



Annual Report 2015-16



By

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Introduction

Change Initiatives, an NGO based in West Bengal, India, does development research and works for sustainable development with communication tools such as ICTs, videos and print.

The aim is to promote sustainable livelihoods by facilitating communication, raising awareness, promoting knowledge and enhancing access to information in communities.

Activities are based on the principles of ethnographic action research, which allows us to reflect on the work during a project.

Development research is for better insights to social, economic and environment problems. Emphasis of research is on evidence-based policy recommendations, the aim being detecting good practices and formalizing experiences.

Skill training



The year saw your organization start an exciting ICT project — the Capgemini NDLM centre. We have set up the NDLM centre at Rajarhat, Kolkata, with the support of reputed IT consultancy company Capgemini in collaboration with the Nasscom Foundation. Our goal is to train 1,250 individuals in the age group of 14-60 in computer

literacy under the Prime Minister's National Digital Literacy Mission. The project has started in January and we have received a very strong response from the community from our door-to-door survey. Our NDLM centre has six computers, and anyone with a Aadhar card can get training. The centre is the first NDLM centre in Kolkata.





We also started ICT skill training for the aged. We organized computer training and digital literacy classes for the elderly. The programme is in collaboration with Sundarban Nirmal Paribesh Mission.

Kisholoy

We have opened a new chapter of our Kisholoy child development programme at Raigachi High School, Rajarhat. Every week, for about an hour, we interact with the Class V students of this school, located close to West Bengal's IT hub, to grow their reading habit. We believe general literacy skills of the students will improve if we can encourage the students to read more books. The programme at the school is part of a larger initiative to improve schooling by expanding the mental horizon of students through the principles of Entertainment Education. The students, coming from deprived backgrounds, have been a very enthusiastic bunch and readily participate in the various activities.



The year marks six years of Kisholoy. Since its inception in 2009, about 450 boys and girls have been involved with the project. Students have passed Class X and Class XII and gone on to study in colleges and universities — very significant achievements when you consider their poverty and the fact that that all are first-time learners in their family. Two of our students have now got jobs.



The children face numerous other hurdles depriving them of proper education. Their secondary school is 10 kilometres from their villages, a distance too long and travel expenses high to go there and study. Their parents cannot afford books and are themselves often not educated enough to provide after-school learning. Besides, the children often have to do household work, and they cannot go to school.

Not surprisingly, the dropout rate and absenteeism in Kantabele and Madandanga are very high. An ethnographic research study by Change Initiatives and Bhubaneswar's KIIT School of Rural

Management shows the number of dropouts reaching its peak in Class VIII, which means many students do not sit for their class X exams.

Kisholay started in a small manner with a programme of book distribution. We identified 22 needy students to give books and writing materials. We then selected 8 from the 22, who were in class IX, and decided to give tuitions to them so that they can do well in their Class X public exam.

From this small beginning, we have extended our support to about 450 boys and girls. We provide remedial classes to students from Class V to Class VII and tuitions to Class VIII to Class XII students. For each class, we have an arts and a science teacher. We also involve them in mental enrichment activities such as drawing and dance classes.

In a significant innovation, some of our college-going wards are taking remedial classes from Class V to Class VII.

Our next goal is to set up a community multi-media centre for the women and children. The centre will have a library along with computers which will show multi-media content. The library will have story books, magazines and books of general information. The human development centre will be a "learning-cum-entertainment" centre where the children will learn computers, play computer games, surf the internet, read story books, watch educational CDs, study during after-school hours and indulge in other recreational and learning activities. Women will come to the centre to read books and participate in awareness raising sessions. The centre will also be a meeting place for the women.



Like we started Kisholay, work on the human development centre has started in a small manner. The boys and girls have set up a circulating library. Every month the "librarian" among them brings books from a We For Hope-supported library in Ranaghat, which is about 20km from their village. The books are shared among the boys and girls, with the "librarian" responsible for their condition. By the end of the month, all the books have been read and they are returned to Ranaghat; and new books taken again. The programme has been so successful that mothers, too, are reading the books.

In the meantime, we have mapped all the students of the two villages. A database with photos has been created of 500 boys and girls that include all primary school students, Anganwadi students plus the Kisholoy students.

We have taken in our fold **16 children of 6-8 years of age**. We have got involved in their complete personal development from studies, to extra-curricular activities and health monitoring, backed by the engagement of their mothers and data monitoring. The parents of the children — living in Madandanga and Kantabele villages in West Bengal's Nadia district — are poor and cannot give enough time to nurture them, which



stilts their growth. From the very beginning, the children, therefore, will be exposed to the principles of entertainment education and joyful learning; they will participate in numerous activities such as drawing, dance, drama playing with toys and reading story books. The emphasis is both on mental enrichment and physical growth, for which an active mother-child health development programme has been envisaged.

At our Niharika Primary School in Ranaghat, Nadia district, the students were trained in health practices such as hand-washing, leadership training and training in spoken English. Teacher training programmes were undertaken. The library got more books.



At our human development centre in Canning, South 24-Parganas, remedial classes are being given to 70 students, whose parents are involved in aquaculture and in collecting honey from the jungles of Sundarbans. Some of their family-members have been eaten by tigers. The students are also given health check-ups by doctors of the local community hospital. Construction work now has started on the hostel for children.

Funded by WeForHope, US, Community Foundation, US & local funding. Project volunteers: Students of Radboud University, the Netherlands. Students of Calcutta University, Kalyani University.

Nabanna

Our gender development project is called ***Nabanna***. Our mission is to expand the mental horizons of women through interventions in the areas of livelihoods, health, environment and gender rights. We seek to influence attitudes and change behaviour through mentoring, focused information dissemination and link-ups with service providers.



We have incubated a women's ICT enterprise project at Bishnupur Gram Panchayat called Digital Graphics in Bengal's South 24 Parganas. We have trained 1,000 women in computer basics in a Unesco project and worked and another 200 women on setting up micro-enterprises.

We have also worked with 140 self-help groups (SHGs) --- more than 1,000 women --- in Saguna gram panchayat, especially at Kantabele, Madandanga villages. We were involved in maintaining their accounts and organize learning sessions on different government schemes, health and gender issues.

We have worked with district resource persons, cluster representatives and SHG members of 3 districts - 24 Parganas North, 24 Parganas South and Howrah. We offered training in computer literacy and on using ICT tools for awareness programmes.

Digital Graphics has enrolled more students in its skill school under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana. It continues to increase its revenues from computer training and additional services.

Basudha

Change Initiatives promotes ***sustainable environment practices*** through activities such campaigns against plastic bags, noise pollution and air pollution. Participated in the activities of environment platform *Sabuj Mancha*, comprising as many as 40 NGOs and green activists. We set up a helpline and were part of the vigilance squads during Dipavali to check sound pollution.

Change Initiatives undertook disaster management workshops on earthquake and fire at 10 state-government schools. We received an excellent response from both the students and school administration. Programme supported by the West Bengal government. The state government donated two fire extinguishers to each school. Demonstrations on the fire extinguishers were given at the workshops.