and Documentary training workshop in Bosco Reach Out, Guwhati, tailored to empower and equip their partner organisations from various parts of the north-east. The workshop was designed to encourage active participation, and the agenda included engaging activities like report writing sessions, presentations, summarization, and feedback sharing. More than 15 partner organizations from across the north-east actively participated, contributing to the success and collaborative spirit of the workshop.



### Inauguration of Child Rights Newsletter by Partner

On the occasion of Children's Day, 14th November, 2023, IDeA – **the ant** inaugurated the Child Rights newsletter by their Incubation Project partner, Eco-System Protection Trust (ESPT). Dedicated to harnessing the transformative potential of education for the benefit of children, ESPT has been tirelessly working towards creating a brighter future. The child rights newsletter serves as a testament to their joint commitment in discovering and nurturing the unique talents of young minds.



## Reflection from past year



“In retrospect, the year 2023 proved to be a period of learning and unexpected experiences for our organization. The suspension of our FCRA registration compelled us to make difficult decisions, resulting in the suspension of four projects and downsizing three others, leading to the regrettable layoff of 130 colleagues. Despite the painful and tedious process, the Thanksgiving ceremony held for departing team members was a day filled with joy, as they embarked on a three-month journey of preparation before leaving the organization.

As an organization, we have now bounced back to normal and are prepared to be resilient, having formulated a strategic plan for the next five years. Regardless of the challenges that may arise, we are resolute and well-prepared to navigate any hurdles that come our way. Our core purpose and strength lie in the communities we serve, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to walk alongside them. As long as the community needs us, we stand ready to continue our vision.”

– **Netaji Basumatary, Executive Director, the ant**

“The past year has been difficult as half of the ant field operations were suspended because of restrictions to use foreign funds. This affected all of us and the communities we work with. Despite the uncertainties, as ants, our collective commitment and "never give up" attitude have kept us going. I am reminded once again that when one or two come together and stand for what they care about, we can overcome nearly anything. As ants, may we remain agile, evolving, and may we inspire ourselves and others as we look forward to a new year.”

– **Rhondeni Kikon, Programme Director, the ant**

“The 2023 FCRA suspension was a very difficult situation for the organisation. It will remain forever in our mind. On the other hand, it was a very valuable source of learning and insight for the organisation. It has helped us to understand ourselves better. We are now ready to face upcoming challenges.”

**Rwmwi Rwmwi Basumatary, Project Coordinator, Mould, the ant**

*“It always seems impossible until it is done.” Nelson Mandela.*


In the year 2018 the ant Board of Trustees decided to move the work of IDeA from the ant as a separate entity. This decision came about as the type of work, the structure, the scale and outreach of work of IDeA was diverse the management and risk for the ant was challenging. It has taken 6 years for this process to complete. A Section 8 Company has been incorporated by the name Roots to Branches Foundation for taking forward this piece of work. With the incorporation of this organisation the work undertaken by IDeA would come to a stop within the ant from the 31st March 2024 and the IDeA team would transition into the new entity. The philosophy, values and the work ethic would continue to remain the same, and the ant would always remain to be the parent institution.”

– **Enakshi Dutta, Director, IDeA - the ant**

“Looking back on the past year, I am amazed by how much our work has impacted both the community and my own understanding and compassion. It has been a journey of learning and growth, dealing with challenges and uncertainties. There were tough times where progress felt slow and obstacles seemed overwhelming. But in those moments, I discovered strength within myself.

As we move into another year of this important work, I will carry these lessons with me, knowing that each step we take brings us closer to a brighter, more inclusive future.”

– Priyanka Bhuyan, Clinical Psychologist, MITA, the ant



*As we wrap up the final quarter, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your unwavering commitment to our service. The dedication you all have made a significant impact, fostering positive change throughout the past year.*

*As we move towards a new year, let us continue working together to create a brighter future for all. Thank you for being the driving force behind our mission.*

*Wishing you joy and fulfillment in the upcoming year.*

Thank You for reading!

