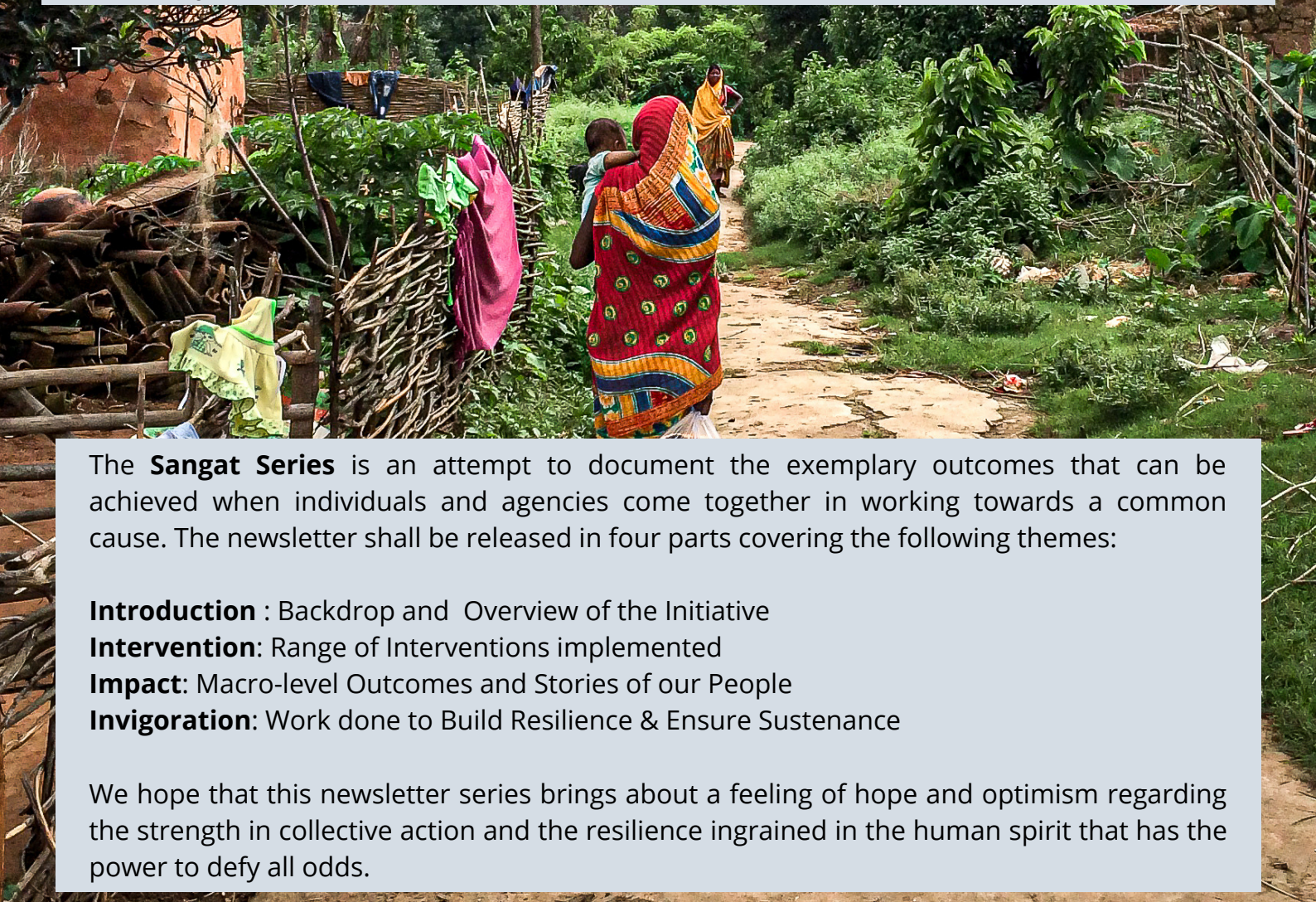


Sangat Series

Newsletter series on Barefoot College International's CBO Relief Initiative

The previous year had been challenging for individuals, communities, and industries across the world as everyone struggled to cope up with the pandemic and the drastic transformations it brought in the very socio-economic fabric of the society. However, emerging from the collective experience of adversity were instances of hope as the citizenry came together to build a united front. Nowhere was it more pronounced than within the non-profit sector which stood at the forefront during the crisis, mobilising government and private machinery and spearheading the relief efforts.

Our very own network of partners also became a source of immense strength for the community and the rest of us within the network. This partnership became the cornerstone for the CBO (Community-based Organisation) Relief Initiative started by Barefoot College International (BCI) that aimed to support Community-based organisation and the last mile community it serves.



The **Sangat Series** is an attempt to document the exemplary outcomes that can be achieved when individuals and agencies come together in working towards a common cause. The newsletter shall be released in four parts covering the following themes:

Introduction : Backdrop and Overview of the Initiative

Intervention: Range of Interventions implemented

Impact: Macro-level Outcomes and Stories of our People

Invigoration: Work done to Build Resilience & Ensure Sustenance

We hope that this newsletter series brings about a feeling of hope and optimism regarding the strength in collective action and the resilience ingrained in the human spirit that has the power to defy all odds.

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Sangat Series | Chapter 1 : Introduction

The first newsletter would shed light on the backdrop of initiative, explain the vision set since the beginning and familiarise the reader with the CBOs we reached out to and their communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented situation across the globe leading to massive human suffering. Within India, at the time of the writing of the report it has affected 1.02 crore people with a death toll of 1.48 lakhs. What has been alarming is the kind of human misery it has brought through losses in employment and income sources, leaving many vulnerable communities with no means of sustenance.

Barefoot College International is extremely concerned about the many escalating issues which continue to occur socially, within households, and in the communities as a result of the extreme financial, emotional and other catalytic stress that escalates issues such as gender based violence and child abuse. Understanding that Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in rural areas play a very critical role, personally addressing crisis situations and strengthening civil society responses, a CBO Relief fund was initiated on 9th of April 2020.

The fund was initiated with a two-fold purpose:

- To provide CBOs with minimum operational fund and the moral and emotional support of our wider civil society network
- To support them in the relief work geared towards addressing systemic gaps affecting the community

OUR FUNDERS

The CBO relief fund was initiated with the voluntary three-month salary-cuts of Barefoot College International Staff and Contractors. This was later supplemented by the generous contributions from our donor agencies such as **Skoll Foundation, Donamojo, United Way of Bengaluru** and contributions from individual donors.



Filedworkers from RASTA (left) and Amhi Amchya Arogyasathi (Right) reaching out to the most vulnerable in their communities

OUR APPROACH

From the very beginning, it was felt important to have a truly **decentralized, bottoms-up approach** whereby the CBOs planned, decided, executed and led the relief initiatives with Barefoot College International restricting its role to coordination, technical and funding support. This was done so that the relief is completely contextualised to the need of the community. Hence, the whole initiative was driven and shaped up by our partnering CBOs who was truly the heart and soul of the initiative.

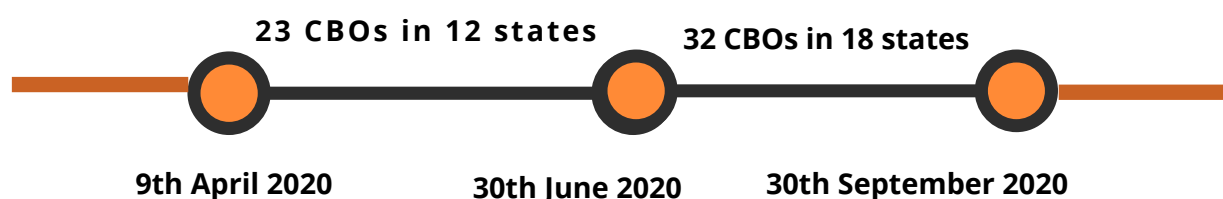
OUR PARTNER CBOs

We tapped into the following network to gauge the needs of last-mile communities and provide relief :

- **Barefoot College International's own network:** It was important to leverage Barefoot's own network of ground partners given how closely they have worked with last-mile communities over the years
- **External Community-based organisations:** A vast majority of Civil Society Organisations that were helping communities meet their survival needs were themselves falling short of the resources to meet operational expenses. Hence, it was important to extend support to the larger Civil Society Network in India even those outside our network

Out of the proposals we received, **32 CBOs** were selected based on the **vulnerability of the communities** identified by the CBOs while considering aspects of the sustainability (post of our funding), community involvement, and promotion of self-reliance in the relief measure proposed.

The selected organisations were funded into two rounds so that 32 organisation in 18 states were supported by 30th September 2020, when the first phase of this initiative concluded.



RELIEF WORK ACROSS INDIA

32
ORGANISATIONS

18 STATES

37 DISTRICTS

30,385
BENEFICIARIES

FIRST ROUND

1. SUTRA, Himachal Pradesh
2. SARA, Rajasthan
3. Prayatna, Rajasthan
4. TSVS, Rajasthan
5. Manthan, Rajasthan
6. ALOK, Bihar
7. Ujjala Samaj, West Bengal
8. Balsaka, Assam (Golaghat)
9. Manav Sewa Sansthan, UP
10. JKGUS, UP
11. Parhit Sewa Samaj Sansthan, MP
12. SANKALP, Rajasthan
13. Bundelkhand Sewa Sansthan, UP
14. SARTHI, Gujarat
15. SAMPARK, MP
16. Sarathi Trust, Maharashtra
17. Gram Association, Jharkhand
18. SPADE, West Bengal
19. Agranee, Odisha
20. SARC, Odisha
21. The Ayauskam, Odisha
22. DAPTA, Odisha
23. MACS, Andhra Pradesh

SECOND ROUND

24. Human Welfare Foundation, J&K
25. The Helping hand, J&K
26. AIDA, Arunachal Pradesh
27. SUPPORT, Jharkhand
28. Amhi Amchya Arogyasathi, Maharashtra
29. Thamate, Karnataka
30. RASTA, Kerala
31. SNEHA, Tamil Nadu
32. SRCT, Tamil Nadu

OUR COMMUNITIES

Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribes:

Through our partners we reached marginalised communities across India such as the Mushahars, Santhals, Banjaras, Bhagarias and the Kohlas. While these communities already lag behind in terms of access to health, education and land rights, the lockdown has only exacerbated their vulnerabilities. Since they are often not enrolled in government databases and are almost entirely dependent on day to day earnings for their survival, it was important to provide them assistance on a priority basis.

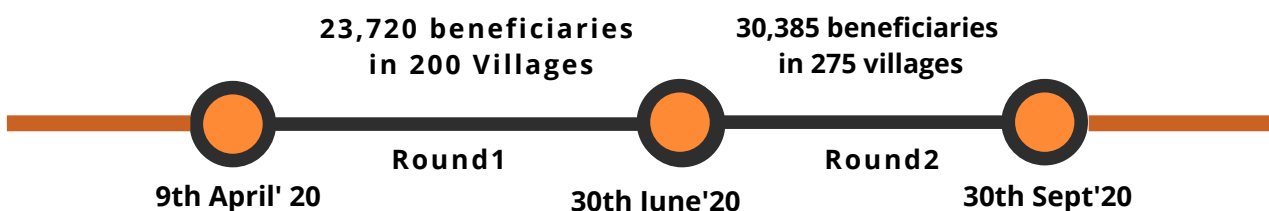


Daily-Wage Workers:

With the lockdown, construction activities, contractual work and MNRGA activities halted. Many lost their jobs with no income support. A large number of our beneficiaries were daily wage workers (56%), a majority of whom were excluded from government support due to non-enrolment in government databases.

Subsistence Farmers:

Due to the shutting down of local markets, disruption of transportation, lack of storage facilities, and perishability of the crops produced, farmers were forced to sell the produce for a pittance to middlemen or even throw them away. As a result, many were forced to take loans from informal sources for basic sustenance.





LGBTQI community and HIV patients:
 COVID -19 has increased health risks of the LGBTQI community due to existent disparities in their access to healthcare facilities as compared to non-LGBTQI individuals. Similarly, extra care had to be given to HIV patients so as to avoid contracting the virus.

Pregnant and Lactating Women :

In most rural areas, the health systems weakened due to the engagement of ASHA and Anganwadi workers in government relief work and the apprehension of individuals to visit health facilities due to fear of contracting the virus. This affected pregnant and lactating women who couldn't go for regular health check-ups and whose nutritional intake got disrupted.

Children:

With the lockdown, schools, anganwadis, and daycare centers were shut down often cutting off access to the mid-day meals and nutritional supplements they provided to children. Moreover, as shown by a report by the UN, COVID-19 increased children's vulnerabilities with respect to violence, abuse, and neglect. Thus our partners provided them care and attention during such confusing times.



"I used to get requests for sanitary napkins from so many young girls and women in our village. Due to the lockdown, shops in the towns have been inaccessible and supply of pads to our local shops has stopped. Gram Association's (partnering CBO) relief kit which contains sanitary pads has come as such a relief. Now, women have fewer things to worry about!" - Savitri Devi (Midwife), Medha Village (Ranchi)

SNEAK PEEK: Sangat Series | Chapter 2 : Intervention

Hoping that the first newsletter helped you in getting a broad perspective about the initiative, familiarise yourself with our network of partners and get acquainted to our very own communities. Tune into our next newsletter to know some of the unconventional ways in which our partners conducted the relief effort. See you next week!