

**Society for Direct Initiative for Social and Health Action**  
**Nineteenth Annual General Meeting**  
**29<sup>th</sup> November 2014**  
**20/4 Sil Lane, Kolkata 700 015**  
**Annual Organisational Report, 2013-2014**

**Respected President and Friends,**

Thank you for attending the seventeenth Annual General Meeting. What follows is the draft summary report of the last year's activities for your perusal and confirmation. Since Jan 2014 to Nov 2014, DISHA has been active in various areas, especially coastal and fishers' rights issues, electronic waste, wetland issues, community rights and human rights issues. DISHA, assisted by activists, friends and sympathisers, has been able to mark some progress in various fields during this period. The organisation has been able to achieve some better position both in terms of human resources in comparison to last year.

**The passing away of our friends**

**Father Thomas Kochery** was a close friend of DISHA. He was the founder member of National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), National Alliance of Peoples' Movement (NAPM) and World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP). As a priest he started his working life and devoted entire life for organizing down-trodden people especially traditional fisher folks. He expired on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2014 after a massive heart attack.

**Chandrika Sharma** was a very close friend of DISHA. She was the Executive Director of International Collective in Support of Fisheries (ICSF), an organization with whom DISHA held number of activities including conference, workshops, visits and studies. She was on her way to Mongolia on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The flight disappeared leaving no trace.

**Kunal Guha Ray** was also a very close friend of DISHA. He was Secretary of Forum for Legal and Human Rights. He was very much instrumental in PIL cases on environment. He joined in our wetland petition and number of initiatives. He expired all on a sudden with a massive heart attack on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

DISHA misses its friends deeply and is yet to get used to the vacuum left by their absence.

## ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014

### I. DOCUMENTATION

We maintain the **documentation** section with a view to supporting researchers, activists and our own publications. The section procures and preserves clippings from different newspapers. This work is going on in its usual manner and pace. However, documentation continues to suffer from some basic problems.

Right now, one major problem seems to be that we do not have anyone sufficiently competent personnel to take proper care of the library. Due to non-availability of the existing staff some two part time new recruitments have been made. But apart from running the regular work any substantial improvement has not been experienced. We have also run into a serious shortage of space. Our collection of books remains grossly inadequate. We avoid purchasing books due to dearth of space though this year several books on coastal and fisheries issues worth Rs 10000/- have been purchased.

**Funding** : The documentation centre has no external financial support but due to somehow, we have been able to run it from our own resources.

**Output from documentation:** The yearly volume of collection of environmental news of West Bengal in Bengali *Sambaade Paribesh, Poschim Banga* could not be published due to non-availability of human resource. There is a plan to publish a Bengali pamphlet on saving green. The work was in progress but its speed seems retarded.

**Networking:** During the year, our network activities with National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) is continuing strong. For some time now we have been extending extensive support to the nationwide activism of fishworkers led by **National Fishworkers Forum (NFF)**. In local level we are having close ties with various fishers' organisation like Dakshin Banga Matsyajibi Forum and its affiliated organizations.

Apart from networking based on forest and coastal issues and fishers' rights, we are continuing close network with **Sabuj Mancha**, a platform of individuals and organisations in West Bengal. DISHA is playing a major role in it. We have played crucial role in **Shramajibi Adhikar Mancha**, a platform active against plight of working people of West Bengal since 2009. During this year we have built relationship with National Alliance for Peoples Movement. A good number of fishers' programme were attended by them. Pradip Chatterjee, Chief Coordinator attended the national conference of NAPM held in Pune.

We are also in touch with many groups in different parts of India and abroad. We are in regular communication with many of these groups. The significant of these contacts are Toxics Link, Nagarik Mancha, Mnabadhiar Suraksha Mancha etc. who have supported a number of our initiatives. We are involved with the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) and in the National Alliance of Anti-Nuclear Movements (NAAM).

We have also made considerable headway in developing strong ties with local groups. We have close relations with *Chetana*, *Purba Kolkata Paribesh Samikshan*, *DRCSC*. We also have close interactions with individuals and groups in the Sunderban area, particularly the, *Sonakhali Sunderban Unnayan Niketan* and *Sundarban Rural Development Society*.

We are active partner in some of the initiatives in the international arena viz., *Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)*, *Waste Not Asia (WNA)*, *International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN)*.

## **II. NEWSLETTER**

Our Newsletter on environment could not be published due to our lack of resources and inclination. We had been very active in publishing the first issue of a bi-monthly newsletter namely *Matsyajibi* on fishers' rights issues. The same covers many environmental issues. But this publication also suffers delay in absence of human resource.

## **WEBSITE**

Some of the new matters have been included in our website. But many more materials should be put up to update it. It is important that the web site is being visited by interested people and some of them are directly contacting us for various reasons. But regular updating of the web site has not been possible for the same reason of lack of human resources.

## **IV. ACTIVITIES IN THE SPHERE OF MEDICAL WASTE**

As an organisation, DISHA has developed a good amount expertise in bio-medical waste management. Perhaps this is the only organisation in West Bengal which has this expertise. But unfortunately the expertise has not been utilized in its proper capacity. Several government officials refer to DISHA whenever any issue comes but our proposal for regular monitoring activity and developing some model initiative has not been accepted by the government.

It was reported in last year's meeting that the MoEFCC had notified a draft amended Rules for BMW management. Though the draft Rules had many positive aspects like formation of monitoring bodies at different levels with the participation of NGOs, it proposed changes, some of which were disastrous. Due to vehement protest from organizations like us the new Rules have not come up but at the same time any change mandating in-house monitoring compulsory by external agencies remains absent.

## **V. ACTIVITIES ON MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE**

We campaign for and look forward to a Zero Waste Society, based on the principles of Reduce-Reuse-Recycle. Reduction, source segregation, composting, vermicomposting, and recycling are issues we would like to address. Earlier, we had organised quite a few meetings, training sessions and implementation programmes on these issues with different municipalities and citizens' groups.

Last year there was an effort to bring a new set of Rules by MoEF&CC. A draft was circulated. This has proposed to omit the compulsory provision of source segregation. The new draft also suggested promotion of incineration. Since a PIL was filed in Karnataka High Court by our fraternal organization ESG and the court issued order to stop notification of the Rules and demanded various clarifications from MoEF&CC. The matter is still pending at the Karnatak High Court.

## **VI. ACTIVITIES IN THE SPHERE OF E-WASTE**

Electric and electronic waste (e-waste) has been on our agenda during the last few years. A project had been launched by European Union and GIZ in 4 cities of India namely Delhi, Bangalore, Pune and Kolkata. The objective was to create models for bringing the people engaged in informal e-waste recycling into a formal stream, which is going to be developed in India in the context of notification of E-waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011. DISHA was a local partner to conduct the project activities in Kolkata. Our task was to find new entrepreneurs who would set up small scale units for collection and dismantling of e-waste, following the norms laid down in the Rules.

This was one of the most challenging result-oriented projects that DISHA had taken so far. After conduction of extensive survey and developing plenty of contacts in e-waste sector we have come up with a suggested model. This has been highly appreciated in the concerned sector. The model outlines selection of leaders among the people engaged in informal sector, providing support for installation of small dismantling units abiding by all the Rules and Guidelines, tag with formal authorized recycler. On the other hand petty collectors and dismantlers who do not have means to set up even small authorized dismantling units may form SHG groups, have access to bank loans and rearrange their activities and tag with the

small dismantling units to channelize their product. They also can establish authorized collection centres inside the city. So a formal chain will be established.

Regarding setting up of dismantling units, substantial progress could be achieved. We took initiative to form two groups of informal dismantlers to install their own dismantling units. We were providing them ground level support in all the areas like company formation, registration, site plan, trade license, no objection from Panchayet, construction, details project report, designing of pollution control equipment, clearance from Pollution Control Board. One unit is to be set up in Ruiya Industrial Complex in Patulia Panchayet near Khardaha in North 24 Parganas. The other in Tekpanja Village, Nishapur Panchayet, near Sangrampur in South 24 Parganas is being constructed. By this time the first one should have received the authorization. But after all the inspection, it revealed that due to some anomaly in records, the land could not be converted into factory land. In case of the second one also conversion of land had been a major issue. Though the project period is over, we are supporting both the initiatives. But due to government procedural delay in land conversion, both the projects could not start their activities.

At the same time we have been entrusted with another important project by GIZ. The project aims that more and more materials now pass through informal channels are routed to formal recyclers. The bulk generators and institutions will also be motivated to dispose of their e-waste through formal channel. Public awareness campaign programmes would be organised. Nokia and now transformed to Microsoft is supporting the project as a part of CSR.

Here we experienced that in spite of our efforts, the petty collectors are not confident enough to channelize their waste to authorized recycler. The matter was reviewed with GIZ and Microsoft at length. It was decided that DISHA may take responsibility to collect mobile phone waste and channelize to authorized recycler. The target fixed for 2014 is at least 1 MT. We were given authorization by Nokia / Microsoft which is authorized by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board. Initially it seemed a large target, particularly when the decision was taken at later part of the year in August. But our team started excellent work and within three months they have been able to collect as much as 270 Kg of mobile waste. But problem was faced from other end. Selected authorized recycler showed reluctance to arrange collection and the project activity got delayed. GIZ extended the period up to February but with no cost. We had to arrange meeting with the recycler in Chennai. However, just yesterday the first consignment could be dispatched. It is to be probed whether this channelizing may be commercially viable. If it can be shown that people can make viable business through this process, this may be projected as model and informal sector may really take interest.

Apart from mobile phone waste, our team has also collected a good amount of other e-waste through school campaign. These materials have been transferred to refurbishers as most of the collected materials were repairable.

## **VII. ACTIVITY ON TOXIC ISSUES**

In 2013-14 we did not have any specific activity or project on toxicity related studies or programme. Our general coordination with IPEN and SAICOM continued.

## **VIII. COASTAL AND FISHERS' ISSUES**

This has been a major focus area in our activities. Since 2001 we are engaged in coastal environmental issues and supporting the small and traditional fish workers' cause as they are natural custodian of the coastal environment. We have continued to provide support to the coastal fishworkers' movement led by NFF. Recently some questions have developed regarding the present activities of the NFF leadership as the long pending cardinal issues are kept unattended for long time. It is strongly felt that demand for a comprehensive act to protect the coast is not being given due importance. An effort to sensitize the leaders of three states, namely WB, Orissa and AP has been taken.

Another important step has been taken to prepare coastal map in West Bengal. DISHA in association with DMF organized a meeting on coastal mapping. Our friend Probir Bannerjee, East coast convenor of National Campaign for Protection of Coast (NCPC) gave a talk on importance and procedure of coastal mapping. The meeting was very well attended by the civil society. Thereafter we sent a team led by our President Santanu Chacraverti with three other activists to have short term training on coastal mapping in an institute in Chennai. After the training, the team procured GPS instruments and started mapping in East Midnapore in Boguran Jalpai village.

Since 2012 we are also trying to organise the inland fishers. We became deeply involved with many river fishers. Last year we have spread our footing towards culture fisheries also. A large number of pond based fishers have been surveyed in different districts. Fishers' organizations are also spreading among the pond based fishers.

A project granted by Action Aid India obviously gave us scope to move beyond voluntary support. A good number of activists in different districts were supported during last two years. But unfortunately the Action Aid support did not continue in the first part of 2014. So a good amount of resource of the organization had to be engaged in this field. Moreover always there was an amount of uncertainty. Now it

is our headache how the work in fisheries sector will sustain in absence of a regular support.

Now DISHA has rented offices in Kanthi in Purba Medinipur, and in Diamond Harbour in South 24 Pgs mainly to support the fishers' organisations.

We continued series of activities including day to day activities maintaining close alliance with *Dakshin Banga Matsyajibi Forum and its affiliates Sundarban Joutha Matsyajibi Sangram Committee, Kanthi Mahakuma Khoti Matsyajibi Unnayan Samiti, Purba Upakuliya Matsyajibi Vendor Union, Rupnarayan Nod matsyajibi Union and Hoogly Zilla Matsyajibi Forum. Sagar and Namkhana Block Matsyajibi forum* in South 24 Pgs. The coverage areas of almost all the unions and efforts have considerably expanded in during last year. We hold number of meetings in Bankura and established contacts. We have been able to support quite a number of DISHA activists who are inside or nearer to the communities and performing day to day functions of the organisations and their expansion.

Our important interventions in this sector in the recent period includes (a) forest rights of fisher people in Sundarban, (b) ban on fishing in several areas of Sundarban and atrocities of forest department, (c) coastal land rights for fishers communities, (d) ban and restriction on fishing in Hoogly and Rupnarayan river, (e) pollution in rivers, (f) fishers' identity cards and social security issues.

In one particular move we could achieve some important result. The Tiger Project authority directed by an order of the Forest Department imposed ban on use of fuel wood by the fishers who go for fishing in Sundarban with due permit and BLC. A massive sensitization programme was organized on 3-4 Sept. The authority had to suspend the order and committed to review the BLC distribution system.

This year we have been able to conduct two important studies. One is on Sundarban and its fisher people led by Santanu Chacraverti. The other is on status of pond based fishers in nine block of three districts led by Pradip Chatterjee. Both the studies we

re supported by ICSF. Report of the first one is almost complete and the other is in draft stage.

Our interventions on various issues in fisheries sector require further persuasion. Each and every issue deserves sustained attention but we are failing to satisfy the need. One reason is of course lack of man power. At the same time, we have to consider whether we should select some particular issues for the time being and focus on them or continue to attend all the issues together with our limited resources and man power.

## **X. ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD OF PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

We have been trying to support some community activities for supporting of livelihood alternative to using of natural resources so that pressure upon natural resources reduces. Such activities are conducted in three areas of Sundarban – Lahiripur, Amjhara-Hedia and Samshernagar with the support of Siemenpuu Foundation of Finland through a short term project. The activities mainly covered extensive mangrove plantation on river banks, fish cultivation in ponds and rearing of goats and chickens by women groups. Two campaigns one on keeping the forest clean and the other on community rights in forest areas are also being conducted under this project. Two coaching centres for fishers' children have been supported through this project. We are trying to expand these activities if support continues.

## **XI. WETLANDS**

DISHA's efforts towards protecting wetlands from encroachment had yielded important fruits in previous year. DISHA's petition (jointly with FHLEER) at the Calcutta High Court for protection of Wetlands in West Bengal had resulted in a highly applauded judicial verdict. The verdict led to the creation of a governmental High Power Committee on Wetlands, with the mandate of coming up with recommendations that would make future wetland PILs unnecessary. DISHA's inputs proved crucial at the High Power Society Hearing and in the making of the High Power Committee Report.

The Committee's report and recommendations were appropriate. But the government is still sitting on these recommendations. We have already written to the Secretary seeking an explanation. We are to send an ultimatum in preparation of another round of legal engagement.

Apart from the above, DISHA had been engaged in two other issues of Wetland activism – the Bally Jagacha wetlands and the further encroachments of the Bikramgarh Jheel. Our members Sasanka Kar and Kunal Thakur were active in saving wetland of Hind Motor. It was earlier reported that three other water bodies could be saved in this year. One in eastern side of Eastern Bypass where the boundary wall created by the miscreants had been demolished by KMC. The other two are in Hatgachia behind Milan Mela Prangan the famous Captain Bheri could not be saved in spite of our efforts. We have to think how we should move further in this sector.

## **XII. SAVE THE GREENS**

An important move has been made by DISHA with our veteran friend Sankar Hazra and other young activists to Kolkata Chapter of Green Bench. Initially the case of Bally station where railway authority was cutting large trees indiscriminately was taken up. Green Bench in its first hearing directed the railway authority to stop tree felling and submit report regarding its requirement. The case is alive.

It was decided in a special general meeting of DISHA that efforts will be taken to publish a Bengali pamphlet to raise awareness among common people who are interested to save greens - what is to be done in case of tree felling in your locality. Some progress has been achieved but the process is delayed.

## **XIII. NUCLEAR POWER**

During the last one year, as in the previous years, DISHA has been continuously active in carrying out anti-nuclear campaigns. DISHA, as a member of the Paramanu Bidyut Birodhi Prachar Andolan, has been constantly active in organizing awareness and protests in West Bengal. DISHA's President Santanu Chacraverti is keeping in touch with them. Our Executive Committee member Pradip Dutta has been significantly contributing to anti-nuclear literature and campaign to raise awareness.

## **XIV. SABUJ MANCHA**

The platform was formed in 2009 consisting of organisations and individuals concerned on environment. But the activity was at low ebb. Since July 2012 the platform has become very active. Number of environmental issues including sponge iron pollution, sound pollution, water bodies and wetlands, tree felling is being addressed through the platform. A non-official enquiry commission under the chairmanship of Bhagabati Prasad Banerjee, Ex-judge has been set up. The Commission, though non-official, is being attended by many state and central government departments including police authorities. Representatives of local urban bodies are also being present in the hearings. Some of the Commission's judgment has also been implemented. DISHA being an important constituent of the platform is playing active role in it.

## **A BRIEF SUBMISSION ON ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS**

Considering the limited resource of the organisation, one can say that last year DISHA performed beyond its capacity. Lots of issues have been addressed and some policy intervention could be possible. Yet the demand of the situation is more and we are not being able to cope up with this demand. I request all the members and supporters to give more efforts, take more responsibilities and try to make some real

change. It is understood that it is not always possible for all the members to be involved with all the ongoing activities particularly when most of the work is taking place in rural sector or in a specific community. But the members are requested to create their own areas of involvement and connect DISHA with those.

Thanks to our Asst. Secretary, Shyamalendu Biswas for organizing bimonthly members and supporters' meetings. It was nice that we had interacted on several ongoing issues in these meetings and members could keep them apprised. But more fruits were expected from such meetings.

There are more than 30 activists are now attached with DISHA's work. Most of them are paid minimum amount as temporary staff. Nine activists, who are office staff in Kolkata, Diamond Harbour and Kanthi offices, are relatively better paid and was given contract appointment in January 2014 for one year. Health and accident insurance have been arranged for them. These were done on the basis of some assurance from Action Aid regarding a long-term project. But right now the same has not been finalized. It is still unknown how the work will be sustained.

I would like to conclude with the belief that DISHA will be able to achieve more and better in the days to come through the combined efforts of all its members, staff, friends and well-wishers.

Regretting any errors and omissions and with heartiest congratulations,

Yours sincerely

***Sasanka Dev***  
SECRETARY