

Annual Report 2014 – 2015

About the Organization & its Founder

Founded in 1994 by the visionary social activist, Sanjoy Ghose, Charkha Development Communication Network is an innovative non-profit organization that works towards the social and economic inclusion of rural marginalized communities through the creative use of media. Rural marginalized communities often remain unheard and have little access to information that they can use to overcome their social and economic disadvantages. Charkha is committed to empower these communities by building their capacity to speak up at the local, state and national levels and access available resources to obtain their rights and entitlements.

Charkha started more than two decades back with one man – Sanjoy Ghose writing a column called ‘Village Voice’ in one newspaper – Indian Express. Today, Charkha has almost a hundred active writers in the State of Jammu and Kashmir alone. Our articles are published across the country in English, Hindi and Urdu Newspapers – both regional and national. Digitally, our articles appear in many e-newspapers and on social media.

LIST OF GOVERNING BODY MEMBERS

1. **Ms. Sumita Ghose** - **President**
Founder and Executive Director, Rangсутra
2. **Ms. Kiran Aggarwal, (IAS Retd.)** - **Vice President**
Former Principal Advisor, Planning Commission
3. **Mr. Anil Singh** - **Treasurer**
Secretary General, South Asian Network for Social and Agricultural Development (SANSAD)
4. **Mr. Tilak Mukherji** - **Member**
Chairman and Chief Mentor, Sigma
5. **Mr. Prashanto Chandra Sen** - **Member**
Advocate, Supreme Court of India
6. **Mr. Rajdeep Sardesai** - **Member**
Journalist
7. **Ms. Usha Rai** - **Member**
Development Journalist
8. **Mr. Mathew Cherian** - **Member**
Chief Executive, Helpage India
9. **Ms. Tasneem Ahmadi** - **Member**
Advocate, Supreme Court of India
10. **Mr. Pritpal Marjara** - **Member**
Managing Director, Population Services International
11. **Mr. Salman Haider** - **Member**
Former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador
12. **Ms. Harmala Gupta** - **Member**
Founder CanSupport

SCHEMES BOOKLET HANDBOOK FOR RURAL WRITERS – A REVIEW

The book is intended to be a reference for individuals from rural communities who have been introduced – most of them through their association with Charkha – to various development schemes.

The book is an additional resource to reinforce what is taught in one-to-one communication, so they can refer to it when they need to help people in their communities.

The book covers only schemes which were thought to be relevant to the communities that Charkha has worked with. The book is published in English and Urdu.

Some of the schemes covered in this booklet are mentioned below:

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005
- Integrated Child Development Scheme
- Indira Awaas Yojana
- National Old Age Pension Scheme
- National Family Benefit Scheme
- National Widow Pension Scheme
- National Disabilities Pension Scheme
- Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/ Fitting of Aids/ Appliances (ADIP SCHEME)

PROJECT IN LADAKH
Supported by
UNNITI FOUNDATION – INDIA



Building Bridges with Communications
*Creating two-way communication networks in Ladakh for empowering
youth, particularly women*

1. The Context



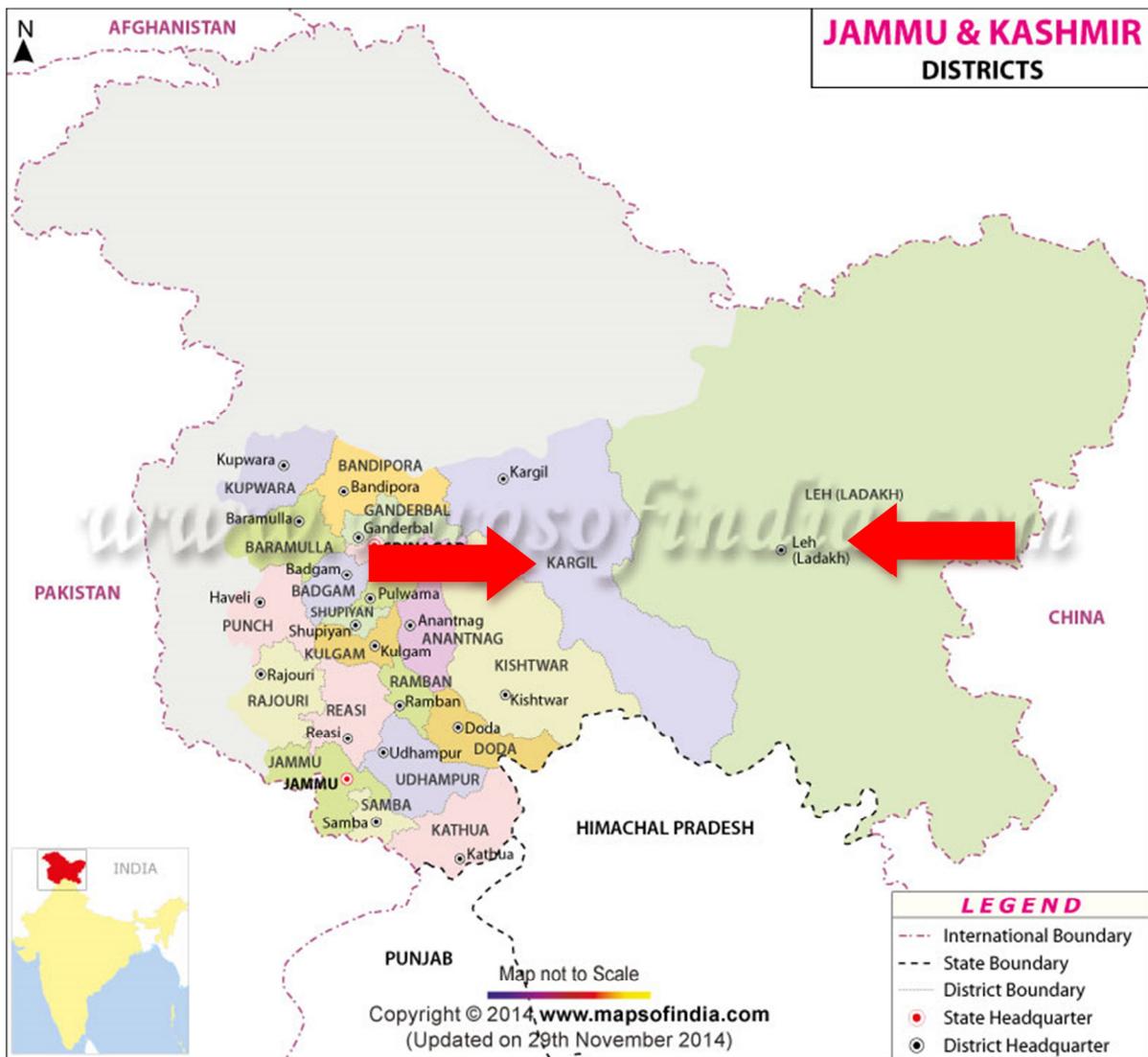
The geographic remoteness and severe winters have served to both protect and isolate Ladakh from the outside world

Ladakh, or the '*Land of High Passes*', is one of the three provinces of India's northernmost state, Jammu and Kashmir. Inhabited by people of Indo-Aryan and

Tibetan descent, it is among the most sparsely populated regions in the state. With an average snowfall of 2 to 5 meters and temperatures dropping to -48°C in winter, Ladakh is among the most difficult inhabited regions in the world.

Ladakh was a significant trade centre in ancient times and evolved a unique culture from the seeds of mixed customs, brought to its land by traders from Central Asia, Tibet, Punjab, Kashmir, Kullu-Kangra and Baltistan. It served as a venue for barter trade.

After Indian independence, Ladakh remained cut-off from rest of the country for many years. Change came in 1960, when the Indian Government carved out a road connecting the neighbouring Kashmir Valley to Ladakh as a strategic move to defend its borders against China and Pakistan. In the 1970's, foreign travellers were given permission to visit this strategically sensitive region. The breathtaking terrain and the Buddhist monasteries evoked the interest of adventurers, tourists, historians, anthropologists and scholars alike.



The districts of Leh and Kargil that make up the Ladakh region have distinctly different socio-cultural norms: the former is pre-dominantly Buddhist and the latter, Shia Muslim. The development priorities and challenges reflect this socio-cultural mosaic. Charkha’s approach in the two districts is appropriately different.

Kargil. Scattered over an area of 14,086 Sq. Km, Kargil is situated at a distance of 205 KM from Srinagar towards Leh near the Line of Control, facing Gilgit-Baltistan to the west and Kashmir Valley to the south. The only way to reach Kargil is by road; promises by the Central Government to establish air connectivity are yet to be fulfilled.

As per Census 2011, Kargil is inhabited by a population of 1.43 lakh pre dominated by 80% Muslim and 20% Buddhist. The sex ratio is 775 females for every 1000 males. The literacy rate of 74.49 % has improved drastically over the last one

decade, reflecting the changing priorities of the community, especially regarding women. Kargil's multiethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural population comprises the Brogpas, Baltis, Purik, Shinas and Ladakhi, who collectively enrich the district and give it a varied, complex identity.

Leh. With an area of 45100 sq. km., Leh is the second-largest district in the country after Kutch in Gujarat. Leh town is 434 km from Srinagar and 474 km from Manali. Topographically, the entire district is mountainous with three parallel ranges of the Himalayas, the Zaskar, the Ladakh and the Karakoram. Between these ranges flow the Shayok, Indus and Zaskar rivers. Most of the population lives in the valleys of these rivers.

In such remote areas, the need for information, connectivity and being linked to the outside world is acutely felt. Women play a crucial role in nurturing these linkages and hence form the focus of the present Project.

2. The Project Framework.

Purpose.

To improve the quality of life of the communities in the Ladakh region and create a sustainable two-way communication network that enables young people, especially women, gain access to information that can address the most pressing issues of the local people; and advocate for policy changes at a state and national level through the creative use of Media

Outputs.

- i. Nurturing a pool of community-based media and social advocates to strengthen the socio-economic status of the people in Kargil and Leh Districts
- ii. Placement of quality articles on relevant issues in mainstream media
- iii. Create effective platforms connecting young people, especially women, with development stakeholders like the Hill Councils, District administration, civil society organizations and local media

3. Activities Conducted



A cluster of houses together makes a hamlet; 2-3 such scattered hamlets are referred to as a village. Haniskote (*above*), near the Kargil-Leh highway, is one such village. Women members of SHGs form the base of Charkha's activities in Kargil District.



A group of disabled people in Leh, led by the remarkable Md. Iqbal (*front, centre*), run People's Action Group for Inclusion & Rights (PAGIR), a respected non-profit that advocates for the socio-economic inclusion of people with disabilities. The group forms the base of Charkha's activities in Leh District.



Assessment

An assessment visit to **Kargil** took the Charkha team to twelve villages located in different remote corners of Kargil District. One common thread across all villages was the enthusiasm among the members of Self-Help Groups. Each and every village has one or more SHG run by a group of women who try to contribute to their household income by cultivating vegetables, selling wool products and tailoring. The level of activity increases during the six winter months when Kargil is cut off from the rest of the world due to heavy snowfall; all access roads to the district – as well as between villages – are blocked by snow.

The biggest challenge marring the enthusiasm of the women in the SHGs is their inability to create a market for their produce, especially the ones that produce wool products. The bright-eyed, hard-working women are keen to learn, and willing to travel, despite the geographic and social implications. They recognize the need to learn new designs, new techniques and better quality standards utilizing their traditional skills to cater to the contemporary demands of the customers. They want to make their presence felt – by contributing not only to their household but also to Kargili society at large.

The potential to work with these SHGs and create a suitable environment for them to be able to learn new livelihood skills led Charkha to design media and social advocacy initiatives in line with these felt needs.

The assessment visit to **Leh** revealed the plight of disabled people in this geographically difficult terrain. Facilities that can give them a life of dignity are



virtually non-existent; the remoteness restricts them to their houses. The isolation is made worse by social discrimination, for congenital disability is seen as a sign of evil.

The absence of education or employment opportunities leaves them with little options. Government laws that assure employment quotas in government and private institutions are flouted persistently, although subjects like welfare and education are the responsibility of the locally elected Hill Councils.

It was clear that strengthening the disability movement was paramount, so that the sustainability of the initiative could be ensured. The movement has its historic roots in PAGIR, a local NGO with a strong determination and a clear vision but extremely limited manpower and skills to raise the necessary resources to execute the required activities.

The leadership provided by this group is recognized and appreciated by the local community as well as the national disability sector. PAGIR is privileged to have received the support of the Dalai Lama himself, in the form of blessings and funding, which they believe has substantially furthered their cause and strengthened their resolve.

PAGIR is therefore an appropriate base to create a sustainable movement with the support of Charkha's media and social advocacy initiatives.

Bringing together the Stakeholders.

KARGIL. Villages Haniskote and Rangdum, the former at the border of Kargil and Leh close to the Srinagar-Leh Highway NH1 and the latter in the extremely remote Zaskar sub-division in south Kargil, were selected for their distinct socio-economic challenges. In both cases, the enthusiasm of the women, their willingness to learn and travel and the expressed desire by the women for educational and economic



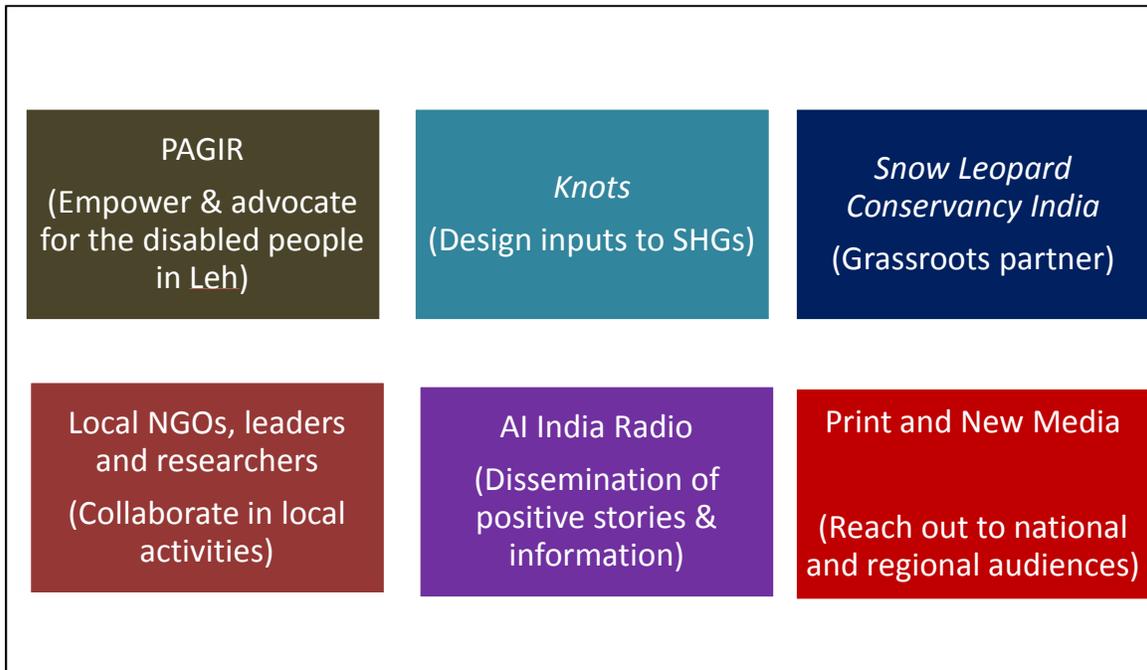
progress were major factors influencing the selection.

The advocacy network would need to bring together not just individuals from the local community but also resource persons for livelihood skill-building, educated youth for imparting educational skills, representatives from the District administration and the Hill Council, local media persons from Print and Radio, market linking groups and any other civil society groups who could bring resources and skills to strengthen the empowerment process.

Extensive brainstorming sessions were held in Kargil, Leh and Delhi, where numerous groups capable of bringing different strengths were brought together to design the way forward using a locally-appropriate, sustainable approach.



Stakeholder Network in Kargil



Stakeholder Network in Leh

* **Knots.** Founded by Sonal Chanana, a young professional designer, *Knots* offers design inputs to the SHG members. *Knots* takes a holistic view of development and locates the design and quality skills within the larger context of socio-economic empowerment of remote communities.

In order to adapt the skills training to a locally appropriate approach, Sonal spent an entire season of bitterly cold winter in Rangdum Valley in Zaskar last year, understanding the needs and aspirations of Ladakhi women. She understands the environment first-hand and has a sensitive approach to the challenges the women face within their isolated, traditionally closed society. Her aim is not only to provide design inputs and training but to also make these women independent of the middlemen who typically pay low prices to the women and find them national and international markets.

* **We for Kargil** - A non-profit set up by Kargili youth based in Delhi, the team facilitated the initial assessments and is involved with designing and conducting Literacy and sanitation programs for SHGs. They plan to rope in local youth visiting Kargil during their summer vacations as volunteers for the training programs.

* **Snow Leopard Conservancy India.** Started as a conservation NGO addressing the clashes between the rarely-sighted snow leopards and the human habitations in remote villages where they would occasionally attack the livestock, SLC now skills local communities in running homestays for tourists and creating wool-based handicrafts that are popular among the visiting tourists, especially foreigners. The option of including villages like Haniskote in the training and income generation activities is being explored.

SLC's volunteer program for students is also being explored as a participant base for media skills workshops so that the development challenges and positive initiatives of the remote communities can be highlighted through the print media and *All India Radio*.

* **Sheep Husbandry Department, Kargil District.** Presently led by a dynamic team, the department plays a key role in guiding and assisting the SHG members in improving the quality of livestock and, consequently, the quality of wool used as raw material for the products.

* **All India Radio.** Through AIR in Kargil and Leh, stories of the SHGs and disability movement will be featured on air. This powerful media – indeed, the most effective medium that reaches all corners of Ladakh and beyond – can bring the challenges and achievements of women SHGs and disabled persons to the notice of the administration and locals alike. The content thus created can also be used to highlight the stories via print and online media.

* **Print and New Media.** The state-level newspapers published in Srinagar and circulated in Kargil and Leh can be tapped for dissemination of stories and

information for advocacy of the issues facing remote communities that are barely known even in the town of Kargil, let alone Srinagar and the rest of the country. Social media can similarly be tapped – a large number of Kargili youth study in cities like Jammu, Chandigarh and Delhi and are actively connected through social media.

* **PAGIR.** With its limited resources, PAGIR has been able to reach out to a number of disabled persons in villages around Leh District, but much needs to be done before the disabled in the more distant blocks are reached. The advocacy efforts require visibility through the media, as well as a two-way communication that allows information to be delivered to the grassroots, particularly in the more distant blocks.

* **Local NGOs, leaders and researchers.** The goodwill and respect PAGIR enjoys enables it to collaborate with local NGOs and local leaders for rallies and public meetings to highlight the need for recognition of the rights – and indeed, the duties – of the disabled in the society they are part of. PAGIR uses the environmental conservation platform to partner with like-minded groups and highlight their productive contribution in utilizing waste paper and cloth to make saleable products. These links are being included in the advocacy network being strengthened on the ground. A research study has been launched to enumerate the disabled in other blocks of Leh District and to document case studies that reflect the multitude of factors influencing the quality of life of the disabled, as well as the grit and effort that goes into giving them a life of dignity.



Creating a locally sustainable base.

A Rural Resource Centre at Haniskote is envisaged where group-level activities will be conducted and information pooled together to inform and empower the women involved.

The physical space is being identified and will be made available by the community itself. It will conduct activities envisaged for the skill building, such as –

- Training center where *Knots* can conduct training sessions in a structured and disciplined manner. The women are expected to continue working at home and bring their assigned work to the Centre during the training sessions
- The literacy and sanitation awareness programs can be conducted in this space
- Government officials from the Sheep Husbandry Department, the Agriculture Department and other relevant departments can be invited for interactions with the women
- Resource material like books, films, magazines can be made available at the Centre for reference and quality enhancement



A similar base is being created at the office that PAGIR has set up on land donated by the village of Saboo near Leh town.

Putting together the pieces.

- *Knots* has completed the initial assessment and prepared a training calendar in consultation with the members of the SHGs. The initial orientation has been carried out with the women have been expressed interest in being associated with the yearlong training. Quality and design inputs will be given in a systematic series of sessions starting in the summer of 2015. The sessions and assigned tasks will continue through the winter and products exhibited in Delhi and other cities for marketing. *Knots* has contacted potential buyers; the response has been positive.
 - The *We for Kargil* team has proposed a training program and schedule. Work is expected to start when the college students go home to Kargil during the summer vacations.
 - *Snow Leopard Conservancy* has suggested that a Writing Skills Session be conducted during their Student Exchange Program in the summer of 2015. The sustainability of such a partnership is being explored. They will also examine the feasibility of including villages like Haniskote and Rangdum in their homestay program, when the snow-blocked roads open in the summer.
 - The Sheep Husbandry Department purchased large quantities of wool directly from the cultivators across Kargil to ensure they get a fair price. Efforts are being made to connect them with organizations that can sustainably provide value addition and market links to the households.
 - The team at All India Radio was extremely supportive and are keen that their empanelled team members be taken through skills building sessions to improve the quality of content being broadcast as well as to highlight hitherto unheard stories. They are willing to produce specific information-based programs pertaining to education, health and livelihood opportunities for improved awareness of communities, particularly in the remote blocks of the region.
 - The *PAGIR* team has, after due orientation, started the enumeration process in identified villages in the distant blocks. The target is to cover three blocks of Leh covering two hundred and thirty five villages. The data is being digitized in the *PAGIR* Office and will be analyzed professionally by an independent research team.
 - Case studies are being documented and focus group discussions have been conducted to highlight the qualitative aspects that can assess their attitudes towards subjects like education, employment, attitudes within society. The analysis will determine the focus of advocacy efforts in the coming months.
 - Charkha will provide the local youth a media-based platform where they will be able to learn new ways of highlighting their socio-development issues through various forms of media like radio, newspapers, social media, web portals and blogs.
-

OUR WORK IN JAMMU

SUPPORTED BY

**BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION
NEW DELHI**

An event to commemorate the completion of Charkha's 3 year project in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir was held in Poonch in March 2015. During the three years that Charkha worked in Poonch a total of 301 local youth were trained to become rural writers. These All the 301 trained rural writers were invited along with many Government officials including the District Commissioner. At this event one of the rural writers Ms. Asia Firdous from Mendhar Block while addressing the gathering said, "Everyone is saying that Charkha is leaving Poonch, but the reality is Charkha is not leaving Poonch because what Charkha has done is that they have created a number of new Charkhas". A very strong statement - full of emotion and good intentions. What remains to be seen is whether these youngsters are really able to carry on the good work of capacity building of communities to highlight their development issues through the media and improve their access to State delivery mechanisms started by Charkha in Poonch in July 2012. Cross border firing, inclement weather conditions and limited livelihood opportunities within the State leading to extremely slow economic development may be looked at as some of the deterrents to the sustainability and scalability of the project outcome.

The skills and knowledge imparted to the youth of Poonch District have shown results that can prove to be sustainable in the long run, for their confidence and ability to build links with State officials is reflected in the initiatives they have begun to take on their own in recent months. These instances of direct benefits reaching the communities reflects the success of the community-based initiative which is now seeing a strengthening of the bonds of reliance between the State and the people, as also the goodwill reflected in the responses of the security forces in the area. The self-confidence among the youth involved with the project's activities affirms their belief that they can improve the quality of their lives through their own initiatives.

Encouraged by the instances of response from the State officials addressing issues highlighted through published writings, many more

youth are taking an interest in proactively reaching out to assist households in their communities and identifying issues that need to be highlighted. Skill Building Sessions will in future be conducted by some of the senior writers who have been trained to conduct these sessions in even more remote parts of the region. This one factor is a crucial element contributing to the continuing success of the initiative.

The acceptance of articles pertaining to development issues at the community-level has sensitised the mainstream print media to the travails of the people. This coming together of the powerfully effective platform of the mainstream print media and socially-sensitive and passionate community youth has set in motion a combined force that is expected to sustain far beyond the duration of the project.

A fairly decent number of youth have begun to spend quality time improving their knowledge of government schemes at the Rural Resource Centres - equipped with the necessary infrastructure - which is illustrative of the interest generated among them to help their communities.

The positive, prompt responses received from the stakeholders - senior government officials, security personnel and print media - serve as a source of encouragement for the youth who have hitherto had scant faith in the effectiveness of the governance system.

PROJECT DESIGN



चरखा
CHARKHA™

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION NETWORK

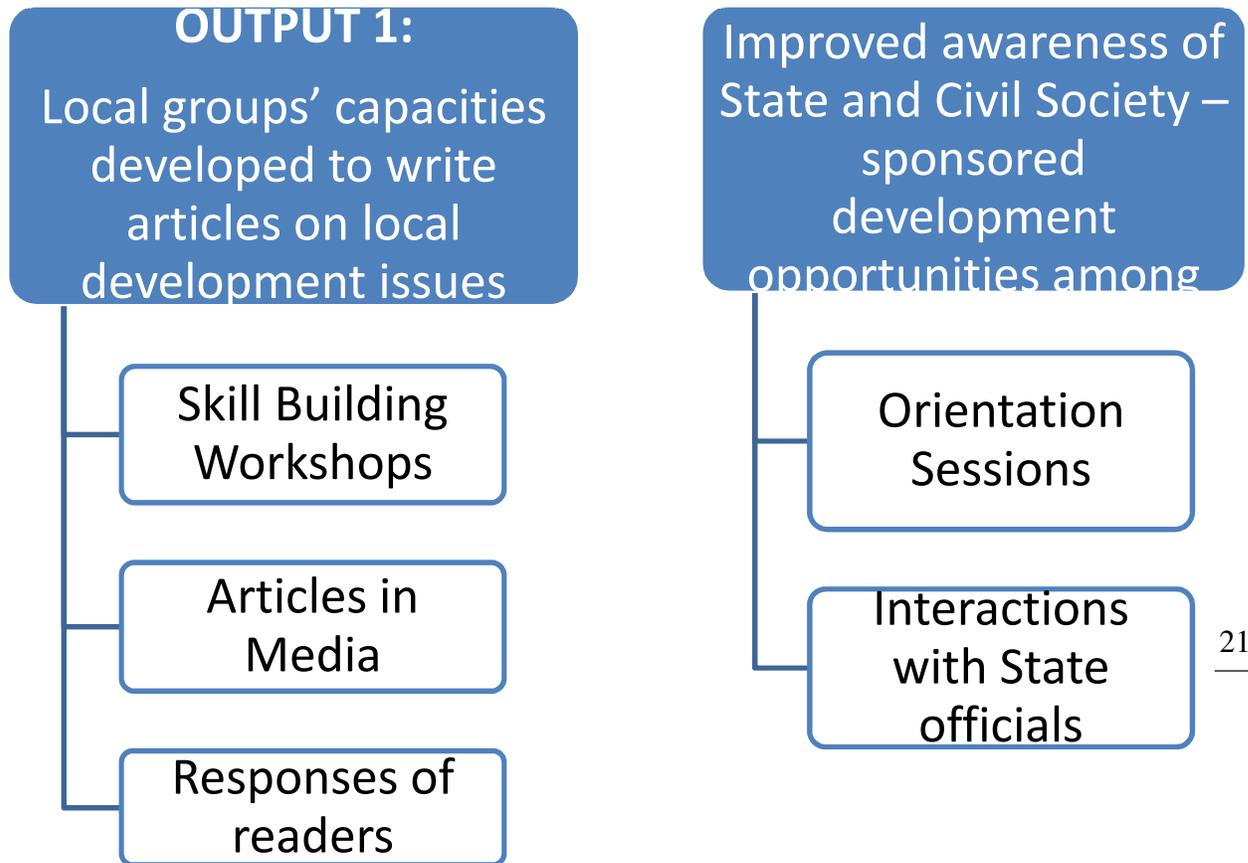
PURPOSE

Local communities' capacities built to highlight their development issues through the media and improve their access to State delivery mechanisms

1. Local communities' perspectives highlighted through State & National Media

2. Improved awareness of development schemes among local communities

PROJECT DESIGN



ACTIVITIES

Rally organized by Charkha's Social Advocates at Village Khanetar, District Poonch regarding problems related to high rate of school dropout of children especially of girls in the village

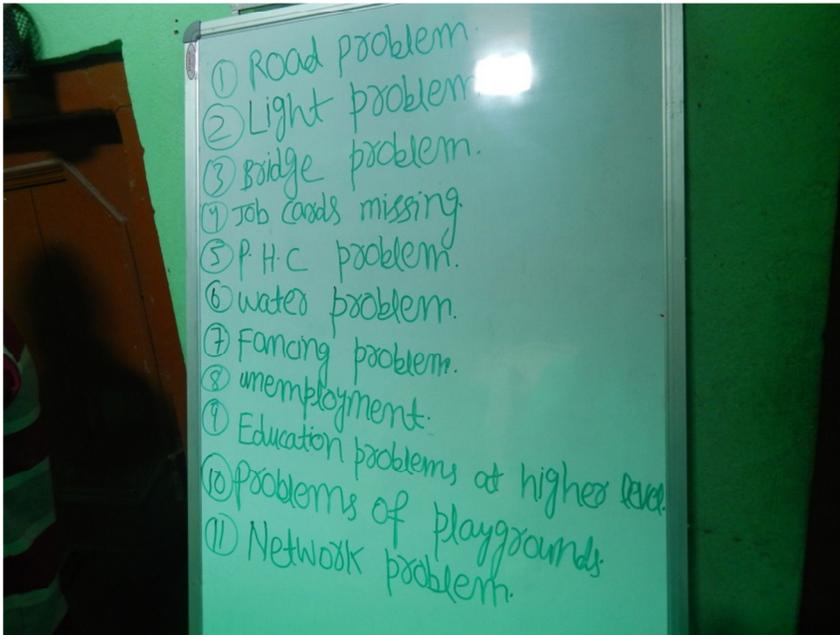


ACTIVITIES

Workshops held in Poonch, Surankote, Mandi, Balakote and Mendhar Blocks of District Poonch



ACTIVITIES



Field Activities during the year in Poonch



Field Activities during the year in Poonch



SANJAY GHOSE RURAL FELLOWSHIP 2014

- For the First time in 2014 CHARKHA started 'Sanjay Ghose Rural Fellowship 2014' for the rural writers from the most disadvantaged places throughout the country.
- The main objective of this fellowship is to provide a platform to those rural writers who want to bring change through their writings.

Selected Fellows:



Amritanj Indiar



Anees ul Haq



Basharat Hussain



Irfan Lone



Nikhat Perween



Qamre-e-Alam



Siddiq Ahmed Siddiqui



Vipin Joshi



Musarrat Yasmeen



Ajaz ul Haque



Raja Wasim Malik



Pir Azhar

Articles

THE HINDU

LIFE & STYLE • SOCIETY

This Kashmiri's last wish

ASHUTOSH SHARMA

ANARA BEGUM: The 93-year-old woman looks to come back home.



Many elderly Kashmiris who migrated to PoK during the 1947 and 1949 wars struggle to return to their loved ones across the border

Ishq karo Ishq karo bana le — these are our forefathers' date, are stranded motherland to all who migrated to PoK is 93-year-old Anara Begum, born in Baag district in PoK in 1965, along with her husband at the time. However, she could only return to her grandfather to three.



Anara Begum, born in Baag district in PoK in 1965, along with her husband at the time. However, she could only return to her grandfather to three.

Kashmir Images



Kashmir Image

No victories for this battle

Author ASHUTOSH SHARMA - Sunday, 07 10 2012 10:47

Wars do not have a definite end as their threat continues even after changes, from battlegrounds to the lives of people - the new arena is the native audience specifies more than what a grown up for innocences, faith and zeal in the journey of life and that too quiet as children are battling near the Line of Control (LoC). Children who are the nation stand maimed and mutilated for the approval of the

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ग गुफाओं में रहते हैं

ep, 2012, Monday

आखिरी ख़ाहिश...!

यह कहानी एक 93 साल की महिला की है जो 1965 में बाग़ जिले के एक गाँव में पैदा हुईं। 1947-49 के युद्ध के दौरान उनके परिवार को पश्चिम काश्मीर छोड़ना पड़ा था। वे पाकिस्तान के पोक में बचकर बच गईं।

ग गुफाओं में रहते हैं

ep, 2012, Monday

GREATER KASHMIR

SRINAGAR, SATURDAY, 6, SHAWWAL 1433 A.H ; 25 AUGUST 2012 CE

کشمیر



The Bruised Childhood

Innocent victims of landmines, unexploded ammunition shells, stray bullets and cross border firing on LoC

LIFE ON LINE BY ASHUTOSH SHARMA

[Smaller](#) [Default](#) [Larger](#)

Wars do not have a definite end as their threat continues even after they cease. Their location changes, from battlegrounds to the lives of people - the new arena is the native audience specifies more than what a grown up for innocences, faith and zeal in the journey of life and that too quiet as children are battling near the Line of Control (LoC). Children who are the nation stand maimed and mutilated for the approval of the

THE HINDU

Arts • History & Culture

Published: October 12, 2012 13:27 IST | Updated: October 12, 2012 13:27 IST

Lost and found



Life came a full circle: Sant Singh.

Starting from 1947, Sant Singh's life story has been a tale of human love and trust

Memories of the 1947 Partition are deeply etched in every heart that has undergone the tragedy. In between the gory tales of the Partition, there are unknown stories of human love which share the common ground like the common colour.

Meet Sant Singh, a resident of Bakshi Nagar in Jammu district who has seen many religious identities since his birth. His is an inspiring story that is stranger than fiction with every word coming true even before he could well understand the meaning of life!

During 1947, the entire village of Kumi Kot in Muzaffarabad, now a part of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), was engulfed by communal violence. A blood-stained boy, about two years old, clinging to an unidentified woman's dead

The unending battle of the victims of partition

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The unending battle of the victims

By ANI | ANI - first step, news

Wars do not have a definite end as their threat continues even after changes, from battlegrounds to the lives of people - the new arena is the native audience specifies more than what a grown up for innocences, faith and zeal in the journey of life and that too quiet as children are battling near the Line of Control (LoC). Children who are the nation stand maimed and mutilated for the approval of the

There are only battles. Through these unending battles, innocent victims of the war are suffering sacrifice more than what a grown up would forfeit - they lose their innocence, faith and zeal in the journey of life and that too quite early.

In our country, several children are battling near the Line of Control (LoC). Children who are considered to be the future of the nation stand maimed and mutilated by the armed conflict in the border regions of the northernmost state of India - Jammu and Kashmir.

انارہ بیگم کی آخری خواہش

انارہ بیگم کی آخری خواہش ہے کہ وہ اپنے وطن کاश्میر واپس آسکے۔ انہوں نے کہا کہ وہ 1965ء میں پاکستان کے پوک میں پیدا ہوئی تھیں۔ ان کے والدین نے انہیں 1947-49ء کے جنگ کے دوران اپنے وطن سے ہجرت کرنا پڑی تھی۔ انہوں نے کہا کہ انہیں اپنے وطن میں لوٹنے کی خواہش ہے۔

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION NETWORK