
ANNUAL REPORT

2018-19



Society for Rural, Urban & Tribal Initiative

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ABOUT SRUTI

SOCIETY FOR RURAL, URBAN AND TRIBAL INITIATIVE

SRUTI – Society for Rural, Urban and Tribal Initiative was founded in 1983, on the belief that individuals are powerful instruments of social change and transformation. Originally conceived by social sector leaders Tara Ali Baig, Bunker Roy, Ela Bhatt, Lotika Sarkar, Poonam Muttreja, Samir Chaudhuri and Dr. Ramalingaswami, the **SRUTI Fellowship Programme** supports individual and community action towards securing justice, rights, dignity and opportunity for some of India's most marginalised groups.

SRUTI aims to harness the power of individuals in order to attain its vision of a society that is based on the core values of justice, equity, compassion, respect and dignity for all. The importance of **collective social action and local leadership at the grass root** is the crux of the SRUTI Fellowship. SRUTI and its Fellows believe that social change and sustainable economic development can be achieved by empowering oppressed and vulnerable communities to access justice, equality and opportunity and be true stakeholders in a vibrant democracy.

SRUTI's core mission, therefore, is to identify and invest in individuals armed with zeal and a vision to work towards the ideals of a more equitable society within a democratic framework; individuals with idealism, staying power and the ability to mobilize communities at the grassroots to seek solutions to address their most pressing issues through the idea of the 'sangathan', a peoples' group that facilitates community social action.

Some key issues dealt with by the SRUTI Fellows and the sangathans are: Access to, and Ownership of Natural Resources - *Jal, Jangal, Zameen*; Land and Forest Conservation; Small Holder and Sustainable Agriculture; Right to Food; In situ Livelihood; Panchayati Raj Institution and Governance; Rights to the City; Education; Right to Information; Caste and Gender, among others.

SRUTI extends a mix of financial support and intermediary inputs to an individual Fellow/a group of Fellows through the Fellowship Programme that has evolved substantially over the decades. The Fellowship Programme is financed by resources mobilized, to the extent possible, from within the country, through support partnerships and a range of fundraising efforts. The Fellowship Programme, its related outreach efforts, and the Resource Mobilization program, form the key pillars of SRUTI.

For more information, please visit www.sruti.org.in

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTORS

We are happy to share SRUTI's 35th Annual report for year 2018-19. SRUTI has completed 35 years, and its work of building and nurturing leadership within the marginalized communities remains more relevant than ever.

The Fellowship Programme has been able to support individuals in addressing the most contemporary challenges in the country. The question of natural resource – of preservation, conversation, and settlement of rights has become significant.

To enable a culture of critical questioning, we have been to expand the scopes of the School for Social Change (SSC) and are now trying to organise regional and local level shivirs so that more people are able to directly attend it in each area. SSC saw the first culmination of more than 200 participants across the country at the Yuva Mahotsav.

This year saw regional meetings, workshops and trainings on changing contours of social and political systems, and addressed the emerging need for new and relevant research on such subject matters. Through meaningful interactions with administration and other stakeholders, SRUTI fellows have constantly worked to create an enabling culture of addressing community needs.

We have mentioned some major achievements and processes in this annual report. In addition to addressing the issues, we have also worked to create a vibrant exchange of knowledge from the grassroots and the civil society groups at the states and the national level.

We also grew stronger in our partnerships; and have been able to create sustainable mechanisms for raising support and develop our intermediary processes of learning. We reiterate our commitments to the goals of deepening decentralised democracy and hold close the values of the Constitution of India.

We are extremely thankful to all our friends and supporters and take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude towards your continuous support, engagement and encouragement.

*Shweta, Satyam and the SRUTI Team New
Delhi*

ACTIVITY REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2018-19

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

SRUTI FELLOWS AT A GLANCE

Since its inception, SRUTI has supported the work of more than **128 fellows** at the grass roots in 18 states across India. SRUTI currently supports **31 Fellows, 143 karyakartas (volunteers/activists) and their groups in 14 states:** Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The current outreach of SRUTI Fellows is over 7361 villages and 250 urban clusters covering around 6.8 lakh families and 34 lakh people.

ANDHRA PRADESH

1. K. Victoria – Navjeevan, Nellore dt.

BIHAR

2. Kailash Bharati – Mazdoor Kisan Samiti, Gaya dt.
3. Santosh Marandi – Bahishkrit Hitkari Sangathan, Khagaria dt.
4. Sohini – Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan, Araria dt.

CHHATTISGARH

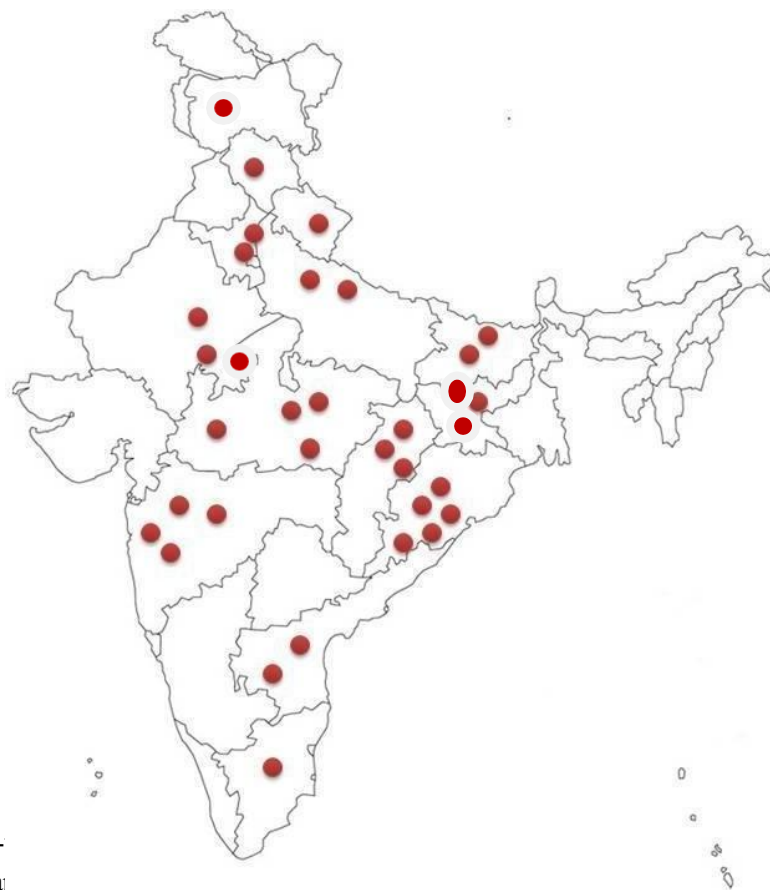
5. Alok Shukla – Jan Abhi Vyakti, Korba and Sarguja dt.
6. Jang Sai – Gaon Ganrajya Sangathan, Sarguja and Ambikapur dt..
7. Rajim Ketwas - Dalit Adivasi Manch, Baloda Bazar and Mahasamund dt.

DELHI

8. Anjali Bhardwaj – Satark Nagrik Sangathan, South Delhi dt.
9. Sadre Alam – People's Foundation, North-west, South-
10. Thaneshwar Dayal, Delhi Nirman Mazdoor Sangathan

HIMACHAL PRADESH

11. Puran Chand – Sirmaur Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, Sirmaur dt.



JHARKHAND

12. Arvind Anjum – Visthapit Mukti Vahini, Singhbhum dt.
13. Jerome Kujur – Jan Sangharsh Samiti, Latehar dt.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

14. Dr. Sheikh Ghulam Rasool – J&K RTI Movement, School for Rural Development and Environment

MADHYA PRADESH

15. Jayashree – Adharshila Learning Centre, Badwani dt.
16. Veerendra Kumar – Bundelkhand Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, Damoh dt.
17. Aradhana Bhargav – Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, Chhindwara dt.
18. Abhay and Swampnil Zenith Legal Aid Clinic, Shivpuri dt.

MAHARASHTRA

19. Dashrath Jadhav – Shramjeevi Sangathan, Latur dt.
20. Ulka Mahajan – Sarvahara Jan Andolan, Raigad dt.
21. Vilas Bhongade – Kashtkari Jan Andolan, Nagpur, Bhandara, Wardha and Gondia dt.

ODISHA

22. A K Pany – Adivasi Kranti Sangathan, Dhenkanal dt.
23. Amulya Nayak - Adivasi Chetna Sangathan, Dhenkanal and Angul dt.
24. Pradeep Dash – Lok Chetna Sangathan, Rayagada dt.
25. Prafulla Mishra– Adim Adivasi Mukti Manch, Nayagarh dt.
26. Sarojini Malick – Mati Maa Mahila Manch, Nayagarh dt.
27. Trilochan Punji – Zindabad Sangathan, Bolangir dt.

RAJASTHAN

28. Devendra and Sudhi – Hum Kisan, Manthan Shikshan Kendra, Jhalawar dt.
29. Khemraj – Khetihar Khan Mazdoor Sangathan, Chittorgarh dt.

TAMIL NADU

30. MS Selvaraj - Vyavasayigal Tozhilalargal Munnetra Sangham (VTMS), Nilgiris dt.

UTTARAKHAND

31. Basanti and Rekha - Maati Sangathan, Pithoragarh dt.
32. Gopal Lodhiyal, Uttarakhand Van Adhikar Manch, Nainital dt

UTTAR PRADESH

33. Afaq Ullah, Faizabad dt.
34. Rajnish Gambhir – Tharu Adivasi Mahila Mazdoor Kisan Sangh, Lakhimpur Khiri dt
35. Lal Prakash Rahi – Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chhatra Naujawan Sabha, Jaunpur dt.

NEW FELLOWSHIPS

1. Sohini, Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan



Sohini is a queer feminist activist with the Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan – a trade union of landless labourers, marginal farmers and the youth, working across six districts in rural Bihar. After graduating from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, she worked on issues of local self-governance in Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, and on issues of social security as a citizen's right as part of the Pension Parishad campaign nationally.

For the last few years sangathan is working in Araria, one of the poorest districts of Bihar, living and learning at the union, among Dalit-Bahujan workers who organise to get for their rights and resources, against forces of caste based feudalism, capitalism and patriarchy.

The union works on a range of issues that arise from our members, our units or the larger community and contexts - including land rights, entitlements like NREGA-ration-pensions, education and health, agricultural issues, fighting corruption through increased transparency and accountability in governance to resisting State and police violence or addressing caste and gender based discrimination. While trying to encourage community leadership among the present and future generations, the union also believes in building larger regional, national and internationalist solidarities.

2. Abhay and Swapnil, Zenith Legal Aid Clinic



Abhay Jain is a graduate of National Law University, Odisha and belongs to Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh. While in college, he was associated with various social movements and activists, which helped him get an understanding of the socio-political issues in the country.

Swapnil Shukla is a graduate of National Law University Odisha. His work involves identifying existing socio-legal issues in the region, which highlight violations of social welfare legislations, and finding remedies to these issues using administrative and legal channels.

They have been working in Shivpuri from the last five years on various issues like education, environment conservation, forest rights, manual scavenging.

As the understanding grew, we started 'Zenith Legal Aid Clinic' in Shivpuri where they provide legal services to communities and organizations. They are now working in some villages of Shivpuri which are predominantly inhabited by members of Sahariya tribe to empower them with the tool of law and unite them to struggle for rights that they have been deprived of from decades.

They have established a Library-cum-resource centre with support from the Municipal Council of Shivpuri for students and youth of Shivpuri where they can explore opportunities in higher education. We are trying to involve youth in governance through various awareness programs and workshops.



Abhay and Swapnil believe that the law is an efficient tool to bring a social change and this can only be done by putting law in the hands of people and also making them self-sufficient to use it. A strong community action as the means to tackle various social inequalities is a way forward and therefore, they are involved in conducting various awareness/ educational/training programs in villages/panchayats to efficiently build social movements for effective change making.

Moved by the prevailing inequalities and discriminations that exist, they have started the **Access to Justice Program** in Madhya Pradesh in April 2018.

3. Lal Prakash 'Rahi', Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chhatra Naujawan Sabha



Rahi bhai completed his Llb from Purvanchal University, having been a part of the peoples movement since childhood he was involved in politics by establishing a Naujawan Bharat Sabha in college life. Till date he has associated himself with various progressive organizations and is continuously working with them. Rahi bhai is also working with the organization of the farm laborers, Kisan Sangram Samiti.

At present he has started organizing and mobilizing people under the banner of Shahid Bhagat Singh Chatra Nawjawan Mahasabha. Along with this, he conducts workshop on alternative school education in ve villages with fan aim to impart scienti fic temper among the students.

Shahid Bhagat Singh Chatra Nawjawan Mahasabha now works in different parts of Jaunpur to promote equity, social justice and fraternity among the people. The sangathan is also actively advocates for land rights for landless people in Jaunpur.

Sathi Milan

This year the annual meeting of SRUTI Fellows known as “Sathi Milan” was organized in the field area of Navjeevan Sangathan in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh from 11th April to 14th April 2018 at Mypadu. All the SRUTI fellows from 14 states and SRUTI team participated in the meeting. The objective of this year’s sathi milan was to build a dialogue or discussion on the process of sangathan nirman and to arrive at annual action plans towards achieving them. The meeting was for 4 days.



On the initial day, sharings were done by fellows on the the structure of the sangathan, working to strike a balance between individualistic issues and social issues and if they have been successful in connecting the people in the sangathan and the community with collective motivations. We also raised points on trying to understand the expectations communities would have from the fellow/sangathans. We also wanted to understand how they looked at the contemporary issues and what strategies would be useful in the coming times.

Leading to an enriching discussion, further points of work were also identified by all sangathans. This was followed by the second day on 12th April was assigned for area visit. The brief introduction of the area and people was given by Sahadevaiah (fellow working in AP). This visit was divided into two parts i.e. boat trip through Buckingham Canal to the sea and village meeting at Kothapattapu Palam village. Buckingham canal is a fishing spot of the Adivasis who use small net or do hand fishing for their livelihood. This was vividly seen during the trip as few men and women who were fishing there. Although there was no interaction with adivasi people who were fishing but it gave the idea of the ways and means of fishing.

The afternoon of the day was given in meeting with people of Kothapattapu Palam village. Towards the end of the meeting there was a solidarity sharing from fellows of each state giving them the overview of the struggle and strategies used in their respective state. The long interaction helped everyone to understand the issues and area better. The meeting in the village drew the idea of forming a network of coastal fishing community of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

On the third and day, book release was done for 3 books among fellows - on Inland waterways, on commercial coal mining in CG, and on upcoming tiger reserves in Jharkhand. Valuable discussions were done on power, the process of politicization, and the processes of sangathan nirman. These inputs allowed for robust planning and review of work by sangathans, and of the roles SRUTI is to build with them.

On the final day, all members celebrated Ambedkar Jayanti. This year marked the 127th birth anniversary of Baba Saheb Ambedkar, celebrated as the pioneer of the Indian Constitution and a champion for equality and dignity of life, the world over. Ulka Mahajan in her commemoration note shared that today identity politics has divided the masses even more where Dalits claim Baba saheb as only theirs, we have lost the social fabric where progressive ideas were not restricted to an entitlement of one's caste. If we want to annihilate caste we have to break the boundaries much like the first satyagraha for water. The constitution is our common ground for which we have to struggle together and keep the vision of Babasaheb alive

amidst us. At this node we joined together to the rhythm of ‘we the people’ a perfect sangharsh geet that kindled the spirit of togetherness amidst us. Review of fellowship policy, updates from fellows and other requirements were shared in the final session before leaving back to their respective areas.

SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The perspective building training program known as “School for Social Change” re-started last year as a full-fledged perspective building training program for karyakartas of fellow sangathans. Four different schools are organized in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil and Odia in North India, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Odisha respectively based on the language spoken in the regions. All the language schools had successfully completed the first batch training process in their respective area by March 2018.

On successful completion of School for Social Change training program a three day Yuva Mahotsav (Youth Festival) was organized on 26, 27 and 28 May 2018 at Sane Guruji Rashtriya Smarak located at Mangaon in Raigad district of Maharashtra. As the name suggests, Youth Festival was meant to create a space to celebrate the vibrant colours of youth, diversity of cultures and building a collective strength and intervention through cultural expression among participants from all 6 centres: North Central India, Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Barwani and Dungarpur. The festival was dedicated to felicitating the 250 participants who had completed the training for the year from all the above centres.

Yuva Mahotsav a three-day festival to celebrate the successful completion of School for Social Change training was organized on **26th - 28th May** at **Sane Guruji National Smarak** (Pen tehsil) in Raigad district of Maharashtra. Yuva Mahotsav, as the name suggests, was meant to create a space to celebrate the vibrant colours of youth, diversity of cultures and build a collective strength and intervention through cultural expression. The Festival was a culmination of a yearlong (School For Social Change) training process conducted in 6 centres: North Central India, Orissa, Maharashtra, Barwani, Dungarpur and Tamil



maker Jayprad Desai and Dhamma and Pravin from Yelgaar Theatre Group.

Nadu, making it a truly diverse and energetic collision. The festival was dedicated to felicitating the 250 participants who had completed the training for the year 2017-2018 from the 6 centres and was envisioned to be a showcase of the transformative process.

The festival also brought together SRUTI fellows from across the country, SRUTI Delhi team and eminent resource persons like Subhash Ware, cultural activist Sambhaji Bhagat, esteemed film

School for Social Change training envisions the pedagogy to equip young activists with perspective and questions that must be addressed in the struggle to bring in 'social change'. Through the course of 4 to 5 shivirs the training covers detailed understanding of origin of earth, evolution of human species, transition from nomadic to settled agriculture, rise of early kingdoms and city centers, rise of organized religion, money and banking, industrial society, capitalism and consumer culture etc. The process not only



The answer was aptly put into words by Mr. Sambhaji, who said that "Human species are by evolutionary right, creative in nature! This is what sets us apart from other creatures and creations of this planet." He went on to add that humans are social animals who inhabit in a sense of culture. Cultural activism therefore is a powerful tool to reflect the society to itself and thus guide it or remind it of a more humane world.

facilitates a deeper understanding of the issues that the activist is struggling with, but also sheds light on how the issues are interlinked.

A pertinent question for the culmination of the School for Social Change training is that how will the informed trainees strengthen the ongoing processes of their sangathans or engage in a dialogue in their respective communities, to materialize their intervention, post the training?





building and training programmes.

Workshop on making films highlighting various issues

Taking the learnings from the previous process of training, the SSC training for the new batch was started in all the centres. School for Social Change is now a hallmark programme for youth perspective building, and attempts to strengthen sangathans in involving the youth in their work – through relevant skill

WORK UNDERTAKEN BY FELLOWS: THEMATIC AREAS

The work undertaken by the Fellows during the period under report may be grouped into the following thematic areas:

- ☐ ***Jal, jangal, zameen (Rights over water, forest and land) including Forest Rights, Conservation***
- ☐ ***Panchayati Raj Institutions and Governance***
- ☐ ***Agriculture and Livelihood***
- ☐ ***Education***
- ☐ ***Campaigns and Perspective building***
- ☐ ***Addressing Caste, Gender, Communalism and Social Exclusion***

Jal, Jangal and Zameen (Rights over forest, land and water)

The impact of central legislations like the Forest Rights Act (2006), the Indian Forest Act (1927) and the Forest Conservation Act (1980) are primary in understanding the context of work sangathans involve with. While correcting ‘historical injustice’ has been the mandate of the most recent attempts of the Parliament in the passing of FRA, with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) at the centre of its implementation, we have not seen other departments and ministries supporting their cause. On the contrary, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has intervened many times and allowed for diversion of forest land and issued clearances needed for the same, violating norms and practices and legal provisions.

The lack of transparency at the highest levels in deciding the fate of forests and those who live there overpowers many attempts by people to create sustainable eco-systems. Over this period, we see malicious attempts against tribal communities in the name of protection of wildlife – from frivolous cases against them in obstructing the forest department, to forced cases of displacement and evictions.

A Supreme Court order on 13th February, 2019 ordering evictions of ‘encroachers’ whose claims have been rejected has allowed for a sense of urgency to emerge, and brought to fore the issues people encountered all these years. The year has ended with wide speculations and legal interventions by all concerned stakeholders in these cases.

Sangathans or local collectives have performed the role of effective monitoring and enforcing norms of local democracy – recognized in constitutional provisions of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Panchayat Extension of Scheduled Areas (1993), which gives responsibilities and authorities to Gram Sabhas, or village assemblies in determining these concerns. The Forest Rights Act gives a structure to these, where such powers can be exercised.

SRUTI fellows – many of who work closely in forest areas have followed up on their attempts to secure pattas (titles) which allow families and social groups – be it tribals or Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) to assert their claims and seek state support. They have also created awareness of provisions of the FRA – to create action around conservation, community ownership and control over forest produce.

Seeking accountability from decision-making bodies at all levels, along with building their capacities to address emerging challenges becomes then the most effective tool to address a variety of issues concerning governance in forest areas – those of settlement of claims regularizing what is now understood as ‘encroached land’, creating awareness on forest conservation, empowering local self- government units like Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats. Forest areas see the most conflicts in the political economy of the country. From not taking actions against poachers and illegal tree-felling to opposing the rights of communities which the law recognized and actively advocated for, the forest bureaucracy has largely compromised the protection of forests – which have been historically taken up by indigenous communities.

SRUTI has worked to support workshops and trainings, public awareness campaigns, seminars and conferences at the villages and at the district, state and national levels. Through collective sharing during sammelans, issues have been taken up by sangathans and memorandums have been submitted to respective administrative agencies. A rigorous process of claim verification and distribution of titles, both individual and community, have allowed for settlement of many claims. The progress is not even, and sometimes small wins take a long time due to administrative lethargy and inherent prejudice.

Working to build understandings of the close relationship between nature and human activities, village meetings, cross-learning visits and incorporating newer methods of building knowledge have been made in working areas. Regular interactions and dialogues with the administration and policy makers have been useful in understanding the issues in its entirety. Strong alliances among various groups, deliberations and collective action have been hallmarks of these efforts.

Forest rights and Conservation

- ***Trainings with members of Forest Rights Committee members, other active members of Gram Sabhas and panchayat representatives*** were organized in Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Odisha,

Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh. It allowed them to better learn the provisions of the act, motivate gram sabhas to actively intervene in cases of rejection of accurate claims, and also learn to file individual and community claims. Resource mapping, creating bio-diversity registers and addressing matters of diversion of forest land was also done.

- **Regular meetings with state-level officials** was done in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand – to actively pursue pending claims and for expediting the progress.
- **Community forest resources** were demanded by sangathans across the country.
- More progress is seen in the settlement of individual claims, but the recognition of community claims is a major hurdle in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand

Some glimpses from the field

Tamil Nadu – VTMS, working closely with the Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD), organised a convention on 30th September 2018, at Chennai bringing together representatives from Kanyakumari, Dindigul, Theni, Coimbatore, Erode, Nilgiri, Villupuram, Chengalpattu, Ramanathapuram, Pondicherry and Nellore district, following which a 13 member-delegation met members of the state government and demanded action in this regard.

The minimum potential area eligible for recognition under the Act range from 19.20 lakh hectares¹ to 19.06 lakh hectares² out of 26.34 lakh hectares of forest area in the state – implying that 76% of the state's forest land would fall within the the jurisdiction of the concerned hamlet level Gram Sabhas 5799 families.³ Till now, only 0.2 percent of claims over this area – for a mere 5,416 hectares have been settled.

As an effort to get the implementation in place, the issue of 47 sq kms of mangrove forests in the coast which also falls within the purview of gram sabhas was raised by state-level alliances, with support from VTMS. Fishing along these areas is the primary source of livelihood, as mangroves are the prime breeding grounds for fishes. The threat of increasing industrial pollution threatens the entire eco-system along with the lives of fish-rearing communities.

They also challenged amendments being introduced to Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882 which changes the Ryotwaris status of the forest land where Sri Lankan repatriates have been living for more than 50 years, known as Janmam estates, recognised under section 17 of the Act.

¹ Forest Survey of India, 1999

² Census data, 2011

³ State-wise performance of the Forest Rights Act, released by Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Awareness camps on the rights under the Forest Rights Act were organized at the village and panchayat level. Deliberations were organized at the state level.

Sangathans in Odisha and Chhattisgarh got the administration to recognize the conversion of 40 unsurveyed villages into revenue villages.

Displacement from 70 revenue villages have been stopped in the Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary.

5135 IFR in 60 villages and 140 CFR titles were secured in MP, Chhattisgarh and Odisha Majority of claims are still pending at the sub-divisional and district levels. About 8,000 fresh claims from were filed during this period. More than 3000 families, because of recognition of IFRs could access loans for seeds and fertilizers, and be eligible for crop insurance.

Gram Sabhas from 161 villages in Nilgiri and Kodaikanal districts passed resolutions against any proposed eviction, citing the lack of verification of forest claims and pointed out its illegality as per the provisions of the Forest Rights Act.

Andhra Pradesh – A state-level forum for Forest Rights was formed as a result of coming together of about 16 member organisations from 13 district of the state. This state-level meeting was organised at Vijaywada with representatives from civil society organisation and people's movement groups. It has been effectively raising the timely and effectively implement the Forest Rights Act.

Jharkhand - Awareness campaigns on the rights of Gram sabhas in 5th Schedule areas were organised in East Singhbhum, Saraikela-Kharswan, Latehar, Gumla and Ranchi districts. A public march from Ghatshila to Ranchi was organised from 24th – 29th October, 2018. It saw participation of more than 3000 people, and was widely attended by prominent adivasi poets, lawyers, writers and journalists. It strengthened the resolve of adivasi groups to come together and conserve forests and create learnings for mutual exchange. Alongside, the issue of Palamu Tiger Reserve was raised with the Tribal Advisory Committee of the state, which issued orders for proper action to be taken regarding the notification of 8 villages in its core area.

Bihar - Adivasi Mazdoor Kisan Mukti Vahini organised a 4-day cycle yatra was conducted from 10th to 14th September in the Districts

Kura covering other blocks namely Katoria, Baunsi, from Mazdoor Kisan Samiti, Gaya also participated in the yatra. The most villages are majorly the residence of Santhali Tribes who are being exploited by Forest Department. The main focus on this yatra was to bring the Forest Right entitlements to people's lives. Each village saw the peoples gathering which was to bring awareness to people. This was a platform to bring zeal among people in forming sangathan to work for their development. The expansion of sangathan is seen now in 19 villages of Chandan, Katoria, Belhar and Baunsi Blocks of Banka District.

The turning tides in Sonakhan – Impact Story

The cancellation of lease for 2.7 tonnes of gold mining is a welcome move for communities. But much remains to be done to tackle corporate loot in the state and recognize the rights of adivasis and forest dwelling communities.

The state of Chhattisgarh has been witness to large scale coal-mining and extraction of iron-ore, thermal power plants and the construction of large highways for the transport of coal and other material. With a rich forest cover, the state is a natural target of economic and political expansionist programs of large corporate groups, backed by repressive regimes of the state and national governments. The notification of 14 new coal blocks in the Sarguja region and rich Hasdeo Aranya forest regions has already been challenged in the courts for violating environmental and procedural processes. Through the back door, the issues emerging from the Coal-Gate scam have been diverted to 'auction' these coal blocks to private players and its subsidiaries. The changes introduced through the Coal Bearing Act, 2014 allows for diversion of forest land for coal.

In January, 2019, the newly elected Congress government in the state met representatives of Dalit Adivais Manch, a sangathan which has been spearheading the movement against illegal leasing and cancelled the lease given to extract gold from the region. There is renewed enthusiasm among the villagers as this announcement comes as a huge win to the long struggle to protect their lands and habitats, as also a recognition of their rights over forests and natural resources.

Distribution of community and individual claim titles, filed under Forest Rights Act



Enclosures being done by Forest Department in Barnawapara area for plantations, and regulating entry/exit in the region



The Barnawapara region in northern Chhattisgarh has been facing an unprecedented crisis. Along the eco-sensitive zone of Baghmara – 474 hectares of land in 24 villages were to be effected by gold mining in the Sonakhan region. Earlier, another 133 hectares of rich forest land was to be diverted for mining purposes. In February 2016, national newspapers first reported on the London-based mining giant, Vedanta group winning the bid to mine gold in the Baghmara area. The locals neither had any idea that such a plan was in place, nor the local village councils were consulted to discuss the impact of these mines. With the direct patronage of the state government led by Mr. Raman Singh, many concerns raised by local villagers, activists, environmentalists including the District Forest Officer (DFO) were sidelined.

Members of Barnawapara Sangharsh Samiti, a local sangathan formed to raise issues of eviction, coercion and non-recognition of rights during their 34-day sit-in



The proposed mining region is home to a large array of wildlife including bison, bear, leopard, tiger, deer and many others; and is also the area of the free movement of elephants. The marked region for gold mining in Sonakhan also has more than 2 lakh trees including many species of bamboo, tendu, mahua, and many other minor forest produce and many varieties of timber. Destruction of these rich, dense forests would cause the destruction of precious wildlife and increase the man- animal conflict many times, already creating havoc across the state. Migration of the elephant and the tiger regularly causes the destruction of homes and agricultural fields,

also leading to loss of lives. But the state government did not seem to pay attention.

The unity amongst locals

Dalit Adivasi Manch, a local group of activists has been leading the struggle on these issues from the forefront. The notification of the Sonakhan region for gold mining came as a surprise to them as well. Soon after, the village Sonakhan in Kasdol block (of the newly formed Baloda Bazar district) became the symbol of resistance to indiscriminate looting.

Gram Sabha resolutions unanimously opposed the attempts to mine the area for gold. The area is home to Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh, the celebrated leader who was murdered publically for participating in the rebellion of 1857 against the British rule. Revered by locals across caste and class, the news of proposed mining brought them together. As the villagers were also aware about what happens to a region after mining takes place, they were in no mood to give up their land, forests and long association with nature for any compensation or to facilitate the greed of a private company. India imports 700 metric tonnes of gold every year. Even if all the 2,700 kg of gold were mined from Sonakhan, it would only account for 0.39 percent of the yearly imports leading to an income for Rs. 820 crores for the state exchequer. The destruction of forest cover and bio-diversity in comparison was beyond comprehension.

The struggle in Barnawapara

Many forest regions in the country face a variety of conflicts. Although it is beyond the scope of a

singular note to highlight the decades of exploitation people have faced at the hands of the forest department, it is important to say that forest dwelling communities continue to suffer at the hands of its officials, including the administration and officials who treat them as backward, encroachers and antagonistic to the development needs of the nation. The progressive legislation of ‘The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006’ recorded these experiences as ‘historical injustice’. The provisions of the legislation attempt to correct these injustices, which continue to be conveniently disregarded in a variety of ways – from the lacklustre approach in recognition of community rights, forcing evictions for the formation of wildlife corridors, to illegal plantations on agricultural lands, and the shadows of extortion and violence that these communities live in.

The Barnawapara region has 22 villages. Rampur was the first village to be evicted in 2013. However, 9 families did not move out or were offered the compensation package as the laws treated elder sons of the family as a separate family but females were denied their due. These 9 families continued to live in the village, with regular threats and damages done by the forest department officials who threatened them to move out. From damaging holy sites, water sources and schools, these officials put notices threatening the demolition of their houses using JCB machines. People continued to cultivate their fields and gather firewood, although they had to keep paying small bribes over this time as they were constantly threatened and notices and tolls were extracted from them.

On 5th January 2018, a villager named Rajkumar Kondh was abused and beaten mercilessly by a forest range officer, Sanjay Ratauiya and 6 other employees of the forest department after an argument. The local police later joined in and beat him up and his family, including women and children. He was then taken to Baya police station where the police registered a false FIR against him for assaulting the forest officials. When the family along with members of Dalit Adivasi Manch reached the police station, many of them were abused and the Rajkumar was later found to have severe injuries. Thus began a long agitation which united the 71 villages of the Barnawapara region. A sit-in was organised starting 10th January outside the police station demanding the arrest of the range officer and for justice for Rajkumar.

After 34 days, on 28th February 2018, the sit-in ended with the promise of immediate action against the range officer and withdrawal of all illegal taxes for residents in the sanctuary. There were also concessions made to the collection of firewood, minor forest produce like mahua, tendu and the forest department withdrew its control of panchayat funds and planning. Efforts started to recognise individual and community claims under the Forest Rights Act, and decision was made that no eviction would be done without the consent of the Gram Sabhas, in recognition of existing laws and provisions. The villages have since then taken forward their struggle and demanded the implementation of FRA. They have also given their support to the ongoing struggle in Sonakhan – where proposed mining threatened to uproot rich bio-diversity, and bring havoc to human lives and livelihoods at a large scale.

Delegates from Dalit Adivasi Manch meeting with CM Bhupesh Baghel, after the cancellation of mining lease in Sonakhan region



Sonakhan: A movement for protection, conservation and building livelihoods

Baloda Bazar district has recently received community claims for 64 villages after a rigorous process of reformation of Village Forest Rights Committees (FRCs), following up of claims at the Sub-Divisional Level Committee (SDLC) and the District Level Committee (DLC) as mandated in the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Attempts were made to sideline these demands and continue with plans of forest diversion and plantations under the newly passed Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and

Planning Authority (CAMPA, 2016). Along with the lack of information available at the ground and the many processes in which the Forest department continues to deny adivasis and others the rights recognised under the FRA, there were also many instances of coercion and violations at the ground.

The recognition of rights in the year 2018 itself was a huge achievement considering not many areas in the country were seeing positive intervention when it came to the recognition of community rights. While there were also attempts to not give these rights in the name of Gram Sabhas, but in the name of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMs), the sangathans opposed them and got the titles issued for Gram Sabhas. There are attempts now to implement traditional conservation methods, bring together communities to organise for collecting minor forest produce, build support for value addition and formation of cooperatives for the same, and bring women at the forefront for protection of several species of medicinal plants and wildlife.

In many ways, the struggle in and around Sonakhan can be seen as a successful instance of positive struggle for recognition of rights, social, cultural and economic. Through democratic organising and collective bargain, along with successful effort at bringing together stakeholders from across the state, the sangathan has allowed for constant negotiations with officers, district and state administration and others. The cancellation of mining lease to Vedanta in recognition of these struggles was much-needed and is a positive attempt on part of the state government which is taking initiatives to bridge the gap between the mainstream development discourses and the exploitation of local communities.

Land Rights and Development

- *Applications were filed for the regularization of 240 homestead pattas in Odisha. 132 could be taken up for review for the administration.*
- *There is largely unwillingness to regularize land reform programmes in the country.*
- *Land demarcation was not done in many cases where land titles have been secured. Regular follow ups are being done by sangathans with support from the district administration.*

- *Sangathan in Tamil Nadu raised the drop in wages and removal of government support for 40,000 tea estate workers*

Some glimpses from the field

Odisha - Working with communities suffering from displacement caused by big dams, mining and other development projects, Zindabad sangathan facilitated to form Paschim Odisha Bisthapan Pratirodh Samanwaya Samiti (POBPSS). On 1st November 2018 a convention was organized on displacement issues at Harishankar village with different people's organizations. 250 people from 10 sangathans participated and shared the problems faced in their local areas following which a strategy plan was made. As a follow up 3 different meetings were held at regional level. On 9th December 2018, a meeting was held at Kulanti in Bargarh district with victims from 32 villages affected from construction of big dam at Pujharipali. Other sangathans had also joined in solidarity. Another meeting was held at Kharia in Nuapada district with 500 people affected by the lower Indra irrigation project. There were issues in rehabilitation process which have not been addressed by the government. Therefore, it was insisted to strengthen people's organization to persuade the government to take action.

Tamil Nadu - The coastline of Tamil Nadu has a length of about 1076 kms which constitutes about 15% of the total coastal length of India and stretches along the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. The coast is also endowed with varied coastal habitats like mangroves, corals, seaweeds, sea grass beds, salt marshes, mudflats, sand dunes etc. The State also has a number of rivers, estuaries and lagoons. The coastal ecosystems are now highly disturbed and very much threatened, encountering problems like pollution, siltation and erosion, flooding, saltwater intrusion, storm surges and other activities due to ever expanding human settlements. These anthropogenic activities have put tremendous pressure on the fragile coastal environment. Tamil Nadu coast has been blessed with vital eco-systems and preservation and protection of the eco-system is vital for sustainable development.

Majority of the people of Gudalur, where VTMS has been working, have benefited by the continuous land demand programmes which the organized. A meeting on this was conducted at Kolapalli on 2, May, 2018 in which 96 youth people participated and focal point of the meeting was the importance of land rights in the changing socio-political scenario. Land rights trainings were held from 5th - 7th May 2018 with 80 members, and 62 people participated in the training held at Alampadi during 6th - 8th July, 2018. History of the land, how the land that lay for common use came under the control of a few people and transformed to private properties were analyzed.

Bihar - A two day Bhudan Kisan Sammelan was organized on 9th and 10th July 2018 at Shilaunja, Bodhgaya, Bihar by Mazdoor Kisan Samiti. Around 300 people had assembled from 36 villages of Gaya Districts mainly from blocks of Fatehpur, Mohanpur, Barahchhatti, Dobhi, Tenkupa, Bodhgaya.

In the Majholiya village of Gaya district, big success was achieved as a new hamlet of Jay Prabha Nagar was established. On 15 January a meeting was organized for the inauguration of Jay Prabha Nagar, where sangathan karyakartas addressed around 500 people in the meeting. The newly formed village is situated on 3.5 acres of government land where 66 Dalit families (of Chamar and Bhuiyan castes) from nearby villages Ramnachak, Bankat, and Majholiya villages are settling down. Initially a part of the Shankaracharya Math, which was demolished during Bodh Gaya movement of the late 1970s, these lands were under illegal occupation by members of the dominant castes. But the Sangathan's long struggle paid off and now landless people from various Dalit groups are settling here.

Campaign against eviction of communities from Rajaji National Park – Impact Story

Van Panchayat Sangharsh Morcha started with the mobilisation against JFM (Joint Forest Management) in 2001 and since 2008 it is closely working with van gujar community in got khattas. (Got Khattas are the settlements

inside the forest areas where people from this community reside in)

Delegates from state networks in Uttarakhand discussing the implementation of FRA



People from van Gujjar community are scattered in different regions of Uttarakhand (Garhwal & Kumaoun Div.). These regions can be classified as eastern tarai division, central tarai division and western tarai division (in tarai bhabar region of Kumaoun) and Pauri, Uttarkashi, Haridwar and Dehradun (in Garhwal region). This community is primarily a forest dwelling community and their main source of livelihood is livestock rearing.

Since last few years, state government and forest department are trying to displace this community from their forest settlements based in national parks, mostly in the name of saving the tiger and other wildlife, and in effect portraying them as encroachers and a potent threat to wildlife and forest ecosystem. The state executive and high courts have also towed this line. Securing stays on illegal

orders of the High Court has only been able to give them some respite. Even after many years of independence this community is still deprived of voting rights. Where many tribal communities and people from rural areas are facing the serious issue of malnutrition, the van gujjar community is thriving in their natural habitat with no such issues. Like many other marginalized groups and communities, this community doesn't have access to government schemes and facilities. There has been no case registered of malnutrition or starvation in this community yet, the reason being their healthy way of life which is completely dependent on the forests. In 2015 Tumadiya Khatta (Jim Corbett National Park) a van gujjar settlement was destroyed by state forest department. People fought a long struggle with forest department on this issue and were able to get facilities like electricity and gohar gas plant. This allowed for a robust leadership to develop among Gujjars, and many have started giving more time and energy to become active leaders, and worked with groups and networks across the state and nation, to put forward their issues, learn legal provisions and develop donation based support for their activities.

Their displacement will not only create the issue of livelihood for this community but it will also hamper their healthy way of life. Till today the Van Gujjar community settlements are deprived of basic facilities like clean drinking water, education or electricity etc. On top of these, this community is also facing the constant threat of displacement posed by state forest department. 57 families of Van Gujjar community residing inside the Jim Corbett National Park in Ramnagar were issued an eviction notice within 30 days. Against this notice sangathan mobilized people and called for a gram sabha. In the gram sabha it was decided that this notice will be challenged in high court, later court ruling came out in the favour of van Gujjar families and they were allowed to stay as per their earlier arrangements.

Similarly, in Rajaji National Park (Lansdowne Division) 400 van Gujjar families were issued an eviction notice by forest department. On 8th October 2017, people with the help of sangathan filed a case against this order in court. In another case 18 Gujjar families in Chidiyapur (Rajaji National Park) were issued a same notice. In response to this notice people from the community have sent a reply and followed up actively on the process of individual and community claims as per the Forest Right Act, 2006.

Less than two months later, on 6th December, the forest department destroyed houses, standing crops and injured people in forced eviction. In Udham Singh Nagar district 106 families were displaced from Saniya Basti again on 4th May 2018. With the help of sangathan displaced people raised this issue and sent a letter to chief conservator of forest in Dehradun. It is important to mention here that individual and community forest right claims were filed by these people on block level but still these families were forcefully evicted by forest department.

Panchayati Raj and Local Governance

Odisha - Adim Adivasi Mukti Manch organised two capacity building training on the Panchayati Raj system and village development plans from 4th - 11th September, 2018. Both the trainings were held at SANCHARR Resource Support Unit, Phalpaju (Banigochha) with a total of 52 sangathan members, community leaders and elected Panchayati Raj representatives have participated.

Main topics for the discussions were roles and responsibility of the elected representatives, importance of gram sabha and village development plan, different schemes and how they are misused by some influential people, women's participation in PRIs. In the discussions how different constructions were done by machines and contractors were brought to light. Thus the money was flowing in the pockets of contractors and not for whom that was meant for. Some ward members and Sarpanch shared their problems and how they are pressurized by government officials and collectors for doing certain works according to them and not as decided in the village.

Sangathans organized regular village meetings with active gram sabha members. It particularly focused on the contemporary issues faced in securing rights over social security schemes, and organising their concerns and solving them through applications and memorandums.

Working alongside to secure rights over drinking water for about 8000 families, sangathans in Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh demanded work and secured payments of about Rs. 1.6 crores under MGNREGA for more than 12500 families. They also take up issues of sanitation in 195 villages, secure old-age and widow pensions for 1200 people.

Entitlements under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana were secured for more than 6000 families in Rajasthan, Odisha, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh

Trainings with representatives of elected panchayat officials, ward members and zila parishad members were done in working areas of Odisha, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. The goals of local democracy.

Specific focus was done on the interactions and trainings with youth and women members – for active gram sabha participation.

SHG formation was encouraged in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Village planning processes were initiated in 80 villages of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha

Zindabad Sangathan from its very formation in year 2000, have been involved in peoples' struggle for safeguarding their rights over natural resources, livelihood opportunity, against oppression and exploitation. While working on these issues, sangathan also noticed other issues in the area. In forest areas people were restricted from their rights in forest land that they enjoyed earlier. There were many incidents on atrocities and harassment on forest dwellers and adivasis by forest department. Thus, the sangathan eventually started working on Forest rights and other issues such as displacement, land issues, peasants' issues, labour issues, migration, NREGS etc. Now the impact of sangathan is in Bolangir district but core working area of sangathan is in 3 blocks: Khaprakhol, Turekela and Belpahar blocks.



Chhattisgarh Gram Sabhas come together to assert their constitutional authority and ask governments to take forward due recognition of rights – Impact story

Over 150 Gram Sabhas come together for asserting their constitutional rights and establish control over their forest resources. State Tribal Affairs Minister assures that implementing Forest Rights Act in letter and spirit is the foremost priority of Chhattisgarh Government.

*Sammelan at Morga village, Korba district (Chhattisgarh)
against illegal forest clearance to coal mining and the rights
of Gram Sabhas*



Media coverage of Sammelan at Morga village, Korba district on the rights of Gram Sabhas



On 24th February, 2018, Morga village in Korba district of Chhattisgarh witnessed the coming together for more than 150 villages and representatives of their respective Gram Sabhas. At this crucial juncture where adivasis and other forest dwellers across the country had just heard the news of the Supreme Court order evicting them from forest areas, there was considerable opposition and anger among people owing to the non-implementation laws like FRA and of non-recognition of the rights of Gram Sabhas.

Locating the struggle in Chhattisgarh

It is a grave problem to consider those whose claims have been rejected as 'encroachers' since the entire process of recognition of rights has never been properly followed, and much of these are still pending. There is a long-standing demand to revisit all these claims, and sensitize the administration at the district and state level on issues in the process of recognition of rights.

Adivasis and their traditional knowledge and culture has been responsible for protection and conservation of the forests, in the absence of which no forest conservation is possible. In light of this, the present order of the Supreme Court is extremely sad and needs to be revisited.

Over the last 15 years, provisions of PESA and FRA had been consistently ignored in order to benefit of industrial interest groups, and allowed for wide commercial exploitation of forests. Chhattisgarh has still not framed rules to ensure implementation of PESA even 22 years after the legislation. As a result, the interests of adivasis and other forest dwellers, as well as vital concerns of conservation of environment and forests have been regularly sacrificed for the sake of profits for a few companies.

The new state government has been elected with the widespread support of adivasis and forest dwelling communities, who were angry with anti-people policies and widespread violence and prosecution. It is important to realise that due implementation of PESA and Forest Rights Act including recognizing the communities access and control over their forest resources is critical to ensure peace and normalcy in the region. The continued

Representations from 150 villages attended the sammelan demanding the recognition of rights under FRA and PESA



deprivation of adivasis and local communities from their traditional forest resources was largely responsible for current state of fear in the region. Rights of gram sabhas to “free prior informed consent” before forest diversion in Schedule 5 areas have been consistently violated.

The solidarity built among social movement groups activated legal recourse and made demands for oversight of institutions, allowing these issues to gain visibility.

The state administration also took note of the struggle in Sonakhan area following delegations meeting them for the recognition of rights in

the Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary was historic.

In the coming together of representatives of social movement groups and Gram Sabhas asserting their constitutional authority, we see an expression of constitutional values whereby communities are directly being able to question how issues of development are envisioned for them. Through years of direct association with political parties in raising these issues in the assembly and outside, and with an effective support from the local and regional media to address their concerns, Gram Sabhas have emerged as the primary negotiators with the state and national governments. It has addressed illegalities of the forest and environment ministry in giving clearances to companies in disregard for issues of environment conservation and protection of wildlife. Gram Sabhas have also worked effectively towards passing resolutions to recognize peoples' rights to protect their forests and improve their livelihoods, already enshrined in the progressive legislation of PESA and Forest Rights Act, 2006.

An important causal factor for this expression to come out so strongly is the significance given

by sangathans to build legal understanding on how Gram Sabhas can be the only constitutionally recognised body which can effectively address bottlenecks of the development paradigm. It can also be through the authority of Gram Sabhas to emerge as robust mechanisms of democratic decision- making in the atmosphere of onslaught on the rights of people, and those who continue to struggle for it

- be it members of civil society, lawyers, activists or vocal men or women from the communities themselves. The Gram Sabhas in Hasdeo Arand have opposed coal mining in their region, came out and expressed their questions and opinions in national and international media agencies, and supported democratic struggles in the state and outside.

Dr. PremSai Singh Tekam, Minister for School Education, Tribal and Scheduled Caste, Backward Class and Minority Development, Cooperation, Government of Chhattisgarh addressing the sammelan



State government lends an ear to the ground

The sammelan was an expression of Constitutional rights provided to Gram Sabhas in Schedule V areas under the PESA Act. Gram sabhas from different parts of Chhattisgarh also expressed their solidarity and support with the struggle of Hasdeo Arand Bachao Sangharsh Samiti to conserve and protect Hasdeo Arand forest region. At the end of the sammelan, a charter of demands and concerns was also presented to the Honourable Minister Dr. Premsai Singh Tekam. He listened patiently to the points raised by all speakers, interacted with the members of gram

sabhas and addressed those issues in his speech.

In the charter of demands submitted to the Honb'l Minister and the state government, action was demanded against all illegal industrial and mining projects where diversion has taken place without completing the recognition of forest rights and without the consent of Gram Sabhas. Along with a ban on industrial or mining activity in any bio-diverse and wildlife rich areas, demands were also made to recognize the rights of the Gram Sabhas to take full control of minor forest produce and transit permits, and honour their rights to appoint their own Secretaries. The demands to recognize the provisions of PESA was also echoed along the sammelan. Members also called for recognition of rights of Gram Sabhas to determine and give permission for any land acquisition and address false processes adopted by the administration and companies in this matter. Finally, to take into account the 'historical injustice' meted out to people in the state, the FRA was sought to be implemented in letter and spirit.

Agriculture and Livelihood

Agriculture still continues to be the principal source of livelihood in the country. But intensified agrarian crisis, punctuated with disturbing farm suicides as well as angry protest from the peasantry marked this period. For instance, *In May 2018, five farmers from the Hadoti region in Rajasthan had committed suicide over garlic prices hitting rock bottom due to bumper crop. As a result, the farmers had to sell their crop at throwaway prices⁴.* Peasants struggles in areas like Shikkar received huge popular support with traders, students, workers jointing depressed presents. Farmers demanded implementation Swaminathan Commission's recommendations and a guarantee of procurement and lowering the cost of inputs such as water, fertilizer and power.

While farmers cutting across religion, caste and land holding size drowning in agrarian crisis several parts of Rajasthan also witnessed un precedent attack on Muslim cow farmers. It was unfortunate that Meo

⁴ Moneycontrol.com

muslims of Mewat region, who are historically one of the largest cattle farming community in northern india; had to disproportionately bore with targeted violence. The targeted violence by the vigilante groups intensified the plight of farmers belonging to all religion. It became virtually impossible for Muslim farmers to buy and sell cow for farmers in Rajasthan which had adversely affected the cattle economy of the state and the life of farmers.

We also witnessed systematic crushing of the rights of the poor like old age pension and food security. According to reports, an estimated 2.5 million families have been removed from the food security scheme in an attempt to weed out fake beneficiaries. In addition, over 2 million people are unable to access the subsidised rations due to the Point of Sale (PoS) machines not being able to read their fingerprints, indicating that the poor are suffering at the expense of a digital governance. Added to all this, more than 10 lakh pensioners' names were taken off as well from the list. The worst victims of this process of exclusion are old people, Dalits, women and tribals.

Some glimpses from the field

Rajasthan - Handloom cooperative Adarsh Hathkargha was initiated by the Hum Kisan to provide the livelihood for the most downtrodden community. More than 90 percent of the weavers are women in Adarsh Hathkargha. It has played a vital role in supplementing steady income to a great extent to 40 families with the turnover of 35- 45 lakh. When the implementation of MNREGA has worsened in Rajasthan in the current financial year with only 22,892 households provided 100 days employment so far as against 4.27 lakh households in 2016-17.

This year cooperative has registered their brand Aha Vastra and also applied for the export license to expand the market. A study has been conducting to analyze the socio-economic conditions and problems of handloom weavers across the state and to adopt new strategies to improve the present condition. As part of this Devendra and Sudhi visited yarn market at Ahmadabad, Panipat, Delhi, Bikaner. This study helped to come up with the idea of forming a platform to market the product of weavers to customers directly. The initial meetings with different groups are going on to start e- marketing.



Top - Sangathans in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh working with farmer collectives

Below - MATI sangathan organising workshops and trainings with women cooperatives



Cauvery campaign - A campaign ending on 18 September was carried out in Tamil Nadu to point out that with proper management the irrigation and drinking water needs of 7 districts namely Karur, Tiruchy, Pudukottai, Sivagangai, Virudhunagar, Ramanathapuram and Tuticorin could be solved by tapping this excess flow. The Cauvery-Ariyaru- Vaigai-Kundaru Canal Irrigation farmers federation had organized this campaign. Hundreds of farmers participated in this programme. Over 50 leaders and karyakarta from VTMS participated in this campaign. Meetings were held in 69 villages in 7 districts.

Cooperative Initiatives of Adim Adivasi Mukti Manch in Odisha in its annual convention on 5th May, shared the statements of profit and loss. Last year 13 quintal @Rs15/ Kg Mahua flowers costs Rs.19500/- has been purchased by the MPMPCS. It was stored and sold at the end of December @Rs30/- per kg costs, getting the cooperative Rs.19,500 profits.

Rs10 per kg profit was distributed among the members costs Rs.13,000/-. 2 board meetings were organized to strengthen cooperative for procurement of Forest & Agriculture produces Tendu leaf collectors got a profit of Rs. 700 per kg.

In Jakeda G.P of the Nuagaon block construction workers have formed a cooperative named as **Sramajibi Prathamika Samabay Samittee** with the help of sangathan. Around 44 workers are depositing Rs.20/- each month as savings from where the workers are getting micro credits for immediate requirement.

Navjeevan Sangathan in Andhra Pradesh worked to update the farmers about the schemes for farmers. A training was organized in coordination with Agriculture and horticulture department on 20th June. They also Facilitated animal husbandry loan in 120 villages and 174 buffalos and 56 units of sheep loan were distributed in 9 Mandals. To promote non- farming livelihood, skill training is initiated where women from 3 mandles were trained in fabric painting.

Adivasi Chetna Sangathan is encouraging people for better farming in the Rabi crops season. They have mobilized agriculture officials and demanded for seeds and other assistance to farmers especially the draught affected farmers. As a result 2235 farmers have received 17880 kgs of mung seed and 17880 kgs of other pulse seeds, 2320 farmers have received 58000 kgs of groundnuts seed and 625 farmers received other vegetable seeds at free of cost from agriculture department. Government have also sanctioned 300 ponds, 256 wells, 16 water harvesting projects, 65 numbers of pond renovation and 62 water channels in different villages.

Trainings were done to use traditional seeds and learn of the need for avoid mono-cropping by sangathans in MP and Odisha

Education

Some glimpses from the field

Delhi - During last few years while working with youth girls, Delhi Young Artist Forum felt that mobilization of mothers as labours should be prioritised, so that the issues surrounding the exploitation of the **rights of workers** can be raised and a collective effort could be put in to deal with the issues. DYAF on 29th of March 2018 on the occasion of 10 years of the sangathan formed the “Asangathit Mazdoor Sangarsh Morcha” to work for the rights of labours in the unorganized sector in Delhi. On 14th of March 2019 DYAF conducted the first convention of Asangathit Mazdoor Sangarsh Morcha where they discussed the various aspects of the works they do in details ranging from Piece rate works to rag picking to working as domestic help.

Across the year, DYAF mainly focused on mobilizing workers on in unorganized sector, organising Girls activist Convention, regular Youth Perspective building workshops and the educational fellowship program.

The sangathan this year also worked on involving and engaging more **youths** with its initiatives and organized theatre workshops and sensitising boys in the community towards issues of violence against women.



Hum Kisan Sangathan in Rajasthan runs community school called Mathan in Jhiri Village. A total number of 120 students were enrolled in school from 1st standard to 8th standard out of which half are girls. 16 students including 5 girls from Manthan school appeared for in 8th standard board exam. 15 students of Manthan appeared for the 5th standard board exam conducted by the state government and most of them were able to secure Agrade. The achievement of Sangathan resolute view that privatization is the solution to the problems of the education system.

Kashtakari Jan Andolan in Maharashtra conducted two shivirs in the Dec, 18 and March' 19. The curriculum of the shivirs were in the line of the School for Social Change. After these shivirs the sangathan is very optimistic about starting the SSC at local level in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra in the year 2019-20. karyakartas of the sangathan visited Vistapit Mukti Vahini, Jharkhand and Malyagiri Adivasi Sangarsha Manch, Odisha to understand the struggle of these sangathans. In Jharkhand they visited the chandil Dam area and interacted with people who were involved in Cage Culture of fishes as part of earning livelihood.

Adivasi Kranti Sangathan in Odisha initiated different capacity building and perspective building training program in different villages. The objective of the training was to spread awareness among youths and develop in them a perspective and understanding on different issues. In 6 villages the training programs were conducted namely in Khoda, Sunia, Kontapal, Bamgaon, Pitaladua and Baltangar.

Uttar Pradesh – At Tanda, Awadh Peoples Forum took an initiative to mobilise youths who are involved in the power loom industry. During a visit to Tanda on 10th November 2018 it was observed that the socio economic condition of weaver in general is very poor; they are in a very pathetic condition. They are not in a position to fulfil their basic requirements. Most of the weavers are living in a joint family system consisting of 8-10 members in a family. So it is very difficult to survive with such low wages. Most of the weavers have low educational status, so they are not taking care of their

family successfully. That is the reason the middle man or supplier take full advantage of poor weavers

and their labour. The poor female weavers hesitate to ask contractor to increase their wages after the work is completed.

There were many youth groups of Tanda who had lot of energy to work for bring changes in the existing stagnation in their society. Most of the youths were post graduates from Awadh University, Faizabad but unemployed. The unemployment situation in Uttar Pradesh is also serious and alarming. There are also issues of communal tensions in the locality, which has resulted to religious disharmony, disturbing the course of life of citizens and hurting the economy.

After discussions with youth groups and other civil society members two important initiatives - A **Bunkar Sammelan** to address the socio-economic and political issues and conduct a survey and research report to ascertain facts and socio economic conditions of people of Tanda. After this on 20th January 2019 Bunkar Youth Forum was formed and a meeting was called and discussion sessions were organized on the topic “Our Duties in Society Today” (“वर्तमान समाज और हमारे कर्तव्य”).

There was a workshop with 50 youth on Gender, importance of community living in competitive word and Impact of social media was organized from 14- 17 May 2018 at Kartania Forest in UP. On the first day the discussion took around the community living. As most of the youths coming from the urban area, it was their first experience to witness human life inside a forest. During the meeting the concept of collective consciousness was also discussed with a question that how it holds the society together.

Perspective building campaigns

Glimpses from the field

Jharkhand – Sangathans working in the state raised the issues of land grab, growing communalism, nexus developing in the name of wildlife protection, violence on human rights activists and the attack on people in tribal areas.

Some laws and policies such as Land Acquisition Law 2017, creation of land bank, CAMPA and around 300 signed MoUs after creation of state have created a situation of uncertainty for them. At this juncture

each and every adivasi is at the verge of being devastated. Cultural expressions during larger meetings and programmes around campaigns have allowed solidarity networks to develop.

Events organized to spread awareness



Sangathans in Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh worked to facilitate the effective delivery of social security schemes – of housing, education, income certificates

Sangathans across Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand organized programmes with more than 3000-5000 people in their respective areas to celebrate the World Indigenous Day on 9th August, 2018.

Zindabad sangathan organised skill development trainings for migrant brick kiln workers in 15 villages of Khaprakhol block for around 391 participants.

Celebration of **Shramik Vijay Divas** in Odisha - On 1st May 2018, Gramina Sramajibi Chetna Sangathan and Jakeda Panchayat Rural Sramik Samabesh was organized at Village Similisahi Rajib Gandhi Seba Kendra with 200 workers from 25 villages. The speakers focused on importance of the day and present situation of working class, problems of migration, provision of Construction workers welfare act, benefits under this act, Kendu leaf pluckier right, labour right, MGNREGA, Mo Pokhari etc.

Sangathans in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar facilitated the registration of construction workers. A total of 195 new workers were registered for social security schemes in the respective states.

a) Jeth Jatar Celebration – It is celebrated by Oraon adivasis during the Jeshth Month (In the Month of May) every year. This cultural event which is organized in village level brings all villagers and the relatives to celebrate togetherness. On 27th May 2018, sangathans organized the program with the theme – ‘*Ek Kadam Gaon ki Or*’ (*One step towards our village*) at Semar Budahani village. The purpose was to gather people from the valley living in the big cities for livelihood. The day brought together not only Oraon Adivasi but also allowed for celebrations for other adivasi communities such as Kisan, Brijjiya, Bhuinhar Mundas.

Film Screening On Mandal Dam -

A Documentary Film “Ik Hadsa aur bhi” was screened for social activists, networks and Media personnel at Ranchi Loyola Hall on 19th January 2019. The film is based on the damages caused by Mandal Dam in and around the district of Palamu. The major focus of the event was to connect and mobilize people with the issue of Displacement caused by Dam building which is going to violate forest rights of the Adivasi residing over there. It is also an important aspect to understand the idea of development which is infused by the state and market is not for everyone. it causes people to be uprooted which results in greater devastation.

Around 150 people from different walks of life had gathered there and got chance to build the perspective around the issues of dam, displacement and development. The building of dam is violating the forest rights of Adivasi of the area. In realizing the seriousness of the issue and the plight of people it was very apt that the people who are politically aware should be gathered and initiate the discourse in the context of Jharkhand.

Addressing the issues faced by migrant workers – Impact Story

In Bolangir district of Odisha, especially in Turekela and Khaprakhol blocks, there are large number of marginal farmers and landless labourers. Most of them work in others’ paddy field otherwise migrate to Telangana and Hyderabad to work in brick kiln factories. This happens on contractual basis. Contractors give advance money to the labourers during farming season and when farming work is over they go to repay the debt. Mostly they are compelled to work in brick kiln factories. While back home, they possess no money so they borrow from the contractor again. Thus this becomes a vicious cycle. In this process many end up as bonded labour. In this way many fall prey to oppression and exploitation. In brick kiln factories labourers are made to work more than the required hours. Labourers are not paid wages but only given food thrice a day. Working in brick kiln factories involves high risks and safety measures are hardly practiced that leads to accidents and even deaths. Workers are abused by the owners and contractors. They do not have any security mechanism either that makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and oppression.

Zindabad sangathan has involved in getting the labourers registered under the Labour Welfare Act that might provide them security. The sangathan is also mobilizing and spreading awareness regarding their rights and the provisions of the Act. They also assist them through legal intervention. Recently a case was registered by wife of a brick kiln worker who was said to be killed by the kiln owner. The case was reopened and proper enquiry was demanded by the victim's family and the sangathan. The copy of the same was also sent to the Director General of Police. Total of 80 number of cases including death case, murder, rape and other sexual abuse and atrocity cases were addressed by the sangathan. Many people from Balangir are found as bonded labour in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Through the intervention of Zindabad sangathan 82 bonded labours were released from Telangana and as per law Rs.1000/- was given to each of them. Back home in Odisha also they are entitled to receive some support. But no action has been taken from the government that needs further follow ups.

The issues of migrant workers are being addressed by utilizing **Odisha Building and other Construction Workers Welfare Board** and necessary records have been obtained for online registration under OBOCWBB for 5643 workers. The department of labour has been given written demand for assistance to 27 families of brick kiln worker who died in Telengana, Andhra Pradesh, Bangalore and Tamil Nadu.

Bonded Labour is significant phenomena in the area of sangathan and in order to rehabilitate the rescued 183 bonded labourers sangathan has sent attachments to DRDA Balangir through the welfare extension officers.

Addressing Caste, Gender, Communalism and Social Exclusion

Glimpses from the field

Uttar Pradesh – Campaign for Social Inclusion



In the UP state budget 2018-19, the expenditure on social sector got neglected. Infrastructure gets the largest share of the budget. The respective shares of irrigation, power, and transport sectors are 3.7%, 6.0% and 5.8%. Education accounts for 13.4% of the proposed outlay, while medical, health, and family welfare account for only 5%. Agriculture and allied sectors get 3.24% of the budget and rural development gets 5.20%. Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) welfare gets a paltry 1.52% of the total funds. (EPW)

Uttar Pradesh has become an epicenter of communal tensions and hate crimes, lynching, mob violence, fake encounters and atrocities on dalits is getting normalized in popular and media perception. The violence against women has also increased in the meantime. There were many instances where gender related violence were reported.

The neglect of the social sector was unexpected as UP falls among those states whose growth rate is slower than desired in terms of social development indicators . The National Human Development Report 2011 ranked UP at the 14th position among major states in terms of the Human Development Index (GoI 2012). The state slipped to the 16th position according to the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2015 (Kundu 2015). The Health Development Index prepared by the NITI Aayog ranks UP the lowest among the major states, even below Bihar and Jharkhand (NITI Aayog 2018).

With this socio-political and economic scenario, the role and responsibility of sangathans become very crucial. At this juncture sangathans had to address the lack of realization of the concerned authorities that without improving the quality of life and stitching the torn social fabric the dreams of justice and equity is just ineffectual.

Campaigns for social inclusion organized in Uttar Pradesh

During the year 2018-19 SRUTI fellows took various pragmatic initiatives to intervene in the ongoing cases.

Awadh Peoples' Forum works with youth, domestic workers and weavers in Faizabad district. Various meetings, discussions and sharing were organised by Awadh Peoples' Forum in Faizabad, Mau, Balia, Varanasi, Gonda, Jaunpur, Alahabad, Bareilly and Lucknow to understand peoples' issues and building solidarities among communities and collectives. Various issues such as land rights, forest rights, livelihood, employment, gender, caste, secularism were discussed during such meetings for upholding the values of constitution, democracy, justice, equality and brotherhood.

Gender inequality in education is a persistent problem in Indian society, especially for girls from rural areas and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. During the past several decades, India has achieved success in moving toward universal school enrolment and in enacting policies to address educational inequalities such as those based on gender. However, education gaps still exist. Awadh Peoples Forum in Faizabad, organised a campaign against gender discrimination in educational institutes. They were able to involve more than 1500 youths through exposure and learning visits and through constant dialogues. The campaign also reached out to the school and colleges of Tanda, Ambedkar nagar. The Campaign started on 25th November and continued till 10th December 2018.

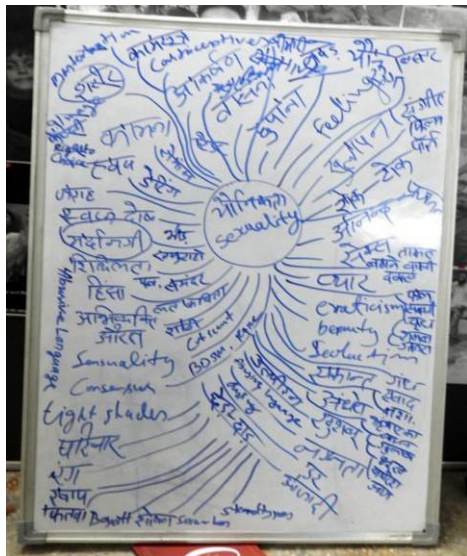
In the month of July **Dialogue in Solidarity Harmony and Action (DISHA)** conducted a Workshop on Scientific Temper, Secularism and Education with 39 youth schoolteacher. Following up this workshop DISHA again called for a workshop on Constitutional Democracy and gender on 12th and 13th of January 2019 at Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh. During the workshop the main topics of discussion on the first day were the principle of fundamental rights with the emphasis to "right to equality", discussions were also made on the values of democracy such as freedom, equality and fraternity. On the second day discussion was done on understanding gender and how gender roles are imposed on us knowingly and unknowingly. Participants also discussed the role of patriarchy in suppressing the idea of gender equality.

NETWORKING AND OUTREACH

SRUTI works to build solidarity amongst pro-people groups to advocate for universal implementation of pro-poor legislations on land, forests, displacement and public policy in the view of constitutionally recognised people's rights and universal human rights.

Events/Capacity building of SRUTI team

Gender training workshop for SRUTI team. Participants mapping sites of violence on women's bodies.



Delhi.

A meeting of friends and supporters | Constitution Club of India | Delhi



Fundraising event, Autumn Cheer | SRUTI office



Our individual supporters have been the essential and constant fellow travelers in our journey which envisions a reality free of prejudice and discrimination. Over the years, we have witnessed generous support of individuals in mobilization of various resources. Be it in the form of scrap collection or individual donation, we have witnessed blossoming of many friendships of great value through our outreach program. In this spirit of camaraderie, we organized a **Meeting of friends and supporters of SRUTI** on 22nd November-2018 at Constitution Club New

- Gender Workshop on intersections of gender, caste and religion. Construction of gender identity and sexual violence | 25-26 March, 2019 | Delhi
- Workshop on learning communication methods, technology and programmatic management
- Team retreat and planning for the annual year was done on 22-23 March at Neemrana, Rajasthan.
- Fundraising meeting '*Autumn Cheer*' was organised on 14-15 September, 2018

Campaigns

- Meetings to discuss implementation of Forest Rights Act, including strategy building workshops were organised in Delhi
- Along with state and national level networks, consultations were organised with sangathan leaders, members of civil society organisations and government officials on effective planning and implementation of Panchayati Raj Institutions – regarding devolution of powers and functions to develop decentralised democracy. The role of Gram sabhas as effective decision-making bodies for local governance was the central thrust of these gatherings.

SRUTI WELFARE AND SOLIDARITY FUND (SWSF)

The SWSF was constituted with the idea of providing financial assistance to individuals and communities for medical emergencies, higher education, house construction, welfare and relief during natural and other calamities. The assistance is extended to SRUTI Fellows; staff members; associates in SRUTI's solidarity network, and communities supported through SRUTI's Fellowship Programme. A total of 12 individuals and grassroots groups benefitted from the Fund during the year.

Structure of the SRUTI Team (2018-19)

<i>Slab of monthly salary (Rs) plus benefits paid to staff</i>	<i>No. of male staff</i>	<i>No. of female staff</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>10,001-25,000</i>	-	-	-
<i>25,001-50,000</i>	8	2	10
<i>50,001-100,000</i>	2	1	3
<i>Total</i>	10	3	13

PEOPLE

SRUTI General Body

1. Amita Joseph
2. Anju Talukdar
3. Apoorvanand
4. Ela Bhatt (Founder Member)
5. Enakshi Ganguly Thukral
6. G.B. Panda
7. Jamal Kidwai
8. Kanika Satyanand
9. Poonam Muttreja (Founder Member)
10. Prabhu Mohapatra
11. Rajeswari Raina
12. Ravi Rebbapragada
13. Samir Chaudhuri (Founder Member)

SRUTI Team

1. Asha Raveendran, Assistant Programme Executive
2. Baldew Thakur, Finance Officer
3. Elin Archana Lakra, Assistant Programme Executive
4. Emlon Tirkey, Assistant Programme Executive
5. Jojoy Mathew, Assistant Officer – Finance and Admin

14. Sanjit (Bunker) Roy (Founder Member)
15. Shibani Chaudhury
16. Uma Chakravarti

SRUTI Executive Board

1. Amita Joseph, Member
2. Apoorvanand, Treasurer
3. Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, President
4. Prabhu Mohapatra, Vice President
5. Rajeswari Raina, Member
6. Ravi Rebbapragada, Member
7. Jamal Kidwai, Member
6. Juheb Jhony, Assistant Programme Executive
7. Mahipal Singh, Admin-Fellowship Assistant
8. Rakesh Sharma, Assistant Manager – Resource Mobilisation
9. Sanjay Verma, Assistant Manager – Resource Mobilisation
10. Satyam Shrivastava, Director
11. Saurabh Sinha, Senior Programme Executive
12. Shweta Tripathi, Director
13. Sidharth Bhatt, Programme Executive

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

SRUTI Income for the financial year 2018-19		
S.No.	Details	Amount (Rs.)
1.	Interest (Investment and other funds)	37,87,038
2.	Donations	67,05,096
3.	Scrap Donation	12,88,295
4.	Grants from Donors (inc. previous year's)	3,16,97,037
	Total Income	4,34,77,466

SRUTI Expenditure for the financial year 2018-19		
S.No.	Details	Amount (Rs.)
1.	Fellowship Programme	2,93,54,431
2.	Resource Mobilisation	11,58,621
3.	Emergency relief and welfare	2,01,163
4.	Administrative Expenditure	31,11,308
5.	Depreciation and loss of fixed assets	4,27,043
6.	Other expenses	91, 330
	Total expenditure	3,42,52,566

CONTRIBUTORS

We thank our institutional, individual and scrap donors for their continued support and trust in SRUTI

