VOICE

ECONOMIC JUSTICE: Working towards reducing inequality and securing sustainable livelihoods

Page 01
REGIONAL NEWS
Updates from Oxfam India’s regional offices.

Page 02
OPINIONS MATTER
Why livelihoods are essential to eradicate rural poverty.

Page 04
NEWSROOM
A roundup of Oxfam India’s work from the last quarter.

Page 07
PARTNER PROFILES
Learn more about Oxfam India’s local partners.

Woman working together under the collective farming project in Sahar Block, Bhojpur District, Bihar.
Wishing you all a very happy International Women’s Day!

In the 106th International Women’s Day, Oxfam India takes the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to continue to work persistently for women’s equality.

It is good to be back with another informative and comprehensive issue of our quarterly newsletter, ‘Voice’.

The word inequality has been making headlines these days. Oxfam has been working on issue of inequality and was in news recently for predicting that by 2016 the richest one percent will own half of the world’s wealth.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International, co-chaired the World Economic Forum’s 2015 Annual Meeting in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland. It was an important opportunity for Oxfam to talk about growing income inequality as a major global risk for several years running.

The time has come for urgent introspection. I find it fitting that the third edition of ‘Voice’ is focused on economic justice.

It is a matter of serious concern that people living in regions with the country’s richest assets like forests and minerals are one of the poorest. Tribals are deprived of their rights over the very forests they live in.

The states of Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh – all focus states of Oxfam India – together account for 1/3 of India’s tribal population, 1/4 of the country’s forest resources and 2/3 of the country’s minerals.

This disparity isn’t limited just to tribal communities. Agriculture still remains the largest employer in rural areas. But women in agriculture still don’t have equal status over land rights or the produce from their fields they sow.

Oxfam India is working towards reducing this access gap. You will learn more about our work to end economic inequality in this edition.

Also, with the strong support of our partners and networks, Oxfam India marked the ‘16 Days of Activism’ campaign with a groundswell of efforts to raise awareness on ‘Ending Violence Against Women’.

Nisha Agrawal
Chief Executive Officer,
Oxfam India
Across the world, digital communications give farmers access to information like market rates, help them adapt to climate change and extreme weather, and assist them in making well-informed decisions. One such innovation in Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand impacted lives of many farmers in the Himalayan region.

**WITH A FARMER**

“Having registered with the SMS services, I now get daily information on market rates of harvested crops. Last year, my tomatoes sold at the desired market rate with the information provided through SMS. The availability of information at the right time helps me and other farmers negotiate effectively with buyers.”

– Mr. Ramesh Nautiyal, a farmer living in Dewalsari village, in Uttarkashi district registered with HARC’s SMS service.

**WITH A WOMAN FARMER**

“Earlier we were forced to work in other farmer’s fields to earn our livelihood. We had neither regular work nor wages, and meager profits and investments. In 2011, a group of 10 women pooled their funds together to start collective farming on 0.2 acres of land. We shared loss and profit equally. Gradually investments multiplied, and we now farm on 0.8 acres of land. Initially, men were negative and would say, we would not be able to manage farming along with household chores. In due course, our hard work reaped results, and even our husbands started helping. Aajivika Sahayta Kendra (ASK) supports and educates us on benefits from government schemes. Now we can say “women are farmers too!”

– Mrs. Shail Kumari Devi, Secretary Luxmi Mahila Kisan Samiti, Nawada district, Bhojpur, Bihar,talks about collective farming group achievements, with ASK’s support.
Vanita Suneja, Oxfam India’s Economic Justice lead, argues that India can’t progress until it tackles rural poverty.

Farmers also partially earn from employment in non-farm sectors. Still, incomes are generally very low. The 70th National Sample Survey Office estimated average monthly incomes per agricultural household, across India from July 2012 to June 2013, to be just Rs. 6,426. Of this, farming accounted for 60%, and wages 32%.

Empowering Women Farmers

Going ahead, investments and policy reforms in agriculture must prioritise small and marginal farmers, and facilitate more entrepreneurship opportunities for women. A major obstacle is the absence of land titles in women’s names, hindering their access to technology, irrigation, credit and markets. It’s vital that technology outreach, agricultural schemes and information on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) are not restricted simply to big full-time farmers, but also reach part-time farmers, especially women.

The Forest Dependent

Inclusive growth is also imperative for Forest-based employment which has been neglected over the years. Forest-dependent communities, often in conflict with the government’s
Concentrated policy interventions proved that an average agricultural growth jump from 2.4% in the decade 1995 to 2004, to 4% for 2005 to 2014, is possible.

Over half of India's 90.6 million rural households are in farming. 216 million live below the official poverty line on Rs32 a day.

Forest Department, have been demanding their rights to their forest resources. Around a quarter of the rural population, including 70% of tribes, living in and around forest areas are dependent on forest resources for livelihoods.

60% of India's forested area are tribal.

Our country's 'scheduled tribes' lag 20 years behind the general population, with the worst indicators of child malnutrition and mortality, and risk being completely locked out of sharing prosperity. The states of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Odisha together account for 1/3rd of total tribals, 1/3rd of forest resources and 2/3rd of minerals. Here, mining conflicts are commonplace.

Towards Inclusive Reforms

Building more inclusive policies for forest-dependent communities is essential. The need of the hour is secure access to their forests, support in building up value chains based on minor forest produce (MFP), and an end to the Forest Department’s dual control on forest resources and their sale.

Though the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 recognises community rights over forest resources, its implementation has been systematically undermined by the Forest Department. It is important to expedite the implementation of FRA, and bring further reforms under it, such as providing explicit rights over timber.

What Threatens Rural Livelihoods?

One progressive step has been the introduction of a government scheme to provide a Minimum Support Price (MSP) to forest dwellers for some products. But once again, its implementation leaves much to be desired, with many important products such as tendu leaves and bamboo, nationalised and controlled by the Forest Department.

Two external forces further threaten rural livelihoods.

Firstly, dispossession by the state for mining, industry and infrastructure and secondly, the impact of climate change on both agriculture and forestry.

Safeguards to minimise forced dispossession, like informed consent, resettlement, rehabilitation and adequate compensation, are some key elements needed to foster broad-based growth in rural areas. State Action Plans on climate change, especially adaptation budgets, also need to be made effective and acted upon swiftly. Climate change cannot be seen as a standalone issue disassociated from rural India’s isolation. And lastly, the need for integral safety nets to address malnutrition and hunger.

Social protection programmes, under the Food Security Act 2013, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) and the Maternity Benefit programme in rural India, are necessary for populations that strive for economic justice. Demanding policies and investments for a resilient and prosperous rural India, where people have dignified livelihoods is a transformative and necessary agenda, just as it was for Mahatma Gandhi.
**EVENTS**

**WALKS AND TOURS**

- **Mumbai Trailwalker:** December 5 to 7, 2014
  A national record was set at the Mumbai edition of Oxfam’s flagship fundraising event, Trailwalker. Team Gladiators from the Indian Army completed the 100 km walk in 10 hours, two minutes. 121 teams participated in the 110 km event, of which 117 completed the endurance challenge. This edition also featured the first ever women’s edition - the 55 km walk. 12 teams started the 55 km walk and 10 completed the challenge in 2 hours.

- **Bengaluru Trailwalker:** January 31 to 25, 2015
  At the fourth Bengaluru Trailwalker, participants walked a new trail, Sathanur to Nethers, the Silk Route of the county. It was the first time in the Trailwalker events, out of the 281 teams that started, 38% completed the 100 km challenge. Both events, Mumbai and Bengaluru, raised over Rs. 1.3 Crore for Oxfam India to fight poverty and injustice.

- **Cycle Trip for recognising Women as Farmers:** December 12, 2014 to January 12, 2015
  A cycle trip for recognising Women as Farmers was organized to raise awareness on the role of women farmers in general masses and state government. Akshay Kumar from partner NGO Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAP) cycled over 3,000 kms across Uttar Pradesh as part of the Aaroh Campaign. Huge media support helped spread his message widely amongst government representatives and communities. Through group discussions with local rural communities, the need to recognize women as farmers was explored.

**RELIEF WORK**

- **Assam Crisis:** 2014 ended with more than 150,000 people fleeing their homes for relief camps when violence broke out in Kokrajhar, Chirang and Sonitpur, Assam. In such situations, outbreak of diseases is the biggest concern. Oxfam provided Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) support to relief camps, and closely monitored the situation. After transferring water testing equipment to Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD), water testing in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps was set up. Working with local partner North East Research and Social Work Networking, Oxfam responded by providing hygiene kits to over 3,000 people, distributing 552 emergency shelter kits and setting up sheds to protect women, lactating mothers and children.

**NEWSROOM**

**TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS**

- **Community Forest Rights:** January 11, 2015
  Oxfam India along with NGO partners organized a State Level Public Hearing on Community Forest Rights to focus on the different policy level concerns of Forest Rights Act. Juel Oram, Minister Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India, inaugurated the event and assured to work for protection of rights of Tribals in the state.

**CONFERENCES AND CAMPAIGNS**

- **Beyond Lima:** November 8, 2014, New Delhi
  The 20th Conference of the Parties (COP20) held from December 1 to 12, 2014 in Lima, Peru, was aimed at formulating the architecture for a globally binding...
agreement to tackle climate change at COP21 Paris in December 2015. The PreCOP Consultations were organised by Beyond Copenhagen along with National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change, Laya, Climate Action Network South Asia and Oxfam India.

A crucial year for climate change, the final opportunity to draft an agreement.

With the strong support of partners and networks Oxfam India ‘16 Days of Activism’ campaign was marked with a groundswell of support to raise awareness, and end violence against women. The global campaign from November 25, International Day continued till December 10, Human Rights Day. This multi-pronged campaign was spread across Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

In 2011, Oxfam India partners in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra gave Community Forest Rights (CFR) in 2012 partner in Odisha also gave CFR.

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The Ministry issued comprehensive guidelines for the implementation on 12.7.2012 to ensure that interdepartmental duties to regulate forest dwellers.

In 2012, for the first time community rights were given in Chhattisgarh: Odisha and played a significant role in building awareness.

Visits

Visits

#16daysOfActivism: Patna Women’s College emphasized on the need to end gender-based discrimination at home and give equal opportunities to girls during 16 days of activism.

#16daysOfActivism: 1.5 km long human chain was formed in Raipur extending solidarity against gender-based violence.

#16daysOfActivism: More than 750 women from 23 groups & 8 districts came together to “Break the Silence” in Chhattisgarh.

Learning from India: December 12 to 14, 2014: Gaya, Bihar

India’s Right to Food campaigns and legislations are inspiration for our neighbouring countries, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. Towards this our South Asian colleagues, together with, Anna Bronkhorst, CRW lead, Oxfam India and a Bangladesh law commission member embarked on a Right to Food Learning visit. The team started with understanding the campaign from its beginnings, from a national perspective. A visit to Bihar, led by Oxfam India’s regional Patna office and Koshish Charitable Trust brought clarity on regional law initiatives, with a focus on community mobilisation, ownership and monitoring systems set up by Koshish to facilitate proper implementation of National Food Security Act 2013.
Bhanumati, a woman farmer practicing mixed crop farming, with radish, assorted vegetables and watermelon.

**Digital links**
- Website: [www.oxfamindia.org](http://www.oxfamindia.org)
- Facebook: [Facebook.com/oxfamindia](https://www.facebook.com/oxfamindia)
- Twitter: @Oxfamindia
- Blogs: [www.oxfamindia.org/blog](http://www.oxfamindia.org/blog)

**What we're reading**
- Films to promote maternal health
- Inequality in Asia
- Nearly 500m people in Asia live in poverty
- 50m people displaced due to "development projects" over last 50 years (Our expectation from [http://bit.ly/1EsnzGD](http://bit.ly/1EsnzGD))
- "Development projects" destroy lives and livelihoods
Our partners are our heroes. Oxfam India is working with 42 partners for implementation of Economic Justice work in seven focus states. Here we learn more about our partners in working on Economic Justice.

**CHAUPAL GRAMIN VIKAS PRASADIKSHAN EVAN SHODH SANSTHAN (CHAUPAL)**

Livelihood security for primitive tribes

In 2002, Chaupal was set up by adivasi grassroot activists in Surguja district, Chhattisgarh for issues of right to food and right to work, amongst adivasis. In 2012, Chaupal began work on right to natural resource management and livelihood by demanding implementation of FRA.

**Steps taken:**
- Create awareness on rights under Forest Rights Act (FRA), The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) and samhita Santhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA).
- Strengthen community institutions, and support sustainable management of natural resources for forest dependent communities.
- Making government accountable to FRA implementations.

**Outcomes**
In January 2013, started process to file state’s first ever claims for Community Forest Rights. Communities mapped their village and forest area to identify and claim resources on which their livelihoods depend. Map sanctioned and signed by Gram Sabha, Forest Rights Committee (FRC) members and further sent for approval of District Committee.

**HIMALAYAN ACTION RESEARCH CENTRE (HARC)**

| Enabling an integrated approach to livelihood recovery and enhanced climate resilient capacities, amongst farmers.

Established in 1988, HARC aims to contribute towards recovery and restoration of livelihoods in disaster affected communities, through enhanced climate resilient practices in Uttarakhand. The primary focus is to revive agricultural livelihoods post disasters. HARC works to help farmers become skilled, knowledgeable and acquire resilience to climate changes, with low cost eco-friendly techniques required for climate resilient crops and the sustainability of the fragile Himalayan eco-system.

**Steps taken:**
- Revival of affected livelihoods.
- Promotion of age and skill based business activities, facilitating market linkages.
- Increased access to technology, income generation options and decision making for women.
- Create an environment and provide a platform to influence government programmes and policies.

**Outcomes**
Disaster affected families in 10 villages restored their livelihoods.

- 705 farmers recovered livelihood options through climate resilient agricultural practices.
- 25% income enhancement of 80% farmers, 85% farmers gained access to IT enabled systems, 85% farmers given access to markets and quality inputs through collective marketing.
- Emergence of producer federation for surplus vegetables, fruits and flower production.
- Collective enterprise by women to increase income and improve food security.

**PRAGATI GRAMIN VIKAS SANITI (PGVS)**

Empowering people and Institutions in their rights over land and livelihood

In 1985 a group of young social activists started working for Patna’s poorest Scheduled Caste community which later got registered as Pragati Gramin Vikas Saniti (PGVS). The Pragati Gramin Vikas Saniti (PGVS) works to empower Bihar’s most marginalised and scheduled castes on their rights to land and livelihood, education, health, NREGA, social security, and campaigns for right to forest and forest land under Forest Rights Act (FRA). PGVS also initiated women’s income generation through group farming to empower them as a strong organisation of the excluded community.

**Steps taken:**
- Consolidation of grassroots, district and state level, while reaching out to adjoining villages, to increase its individual and household membership.
- Acquiring joint deeds of homestead land for homeless/harassess.
- Promoting food security of small and marginal farmers through collective farming.

**Outcomes**
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**Steps taken:**
- Grassroot programmes with community-based actions, evidence based advocacy and capacity building to influence policies from a pro-poor and rights based perspective.
- Ensure transparent, gender sensitive, accountable and democratic governance by building the capacities of people and organisations in participatory planning.

**Outcomes**
Developed model organic farms with training programmes on year round multi-cropping, use of vermi compost, diversification of income generation through non-farm activities, such as schemes and poultry.

- Played a pivotal role in establishment of civil society coalition National Social Watch (NSW), and campaigns like Wada Na Todo ( Hindi: Government, Keep Your Promises) and Nine is Mine (9% of public expenditure for health and education), that monitor the performance and accountability of key governance institutions.

**CENTER FOR YOUTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CYSID)**

| Extreme poverty eradication

For three decades, CYSID has focused on extreme poverty, hunger eradication, social inclusion and justice, good governance and citizen rights. Working with sustainable tribal/rural livelihoods, participatory governance and building disaster resilient communities, CYSID reaches out to 5 lakh people or 1.8 lakh poor families in 2010 villages.

**Steps taken:**
- Launched programmes with community-based actions, evidence based advocacy and capacity building to influence policies from a pro-poor and rights based perspective.
- Ensure transparent, gender sensitive, accountable and democratic governance by building the capacities of people and organisations in participatory planning.

**Outcomes**
- Developed model organic farms with training programmes on year round multi-cropping, use of vermi compost, diversification of income generation through non-farm activities, such as schemes and poultry.
- Played a pivotal role in establishment of civil society coalition National Social Watch (NSW), and campaigns like Wada Na Todo ( Hindi: Government, Keep Your Promises) and Nine is Mine (9% of public expenditure for health and education), that monitor the performance and accountability of key governance institutions.
More than a quarter of India's population depends on the forest for survival. Forest dwellers, including tribals, are amongst the poorest and most vulnerable in society, with the highest poverty indicators. Oxfam India's Natural Resource Management programme is aimed at increasing poor people's access, and securing their rights to the natural resources that support their livelihoods.

275 million people in 1.73 lakh villages are dependent on forestland in India.

70% of coal
60% of bauxite
80% of high-grade iron ore
33.3% tribals
25% forest resources
66.67% of minerals

After Bihar, Chhattisgarh has the second highest incidence of poverty among all Indian states.

Oxfam India’s Work

19,945 Individual Forest Rights Claims filed
4,621 IFR claims received
188 Community Forest Rights Claims received

66% tribes were empowered on their rights to accessing forest land and resources

40,000 houses
26 districts

In 2013, Oxfam India reached 40,000 households in 26 districts, through NRM work.