

## **NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 202**

**GRAM SABHA MEETING HELD AT KOMBHIKONA VILLAGE:** On 9th December, SIGN organized a Gram Sabha meeting near the Anganwadi building at Kombhikona village. The meeting was held in accordance with Article 13(3)(a) and Article 244(1) of the Constitution



of India. The proceedings of the Gram Sabha were conducted by Mr. Budhlal Kerketta, with the participation of 17 villagers. During the meeting, participants were informed that customs and traditions are also recognized as law under the Constitution, provided they respect

Fundamental Rights. It was explained in simple terms that traditions can continue only when they do not harm the basic rights and dignity of individuals. The meeting also highlighted that tribal areas enjoy special constitutional protection, and the government is duty-bound to respect tribal customs, land rights, and traditional systems. Accordingly, the tribal areas of Jharkhand are covered under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.

The role and importance of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, popularly known as PESA, was also discussed. It was emphasized that PESA was enacted to safeguard tribal communities, their land, culture, and way of life. The Act grants greater powers to the Gram Sabha in Scheduled Areas than in non-tribal regions. Hence, a Gram Sabha meeting is a constitutional process and not merely a forum for discussion. The Gram Sabha was

described as the heart of governance in Scheduled Areas, with its decisions carrying legal authority.

The following issues were also deliberated during the meeting: a) Use of 27 pieces of

Sal (Sakhua) wood posts for *Madwa Khuta* during marriages b) Prohibition of alcohol in the village and c) Issues related to firewood. All agenda items were discussed in detail. However, due to the lack of quorum, it was decided that the next Gram Sabha meeting would be scheduled and communicated at a later date.



## **CHETNA CAMPAIGN-CUM-CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WITH DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILDREN:**

On 12th December, SIGN, with the support of Caritas India, organized a Chetna Campaign-cum-Christmas Gathering *for and with differently abled people*, celebrating dignity, inclusion, and the true spirit of Christmas.

Children from three institutions – Cheshire Home, Bariatu; Koshish, Ratu; and Shrijan Help,



Pahari Mandir – actively participated in the programme, making the celebration lively and meaningful.

The event was graced by four distinguished guests: Archbishop Vincent Aind, Fr. R. Jeusdass, Executive Director of Caritas India, Delhi, Mr. Yogesh Parkhi, Director, National Career Service Centre for Differently Abled, and Mr. Suryamony, Director, Composite Regional Centre.

The programme was also

witnessed by eight Directors of Diocesan Social Service Societies (DSSSs) and three Assistant Directors of DSSSs from the JHAAN Region.

A special highlight of the celebration was a short heart touching skit presented by the children of St. John Mary Vianney, Chanho. Through this powerful presentation, they depicted how society often treats differently abled people and strongly conveyed the message that differently abled persons are also human beings, deserving respect, dignity, care, and inclusion.

Children from Koshish and Shrijan Help delighted the audience with energetic dance performances, while children from Cheshire Home presented a touching musical performance. Their talent, confidence, and joy deeply moved everyone present.



In his message, Archbishop Vincent Aind shared a touching story symbolizing wholeness and healing at the birth of Jesus. He said that organizing the Chetna Campaign close to Christmas was very meaningful, as Christmas reminds us that Jesus came to make all people whole.

Mr. Suryamony expressed his happiness and surprise, noting that it was his first experience



of attending such a programme organized by an institution not directly working with differently abled people, and he appreciated SIGN's sensitivity and commitment. Mr. Yogesh Parkhi shared that, in one way or another, all of us are differently abled, and assured his support whenever needed.

While proposing the vote of thanks, Fr. R. Jeusdass reflected that Christmas is the feast of the unreachable God becoming

reachable. He added that through the Chetna Campaign, those who consider themselves "normal" are invited to become reachable to differently abled people.

The celebration concluded on a joyful note with the arrival of Santa Claus, who distributed sweets and danced with the children, spreading laughter, joy, and the true message of Christmas.

**ACT OF MERCY FOR BIRHOR FAMILIES AT OMENBURU:** On 18 December, the SIGN staff visited Omenburu village to meet the Birhor community, one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) of Jharkhand. The visit was an expression of care, solidarity, and compassion towards families living in very difficult conditions.

With the generous support of Mr. Pritam and Mr. Harsh Pasari, SIGN distributed two blankets each to 48 Birhor families. The programme began with a brief prayer, invoking God's blessings upon every family and asking for protection,



health, and peace during the winter season.

To share the joy and spirit of Christmas, the SIGN staff sang a Christmas carol, which brought warmth and happiness to the gathering. Following this, the blankets were distributed to the families. During the visit, it was observed that the villagers live in extreme poverty, with very limited resources. Many families, especially children and elderly persons, do not have adequate warm clothing to protect

themselves from the severe winter cold. This small act of mercy provided them some comfort and relief during the biting cold days.

The relief programme concluded with another Christmas carol and a heartfelt word of thanks to the villagers for their cooperation and warm welcome. The SIGN team expressed its continued commitment to stand with vulnerable communities and to reach out to those most in need, especially during the festive season.

**SIGN FELICITATES INTERNS ON COMPLETION OF INTERNSHIP:** On 18th December, SIGN felicitated three interns—Sr. Punam Barla, Anju Soren, and Manila Kachhap—on the successful completion of their internship at SIGN.

The felicitation programme began with the interns sharing their experiences. They expressed their happiness and said they were deeply impressed by the work of SIGN for the development of poor and marginalized people. They shared that in the agriculture sector they learned about the System of Root Intensification (SRI) and organic farming. The interns also said that it was an eye-opening experience for them to learn about tribal heritage. They appreciated the



efforts of SIGN to preserve and promote tribal culture and traditions in seven districts of Jharkhand. They were amazed to realize that tribal communities have a rich culture and heritage of their own. They also shared that they always felt at home during their stay and work at SIGN. After the sharing, all SIGN staff congratulated the interns, thanked them for their association, and wished them success in their future endeavours. Fr. Bipin Pani wished

them all the best and encouraged them to be proud of their tribal identity. He exhorted them to promote tribal customs and culture at their own level.

As a mark of appreciation, the interns were presented with certificates of internship completion. In return, to express their gratitude, the interns gifted a shawl to each staff member.

The felicitation programme concluded with a short tea party, marking a warm and joyful end to the occasion.