



Annual Report 2011-2012



PFI Foundation

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President's Note



It is acknowledged that NGOs and other civil society organizations play a vital role in plugging gaps in basic services, by building bridges between the government and marginalized communities. This is amply demonstrated by the role of PFI Foundation in rural areas of Northeast. Working in the areas of education, health services, protected water supply, sanitation, etc., PFI Foundation strives to create an enabling environment in which development processes can be nurtured for take off.

One of the biggest challenges for PFI Foundation is to mobilize and utilize resources in a creative and optimal manner, with a clear focus on building systems, which will ensure sustainability of development processes and products even after PFI Foundation withdraws. While systematic development of technical and managerial capacities is a key ingredient in this, it is important that each community has substantial funds at their disposal as well. The process of building up community funds needs a tremendous amount of foresight and ability to calculate future costs and factor in contingencies. The process of convincing communities to raise resources today to meet tomorrow's expenses is tougher. This has been most impressively accomplished in its interventions in community managed water supply and sanitation. The foundation ensures that all families will have access to water supply and sanitation at all time in the future, even as the number of families grows in the villages. Another interesting and innovative aspect of PFI Foundation's

work is the principle of cost-sharing that is evident in all interventions. PFI Foundation believes that local communities can and will pay a share of the cost of development projects, but 'social costs' clearly are necessary for basic services which are 'fundamental rights'. These are leveraged from the government wherever feasible and from external donor institutions. The process of linking with government creates spaces where PFI Foundation together with rural communities can, through a process of demonstrating alternative implementation processes, influence implementation of development schemes and formulation of policies. One thing PFI Foundation has realized, is that to be really able to influence the government, activities have to be demonstrated on a sizeable scale, impacting large populations. PFI Foundation has articulated in its Strategic Plan (2004) its vision for scaling up. The challenge will be to simultaneously build up financial resources and human and institutional capacities to match the scaling up. Quality and effectiveness must not be compromised. The good and bad experiences from the scaling up of interventions in biogas in the decade of the 80's will stand in good stead as PFI Foundation prepares to expand exponentially in the coming years.

With a committed workforce PFI Foundation promises to grow bigger and more effective in the coming years.

Dr (Mrs) Sulekha C Bhattacharjee
President

From The Executive Director



PFI Foundation has made consistent efforts to counter inequities and injustices that are manifest in the society around us. Over the decades of working in rural Northeast, we find that while the nature of inequities may have morphed from one form into another, the fundamentals persist. In fact, politics and policies deliberately perpetuate and sustain several of these inequities. This is most manifest in the ever-widening divide between rural and urban areas. With poor living conditions, the absence of basic services of education and health, and the lack of meaningful employment, poor people are drawn from rural areas to urban centres, where they live like vermin in slums and shanties to keep their body and soul together, in an existence that is sub-human and abhorrent to any civilized society.

Take the case of rural poverty reduction, an area that PFI Foundation has been working in for more than a decade. We have recently organized a national workshop on Modernization of Traditional Schools for employable life-skills education with the support from the British High Commission and in collaboration with Govt. of Assam. The task at hand is by no means simple, and demands high levels of resilience and stamina. Thanks must also be extended to all institutional supporter, donors, partner organizations, volunteers and supporters in India and abroad. Thanks to the new President of the Foundation Dr (Mrs) R K Mazumder for her strategic guidance in all our endeavors.

One of the major highlight of the year was the launching of the South Asian Regional Development Gateway (SARDEG) through a partnership alliance with country development gateways and in collaboration with the Development Gateway Foundation, USA ,. The project is envisaged to be an online communication initiative (Internet portal) that provides and promotes exchange and dissemination of information on development matters in the region initially focused on Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

I am proud to present to you the Annual Report of PFI Foundation.

Baharul Islam, PhD
Executive Director

April 2012

STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

The strategic reference points for the PFI Foundation' missions are local interventions through a global development visions such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and nearly all-developmental priorities of the Foundation are aligned to these goals. This major goal is realized through the programmes and a process that has five core strategies:

- a. Awareness Raising
- b. Connecting Good Governance and Development
- c. Coordination in Policy, Projects and Development
- d. Capacity Building & Knowledge Sharing
- e. Development Information Services

Institutional and methodological features aligned with these core strategies are as follows:

1. Awareness Raising:

Through the activities of the NGO network, and in formulating, implementing and publicizing the strategy and action plan, awareness will be raised amongst key development stakeholders within the region as to the benefits and challenges of development information sharing. It will be done through:

- Frequent Seminars, Workshops, and online discussions.
- Publication in the newspapers.
- Regular shows/programmes in the electronic media .
- Publication of relevant materials and distribution.

These activities will focus on the constraints and opportunities of development initiatives in the region, the requisite technological, human, cultural infrastructures, and policy frameworks, understanding the roles of various stakeholders, and the current development landscape within the region with special reference to poverty reduction.

2. Connecting Good Governance and Development:

The Foundation seeks to link good governance and development goals in the region. The gateway will:

- Support the on-going national efforts in institutional and administrative reform and modernization through
- Serve to enhance public administration and the delivery of public services by providing a ready information outlet/window on Foundation portal.
- Help public and private institutions to ICT-based medium to channel the processes of decision-making, planning, co-ordination and management of their programmes. Eg, monitoring foreign assistance flow to the NGOs in a state/country.
- Establish links between actors in development initiatives at government, non-government and multilateral organizations and priorities of the regional as well as national and regional economic, social and political goals.
- Disseminate local success stories in development efforts and good governance and help scaling them up in other parts of the region.

3. Coordination in Policy and Project Implementation and Development:

While the countries in the region are at varied levels of ICT access and usage, the regional gateway program launched in collaboration with the South Asia Development Gateway portal (www.sardeg.org) will set the scene for improved co-ordination in South Asian regional developmental policy and project implementation. Much of developmental project implementation takes place at the national level and is not regional issues as such. Towards knowledge sharing on these activities and possible harmonization within the countries and possibly at the regional level, the portal will:

- Seek to build stakeholder consensus, provide broad guidelines for the harmonization of national efforts and identify opportunities for joint programming (e.g. meteorological warning systems),
- Facilitate partnerships through online networks between individual champions, organisations, and institutions.
- Create opportunities for collaboration and mechanisms for resource mobilization through online networks and promotional events.
- Develop an action plan to be formulated through a participatory process, involving

consultations with key-actors to strategize development information sharing in the region.

4. Capacity Building & Knowledge Sharing at Regional and National Levels:

Through the development of an effective regional network of policy and decision makers, public administrators, the private sector and the civil-society, the Foundation will:

- Share information and knowledge on various developmental activities and strategies adopted by various actors and lessons learnt thereof.
- Increase visibility of “best practices” and fostering co-operation on developing common policies and activities.
- Inform the stakeholders, various government and non-government actors to build capacity in regional resource and knowledge sharing.
- Organize events to build the capacity of development planners and implementers in the region with regard to the operational aspects of poverty reduction policy and implementation of initiatives and programmes.

5. Development Information Services:

Foundation will provide a forum for community-based and local, regional or national organizations to share and exchange ideas, experiences and resources on issues of common interest. In doing so SARDEG will:

- Organise a regional workshop of relevant institutions on development research and create an institutional network for data collection in key areas: infrastructure, sectoral applications (education, health, public and private sector), and the information economy.
- Develop a suggested framework for baseline studies with indicators.
- Disseminate the results of the studies through the internet portal in four components: Indicators and Benchmarks, policy Issues, Human Resources and Applications.
- Create a platform for action research by the development actors as well as institutional researchers.

- Will catalyze the development of new e-based economic development tools by providing information on and evaluations of various web applications and services, notably for e-learning, e-governance, e-education, e-health, e-jobs, e-communities and e-advisory services.

- 1.2.6. Financial Sustainability: SARDEG aims to become financially sustainable by the year 2009 through various income generation activities like:
- Subscription for web-based service delivery (eg, Institutional admission, hospital appointments, out-sourcing of various licensing and tendering processes of smaller government departments who does not have dedicated ICT facilities).
- ICT related training, and consultancies.
- Creating a corpus fund through international donors.

Target groups and methodology

PFI Foundation’ work is concentrated in predominantly poor districts of ASSAM with special reference to Barak Valley. We aspire to work with 1% of Assam’s population over the next decade, through direct outreach and in collaboration with other non-government organisations.

PFI Foundation plays the dual role of an implementer and facilitator to achieve its mission. Involves mobilisation of communities in identified clusters, initiation of development processes, supervision and management. There follows a gradual role transformation enabling communities to manage processes and eventual withdrawal upon handing over full controls to communities.

FOCAL AREA I EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND SUPPORT

The interventions in education by PFI Foundation aim to ensure that all children are able to access primary education. Where government schools exist, our efforts are towards motivating and mobilising village communities to ensure effective functioning of these schools. In this regards the organization was mainly involved in identifying dropout children from formal schools and making case study of each of these identified children. Efforts were made to find out actual reason of dropout through interview sessions both with the parents and the particular child and it was found that parents pressure, school environment, financial weaknesses were the reasons for dropouts. The Social Worker, from the organization tried to sought out the problems through counseling both the Parents and the Child. As a result of these efforts there were more than 20 Children were readmitted into schools for their continuation of formal education in different villages of our targeted area of villages. While, dealing with such cases a special attention had been given to Girl Child.

Further, in association with the Barak Education Society, Silchar (Assam) the Foundation sponsors financial assistance for the poor and meritorious students.

FOCAL AREA 2: FAMILY HEALTH CARE AND POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAM

2.1. RURAL HEALTH CARE CUM SELF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR POOR WOMEN IN INDIA

Though the majority of preventable diseases and deaths in remote, rural and below poverty line areas of India's northeast (72% of total Population, 50% of them below \$1/day) are due to infections, communicable, parasitic and respiratory diseases and these can be reduced by preliminary check-up and medicines, the health workers (HW), leave alone the doctors, do not want to stay in those villages and communities due to poor communication and living conditions. Several attempts by the government to encourage, compensate and even 'force' the health workers to stay in those villages have

failed as HW like to stay in urban and semi-urban centers for 'better' living conditions.

The idea is to plant in each uncovered remote, rural and poor villages of the northeast India a community women health worker cum entrepreneur in who will start a rural medicine shop and provide preliminary health care at the grassroots level. He will be backed up by training, business startup loan and referral facilities. She will be tied to her business of running the rural drug store, not 'transferable' by the government and based in the communities living with her family there. The strategy is to an employment opportunity for the women in rural areas while ensuring the availability of rural basic health care and the referrals for complicated cases by cross-subsidization.

The project will identify the rural women with necessary education, business-acumen and residential criteria to start healthcare business in selected areas. They will be trained for 6 months in the partner institutions of medical hospital and research. A network of business support system with local banks and medical referral facilities with local hospitals will be established to support them with the starting of the rural drug store cum health facility. The implementation of the project will be managed, monitored and supported by a team of business, medical and government representatives who will act as mentors the selected trainees. The cross-subsidization of referral facilities as well as community outreach programs have been piloted by HAMM Hospital in Hojai (Assam) but the entrepreneurial orientation to the 'embedding in community' strategy is to be an innovative extension of the program. A basic feasibility study has been done and preliminary results were encouraging for starting such an initiative.

The current approach of rural health mission is to 'appoint' another set of rural health workers by government departments who are motivated more by the 'government job' aspect of the scheme. As usual in rural areas in northeast India, the moment the 'salary' starts coming the so-called village health worker rushes to the nearby urban or semi-urban center to a better living condition for his/her own family member. They are 'government appointed' and hence not apparently 'answerable' to the poor villagers and by greasing a few hands they continue to be the

'ghost-health workers'. In the present project, the worker is from the village itself, is a woman with a family living in the village/community and hence more 'immovable' and above all motivated by the marginal profit aspect of the 'community health store' business. As she is to run the store from the community itself, she has to stay there and provide basic health services to retain her customers.

The idea of cross-subsidization of the health care is not new but we are extending it to the community level to deliver basic healthcare and medicines at the doorstep of the poor. The medicine supply is supported by a network of voluntary drug donations and supply of medicines at an affordable price from resources such as Low Cost Standard Therapeutics, India. The well-tested microfinance system for rural women will be employed.

Local communities are involved right from the beginning to give the community health store lady a sense of community support, customer base and an accountability mechanism. She will work from within the communities and unlike 'government' health workers, she will be personally and traditionally accepted by the communities themselves as one of their own. At the formal level a community support group will be established in each target village to help the starting and day to day operational issues of the rural health store. The community is briefed about the processes and costs involved so that they have a sense of ownership and can check prevent any undue exploitation of the program.

The project is named "EACH ONE – REACH ONE" aims to train and establish 250 village medicine stores operators cum Multi purpose Health Workers (all Women) to cover at least 250 villages and communities creating an equal number of village health stores within a period of 24 months in 4 batches of training (6months each). Each trained workers are then expected to attend at least 10-15 cases on average in a day, approximately 4000 cases in a year. This will make the ultimate number of beneficiaries (after 12 months of starting the program) approximately 1 million villagers.

Indirect beneficiaries will be her immediate family members due to her stable source of income and all others involved in the supply chain, support services like Ambulance service, clinical and pathological testing services etc. These are also estimated to be around 500

persons per year. Further, depending on her business capability she will also be given proper training and financial help to take up similar enterprises in the adjoining areas.

The physical number of village health stores and the actual number of patient attended to will be the prime quantitative measure of the project's success. On the qualitative side periodical feedback and evaluation mechanism will create another benchmark for the project's success.

The project's success will ultimately cross-verified from an drop in the number of cases referred to the urban health centers/hospitals as well as a decrease in the rate of infections, communicable, parasitic and respiratory diseases in a target area/community.

The essence of the project is a business plan to set up rural health stores with a motivated rural woman to run her store with proper medical training as well as entrepreneurial skills. She has to stay in the village with limited margin of profit from the medicine store and also serve the local community with basic healthcare. With initial business establishment cost coming as a loan she has to repay the amount in installments from the earning of the store so as to become the 'owner' of the store in the long run. The challenge is to find such a suitable person and to provide that initial amount. The organization will provide the initial investment costs for businesses while the DM funding is aimed at providing training cost and operational cost of creating a support network of mentors to guide the trainees. Once the initial 250 are set up and the loan-repayment starts, the next batches of training will be sustained from the recycling of that amount for expansion without any external funding.

PFI Foundation India has experience in piloting rural healthcare programs and free medicine supply camps in Assam (India) since 2003-2004 with the help of local communities. The primary partner in this project HAMMHRC is running a specialty hospital and research center with community outreach activities since 1986. We would join hand together in this project to make it a success.

Lack of mass health insurance in India makes 'out-of-pocket' health expenditure very high in India for remote states where health facilities are far away. In northeastern states the basic healthcare is often unreachable because of the

difficult terrains of the region and absence of a preliminary point of healthcare service in remote areas. This project can be scaled up in other countries/regions where such geographical barriers prevent outsiders to stay and provide the basic healthcare services as well as to act as the referral initiator to a network of specialized services elsewhere. The business skills of ordinary rural housewives, especially in matriarchal communities of Northeast, are still untapped for health sector.

The quick recycling process of the initial investment after the 6 month training & 18 months operation gives the project fast multipliers affect @ 250 every year. This project can be very easily replicated in large scales in other poor, remote and unreachable parts of the hilly and tribal states in India.

2.2. SOUTH ASIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES (SARIMS) - A PFI Foundation (India) Initiative for South Asia



The deadline of year of 2015 set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is drawing near and many of the health goals remains as a distant mirage for the South Asian region. Primary health care, as a paradigm, has been lost on the way. To improve the prevailing situation, the problem of rural health is to be addressed both at the local (national and state) and at the regional level in a holistic way, with genuine efforts to bring the poorest of the population to the centre of the attention pulling together healthcare resources from the countries. It is this resource sharing objective that drives this initiative for establishing a research institute for medical sciences in Northeast India that will serve the entire South Asian region.

In a developing country such as India, Nepal or Bangladesh where an optimal level of health service is a dream to many, there are far too few medical research, health workers training institutions. With a limited number of available training institutions, it is nearly impossible to train large numbers of medical officers and paramedical workers and conduct quality research in medical sciences so as to reach the benefits to the millions of poor in the region. Medical education in this region is based largely

on the western model and unfortunately, both undergraduate and postgraduate curricula fail to match local health needs. Thus, products of such a system are mismatched with the existing expectations of the local patients and prevalent complicated diseases. Doctors find it difficult to tackle many problems in their work situations.

Research in Medical Science

The increasing requirements for locale-specific research in medical sciences and corresponding need for a large number of researchers in the area, as well as the necessity of continuing education of research professionals have led to the concept of regional research institutions in health sector. While a few countries like Europe have initiated such programmes, in India, health research courses offered are few and offered by a limited number of higher institutions

Challenges and Issues

For effective and efficient health care delivery, especially in rural areas and urban slums, research studies on of various areas of medical sciences and diseases have always been emphasized by health sector. Though, as noted above, a few countries including India have initiated professional institutions of higher research in medical sciences, there is not adequate data to assess its impact of the programs at this time. It is still our belief that the most important challenge of training and reorientation of middle and junior level health workers of government organizations and NGOs can be best met through a learning program that encompasses both regular professional courses (MBBS, MD, MS etc) as well as application of modern research technologies in the health sector. The future challenge therefore includes provision of qualitative need-based health education and research programme to a variety of heterogeneous clients. However, certain issues need to be addressed and considered for successful application of distance education programs for health professions:

1. Since health sciences deal with life and death and are therefore are more skill-oriented (rather than more knowledge-based), it is felt that providing basic beginning or early training in the field of health may not be feasible through distance learning. Being an innovative and flexible system, and having the ability to respond to emerging training and educational needs,

distance education is more appropriate for in-service training of health personnel.

2. The academic programs have been confined to a limited area of health education and training. In order to meet the diversified and emerging needs of health workers, the programs and courses have to go beyond medical graduates to include a wide variety of need-based functional areas ranging from simple awareness programs to more complicated skill-oriented courses on epidemiology and health economics.
3. Application of sophisticated communication technology has to be done cautiously, keeping in view clients needs, cost, media behavior and infrastructure and facilities at the receiving end. In the developing countries including India, audio and television programs seem to be more feasible and promising. Furthermore, multi-media packages need to include a large amount of hands-on and field experience.
4. An issue to be deliberated is the provision of student support services for research to be conducted by rural health workers and professionals. While compulsory counseling and extended contact increase the effectiveness of programs, these on the other hand pose problems to both providers as well as the receivers of health education. More practical-oriented courses need to have compulsory built-in face-to-face components; and work centers or practice centers at grassroots level with required instructional provisions would be more feasible than regular study centers.

Need of the Project:

South Asian countries are very diverse in terms of personnel education, training and research capacity on medical sciences. While India has a vast human resources development infrastructure for health sector, its neighboring countries lack such training infrastructure and face an uphill task on training their health personnel to able to meet the targets of MDGs. In line with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) declarations on knowledge sharing, the present project aims at meeting this challenge in health sector by creating an advanced regional research institution for SAARC forming a cluster with India.

The idea is to use modern research tools and training programmes innovatively reducing time and cost in the health personnel training that will ultimately benefit the millions of poor in the target countries. While tapping on the capacity of Indian medical institutions and forming a network with similar institutions in the three neighboring countries.

Against the present world scenario and the needs of research on medical sciences for the people living in SAARC region, a long awaited step should be creating a modern center of academic excellence at the regional level. It is absolutely necessary for the new medical graduates to acquire not only higher education but also adequate research skills to survive in a very competitive global market today.

PFI Foundation (India) in collaboration other partners shall take up this noble mission to establish a South Asian Research Institute for Medical Sciences in the Northeast India. The Foundation is committed to provide necessary land and facilitate administrative processes for the establishment of the institute.

The SARIMS Project

The importance of medical research can not be over emphasized for Indian subcontinent as of scarcity of economic resources. To give a concrete shape to this ambitious proposal, a think tank of international academics led by the PFI Foundation and representative of the other institutions initiated discussions with community leaders across the country to work out an action plan to start such an international institute and considered the feasibility of such a venture. It is agreed on the merits of establishing such an institute and in response PFI Foundation India set up a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to study the needs and feasibility of setting up a South Asian Research Institute for Medical Sciences to particularly serve the marginalized population in the northeastern state of Assam. The state and the region as a whole deserved special attention due to the fact that though it has the largest concentration of marginalized tribal population and there is not a single international level institute of higher research in medical sciences even after more than six decades of India's independence. The first stage of the process involved an analysis of the current state of higher education in the regions including the

seven small sister states around Assam. The Committee reviewed the types of “provider” institutions, the programmes offered and the modes of delivery, the nature of inter-institutional relationships, the availability and use of information and communication technologies (ICT), and the aspects of higher education needs voiced by the communities and various stakeholders.

The TAC also reviewed the stages of development of higher medical education noting that it has emerged from the application of ICT in the context of education and business. The change in social and economic forces needed for the emergence of a modern self-reliant community was documented as well. The TAC concluded that the creation of a South Asian Research Institute for Medical Sciences could benefit the population in the region by:

- Enabling the community to be “players” in the social and economic upliftment and poverty reduction in general by attaining higher technical education specially in areas of ICT and business.
- Acting as a facilitator in helping the educational institutions of other small states form the subcontinent to share existing course materials, develop new ones, plan new programmes for joint delivery and market existing programmes in content areas where another institution has unique resources.
- Enabling access to professional knowledge that would provide a competitive edge for the remote communities.
- Providing services that enable students to plan programmes and take courses from a variety of quality-assured programmes and enhance their self-employment capacity through establishing small enterprises.
- Providing accreditation systems to develop quality standards in education for the medical institutions, and ensuring that they are met.
- Enabling medical community in general to have access to research and development capacity through which they would be able to assess various innovations involving ICT applications.

The Vision

The vision that emerged for a South Asian Research Institute for Medical Sciences is one of a pioneering center of excellence in medical sciences, enabled by appropriate ICT applications, working together in practical ways to plan programmes, develop the required courses and ensure the delivery of those programmes and support services to students to gain employment in a competitive market.

Objectives of the Proposed Institute

1. To provide a vehicle for the research in medical sciences for the benefit of the poor, remote and marginalized communities living in India and the sub-continent particularly through the use of emerging technologies that are needed to provide advanced education in technology and business.
2. To provide leadership in the planning, design and delivery to learners of programmes, curricula and courses that are pertinent to the human resource development needs of the medical sciences.
3. To provide support services to research students, which would include assessment of current skills and knowledge, advice regarding academic plans, quality-assured access to courses, record of learning and the provision of resources where these are available from other organizations.

Progress so far

During the year 2011-12, the Foundation developed a Detailed Project Proposal (DPR) for the SARIMS project at the cost of 25 Million rupees (250 Crores). Detailed estimates have been prepared and submitted to Ministry of Finance for declaration under Sec 125/18(A).

FOCAL AREA 3: BOOKS PROMOTION



The Foundation operates a rural library cum reading room at Silchar based on the personal collections of late Prof Fokhrul Islam.

During the year 2011-12 the library collection was further enriched by addition of many new volumes by the Executive Director.

FOCAL AREA 4: RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

The starting point of all PFI Foundation' activities is the community. Development of community based management systems is vital for enabling gradual transfer of responsibilities to the community. To improve the economic condition of lower income group of rural areas, the organization has started its first step as creating awareness among youth to form Self-Help-Group for self sustainability and economic reliance in the late part of the year 2003. For said purpose, the organization had been conducting meetings with different groups of youth in different places of Patherkandi in Karimganj district of Assam. The main aim behind the conducting of these meeting was to make them aware of SHG, its formation procedure and its benefits.

In the area of rural development and poverty reduction, the Foundation aims to:

- Enable creation of appropriate living conditions, including protected drinking water, sanitation.
- Enable creation of adequate common infrastructure including community halls, grain stores, communication systems etc.

PFI Foundation' intervention in the rural infrastructure sector focuses on mobilizing communities to pool resources to create basic infrastructure for sustainable development. People contribute labour and locally available materials. In this regard, the organization in collaboration with Kabaribond Nabajagan Club, Patherkandi, revived and ran the

Kabaribond Water supply Scheme from 23rd May 2011-December 2012, which was close down due to lack of fuel.

To improve the communities/villages communication system, the organization was always extended its helping hands to communities/villages from time to time. As an example of that on 2-5 Jan, 2012, the organization in collaboration with Kabaribond Nabajagan Club repaired the 5.5 kms road from Patherkandi to Mukamtilla village.

4.2. Rural Technology Institute in Northeast India:



The Foundation has set up a Rural Technology Institute at Vill Alamkahnai, Near Nilambazar, Dist Karimganj Assam to impart vocational skill training for the rural youth. The centre building has been constructed at the cost of approximately Rs 15.00 Lacs donated by IRW, Mauritius. The Foundation procured the necessary land for the institute amounting to 5 Bighas.

A Technical Expert Committee (EXCOM) set up by the State Rural Technology Promotion Council (SRTPC), Assam reviewed the state of economy, specific causes of poverty and backwardness in the region. It noted that the change in contemporary economic environment ("poor to poorer and rich to richer") forces the marginalized communities much more backward within the same country. Thus a farmer in Nagaland is much disadvantaged in terms of training, information and infrastructure compared to his counterpart in Haryana or Punjab. It is, therefore, recommended that the Northeastern region could benefit by:

- Establishing a Rural Technology Institute to enable the rural communities to be "players" and stakeholders in the social and economic

upliftment and poverty reduction by utilizing new technologies and availing business development assistance.

- Providing a single-window facilitation Institute market research, financing and technical expertise in areas where Northeastern states have unique resources.
- Enabling access to professional knowledge that would provide a competitive edge for the rural communities.
- Providing services that enable rural unemployed youths to plan and take appropriate 'tailor-made' programs from a variety of central and state government agencies in one place with minimum formalities and paper-work and enhance their self-employment capacity through establishing small businesses.
- Enabling rural communities to access research and development on new technologies suitable for realities of rural areas.

The following basic assumptions are made for this mission:

- Collaborative action is essential between government bodies overseeing rural development, technical and entrepreneurial training, micro-financing mechanisms and civil society organizations.
- Initiation and management of such a mission requires strong, committed leadership and national support.
- Rural communities will continue to lag behind in poverty unless there are interventions that increase the capacity of the community to participate in a competitive market more strategically.
- Access to infrastructure in the region will continue to improve.
- The application new technologies will likely increase institutional costs unless there is a clear understanding and analysis of the objectives to be achieved and matched by a revenue return from a paid up portion of the service provided by the facility and support from international donors who will share costs on multilateral basis.

The proposed Rural Technology Institute is driven by a long-term vision of building technical skills and services sector and creating a regional trade hub in the Northeast with international links with bordering countries. The Institute will be committed to reducing rural

people's poverty level by producing skilled people and entrepreneurship development assistance and services to the region as a whole. Four features of this vision are underscored:

- The proposed institute is not being proposed as a institute in the conventional single-campus institutional sense. It will, in fact, be a "integrated collaborative network" of several institutions – training centers, universities, polytechnics, and engineering colleges across the region.
- The proposed institute will carry out its functions by optimizing ICT applications, particularly those that enable the creation and deployment of content databases based on learning objectives. It is therefore a bold and challenging vision that has the promise of enabling the learners to become information hubs in the rural communities.
- The programmes are expected to be tailored to the realities of the learners, infrastructural and marketing opportunities of the region to better serve the prevailing employment and economic conditions of the region/communities.
- The proposed institute will be as much concerned with "adding value" to conventional formal instruction as it is with providing the community with a means to gain successful employment in all possible sectors embedding them in rural communities and reversing the urban migration.

RTI MISSION

The prime objectives of the proposed Rural Technology Institute are to examine and train rural youths on the new technologies suitable for rural areas and that are being used in other parts of the country by the rural industries. It also aims to identify and develop appropriate Technology and get it accepted and adopted by the rural communities with the help of dissemination of information, networking with local institutions, NGOs and communities.

However, within the broader objectives of the vision, the proposed regional **Rural Technology Institute** will be to:

- Examine the existing status of technology to assess its employment potential and engage

in income-generating activities with a view to creating awareness of lucrative investment and build entrepreneurial skills in rural areas.

- Identify Appropriate Technologies and transfer through various media of communications.
- Monitor the on-going R & D in technology and test its application and suitability to local conditions
- Undertake pilot projects of proven but untried technology.
- Introduce more remunerative new economic activities through rural youths with advanced skills for capacity building at the community level.
- Promote the concept of Appropriate Technologies among the Technocrats, Professionals and Academic Institutions and at the policy level in Government and Non-Government organizations.
- Promote research and motivate young professionals to accept Rural Development as their future career.
- Equip To disseminate the results of research through teaching, seminars, conferences, public lectures, publications and other appropriate means.
- Provide consultancy services to government, industry, the private sector and the community at large
- Contribute to the cultural, civic and moral training of the youths in the region against separatist activities and to participate actively in the economic and socio-cultural development of the Northeast.



MAJOR GOALS

FOCAL AREA -6: YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS

Adolescents account for one-fifth of the world's population, and the number are rising. In India, they constitute 22.8% of the population (according to the Planning Commission's Population projections). This means that approximately 230 million Indians belong to this age group.

Realization of the need to invest in development and empowerment of Youths and Sports let the Foundation to start a project in 2011-12 to meet the urgent need for stimulating action for development and empowerment of adolescents, particularly from the economically and socially neglected/backward sections of society. An important means of doing so is to provide encouragement and financial support to agencies who have an interest and capability to do so.



- To build and develop an environment which

recognises the special needs and promise of the adolescents in the country and provides for adolescent friendly services;

- To sensitise the stakeholders, i.e., parents, teachers, government functionaries, the media, the community, the youth, as well as the adolescents themselves, about the needs, problems and promise of the latter through sustained awareness building and advocacy;
- Through exchange of ideas and experiences and other appropriate activities to build the capacity of NGOs and youth functionaries under the Government dealing with adolescents;
- To selectively identify and financially support NGOs and governmental, agencies to take up programmes of development and empowerment of adolescents; and
- To develop an adequate information and database on adolescents to encourage research and publication and to promote technical resource support for various programmes under this Scheme.

FOCAL AREA – 7: WOMEN WELFARE



In spite of the new opportunities that Information Technology has offered to women, one can only be cautiously optimistic. The success of women has so far been limited to a handful of (mostly Asian) countries. The beneficiaries are generally from urban areas, whereas the majority of women, even in the high profile Asian countries, live in rural areas where connectivity is rare or non-existent. Women are generally engaged in meeting local and family needs and are overwhelmingly not linked to a global digital economy that is essentially geared to trade and anchored in market transactions.

Exclusion implies missed opportunities and a widening of the gap in material well-being between the excluded and the included. Since women form the majority of the poor in most developing countries, exclusion affects more women than men.

Therefore, the Foundation felt a strong need to study the strategic challenges and opportunities

from a gender focus to analyze the prospects of IT based commercial enterprises for women. During 2011-12 the Foundation launched a major study (under a doctoral research support programme with Gauhati University) led by Ms Sahida Bahar, Registrar of the Foundation, to conduct an analytical research on women's IT-based commercial enterprises, through representative samples of ICT enterprises, and presents a matrix of challenges and the prospects faced by women entrepreneurs from commercial and poverty alleviation perspectives.

PPROGRESS SO FAR

Swasti Mitter (2001) dealt with an agenda for research and action for advancing women's employment and livelihood opportunities in developing countries in the ICT-related sectors. She explored the possibility and potential of ICT in bringing gender equality in the world of work, be that in employment or in trade and commerce. Her research highlighted a case for distributive justice for women and the productive efficiency of their countries. She surveyed the current position of women in the digital economy.

Richard Duncombe et al in their handbook entitled Supporting Women's ICT-Based Enterprises specifically researched select cases of women's ICT-based enterprises; specifically micro- and small-scale enterprises (MSEs) in developing countries in order to highlight the ways of harnessing digital information and communication technologies (computers, Internet, software, etc.) for socio-economic development. They focused on how women can derive immediate and direct benefits from ICTs: jobs, income, skills, empowerment with an aim to deliver more and better women's ICT-based enterprises.

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women in its seminal research report on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women through ICT under a series called Women 2000 and Beyond (2005) that provided a summary of critical gender equality issues related to ICT and development and outlines potential opportunities for women's economic, social and political empowerment. Key strategies and tools to address the gender digital divide in national and international contexts are presented. Examples of good practice on gender equality and ICT are elaborated throughout the report. It focused on the two-fold need to address the

gender divide and reduce inequalities related to ICT and to identify ways to proactively and effectively use ICT to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework is another major global research published by the UK Department of Trade and Industry to provide a collaborative and long-term approach to the development of women's enterprise in the UK. The research encouraged the sharing of good practice for women's enterprise are under development and prepares the ground for change in a number of areas that affect women's enterprise – from education to the financial and business support environment. It highlighted ways relating to the provision of business support and access to finance.

S. Gothoskar (2000) researched the biological and social roles of women as mothers, homemakers and careers circumscribe their ability and opportunity to function on an equal basis with men in most economic spheres. It contextualized the position of women in traditional occupations and sectors, loosely described as the Old Economy, and observed that the situation is likely to persist even in the so-called Digital or New Economy. Women often find it difficult to engage in to establish businesses in telekiosks or cyber cafes often eludes women who do not have the same access as men to family property or institutional finance. Women also have to face greater barriers than men in obtaining education and training that can equip them with computer literacy, English literacy and business skills.

The main advantage of the women's home-based IT businesses is that networking opportunities could, in an enabling environment, make these endeavors profitable rather than marginal. The potential to earn income at home while raising a family – with the technology to communicate inexpensively with customers around the world, and handle accounting and order processing online – makes the Internet an attractive working tool for women. Yet, for the majority of women in Asia, Africa and Latin America, it has proven difficult to realize this potential in view of barriers in access to challenges that are related to technologies, language of the Internet, credit or finance, technical and business skills and lack of information on trade & customs regulations.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 drew attention to the emerging global communications network and its impact on public policies, as well as the attitudes and behavior of individuals. It called for the empowerment of women through enhancing their skills, knowledge, access to and use of information technologies. It also included a strategic objective: "Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication". Based on knowledge and experience that had emerged in the previous five years, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, held in June 2000 to review progress in implementation of the Platform for Action, recognized that IT had created new opportunities for women and contributed to knowledge sharing, networking and electronic commerce activities. Member States acknowledged that poverty, lack of access and opportunities, illiteracy (including computer illiteracy) and language barriers prevented women from using IT, including the Internet. Steps were proposed to ensure that women benefited fully from IT, including equal access to IT-related education, training and entrepreneurship opportunities and equal access as producers and consumers of ICT through public and private partnerships.

During its forty-seventh session in 2003, the UN Commission on the Status of Women recognized the importance of this issue and considered the topic, "Participation and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women". This was the first time that the Commission had directly focused on the issue of IT and the empowerment of women. The Commission adopted agreed conclusions which addressed women's equal access to IT-based economic activities and employment, such as through telecentres, information centres and business incubators.

Rodwel Foundation, Zimbabwe started in 1996 and registered as a women's co-operative by ten women. The women purchased computers for the project after pooling their finances and with partial assistance from TIPS/UNDP. The aim of the co-operative was to set up a project for the benefit of women, by women, to train women in the use of computers and their benefits. The initial capital required to set up Rodwel was

US\$325. More recently, the enterprise benefitted from the acquisition of a modem, which connects the organisation to the Internet, thus diversifying activities into e-commerce and information retrieval for businesses, as well as technology training, computer short courses, email and typing services.

Technoworld, Kumarapuram, India was started in 1999 mainly targeting data entry services like digitization of public sector records (ration cards, land registration); training – basic computer instruction for school children during school vacation. Annual turnover in 2002 was US\$22,222. This data entry micro-enterprise was set up as part of the Kudumbashree initiative. Members of various self-help groups with basic skills were selected to form the first ever women's group enterprise in data entry in Kerala State, aided with a series of training programs in data entry, software integration, marketing and accounting. The initiative had a budget of US\$6445 raised through a bank loan, members' contributions and a small subsidy. The initial client was the Employee Provident Fund Department for the digitisation of personnel records. For the initial 18 months of operation the unit functioned in the corporation office before moving to a rented building. The unit repaid all its initial loans after three years of operation.

Divine Computers in Calicut, India was started in 2002 to impart IT Training to high school students, and some short-term vacation computer courses to general public. The number of students trained in 2004-05 was 485 (144 in 2002), mainly as two more classes were added. Total value of sales (2004) was US\$2,377. The local government advertised the state's IT@School programme in the local newspaper, calling for qualified applicants from below-poverty-line families to start a group enterprise. A team of six determined women mobilised a group loan of US\$4,444 from the State Bank of Travancore under a Federal Government poverty alleviation scheme. The group members contributed US\$222 while the rest was paid through a subsidy. The micro-enterprise is involved in the training of school students under the IT@School Programme. The school collects monthly fees from the students (US\$0.50 per student), out of which US\$560 is directly paid to the bank account against the loan per month, and the rest is given to the women in Divine Computers.

Computer Club 'VIRTUAL', Ukraine was started in 2002 mainly for IT training, computer-based services, computer games, copying services, typing and printing of documents, computer-based training for personal growth for parents and children. Turnover in 2004 was US\$5,500. In 2001, a business plan for opening a computer club was initiated at the local Women's Business Support Centre. The initial finance was based on unemployment benefit. In March 2002, the computer club started functioning with three computers. By the end of 2002 there were ten computers. In 2003, the Club became a member of the Donbass Association of Computer Clubs. In 2004 a youth-based NGO was created for youth leisure.

Millennium Computer & Electronic Services, Tanzania was established in 2002 offering assembly, sales and maintenance of IT, sales of computer consumables, IT training, data entry, and offering solutions to various ICT-based problems. Total sales in 2004 were equivalent to about US\$150,000. Millennium Computer & Electronic Services (MICES) was set up by one African woman Mrs Kilasara using her own savings. She is an entrepreneur who was employed at Sokoine University as a computer technician where she started to help the university employees with their computer-related problems. Through her work experience, she became motivated to start her own ICT enterprise. Since then her skills in ICT sales and solutions have enabled her business to grow. This was achieved through three institutional repair contracts, the repair of 30 PCs, the sale of forty printers, the delivery of eight IT training courses, and the assistance of twenty interns (for whom no charge is levied). Customers include the municipal council, universities, private sector investors, banks, private individuals and local offices in Tanzania.

InfoShree Systems and Peripherals, India formed in 2003 for hardware assembly, installation, service & sales for local councils, schools, banks, shops, DTP services, occasional data entry or computer training work. Annual Turnover in 2004 was US\$8,400. Following an initiative by the local council to set up a hardware assembly enterprise to meet growing demand for PCs, Kudumbashree – the local poverty alleviation agency – organised a group of women from low-income families to form this enterprise. Financial support was given through a bank loan, and local council subsidy, to set up basic infrastructure and to purchase equipment.

Further IT training – in areas such as assembly, installation and maintenance – was provided by a local centre, along with assistance from a marketing company for hardware purchases. The micro-enterprise has also been given enterprise-related training through a Performance Improvements Programme (PIP). Presently the enterprise supplies orders in five local districts. In order to utilise spare capacity, diversification of activities, such as IT training and data entry is taken. Two extra staff were employed after the first year of trading.

MAJOR OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY

Women face major challenges as a result of changes in the world economy arising from rapid globalization, fast-paced technological progress and a growing informalisation of work. As a result, women's labour market status has greatly altered. Although women's representation in the labour force is increasing all over the world – to at least one-third in all regions except Northern Africa and Western Asia – their participation rates are still lower than men's, and they are disproportionately represented in non-standard and lower-paid forms of work, such as temporary and casual employment, part-time jobs, home-based work, self-employment and work in micro enterprises. According to the UN Report World's Women 2000, self-employment and part-time and home-based work have expanded opportunities for women's participation in the labour force but are characterized by lack of security, lack of benefits and low income. Available statistics are still far from providing a strong basis for assessing both quantitative and qualitative changes in women's employment.

Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are a framework for development and time-bound targets for the future to build a world with less poverty, hunger and disease, greater survival prospects for mothers and their infants, better educated children, equal opportunities for women, and a healthier environment; a world in which developed and developing countries worked in partnership for the betterment of all. The MDGs were set to be achieved by the year 2015. The target three of MDGs focuses on gender equality and empowerment of women as women remain at a disadvantage in securing paid jobs and face wage differentials, occupational segregation, higher unemployment rate and their disproportionate representation in

the informal and subsistence sectors limiting women's economic advancement. Promotion of small and medium enterprises among women was seen as an avenue to meet this target.

The present study, therefore, will tackle a number of very important and relevant issues regarding the commercial and operational aspects of the women's IT-based commercial enterprises.

FOCAL ARTEA -8: VOCATIONAL TRAINING



The reform of the traditional Madrassa system of Islamic education in India is a much talked about and hotly debated subject today. The September 11, 2001 marks a watershed in the contemporary perception of terrorism as a global phenomenon beyond local militant responses of some disgruntled groups in various parts of the world. Discussions on Madrassa education is often linked to allegations of these institutions being involved in training fundamentalist forces within the community and invariably the voices of Muslims who are engaged in promoting reform within the system are often marginalized or completely silenced. This conference, therefore sought to bring together a number of key stakeholders associated with a range of Madrassas –both government aided and un-aided - which are associated with different schools of thought in India.

Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India has recently requested the private sector asking them to help in generating employment for the minorities (Press Trust of India: Posted online: Sunday, February 11, 2012). However, are the minorities ready and trained for jobs in the emerging job market in the private sector? Is there any strategy so that specific schemes could be formulated to make the minorities employable in the fast-growing sectors of the economy? A number of such jobs, which have emerged/are emerging in the private sector after liberalization of the economy. Perhaps this workshop will develop a program to incorporate minorities in the national mainstream through employment avenues.

The traditional Islamic religious schools in this region in the post 9/11 scenario have seen a marked shift in their activities towards modernization (academic and administrative). There has been a steep increase in the number of these schools over the last few years and there are approximately 1,50,000 Madrassas presently functioning in the Indian subcontinent (Singer 2001, Babar 2002). Though frequent reports on functioning of these Islamic religious schools have appeared in various newspapers on the activities of such schools and limited studies were also undertaken on this issue (Singer 2001, Babar 2002, World Paper Online 1998), and explorative consultations were organized in India (mainly by US PAO) and elsewhere, no region specific initiative was undertaken to develop a sustainable process of reforming the Madrassas with a strategic action plan with a few time-bound pilot projects to test the framework.

During 2011-12, the Foundation organized a National Conference cum Workshop at Administrative Staff College, Guwahati in collaboration with Govt of Assam and supported by the British High Commission, New Delhi from 28-30 March 2012. This conference, therefore, made a sincere endeavor to bring together 75 (Seventy-five) stakeholders from Madrassa education sector, government departments and civil society to discuss the socio-political-psychological issues associated with the reform process, draw a strategic action plan with a few time-bound pilot projects in the Northeastern region.

The National Conference cum Workshop had a general exploratory objective of looking into the functioning of the large number of Madrassas in India and through focus group discussions/working sessions, a restructuring framework for educational as well as political administrators.

This conference attained significance in the light of the recommendations of the Prime Minister's High Level Committee for Preparation of Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India, headed by Justice Rajindar Sachar which was tabled in Indian Parliament on 30 Nov 2011. The report dealt with various issues relating to Madrassas and reiterated that through these Madrassas the Muslim community in India ensures that its future generations acquire knowledge of Islam, have become a symbol of Muslim identity in India. While political administrators are looking

for adequate means and ways to handle the issue on the policy level, educational researchers have a role to play in finding out the ways for reform based on the present activities of the Islamic schools in India, their governing philosophies, the curriculum, teaching and learning process. This conference tried to assess the various issues related to the felt need for reform in the Madrassa Education system in this region. Stakeholders recommended a framework to redirect their functions and a road map for the restructuring agenda.

The participants of the conference (75) were mainly from the Northeastern state of Assam in India with participation of experts from other parts of the country. The participants were drawn from the following broad groups:

- Government: Officers from education departments/Madrassa education directorates of the government.
- Civil Society: Academia, Media and NGOs involved in the education sector.
- Madrassa Education: Stakeholders from instructional management and administration side of the Madrassas in the states.
- International Participation: Fulbright scholars; UN and other multilateral organisations interested in the 'Madrassa Education'

The local participants were placed in 4 (Four) closed groups to interact with the resource persons and draw from the modernization experiences of many other institutions. A full list is annexed to this report.

A. STEEL FABRICATION TRAINING CENTER

During the year the Foundation started a Steel fabrication Training center in Silchar (Assam) with the help of local SMEs to train unemployed youths in the trade.

B. TAILORING TRAINING CENTERS

During the year the Foundation started a Tailoring Training Center in Patherkandi (Assam) with the help of local SMEs to train unemployed youths in the trade. This year the Foundation has already had preliminary

discussion with the Ministry of DONER, India which was attended by the Union Minister for Northeastern Region Sri Mani Shankar Ayier in New Delhi to propose a full-scale Fashion Technology Institute for NE region to be supported by North Eastern Council under the ministry.

FOCAL AREA- 9: COLLABORATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKING

To meet the challenges of the twenty-first century countries must make important strides in the areas of science, technology and higher education. The regional development gateway will give priority attention to encourage regional cooperation in these areas to derive benefits from the synergy of collective, well-planned and focused initiatives undertaken by the three countries. They directed that a SAARC Plan of Action for Science, ICT and Technology be elaborated for consideration during a Meeting of SAARC Science, ICT and Technology Ministers to be convened as soon as possible.

A specific regional portal with links to all major universities and higher education institutions in the three countries will facilitate students' admission, research and development activities in the region. The institutions will be motivated join the network and support a joint students-exchange and admission programme for the sub-region.

FOCAL AREA -10: SOCIAL FORESTRY

The Foundation decided to start afforestation program in the spare lands with the foundation as well as with other beneficiaries. following words. Special attention was paid to supporting innovative ideas for generating income and employment in rural areas through support to various types of agri-business. As an experimental measure, Government proposes to set up a Small Farmers' Agri-Business Unit at Patherkandi (Assam) as an experimental pilot project funded by its own resources. Economic efficiency, environmental soundness and social equity and will organize 12 major projects in 2012-08 in different parts of the state, based on a mix of enterprises with active participation by the State Governments and farm families. The programme will be expanded as we gain

experience. We must begin a new chapter in our agricultural history where farm enterprises yield not only more food, but more productive jobs and higher income in rural area.

FOCAL AREA -11: HANDICRAFTS

Spirits of regional cooperation and developmental initiatives need to be sustained by efforts to promotion of Handicrafts of the region and people-to-people contact and by a vibrant Small Scale Cottage Industry promotion throughout the region. The Foundation is actively engaged in forging links across national boundaries. Stakeholders at all levels promote people-to-people contact by facilitating online exchange among SAARC countries, promotion of youth discussion lists on culture and sports, promotion of intra-SAARC tourism, establishment of linkages among professional bodies. The Foundation, during 2011-12 focused on the 2011 as "South Asia Tourism Year" as declared by SAARC and encouraged Handicrafts initiatives by private sector entities in promoting understanding and harmony in the region.

FOCAL AREA - 12: DRUGS PREVENTION & AWARENESS

The Foundation launched the Drug Prevention and Awareness programmes for adolescents, for persons in the age group of 10 to 19 years through Counseling Centers that means the professional help and advice was given to adolescents to help them resolve the drug abuse related of problems.

FOCAL AREA -13: TRIBAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT (MISSIONS)

13.1 MOBILE EYE CARE CLINIC FOR THE TRIBAL PEOPLE OF NORTHEAST



During 2011-12, the Foundation has launched this project amounting to a total 220,000 US Dollars to be supported by the World Bank's Development Marketplace programme.

India has an estimated 15 million people visually challenged, 52 million visually impaired and 270,000 cases of childhood blindness. Cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy are prevalent. Nearly 70% of its patients live in rural India, where there is an acute shortage of ophthalmologists. India is home to almost 338 million children, yet has only fifteen hospitals specializing in children's eye care. In northeastern India is home to 15 million children, yet there is no pediatric eye care center in the region. The elimination of needless blindness, therefore, needs an innovative approach in 'reaching as many as we can' and reaching out beyond the clinic'.

The current gap between eye care services and rural people' needs could be best bridged through a program/technology to reach out to rural people physically as well as virtually. This project addresses these challenges, through twin concept of Mobile Eye Clinic that provides high-quality eye care to underserved populations—particularly children and the elderly—who lack access to health care as a result of finances, transportation problems or cultural and language barriers and a Long-distance (LD) Wi- Fi wireless technology to enable rural residents be remotely diagnosed and have video consultations with doctors, eliminating the need for patients to travel long distance.

Phase I (6 m): Procurement of the Mobile Eye Care Van with all the necessary equipment for primary tests and minor surgical procedures. Point-to-point long-distance wireless infrastructure that combines a variation on IEEE 802.11 (Wi-Fi) technology with off-the-shelf videoconferencing software and tools (designed by Intel and UC Berkeley) will be set up to connect the van with the Regional Institute of

Ophthalmology. The Wi-Fi setup was tested successfully in south India by Arvind Eye Hospitals. The difficult terrains of the Northeast India and remoteness of Tribal habitats makes this project to combine the technology with a fully equipped mobile eye care van.

Phase II (6m): To set up a network of specialists through a voluntary effort with the partner institute as well as Govt. of Assam link the programs of the mobile Eye Care van with the target population. This pilot phase will stabilize the regular eye care checkup visits with the population and to enhance the skills of ophthalmologists involved in the program.

The success of the project depends largely on the capacity of the project team to relate to, partner and work with the community. Skills needed to adequately engage and work with the community are quite different from those needed to be a good eye care professional in a clinic setting. All members of the mobile team would be assessed and offered additional training where needed. Community involvement and ownership shall include their approval and support for the programme, their full involvement at all stages of planning and implementation, a clear understanding of the roles and contribution of each party, and a common understanding of how success will be defined and appraised.

13.2. TRIBAL STUDENTS' HOOSTEL

The Foundation has initiated a proposal for the construction of a Tribal Students Hostel in Silchar (Assam) with the Center of excellence in ICT near National Institute of Technology (Deemed University), Silchar. The detailed proposal with cost estimates amounted to a total budget of 49,87,000.00 (Rupees Four Million Nine Hundred Eighty-seven Thousand only).

The State Rural Technology Promotion Council, Govt of Assam will extend all technical manpower assistance and construction supervision that will reduce the construction cost by 15%. This estimate have been prepared as per the verbal instruction of the Project Director, ITDP, Cachar, Silchar and the estimate has been prepared after observing all formalities at the work site.

FOCAL AREA -14: ANIMALS WELFARE

In our efforts to understand the root causes of lack of general animal care, the Foundation motivates and enables communities to provide treatment services, basic medicines, immunization of animal in target localities.

FOCAL AREA - 15.: HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AND AWARENESS

Based on a regional strategy for collective response to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, regional response in this regard will be further enhanced through an online resource center to eliminate this dreadful disease from South Asia. The portal will also enhance regional cooperation to support a stakeholders' dialogue for the prevention and treatment of Dengue, Malaria and other infectious or communicable diseases constituting major public health concerns will also.

The Foundation launched local HIV/AIDS AWARENESS with special regard to basic healthcare services and sanitation in the rural areas and encouraged exchange of experience and best practices within the region. It will work for cooperation in medical expertise and pharmaceuticals, as well as traditional medicine, and availing affordable pharmaceuticals produced in the region, harmonization of standards and certification procedures and production of affordable medicines.

FOCAL AREA 16: INFORMATION SOCIETY AND ICT for DEVELOPMENT



Senior staff of PFI Foundation participated through the year in several meetings and consultations organized by government, donor agencies and non-government organizations.

Most people in disadvantaged communities and rural areas have low levels of income, health, education, and general well-being owing to poor access to universal services and markets. This is basically caused by poor infrastructure provision such as energy, transport and communication network and deficient system for financial operations. The ultimate objective of development in these communities is the improvement of the quality of life of the people by removing the impediments to their socio-economic development. In this regard, ICT can be an effective and innovative infrastructure to enable such communities to reach markets and public services.

Funding agencies have shown continuing interest in initiating ICT projects for disadvantaged groups of people including women and rural and remotely located communities. Community ICT access points have been built in different localities around the world, under such different labels as Community e-Centres (CeC), telecentres and multi-purpose community centres. While some centres were not sustainable or have not contributed to the development of the communities, others have succeeded in improving, and in some cases revolutionizing, the communities by creating an enabling environment and new opportunities for socio-economic development. They have had a positive impact in creating local micro-enterprises, improving access to markets for local produce, and developing human capacity. Such community ICT access points are seen as an effective tool in realizing many socio-economic development goals.

In order to act as a development tool and to maximize the limited resources, most ICT access points, private or public, need to be re-designed in the form of nodes of knowledge networks while continuing to operate according to a

flexible structure for supporting non-formal processes as sustainable and autonomous entities. They need to be transformed into service and community development hubs, as well as centres for exchanging business information providing sustainable sources of revenue, thus extending the model beyond the original model that only focuses on access to ICT.

The United Nations, involving its five Regional Commissions, is executing a project aiming to empower poor and disadvantaged communities through the transformation of existing ICT access points in selected countries into knowledge hubs of global knowledge networks. The project is expected to increase engagement of target beneficiaries in disadvantaged communities in these knowledge networks. This involvement will serve to deploy relevant knowledge pertaining to key areas of sustainable development such as employment, education, gender and health.

These are the terms of reference relate to an assessment review of telecentres in Asia and the Pacific done by the Executive Director of the Foundation in 2011-12 which is the first activity in the above mentioned project. It aimed at reviewing the state of the art and degree of evolution of telecentres towards knowledge hubs, including available ICT applications and services. The final report is under publication by UNESCAP, Bangkok.

PFI Foundation Day

January 22 marks the Foundation Day of PFI Foundation. Every year community representatives and staff come together at Berenga, Silchar for 2-3 days to celebrate the event. This year, the event was restricted to the staff of PFI Foundation and local volunteers associated in our work. There were over 500 participants in the two-day event. On January 21st, staff teams discussed the Strategic Plan of PFI Foundation. The event was an opportunity to gain a common understanding of the vision, mission and strategies of PFI Foundation. The event was also an opportunity to showcase the talents of staff in cultural events and sports.

Financial Statement for 2011-12

The audited statement of accounts of PFI Foundation for the period April 2011 March 2012 is appended herewith. The financial systems in PFI shows transparency. There is regular internal audit scrutiny and the management is continuously reviewing and implementing needed improvements. PFI Foundation has satisfactorily complied with all statutory requirements related to financial management.