

A photograph of a man with dark skin, a mustache, and short dark hair, wearing a blue short-sleeved shirt. He is holding a young child with dark skin and hair. The child is wearing a brown and yellow patterned shirt and a red patterned shawl. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Samata

Assertion for people

2014-15 Annual Report

April 2015



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A note from the Executive Director

This year in August samata will complete 25 years of service to the tribal communities and to the Nation as such! Normally it is an occasion to celebrate for any organization - be it not for profit or for profit. I can proudly say that it has been a very successful 25 years for Samata despite all the odds starting from 1990 when we formally registered Samata. From the village level to the National level Samata has successfully demonstrated a commitment to the cause of the Tribal peoples and environment. The Last two and half decades has seen us working from organizing thrift cooperatives with the help of Samakhya (now CDF) to organizing tribal farmers to access cashew plantations, Land problems and issues and finally the constitutional question of State governments rights to hand over land in scheduled areas to other than tribal peoples – this was the Samata judgment delivered by the Honorable supreme Court of India in 1997 and stands as a unique judgment in the context of land rights in tribal areas of India and indigenous areas around the world.

In this time we had also worked on a Unique form of nature based education program “Balamitra” for over a decade and have prepared a handful of tribal children who are now in their 10th, 11th and 12th standards in the tribal welfare schools of the government and doing very well as compared to other students. After the right to education act we decided that we should do away with this kind of Centre for excellence and strengthen the government schools so therefore we closed the school last year April.

It is important to mention here that the scenario of the nonprofit sector is changing rapidly and it is getting increasingly difficult to access funds for the kind of work Samata has been doing due to various reasons mainly changing policies and priorities at the national and international level. I am happy to inform all of you that our work in the Eastern Ghats has continued, the work on the aspect of children and mining has been satisfying and we have a community resource guide and a documentary on the plight of children in mining areas.

Our activity in engaging the members of parliament on issues related to children in mining areas and also the inputs into the proposed MMDR bill have proved to be useful and necessary and this is planned in future as one of the main activity so that Samata can be a support for tribal communities at the National level.

I have been elected as the Chairperson of the only mining alliance of our country mines,mineral & PEOPLE (mm&P) which is actually an un-enviable position and I would have to put in a lot of work to steer the alliance on relevant issues.

Similarly our spontaneous response to an old tribal leader Sambe Pollanna of Karkavalasa who requested an eye checkup lead to a successful eye camp along with Sanker eye foundation and also shows us that this activity needs to be continued.

Our work with the tribal children also has to take a new shape so as to be able to reach out to many more and this is on the agenda for the coming year.

We are still following up with the issue of land title deeds for the people of Borra panchayat and hope that the present set of dynamic project officer-ITDA, Sub Collector Paderu and Collector visakha will settle the long pending issue (23 years since Samata took up their cause) in this context it is important to mention that when now a days the donors seek results in a short span of one to three years!!! This is an issue we have been following for the last 23 years!

We have been providing services to the tribal villagers who find their way to our office for help with the district administration and other aspects and we will continue to do so.

I finally thank our staff members, volunteers, the board and all others for facilitating this fulfilling work for the society. Last but not least I thank volunteer Shashikanth Subramanya for helping prepare this report.



Sincerely,
Ravi Rebbapragada

Eco-Alliance Project

Funded by Keystone Foundation

Annual Sivaraatri Celebrations

February 2014

Samata organized Annual Sivaraatri Festival at Nimmalapaadu

Samata has been organizing the Sivaraatri festival in and around the tribal villages of Nimmalapaadu from last 23 years. This celebration began during the Samata Judgement Struggle in the same area. It has always helped to mobilize the community together where people sit together to share their issues and happiness. Motivational and patriotic movies are screened for people to see.

Special Issue on Environment

March 2014

Samata took to the media to spread awareness on the protection of Eastern Ghats

Samata has always been concerned about the protection of the ecology of the forests along with our interests towards the people inside. Samata networked with the local media people and encouraged them to spread information and awareness towards the protection of Eastern Ghats. The sensitive issues involved in the protection of the ecological balance of the Eastern Ghats were highlighted mainly.

Tribal Youth Camp

April 2014

Samata believes in Sempowering the emerging youth and sees it as a way forward towards creating a better society Samata had started a school called Balamitra in 2004 for the tribal children. Around 300 students were being taught in a special facility for them. After the Right To Education Act (RTE Act) came into existence, the school had to be closed in 2014. But even after that Samata is in constantly working with them. In the month of April 2014, it had conducted a Youth camp to spread awareness on Ecological issues, protection of environment and tribal rights. Apart from these there were motivating sessions conducted.



Facilitation of Tribal Caste Certificates

April 2014

Supporting the tribals in the East Godawari Area of Andhra Pradesh

Around 60 villages in the East Godawari district mostly inhabited by tribal communities, has been denied tribal caste certificates as this area is left out from the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. Samata facilitated the meeting with the tribal youth of the East Godawari Area with the agenda of availing tribal caste certificates for them networking with another organization called Ghats working in that area.

Killoguda Seed Festival

May 2014

Awareness and support for alternate agricultural practices in the tribal area



World Indigenous People Day Celebrations

August 2014

Samata recognizes and celebrates World Indigenous People Day every year

This year on 9th August Samata recognized the importance of the rights and development of the Indigenous people of our country and celebrated the World Indigenous People Day at Borra of the Anantgiri Mandal. On this day the issues of lack of roads, lack of proper drinking water, issues of no permanent revenue pattas to their lands and the 20% income share from the tourism department was raised and discussed towards solving all these problems. Samata helped tribal children organize rally from Gateuvalasa Asharm school till Borra caves and perform street plays to spread awareness on not to use plastic and on the need to protect the environment.





Seminar on Eastern Ghats Protection

August 2014

Samata had organized a seminar on Protection of the Eastern Ghats inviting various intellectuals and field practitioners

The protection of Eastern Ghats and its environment has always been the main agenda of Samata apart from people. In 1990, Samata was part of the Manya Praantha Chaitanya Yatra, a Padayatra spreading awareness on the importance to protect the Eastern Ghats. This particular Seminar in August 2014, was inaugurated by Dr. E.A.S Sharma, primarily focused on ways to protect the Eastern Ghats. Post the presentations, an e-group was created to further discussions and action plan to save the Eastern Ghats. As a follow up of the seminar one of the participant's Mr. Vikarm Aditya who is part of ATREE organized the bird survey conducted in the Eastern Ghats. Close to 200 bird species were documented.



Protect Eastern Ghats for healthy plains: Experts

Times News Network

Vishakhapatnam (Anantnag): Plains on the east coast of India can be wealthy only if the Eastern Ghats remain healthy and it is the responsibility of the public to conserve the ecological niche provided by these mountains, opinion polls of a seminar on environmental protection of Eastern Ghats on Thursday.

Speaking at the occasion, former secretary to the central government, EAS Sarma, stated various important issues such as ecological and social impacts of bauxite mining. He also noted the lack of awareness about Eastern Ghats and the value of it that among people residing in the plains.

He also pointed out that bauxite mining would cause ground water contamination, massive displacement of tribal

Bauxite mining will cause ground water contamination, massive displacement of tribal communities, water scarcity due to excessive use by mining companies and would have an impact on generations of tribal communities

communities, water scarcity due to excessive use by mining companies and would have impact on generations of tribal communities.

Sarma also expressed resentment over the change of standards being forming by political parties after coming to power. He highlighted the provisions of Pitha Sarkar of Indian Constitution, which directs

for adopting any law to suit the needs of tribal communities.

Expressing concern over ineffective implementation of important laws such as Forest Rights Act and PESA, Sarma worried of water scarcity that would result from the mining of various minerals in Eastern Ghats. The reserves such as Meghalayakha, Tatpadi, Madusariva, Katakada, which supply water to Visakh city would get up to ineffective management of Eastern Ghats, he said.

Environmental activist Kuri Lakshmaprasada expressed his apprehensions about the cultural and social impacts of bauxite mining on Adiroli communities. He gave an elaborate presentation on the concept of 'tooth of the hills is the wealth of the plains' and highlighted the threats to regional food and water security.



29/08/2014



29/08/2014

Children in Mining Areas

Funded by terre des hommes (tdh) Germany



Samata in association with HAQ: Centre for Child Rights worked on a project Children in Mining areas, supported by the Terre des Hommes (tdh) Germany, mainly focused on the rights of Children living in and around the mining area. Samata has been working on Children and their issues through training the community based organization (CBO's), community representatives etc over a decade now.

Samata stumbled upon the issues of children when after the Samata judgment we started looking into the ill effects of mining on communities living around or working in the mines at Bellary in the late 90's and has realized that it is an important aspect to work on. Since then we have been working with child rights groups who do not appreciate the work of environmental groups and vice versa. In the current project we have three other partners namely, Gramya from Uttar Pradesh, Don Bosco and SEEDS from Karnataka (GDSS)

In collaboration with HAQ Centre for child rights and mines, minerals & PEOPLE we have come up with a Community Resource Guide on children and their rights in mining areas of India

Samata through this program has enabled CBO's and various individuals from communities, elected representatives to know how mining and its related activities effect for MP's impact communities, resources and mainly Children. Samata conducted various programmes like Training of Trainers (TOT), State level Round tables, and undertook various field visits spreading awareness on and tackling these issues. The following activities were conducted as a part of this project in this year.

1.Partners meetings – Bangalore and Delhi

2.Training of Trainers (TOT) – in Bhubaneswar (Odisha), Allahabad and Nagpur

3.Community level (Regional) training programs – in Roberts Ganj (Uttar Pradesh) and Chitrakoot (Uttar Pradesh)

4.Field visits – in Uttar Pradesh and Nagpur were conducted.

5.State Level Round Tables were conducted in ITDC (Visakhapatnam) and Jharkand (Ranchi)

6.Lobby with Parliamentarians – A memorandum was prepared by Samata and submitted to the parliamentarians and had the following demands:

- a. Inclusion of Children in Mining Laws
- b. Prohibition of Child Labour employment in Mining Area in accordance with the Child Labour (prohibition and regulation) Act, 1986 and the Mines (Amended) act, 1983.
- c. Revival and Revitalization of the 2011 Inter-Ministerial Committee
- d. Priority given to mining children for access to government programmes and schemes
- e. Convergence of departments and ministries
- f. A system of implementing child protection measures by the lease holders/ PSU/ Private Companies to be put in place.



7. Overall the project has trained 134 participants with a focus of solving issues related to Children in mining areas. A video documentary was filmed on this issue and released in New Delhi in March 2015. Intellectuals and field practitioners from across the country took part in this programme. A Community Resource Guide for the people/ organizations working in this area was also released.

Here is the youtube link for the video documentary:
Falling through the cracks: Children in Mining
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkshMigys68>

Children on The Move

Destination Unknown



Samata's concern towards children just increased in its projects as it took up the role of co-ordinator to work with NGOs who are working on the issues of children whose parents are always on the move (nomadic). As part of this initiative, a one day regional meeting was held in Visakha Public Library, where there was a representation from Navjeevan Balabhavan, Vijayawada. The primary objective of this meeting was to identify the key issues in Child Migration and Child protection. Fr. Balashourie Convener of TDH Andhra Pradesh and Executive Director of Navjeevan BalaBhavan released a poster on Children on Move during the meeting. Mr RamMohan Rao, Executive Director of HELP, N. PrakashRao Executive Director of Bala Vikas Foundation and Ms Saila Bhavani Research Scholar from Andhra University were present among various other field practitioners in this area. Mr Deme and Mr Satish from Samata had earlier participated in an action plan and budgeting meeting for the activities of Children on Move Project. Samata will now co-ordinate the activities for all the three districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

Eye Camp at Nimmalapaadu

January 2015

Eye camp was conducted by Samata for the nimmalapaadu vil-
lage and 3 other villages around it.

Samata got a request from one of the old leaders from the nim-
malapaadu village called Sambe Pollanna for a treatment of his
eyes, complaining of the cataract. Upon getting this request, Mr
Ravi Rebbapragada, Executive Director, announced a new proj-
ect where Samata facilitated the treatment of eyes for all the
people of Nimmalapaadu and also its surrounding villages. Sa-
mata facilitated the whole eye camp by networking with Sankar
Eye Foundation for treatment, spectacles and cataract surgery.

No of Villages impacted – 04

No of people treated – 190

No of people treated for cataract surgery – 30



Health of the Hills is Wealth of the Plains

The Nagulukonda Hills is a very long snake like hill extending from the Yeleru reservoir in east Godavari district till Tandava reservoir in Visakhapatnam district. It is part of the Eastern Ghats range and is important in the local context as a source of various perennial streams that join the Yeleru, Pampa and Tandava rivers which feed the plains of both the districts. These hills are also known for medicinal plants and forest produce and several panchayats are located on the hill top where tribal communities are practicing their traditional agri / horticulture and forest produce collection. The Nagulukonda Hill extends in non-scheduled and scheduled areas of both East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts. There are large scale deposits of laterite on this Hill and mining contractors have been trying to acquire leases over large extents. Samata and the local communities have been trying to highlight the violations of various laws in this process of mineralization under the campaign called "Health of the Hills is wealth of the Plains". The campaign has mobilized various sections of the communities affected and has raised important issues and is engaged with the district administration.

Solar Power in Samata Resource Center

Development and installation of Fixed Solar Panels in the Samata resource center to make the whole place completely energy sufficient. Samata has always encouraged the young people from Germany who volunteered to work with Samata as part of German Youth Volunteer programme. In the last 8 years around 55 German volunteers worked with us for the Balamitra school, teaching English to the tribal kids and conducting various other creative activities.

Some of them have now gone back to take courses on Anthropology and social work. And some of them have come back to samata to help us. One such volunteer, 'JOJO' went back to do his micro systems engineering and he came back to Samata to set up a Solar Panels and making the entire resource center energy sufficient. He even mobilized financial resources for this project, from a company called Lush. This structure stood strong even during the Hud-Hud cyclone, and our resource center was the only place around to have power post the cyclone.

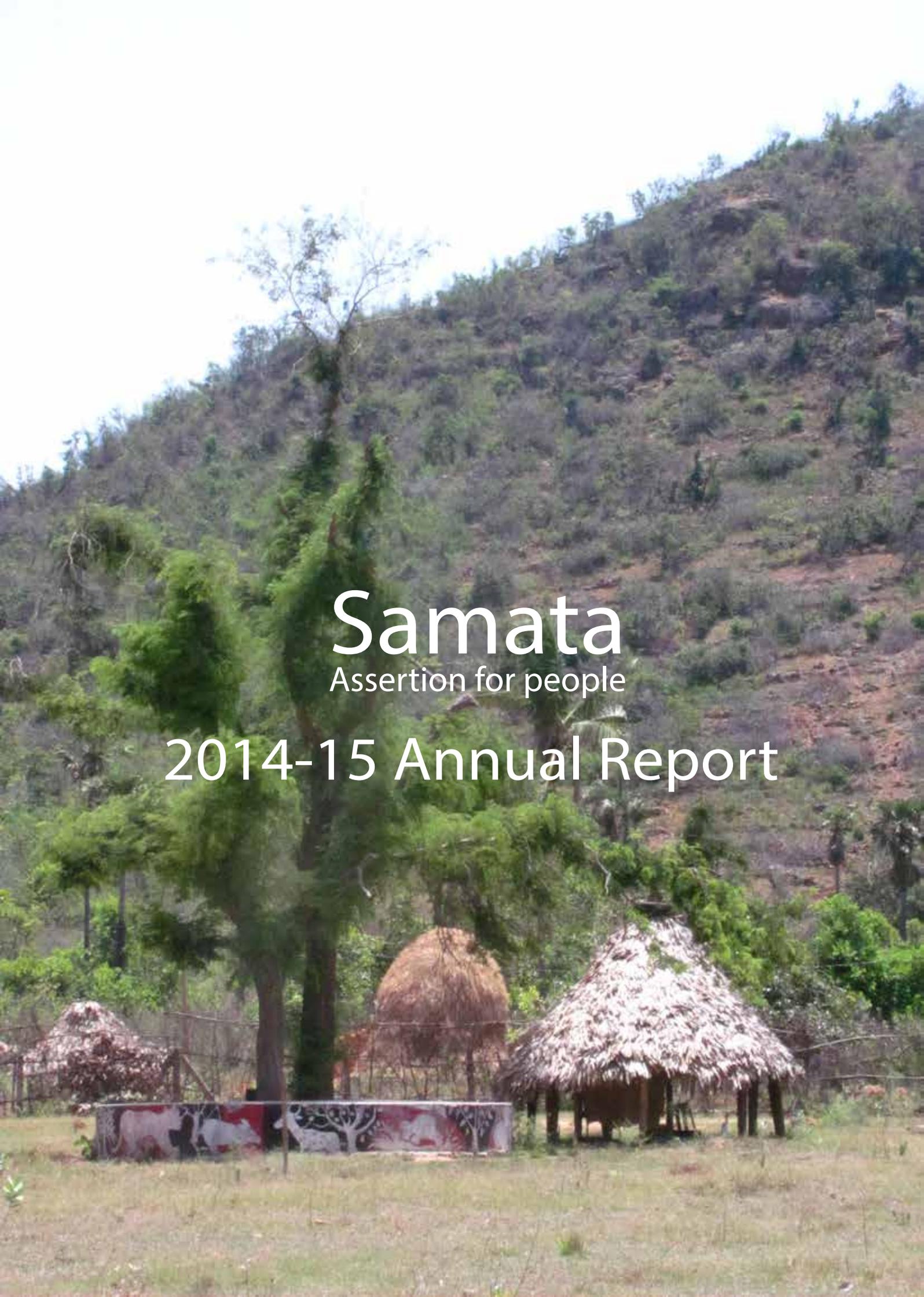


Hud Hud Cyclone Report

The Samata Campus is located at Dabanda village, GandiGundam Post, Anandapuramnadal, Visakhapatnam. Though the campus is a good 20 kms from Sea by road and 12 kms as a crow flies and is surrounded by hills and forest all around the effect of Hudhud was severe in the Dabbanda valley. Alerted by the warning from the district administration we were prepared so to stay and from the night of 11th October there was heavy wind and rainfall and by the morning before the Hudhud (2 PM on 12th) crossed the coast at vizag beach a lot of damage was done by the rain to the offices in the campus.



We were lucky again as we had the solar power system and so we restored the power supply and could pump water, and operate all other appliances like normal when the whole district was under darkness! We had milk we produce, vegetables we grow and water but the communication was cut off for more than 10 days and electricity from the grid was restored (thanks to a few friends in the government) in a few weeks and the rebuilding process was initiated and it finished only in the last week of December. We thank Keystone and both ends for their timely financial help by which it was possible to rebuild our structure and also our confidence that we have friends who will reach out in times of a disaster.



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