

The year that was 20-21

The year began with a lock down in April 2020 and ended with one as the second wave of the Covid 19 pandemic began to sweep through India in March 2021.

In between, there have been several changes which have rocked global society forcing us to look at the world differently. Schools and educational establishments have remained closed. Work from home has become the norm and meetings have shifted from being face to face to online events. Field work and field visits have become difficult as one has to be careful not to carry infections to rural areas. Information gathering and dissemination have shifted to phone calls and online sessions. Several events, programmes and plans have had to be altered or cancelled as social distancing and restrictions on movement have become necessary. Project deadlines have been difficult to meet and we have had to ask for extensions.

In India, although the monsoons were on time and the rainfall good the clouds and rain remained for longer than usual affecting certain crops as well as the migration patterns of migratory pastoralists. Livestock markets remained closed for most of the year. People lost their jobs and looked for new ones. We learned that backyard livestock rearing became popular once again as migratory workers returned to their home villages.

At another level in India, legislations came in which affected farmers and NGO's with far reaching consequences. Several NGO's such as Anthra which receive funds from abroad for research and collaborative projects have had to make changes in their organizational structure to meet the new legal requirements.

Despite this we have tried to carry on. Drawing inspiration from our pastoralist friends we have tried to be resilient, flexible and dynamic. Most of us are working from home now. When possible, we made quick field trips. We have learnt the art and science of conducting meetings online. We are looking at fresh ways of reaching out to the community. We have also used the time to reflect and reorganize.

Most of all we have tried to remain hopeful.

Nitya Ghotge
Executive Secretary

Our Projects and Programmes

Partnering through Knowledge Sharing: Helping Small Livestock- holding Communities Emerge from the Shadows

This project came to a close in September 2020 after a short extension of two months due to the pandemic. Several meetings and training programmes which were to have taken place shifted on to online platforms.

The main objectives of the project were

To help bring about autonomy in the lives of small livestock holders to enable them to take control and be in a position to take critical decisions regarding their lives and livelihoods .and this was to be achieved through

- 1. Improved health of livestock and the families owning livestock :*
- 2. Increased education opportunities to enable functional literacy to enable them to move forward independently -*
- 3. Added value to their stock and livestock produce to enable better marketing opportunities as well as provide nutritional security for their families -*

Although we made headway in each of these objectives an important learning for us was the invisibility of women livestock holders. The voice of women livestock holders, remained largely unheard, unrecorded and under-represented. As a group we felt the need to have a project which focussed exclusively on women livestock holders and therefore we applied for one.

Sangeeta Khapre, Rujuta Date and Nitya Ghotge were associated with this project .

Project Support Misereor

Bringing Visibility and Recognition to Women Livestock Farmers and Pastoralists & Their Knowledge.

This project began in September 2020

The main objectives of the project are to :

- Increase research and scholarship on women livestock farmers especially women from migratory pastoralist families ,*
- Document their knowledge , and give it value and recognition*
- Create platforms for sharing this knowledge*

Fellowships have been created to achieve the above objectives . Ashwini Labde has been awarded the first fellowship . Ashwini holds two Masters degrees . The latest a Master's degree in Dalit and Tribal Studies and Action from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her Master's thesis was based on Women Construction labourers in Navi Mumbai. She also holds a Master's degree in Political Science from Savitribai Phule Pune University. Ashwini belongs to the Dhangar community and a family which is involved in sheep rearing and farming activities.

A team of young researchers are also working with pastoral women to document the special knowledge that women have related to livestock rearing . We have so far managed to document knowledge related to the management of horses, care of rams , care of young livestock , medicinal plants and fodder varieties ,
Women are also documenting their own knowledge and sending us photographs of their work and their lives.

Additionally, we have started a gender and livestock initiative and the first meeting of the initiative was held in February .

Sangeeta Khapre, Ashwini Labde, Kritika Suratkal , Saeer Pawar, Rujuta Date and Nitya Ghotge are associated with this project .

Main Project Support Misereor . Additional support Centre For Pastoralism



The HERDING research project

Sustainable development for pastoralist women in India: heritage, dignity and adaptations in times of rapid change

Anthra collaborated with the University of Leeds UK and the Centre for Pastoralism, India in a study with and for women from Pastoral communities in India.

Called the HERDING project it brought together academic disciplines of gender studies, development studies and the sociological study of religion to study the complex transformations of pastoralist women's lives. An attempt has been made to investigate the role that their beliefs and practices play in constructing a sense of shared heritage that links them to the land and their animals; and how this heritage is changing. It also provides an opportunity for pastoralist women, to speak about the roles and importance to them of religion, gender, culture and nature. It asks: 'How do pastoralist women in India live, perceive and mobilise aspects of their religio-cultural heritage to lay claim to sustaining livelihoods of dignity within and outside mobile pastoralism?'

The project which was due to end in May 2020 sought an extension for a few months because of the pandemic. In the final months of this project the oral histories of pastoral women from 5 major groups Dhangar , Fakirani Jat , Rebari , Gaddi and Muslim Gujjar were collated and finalise to enable analysis . Small workshops to discuss the situation of pastoralism in the three states were also held . These workshops also looked at the advocacy initiatives which were needed and those which were already in place in the three states . The impact of the pandemic and the lockdown on pastoral women was discussed. Several small studies were also undertaken under this project such as the SDGs from the point of view of nomadic pastoral women and a study of land issues in Maharashtra and Gujarat and their impact on pastoral women .

The information gathered is now being analysed . A website is being designed where the learnings from the project will be uploaded.

Sangeeta Khapre, Saeer Pawar, Rujuta Date and Nitya Ghotge are associated with this project .

Support : the British Academy's Sustainable Development research programme.



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One health Project

“India Zoo Risk+: Using One Health approaches to understand and co-develop interventions for zoonotic diseases affecting forest communities in India”

Anthra is partnering with UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, and other groups in this project on one health

This project responds to the global health system challenge of **the high and evolving burden of zoonotic diseases** in tropical forests linked to complex socio-political, ecological and environmental change drivers. Through strong engagement with affected forest communities including pastoralists , cross-sectoral policy makers and practitioners, and novel interdisciplinary methods.

The project seeks to

- *understand complex and interacting impacts of biological and socio-economic drivers (forest degradation, land tenure, human mobility and policy, power dynamics and knowledge sharing, belief systems and seasonal ecology) on health outcomes and spread of zoonotic diseases*
- *co-develop improved interventions, health system coverage and One Health capacity.*

The grant was awarded in 2020 but because of the pandemic it was decided to postpone activities especially field based activities by a year .The total duration of the project is 36months

Part of the work package that Anthra is involved with includes documenting

Perception of disease by community ,beliefs related to disease and its origin, local nomenclature, description of symptoms and progression of symptoms if known , season of occurrence , any knowledge of factors leading to its spread including climatic factors, presence of vectors in surroundings or on livestock , association of disease with vegetation present , preventive methods including management practices like herding and grazing areas for livestock , time line of known instances of disease, traditional treatments including plant , animal and mineral based treatment .

Main Support :UKRI ,

Covid response

In response to the pandemic we initiated several activities under different projects and programmes

During the initial lock down we partnered with a group from TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) to ensure rations and supplies reached families and communities in remote areas. We managed to ensure rations and supplies reached several nomadic pastoral families

During May and June 2020 we conducted a rapid assessment of the impact of the pandemic on several migratory pastoral households . The ones who had been hit the worst were pastoralists who herded cattle . They were prevented from entering villages, from selling milk and from purchasing feed. Many had to throw away milk as restaurants a, tea shops and dhabas which normally purchase their milk were closed they suffered losses. Shepherds were hit but to a lesser extent although livestock markets were closed. Many shepherds managed to find alternate ways to market their produce but as they were non- perishable it was easier.

Another study was conducted under the herding project on the impact of the lockdown on pastoral women. Several pastoral women were interviewed over the phone to try and understand the impact of the pandemic , the lockdowns and other restrictions on their mobility , their lives and on their children. This study took place in July- August 2020.

A more detailed study was conducted with the support of our NGO partners in December 2020 and extended into January 2021. 145 women from different livestock rearing communities across Maharashtra were interviewed. Amongst the communities were Bharwad, Nanda Gawli , Dhangar , Dalit. Maratha , Ramoshi, Katkari, Thakar, Kolam and Gond.

Although the women belong to communities that vary in geography, traditional occupation and ways of life there are threads of similarity that can be seen in their experiences with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the resultant lockdown. The most frequently reported effect of COVID and the lockdown was on the livelihood of the respondents, several of them incurred financial losses and had to borrow money, the markets being shut affected the sale of animals for members of all the communities. A direct result of no work was that there wasn't enough money to make ends meet or tide over the crises, this affected their food intake, nutrition and to an extent it also had an impact on their social settings. Some parents were concerned about their children's education as they didn't benefit from online education. Veterinary health facilities were difficult to access and , ethnoveterinary and herbal medicines became popular . We received many requests for our books and training material. We held online training programmes too for farmers on health care. However , there were a few respondents who managed to view this trying time in a positive light, they were glad for the extra hand to divide chores and farm work, and they felt



empowered to face any future crisis. We also noticed that in some areas migrants returning home took up livestock rearing as a short time livelihood option to tide them over difficult times .

Women used a multitude of ways to deal with the repercussions of COVID and the lockdown. These varied from budgeting and making do with stored grains and millets, to starting/relying on kitchen gardens, communities were divided but in places they also came together to share resources and help each other out.

Other Highlights

Regional Multi stakeholder Partnership meeting of the Global Agenda of Sustainable

The regional meeting of the GASL Multi stake holder partnership was held online on the 9th and 10th of September 2020. Anthra along with LIFE Network coordinated the online discussion which saw over 30 participants from several countries in South Asia and South East Asia take part .

Publications

Articles that were published the past year included

- Is intensive livestock production responsible for emerging infectious diseases
<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/health/is-intensive-livestock-production-responsible-for-emerging-infectious-diseases-72357>
- [did african swine fever come to india because we left the door open?](#)
- Difficult times for Livestock farmers
<https://www.outlookhindi.com/view/general/livestock-farmers-badly-hit-by-coronavirus-47156>

Movies

Anthra is collaborating with Access agriculture in making movies on livestock care . They deal with common diseases of livestock and how they can be cured using herbal medicines . These movies are accessible on the websites of access agriculture (www.accessagriculture.com) and of Anthra . Nitya Ghotge and Sangeeta Khapre helped write the scripts of the movies and identifying movie locations along with farmers.



Towards Organizational change

Anthra has been in the process of reorganisation since March last year to be in tune with the changes we see. We decided to revisit the organisational manual , review and revise it . The revised manual was approved by the Board . We also drew up a fresh Science and Ethics policy and a policy on sexual harassment in the work place . Both these were also approved by the Board .

Online Board meetings were regularly held and the Board also met online informally several times to discuss and plan.

Elections to the Board were held in January 2021 . Sumi Krishna was unanimously elected as the new President and Mamta Dhawan as the new Vice President .

Dr. Usha Mandokoth a founding Member of Anthra stepped down from the Board . Age related concerns made it difficult for her to be active on the Board . The Board of Anthra thanked her for her immense contribution to the field of veterinary science and the invaluable support to Anthra . An award in her name to benefit a field worker of Anthra is being proposed .

We also welcomed two new Members, Bhavana Rao and Sushmita Parai to the Board . We hope they will have a long and happy innings with the organisation .