

NEWS UPDATE

A Caritas India weekly

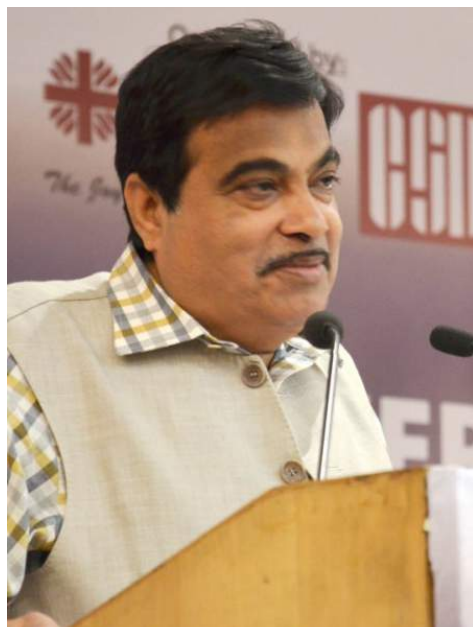
Caritas India is the official National Organisation of CBCI for Social Concern and Human Development



RESILIENT FUTURES FOR SMALL FARMERS

Conference on Smallholder Farmers | 10-12, March, 2015

Attending an inaugural function of a three day conference on small farmers jointly organized by Caritas and Council for Social Development (CSD), Union Minister Nitin Gadkare suggested Small farmers to carefully invest time and energy, do value addition to their products keeping the 'market' and 'profit' in mind.



Speaking immediately after CSD Director Dr. Haque, the minister urged the small farmers to work on economically viable farming practices.

In his 30 minutes address to farmers from Bangladesh, India and Nepal, Minister Gadkare cited several examples of best farming practices, majorly of the big farms from his encounter. It is inconclusive though that these examples may fit into the context of the small holder farmers' category present in the conference, whose cultivable land varies from half a bigha to less than two hectares.

The three day conference on small holder farmers is based on a European Union supported

project in Bangladesh India and Nepal. The project is trying to make home the hard facts about small farmers, through a South Asia level Conference being organized at India International Center, New Delhi.

With a theme 'Resilient futures for Small Farmers', this conference was a convergence platform for multi-stakeholders working for and around small-farms including national international NGOs, National and International Agriculture Research Agencies, Farmers' Organization. The key participants of the event are the small farmers from these three countries, who will hold a panel discussion to share their concerns and suggestions.





In his address, CSD Director Dr. T. Haque cited average income of a small farmer at Rupees 3500 only based on the NSSO data. He was of the opinion that free and quality education be provided to the children of the small farmers. In many ways, he held the government responsible for the plight of the farmers in India.



Caritas India Deputy Director Fr. Paul Moonjely informed that Caritas works with 6 million people of which 50 percent are marginalized farmers that is working on resilient measures complimenting the work of national and state governments.

With plenty of problems ranging from land reforms, credit to climate change, these small farmers are brave souls, continuously innovating and adapting to changes to sustain their farm and food security, while contributing to that of others. Their role in nation building, ecological sustainability and economic development remain unnoticed, though their suicides make the headlines.

“Presently in India, Caritas network is working with 43 thousand farmers, of which over 90 percent are small and marginalized farmers” informed Caritas

India Executive Director Fr. Frederick D'Souza who have been representing Caritas in number of UN's Climate Change conferences, including that in Warsaw (COP 19) and another event in New York.

The deliberations during the event has drawn various efforts of innovation and good practices, being experimented by SAFBIN through farmer-lead On-Farm-Adaptive Research in 90 villages in three countries, that hold the potential to build resilient future for these farming communities in South Asia, said Sunil Simon who is coordinating the project.



Participating in a technical panel session chaired by European Union's Sr. Project Manager P. Subramanian, Sukhlesh George Costa attributed absence or the decrease of cattle and other livestock among village households (life style) for the increased need felt for using of chemical fertilizers.

Sukhlesh George Costa, National Program Coordinator of Caritas Bangladesh said this as part of the experience sharing session from the SAFBIN-Bangladesh intervention. He spoke immediately after Sunil Simon, SAFBIN-South Asia Program Manager who gave an overview of the project running now for over three years in the three countries of Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

Presenting Nepal's experience, Caritas Nepal Head of Programs Manindra Malla raised the alarm of whopping temperature rise at 6 degree every year in the Himalayan country leading to unprecedented shift of climate pattern.

In such circumstances, a pilot trial cultivation carried out in collaboration with farmers brought answers to some of the problems. The SAFBIN team found out that the variety 'Sukha one' gives more yield, compared to the local 'Sukha two' another variety of paddy.

Another finding of the trials includes increase in seed stock leading to enhanced adaptive capacity of farmers.

National Program Coordinator Valentine Dennis Pankaj from Caritas India SAFBIN project as a hub of convergence for traditional and conventional agricultural wisdom propelled by collective action of smallholder farmers. The other four key indicators of the project are Farmers initiated on-farm agricultural research (OFAR) based trials in line with environmentally sustainable measures in all project locations, Dietary diversity enhancement with increased food basket capacity by 2-3 times leading to overall food and nutrition security among smallholder farmers, Five best practices each from Bangladesh, India and Nepal and an established working model on technology convergence. Research student Katharina Zangerle from Boku University presented her thesis on "A gender-focused analysis of learning processes within a research and development project in Nepal".

Marking climate conditions like droughts, periodic water scarcity, lack of knowledge and inputs for adaptation, she pointed that smallholder farmers (SHFs) especially female of lower social classes are

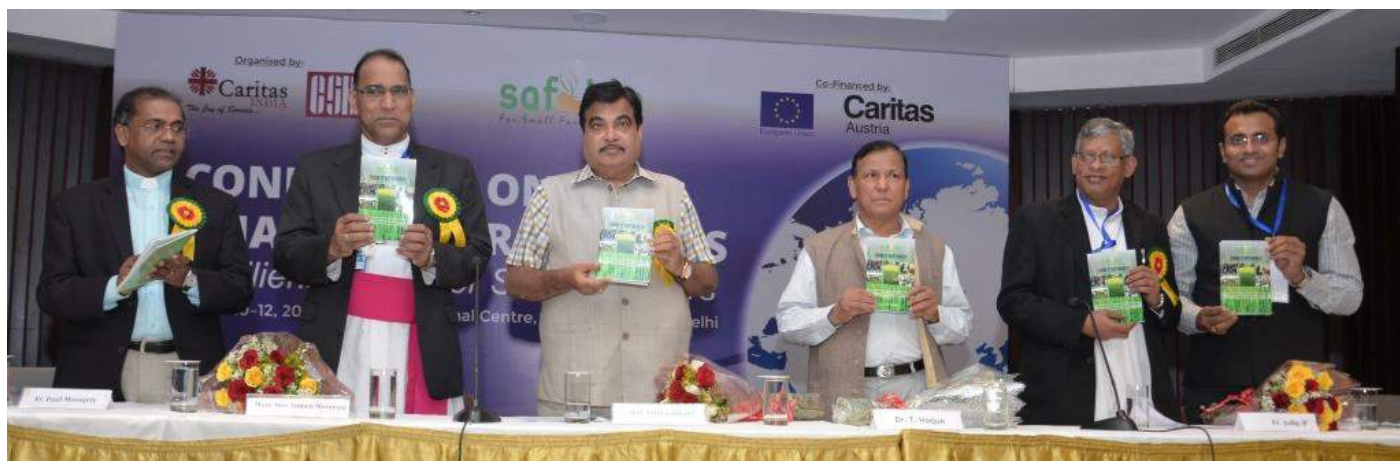
less likely to benefit from the existing development programs.

The study pointed that projection of high women participation in agriculture is due to the fact that men migrate to other countries in search of work.

It was suggested from the audience that women's ownership of land needs to be studied with focus on women's decision making power.

According another research student Bernadette Moser on goat rearing, cross breeding increases meat quantity, resulting in increase in family income and nutritional security. She also pointed out in her study that 1/3rd of the farmers noticed impact of climate change on goats susceptible to new diseases.

In his response, Dr. Manfred from Caritas Austria appreciated farmers' ability to adapt to climate. "Increased yield and increase income' among small farmers attracts his attention as donor agency personnel. He said that issues of women farmers continue to be a concern in the subcontinent.





SMSSS COMPLETES 25 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Shri Veerabhadra Chennamalla Swamiji of Nidumamidi Mutt has called upon the people to be wary of reactionary forces that are trying to disturb peace and amity in society in the name of religion. Peace and compassion form the bedrock of every religion. It was unfortunate that some extremist forces were trying to create rifts in society by misinterpreting religion, he said at the program held to mark the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of The Shimoga Multipurpose Social Service Society (SMSSS) on the premises of Sacred Heart Institutions on 09 March 2015. Christian Missionaries have rendered commendable services to the fields of education and healthcare. Along with creating awareness, the religious heads should bring the people from marginalized sections of society to the mainstream, he said. Oscar Fernandes, Member of Rajya Sabha, who inaugurated the program lauded the work of SMSSS and urged them to extend its services to a larger sections of people. Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bengaluru who presided over the function emphatically conveyed that Christians do the service only with the love of God and humanity and without any ulterior motives.

Mr. Kimmene Ratnakar, Minister for Primary and Secondary Education inaugurated the Vidyadeepa Program and honored Mr Edmund Frank, the first donor of this project. Mr K B Prasanna Kumar, the MLA of Shimoga handed over the Silver Jubilee Houses to the beneficiaries. SMSSS built 100 houses for the shelterless throughout the diocese. Fr Paul Moonjely,



the Assistant Executive Director of Caritas India, inaugurated the stalls put up the women. Fr. Paul conveyed in his speech that Caritas India is proud of development intervention made by SMSSS and we will continue to journey with SMSSS for the empowerment of marginalized people. , The representatives of the partner agencies, Fr. Peter Brank of KROSS, Mr. E Monis of Andheri Hilfe, Mr. Felix D'Souza of FVTRS and Jimmy Mathew of Caritas India were felicitated on the occasion. 10 staff of SMSSS who have put in more than 15 years of service in the Organization were also felicitated. More than 15,000 delegates from SHGs, farmer clubs, various stake holders, elected members of various local self governance bodies etc were participated.



CARITAS INDIA SUPPORT DURING ASSAM NAGALAND BORDER CONFLICT 2014-2015

The land dispute between the Assam and Nagaland has resulted in brutal battle for decades. Before this violence, there were two major incidents in 1979 and 1985, leaving at 100 persons dead between them.

The recent boarder conflict on 12th August, started when Assamese villagers staged a protest outside a CRPF camp on 11 August, agitating for the release of two school students who have been missing since July. The Assamese protesters alleged that Naga insurgents had abducted the schoolboys. Naga insurgents fired on the protesters and the following day attacked eight villages along the Assam border. The shooting led to mass eviction: 780 families of 16 villages and over 10,000 people of Sector 'B' of Uriamghat moved to 14 relief camps in different places of Golaghat District mainly in religious institutions and schools.

After hearing about the conflict Caritas India's local partner Seva Kendra Dibrugarh had a meeting at diocese and parish level in which the partner had taken a decision to support with relief materials to the affected people. Knowing the needs of the people Caritas India financially supported through Seva Kendra Dibrugarh with buckets, mugs, steel plates, washing soaps, Sanitary cloths, Mosquito nets Phynayle bottles, Tin sheets, Wire, GI sheet, Plastic mats, Tarpaulin and food items. Fr. Romanus Bhagwar, parish priest of Lachitgaon said, "even though the support given by Caritas India was small in amount, it means to us so much at that situation. That small amount saves the lives of hundreds in the relief camps and that is what Caritas India has done for the people". Given table shows the relief materials distributed to the conflict victims.

Current situation in Santipur and Uriamghat

There is a deep sense of insecurity among the people of these areas who cannot dare to return to their homes and still taking refuge in the relief camps. As per the information from Fr. Romanus Bhagwar approximately 329 families are still in Santipur, Lachitgaon, Sukhanjan and Rajapukhri relief camps. "Where is our future, we have lost everything, even though we want to return back to our village we can't. How long we can stay in this small tent which has no security says Elizabeth Lakra in her breaking voice.

Ursela Barla one of the camp inmate from Kempur said, "It's been 7 months since we are staying in this small tent with sleepless of night, no proper food and don't know what will come next. My only desire is to go back to my own village and start a new life".

The two states have held a series of meetings at various levels, including that of chief ministers and the centre but there is no solution of the same. This is due to the total failure of the government, miscreants are active in these disput areas and even fresh incidents continue to take place.

