

Samata: Annual Report 2004-05

Background:

Samata is a voluntary organization working for the protection and development of the tribal people in Andhra Pradesh and for the sustainable development of the ecological resources of the Eastern Ghats since 1987. We work in the state of Andhra Pradesh and help tribal and marginalized communities to build their capacities, access development benefits and to promote sustainable development.

Activity Report for 2004-05:

Advocacy for support of tribal people:

Training to Tribal Women's Self Help Groups:

We have given training to more than 200 tribal women on management of thrift societies and self help groups, on community development, PESA Act, the role of women in panchayats and Gram Sabhas and women's empowerment in economic, social and cultural areas. The programmers were also intended to give them confidence and courage to articulate their problems with officials and in public meetings and to demand for equal rights of wages, land ownership and other natural resources in the tribal areas.

Training on Health and Nutrition:

We have given several trainings and capacity building orientation to government Community Health Workers in the tribal areas on primary and reproductive health, on health and hygiene and gender problems with regard to non tribal exploitation and other issues. We have followed up with the women CHW's by helping them in referral cases to district and state level government hospitals, in mobilizing medicines and free treatment to poor tribal and rural patients and in accessing free medical facilities from philanthropic private doctors.

Training to Gram Sabhas:

As the new Panchayats (Extension to Tribal Areas) Act , PESA came into force but is not being properly utilized or known to the tribal people, we have been organizing trainings and meetings to strengthen Gram Sabhas at the village level to help them understand tribal laws, administration and how to mobilize community resources for development of the Gram Sabhas. We have helped them also follow up on day to day issues at the field level like getting pattas, caste certificates, village infrastructure, admission into ashram schools and colleges and other infrastructure concerns.

Tribal Education:

As the interior and hill-top villages are neglected and do not even have primary level education, we are coordinating with the government to represent the problems and help set up GVVK's or alternate schools. Simultaneously, with the help of Sir Dorabjee Tata Trust, we are also directly working with the communities to run their own primary level schools in 40 villages. We have more than 1020 children in these 40 schools to whom we provide education material, get aid from individuals and institutions to help support the education programme and impart training to tribal youth to work as teachers.

We find that the education provided to tribal children is not relevant or of a quality which will help them cope up with the mainstream world. So we are work intensively on documenting tribal history, songs, music and art forms and to integrate this into the curriculum so that tribal children have a strong sense of identity with their culture. We have come out with several stories, songs and other education material which can be used not only in the 40 schools but by government or other schools working in the tribal area.

We also help tribal students in higher education get scholarships or provide facilities for coaching, stay and other facilities so that they can continue their college education.

Follow up on implementation of the Samatha Judgement:

After the Samatha Judgement was passed by the Supreme Court of India in July 1997, we have been continuously following up with the government of A.P on implementation of the judgement. We have coordinated with the local administration to help get pattas for tribals in Borra panchayat and in other tribal areas of Vizag district. We have given several lectures and participated as resource persons at meetings organized by government to explain about the judgement to revenue officials, project officers and sub collectors, etc. We have also given training and orientation to NGO's and other universities (like National Law Schools) on tribal laws and the Judgement.

Forest related activities:

Forestry Round tables were organized at the regional and state levels to highlight the problems of the tribals in the forest areas and to bring officials and tribal community leaders and NGO's together for dialogue and follow up. These have led to some of the field level issues being addressed.

Several state level meetings with NGOs, forest department and tribal welfare department were attended by us on the policy issues with regard to forest rights, PESA, CFM and Fifth Schedule.

Support to tribal communities affected by irrigation projects:

In 2002, Samata got a favourable judgement from the High Court of A.P on behalf of the tribal communities who were proposed to be affected by the Surampalem reservoir in East Godavari district. We contested the project on the legal ground that the Gram Sabha was not consulted upon which the H.C ordered the departments concerned to consult the respective Gram Sabhas and take up the project activities as per their demands. Based on this, we ensured proper consultative resolutions of the Gram Sabhas and implementation of the rehabilitation programme as per people's demands.

The success of the Surampalem rehabilitation process brought the tribals who were displaced by Kovvada reservoir to Samata for assisting them with similar support for getting rehabilitation.

In Kovvada reservoir issue, after we moved the issue with the district collector, there has been a response. The rehabilitation work is in progress and a team from Samata visited the site twice and have prepared a report of the work.

In Surampalem, village reconstruction work has been almost completed in all the villages proposed to be affected, but the people have still not been given agricultural land as compensation. So the people have refused to enter the new rehabilitation colony and we are continuing the campaign with them.

Legal Aid:

- A public interest litigation was filed in support of the tribals affected by the Kovvada reservoir project
- A public interest litigation was filed to support the tribal employees of the Sponge Iron India Ltd (SIL) company
- A public interest litigation on the uranium mining project in Nalgonda district

Wildlife Attack cases:

We had earlier started helping a family whose child was killed by a leopard in Poolabanda village of Paderu mandal. It is almost three years now and there has been no compensation issued. We had earlier sent a legal notice to the forest department upon which they had issued a proceeding letter for compensation. It is now more than a year since this letter was issued but the fund has not been released to the family yet. We have again sent a legal notice but the forest department has responded with a dodgy letter. Simultaneously, we have started helping another victim of wildlife attack. The legal notice sent to the FD was responded with statements alleging it as a false claim. We have gathered the supporting documents from the MRO and police and together both cases are being filed in the High Court as per the Wildlife Protection Act. *(In the month of April the family in Poolabanda were finally paid partial compensation of Rs.50,000)*

Gender Workshop with Tribal Girls on Human Rights issues:

A two-day workshop was organized with tribal girls, Community Health Workers and women CBO members on issues concerning health and human rights violations in the tribal areas. The workshop was organized to sensitise the young tribal women and girls to the social changes due to displacement, development projects, non tribal influences, tourism and other activities and their impact on them. The participants discussed the traditional practices and the positive and negative aspects of these and the impacts of the liberalization process. It was the first time that the women were discussing health, sexual and reproductive issues. The CHW's are illiterate women who still have strong cultural roots and knowledge and the workshop enabled a discussion between them and the educated girls. We also discussed how we could address these at different levels-in residential schools, within the community, in the political spaces and as women's institutions like SHG's.

Infrastructure:

We have provided tiles for two villages to build their houses in Vizag district

National and international networking for social justice:

- We organized the Third International Women and Mining Conference in October 2004 on behalf of mm&P and the International Women and Mining Network. Eighty women from 22 countries who were either mine workers, hailing from communities affected by mining, representatives of trade unions, NGO's supporting campaigns against mining induced injustices and representatives of national and international level advocacy, research and human rights organizations participated in the nine day

conference to share their experiences of struggle with governments, mining industries and financial institutions.

- We also participated in meetings with NGO's, universities and with government departments on the issues of mining and development. We attended the Community Corporate Leadership Programme of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and put forward our experience of working with tribal communities.

Supporting Policy, Legal and Human Rights issues of Adivasis:

- **Draft National Tribal Policy 2004** - Samata was part of the group which organized National Assembly on Draft National Tribal Policy and are keenly following up the policy issues.
- **Amendment of CrPC and CPC rules:** Samata attended the meeting on New Criminal Procedure Codes rules (CrPC) organized by Andhra Pradesh Human Resource Development Academy Hyderabad and submitted our recommendations on the rules.
- **Pursuing policy issues with regard to PESA:** Samata was invited by National Institute of Rural Development for a workshop on framing Draft rules for PESA.s Rules. We presented our inputs and continue to be associated with the tribal welfare department on this.
- Samata also participated in the National Workshop on PESA organized in Bhubaneswar where there was a comparative analysis of the PESA laws and rules across the fifth schedule states and what kind of rules need to be framed to protect the interests of the tribal people in the spirit of the PESA Act.
- **Networking on the Draft Rehabilitation Policy**-Samata is part of the national level networks for rehabilitation policy based on people's rights. We participated in the National Consultation of groups on R&R organized in New Delhi by NAPM and India Coalition and Land Rights Network, to discuss the Draft Rehabilitation Policy on different kinds of projects.

Facilitating field visits and meetings for several national institutions and experts:

- As a way of extending solidarity, we also organize meetings with outsiders in Nimmalapadu. After Ms. Sunita Narain's visit to Nimmalapadu and Borra as part of the CSE's green ratings project and her article in Down to Earth on Nimmalapadu, the Frontline magazine approached us and did two cover stories in the earlier part of the year.
- The committee which was appointed by UN and MoEF with senior bureaucrats and scientists to look at the Ecologically Sensitive Areas was accompanied to the tribal areas in Vizag district and we facilitated the discussions with the communities and showed the ecological threats from mining and from tourism. The committee was very disturbed at the damages being done by tourism inside and around the caves. The committee asked us to make a presentation on the ecological significance of the scheduled area of north coastal A.P in Andhra University. The committee has strongly recommended for declaring the region as ecologically sensitive zone.

- Social Work institutes and colleges have asked Samata to place their students for field experience to understand community development work. We have facilitated field visits of students from Hyderabad School of Social Work, from Tata Institute of Social Sciences and other local colleges.
- In February the Samata team participated in the Knowledge Exhibition organized by SPWD in New Delhi. WE put up a stall displaying the work of Samata in the field of protecting tribal rights and promoting sustainable development.
- We attended the state level workshop organized by CESS and UNDP, in February, on the A.P Human Development report. We have been asked to help them in preparing the report for the tribal regions.
- We were invited to participate and make a presentation on Tribal policies and problems for the Department of Anthropology of University of Hyderabad for their students and the university has invited us to undertake joint programmes on research and development programmes involving the students and has requested for an MoU. We are discussing the collaborating areas for research and action.
- **Participation in international conferences:**
 - We presented a paper on Women Mine workers in India at Canberra University
 - Participated in the Kolisko Conference in Sydney on Waldorf Education