

# **A Report of Advocacy Campaign against Land Alienation led by Adivasis in Khammam District, Andhra Pradesh, India**

**Reporting Period: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010 To 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011**

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**Moving towards protecting and promoting Land Rights of Adivasis in Khammam District ....A Journey of SNEHA (Society for Non Formal Education, Health and Awareness)**

## **Introduction – About the implementing agency**

To improve the living conditions of tribal people and to protect the land rights of Adivasis in Khammam district, Andhra Pradesh Sneha has been successfully carried out result oriented and fruitful campaigns by involving local people and various government departments.

Sneha Society for Non Formal Education, Health and Awareness is an NGO located in Sattupally town, Khammam district of Andhra Pradesh state, India. Since its establishment in 1992 it is working for the single objective of tribal development. By adopting a broad principle of Self-development of tribals through capacity building, Sneha played important role in implementing a range of project interventions for the development and well being of tribals like awareness generation, health, and trainings on legal issues, environment, education and sustainable development.

The project was designed on the basis of a long term objective of strengthening tribal social support structures such as Kula panchayats, Panchyati Raj Institutions and other Civil Society Organizations to act against land alienation and enforcement of all the constitutional rights which are related to their empowerment.

## **Goal and objectives of the project**

### **Objectives:**

- To enable Adivasis and their support structures understand the applicable laws, regulations and government orders (GOs) and their implications on their own rights
- To catalyse civil society response for social pressure on the system (line departments, agencies, etc.) to ensure that land protection laws, regulations and GOs are enforced
- To organize rallies, public open forum meetings, all political party meetings, press meets at the Mandal level aiming at Adivasi led advocacy and lobbying, especially focussing on new policy propositions
- To build the social capital of Adivasi Land Rights' Taskforce (ALaRT) at Panchayat level and their federation at Mandal level to promote and protect Adivasi Land Rights
- Community action against land alienation and enforce the bureaucracy for implementation of applicable laws, regulations and government orders for protection and promotion of Adivasi land rights.

**Purpose of the activity:** The main focus of the interventions was laid down on generating awareness and community action against land alienation and enforced the bureaucracy for implementation of applicable laws and government orders for protecting tribal rights. Huge

advocacy campaign has been initiated with the involvement of community based groups from village level to mandal level.

The activities carried out in the year can be categorized in to six broad areas as mentioned below. And the purpose, content and course of action have narrated under each head.

#### 1. Awareness generation

##### 1. A. Public events like rallies, public open forum meetings

The project has been implemented in **10 Grama Panchayats** of the **Velerpadu and Kukunoor mandals of Khammam district**. Majority people of the communities in the project area are illiterates, ignorant and not aware of any constitutional or other policy implications on their rights. Without any knowledge of the acts and rights, the tribals cannot pursue their problems and unable to develop in all spheres of their life. In order to generate community action **a series of awareness camps** were organized in the project area. Tribal people have participated in the awareness programs and gained knowledge regarding various laws. Adivasi leaders, project coordinators and organizers were involved in these camps.

In order to raise awareness among the tribal community Sneha have organized awareness camps, **rallies and public open forum meetings at village, panchayat mandal, and district level** as well. Rallies were held two mandals with community leaders and adivasi leaders. **Around 180 people participated in the two rallies. These participants include adivasi farmers, women and youth.**

##### 1. B. Translation of laws

To orient the people in the community on important constitutional provisions, laws and government orders related to tribal were translated in to local language. The following laws were translated by involving senior professional legal practitioners and activists who are eminent in legal issues of adivasis.

1. Constitutional provisions such as Articles 244 (1), (2) 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule and 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of constitution
2. Regulation 1 of 1970
3. The schedule Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Tribal Rights) Act 2006
4. The schedule Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Tribal Rights) Rules 2007
5. Government of Andhra Pradesh orders, Go MS. No. 1049 dated July 28, 2007 on Ranga Rao Land Committee Report.
6. Rights on MFP
1. C. Press meets

All awareness programs were covered by local print media. Apart from this The implementing organization conducted press meets to bring the factual situation of adivasis in the project areas to the notice of government and general public. It drew the attention of all stake holders such as community leaders, all political party leaders through these press meets. It also raise the need of community action against land alienation and enforce the bureaucracy for implementation of concerned laws and government orders for protection and promotion of adivasi land rights.

## 2. Community interface with line departments

**Revenue department, Forest department and ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency)** are the key departments which are regularly intervene in many aspects of tribal people. Almost every month Sneha has facilitated the **community to interface with line departments** has been done. In fact the officials of ITDA wrested total powers in the project area despite the fact that the tribal leaders are vested with constitutional powers. But after conducting the series of awareness interventions and interaction with ITDA officials they realized the actual powers/rights of adivasis and noticed the change occurred in the people attitude. The **intensive efforts of organizers and community people made them to abide and implement the constitutional obligation in assigning powers and rights** to the scheduled tribes in the agency areas enshrined in various acts.

The information on legal aspects which were translated in to local language became much more useful and in a great use for them when the interacting with line departments. They served as resource material to full extent.

## 3. Mobilizing political leaders and drawing their attention towards adivasis

Three meetings with all political party representatives were conducted in Kukunoor and Velerpad mandals respectively. Not only political representatives from all parties but Adivasi community leaders also took part in the meetings. These meetings drew the attention of public. Political leaders also expressed their solidarity towards the issues of adivasis. About 120 representatives were equipped with knowledge on Fifth Schedule of the constitution, its amendments and the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996 (PESA).

## 4. Building advocacy campaigns and social capital buildings of ALaRT

### 4. A. Social capital buildings of ALaRT

To reach the primary objective of building the social capital of Adivasi Land Rights Task Force Committees at panchayat level were initiated in the community. The principle goal of these Task Force Committees is to act like a watch dog in protecting and promoting Adivasi land rights. These committees were initiated in all panchayats and all these committees were gathered into a single platform and formed into mandal level federation. These committees held meetings every month to discuss about various development issues in related to adivasis.

The Task Force Committee functions on a regular basis and meets every month to monitor the situation of the campaign on tribal issues. They were also tried to exercise their land rights with the help of ITDA officials through lobbying with them. The Task Force Committee members are in touch with government officials every month and created an impression among officials that

now the tribal people are fully aware about their rights and no longer they cannot tolerate the exploitation by non tribal's.

#### 4. B. Advocacy campaigns/meetings

Sneha strongly believed that the only solution to empower the tribal community towards accessing their rights would be that the tribals are not only aware of the laws and rights but become powerful structures to campaign and advocate for those rights on a sustainable basis. Hence, Task force committees were initiated as mentioned above to lead advocacy campaigns. This campaign includes **several community based groups such as Adivasi women groups, mahila sanghas, (women associations/organizations) and other women headed CBOs (Village Organizations headed by women leaders)** were actively involved in advocacy initiatives.

Village Revenue Officer (VRO), Mandal Revenue Officer (MRO) and Project Officer of the ITDA were also took part in the monthly campaign meets. The advocacy efforts were turned into intensive campaign with special focus on the new policy implications.

**Representation to Union Minister:** Around **150 community leaders** from different profiles like women leaders, Panchayat Representatives and other community people gone to New Delhi to meet Union Minister and gave their representation with their recommendations and demands towards proper implementation of various laws related to land alienation and other rights.

#### 5. Review and monitoring of the progress

Review meetings for the field staff held by the Director of the implementing organization to check whether the activities have been carrying out well or need any support. These reviews would equip the staff with new insights and technical inputs to carry out each and every activity with result based management. Participatory planning and implementation adopted by the organization with special emphasis laid on day to day monitoring on field activities.

Interface with government departments has given good result in the form of their active involvement and participation in each and every activity carried out from bottom to top level.

#### Content and method of the activity

Participatory planning, implementation and management were adopted in order to achieve the objectives of the proposed project. The entire interventions carried out in the lines of people's participation.

Interface with government departments, public events like rallies, open forum meetings, all party consultations and press meets were organized intensively and these activities drawn the attention of the community and other stake holders in the society as well. The main focus of all these events was on generating awareness and community action towards protecting the interests, autonomy and rights which are provided by the constitution for the development of Adivasis.

## Achievements of the activity

Achievements of the project towards objectives and activities are described below:

Activities	Achievements	Out reach
1. Awareness generation 1.a. Rallies	Two rallies were organized in Kukunoor and Velerpadu mandals. The community leaders and adivasi leaders participated in the rallies	180 people have actively take part in the two rallies.
1.b. Awareness camps	Awareness camps were organized in two mandals, with involvement of adivasi leaders, village people, project coordinators and legal advisors.	At Village level - 250 people participated At Panchayat level - 400 people are aware about their rights
1.c. Translation of laws	Active involvement of adivasis. Professional legal practitioners are engaged to translate the laws. Adivasis are educated on legal issues like LTR. Many tribal laws like Regulation 1 of 1970, Forest Rights and other laws related to the protection of tribal rights were translated in to local language.	Political leaders, local community people from 10 panchayats, activists and legal professionals.
1.d. Workshop on policies	Adivasis and the local political leaders also felt that they are useful for them The Staff of ITDA and other government officials were aware about the tribal policies	150 members from different profiles such as Government officials, local leaders.

	<p>intensively.</p> <p>The government officials are sensitized towards adivasi issues and their rights.</p>	
2. Community interface with line departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good rapport was developed between the community and government officials.</li> <li>• ITDA officials were sensitized on the laws in depth</li> <li>• They realized the rights of adivasis and abide to implement the government orders.</li> <li>• Tribals experienced Good response from them whenever they approached them.</li> </ul>	ITDA officials, Forest department staff and officials of Revenue Department
3. Mobilizing political leaders A. All party meetings B. Public opinion meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives of all political parties actively participated in all party meetings.</li> <li>• They were fully aware of the adivasi issues and their rights.</li> <li>• Huge public response came up from many stake holders through open forum meetings.</li> </ul>	<p>Local political leaders from all parties. Around 120 representatives were participated.</p> <p>Adivasi leaders were also engaged.</p>
4. Advocacy meetings/camps  Representatives from community to Delhi to meet Union minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strong recommendations have come up from the people for implementing the laws and government orders.</li> <li>➤ Press coverage of series of advocacy campaign meetings spread the purpose of the campaign intensively.</li> <li>➤ Succeed in mobilizing</li> </ul>	<p>VROs, MROs, PO of ITDA and media representatives.</p> <p>160 people from community of different profile men leaders, women CBO leaders and local PRI representatives</p>

	local CBOs like women groups and youth groups	
5. Review and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periodical reviews provide the staff with in-depth insights on result based program management.</li> <li>• Each and every activity of the project was monitored by the cluster coordinators and project Director.</li> <li>• Staff equipped with technical knowledge on legal aspects and rights of the tribals.</li> </ul>	Project staff community organizers cluster coordinators.

#### **Future areas to be pursued:**

Empowering communities is an ongoing process which needs continuous efforts for a period of certain time. It is not possible with one year or two year interventions. It needs lot of commitment and community involvement along with human and economic resources.

During the course of action few areas were noticed for future action. They are detailed as strengthening institutional support, need more sensitization of government officials, extension of the interventions to much more field area as they are requesting and drawing the attention of



political leaders from all parties to promote and protect the land rights of tribal's in the project area.

#### Institutional support

Though the tribal people of 10 panchayats in Velerpadu and Kukunoor mandals were now aware about their constitutional rights due to yearlong activities of SNEHA, they need institutional support to strengthen their campaign towards alienation of their lands. The task force committees need to strengthen more on institutionalization.

#### Strengthening advocacy campaign

The advocacy efforts initiated by the Task force committees and community leaders to be strengthened. They have to become powerful tool in lobbying with various stake holders to implement the laws and government orders. Questioning attitude and raising voices would be done to protect their rights and entitlements are important.

Though SNEHA has succeed to some extent in sensitizing community and government departments one year effort is not enough to change the age old traditional attitudes and mind sets of the tribal people. And it is also difficult to bring change among insensitive government officials with in short span of time, it needs lot of efforts and it is a long term process. Because of having continuous interaction and good rapport with the community Sneha team succeed in achieving the objectives of the present project.

#### Conclusion

Collaboration with Niwano Peace Foundation has created a new hope and paved a path from ignorance to the spirit of knowledge and pulling resources to improve the socio-economic situation of the target groups, aiming at their sustainable and holistic development. The task is forcing the situation to move forward with courage. On the whole Sneha played an important role enabling the tribals to emerge as self sufficient community capable of addressing their own issues with great courage and confidence.

