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Annual Report 20-21

Summary:

To prevent spread of CORONA Government of India imposed lockdown in the country in March, 2020 end and as a result in April and May we could not do anything but attend virtual meetings. We organized couple of virtual meetings. We carried out a study of impact of lockdown on ceramic workers. As COVID relief we distributed gluco-meters to the diabetic patients from economical weaker section. We organised meetings with the Ceramic workers for silicosis and decided to carry out a survey. We filed some new complaints before the National Human Rights Commission and followed up in already filed complaints. In Chhotaudepur area Government of Gujarat paid compensation to several families as a direct result of our complaint with the NHRC. We submitted our suggestions to the Government of India on draft OSH code. We continued working with workers covered under ESI Act. We helped some workers receive ESI services. We issues public statement on 28 April being International Workers Memorial Day. We received Rs.6,41,072/- towards grant and donations and we spent Rs.11,16,096.63 during the year.

From March 23rd lockdown was imposed throughout the country. As a result during April and May we could not do anything but attending webinars.

PTRC organised a webinar on 20 June in memory of Vijay Kanhere's 14th death anniversary titled "Remembering Vijay Kanhere: Evolving grassroots OHS movement". Dr.Rajesh Tandon Founder President, PRIA, Dr.R.Sreedhar (ENVIRONICS), Dr.Yogindra Samant (Chief Medical Officer, Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority), Dr.Shyam Pingle (IIPH, Gandhinagar) and Noel Colina (AMRC, Hong Kong) were the speakers. Webinar received good response.

In July, PTRC took lead in organising introductory webinar between Safe in India Foundation and OEHNI members. All OEHNI members participated and introduced their activities with the Safe in India. SIF also introduced their programs. This virtual meeting was held on 3/07/20

On 28 July National Human Rights Commission organised review meeting of silicosis complaints. PTRC was invited. PTRC attended the online meeting and made representation. State Government representative also attended.

PTRC being member of ANROEV and Secretariat of OEHNI actively participated in organizing series of webinars on LG Gas leak.

Study of impact of first wave of COVID on ceramic workers in Than:

PTRC carried out survey of 150 workers of ceramic workers in Than to know the problems faced by the workers during lockdown. Most workers were local workers who got food supply from Government and also cash relief. Most lost their wages. Few had problems in getting medical services. Most had to borrow money for their daily needs. We helped few workers for treatment expenses. (Detailed study report available on request)

COVID Relief:

As a result of long lockdown routine health care services were impacted. People were not able to go out of their home. Availability of public vehicles was difficult. Services of State transport buses and trains were terminated. Private health care facilities did not operate and public health care services were engaged in COVID. Routine vaccination of children or services to the identified TB patients was badly affected.

In such situation we thought of helping the diabetic patients to monitor their blood sugar. Diabetic patients are more vulnerable to COVID infection. We reached out to the diabetic patients from poor section of the society who were taking services from public health care facilities. We designed tool which was first field tested and then over 250 patients were visited at their home and collected information. On the other hand we requested EcDeesha Foundation to make small videos on diabetes management. They prepared 7 short videos. We contacted Diabetes association in Vadodara and bought 200 copies of their publication on diabetes in Gujarati.

PTRC located diabetes patients in Surendranagar, Than and Dhrangadhra. In Surendranagar we aimed at locating 100 patients while in Than and Dhrangadhra 50 each. We collected data on their education, their age and if they are identified as BPL (below poverty line), if they are insulin dependent, from where do they seek treatment and the monthly expenditure on medicines, medical consultation and blood tests, at what frequency do they carry out blood tests, whether they do any physical exercise or not, whether they need glucometer or not etc. Based on prefixed criterion we identified 200 patients who can be given glucometer. We then organised physical meetings with the patients. While organising these meeting we took due care to

prevent CORONA infection. We took body temperature using thermal gun, gave each one a mask and got their hands sanitize before giving entry to the hall. IN the hall we arranged sitting so that physical distance can be maintained. We would invite only 20 patients. In the meeting videos were screened. We also talked about COVID precautions. We demonstrated how glucometer can be used before distribution. In addition we distributed a book in local language on diabetes. We organised 8 such meetings as under.

1. 13 September, Surendranagar, 22 glucometer distributed.
1. 21 September, Surendranagar, 19 glucometer distributed.
2. 23 September, Surendranagar, 19 glucometer distributed
3. 26 September, Surendranagar, 19 glucometer distributed
4. 21 October, Surendranagar, 10 glucometer distributed
5. 22 October, Dhrangadhra (Morning) 25 glucometer distributed
6. 22 October, Dhrangadhra (Evening) 25 glucometer distributed
7. 27 October, Than, 27 glucometer distributed
8. 10 November, Than, 28 glucometer distributed

Among those who were donated the glucometer 102 were male and 92 were females including children. 9 were below the age of 18, 29 in the age group 21- 29, 115 in the age group 30-60, 35 in the age group 61-65 and 5 were above 65. 31 were insulin dependent.

TB or Silicosis:

On silicosis front we decided to prepare list of workers who have long exposure of silica at work

but have not been diagnosed suffering from silicosis but have been on anti-TB treatment for a long time. We have now started contacting them personally. In first round we visited 4 TB patients who have taken TB treatment for more than one time. During the visit we confirm their silica exposure and record of their TB treatment. We have planned to send them for diagnosis of silicosis with chest & TB expert of our choice at our expense. Due to COVID on the one hand workers are scared to visit any hospital fearing they might be quarantined unnecessarily. On the other hand we requested the experts to come down to Surendranagar or Dhrangadhra for a medical camp but they also do not prefer to travel. So we are waiting for better social environment.

It was very difficult to convince the patients to visit the hospital doe diagnosis. They feared that if they are tested for CORONA in the hospital and if they come positive they may be quarantined for two weeks and they may be at loss of their livelihood. On the other hand we

requested some experts to help us organize camp but they refused to take any risk. 3 workers went for diagnosis. In one case the patient was advised to get hospitalized. We helped him get admitted but after two days he took discharge on his own without consulting us. In rest two cases the result remained inconclusive. We are waiting for the situation to be normal when we can take the patients to the experts for diagnosis.

In September we visited several such workers in Dhrangadhra who were bed ridden or on medication.

Silicosis:

For faster communication with the Silicosis patients we prepared a WhatsApp broadcast group which has 88 members.

Upon request by AMRC we recorded four videos of the silicosis victim women. Videos were used by AMRC on their face book page.

On 23 January, 2021 we organized meeting with ceramic workers in Than at the invitation of local elected member. Their major concern was the treatment expenses once they contract silicosis. They were expecting us to help them get medicines free of cost. We said that only way to get treatment in free is ESI. Large numbers of workers said that they are not covered under ESI Act. They were under impression that if their ESI contribution is deducted from wages they become "permanent" employee which they dream of. We clarified that there is nothing like permanent now in India. It was then decided that we should take up a study on the ESI coverage in Than.

Complaints before National Human Rights Commission:

- In the complaint no. 1067/6/3/2020 filed before the National Human Rights Commission in July 2020 the commission passed its recommendation on 20 January 2021 directing the Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat to pay Rs. 3 lakh as compensation to the

widow Savitaben Vaghri. Her husband was agate polisher and died of silicosis after which she applied for the compensation with the State Government and the State Government paid her Rs.1 lakh. She later came to know that she is entitled for Rs.3 lakh. She made written representation with PTRC and PTRC in turn filed online complaint with the Commission. We do not know yet if she has been paid the said amount.

- In our complaint no. 260/6/18/2011 before National Human Rights Commission filed on 14 March 2011 Government of Gujarat informed the Commission on 13 February 2020 that the Government has disbursed Rs.4/- lakh to each 29 families of the deceased workers. They disbursed Rs. 1.16 crores in all! This must be a big amount for a small tribal area. It all started when I read an article in an Indian Jr. of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, December 2010 issue by Dr.R.R.Tiwari, Dr.Y.K.Sharma and Dr.Sunil Kumar. The article stated that they examined 134 past workers of quartz factories and they found 57 workers suffering from Silicosis/SilicoTB. We filed the complaint requesting the commission to ensure that those who may have died of silicosis have received relief from the Government. In May 2009 the Supreme Court of India directed NHRC to ensure that NoKs of the deceased workers are paid relief. In response, the commission sent a notice to the National Institute of Occupational Health to provide a list of workers and they provided it promptly. The Commission shared it with us. With the list in our hand, we visited the villages of Chhotaudepur and located the families named. We found that out of 57, 22 had already died. We submitted our report to the commission in December 2011. We stated in our report that out of 57 we could not trace 10 subjects while 23 were not sick and 2 were sick. In Oct 2014 we submitted our second report to inform that 9 more had died totaling 31 deaths now. After 10 years the complaint has been closed.

- In April we wrote to the Collector, Bharuch to take necessary actions in connection with the direction by the Commission on 20 March, 2020 in our complaint no. 499/6/5/2010. We again sent a reminder in June. As a result he wrote to the Ministry of Labor, Government of Rajasthan to take necessary actions in July, 2020.

- In June we filed 3 separate complaints online to the Commission. Pachabhai, Ramesh Kinhla and Savita Chiman Vaghri. In case of Savitaben Vaghri, the Commission has already passed its recommendation while in rest two we are waiting for the recommendation.

- On August we filed one more online complaint for 12 confirmed cases of silicosis deaths and 25 cases of silicosis in Surendranagar district. The Commission admitted the complaint and assigned complaint no. 671/6/24/2020. The commission sent notice to the Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat to submit report on 4/02/21. Due date for submission of the report was 23/03/21. It seems that the Chief Secretary has yet not submitted its report to the Commission.

- In our complaint no. 1218/6/21/2019 for 2 confirmed cases of deaths and 3 cases of silicosis, the Commission, Labor department submitted its report to the Commission on 27/02/20. The Commission sent us the copy of the report in March, 2021 for our response. We submitted our response on 1/04/21. Our complaint was in relation to the death of Mansukh Vaghela, Ashok Chikhalia and Raju Prakash Parihar and Jayanti Rudakiya and Bipin Sahu who were alive. We could not contact Sahu who had left Gujarat for his native Odisha in CORONA lockdown. While Jayanti Rudakiya died on 27/11/20. We submitted his death certificate with our response.

Petition before Disability Commissioner:

We filed petition on 30 July, 2020 before the Disability Commissioner of Gujarat state to get justice for two workers of a factory in Waghodiya Ind. area. During COVID the factory fired several contract workers. These two workers had met with accident in this factory and they also were fired. The factory did not fire permanent workers. We pleaded with the Commissioner that the disabled workers were given unfair treatment and the management discriminated the disabled workers which was violation of the law for disabled people. The Commissioner did not even acknowledge nor took any action.

Advocacy:

- In January we sent our suggestions and objections on OHS code to the Government of India in response to the invitation. We gave several suggestions to improve the provisions.
- We have been advocating for OSH rights for workers in all economic sectors. In Jan Swasthya Abhiyan meeting we talked about hazards faced by the health care workers at work. On request we prepared a detailed note on the hazards and sent to the Abhiyan HQ for necessary actions.

- Similarly, we kept saying that all infectious diseases are compensable in India and we do not need to demand to declare it as occupational disease. We wrote to the ESIC Director General to arrange for CORONA testing for the workers covered under the law and publicize their rights to claim benefits if they get infection at work. We wrote to the DG in April, 2020 to this effect.

- On the occasion of International Workers Memorial Day we issued a statement on 28 April, 2020 in which we shared the information that during the past year 13 workers had died of silicosis and still Government of Gujarat has not taken any steps to implement recommendation by National Human Rights Commission to format policy for rehabilitation of silicosis. We raised our concern on the rising industrial accidents which we see as direct result of the Government's liberalized policies. We raised 13 demands with the Government. We sent our memorandum to the Minister, Labor & Employment, Government of Gujarat

Research:

- We analyzed the information sent to the Government of India by Government of Gujarat on the safety & health situation in the state in 2018 and 2019. Our write up in Gujarati was published in Web Gurjari, an e-magazine

- We analyzed the annual report of ESI Corporation for the year 2017-18. Our write up in Gujarati was published in Web Gurjari, an e-magazine.

- We have undertaken a survey of ceramic workers in Than to see how many of them have been covered under ESI Act. Though it is mandatory the employers do not deduct the ESI contribution and thereby keep the workers deprived of the social security. We developed the tool and before finalizing tested in the field. We got it printed. We also printed pamphlet giving information on ESI benefits which can be distributed to the workers. We have planned to cover 1000 workers. We hope that by end of April, 2020 our report shall be ready.

- We have started collection information on the hand injuries. Large numbers of workers loss their fingers, thumbs or even hand in power press accidents in engineering industry. We have been requesting the contacts in the industry to help us get information. We have planned to collect as many accidents happened during last five years. We shall be interviewing the victims and prepare report to be presented before the Government and the industry. We organized primary meetings with the stake holders in Waghodiya (25 /01/21) and Halol (6/03/21). During Halol meeting the participants said that the units do not cover the workers under ESI Act.

Help to worker to get ESI services:

- On 22/06/20 we filed complaint with ESIC Sub-Regional Office, Vadodara that M/s. M.Kusha Coating, located at C/43, Sardar Estate, Vadodara is employing around 50 workers but they are not deducting ESI contribution from the wages/salaries of these workers and thus violating the law. ESI Corporation is losing on its revenue and workers are deprived of the social security. We have not known the fate of this complaint.

- Deepak Tablawala, industrial worker covered under ESI Act came to us in 2018 with a complaint. His father had some heart related problems and he was taken to ESI Hospital. Experts at the hospital referred him to tied up private hospital for further management where he was supposed to get cash less services. When Deepak took his father at the private hospital he was asked to deposit Rs. 10,000 and later another Rs. 4,000/- as deposit. He deposited the amount. He was promised that when he submits official permission letter the deposit shall be returned. When he submitted the document, they did not return the amount. When he asked, he was told that the amount shall be returned when ESIC settles the account in this case. After discharge of his father he several time visited the hospital to know if their account has been settled and they said, no. When he came to us we represented the case before the Suvidha Samagam, grievance redress system developed by ESIC. We kept on following up at various levels. In January ESIC wrote to the hospital to return the amount. The amount has been returned to Sri Deepak in January 2021. Our consistent efforts brought result.

- Salik Tantod was working in Standard Spring in Waghodia where he met with accident on power press. He was not covered under ESI Act violating several legal provisions. We filed complaint to arrange to issue him identity card under ESI Act, help him get disablement benefit and enrol all the workers working in the factory under the Act.

- Siddhu Pujari, a migrant worker from Karnataka was compelled to take treatment from private health care facility in emergency. When he approached ESI dispensary to claim treatment expenditure reimbursement, he was denied. We talked to the ESIS medical officer and other officers. As a result they agreed to accept the claim. He made claim for Rs.75000/- for treatment and sickness benefit for 54 days.

Attended:

We attended AMRC meeting on 12 May and made presentation on the factory inspection system in India

Narol Accident fact finding:

On 7 November we travelled to Ahmedabad to discuss on the Narol explosion. Like minded organizations and individuals came together and discussed the situation of industrial safety in Narol area. We visited the site of the accident to find that the factory where accident took place employed only one employee who died in the explosion. We could see the remains of containers of Hydrogen Peroxide which is hazardous chemical. Because of the explosion adjoining building collapsed killing 11 workers working there. State agencies were carrying out detailed investigation and there was not much left for us to find the facts. We decided to take up a little larger study of the whole area and decided to meet again. We could not meet again due to spread of COVID-19.

Meeting with Guj Pollution Control Board:

On 9 November we accompanied environmental group to visit officials of Guj Pollution Control Board to discuss the utilization of the fine they received as a result of litigation and Courts ordered fine to be collected from violators. The petitioners in the case have a right to get the amount so collected to be used for the welfare of the community affected by the pollution. The meeting was useful. Both the parties discussed their plans of utilization and decided to continue the discussion. Due to spread of COVID further discussion could not be held.

TV Talk:

On 4 November there was huge explosion in a factory in Narol in Ahmedabad killing 12 workers. GTPL, Baroda invited us to talk on the industrial accidents. We discussed on the limitations of the legal provisions and status of enforcement agencies.

Talk on social media:

We were introduced to Sapna N Sapna by our common friend Dhiru Mistry. She invited us to her Face book page on which she introduces her friends with some social activist at regular intervals. She recorded our interview which was posted on 19 December, 2020.

PTRC in press:

No	Date	Name	Title		
1	13-04-20	Counterview	India's health workers have		

			no legal right for their protection, regrets NGO network		
2	17-04-20	Counterview	Carry out Covid-19 tests to all to 82.8 million insured workers_ NGO plea to ESIC		
3	29-08-20	The First India	After 130 deaths in 7 months Gujarat serious about industrial accidents		
4	29/04/20	Indian Express	13 workers have died of silicosis in 16 months		
5	4/09/20	Times of India	35% suicides in Gujarat were of daily wagers		
6	25/09/20	Divy Bhaskar	ડાયાબીટીસ દર્દીઓ માટે પીટીઆરસી ની શિબિર યોજાઈ	PTRC camp for diabetes patinets	
7	28/10/20	Sandesh	ધ્રાંગધ્રામાં ડાયાબીટીસ કેમ્પ	Diabetes Camp in Dhrangadhra	

Finances:

During the year we received Rs. 6,41,072 towards grants and donations, earned Rs. 23,410 on interest. We spent Rs. 11,16,974.62 on the objectives of the organization.

We thank all our donors, supporters and sympathisers for their whole hearted support.

Staff:

Mansukh Olakia joined us as field executive for Rajkot region in May, 2019. Deepak Rathod joined us in Nov. 2019. Mansukhbhai looked after Rajkot and Than areas while Deepakbhai looked after Dhrangadhra and Morbi areas. We have had no staff at Khambhat in the period of this report but we continued with the office there with occasional visits. At Baroda Niranjana Patel has continued to maintain accounts.