

About I3S

This edition of I3S Newsletter will present a brief overview of the on-going development, under the project entitled, 'Insights Into Indian States' (I3S). This is a new initiative of CUTS International, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi. The main features of the project are to create an interactive and user-friendly web-portal, conducting action research, networking and advocacy and dissemination of the successful and not so successful practices adopted in the selected Central and State sponsored programmes and schemes of Rural Non-farm Sector (RNFS) for cross learning. The initiative commenced in October 2013 at four targeted States, i.e. Assam, Odisha, Rajasthan and Karnataka.

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About 27 schemes related to the Rural Non-farm Livelihood sector have been finalised, under the project 'Insights into Indian States' (I3S), for exploring the successful and not so successful practices in the four targeted States of India. During the last quarter, programme management team with the support of state partner organisations visited all the four states and validated some of the selected schemes for further documentation. During the field work, several places were visited and the identified practices, under the selected schemes were verified. These practices will be documented in a standardised format to be uploaded on I3S web portal. Some of the apprehended practices are briefly mentioned below.

Lantana Empowers Community of MM Hills in Karnataka

This is a story about how *Soliga*, *Korva*, *Malayali* and *Palliyar* tribal communities in South India are using Lantana in diverse ways to improve their livelihoods. Lantana is used as a substitute for native species, such as bamboo cane and others, therefore, aiding in the conservation of these species. Negligible cost technology, simple skills and abundantly available resources are empowering women and their families in Male Mahadeshwara (MM) Hills. The distance of MM hills from Bangalore is around 250 kilometres. Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) MM Hills to study governance and socio-environmental issues and role of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in the income basket of forest-dependent communities. This study laid the ground for further research programmes, which were mapping the distribution of alien invasive species, Lantana, and its impact on local biodiversity. ATREE introduced lantana crafts as a way for enhancing livelihood, using a readily available NTFP resource.

ATREE disseminated technical know-how on processing lantana and making it more pliable for making furniture and other utility products. Anil Joshi, Founder of Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation, promoted the use of lantana to make furniture in Uttarakhand. In 2003, selected people from MM Hills were taken to Dehradun for attending a formal training by Anil Joshi. The communities are independently managing their business of lantana eco-products, at present. ATREE is helping in networking efforts through which *Soligas*, *Palliyars*, *Malayalis* and *Kurumbas* share their experience on Lantana product development and market linkages.

ATREE has trained over 350 crafts people in lantana craft. About 80 percent of these are women. Trained artisans derive nearly 80 percent of their cash income from Lantana craft. Average income of an artisan ranges from ₹8 thousand to 15 thousand per month. Other than furniture, Lantana is also being used in making toys and ornaments. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has also supported this group and provided resources mainly for buying the equipment.



Art of Thar Desert Providing Sustainable Livelihood

There was a time when weaving was in the state of being extinct, but looms have once again started providing livelihood. *Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti* (UMBVS) campuses in Phalodi and Pokaran also provide space for training, storage, dyeing, display and sales and modest residential facilities. Moreover, the committee has given the local weavers the opportunity for sustainable livelihood. Today, this fabulous art of Thar Desert has captured the market worldwide. Presently, the unique weaving from the small households is catching the fame. *Rangсутra, Dastkari Haat Samiti, Dastkar, Sampoon, Sanatkada* and *Fab India* help to promote and market the product of desert craft within the country and across the globe. As per result, the weaver's community is leading a dignified life.

UMBVS is a registered, not-for-profit organisation established for the welfare of weavers in the Great Thar Desert of Western Rajasthan. At present, UMBVS is working with over 200 weavers (out of which around 20 are women) from 12 villages in the north-west of Rajasthan. This provides the weavers the ability to produce and earn respectfully. The *Samiti* helps the weavers to obtain higher prices for their products, which are sold in local and international markets.



Boosting Suwalkuchi – An Ancient Weavers and Artisans Cluster

In the context of silk weaving in Assam, *Suwalkuchi* is a name that stands apart. It is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra, about 35 kms from Guwahati, in Kamrup District. There are eight *gram panchayats* in Suwalkuchi block, where weaving is a dominant occupation. Suwalkuchi has been developed, over the years as a major centre for commercial production of indigenous fabrics, especially the *Pat* and *Muga* silk. *Suwalkuchi* is popularly recognised as 'Manchester of Assam'. It was established by Momai Tamuli Barbarua, a great administrator of the Ahom kingdom during 1603-1641. Barbarua set up this weaver's village by shifting a large number of master weavers from all over the region to the village. This patronage led to the advancement and development of sericulture in Assam.



Suwalkuchi has a population of nearly 50,000 people, most of which are engaged in weaving magic on their looms. This village has an estimated 25,000 handlooms and produces nearly six million meters of white and golden Assam silk annually. *Suwalkuchi*, an ancient craft village is having silk-rearing and weaving communities, potters and goldsmiths.

Incense Sticks and Bamboo Artifacts Cluster at Baripada, Odisha

Agarbattis (Incense Sticks) and bamboo artifacts cluster of Baripada, Odisha, came into existence in the year 2010. With an initial investment of ₹15 lakhs and the technical support from Orissa Bamboo Development Authority, the cluster has started producing various bamboo handicrafts, jewellery and *agarbattis* (incense sticks). The cluster is able to provide employment to around 130 women whose average income for a month is around ₹3,000. With a huge rise in demand for incense sticks from near-by places like *Bhadrak, Agrapada, Dhamra, Basudevpur, Sworo, Baleswar, Nilgiri* etc., the daily production of the sticks has gone up to one quintal. With the sale of every kilogram of incense sticks, there is an assured profit of ₹70 to 80.

Thus, the bamboo and *agarbatti* sector is providing an indigenous business opportunity to the rural poor of Odisha where the local resources and traditional skills have been a great source of livelihood with a little bit of value addition in the form of technical support from the government schemes. The cluster is in the process of opening a retail sales outlet for its product, which would help in optimising the money spent on marketing of the products.



Action Research

The I3S project team has identified some schemes, under rural non-farm sector and started working on action research. Basic information of all these selected schemes has been collected by the state partners and project management team (PMT). The project team visited different places in all the four targeted States and gathered cases from the selected schemes.

I3S team members visited Assam from March 04-11, 2014 to conduct the action research and validate five cases and practices related to Rural Non-farm Sector. They visited five institutions along with State Project Officer (SPO), Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD). They also visited Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission (ASRLM) office and met Mission Director, State Programme Managers; Rural Department and met with K S Pegu, Additional Chief Secretary and Additional Director (ACS); and North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFI) to meet with Saurav Kumar Sharma, Additional General Manager on March 10, 2014. He briefed them about I3S project and sought their support to carry out the task of documenting successful and not so successful practices of their interventions related to RNFLS.

A visit to Karnataka state was made by the team from March 11-15, 2014 as part of the action research. Public Affairs Centre (PAC) supported and accompanied the team. Two specific cases of organisations named ATREE and OUTREACH were covered during the visit. MM Hills area of ATREE and Hosur block of OUTREACH were visited to see the livelihood activities in field. Focused group discussion (FGDs) with beneficiaries in the field, interviews with officials of concern organisations, brief discussion with government officials were conducted during the visit. A meeting was held with D R Swami, Managing Director of State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM) and he was briefed about the I3S project.

During March 04-08, 2014, a visit was made to Odisha to collect information about different government supported interventions in the non-farm livelihood sector, along with the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD). The team visited and met B N Das, Executive Director, Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS), under Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM). They also visited two clusters of Bamboo in Baripada District and Kantha Stich cluster being promoted by ORMAS in the Kesharpur area of Cuttack Sadar. A visit was also made to the coir cluster promoted by ORMAS at Balapur village in Puri district.

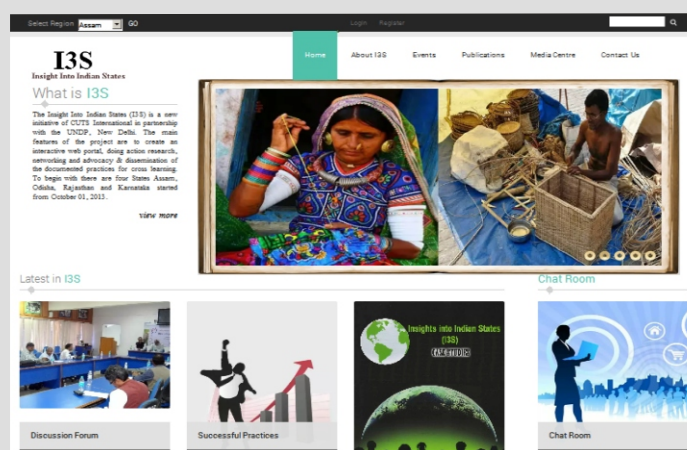
For collecting cases in Rajasthan, I3S team visited Urmul Trust, Bikaner on February 17-18, 2014 for documenting their weaving programme implemented by one of the sister organisation called '*Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti*' based at Phalodi. They also visited the village Narhet of Alwar district on March 28 to monitor the activities of Jaipur Rugs. They learned about the socio-economic business model of the organisation. The team visited five places where the looms were installed and the weavers were working. The team interacted with the beneficiaries, quality supervisors and other persons working directly and indirectly with Jaipur Rugs. They also gained an insight into the other Jaipur Rugs Foundation's ongoing activities. Moreover, documentation of the cases under progress.

About I3S Web Portal

Web portal of the I3S, under the domain i3s.net.in is updated on a regular basis with the project activities, reflections and people's views. Relevant resource materials and media coverage can also be viewed on the portal. Project specific documents have been updated. The work of (is ongoing) activation of states page, web group,

replacement of the current home page photographs with other suitable images and uploading new set of resources and media coverage on RNFS. State partners are also providing relevant web links for resource material related to state specific interventions.

The team has provided the inputs and suggestions to update the web portal. One cover page has been created in the name of I3S showing more tabs to display more programmatic areas. The team also suggested other relevant topics to be incorporated at the bottom of the web portal. Second lot of resources, content for State pages, events etc. were also uploaded on the web portal.



I3S Project Advisory Committee

Subject experts and key practitioners across the country have been selected for project advisory committee (PAC), under the I3S project. These eleven members of PAC are selected based on their experience, knowledge and active involvement in the livelihood and similar sort of activities and initiatives. Members are providing their valuable comments and guidance in project related activities.

RNFLS Community of Practice

Through the continuous reach-out activities with policy makers, programmes implementers, practitioners from civil society organisations (CSOs) and other key stakeholders, a group (of around 160 practitioners) has been put together and has been made a part of the newly formed community of practice (CoP) on Rural Non-farm Livelihoods Sector. Formation of this group is a result of the scoping visits, inception workshops in targeted four states. Among the community, further discussions and exchange of views, experiences and dissemination of resources and documented practices and cases has been started and will further intensify in near future. A master networking list along with separate state wise networking lists were also prepared and uploaded at the web portal.

List of Selected Schemes

Sr.	Agency/Department	Name of Scheme
Assam		
1.	Panchayat and Rural Department Development	Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission
2.	Panchayat and Rural Department Development	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)
3.	Panchayat and Rural Department Development	State Institute of Rural Development, Guwahati
4.	NABARD, Guwahati	RNFS programme of NABARD
5.	Department of Industries and Commerce, Assam	Chief Ministers' Self Employment Scheme/ <i>Mukhya Mantri Assam Vikas Yojana</i>
6.	Department of Sericulture	Catalytic Development Yojana
7.	North East Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFC)	Women Enterprises Development Scheme
Odisha		
8.	Panchayat and Rural Department Development	Odisha State Livelihood Mission
9.	Panchayat and Rural Department Development	MGNREGS
10.	NABARD, Bhuvneshwar	RNFS Programme of NABARD
11.	SC & ST Welfare Department	Odisha Tribal Empowerment Livelihoods Programme (OTELP) and TDCCOL
12.	Forest and Environment Department	Odisha Bamboo Development Agency (OBDS)
13.	Department of Textile, Handicraft and Handloom	Skill Development and marketing Programme
Karnataka		
14.	Rural Development Department	<i>Ajeevika</i> Programme of State Rural Livelihood Mission
15.	Rural Development Department	MGNREGS
16.	NABARD, Bangalore	Rural innovation of NABARD
17.	Karnataka Forest Department	Joint Forest Planning and Management and Village Forest Committee
18.	Sericulture Department	Tribal Sub Plan and women Development Programme
19.	SIRD, Mysore, Department of Rural Development	Satellite based Training, Interactive and Communication Programme
20.	Govt. of Karnataka Undertaking	The Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation Ltd.
Rajasthan		
21.	Rural Development Department	<i>Rajasthan Grameen Ajeevika Vikas Parisad</i>
22.	Rural Development Department	MGNREGS
23.	NABARD, Jaipur	Rural Non-farm Programmes
24.	Department of Industry	Rajasthan Skill and Livelihood Development Corporation
25.	Govt. of Rajasthan undertaking agency	Rural Non-farm Development Agency (RUDA), Jaipur
26.	Govt. of Rajasthan undertaking agency	State handloom and handicraft Corporation, Rajasthan
27.	Deptt. of Rural Development, Govt. of Rajasthan	Mitigating Poverty in Western Rajasthan (MPOWER)