

Gandhian Unit for Integrated Development Education

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ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2015-16 SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL BODY

At the outset

The financial year 2015-16 had been kept on low key owing to the fact that the status of GUIDIE with regards to receive foreign funds was at somewhat precarious state. So we only kept on to activities that were agreed upon as the ongoing or follow up of whatever activities that were supported by certain funders during the previous financial year.

We also need to keep in mind that the historic down pour of rain during the monsoon days of November 2015, which resulted to breach of many water bodies in our district, rendering the normal project life of GUIDIE to a standstill as immediate attention was needed to poured in helping the most affected poor women from dalit and adivasi families of our district.

The following are the important project activities conducted during the reporting period:

- Women and Adolescent girls empowerment programme held under the financial support of Global Fund for Women and Tsadik Foundation.
- CRZ follow up activities done with the support of Canada India Village Aid
- Flood relief work done with the support of Global Fund for Women and Second Chance Foundation

Women and Adolescent girls Empowerment Programme

2237 women have taken up leadership roles and are active in addressing VAW / GBV. 360 men have understood the concept and have extended support to the women's efforts. 120 female college students and 560 school girl students have joined us in resolving VAW / GBV issues.

They have attended specific skill development training in this regards and have discussed what they have learnt in their village level associations. The members with their understanding of VAW / GBV learnt from them bring the cases to them, which they deal at their level and what they cannot they bring to GUIDIE. With the school and college girls students too, they have attended short sessions conducted in their own educational institutions and have formed committees to take up the issues. The young men have attended our orientation sessions and have pledged to work along with us.

We held short crash courses on identifying VAW / GBV to them and also help them to follow with police and other government authorities when they bring a case which they are not able to get action on at their level.

We were interacting with more and more schools and colleges and thus were having more students involved in the process of identification of cases within the their institution and take it forward for legal action though the institution level association they have floated for this purpose. In the villages the young women leaders are more oriented to identify the issues and so they take up such issues. However many of them get resolved at the level of the village and when the village level association takes it up the concerned violence inflictor tenders apology and is willing to accept any punishment given. The women bring the case to legal action only if they find there is a repeated offense by the same person.

We had been intensely lobbying with the government through our rallies and interaction with the concerned officials demanding the hike and had the concerned women from our CBOs involved in the lobbying and rallying around the issue. We also had other like-minded CBOs involved in the process. Special days meetings such as Women's Day, Human Rights Day etc. had been used as tools to pressurise the government. The government has taken it seriously and had decided to increase much above the percentage we had been demanding for.

320 women have gained increased skills in farming and are actively applying the learnt knowledge and skills. They have gained ability in developing a new component of organic manure, which has the sludge of the treated sewage of the sewage treatment plants, something that has not been used for such usages so far. We are negotiating with the Corporation of Chennai to provide the sludge from the sewage treatment plants, which is the core component of the organic manure. They are also collecting various non edible oil seeds such as neem seed, castor oil seed, pongamia seed to go as component in the composition.

We provided practical training on how to create what we call as 'pot mix', something that has the treated sludge of the sewage plant as the 40% component. The rest are: oil cakes of non edible seeds, coco pith, ash of the bran used for fuelling from the modern rice mills and a small quantity of organic pest repellent, which is made on the base of cattle urine. The women had no difficulty in learning the trick and applying them in their farm lands with the consent and involvement of their men. We found experts in this subject and they have provided training to our women farmers.

About 300 men who have undergone orientation have changed their attitudes and behaviour. About 600 elder women and 300 young women have become more oriented towards gender sensitive.

Men encourage the women leaders to participate in the central meetings held in GUIDE office and elsewhere, by sharing the responsibility at home to be completed in their absence. They also support the argument of the women of their families when the women draw attention on VAW issue in the village. A total number of 6 child marriages were stopped by the women leaders in their community with the support of their oriented men.

15 meetings male only orientation sessions were held for men (mainly husbands) of the women leaders and 10 sessions were held for young men of those families. The number of participants works out to be about 497. A total of 32 community level orientation meetings were held for the

women and the number benefited are 614. A total number 342 young women have participated in 28 community level orientation sessions.

CRZ Follow Up Activities

It was unfortunate that Canada India Village Aid, who helped us with the first phase of the data collection related to CRZ violations and education of the coastal communities in this regard, decided to wind up and provided a farewell grant of USD 2000.

With this fund we decided to continue the work and started to work on this aspect from February 2016 onwards with Mr. Gilbert Rodrigo as the staff to continue the work. He being the person who did the earlier project became easy for him to continue the work. So far in this two months he has gone on a second visit to the villages in Coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry region and has done an assessment of the further development in the coastal region related to occupying the restricted coastal regulation zones meant to keep all development activities in bay.

Flood Relief Work

A lot of voluntary help came in the form of physical availability of volunteers to do immediate relief support work such as distribution of ration and other support materials and medical check up. In this connection we gratefully like to mention that staff team of VKC foot wear who provided about 450 packets of relief material distributed through the involvement of their own staff team. We also like to remember the kind effort taken by Ms. Chettinadu Health City Hospital, who provided us with a series of health check up in flood affected villages and helped to save the poor women and men of dalit and adivasi communities from being affected by water borne diseases.

It was disastrous on our organisation in two ways. One: it destroyed all the hard earned small assets of poor families of our project area. It included rice, pulses and groceries stocked through hard savings. Besides due to floods there was no work available for some time. So the poor families were rendered in pitiable condition. All the hard work done by us to raise the little savings in kind was lost to our women. Two: For GUIDE, the campus was immersed in water and the vehicles had to undergo costly repairs. All the demonstration plots of organic farming was immersed in water and was totally destroyed. All our planned work with college students and VAW campaign action were stopped, We arranged for the immediate supply of ration and basic necessary materials for the most neglected families mainly headed by women. We also arranged for medical check up and needed medicines for very affected villages. We also helped the families to get whatever entitlement they have right to get (including duplicate of the documents lost in the flood). We will be providing material for re thatching of roofs of poor people whose thatches houses are totally or partially damaged by the floods.

As said above, the hard earned food stock was lost by poor women. Those who lived in thatched houses (esp. The Irula tribal people) found their roof coming down and so had to move temporarily

to some other place, such as the village school. No employment for two months and most of them are daily labourers and lead their life by borrowing money from money lenders.

The women of the villages showed their extraordinary courage. When everybody was affected among the dalit and adivasi community, they knew that all are not equally affected and so should not claim equal share of relief. Therefore the leader women, who though some of them were very affected, wanted to set a model. They decided to forgo support in priority and let most affected get the relief first. While in other places confusion happened in relief supply, every body was appreciative of how the women were able to work together and prioritize. They also sought the support of the media, mainly electronic, to bring to the notice of the public that there are discrepancies in the relief activities by the government agencies.

Other Activities

A study of Waste Management

Dr. Barbara Harriss White, a long term friend of funders of GUIDE and Professor Emeritus of University of Oxford, UK, proposed to conduct a study on waste management in Chengalpattu Municipal limits. The GUIDE team was involved in identifying the respondents and supporting in translation of the interviews.

During the three weeks study, we understood the plight of the people involved in separating the waste into usable waste and unusable and making an income out of the usable waste. A lot of Irula families are involved in it and are not recognised in any form. We also found that one third of the present staff involved in collecting the municipal waste are under contract and are paid very low wages and provided very poor living conditions. In fact one woman from among them died during the study days, as she fell from the truck and it was a great struggle for the poor workers to get an y compensation for the family.

GUIDE has determined to work among these poor Irula unorganised workers to help them improve their living conditions.

Way forward

Serious efforts are taken by the Team Leader cum secretary of GUIDE Ms. R. Vasantha to find funds to continue the good work of educating the women leaders and adolescent girls

With the view of sustaining through local contribution and to ensure some amount vibrant activities are done in the campus of GUIDE at Palaveli, Chengalpattu. One of the activities proposed is to run a day learning centre for the Irula children who shy away from going to school. A play way method education is considered. Another activity would be a Wisdom Avenue, a short street of houses for senior citizens who would like to live on their own but share the food with others. We will be considering those who can afford to meet cost sharing arrangements, as it will be a non profit programme.

The project of converting city sewage waste into organic manure proposed by Ms. Pure Water Foundation is been shelved for the time being due to the difficulties we face in getting permission to procure treated waste of Chennai City Corporation.

The team of GUIDE is open to any new social entrepreneurial activities that would suit the objectives of GUIDE.