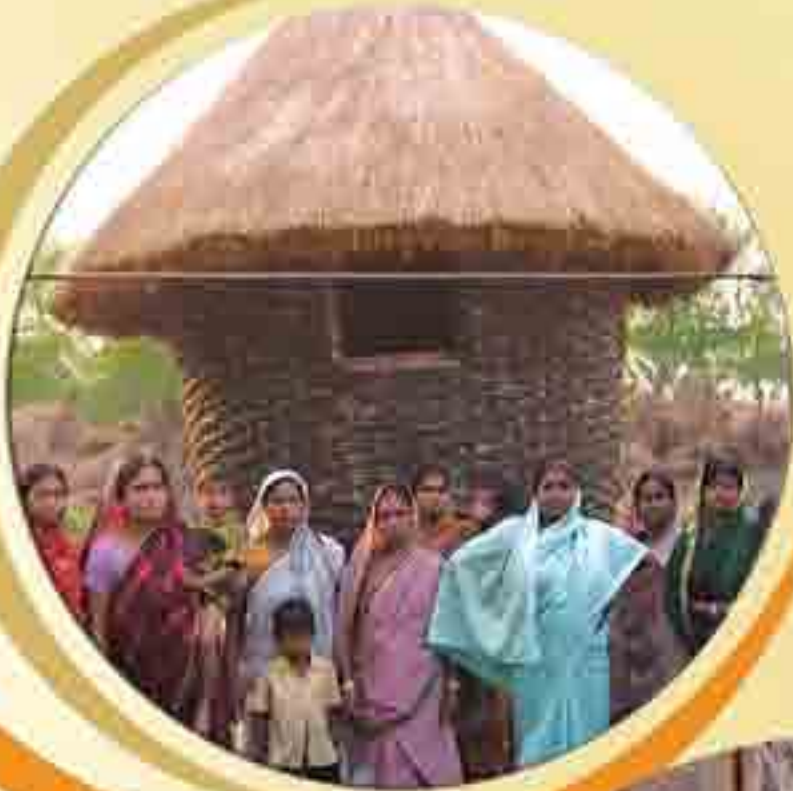


Right to Rights

LUTHERAN WORLD SERVICE INDIA REPORT 2007-2008



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION
Department For World Service



Right to Rights

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The elemental drive of every human being is the expression of the self to its full potential. The freedom to become who we truly are, is essential to the recognition of this self-worth. Freedoms such as the right to life and liberty and social, cultural and economic rights are therefore indispensable for leading a life of dignity. However, rights become valid only when people become aware, work towards realisation and actively claim their rights in the private and public spheres. Unfortunately, this ideal situation of human being free from fear and want is constantly under threat due to socio-economic imbalances.

One of the strategic objectives of LWSI is “Empowerment through rights-based approach”. Empowerment is essential to enhance the capacities of the marginalised, so that they can claim their rights, seek public accountability and participate in the process of governance.

LWSI empowers disadvantaged communities through capacity-building initiatives to realise their rights and demand their entitlements.

Director's Message



Dear Friends,

Lutheran World Service (India) has completed 34 eventful years of service to the people of India, working together with the communities with support and cooperation from Government, Civil Society Organisations and networks, banks and financial institutions here and abroad, our resource partners, the ACT Alliance and our Headquarters in Geneva.

On September 4, 2008, the organisation was registered as a local Trust with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India and the National Council of Churches in India as the two settlers, following which a seven member Board was constituted for governance of the new organisation. There are a number of legal and institutional formalities still remaining to be complied with, before the new organisation can become a fully operational local entity.

The years 2007 and 2008 were quite hectic, compounded by the organisation's transition process, and our response to the major floods in Assam, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. In addition, a good number of mid-level and senior colleagues were on deputation to Myanmar and Thailand to assist in the Cyclone Nargis disaster response program of The Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service and ACT International, Geneva.

While the last Annual Report focused on "Right to Food", as the central theme, this combined report for 2007-2008 focuses on the larger issue of "Right to Rights". The obligations to secure such rights have often not found practical expression in subsequent developmental efforts. Ironically, the liberalisation of the economy has led to deregularisation of some industries but has not resulted in greater wellbeing of the underprivileged. LWSI efforts have concentrated on enlightening the poor about the existing policies, schemes, resources and services they are entitled to, and the legal and juridical support available to protect and promote their rights and dignity.

The thrust of LWS India's approach is on creating and building capacities of Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their alliances and linking them with Government and Non-Government Organisations to serve as platforms for people's own development initiatives. More than

80% of the 2,615 communities we work with, have at least one women's group, managing at least one community development initiative.

Community Capacity Building for Disaster Preparedness and forming Disaster Mitigation Teams comprising community members in disaster prone areas continued with great vigour as the adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" has been proven to be true many times over since LWSI pioneered Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) in the aftermath of the devastating cyclone in 1999, which left in its wake more than 10,000 dead in Orissa's coastal districts.

Bearing in mind the disastrous consequences of global warming and environmental degradation, LWSI has been increasingly emphasising on natural resource management, environment protection and climate change issues.

Likewise, gender continues to be a cross cutting issue and together with the environment, under girds all of LWSI's programs and activities.

Human trafficking, especially that of women and children, has emerged as another burning issue, regarding which LWSI is creating awareness and addressing its root causes – poverty and gender inequity.

Decline in resources continues to affect our planned program and activities. Possibilities and new avenues of cooperation with the Indian corporate sector and government agencies are being explored to generate greater local resources for our work.

In closing, let me once again express our sincere gratitude to all who have supported our work and continue to do so.

Last but not least, I would like to say a big 'Thank You' to my colleagues for their dedication, commitment and hard work under difficult and challenging conditions, often living far away from their near and dear ones.

My thanks also to the communities for their cooperation, initiative and the wisdom they so generously shared with us.

By the time this report is published, I will have left the LWF family after more than 25 years of service in various positions both here and in Geneva. I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal gratitude for your support and solidarity.

Neville Pradhan

Interim Director

LWSI MISSION

Inspired by love for humanity, Lutheran World Service India challenges and responds to the causes and consequences of human suffering and poverty with commitment to justice and dignity for all.

LWSI VISION

People of India living in just, secular and peaceful societies, in communal harmony and with dignity, united in diversity and empowered to achieve their universal rights to basic needs and quality of life.

About LWSI

Lutheran World Service India (LWSI), the country program of the Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service, was established in 1974 in response to the needs of refugees from the new state of Bangladesh, and later expanded to many parts of India's eastern region. The Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service, Geneva, acts on behalf of the communion of Lutheran Churches worldwide. LWF is a founding member of Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, a global alliance of churches and related agencies working to assist communities affected by disaster all over the world.

LWSI is a member of various alliances and task forces addressing issues such as gender, disaster preparedness, human rights, HIV/AIDS, environment, food security, mother and child health, etc. We are members of the steering committee of SPHERE India; the Asian Zone Emergency and Environment Cooperation Network (AZEECON) comprising the Lutheran World Federation's country programs in Asia; and South Asian Gender Alliance (SAGA) dealing with gender related issues.



Since its inception, LWSI has been working to:

- Reduce the disaster and poverty related vulnerability of the socially and economically marginalised people through effective and responsive emergency relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness integrated in sustainable development processes.
- Empower the vulnerable and the marginalised people and create enabling conditions for people to secure their rights and achieve greater control over their lives and livelihood by facilitating their participation in sustainable development processes.
- Assure high quality services provided in a compassionate and professional manner by improving the capacity of LWSI to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Localisation

After 34 years of being the India Program of the LWF/DWS, LWSI was registered as a Trust in 2008 changing its identity from an international agency to a national NGO. The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) and the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) are the key stakeholders, thus upholding LWSI's identity as a Christian ecumenical organisation. The Board of Trustees has members representing the UELCI, the NCCI and professionals from the field of social development and allied disciplines, representing civil society groups at large.

Evaluation of LWSI

Evaluation of LWSI activities was undertaken during March-April 2008. The evaluation team, comprising personnel from LWF/DWS, UELCI and independent consultants, expressed satisfaction with the evidence of LWSI activities and methodologies, all being carefully and responsibly directed towards priority needs and opportunities. The team stated that LWSI initiatives have proved highly effective in motivating and supporting communities to make major progress towards the goal and objectives that LWSI has set in its CSO and in its planning documents.

During the reporting period, LWSI operated in the states of Orissa, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Bihar, assisting those in need, irrespective of race, creed, nationality, sex, religion or political conviction.

Disaster Response Projects (DRP)

India is one of the most disaster-prone countries in Asia. Every year, floods and cyclones destroy lives, homes and disrupt livelihoods. LWSI/ACT implemented projects in tsunami-affected areas of Tamil Nadu and flood affected areas of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

Disaster Preparedness Project (DPP)

Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) project empowers local communities in flood and cyclone-prone areas by reducing the vulnerability of these communities and also preparing them to respond to natural calamities to mitigate disaster risks. The project operated in Kendrapara, Jajpur and Ganjam districts of coastal Orissa.

Urban Development Project (UDP)

LWSI works with people living in urban slums and squatter settlements, consisting of refugees from neighbouring countries and migrants from rural areas and states. During the reporting period, UDP continued in Kolkata (West Bengal) as well as in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar (Orissa).

Rural Development Project (RDP)

In rural areas, LWSI works with vulnerable communities living at subsistence level. Most of the families in the operational communities belong to traditionally marginalised groups, such as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. During the reporting period, RDP operated in two districts of West Bengal (Bankura and Birbhum), and seven districts of Orissa (Bolangir, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada, Puri and Subarnapur).

Bilateral Projects

Among LWSI's bilateral projects are the rehabilitation and resettlement of people displaced during inter-tribal violence in Assam, the CIDA/CLWR-supported development project in South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, the DCA-supported project in tsunami-hit Tamil Nadu, the Gift-A-Goat/Gift-A-Cow project in West Bengal and Orissa, and the FCA and NCA-supported Staff Capacity Building program.



Disaster Response Project



Temporary shelter in a disaster affected village

Tamil Nadu Tsunami – ASRE 51

Tamil Nadu, a southern coastal state of India, witnessed an unprecedented human tragedy on December 26, 2004; tsunami lashed the long coastline, leaving a trail of death and destruction. LWSI/ACT's initial response covered 25 villages in the districts of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam with the goal of rebuilding communities directly affected by the tsunami.

This reporting period saw a continuation of the work initiated in January 2004, the objective being to build disaster-resistant houses, community infrastructures and promote and strengthen local organisations, particularly Disaster Management Teams (DMTs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs). The project laid stress on creating awareness on gender equality and mother-and-child health. It also provided training on water and sanitation and environmental protection.

| ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|----------|
| Activities | Unit | Achieved |
| Permanent houses | No. | 880 |
| Community infrastructure : | | |
| Community centres | No. | 18 |
| Tubewells | No. | 36 |
| Work sheds | No. | 4 |
| Pond renovation/Pond retaining wall | No. | 2 |
| Cement concrete road | Km. | 1.16 |

Andhra Pradesh and Orissa Floods – ASIN 62

Responding to the 2006 floods, LWSI/ACT initiated relief work in East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh and Kendrapara, Orissa. Rehabilitation work in Kendrapara and Jajpur districts of Orissa started in 2007 and continued till early 2008. Approximately 85,683 people from 16,758 families of 215 communities benefitted.

| RELIEF ASSISTANCE | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| State | Intervention | Type | No. of Families |
| Orissa | Crisis Phase | | |
| | Food aid | Dry food ration | 3,000 |
| | | Compact food (BP 5 biscuits) | 2,398 |
| | Basic clothing | Men's, women's & children's wear | 8,000 |
| | Sleeping materials | Bedsheets | 8,000 |
| | Temporary shelter | Tarpaulins (HDPE Polythene) | 7,500 |
| | Water & sanitation | Halogen tablets | 3,600 |
| | Rehabilitation Phase | | |
| | | Material to improve shelter | 350 |
| | | Drinking water tubewell | 22 communities |
| | | Fruit tree saplings | 4,000 |
| | | Food security (Food For Work) | 2,049 |
| | Community Based Disaster Preparedness | 25 communities | |

Floods in Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal – ASIN 72

A depression over the Bay of Bengal in 2007 triggered relentless rain in several parts of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Balasore was the worst affected district in Orissa. Floodwaters swept away hundreds of homes, submerged agricultural fields, destroyed standing crops and covered cultivable land with sand.

In West Bengal, the flood affected the lives of 4.7 million people. The area suffered considerable loss of crops and livestock. There was an acute crisis of potable water and food. Once the rains stopped, stagnant water created a hazardous environment for the people.

In Bihar, heavy rainfall in the catchment areas of the rivers caused flooding. 11 million people were affected.

| RELIEF ASSISTANCE | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| States | Intervention | Type | No. of Families |
| Bihar/Orissa/ West Bengal | Crisis Phase | | |
| | Food aid | Local ready to eat food | 3,500 |
| | | Compact food (BP 5 biscuits) | 3,600 |
| | Basic clothing | Men's, women's, children's wear | 10,473 |
| | Sleeping materials | Bed sheets, mosquito nets, blankets | 10,000 |
| | Temporary shelter | Tarpaulins (HDPE Polythene) | 8,600 |
| | Water & sanitation | Halogen tablets | 1,500 |
| | | Lime dust/bleaching powder | 263 communities |
| | Rehabilitation Phase | | |
| | | House building materials | 500 |
| | | Food security (Food For Work) | 500 people |
| | | CBDP program | 64 communities |
| | Flood shelter-cum-school building | 3 nos. | |
| | Agricultural assistance | 5,600 | |



Complete destruction of property in Midnapore, West Bengal

Tamil Nadu – ASIN 82

Most of the early relief and rehabilitation assistance from the government and NGOs initiated in 2004-2005 had benefitted only the fishing communities, as they were directly affected by the tsunami.

During the reporting period, LWSI focused its Disaster Risk Reduction interventions on 50 inland communities, predominantly dalits, living in low lying, highly flood-prone and amongst the most neglected regions of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts of Tamil Nadu. Though not directly affected, these communities are extremely poor and backward and depended on the coastal economy for their meagre livelihoods and whose vulnerabilities had become severely exacerbated following the tsunami.

LWSI's intervention was not confined only to survival skills training, but extended to cover the entire gamut of strategies required for social empowerment - to secure lives from insecurities; equitable redistribution of resources and power, construction of disaster-resilient housing for the most marginalised; and creation of diverse livelihoods for the most discriminated against.



Houses provided to tsunami victims in Tamil Nadu

Orissa and West Bengal Floods – ASIN 83

In June 2008, monsoon rains and floods once again devastated large parts of Orissa and West Bengal.

In Orissa, more than 2 million people were affected. People took shelter on river embankments and roadsides, and in schools and flood shelters. Around 50,000 houses were damaged.

In West Bengal, more than 2.4 million people were affected. East and West Midnapore districts were the worst hit, where 27 human casualties were reported and floodwaters submerged agricultural fields and destroyed crops. With more than 60,000 houses damaged, the affected families faced acute crisis of potable water, food, medicine, clothing and sleeping materials. LWSI/ACT responded with aid in these areas.



Villagers rescuing cattle in Midnapore, West Bengal

RELIEF ASSISTANCE

| States | Intervention | Type | No. of Families |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Orissa/ West Bengal | Food aid | Dry food ration | 10,000 |
| | Sleeping materials | Mosquito nets | 10,000 |
| | Temporary shelter | Tarpaulins (HDPE Polythene) | 11,000 |
| | Water & sanitation | Halogen tablets | 2,000 |
| | Livelihood support | Agricultural support | 6,000 |

Bihar Floods – ASIN 84

In August 2008, the river Kosi changed its course and submerged numerous towns and villages of Bihar. More than 3 million people residing in the seven districts of North Bihar were affected.

LWSI/ACT intervened to provide life-sustaining assistance to 20,000 flood-affected families. The objective was to provide emergency food aid, water purification tablets, family kits and temporary shelter materials.

RELIEF ASSISTANCE

| States | Intervention | Type | No. of Families |
|--------|--------------------|--|-----------------|
| Bihar | Food aid | Food ration | 20,000 |
| | Cattle feed | Fodder | 2,200 |
| | Sleeping materials | Bedsheets | 5,000 |
| | | Woollen blankets | 5,000 |
| | Temporary shelter | Tarpaulins (HDPE polythene) | 3,509 |
| | Water & sanitation | Halogen tablets | 621 |
| | Family kits | Plastic bucket, plastic mug, detergent and bathing soaps | 5,000 |

Tamil Nadu – ASIN 85

In December 2008, Cyclone Nisha lashed Tamil Nadu, killing 177 people and damaging roads and bridges. To address the immediate needs of the people, LWSI/ACT distributed relief items consisting of dry food ration and mats to 2040 families in 27 villages in the districts of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam.



Relief distribution in Tamil Nadu

Case Studies

Against All Odds – Orissa and Tamil Nadu

Born into an impoverished scheduled caste family of Balisingh village in Orissa, life had been a relentless struggle for Manju Jena. She was married off at the age of 13 and widowed before she reached 30. Manju earned her living from agriculture work as a labourer. As this was seasonal work, most of the year she remained unemployed and it was an uphill task for her to feed her three children who most of the days went hungry to bed. Poverty forced her to take her children out of school.

Manju's life took a hopeful turn following the floods, when relief work started in her village. Under the Food For Work program, she got 15 days of employment and food grains to last her for 45 days. During the rehabilitation phase, LWSI enlisted her name as a beneficiary for material support for house building. Prejudice ran high among the community people against this decision because of her status - a single woman and of low caste. But the excuse they raised was that Manju had no land.

With a strategic priority of supporting the most vulnerable, LWSI was firm to extend help to Manju. LWSI stood beside Manju to pursue the local administration of Balisingh, Orissa to allot her a plot of land. Acknowledging her need for rehabilitation as legitimate, the authorities donated her a small plot of land. Now Manju has a small hut of her own and is optimistic about a secured future for her family.

Far away in Thullanmedu, a tsunami-affected village in Tamil Nadu inhabited by 85 dalit families, discrimination in another shape was taking place. Anjalai (65) and K. Poonusami (75) are an elderly couple living in this village. The village is so vulnerably situated that every monsoon, mud houses are either severely damaged or obliterated by floods. Anjalai and Poonusami are landless and cannot work any more as agricultural labourers, they live on the mercy of others. Anjalai, a leprosy patient and with no male child, was already stigmatised and discriminated from any social support. When LWSI/ACT decided to build permanent houses for the people in their village, the community refused to include the name of this couple, stating the similar excuse of the couple owning no land.

Faced with a daunting task of changing a hardened mindset, LWSI intervened to sensitise the communities. Left destitute and abandoned, Anjalai mustered the courage to fight the community, with LWSI advocating her cause, till they finally came around. When the local government bought land, the elderly couple was one of the beneficiaries. With LWSI support, Anjalai and K. Poonusami today have a house of their own. The couple is overwhelmed with happiness. **"It doesn't matter even if we don't get food all the time, at least now we have a safe place to sleep"** says an emotional but proud Anjalai sitting in front of her house.



*Anjalai and Poonusami,
proud owners of a new house*

Disaster Preparedness Project

*L*WSI Disaster Preparedness Project works with at-risk communities to strengthen local disaster coping mechanisms and to improve their resilience to disaster. Promoting and strengthening community-based institutions with capacity and skills to address the vulnerabilities and mitigate disaster risks, preparedness stands out to be an integral aspect in the process of strengthening local institutions, which ensures disaster response at a micro level. The project promotes micro-credit to develop economic opportunities for the marginalised.

Since disaster and environmental degradation are closely related, the project sensitises the communities to promote environmental awareness. Learning from the frequency of disasters over the years, which adds to the magnitude of the vulnerability of the communities, LWSI prepares the communities to develop community-based contingency plans to mitigate disaster risk.

The DPP is operational in Kendrapara, Jajpur and Ganjam districts of coastal Orissa.

Project activities include training of community people and Panchayat representatives on disaster preparedness and formation of Disaster Mitigation Teams to help communities during disasters. Furthermore, awareness programs are organised in schools for teachers and students.

Participatory Rural Appraisal exercises are conducted to generate baseline data for the planning and implementation of disaster mitigation measures.

DPP activities carried out included:

- Formation of SHGs, training of group members and creation of group funds
- Establishment of grain banks
- Health awareness and gender sensitisation programs
- Non-formal education and training of instructors
- Vocational and agricultural training
- Development of wastelands through plantation programs and group farming
- Development of community infrastructures through Food For Work project
- Renovation and construction of tubewells/dug wells with raised platforms
- Construction of community centres



DMT training in progress

Case Studies

United at Work – Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu

*F*or the 35 impoverished dalit families living close to Perumal Lake in Cuddalore district, the LWSI livelihood project came as a boon. LWSI supported two women's Self Help Groups by constructing a vermi-compost pit for one and a shed for mushrooms for the other.

This dalit community was excluded from all facilities. Their meagre income was not enough to assure them two square meals a day. It is only after the two groups were formed that the lives of the villagers took a turn for the better.

The proceeds from the mushrooms and the vermi-compost went into their respective group funds, which led to increased savings for the members. Impressed with the zeal of these enterprising women, the local bank provided a loan of Rs. 20,000 (\$400) to each of the two groups.

"It is only when we learnt to work together that we actually started making a living", says Bhuvanewari of the vermi-compost group. Kanyakumari of the mushroom growing group reiterates Bhuvanewari's statement and adds, **"The opportunities provided by LWSI have helped us to stand on our feet and work collectively"**.

One cannot help but get inspired, how two women's SHGs, soon after their formation, realised that they were inter-dependent and that they needed to join hands to draw on each other's strengths as also to rally behind their members to empower individuals in the process.



Women's SHG with their harvest of mushroom crop

Reaching Out From Within – Ganjam and Kendrapara, Orissa

*W*omen should come forward when disaster strikes the village. They are our strength" says C. Gari, member of the Village Panchayat and President of the women's Self Help Group of Podampeta village in coastal Orissa. **"LWSI has made us realise that the power to our empowerment lies within us"** she says.

But such views not being articulated earlier.

Coastal Orissa being flood-prone, nearly every year human lives, livestock and property would be devoured by the flood waters. The people seeing no option to fight this force of nature, left themselves to its mercy.

LWSI began to build up the capacities of people of these flood and cyclone-prone areas by training them on Community Based Disaster Preparedness and organising Disaster Mitigation Teams (DMTs) to be prepared to manage and mitigate the effects of future disasters. In Podampeta village of Ganjam district and Dasmankulo in Kendrapada district, women's Self-Help Groups were formed. They started to mobilise local resources; loans from the group opened up livelihood options and side by side funds were created as a buffer to address emergency needs.

Enhanced capacity of DMTs and SHGs finally paid off when in August 2007, flash floods submerged their villages, destroying mud huts. The disaster mitigation teams and the women's group sprang into action and rescued families, guiding them to the shelter constructed under the Disaster Preparedness Program. From the buffer funds, cooked food was provided for the marooned till relief from outside reached. **"We made floaters with coconuts tied together and threw them to people in the water"**, says the villagers of Dasmankulo remembering those traumatic days. **"Some of them were injured and we made makeshift stretchers with bamboo poles and sarees and carried them to high grounds"**, they continued. **"Thanks to LWSI we have learnt to be calm in the event of any floods and work together in an organised manner"**. The women, acting with promptness through their own initiative and by harnessing available resources, reached out to the flood victims even before the local administration could reach them with relief work. Impressed by their spirit, the local government has extended several responsibilities to the group to spearhead development initiatives.

Finding new zeal, the Disaster Management Teams and women's Self Help Groups in Kendrapara have started addressing other compelling needs besides disaster preparedness and response work. The members, all belonging to schedule castes, are now able to interact with other DMTs and are not intimidated about working with general caste people. Their confidence got a boost when they made a mass petition to the Block Development Officer (BDO) demanding their BPL (Below Poverty Line) cards. **"LWSI made us realise that we need to fight for our rights. We repeatedly visited the BDO Office till our demand for BPL cards was fulfilled."** says Manashi Das. Through their own initiative, 100% villagers are now BPL cardholders.

The success of the people of Podampeta and Dasmankulo lies in the transformed attitude of the women and men to make the most of the least. They chose to look within, instead of looking outside for help. Their self-reliance and determination to surge ahead when faced with adversity, has made them an example to emulate.



Members of women's SHG in a meeting

Development Project

LWSI's Integrated Development Projects are implemented in both rural and urban areas. The program has over the years garnered expertise in a number of sectors, which are a part of local development needs.

The Rural Development Project (RDP) primarily works among landless and marginalised communities, such as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. RDP operates in Bankura, Birbhum and South 24-Parganas districts of West Bengal, and in Bolangir, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada, Puri and Subarnapur districts of Orissa.

The Urban Development Project (UDP) is operational in urban slums and squatter settlements comprising of refugees from Bangladesh and migrants from rural areas of neighbouring states. During the reporting period, UDP was operational in Kolkata, West Bengal and Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

Institutional Strengthening and Advocacy

LWSI encourages and supports communities to form organisations and groups and to establish networks and alliances to address issues affecting their lives and livelihoods. Groups and organisations are helped to develop rules and regulations to manage actions efficiently, to ensure transparency and accountability. The capacity of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and SHGs is enhanced through trainings, workshops and mass awareness programs. LWSI believes that organisations of the disadvantaged have to join forces to add to the collective strength and power to influence policies and decision-making processes. To strengthen collective community efforts, particularly to support advocacy work by the communities, LWSI promotes Mahasanghas, or alliances of community organisations and groups at different levels such as Panchayat (local self-government) and block. The Mahasanghas have successfully applied political and administrative pressure on the government to ensure that the benefits of government sponsored poverty reduction schemes reach the intended target groups.



A Mahasangha meeting in session

Mainstreaming Gender

LWSI consciously addresses issues of gender discrimination and promotes gender equity through gender mainstreaming. Projects organise gender sensitisation trainings for their staff, who in turn conduct training and gender awareness programs for community people and bring about attitudinal changes among men and women. To enable women to contribute meaningfully to the development process and to build their confidence, projects organise trainings on organisational development aspects and leadership. LWSI supports communities to create opportunities for alternative livelihoods with a positive bias towards women.

During the reporting period, the projects emphasised on generating awareness on social issues like dowry, child marriage, domestic violence and women's rights. These awareness

programs along with other capacity building measures have had a positive impact on people's lives, especially women. Alcohol abuse and resultant domestic violence has reduced to a considerable extent in many communities. Apart from mobilising women to form their own groups, LWSI encourages women to lead larger forums like CBOs, DMTs and their alliances. In LWSI operational communities, a woman's role in decision-making is acknowledged and accepted today by the men.

ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

| Major Activities | Unit | Achieved | |
|--|---------------|----------|------|
| | | 2007 | 2008 |
| Gender sensitisation/awareness programs | Communities | 1407 | 941 |
| Capacity building training | Women | 4747 | 6974 |
| | Men | 2526 | 2601 |
| Sensitisation programs for community leaders | Women leaders | 519 | 252 |
| | Men leaders | 656 | 372 |

Education

LWSI emphasises education as a pre-requisite for development. Programs are organised to make people aware of the importance of literacy and education. Before the beginning of the school session each year, special programs are conducted to motivate parents to enrol children in formal schools. LWSI also support communities to operate pre-school centres to develop a school-going habit among pre-schoolers. Communities are supported to open non-formal education centres and community study centres for promoting literacy. The focus of intervention is girls and women. Non-formal education centres promote functional literacy among illiterate adults and out-of-school children. Literate local youth are trained to operate and manage NFE centres under the supervision of CBOs and SHGs. In the community study centres, local teachers and educated youth help formal school students with their studies.

This has arrested the dropout rate among first generation school-goers.

Sports and cultural programs organised by the projects strengthen community bonding and cultural identity and provide women the space to take part in public activities. Community education committees are organised to monitor the village schools. Parent Teacher Associations provide opportunities to discuss student performance and the overall functioning of the schools. CBOs and their alliances are encouraged to actively monitor and strengthen government sponsored special education programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All).

Microcredit activities promoted by the project have generated visible improvement in employment and income opportunities; better farming practises have increased agriculture yields and improved food security. As a result, fewer families are migrating in search of employment, and their children's education is continuing undisrupted.

Celebrating International Literacy Day through a workshop



ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

| Major Activities | Unit | Achieved | |
|--|-------------|----------|------|
| | | 2007 | 2008 |
| Study centres | Girls | 3260 | 1889 |
| | Boys | 3532 | 2133 |
| Preschool centres | Girls | 1790 | 1484 |
| | Boys | 1731 | 1500 |
| Dropout children in non-formal centres | Girls | 917 | 472 |
| | Boys | 834 | 397 |
| Non-formal and post literacy centres | Centres | 728 | 115 |
| | Learners | 10981 | 1776 |
| Parent education committees formed | Communities | 470 | 133 |
| Instructors trained | Persons | 873 | 284 |
| Community sports/local folk media groups supported | Communities | 306 | 309 |

HIV and AIDS



HIV infection is spreading rapidly in India. A major concern is the growing trend of infection among women who have a single partner. This establishes that awareness on prevention is yet to reach the masses.

Empowerment strategies enable people to demand safe healthcare services. Awareness programs are organised for the youth and adolescents, who in turn work as peer educators. World AIDS Day is celebrated to generate mass awareness. Media groups are promoted and trained to address the issues of STD, HIV and AIDS. HAGA (HIV and AIDS and Gender Awareness) is a tool used to assess the knowledge and skills of both men and women to deal with the issue of HIV and AIDS. LWSI organises trainings for staff and community resource persons like community leaders, NFE instructors and Community Health Workers. Their communication skills are strengthened to educate the community members on the risk of HIV and AIDS and to motivate people at risk to adopt safe practices.



Awareness program in a village fair

ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

| Major Activity | Unit | Achieved | |
|--|---------------|----------|------|
| | | 2007 | 2008 |
| community leaders/resource person trained | Women | 1246 | 1680 |
| | Men | 1088 | 947 |
| School/college students and teachers trained | Students | 879 | 394 |
| | Teachers | 129 | 397 |
| Awareness camps | Communities | 1090 | 588 |
| STD/STI camps organised | Cases treated | 1447 | 437 |
| World AIDS Day observed | Communities | 915 | 573 |

Mother and Child Healthcare

Communities have become more aware of their health rights and are demanding quality healthcare services. LWSI intervention is consistent with the Millennium Development Goals - improvement in maternal health and reduction of child mortality. LWSI focuses on promoting



Monthly health check-up for mother & child

primary health, hygiene and nutrition. Health education and awareness camps are regularly organised to bring about changes in behaviour and practice. LWSI encourages communities to access government healthcare facilities in the area. Community health resource persons trained by the projects provide basic primary healthcare and refer cases to the nearest government healthcare institutions. The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) sponsored interventions have improved the availability of healthcare and the collaboration of community and government healthcare personnel. LWSI personnel support state healthcare providers to promote universal immunisation, better ante- and post-natal practices and prevention and control of communicable diseases. CBOs and their alliances monitor the performance of government healthcare personnel engaged in outreach programs; they also mobilise community members, coordinate actions and support members to claim cash incentives under NRHM.

Water and Sanitation



Women collecting water from raised platform tubewell

Water is basic to life and needs to be conserved and used judiciously. Unsafe drinking water causes 80% of the common diseases in rural communities and urban slums. LWSI supports rural and urban communities to develop safe water sources like tube wells and dug wells. Communities are enabled to secure their rights to safe drinking water and sanitation from the Government. They get supplies of disinfectants from local government health centres. LWSI organises hygiene and sanitation awareness sessions and special programs to reinforce the importance of a clean environment and supports communities to construct drains and garbage bins for safe disposal of wastewater and solid waste. In rural areas, wastewater from the tubewells is used to grow vegetables in kitchen gardens. Projects support communities to access resources from the Government's Total Sanitation Campaign to construct sanitary toilets. In some urban communities, LWSI has introduced improved energy efficient stoves, which reduce smoke. Village Health and Sanitation Committees are formed to coordinate and monitor sanitation-related work in the communities.

Environment

LWSI adopts various measures for the protection, conservation and restoration of the environment. These include building awareness, promoting community forestry, orchards and homestead tree plantation, supporting rainwater harvesting and other water and soil conservation measures, promoting environment-friendly agriculture practices and organising and strengthening forest protection groups

Emphasis is on cultivation of crops suitable to local agro-climatic conditions. Efforts are made to reintroduce traditional varieties of crops, which are appropriate to the local context and involves low investments as compared to the traditional varieties. Application of organic manure, bio-fertilisers and pesticides is encouraged. Construction of compost pits and use of organic manure has improved environmental sanitation and soil fertility and reduced dependence on chemical fertilisers.

Farmers are supported to undertake construction of field bunds to prevent rapid run-off of rainwater and soil erosion. Rainwater harvesting structures are also constructed to store run-off rainwater.

LWSI supports Community Forest Protection Committees engaging both men and women. More and more of these groups are working in cooperation with Government Forest Department to protect and regenerate village forests. Controlled grazing of animals is encouraged to preserve forest resources.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been introduced and EIA sessions give communities the opportunity to analyse the impact of proposed actions on the environment, choose alternatives and identify mitigation measures.



Saplings for social forestry

Food Security and Sustainable Livelihood

Sustainable increase in income, food production and greater food security through environment-friendly practices is an area of major emphasis. LWSI's work strengthens the communities' control over common property resources (forest, land and water), access to cost-effective and environment-friendly technologies, and steers communities to access state sponsored social security and employment generation schemes.

LWSI offers training and demonstration programs on soil and water conservation, use of organic and bio-fertilisers including compost and green manure. Farmers are encouraged to grow cereals, pulses, oil seeds and vegetables. Community and group farming is supported and the produce is deposited in community/group grain banks, which provide food grain loans at a reasonable rate of interest during the seasonal food crisis.

Microfinance is central to the poverty reduction strategies elaborated by the Government. SHGs are the instruments for mobilising local community resources and the channels for delivering credit to the poor. Both rural and urban projects organise Self-Help Groups and spend considerable resources to develop the capacity of these groups. Women SHGs are the most successful examples for microcredit and microfinance initiatives supported by LWSI in the operational communities. LWSI nurtures and strengthens these SHGs for savings, credit and income generating activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

| Major Activity | Unit | Achieved | |
|--|----------------------|----------|------|
| | | 2007 | 2008 |
| Groups assisted for income generating activities | Women's group | 434 | 203 |
| | Men's group | 143 | 13 |
| | Individuals assisted | 1375 | 1117 |
| Entrepreneurship development training | Women | 389 | 270 |
| | Men | 234 | 138 |
| Vocational training | Women | 1298 | 636 |
| | Men | 777 | 298 |
| Farmers trained | Women | 1420 | 819 |
| | Men | 1841 | 958 |
| Farmers assisted to use organic/green manure | Farmers | 539 | 562 |
| Seed banks supported | Seed banks | 60 | 82 |

Watershed Development Project

LWSI is collaborating with the State Government of Orissa and the Western Orissa Rural Livelihood Project (WORLP), funded by the Ministry of Rural Development and DFID respectively to implement Watershed Development Projects in Bolangir, Kalahandi and Nuapada districts. The Watershed Development Project includes a large number of socially and economically marginalised communities, where LWSI is implementing rural development activities.

LWSI uses contemporary watershed management practices to improve and sustain the productivity of natural resources along with interventions targeted at enhancing the livelihoods of the different economic groups within the watersheds. Natural resource management concentrates on increasing the productivity of both non-arable and arable lands. This includes development of common property resources, cultivable land and wastelands through plantations and improved cropping systems and practices. The approach is aimed at treating degraded lands with the help of low cost and locally accessible technologies through participatory approaches. LWSI ensures socio-economic development of the resource poor and contributes to restoration of ecological balance in the village through sustainable community actions.

LWSI promotes micro credit and non-farm activities through entrepreneurship development. Livelihood promotion intervention emphasises capacity building of the primary and secondary stakeholders. The thrust area ranges from skill development, development of SHGs and micro enterprises, to off-farm income generation activities such as aquaculture, livestock rearing, primary agriculture processing, non timber forest products processing etc. LWSI facilitates to strengthen the capacity of SHGs, local Panchayats and NGOs to work together in addressing poverty.

During the reporting period, LWSI was the Project Implementing Agency for 18 micro watershed projects covering 38 villages in Bolangir district; 10 micro watershed projects covering 17 villages in Nuapada district and 10 micro watershed project covering 17 villages in Kalahandi District.

| ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE | | | |
|--|---------------|------------|---------|
| Major Activity | Unit | Achieved | |
| | | 2007 | 2008 |
| CAPACITY BUILDING | | | |
| Community representatives trained | Women/Men | 2,626/3376 | 830/878 |
| Watershed associations strengthened | Associations | 30 | 20 |
| Watershed development committees strengthened | WDCs | 38 | 20 |
| Grains banks supported (total) | Grain banks | 300 | 59 |
| INCOME GENERATION | | | |
| SHGs formed and strengthened | SHGs | 627 | 216 |
| Vocational training | Women/Men | 61/103 | 83/70 |
| SHG members involved in income generating activities | Women/Men | 1,799/973 | 1502/79 |
| AGRICULTURE | | | |
| Assistance provided for organic/compost manuring | Farmers | 510 | 137 |
| Support for improved cropping/dry land farming | Acres/Farmers | 574/1563 | 22/45 |
| Land development and soil conservation supported | Acres/Farmers | 892/482 | 136/178 |
| Irrigation facilities developed | Acres/Farmers | 488/845 | 170/90 |
| Agricultural implements provided | Implements | 142 | 57 |
| Farmers trained on watershed management | Farmers | 418 | 652 |
| Social forestry supported | Saplings | 296,680 | 26000 |
| Homestead plantation supported | Families | 3,570 | 753 |

Case Studies

Keep the Flame Burning – Kalahandi, Orissa

Years of work with the Self-Help Groups has proved beyond doubt that it is critical for communities to have leaders with vision to sustain growth and meet changing demands. It is hard to find people with the right mix of leadership, interpersonal and attitudinal skills. LWSI creates opportunities to bring out leadership qualities in people who have the drive to make a difference. To groom such future leaders, LWSI offers extensive opportunities through personal development trainings and exposure visits.

One such leader LWSI is proud of is Chaitu. Chaitu Patra (34), although a graduate, had a tough time making ends meet for his six family members, working as an agricultural labourer. After LWSI intervention, a Community Based Organisation and Self-Help Groups were formed to initiate community development work in the village. Chaitu participated actively and was selected secretary of the CBO. His eagerness to enhance his knowledge by attending trainings and awareness programs, in due course saw him become the secretary of the Watershed Development Committee. His zeal further earned him a responsible position in a local NGO to supervise the CBOs and SHGs in two Panchayats.

When the Government declared the availability of work under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), people did not get the required job cards from the Panchayat office. Chaitu took the initiative and organised awareness programs on RTI (Right to Information) Act and the process of obtaining 100 days employment under NREGS. He mobilised the people of the two Panchayats and a joint petition was submitted to the Government. Finally the villagers got work worth Rs. 500,000 (\$9994). Chaitu was assigned to supervise the work.

The people remain grateful to Chaitu for his initiative and to LWSI for the creation of such local leadership, which will surely make a difference in the days to come.



Chaitu with women SHG members in a meeting



1



2

Right to Rights



3



4



7



5



6



8



9

- 1. Health Camp at Kolkata
- 2. Celebrating World AIDS Day
- 3. Sports Day for children
- 4. Zari (gold & silver thread) embroidery
- 5. Earning a living at home through tailoring
- 6. Growing sunflowers
- 7. Pre-school study session in progress
- 8. Creative activity through traditional practices
- 9. Folk music performance by villagers

Collective Strength – Bankura, West Bengal

*A*miya and his fellow villagers have come a long way from their days of virtual bondage.

The people of Karapara village in Bankura District of West Bengal vividly remember the day when they refused to work unless paid the minimum wages. They could afford to protest because they were an empowered community. LWSI has encouraged them to look beyond traditional sources of income and approach the Government for support. People have now found new means of livelihood in the village itself; migration is at an all time low.

Amiya and his Self-Help Group received a Government proposal to establish a poultry. The proposal stated that they would have to arrange for the land and share 20% of the project cost. Their past collective efforts bore fruit and with the group's savings they bought land, shared 20% cost of the project and contributed their labour to match the rest of their share. The poultry supplies 50,000 chicks to this district alone.

"We are exploring marketing possibilities in the neighbouring districts," said a pleased District Magistrate, during one of his visits, supporting the group's passion and involvement in the project.

The villagers have ensured the enforcement of an inalienable right: the right to live with dignity – for active citizenship.

Fight to Access Rights – Nuapada, Orissa

*D*alar lagi etki dur, agke bi emta karmu" (We have come so far as a group and shall continue to carry forward the efforts in future as well).

This was the bold assertion of the men and women SHG members of Makhabhata village in Nuapada, Orissa. The marginalised tribal people residing in this remote village were a deprived lot until their association with LWSI. Capacity Building and group formations have transformed their lives.

Their struggle began with their village road. Despite their grievances addressed to the Panchayat to renovate it, nothing happened. They approached the Government officials and that too did not work. Ultimately, they approached the Chief Executive of the District and the local elected representative. Their efforts were rewarded and the construction of a concrete road was approved.

When the primary school under the Education Guarantee Scheme ceased to function, the children had to walk over 2 kms to attend the nearest school. The groups approached government officials, the sub-inspector of schools and the Panchayat with the problem. Their dogged determination eventually paid off and the school was re-opened.

This experience of going to several district authorities, developed their understanding of the system; the groups continued to use their combined expertise for other developmental activities. Riding high on a newfound enthusiasm, they constructed a school building in 2008.

By continuing with group farming, the groups mobilised Rs. 3,60,000 (\$7,195) under the government scheme. These SHGs have set the benchmark of collective action so high that other groups and individuals look up to them for inspiration.



Villagers of Makhabhata collecting water

Bilateral Projects

NORAD Supported Assam Relief and Rehabilitation Project – Kokrajhar, Assam

Following the ethnic violence between the Bodos and Santhals of Kokrajhar district of Assam in 1996 and 1998, LWSI provided relief to the displaced families living in improvised camps.

With support from NORAD through Normisjon, LWSI is implementing a five-year rehabilitation and re-construction program to uplift the social-economic status of the families affected by the violence. The project aims at ensuring stable, sustainable and secured lives and livelihoods for these victims of fear, violence and instability. LWSI's emphasis on peace and reconciliation has evoked a positive response from the target groups and has motivated the majority to pursue a more constructive and hopeful life.

During the reporting period, the project worked with 158 communities. People of the operational communities have grown in confidence and formed their own SHGs, Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Farmers' Clubs. The 313 active organisations or groups are the main mobilising factor, bringing communities together and building mutual trust, social solidarity, harmony and human dignity.



Tea-stall operated by women's SHG

ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

| Activities | Unit | Achieved |
|---|--------------|----------|
| A. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT | | |
| Construction of community centre | No. | 7 |
| Improved village link road | No. | 12 |
| B. LIVELIHOOD/FOOD SECURITY SUPPORT | | |
| Plant nursery support/strengthening of VDC/SHG/DMCs | VDC/SHG/DMCs | 2 |
| Nutrition garden-vegetable seeds support | Family | 4,585 |
| Fruits bearing sapling support | Family | 3,150 |
| Livestock support | SHG/VDCs | 45 |
| Social forestry | VDC/SHGs | 4 |
| Grain bank support to VDC/DMCs | VDC/DMCs | 29 |
| Agricultural implements (spade & sickle) | Family | 1,590 |
| Construction of vermi-compost pit | No. | 16 |
| C. ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD | | |
| Training on bee keeping | No. | 5 |
| Material support for bee keeping | SHG/VDCs | 10 |
| Training on bamboo crafts | Person | 40 |
| Training on mushroom cultivation | Training | 6 |
| Material support for mushroom cultivation | SHG/VDCs | 10 |
| D. HEALTH & SANITATION | | |
| Awareness on immunisation | No. | 81 |
| Awareness on HIV/AIDS | No. | 81 |
| Awareness on reproductive health | No. | 80 |
| Awareness on nutrition | No. | 34 |
| Awareness for adolescent boys and girls | No. | 36 |
| Health check-up camp | No. | 26 |
| Installation of tubewell with platform | No. | 130 |
| Construction of tubewell platform | No. | 45 |
| E. EDUCATION SUPPORT | | |
| Village school infrastructure support | School | 13 |
| NFE/PPE centres | Centre | 47 |
| Community library support | No. | 7 |
| Students' scholarship | Students | 122 |
| F. COMMUNITY SERVICE | | |
| Awareness/seminar on peace building | No. | 53 |
| Leadership development training for VDCs/SHGs | No. | 12 |
| Training on planning, implementation, monitoring & evaluation | No. | 55 |
| Gender sensitisation | No. | 32 |
| Upscaling/strengthening of SHGs | No. | 107 |
| Training on book keeping for SHGs | No. | 10 |
| Awareness on prevention of deforestation including plantation | No. | 18 |

CIDA/CLWR Supported Project – South 24 Parganas, West Bengal

CIDA/CLWR supported rural development project was initiated in October, 2005 in South 24 Parganas in West Bengal and has entered into its second phase from 2nd July 2008. The project is operational in 170 communities with the aim of promoting holistic community development from gender and environment perspective. LWSI involves men and women in

all stages of the project cycle so that the benefits are distributed equitably. The communities are encouraged to participate actively in the process of development and are implementing development activities decided democratically. Thrust is given on capacity building activities to develop the competence of community as efficient development actors. The project promotes and strengthens the community level institutions and enhances their capacity to take collective actions to assert their rights, which they are deprived of.

After LWSI's intervention, a remarkable change has been noticed in women's participation in the development process. Women have gained the confidence to break out of the confines of the household and step into the wider world. They have acquired skills to negotiate with bankers and leaders of local Panchayats. Opportunities created for income generation activities and increase in agriculture production has helped in reducing dependency on money lenders and migration by 70%. But perhaps the greatest triumph is that almost 90% of the children are now going to schools, out of which 60% are girls.

DCA Supported Community Based Disaster Preparedness Project – Tamil Nadu

Tsunami struck India and a few other countries on December 26, 2004 and caused unparalleled devastation in the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu in India. With support from DanChurch Aid, LWSI started the community based disaster preparedness program to prepare the communities to become disaster resilient through capacity building.

The project focused on the most geographically vulnerable and disasters prone villages in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts and worked with 50 vulnerable communities.

In all the 50 villages, disaster management teams were established. Nearly 3445 people in the disaster management teams were trained. Women were encouraged to take part in disaster management teams.

The project constructed 6 multipurpose centres in 6 vulnerable villages of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam.



Women taking part in DMT training in session

| ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE | | | |
|--|--------------|-------------|------|
| Major Activities | Unit | Achievement | |
| | | 2007 | 2008 |
| No. of VDCs formed/strengthened | No. | 50 | 0 |
| No. of DMTs formed | No. | 50 | 0 |
| Mass awareness on CBDP | Program | 60 | 32 |
| PRA exercise & presentation | Program | 50 | 21 |
| Motivational training to VDCs | Program | 33 | 20 |
| Skill training to DMTFs | Participants | 940 | 2505 |
| Mock drills | No. | 19 | 25 |
| Refresher skill training to DMTFs | Participants | 384 | 1460 |
| CBDP orientation program for school children | Program | 659 | 1876 |
| CBDP orientation program for PRI members | Program | 51 | 13 |
| OSD celebrations | Events | 46 | 28 |
| CBDP-ToT training for DCA partners | Program | 01 | 0 |
| General awareness | Program | 39 | 10 |
| CBDP orientation program for school teachers | Participants | 9 | 4 |
| Multipurpose community centre | Nos. | 2 | 4 |

DCA Supported Livelihood Support Project – Tamil Nadu

Tsunami struck India and a few other countries in 2004 and touched the heart of civil society – world leaders, international and national NGOs responded to the calamity. Initially the humanitarian assistance by the Government and civil society organisations were concentrated only on the fishermen communities, who were the direct victims of tsunami. The nearby vulnerable dalit villages were left out. LWSI extended its rehabilitation efforts for these underprivileged dalit and backward communities. With support from DanChurchAid, LWSI started the livelihood support program to ensure that these marginalised communities came into the mainstream to lead a dignified life.



Self-employed woman running a grocery

| ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Major Activities | Unit | Achievement | |
| | | 2007 | 2008 |
| No. of SHGs formed/strengthened | No. | 21 | 16 |
| Support for tailoring training | Trainees | 62 | 27 |
| Livestock support | No. | 211 | 97 |
| Support families for other IGPs | No. | 129 | 198 |
| Tools support to cobblers and barbers | No. | 04 | 01 |
| Mobile shop for cloth pressing | No. | 05 | 03 |
| Petty shop | No. | 05 | 03 |
| Computer training | Trainees | 38 | 18 |
| Food processing training | Program | 01 | 03 |
| Kitchen garden | Families | 2,400 | 1,100 |
| Skill development training for masons | Participant | 57 | 0 |
| Bicycle with ice box for fish vending | No. | 05 | 51 |
| Training and tool costs for candle making | Families | 12 | 35 |
| Fund management training | Program | 07 | 06 |
| Entrepreneurship training | Program | 03 | 05 |
| Leadership training | Program | 13 | 06 |

The reporting period has seen visible changes in the income level of the poorest members of society by promoting small income generation activities, skill upgradation trainings and by boosting saving habits.

LWSI facilitated the establishment of 37 SHGs and linked them with banks to start receiving revolving funds and economical loans.

In addition, rural artisans like masons, traditional drummers were also supported to increase their income source. 3500 families were supported to start homestead gardening. Fruit and avenue trees planted have added to the greenery of the village.



Electrical training session for local women

DCA Supported Gift A Goat/Gift A Cow Project

LWSI implemented this project in three rural districts, two in West Bengal and one in Orissa in the year 2007. The project was supported by DCA as a special project to support the rural poor, particularly women, to increase their family income level. The project beneficiaries were women members of SHGs promoted by LWSI. Women from dalit and tribal communities were primary beneficiaries.

The goats and cows were provided as gifts to SHGs, who in turn disbursed them to the members, treating the value as loans to the members, which the members repaid at predetermined intervals as per the rules of the groups with mutually agreed upon interest. Some groups retained the goats as group property, managed by members by turn and adding the profit from sale of goats/kids to the group funds. This venture helped in increasing group funds and with more capital available, the groups were able to give loans to more people for productive purposes, encouraging more and more unemployed people to get engaged in self employment ventures.

FCA and NCA Supported Staff Capacity Building

FCA-funded Staff Capacity Building program was organised to develop staff skills in the areas of program management and implementation; to strengthen knowledge on thematic issues relevant to the projects; to provide updated information on development issues and approaches, and introduce staff to new and emerging issues.

Training courses were designed taking into account the local project contexts, the local wisdom, ethnicity and culture. Employees from all levels had the opportunity to attend training programs. Training programs were organised on issues/subjects like Rights Based Approach, Micro credit (including livelihood issues), Disaster Risk Assessment and Reduction and Community Based Disaster Preparedness, Sustainable Environment, Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Responsive Budgeting, Training of Trainers etc. Training in subjects like English, process documentation and computer applications have helped the staff to improve their personal skills.

NCA-funded Capacity Building Program titled "Improving Organisational Effectiveness" was organised for Senior Managers, Project Coordinators and selected staff members. The program was designed and conducted by Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.

Case Studies

Breaking New Ground – Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu

Savanthi, an SHG member of Poochimedu village in Cuddalore district, is the proud owner of half an acre of leased land, a feat unheard and undreamed of, in the history of the village.

Uma, a dalit woman from Theerthanagari hamlet in Theerthanagari Panchayat, is another luminous example, who challenged all stereotypical notions to become the first woman to hold a driving license in the entire district.

Such dynamism was not visible a few years ago. The villagers of Poochimedu living hand to mouth, lacked technical skills and management know-how to try to improve their lot. The will to better themselves lay dormant within themselves. LWSI came forward to ensure that the fire within was lit. The people formed a Self-Help Group. In a meeting with LWSI, the possibility of growing flowers was examined. With financial backing from LWSI, the SHG took a plot of land on lease and began commercially cultivating flowers. Nadiya (26), formally educated till 10th grade, is today a deft accountant, while Geetha, though semi-literate, is good at calculations.

Monetary income aside, it was the non-monetary gains they made by challenging traditional role practices which filled them with immense pride. Owning and managing land, marketing their own products without an agent's help, collecting the cash, and reinvesting it – all considered a man's domain – have helped expand their social and economic spaces. **"We have changed the way the village regards us, and we are now thinking of buying our own land"** says the proud group leader.

Uma's story is compelling for many reasons. Uma's husband supported his wife's desire to learn driving, a non-traditional skill. When asked how the villagers reacted, a confident Uma says, **"It would be a boon for our village to have a means of transport. My status as a driver is already accepted, as no one else has a driving license in my village"**. A woman driver certainly has changed the perception of an entire community about what women can do given the opportunity. Following Uma, three other women have completed the course and are hopeful that they too would take up driving as a full time profession. **"But for Uma's success and encouragement from LWSI's to enrol for the driving course, we would not have been motivated enough to join"**, these women say in unison.

Savanthi and Uma have set a model for others to replicate and have also showed how LWSI has helped breach gender barriers even in communities where gender biases are deeply entrenched. What's more, this venture demonstrates that men, when sensitised, accept the idea of emancipation of women more readily.



Giving Peace Another Chance – Kokrajhar, Assam

Judasi, an SHG formed by 16 Santhal women in Kokrajhar District of Assam, was an eye-opener for all. Various awareness programs attended by them instilled a desire in the group to try to bring peace to the area and give reconciliation another chance. Their eagerness to bring peace and reconciliation by way of opening a tea stall in the local Bodo-dominated market made them prominent actors as harbingers of peace, thus starting the peace-building process among the Santhals and Bodos.

The riots of 1996-1998 between the two ethnic groups - the Santhals and the Bodos – had destroyed the social fabric of Kokrajhar district of Assam. After years of living in relief camps, when many returned to their villages, they were at a loss as to how to rebuild their lives. An air of mistrust and uncertainty prevailed, making everyone doubt whether peaceful co-existence was again possible in the aftermath of the ethnic violence. Under such circumstances, LWSI offered a helping hand to the Lalachar community to enable them to start afresh. Undoubtedly, this was an uphill climb. The communities, under guidance from LWSI, started organising the men and women to facilitate establishment of Self-Help Groups. The empowered individuals and groups, through their own initiative and by harnessing their own resources, started engaging themselves in rebuilding the community and their lives. With renewed vigour, they came together to address compelling problems in a decisive, integrated and participatory manner.

Innovative means of confronting the core issue has gone a long way in injecting confidence into the riot victims. The group has addressed issues like access to safe drinking water, sanitation and employment opportunities, thereby enhancing the community's capacity for development and awareness of their rights. As further proof, women are now comfortable to work in erstwhile hostile territory in peaceful co-existence; both ethnic communities sit together to bring about economic and social change, and accelerate the peace building process.



Women bring peace to the community