

Dhaatri
Resource Centre for Women and Children

Annual Report

April 2014-March 15



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Introduction:

Dhaatri Trust worked towards strengthening its field activities in the year 2014-15 with most activities implemented from our field office at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. We started the year in a positive direction by initiating collaborative work in our field area as well as at a national level. With our resolve to strengthen our work in the area of women's rights we started the year with a partnership on protecting the human rights of women and through women's empowerment through training, research and advocacy support to ten field based organisations in five states-Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh.

The work on children's rights continued through the strengthening of our monitoring work at the community level to bring entitlements to tribal children under the Right to Education Act. Our field based team undertook several programmes to empower women as parents and as elected representatives to participate actively in conducting social audit of education and forestry programmes.

As part of our education as well women's rights work, we initiated a new programme at the community level bringing focus on adolescent girls who are farmers and have dropped out of school or were never enrolled.

We have tried to strengthen our international advocacy work through rebuilding linkages with members and alliance groups on women and mining to connect our India mining programmes with international advocacy.

Cultural knowledge and strengthening women's authority space over this knowledge was another thrust area this year that gave a new focus to grassroots research through building barefoot ethnographers.

Education and role of civil society advocacy in strengthening the Right To Education Act

We have continued to work in the area of building the capacities of School Management Committees in Salugu, Tadigiri, Mottujore and Teegalavalasa panchayats of Paderu and Hukumpeta mandals. Our team has conducted monthly meetings at primary schools with SMC members, facilitated the monitoring of schools through social audit by SMC members and submission of representations to local and district level education authorities. We have ensured the re-admission and retention of children who have dropped out of school at primary and middle level by doing house to house survey and motivating parents and children. We have successfully admitted more than 50 children in residential high schools. The team has conducted monthly community meetings to track children who have dropped out, to help the community dialogue with the teachers for better attendance and for improving the quality of mid-day meals. We also conducted training for school mid-day meal cooks to improve their sanitation and nutrition levels while providing meals in the schools.

In order to retain children in high schools and to dialogue with high school teachers on quality education and cultural knowledge, we initiated a High School Students' programme. As part

of this programme we have conducted workshops on issues of cultural knowledge, gender and sexual rights, reproductive health and healing. The workshops were conducted in both boys' and girls' hostels with permission from district authorities. We conducted a series of programme like quiz competitions on traditional food and forestry, initiated student project activities where students were given assignments to work together in groups on their cultural knowledge of wild food, hunting, agriculture, forest produce, house building, biodiversity and traditional sports. These were compiled by students and displayed in their respective schools. We also conducted an Annual Day Celebration for all primary schools in Salugu panchayat where we work for improving the role of SMCs. The Annual Day was celebrated by inviting more than 100 children from the 18 primary schools to the nodal ashram school in Malkapalem where we conducted games and educational activities in the presence of parents, SMC members and teachers of all the schools. This was received extremely well by children as well as parents and the teachers have asked for more regular interaction at the high school level. We distributed sports material to some of the primary and high schools.

Adolescent Girls-education and health interventions:

As part of both our education and health interventions, we have initiated an Adolescent Girls' programme to give awareness on health and gender issues. We have trained not only our field team but also our field partner NGOs in Andhra Pradesh to undertake trainings in their respective field area schools and at anganwadis through the Kishori Balika programmes. The training consisted of understanding human physiology and sexual health, adolescent girls and health issues, particularly those in residential schools where hygiene, sanitation and nutrition are serious issues. It also covers gender equality and understanding the rights of women, both constitutional and customary. Our trainers conducted a series of workshops at girls' high schools in Paderu mandal and at the community level with the Kishori Balika age group. A number of health problems were exposed where girls feel the need for information and guidance. We have come out with a manual on sexual health in Telugu which will be used in our training programmes.

A serious issue identified by our field team was the safety and social security of tribal girls studying in hostels at school level as well as post matric level, particularly where girls are away from their homes at district level institutions where there is no monitoring or authority. A number of cases of abuse and exploitation are being reported and we identified the need for bringing awareness and counselling to girls hostels. As part of this this we have started conducting workshops on gender equality and sexual health at government tribal welfare post matric hostels in Visakhapatnam and Paderu. This has brought our several individual cases that are being dealt through counselling and medical aid. We have provided emergency medical support to one such student.

We also extended our support to education through student scholarships at higher education level and through support of a school in Madhya Pradesh which is run for dalit and tribal children of daily wage labour. We received donations and supported two students in higher education.

- cultural education and tribal knowledge-high school student programmes; ethnography of the Pejjenis-a documentation of the lives and spirituality of the Pejjenis among the Khonds
- improving the quality of primary schools
- student scholarships

II. Gender Equality:

Dhaatri Resource Centre has started coordinating a gender and human rights programme with the support of BothEnds, the Netherlands and through partnership with Keystone Foundation, Nilgiris and with ten other field and national partners. The project is aimed at strengthening the voices of women to protect their rights to food, water and safe environment. The programme was implemented through the fiscal sponsorship of Adivasi Mitra, Paderu where Dhaatri's role was in training local partners on gender equality and rights of women, building the capacities of human rights defenders at the grassroots level to dialogue with local governance institutions on asserting for women's constitutional rights and leadership in decision making. As part of this, we have conducted gender equality trainings, built capacities of local partners in undertaking baseline research from a gender perspective and to build strategies of interventions related to women's empowerment based on the problems identified. A major focus of this research and survey was on women's land rights, forest rights and impacts of environmental pollution and other projects on women's livelihood, health and social security.

As part of this, we have travelled across partner organisations' field areas in Hospet, Karnataka, Panna district of Madhya Pradesh, Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh and in Viskhapatnama and Srikakulam districts. We undertook extensive field research to study the quality of water and its impacts on women's health, the impacts of mining and pollution on women's reproduction and sexual health and child labour issues. We are having a dialogue with the partners on field strategies to improve the quality of women's livelihoods and health.

One of the two focus areas of this project as well as a women's empowerment project supported by Mamacash, the Netherlands and Adivasi Mitra, is to enable tribal women get entitlements under the Forest Rights Act. Our field team was trained extensively in understanding the processes of claims and grievances, documentation of claims and strengthening the role of women in the Forest Rights Committees. We have worked in 14 villages directly at the field level in the process of claims registration under the Act where single women, women headed households and widows were helped in putting up claims and in mapping of their individual and collective rights to forest lands.

The second focus area is to strengthen the rights of Adivasi women as farmers and to protect their land rights. We have started working with women at the community level through dialogue with them on food security, traditional food crops and in improving the traditional livelihoods through land based activities. This year, we collaborated with other partners in procurement of seeds for improving millet cultivation. Around 150 women farmers received seeds and support from our programme.

As part of our gender and human rights work, we are trying to highlight the problems of women and children affected by mining projects. We undertook a fact-finding visit to Bellary district where women are suffering from pollution, poverty and domestic violence in the background of mining and mine closure. The problems identified were documented and we started a dialogue with the various departments in the government concerned with women and children in Karnataka. We are working closely with our partner NGO, Sakhi Trust in undertaking training and counselling of adolescent girls who are vulnerable to sexual abuse, domestic violence and devadasi systems.

We participated in international level meetings to strengthen women's empowerment and their right to food, water and safe environment. This year we attended a partners' meeting in Geneva and to attend some of the UNHRC meetings on business and human rights.

Ethnography and women's priests:

With the support of the UN Trust Fund and Adivasi Mitra, we have been supporting the team of Adivasi Mitra in undertaking field ethnography to strengthen Adivasi cultural knowledge. As a women's resource centre, we aim towards building our research and documentation on women's problems as well as knowledge. The women priests, or Pejjenis among the Khonds, a vulnerable tribe in Andhra Pradesh share a unique role as high priests of the community where they have spiritual authority over the community. They perform rituals to protect the community and the land and forests through their knowledge and spirituality. We have been training a small team at the community level to undertake field interviews, document traditional rituals and festivals, document life stories and compile songs and oral histories from Pejjenis which we will be bringing out as a publication as part of our cultural education programme. We conducted workshops with the Pejjenis and the ethnographers to take their permission and work with the Pejjenis in documentation of their rituals.

Some important news:

Dhaatri has received permission from the Income Tax Department for exemption u/s. 80G of the Income Tax Act –all donations to Dhaatri are eligible for exemption from income tax.

Activity Photos



Dabbanda School Opening



Dabbanda School Re-opening Rally



Dabbanda School Re-opening



Hukumpeta Rally



Mattujoru Cooks One day meeting



Memorandum to MDO



Gender Training – 31st August – 2nd September 2014



Workshop with human rights defenders on Gender Equality



Role-play depicting gender discrimination at the Workshop on Gender Equality



Group discussion on implementation of gender equality in field partners' areas



Individual planning by organisations on gender equality



Group presentation



Participants of the meeting



Students put up a role-play on gender sensitization

Orientation on Dhaatri Activities to TISS Students: 23.08.2014



Orientation on social mapping to TISS Interns

Training to Trainers on Adolescent Girls: 5-6 December 2014



Training to trainers on issues of Adolescent girls



Training to trainers on making sanitary napkins in the workshop on Adolescent girls

Adolescent Girls Training at Poolabanda Resource Centre : 22nd November 2014



Workshop with KishoriBalikas at Poolabanda

Adolescent training at Kiloguda on 20th December 2014



Meeting with adolescent girls on issues of personal hygiene etc. at Sanjeevini, Kiloguda area

School Programme at Malakapolam and KGBV, Paderu on 4th December 2014



Interaction with school girls at KGBV Paderu



Organising Student Science programme at Malakapolam boys' ashram high school



Screening of documentary film on sexual and reproductive health at Tribal Girls' hostel in Visakhapatnam

Human Rights programme with adolescent girls at KGBV Kamalapura, Hospet, Karnataka



General topic on adolescent girls at KGBV Kamalapur, Karnataka, Roleplay by a student on how teachers abuse them



Orientation to Sakhi team, Karnataka on monitoring the RTE Act



Meeting with Panchayat elected members at Karginur in Karnataka



Interview with an accident victim due to mining transportation in Hospet

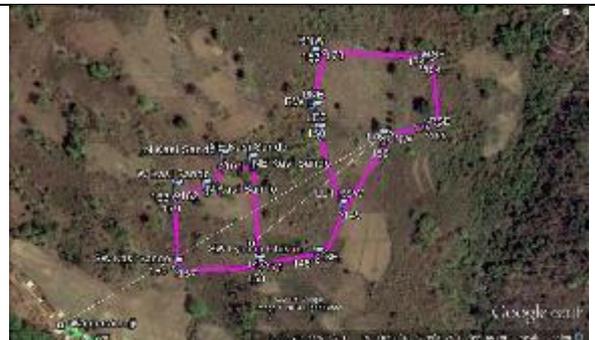


Studying the status of anganwadis in Papinayakhalli, Hospet

Land mapping at Kapparmajji on 20.11.2014



Villagers at Kapparamajji, Visakhapatnam district on FRA land pattas



Land mapping at Kapparamajji



FRA pattas at Kapparamajji, Visakhapatnam district



School situation at Kapparamajji village

Field visit with TISS students on FRA in September 2014



Social mapping at Kumarthomu for identification of resources



Baseline survey conducted by GVS staff at Kovelapalem



Project Planning meeting with partner organisations at Dhaatri office, Dabbanda



Community meetings with Women affected by illegal mining and displacement due to Panna Tiger Reserve

Illegal diamond mine near Gandhigram



Community meetings with Women affected by illegal mining at Nayabasti

NMDC mines in Panna



Assessment of the mining problems in Panna, Madhya Pradesh



Woman worker in illegal diamond mines



Men affected by silicosis Umraoan



Stone mine near Bhaghagua