



# Annual Report

2021-22



# NERSWN

(North East Research & Social Work Networking)





## Executive Director's Note

As the human tragedies and tough challenges of Covid-19 Pandemic gradually faded away, the NERSWN team reached out to most marginalized communities with social endeavors smoothly in its operational areas. This Annual Report will narrate the activities being carried out during 2021-22 fiscal year.

As we complete 17 marvelous years filled with committed efforts to bring change in the lives of the people, NERSWN team remains ever grateful to its partners, well-wishers, co-workers, volunteers, donors and all the stakeholders who have generously extended their support.

Friends and colleagues, let us once again remind ourselves of our commitment to reach out to the last person in our surrounding with endeavors to ensure peace, justice and dignity for all. Thank you.

**Raju Kr. Narzary**  
Executive Director

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

- Ajim Premji Foundation.
- Malala Fund.
- DKA Austria.
- UNICEF
- 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.



## A NOTE FROM CHAIRPERSON

A note from Chairperson The year began with caution as Covid-19 pandemic and lock down were gradually relaxed. Just a few months into having activities and programs only to be faced with yet another Shutdown to contain the pandemic followed by the annual floods which did not spare to take its turn to test the patients and commitments of the team. It is understood that the team is not to be cowed down by the innumerable disasters and obstacles. My sincere gratitude to mentors, friends and supporters for giving us much encouragement and hinted that we are together in reaching out to the most vulnerable. Congratulations to the NERSWN team for moving forward with zeal and enthusiasm with a mission towards the Vision.

Sincerely yours'

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Birphung Narzary'. The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Birphung Narzary  
Chairperson

Yet another year, filled with exciting activities has just gone by. When NERSWN team was just breathing sigh of relief from first wave of Covid-19, the second wave wreaked havoc, thereby posing a daunting challenge. While carrying out the routine programme, NERSWN had to take up additional challenge of reducing human tragedies of the pandemic of Covid-19. To the best of its capacities, with support from generous donors, partners and community, NERSWN Team carried out constructive development work that this Annual Report 2021-22 shall narrate in brief.

### HEALTH PROGRAMME

As the world faced the terrible pandemic almost for two years, the communities that NERSWN works with also faced the same. The communities being historically deprived, lives in lowest possible strata of the society- economically, socially, politically. At the critical situations of facing twin challenge of Covid-19 and disasters such as floods and post conflict difficulties, thousands of people in the community sought NERSWN's help. Responding to call, NERSWN workers swung into action. In partnership with the Department of Health Services, NERSWN mobilized communities for vaccinations in some of the remotest areas. As the rumor and misconception spread about Covid-19 Vaccines, communities were reluctant to get vaccinated. However, with extensive awareness and sensitization campaign using folklore, sports, youth campaign, village meetings, targeted reach out, etc. Kokrajhar District was the first in the country to achieve 93% vaccination against Covid-19. In addition, NERSWN provided dry ration and hygiene support to 5000 households in Kokrajhar, Dhubri and South Salmara districts of Assam to the most needy.



**Mental Health Camp :**It was in March 2009 that NERSWN organized the first Mental Health Camp in the district of Kokrajhar. There was no facility in the whole of the district to treat the mentally ill and thus were excluded from the health care system. The consequences of long period of unrest, conflicts, poverty and thereby losing of near and dear ones, people were depressed, frustrated and unable to deal with themselves and others and had various types of mental illness. The mentally ill were most often neglected at home and in the society and not cared for because of lack of awareness. NERSWN, since it worked with the community in the grassroots came across people with such sufferings and were restless to do a bit for this most neglected community with the illness. Thus, mental health camps started, then awareness and advocacy which resulted in having an OPD and getting health personnel posted recently. For more than a decade, it has been providing free of charge care & treatment to the people with mental illness belonging to the poorest section of the society. So far, 2500 people with mental illness have been provided with free of cost screening, diagnosis, medicine, counseling and follow up.

**Universal Immunization:**In the year gone by, NERSWN workers with support from Voluntary Health Association of India and in partnership with Department of Health Services carried out door to door survey of LODOR families for Universal Immunization coverage in flood prone areas of Dhubri and South Salmara. After rigorous activities of convincing through home visits, awareness meetings consultation programmes, miking on boats, auto rickshaws, e-rickshaws, wall painting in places of gathering, schools, near Sub-Centres and posture campaign, the team could reach out to 25,000 families for immunization against polio, measles, diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis A & B. Along with awareness on immunization, the team also included breast feeding, Covid-19 protocols and vaccination in the sensitization programs.

With support from Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) & George Institute of Global Health, total of 4 PHCs have been taken up for carrying out health related surveys of tribal population. Total of 2020 households have been covered. At the end of the data collection and thorough analysis, hypertension, diabetes and maternal health including early marriage and early pregnancy related problems were found to be major problems amongst the

targeted population. Based on the research findings, a rigorous field level intervention have been planned and implemented in two PHCs & 3 HWC's covering 71 villages and 19300 population.

### SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

Across four districts of Assam and Meghalaya, total of 25,000 girls have been sensitized on sexual and reproductive health rights by using different methods. Weekly sessions have been conducted and Folklore has been used to sensitize the girls. The discourse revolved around sexuality, menstrual hygiene, gender, pregnancy, STI, RTI, HIV, etc. Girls with their collectives are now vibrant and resurgent in their outlook towards their sexual and reproductive health.

**Health Camps :** In collaboration with Mobile Medical Unit, NHM Kokrajhar, total of 15 Health Camps, 3 health melas, have been organized. This health camps have benefited a total of 1135 people in inaccessible areas. Communities from 2 PHCs with a total of 5039 were screened for antenatal, post natal check up and non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension in HWCs.

Improving quality of pregnancy care and childbirth was the focus at the level of

health system. NERSWN with support from ANMs and ASHAs regularly conducted a total of 158 VHND in the intervention villages. During the VHND it was ensured that pregnant women were examined and counseled, their blood pressure, hemoglobin and weight was measured.



### EDUCATION AND CHILD RIGHTS

Education & Child Rights Programme by 2021-22 has become the largest programme in NERSWN. The communities who have faced conflict for decades and annual flooding, now has started giving much needed priority to their children's well-being. However, with grave protection concerns there are barriers in every step. To ease these barriers following activities have been carried out during the reporting year.that pregnant women were examined and counseled, their blood pressure, hemoglobin and weight was measured.

**Suluk-Gwjwn Vidyalaya, Jhawarbil :** Suluk-Gwjwn Vidyalaya, Jhawarbil after having been shifted and renamed from its original name of Sapkhata Relief Camp L.P School, now enrolls more than 201 Adivashi first generation learners. Children, who are mostly born and brought up in relief camps with hunger and poverty, were forced to leave the relief camps and settle in forest fringe villages. However, after resettlement, has been dubbed with forest encroached communities, thereby depriving them from all basic services and amenities. Thus, NERSWN has been supporting the community managed school of Suluk-Gwjwn Vidyalaya, Jhawarbil to ensure basic education for children enshrined as fundamental right in Right to Education Act 2009.



**Mainstreaming Out of School Children:**

In collaboration with the Education department of Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts, the dropout school children have been identified by the team. In Kokrajhar district total of 2709 for elementary level (6-14) years have been identified where 1012 are girls and boys are 1697. The Secondary level accounts a total of 1981 where girls are 680 and boys are 1301. In Dhubri district we have identified 1684 girls and 3801 boys who dropped out of elementary level whereas, in higher secondary level a total of 3663 consisting of girls 724 girls and 2939 boys where identified.

**Supplementary Coaching :**

A total of 32 coaching Centers have been started in intervention areas of the 4 districts to give supplementary coaching to 3815 adolescents to fill the learning gaps. The supplementary coaching is provided in Mathematics, Science and English. The number of teachers appointed was 66. This supplementary coaching will help adolescents maintain a steady growth of academic knowledge despite Covid-19 related disruption in education



**Counseling Programme :** Several Motivational cum Career Counseling Programs were conducted in three different locations, specifically the Karigaon High School, Nayekgaon High School and Kashiabari High School in Kokrajhar district. The team along with faculty and students from the Bineswar Brahma Engineering College imparted knowledge and information about engineering courses, process of application, eligibility, criteria, etc. Career counseling is the process to guide students on the path of self-discovery and self-realization. The team supported pre-board students in weeding out self-doubt and making decisive decisions based on their interest, leading to long-term satisfaction with their choices and a life lived with purpose. A total of 793 adolescent girls and boys participated in this program.



**Collectivization of adolescents and Structured Sessions :** A total of 25,000 adolescents are collectivized through meetings and sessions, adolescent health days, folklore live performances, exposure visits in different villages across Kokrajhar, Dhubri, South-Salmara and Garo-Hills district where the staff visits, does follow-up and keep track of their daily activities. The staff noted that there is a need for constant encouragement and engagement with the adolescent girls and boys especially in terms of education. Through these clubs' children are sensitized on different issues and are empowered to call 1098 and inform to VLCPC, CWC, etc. The clubs are a platform for the adolescents to share and connect with their peers and got opportunities to learn about child protection issues, their rights and responsibilities, thus enabling them to recognize harm.

Through **SHAKTI** adolescent girls are connected to the peer group, recognize harm, plan for their safety and negotiate for themselves. They do this by learning about rights and entitlements, making educational and vocational plans and accessing key services.

**Chouraha** connects adolescent boys to positive peer groups, and support them to recognize protection risk they faced. It does this through group sessions where boys talk about their rights, develop and negotiation skills, and access key services of DE-addiction, government offices and hospitals.

**Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)** sessions have been organized in the 150 villages in proposed 4 districts- Kokrajhar, Dhubri, South Salmara and West Garo Hills. The 8th phase of PLA session is completed in 150 villages. This approach helped children and adolescents to identify their issues, problems, needs and promote active participation and intervention of the communities in the concerned issues.



**Exposure visits** : A total of 600 active adolescents were taken for exposure visits to important institutions like colleges, police stations, the District Collector's Office, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, DCPU, CWC, Office of the Superintendent of Police, Sports Authority of India, Bodoland University and the post office. These exposure visits made the adolescents learn and broaden their knowledge about what is beyond their villages and made them enthusiastic to continue their studies.

Child protection was an integral component among the projects of NERSWN. Staff were actively involved in organizing clubs and events that promoted awareness around the dangers faced by children as well as providing the education needed for children to be protected. This also manifested in active intervention in certain cases.

**Strengthening the Village Level Child Protection Committee** : A total of 97 VLPC meetings were conducted with 1261 Participants and 17 SMC meetings were held with 240 Participants after the normalcy returned post lockdown so far. During the lockdown, children's education was disrupted. Efforts were on through the SMC and VLPC

meetings, to strengthen and sustain those committees to ensure protective and learning environment for children and adolescents so that children are prevented from being dropping out of school, early marriage, forced migration and trafficking. The VLCPCs have taken proactive role in creating protective environment in the villages resulting in reduction in out of school children, forced migration, child marriage, child labour, etc.

**Sports for Empowerment :** Total of 10 adolescent girls' football team have been formed and promoted. They have team practice and have friendly inter club football matches on a regular basis and on different occasions. From among the girls of the football clubs 3 girls were selected to be trained by the Sports Authority of India. The formation of the Girls Football team has also dispersed the notion in the remote communities that football is only for the boys.



### Post Card Campaign for Girls Education :

Every year NERSWN celebrates National Girl Child Day on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January with the aim to empower girls and promote education and protection. National Girl Child Day with the theme “Transforming Education for Girls” was observed this year too. Over 1000 girls from remote areas of



Kokrajhar and Dhubri district send the signed postcards to Sri. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India seeking Free and Compulsory Education from 3 to 18 years, mandatory scholarships for all girls, secondary schools within 5 km radius, provisions of teachers and adequate infrastructure, safety measure ensuring safe travel while commuting to the schools and enhanced allocation of budget and human resource. Girls from different locations were brought to the nearest post offices to post the postcards.

**Youth Empowerment Centre :** In today's world of fast information and technology, it is most unjust for the youth in the remote parts of the country to remain uninformed about the happenings around the world especially information concerning the youth. Equally not just is that while the privileged are skilled in handling the computers, the youth from the remote areas are unable to touch one. With the thought in mind for the most marginalized youths who are also conflict affected, a Youth Centre was created in 2019 with generous support from TDH Germany. It is a space where they come and read newspapers, books, learn computer, get information regarding job openings, do online form fill up for jobs and others and share and learn from each other. The Youth Empowerment Centre is situated at Tipkai so that the youths from the nearby villages would access the little facilities available.

### **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

**Aijw Falangi Afat :** For almost two decades NERSWN has been mobilizing street women vendors to secure their livelihood. Both in Kokrajhar and Gossaigaon town. Aijw Falangi Afat (Women Street Vendors Association) comprising more than 2000 street women vendors have been actively involve to make their businesses safe, secured and dignified. The two associations with support from NERSWN seeks their basic entitlement of amenities for dignified business.

**Aijw Falangi Bantha:** Aijw Falangi Bantha (Women Entrepreneur Award) has been instituted to give recognition and motivation to small women entrepreneurs. Women who have faced difficult circumstances in life, have braved all challenges, excelled in life, are chosen for the award. In March 2022, Smt. Ramashi Narzary have been conferred the award for her outstanding courage of taking her business from scratch to a height.

**Women's Day Celebration:** The International Women's Day was celebrated at NERSWN Campus with various activities like the other years. The day started with Flag hoisting by the President of KAFA followed by various activities of games and sports, cultural dances and songs, Folklore live Performances on Social Change and Communication, which were participated by the elderly and the adolescents alike. Dr. Sujata Bhadra, Professor Janata College, Serfanguri was the chief guest and Ms. Pratibha Brahma, Chairperson Kokrajhar Municipal Board, Rani Helen Wary, Teacher and Writer, Preetam Brahma Chaudhury from Child Welfare Committee were the guests of Honour. Women were lauded for work in various fields and the day was a Gala occasion.

## LIVELIHOOD

**Commercial Vegetable Cropping** : Total of 5000 marginal farmers has been given knowledge and material input to grow vegetables commercially. Based on the market surveys, farmers have been involved with growing vegetables. Each of the farmer were sensitized with the planning, cost benefit analysis, market survey, entering into supply chain and so on. For last couple of years now, farmers' income especially those who could produce in off season have increased.



**Enhancing Paddy Production** : A total of 339 farmers in the year was provided certified seeds. Different methods of paddy cultivations including seed treatment, seedling management, line sowing, weeding, etc. have been transferred to the farmers. With the continuous support, the paddy yield was sufficiently good, especially

amongst conflict affected marginal farmers of Kokrajhar.

**Vocational Skill Development Training** : NERSWN provided skill training to 266 long term adolescent dropouts from different intervention villages on motor driving, tailoring, pickle making, jute handicrafts and bridal makeup. Through these skills, NERSWN believes that they will be able to sustain their livelihood and enhance their standard of living.

**Seed Distribution** : During the second wave of Covid-19 and the lockdown, farmers could not access market. Thus, the team with support from different donors distributed paddy and vegetable seeds to 435 households. With these seeds, farmers have enjoyed bumper harvest.

**Jhawarbil Unnati Samaj and Its Role So Far** : After formation of Jahwarbil Unnati Samaj( JUS) in 2019, series of promotion meetings were held with the committee members of JUS and keeping in touch with Forest department regularly regarding Land revenue tax for forest land. The committee also drafted application and their relevant documents were submitted to Raimona Forest Range Office for land entitlement purpose. Advocacy for the rights of the community are on with different

Government departments. The JUS members also submitted memorandum on various developmental requirement for entire Jhawarbil area.

Due to relentless efforts made by JUS members along with NERSWN workers, surveys and geotagging of land for distribution of legal land title have been completed in the area. If the bureaucratic formalities are completed, the more than 750 families in Jhawarbil will receive land title very soon.



**Training on Rights and Entitlement for the Tribe :** A refresher training program was conducted for Jhawarbil Unnati Samaj and existing Forest Right Committee (FRC) on different constitutional rights and Land issues in the financial year 2021-22. Total of 46 (Female-11, Male-35) committee members participated in the program.

**Community Shramdhan (Voluntary Community Service):** Shramdhan activity were carried out 12 times by the community people to repair the Suluk Gwjwn Vidyalaya School building, cleaning School surroundings, earth filling in village roads. The community people also cultivated sesame seeds in 9 bighas of land which yielded 1360 kg and they sold out @ 62.5/- per kg and got INR 85000 rupees. This amount will be utilized for school development. In that activity all the community people old and young, male and female participated.

### THE WALL OF COMPASSION

Besides the many initiatives of NERSWN, a most humble initiative was also started by the Executive Director of NERSWN, Mr. Raju Narzary on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January, 2017. The Wall of Compassion is an initiative for the poorest of the poor. NERSWN team collects items of clothes, utensils, books, etc. from people who have unused items in good usable condition and distributes them to the most needy people. The 8<sup>th</sup> Wall of Compassion was organized on the 2nd of February, 2021. So far a total of 3690 items were distributed to 1230 people.



### VOICES OF GIRLS FROM SILPUR VILLAGE

Silpur is an intervention village of NERSWN NGO in Gossaigaon block of Kokrajhar district. The girls of Silpur are collectivized into adolescent girls club and Sports club. The girls of the club are very much forward and aware of the importance of education and their rights. As adolescent girls they have dreams to become doctors, health workers, teachers, join the defense services and become social workers, sports person, etc. They really would like to fulfill their dreams.

The adolescent girls of Silpur village have to travel more than 12 Kms to reach Rangsupur High School, Srirampur High School, Grahampur High School and Gossaigaon. They travel to school by bicycle. It is not that all girls have a bicycle of their own. So, the girls carry their friends in the bicycle to reach school. The road condition is very bad, and during rainy season the condition becomes worse. All these came to light when the team worked with them by having club meetings, sessions, home visits and also consulting with them about their challenges and issues.

On 24<sup>th</sup> of January - National Girl Child Day and International Day of Education, the girls of Silpur also took part in the media campaign and posted the post cards. Monora Tudu represented the adolescent girls of the village and spoke to the media about the issues and challenges of the girls on having a good education. Two schools where the girls studied are still venture schools, and thus they do not have the requisite facilities. Not being paid as Venture school teachers, the schools do not have science, mathematics and social science classes. While Monora Tudu aims to study medicine, her school does not have classes for those subjects. Left with no choice, she spoke about her plight, which got wide media coverage that resulted in ranks and files of education department to visit her. Many came up to support her education. She has been provided with a bi-cycle by CSRs of local bank. Presently, the process is on to make the school government.

