

About I3S

This edition of I3S Newsletter presents 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 in four targeted States, i.e. Assam, Odisha, Rajasthan and Karnataka.

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Under the project 'Insights into Indian States' (I3S), schemes related to the rural non-farm livelihood sector were identified for finalising the successful and not so successful practices in the four targeted states of India. During the last quarter, programme management team, state partner organisations and field researchers visited the four targeted states and validated some of the selected schemes for further documentation. Practices were identified during the field research under the selected schemes. These practices are documented in a standardised format and uploaded on I3S web portal. Some of the practices are briefly mentioned below.

Cane and bamboo craft in Hawli of Barpeta district of Assam

This particular initiative on cane and bamboo craft cluster covers four villages in Hawli, under Barpeta district of Assam. Cane and bamboo craft was first introduced in the area during 1980's by an enthusiastic entrepreneur Sushil Das. He was himself engaged in its production, which employed a few villagers. However, the larger role he played was that of encouraging the villagers to take up this activity. He could foresee the prospects and potential demand; he also understood the importance of developing a cluster, which alone could create a sustainable environment for the craft.

Then in 2008-09, State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) under Chief Minister's *Jeevanjyoti Swaniyojan Yojana* (CMJSY) started an intervention in that area, under which, unemployed youths were provided with skill development training and loans. Earlier, it was an area stricken with poverty, as most of them were either marginal farmers or landless farm labourers. But with the introduction of cane and bamboo craft, there was a widespread economic empowerment among the beneficiaries.

The cane and bamboo cluster in Hawli comprises four villages of Raipur, Josihati, Bhaluki and Balabhita, which are inhabited by minority Muslims. Almost 100 percent of the beneficiaries are from the minority community. All the working members of the households are actively involved with the cane and bamboo craft. Almost all the beneficiaries belong to BPL families. About 1000 households are involved in this craft presently and the literacy rate is found to be around 30 percent. As engagement in the activity is at household level, males and females are equally involved in the craft.

Assam produces 60 percent of the total bamboo in India. As some of the villagers had managed to raise their income considerably by engaging in cane and bamboo craft, it was felt that other villagers could also join this activity. A few educated youths of Raipur village approached SIRD for assistance which ultimately resulted in the formation of the cane and bamboo cluster. The members of the cluster received skill development trainings organised by SIRD in addition to subsidised loans under CMJSY.

Assam is primarily an agrarian economy with more than 70 percent of the population depending on agriculture. Moreover, land distribution is uneven as a small section of the population owns the majority of agricultural land. Poverty was widespread along with other socio economic disadvantages like illiteracy, poor connectivity, disguised unemployment, forcing people to look for other income avenues.



Wood carving and wood inlay works of Belavatta village, Mysore

Mysore city is famous for its aesthetic craftsmanship in sandalwood and rosewood. The beautiful carved furniture and artifacts, tables, wall hangings, etc. are eye catching. The artisans in and around Mysore are practicing these arts for centuries. Some of the finest examples of the elaborate inlay work done by master artisans can be seen in the Maharaja's palace in Mysore and in the mausoleum of Tippu Sultan in Srirangapatna. This ancient craft of Mysore has found rich expressions on the doors and ceilings of temples and monuments built under the patronage of various ruling dynasties. Wood carving and inlay work has been quite traditional in Mysore.

Wood carving, carpentry and wood inlay are found all over India. While *sheesham* is the most widely used type of wood other wood varieties like mango, teak, rosewood, ebony, sandalwood, walnut and *deodar* are also used. Intricately carved wooden pillars and doorways can be found in temples and palaces across the country. With royal patronage being replaced by market dynamics, wood carving is at present mostly found in functional articles like furniture, bowls, boxes, lamp stands, wall hangings, etc.



Around 40 youth of Belavatta Grama are associated with the artisan skill of wood carving, carpentry, wood inlay, etc. Initially, these youths were doing the work individually, but when the demand for the products increased, they felt the need to get organised. Two male youth groups were formed in Belavatta village named '*Jai Maruti Yuvakara*' and '*Ambedkar Yuvakara*' Self-Help Groups (SHG)

The '*Jai Maruti Yuvakara*' SHG is operational for two and half years and comprises 20 youth. The members of this group are masters in carpentry, handicrafts and wood inlay work. The main purpose for the formation of the group is to help the local youth by training them in inherited crafts. The '*Ambedkar Yuvakara*' SHG was also formed two and half years ago with a membership of 20 youth. Along with carpentry and inlay work this group also undertakes polishing and welding assignments. The main purpose of this group is the survival of youth from Scheduled Caste community through the traditional activity. This group has been provided bank loan to invest in the inlay activity.

The members of these groups are very regular in terms of savings and they want to increase the same in order to secure loans from banks and other institutions. The members of the groups strongly feel that the Government and banks should come forward with a supportive hand. Presently, the groups are struggling to get finances to invest into their business due to which they are unable to take bulk orders.

Bazar on wheels: Innovative marketing strategies of SHGs in Ganjam, Odisha

Odisha Rural Marketing and Sale (ORMAS) provided Rs one lakh to run the project and later an additional amount of ₹50,000 was provided in 2012 to the '*Maa Santoshi*' Self Help Group (SHG) Federation. The life-line of this project is a vehicle '*Mahindra Bolero*' which was provided by ORMAS in 2011 free of cost. All the products are loaded in this modified vehicle in the shape of a shop, which is known as '*Bazaar on Wheels*'. It moves across Ganjam district both in rural and urban areas. Products of various SHGs both inside and outside the Ganjam district including the rural areas are collected with an initial part payment and once the products are sold, remaining balance payment is made.

Namita Thakur is part of the '*Maa-Santoshi*' SHG and its federation for last several years. She has grown with the federation and credits her life-changing story to the federation and its leadership. She feels that this federation has witnessed many successes as well as failures but importantly all these were lessons to move forward. The SHG members also stated that due to "*Bazar on Wheels*", the federation has acquired a good marketing tool and is making profits. It turned the federation from a loss making federation to a profit making one and thereby showcasing a successful model to the entire State. The State funding agency to the project is ORMAS, which also highlights this project as a successful model to be replicated in other parts of the State.



A women's handicraft enterprise' promoted by Seva Mandir, Udaipur

Seva Mandir is a prominent Non-government Organisation (NGO) working in Udaipur and the surrounding districts of southern Rajasthan. Its work mainly focusses on the efforts to bring together and organise fragmented communities through a wide variety of interventions across diverse sectors. It has thereby simultaneously addressed people's immediate development needs and has empowered them to make their own destiny.

In 1988, *Seva Mandir* started a livelihood programme for the economic independence of women in its project area to help them combat the persistent drought and other miseries. *Seva Mandir* set up its patchwork programme, which was later called '*Sadhna*' which is providing training to women. *Sadhna* was conceived with the aim to provide rural and urban slum women of Udaipur as an alternative source of income generation primarily for empowerment and enhancing their socio-political standing. Today, *Sadhna* comprises 697 highly skilled women artisans from rural and poor background of Udaipur and Rajsamand districts.



Sadhna is supported by a team of women artisans, representing the organisation at various levels of decision making and have certain share in the annual profit. Furthermore, the respect that the women have been shown by *Sadhna* has played a pivotal role in increasing the confidence levels of these women. *Sadhna* has succeeded in drawing together women from various castes and religions and has contributed in breaking religious barriers, and influenced participatory governance.

I3S team members including the State partners visited various places for collecting the cases or practices, under identified schemes of rural non-farm sector. Several cases and practices have been identified by the team and validated by visiting the field in all the four targeted States. Madhu Sudan Sharma, CUTS visited Berhampur and Bhubaneswar, Odisha from September 08-11, 2014 for action research activities undertaken by the Youth for Social Development (YSD) and the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) in Odisha. He took part in action research process conducted by YSD in Berhampur and met with three weavers' cooperative societies and one women SHG federation, which is running a shop on a vehicle.

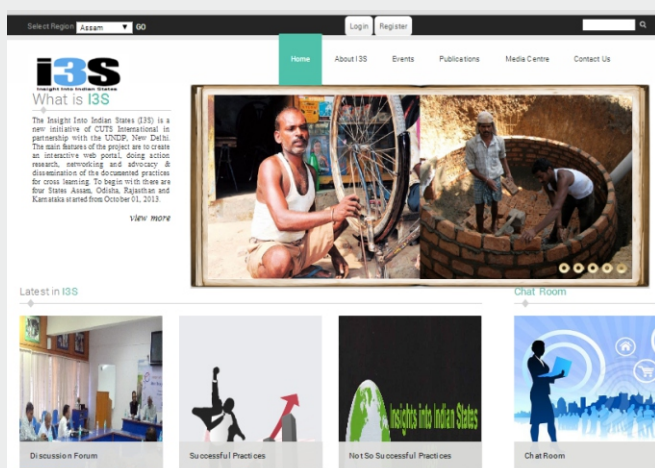
Amrat Singh, CUTS visited Udaipur and Rajsamand districts on September 09-10, 2014 to document the case studies. He visited *Sadhna* office and met the CEO, Seema Shah and also visited the showroom and the production centre of *Sadhna*. The women artisans were actively carrying out the handwork of fabrics and managing the enterprise professionally.

Jaishree Rathore of CUTS visited Bangalore and Mysore in August 25-28, 2014 to review the progress of documentation of cases by S N Fathima, Development Consultant at Mysore. She visited Public Affairs Centre and seven villages along with Fathima.

In July, 2014 Varidhi Singh and Jaishree Rathore visited Udaipuriya village of Jaipur district in Rajasthan to study its leather clusters. The visit was facilitated by Harinarayan Sonkariya, master artisan of Udaipuriya leather cluster. This constitutes about 500 households with equal number of men and women. The cluster has also been involved in the business of crafting leather products and *Rajasthani Jooti* (a famous traditional footwear) is its major product.

About I3S Web Portal

The web portal of the I3S under the domain i3s.net.in is updated on a regular basis with the relevant resources, materials and media coverage. A Facebook page 'Insight Into Indian States – Rural Non-farm Livelihood' has been created and linked with the web portal. 93 persons have liked this page. Subscribers list is 243 members. Discussions have been initiated by the team in which members are taking part for discussions. Several media coverages and more than 123 resources related to rural non-farm are posted on portal for reference of the visitors. A Twitter account has also been created under I3S, which is linked with the web portal. Relevant news and other updates are being shared through the twitter account.



In Media

NIFT to promote Odisha art and craft

Bhubaneswar: The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Bhubaneswar, opened the new department of fashion design on Saturday and decided to promote the State's rich art and culture through it. Union Textiles Secretary, Sanjay Kumar Panda inaugurated the new department on Saturday. Students also organised an exhibition of designs on the occasion.

"The new infrastructure will help students work better. The students should work to boost the traditional art and craft of the State", said Panda. Sources said, the four-year degree programme in fashion design had already been launched and students were in the second year. But due to lack of infrastructure, the department could not start, official sources said.

(Times of India, 31.08.14)

Weavers with unusually low wages await revision

Madurai: Fifty percent hike over existing wages could appear quite steep but it means a lot for handloom weavers of Sellur who barely make between ₹35-70 in a day. They are now eagerly waiting for the third round of talks between their representatives and employers scheduled on August 08.

"I hardly make ₹50 paid on the volume of cloth I weave. It is tricky with handlooms because it is a tiring job. If we try weaving more to make more money, we can't wake up the next morning due to severe body pain", said S Soosaiammal, a worker who was widowed at a young age and has to support her five-year-old son and ailing father. Still, they prefer weaving because they do not know any other work. Most of the workers are paid based on the volume of work in a day. Ironically, the ones working more may end up getting very less like those who spin bobbins for shuttles who are paid ₹35 per day. The more complicated procedures may be provided a daily wage of ₹100.

(Times of India, 04.08.14)

Jobs dry up, agricultural labourers lose crores in wages

It is not just the farmers who are feeling the pinch of the prolonged dry spell. A lot many poor agricultural labourers are losing several crores of rupees in wages with there being no work in the fields for about a month. There are over 6 lakh male, and almost an equal number of female job cardholders under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in Adilabad. While most women are employed at construction sites, they essentially work as agriculture labourers. Most have had no work following the temporary suspension of the MGNREGS during the monsoon.



A woman worker is paid ₹150 a day during the agriculture season, which means that every labourer who has had no work for the last 30 days has lost a precious ₹4,500 in wages during the period. This translates to wage losses of running to crores of rupees.

(The Hindu, 07.07.14)

Rajasthan launches India's first skill training project

Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje on Thursday launched the country's first and biggest skill development project aimed at creating employment opportunities for the young people of the State. The Union Government - selected Rajasthan as the first State for this project and has proposed ₹398 crore for it.

The Rajasthan Government would impart modern skills for employment to one lakh rural youths under this project and then provide them jobs in collaboration with the Union Rural Development Ministry. Rajasthan Skill and Livelihood Development Corporation (RSLDC) Managing Director, Gaurav Goyal on Thursday signed agreements with representatives of 22 organisations selected as "Project Implementation Agencies" for skill training.

The agencies would provide skill development training to one lakh rural youth, including 34,000 women, in all 33 districts of the state in 19 sectors, such as garment marketing, retail, beauty culture, hospitality, banking and accounting etc. "It is a historic occasion and this project would change lives of lakhs of young people of Rajasthan who can fulfil their dreams. The State Government is committed to provide better employment opportunities through such skills development initiatives", Raje said.

(Business Standard, 17.07.14)