



हमारा अधिकार • हमारी आवाज़

**PACS**

Our rights • Our voice

**CELEBRATING INCLUSION**

The PACS Journey



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# FOREWORD

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Exclusion and discrimination based on social identity exist not only in India but across the globe. The degree and manner in which they appear may vary, but the consequences usually include certain social groups being pushed into deprivation and exploitation, and the creation of structures that perpetuate poverty.

In India, people from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, Muslims and persons with disabilities have faced historical injustices caused by discrimination. This has greatly restricted their social and economic development. The Indian state, through its constitution and various laws enacted from time to time, has identified these barriers and provided certain measures to safeguard the development of socially excluded groups.

The PACS (Poorest Areas Civil Society) Programme, one of the largest civil society programmes supported by the UK Government's Department for International Development and managed by the IFIRST consortium, has worked in partnership with local civil society organisations to empower and develop leadership within poor and socially excluded groups.

PACS has worked on both the 'demand' and 'supply' side to promote practices of good and accountable governance – enabling communities to demand better delivery of and access to their rights and entitlements, while at the same time engaging service providers to respond to the needs of communities.

Empowering socially excluded groups is a long and complex journey, but PACS has contributed to this process by bringing together communities and their leaders, civil society organisations and other stakeholders on a common platform across seven states.

When I visited communities reached by PACS, I met with vibrant community leaders and witnessed inspiring stories of change where excluded communities are realising their rights and entitlements without discrimination and exclusion.

This brochure contains some powerful stories of our journey, which we hope will inspire other people and institutions to explore new ideas, forge collaborations and design innovative programmes and approaches that continue to promote inclusive growth and development.

Anand Kumar Bolimera  
PACS Director

# INTRODUCTION

The Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme is an initiative of the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID). From 2009-2016, PACS has worked in partnership with civil society organisations in 90 of India's poorest districts in seven states to empower and enable socially excluded communities to claim their rights and entitlements more effectively. Originally aiming to affect the lives of 9 million people, PACS has now reached more than 9.6 million beneficiaries.

## Aims

- *to help excluded communities become more aware of their rights and entitlements and strong enough to claim them*
- *to ensure that socially excluded groups are better represented and have a greater voice in committees (at village, block and district level), in civil society and in government bodies*
- *to ensure that civil society works to make service providers and public institutions more responsive and accountable to socially excluded groups*
- *to widely disseminate learning from the programme.*

'PACS was based on the belief that chronic poverty in India is largely caused by discrimination due to social exclusion. There is a broad category of poor in India, but certain socially excluded groups, such as Adivasis and Dalits, experience greater challenges in accessing rights, entitlements and opportunities, and in moving out of poverty.'

Anand K Bolimera, PACS Director

## Context: social exclusion and poverty

Despite being one of the world's largest economies, India still houses the largest number of people living in absolute poverty. Many socially excluded groups are barred from receiving the benefits of growth; their rights and entitlements are not fully realised.

'It's a common sight, that programme activities fell apart after funding is over, but this is not going to be the case with PACS. We have formed federations and we are going to work towards strengthening them.'

Sunil Kumar, Madhya Pradesh

Discrimination and acceptance of it are deeply ingrained in the social structure. Law and policy do not necessarily take the inclusion perspective. This has led to institutional bias, and lack of transparency and accountability in the implementation and delivery of public services. Fear of attack, atrocities or social boycott prevents socially excluded groups from confronting discrimination by the dominant castes or people in power. This is the context on which PACS programme planning has been based.

An example of this exclusion was the village of Piprahi in Madhya Pradesh, which had no electricity for years, not just because it was remote, but also because most of its inhabitants belonged to socially excluded communities. (You can read the full story of Piprahi on page 14).

## PACS IN NUMBERS

9.62m people reached

23,206 community organisations supported

726,935 people trained

225 partners

7 states  
90 districts

## Focus populations

PACS identified five socially excluded groups to work with – women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, economically backward Muslims, and persons living with disabilities. These groups were identified because each scores lower than the general population against a wide range of socio-economic indicators, both nationally and in the seven PACS states. People belonging to more than one of these groups – a Muslim woman, for example – are likely to encounter multiple forms of exclusion.



More than 9.6 million socially excluded people

*Women, persons with disabilities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, economically backward Muslims*



Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

*90 core partners  
135 network partners in seven states*

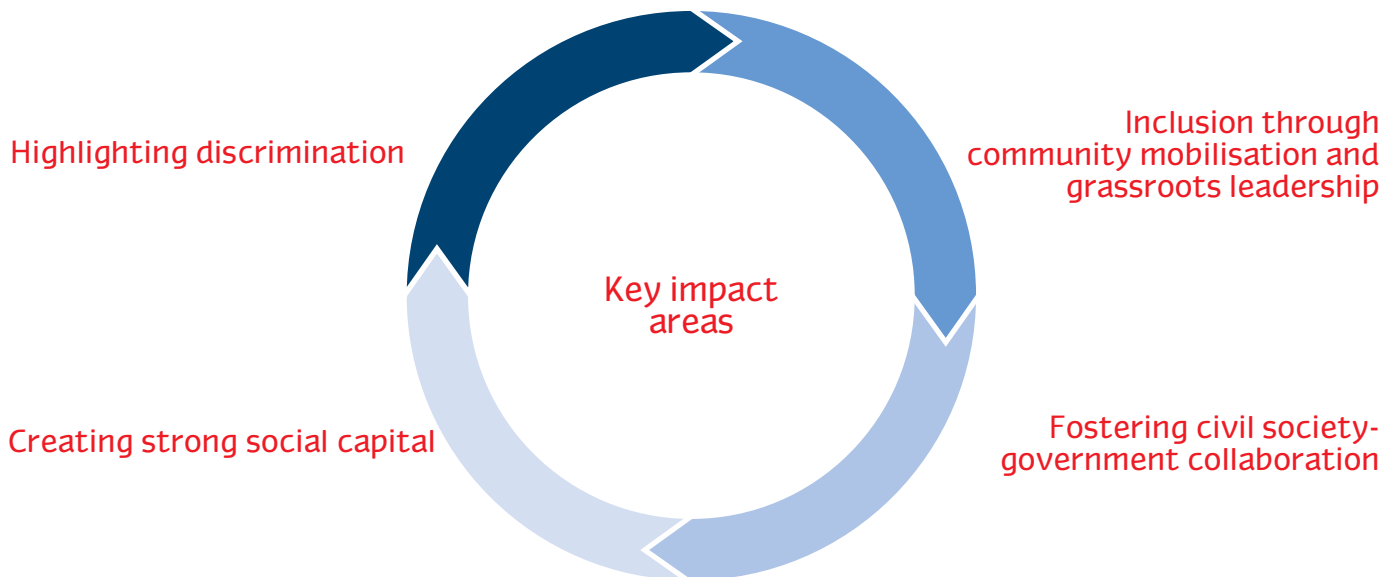


Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)

*23,206 CBOs in 90 districts  
22,404 villages*

## Where PACS worked

PACS has worked in 90 of India's poorest districts in seven states – **Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal**. In all the target areas poverty levels are higher than the average for rural India and a substantial proportion of their populations belong to socially excluded groups.



'The PACS programme has made us more aware of the consequences of child marriage. This has only strengthened our resolve to speak against child marriages in our community.' Almira, West Bengal

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## Community mobilisation and grassroots leadership

PACS has relied on civil society playing a key role in addressing social exclusion, as it believes they are capable of fostering a more inclusive development process. The change process has been facilitated through community mobilisation, and building strong and vibrant CBOs led by women and socially excluded communities. The programme has sought to strengthen civil society by providing grants for projects assisting socially excluded groups, capacity building, alliance building and joint advocacy, and to track progress and share learning.

To ensure that socially excluded groups are better represented and have a stronger voice in committees (at village, block and district levels), in civil society and in government bodies, PACS has set up and consolidated CBOs, empowered them to challenge discrimination, and provided them with the skills and confidence to negotiate with government authorities for their rights.

## CBOs supported by PACS

Farmers' Dalit/tribal rights/  
Women's minority rights Common interest  
Village development  
**GROUPS**  
Forest and land rights children's  
Persons with disabilities Youth and  
Producers' cooperatives



CBOs – such as this one in Odisha – meet every month to discuss issues in the village.

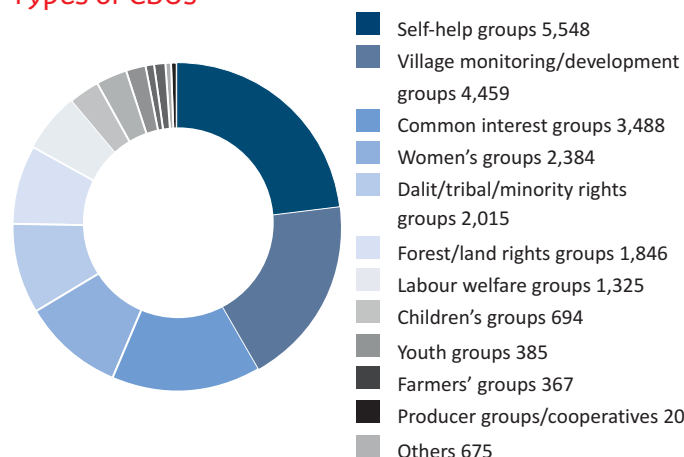
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'Now they [the CBO members] sit in a circle whenever there is a meeting and people sit next to each other irrespective of their caste.' Sabiha, Bihar.

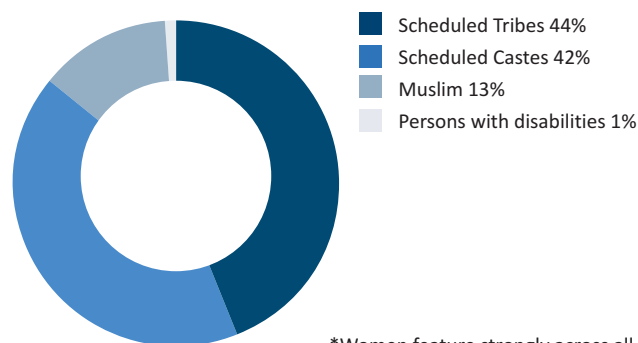
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## Types of CBOs



## CBO membership



\*Women feature strongly across all CBOs

## Social capital

PACS has created a dedicated team of field facilitators who helped to form and strengthen community-based institutions under the programme. With the majority belonging to socially excluded communities themselves, they are the real champions leading impactful work on the ground. PACS has invested in building their capacities, thus ensuring they will continue to carry the work forward.

- **2,424 RSBY Mitras** (community mobilisers) strengthen community participation under the *Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana* (RSBY) micro-health insurance scheme, help households understand and apply for RSBY smart cards, support families in using healthcare services, and represent their communities in raising issues of discrimination and malpractice.
- **3,698 MGNREGA social auditors, resource persons and Women Mates** monitor jobs and entitlements under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) employment scheme, ensuring equitable and non-discriminatory practices in their areas.
- **5,469 school management committees** uphold every child's right to education and monitor the functioning of schools.
- **1,067 Van Adhikar Mitras** (community mobilisers who help with forest rights claims) and similar volunteers support village councils to submit community forest rights claims, and act as volunteer paralegals at the community level.
- **98** passionate and enthusiastic young leaders known as **Changeloomers** have been mentored to lead initiatives addressing social exclusion within their communities.
- **120 Community Correspondents** are vigilant citizen journalists in their communities, unmasking malpractices and seeking solutions.
- **Bal Panchayats** (children's councils) promote leadership among rural children and allow them to articulate and seek solutions to education-related issues.



Kari Devi (in purple) is one of 1,008 Dalit women in the Jehanabad district of Bihar who are challenging cultural and societal expectations by taking up roles as MGNREGA Mates. PACS and partner Pragati Gramin Vikas Samiti have trained these women to oversee MGNREGA work sites and labourers – a job that is usually done by men. In taking up these management roles, women like Kari are helping to make work sites more inclusive, encouraging more women and other socially excluded groups to participate in MGNREGA work.

'We are no longer a burden on anyone. We can earn our livelihood even single-handedly.'  
Anwara, Jharkhand

## Collaboration between civil society and government

PACS has adopted a collaborative approach to seeking solutions to deep-rooted problems. To achieve impact at scale, the programme has worked to develop partnerships between CSOs and government at state, district and local levels. Governments too have relied on PACS's expertise.

PACS has provided inputs to numerous policy documents in planning and review exercises for effective implementation of government programmes and signed a number of Memoranda of Understanding with state governments.

PACS partners have been part of district and state core committees on the MGNREGA, the Forest Rights Act, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and many others. PACS has played a pivotal role in establishing state social audit directorates in Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, and in setting up a land reform core committee in Bihar. Additionally, PACS has been a core team member in the National Rural Livelihood Mission in Jharkhand.

PACS has played a pivotal role in institutionalising MGNREGA social audits and intensive participatory planning exercises within the government system. This ensured inclusion in work identification and budgeting.

PACS partners have been enlisted by the government to train district resource teams on participatory planning. PACS-developed materials have been used in the national training module for participatory planning.

In Bihar, PACS has influenced the formation of the first ever state core committee to monitor and implement the land reforms outlined in the many Land Rights Acts.

Community help centres set up by PACS for redressal of grievances under MGNREGA have been adopted by national and state governments.

In Uttar Pradesh, PACS has been a strategic partner in the state government's school enrolment campaign. The education department has used information materials developed by PACS.



PACS has worked to develop partnerships between CSOs and government at state, district and local levels.

'It was the very first time that we were able to put forth our needs and priorities. We realised that we too had a say in planning for the development of our village.' Moteeshwar, Bihar

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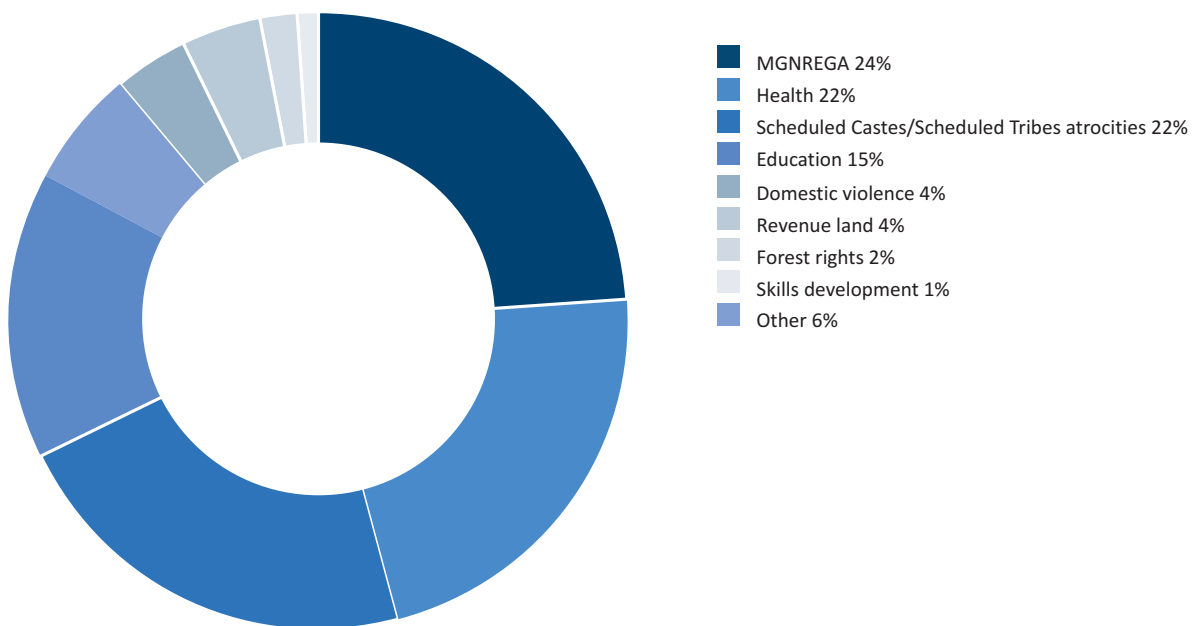
## Addressing discrimination, fostering the right to information

Perceiving development through a social inclusion lens, PACS has highlighted discriminatory practices across its work. Whether they are affected by the practice of untouchability, gender bias or caste-based prejudice, PACS has raised a voice for all marginalised people.

From ostracised Dalit cooks to children from marginalised communities, excluded from the school midday meal programme, PACS has strengthened excluded communities by:

- teaching them to fight discrimination,
- to understand, know how to demand and access their rights,
- to learn to use government provisions and acts such as the Right to Information Act,
- to obtain a more equitable share of benefits, and
- to gain dignity and respect.

## Types of discrimination addressed



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**'I used to be known outside as someone's wife, mother or daughter-in-law. But today I have my own identity.'** Mamta, Uttar Pradesh, coordinator with PACS partner Gramya Sansthan

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# VOICES OF INCLUSION

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In Ammapati village, Bihar, some children were made to sit separately during lunch in school because of the community they belonged to. PACS partner APCL educated the community about their rights and organised them into a self-help group. Group head Saiful Khatoon, a mother of five, led the fight to get equal treatment for all the children.

## 'How can a school teach untouchability?'

How a marginalised community in Uttar Pradesh fought the denial of rights

At the primary school in Kesopur village, Uttar Pradesh, new cook Gita Saroj was constantly asked to step out of the kitchen while others cooked the food. 'It was because I was a Saroj, a lower caste,' she said.

Gita was allowed to do only menial tasks like fetching water or firewood. She said: 'They told me: "We hired an outcast like you because we wanted you to have an opportunity to make a living. But we don't want to make it a practice in the village." How can a school teach untouchability?'

Because Gita was a member of the school management committee, constituted by PACS partner Lokmitra, she felt bold enough to go to the headmaster, and gradually things began to change. Arvind Kumar Maurya, the field coordinator of Lokmitra, said: 'Gita was courageous, because not many women can take on the feudal mindsets of men when it comes to issues like caste. This is also why children from marginalised communities drop out of school.'

For three years, Lokmitra worked with Gita's community, forming Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and building their capacity. The women developed the confidence to negotiate with people and to articulate their issues knowledgeably. 'We began to discuss issues like personal hygiene, school attendance, midday meals, etc. This clearly made an impact on the way the school was run and how parents perceived it. Now children come neatly dressed, toilets function and children's hygiene has improved,' Arvind added.

'Traditionally, people from the Scheduled Castes have done jobs thought unclean, such as cleaning people's homes or removing sewage. Caste-based discrimination is illegal but it persists – especially in rural areas. In many places, dominant castes still refuse to eat food cooked by other castes and inter-caste marriage is taboo.'

**Arvind Maurya, coordinator, Lokmitra**

The Musahar community and manual scavengers are considered the lowest of the low, are shunned and live in abject poverty. Through PACS, 1,565 cases of discrimination across various social categories were identified. Action was taken in 1,489 instances.

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'For me, the best outcome has been economic independence: where we always went to our husbands for all our expenses, today we go shopping for our needs with our own money and buy whatever we want.' Jagyanti, Madhya Pradesh

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Women of Teghariya village, Bihar, flank the road they built under the rural employment scheme, MGNREGA



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## The road to self-determination

### How a women's organisation in a remote Bihar village fought discrimination and got their MGNREGA rights

Teghariya is a remote village along a tributary of the Ratua river in Bihar. From the outside it looks like any other Indian village. But when you enter, a new concrete road cutting through the village sets it apart.

Behind this all-weather access road is the story of the local women's CBO.

In rural India, the MGNREGA scheme has the potential to transform quality of life but large-scale corruption and irregularities obstruct its implementation in states such as Bihar. And when work is handed out, women often find themselves excluded or given unviable options.

PACS partner IZAD has been working in Teghariya since 2012. To combat this discrimination they set up a women's CBO and then, as part of the PACS *Kaam Maango Abhiyan* (Work Demand Campaign), they taught the group how to apply for MGNREGA work.

In April 2014, all 25 CBO members successfully applied for MGNREGA employment to build the road in the village. But things went awry.

CBO leader Nirmala Devi said: 'When this road started to be built, because of incorrect cement-stone-soil ratio it began cracking in a few days. We realised that there was corruption in procurement and use of the material.'

The women lodged a protest. So strong was their voice that the MGNREGA programme officer visited the village and re-sanctioned the building of the road. Work resumed and the road was completed in 12 days.

Kamala Devi, a CBO member, explained how it has benefited the community: 'When it rained, the earlier road would become slushy. There were accidents and getting timely medical attention was impossible. But now we can safely send our children to school.'

Three years ago, most of the women worked as agricultural labourers in fields owned by the dominant castes, while the men migrated to the cities for work. The women were often paid just a few bags of grain. They faced caste-based discrimination and had no voice of their own.

'With the advent of PACS, we are aware of our MGNREGA rights, how to apply for and demand work, and how to get unemployment allowance,' said Indira, another CBO member.

The CBO is now developing into a self-help group, which will consolidate the women's financial returns.

**The Indian Government passed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005 to enhance the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment each financial year to every rural household whose adult members demand work under the scheme.**

MGNREGA has been PACS's largest thematic intervention, covering 78 districts and involving 132 CSOs. PACS has worked to increase the participation of socially excluded groups in this scheme.

- MGNREGA social audits and participatory planning were institutionalised in the government system.
- 664,603 people got work with PACS support.
- Total wages worth ₹129.6 crore (£12.9 million) were generated.
- 1,008 Dalit women were trained to become MGNREGA Mates.

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'We have grown in confidence and now fight for our entitlements at various forums. Many of us have applied for job cards and are active in MGNREGA. We now want to move forward and acquire land under the Forest Rights Act. This is just the beginning. Women need to get together more to move ahead in the community.' Kamalini, Odisha

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## Regaining dignity

### Helping manual scavengers shrug off their past

For most of her life, Anti Devi has been getting up early to clean the latrines in nearby households. 'The one constant memory was the gut-wrenching sight and nauseating stench of piled human waste,' she said. 'We removed it, latrine after latrine, with our bare hands. Then we carried the full basket on our heads or hips outside the village, where we disposed of it.' She would regularly hear words like 'filthy', 'dirty', 'polluted', 'contaminated' and 'unclean' used to describe her and her family.

In 2014, PACS partner Jan Sahas surveyed manual scavengers in the area. 'When we first met Anti, she was sceptical,' said Jyoti Kumari of Jan Sahas. 'But after repeated visits she opened up and pleaded for work that would give her the courage to walk away from manual scavenging.'

Jyoti convinced a community of basket weavers to teach Anti their skill. It took her two months to be confident to weave a basket on her own. She now makes and sells about 50 baskets every month for ₹40-50 (40-50p) each.

Jan Sahas has also linked Anti to various government benefits. 'It has been a long struggle to get my voter card and ration card and I am one of the few lucky ones to be allotted a house under the Indira Awas Yojana [a government housing scheme],' she revealed. 'I also know now that the law prohibits manual scavenging and we have to collectively be alert to infringements of our rights.'

Most important to Anti though is the dignity that comes with her new life. 'I look at my clean hands in wonder. For the first time I feel totally liberated from my past,' she added.

**According to the 2011 census there are an estimated 182,505 manual scavengers in rural India. 95% of them are women.**

**On 10 December, 2012 – Human Rights Day – PACS launched its "Breaking Margins" campaign to end this practice.**

**PACS partner Jan Sahas has since liberated 2,400 manual scavengers in eight districts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.**



Now weaving baskets to make a living, Anti Devi has left her manual scavenging days behind.

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**'I have a dream. I want my community to secure what rightfully belongs to them. I want to see them live with dignity. I envision a day when our society treats them as equal beings.'**

**Pushpa Valmiki, daughter of former manual scavenger, now CEO of PACS partner Adharshila**

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CINI, the PACS partner working in Moraghat tea estate, West Bengal, is ensuring all children benefit from health and nutrition, immunisation, early schooling and other interventions. Moraghat village has 15 self-help groups, each with 10- 15 members. Health services are provided from the Anganwadi centres. The programme seeks to ensure girls have the same resources as boys. Women members hold Mothers' Meetings every month, creating an informal support group to share experiences.

According to the National Family Health Survey-3, 48% of girls under 5 years, 47.9% of children from Scheduled Castes, and 54.5% of children from Scheduled Tribes are underweight for their age.

**PACS has enhanced the knowledge and ability of socially excluded groups to monitor, and access quality, nondiscriminatory health and nutrition services.**

PACS focused on linking them to three government schemes:

- Janani Suraksha Yojana maternal health programme, through which 240,713 births took place in institutional facilities.
- Integrated Child Development Services, through which 351,181 children received supplementary nutrition.
- *Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana* (RSBY) health insurance scheme. Improved service delivery by sensitising 600 healthcare providers from hospitals empaneled under the scheme. Implemented innovative communication activities to raise awareness about the benefits of RSBY. Set up a helpline in Jharkhand to address grievances on RSBY. Supported communities to raise grievances where discrimination and malpractice occurred.

## Immunisation for all

How a shunned Musahar community broke the cycle of neglect

In the village of Ayar in Bihar, the Musahar community – a particularly excluded Dalit group – was not receiving immunisations and other health services because healthcare professionals would not touch or visit them.

The village had an Anganwadi centre under the government's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme. However, the Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), village level workers responsible for providing health services to mothers and children at the centre belonged to dominant caste communities. They never visited the village because they considered Musahars as untouchables. When the Musahars asked ASHA why she wouldn't deliver services to them, ASHA openly responded that was because Musahars were unclean and they stank.

In 2012, PACS partner Yatharth formed a CBO called *Adhikar Chetna Manch* (Rights Awareness Forum) to encourage people to demand their rights. The issue of absenteeism of the ASHA and the ANM was brought up at the meeting. When Yatharth confronted the ASHA, she denied the charges and said the villagers were lying.

Supported by Yatharth, the Musahars collectively submitted a petition against the ASHA. The administration took corrective steps immediately. It sent a mobile vaccination team to the village as well as issued a punishment order to the ASHA.

Due to such prompt action, the health scenario in the village is changing. 'Yatharth taught us about several government schemes related to health- like availing RSBY smart cards, and the services of Anganwadi centres, and primary healthcare centres, which are free and beneficial to us,' said Rameshwar Ram, the leader of the CBO. 'We have realised that it is important to be conscious, to build pressure, to gain our rights. Otherwise we Musahars will forever remain on the periphery, neglected and exploited.'

'Though he had a RSBY smart card, my neighbour's son was charged a fee for blood tests in an empaneled hospital. I called on the toll free number managed by PACS, and registered a complaint. Immediate action was taken. Money was reimbursed to the patient's family.' Majida Begum, Uttar Pradesh

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## Lighting up a village

### How an ignored Scheduled Caste community in Madhya Pradesh brought power to their village

With high hills on one side and a river without a bridge on the other, the villagers of Piprahi were virtually cut off from many benefits transforming India. They were therefore delighted when, back in 2012, they learned that their village would be electrified under a government scheme. But after the electricity poles had been erected, the contractors asked them for extra money to finish the job, which they couldn't pay.

'It was an odd sight,' recalled Ram Naresh Kori, one of the residents. 'Electricity poles stood like lollipops; what was missing was the electricity supply. Every time we enquired, the electricity department gave us vague answers and sent us on our way.'

Asha Kori, the Sarpanch (village head), said: 'Without electricity, our mobiles would run out of battery – we had to travel to distant villages and carry dozens of mobiles for

charging. For days on end, we were cut off from the outside world. This was very significant for families where members were unwell, women were in labour or there was some other emergency.'

Soon after, PACS partner Emmanuel Hospital Association (EHA) started working in the village, and helped to set up a CBO called Nigrani Samiti (Watch Committee). PACS built EHA's capacity to access government-run machinery and they in turn trained the community. EHA supported the committee members to register the village's complaint on the Chief Minister's helpline. Within four days, the work resumed. The village was finally electrified in 2014, with each household getting an electric point.

One of the biggest impacts of the electrification was the setting-up of an *atta chakki* (flour mill) in the village by a local entrepreneur. Thanks to the electric mill, the villagers now have a regular and local supply of flour for making their *chappati* (bread).

Besides Piprahi's remoteness, there was another reason it was ignored by service providers. A majority of its families belong to the Scheduled Castes. In many parts of India they are still at the bottom of the social pyramid, often excluded from receiving benefits.



A family in Piprahi now does its daily chores under the illumination of a light bulb.

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'PACS has broken the myth that illiterate communities with few outside connections cannot engage and successfully mobilise themselves in claiming their dues without support.' Nohan, Chhattisgarh

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Through Bas!Stop young people learned how to take action to end social exclusion.

## Letter from a Bas!Stop participant

How meeting a community of street children opened one participant's eyes to discrimination

*Dear bus,*

*It was a great ride we both had today with each other. The other passengers added so many new perspectives which made my day all the happier and also etched a lot of learning in my diary of memories.*

*I wanted to share that what I felt during the visit was special and memorable.*

*I got to know a lot of things about life from those lil kids and it also broke my stereotypes in respect to the source of happiness.*

*Now, I feel the happiness and love they have – even for people who are total strangers to them like us – was so adorable. And that happiness and love is nowhere found in our daily materialistic desires and so-called basic needs.*

*I also want to tell you that I felt disabled at the same time because I know that, despite the fact which I know now – that the real source of happiness lies somewhere else – I still can't avail it due to my self-built constraints. However, now that I'm conscious about it, I assure you that I will make significant efforts to bring change in me at least.*

*I will always remember you and keep telling people what I learned and experienced today.*

*Thank you for everything, Tanushree*

**PACS supported a range of projects for young people, believing their participation is vital to bringing about social change and inclusion.**

**Bas!Stop** was an innovative campaign on wheels that ran from December 2014 to May 2015. A specially designed bus took young people on experiential six-hour journeys to learn about, reflect on and take action to end social exclusion.

On board the bus, young people took part in theme-based workshops on issues such as gender inequality, violence against women and caste-based discrimination. On board the bus, students took part in theme-based workshops on issues such as gender inequality, violence against women and caste-based discrimination.

Each bus journey took up to 30 participants. The bus ran 103 journeys and reached more than 48,000 young people.

The bus visited 65 socially excluded communities, where participants met and interacted with people from backgrounds that were different than their own.

Bus participants made a range of pledges to end social exclusion in their own lives, families and communities.

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**'I will not judge people before knowing them, and will try not to discriminate them on any particular basis.'** Pledge by Priya Chahal, bus journey participant

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## A level playing field for Dalit girls

How football became one woman's medium to challenge ingrained cultural norms

Although she wanted to study, the situation at home forced Pratima Kumari –from Phulwari Sharif village in Bihar – to marry at the age of 15. An abusive husband, a tear in her uterus during childbirth, and a high-risk operation further impeded her studies. Today, she is a passionate advocate for the empowerment of young Dalit women. 'I resolved that I would not suffer silently again, nor would I let any other girl go through what I had,' she said. So she applied for funding and support under the PACS Changelooms With.in programme.

Pratima's project involved: forming self-help groups of adolescent Dalit girls and women, and empowering them with information relating to health, education and livelihoods. She also trained a group of the young women to develop their confidence, identities and leadership skills – on the football field.

'Girls who were afraid to step out of their homes now play uninhibited on the field, in front of their parents and the village heads,' Pratima said, explaining how she has used football to help the girls challenge ingrained cultural stereotypes.

**Changelooms With.in was a year-long leadership programme (October 2014 – September 2015) for 98 passionate and enthusiastic young leaders known as Changeloomers. They were mentored to lead social change initiatives to address social exclusion within their communities.**

**Their projects focused on a range of issues including domestic violence, child rights, education, livelihoods, youth development and caste-based discrimination.**

## Overcoming Odds with Positive Attitude

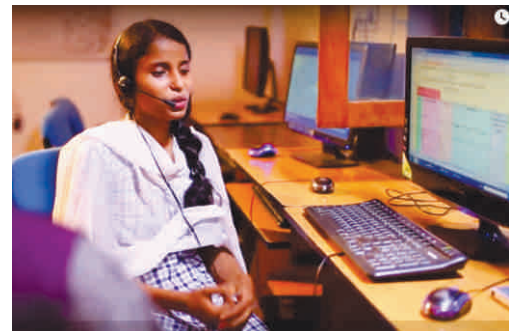
How PACS partners are providing market-linked skills to help people beat disability

Roohi Parveen has been partially paralysed since she contracted polio at the age of six. Her family of nine lives in an urban slum in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Roohi's father runs a small teashop, earning ₹3,500 (£35) a month. Neither Roohi nor her family ever imagined she could overcome her disability and earn a livelihood. 'I always felt weak and incapable,' she shares.

While in her second year of undergraduate studies, she was approached by PACS partner SPARC under a programme providing market-driven vocational skills training to people living with disabilities. Roohi decided to train in business processes outsourcing.

The training completely changed her perspective. 'On my first day here I was very apprehensive. I had never stayed away from home – even for a day! For someone who did not open her mouth publicly, I made many friends and learned to speak unhesitatingly with everyone.'

After three months, Roohi was hired by Aegis, one of the biggest companies in the sector. She now works as a customer service executive, earning ₹9,000 (£90) a month. The first girl to work in her family, she vows never to be dependent again. 'I don't have big dreams. A small house, a decent job, a normal life... that's all I want,' she shares. 'People who have a disability, like me, who are confined to their homes and think they can't do anything on their own, need to start believing they can do anything they want.'



**Under the Skills.in programme, PACS trained 8,342 young people from socially excluded groups. Of these, 6,692 (80%) had found job placements till March 2016.**

'PACS has taught us that we can be severely physically disabled yet hold a brain to rival anyone else. The day my husband came to know about the job from PACS, he said he did not feel handicapped any more.'  
Babita Shrivastava, Uttar Pradesh



## Nurturing women's leadership

### How a women's group cracked down on alcohol and domestic violence

In Taldevri village, Chhattisgarh, PACS partner KALP organised 55 Dalit women into a self-help group named Dalit Seva Samity (committee serving Dalits). Motilal Jahlaria, block coordinator of KALP, said: 'They told me "When men earn money here, they spend it on alcohol and gambling. When women earn money, they spend it on food, medicines and education for their kids and families." So we made the eradication of brewing of illicit liquor and selling it our main issue.'

'We patrol the village with large bamboo sticks in hand, ready to catch any one found selling or making liquor. Don't tell us we are taking the law into our own hands. We are determined to make our village liquor-free,' said head of the group Radha Khute, who has been trained as a Woman Mate to monitor MGNREGA activities in the village.

The women also help the community fight caste-based discrimination and domestic violence, access MGNREGA benefits, and monitor the local schools to ensure all children are treated equally and have access to quality education.

**Many Indian women, especially in rural areas, suffer from denial of freedom even in their homes, a rigid caste hierarchy and myriad other social taboos.**

**PACS partners have developed women's CBOs and women community leaders who inspire, lead and empower other women to raise their voices and demand their rights. Women community coordinators are breaking down barriers and carving new identities:**

- leading advocacy campaigns
- monitoring services and petitioning authorities when service providers don't meet obligations
- participating in governance meetings, demanding inclusive policies and practices.



The women of Taldevri patrol the village with large bamboo sticks in hand, ready to catch anyone found selling or making liquor.

'Whenever I see people demand their rights I feel happy that I was the one who persuaded them to do it. I am proud of what I do.' Radha, CBO leader, Chhattisgarh



Children of Mansoor Village in Uttar Pradesh are benefiting from their parents' involvement in the management of the school.

## Parents' committee exposes school corruption

### How an illiterate Muslim community made their local school accountable

PACS partners like Shramik Seva Kendra (SSK) have focused on ensuring that socially excluded groups are involved in School Management Committees (SMCs). 'Unfortunately, because of the ignorance of parents and negligence of teachers, most SMCs are either inactive or don't have the skills to realise their responsibilities,' explained Satendra Kumar, district coordinator for SSK.

In Mansoor village, Uttar Pradesh, Fatima is one of those who have been empowered by SSK to stand for SMC election. 'We are all illiterate,' she said. 'But I understood we did not have to be educated to hold the school accountable.'

At the beginning, even SMC president Afsar didn't want to be involved because he felt it was best left to teachers. But SSK's awareness campaign intrigued him. 'I liked the idea of our school supporting the natural curiosity of children, of our classrooms as centres for active learning, of our teachers as change agents, and we – the parents – playing an informed role.'

When Afsar heard rumours that the school was misusing funds allocated by the government for its midday meal, he took action. He found only 75 children were being fed, not 358 as reported. He went to the SMC, who, thanks to SSK's training, knew how to submit a complaint to the Education Department.

Despite intimidation from the headmaster and the teachers, Afsar submitted memoranda to the authorities. SSK also supported him to use the Right to Information Act to seek information from the government about the mid-day meal fund. Thus exposed, the headmaster agreed to use the money left over for repairs and upkeep. The mid-day meal supplies now come from a reliable grocer.

**Under the Right to Education Act in India, education is free and compulsory for children aged 6-14 years. The Act also mandates a school management committee in every school, with 75% of members being parents.**

Through 78 partners in seven states, PACS sought to increase access and participation of socially excluded groups in quality education systems, and:

- regularised midday meals in 3,439 schools
- placed 15,047 CBO members on SMCs
- supported 5,469 SMCs
- facilitated 431 school development plans.

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'Our fight against social exclusion became possible only through GCK and PACS. They empowered us that all are equal in school. This opened our eyes and infused fearlessness in us.' Upendra, Jharkhand

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## Reclaiming forests

How PACS partners are helping forest communities use technology to claim and protect their land

PACS partner Chaupal has been carrying out a pilot project to use Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to help three village communities in Chhattisgarh file 298 community and individual forest rights claims.

Muneshwar Ram of Pampapur village in Surguja district can now plot his two acres of land accurately. All he has to do is switch on the GPS device and walk around his land boundaries.

The data he collects on the GPS device is uploaded to the internet, tracking his plot of land to the exact coordinates. A printed copy of this map attached to his forest rights claim form serves as proof of his land.

Muneshwar's community is just one of many tribal communities that have been historically marginalised because of a lack of information about their rights. But PACS partners like Chaupal are reaching out to these excluded communities to help them get their dues under the Forest Rights Act.

They have been training the villagers, many of whom have never used such digital technology. 'Earlier, when we filed our claims, the government would slash them,' said Muneshwar. 'With this technology there is no dispute. We know exactly what we are entitled to and we can also produce a map as proof of ownership of land.'

Narendra Kumar Das, of Chaupal, added: 'We plan to ensure that in all our targeted villages, the community forest rights claims reach the authorities. We will submit all claims with GPS maps. And in villages where lands have been allotted, we constitute committees to ensure best use [of the land] and marketing support.'



Muneshwar Ram of Pampapur Village, Chhattisgarh, maps his land with the help of GPS technology.

**The Indian Forest Act, 1927 made all forest land government owned. As a result millions of tribals, who depended on forests for survival had no legal rights over forests and were treated as 'forest offenders'. The Forest Rights Act, 2006 undid this injustice. Now forest dwellers could claim their rights to the land. But because they live in remote areas and often speak their own languages, these communities remain unaware and face discrimination. If they do not legally own their lands, they are under the constant threat of eviction.**

PACS work on forest rights (51 partners in 41 districts across five states):

- strengthened forest rights committees and increased women's representation
- trained 1,067 *Van Adhikar Mitras* to file and follow up claims
- provided legal support to forest rights committees
- bought GPS technology to map land boundaries and used data to prove land ownership
- supported 124,500 households to claim for their Individual Forest Rights
- facilitated submission of 3418 Community Forest Rights claims.

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'Now we are fearless. We are the owners of our land.' Jema Katli, Odisha

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## Promoting inclusive livelihoods

In India, socially excluded groups face twin livelihood challenges. Their landholdings are marginal and under-productive, and they have limited access to inputs, credit and market services. PACS's inclusive livelihoods programme adopted eight scalable and innovative models to address these challenges:

- 🏠 Benarasi weavers (Uttar Pradesh): 5,000 households, primarily Muslim
- 🐟 Community-based fisheries (Jharkhand): 5,000 households from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe communities
- 🐄 Dairy farming (Madhya Pradesh): 5,000 households
- 🌿 Inclusive value chains (Odisha): 3,050 women turmeric and vegetable producers primarily from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities
- 🌳 Lac production (Jharkhand): 8,000 tribal women
- 👤 Women's land rights (West Bengal and Odisha): 20,000 landless families, 1,531 women headed households
- 🌾 Market oriented value enhancement (Odisha): 4,100 women headed households
- 🌱 Triple crop value chains (Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh): 10,000 excluded farmers.



**In Turundu village, Jharkhand, Prabha Devi prunes a *Ber* tree. Her family farms rice, pulses and lac (a resin produced by insects), using traditional methods, on their four acres of farmland.**

In June 2013, PACS partner Udyogini introduced Prabha (pictured left) to scientific farming techniques for lac, helping her to understand the benefits of tree pruning, effective methods of introducing the lac larvae to the host plant, and regular pest management.

Since receiving the training, Prabha has considerably boosted the family's annual lac production. 'I have to toil hard to increase lac production and encourage other women in the locality for lac farming. I am also planning to buy new clothes for the kids and a solar lamp for the family next season,' she said.

'The project has given a boost to gender equality in the region with women gaining confidence and earning for themselves. People are also becoming motivated to educate their children and are buying things like mobile phones, two wheelers [scooters and motorcycles] and solar power equipment.'  
Bharat Kumar Rathor, Jharkhand





Ramsakhi (right) and Tanju are two of the women trained as Community Correspondents.

## Community journalists report from the ground

### How PACS trained women to highlight local issues

Ramsakhi Ahirwar and Tanju Devi are two of the Community Correspondents trained under the PACS Community Correspondents Network project. They produced videos about people in their communities who had not been paid for work completed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Thanks to their films, justice was delivered, showing how powerful video can be as a community advocacy tool.

As the secretary of a collective of 13 self-help groups in Sagar district, Madhya Pradesh, Ramsakhi (pictured above holding her flipcam) jumped at the chance to gain new skills to highlight issues her community was facing to local officials. In February 2013, she was supported to become a Community Correspondent.

‘I knew that in every village in my district numerous discrepancies existed regarding MGNREGA implementation, and our families suffered because of it,’ said Ramsakhi. ‘I was keen to raise these issues.’

Her video focussed on 20 Dalit workers in her village who had worked on a MGNREGA project in January 2013 but not been paid. Both Ramsakhi and Tanju’s original “issue videos” resulted in the featured workers being paid their dues and so they have both now made “impact videos” to show the results.

**PACS and its partner Video Volunteers trained a network of 120 Community Correspondents in video journalism, enabling them to expose issues affecting their communities across all seven PACS states.**

These Correspondents highlighted matters like violence against women, education and MGNREGA employment. The project provided a space for the voices and issues of social excluded groups to be heard.

Over time, many Community Correspondents have become empowered leaders, some even *Sarpanchs* (heads) of their Panchayats. Under the initiative, the trained Correspondents produced:

- 592 “issue videos” which highlighted key areas of concern for the communities
- 70 “impact videos” to show the change that occurred if a highlighted issue was solved.

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‘When my videos started bringing about change, people started calling me with their problems. It means a lot to me to have their trust and be able to resolve their problems.’ Saroj, Community Correspondent

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# PACS PARTNERS

PACS is grateful to all its partners for their untiring work in the face of multiple challenges. Without them, none of our efforts would have been possible.

<b>Bihar</b> Association for Promotion of Creative Learning (APCL) Bihar Sewa Sansthan Bihar Viklang Kalyan Parishad Centre for Alternative Dalit Media (CADAM) Centre for Health and Resource Management (CHARM) Dalit Association for Social and Human Rights Awareness (DASHRA) Deshkal Society Development Education and Environmental Programme (DEEP) IZAD Muzaffarpur Vikas Mandal Nidan Pragati Grameen Vikas Samiti Prayas Grameen Vikas Samiti Samagra Shikshan Evam Vikas Sansthan (SSEVS) Yatharth	Adivasis (ASRA) Vikas Foundation  <b>Madhya Pradesh</b> Adivasi Chetna Shikshan Seva Samiti (ACSSS) Adivasi Sanrachna Sewa Sansathan (ASSS) Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) Ekta Foundation Trust Emmanuel Hospital Association Gramodyog Sansthan Jan Sahas Kshitij Madhya Pradesh Voluntary Health Association (MPVHA) Mahatma Gandhi Seva Ashram Mahila Shram Sewa Nyas Navrachana Samaj SeviSansthan Nirman Society Pararth Samiti Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action (SRIJAN) Swadhikar	Empowerment (PACE) Panchsheel Development Trust People for Peace Service Society (PPSS) Prayatna Foundation Purvanchal Gramin SevaSamiti Purvanchal Rural Development and Training Institute (PRDTI) Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra Samudayik Kalyan Evam Vikas Sansthan (SKEVS) Shramik Seva Kendra School for Potential Advancement and Restoration of Confidence (SPARC) Tarun Chetna Vigyan Foundation
<b>Chhattisgarh</b> Centre for Action Research and Management in Developing Attitude Knowledge and Skills in Human Resources (CARMDAKSH) Chaupal Disha Emmanuel Hospital Association Kalp Samaj Seva Sanstha Nirman Society Navrachna Prayog Samaj Sevi Sanstha Rachna Manch Shikhar Yuva Manch	<b>Odisha</b> Aaina Centre for World Solidarity Development Institute for Scientific Research, Health and Agriculture (DISHA) Institute of Social Sciences Jana Sahajya Orissa Voluntary Health Association (OVHA) Society for Promoting Rural Education and Development (SPREAD) Society for Welfare, Animation and Development (SWAD) Team for Human Resource Education and Action for Development (THREAD) Visionaries of Creative Action for Liberation and Progress (VICALP)	<b>West Bengal</b> Child In Need Institute Church of North India-Synodical Board of Social Services (CNI-SBSS) Jalpaiguri Seva Sadan Nari-O-Sishu Kalyan Kendra Shripur Mahila-o-Khadi Unnayan Samity (SMOKUS)
<b>Jharkhand</b> Alternative for India Development (AID) Badlao Foundation Chetna Vikas Dalit Vikas Vindu Ekjut Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR) Foundation for Emancipation of Marginalized (FEMALE) Gramoday Chetna Kendra Jharkhand Vikas Parishad Lok Chirag Sewa Sanstha Naya Sawera Vikas Kendra Prerana Bharati Shramajivi Mahila Samity Society for Human Assistance and Rural Empowerment (SHARE) Society for Reformation and Advancement of	<b>Uttar Pradesh</b> Adharshila Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG) Gram Niyojan Kendra Gramya Sansthan Grameen Vikas Sansthan Lokmitra Nav Bharatiya Nari Vikas Samiti (NBNVS) Nirman Society Participatory Action for Community	<b>Partners on livelihood and skills programmes</b> Access Development Services Don Bosco Tech Society Ekgaon Indiacan Education Pvt. Ltd. Intellectap Landesa Pravah Samarthanam Shop for Change Traid Craft Udyogini Watershed Support Services and Activity Network (WASSAN)
		<b>Technical partners</b> Centre for Health & Social Justice (CHSJ) Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSJ) Liberty Institute Multiple Action Research Group (MARG) Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) Nirantar Samarthan Video Volunteers Virinchi Development Services Pvt. Ltd.



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## Leaving a legacy of empowered communities

The PACS programme ended in March 2016. However, strong programme planning and an effective exit strategy will enable its legacy to live on through the community structures it empowered. CSOs and CBOs trained and strengthened by PACS are its torchbearers and carry the momentum.

PACS will continue to resonate through the 225 network partners it has supported and strengthened, through the 726,935 people it has trained and sensitised, and through the 23,206 CBOs it has set up.

### About DFID

The Department for International Development (DFID) is a United Kingdom government department responsible for administering overseas aid. The goal of the department is 'to promote sustainable development and eliminate world poverty'.

### About IFIRST Consortium

PACS has been managed by the Indian Forum for Inclusive Response and Social Transformation (IFIRST) – a consortium led by Christian Aid, along with Caritas India, the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, ACCESS Development Services and the Financial Management Services Foundation. IFIRST addresses social exclusion through research, policy and advocacy, and through programmes aimed at improving accountability and livelihood opportunities.

### About Christian Aid

Christian Aid is an international development agency that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.







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