COVER
Preface

The distinctive beauty of People Led Empowerment (PLE) initiative is that it brings people together. PLE, as a philosophy of working with the community, creates space for traditional or locally acceptable and sustainable people’s institutions to be an integral part of the development agenda. PLE generates solutions in a different way – it enables people to make use of their skills, knowledge and practices for solving their problems. Caritas India is convinced that PLE strengthens local knowledge and it leads to greater self-reliance of communities. More importantly, PLE has contributed to increasing the self-esteem of communities which is reflected in the greater confidence of communities to launch grassroot-level movements.

Caritas India pursues PLE as an initiative for the transformation of society and bringing the community to the centre of empowerment process. PLE is also envisaged to culminate into people’s development actions that will lead to the transformation of society leading to greater liberation and humanisation. The JEEVAN programme in Maharashtra has been able to initiate several self-propelling, self-directing, continuous and collective social actions. This collection of impact stories is a good narrative of the progressive empowerment of communities.

Fr. Frederick D’Souza
Executive Director, Caritas India
Foreword

Interventions of Caritas India have their underpinnings on the conviction that communities are subjects of change and they should be respected for their resourcefulness. Caritas India endeavours to make communities owners of change rather than mere recipients or beneficiaries. This is why Caritas India speaks powerfully in favour of empowering communities.

The JEEVAN programme in Maharashtra, in many ways, represents Caritas India’s belief and perspectives on development and empowerment. JEEVAN is implemented in consonance with People-Led Empowerment (PLE) which is founded on the conviction that empowerment of community is possible only when transformation happens at organization and community levels. Caritas India believes that NGOs need to become facilitating organisations rather than implementing organisations. This way, community becomes owners of the change and its processes. Similarly, Caritas India also believes strongly that transformation in community will help them free themselves from dependencies.

I am glad to present this compendium of impact stories which are the results of the positive and affirmative actions of organised communities.

Fr. Paul Moonjeley
Asst. Executive Director, Caritas India
The villagers of drought-affected Bharapur are now in a festival mood as they pump out fresh water from their wells and bore wells which have been dry for the last 12 months. With a long struggle and perseverance they realized a permanent solution for the water crisis in their village. The rain-water conservation and harvesting structures in the village were irrigated 228 hectares of land of the village through 65 tube wells. While working at construction sites and other manual jobs. One of the strengths of the villagers was its unity and mutual support in the times of adversities.

Over the past 3 years the drought had persisted in this village thereby causing a serious challenge to local livelihood. Majority of the farming community being dependent on cotton, black gram, paddy, millet, groundnut and sorghum. These crops were irrigated with water drawn from the 65 open wells and 125 bore wells, which were also source of drinking water for the villagers. Due to the severity of drought, none of these open wells or tube wells had water. Yet, when the first rain came, the farmer realized the importance of water harvesting structures and other manual jobs. One of the strengths of the villagers was its unity and mutual support in the times of adversities.

The community then marched to Beed to thank the Manager of St. Ann’s School. The very next day they asked the government to discontinue supply of drinking water to the village. In the same way villagers were coming out with great force seeking fund support for digging trenches. The villagers then approached the government for digging 37 trenches, which was a major part from St. Ann’s School. The very next day, farmers contributed Rs. 50,000 for the people’s water conservation initiative.

Aragundeb Diocesan Social Service Society (ADSSS) has been implementing JEEVAN PLE project which has been implemented govt and supported by St. Ann’s School and sought support. After seeing the enthusiasm of people, the management of St. Ann’s School offered a fund of 1,00,000 for the people’s water conservation initiative. The village council started to dig trenches for the people’s water conservation. The community collected more funds, a major part from St. Ann’s School, for digging 37 trenches, which was completed in May 2016. The heavy rain in the intervening night of 7-8 June brought great happiness to the villagers. All trenches were filled with water. The happiness of community had no bounds when they found the next day that their hand pumps and open wells were getting filled. They were pleasantly surprised to see that water was coming out with great force. It was a great joy and repaying among the villagers. People of the village gathered the Sarpanch and felicitated the VDC members. The community then marched to Beed to thank the Manager of St. Ann’s School. The very next day they asked the government to discontinue supply of drinking water to the village. In the same way villagers were coming out with great force seeking fund support for digging trenches. The villagers then approached the government for digging 37 trenches, which was a major part from St. Ann’s School. The very next day, farmers contributed Rs. 50,000 for the people’s water conservation initiative.

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We will be able to ask for ration, toilet, road and electricity only when we attend the Gram Sabha meeting. Women also asked for police protection since they had the apprehension that their demands may have backlash from the politically powerful Sarpanch. Under pressure from CEO, Sarpanch and Up-sarpanch organised the Gram Sabha on 15 August 2016. Sarpanch Ragnya Bobade, Up-sarpanch Ratod and Panchs Vishal Bobade and Dale Arjun Jagtap at the instruction of the Block Development Officer (BDO) because Mr. Jagtap had to attend Gram Sabha meeting of another village. Women agreed to attend the Gram Sabha meeting because they had the apprehension that their SHG will operate the new PDS shop in the village. The women said, “we will fight till we get our rights” said Chamba Pandurang a woman who is emboldened by the success of her SHG.

It was a day of victory for the women of Bahirwadi village as they determined to attend the Gram Sabha compelled the Sarpanch to arrange a special Gram Sabha in the village on 15 August 2016. Bahirwadi panchayat, with a population 5667, is a vast panchayat with small hamlets Bahirwadi, Ayodhya Nagar, Bhiravnadh Nagar – all spread out. Majority of the villagers are very poor and earn their livelihood from wage labour. Despite being proximate to Aurangabad city, the village is under-developed and people have not been getting essential services of food supply, road, light, toilet, housing etc. Names of only 200 households were listed in Public Distribution System (PDS) and no other government schemes were being implemented in the village. Even since Aurangabad Diocese and Caritas India with small hamlets Bahirwadi, Ayodhya Nagar, Bhiravnadh Nagar – all spread out. Majority of the women SHG members waited for a few days to get details about the Gram Sabha, but no information came their way.

When they realised that they will get no information, women collectively decided to give a written statement, arising out of conviction, brought remarkable amount of confidence to the SHG. On 1 May, members of Gyaneswar Mauli SHG went to attend the Gram Sabha, but the Sarpanch did not turn up. The villagers knew that the Sarpanch Bajirao Bobde will not be interested in organising Gram Sabha on 15 August as well. The women SHG members waited for a few days to get details about the Gram Sabha, but no information came their way.

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We will be able to ask for ration, toilet, road and electricity only when we attend the Gram Sabha meeting. Women also asked for police protection since they had the apprehension that their complaints may have backlash from the politically powerful Sarpanch. The CEO assured police protection for the women and encouraged them to attend the Gram Sabha meeting. The CEO also sent a notice to the Sarpanch and Gram Sevak and asked them to organise the Gram Sabha on 15 August. Announcements on Gram Sabha meeting was released in local newspaper Pravah in Aurangabad, to inform the villagers about the Gram Sabha meeting. That simple statement, arising out of conviction, brought remarkable amount of confidence to the SHG. On 1 May, members of Gyaneswar Mauli SHG went to attend the Gram Sabha, but the Sarpanch did not turn up. The villagers knew that the Sarpanch Bajirao Bobde will not be interested in organising Gram Sabha on 15 August as well. The women SHG members waited for a few days to get details about the Gram Sabha, but no information came their way.

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Backward Community gets Water Supply with Collective Action

Communities of Umri-Urja-ad-nakha village of drought-hit Aurangabad has been facing severe water crisis for several years due to drought. Village women who walk more than six kilometres for fetching water for household uses. Tired of the struggles, women decided to find a solution by forming the administration to supply water. They took a rally to district head quarters and forced the Panchayat Samiti to start water supply to the village with tankers. Major population of Umri-Urja-ad-nakha belongs to Scheduled Caste households.

A team under the leadership of Ms. Shila Shinde prepared a written application and submitted it to Public Works Development (PWD) officers. On 19 March, 2016, 40 women and 50 men from Umri village under the leadership of Ms. Jayasri Gokul took a rally to district collector’s office and gave an application to the deputy collector Mr. Sayyad vowing immediate supply of drinking water. The women also demanded opening a bank under MGNREGA. They also went to Panchayat Samiti and met the development officer (DOO) Mr. Shantaram Kodape and told that they will start drinking water supply to the village with tankers. The deputy collector also gave assurance to distribute MGNREGA job-cards to all deserving families with immediate effect.

On 25 February and held discussions with PWD officers inspected the spot on 25 February and held discussions. Since the community was not united, several consultations were needed for the community to know their rights and entitlements under various government programmes and schemes. However, it was clear that the community did not have dependability on the administration. They also got a good road. Thus with the collective action, the community was able to get the road which was constructed under MGNREGA and the low quality materials used for the road construction.

The one of the main issues that people faced was the low wage paid to the workers under MGNREGA and the low quality of materials used for road construction. The workers were employed in the road construction work but we never got wages in full. One of the main issues that people faced was the low wage paid to the workers under MGNREGA and the low quality of materials used for road construction.

The Panchayat of Umri-Vsaur had submitted a written application to Public Works Development (PWD) and road construction work started. When the community realised that not only they are getting underpaid for the work but also they are using sub-standard materials, they informed Mr. E. Sahare, construction supervisor. The PWD authorities instructed Mr. Sahare to pay correct wages and the use of low quality materials was stopped. Thus the people faced was the low wage paid to the workers under MGNREGA and the low quality of materials used for road construction. They were employed in the road construction work but we never got wages in full. One of the main issues that people faced was the low wage paid to the workers under MGNREGA and the low quality of materials used for road construction.

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By coming together we can overcome our limitations. We are now very confident to work together to claim our rights.
Community Action Improves Anganwadi Functioning

Anganwadis of Gondjada and Kollamguda villages of Jambhlapani block of Nagpur district had not been functioning well for several years. The villagers had complained about the irregularity of the staff but the anganwadi teachers continued to ignore people's requests. The 43 households of Gondjada and Kollamguda villages belong to backward communities of Schedule Caste, Schedule tribe, Banjara and backward communities. The largely-uneducated community that is more united after Gram Sabha meetings. Now teachers come to Anganwadi regularly. Our children are getting better education and regular food. Similarly pregnant women and lactating women are receiving nutritious food.

Women Demand Special Gram Sabha for Them

Women of Jambhlapani are mobilised because their demand for special gram sabha meeting for women was approved. They had appealed for a special Gram Sabha meeting with the Anganwadi teachers to higher authorities. The villagers then came together and decided to report the absenteeism of Anganwadi teachers to higher authorities. Several community consultations were held as part of JEEVAN PLE project for identifying issues of communities and help them identify solutions. NMSSS realised that the villagers have become highly critical of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings because the meet- ings were held 15 kilometres away from our village. Since there is no transportation link, we have not been able to attend the Gram Sabha meet- ings say the villagers. Nagpur Multipurpose Social Service Society (NMSSS) had organised several community consultations in Jambhlapani under the ongoing JEEVAN PLE project for identifying issues of communities and help them identify solutions. NMSSS realised that the villagers have become highly critical of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings. Women from our village do not have representation in Gram Sabha. We could never attend the Gram Sabha meetings because the meet- ings were held 15 kilometres away from our village. Since there is no transport for the women to travel, we faced severe water shortage. The Gram Sabha meetings were held 15 kilometres away from our village. Since there is no transport facility, we could not attend the Gram Sabha meet- ings say the villagers. Nagpur Multipurpose Social Service Society (NMSSS) had organised several community consultations in Jambhlapani under the ongoing JEEVAN PLE project for identifying issues of communities and help them identify solutions. NMSSS realised that the villagers have become highly critical of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings.
Farmers Collective Embraces Organic Farming

They came together, put their efforts, worked hard and they formed a group of five farmers belonging to Bendoli village. They realized that the economic crisis due to the poor performance of the farming and significantly increased input costs and environmental-farming methods, Bendoli is a small village with the population of 124 is situated in Umred Block in the Nagpur District. The villagers were facing a severe financial crisis as they had to invest too much of cost in their field. The profit margin in farming was very low. Migration was on its peak because of the poor circumstances. “We are growing black gram and cotton. We didn’t use phosphate and potash this time. Earlier it used to cost us Rs. 20,000/- to cultivate one acre of land. Now we have saved Rs. 10,000 on one-acre land. And we are cultivating 10 acres of land without any chemical fertilizers. We will get more profits this time. We had to put all of our efforts but the result is worth cherishing” Mr. Khadate shared his experience.

Embraces Organic Farming

Farming

“Mr. Dhawle who enriched us with technical information. He guided us a lot. He taught us how to prepare the organic manure, how to use it, the organic manure, how to use it, when to use it etc” he continued. They came together after PLE initiative. They prepared Benjamati, Jeevanmat, culture-50 and Nimbo-arik which are totally made of organic solutions. “We can use this for our 10 acres of land. This required very minimal investment and we could save at least one lakh rupees for cultivating 10-acre land. Now we are not using chemical fertilizers, pesticides and are happy with the results. Our fields look more fertile than the other fields” said Mr. Masram, one of the five farmers. “We are growing black gram and cotton. We didn’t use phosphate and potash this time. Earlier it used to cost us Rs. 20,000/- to cultivate one acre of land. Now we have saved Rs. 10,000 on one-acre land. And we are cultivating 10 acres of land without any chemical fertilizers. We will get more profits this time. We had to put all of our efforts but the result is worth cherishing” Mr. Khadate shared his experience.

We are living on agriculture. We don’t have any other means of livelihood. Day by day the situation was becoming worse. Our investment was very high as compared to the profit that we earned.

Community Action Removes Menacing Electricity Pole

Kapur residents breathed a sigh of relief when the broken electricity pole was replaced by the Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB). It was almost a year for the community to get it done! Khapri - a peaceful, splendid and striking hamlet situated in Umred Block of Nagpur district. There was a time when everything was running smoothly. People were living a serene life. But, the line had changed. Now worries are reflected on their faces instead of smiles. They are living under life-threatening situation. Khapri is the story of a small hamlet that fought for their right to live. Now, a group of eleven community members, Mr. Prahlad narrated the experience. The committee put in their efforts. The committee put in their efforts. They went to Gramsevak, took the copy of resolution prepared by the village community and prepared another application. They met Mr. Machle, Chief Engineer, MSEB, Umred and submitted the complaint. They removed the electricity pole. MSEB immediately erected a stronger and safer pole in place of the ominously bent electricity pole.

We are so happy that we can live in a tension free life now. It is hard to believe that the work which was pending for more than a year was completed within a month after our village came together” said Mr. Babbi-Joge, one of the villagers who joined the campaign.

“We realize that there is strength in unity. We also feel proud that we could do something for the village” Mr. Khade, one of the villagers said.

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Community Solidarity Brings Solution to Water Scarcity

In the last five years, agriculture and livestock-related livelihoods of communities under severe stress because of repeated droughts. “The villages get sufficient rains in monsoon season but because of steep slopes, all water flows out. Since water does not stay in this hilly area, we always have water shortages,” said Kavin Pawar, the Sarpanch of both Padekarwadi and Doni villages. These villages neither have natural water storages nor water conserving structures for harvesting and storing rain water. Due to slopy feature of the land, farmers cultivate just one crop and migrate in search of wage labour.

Mr. Saketwale Pawar a farmer of the village says about the nature of water problem of the village, “in the rainy season, rain falls heavily but the water flows out due to the geographical features, and the village faces water problem for agriculture and drinking purposes.” Villagers of both Padekarwadi and Doni organized an annual festival with the help of Poona Diocesan Social Service Society (PODSS) which has been organizing and empowering marginalized communities for the last 20 years. In the festival, communities discussed the water problem and came up with a solution.

Several more meetings were organized to finalize an action plan. After 30 day’s continuous work, the village community decided to contribute, both money and labour, for dredging the tank and linking villages with a 900ft-long pipeline. The village, without exception, demonstrated solidarity and raised Rs. 300,000. Apart from this, 100 people worked voluntarily and without any payment, for 15 days, for deepening the tank and digging trenches for laying pipelines. "The villagers completed the 900-foot-long pipeline and connected the village with both villages. “The pipeline now provides sufficient water to both villages for meeting domestic needs. Once the tank gets filled in the rainy season, it will supply water to villages for at least six months and help us cultivate a second crop”, said Mr. Dhondiram Pawar a marginal farmer. “Our cattle thrives on this rainwater”.[7] There is a will, there is a way,” he said with a broad smile.

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Community Action Wakes Up Animal Husbandry Department

The farming community of Kalambist village depended on veterinary services for its livestock. The last six years no veterinary doctor visited the village. The villagers came together and launched a successful campaign for bringing the doctor to the village.

Kalmubist, a village of Sindhudurg district, has approximately 500 households each of which has at least 2-3 animals. The villagers realized that the number of cattle in the village was coming down drastically due to unavailability of fodder and veterinary services. The community leaders and Sarpanch of the village submitted an application to the Animal Husbandry Department. The community action of the villagers helped them in getting a veterinary doctor in the village.

After submitting the application, the villagers continuously followed up with the application by visiting the district headquarters. Presented by the community, the Animal Husbandry department wrote a letter to Gram Panchayat informing the decision to allocate a veterinary doctor to Kalambist. The visit of the veterinary doctor started immediately and now the villagers are satisfied with the veterinary services. The villagers expressed the need of having a veterinary doctor in the village.

Finally, the villagers of Kalambist village for solving their issue regarding non-availability of a veterinary doctor in the village. Since last six years, villagers have been finding it difficult to get treatment for their animals. People used to fight to get the veterinary services to their children.

The resumption of veterinary services to Kalambist village helped community realise the power of their unity. It also secured their livelihoods.

Mr. Krishna Sawkar, the community member who initiated the application for a veterinary doctor in the village.

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Community Action Wins Land Rights

I t was great news for the landless Thakar community because they just received ownership title which was not given to them for more than thirty years! The landless tribal community of Pachwa hamlet of Kamba panchayat have 45 households belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL), have been living for more than thirty years! The landless Thakar community, all belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL), have been living for decades on the land that they never owned. Pachwa falls in the Kalyan block of Thane district. Maharashtra government had designated Thane as one of the ‘most-backward’ communi-

The community urged the Gram Panchayat to step in to protect the land rights. After a prolonged legal war, the court gave the verdict in favour of the community on land holding), it was paid to Gram Panchayat, all eligibility forms and they got an identification card (Adhar card). “We have been staying here for more than thirty years”, said Ganpat Waghe, one of the villagers. “It is very difficult for us to leave this land because this is the land that my father and grandfather had cultivated for a long time”, said Ganpat Waghe, a villager who is in spite of his physical disabilities joined the campaign to win land ownership. Karunya Trust, under the Caritas India supported JEEVAN project, organised communities and helped them to raise their voice for demanding land ownership. This community collected all documents to prove their long stay on the land which included collected all documents to prove their long stay on the land which included the monthly supply of food grain, we will starve”, said Mr. Ganpat Wagh, a head of family of five. Similar was the case of other 35 households of Kathkari community because they were not given food grain for three months.

Mr. Ganpat said that the shopkeeper and demand our entitlement. The PDS shopkeeper exploited us by manipulating records and not releasing the quota of food grain to us. Ganpat urged the community members to work collectively. As per the decision of the community, 11 tribals went to the PDS shop and demanded ‘their’ food grain supply on 14 January 2016. Seeing the unity of tribals and their anger, the PDS shopkeeper immediately distributed the food grain that was not released for three months, that too without asking for Adhar card! “We experienced the power of unity which increased our self-confidence. We realized that we can get our rights only when we come together and fight” said Sita Sapta.

We have no source of income other than wage labour. If we do not get our food grain, we will starve”, said Mr. Ganpat Wagh, a head of family of five. Similar was the case of other 35 households of Kathkari community because they were not given food grain for three months.

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Tribal Community Claims Food Rights after Campaign

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