

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-21



## NERSWN

(North East Research & Social Work Networking)

## A NOTE FROM CHAIRPERSON

Dear friends,

It's been an exciting journey since we started an initiative to work as a group in 2004. From then and now it's been sixteen years. Together, overcame a number of challenges and also good times. We faced tough challenges of conflict, displacement, floods, erosions and recently the Covid-19 Pandemic. But we are here and still continuing as we believe we were created to fulfill certain missions in our lives however small they may be.

The journey was tough but we are on our way to fulfill our mission and our vision is clear. We believe in working as a team and the support of our mentors, donors and friends has been immense. I on behalf of NERSWN would like to say a million thanks from the bottom of my heart to one and all.

To my dear NERSWN team, I say Congratulations to you all for your enthusiasm, hard work and selfless nature. As we continue with our rolled-up sleeves, let us have the Never Say Die spirit.

Hats off to you all. Thank you from bottom my heart.



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The year 2020-21 has been one of the toughest years in NERSWN's history so far. Covid-19 Pandemic, brought the civilization to a standstill. On one hand, threat of being getting infected and losing life, on the other, extraordinary emergency situation of people demanding service from the organization. NERSWN Team bravely decided to take the challenge head on. With the curfew passes from the district administrations, NERSWN workers swung into action to help the returnee migrants, provide ration support, create awareness and appeal to follow the protocols and guidelines.

The experience of emergency response during ethnic conflict and floods became handy. With generous support coming from donors and partners of NERSWN, the organization not only responded effectively to reduce the human crisis, but carried out its regular programme too.

I extend my sincere gratitude and thankfulness to our donors, partners, all the NERSWN workers, volunteers and most importantly each of the community members that we work with.

Friends and Colleagues at NERSWN, congratulation for completing yet another meaningfully fulfilling year and all the best for the future.



**Raju Kr. Narzary**  
Executive Director

### **Sincere gratitude to our partners for their generous support and kindness:**

- Ajim Premji Foundation.
- Malala Fund.
- DKA Austria.
- UNICEF
- VHAI
- Bred for the World.
- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- George Institute of Global Health.
- Church Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA).
- Edelgive Foundation.
- OXFAM.
- Tdh Germany.
- SUSTAIN+



The year 2020 to 2021 was a year of Covid-19 pandemic followed by the Lock down all over the world. Despite the lock down the NERSWN team has made the best of efforts to carry out the activities and also to realize the goals and objectives of the different programs towards reaching out to the most vulnerable community such as the internally displaced due to conflicts, erosion and floods and those living in the char as well as those considered as forest encroachers.

NERSWN did its level best in its capacity and ability to reach out to the last miles who are not noticed and whose woes are not reported and not looked into for finding a solution. Thus, the NERSWN team stepped in, to work for those living in the forest fringes, and the chars, those affected by floods and erosion that were cut off from the world because of the lockdown imposed to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a tough, distressful and challenging time for all. The team could have the project activities only for a few months in 2020 because of the lockdown due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Later in the end of the year the Council elections took place in December 2020 and again the Assembly election between the months of March 2021 to April 2021.

## EMERGENCY COVID-19 RESPONSE

NERSWN with permission from the district authority and following strict Covid-19 Protocol could work and utilize its resources to

some extent. Thus the most neediest individuals and families were identified, such as those without ration cards, forest dwellers, riverine communities, daily wage laborers, petty traders and vendors, farmers, families stranded and out of work.



NERSWN could distribute dry ration packs and hygiene kits including sanitary pads to 1504 households keeping the girls in mind so that girls would have access of this particular commodity during lock down as it was not considered as an essential commodity. The tradition and customs lead to think of menstruation as a taboo topic and girls feel embarrassed to speak about it and times were hardest even to get one square of meal for the poor because of not having any earning opportunity due to the lockdown. Thus, menstrual hygiene and the importance. of sanitary pads-one of the most essential thing for a girl and monthly requirement is not given importance. The dry ration pack consisted of rice, dal, cooking oil, salt and the hygiene kit consisted of sanitary napkins soap, bleaching powder, phenyl bottle, hand



sanitizer, face masks.

## HEALTH

NERSWN always gave priority to health of the marginalized communities from the very initial period of its establishment. Starting from providing door to door Anti Malaria services, capacity building of the ASHAs, facilitation of immunization in the forest fringes areas, awareness through street plays on different health and hygiene, having mental health camps and district consultations and other advocacy activities to now doing health research of the Tribal Health and still working with the people who cannot be reached by the government because of geographical location and inaccessibility.



the lockdown that followed caused distress and confusion to the communities and therefore, awareness through Poster Campaign and

Distribution of leaflets on Covid-19 protocol were done. A total of 20,000 leaflets were distributed and 160 flex banners were put up by the team members in places which could be seen and understood. Through these activities team tried to inform the community people about primary preventive measures of Covid-19 Pandemic, such as hand washing, maintaining Social distance, using masks, etc. Awareness was also done on Covid-19 Pandemic protocols, immunization and prevention of flood related diseases through miking on running boats.



Besides, team worked relentlessly for convincing communities and facilitating health workers for immunization of children. Some communities have issues regarding child immunization because of non-accessibility and beliefs in the community that it causes harm to the child. So, number of meetings, orientations, home visits were done with the community leaders, local NGOs, Pnchayati Raj Institutions, Women

Groups, religious leaders, etc. These activities were taken up to give information on schedule of immunization, importance of vaccine, and bring vaccine confidence in the minds of the community and facilitate routine immunization demand to the left out, drop out, resistance families (LODOR) and make particular areas fully immunized. Team could reach to a total of 107 Girls-69 and Boys-38 LODOR children between the month of May 2020 to April 2021. Total children immunized were 84% (Girls-50% and Boys-34%).

The team conducted 17 Adolescent Health Days which were attended and participated by 1900 adolescents and learned about nutrition, health and hygiene. The ASHA, ANM and ICDS workers were involved in the adolescent health day. The main topics of the programme were nutrition, education, unsafe sex, early pregnancy, drug abuse, mental health, etc.

### CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME

NERSWN formed and promoted 200 clubs with children between the age group of 6-18 years and collectivized 15000 empowering them through different structured sessions on Child Social and Financial Education, Shakti, Chouraha, Participatory Learning and Action, celebration of important days and festivals with different activities of Sports and Games, folklore for Social Change and Communication, poem recitation, drawing and essay writing programs, Social Peace Building programmes

Building programmes, etc. These sessions and activities are conducted to create a protective learning environment.



Team also promoted Folklore for Social Change and Communication teams with adolescent boys and girls in intervention



areas and had live show performances in places of community gatherings and days of festivals and reaching out to 6000 people. The folklore songs were on health and hygiene, child marriage, importance of education and RTE act 2009 and other child protection issues. It is to be noted that the folklore team themselves wrote the lyrics, practiced them together and performed them. Keeping the situation of the children during the pandemic

## CASE STUDY OF A TRAFFICKED GIRL

When Rani (name changed), from Bamunpara village of Hatipota GP, Bilasipara Block in Dhubri district went missing. Her father's name is Sukur Ali (name changed) and her mother's name is Mumtaj Begum (name changed). She was 15 years old and was studying in class VII in Bilasipara Girls' High School. She was kidnapped on the 19th of September, 2020 by someone when she was on the way to a bank as the children came to know that some amount of scholarship money have been transferred to their account. When she was on the way some men whom she knew asked her to go along with them and tried to lure her saying that she would get to work and earn a lot of money. When she did not agree to go she was taken forcefully to a sweetmeat shop and was drugged. All along the journey to where she was taken she was not conscious, as whenever she was about to come to sense she was drugged again and again. She was also abused and tortured all along the way till she found herself in a house in Haryana. She was tortured and abused by those who trafficked her and was to be sold as a child bride.

Rani is a courageous girl and she did not give up hope of getting herself free from the clutches of those who kidnapped her and from the household where she was kept. She came to know that they were arranging to marry her and some sort of puja and ceremonies were going on in the household there. During one such ceremony when the family was performing she managed to run away and she could run away very far from the house where she was kept. Finally, one person in a bike found her looking very terrified in a local market place there. When the person asked the reason, she narrated her story telling that she was brought forcefully to Haryana. On hearing her situation and problem he took her to the police station. From there, she could call her father over phone.

Her father informed NERSWN team who discussed with him and the VLCPD about what could be done. Then the team accompanied her father, VLCPD members and the community to CWC of Dhubri and linked up with her and also took to the CWC whenever required. Then the matter was taken to the local MLA who at once arranged flight tickets for the police personal and her father to Haryana by plane to get the daughter home safe and sound. It took about a month to rescue her on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, 2020. After bringing her home she was re-enrolled in the same school in the month of November, 2020 where she read earlier.

in mind, regular online activities were conducted and important days and festivals were observed reaching to 12000 children. Cultural dances, Cultural songs, drawing and art competition, essay writing, poem recitation, youth led hygiene promotion campaigns and tree plantation, in the backyards of the children's' homes were done for which the children had to take photographs and videos and post them in the social media groups. Later, when lockdown was relaxed, the team members organized the sports events, cultural programs on important days such as Children's day, National Girl Child day, etc.

Adolescents and youths also initiated Social Peace Building Programs, such as tree plantation drives and planted flowers in the Schools, Churches & Mandirs by involving community members such as parents, teachers, ASHA workers, ICDS workers, ANM, etc. Adolescents and children from different communities came together for the project leading to communicate, interact and share each other's issues, challenges and plans to have a better society.

## EDUCATION FOR THE DISPLACED

To ensure that the most marginalized in the forest and char areas are not neglected, NERSWN is doing its bit that education reaches the vulnerable children. On the one hand communities cannot avail the benefits of development in the form of government schemes and entitlements as one group is blamed as forest encroachers and the other group is out rightly neglected because of several allegations and geographical

inaccessibility and they have to suffer floods and erosion year after year and get displaced from home and hearth because of the vagary of climate change.



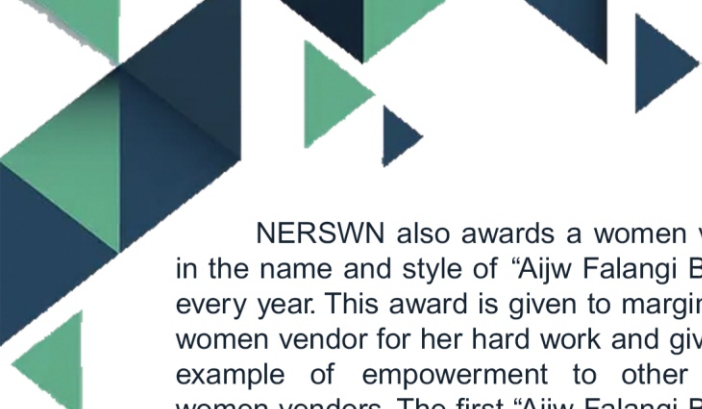
For NERSWN education is always a top priority and even in the relief camps, facilitated children for having education as it believes that it is a means for upliftment of the marginalized communities. Later when the community of people living in the Sapkata relief camp decided to move to Jhawarbil, the school which started in the relief camp moved along with the community at Jhawarbil and thus a community school was established there in 2011 with the name of Suluk Gwjwn Vidyalaya which reads Peace in Santhali and Boro respectively. Presently, the school offers class I to X enrolling 248 pupils with 06 teaching staff. Except for the schools, the formerly displaced people of Jhawarbil still do not have access to any other basic amenities and necessities and NERSWN is trying its best to ensure basic rights to children through different projects.

NERSWN also formed 53 village Level Child Protection committees with a total of 1113 members in the intervention area so as to create a safety net for the children and ensure protective and learning environment for children and adolescents so that children are prevented from being school dropouts, early marriage, forced migration and trafficking.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

From the very beginning NERSWN have been working to empower the women so that through equity, equality can be brought in the community. From facilitating the conflict affected women vendors and collectivizing them into two associations -GAFA in 2009 and KAFA in 2010, working with Self Help Groups, training them on different livelihood skills of candle making, mushroom cultivation, engaging them in eri or indi silk production in traditional method, soap making, exposure visits to learn and gain confidence and training them the arithmetic of business so that they would have profit. The women vendors were also given training to ride bi-cycle so that they would not have to depend on anyone to carry their goods and travel to reach the markets. Team also facilitated them to meet the officials and personnels to demand for their rights of having safe drinking water facilities, toilets for women in the market, etc. The NERSWN team organized the International Womens' Day for the first time on 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2009 at the premises of the then NERSWN Office at Gossaigaon.





NERSWN also awards a women vendor in the name and style of “Aijw Falangi Bantha” every year. This award is given to marginalized women vendor for her hard work and giving an example of empowerment to other fellow women vendors. The first “Aijw Falangi Bantha” was awarded to Ms. Somela Basumatary in 2012 a conflict affected and displaced women for her hard work and never say die spirit, thus progressing in the business and at the same time looking after home and hearth.

From then on NERSWN have awarded the 10th “Aijw Falangi Bantha” on 8th March, 2021 to Ms.Namei Basumatary. In the year, in connection with the “International Women’s Day” team conducted a women’s rally with the purpose to stop discrimination of women, violence against women and deprivation of various women’s rights. More than 500 women participated in the program. After the rally there was a gathering to celebrate the day at NERSWN where invited chief guest Mr. Pramod Boro Chief Executive Member of BTR delivered a valuable speech on women’s rights. The other invited guests and Senior Journalist Mr. Preetam Brahma Choudhury, Monalisa Sharma ,social activists Pratibha Brahma, Rani Helen Wary, Gita Rani Bhattacharya, Swapna Dey, and many invited guest from different places delivered valuable speech on women rights.

## LIVELIHOOD

The disaster affected communities, after staying in the relief camps for more than a decade lost their skills of livelihood and as a result could not become self sufficient for which there were large out migration of children and youths. They could not have enough cash for getting a decent education and life. Thus, the NERSWN team realized the necessity of giving livelihood skills to the adults so that their children would get education for leading a decent life. Thus, NERSWN started working with farmers, SHG, Bandhw Committee, youth volunteers, etc. Training were given on organic farming, preparation of nursery, seed bed, identification and separation of seeds for sowing, seed support, caring for crops, utilization of optimum use of water from the streams by directing river water were done. All these were done to have sustainable livelihood so that these in turn would go a long way in education of the children during good times as well as in emergencies.

In the year, NERSWN implemented the project titled “Livelihood promotion for Poor and Marginalized in

through Renewable energy” in 20 villages of Kachugaon, Gossaigaon and Dotma Block under Kokrajhar District. NERSWN aimed to work with 5000 families in the next three years by introducing renewable energy and clean cooking to ensure sustainable livelihood.

Awareness of entrepreneurs, on using incubators for multiple hatching of eggs, solar power and its installation were done with the LSK(Lok Sabha Kendra) and for solar powered tailoring. For tailoring there were installations of solar panels as well as solar paddles for the



sewing machines. These activities ensured to do a bit for the livelihood of the non agro business and also reduce the use of energy and also mitigate climate change by using renewable energy. After training and awareness

of using the solar energy for their livelihood purpose in operating the machines for tailoring and in the Lok Seva Kendra the entrepreneurs could understand that their work have been enhanced, increased profit and had satisfied customers as now the work could be done in less time and did not have to wait and depend on power cuts and shortage. In the year 80 long term adolescent boys and girls were also given vocational training in driving, tailoring and pickle making.

## **WATER GOVERNANCE AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM**

The communities of Saralpara depend on the river water of Swrmanga(Saralbhanga) for drinking, household use, irrigation purpose and others. During the monsoons the strong and fast flowing water of the Swrmanga River washes away the traditional base diversion used to divert water to the different villages and these happens several times during the monsoons. Because of the interface with the government departments the NERSWN team could facilitate the community of Saralpara to meet the DC of Kokrajhar Shri. Bhaskar Phukan when the point of diversion which is 200 meters inside Bhutan from the India-Bhutan border was washed away by fast flowing Swrmanga River. It is to be noted that during normal times the community of Saralpara goes and repair the point of diversion without restrictions. But the community could not go and repair the point of diversion as the international borders were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. After the community along with the NERSWN

team met the DC and communicated their issue, the DC of Kokrajhar, Shri. Bhaskar Phukan spoke to the DC of Sarpang, Bhutan, Karma Gyle. After coming to know about the problem of the community of Saralpara, the DC of Sarpang took immediate steps to repair the point of diversion by sending men and machine. The DC of both the Kokrajhar district and the DC of Sarpang district asked the community to communicate over phone directly so that the people would not travel during the Covid-19 pandemic in order that the community remains safe and also that the pandemic is contained. This facilitation of the community by NERSWN with the district administration of both Kokrajhar and Sarpang, Bhutan and thereafter, repairing the point of diversion by District authorities of Sarpang, Bhutan took place eight times in the year benefiting 1500 farmers.

NERSWN have been doing the work of Strengthening Volunteers Network and Youth Clusters in Saralbhanga and Brahmaputra Basin. Water testing training to volunteers in various villages of the intervention area of the Brahmaputra and the Saralbhanga basin were done. NERSWN team along with the volunteers after getting the water testing training, tested the water in various villages of the intervention area to know whether the water is potable or not. The water in those areas was found to be potable though some amount of iron was found to be present in the water.

NERSWN conducted online workshop to strengthen Water Governance Collective Action Network (WG-CAN) and there after visited NGOs to train on WG-CAN portal for sending early warning messages. A total of six NGOs-AIET, NEDAN Foundation, ESPT, the Peoples aid, SB Foundation, Gauripur Vivekananda Club were trained so far on the portal.

The NERSWN team also sends early warning messages to volunteers about weather, water level, floods. Team visited government departments to ask the officers to give awareness on floods and Covid-19 pandemic through adhikar vani. Team recorded officers' voices from DDMA on floods and Covid-19 pandemic in local languages. The team also used the portal to send messages related to Covid-19 pandemic, weather forecast, raising water level, etc to the volunteers.








## Reaching out with Social Endeavour



### **NORTH EAST RESEARCH & SOCIAL WORK NETWORKING**

Gwjwn Dera NERSWN Complex, Opp. B.B. Engineering College, Vill- Khumguri,

P.O: Chandrapara, Dist: Kokrajhar-783370 :: [www.nerswn.org](http://www.nerswn.org)

 [nerswn@gmail.com](mailto:nerswn@gmail.com)  [@nerswnofficial](https://twitter.com/nerswnofficial)  [@nerswn](https://facebook.com/nerswn)