

# Monthly Newsletter

*Period: December 2024*



# Editorial

We are in the Winter of 24, signifying the end of one more year of Empowering Works and hence it is time for recollection and reflection. In this pivotal edition, we dive deep into the two fundamental concepts of social work i.e., **“Sympathy” and “Empathy”** and how they relate to Empowerment, Self-Determination, Dignity and Social Justice.

We are going to pose two important questions and that will serve as a reference point. Firstly, is the focus of social work solely on tangible outcomes? Or is social work both “a means and an end”? which is to inquire, if the process and the person implementing the process are as important as the tangible outcomes. We will try to explain this from the perspective of sympathy and empathy.

Sympathy simply means feeling sorry or pity for the unfortunates; however, this feeling is essentially disempowering. **How?** This sensitiveness is projected through personal and social lens inclusive of bias, judgements and false beliefs. It attributes a person to be incapable, inferior and powerless. Basically, sympathy strips off the person’s humanity and dignity as they are only seen from the perspective of their suffering and circumstances. Generally speaking, it assumes them to be intellectually, emotionally and socially incapable. Also, it creates a sense of distance and emotional separation between the sympathizer and the one who is being sympathized. Interestingly, the pitier even feels relieved that he isn’t in the sufferer’s position. So, sympathy is disempowering in the sense that the sympathizer feels he is incapable of learning, developing, changing his circumstances, living life to the fullest or fulfilling his varied roles. While it is true that they might be incapable in some areas, but that doesn’t define their entire existence. Also, this is where Social Work comes in, to address the gap through empathy

SYMPATHY

VS.

EMPATHY

and meaningful helping process. On the other hand, “Empathy” views the person in its entirety and unconditionally accepts him as he is without any judgements whatsoever. His strengths, weaknesses, circumstances are acknowledged and his existence dignified through understanding of knowledge rooted in truth. The empathic helper is able to see life from the perspective of the sufferer or the client and there is emotional connection. If sympathy inherently focuses on incapability of the person, Empathy emphasizes the person’s capability. In the context of social work, this is referred to as the “Strengths Perspective” or “Empowering Perspective” as it is believed that if the person is given the needed intervention, he would definitely be able to change the course of his fate. Is it empowering? Definitely! Empathy gives the person enough independence, self-determination and the right amount of intervention. The most important thing is bias, judgements and discrimination are absent.

So, is there a way to remove sympathy so that empathy may flower? Certainly, knowledge rooted in truth has the potentiality to overpower all personal and social biases and judgements. This knowledge can come about by direct observation, self-study and social work experience.

Now, let’s try to answer the two questions. No, Social work doesn’t solely focus on tangible outcomes. In the profession, both the process and the person executing the process are as significant as the results. This is why empathy is paramount. It aligns the helper’s assumptions, thinking and attitudes with the fundamental social work values, principles and guides his actions. When that is achieved the process is as uplifting as the intervention results themselves, thus, establishing the vital role of empathy in social work profession.

Sympathy and Empathy could also be discussed from the standpoint of “Ego” and “Pre-Conceived Notions”. However, we must defer this to the next edition. Merry Christmas and advanced Happy New Year!

<b>Name of the Activities/Social Security Schemes</b>	<b>Approx. Numerical Data</b>
Home, Workplace, Relief Camp Visits	30
Identification of Beneficiaries	10
Identification and Registration	46
Meeting with employers	0
Identification and Registration of Employers	13
Contacted Employers for Placement	16
Bank Account Applied	1
Birth Certificate Received	3
E-Shram Card Application	1
Domestic Workers' Group Formed	1
No. of Domestic Workers Placed	33



# HIGHLIGHTS...!

## Annual Staff Meet & Training for Capacity Building

### *Theme: “Leadership for the Mission”*

The “Annual Staff Meet and Training for Capacity Building” was organized in CDI from December 18 to 20, 2024 with the primary intention of enhancing the competency of the staff for effective field intervention resulting in programme effectiveness, reinforcing professionalism and collaborative learning. Staff from Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, West Bengal and Assam along with the provincial councillors for social Apostolate in the provinces participated in the training. Several imminent personalities like Rev. Sr. Christine Mynsong, MSMHC Superior General; Sr. Mary Nemi, PC, Kolkata; Sr. Shobha, CFMSS, Regional Secretary, NER Labour & Migrants Commission; Mr. Abhinash Narzary, Project Manager of NER L&M Commission; Sr. Irene Zoziemi, Research Scholar; Rev. Fr. John Paul, Procurator, Guwahati Archdiocese; Rev. Fr. Raj Kapur, Administrator, Archdiocese of Guwahati; Mr. Sanatan Deka, Manager and Programme Head, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and Rev. Fr. V M Thomas were the resource persons for the event resulting in an enriched learning and mutual intellectual exchange. The three-day event delved into significant subject-matters such as Mission Driven Leadership, the purpose of social workers and the spiritual, being a light unto others and the less fortunate, serving with humility, compassion and love; Constitutional provisions for the Labourers; Acts such as Payment of Wages Act 1936, The Minimum Wages Act 1948, The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2013 and The Child and Adolescent Labour Act 1986; effective communication, project planning, project proposal writing, reporting to donor’s expectations, financial management and the shift from economic project mode to evangelization mode in social apostolate.



# HIGHLIGHTS...!

The programme was intellectually stimulating, emotionally charged and socially uplifting. The attendees gained relevant expertise ushering in incremental level of confidence for intervention in the current field of social developmental works which the organization is engaged in. By doing this, the organization has once again showcased its commitment to improve the lives of the marginalized and the downtrodden, reflecting its willingness to sharpen its faculties and address its shortcomings for greater intervention efficiency. The future is secured in the fact that the organization is willing to be flexible and innovative in the face of continuous and often confounding challenges. Overall, the event was a preparation for the forthcoming future in which the current gaps and challenges were addressed. Furthermore, **Pre-Christmas**, the season of cheer, joy, delight, giving and receiving was celebrated with much fanfare and festive atmosphere.





# HIGHLIGHTS...!

## Monitoring Visit (International Human Rights Day and Group Meeting at Tetelia)

The International Human Rights Day which falls on 10th December annually was celebrated at Borengajuli TE and Subansri in the Tea Garden Belt of Assam on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2024. The event held at Borengajuli TE was attended by Sr. Lisa Elavunkal, the director of CDI and Rev. Sr. Caroline, while the programme carried out at Subansri was graced by Mr. Nirmal Singh and Sr. Valarin Toppo. Sr. Lisa Elavunkal, in her homily, spoke of education and the importance of sports. The children, to showcase their warmth acceptance and appreciation to the visitors performed an action song. Furthermore, the event gave an opportunity to a Mahila Samiti's secretary to speak about its IGA's progress (pig rearing). A consensus was reached where it was decided that moving forward sports would be organized once a month amongst the existing community-based organizations (CBOs). In Subansri, the day focused on human rights awareness, role of education in the students' lives and society, along with good manners, health and hygiene.

In another monitoring escapade, Sr. Liza Elavunkal visited and interacted with the Kamrup's domestic workers wherein she inquired about their health, work activities and their sources of livelihood. She duly motivated them to keep up the momentum towards the envisioned goals.





# PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT

**Domestic Workers' Group Meeting and Home Visit:** The staff frequently visited the domestic workers as well as their employers with the purpose of building and maintaining rapport and understanding their progressive situation. As such, during the visits their working condition, including relationship with their employers was enquired and found to be desirable and cordial. Additionally, their health and personal living conditions too were monitored to ensure that everything was going well for them. They were also informed of the upcoming Annual Meet-Cum-Staff Training to be held in CDI from 18 to 20 December, 2024. Specifically, while visiting the employers, they touched upon topics such as the project, their perception about their domestic workers' professional services. Also, during the group meeting held at Thangmeiband Yumnam Leikai, they had an exchange on social security schemes and entitlements. During the group meeting at Panglian, they deliberated on the ways to animate the group including entitlements for the beneficiaries. In another meeting, the group leaders were trained on book-keeping and record maintenance.

**Collaboration with Stakeholders:** The staff made repeated visits to the vendors in order to inform them of the imminent financial transaction, to print banners and purchase refreshment items. Additionally, the staff stopped by a press centre, and paid a visit to Bank of Baroda for some important queries. They also went to Mizoram State Commission for Women and deliberated on the existing rules and regulations concerning Domestic Workers' Placement Agency, Minimum Wage Fixation and the state's situation with regard to domestic workers. They dropped by domestic workers stalls for the purpose of monitoring and rapport building and visited CSC for the purpose of E-Shram Card and Aadhaar Card linkage.





# PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT

**Placement, Solidarity and Direct Intervention:** 33 domestic helpers received direct part-time placement in Aizawl City between December 1 to 21, 2024. The staff of Aizawl effectively resolved a dispute between a domestic worker and an employer. After having knowledge of the dispute, the staff had contacted Women's Helpline, after which they were directed to visit One Stop Centre, next the dispute was amicably resolved between the two parties through a phone call, thus, the staff effectively resolved the issue before it turned worst. The domestic were also assisted to apply and obtain social security schemes and entitlements.

## Anti-Human Trafficking Project

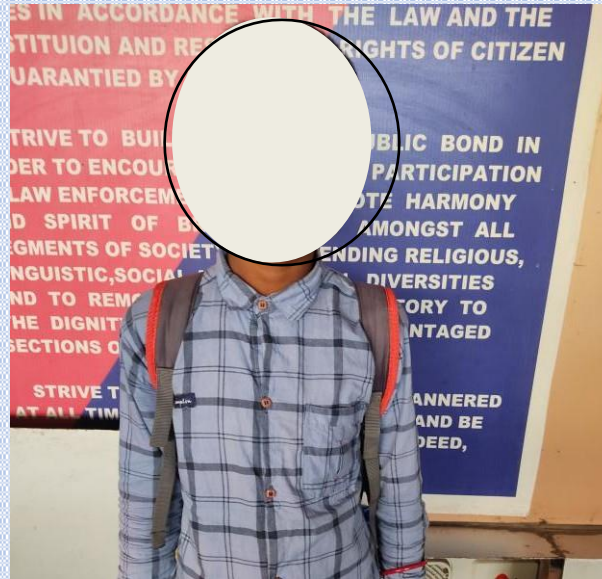
- **Meeting with Tutors:** Numerous meetings were carried out in the tea garden with the tuition teachers with the primary objective of “increasing the learning centres effectiveness”. The talks centered on frequent register checking, the obligatory condition of daily attendance, adopting such systems of teaching that ensure children's regularity and punctuality, complete reduction and drop-out prevention, knowing and understanding teachers and students' problems and their timely and effective resolutions, and methods that must be adopted to ensure regular attendance. The meetings had numerous positive outcomes: home visit was decided to be one such significant strategy to bring children to the learning centres, the utilization of interactive games and other co-curricular activities like singing, dancing, drawing competition to enhance learning experience, also the platform enabled the children to voice their needs like being given home-works and more tuition time.





# PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT

**Interception Project:** In this intervening month, 17 cases were successfully intercepted mainly in Guwahati Railway Station (GRS) and all of them were adolescent and pre-adolescent boys and girls. Some of the cases are: a 15-year-old insisting on attending his cousin's wedding despite being debarred and travelled alone and landed in Guwahati confused, a missing girl travelling alone to fix the phone for online classes as her mother neglected her pleas, got lost during the course of their journey, got separated during the train journey as they mistakenly deboarded at the wrong place, and intercepted a probable trafficking case where a girl had been promised of a better employment without much detail with the rendezvous point being GRS.



**Awareness on Social Security and Entitlements:** Awareness on Social Security and Entitlements was conducted in the project cities falling under New Hope. It was carried out at Zeliangrong Village in Dimapur on 6 and 7 December wherein 87 of them participated and at Gaon Bura Colony, Naharbari on 16 December. In Kohima City, it was striven on 6, 8 and 14 December, 2024 with 250 participants. Post-programme demonstration on paper bag making was demonstrated by Sr. Rincy. 100 domestic workers were witnessed to have partaken in the awareness programme on 8 and 9 December, 2024 in Imphal, while Churachandpur carried out the event on 10, 11 and 12 December, 2024 at Panglian, Lanva TD Block and KIC Hall, Tuibuang, respectively. Champhai hosted the session on 12 December at ZNS Hall.



# MICRO-CREDIT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

**Kamrup and Manos Domestic Workers' Group** The following activities were endeavoured by the staff in their endeavour to intervene for the domestic workers of Kamrup:

**Deliberation:** Discussed about their health and working condition.

**Action:** December month's activities and programmes were collectively planned. Space for commercial stalls planned to be set up by the domestic workers were visited, while the two existing stalls at Tetelia and Jharpara were monitored. The beneficiaries are working on a part time basis in these two stalls. The upcoming date for health camp fixed and the beneficiaries informed, mobilized and other arrangement done. Follow-up on seed money was also performed; assessment being continued and project review carried out. The budget diary was also scrutinized, and provided assistance to the group members in making and selling detergent at a local market. Moreover, an awareness programme was striven at Haropara where the 43 domestic workers were sensitized on emergency helpline numbers.

**Inquiry:** Inquiry was made into the income generation activities initiated through the disbursed start-up funds, also, the existing legal documents and the techniques of their application were investigated.

**Monitoring Start-Ups:** The beneficiaries were found to have begun a business on incense stick making, packaging and distribution to local shops. Tangkame, a DWs group from Tura, has successfully started a pickle (Indian Olive) business.

**Feedback:** Feedback gathered on toilet cleaner, phenyl training and awareness.

**Learned:** It was realized that the reasons behind the success of alternative livelihood programme amongst the beneficiaries were the mental, emotional, social and financial support they received from the staff and organization.





# MICRO-CREDIT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## Housekeeping and Food Preparation Training

**Training on Phenyl Making and Awareness on Personal Hygiene:** A residential training was endeavoured in CDI on phenyl and toilet cleaner making with 100 domestic workers and NIOS students on 10 and 11 December, 2024. On the first day i.e., 11 December, the participants were demonstrated through hands-on and heads-up approach about the procedure involved in phenyl Making, giving the participants comprehensive understanding of the subject. Firstly, the two resource persons by the name of Mrs. Jeuti Das and Mrs. Lakhi Kumar (domestic workers) introduced themselves, following which they brought out all the ingredients and explained what the ingredients were, and started mixing them one after another in a bucket of water. With the addition of each ingredient, the mixing was continuously stirred, of which by the end a frothing blue liquid called “Phenyl” was produced, which was the final product. Then, all the participants were given the opportunity to closely observe the end result, after which Q and A session was undertaken, which was succeeded by a team-building exercise. On 12 December, 2024, the second day of the event, to enlighten the partakers on “Personal Hygiene” they were expounded on the concept of hygiene, its importance, body care, hygienic practices and many more. A dedicated Q and A and an ice-breaking session were also striven. The completion of both days was marked by a memorable group photo.





# MICRO-CREDIT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

**Home Visit (Manos and Kamrup):** The staff sought from domestic workers of Tura the progress of their livelihood activities, also visited a beneficiary who had a work based minor accident. Assessment is also still being pursued by the staff. The profession related matters were also deliberated during the visits. Similarly, the domestic helpers of Kamrup, Assam were met in order to monitor and follow-up on the income generating activities initiated through seed money funded through CDI. Furthermore, the beneficiaries were also mobilized for an upcoming skills training and assessments were performed.

**Training on Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives:** A session on Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives was conducted on 17 December, 2024 in CDI, in which Mr. John Gautam Rabha enlightened the 12 domestic workers on the 4 Ps of MSME i.e., Product, Price, Place and Promotion. The programme started at 11.30 a.m. with an introductory speech wherein the objective of the training was clearly articulated, which was followed by the main event. In this stage, the business 4 Ps were extensively covered delving into themes like types of enterprises, project selection, problems and opportunities, product choice, manufacturing and services, technology and machinery, finance and approval etc. This was succeeded by an interactive session in which the domestic workers directly interacted with the resource person, also during which they shared about their current start-ups and financial situation, among others. The training concluded at 1. 30 p.m. with a vote of thanks delivered by Mrs. Gitamoni Barman.





# CHILD RIGHTS AND CHILD PROTECTION

**Shelter Project Tuition Centres:** The children were supervised, instructed and taught on subjects like Math (addition, subtraction, table) Assamese (dictation, letter and word reading etc.), Science, Reading, English (writing, reading etc.), Drawing, paragraph reading, physical training and games, dance competition, story on “The Night the Elephants Came”, Hindi (letter reading and many more). They were also given full support in preparation for their exams. A sports day was also observed at Madhupur Centre Shelter Club in Baksa. For co-curricular games and other lively activities were organized.

**Missio Tuition:** The children of the learning centres situated in Udalguri, Baksa, Chirang, Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts were taught, assisted, supervised and motivated to study subjects like English (grammar, poem reading, story reading etc.), Mathematics (multiplication table etc.), social science, Assamese, Hindi, general knowledge, EVS history, Sanskrit, drawing and MIL. Also, other accompanying activities conducted during the classes are sports, physical exercises, singing, dancing, quiz, impromptu speech, dancing, singing and other fun centered activities. Awareness on health, hygiene, alcoholism, education and healthcare featured, while National Human Rights Day was also observed.

**NIOS Coaching Centre:** The coaching centre of CDI where the students are enrolled through NIOS is still in progress. They have all completed their TMA and their marks have been uploaded by their respective subject teachers. The students have got their Christmas and New Year’s holiday from 21<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2025. They have been given loads of homework to be completed over the holiday and have been instructed to complete their practicals too.





# HEALTH CARE AND HEALTH PROMOTION

**Eye Health Camp:** Two eye camps were organized 13 and 14 December, 2024. The first was held at Amingaon, while the second was strived at Sadilpur in Jalukbari. In both events, Guwahati's Down Town Hospital healthcare workers were roped in leading to successful collaborations. Both programmes were scheduled between 10. 30 a.m. and 3 p.m., and the two followed similar procedures. The beneficiaries were registered, following which consultations and tests were done, and referrals and free medicines were provided. The Major outcomes of the camps are given in the following below:

- 16 partakers got a referral for affordable cataract operation at Down Town Hospital, similarly, 7 other beneficiaries got a medical recommendation for emergency eye treatment in the same hospital.
- 25 beneficiaries received free optical glasses
- Blood pressure checked for 81 participants
- 34 patients were screened for diabetes

In aggregate, 96 beneficiaries benefitted from the two eye camps. Moreover, awareness was provisioned on the value of eye, method of eye care, its protection, eye lenses etc.



# CARE FOR ENVIRONMENT

## Programme on Environment

The staff of Manos Unidas attended an Environmental centric programme at District Court in which the focus was on environmental laws, the harmful impacts of pollution and environmental degradation.

