

# **Sanchal Foundation**

## **Annual Report 2015-2016**

The Foundation had another busy year, in spite of tightening financial constraints that have persisted since last year. The various activities undertaken in 2015-16 are briefly highlighted in this annual report.

### **Livelihoods**

#### **Sustainable Livelihood Practices**

A project on livelihood practices, supported by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, had been taken up two years ago, as a continuation of our earlier work on climate change in 16 cities, to document the resource use of working people living along roads and explore whether their practices were suited to adapt to and mitigate climate change. This year through meetings, trainings, consultations, and media events, we tried to encourage a wider debate around the publication of “A Subaltern View of Climate Change”, in which it was argued that only those Indians who earn less than Rs 8000 per month consume energy below the sustainable limit, hence they should be considered as ‘best practice’ rather than most ‘vulnerable’.

However, before the dissemination could be completed and some consensus could emerge with other organisations and institutions, the funders held a meeting with us in October 2016 to state that the “project is not in line with the objectives and indicators of (our) climate line of funding” – this, after three years of supporting the work, and yet not disclosing what the objectives and indicators were. In addition, we were informed that the funder’s Directives specifically provided for return of left over funds within the project period and for the termination of the project, although the specific provisions in the Directives were not disclosed. Hence, the project was terminated abruptly without completing its objectives.

#### **Sustainable Livelihoods & Life**

Immediately after the project on Livelihood Practices was terminated, the Foundation received a grant for knowledge production from Misereor-KZE, to enhance the outreach of the Delhi centre by setting up two regional centres at Ahmadabad and Vishakhapatnam, from where extension activities could be taken care of for the southern and western regions, while Delhi would take care of the central, eastern and northern areas. In this manner, the Foundation continued activities in several settlements of Ahmadabad, Delhi, and Vishakhapatnam, and in their neighbourhoods, as well as in 23 other cities and towns ranging from Allahabad to Vadodara, Asansol to Varanasi, and Kota to Kurnool.

These activities focused around the theme of how local knowledge could be strengthened for sustaining livelihoods. For example, in Delhi, in Sukhdev Vihar, researchers worked on mitigating traffic accidents; in Kathputli Colony, they researched into the relationship between shelter and work; in Sabda Ghevra, they looked into the economics of water supply through ATMs; in Khanpur, they provided organisational assistance in training for shop assistants. Similarly, in Nagpur, workshops were organised with workers affected by privatisation of public

transport; in Vijaywada, the concerns focussed on the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana; and in Bhubaneswar, the street vendors were seeking space on the roadside.

### **Rationalisation of Work**

On the request of Global Fairness Initiative and concerned organisations in Nepal, we provided technical assistance to conduct a time-motion study of 185 (60% male, 40% female) piece-rated workers in 14 brick kilns to establish what should be the fair wage for these workers. This was an outcome of our earlier work in a brick kiln near Ahmadabad, where the research showed that the energy output of the workers in the kiln was higher than the energy input of the food that they consumed. These two initiatives also led to an attempt to begin developing a low-cost energy measurement device which could be used workers' organisations to measure their own energy expenditure and thereby arrive at reasonable wage rates.

In Jabalpur, a study was initiated on the conditions of construction workers and the terms of payment. It also became an opportunity to develop a mobile-based App called 'Sahbhagita' which allowed for the rapid entry, as well as analysis, of field data. A similar study of piece-rated jobs was launched in Meerut, but had to be later abandoned. A study of investments in Jaipur and their impact on employment was also initiated but could not be completed because of differences in perspective with the funding organisation. Sanchal Foundation also carried on with the effort to promote the Right to Work as a crucial legislation to be adopted for advocacy by workers' organisations.

## **Children**

### **NGOs working with Railway Children**

This project, taken up last year with support from Paul Hamlyn Foundation to strengthen the capacities of groups working with children in need of care and protection found at railway stations, was completed this year. Of the three partners at Jaipur, Bhopal, and Kolkata, one dropped out. After initial meetings and detailed interviews, the research and training began to focus on the 'agency' of the child and how it differs from the prevalent 'rescue and return' mode implicit in the Juvenile Justice Act. Then several meetings and workshops were conducted on their experience with these themes of agency and informal networks. However, the funders shifted the focus to documentation of the learning process of each partner.

By the end of the project this year, the two partner teams agreed that reporting and documentation was a very important part of their work, both for personal as well as for organisational growth. They have realised that a proper orientation is necessary for new entrants to the team, since they had themselves learnt on the job without any assistance. The issue of children who become older than 16 years also figured as a major concern for the organisations as they cannot keep these children in their shelters and employment is difficult as they lack the skills. Hence, mapping the employability pattern and the work available in the area should be taken up as an important area of training in future.

### **Life and Agency of Children**

The earlier project with NGOs led to another project launched this year and also funded by PHF, by a clutch of concerned NGOs and individuals, to understand how children exerted their

'agency' when they came to the railway station and what were the informal networks that emerged around them to support them in the decisions they took about their lives and livelihoods? This group named itself as the All India Working Group on Rights of Children in Contact with Railways. Through a series of meetings this year it came to a consensus on how the study would be designed. The study will begin next year with a literature survey, then interviews with 1000 children at about 25 railway stations, followed by 100 case studies.

Apart from supporting the novel initiative proposed by RCCR, Sanchal Foundation has also been involved with several other attempts to explore the world of children. In Bhuapur, near Ghazipur landfill of Delhi, our researchers have participated in developing learning materials for children of waste-pickers (with support from Gansagar Ratandhan Foundation). Help has been provided to attempts to start a primary school at the Bawana resettlement site, and to explore how children view schools and education at the Bhalaswa resettlement site. We have also approached over a hundred educational institutions this year both to attract interns who wish to learn from communities, as well as to explore collaborations.

## **Empowerment**

### **Equality and Poverty Reduction**

This project, supported by UNDP, was taken up last year to explore the denial of access to core basic rights that lead to poverty for particular individuals and groups. In the first phase, a comprehensive literature review and analysis of existing work had been completed. In the second phase, carried out this year, policy guidelines had to be prepared through two studies, of which the Jharkhand study could not be completed. But, through case studies and interviews in five migrant labour settlements of Delhi, the research concluded that the poor were forced to improve their lives incrementally; absence of documents denied access; targeted supplies were inadequate; lower castes were given lower access; and there was no policy assurance for work.

The interviews revealed that the poor are aware of how targeting impacts them, and demand universal entitlements, but do not have a political voice. They also want identity documents, subsidised provisions, fair wages, affordable shelter, water, sanitation, health, education, and livelihoods – for all citizens. And they demand that these be provided directly by a welfare State and its institutions, and not through private agencies or intermediaries hired by the State. On occasion, they gather together to petition the authorities to provide urgent necessities, but there is a conflict between depending upon the present political system to protect their interests and developing their own systemic organisations for self-empowerment.

### **Bridging the Gap between Science and Society**

A grant from Wellcome Trust ensured we could promote people-led research, beginning with Allahabad where a thermal power plant is being built at Meja and the local people have been resisting the plant. At their request, our researchers designed an exercise of participatory resource mapping in the area. However, there has been a clampdown by the authorities, several leaders have been arrested, and the work had to be discontinued. In Ahmadabad, there was a request for assistance in assessing the health impact of moving settlements to areas near industrial units and garbage dumps. This has made little progress, although an examination of resettlement policies of the State Government has been completed.

We have been working in the Singrauli area for many years helping local organisations in understanding the environmental impacts of several thermal power plants and other industrial units in the region. On their request, we were able to bring together a range of technical and legal institutions and individuals to think of how to begin community-based environmental monitoring. A series of meetings and workshops was then carried out and local low-cost monitoring of particulates in the plumes of the thermal power plants, suspended solids in the ash water, sulphur concentration in the air, and diversity of benthics in the small streams has begun, along with the documentation of health impacts in 52 villages.

Some work has also started on how to assess the quantity and quality of water supply in Nagpur, now that the utility has been transferred from the public municipal corporation to a private firm. An initial meeting has taken place and a draft schedule designed. In Delhi, the health impact of air pollution has become a major public concern in recent years, so the Foundation's researchers have begun compiling the available data on pollution and health from several sources in order to build a composite picture of the differentiated sources of pollution, its distribution, and the impacts recorded in the literature. A preliminary exercise has also started to measure the lung function parameters of school-going children.

### **Collective Efforts**

No social change is possible without larger and larger collective efforts. This is something that the Foundation has attempted to do in several initiatives supported by a range of institutional and individual actors.

A grant from Association for India's Development has made it possible for the work of the Lok Shakti Manch to continue. As have financial support from Action Aid India, Association for India's Development, and Indo-Global Social Service Society made it possible for the Sajha Manch to function. Part of the funds made available by the earlier-mentioned institutions, as well as individual donations, has also supported the collective endeavours.

The Lok Shakti Manch, in turn, has taken up community issues of Ration shops, Shelter tenure, Access to education and water & sanitation, Intoxication, Rural employment guarantee, Cooking fuels and Food security, using the Right to Information and various grievance redressal mechanisms to demand accountability. While the Sajha Manch has tried to share experiences through monthly meetings, a newsletter, and training workshops

The Right to Work Bill proposed in an earlier incarnation of the Sajha Manch has become a document offered for discussion in different networks and alliances where the rights of unemployed rural labourers or the workers in the urban informal sector are being discussed and joint campaigns taken up for approaching the legislature and executive to modify or adapt the law in this regard.

To provide further support the Foundation has taken up capacity building workshops to acquaint community groups with the procedures for registration of associations, administration and accounting that are required for accessing government schemes; on gender issues, especially with the youth; on media and communication techniques; and the basics of legislations, policies, and schemes for livelihoods, shelter, and services.

The initiative in setting up Community Kitchens last year has been documented and published in Hindi. Posters on the Bus Rapid Transport System and the Metro, on Climate change, and media presentations on New Delhi's urban renewal, Slum governance, and the Road as Social Space have also been made publicly available. The manual on Occupational Health and Safety for crafts-people has been published in Hindi – all for larger collective use.

The performance of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission in the period from 2015-2015 has been documented in 17 cities in collaboration with active groups in all these cities and will shortly be published for collective debate and action. A similar effort has begun for the Smart City project in a few cities as well as for Master Plans that are being prepared at some locations.

The issue of Safety and Dignity of sewerage workers has also been dealt with in a set of booklets, pamphlets, and posters in Hindi and English, for use by all-India campaigns and those in Gujarat and Delhi in particular. Training in skills of survey design, data entry and analysis, mapping, land valuation, measuring water flows, documenting local histories, and maintaining records have also been organised from time to time.

### **Cost analysis**

For the year 2015-2016 the Foundation received a little over Rs. 1 crore (1,03,80,461), of which about 78% was from foreign grants and 22% was from Indian institutions and individuals. This compares somewhat favourably with last year's total receipts of Rs. 69.7 lakhs. Of the total receipts, roughly 80% was spent in this financial year itself. And just over 80% was spent on programme expenses. The year began with an opening balance of Rs. 6.3 lakhs and closed with a balance of Rs. 27.5 lakhs.