

# Pratibimb



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A REFLECTION

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## NATIONAL FORUM FOR HOUSING RIGHTS LAUNCHED

→ The NFHR (National Forum for Housing Rights) was launched on 1st October, 2012, on the occasion of World Habitat Day to protect and fulfill every individual's right to adequate housing. During the launch, Indu Prakash Singh, Convenor of NFHR and Head of the Urban Poverty Programme at IGSSS, shared that it is a coalition of organizations, networks, institutions, social movements and individuals across India which will focus on protection against forced evictions, especially the homeless citizenry.



## The IGSSS – NDTV winter campaign

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This winter "Give a Cup of Tea to the Homeless" campaign was carried out for 36 days during the peak winter period from 10th January, 2013. The campaign reached out to 7500 homeless people at Yamuna Pushta, New Delhi.

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## EDITORIAL

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## ED'S DESK

# There are miles to go:

● As the spring blooms in India and the summer is waiting at the threshold, it is already drought in some places. Moreover, we see a drought of the basic thing that each human being needs to have – humanity. Since the brutal rape of Nirbhaya and the huge outcry across India and abroad one would have hoped for civil sense to prevail and children and women would be safer in public spaces, (be it returning from work or going shopping) or in private spaces as in their own homes. Well NO its only been worse – 2 year olds and ladies asking for directions have been assaulted.

One is left to wonder why so... is it, as some say, more active reporting; is it space wars; is it being away from home for long; is it value degeneration; is it provocative dressing; is it... this; is it... that.

There is no reason which can be even talked about to say that women can be assaulted. NO reason at all. But then no element of revenge or shunning the evil doers from Society will help. One needs to bring in a culture of love and concern. From the time of the child being in the mother's womb – of being wanted, of being cared for - till the time they leave this world each person having worth and dignity so that they are positively contributing to the society.

We need to take a position in LIFE – Life with Freedom and Dignity - and not just be passive opinion makers.

IGSSS through its interventions in Kashmir and North East, has been able to bring this element of Life, Freedom and Dignity. The young and the women in groups of their own are provided for a space where they are able to look at themselves and how the society has evolved in the last two decades of conflict and violence. There is desire in them to bring in peace and through peace prosperity. At the same time the scars of yester years have not faded and unfortunately at times are made fresh.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

Our work with and for CityMakers (Urban Homeless) is another hallmark of the promises kept but miles to go before we sleep. The winter campaign this year has been a great achievement with so many people joining us. It was convergence of people from diverse sectors – media, government, judiciary, civil society, the common man/woman and more importantly the CityMakers themselves.

However, miles to go before we sleep...

Smiles... Joseph



## OPINION

# Take Back the Night

Ms. Sreya Mozumdar  
MANAGER, GENDER MAINSTREAMING

There has been much debate since the episode of the brutal gang rape of the young woman on a cold December night in Delhi. Having already earned itself the infamous sobriquet of the Rape Capital of India, Delhi reinforced its reputation as being a city of misogynists and predators – men and young boys who prowl the streets in search of 'softer' female targets.

The woman in question was accompanied by her male friend and stranded in search of public transport when she boarded a chartered bus that fateful night. The driver of the bus, along with a motley crew of friends, ravaged and assaulted them both – leaving them naked and bleeding on the road, after throwing both of them off the bus and unsuccessfully attempting to mow them down. Doctors who treated her at the hospital said that they had never seen such savagery on a person before. Those who were with her till the end spoke movingly about her courage, resilience and will to live. During her fight over a course of two weeks, Delhi came alive with protests, in solidarity. Thousands thronged the streets to demand for capital punishment and/or punitive rape laws. Many came to grieve silently, lighting candles and praying together in one of the harshest winters the city has witnessed of late. The media, both regional and national, vied with each other for the 'breaking news' on offer. Politicians cut across party lines to condemn the attack in all its viscerality. Change was imminent, or so it seemed.

The finer print was harder to read amidst all the noise. To the discerning observer, however, there were discordant notes being struck right from the start. Of police inaction on the night of the assault, when medical attention was delayed needlessly. Of indifference on part of the passersby, who were content watching the grim spectacle that the young woman and her friend made lying on the road. Of the inept administration, who forced the young woman, on ventilator support, to submit two separate statements to the magistrate. Of the media, who teased the viewers with salacious details about the young woman - describing the colour of the streaks in her hair, the kind of clothes and shoes usually worn by her, obliquely commenting on the kind of physique she had had. Of sections of the protestors, who tried to hijack the feminist agenda by lending to it their own political colour. Of politicians and public servants,



who repeatedly made protectionist arguments related to the safety and security of women. Of a country torn between the urban-rural divide, where many more such crimes against women have gone largely unreported, unnoticed in the rural hinterland. Of the many voiced claims for the death penalty, based on the regressive belief that rape is a fate worse than death for a woman.

The writing on the wall seems blurred as of now. Suggestions on amendments to criminal laws relating to the safety and security of women range from the radical to the cosmetic. Highlights include the replacing of the term 'rape' by 'sexual assault' as per the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2012, raising of the age of consent from 16 to 18 years, recognition of marital rape as a serious offence under the Indian Penal Code, the setting up of a permanent Statutory Committee for the purpose of prescribing sentencing guidelines as well as legal measures barring entry of people who have committed violence against women into any political or elected posts. But the larger struggles, more difficult to wage a concerted war against, are the ones that begin at home, within families, where gendered understanding and stereotypes are built and reinforced. And that still remains a road less travelled on, a road under construction.

# THE LESSER RAPES

Mr. Yasir Qureshi  
MANAGER PROGRAMS, KASHMIR

“I just want to sleep. A coma would be nice. Or amnesia. Anything, just to get rid of this, these thoughts, whispers in my mind. Did he rape my head, too?” – Laurie Halse Anderson, Speak

Brutal gang rape of a 23 year old student in moving public bus in Delhi has not only brought shame and disgust but has also seen seething anger amongst the citizenry against the deteriorating state of law and order and security of women.

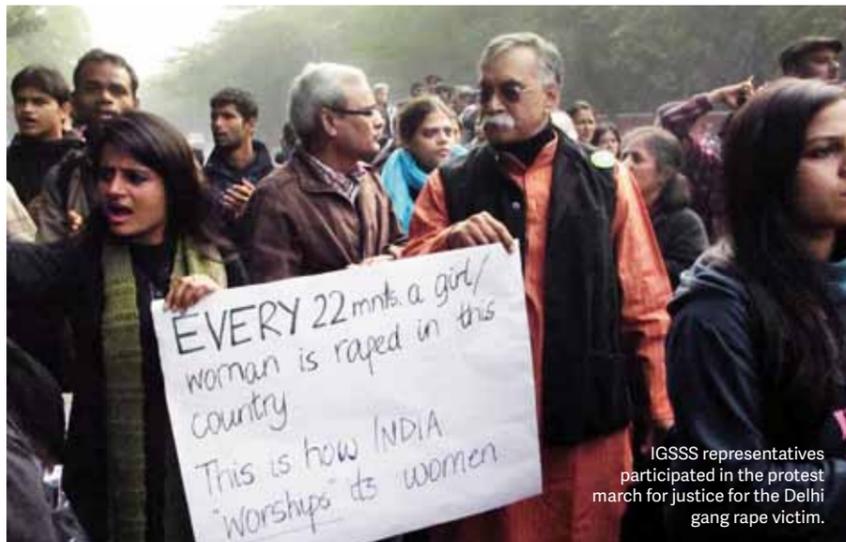
I cannot have two opinions about it, that rape is rape whether committed by police/security forces or criminals in Kashmir or Delhi, in Manipur or in Raipur, in UP or in Bihar. It is simply violence against women perpetrated by evil Homo-sapiens. It is a brutal crime which leaves a victim devastated physically and mentally.

While there can be some ‘unjustified’ reasons for increasing violence against women but there can be no reason why it cannot be stopped. The agenda of the civil society should be to end violence against women, it should have a road-map to secure our women against any violence be it domestic or otherwise.

Resorting to agitation at secure zones of New Delhi will only yield some international publicity but not solution to this ever increasing problem.

I pray that our response to this brutal crime should be measured one, the one which doesn't lead to violence; arson and death of innocents as dead do not come back walking to their dear and near ones.

I am pained when I see double standards employed by organizations and imminent personalities who champion the cause of women rights in India. They come to the fore to show angry India on corporate media when such heinous crimes are conducted



IGSSS representatives participated in the protest march for justice for the Delhi gang rape victim.



A patriarchal mindset is the root towards all kinds of crimes committed against women.

*“I strongly believe that love is the answer and that it can mend even the deepest unseen wounds. Love can heal, love can console, love can strengthen, and yes, love can make change.”*

against women in cosmopolitan cities but ignore and avoid when similar crimes are ‘organized’ against women in other parts of India. Comparing rapes with other rapes will be foolish and inhuman thing but comparing responses by authorities and so called champions of women rights or “civil society” to such rapes is surely our right to do. I strongly believe that it has never been India's policy to commit state repression or violence against women in any war or peace situation for any race or ethnicity. But when State shows indignation to reports

of violence by its functionaries, when State shows reluctance to act against its functionaries, when State doesn't allow remedy to the aggrieved, when State showers gallantry awards and promotions to the accused functionaries, it is nothing but walking the path of hypocrisy. May be they are there to preserve democracy but not to practice it.

This hypocrisy gets further cemented in the minds of fellow common people when media, “civil society” and judiciary maintain a graveyard silence under the garb of a larger national interest.

When there is paradox and dichotomy in our values for women then there can be no remedy to this problem of violence against women.

“I strongly believe that love is the answer and that it can mend even the deepest unseen wounds. Love can heal, love can console, love can strengthen, and yes, love can make change.” – Somaly Mam, The Road of Lost Innocence: The True Story of a Cambodian Heroine.

# Right to Information

## A Tool to Bridge Communication Gap in Kashmir

Ms. Nazia Nabi  
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE, KASHMIR

*Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family. - Kofi Annan*

The relation between government officials and commoners in Kashmir has never been encouraging with regard to sharing of information. The lack of cooperation by government officials exhibited through a reluctant attitude, inapproachability and sometimes even going to the extent of bullying a commoner, in response to a query, impedes exchange of information. Thus, the citizenry mostly remain ignorant about the various welfare schemes and the processes involved to access their entitlements from the concerned government departments.

However, the RTI (Right to Information) Act holds the potential to improve accountability towards the delivery of services meant for the needy and contribute towards improving the quality of life for many marginalised communities. There are government schemes and programmes designed to strengthen the poor, but often these benefits do not reach the target population. Millions of rupees are pocketed by the government functionaries and the allies and various other vested interest groups in the name of social welfare. The RTI could be used as an effective tool against the erring officials; it provides a citizen with the legal right to question any government official in the wake of a gap between service and delivery concerning government schemes.

The RTI Act came into effect in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2004 and a new version of the Act was further implemented on 20th March, 2009. It became an important tool to dispel the fear of the powerless. The government functionaries became responsive and this RTI movement unnerved certain officials' who were neck deep in corruption.

Kashmir being one of the most corrupt state in the country, there is, however, every possibility of nepotism and chaos at every level of implementation. There are vested interests that want to make the Act ineffective and the recent decision of cabinet to amend few sections

of the RTI Act added fuel to the fire. This action is a planned campaign to curb the basic democratic rights of the people. I am confused what does democracy mean in such a set up. Unless the commoners find an equally strong motivation to stand up and fight to preserve it, its ability to withstand this onslaught is in doubt for sure.

The best way to strengthen the RTI Act is to spread the awareness about its significance and the impact it can have. It is also necessary to do this without creating needless animosity between the people and government officials; instead it is better to encourage people to use RTI for the benefit of all. It is also important to educate youngsters about this Act and involve them in the process of information dissemination so that they can play a strong role in spreading the message across the length and breadth of their respective villages.

IGSSS under its various interventions sensitized the Youth towards using Right to Information Act as a key tool for development initiatives in the Kashmir Valley



# Tibetans of Kashmir

Ms. Monisa Qadri

RECIPIENT OF IGSSS MEDIA FELLOWSHIP 2012-13, KASHMIR

Tibetan Colony of Kashmir is still an enigma for most of the Kashmiris. Many people do not know about them. After converting to Islam, these people migrated to Kashmir from Tibet around 1960. They settled in Srinagar city in the areas of Hawal, Eidgah and Gulshan Mohalla of Makhdoom Sahab, now popularly known as the 'Tibetan Colony'.

Some 120 families are believed to have migrated from Tibet, and at present there are about 270 families settled in these three localities, which make up a population of about a thousand people.

Abdul Majeed Dar (55) has faint memories of migration but his elders have told him much about it. He says, "We first settled in Numaisi (Exhibition Grounds) when we came here and then we were shifted to Eidgah and other areas, where a colony was built for us."

Like a majority of Kashmiris at that time, their financial condition was not good and so they had to struggle hard for their living. "We even sold off jewellery and other valuable things. When the Civil Secretariat was being constructed, we laboured for it," he adds.

With typical Mongoloid features, these people have still held onto their culture. Their food comprises of famous Momo, Thukpa, Chowmein and their women wear 'Shhuba'-a traditional gown and they speak mostly in their mother tongue, Tibetan. They relish these symbols of their identity. Every household has varied items of Tibetan origin like utensils, fabrics, carpets or wool. Tauseef Ahmad Shahkuli, a 24 year old self-employed boy, and his sister-in-law happily showcase these and other things like Ginseng Tea, painkillers and so on. While holding out a bottle of Vapourub, he says, "This is the original product" and naming a popular Indian brand he adds, "that is simply a copy that is why we use Tibetan items." When asked about how these things are procured, it was shared that they are mostly bought from Tibet, when somebody travels to and fro and also from Tibetan markets of Jammu, Ladakh or Delhi. Strangely, there are not many markets of Tibetan products in the Valley and that is why Asma, who got married last year, had to get her Shhuba and Paandaeyy

(apron) stitched from Delhi. These are a must for every Tibetan bride.

Almost every house has typical aluminium cookware 'Moattu' with two parts, meant specifically for preparing Momos in steam. Big, small and in every size they come depending on the need quotient. Majority of the Tibetan population are associated with the business of embroidery, hosiery or tourism. Tauseef is associated with tourism and has two cabs, while his family runs an embroidery business. His shop, which is located near his home, displays variety of Tila (Traditional embroidery in Silver and Golden thread) designs done mostly on Pherans (Kashmiri Gown worn during winters). Amidst sounds of sewing machines, he talks about his business. He says, "We don't do the handwork, as we use machines and that is why Kashmiris refer to this kind of work as 'Boata Tila.' There is a good market for this work also as it is reasonable."

Generally, these people are hard working and honest, which has earned them a good reputation among other communities. While entering the Eidgah Colony, we saw an octogenarian woman busy knitting. 'Maulaa' or Granny as she was called by everyone in the colony, seemed little bothered about this unfamiliar face as she went on converting yarn into a sweater along with two other women Zulaikha and Haseena in their forties. She is good at almost everything, according to Tauseef, especially at making Momos and has fed people for decades in her little Momo restaurant.

Maulaa, whose real name is Zeenat had been a witness to the migration. Nostalgically she recounts, "I was 28 when I came here with my family and that was a difficult time for all of us."

Zulaikha says that due to the communist control in Tibet, it was deemed fit by their elders to return to Kashmir so that they could practice their religion freely.



Many Tibetan youths involve themselves in traditional forms of livelihood

"My grandfather, Habibullah was arrested along with his friends who were religious heads of Muslims there and he died in prison some 15-20 years after we came here. And we too had to experience lot of issues when we came to Kashmir; language was one of the biggest problems." In a quiet tone she spoke about Maula's awkward moment with the local language when she asked for Mohabbat (Love) instead of Mombati (Candle).

On a more serious note, Ghulam Rasool mentions that they were asked by the Indian Government to go to any place in India, but since they were originally from Kashmir, they chose to come to Kashmir. "It was also because of our religion that we felt we should come here," he adds. But, there have been so many things that bother this community which includes denial of state subject hood, little opportunities for higher education besides having no access to government jobs. The latter two are a result of them being denied state citizenship.

They are still not considered state subjects, even though they have all relevant documents like Electoral Identity card, ration card etc. Article 370 is the reason attributed to the denial of State Subject to the Tibetans in Kashmir. Abida Parveen, a final year student is unsure about her future. "I don't know how I will be able to get admission for my Post Graduation for want of a state subject." This is the tale of almost every graduate or higher secondary pass-out, who needs

to produce state subject at the time of admission. The same holds true for anyone applying for state government jobs.

Those who are fortunate enough to travel to different cities of India, like Delhi, do not face such a problem and every Tibetan colony member who has gone for further studies has studied outside Kashmir. Dr. Qazi, a young university Assistant Professor, studied in New Delhi. However, not everyone in the Tibetan community located at Srinagar can afford to send their children to other states to pursue higher education.

Lack of opportunities in the context of both higher education and employment opportunities has led to poor literacy rate among the Tibetans. For Ishrat, lack of higher education opportunities was the reason for not pursuing studies after completing her 12th.

Nevertheless, there exists a positive bonding between the Tibetan community and certain Kashmiris who think positively about them. Abdul Rasheed, a local businessman working with some members of the Tibetan community including Tauseef and Majeed, says, "I have been trading with them and they are my very good friends and honestly it is good to deal with them."

Tibetan Kashmiris too feel that they have never felt any social discrimination as Abida points, "There are inter-community marriages as well and we live in a great harmony with everyone."

# Winter Campaign for the Homeless

**Ms. Ambalika Saha**  
OFFICER COMMUNICATIONS, URBAN POVERTY

**Ms. Sheeba Anwar**  
FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR

Winters are unrelenting and harsh in Delhi. Ensnared in warm heated apartments we fail to comprehend how bitter cold can be when home is out on the streets. IGSSS took few significant initiatives this winter in a bid to help the homeless keep themselves warm during the peak winter.

**NIGHT VIGIL:** Every night when the city wrapped itself under the blanket and quilt, the Night Vigil team scanned the deserted roads and distributed blankets to people who lay bare and shivering. It was an initiative to not only help the homeless residents deal with the chilly winter but also during the night vigils innumerable people living on the streets who required urgent medical attention were provided with necessary medication and care. During these visits, many rescue operations were also carried out primarily of deserted women, the aged and abandoned by their families, disabled and the seriously ill. The needy were rescued and provided refuge in the temporary and the permanent shelters set up by IGSSS in different parts of the city.

**ONE HOT MEAL:** The organization also launched the Hot Meal Initiative

in collaboration with MCKS Food for Hungry Foundation. The initiative reached out to nearly 200 people every evening in Yamuna Pushta area, near Nigambodh Ghat. The vicinity is a key hub of homeless people (it is home to approximately 200-300 people) many among whom are engaged in strenuous work while also being addicted to drugs. While they remain malnourished throughout the year, it is during the winter that the situation becomes grave and Delhi reports several unclaimed frozen bodies of homeless person who die due to their inability to obtain the minimum calories which could keep their bodies warm and help them fight winter, as they sleep on the street. This activity, spread over four winter months - December to March, was not only aimed at fighting malnutrition but also to highlight a citizen's Right to Food.

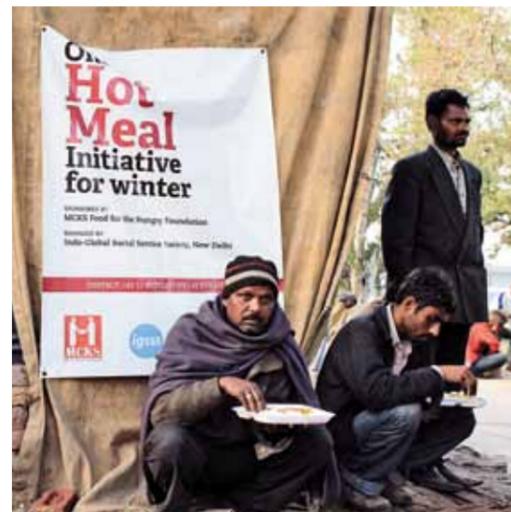
**CUP OF HOT TEA CAMPAIGN:** IGSSS and NDTV implemented a campaign 'This Winter Give a Cup of Tea to the Homeless'. Under this campaign, morning tea and biscuits were provided to approximately 250 homeless residents waking up on cold foggy mornings. This initiative was largely possible due to

the appeal broadcast by NDTV twice across its news space and platforms. The campaign raised an amount of Rs. 1,71,124. A portion of this amount was utilized to distribute 500 blankets and 180 sleeping bags to the homeless people living on the streets.

**MEDIA ADVOCACY:** CNN-IBN also launched 'Help the Homeless' campaign and IGSSS team members played a crucial role in orienting the journalists on the issue. They took them at night to the shelters in Delhi and facilitated their interaction with the homeless residents on streets, particularly women to highlight their plight. Leading national dailies such as The Hindustan Times, Times of India and Mint widely covered the issue. The media highlight helped to advocate the concerns and created a pressure strategy on the duty bearers, the Delhi Government and Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board to deliver the entitlements to the homeless.

The efforts struck a chord with the citizenry equally and people across the country and also abroad came forward to aid the cause of the Homeless residents. The sensitivity and interest on the issue of Homelessness gives us Hope in people and strengthens our belief that all of us have a role to play in improving the living conditions of the homeless and together we can make Delhi a Caring city and an inclusive space that respects all human lives equally.

**From left:** Blankets and Sleeping Bags being distributed to the homeless at Nizamuddin, New Delhi. 200 homeless citizens fed every day during the harsh winter at Yamuna Pushta, New Delhi.



# Humein Naaz Hai

**Ms. Sohini Bhattacharjee**  
EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS



The play 'Humein Naaz Hai' was based on the plight of the homeless surviving on the streets of Delhi. Conceived by Mandala and Jamghat theatre group, the play was directed by Lokesh Jain and supported by IGSSS along with few likeminded organizations.

The play was woven around stories which helped the audience understand about the identity of a homeless person and the quest for survival. Poignant characterization reflected through the roles of a small tea stall owner, a migrant night guard, the mentally challenged, a eunuch, women evicted from families in the name of dowry and domestic violence, and the displaced. Several such portrayals struck a chord with the audience and helped them connect with the issue. Moreover, the play also brought forth the difficulty of street children whose concerns otherwise remains invisible.

It touched upon several key issues such as the impact of partition that led families plunging into poverty; social alienation faced by the character of the eunuch. This was one of the many reasons, that eventually led the eunuch fall prey to the sex trade, posed a serious question to the larger society about how we treat such

people and its consequences on their lives.

The distressing struggle of street children was shown through one deeply moving scene, when a child laborer in order to save his hard earned money from being snatched away by the pimp hid it in excreta, their powerlessness exposed when the pimp forcibly abused such vulnerable children who had no guardian to protect them against such atrocities.

The predicament of the women was shown through the violence meted out to them in several forms such as physical, psychological, social etc. Being homeless with no concrete identity, hostilities inflicted upon them are scarcely recorded or responded.

The character portrayal of the mentally challenged roaming on the streets bereft of institutional care penetrated the apathy of the state who fails to respond to the medical needs of such people.

The play spoke about a section of population that no welfare policies cater to, unheard and unrecognized; they are 'Nobody's Citizens'. The play is a remarkable effort to not only sensitize the common person about the issue of homelessness, but a plea to every resident of this country to treat such people with warmth and dignity.

# Winter warmth

Mr. Mukesh Dubey  
MANAGER COMMUNICATIONS

During the last winters in Delhi, the IGSSS campaign for homeless people aimed at providing basic necessities such as food, clothes, blankets and a cup of hot tea. The campaign for a cup of hot tea was promoted by NDTV and attracted a great number of supporters to fund the cause. The selected photographs depicts the need, process and impact of the campaign.



On an average at least 200 people were served hot tea along with two slices of bread.



From top: Tea is being prepared by the volunteers; The initiative was hugely appreciated and supported by people; Delhi dipped close to 4° C this winter exposing homeless people to death.



# Potential community based intervention along the eastern coastal tract in context of climate change

**Mr. Joel Jose**

ASST. MANAGER, LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM

A workshop was organized on 11th - 12th December, 2012 in Visakhapatnam to discuss the issue of climate change and its impact on livelihood along with likeminded CSOs (Civil Society Organizations).

Based on their experience the participants shared that the known weather patterns/local climate patterns prevalent three to four decades ago (which most participants experienced in their

adolescence) has changed. Major indicators of this change are being experienced such as the delay in the starting of khariff farming due to late arrival of monsoon, overall increase in temperature throughout the year, short winter etc.

Discussions revolved around potential activities which would reduce the vulnerability posed by the imminent danger of climate change. Some of the significant

suggestions that came up included economization in terms of resource usage, development of alternative technology, diversification of livelihood opportunities, community management of resources and undertaking strong advocacy with concerned government departments to spread awareness amongst the coastal communities about the rules and regulations concerning the coastal issues.



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