

# **Sanchal Foundation**

## **Annual Report**

**2012-2013**

The Sanchal Foundation was set up to promote, foster, aid and assist research for the extension of knowledge in the fields of natural, social, and applied sciences and allied fields. It was mandated to give awards, scholarships, fellowships, and grants for eliminating poverty, developing education, improving working and living conditions, and promoting health, organise lectures, symposia, seminars, and publish periodicals, books, journals, and magazines. As in previous years, the Foundation did much of its activity through the Hazards Centre, specially set up to meet the needs of communities in distress. The Foundation also continued work on human rights, environmental degradation, mutual learning, and women's empowerment. Earlier the Foundation had divided the work under three sub-heads of Governance, Labour, and Environment, but this year the projects reflected a coming together of these three themes. Hence, this report is an account of the project-wise activities conducted by the Foundation in the financial year beginning on April 1, 2012 and ending on March 31, 2013.

### **Challenges of Urban Livelihoods and Governance**

This project, supported by the Ford Foundation, is the result of several years of work on urban issues of shelter and services and, now, livelihoods. The activity has spread from Delhi to 27 cities and towns over the year, mainly because of a mid-term evaluation of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission in 2009. This year the Foundation's researchers have helped local groups to do 23 participatory research studies in their cities. We had 5 Community Researchers this year, and could conduct 67 Workshops, 78 Seminars, 15 Right to Information trainings, 530 applications and 2 public hearings, as well as 16 Public Meetings on the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment and 22 Exposure Visits for community groups. They resulted in 26 reports, 5 booklets, 15 pamphlets, 3 books, and 5 posters on housing and evictions, child rights, food security, social security, sewerage, public transport, safety, industrial employment, energy, crafts, women's security, and public-private partnerships.

As a result of these activities it was possible to:

1. start local and regional preparatory meetings around the issue of employment-centred growth with several studies on the subject; and support livelihood-based debates and campaigns in different cities
2. facilitate the emergence of alliances around water and sanitation, rations, sustainable development, shelter, participatory planning, street vending, public transport, child care, health, waste management, and safety

Two environmental changes that impacted on the work were:

- hardening in the attitude of policy makers who see the demand for participation as an obstacle to rapid economic growth
- less support for participatory community activity as funding agencies are having their own strategies with their partner community groups

The Foundation's researchers have developed a good method of working which begins with initial consultations with the affected group that approaches the Foundation for assistance, followed by training workshops and participatory research. This results in the emergence of reports and policies that are presented in seminars and spread widely with the aid of meetings, hearings and conferences for public debate. In the end this affects policy changes and the affected groups then try to get them implemented in their own areas. The Foundation has tried to help in the formation of collective activities by community groups; and to build linkages with networks which can influence policy changes. Groups in different cities have also begun to ask for deeper interactions between themselves for learning and developing specific tactics, as well as for more material to understand the basis of policy-making, planning, and legislation.

The overall evaluation, arrived at in a festival that was organised late in this year, suggests that many groups have picked up governance ideas as part of their work and there is no longer a need for the Foundation to intervene unless specifically asked. Also many community initiatives have begun to meet their own costs of research and training. Inter-community exposure visits have been producing encouraging results with a lot of mutual learning taking place with the help of the Community Researchers. Alliance building remains uneven because the many networks of 'partners' created by every funding agency create a lot of mistrust. The Foundation has chosen not to provide support until the component groups come to understand the need for integrated and collective action. What is more troubling is our inability to quickly produce enough textual and audio-visual materials – partly because of fewer personnel and partly not enough time given to this.

It is easy to speak of 'participatory' governance but there is a lot of resistance by policy-makers and law-givers. Thus, the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment enabling citizens to participate in their own development has not been implemented in any State. Similarly, the Right to Information Act has been strongly opposed by sections of the administration and is in danger of being diluted. A national campaign to make development planning focus on growth in employment rather than growth in domestic product has not been given any attention. A national conference where community groups tried to engage policy makers on the failures of the Urban Renewal Mission was dismissed outright by the Ministries and the Planning Commission. Hence the Foundation's researchers will have to think in the coming year of how to find a solution to this hardening stance.

### **Sustainable Livelihood Practices, Urban Transport and Climate Change in India**

This is a project that began this year with support from the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and is a pointer to our attempt to bring together several themes under one umbrella. The thinking for this project emerged out of earlier research by us that suggested that the 'best practice' for countering climate change came from those groups whose lifestyles were already within a

sustainable level. Several meetings were organised in Delhi, Jaipur, and Indore to discuss this concept with local groups for their agreement to take up the proposed activities. These partner groups then held meetings with their local community organisations to examine their problems in getting services and saving livelihoods and to discuss how these could be connected to the best use of resources. After this the community organisations started collecting information on schemes from the urban local bodies and then comparing that to what was being done in their areas.

Then periodic trainings were organised to explain the process of community-led research. This focused on the existing experience of each organisation and how they could begin collecting information on their needs. Some of the groups then started their own participatory research studies on basic services, livelihoods, shelter, transport, and so on, with some help from the Foundation's researchers. Study reports were published and distributed so that community people could learn more facts about their own lifestyles and how these were better and more sustainable than the consumerist way of living of higher income groups. This strengthened the community demands from the administration and also got more support from an informed public.

We had planned that one preliminary meeting and training in each city would be enough to start community-led research and report preparation. But more than two preliminary meetings had to be held in each city and then there was a long period of community consultation by the local organisations. This more intensive work helped to decide what kind of research the communities wanted to take up and then we had to see how these studies could be tied to issues of resource use and sustainability. So the following activity of reports, workshops and publications got a little delayed during this year. But there was much greater local participation and learning on issues such as the Bus Rapid Transport system, waste-picking, hawking and vending, rights to land and housing, and the importance of identity.

An internal assessment shows that the vulnerable groups in all three cities are beginning to relate their specific issues to what is happening at the policy level and to understand the links between livelihoods, shelter, services, and resources. They are also grasping how participatory research can be carried out and how this strengthens the affected groups and communities. So more local knowledge is being created but there is a time lag in spreading this knowledge more widely within the local community groups as well as the general public. We have to be careful to work at the pace with which communities feel comfortable. Also it takes time to understand the connection between what people experience and how the larger society works. And we also have to deal with the fact that there are many other networks which compete to attract groups in the same area for a different set of issues.

### **Community Kitchens**

In Delhi, more and more groups were worried about how to sustain themselves and their active young people doing community work in the absence of secure jobs and earnings. While trying to explore ways of employment that support community work, some groups wanted to set up community kitchens. So a project was planned to establish eight community kitchens at different places, both to meet the food needs of vulnerable migrant communities as well as support the

groups running the kitchens. Jamsetji Tata Trust provided funds to set up all eight kitchens but finally only six could be started because the proposal took more than eighteen months to be cleared and one of the partner groups defaulted. The six kitchens catered to an average of 400 persons per day, although this figure varied a lot depending upon season, migration, and availability of work in the area. The food is nutritious, better than what is offered by government schemes, and is at an affordable price. Free meals are also often provided to the old, handicapped, widows, single women, and children.

The Foundation helped in the management of the kitchens by organising a series of workshops to give training on how to maintain accounts and inventories, use funds to the best possible extent, maintain the quality of the food, prepare reports, sign contracts, and organise self-help groups. Visits to modern kitchens run by other voluntary groups and weekly and monthly meetings within and between different teams running the kitchens helped to share experience and build capacity. We have been able to prepare case studies of all the kitchens that are running to compare the income and expense patterns and different ways of managing so as to learn better ways of making them more viable and sustainable. Problems faced with regard to rising prices; making a choice between *thalis* for the poor and tiffins for the slightly better off; issues of rent, registration, licensing, transport; and safety and security have been tackled in spite of non-cooperation from the municipality.

Interestingly, the kitchens have not only become a place for people to eat food and groups to earn something, but also spaces for meeting and exchanging experiences on issues of survival. So the Foundation has also received requests to give training on social, economic, legal, and policy issues. Two of the successful kitchens are run by women's self-help groups and their example appeals to other groups who are also asking for assistance to set up kitchens. But we are still working out how to meet the rising costs of all inputs because of inflation and maintain a constant customer base of what are mainly migrant labourers. Service agencies, financial institutions, and regulatory authorities are also wary of recognising informal kitchens like these for fear of risks. Also cooks and managers do not stay for long because the wages are still low as compared to what the market is offering.

It was proposed to conduct health camps twice a year to measure and monitor the health impact on the beneficiaries. Six health camps were also organised during the day and also at night and doctors from the local dispensary and hospitals were recruited for these camps. Most of the attendees reported fevers, body pains, cuts, and tuberculosis as the main complaints, and they were under-weight and showed signs of malnutrition. But the camps could not give an idea of the impact of the nutrition provided by the kitchens, as they were mainly catering to migrant workers who are highly mobile and do not stay within the range of a single kitchen for any length of time. Hence, it was not only the kitchens which were unstable but also their clients. The review found that a lot of capacity had been built in the organising groups but it was not enough to deal constantly with the unstable conditions of the informal (and illegal) sector.

### **Policies for Waste Management**

As part of an understanding with Christian Aid, the Foundation extended assistance to Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group to analyse policies for waste management in

different Indian cities and how they impacted upon waste-pickers. This unique study found that while waste-pickers are among the poorest and most vulnerable residents, in order to survive they need to pick up waste and this should be made legal and safe. While Indian policies and rules include some important provisions for such recyclers, they are ignored by municipalities, urban policy makers, and private companies in the business of solid waste management. Partly, this is because they are not aware about these rules and policies; and partly because planners do not include waste-pickers in their plans by design. By doing this, they bypass both the environment and the poor, because they are not helping an informal chain that contributes so much to reducing greenhouse gases.

The study recommends that doorstep collection should be carried out only by waste-pickers, who should be able to take out the dry/recyclable waste for themselves. Basic support is required from municipalities such as identity cards, cycle carts, credit, space etc. and some training in safe handling. Hence, there is a need for educating municipalities about the role of the informal sector in waste management because many of them are turning only to private companies for this task. Besides this, the informal sector also has to create new strategies to advocate for its own inclusion. One such strategy could be to follow international best practice and demand space in landfills for trucks to unload their waste and a sorting yard that allows waste-pickers to carry on their work without injury or disturbing the rest of the technical area. Chintan has also printed the report in Hindi for the use of waste-pickers and their organisations.

### **Lok Shakti Manch**

This innovative project of the Foundation has been supported for a few years now and this year too, the project continued with limited support from Association for India's Development, Troy and Seattle Chapters. Both financial and technical support from Sanchal was considerably less this year as the project steers its way to be independent of the Foundation. In this year the Manch again took up the issues of the public distribution system affecting the people in the slums and resettlement colonies around Bhalaswa in north-west Delhi. A memorandum signed by 5000 people was presented to the authorities protesting against the cash-for-food system being implemented in place of universal rations. The Right to Information Act was vigorously used to campaign against corruption. Water supply by tankers was shown to be unsafe and irregular and complaints made to the Public Grievance Commission to hold Delhi Jal Board responsible for supplying drinkable water by pipeline. The Commission has responded positively to the complaints made by the people.

The Public Grievance Commission was also approached to order the Municipal Corporation and the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board to improve the system of sanitation with regular collection of waste, cleaning of drains, and maintenance of public toilet blocks. Members of the Manch took up the cause of public education in government and municipal schools to ensure that enough teachers were appointed, that these teachers attended regularly, and the schools were monitored by parent associations. They also undertook a unique participatory survey of almost 1000 households that showed that on an average each slum family invested about Rs 7 lakhs in housing and services for the ten years they were in a slum and this was followed by a further investment of Rs 5 lakhs when they were moved to a resettlement colony, which is

supposed to have all the necessary services. Members went to Udaipur, Hyderabad, Ballia, and Alwar to learn more about activities in other areas and to share their experience.

### **Uttarakhand**

With financial assistance from Association for India's Development, Troy Chapter, a Saathiship was offered to K Ramnarayan to explore, study, and experiment with development issues in the Kumaon area of Uttarakhand. He has submitted periodic reports on conservation projects in the area, with reference to the implementation of the Forest Rights Act, quality of water supply, audit of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee programme, and sacred landscapes. He has also conducted ecology studies in the Gori valley and Askot region, visited hydro-electric projects for photo-documentation of the damage, made representations to the concerned authorities, and participated in consultations on tourism and waste management. Some experiments were carried out in water management and processing, solar lighting, wind energy, improvements in wood stoves, and improvements in the farming of rajma beans.

### **Administration**

There have been no changes in the Foundation's Board in the year under review, but two senior staff have left the Hazards centre during the year along with three junior researchers – primarily to pursue academics or better paid jobs. This has left some gaps in the capacity of the Foundation to respond to demands, particularly for audio-visual material, and it has not been easy to find suitable persons to replace the experienced persons. Two new staff have been recruited (and three more are proposed) but it will take some time before they are able to grasp the comprehensive nature of the work and take up the slack. One of the ways of organizational strengthening that is being explored is to formally associate the Hazards Centre with an academic institution so as to provide some continuity and stability to its researchers and the work. The other possibility is to strengthen the outreach of the Centre through the Community Researchers program.

The accounts for the year have been audited. The Foundation began the year with an opening balance of Rs 38.17 lakhs and received Rs 106.40 lakhs through the year, of which Rs 91.25 lakhs was from foreign grants and the remainder came from local sources. The total expenditure was of the order of Rs 87.62 lakhs, out of which Rs 11.12 lakhs was spent on administrative costs. The main donors were Ford Foundation (Rs 57.67 lakhs), Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (21.12 lakhs), Jamsetji Tata Trust (Rs 13.51 lakhs), Diamond and Jems (Rs 4.14 lakhs), Association for India's Development (Rs 4.12 lakhs), and Action Aid (4.00 lakhs). This left a closing balance of Rs 56.52 lakhs for the year, all of which is earmarked for specific projects.