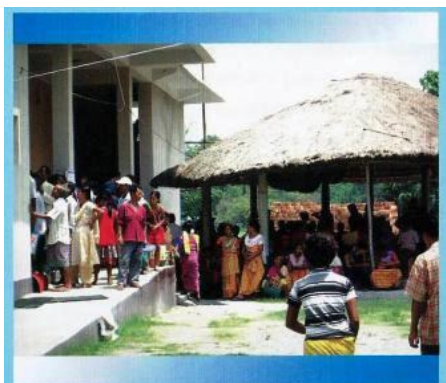




News from the ant team
January – April 2014

A quarter of the year has gone and we are already into FY 2014-2015 and headlong into activities and our ant heads stuffed with still more ideas and dreams for this year and beyond!

Community Mental Health Project



It is 6 months since we got the community mental health project off the ground. We hope to be able to look after the mental health of one lakh population in the next few years. The team has been recruited and the community health workers have started their rounds of the selected villages. It is challenging but an interesting transition to move from camp based treatment of mental illnesses to a more holistic community approach to mental health. This project is supported by the Jamshetjee Tata Trust and is part of a larger multi-partner initiative on community mental health in India. We hope to tackle both severe and common mental disorders in the community and work to prevent mental illnesses.

1. **Severe Mental Disorder-** Schizophrenia, Bipolar disorder, other psychosis.
2. **Common Mental Disorders-** Depression and Generalized anxiety, Other Anxiety Disorders; many sub-groups, e.g. Panic Disorder, Phobias, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Somatoform disorders.
3. **Epilepsy-** Fits

CMHP
(Community Mental Health Programme)

When Women come 'March'-ing in !



Come 8 March and women over the world burst out in celebration for it is International Women's day. For the 6th year in a row, the women's federations of the ant have been taking over the celebrations bit by bit. This year, 1483 women registered and took part in 5 events in which our women raised over a lakh of rupees in contribution. Apart from the awareness built about women's equality and rights, the event has over the years helped the federations gain in skills of planning and confidence of execution. It sure feels good to have the women take ownership of the programmes.

All new website at www.theant.org
We are re-launching our website. The most exciting part is that we learnt to do this from scratch and can now control the website sitting in our village in Rowma ri! It may not be the most professional of websites (as yet!) but at least we will be able to update it as and when we need. And yes, we are sure we will learn and get better with it.

Science on Wheels

The Science Van Reaches out to children in Relief Camps



Regular Science Classes are held for 1200 children from Classes 6-8 from 9 partner schools reached out to 2 times a month. Apart from that, we do science workshops with Classes 9 & 10 students in 4 partner schools once a month and also in hard-to-reach schools. Science awareness workshops are also done with our women's federations and the community in general to bring about rational thinking and counter superstitious beliefs. We are thankful to Caring Friends for stepping in to support the programme since the support from Bongaigaon Refinery under their CSR funds do not support running costs of the project.

Keeping Culture Alive

With taped music easily available (and now digital music played from the mobile phone!), the sounds of traditional Bodo drums, flutes and violins is lost. The rich culture of communities externalized by their traditional music and dances is fast getting lost and along with it an important part of their identity. We have started forming youth cultural troupes and started coaching young people in their traditional art forms. During the Summer vacation in July, we are planning a residential workshop for training youth in their traditional instruments.



Members of our Rowmari Youth Culture Troupe learning to play the traditional instruments. We had to hire a trainer from outside the area as traditional music has become so rare that we are unable to get anyone who knows enough to reach our youth.

Taking Tradition Back to the Village



This year, from 15-20 April during the Baisagu Festival, our Rowmari Youth Culture Team went dancing house to house and sought the blessings of their elders. This tradition had been looked forward to by the families in the villages but has almost disappeared from our area. It was a real pleasure to see the elders glow with happiness and joy at the children's efforts. The children collected a lot of blessings and some money – which they gave as loans to four of their group members to pay their school / college fees. If not for this support, these children would have had to drop out of their studies this year.

Restoring Livelihoods of the Riot Affected

We have just completed a project to restore livelihoods of 2012 riot affected victims who have returned to their villages after staying in relief camps. This project was a tripartite partnership between Mercy Corps (UK), the ant and Ajagar Social Circle (Goalpara). It has helped 1869 beneficiaries in 29 locations (3 IDP settlements and 26 villages). This project supported the farmers with seeds and also with help to plough their land using the tractor (since most of them had lost their plough cattle during the riots). It also helped families rebuild their burnt houses and build community assets by giving them opportunities for earning cash for their work, it also supported women with rebuilding their some of their lost assets by giving them small livestock. And we helped skilled workmen and also small businessmen regain livelihoods by giving them some tools of trade – such as giving cycles for petty traders, tools for carpenters & masons etc. Supported by ECHO, this project helped communities get on with their shattered lives.



Violence In Bodoland2014

It is indeed ironic! Even as I write about the efforts to help communities recover from the conflict of 2012, we are faced with yet another conflict. Since 2 May 2014, we have had curfew in our area and we are haunted by the specter of violence yet again. 39 people killed in 3 days and of these almost half are children. How much more brutal can we get? But there is one silver lining, ordinary people in the villages seem to tire of conflict and are refusing to retaliate.... They remain our hope for peace!

Some Current & Future Work (for greater details of our current programmes, do visit www.theant.org)

- **Youth Skills Development Centre** : With the second floor of the Multipurpose Training Centre almost ready, we have started exploring options of partnering with other organisations to start a Youth Skills Development Centre which we hope will cater to the vocational training needs of young people.
- **Youth & Women for Peace Programme**: We are planning to take the Youth Peace Drama group we started last year a step further. We are working to take the group through a journey of carrying out more peace building activities and emerging as youth peace promoters in their communities and areas.
- **CF NGO Support** : the ant continues to support Caring Friends (CF) in reaching out to support the work of deserving individuals and NGOs in the Northeast. In April 2014, Nimeshbhai of CF came on one of his soul trips to the northeast and we travelled Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland together for over 12 days and interacted with over 13 groups. It sure was soul-enriching.

We welcome any feedback. Please do get in touch. Our contact is : the ant, Rowmari, P.O Khagrabari, Dist Chirang via Bongaigaon, Assam – 783380; Ph: 9859978991 email: jenny@theant.org ; www.theant.org
(Donations to the ant are exempt from Income Tax as per rules under Sec 80G of the Income Tax Act)