



CASA in Action

NEWSLETTER



Women of change

The struggle of extra-ordinary women from rural India to break free from social injustice and unequal treatment

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

We bring to you the 3rd edition of **CASA in Action** newsletter with stories of women from rural India and their courage to outstand the challenge to bring a change in their communities.

Domestic violence, lesser participation in decision-making, dowry, female foeticide, illiteracy, lack of health awareness, pay disparity and trafficking into forced labor and sex slavery are some of the major challenges that are being faced by women in India, especially the ones living rural parts.

Poverty is deeply rooted in our social constructs that adversely impacts a woman's economic status to her nutrition and health status, and food security caused from unequal distribution of food at home.

Development within any society cannot be achieved without taking the role of women into account.

A glance through the cover story '**United They Stand, Divided They Fall**' will take you through an ocean of stories projecting struggles of so many extra-ordinary rural women having taken the challenge to improve the conditions of their communities.

Some have protested against the years of domestic violence, whereas some have gone against their family members and raised objections on excessive liquor consumption which adversely affect their families' financial stability.

We hope the tales of struggles of women in hinder India in this newsletter will give you an in-depth within the problem situation and the transformation they are willing to adapt. Feel free to write to us.

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Farmers have become increasingly vulnerable to crop failures due to natural calamities, changing weather patterns and have succumbed to global food price recession. Global Hunger Index 2016 indicates that India continue to have serious levels of widespread hunger forcing it to be ranked a lowly 97 among 118 developing countries. CASA's unique programme Food Support for Community Mobilisation (FSCM) aims at making the livelihood of the agrarian sections more sustainable by providing them work in their own vicinity. This is intended to improve the socio-economic status of the referral communities in many ways.

Addressing the need **WORK FOR ALL**



(Up) CASA project officer Francis Joseph interacting with Karma Oroan over recultivating his land.

(Below) Oroan at CASA resource centre in West Bengal.



62-year-old Karma Oroan's 1.70 acres of land remained unutilized for almost 14 years. After having received the patch through land distribution process, he was unable to cope up with the financial burden to re-harvest it for the agricultural purposes.

Having the responsibility to feed the family of 18 members, Karma had no choice but to migrate to nearby villages in search for labour work. Sometimes he migrated alone, and many times along with this family. Poverty also forced his two sons to drop out of schools and migrate to places to earn money for the family.

Living in a small village in West Bengal, the irregular rains and change in weather pattern proved the land cultivation a far-fetched dream for Karma and his family.

CASA's FSCM project identified people like Karma and motivated them to join the programme where they could again dream of making their land cultivable and become financially independent. CASA approached local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and gram panchayats to help rebuilt his land so that he can start his cultivation.

FSCM aims to address the issues of food insecurity with an objective to reduce migration in the areas. It also aims at the process of developing potential of the communities through mass awareness programmes on various government schemes so that they can gain the benefit.

Now after 44 years, Karma has planted paddy for the first time and plans to cultivate wheat and chana. An irrigation canal built by CASA in 2015 in the same area has provided water stability for farmers. Karma is now able to cultivate at least 2 crops a year which will stabilise his family's income. He feels his profit will rise to Rs 20,000 per year per crop and as a result he will face less problems related to food security.

Through FSCM Karma earned 300 kg rice while working on re-building the land. He says he worked from morning to late afternoon so that he could see his land get rejuvenated soon. He said that he will repay the loan from the profit that he earned.

FSCM impacts:

Amrapara is one of the most backward blocks in the Jharkhand state in development concern.

The indigenous people of this area are either agricultural laborers or cultivators and they use to supplement their need by collecting minor forest produces also. The soil is mostly morrham (sandy red soil).

Fertility is low with less organic matter content. The state also witness's extreme temperatures with the maximum rising to as high as 45 degrees in summer and 5 degrees in winter. The rainfall in the month of June and July has been showing erratic patterns in the last five years.

Under the project, 4 reservoirs would be re-excavated in the area this year along with 32 acres of land reclamation work with the communities. The reservoirs re-excavated will help in addressing issues related water scarcity in the area, whereas levelled land will address the food insecurity in the area with an increase agricultural productivity.

The project has made an immense impact in the past few years in the area. The level of migration has decreased over the time.

Now villages has doubled cropping as the land moisture level has increased along with the availability of food grains in households and intake of food grains.



**CASA project officer and staff conducting the re-evacuation of land for the community under FSCM project. (Below) A finished pond build by the community members for agricultural use.*



CASA started liaison with government's line department to take measures for monsoon preparedness with the community stakeholders through Inter Agency Group (IAG).

Objective was to combat disaster situation, reduce the risks and losses of the targeted communities.

Mangrove, especially for the Sundarbans in West Bengal, plays a key role in balancing eco-system, trap sediments to build new lands, sources of natural resources such as foods, fuel, building materials and

medicine, balance the food chain and most significantly mangrove is cyclone resilient.

CFC partners organized a discussion meet focused on mangrove plantation and conservation in the intervention areas of the partner organizations to fulfill the objective to focus on Climate Change issues, sensitizing and educating the locals on Disaster Risk Reduction and to make the community as Climate SMART.

Aiming to improve the quality of lives of Sundarban islanders, tea garden

workers and hill dwellers, CASA addressed mainly Climate Change in relation with disaster unpreparedness and food insecurity, the two burning issues.

CASA developed a Gender Task Force with its partner organizations to address gender issues focused on sensitizing the community on gender and disaster response through gender lens and some immediate step up at the institutional level to mainstream gender issues in PME system.

Reaching THEM on TIME

Heavy rains in July and August had swallowed many districts surrounding the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries. Worst affected were the areas in the districts of Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Morigaon, Jorhat, Dhemaji, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Chirang, Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Nagaon and Dhubri and its blocks. As calculated, this year's flood has affected more than 326 villages in these districts with death toll up to 30 people.

CASA provided relief support to 1425 most flood affected families to reduce the sufferings of the Flood affected people from 29 villages of Mandia and Rupsi block of Barpeta district in Assam with Rice, Lentil, Salt, Mustard Oil, Turmeric Powder and Tarpaulin sheet. These items were chosen based on our field team recommendations, damages by the flood in the areas and request from the communities.

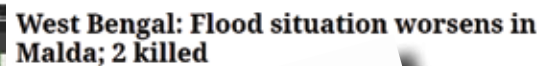
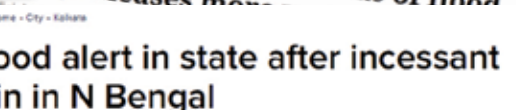
Heavy rainfall in Nepal caused flood in the eight districts of North and Eastern Districts of Purnia, Kishanganj, Araria, Katihar, Madhepura, Supaul, Darbhanga and Bhagalpur of Bihar.

The flood situation in these districts is said to be worsen if rain continues in Nepal or Bihar. These areas are hardly hit when rain water from Nepal overflowed through in Bihar in Kanai River causing flood in the adjacent blocks.

According to government sources, 2.92 lakhs people were affected in eight districts of Bihar. These include 33 blocks which hardly hit in the districts of Purnia, Kishanganj, Araria, Katihar, Madhepura, Supaul, Darbhanga and Bhagalpur.

West Bengal in the month of July witnessed heavy rainfall in the Northern part of the state resulting in flash flood in the state. Worst affected were the districts of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Cooch-behar of Malbazar Block of Jalpaiguri District.

CASA through its partner of West Bengal Package programme (CFC) took the initiative by providing Humanitarian Support in these areas. Total of 620 households were provided Humanitarian Aid.





Kushmatia with her grand children in Bihar

64-year-old Kushmatia Masomat lives in Aashram Toli village of Bihar's Purnea district, which was worst hit by floods in September. She is a widow lives with her four grandchildren. Her livelihood is fully dependent on daily wages through which she is able to support her family's needs. She earned only Rs 100 per day after slogging day and night as an agricultural labor. Her son and daughter-in-law have migrated to other city in search of work leaving behind their children.

As Aashram Toli is a flood prone area, every year flood water enters agricultural fields and with time gets drained leaving fertile clay in agricultural land. But this year huge influx of flood water caused water logging in villages. Even after one and half month, it did not recede. This had adversely affected the

livelihood of the villagers who were dependent on land-based agriculture. Senior citizen Kushmita and her grandchildren were left in vulnerable conditions.

She along with many of her neighbours had lost shelter and were making a temporary living by

Due to high intensity floods in Bihar, agricultural fields were inundated, crops were wiped out and all agricultural-related works were shut down. It directly affected the livelihood of villagers. Masomat Chano Devi had not enough money to keep store of grain or purchase from market. "This flood came to kill me by starvation. I feel ashamed when anybody gives me unsatisfied amount of food. The flood water has been here for last 2 months and problems have been started since then".

the roadside. They had limited access to clothing and were highly prone to cold and other health issues. Children were not able to attend school. The affected and homeless people used boats to commute from one place to another.

Most parts of the agricultural fields were left inundated as result of which the farmers were not getting job opportunities. Alternate sources of livelihood and income for the community were not available. People started to migrate in search of livelihood opportunities.

Masomat Chano Devi is 64 years old and lives alone in a small hut in Jangal Tola village of Purnea district, Bihar. Her late husband died 15 years ago leaving three daughters behind. The daughters have been married but none of them visit Masomat.

The elderly woman's livelihood depends on daily wage labour activities for which she gets very little paid. Till 2014, she was getting widow pension which was discontinued without any knowledge of Masomat. She has been living in a deplorable conditions ever since.



People affected in the worst-flood hit areas of Bihar, Bengal and Assam received assistance and aid by CASA and its partners.

UNITED THEY STAND, DIVIDED THEY FALL

The struggle of extraordinary women from rural India to break free from social injustice and unequal treatment

Designed & layout by Sanjeev Singh



The deep-rooted poverty in our social constructs hits women and women-headed families the hardest. Lack of employment opportunities and pay disparity becomes a hindrance for them to achieve financial stability and a healthy life, leading to a situation where they have a very little say in the decision-making.

Writes Isha Banerjee | CASA New Delhi

Domestic violence, lesser participation in decision-making, dowry, female foeticide, illiteracy, lack of health awareness, pay disparity and trafficking into forced labor and sex slavery are some of the major challenges that are being faced by women in India, especially the ones living rural parts.

Poverty is deeply rooted in our social constructs that adversely impacts a woman's economic status to her nutrition and health status, and food security caused from unequal distribution of food at home. Development within any society cannot be achieved without taking the role of women into account.

Women's rights is an important parameter to understand a country's well-being. Researchers and economists have been arguing that poverty and food security are complex and multidimensional in nature, and that poverty leads to under-nutrition and food insecurity by limiting poor people's access to food.

But what most tend to forget is that poverty mostly affects women in the rural villages where the burden to take care of all the needs of her household falls on her. Women and their children, specially a girl child, are often the ones who suffer due to the trickling effects of poverty. As reported widely through media or other publications, there still exists a tendency to suppress a girl's voice since her birth – suppression of which leads to poor health, irregular education, more focus on household and labour works, and no financial independence.

According to National Family Health Survey-3 (2005-06), in rural sector only 26% of decisions are taken by married

women regarding obtaining healthcare for themselves. The survey suggests that almost 36% of women in India are undernourished with a Body Mass Index (BMI) less than 18.5, indicating a high prevalence of nutritional deficiency. More than half of women (55 per cent) of women in India are anaemic. The prevalence of anaemia in children age-6-59 months increases steadily with the mother's level of anaemic.

Women belonging to poorest household are less likely to have a well-balanced and healthy diet. A mother's diet directly affects her child's mental and physical growth, which if not taken proper care on time might lead to medical complexities later in life.

Studies and reports by the government have found that a mother's education and household wealth affects the health of her children. With only 64 per cent females literates, the main reason of women never attending schools are 'expensive cost of education', 'not interested in studies', education is not considered necessary', and 'required for household work' – the Census 2011 has found out.

Lesser participation in decision making affects a woman's growth at all levels. In rural sector, the workforce participation rate for females at the national level stands at an alarming 30 per cent as compared to men at 53 per cent.

The gender disparity is most visible among female-headed households, notably lone mothers and single pensioners. A large number of women in India are engaged in agricultural labour.

The pay disparity here plays a major

hindrance for women. With the country reeling under erratic weather patterns and failure of crop production, the men in rural India mostly migrate to other areas where they find work and income to afford a living – often leaving the burden on women to take care of her family, farms and cattle on their own.

At a time when income stability is on the minds of the rural workforce, most women complain of unequal wages and unfavourable treatment. Lack of medical and financial attention leaves them with no choice but to succumb to the wage disparity pressure.

Well-known London-based economist Stephen Jenkins suggests the concept of 'feminist poverty' which he describes as an 'individual right to a minimum degree of potential economic independence'.

The flesh trade racket is yet another web which has been destroying lives of many young girls and women. Trafficking has become a trade of commerce, and it specifically becomes a profitable business for the traders in areas which are hit by abject poverty or disasters.

After disasters people are more vulnerable and they have no options to earn their basic necessities for survival. Traffickers use the opportunities to lure young children and women by offering them fake assurance of a good life.

India suffers severe deprivations in education and health - especially when caste, class and gender inequities play a strong role. Poverty often hits women the hardest as they have fewer economic opportunities to improve their well-being and that of their families. ■

Harassed, exploited, then back to homeland

Agricultural activities for the farming community in this village of Betul district, Madhya Pradesh are very limited as the irrigation facilities are not adequate and most farmers depend on rainwater for cultivation.

Some farmers have huge land reserved for agricultural activities, but due to insufficient rains, the land remains unused for most of the season. The farmers harvest crops from July to August when the monsoon is at its peak. For the rest of the period, they along with their entire family, including children, migrate to bigger farms in search of work.

In their own country, having their own land, they lived as refugees.

It was like completely vacating the village and moving to a temporary shelter provided by the farm owners. Almost every family in the village of around 120 families went on migration. The entire village bore an image of a deserted hamlet. The families migrated two times a year – First during Soyabean cultivation season at the time of Diwali and the second during April.

They spent months (at least 15 days) as daily-wage labourers. A village resident Sukanyabai (name changed) says, “There used to be no work here. So we migrated to different locations. We packed clothes, food, sleeping mats, utensils, leaving behind the elderly to take care of the livestock.”

The migration made an adverse impact of the education and nutrition of the children. They could not attend schools due to re-location every six months. “We wanted our children to receive education, but could not leave them here while their mothers were away. They went with us wherever we went,” she says.

Also, most of the toddlers and infants were becoming victims of malnourishment and poor health due to irregular-meal intake and improper care. “Our focus was on earning money, there was no time to take care of our children,” she says.

Exploitation in payment making was another hurdle that every worker had to suffer. “We laboured day and night, slogged for longer hours but did not get the promised wages. We were harassed

by the owners when it came to payments. Sometimes if a member couldn't come to work due to illness, the owner would deduct his/her wage. They threatened us with wage cut-offs if we took breaks,” she narrated her ordeal.

Neither the owners promised medical help during accidents, nor personal assistance. “Once a labourer accidentally lost his finger while working. He was bleeding profusely and could have died that night. We wanted to take him to doctor but didn't have automobile. We requested the owner to take him to a hospital but he never responded,” she says.

Apart from harassment, alleged ‘molestation’ of girls and women was an issue which the families would either hide or try to forget. “We were afraid if we reported the issue, there will be a constant pressure and harassment from all sides (I don't want to name). So we tried to make peace with it and forget about it. But taught ourselves to be attentive all the time,” she says.

After joining Ekta Jan Sangathan (an initiative by CASA to form an organisation of farmers to tell them about their rights) 8 years back, the tribal community realised that they could demand 100-day work and payment under NREGA instead of fleeing to distant lands.

“Villagers, majorly women, started participating in Gram Sabhas. We demanded that every farmer must have a well or pond for irrigation purpose and everyone should get deserved NREGA payments, among other issues.”

“Now, only 4-5 families might migrate for work. This women-centric organisation has given voice to us to demand for our rights. We regularly go to Gram Sabhas and now, the women sit in the front row. We are not afraid of anyone anymore, not even the Sarpanch,” she says.

Things have changed for people of the village. Children receive proper education and the parents make sure that every girl child from every family is goes to school daily. “There are more girls who go to school than boys,” she said. ■



'You won't understand how it feels to sleep peacefully, without bruises or broken bones'

25-year-old tribal woman Sushma (name changed) held her hands tight every night, made sure her children slept by 11 PM and prepared herself for a battle which she knew she would lose.

"Every night my husband would come home drunk. And when he is drunk, even a slightest mistake like less salt in food can make him angry. He would beat me up in front of my children, neighbours, sometimes inside the house, many a times on the streets," she says.

Most of the time she escaped with minor injuries like cuts and bruises, but at times she would scream in pain night after night due to the cracked bones. It was a constant fight for her to keep her son away from learning such violence from his father. And she didn't even want to set a bad example for her daughter that "it is fine for a woman to tolerate assault."

"My parents got me married when I was a minor. It was not just physical violence, the trauma has made my perception sour towards marriages. I am scarred, what if my daughter also gets a man like him", said Sushma, a resident of Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh.

The constant worry to secure her daughter's future triggered inspiration within Sushma. She knew it was important for a girl to have an identity in the society where women are given a "back-seat."

In 2009, Sushma along with other tribal women came together to form an organisation that worked to make women financially independent. They went door-to-door to encourage women to join her in making them independent and motivate them to participate in 'Gram Sabhas' (local self-government organisation in India of the panchayati raj system at the village or small town level).

"Many women joined and I was happy that I was emerging as a local woman leader. But my alcoholic husband had problem with me travelling around the village, mixing with people, especially men. There were usual fights, but this time I didn't want to back out," a much-determined Sushma says.

And when one day her husband, in a drunk-state, started beating her in front of people, she revolted and called police. "My women members were standing in my support. That day I realised that I had a power which remained unused for years," the mother of two says. Participation in 'Gram Sabhas' and women programmes continued for Sushma, even as her husband left the house as per police instructions.

After coming to know that Madhya Pradesh government reserved 50 percent seats for women candidates in Panchayati Raj and most of the seats go uncontested, she decided to contest Janpad Panchayat elections with the support from the organisation.

Sushma campaigned on core issues like domestic violence, prohibition of liquor consumption inside the house, improving farming activities and addressing women-related problems. "Of course, I lost as many men were not happy that I touched upon issues like violence against women and liquor. But it has given me more visibility in the society, a new identity," she says.

She might have lost the polls, but now she is even more "determined" to contest next elections in a planned manner. "If I knew about the power of an organisation, my life along with lives of other Adivasi women would be way better. I am financially independent", she said. ■





From an ordinary woman to becoming a Sarpanch

Santabai Warkade was an ordinary woman from an ordinary Adivasi (tribal) family until she joined Ekta Jan Sangathan, an independent organisation formed by the people of several villages.

Exactly a year back, her village people were dancing on the streets and garlanding Santabai as she had won the post of Sarpanch for Neempani Panchayat in Betul district. She had become the first ever Sarpanch to be elected from her village.

Every alternate morning Santa takes a walk around houses in her village to hear-out grievances from her people. "Don't worry, I will put forward the petition", she assures them as her assistant writes down the pointers on a piece of paper.

Many recall a "changed" Santabai as a person who was once a "timid woman".

"I have known her for a long time. A timid woman who only kept to herself. The women of the village never spoke in public, especially in front of male Sarpanch and other officials, unless they were given a go ahead by their husbands. We never thought that a woman could also contest elections," says Kallibai, Santa's supporter.

"She is now a changed person - more bold, determined, confident and fearless. Today,

the women are more vocal and active in developmental and petition works," Kallibai said.

The Sangathan, formed some 6-7 years back of the village, gave immense energy to the people to improve their conditions.

"It was all because of the organisation that women like me demanded for what we were deprived of. The previous sarpanches never asked us for our demands or requests. So, gradually people stopped caring who the Sarpanch was, where he worked from, because we had in our mind that the system is not meant for us (the labour class). It is for the people who are in power," Santabai says.

In a terrain where water scarcity and poor irrigation made it difficult for farmers to harvest crops, most of the families migrated to other areas in search of work.

"We had to earn money for survival. And we had no idea that we could demand work under NREGA and create wells, ponds, roads, houses, check dams without migrating to a different place," she says.

After joining the Sangathan, Santabai along with other women started participating in Gram Sabhas (official village meetings) and about the progress of

work in her village.

After repeated attempts to get their issues addressed, the organisation decided to nominate someone for panchayat elections from their own village, preferentially a woman, who was also a member of the Sangathan.

By this time, Santa was emerging as a vocal leader in women's rights and development work.

Santabai recalls her days when she started campaigning. "It was tough being the lone woman candidate. I received threats from the opposition to withdraw nomination. They told me that a woman should not get involved in matters like elections. I had sleepless nights. In the last phase of campaign, the opposition distributed freebies, alcohol, money, chicken, and we had no money like them".

Santabai is not alone in the system now. She encourages more women to join her and occupy seats in the panchayati raj.

"In next four years, I want to provide permanent shelters to homeless people, concrete road in the village, irrigation facility like ponds and wells for every farmer and toilets for every household," she says with confidence. ■

'ORGANIC FARMING - Because we were tired of struggle'

Three years back, Subhadrabai was struggling to make maximum produce out of her 2-acre land while her husband had to relocate for a month in search of work.

The lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities in the village made it mandatory for the farmers to leave home in order to survive. The women would either migrate with their husbands or stay at home to take care of children, farms and livestock.

Having lesser experience in farming, Subhadrabai did what little she was instructed by her husband - to sow maize seeds immediately after the first monsoon rain. But at times when bad monsoons and water scarcity haunted the region, it was a struggle for Subhadra to grow enough to feed her family.

"Buying fertilizers like Urea and pesticides like DAP from market was another financial pressure that I and my husband had to bear. At times we suffered huge losses, especially when growth of the plant stopped or the seeds didn't germinate," she says. But the couple could not figure out the reasons behind the failures and low productivity.

WHO states that 'synthetic Urea and pesticides pose risks to human health and the environment. Children may have higher exposures and greater vulnerability due to exposure to pesticides. Synthetic Urea, on the other hand, exerts higher

concentrations of ammonia in the soil, making it even more acidic and retarding the soil of its natural fertility.'

Apart from the unhealthy products and the brunt of financial pressures, Subhadra realised that the chemical farming required huge gallons of water, which again became a hurdle considering the fact that the community was largely dependent on rains and did not have irrigation facilities.

According to Agriculture scientist Dr B K Rai (a former scientist at Council of Scientific and Industrial Research), the soil in this particular region is not suitable for chemical farming. "Chemical farming needs a lot of water, which meant that every farmer needs to have its own irrigation system, which is impossible in the village."

Organic Farming was introduced to the adivasi farmers where scientists like B K Rai encouraged them to choose cow urine over urea and DAP pesticide over 'Jiva amrit' (a mixture of cow dung, cow urine and other organic wastes).

People started making vermicompost, a pit in which they accumulated organic waste for a period and leaving earthworms

to decompose the matter. The matter acts as a natural fertilizer with rich ammonia content.

CASA also discouraged the practice of 'scattered seed sowing' and taught the technique of sowing seeds in rows and columns, therefore increasing the crop yield. The volunteers also taught adivasis about 'drip irrigation system' which required minimum water during farming. "My production doubled. Now I grow 5 quintals of maize. I save a lot of money on synthetic fertilizers. Instead of buying the compost from the market, I make it at my house. As our products are organic, it is in more demand in the markets. People want to eat healthy products. I encourage others in my village to follow the same method," Subhadrabai says.

Subhadra identifies herself as 'self-sufficient' and has inspired women like Parvatibai of nearby Bhatgaon village. Parvati started growing turmeric using organic farming with CASA's help. She and her husband have been making vermicompost at their house and they carry farming activities round the year, even when sky does not bless the land with rains. ■



For an educated woman like Shivkumari Tekam, it wasn't easy to carry a bottle of water every morning and walk a mile in search of a private place where she could defecate safely.

Having a post-graduate degree and a commendable educational qualification, the 23-year-old was married in 2013 and settled in Bahmi village in Mandla district of MP.

But she never thought that she would have to "compromise her dignity and safety" when she realised the reality of a toilet-less house. Later, she realised that the people in the village have been accustomed to the

man while she had gone for defecation. And it was not just the physical or sexual violence she was worried about; Shivkumari had studied that women are much prone to contract bacterial infection while defecating in the open.

"I realised that children were majorly impacted. They were not having good health and women were at the receiving end of severe vaginal infections," she says.

Shivkumari joined Gram Ekta Sangh (Federation) in 2014 where CASA workers along with volunteers advocated the need for toilets in every household.

'I compromised my dignity, safety everytime I went out to defecate'

same practice of defecating in the open for years.

According to UNESCO, India has the largest number of people still defecating in the open: more than 595 million. Only one in two people use toilet.

Shivkumari raised the issue to her husband and in-laws, but they only "encouraged me to go in groups and avoid dark places". She tried hard to fit in the custom. Sometimes she would go alone and many a times accompanied by other women. Most of the time, her best friend would tag along.

"We took turns to defecate. One would be on the lookout. We faced a lot of challenges. There are chances of sexual molestation and rape. Miscreants wait for the opportunity to nab women at a deserted area," she says.

Shivkumari remained scared for a few days when her friend was molested by a

She actively participated in campaigns against open defecation.

With full support from her in-laws and husband, she decided to contest elections in 2014 on the developmental plank of constructing toilet in every house and saving women from further humiliation.

"I became Sarpanch of Bahmi Gram Panchayat and that was the day when my mission to make the village open-defecation-free started. I had a dream of constructing toilets in every house of the village," she proudly says.

Under Swachh Bharat Mission (an initiative to accelerate sanitation coverage in India by the present government), she made proposals after proposals to get funds sanctioned for toilet construction.

But it was tough fight for Shivkumari. "I had to travel from house-to-house to discourage people from



defecating in the open and encourage them to get a toilet. I organised series of campaigns for the women, indicating health hazards, while defecating in the open. In the later stage, women from my village helped me a lot in my mission."

Shivkumari points out that "now you can visibly spot change in habit among the people of this village. More than half of the people use toilets. But there are still a few who prefer defecating in the open."

With Shivkumari's determination and zeal to inculcate healthy habit among her tribal community members, every single house in the village (340 houses) now has a toilet.

But that's not enough for her. She is on a mission to make her village 'open defecation free' and she already has women from her village working on the roadmap. ■

For Sujatabai (name changed), it was never about winning elections or grabbing power. Her fondness to preserve the tribal culture she was born in, besides advocating equal rights for women, made her a “loved leader” within her Adivasi community.

Most of the people in her village belong to Schedules Castes (SCs) and Scheduled tribes (STs), the marginalised and the deprived sections.

“Our only source of income is farming and income. Some of the families here are so economically weak that they can’t even afford two meals a day, forget about sending their children to school,” she says.

Rainless seasons and ignorance of government livelihood schemes, forced these indigenous people to migrate to distant land in search for work. “It was our land, but we left it to work as bonded labourers at someone else’s farm. Women getting harassed, children lacking nutritious meals, death of livestock,” she says.

“We (Adivasis) are the people of this land, and yet we felt helpless. We needed to know about our rights in order to survive,” she says. The problems of Adivasi communities are about access to basic needs like elementary education, healthcare, sustainable livelihood support, food security, and infrastructure, which largely remain unfulfilled.

In 2007, Sujatabai joined Ekta Jan Sangathan (EJS) along with a handful of women. They held meetings and discussions on what issues needed to be taken up in the next Gram Sabha meetings.

The community understood that “the rights of tribal communities in India are protected by the Constitution and special legislations. The government has been ensuring schemes but somehow we were not aware of them.”

Sujatabai and tribal women like her, who once stayed away from the “frustrating” governmental procedures, were now putting forward appeals and grievance letters to the officials demanding for the fulfilment of their rights.

Initially, it was very difficult to gather

An Adivasi and a woman, and the need to protect her rights

women to participate in the organisation, but when they saw our work on NREGA payments many showed interest to join us, she says. Now, her job didn’t remain restricted to preserving culture, Sujatabai and others also dedicated her time to empower more women from her community.

“Our organisation started working for Widow Pensions. We raised the issue in Gram Sabha. Before this, widows were living in an adverse condition with the future of their children insecure and unstable,” she says.

Sujatabai, a resident of Armadana village in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh, also worked effortlessly towards liquor consumption among men and domestic violence against women.

The organisation raised the issue in the Gram Sabha and after a thorough intervention and counselling, the drinking problem among men have reduced.

She along with other women leaders are rigorously working on the issues like reducing liquor addiction among men, domestic violence, checking on migration, regular NREGA payments, monitoring school activities, and increased participation of women in the village and ensure regular pension for widows.

Sujatabai says that she does not want to be the Sarpanch or at the centre of the system “I just want to help preserve the ethnic culture and ensure that not a single person is left out of her basic needs or rights.” ■



Rebuilding a shattered life - Young girl braves odds

Amaravathi's parents were employed at a tamarind business for several years in Sengurichi village in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu. But soon both her parents fell sick to a sudden onset of bone weakness that kept them away from pursuing any kind of labour or employment.

Her parents never forced her daughter to join her in any labour activities. All they wanted was to let her pursue her education and make a better life for herself. With the financial situation going worst after her parents illness, Amaravathi decided to discontinue her studies four years back and take up a small job at the spinning mill that was located 15 kilometres from her home.

Waking early in the morning to travel a long distance to work instead of school was something that she never enjoyed. Initially, she earned Rs 120 per day which later rose to Rs 170 per day, but she had to toil hard from 6 AM to 6 PM which was the day shift for 15 days. The other 15 days she had to cover the night shifts.

Over a period of time Amaravathi was unable to cope up with the long hours of work, travel and suffered severe fatigue. She was unable to manage the chores at her home. Sometimes when she could not get the pick-up transport, she had to travel the distance all by herself.

She had no option but to quit due to the constant abuse at work. She also developed asthma due to constant exposure to the dust in the spinning mill.

CASA believes in making women financially independent so that they can find jobs based on their skills and escape the cycle of poverty. The women are given training into embroidery, fabric painting and tailoring at CLFZ skill centres to give them alternate sources of income and better their economic conditions.

Amaravathi, now 19, is one among the young girls enrolled in CLFZP (Child Labour Free Zone Project). She is among the many young women to be enrolled in the first batch of skill training for six months.

She took an interest in pursuing the tailoring course after which she secured a full-time job at a garment factory in Kamiliampetti village, 2 kilometres from her house.

She now earns Rs 250 per day and is able to look after her family with the hard-earned money. Amaravathi now has a tailoring machine at her home and is able to make some additional income out of it.

Amaravathi has become the source of strength and support for her parents and three younger sisters. Earlier, they could only eat rice with rasam (tamarind water) but now they can afford some nutritious food with vegetables and eggs.

Eldest daughter Amaravathi can purchase medicines for her parents and was also able to make some savings for her sister's marriage. Her two younger sisters are continuing their studies only because of Amaravathi. ■

(Inputs by CASA South Zone)



(Up) Amaravathi at CASA tailoring training centre in Tamil Nadu

(Below) The students of skill training centre in Tamil Nadu

Helping women to send children to school

Andhra Pradesh's Vadrigudem village has many school-aged boys, among who were two teenagers whose passion to pursue education never extinguished. They wanted to achieve their dreams but they had little control over their conditions.

The income conditions of both the families weren't strong enough to support their education. Insufficient rainfall and drought-like situations had impacted their agricultural produce and economic stability.

The families of 13-year-old Acchi Murali and 14-year-old Thammiseti Pulla Rao belong to the most backward community. The community is predominantly occupied with earthen-related works and migrate for a period of 3 to 6 months for making clay-bricks. The children also accompany their parents to the workplace and drop out of school.

Both being the fatherless children, having separated from their parents to alcohol addiction and dependence.

While Pula Rao's father died due to sickness resulting out of alcohol dependence, Murali's father left his wife and children as he got too much involved in alcohol consumption leaving the family's economy in lurch.

Murali's father later married another woman in another

village and never came back.

Since then, both the women-headed families were solely dependent on incomes from insufficient agricultural produce or manual casual labour works in nearby areas.

But working in gender-biased conditions for the two women was not as simple as it appears. They women had to overcome challenges like wage disparity and harassment to earn daily meals for their families.

Ever since Murali's father left his family, he dropped out of 5th grade and became a helping hand for his mother.

As a young widow, Pula Rao's mother faced severe difficulties in running the family's expenses as they could not afford basic necessities for her growing children. Pulla Rao dropped out of 6th grade and could not be sent to High School. He started working as a labourer to support her mother in running the family's expenses with his meagre earnings.

CASA initiated Child Labour Free Zone (CLFZ) project for the protection and promotion of children's rights and a Bridge

Course Centre at Vadrigudem where Pulla Rao and his brother were enrolled. However, due to the pressing needs of the family, the children could not attend the classes regularly and continued to work as child labours.

At this juncture, CASA staff spoke with the mother, learnt about the family's situation and supported them with an additional income so that the children could be sent to the Bridge Course Centre (BCC) regularly.

After examining her case and need, the women's group and BCC volunteer recommended Pulla Rao's mother for the Income generation Program (IGP) and granted Rs 10,000. The amount was utilized to start a vegetable vending business for her from which he made money addingup as an additional income for the family.

Her children are able to pursue education again. Pulla Rao will appear for 10th class exams as a private candidate.

The same recommendations were made by the women's group and Bridge Course Centre volunteers wherein they Murali's mother also received Rs 10,000 as part of Income Generation Program (IGP) to start a small clay brick unit and sell raw bricks. The additional income raised confidence among her Murali's mother.

Now, Murali and Pulla Rao both attend and study together at the Bridge School. ■
(Inputs by CASA South Zone)



(Left and above) 14-year-old Pula Rao with his mother



(Left and above) 13-year-old Murali with his mother

Women Tackling Violence, Illiteracy

‘SHAKTI, My voice’ – an united voice of women against injustice. Initiative SHAKTI has succeeded in changing lives of a lot of women, especially in Chhattisgarh.

Baisakhin was married and widowed – both at a very early age. Few years after marriage, her husband died in a road accident. Thereafter, Baisakhin had to take care of her three children – all minors.

Her entire time was spent in labour works and gathering meals for the growing children. Meanwhile, People in her small village were facing problem regarding the collection of ration under Public Distribution System (PDS).

In a situation where her income proved insufficient to support her family’s three-square meal needs in a day, Baisakhin was solely dependent on PDS for basic food items. The mother of three then came to know about the initiative SHAKTI which addresses the problems of domestic violence, PDS and other issues related to women.

This long-term intervention is progressive in 18 districts of Chhattisgarh and addresses issues on the non-functioning of government schemes and programs, illiteracy among women, unawareness, poverty, women health and others.

Baisakhin’s association with this platform gave her a motivation to improve things at her level. She motivated women to raise their voice against the agent of the ration shop. Standing alongside Baisakhin’s leadership, the villagers raised voice

against the agent who was forced to close his shop.

This proved to be another problem for the villagers as now they had to walk at least 10-12 kms to collect ration from another village. Counter to the problem, Baisakhin motivated women to form a Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and established a ration shop in their own village where people received their fair amount of ration on time following all the rules and regulations by the department.

Meanwhile, **Annapurna Soni** of Portha Village in Chhattisgarh has been working towards addressing the issues of women education. When Annapurna came to this village, she realized that most women were illiterates and unaware of their basic rights.

Women were barely allowed to step out of their houses and had minimum participation in decision-making.

She joined a primary girl’s school as a



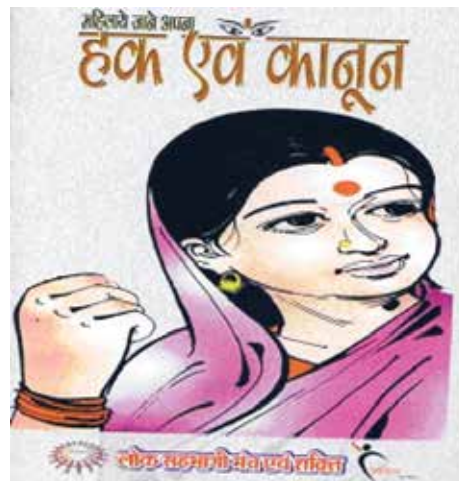
teacher with an objective to educate the people and children with the primary-level basic knowledge.

Annapurna started to work with them to defend them from all the superstitions that could come as a rudiment in their development. It was not easy for her to work in the male-dominated village.

But she continued to motivate women to enroll in schools and get primary education. She also formed a group called ‘Durga Mahila Mandal’ in which many women took part. Annapurna started focusing her work towards “discrimination faced by lower caste people by the upper caste.”

CASA in its operational area is working with the women at the grassroot level to empower them through meetings, trainings and exposures to enhance their leadership quality and raise voice for their rights and dignity. CASA is always trying to focus on the problems faced by women.

Thanks to Annapurna’s continuous efforts that the social constructs in Portha village is lot more different now. After creating awareness among women on the issues of healthcare and education, she now fights against liquor consumption causing domestic violence. She started an anti-liquor campaign and submitted memorandum with group to the authorities. ■ (Inputs by Rajat Chowdhury, Senior Program Coordinator)



Disasters and the risk for women, girls

Human trafficking is emerging as a prosperous trade during disasters. This trade is no more bonded to any region, area or a country but has also extended its manifolds to all over the world. Nepal being one of the least developed countries among the world, lacking in sufficient economic capital, infrastructure, and developed human resources to forge an independent path of development is adversely over blown by charge of human trafficking.

Traffickers look for people who are susceptible for a variety of reasons, including psychological or emotional vulnerability, economic hardship, and lack of a social safety net, natural disasters, or political instability. The trauma caused by the traffickers can be so great that many may not identify themselves as victims or ask for help, even in highly public settings.

The vulnerability of women and children increased due to earthquake on April 25 and May 12 with severe magnitude ranging from 7.8 to 8.1 on Richter Scale, leading to death of around 8,000 to 9,000 people followed by 23,000 injured and making homeless.

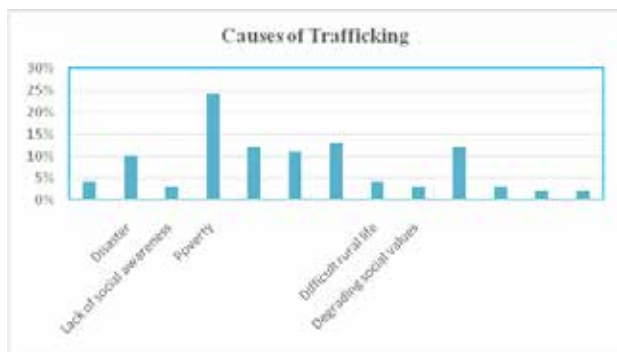
Human trafficking in Nepal occurs both internally and transnational and manifests itself through many hidden pockets, which have not been yet explored nor addressed thoroughly. It is a highly complex, cross-cutting issue interlinked with poverty, unemployment, gender discrimination, social exclusion, globalization, internal displacement, and foreign migration.

After the disaster in Nepal the traders found it more feasible and profitable

business as people were more vulnerable and had no options to earn livelihood, even the basic necessities to them was unavailable. Seeking this to be an opportunity, traffickers lure people by giving them fake assurances of jobs and providing other better opportunities.

The shocking fact is that the worst affected are children and women, who after disaster are more vulnerable. For traffickers it is very easy to trap them as there is nobody who could look after these women and children after a disaster, their helplessness force them to be a part of this trafficking cycle, as they are ignorant to such heinous world they are most likely to get trapped.

Trafficking has to be understood and addressed more as an exploitative process in a continuum of events and conditions, and not as a one-off, exploitative situation. Economic aspects like poverty, lack of opportunities, and breakdown of livelihood options are factors, which make people easily fall prey to the exploitation and trafficking. It is also important to deal with issues of gender, age, class and caste dimensions, which have very clear roles to play in defining vulnerabilities. Lack of proper education makes them more vulnerable from every aspect. ■



(Up) Discussion with elderly women about Disaster and Trafficking in chautara , Sindhupalchawk, Nepal



(Below) Government Trafficking check post team checking a local Bus in Sindhupalchawk

(Inputs by Suresh Satapathy, State Coordinator)

*Excerpts taken from a survey report published by CASA

A constant fight for tea workers

When tea companies started withdrawing from the garden in Alipurduar district of West Bengal, the tea garden workers faced the financial brunt as thousands of bread-earners who were solely dependent on these gardens had lost their permanent livelihood.

As adults struggled to find different sources of livelihood, children and young women were purportedly lured by the labour contractors and agents to work in bigger cities like Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Punjab and Haryana.

With an increase in demand for work, more and more teenagers including girls dropped out of schools and joined the labour force to support their families. The locals in the areas informed that the influx of labour contractors and agents “drastically” increased in the abandoned and neglected villages in the recent years.

A large chunk of children were allegedly trafficked to these cities where they either worked as domestic helps or were forcefully involved in flesh trade. The parents of the missing minors, who were later tracked down and rescued by CASA and its partner organisations, alleged that the agents usually stopped coming to their villages or changed their mobile numbers whenever they inquired about the well-being of their children.

The family members waited months for



CASA and its partners have formed women Self-Help groups in the closed and sick tea gardens so that everyone gets fair and good quality ration during public distribution.

phone calls from their children, but that seemed a distant wish. The nexus of the traffickers weaved a web of lucrative offers around these teenagers, especially young girls.

The teen girls, the families of whom were hit by abject poverty, were mostly sold into flesh trade and some to domestic work. Some of the girls have been rescued by CASA and local organizations, and are now continuing school and leading a normal life. However, the condition remains unchanged for many.

CASA team and its partners have been working extremely hard to put a check on



the traffickers and their movements. Our response team members stay in constant touch with Railway Police Force (RPF) in tracking down trafficked girls from trains and uniting them with their parents. Women activists are very active in this area of work.

Similar was the case of a woman, who was lured by one agent to work in big cities like Delhi and Rajasthan. “After the gardens closed temporary or permanently,

the alcohol consumption among men increased in this village. There is an increased domestic violence - Husband beating wife, brother beat sister,” said the woman, whose identity has been kept hidden due to several clause.

“I wanted to escape all this and I was about 16 when an agent took me to Delhi where I could earn enough. The agent who came here to recruit told me that I would earn enough. But what I thought did not come true. I lived for 7-8 months in Delhi. The owner used to beat me a lot. Sometimes, the wounds were deep. Then I was moved to Jaipur for two months. I wanted to call my parents but the owner did not let me phone my parents. I did not get a penny of my income. I reached a lot of people for help. One day, I escaped from the house while the owners were in the party. I went to an orphanage home and stayed there for three months from where I contacted some activists who rescued me,” she concluded. ■



Women empowerment is an essential tool to bring about changes in their socio-economic condition. Empowerment of women needs to begin with their participation in different spheres of life. Education is a great determinant in this regard. To achieve empowerment, women have to be educated about their rights and privileges in a modern society.

As handlooms and handicrafts being the innate artistic skill for the Manipuri women they successfully take up these occupation as income generating activities.

Empowerment of women is the pre-requisite to bring transformation. In keeping with its commitment to social justice and promoting human dignity, CASA's intervention in the North East India was initiated in 2005 where they special attention was given to the Self-Help Group formations, conflict resolution, sustainable modes of agriculture and women empowerment. CASA's project was initiated with a vision of promoting people-based organisations and empowering the local leadership to sustain development processes within communities.

In Meghalaya, State Network SAST conducted programmes on various available schemes for village leaders and

appraised them on Central sector schemes on livestock, agriculture and micro-finance for women empowerment on handloom and handicraft.

Regular sessions are conducted by the organisation and its partners in the importance of gender mainstreaming. Women are encouraged to take active part in decision-making at all level. Income generating activities are considered to be economic independence for women.

According to the World Health Organisation, an estimated 700 million people in India still rely on solid fuels and traditional cook stoves for domestic cooking despite their negative impact on peoples' health.

The cases of respiratory diseases which they are affirmative are caused due to HAP. either unaware or ignored the fact that the usage of traditional chulha has severe health repercussions.

CASA have been making an effort to introduce smokeless chulha in the rural sectors. Women are mostly impacted with the ordinary chulhas which emit poisonous substance as women spent most time in the kitchen. CASA started its work in pond reconstruction in 2012 and provided support for pisciculture in one of the villages in Madhya Pradesh. ■

The Women today and society's tomorrow

Every woman is endowed with innate power that can make them successful entrepreneurs – whether locally or at a big scale. Women are naturally endowed with the qualities of entrepreneurship. A single woman's contribution in achieving economic liberation brings transformation in the society.

Today, women share equal status as men. More stress should be laid on empowering rural women and their development. A special focus should be on empowering girls and women, since it will lead to a change in the society which would be sustainable and will be in effect for ages to come. It is society's constitutional, moral and social responsibility to confirm women's progress giving women equal opportunities and rights.

India ranks 97th of 118 in global hunger index

The latest GHI 2016 data shows that India has 'serious' levels of hunger forcing it to be ranked 97 among 118 developing countries. The data was released on October 11.

Countries worse than India include North Korea, African countries Zimbabwe, Liberia, Namibia, Mozambique, Ethiopia among others. Some of India's western neighbours also fall in the 'serious' category.

Other neighbours Sri Lanka, Bangladesh,

Nepal and China are all ranked above India.

In India, the share of under-5 children who are 'wasted' is about 15% while the share of children who are 'stunted' is a staggering 38.7%. This indicates lack of balanced diet. The under-5 mortality rate is 4.8% in India.

Endemic poverty, unemployment, lack of sanitation and safe drinking water, and lack of effective healthcare are main factors for the sorry state. Compared with

previous years, marked improvement has taken place in child stunting and under-5 mortality rates but the proportion of undernourished people has declined only marginally from 17% in 2000 to the current 15%. The share of wasted children has inched down similarly, a leading English daily stated.

India was ranked 83 in 2000 and 102 in 2008 with GHI scores of 38.2 and 36 respectively. This implies that, while hunger levels in India have diminished somewhat, the improvement has been outstripped by several other countries.

Overall, global hunger levels are down by about 29% compared to 2000. Twenty countries, including Rwanda, Cambodia, and Myanmar, have reduced their GHI scores by over 50% each since 2000. And, for the second year in a row, no developing country for which data was available featured in the "extremely alarming" category. ■



India's detailed score for 2016

Country data (in %)	Proportion of undernourished in population (%)	Prevalence of wasting in children under five years (%)	Prevalence of stunting in children under five years (%)	Under five mortality rate (%)
	15.2	15.1	38.7	4.8

*Source: Global Hunger Index 2016

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is calculated by taking into account four key parameters: shares of undernourished population, wasted and stunted children aged under 5, and infant mortality rate of the same age group.

A VISION FOR 'SWACHH' INDIA

Artists and street performers comprising CASA volunteers from Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh gave away nukkad natak and other shows propagating the importance of proper sanitation and hygienic practices in the country on Clean India Day, marked on October 2 to commemorate birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi who believed that “cleanliness is next to Godliness”.

CASA participated in NDTV-Dettol Cleanathon initiative on October 2 at premises of Purani Delhi.

The duty to clean our country starts with us, the citizens. CASA has been and will always be a part of Clean India campaign against unhygienic practices like defecation in open and littering on streets.

The plays reflected how people in the rural areas prefer defecating in the open which can lead to environment and health hazards, specially for women and children.

The CASA volunteers dramatized and propagated good habits of washing hands before and after every meal which can prevent one from several diseases. It is not just the person who suffers with the disease but the entire family gets affected in the longer run.

Artists from Bhopal said that they came to Purani Delhi to propagate how they have succeeded in keeping their villages clean with simple and clean habits inculcated by the community members.



“The initiative taken by the government, NDTV and CASA on the cleanliness campaign is small step to a big change. I hope people are encouraged when they see us perform on these vital issues which are essential for a better and clean living,” one of the artists said. ■



CASA team gathered at old Delhi for NDTV's Cleanathon campaign

NOBEL PRIZE 2016



NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Colombian President **Juan Manuel Santos** won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end Latin America's longest-running armed conflict

NOBEL ECONOMICS PRIZE

The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2016 was awarded jointly to **Oliver Hart and Bengt Holmström** "for their contributions to contract theory"



NOBEL PRIZE FOR MEDICINES

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2016 was awarded to **Yoshinori Ohsumi** "for his discoveries of mechanisms for autophagy".

NOBEL PRIZE FOR CHEMISTRY

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2016 was awarded jointly to **Jean-Pierre Sauvage, Sir J. Fraser Stoddart and Bernard L. Feringa** "for the design and synthesis of molecular machines".

NOBEL PRIZE FOR PHYSICS

The Nobel Prize in Physics 2016 was divided, one half awarded to **David J. Thouless**, the other half jointly to **F. Duncan M. Haldane and J. Michael Kosterlitz** "for theoretical discoveries of topological phase transitions and topological phases of matter".

NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

The Nobel Prize in Literature 2016 was awarded to **Bob Dylan** "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition".



September 5 was Teachers' Day

And we salute the commendable efforts of CASA Volunteer Teachers trying to bring a positive change in the lives of many underprivileged children through CASA's Bridge School.

CASA provides an opportunity for the school dropouts and underprivileged children to get back to school again, and our teachers make it possible for us. #ThankYou #Teachers #TeachersDay





IMA and CASA reach thousands suffering from lymphatic filariasis in India

Imagine pain so severe that you consider ending your life to make it stop.

Now picture yourself suffering that pain alone because family members and neighbors have shunned you, believing they cannot touch your skin and that your condition is a curse from God.

It's a sad reality for thousands of people living with lymphatic filariasis—a neglected tropical disease that starts with a mosquito bite and leads to extreme swelling in the legs, arms and genitalia—throughout India.

But there is hope. Thanks to a partnership

between IMA World Health and Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, with support from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, thousands of people living with LF in India have gotten their lives back and thousands more have learned how to care for their loved ones.

Since 2007, IMA and CASA have successfully implemented the Community Based Lymphedema Management program in Orissa State, on the southeastern coast of India.

Communities where the program has been implemented demonstrate increased awareness around LF and lymphedema patients, and this has been shown not only to decrease stigma for those suffering from the chronic infection but also to increase community acceptance of LF prevention efforts, such as mass drug administration. The program has been so successful that the Ministry of Health and National NTD Program plan to carry out the CASA model throughout the country.

Volunteers go to where the patients are in their communities rather than treating them after they

arrive at a medical facility. "We realized it's difficult for the person (living with LF) to get to the hospital," said Jonathan Rout, CASA Program Manager, who was recently in Washington, D.C., to connect with colleagues at the Neglected Tropical Disease NGDO Network.

It's painful and often difficult for people with severe swelling to travel. They also sometimes lack the support system to arrange for their transportation. "We bridge the gap," Rout said.

CASA trains local task force members, family members and health activists in the principles and practices of lymphedema self-care through home-based, foot care management. The volunteers then go door to door, seeking out people who are suffering. In some cases, they have found people who have been cast out, living with farm animals.

People often weep when volunteers wash their extremities for the first time because they haven't been touched in such a long time.

Along with training, CASA volunteers also give people three bars of soap,

three tubes of antibiotic ointment for acute attacks and three towels, which is estimated to last about two months. After that, patients are expected to be able to purchase their own supplies.

They do not supply gloves because they are not needed, Rout said. The CDC has found that there is no risk to the person who is washing the affected areas, he said.

Something as simple as washing swollen extremities twice a day and doing low-impact exercises has a dramatic effect on

patients, Rout said. They are able to get back to their daily

lives. They're able to work and visit with friends and family. And they are less likely to have acute attacks, which are extremely painful.

The whole program revolves around community ownership. CASA helps build the capacity of the community, including women, and develops awareness. The building blocks of the process are awareness, education, unity, organization and action.

For the past three years, through IMA's partnership with CDC, IMA provided a subgrant to CASA to expand ongoing work. And there is still much work to do.

Although the program has reached 33,911 people, there are still 50,000 on the waiting list, Rout said. Many people on that list are suffering, in pain and alone.

IMA and CASA will continue to work together to find ways to help the people of India as part of our ongoing mission of ensuring health, healing and well-being for all. ■



*Article published by IMA World Health

Kitchen garden: A solution for sustainable farming

The target community of Madhripuram lives in tribal area which is one of the old operational area of CASA. Many of these tribal families live in dwellings and thatched houses. Some live in government houses. These families have vacant space around their house. In past many of these families have maintained kitchen gardens through which they get fresh vegetables and lentils. Apart from using it for their family, they used to sell the remaining vegetables which give them additional source of income.

CASA's Kitchen Garden program have raised awareness on the sustainable agriculture, promoting organic farming and using of vermi-compost to grow nutritious food. Starting a home vegetable garden comes with many benefits - including saving you money. The fruits and vegetables grown in the garden promotes good health because practices as the products are rich in nutrients, especially in phytochemicals, anti-oxidants, vitamin C, vitamin A and folate.

The vermicompost is rich and we know it is good from the quality of food we eat that goes into it. Almost everything in our house gets recycled and composting is one fo the best ways to reduce garbage to almost nothing, about one small bag every two weeks.

In 2002, approximately 1,000 families were supported by CASA by distributing vegetable seeds for the promotion of kitchen gardens. Many of them are still maintaining kitchen garden wihtin their premises.

After CASA's initiative, Telangana Government have started supporting these rural families by providing seeds at subsidized price. For promoting kitchen gardens, government is providing Rs 100 vegetable seeds at subsidized cost of Rs 90 through various schemes like VELUGU /IKP (Indira Kranthi padham). These scheme where implemented during the rainy season only. For availing benefits under government scheme beneficiary must be the member of SHGs.

As a result of CASA's initiative, 150 families got financial support from the IKP department and mobilized seeds in the months of April and May 2016. Mandal federation leaders created awareness on the scheme and motivated the eligible families to promote kitchen gardens in their homes. CBOs used to visit regularly to share the replicable models for promoting kitchen gardens in the other Mandals also. Incomes are also increasing as people have adopted healthy lifestyle by cultivating and eating the clean and green organic vegetables.

The parents have become the role models to their children by inculcating the practice of having organic vegetables so that this practice will be instilled in the next generations. ■



Savings Habit inculcated after FSCM intervention

With the support from CASA, Food Security for Community Mobilization (FSCM) has been implemented in Elugamvalasu village of Ponnivadi Panchayat, Tiruppur Dt, Tamil Nadu from 2014.

Family members were enrolled under FSCM program implemented by CASA, and they were provided with rice for

participating in FSCM activities. In addition to this, they get rice from PDS shop every month.

Under FSCM, family members have started earning through other sources. Now they are self-dependent and able to start savings and enrolled in local Self Help Groups.

The changes that happened in their

lifestyle has created confidence and they have planned to take some land on lease for cultivation. They discussed with the land owners and have taken 4 acres of land on a 5 years lease for an amount of Rs. 40,000/. Since they are the members of Self Help Group, they took Rs. 20,000/ as loan from the group and the remaining they took it from savings and paid the land owners.



A step towards conservation

Representative of CASA, CCDB (Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh) and UMN (United Mission to Nepal) participated in the exposure visit to Sri Lanka where a joint study on the issues and challenges in Protecting Mahaweli river was conducted by 'Friends Srilanka Net' promoted by NCC-SL. The study report was released at the auditorium of Asst. Indian High Commission, KANDY on 11th August 2016.

The mainstreaming of Mahaweli River, pollution and advocacy efforts are the major areas for replication. The expressions of commitment by members of different religions and its leaders, authorities of the concerned Mahaweli river, environment engineer, Kandy

municipality, network leaders and Asst. Indian high commissioner, Kandy to address the issue are the indicators of success of the campaign.

The efforts in promoting 'children's networks' for safe Environment among slum children and motivating them to bring out the issues of their community, was well received by the media and the different ethnic groups.

The children's network has launched a newsletter – "SLUM – Transformation Newsletter" to bring out the talents of the children as well as the problems faced by them. The first newsletter was released on 13th August 2016 at Colombo.

On the other hand a women group in

Kandy region has involved in promoting 'Organic Kitchen Gardening' in the Kandy Hill region. If the involvement of young women and the men folk are mobilised in the efforts, it would have become a replicable model.

The visit to garbage yards of Colombo city, landslide areas, relief camp of the flood victims, and Chinese port city in Colombo enlightened on the major issues of the Sri Lankan community. The interventions by Government / NGO's are negligible.

It is noteworthy to mention that Rev. Ebinezer Joseph, General Secretary – NCCSL and his team created learning atmosphere throughout the programme. ■

Landless women laborers Turn Entrepreneurs

The women of Varund village are very active members of the SHG group Jai MungsajiMauli. As they wanted to engage in some entrepreneurship work and to enhance their livelihood opportunities they requested for a lentil processing machine. This was provided to them in the financial year 2015-16. The women came together and planned how to use the machine and to make profit through collective working.

They have learnt to operate the machine on their own. They have been able to maintain the accounts and record. During the harvesting period between March-June 2016 of lentil they used the machine to clear lentils of 45 quintals of approximately 250 families.

This has given them a direct profit of Rs. 4,800/- as they charged Rs.120/- per quintal for cleaning. The larger profit is for the farmers who utilized the services to clear lentils where they will get double the cost per kilo when they sell it in the market. (1 Kilo raw lentil is Rs. 60/- to Rs. 70/-.

Once it has cleansed it is around Rs.130/- to Rs. 140/-) per kilo. Since people have this facility in their own village they are able to process it and enhance the cost of the product through Value addition. In the absence of this lentil processing mill the people were having 100% loss. When they sold it as raw lentil they were losing on a huge amount.

This project has made the women more confident and it has also enhanced their entrepreneurship skill. They are very enthusiastic about this project and they want to do more economic activities on their own. This has provided

an alternative source of income to them. These women have not taken any wages for cleaning. However of the 45 quintals cleaned 5 quintals belong to the women of the SHG group. ■

(Inputs by Joycia Thorat, Project Officer)



A simple wheel changed life for a potter in Maharashtra



Ravindra Uttam Padvar belongs to Khubhar Backward Caste and lives in a joint family of 7 members along with his old parents. For his livelihood he depends on earthen pot making a seasonal small scale business and also they do sharecropping. As they belong to Khumbhar caste their house is in

periphery. It is a social discrimination that all people who belongs to Kumbhar caste lives in periphery.

Sharecropping is fully depended on rainfall and water resources. Hence no assurance for sustaining his livelihood to meet the basic needs of his family. Through share

cropping he has to invest Rs. 30,000.00 to Rs. 35,000.00 yearly and get 6 acre land on rent and do the farming. Many times he faces loss in sharecropping due to scanty rainfall and then they depend upon their livelihood on seasonal small scale business i.e. earthen pot making.

Mr. P S Birajdar Coordinator and Mr. Ravindra Suryawanshi Program Associate of Comprehensive Food Security Program, (CFSP), Arni visited the family and after finding out the families economic conditions helped the family to get a new potter's wheel under the project as the old potter's wheel was not functioning well. This helped Ravindra to increase the production of earthen pots which he sold in the Arni market and nearby villages.

His income thereby improved. He could now invest Rs. 55,000.00 in sharecropping and took 9 acres land on rent. Their younger child who passed 7th standard now had the opportunity to study further. CASA under CFSP program was able to bring smile and happiness to this family. ■

(Inputs by Joycia Thorat, Project Officer)

The alternate income support for landless women headed families through goat distribution has started yielding results in three fold manner. First of all the goats supplied to these families has been a great source of income support and succor to the families which did not have any asset to call their own. By having the goat for themselves they are the proud owners of one asset which they could call their own.

They took care of these goats so well which helped in multiplying more offspring. This has helped in nutritious food consumption in the form of milk and milk products. The families have become food secure as they were able to have additional income through the sale of milk and goats. The benefit of this project (goat distribution) did not stop here.

As per the agreement and realizing the need of the other needy families in the

true community spirit these families are contributing to welfare other needy households. 15 such goats have been distributed to the needy families thereby upholding another 15 families for their alternate source of income. This is the first time re-distribution of goats. Another 27 goats are ready for distribution. So far the goat support provided by CASA-ERD in 2014-2016 is sixty-one. For the year 2016 we have planned to distribute 50 goats.



(UP) CASA and NCCI organised an ecumenical diakonia on climate justice with four other member churches at CNI Bhawan, Delhi on 3rd and 4th August.

(Right) General Secretary NCCI Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikewad and CASA Director Dr. Sushant Agrawal addressing the seminar.



MCCI and CASA holding a meet over new guidelines for food support for community mobilisation (FSCM) at CASA Headquarters, New Delhi 9th September.





CASA Delhi Fundraisers for Local Resource Mobilisation (LRM) with Head of Fundraising Gopal Jain (Sitting extreme left) with CASA's fundraising consultant Kunal Verma, CASA Director Dr. Sushant Agrawal (Centre), Manager Retention and Servicing Rakesh Verma (2nd from left middle row) and Manager Acquisition Sougata Pal (3rd from left middle row) at Noida Office.

Reminiscences

(A glimpse of CASA's Newsletter in this quarter way back in 1965. Then CASA was known as CORAGS (Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies) and was a programme of the NCCI (National Christian Council of India)



INFORMATION BULLETIN

COMMITTEE ON RELIEF AND GIFT SUPPLIES
NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF INDIA

4, Mathura Road
Jungpura - A
NEW DELHI - 14

AUGUST 1965

ONE MAN'S KITCHEN

The story of how a man's ambition to do a 'bit of building up instead of knocking down' took him from Hong Kong to the slums of Calcutta and whose enthusiasm fired the interest of Christian peoples in all parts of the world. With their support he is doing the work of five men.

Every day Major Dudley John Gardiner has his 'family' of 1153 to feed.

John, an ex-British Army major, is a voluntary social worker at the Salvation Army Social Centre, South Circular Road, Calcutta. His day starts early. At 6-30 a.m. he is out drawing rations for his proteges; between 7 and 8 he is issuing dried milk, medicants and food to tubercular patients who call daily at the Centre as part of a regular health programme.

After his own breakfast in the Social Centre Canteen, Major Gardiner dons white overalls and retires to a special kitchen he has established in the backyard of the Centre. Surrounded by huge cauldrons and outsize pots and pans, he starts his team of helpers on the preparation of curry, rice, chapatties, dall purce and porridge. At 11.30 Major Gardiner is ready. He summons the driver of a Jeep station wagon bearing the sign 'Red Shield' and the slogan "The Salvation Army Social Services Meals on Wheels OXFAM sponsored" into which he loads a proportion of the meal he has prepared. Adding another container into which he has poured skimmed milk prepared from dry powder, he takes the van to a nearby Anglican school where 120 under-privileged children sponsored by the Christian Children's Fund of Canada are the first of his 'family' to be fed.

Back at the Social Centre by 1230, John feeds another 600 destitutes who arrive daily, some taking their meals at the Centre, while others take them back to their families. Each case has been examined and approved by a team of social workers from the Salvation Army. After a short rest and time to reload the van with fresh supplies Major Gardiner is off again, this time with more than 400 meals aboard.

He has 25 stopping places to call at in the slums of Calcutta to feed those who for one reason or another are unable to go to the Canteen. Some are blind, others are old and infirm, many are sick or with families that cannot be left and a few have small menial jobs which earn them a few paise but keep them occupied during the lunch hour. Major Gardiner knows all of his proteges by name and has a kindly word for each one, but there is no time for a lengthy chat and he is lucky if he gets back to the Centre by 5 o'clock.

Rs. 1,00,000 and a Jeep.

Dudley John Gardiner, at 55, is a bachelor, but has adopted nine children whom he supports on his army pension. Four are at Bishop Westcott School, Ranchi and five at Bishop Cotton School, Simla. "I served in the army for 32 years," said Major Gardiner, "and moving around the world I have seen so much chaos and find that the civilians always get it worse in the neck than anyone else, so I thought I would do a bit of building up instead of knocking down."

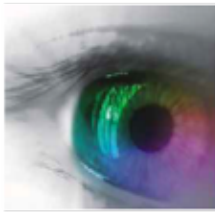


The mobile van arrives at one of the stopping centres on the "milk round" where cheery faces greets its arrival.

He was invited by the Salvation Army to help with their programme for the care of the undernourished in Calcutta's slums in 1959. Soon he had collected 55 destitutes, which aroused the interest of the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM). "They provided a lakh of rupees and a jeep so that I could really get going" declared Major Gardiner enthusiastically, "and now they are helping with the cost of putting up a new building at the Social Centre." Changing out of his overalls after his 'milk-round', John excused himself. He had another two hour's voluntary work ahead of him, coaching boys in English, general knowledge, behaviour and 'on how to talk to other people.'

Contd. on page 8

Vision of CASA



CASA's vision is inspired by the Christian Faith and values. CASA visualises a society in which peace, justice and equality prevail and wherein all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, language and religion—live in peace and communal harmony. CASA also envisages a society where

the poor, women, the marginalised and under-privileged lead a quality life with dignity and have equal opportunity for their involvement in the development process which is value based and sustainable, and also have an appropriate environment to develop their fullest potential.

Mission of CASA



CASA actively supports and works for a just and sustainable society by creating opportunities for the participation of socially and economically marginalised sections in the development process through networking, alliance building and strengthening of their organisation. CASA also supports local self-governance, protection of

human rights, peace and reconciliation and sustainable livelihood measures and responds to the environmental issues, natural and manmade disasters and strives to bring the victims to the mainstream while upholding the human dignity. CASA promotes gender mainstreaming at all appropriate levels, mobilises resources in favour of the poor and optimises all potentials and capacities existing within the organisation and other partners.

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