



the ant

the action northeast trust

17

the ant's

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 – 2017

In the last year, the world has seen a growing trend of extremism, intolerance and polarization, both in the domestic and international spheres. As the ant turns 17, we realize it is time to address this menace more proactively, particularly by working with our children and young people, so that they don't follow the same paths of divisiveness, and walk instead the roads of inclusion and peace...

It's time to get back to basics, to become aware of our constitutional rights, and to reinforce in our team and the society around us our fundamental values of love, *ahimsa* and forgiveness.

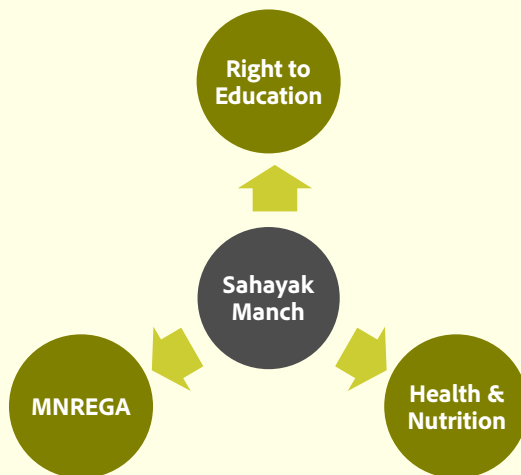


1. EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES

a. Caring 4 Rights –

Building Dialogue & Action for Child Rights in Conflict Affected Villages of Chirang

Our journey towards peace and reconciliation with communities has evolved over the years. The main aim is to get communities to fight together for a common cause instead of fighting each other. We wish them to deal with disasters and emergencies shoulder to shoulder, especially working to mitigate the disaster of conflict which causes huge loss for the poorest families on both sides of the fence. Building on the work we started last year in 32 villages to collectivize communities with a history of conflict into Sahayak Manches or “Cooperation Forums” and also establishing “Golpo Deras” or Dialogue Houses in the villages, we feel that the time is right to help them take action for demanding accountability of the State and get children and women, especially from marginalised households their legal rights and entitlements. In the entire collectivisation and action process are embedded the principles of dialogue, cooperation, mutual respect, collective action and participation. Continuing with the SahayakManches in 2016, we are forming more Sahayak Manches with similar formats to come together in a larger area of 60 Sahayak Manches (inclusive of current 32). And, as they get their children their rights and entitlements together, it could also be a step towards peace and reconciliation among communities in conflict by creating active spaces where they experience each other. In the long term, this project backed by UNICEF can expose people to an idea of reducing their dependence on violence to redress conflict.



The work of the Sahayak Manch will be based on the following principles:

1. Participatory approach
2. Conscientization
3. Empowerment
4. Learning in a dialogue-rich group
5. Problem-posing and the search for solutions
6. Reflection and action, learning through action shaped by reflection and then leading to further action
7. Collective action

It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order to critically reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection: this we know from the works of Paulo Freire.

The involvement of the Sahayak Manch in intervention villages has seen a growing improvement in relationships between Bengali Muslim and Bodo communities, which had hitherto been alienated from one another following the violence between the two communities in 2012. It is observed that there is a gradual building up of trust between the two communities, especially among youth through activities like the mixed football tournament. In Bhalatal village, where four people, two Muslims and two Bodos, were killed in the violence in 2012, people were unwilling to attend Sahayak meetings and trainings jointly, and would not let the young people form a mixed community football team. Finally, the Bodo team of Bhalatal played with the Muslim team, with the latter losing. Nonetheless, substitute players from the Bodo team joined the team of Muslim youth, and this mixed team ultimately won the match, and also a subsequent tournament in Majrabari village. This entire experience has brought the two villages much closer together. In fact, we are learning to hold tournaments only of mixed community teams!!

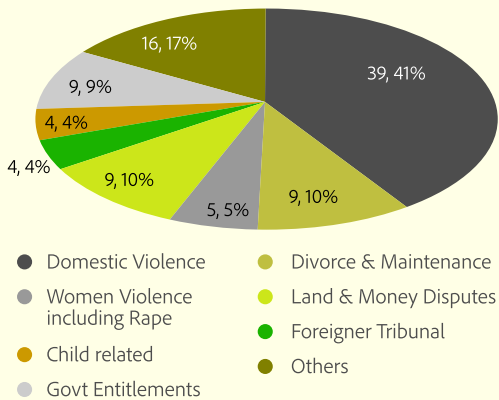


Training on Disaster Risk Management in the community



Mixed community football players getting ready for a match

Legal Cases Handled (95 cases)



Legal Aid Cell – Peace and justice being two parts of the same coin, since 2012 we have been running a Legal Aid Cell at **the ant**'s campus to offer free legal advice and help for people who need it. Lawyers and para-legal workers help solve the cases of the community through both legal advice and legal aid. This year, of a total of 162 cases, the most occurring type of cases with the legal aid cell involved domestic violence, maintenance, land disputes and money matters. Others include disputes related to the Indira Awas Yojna, Foreigner's Tribunal, Child Marriage, and others. Caring Friends continued supporting this initiative this year too!

b. Sports for Development (S4D)

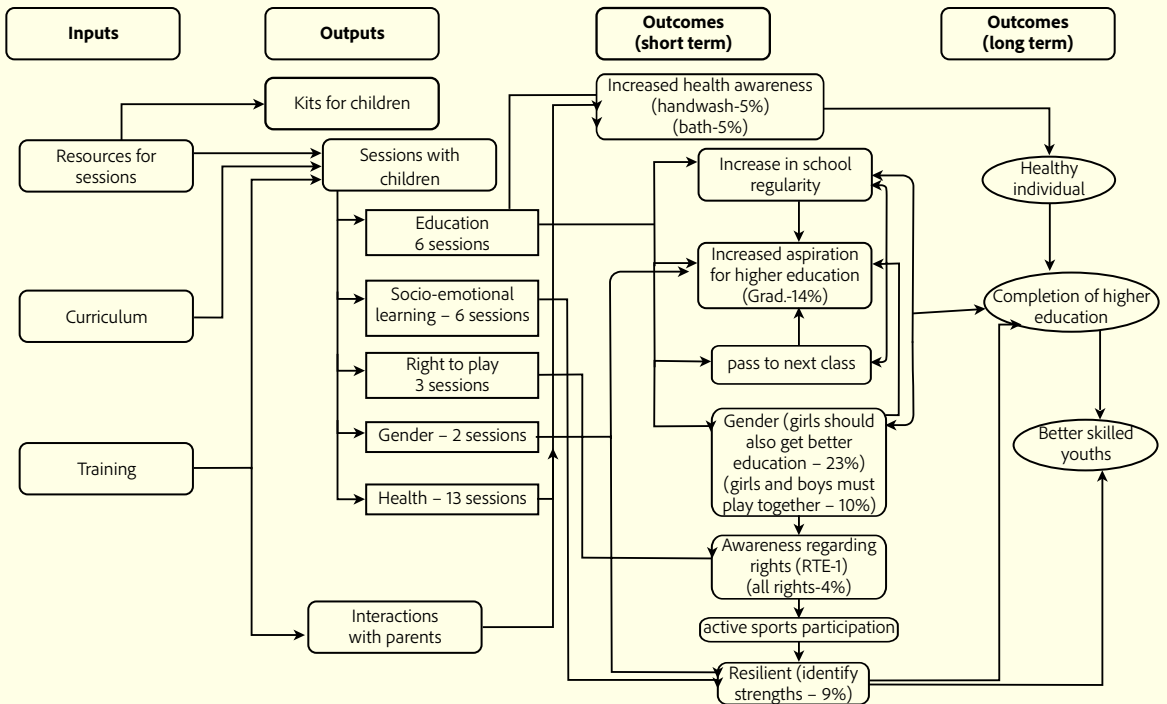
Using a sports and games based curriculum, we are reaching out to 3000 children in Chirang District in the ages 8-14 years to achieve physical, mental, emotional and social development. The main goal of this (largely) DKA supported project is to contribute to improved social cohesion among children of different ethnic groups, improved participation in schools from children and parents, and to contribute to improved confidence amongst children and youth.

Children and youth need significant other things in their life beyond the school and family environment to mentor them and to be able to talk about things that concern them. This effort is being made in this project by working with community youths by mentoring them closely through project staff (youth facilitators) to take leadership and also to mentor younger children. The interaction and mentoring is done using sports based curriculum by Magic Bus Foundation, the technical partner of **the ant** for the project.

Girls and Boys playing during one of the S4D sessions in the community



Results of the recently conducted midline study are shown in the following figures:



Education

Aspirations for Higher Education

- A greater number of children have realized the benefits of pursuing their higher education
- 14% more children wish to complete degrees up to graduation and above as compared to the baseline

Gender

Perceptions and Attitudes towards

- Greater awareness about gender stereotypes was observed, where there was an overall drop in the number of children who believed in the same
- A positive shift towards gender equality was observed from baseline to midline

Socio-Emotional Skills

Self-Awareness and Management

- There was an increase in the number of children who could identify their strengths and weaknesses from baseline to midline
- The number of children who understood the meaning of consent increased by 13.4%

Child Rights

Awareness about Children's Rights

- The awareness amongst the children about the RTE and child rights in general increased; however, the number of children aware about their individual rights dropped

Health

Practice of Personal Cleanliness and Hygiene

- Increase in 5% of children practising healthy habits like using soap while washing hands or having a bath

Age of marriage

Awareness about the legal age for marriage

- The number of girls aware about the legal age for marriage increased by 4%

Though we started on a model largely run by Community Youth Leaders who would volunteer once a week for this, we found that many of them were unable to be regular in running the activities. Hence they have been replaced by trained community youth mentors (CYMs) who shall now be responsible to run the weekly sessions for children in their villages. It is great to see some of the CYLs grow into CYMs with robust confidence and sound skills. Some have been exceptional. Like Gwjwn (pronounced as Guh-Zuhn) in the photo (left, behind the camera) alongside. He



Gwjwn (left) behind the camera

dropped out after Class 12 because his parents could not afford the college fees. But with a passion for making films, he worked really hard and earned some money. Currently, he is making his own film, leading S4D sessions in his village and also helping us mentor and train other youth in his area!

Promoting peace and diversity through sports

The Community Youth Leaders (CYLs) tournament was organized in Rowmari, the base of ~~the ant~~, using sports as a medium to promote child rights, gender equality, peace and diversity. Despite the history of violence that these youths have experienced in the past, the inhibitions and awareness of the differences seemed to fade away in the cheering and laughter as the game progressed with CYLs from different communities playing together as a team of CYLs.

The tournament saw both boys and girls coming together as a team and playing together with good team spirit. As one of the CYLs mentioned "In this tournament we are playing handball and Frisbee where both boys and girls are playing as a team – this is the first time we have seen both boys and girls playing sports together as a team." Traditionally, football is seen as a boys' game but the tournament saw girls participating with much enthusiasm and skill in the game.



c. Shiksha: Improving Education Quality

Education for the poor normally means poor education! To change this and to build a positive atmosphere for studies in remote, hard-to reach villages so that school performance can improve, especially of girls, we have been helped by a donor through Arpan Foundation – with Arpan Foundation also contributing to the kitty!– to run some make-shift schools in Deosiri and Kuklung areas. Project Shiksha covers a total of 98 villages and reaches out to 1391 students from remote villages (705 female, 691 Male). There are three kinds of interventions in these areas:

Contributing to early childhood education - guided study and extra-curricular activities for young children



Child Development Centres (CDCs)

- 26 CDCs
- 774 children enrolled from class 1 to 5
- Ultimate Frisbee played everyday
- 2 hours x 5 days/week

Remedial support to middle school children in Maths, Science and English



Middle Education Study Centre (MESC)

- 4 Centres
- 146 children enrolled from class 6 to 8
- Special focus on Maths, Science, English
- 2 hours x 3 days/week

Support to schools in remote areas with single teacher or with high student-teacher ratio to maintain quality of teaching



Supplementary Teachers in Govt. School

- On the request of SMCs, 11 teachers placed in Lower Primary Schools where the Teacher:Student ratio is low (in remote areas)
- Training on Alternative teaching methods





i. Children Development Centres (CDC)

We started 25 CDCs which engage young children to create learning beyond schooling through sports and extra-curricular activities. The centres are running in two of our cluster areas, namely: Deosiri and Kuklung, which are forest areas situated in the foothills of Bhutan.

All the centres have been started in collaboration with the community involving parents, village leaders and also leaders of local community-based organisations like the students' unions. We are providing a teacher, some teaching materials and facilities for games. The community

is highly appreciative of these centres. Although meant for increasing the study hours for children as they have no learning environment at home, the 2 hours of activity-based learning for five to six days a week every month has been appreciated by the community as something much more valuable than what they were getting all along.



ii. Middle Education Study Centre (MESC)

Similar to the Children Development Centres, 4 MESC were started and are now running regularly to cater to the middle school going children. The poor education facilities in our district, especially in the Middle schools, deeply affects the children in their future. There are 2 hours of classes for 3 days in a week to provide special focus to subjects like English, Mathematics and Science.

iii. Supplementary Teachers in Government school

Though the Right to Education may insist on 1 teacher for every 30 students approximately, the fact of the matter is that many schools continue to have a low count of teachers. We have provided 11 supplementary teachers to selected lower primary "government" and "government-aided venture" schools in both Kuklung as well as Deosri, to support schools with single-teacher schools to maintain quality of teaching. Some of the schools have no teachers at all! Such teachers have been nominated by the community itself, with **the ant** providing basic training, teaching & learning material.

iv. Other Activities

We strongly advocate the need for recreation and extra-curricular learning for children because the Right to Play and recreation is one of the rights of children under the Child Rights Convention. Libraries in Bags have also been provided in all our centres. Chirang District, ever since its foundation has been occupying the last position in Assam at the matriculation level. To improve the percentage of passing out students, this year, we pulled out the stops and paid well some tutors to be able to "remedy the education at the end of schooling" and help the district raise its position.

Library in a Bag (LIB)

To inculcate the "love" of reading books amongst children, beyond their school curriculum we have designed a Library in a Bag (aka LIB) for all the 26 CDCs and 4 MESCs in both Kuklung and Deosri clusters. The LIBs are simply a set of books which are not in the curriculum of the students, for example, story books, illustrations, dictionaries, etc., with a mix of English, Assamese and Bodo languages according to the medium of instruction.



The same has been running with decent success (over 80% usage found on random checks and visits!) and we are trying our best to make them child-friendly. The books are often rotated after a few months between the schools.

Educational Tours

Many of the children in our villages have not yet seen, let alone experienced or visited, even a Railway station in their life. To add wings to their dreams, we had included Educational Tours for all CDCs/MESCs and so far 12 of these schools have completed this tour for some of their students.



Top: *Ultimate Frisbee*. Above left: *Remedial coaching*. Above right: *Educational tours*.

As part of improving their life-skills, a total of 167 children (86 girls, 59 boys) have participated in a total of 4 visits to various public places like the Railway station, Post Office, Fire station, Police Station and the Civil Hospital. Children visit these places, interact with the officers concerned and get more familiar with the functioning of such institutions that have gained importance in modern society.

Remedial Coaching for High School Students

Every year students drop out of education because they fail in subjects like science, maths and English in their matric exams. A special remedial coaching was organized in the communities for more than two months to prepare high school students just before the Board exams especially in subjects such as Maths, Science and English.

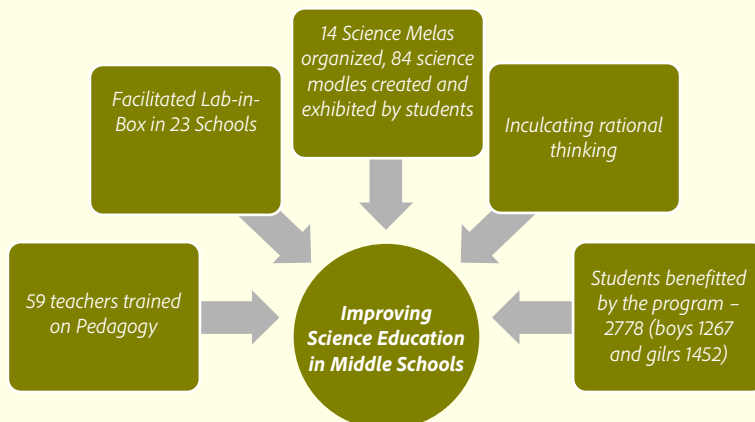
Ultimate Frisbee Sports

When it comes to sports, we have Frisbee – which is indeed an interesting and a learning game. Only planned for Deosiri cluster, the game has rules like: 50-50 girl-boy ratio as a basic rule of play, and inclusion of children speaking at least 3 different languages in each team, which makes it much more amazing. Playing with children above the age of 10, the Art of Play Foundation that helped us with this programme had a rigorous evaluation system to not just measure the skills of receiving and chucking the Frisbee, but also their self-discipline, school absenteeism, personal hygiene and also their hand - eye coordination.

We could organize 241 Frisbee sessions with the children, leading up to a Frisbee tournament between two teams. This has been quite motivating for us and we are looking forward to expanding this activity to our other clusters also.

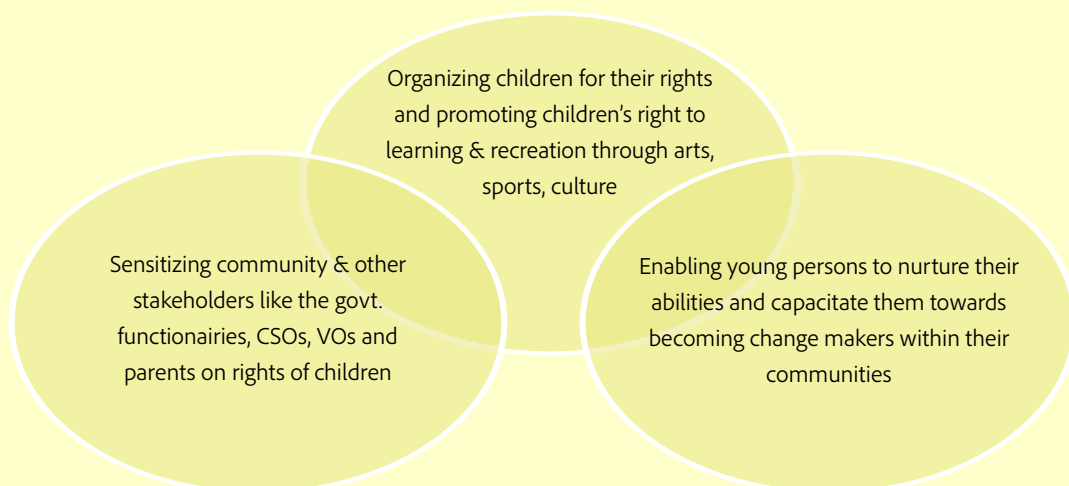
d. Bigyan — Working together with govt. middle schools to improve science education

Our science education project has finished 3 years of project intervention and is already into the fourth year of its work with the govt. middle schools in Chirang district. Started in 2013, the Science On Wheels programme was first implemented in 14 partner schools with an aim to improve the quality of science education in government schools moving from chalk and board methodology to more hands-on science experiments by students. Along with that the programme also reached out to adult populations to promote questioning of superstitious beliefs and irrational practices in the villages. But as we questioned ourselves whether our efforts would ever be sustainable, we realised that we needed to do something of this kind through Govt teachers rather than our own. So from 2016, funded by Child Aid Network, Germany we decided to train Science teachers from Govt run Middle Schools and prod them to use the experiments. In this year's Bigyan project. We also took help from the local Bongaigaon Refinery who agreed to provide a few sets of "Lab In A Box," which are collections of material and equipment to conduct experiments – sourced from Agastya Foundation in Andhra Pradesh – in the middle and upper classes. The Bigyan project is currently covering 23 government schools with a total enrolment of 2719 (boys 1267 and girls 1452) children from 6,7 &8th standards. The District Elementary Education Officer has been very supportive and positive about the programme and has expressed his interest and gratitude to the ant for the contribution to the science education in govt. schools. Recently the District Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) approached us to facilitate an orientation program of teachers on science; the project team organized a one-day training for around 60 teachers with a brief overview on science and the use of Lab-In-Box in the Bigyan project. The SSA also plans to do the same in other education blocks in the district and have requested for support from the project.



e. Project Dolphin*

The playful Gangetic Dolphin is the State aquatic animal of Assam and is called Shishu. Our effort to contribute in improving education in the area got larger this year when Terre des Hommes (TDH) Germany contacted us with a small handshaking grant while we could figure out what to do next year. This has resulted in a one year pilot project, starting April 2017. ~~the ant~~ thus has expanded its work to a new cluster covering two village council development committees (VCDCs) covering a total population of 7769 in 12 villages. From the experience we have gained from projects like Bigyan, Shiksha and Sports for Development, this project is an effort to bring all the components together under one umbrella to contribute towards realising child rights within our schools and communities.



Annual Status of Education Report Survey (ASER), Bengtol, Chirang

In order to gain insights into the learning levels and quality of schooling, Annual Status of Education Report Survey (ASER) was conducted in the project areas covering 24 lower primary schools and 3 middle schools adapted from the Pratham ASER tools that are used all over the country. ASER test was carried out in order to establish a baseline of children's learning levels and plan for intervention using the findings to improve the areas that needs critical attention for helping children to improve their learning levels at primary and middle schools. The results of the test were astounding.

Key Findings

1. 31% of the middle school children cannot even read sentences in Bodo or Assamese (the medium of instruction of their schools), 56% cannot read a paragraph.
2. 27% of middle school children are unable to write down what is orally dictated.
3. 38% of middle school children can't even perform simple subtraction while 76% of them haven't learnt how to simply divide!
4. Of the children enrolled in middle school (6,7,8) more than half of them cannot read class I level text.

2. EMPOWERING WOMEN

2.1 Building Capacity

In our work with 246 groups having 2609 SHG women across 81 villages in Chirang district, we are focussing on building women's leadership, besides enabling women to enjoy social, economic and political rights enshrined in the constitution and in line with CEDAW. One key activity has been building the capacity of 22 community resource persons (CRPs) for SHGs, to get them trained in Books of Accounts, Group Management, problem solving and in linking the group with government agencies. 96% of our groups have by now been linked with banks and government



agencies, while 50% are self-sustained. They are able to maintain their book of accounts in a proper manner. Another important initiative started in 2015, the Mahila Suvidha Bank and Swadhinta Chakka Committee (Freedom on Wheels), is a local bank run by women's federation, providing loans for pressure cookers and gas stoves, and a cycle bank providing bicycles to promote women's mobility. The cycle bank continues to revolve their fund by providing more and more cycles year after year!

2.2 Kabaddi Tournament

One of the most attractive events of our women's programme is the annual Kabaddi tournament. This year 300



women participated, competed hard and helped others including their husbands and children enjoy the tournament! The tournament was organised by the Federation themselves and they contributed the expenses towards the tournament as well, with the ant only chipping in for prize money.

2.3 Ending Domestic Violence

The End Violence Against Women and Girls Campaign began on 25th November 2016, with an awareness campaign in Odalguri village. This was the very first time we could involve men in the campaign and though initially we were very tentative with our approach of involving men, they appeared very positive and at the end of the campaign the participants of the workshop promised to raise their



collective voice to end the violence against women. In this campaign we were able to reach out to around 1500 women and 350 men including youth. From May 2017, we plan to take this issue up in all seriousness by working with 250 village groups over three years with the help of Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives.

2.4 Women's Day Celebrations!

International Women's Day is always a much-awaited event for our women's federations, who wholly take up the responsibility of organising the event with meetings and trainings starting a month in advance! This year's theme was #BE BOLD FOR CHANGE# and women's day was celebrated in seven different places of Chirang district, with the participation of around 1200 women. Fun games such as Tug of war, dancing, and discussions were organized to mark the day. The key note of the event was to declare bold action, and to felicitate and encourage women who had fearlessly taken a step to improve their or their families' lives, or those who had developed an aspect of livelihoods, or even more importantly, if they had challenged traditional societal norms that suppressed women.



3. MENTAL HEALTH

Decades of insurgent violence has collapsed systems. Most affected has been the health system. With the coming of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) things gradually made some progress in Health but the picture still remains grim for mental health services. **the ant** has been working on Mental Health for the past 8 years and has reached out to 4809 people living with Mental Health problems. Currently we have around 1000 patients from Chirang and neighbouring districts on our rolls. Key activities include conducting outreach camps in 4 Primary Healthcare Centres on alternate Saturdays and Sundays, as well as a central mental health camp once a month in the Udangshri Dera campus. Along with this, thanks to a Tata Trust grant that ended in March 2017, we also used to carry out patient follow-up visits, and home visits in order to identify patients in selected areas of Chirang. Community awareness programs were also organized from time to time at small group levels as well as at large community group meetings and by organizing mental health day celebrations to sensitise people about mental health and epilepsy. Much of this was done in order to reduce stigma attached to mental illness.

Other activities include working with traditional healers in the area to promote collaborative work to promote mental health.

Healers Meeting – Traditional healers are still sought and respected in the communities for their ability to heal. People still seek their advice for their well-being. **the ant's** mental health program works closely with traditional healers to use their knowledge, trust and faith along with contemporary medicines to address mental illness and epilepsy. Two meetings with Local Traditional Healers were organized by the Mental Health team at **the ant** campus in which around 30 men and women traditional healers took part. The meetings led to an exchange of knowledge and experience among the participants and underscored the importance of working together in the pursuit of addressing mental health concerns of the communities.

In addition, with a view to include the caregivers in the process of caring for people with mental illness, we formed 6 support groups in Rowmari, Subaijhar, Mongolian, Amguri, Shantipur and Deosri. The members of each group meet once every month to share their experiences and discuss different issues.

We hope to sustain the programme with patients contributing between 8 to 10 rupees a day for their consultation, counselling and medicines, and plan to reach out on every weekend with outreach camps in 7 public health institutions and also have a monthly camp on campus.



4. IDeA

IDeA is a wing of **the ant** that is meant to support and further the voluntary sector in the region. Since its inception in 2007 it has been involved in capacity building for NGOs in the Northeast, in research and in networking with regional, national and international NGOs. For some glimpses of IDeA initiatives in the region, read on www.theant.org

4.1 Tribal Health Inequity Study

The multicentric research project titled “Health Inequities In a Conflict Area – An In-Depth Qualitative Study In Assam” supported by Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute For Medical Sciences & Technology is anchored by IDeA. The rationale behind this study is to know how health and health care services are affected in an area which has been affected by conflict and to understand further how other determinants such as loss of livelihoods, land, housing, culture, safety and security contribute to further health inequities. The qualitative research has been conducted in 6 villages of Chirang district with different ethnic groups belonging mainly to the Bodo, Adivasi and Nepali communities. The study started in March 2016 with training workshops followed by literature review and data collection and as we go to press, the study is in the final stages of data analysis and report writing.

Through this study we hope we shall get a deeper understanding that can help policy makers and planners fine-tune the provisioning of health and health care services in conflict areas. It can help us design programmes and projects that cater to the actual and also differential needs of different populations of people. Knowing the coping mechanisms of different groups of people can help design programmes which can build on these strengths.

Jennifer Liang & Balawansuk Lynrah presented a paper on Gender & Health – Understanding impacts of conflict on health using a gendered lens, at a seminar organized by Azim Premji University in Guwahati, Assam.



4.2 NGO Support

With help from Caring Friends, IDEa is currently funding small amounts of energetic work of 7 NGOs in Assam, Meghalaya & Manipur through project funds & 4 Institutional fellowships.

Featuring some of IDEa's partners work

Guns to Pens

INSIDE Northeast is a partner organization of IDEa involved in a project "Building Young People for Peace & Development" in Saikul, Manipur. Like most other places in the region people of Saikul have experienced violence in the past. The project encourages young people to inculcate a peace building culture through Shom-in (young people's parliament), book banks, career counselling and guidance, sports for development, capacity building of community leaders, promotion of youth entrepreneurship, skills training, and through educational tours.



An IDEa Partner Speaks Out



Purnima Boro

Fellowship recipient 2014-16
Mahila Shakti Kendra (MASK)
Balipara, Assam

When I applied for the ant-Caring Friends fellowship, our organization's financial situation was not so good. New government regulations were making it difficult to carry out microfinance activities, which was until then the major source of income for my organization. The fellowship money thus was an unexpected boon for us and gave us the space and opportunity to think through further. It was great relief to receive this kind of a support and encouragement during that critical phase.

The support of the Fellowships even had an influence on our institutional practice. Apart from direct work with SHGs and micro-finance, we got a chance to establish partnerships with different NGOs and funders and now we have various national and international partnerships. Caring Friends had also helped us with some funds to build a training centre, and to augment our revolving funds.

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES

Flood Relief – 1st time in 16 years

That climate change is hitting our villages hard can be seen by the fact that last year, for the first time in 16 years, we got into flood relief. The continuous rain in Bhutan and the flow of rain water down from the Bhutan hills to the plains resulted in overflowing rivers and their tributaries and damaged roads and villages and lives in many areas. The floods damaged houses, contaminated water sources, and also caused large scale erosion in many areas. It was reported that a total of 2,717.38 hectares of crop was affected and the flood water damaged hundreds of hectares of agricultural land, standing paddy crops and livestock. With the support of Caring Friends, we were able to provide Cash for Work activity to repair 59 damaged houses in our communities. A total of 8 relief camps were supported with tarpaulins and food items until the Government relief arrived, which we must admit came in reasonable time and was very accurate in its distribution!



Annual Meeting – Dream to Fly & Mumbai!

For 90% of the ant team – it was their dream fulfilled – to fly once in their lives! They had been saving up for one year and contributed their bit for the ticket but we could bring the entire team to Mumbai because of the support from Caring Friends in Mumbai. The reflections and the discussions were good and we even got to go on a Mumbai Darshan. The highlight of course was the opportunity to meet with our well-wishers and friends in Mumbai who have supported and encouraged our work over the years. That it resulted in some more donor cheques was bonus! Our deepest gratitude to Caring Friends for going out of their way and hosting our visit to Mumbai. The care, warmth and respect we got will linger with us and encourage us to work better.

Glimpses of the Annual Meeting in Mumbai 11th – 14th October 2016



Self Reflection time as a team

All Team leaders went on 3 days retreat from 15th - 17th Nov, 2016 at Siloam Home, Barapani, Shillong to have a time of reflection and sharing. The retreat was facilitated by a team from Initiatives of Change (I of C), Panchgani. Getting away from work and taking this time off together as a team was rejuvenating and helped in understanding each other. It was a time for looking within ourselves and making an effort to live the change we hope to see within our organization, our communities, and in our relationship with others.



Top: Learning about trust as an important feature of leadership and teamwork through games. Middle: The team at Siloam Home. Bottom left: Quiet time. Bottomright: Appreciating each other by writing a note on each other's back.

Jindal University Winter Institute

Students of International Relations, Sociology etc. usually do not have any field component in their studies. What they study is from textbooks. In order to change this and give students a "real feel" of what they study, the Jindal Global University (Sonapat, Haryana) collaborated with us and designed and ran a 2 weeks course. Called Winter Institute in Development Planning for Borderland Regions (WIDPBR) program, 7 students worked in the Institute along with their faculty.

The program provides an alternative pathway to studying and researching international relations through a structured and systematic immersion (and sensitization) in the form of field visits to the border areas of Bhutan and Assam. We hope such programmes give a practical perspective to a new generation of scholars and (future) policy analysts who have been sensitised by an exposure to border areas.



Right: Meeting with Secretary, Bhutan - India Friendship Association, Gelephu. Below: Students visit market place at the border – a space shared by both communities of India and Bhutan



STOP PRESS: We regret to announce that Jyoti Basumatary, our trustee and confidante since 2001 succumbed to cancer on the 14th of May. He is survived by his wife Preeti – also a trustee of Aagor – and their two sons. Jyoti and Preeti had sheltered Sunil when he first came to the area, and they were like family to him and Jenny. Their trust and liberal thought have provided unselfish and rock-steady support to **the ant** through thick and thin. We shall remain eternally grateful to him! R.I.P.

Sexual Harassment

We are embarrassed but feel duty-bound to announce that a sexual harassment case happened at **the ant**. The individual was immediately suspended and an Internal Committee on investigating the case confirmed the veracity of the complaints. The person's resignation was not accepted and he was dismissed from service. The Internal Committee imposed a hefty fine to be paid to the victim and also helped the victim in registering an FIR based on which the individual was arrested by the police. As per the Internal Committee's report, we are tightening our systems so as to prevent any further such incidents.

Volunteers

Peter and Barbara are a doughty couple from Germany who have decided to volunteer their time for the Indian rural people. Spending time with NGOs, helping them build proposals, management systems, or review and evaluate their projects, they bring crucial skills missing in many NGOs. With no expectations except that the NGO gets to serve its community better, the smile on their faces and twinkle in their eyes belies the seriousness of their evaluation, and the German precision of their advice can be overlooked only at your own peril. In their travels to different states and NGOs of India, they have come to us for weeks together peeping into our projects and we feel so fortunate to have them back on campus!

Saradha came just in time as we were looking for people to help with **the ant**'s new website that a professional team had taken almost a year and for various reasons, didn't seem anywhere near completion! Saradha volunteered with us for a month helping us develop **the ant**'s new website. An engineer by education, she had worked in Marketing and media fields prior to joining as a Daan Utsav fellow. She has also worked as a Marketing communications executive for a year in a start-up company and *The Hindu* as sub-editor in their online arm. She has an experience in content writing and online marketing.

Staff members who left **the ant**

We want to thank our team members who left the organization in 2017. Many of them have worked with us for years and have been an important part of **the ant**'s growing years. Thank you, Abdul Hai, Anjali Basumatary, Anjali Brahma, Ankit Das, Biswanath Brahma, Dhansri Basumatary, Jiyasri Iswary, Kanchai Boro, Mandira Goyary, Manoj Narzary, Menuka Tudu, Panindra Barman, Premnath Brahma, Ranima Narzary, Rashit Boro, Ratima Muchahary, Rina Basumatary, Sahida Begum, Sarala Chetry, Sasti Sangma, Stephan Narzary, Swnmw Basumatary.

As **the ant** celebrates 17 years we also remember all those who have contributed significantly in the initiatives of **the ant**. We wish them well as they take a new path.

New beginnings for a new year...

- 3 years project on Stop Domestic Violence supported by AzimPremji Philanthropic Initiatives.
- One year project on Protection Of Rights Of Children Through Improved Social Harmony Among Different Ethnic Communities In Bengtol, Assam supported by Terres des Hommes, Germany
- Caring for Rights - Building Dialogue & Action for Child Rights in Conflict Affected Villages of Chirang"one year project supported by UNICEF.
- Bigyan - Improving Science Education in Govt. middle schools one year project supported once again by Child Aid Network.



- *We often pride ourselves that our entire Accounts team comprises women ever since we started off in 2000, and that is not commonly seen elsewhere. Our motorcyclists in Jenny, Hasina and Nani also attract a lot of eyeballs in yet another male-dominated bastion. But when it comes to professional car drivers being women – something we have seen amongst Bangladesh NGOs but not in India – we feel proud in announcing yet another glass ceiling broken by the ant. Ulapi who used to be our Community Youth Leader earlier was trained by Azad Foundation in Jaipur for six months before she started driving our Bolero.*
- *Over the past few years, our relationship with Initiatives of Change, Panchgani (www.iofc.org) has been growing with their young Initiatives for Learning team comprising of Anup, Stephie, Wima, Madhu, Sunny, Wangi, Himanshu and Zooni (besides others) having come to our campus for carrying out sessions on Inner Governance and Be The Change with not just our staff, but also with the All Bodo Students Union. I ofC has identified the northeast a focus area and Suresh, Niketu, Christine and the others in I ofC have been actively creating ways of reaching out the I ofC philosophy of Absolute Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love as a way to go beyond one's community and to bring peace to the region.*
- *Dr Amit from their Jharkhand group of volunteers also brought in their Blood Donors Association this year, and their 4 member team - with an average donation count of donating blood more than 80 times (yes, we said average!!) – alongside the ant motivated the Bodo Youth to donate blood for other communities. The only thing restricting their enthusiasm was the capacity of the Government Blood Banks in various districts to receive blood!*

**We gratefully acknowledge
utilising funds from the following
grantmakers in 2016-17:**

DKA, Austria

Jamsetji Tata Trust, Mumbai

Bongaigaon Refinery, Chirang

Arpan Foundation, USA

Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science
Studies, Trivandrum

Caring Friends, Mumbai

National Foundation for India,
New Delhi

Nucleus Foundation, New Delhi

UNICEF, Guwahati

Child Aid Network, Germany

Terresdes Hommes, Germany

Our Donors in FY 2016-2017

Alpa Ambavat, Anup Maheshwari, Arun

Nahar, Bharati Mukesh Dalal, Devshi L.

Dedhia, Dhiren Dalal, Himatlal N. Shah,

Jamuna Ramakrishna, Jugnu Jain, Neela D'

Souza, Nihit Kaul, Poonam Kaul, Dr Rajeev

Singh, Rajiv Popli, Rashmi Jain, Surity

Brahmo Choudhary

*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, Udangshree
Dera, Village Rowmari, PO Khagrabari, District
Chirang via Bongaigaon, BTAD, Assam 783 380
India. For RTGS / online transfer of donations /
endowments by Indian citizens and corporate
entities to our Punjab National Bank account
number 1201000100106170, please use the IFSC
Code of PUNB0120100. We are eligible to receive
foreign contributions but foreign citizens and
organisations including Indians with foreign
citizenship and Indian registered companies with
more than 50% share capital from abroad may
please write to us before donating to us to comply
with Government of India procedures.*

the ant's BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mr. Debojit Brahma, Ms. Enakshi Dutta, Ms. Himalini Verma, Mr. V K
Madhavan, Mr. Netaji Basumatary and Dr. Sunil Kaul

the ant's LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Bistu Brahma, Mr. Nazrul Islam, Ms. Habiya Khatun, Ms. Nilima Ray,
Mr. Munshi Murmu, Mr. Pradip Narzary, Ms. Mithinga Basumatary, Mr.
Rugunath Basumatary, Mr. Manaranjan Muchahary.

the ant STAFF MEMBERS TILL 31ST MARCH, 2017

Administration, Accounts & ED Secretariat — Sunil Kaul, Rhonden
Kikon, Bhaswati Roy Choudhury, Rashmi Brahma, Nirila Brahma, Naren
Basumatary, Didwm Narzary, Mangal Brahma, Upama Brahma, Anjali
Brahma, Sabita Boro, Jabsrilsary, Saiten Basumatary, Ulupi Biswas.

Mental Health — Daithun Uzer Daimary, Parul Baroi, Sonima
Basumatary, Abdul Hai, Manoj Narzary, Nabanita Sharmah, Rupala
Brahma, Gwmwthaou Brahma

Women's Empowerment — Damayanti Brahma, Sankar Dev
Basumatary, Anil Muchahary, Hasina Khatun, Laxmi Chetri, Passang Lama

Peace and Justice — Jarin Wary, Nilu Rani Brahma, Dipali Narzary,
Akramul Hoque, MD. Hasim Ali, Sachi Mohan Roy, Rina Rani Brahma,
Anjali Basumatary, Narattam Basumatary, Nasir Uddin

Remote Area Development Programme — **Deosiri:** Rabindra Murmu,
Sunil Sutradhar, Samar Basumatary, Passang Lama. **Kuklung:** Sanjib
Daimary, Sasti Sangma, Anjali Brahma, Sahida Begum.

Bigyan — Mungthang Muchahary, Dhanjit Brahma, Mizink Narzary,
Danswrag Daimary

Children's Development Programme — Parmeswar Roy, Akadashi
Barman, Abdul Hussain Mandal, Swmdwn Basumatary, Sangrang
Brahma, Salman Ali, Kwmdwn Basumatary, Rwmwi Rwmwi Basumatary,
Nani Bhagat, Ranima Narzary, Mahananda Koch, John Koch, Ranjit
Narzary, Dinanath Daimary, Hero Basumatary, Solomon Basumatary,
Rumi Kujur

IDeA Research — Mintu Moni Sarma, Jennifer Liang, Balawansuk
Adreena Lynrah, Jauga Mochahary

Consultants — Jennifer Liang (Women's Development and Capacity
Building), Dr Mintu Moni Sarma (Doctor), Dr. RC Debnath (Doctor),
Dr Nabajyoti Kalita (Doctor), Md.Azgar Ali (Lawyer), Bindu Subedi
(Lawyer)



the ant

the action northeast trust

Udangshree Dera, Village Rowmari, PO Khagrabari
District Chirang via Bongaigaon, BTAD 783380
Assam, India. Ph: +91 3664 293802
Email: mail@theant.org Web: www.theant.org