

# NewsUpdate

A Caritas India weekly

## again

**Assam is reeling under floods again**





## ASSAM IS REELING UNDER FLOODS AGAIN, HERE ARE 4 KEY PROBLEMS FACED BY CHILDREN

Report by Amrit Sangma, PRCOM

**Low attendance:** The enrolment of the children in the LP School is high approximately 80% however, the attendance in the school is very less before and after flood. One of the important reasons is due to the frequent flood which is leading to displacement of the children every year.

**Loss of learning time:** During flood, schools remain closed for weeks together, which sometimes become months, depending on the degree of the flood. Parents become clueless on how to keep their children engaged with the syllabus. The teachers also have no plan for the children.

**Lack of play-space:** Reduced living space in the flood relief camps leaves almost no recreational room, essential for children to grow normally. Transliterating an old English proverb to describe this situation will read like "All work and no play, makes Janki a dull girl". Post the flood, it takes months before children can enjoy the comfort of a home and it is not until the parents would have toiled hard to repair the damages their little village huts would have succumbed to.

**Lack of preparedness:** For families that are living on the bank of river Brahmaputra, flood is an annual phenomenon, "at least for the last 20 years" as described by villagers around here. Nevertheless, it is found that children lose their study books and materials to flash floods every year, ask they lack knowledge on preparedness. At the onset of any flood, the primary focus of these families is to save mostly edible goods and other valuables. Children's study books hardly are in the picture. This however adversely affects children's study with serious consequences in their future.

### What can be done to help these children?

To answer the question, we must ask a few more relative questions. Is it possible to safeguard the dreams of these children, ensure that they grow like and at par with other children in our country? Is it possible to protect their right to education and dignity of life, while ensuring uninterrupted learning even during and after the flood?

**And, if the answer to all these questions is a YES, the next question would be HOW?**

Caritas India, a national non-profit organization based in Delhi has joined hands with HCL foundation to answer these questions in affirmative with a strong will to find solution to these problems.

The team have identified 12 flood prone villages in Lakhimpur of Assam. Each village will work on a concept call "My Evening School for resilience building".

These schools will conduct syllabus based regular classes with special lessons on disaster preparedness. A total of 1000 school children will benefit from this innovative project within a period of six months.

Besides regular studies, extra-curricular activities will keep the children fruitfully engaged, taking help of experts and trained personnel.

These villages have already been part of the relief and flood response program carried out by Caritas India and HCL Foundation and this project is the continuation with focussed on education.

"Besides the children, their parents, teachers and care givers will also be counselled," informed Anjan Bag, person heading the project at Caritas India. He said



that interested youth from the area will be identified and motivated to work as volunteers.

## Analyses



Natural disasters, particularly the phenomenon of overflowing Brahmaputra river is an annual occurrence in Assam. Obviously, those residing along the river bank or closer to the river are the first and worst hit, Ms. Lee Paul, advocacy manager at Caritas India wrote in her analyses.

She says that the people's locational vulnerability is directly linked with the social and economic position they occupy within the local society. And this can be corroborated from the fact that most affected and being reached out to by Caritas India in Lakhimpur district, are those who are marginal farmers or daily wage earners.

Unfortunately, the undocumented losses of the daily wagers and those into lease farming goes unrecognised even in the official compensation norms of the State and Centre. The state of Odisha, during cyclone Phailin did notify the compensation coverage to share croppers in 2013 as a good practice. However, this precedence has not been popularised and followed by the Centre or the state governments.

Coming back to Assam floods, Ms. Lee says that the humanitarian agencies are delivering their mandate of reaching much needed lifesaving relief materials to the flood victims, prioritising the most vulnerable in terms of their capacity to survive without aid. Yet, this will be based on the limited resources available and accessible to the aid agencies only to compliment Government response. The state being duty bound to protect its citizens, and the humanitarian stakeholders now need to seriously think about pre-disaster actions, in areas that are prone to annual flooding and cyclones.

The pre-monsoon preparedness of the system and the people in vulnerable locations need to be in place; and disaster mitigation plans need to be set much ahead of the monsoons. Logistically, this will save much loss to life and property; while safety measures and early warning systems need to be strengthened for communities living closer to the river bank to make alternative arrangements. Most important will be seeing to their economic recovery, to help them rebuild their lives.

Well thought and thoroughly planned pre-monsoon actions are far better than being pressed into reactive actions to live up to real Disaster Risk reduction (DRR)

as committed under the Sendai Framework of Disaster Risk Reduction.

**Highlight of the response and relief in 2017** so far by Caritas India in collaboration with HCL, Start Network,



Caritas Germany, CAFOD and SCIAF.

### Relief done 2017

- Hygiene kits to 1000 families in Assam
- Hygiene kits to 1000 families in Mizoram
- 2 Medicated bed nets each to 1000 families in Assam
- Cash support to 300 families in Mizoram
- Medical support to over 800 flood hit people in Assam
- Medical help to 700 flood hit people in Mizoram

### Ongoing relief 2017

- Hygiene kits to 1600 families in Assam
- Cash support to 1600 families in Assam
- Evening school for 1000 affected students with special lessons on disaster preparedness

### Emerging Needs 2017 in the present situation

Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) data shows fresh floods inundating new areas – rendering more families homeless and without livelihood.

**Plan:** In the coming days, we hope to include 5000 worst affected families from Karimganj, being the worst affected district. Manipur may also be included depended on the assessment report.

In Assam, we hope to support the needs for temporary shelter, livelihood, public health, food and nutrition, WASH and psycho-social counseling.

### History of Emergency responses

Looking back in the last 5 years, Caritas India has responded to almost every emergency in the Northeast befitting a population of 1.2 lakhs approximately. The table below showcases a few major ones with number of benefiting families in the sectors of health, cash support, temporary shelter, education, WASH, livelihood, livestock and food.





# Reviving traditional wisdom to address malnutrition

Report by Robin George Program Manager, SABAL  
Edited by Patrick Hansda, Documentation & Publications

Reviving the traditional practices of agriculture can safeguard human health and reduce rising air and water pollution, high greenhouse gas emissions and address the malnutrition.

The benefits of switching towards organic farming system would be seen in the interest of human and animal health, along with improvement in soil and water quality.

SABAL, an initiative of Caritas India supported by BMZ Germany to ensure food security and enhance nutritional status of the Korku tribe in Madhya Pradesh. Korku have been in reckoning in recent decades for alarming malnutrition and hunger.

Malnutrition among Korku is a complex problem with multiple causative factors and chief among them are sustained livelihood through agriculture. Seasonal migration and crop failure for three years has increased the debt of the families.

The programme aims to address malnutrition by enhancing food security with diversification in food

production and intake for 3000 Korku households. Sustainable Agricultural Practices were introduced for better soil and irrigation system for a more sustainable use of natural resources like soil and water.

Poshan Mitras and staff of SABAL programme were trained on Sustainable Agriculture Practices by Mr. Mukund Deshmukh, the social development officer of Caritas India CESSS programme. The two days residential training on July 3-4, 2017 at Khandwa helped the participants to understanding the effectiveness of sustainable agricultural practices thereby promoting the best use of available resources (locally) followed by minimizing the use of non-renewable resources. The training had practical sessions to develop and/or enhance the knowledge and competence of the participants which can be used at field level for enhancing the skills of the farmers in the targeted villages.

Mr. Mukund briefly shared the geographical settings of the melghat region relating to the agricultural practices by the Korku farmers and effects of Green revolution on the marginalised or small holder farmers.

Practical session dealt with different INM & IPM techniques through different Organic Manure & Organics repellents were prepared by the participants. Poshan Mitras were confident to practice the Integrated Nutrition Management (INM) & Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques at village level so that all the local farmers can be trained and food production, quality of the food & food security can be ensured thereby improving the soil health. Six monthly action plans were developed by the participants to promote sustainable agriculture practices at their level. Program Manager of SABAL, Mr. Robin George appreciated and thanked all for their participation.





# Course offering cutting edge to the social workers

Report by Sunil Mammen, Quality Manager  
Edited by Patrick Hansda, Documentation & Publications



Initiated to orient the aspiring social workers on the socio-political context of social work by keeping the values of love, equality and dignity of people, the Development Dynamics Course (DDC) has trained thousands of social workers in the social development sector.

Over the years, the flagship course of Caritas India had reviewed and upgraded its content to match the emerging needs in the sector and imparted in-depth field based training. Focussing on the thrust of inclusiveness, equitable and integrated development of the excluded communities, development personnel were trained to have analytical mind to make an analysis of societal forces.

This year, the 48th DDC started on 05 July, 2017 at St. Joseph Vaz Spiritual Renewal Centre, Goa, with 47 participants including three from Cambodia

The course offers skills of micro social analysis and macro-economic analysis developed with practical experience. It enhances the capacities to initiate, sustain and promote empowerment of the poor and oppressed. Orient participants on emerging concept of development and various approaches, strategies for community mobilization, awareness building, value base for social transformation, sensitivity towards women & development. It also develops skills to manage development organizations along with concepts related to disaster management, integrated natural resource management, approaches to development, peace and conflict resolution and project cycle management.

It also trains participants on Results Based Management: Situational analysis, Proposal Development, Implementation & Monitoring, Evaluation and Documentation. The legal compliances, financial management and human resource management issues are also dealt in the course.

Quoting Henry Ford saying "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.", Fr. Lucio encouraged participants to upgrade themselves for the success of their mission.

Presenting the spirituality of development, Fr. Paul Moonjely, Deputy Director of Caritas India, evoke all the participant to do social work by involving God among us. He shared about the Catholic Social Teaching which is reveals Christ values of compassion, love, care, justice, peace, equality and human dignity.