



SANCHAL FOUNDATION

E-57 Panchshila Park

New Delhi 110017, INDIA

Annual Report 2020-2021

Once again the year has been severely constrained by the COVID-19 epidemic. Nevertheless, Sanchal has continued its activities on a modest scale. Some of them are briefly outlined in this annual report.

Children's Agency

The Centre had provided the secretariat to the All India Working Group on the Rights of Children in Contact with Railways (AIWG-RCCR) for conducting a pioneering study on the 'agency' of children at railway stations during 2016-18. The results of the study challenged the paradigm of 'rescue and restore' that dominates the child protection and care activities of many institutions and showed that children were capable of taking actions in their own best interests which are not supported by state or voluntary agencies. From March 2020 an effort was made to follow up the study by designing a project to support several groups to conduct pilot projects based on the recommendations of the study. In spite of several attempts no funding agency was willing to support the project. Hence, in February 2021, the group reconstituted itself as the All India Working Group for Rights of Children and Hazards Centre has been providing limited support in its efforts to promote the agency of children in locations other than the railways. Also, in August 2020 a member of the Centre became part of a team of the Concern for Working Children to take up an assignment with UNICEF to document case studies of Adolescent Participation in Governance in India, Nepal and Bhutan.

COVID-19 Relief

Early in the year the COVID-19 pandemic hit Delhi severely and a lockdown was declared. This provided an opportunity for Sanchal to facilitate the relief activities in the city and give it some direction. Hence, in conjunction with the members of the Sajha Manch, an alliance of 35 groups in the city, a strategy was developed for community empowerment. Beginning with needs assessment and vulnerability mapping, 4,000 families were supplied with a month's ration in 40 *bastis* of Delhi through the government's SOS initiative. Sanchal issued an appeal for funds that generated roughly Rs. 44.6 lakhs of which 62% was from agency grants, 13% was from individual donations, and 25% was contributed by affected communities through their labour and materials. Community groups organised 6 kitchens, operated completely by local volunteers, which ran from April to September 2020 and provided over 200,000 meals. In addition, about 10,000 masks were made locally out of Grade 25 Polypropylene non-woven fabric and distributed to vulnerable families; blood oximeters and thermometers were used to monitor health levels; and several pamphlets were produced and distributed to raise

inform people about how to access ration entitlements and other welfare schemes; who to appeal to if wages were not paid or workers were laid off; as well as what to do when the symptoms of COVID first appear. The remarkable factor was that all this was done at a time of lockdowns and restrictions on movement and the coordination among Sajha Manch partners was all done online, except for two training sessions at the kitchen locations. It was expected that advocacy with the Delhi government would result in assistance to and expansion of this community-led approach. But 150+ messages to different departments of the government yielded only 12 replies and each one of those merely forwarded our message to another department. 5 Right to Information applications were denied and 3 complaints to the grievance redressal unit received no response.

Urban Governance

The pandemic made any ground work impossible for almost the entire year. However, Sanchal – through its unit Hazards Centre – was able to contribute to discussion and activities related to urban issues in a modest way. Webinars were held on evictions, housing, shelters for the homeless, city planning, urban growth, the role of people in making cities liveable, and new economic imaginations in which Sanchal tried to consistently present the argument that without including the working poor and their ideas in understanding these issues, there could be no holistic way of addressing the problems of the city. Within that context, the Centre offered information and case studies to assist worker colonies being uprooted in Raipur, Delhi slums being removed from railway land, employees of BEST (the Bombay bus corporation) trying to protect public transport, the residents of Kathputli Colony in Delhi denied their rehousing entitlements, and street vendors in Gurgaon asking for space and facilities in public places.

Labour

The work with IIT Delhi on developing a cheap Capnograph for measuring energy expenditure at work was greatly impeded by the pandemic and its consequent lockdowns. The improvement of safety measures in the stone carving and crushing industries at Pindwara and Beawar with Aajeevika Bureau in Rajasthan was also affected. Yet there was significant progress in each of these activities which should show results once the COVID restrictions are lifted. We were invited to participate in a technical committee to propose steps to protect sewerage workers from death and disease by the Safai Karmachari Andolan where, in contrast to other committee members who were proposing automation, we pressed for a root-cause approach of changing from anaerobic processes to aerobic ones for disposal of sewage. We also advised the Safe In India group in the Manesar industrial area near Gurgaon on how to not only obtain compensation for injured workers in the automobile ancillary industries but also promote adoption of safety measures in the production process to prevent injury. This is being developed as a Good Business model for employers. On the basis of a labour survey conducted by the Sajha Manch members during the COVID period and the discussion among them, Sanchal was also able to further push the argument for a Right to Work instead of Employment Guarantee in urban areas with labour unions, urban activists and environmentalists. A lecture module on safety in the construction industry has been developed for courses in IIT Delhi.

Environment

The staff in the Hazards Centre continued to guide and complete a study by Chintan in four cities of Delhi, Pune, Indore and Nainital on the impact on waste-pickers of removing plastic in the waste stream that yielded policy prescriptions for how to both eliminate toxins as well as protect livelihoods. Sanchal kept up its advocacy efforts for the clean-up of toxic wastes from the Union Carbide plant at Bhopal. We also continued to try and model the health impact of thermal power plants in the Singrauli region. We participated in several online discussions on sustainable development and climate change where we focused on the need for radical change in the development model and life styles that would address the basic causes of environmental degradation. However, both financial constraints and COVID related curtailments made many of our efforts not very productive.

Road Safety

The Sanchal-sponsored unit, Independent Council for Road Safety International, organised the five-day International Course on Road Safety Audit and Road Construction Safety in December 2020 in collaboration with IIT Delhi (http://tripp.iitd.ernet.in/activities/training_program_detail/15). ICORSI continues to prepare Evidence Gap Maps in the area of traffic safety in collaboration with Campbell Collaboration International and publishing the same with IIT Delhi and WHO, SEARO, New Delhi. A book 'Transport and Safety: Systems, Approaches and Implementation', edited by Geetam Tiwari and Dinesh Mohan, was published by Springer. It also contains papers by both the editors that were part of the ICORSI Conferences in 2018 and 2019.

Administration

With an opening balance of Rs. 10.36 lakh, the total local income reported for the year is Rs. 29.37 lakh from grants and donations. The main grant of Rs. 10 lakh was made by the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative but the contribution of individual donations was significant. It should also be kept in mind that the generous contribution made by communities in cash and kind does not enter the books of the Foundation. The total expenditure for the year was Rs. 36.84 lakh of which 45% was spent on programme costs, 49% on human resources, and 6% on administration. Salaries and loans payable are Rs. 3.87 lakh, while recoverable advances are only Rs. 85,251. The closing balance on March 31, 2021 is Rs. 5.5 lakh. In our FCRA account Rs. 32.15 lakh remains frozen in the bank account as Sanchal's FCRA certification has not been renewed; while Rs. 2.5 lakh imprest to staff has been recovered and is held in cash. The Ministry has given a misleading and faulty response after the hearing it held on court orders and our lawyers are considering the most effective way of pursuing the matter.