



PAVING A PATH TO LAND LITERACY PROGRAMME TO ADIVASI COMMUNITY LEADERS

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Injot Trust, a Guwahati based NGO, organised a seminar on Jameen- the-first-of-its-kind land literacy training programme for the Adivasis and the tea community of Assam from 14-15, May, 2022. It was the second workshop in its second consecutive year. The two-day residential training conference was organised at Don Bosco Youth Mission and Educational Services (DBI), Guwahati; the venue abuzz with over 120 registered participants from different districts of Assam, and some prominent experts on land matters, law and governance.

"For the Adivasi people Jameen is life; it is an indispensable resource for us since we depend on nature for a living. Everything is related to Jameen. This is my second time at Jameen training conference organised by Injot Trust. Like last year I plan to clear all my doubts. The workds of Anjali Maam were very inspiring.â€• Said one of the participants.

Nazrul Islam, IAS (Retd.) â€“ an expert on land matters of Assam, and the Lead Facilitator of Jameen urged all participants that they should use the newly gained knowledge to address challenges on Land Matters, not just for self or immediate family, but for the greater good of the community. Injot brought together experts like Dr. J B Ekka, IAS (Principal Secretary, Panchayat & Rural Development Dept. and Tea Tribes Welfare Dept, Govt. of Assam), Shammi J Tigga CLS (Regional Labour Commissioner, Govt. of India), Anupchand Minj (a Jesuit Lawyer & RTI Expert from a Khunti based Hoffmann Legal Cell) and Azharood Hussain Hazarika (Asst



P F Commissioner) under one roof, to provide training, and familiarize participants on laws, systems, processes and constitutional tools to increase the efficacy of interventions and schemes that benefit the lesser privileged members of the Adivasi and tea community of Assam.

Introducing the theme of the seminar, Injot's Foundress Anjali Tirkey said, "Jameen is not simply a program or an event. It is a mission to build Land Literacy in the Adivasi and Tea Community of Assam so that the protracted issue of land alienation in the community is addressed systematically, constitutionally and non-violently. We have entered our second year of Jameen and we hope the momentum is retained through the intentional and active participation of community leaders to get informed, trained and empowered to support our people to make informed choices regarding land rights, ownership, selling and acquisitions.

During the session, Nazrul Islam, IAS (Retd) threw light on the challenges that prevent the Adivasi and tea community from legal land ownership. It was acknowledged that besides historical setbacks, the lack of accurate and timely information on land matters is a major hindrance, and if the field workers and leaders of the community empower themselves with the procedures, there is a possibility of a shift in the status quo. Mr. Islam provided an in-depth understanding of land-related vocabulary, procedures and hands-on practical sessions to navigate the Dharitree App and Basundhara portals. He also facilitated a session on The Assam Rights to Public Services Act, 2012, and its provisions and utility.

One of the interesting features of Jameen-2022 was the section Stories from the Field in which community leaders shared their experience of working on land matters – the approach they took, the challenges and the solutions they have identified.



Calling RTI the fifth pillar of democracy, Anupchand Minj, a Jesuit lawyer and an RTI expert from Khunti based Hoffmann Legal Cell asserted its effectiveness in the extraction of accurate information and in building accountability and responsiveness in the government machinery. He talked about various areas where RTI can be used in land matters and explained the procedures. Another critical session during Jameen was facilitated by Azharood Hussain Hazarika (Asst PF Commissioner) on Provident Fund for Tea Garden Workers where he highlighted various social security schemes for Tea Plantation workers of Assam like pension, gratuity and provident fund. He also gave an overview of ATEPFO (Assam Tea Employees Provident Fund Organization) and shared its future goals of bringing the entire process to an online platform to decrease red tape and increase efficiency. The Regional Labour Commissioner (Centre), Shammi J. Tigga CLS facilitated an important session on 44 Labour and Industrial Laws of India and informed the audience about the clubbing of the provisions of the laws under the four new codes - Code of Wages 2019, Labour Code on Industrial Relations, 2019, Code on Social Security 2019, and Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Condition, 2019. He shared about the concept of floor wages and explained that upon implementation, floor wages would be fixed as per a geographical region and no state can have a minimum wage below floor wage. He is hopeful that this would also benefit the community in the future.

Dr. JB Ekka IAS - Principal Secretary P&RD and Tea Tribes Welfare Department- gave an overview of various government schemes that are available to the general public. He too spoke on the importance of land for any community and how some of the schemes, especially livelihood schemes can be better utilized if one owns the land. He encouraged the participants



to guide the community members to avail of these schemes, and also emphasized that the community needs to actively work on skill-building so that they are not solely dependent on the tea gardens for their sustenance. The Jameen-2022 concluded with all the participants collectively dreaming and setting specific goals for the Adivasi and Tea community in regards to land issues. Many volunteers came forward to join hands and form a collective that would actively work on land matters – in information dissemination, building awareness, process training, and supporting each other while working in the field.