

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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ActionAid Association (India)



INTRODUCTION:

While we were trying to recover from the impact of the first wave, the **second wave of COVID19 pandemic** came as severe blow in 2021. It was the worst humanitarian and health crisis in the history of Independent India. The sharp surge in cases across the country overwhelmed the health infrastructure, with people left struggling for beds, medicine and oxygen. The subsequent lockdowns across the country further affected the mobility of the people and large number of people in informal sector lost their livelihoods. The lockdowns and restrictions in movements spelt doom for the domestic workers. Many were not allowed to enter homes they worked in and were not given the monthly salaries. The crisis hit workers at a time when many had not yet recovered from last year's economic shocks that depleted their savings and pushed up their debts. An analysis in May 2021 by the Stranded Workers Action Network, a migrant resource group, showed that 58% of migrant families were days from going hungry. Up to 15 million jobs were lost in May 2021 alone, said a report by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), a think-tank. Workers have been left unemployed for prolonged periods and have not been paid their dues.

As per a UN women report, 118 women for every 100 men are in abject poverty, highlighting the pandemic's impact on women and development. Further, women in the unorganised sector had to make a permanent exit from the labour market to take care of ailing family members. Their unemployment figure reached the [double-digit](#) mark in May 2021.

Given the scale of crisis ActionAid India immediately responded to this pandemic across the country, ranging from food kits to medical supplies, supporting public hospitals to strengthen their services while during the post second wave, we go into rebuilding lives and livelihoods through a range of support and helping people link with various government schemes and programmes.

Interventions to rebuild the livelihoods were initiated with the families most severely affected by the pandemic with particular focus on women, across the states. We supported individual as well as collective livelihoods. We also ran campaigns on accessing entitlements and schemes to ensure that the excluded can benefit. Over the past months, we have supported 703 women in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka with access to vocational skills training, equipment and materials through women's collectives. Areas of training were

agreed in consultation with community members and included animal rearing, fishing, mushroom cultivation, herb and spice farming, pottery, and garment and handicrafts making. Some examples include; providing training, equipment, and materials for 71 garment and handicraft workers in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states; distributing fishing nets to 72 women in Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu State; and providing training in integrated dairy farming for 10 women in Jharkhand State.

We were able to link 473,912 people in 60 districts to access work under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which guarantees 100 days of employment to one adult household member each year. A total of 412,372 people were able to access their pensions, including 199,867 widows and 62,014 people with disabilities who were entitled to their disability pensions.

The pandemic has further resulted in schools remaining closed for over two year now impacting on education and physical and mental wellbeing of children. Private schools switched to online education that required expensive gadgets. Government schools didn't adopt any alternative method to continue education, and marginalized children were most affected. Neighbourhood classes/mohalla pathshalas were initiated across many states and when the schools started opening, we carried out campaigns like Back to School campaign/School Chalo Abhiyan to get the children back to school.

The year 2021 witnessed four **cyclones namely, Yaas, Gulab, Tauktae, Nisarga, Jawad** causing loss of property and belongings of the people. State teams of ActionAid Association along with volunteers engaged in relief interventions during these emergencies.

The introduction of **new rules and legislations** further increased the challenges of the NGOs and CSO. Furthermore, the renewals are still underway, extended by three months. Substantial time and energy went into setting up systems and processes for direct implementation.

It is in this context that we continued our work at the ground level as well at the state and national level. We have been working extensively on building leadership of the social and ecological defenders to support their protagonism and agency formation. We will be working towards ensuring that alliances are built across these agencies and they collectively engage to deepen democratic processes.

ActionAid Association (India) has been focussing on the following strategic areas-

- **Promoting *Rights to natural Commons – Forest, land and Water***
- **World of Workers – Rights and Entitlements and Livelihoods *with Focus on Women in the World of Work***
- **Child Rights *with Focus on Public Education***
- **Women's Rights *with a Focus on Women's Right to Property***
- **Public Financing and Making Governance Structures Accountable**
- **Just, Inclusive, and Livable Urban Spaces *with Focus on Housing***
- **Other Interventions including *Promoting Peace and Harmony and Humanitarian Response to Emergencies***

Update on our COVID response in 2021

India along with other countries reeled under the second wave of COVID. Much of our time, energies and resources in 2021, were spent on reaching out to the most vulnerable with relief kits, generic medicines and cash transfers. In the recovery phase we reached out to the communities to rebuild their livelihoods. Fighting this health emergency was the predominant work in 2021. As the country came to a grinding halt in late March 2021 with a surge of COVID-19 affecting millions across the country, it was clear that none was prepared to face the ferocity with which it swept across the country.

We reached out to the most marginalized - the migrant labourers, daily wage earners, homeless population, families from NT/ DNT communities, transgenders, sex workers, *Devadasis*, *Tamasha* artists, domestic workers, aged, children, disabled, single women, PLHIV, domestic workers, construction workers, sanitation workers, women vendors, shopkeepers tribals (Including PVTGs^[1]) and other marginalized sections from the poor and excluded communities as they are at the risk of facing the brunt of this disaster.

With 512 staff members across 21 States and 2 Union Territories and more than 48144 Volunteers in alliance with 784 NGOs, CBOs (non-financial) and their 1924 Youth Groups / Community Based Organisations, we covered 225 Districts in 786 Blocks. We covered 652 urban locations in 134 cities and 7447 villages across 21 states and 2 Union Territories. Our direct interventions touched the lives of 28,33,192 people across the country.

As part of preventive strategies, ActionAid carried out mass awareness on vaccination, helped vulnerable communities to register on COWIN App for vaccination, supported health workers in doing rapid COVID testing in communities and sanitised the areas. Awareness among communities on COVID appropriate behaviour was carried out through mobile awareness vans, through our volunteers, through youth, women, and adolescent groups that AA works with.

As part of helping augment medical services, we helped set up 23 COVID care centres in various districts of the country- Andhra Pradesh (1), Rajasthan (2), Uttar Pradesh (9), Patna (4), Rajasthan (2), Gujarat (2) and Odisha (4). The COVID-care centres provided primary care, medicines, testing facilities, counseling services, good hygiene and food and medical facilities or COVID care. We reached out to remote districts together with public health services and volunteers to remote locations and habitats so that communities there can access better medical support. Two of these are pediatric care facilities for children- in Patna in Bihar and in Jharkhand. Further, we have reached out to more than 435 health institutions with over 6500 oxygen concentrators.

ActionAid colleagues were part of District Task Force set up for COVID response across 60 districts in 10 states

Through our efforts we were able to ensure vaccination of 1,65,757 persons from the marginalised communities. We have been able to support the homeless (951), persons from NT/DNT communities (4104) Dalits (15713), Tribals-(13008), Muslims (6226), domestic workers-(2064), construction workers (4297), migrants (2001) and transgenders (516) access vaccinations.

We not only engaged at the ground level to provide succour to vulnerable individuals and families but also engaged with the government at the district and state level to amplify the needs of the marginalized communities. ActionAid colleagues were part of **60 District Task Forces** across the states of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, West Bengal,

Jharkhand, Kashmir and Delhi. Till now we shared 38 advisories with State Governments along with a national level advisory on issues of migrants and informal labour workers to NHRC.

As people around the world and governments were taking measure to protect people and families, our efforts also focussed on ensuring that children got due attention and had an environment that is welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and supportive to them. Sharing accurate information and science-based facts about Covid-19 helped diminish students' fears and anxieties around the disease and support their ability to cope with any secondary impacts on their lives.

We were running 14 Child Support Centres (CSCs) to provide medical supplies, food and other essentials to most vulnerable children. In addition, we supported the paediatric ward in the Patna hospital with required infrastructure to help addresses increasing case of COVID among children. Our trained volunteers and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) continuously engaged with sponsored and non-sponsored children in our project areas so that they can continue their education and learning. A total of 200 Mohalla Classes (door-step remedial education) started in 16 districts of Uttar Pradesh. We are also providing surgical masks to Volunteers and children attending Mohalla Classes in various districts of Uttar Pradesh.

Promoting Rights and Commons

The excess exploitation of natural resources including land, water, forest is gradually endangering the flora and the fauna and further marginalized the vulnerable communities depending on these for their survival, whilst engaged in their conservation. ActionAid has been focussing its efforts on asserting rights over commons by tribals, women and Dalits through local level movements. We have registered farmer cooperatives, producer cooperatives and explored various options of improving the livelihoods of marginalized communities. We are working on ecological and social justice by focusing upon protection and conservation of natural resources including water, forest and land. We have also promoted women collective farming, preservation of local seeds through seedbanks. Our work on promoting sustainable agriculture, conservation of traditional varieties of seeds and reviving traditional methodologies, conservation of water bodies has helped marginalized communities to gradually adapt to the impact of the climate change.

Major Advances

Grounded Actions

Accessing Rights and Entitlements

Our ground interventions are focused upon supporting people to claim entitlements and generating awareness among the communities on sustainable agriculture and conservation of traditional seeds that are able to withstand the impact of climate change, such as drought, excess rainfall, storms, etc. The farmers and peasants are adopting organic farming practices and methodologies which enrich the quality of soil and also increases the green cover.

- In Mysore district, **Karnataka**, we have supported 621 tribal families to access individual rights as per the forest right act 2006. Also, KAMBO (CBO we had facilitated) negotiated, interacted with the Integrated Tribal Department, Forest department officials, district administration officials and were successfully able to access the 12 community rights.

- In Chittoor district of **Telangana**, 190 landless poor Dalit families got 175 acres of land. For Dalits who are considered untouchables often face difficulties as there is no designated burial grounds for them. Through collective efforts, 6 Dalit habitations got sanction of burial grounds. Similarly, we identified 440 homeless families and supported them for application of the homestead land. Consequently, 110 single women and 75 families got homestead land.
- In a joint campaign with government of **Rajasthan** and Civil society organisations, intended to bring departments closer to citizen, large scale awareness efforts to guarantee that citizen can linked to state entitlements) with our support 80763 families applied for residential land titles. Out of these 59947 families received residential land titles and another 2602 landless families have received land for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna. (PM's Housing scheme).
- In 6 districts of **Bihar**, we were able to ensure residential land for 305 families. We extended facilitation support In Saharsa district, 250 families got access to land, under the *Dakhal Dahani* scheme of the government, with our facilitation support.
- Around 100 meetings were organised to generate awareness on FRA and community rights over natural resources with community collectives in 40 villages in **Himachal Pradesh**. The leadership and capacity building trainings helped 30 community leaders to enhance their knowledge on FRA and skill about the process of filling community and individual claims.
- In **Punjab** a total of 300 families were facilitated in completing the required documentation and filling application for the scheme of getting 5 Marla residential plot to landless or homeless BPL families living in rural areas.
- Around 30 women have received homestead land for their houses through our "Bhumi Adhikar Abhiyan" (Land rights campaign) in Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, **Uttar Pradesh**.

Rebuilding livelihoods – agro ecology

- Bundelkhand, **Uttar Pradesh** is known for recurrent droughts and erratic rains. We are with marginalized communities to strengthen their resilience by enhancing agri-based livelihoods in 'three districts of this region, namely Jhansi, Lalitpur and Mahoba in Uttar Pradesh. this initiative is primarily working towards empowering women and youth by generating awareness among them on the various government schemes, enabling them to access those schemes and creating sustainable livelihoods. It is important to note that the livelihood models developed under this programme have all evolved from local knowledge and in consultation with the local communities, using locally available resources with minimal dependence on external factors and raw material. ***These livelihood models include seasonal farming, multi-layer farming for vegetable cultivation, nutrition garden (Poshan Vatika), seasonal agriculture, poultry farming, vermicomposting, goat rearing and horticulture model for fruit production.*** Besides conducting capacity-building, we are supporting communities in terms of technical inputs, material, insurance and marketing to promote livelihoods. So far, *our livelihood intervention has been able to reach a total of 1,600 households from 40 villages. A total of 716 women farmers were imparted training on how to prepare organic compost and pesticide, which apart from being an environment friendly substitute will also reduce the input cost and are easy to prepare as the materials are locally available. Plastic drums of 35 litres capacity have also been provided so that the organic pesticide can be stored safely. Women farmers participate regularly in meetings where agriculture scientists and experts provide them with technical support and guidelines.*

- We have facilitated the registration of a *Farmer Producer Organization (FPO)* by the name of *BASANT* in *Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh*. The board of directors of the FPO comprise 10 women farmers and it has around 1600 shareholders. FPO is now entitled to buy and sell agriculture produce and agri-based products. We would continue to provide support, including financial assistance, under our ongoing programme to enable the FPO to become self-reliant.

Registration of Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) named as BASANT in Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh has enabled its women farmer members to buy and sell agriculture produce and agri-based products in the local market. The board of directors of the FPO comprise 10 women farmers and it has around 1600 shareholders. ActionAid is supporting the FPO along with financial assistance to enable the FPO to become self-reliant.

- *In Latehar district, Jharkhand, FPO was registered with 300 shareholders to promote sustainable agriculture, conserve traditional seed varieties of vegetables and fruits* by providing financial and marketing support.
- We continued to support *Women multipurpose cooperative in Nalanda, Bihar* with seeds and agricultural equipment. The women horticulture and nursery Unit in Jamui, Bihar composed of women from Musahar and Dalit communities, where provided with seeds and fruit plants.



- Through the women *integrated farming and dairy collective in Deoghar, Jharkhand*, we are also concentrating on organic vegetable cultivation as well as duckery. In an exemplary move by the local level government, the women have been given 1 acre of land. Through these efforts, the women in this collective are earning between Rs 3000 to Rs 4000 per month. We have also initiated livelihood work with the women in Banka district, of Bihar.
- In **Odisha**, volunteers have trained 110 women farmers from 45 different SHGs with an expectation that they will replicate and share the training to other members. At present 94 farmers are in practice of sustainable agriculture covering an area of 62 acres.

Workers and Employment

ActionAid has been engaged on labour issues in rural and urban areas, with informal sector labour- including construction workers, domestic workers, home-based women workers, street vendors, fisher folks, bidi workers, bonded labour, artisans, blacksmiths, weavers, teagardens and coffee estates workers etc. who have multiple disadvantages of being landless and are in vulnerable situations towards ensuring social security, decent wages, decent work, abolition of forced labour and caste-based menial occupations, and addressing exclusions in the labour market with focus on women workers.

ActionAid has worked towards strengthening of collectivization of informal workers through series of meetings, workshops and awareness campaigns that helped them to know about their rights and entitlements. Leadership training were imparted to identified leaders with focus on women workers. The COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in severe dislocations in the lives of workers especially the poor, neglected, and women workers. During the second wave workers faced the heat of the situation and struggled to fetch for themselves in their day-to-day life. Evidence from the ground signal desperate times with women workers especially the vulnerable workers like domestic workers, street vendors, salt pan workers, construction workers etc as these works are always neglected and invisible from the policy response. These workers are facing severe unemployment, reduced incomes, and adverse conditions of work. We engaged at the ground level providing them relief support and also engaged with the government at the national and the state levels on the issues of informal sector workers.

Policy engagements

Second set of advisories (2.0) with a focus on informal workers were developed after wide consultations and submitted to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) based on the changed ground realities with major focus on to lives and livelihood challenges faced by the vulnerable groups like burial workers, sanitation, and domestic workers during the pandemic and again lockdown in different parts of country. Basis these advisories, the NHRC directed the state governments on dealing with the issues impacting the informal workers during the COVID -19 pandemic. The advisories included addressing immediate health, livelihood, food security needs and concerns of informal and migrant workers and ensuring rights and social protection of Vulnerable Workers.

Together with NHRC, ActionAid Association organised two virtual conversations with community based human rights defenders across the country on Human Rights, challenges and issues. Basis the discussions, specific cases and interventions were made by NHRC, and these are minuted in the meeting minutes and actions identified by the NHRC. Detailed advisories on prevention of WitchBranding were also developed and issued to National Human Rights Commission, and these are expected to be acted on in 2022.

- Detailed recommendations were also submitted to the National Human Rights Commission for the National Policy for Domestic Workers, inputs to the bonded labour legislation as well as overall issues of informal sector workers. The NHRC issued advisories to the state governments on some of these aspects. The main thrust has been towards fixing a decent wage of Rs and social security safety net, with at least 2 to 1 day leave per week, decent working hours, and non-discriminating work conditions as key demands of workers across spectrum in informal economy. Under the domestic workers, the focus has been highlighting the 'invisibilities' of domestic workers in state relief policies and to recognise the right of domestic workers to self -organise themselves into workers' associations and organisations. It also includes Minimum Wage and inclusion of Domestic Workers in schedule of wages at state level to ensure their rights as labourers
- We have shared recommendations to the state rules being developed for the Labour Codes in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. We also prepared recommendation briefs in these regional languages which were used to initiate ground interactions with workers' groups so that they can understand how their lives and livelihood will be impacted by these changes of labour legislations and how they can engage with the state on their demands. Several such meetings, involving informal workers formations, and state labour officials were organised in states

- With support of inputs from colleagues working on issues faced by Women on Health, Livelihood, Food Security and Violence faced, we developed the pointers which were shared with the National Commission of Women, Department of Women and Child, Delhi Government and other Govt offices. Some of the recommendations include- Unconditional cash transfers of at least Rs 7000/- to the most vulnerable households, ensuring primary health care, including for non-covid patients, providing maternal and child health care, contraception, condoms, and safe abortion services are available and accessible, prioritising and expediting free vaccination to all frontline workers and other vulnerable population and treating domestic workers as frontline workers.
- In **Tamil Nadu**, as a result of our continuous efforts the Tamil Nadu Government amended the 'Tamil Nadu Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1947' mandating the Right to Sit for garment workers in accordance to ILO Convention C190 R 206 and a Government Order was passed in the Legislative Assembly to provide rainy season compensation of Rs. 5000 to salt pan workers across the state.
- We engaged with the **Delhi** Government along with the Nirman Mazdoor Adhikar Abhiyaan (which is a platform of 70 workers union) for ensuring financial assistance to the construction workers when the Delhi govt ordered a stop to all construction work due to high air pollution levels. It resulted in the govt. declaring that all registered construction workers will be provided with the financial support of Rs 5000 per family for period when all construction work was stopped.
- In **Odisha**, the Anasangathita Sramik Manch (ASM), a forum of informal workers, have been engaging with line departments such as Department of Labour, Odisha Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board to create a corpus fund for the wellbeing of domestic workers, ensuring minimum wage increment and to address other issues of informal workers especially of domestic workers.
 - The Manch successfully coordinated with the departments and Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation to get different benefits for the workers. After several demands submitted to State Labour Dept. by ASM:
 - The minimum wages were slightly increased to Rs 315/- per day for the unskilled workers.
 - BMC & State Labour Dept. declared to construct rest room, urinal, safe drinking water facilities in city labour addas. Aahar Kendra (Food centres which gives a meal at the cost Rs 5/-) opened in several places in the city.
 - Our engagement with State Urban Development Authority and journalists on the issues of homeless people resulted in a special notification by the govt for the protection of homeless people and arrangement of night shelters.

Domestic workers

- In **Rajasthan**, Domestic workers with Mahila Kamghar Adhikar Abhiyaan organized a Campaign to demand for separate board of Domestic Workers in the state. The group met with Labour Minister and Chief Secretary Labour with the same demand. Series of community meetings were organized with the demand of separate board. As a result, domestic workers were included as workers in labour board and soon government will start survey of domestic workers in Jaipur city.
- In **Uttar Pradesh**, last year with the consultation of various organization, activist, academician, and advocates, a draft legislation for domestic workers was prepared. To push it further we

facilitated a meeting with the labour Ministry to take it forward. We also organised a meeting with chairperson /members of Social Security Board of Unorganized Sector to include the demands of Domestic workers, in the board.

- In **West Bengal**, Domestic Workers groups raised issues of the informal women workers and submitted their recommendations and demand for inclusion of domestic workers under the wage schedule and get work security to state labour minister. ActionAid and domestic workers union met the Labour Minister of the State and presented challenges and issues of the informal women workers. They categorically highlighted their demands for inclusion under the wage schedule and get work security. Issues of maternity benefit and redressal of grievances through help line and workers' facilitation centre were also deliberated. Problems of non -functioning social security registration portal and complicated online system was also presented.

Grounded Actions and Campaigns

- Across states series of community meetings/trainings were organised with the informal workers to make them aware about the changes in labour legislations, facilitation of their vaccinations and other legislative social security protections they can avail. Briefs prepared in regional languages were used to initiate ground interactions with workers' groups so that they can understand how their lives and livelihood will be impacted by these changes.
- ***Women wage watch groups active across 6 states covering 50 districts***, reaching out to around 8,000 women workers These wage watch groups have been instrumental in recovering a total of Rs 5 lakh which was due to the domestic workers. Through these groups the women workers were supported in accessing schemes and entitlements for informal workers by creating awareness programmes, supporting in filing of applications, engaging with labour dept etc. A total of 29,030 informal workers mostly women workers accessed schemes and services of the state specific programs
- Ministry of Labour & Employment has developed e-SHRAM portal for creating a National Database of Unorganized Sector Workers (NDUW) to improve the implementation efficiency of the social security services for the unorganized workers, and Integration of Social Security Schemes meant for Unorganised Workers. It will also help in providing a comprehensive database to Central and State Governments for tackling any national crises like COVID-19 in future. Through our collective efforts we have been able to register 1,12,110 persons in the e – shram portal, meant for the informal sector workers.
- In Gaya, **Bihar** we have been running the Workers Facilitation Centre in Gaya since 2016.. Through these centres we were able to register around 30000 workers on the E-Shram portal.
- In **West Bengal**, we were able to complete the Provident Fund renewal for 248 workers and ensured that 302 workers received Samajik Mukti card. Through our efforts 250 workers enrolled for State sponsored skill building training programme. We took up 10 workplace harassment cases faced by women domestic workers and workers have received their due payments.

“Kaam Maango Abhiyan”

In Uttar Pradesh (Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur and Shamli) we organized campaigns on employment and social protection for unorganized workers and landless labors in 210 villages reaching 70 thousand people. The campaign helped registration under E-Shram and BOCW for 22000 informal workers. We used E-Rickshaws, Yatras, Ratri Chaupals and Community meetings to create awareness on the available E-Shram Portal. Total 5576 people got work under MNREGA of which 2764 are male and 2812 are females.

In Haryana, the campaign reached out to nearly 6500 individuals across 50 villages of three districts. Of these, 554 women & 276 men were facilitated to apply for work with the concerned BDPOs of which a total of 373 workers could accessed work under MNREGA.

Haan Mai Mazdoor Hoon

In Haryana, Delhi, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh this campaign focussed on rights and dignity of informal sector workers. Communities were reached out to make their aware of their rights and on the process to enrol and register with the social welfare boards etc. Through the campaign we could reach around 69100 workers (55400 women workers).

During the campaign 137 families of construction workers linked with welfare schemes of Delhi Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board. Govt. of Delhi had announced that all the registered construction workers will receive financial assistance (as the construction related activities were stopped in the city due to pollution

In Uttar Pradesh, our teams started an initiative called “**Hum Sath Hai**” in association with Navbharat Times and Indian Medical Association (IMA) and operationalized “Shahri Samudayik Sahabagita Kendra” (Urban Poor support centres) for the marginalized informal worker and facilitated registrations of the construction worker under BOCW. 25 workers registered under the scheme to avail medical benefit from the social security department. In addition, 22 workers were registered in the Labour department for Labour card, 80 construction workers supported to get registered ration under BOCW scheme and along with DUDA (District Urban Development Authority) 6 workers SHGs opened their bank accounts and registered under DUDA.

Bonded labour

- We have been making strong efforts to end bonded labour across 9 districts of **Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh**. In 2021, 248 bonded labourers were rescued. We were able to secure release certificates for 61 bonded labourers. Through our efforts we were able to connect 642 labourers to various entitlement schemes like MNREGA and BOCW. Through our consistent efforts we were able to activate a total of 8 vigilance committees - 4 at district level and 4 at block level, despite the COVID affected lock downs and restriction in public meetings.

MGNREGA workers

- In **Haryana**, we strengthened state level “MNREGA Mazdoor Ekta Manch” for intervention on issue of gender gap in work and wage, facilities at the work site according to the MGNREGA act throughout 2483 Dalit families supported to apply for job card under MNREGA and 3078 individuals facilitated to get job under MNREGA, also 70 potential leaders were trained on MGNREGA rights and leadership skills to take the process ahead

- In **Kolkata**, we highlighted the challenges faced by women during the second wave of COVID including harassment being faced due to withheld wages, being stopped from attending work by police, health, livelihood, income, violence against them etc through capturing small videos/clips and testimonies of women and share them on social media for wider sharing and awareness.

Urban Livelihoods support

- A disabled women's collective formed in Patna, **Bihar** under the Viklang Manch, Bihar, was badly impacted during the 2nd wave of the pandemic, with their livelihoods coming to a complete stop. We supported them in starting a sewing centre, provided them with sewing machines, and material for tailoring for 6 months.
- In **Karnataka**, we provided Tailoring machine to 15 women having tailoring skills. We facilitated this team to take up an order for stitching 16600 face masks. Apart from stitching masks, the women are making a living through alterations of clothes in their neighbourhood and earning decent amount of Rs. 100 - 150/- a day. Each of the 50 individual women who have received assistance have resumed livelihood activities and their economic situation is gradually becoming better.

In addition, we distributed vending carts to 20 women engaged in vending activities. Women are using this to sell their vegetables/fruits, greens, etc. 15 women were also supported to set up petty shops.

A group of 10 women have started mushroom Cultivation. Training and support is being provided to them through the horticulture department. A total of around 90 kgs of mushrooms has been harvested as of December 2021.

- In **Uttar Pradesh**, 150 poultry units have been set up with 50 chicks per unit and are being managed by 143 women and 7 men. We have supported two SHGs of 20 women each with raw material (cloth) to start their own business of stitching clothes. A women worker has been supported to open a tea stall in Lucknow.
- In **Uttarakhand**, we provided 3 sewing machines to women cooperative for stitching work. The cooperative has an outlet in Saras Bhawan given to them for marketing purposes by the district administration.

Urban Action School on Cooperatives and Decent Work – Model for Sustainable Economic Futures

A week long Urban Action School 2021 (UAS'21) was organised by ActionAid Association (India), in partnership with Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung South Asia from 1st to 7th December at the Thrissur campus of KILA. With the broad theme of "Cooperatives and Decent Work – Model for Sustainable Economic Futures", UAS'21 welcomed 25 participants from 16 states across India. The participants came from diverse backgrounds and cooperative ventures like fisher folk cooperatives in Meghalaya, snake catchers' cooperatives from Tamil Nadu, and dairy cooperative from the Gujjar community of Himachal Pradesh among others. The UAS'21 was inaugurated by Shri VN Vasavan, Honourable Minister for Cooperation, Government of Kerala in the august presence of Shri MK Kannan, Vice President of Kerala Bank. Celebrated academicians and activists including Prof Michael Therakan, Prof R Ramkumar, Prof Mini Sukumar Prof Praveen Jha and Com Amarjeet Kaur were part of the diverse pool of resource

persons who conducted the different sessions during these three days. Prof Thomas Isaac, former Minister of Finance, Government of Kerala delivered the valedictorian address speaking on the future of the social and solidarity economy.

Public Consultations

Series of public meetings / consultations were organised by ActionAid Association during the year. The meetings conducted through virtual medium focussed on following issues:

ActionAid played a key role in drafting “The City We Need Now 3.0 documentation of the World Urban Campaign, UN Habitat. Our inputs to the document focussed on the issue of refugees, gender diversity and climate justice as key drivers of the New Urban Agenda

- Urban Employment Guarantee Schemes in different states of India
- Housing Rights for the Urban Poor.
- Policies to Ensure Informal Workers’ Rights and Entitlements More than 300 workers gathered physically across six cities and were virtually linked with the national panel consisting of academicians, activists and practitioners working on migrant and informal workers.
- E-Shram and Social Security
- Women workers and livelihoods during the pandemic
- Cooperatives during times of Crisis
- ActionAid played a key role in drafting The City We Need Now 3.0 document of the World Urban Campaign, UN Habitat. Our inputs to the document focused on the inclusion of the issues of refugees, gender diversity and climate justice as key drivers of the New Urban Agenda.

Natural Commons - Rejuvenating Water bodies

We have been working towards reviving the water bodies and engaging with the communities to take leadership of such interventions.

- In **Karnataka**, we conducted a study to understand the quality of water in 106 lakes in Bengaluru Urban and Rural districts which revealed that the water in none of the lakes sampled was fit for drinking or bathing. The report was submitted to Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, Karnataka Tank Conservation Development Authority and Karnataka State Pollution Control Board. As a result of follow-up on actions by Departments, we understand that an internal circular along with our report has been shared with all KSPCB regional offices asking them to develop improvement action plans.
- Biodiversity documentation was initiated at Kudlu Doddakere Lake that included a survey of bird species. This was done with active participation of local communities. A total of 38 species of birds were identified and documented.
- We have been successful in sensitizing the authorities at harnessing rainwater at Doddakallasandra Lake and ensure rainwater harnessing structures are constructed within the

lake. We are now coordinating with the concerned ward level engineer to ensure drains within the area pass on the rainwater towards the lake.

- In slum areas of Jaipur, **Rajasthan** access to safe drinking water is scarce. Macheda and Lohamandi slums rehabilitated by the state government in 2000 is inhabited by over 370 families but there is no access to safe drinking water. With the support of women collectives formed by our team, Kamghar Mahila Adhikar Abhiyan and their engagement with Jaipur Development Authority and Public Works Department, the slums finally had safe drinking facility. Similar efforts were taken up by the women in **Uttarakhand** for increasing water resource and supply in the villages.
- In Dadri block of Gautam Buddha Nagar, **Noida**, we started an initiative to rejuvenate and conserve water bodies. With the support of community and PRI members, 7 ponds were identified for revival and rejuvenation. Desilting, bund construction, cleaning of surroundings and plantation work has been carried out to increase the water retention capacity and the green cover. These 7 ponds – spread over a total of 2.5 hectares of land, after restoration, hold, a total capacity of 5.18 crore litres.
- Flash mobs were organised in 10 different prime locations of **Delhi** such as Connaught place, Delhi Haat, Metro Stations, University of Delhi etc. Through the flash mob activities in various locations volunteers associated with AA reached out over 5000 people and made them aware and sensitize on the pollution and environmental issues of Delhi and urged them to adopt best practices at individual and community level to protect the environment and increase green cover in the city.
- In collaboration with district administration of Northeast Delhi a month-long campaign organised in the district from mid-November to mid-December 2021 to generate awareness among general public on the effect of air pollution in their health. It emphasised upon awareness about the measures to reduce and avoid air pollution and protection from the ill effect of the air pollution in the city. This campaign has reached out to over 10000 people in 30 areas of **North East Delhi** by organising small community meeting, distributing pamphlets and pasting information posters in prime locations.

Child rights with a focus on Education

ActionAid Association India is committed to promoting and protecting rights of children. We believe that children are ambassadors of change in the communities we work. We strive to build a socially just and sustainable futures for the children of the most marginalized. In all ActionAid supported Projects and Campaigns, we strive to ensure that children have access to Free and Quality Public Education, are safe from violence, abuse, and exploitation.

During the year, following have been our policy level engagements pertaining to child rights



Engagements at the National level

ActionAid Association India sent out an appeal in the beginning of 2021 to the Prime Minister and Chairpersons of State Child Rights Commissions outlining how the outbreak of Covid-19 has adversely impacted the well-being of children. The appeal stated how the impact has been more acute on children belonging to the most marginalised and vulnerable sections of the society. The letter appealed to the authorities the need for special care and protection, especially for girls, whose safety and protection has been compromised due to the pandemic. We made special request stating the need of the Government to add to its relief package an announcement of a **Special Relief Package for all Children in difficult circumstances due to COVID 19**, which builds on existing support and protective mechanisms already available to the children through central and state level programmes.

In the context of covid, it was normal to expect that the India's Union Budget 22-23 should have provided enough resources to build back the lives of children. However, the share of Budget for 2021-2022 for Children was a meagre 2.35 per cent of the total union budget. Thus, the RTE forum of which AAA is an active member, brought out a press note expressing dissatisfaction with regard to the budget.

In an attempt to ensure that the children remain connected with education and to curb child marriage and child labour, ActionAid Association took up campaigns and ground level interventions across all the operational states.

'Back to School' initiatives

As the pandemic continued into 2021 and the schools remained closed indefinitely, several studies reflected the various impacts like rise of Child labour, early marriages and domestic violence and largely has led to a complete disconnect in Education for the vast majority of children in the country. There has been learning deprivation in the absence of in person -structured learning opportunities which has caused severe academic regression, young children have forgotten habits of learning; basic reading and numeracy skills have been affected, and we can easily predict a huge dropout as a result. We all know how online education could not be accessed by most children and that it isn't pedagogically meaningful for most children, especially children of the most marginalised.

- **Back to School” Campaign** -Covid-19 pandemic has caused immeasurable disruption to the lives, learning, and well-being of children around the world. And it is needless to say that it has an acute impact on the psychosocial well-being, health, and education of children. Education has become a silent victim of this pandemic due to closure of schools for almost an entire year. The educational gaps have widened exacerbating the issues and challenges of education in India. As the government has re-opened the schools, it is a high time to bring back out-of-school, drop-out/pushed-out children to school. The overall objective of the campaign was to ensure in-school learning of children particularly of those belonging to excluded communities. The campaign was spread across **Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand & Kashmir**. A total of **5569 children** are identified in **26 districts** and **3486** number of children were enrolled with the help of volunteers under this campaign. The following learnings emerged as part of the campaign- there has been an increased preparedness of parents and schools after re-opening of school doors and increased awareness among members of SMCs, PRIs, parents, and guardians to enroll/send back their children to school. There has been increased support of local influencers and leaders in ensuring in-school learning of every child. The govt. officials have been supportive to ensure mainstreaming of children particularly children trapped in child labour and child trafficking.
- In **Odisha**, in collaboration with local social organisations we met with DEO & BEOs as well as Headmaster / Headmistress for proper implementation of the notification to check school absenteeism. A database of dropout children was developed and shared with authorities to bring them back to school In Odisha.
- In **Rajasthan**, the campaign was launched to create education awareness by building children’s movements towards their enrolment and retention and preventing child marriage and linking out of schoolgirls to government open school scheme- Siksha Setu. In the state, a total of 6000 out of schoolgirls were brought back into formal education. Through the campaign, we helped build adolescent leadership in the state and 2,94,054 adolescent girls 2,62,769 adolescent boys and 10,337 frontline workers were able to come forward and actively participate in various activities.
- SHARDA (**School Har Din Ayen**) is a **campaign** launched by Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), **Uttar Pradesh**. The main objective of SHARDA campaign is to identify out-of-school children especially children with disabilities. Identification of out-of-school children is an ongoing process and is being conducted in 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh. The campaign has helped ensure enrolment, regularize attendance and track drop out students. Various campaigns were launched to ensure enrolment, attendance and transition of OoSC(Out of School Children)including children affected by seasonal migration. **“Equal and quality education for all”** campaign was launched through a press conference at Lucknow. Under this campaign, various activities such as- drawing and debate competitions, awareness walk and *nukkad natak* were organized in 1000 government schools. The campaign mainly focused on enrolment, attendance and retention of girl child.
- The campaign, '**Udan Ke Avsar**' was designed for providing career and education-related guidance to students studying in and passing out of Class X and XII. It was targeted to reach out across to more than 500 villages and slums of **Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab**. A team of volunteers together with scholars associated with the ActionAid Association held small meetings with the students in their respective work areas and villages, discussed further studies and career related issues with them. A career guidance booklet had also been created to facilitate students with information related to their queries regarding career building. The campaign had focused to provide guidance to students from underprivileged groups and families specially girls, Dalits and minorities. The campaign also facilitated in the process of filing application with institutions and the process of availing their rights and special provisions as per laws and policies for their

advancement. Through various activities the campaign reached out over 3,000 students in the above-mentioned states.

- **The “Aao Milke Scholarship Payen”** (Let’s Get Scholarships Together) Campaign was launched in September 2021 to spread awareness and help popularize scholarship schemes. This campaign continued till November 2021 in 20 districts of 4 states (**Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi**) where volunteers along with district team organised regular interaction with students and their parents in schools and villages/areas to orient them on scholarship schemes and helped applicants complete the necessary procedures to get the scholarship. Based on the issues faced by students, a demand charter was submitted to the government authorities during the delegation or interface meetings. Similar campaign was carried out across 22 districts in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and Kashmir. Through these campaigns we were able to facilitate filing of 75000 (40% girls) scholarship applications across the states mentioned above.
- The campaign gave special focus on girl child since the COVID pandemic have impacted girls’ education most.
- As the pandemic has affected children’s learning, across our intervention areas, we have been running **Neighbourhood Classes or locally known as “Mohalla Pathshala”** are being run by Education Volunteers to provide basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic. During the lockdown our Volunteers ensured continuity of learning of 52329 children (26823 boys and 25506 girls) and reached out to 36195 families/ parents in 4502 villages in Uttar Pradesh In **Uttar Pradesh** our volunteers have identified 4584 out-of-school children (including 2257 boys and 2327 girls) out of which 64% (2946) belong to migrant families.
- The Girl Child Education Programme in Baddi **Himachal Pradesh** provided English and Computer to 417 students including 310 girls. Due to the pandemic, the learning programme has been continued through both online and office mode where initially children from 10 schools had been provided 20 hours of English and computer education and later shifted to online mode and provided 150 hours of online education to each of the students covered under this intervention. A total 397 students including 271 girls (77%) have been engaged through online medium. Teachers adapted their teaching medium to reach out to students through online apps. They taught in the evenings once their parents returned homes with the phones.
- We mapped out most deprived children in 20 focus districts of Nai Pahal Project of **Uttar Pradesh** to provide support for learning opportunities. We started working with 21,084 Class I, II, III children (10410 Girls and 10674 Boys) from most deprived areas and 332 children with severe and multiple disabilities were identified for home-based schooling in 4 districts of Devipatan Division of Uttar Pradesh’s near the India-Nepal border. Our project team directly reached out to these children with disabilities and provided them accessible worksheets. They also guided them and their parents on how to complete the worksheets. Team has reached out to 21,084 Class I, II, III children (10410 Girls and 10674 Boys) with the support of school and govt. officials.

Child Protection and their well being

- After engaging with OSCPCR, **Odisha** and with the State Level Monitoring Committee on Shelter for Urban Homeless, instructions were issued to 114 Urban Local Bodies to ensure no child slept under the open sky during the chilly winter. The directions were followed with letter and spirit by the ULBS. At least 500 children and their parents were rescued and placed into Shelter for Urban Homeless in different ULBs.

- In **West Bengal**, we facilitated a youth-led campaign to promote **the concept of child-friendly villages** in 110 villages across nine districts of the state, involving more than 1,000 adolescents. Following this initiative, the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) has issued a letter to the District Magistrates of the concerned districts, exhorting them to ensure that child protection issues were placed in the agenda of the Panchayat planning meetings for the year.
- In collaboration with OSCPCR, District Administration and other likeminded NGOs, ***Sishu Sampark Yatra***, a 40 – days campaign organised covering the state of **Odisha**. The objectives of the yatra were to connect children who were in distressed due to COVID. Cases were identified and resolved during the yatra.
- In **Rajasthan** we identified 2439 children who lost both parents or a single parent and with the help of social justice department and our volunteers we linked these children to Palanhar Yojana (caregiver scheme) a monthly cash transfer programme that aims to nurture, educate and provide health care to orphans and other vulnerable children who lost their parents.
- ActionAid Association India in Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF and Amar Ujala jointly organized consultations with 50 children in 20 districts of Nai Pahal education project. The title of this programme was- **Mera Jeevan Mera Adhikar**. Through these consultations children expressed their views on a healthy, safe and joyful living in their homes, schools and the State. The children's demand charter was released by the Honorable Speaker of Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly. To boost the morale of children, the Certificate of Participation was given to all the children
- ***Child Connect Campaign*** was carried out across the states of **Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha**. This was to identify potentially vulnerable children, and support communities to ensure safe, secure and happy childhood for all children in.

Actions Against eliminating Child Marriage

- The present engagement on empowering adolescents and ending child marriage is ongoing in 53 districts of 5 states (**Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Jharkhand**). Through the initiative, we were able to stop **1687 child marriage these districts** of above mentioned 5 states. Our approach has been to strengthen the system and develop district level action plan converging the line departments and other stakeholders. During the COVID 19 pandemic the project has created opportunities to go beyond the efforts of ending child marriage and work on the larger issue of child protection, reaching out to children of migrant families and other vulnerable families with social protection scheme, spread awareness on ending violence against children, initiate a process of tracking child protection violations and support received by these children and adolescents etc. In **Odisha's** Subarnapur district the process of declaration child marriage free village was initiated and an important milestone was shared with the District Collectors as best practices by the Department of W & CD. This process created a momentum and 5731 villages in 13 districts of Odisha were declared as child marriage free village and it contributed to one of the significant outcomes of the state strategic action plan of the state to end child marriage in the state.
- ActionAid engaged with the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) opposing the proposed raise in legal age of marriage by the national government. As a result, a letter from OSCPCR was submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee opposing the raising of legal age.

- ActionAid supported the Department of Women and Child Development in Odisha in developing a state standardized guidelines for declaration of child marriage free village / gram panchayat /Urban Local Bodies. The guideline was shared with the district administration for feedbacks, and it is now ready to be issued further incorporating the feedbacks from the district administrations.
- ***The process of declaration of child marriage free village to all KSPCB regional offices created a momentum in the state and more than 10000 villages & 400 wards in Odisha were declared as child marriage. Also, the DW&CD was bestowed with the highest civilian SKOCH Award (GOLD) for the year 2020-21 under the category governance & innovation.¹***
- Two adolescents girls in **West Bengal** , who had been the crusaders of “Child Friendly Village” campaign in Alipurduar run by AA, were felicitated as Kanyashree (a programme run by the state govt to ensure girl child retention and stop child marriage) achievers on 14th August 2021 by District Magistrate, Alipurduar, recognising their consistent efforts.

Women’s rights

The second wave of COVID 19 and subsequent lockdown to arrest spread of disease resulted in many women getting isolated, alone and vulnerable. While like in 2020, there was a rise in reports of domestic violence, many women had lost their source of livelihoods and slipped in further poverty. It was in this context that we continued with the work taken up previously along with rebuilding their livelihoods.

Policy Engagement

- In **Uttarakhand**, Action Aid is doing rigorous work for formulation of state women policy of Uttarakhand since last 4 years. This work was started with the study on status and challenges of single women. This study was conducted in all 13 districts of UK with collaboration of state women commission. The findings shared with ministers (women and child development, finance minister), officials of various department and media. It came in the concluding discussions that there is need to formulate a draft of state women policy with special recommendations for single women. The first draft of the policy was prepared in the March 2021. Virtual feedback sharing meeting was held in October 2021, in which directors, joint directors, communication experts and other officials participated. Representatives from following 11 departments participated in the virtual session.
- In **Andhra Pradesh**, we met the State Women’s Commission on raising concerns related to single women, their pension and livelihood programmes. State women Commissioner was invited to directly interact with over 200 women from the *bastis* we work in. We also worked closely with the Police Department and the SHE teams on safety of women and children .
- **Amendment in the Witch hunting Act:** ActionAid carried out a study on ‘Witch -Hunting in Odisha’ with the support of Odisha State Commission for Women (OSCW). This report was released in a joint meeting of departments where an amendment to the Act was proposed as a recommendation. The recommendation was appreciated and accepted by the OSCW and further perused with Department of Home, Law and WCD. At present a consensus among these departments is emerging to bring necessary amendment in the Act to make it more effective. The DWCD has allocated additional resources to all the districts to conduct

¹ SKOCH award was instituted in 2003 and this award is given as a recognition of the extraordinary achievement in contributing to the society.

awareness programmes among the stakeholders on prevention of which hunting and branding.

- **Study on witch hunting in Odisha:** A study on 'understanding the vulnerabilities of women related to witch branding, status of the implementation of existing law and suggest strategy to address the issue' conducted in collaboration with Odisha State Commission for Women.

Campaigns

Violence Against Women campaign was carried out 257 villages of 17 districts of **Madhya Pradesh**. The focus was on creating awareness on Sexual Harassment at the workplace, Domestic violence, property rights to women, rights women in work, etc. The campaign involved meetings and focused group discussions with men folks, community leaders, elected representatives, women survivors of violence, young girls, and adolescents. Through 101 village awareness meetings on VAW, we reached about 8540 women and girls. Resource materials on laws relating to VAW were provided to team members. 20 cases of GBV were identified during the VAW campaign. The team provided legal and psycho socio counseling in these cases. Some cases were shared with respective protection Officers and URJA Desks. During the campaign, the team met with the District Collectors and shared about the campaign with appeal for support in 17 districts.

In **Delhi**, support Women Against Violence campaign titled ***Hinsa Ke Khilaaf Mahilaon Ka Saath***) was launched with aim to orient people on various acts and services of govt to combat gender-based violence. Along with Delhi the campaign has also been started in 13 other districts in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. The campaign has reached out over 25000 people in 390 villages/urban areas and mobilised the community to make the society free from gender based discrimination and violence.

Similar campaigns were carried out in other states where AA operates, particularly around the 16 days of activism and on the International Women's Day in which our teams across the states raised awareness on various issues, teamed up with district authorities to ensure that the women in these locations are able to benefit from the government schemes and entitlements.

In **Uttarakhand**, we conducted a discussion on land and resource rights of women, about the agriculture schemes and strengthening of women farmers' cooperative on Women Farmer's Day. Programmes were organised in all the Mandal headquarters of Chittoor district In Andhra Pradesh, demanding government to issue the housing and agriculture land in the names of women on Women Farmer's Day.

- **Campaign on Dalit and Muslim Women issues in Muzaffarpur** -This campaign was conducted in 34 villages of Muzaffarnagar and Shamli Districts of **Uttar Pradesh**, with an objective to create awareness on their basic rights and built their leadership on issues of women's property. We worked to bring Dalit and Muslim women on one platform in every village. There are 20 to 25 women in every group in our 25 villages in which Dalit and Muslim women hold their meetings together every month. We conducted a discussion on women property rights in every group, as well as conducted a training session on leadership. The women's helpline number was also discussed in collaboration with the administration in every village.

Ground level advances

Work with single women in **Gujarat** in 7 districts of the state continued in the year 2021.

During the year the main issues taken up by district level groups of single women and volunteers were:

- 2048 various government entitlements reached to single women through our efforts.
- 83 single women were supported in claiming land and property rights.
- 556 single women linked to National Food Security Act

Single women convention- The Single Women of **Gujarat** continued to celebrate their sisterhood, through the convention this year, despite the challenges of COVID-19. Instead of a large state level event, district level events were held 2021 with a total of more than 3,000 women participating in these. The events helped to spread awareness on the need to speak out against violence perpetrated on women and their rights on property. These programmes, held in a decentralized manner, with all support raised locally and by single women themselves were an opportunity for the leaders to record their collective influence in their own communities.

When a **member of National Commission for Women came on a visit to Navsari**, the following demands were made to the NCW - Single women should be given (PDS, ICDS, pension, housing etc) entitlements in their name, without exploitation through bribery or facing cumbersome paperwork hassles at the grass root level through organising camps. The demands also include that the state needs to encourage property ownership and inheritance rights of women and that there needs to be a national level single women policy.

A **small survey** was also taken up to understand the situation of women who were widowed during the 2nd wave of COVID pandemic In Navsari, **Gujarat**. The findings of the survey suggests that COVID widows are facing a lot of issues related to access to pension, accessing documents of her husband's death, compensation, property rights, livelihood, and violence. Based on the information from the survey, ActionAid started taking up their issues with various stakeholders. We have given memorandum to local MLA and DM explaining the needs and demands of these suffering single women. Also, ActionAid provided livelihood support to 12 most vulnerable single women.

Trainings on leadership, accessing entitlements and schemes:

Women in **Rajasthan** and **Maharashtra** underwent trainings on leadership. Along with this training, the women were convinced to take up issues at the local level which affect them the most. The women armed with the information on accessing entitlements and schemes, approached various local level authorities and filed applications for accessing the same. As a result of such efforts, through Sanvadini centres in Maharashtra 27 single women government documents like Adhaar etc. Women facing domestic violence were also supported through these centres. Our team in **Haryana**, compiled the information related to laws and policies to protect women's rights and used this to train up women leaders at the community level to fight violence and discrimination they face on everyday basis.

Meetings with single women were held in different districts and urban locations in Odisha on right to property and generating demands for pension. A total of 85 single women were identified in Odisha and involved in the collective of single women. Among them 16 Single women received their pension and twenty-four applied for pension from three respective GPs in Odisha.

Orange Café

We continue to run the Orange Café in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh which was initiated in the year 2020 by three acid attack survivors. These women have been appreciated and awarded by the district administration of Varanasi for their exemplary efforts to provide cooked food packets to returning migrant workers and also to the attendants of COVID positive patients.

Public Financing and Making Governance Structures Accountable

Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub Plan

Policy Engagements

In **Rajasthan** we intensified our efforts towards Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan legislation. The campaign reached out to 26 districts in the State. Through our awareness campaigns we reached out to more than 20,000 people in these districts. The awareness campaign was replete with stories and case studies, and strong evidence of challenges in ground implementation on the schemes for scheduled caste and scheduled tribes in the state. Interface meetings were organised with the district administration and people's representatives in all the 26 districts.

In continuation of these efforts, a State Level Consultation on Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub Plan was organized by AAA and Jai Bhim Vikas Sansthan in collaboration with Dalit and Adivasi sangathan in the state last year. In this consultation delegates from the civil society Organization, Advocates, media and community leaders were invited. The main objective of the consultation was to discuss on the SCSP budget allocation and its expenditure by the concerned departments and invite suggestions on the draft bill of SCSP/TSP developed by AAA and Dalit Adhikar Network.

As a result of our and civil society's consistent and collective efforts, govt of Rajasthan has framed draft bill and invited people's feedback.

Similarly, Draft Special Component Plan for Scheduled Caste Development Authorities Bill has been prepared and shared with the Bihar Legislative Assembly and Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly for enactment.

Securing the Rights of Minorities and People Affected by Caste-based Discrimination:

We have been working to support to the rights of persons belonging to Minorities and persons affected by caste- based discrimination in India. The initiative has been running across a total of eight districts in Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to protect and promote the rights of Dalits, minorities and De-Notified Tribes (DNTs). Covering 170 villages, this programme started in the year 2018 continued till June 2021.

Mobilizing the community and training community-based activists as Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) have been important components of the intervention. A total of 486 HRDs, including 204 women, have so far been successfully trained and they are now actively intervening on issues of human rights violations in their communities. A total of 231 community support groups with more than 3273 members across the four states have also been formed and oriented at the village-level to monitor and investigate cases of discrimination and atrocities,

including discrimination in schools, health centres and welfare schemes. A total of 451 cases of caste and religion-based discrimination and atrocities have been brought to the attention of authorities. HRDs carried out fact-finding missions and helped victims report to the police, besides providing them counselling and rehabilitation support. As part of this intervention, ActionAid Association India and the Rights Resource Center that have been set up as part of this initiative along with the HRD have been actively engaging with national as well as state-level Human Rights Commissions, Minority Commissions, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commissions, and Women's Commissions.

The HRDs played an important role in supporting the families in distress (medical or otherwise) as a result of the lockdowns and economic impact of COVID. They supported the distribution of relief material among those in need. In partnership with Big FM radio, we were able to dedicate a number of shows to interview 17 human rights defenders trained by ActionAid in its programme "Saviours in Action". It was a big acknowledgement of the tireless work done by the human rights defenders providing support to people in need during the covid-19 pandemic.

They supported more than 14368 households across the four intervention areas of the HRD initiative in these states (Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) to apply for government welfare schemes, especially under the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) and the Multi-Sectoral Development Plan (MSDP).

As part of this initiative, a bill for the protection of Human Rights Defenders was drafted and tabled as a Private Member's Bill in the Parliament.

On December 9, 2021, ActionAid Association organised an event to celebrate community-based human rights defenders who have been working with the most disadvantaged communities and promoting social and ecological justice. We felicitated several exceptional individuals and the organisations they represent at the meeting held on the eve of *Human Rights Day* at the India International Centre, New Delhi. We also celebrated their exemplary efforts and achievements through social media as part of our *#HaqKiBaat*. These human rights defenders have been making vital interventions in different geographies on a wide range of issues, including children's rights, women's rights, workers' rights, land rights, Dalit rights, minority rights, tribal rights, and to advance ecological justice.

Comprehensive assistance to Refugees in Mewat, Derabassi (Punjab), Uttar Pradesh , Manipur and Mizoram

We continue to engage with refugees to provide comprehensive assistance to them. In 2021, we worked with them in Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram and Manipur. In Mewat and Derabassi, we engaged on the issue of critical health care, access to education, child protection, and protection from sexual and gender-based violence and provided basic sanitary materials to vulnerable women and girls, helped them to access vaccination, and emergency support such as monthly dry ration kits, monsoon emergency support, construction of shanties, education center, provided livelihood support to elderly, disabled people. We were also involved in skilling youth for employments and facilitating job linkages.

At a policy level, basis our research carried out in 5 countries with a focus on women in refuge we were able to publish with Routledge International a book entitled Travelling for Safety and

are using this to generate a public discourse on the gendered dimension of refuge and the question of travel, citizenship and rights. To bring these issues into public fora, we have been part of organising discussions on issues of refugees through our writings and in media discussions. We have also been working to develop a set of policy guidelines for climate migrants.

We supported for the Rohingya, Chin and other refugee groups

- Food items to 9093 families
 - Winter kits to 1632 families
 - Sanitary kits to 2325 women and girls
 - Mosquito nets to 2344 families in Mizoram, Manipur and Mewat
 - Masks and sanitisers to 293 individuals
 - Monsoon support to 405 families in Mewat, 34 families in UP
 - Educational kits to 1174 individuals
 - School bags to 1180 to Mizoram and Manipur
 - Provided beds to 446 families in Mewat
 - Cash support @ Rs3800 / @ Rs 2000 per month to 29 individuals who are elderly and disabled
 - One time cash support @ Rs 5000 to 291 individuals
 - Cash support @Rs 2000 per month to 141 girl children
 - Medical reimbursement support to 26 individuals
 - 88 water coolers to families and individuals, 5 water dispensers in UP
 - Portable toilets to 12 families in UP
 - Tarpaulin sheets to 1875 families in Mizoram and Manipur
- **In Mizoram and Manipur -A total of 3020 number of people were provided food support.** sanitary napkins, utensils, water tanks, temporary shelter materials and basic medicine and first aid were provided to needy and selected people. Cooking utensils, were provided in Manipur alone, in 4 (four) different congregations, where they are cooking together for the entire congregations. Similarly, water storage tanks were installed in four different locations in Manipur and two locations in Mizoram, where there was a need for water storage facility. We also assisted the village authorities with 80 sheets of polythene, with which they constructed temporary toilets using locally available bamboos. Temporary shelter materials were provided in one village in Manipur and two locations in Mizoram. 14 number of tin sheets for roofing were provided in Konseng village in Kamjong district of Manipur for a refugee shelter structure. This was done in collaboration with the Indo Myanmar Border Mission. Essential medicines and first aid materials were also provided to local volunteers, assisting the communities.

RESPONDING TO OTHER EMERGENCIES

The country also had to deal with natural calamities with floods and cyclone in 2021. There were 4 major cyclones that hit the coast of India. The cyclones caused severe damage to human lives and livelihoods of the people. Household material including bedding utensils and also livestock was lost. Apart from agriculture, the livelihoods of the fishworkers, saltpan workers, petty shopkeepers, got severely hit by the cyclone. These workers were already reeling under the impact of COVID19 pandemic so this a double whammy for people adding to their miseries. The vaccination drives were also stopped owing to the cyclone. There were reports of power failure affecting COVID care centres so many patients were evacuated owing

to that. Gujarat and Maharashtra have witnessed a dramatic surge in COVID-19 cases in the second wave, which has been ongoing since April.

ActionAid teams in Odisha, West Bengal, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu reached out to the most vulnerable families including single women, old people, disabled etc providing them with food and shelter support. Non food items included mattresses, bedsheets, mosquito nets, buckets etc. Details of the families supported include the following:

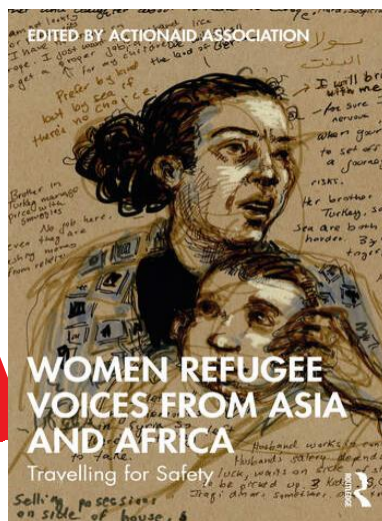
- As part of **Cyclone Yass** emergency response, 6,937 households from **Odisha and West Bengal** were provided with humanitarian assistance (shelter and Non Food Item kits distribution)
 - 4,800 people with cash support Basudevpur areas of Bhadrak district of Odisha
 - 6,050 families supported with unconditional cash transfer in Odisha and West Bengal
- As part of **Cyclone Tauktae** Response, 904 people supported with dry ration and provided tarpaulin sheets to the affected families in **Gujarat**
- As part of **Cyclone Burevi** response Cash transfer of Rs. 3000 each was made to 581 beneficiaries in **Tamil Nadu**

When we initiated the livelihood rebuilding initiative towards later part of last year, it was these families who were prioritised for livelihood support. Support was provided for livelihoods including poultry, starting petty shops, providing fishing nets, agriculture and earth work tools to several families.

ActionAid Association India was one of the three countries chosen from amongst the 45 countries in the Federation for the mid term audit compliance to Core Humanitarian Standards during emergencies, This was also because ActionAid Association India implemented a huge pan India COVID emergency response programme. The audit assessed performance against 9 Core Humanitarian principles and reported compliance to a great degree thereby continuing ActionAid's membership to the CHS alliance for the next 3 years.

Snippets of researches undertaken and published

- **Workers in The Time Of COVID-19**
National Study on Informal Workers Round I (2020)
Round II (2021)
- **Witch Branding in India**
A Study of Indigenous and Rural Societies Across Five States (2022)
- **Towards a Feminist Solidarity Economy**
A Study of Women Cooperatives in Four States of India (2022)
- **Women Refugee Voices from Asia and Africa**
Travelling for Safety (2022) with ROUTLEDGE
- **From the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom**
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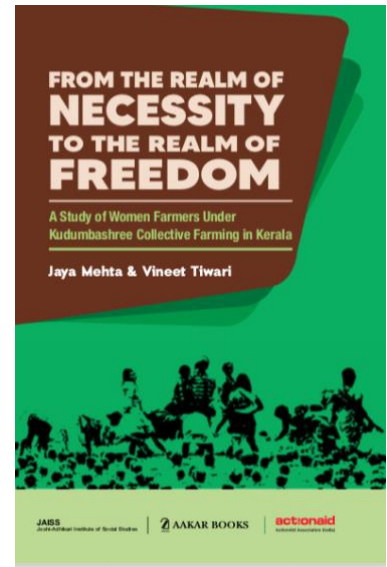
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