

FORUM FOR SOCIAL INITIATIVES

Annual Report 2020-2021



OFFICE ADDRESS

**Forum for Social Initiatives
P.O. – Sadaquat Ashram
Sewa Kendra, Kurji, PATNA - 800010**

Introduction and Background

Forum for Social Initiatives (FSI) serves as the Regional Coordinating Body for Social Work under the Church in Bihar. Established in 2009 under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, FSI has been at the forefront of social development initiatives for over 14 years. Its mandate encompasses coordinating, guiding, and supporting the Diocesan Social Service Societies (DSSSs) and partner organizations operating in all 38 districts of Bihar, with some interventions extending to neighbouring Jharkhand.

FSI is committed to fostering a just and humane society rooted in the gospel values of love, peace, and equality. It aims to promote human dignity, especially for the oppressed and marginalized, by empowering partner organizations through capacity building, advocacy, and collaborative initiatives. Over the years, FSI has evolved into a key player in addressing critical social issues such as poverty, trafficking, environmental degradation, and communal disharmony.

The organization operates through its six dioceses, partnering with a diverse network of community-based organizations (CBOs), self-help groups (SHGs), and government agencies. By facilitating participatory development, FSI ensures that communities are not only beneficiaries but active participants in their own development journey.

COVID-19: A Defining Challenge

The 2020-2021 period presented unique challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, profoundly impacting lives and livelihoods. The crisis exposed and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities within marginalized communities, posing a significant challenge to FSI's regular operations. The pandemic disrupted on-ground activities, impeded mobility, and strained healthcare and social protection systems. For an organization deeply embedded in grassroots development, these disruptions tested the resilience and adaptability of both its teams and the communities it serves.

Despite these difficulties, FSI rose to the occasion by reimagining its approaches and reinforcing its commitment to serve. Through innovative strategies, strong partnerships, and community-driven interventions, FSI ensured the continuity of its mission to empower vulnerable populations and advocate for social justice.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the organization's key initiatives, challenges, and achievements during this transformative year. It highlights the strategic pivot to hybrid modes of engagement, innovative non-budget activities, and strengthened advocacy efforts that enabled FSI to navigate the crisis effectively while laying the groundwork for future resilience and sustainable development.

Geographical Outreach

FSI operates across Bihar, covering all 38 districts. The network includes 6 diocesan social service societies (DSSSs) and 55 Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), as outlined below:

Diocese/Partner	# of Districts	Diocesan Social Service Society (DSSSs)	# of FBOs
Patna Archdiocese	11	Bihar Water Development Society (BWDS)	31
Diocese of Buxar	4	Buxar Diocesan Social Service Society (BUDSS)	4
Diocese of Bhagalpur	2	Bhagalpur Social Service Society (BSSS)	4
Diocese of Purnea	4	Purnea Social & Educational Society (PSES)	3

Diocese of Muzaffarpur	of 12	Muzaffarpur Diocesan Social Service Society (MDSSS)	8
Diocese of Bettiah	5	Bettiah Diocesan Social Service Society (BDSSS)	5
Total	38	6 DSSSs	55

Governance and Leadership

The FSI Governing Body, composed of committed leaders, has played a pivotal role in steering the organization towards its mission.

Name	Designation
William D' Souza	President
Sebastian Kallupura	Vice President
Kurian Valiyakandathil	Member
Francis Tirkey	Secretary
Amal Raj S.	Treasurer & Director
Dorothy	Member
Teresa	Member
Pascal Anand	Member
Anil Bennet	Member

Vision

- **A just and humane society based on the Gospel values of love, peace, and equality.**

Mission

- **To promote the human dignity of the oppressed and marginalized through collaboration and networking with like-minded bodies, empowering partner organizations in their initiatives for social justice and sustainable development.**

Impact of COVID-19 on FSI's Interventions

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically altered the social development landscape, with the following challenges emerging across our operational areas:

1. **Restricted Mobility and Field Activities:** Lockdowns and movement restrictions hampered field visits, community mobilization, and face-to-face interactions.
2. **Disrupted Training and Workshops:** Planned workshops and training programs were either cancelled or postponed, affecting the capacity-building efforts of partner organizations.
3. **Increased Vulnerability of Marginalized Communities:** The socio-economic impact of the pandemic led to heightened vulnerabilities among marginalized groups, including loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, and limited access to healthcare.
4. **Limited Access to Digital Tools:** Both our teams and the communities we serve faced technological barriers, such as lack of devices and poor internet connectivity, which hindered the transition to virtual engagement.

Strategies and Solutions: Overcoming COVID-19 Challenges

Despite the hurdles, FSI swiftly adapted its strategies to maintain program continuity and support vulnerable communities:

1. **Hybrid Model of Engagement:** - We adopted a mix of virtual and on-ground activities, using digital platforms for training and coordination while adhering to COVID-19 safety protocols for essential fieldwork.
2. **COVID-19 Relief and Awareness Campaigns:** - FSI, with its diocesan partners, initiated relief efforts, distributing food, masks, and hygiene kits to affected communities. Awareness sessions on COVID-19 prevention, vaccination, and health protocols were conducted both virtually and in small, socially-distanced gatherings.
3. **Capacity Building Through Digital Platforms:** - Training workshops on child rights, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and social inclusion were held online. Partner organizations were supported in accessing and utilizing digital tools for their operations.
4. **Advocacy for Government Support:** - FSI facilitated access to government welfare schemes, ensuring that communities received necessary support such as rations, employment under MGNREGA, and healthcare services.
5. **Strengthened Community Networks:** - Through enhanced collaboration with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), we ensured a robust grassroots response to emerging challenges.

Non-Budget Activities: Maximizing Impact Without Additional Funding

To address community needs beyond the scope of funded programs, FSI implemented several impactful non-budget activities:

1. **Volunteer Mobilization for COVID-19 Response:**
 - Mobilized local volunteers to distribute relief materials, support vaccination drives, and assist in health awareness campaigns.
 - Volunteers were trained on COVID-19 protocols to ensure safe engagement in communities.

2. Community-Led Awareness Drives:

- Conducted awareness campaigns on government welfare schemes, leveraging community networks and local leaders.
- Focus areas included health and hygiene practices, women's safety during the pandemic, and educational continuity for children.

3. Psycho-Social Support Initiatives:

- Organized counselling sessions for community members, particularly focusing on women and children, to address the mental health impact of the pandemic.
- Sessions were facilitated by trained volunteers and included stress management techniques and guidance on coping with grief and loss.



Community volunteers supported COVID-19 community testing



Organize online counselling sessions for community members during Covid

I. Key Program Activities by FSI (2020-2021)

Training of SHG/CBO Leaders on Rights and Entitlements

Date: 17th – 18th February 2021

Venue: Catholic Church, Basauni, Lakhisarai

Participants: 42 Leaders from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

Facilitator: Mr. John D'Cruze, Coordinator, Forum for Social Initiatives (FSI)



1. Introduction

The two-day training program facilitated by Mr. John D'Cruze, aimed to empower SHG and CBO leaders with knowledge about their rights and entitlements under various government schemes and policies. The program was organized by Forum for Social Initiatives (FSI) in collaboration with local DSSS partners. It provided participants with the tools to effectively advocate for their communities and improve their socio-economic conditions.

2. Objectives

Enhance Awareness: To educate SHG and CBO leaders on their rights and entitlements under key government schemes.

Capacity Building: To build leadership skills and equip participants to advocate for their community's needs.

Promote Access: To guide participants on how to navigate bureaucratic processes for accessing entitlements.

Foster Networking: To create a platform for sharing experiences and building solidarity among CBOs and SHGs.

3. Key Sessions and Topics Covered

Day 1: 17th February 2021

Inauguration and Welcome Address: - By Parish Priest, Catholic Church, Basauni, followed by Highlighted the importance of SHG/CBO leadership in community development. Mr. John D'Cruze led interactive sessions, incorporating real-life case studies and practical examples. He emphasized the importance of collective action and the role of community leadership in driving social change.



1. Introduction to Rights and Entitlements

- Covered constitutional rights, fundamental duties, and an overview of socio-economic entitlements.

- Facilitated by FSI trainers.

2. Government Schemes and Policies

- Detailed presentations on major schemes such as MNREGA, PDS, PMAY, NSAP, and various pension schemes.
- Interactive Q&A session followed.

Day 2: 18th February 2021

1. Accessing Schemes and Resolving Grievances

- Process of applying for entitlements and addressing grievances through online and offline channels.
- Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in ensuring rights and benefits.

2. Leadership Skills for Community Mobilization

- Training on communication, advocacy, and conflict resolution.
- Case studies and group discussions on successful community mobilization efforts.

3. Group Work and Presentations

- Participants formed small groups to discuss challenges in accessing entitlements.
- Presented their findings and proposed solutions.

4. Concluding Session and Action Plan

- Recap of training highlights and development of a collective action plan for their respective communities.

4. Key Outcomes

- **Increased Awareness:** Participants gained a clear understanding of their rights and the schemes available to them.
- **Action Plans Formulated:** Each group drafted action plans to mobilize their communities in accessing entitlements.
- **Networking Enhanced:** Stronger bonds formed between SHGs and CBOs for collective advocacy.
- **Leadership Strengthened:** Participants exhibited increased confidence in addressing community challenges.

5. Challenges Faced

- **Limited Digital Literacy:** Some participants struggled with online application processes for schemes.
- **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Difficulty in accessing entitlements due to red tape.

6. Measures to Overcome Challenges

- **Follow-Up Support:** Commitment to provide ongoing support for participants in navigating digital platforms.
- **Networking with Authorities:** Strengthened relationships with local government officials to reduce bureaucratic barriers.

7. Conclusion

The training successfully equipped SHG and CBO leaders with the knowledge and tools to advocate for their rights and entitlements. The participants left the training motivated and prepared to mobilize their communities for improved access to government schemes.

II. Caritas Project: Accompaniment support to forum for mainstreaming KSPs

Workshop on Child Rights in Collaboration with UNICEF

Venue: Sewa Kendra, Kurji, Patna

Dates: 12th - 13th March 2021

Total Participants: 50

Overview

A two-day *Residential Workshop on Child Rights* was organized in collaboration with UNICEF to empower children, especially school dropouts, from disadvantaged communities. The training focused on personality development, behavioral transformation, and raising awareness of their rights and entitlements.

The event brought together 50 children aged 6-14 from 10 Life Education Development Centers across Gandharmath (Jehanabad) and Kawakol (Nawada), along with 9 instructors, supervisors, and coordinators.



Objective

The workshop aimed to:

1. Build awareness about Child Rights, health, hygiene, and career planning.
2. Equip participants with tools for personality and career development.
3. Inspire participants to become role models, advocating for education and child rights in their communities.

Key Activities

Inauguration Ceremony

The event commenced with a warm welcome by Mr. DevRaj Kumar, Project Coordinator, followed by the lighting of the lamp and a prayer led by Rev. Fr. Amal Raj, Director, BWDS. In his motivational address, Fr. Amal Raj emphasized the significance of child rights and education, sharing success stories from the SMILE project.



Presentations & Sessions

The workshop featured expert-led sessions and interactive exercises on the following topics:

Topic	Resource Person/Facilitator
Vision, Goals & Objectives of Child Rights Training	Rev. Fr. Amal Raj, Director, FSI
Introduction to Child Rights, Health & Hygiene	Mr. Karan Babbar, UNICEF, Bihar
Career Counselling for School Children	Mr. John D'Cruz
Addressing Child Marriage, Abuse, and Trafficking	Facilitators
Self-Awareness and Building Confidence	Facilitators

Interactive Sessions

Day 1 (12/03/2021)

- Ice-breaking exercises and group discussions helped participants overcome shyness.
- Role plays, songs, and motivational stories were employed to introduce the concept of child rights and self-worth.

Day 2 (13/03/2021)

- Focused on personal strengths and career aspirations.
- Children shared their likes and dislikes, receiving constructive feedback from facilitators.
- Group exercises identified rights violations within schools, especially under the RTE Act.

Mr. Karan Babbar led a critical session on child rights violations, encouraging children to brainstorm practical solutions.

Training Highlights

- **Interactive Learning:** Activities like role plays, games, and group discussions made the sessions engaging and memorable.
- **Personality Development:** Focus on building self-confidence and fostering resilience.
- **Practical Guidance:** Emphasis on career counselling and combating child rights violations such as abuse and trafficking.

Methodologies Adopted

- **Motivational Stories and Songs**
- **Role Plays and Group Exercises**
- **Interactive Presentations**
- **Feedback and Counselling Sessions**

Final Note

This workshop was a crucial step in shaping the future of marginalized children, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to assert their rights. It also highlighted the role of education in breaking the cycle of poverty and exploitation.

Children left the training inspired and better informed about their rights, ready to take on leadership roles within



their communities. The program demonstrated the importance of collaborative efforts in creating a protective environment where every child can thrive.

State-Level Workshop on Child Rights

Venue: Sewa Kendra, Kurji, Patna

Date: 19th February 2021

Total Participants: 46

Introduction

A one-day *State-Level Workshop on Child Rights* was organized at Sewa Kendra, Kurji, Patna, on 19th February 2021. The workshop aimed to strengthen the understanding and advocacy of child rights among various stakeholders, including social workers, educators, child welfare professionals, and community leaders.

The workshop provided a platform for participants to discuss issues such as child protection, education, health, and the role of the community in safeguarding children's rights.

Objective

- To enhance participants' knowledge and understanding of child rights and the legal framework.
- To promote collaboration among organizations working for child protection.
- To equip participants with practical tools and strategies to address child rights violations in their communities.

Key Highlights

Session 1: Inauguration and Welcome Address

The event was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Amal Raj, Director, FSI, who welcomed the participants and set the tone for the day. In his address, he emphasized the importance of child rights in fostering a just and equitable society.

Session 2: Child Rights Framework

Facilitator: Mr. Karan Babbar, UNICEF, Bihar

- This session provided an overview of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* and its implementation in India.
- Discussion on key legislations like the *Juvenile Justice Act*, *POCSO Act*, and *Right to Education Act*.

Session 3: Identifying and Addressing Child Rights Violations

Facilitator: Ms. Ritu Kumari, Child Protection Specialist

- Focus on real-life case studies and practical scenarios.
- Group discussions on identifying child rights violations within communities and schools.

Session 4: Role of Community in Child Protection

Facilitator: Mr. John D'Cruze

- Highlighted the importance of community involvement in preventing child abuse, trafficking, and child marriage.
- Practical tools for community mobilization and advocacy.

Session 5: Building a Child-Friendly Ecosystem

Facilitator: Dr. Shalini Sinha, Education Consultant

- Strategies for creating safe and supportive environments in schools and homes.
- Emphasis on psychosocial support and mental health.

Outcomes

- Enhanced understanding of child rights and legal provisions among participants.
- Development of actionable strategies for addressing child rights violations.
- Strengthened network of child rights advocates across the state.

Conclusion

The workshop concluded with a pledge by all participants to advocate for child rights and work towards building a safer, more inclusive environment for children. The event underscored the critical role of collaborative efforts in ensuring that every child enjoys their rights to protection, education, and dignity.



Key Achievements

Despite the challenges, FSI recorded significant achievements in 2020-2021:

- **Capacity Building:** Conducted training sessions, benefiting Partners and direct participants.
- **Advocacy and Networking:** Established collaborations with key stakeholders to influence policies.
- **Community Empowerment:** Strengthened local governance through increased participation in decision-making processes.
- **Community Resilience:** Enhanced disaster preparedness in all high-risk areas, integrating COVID-19 safety protocols into local DRR plans.

Looking Forward (2021-2022)

The year 2020-2021 was a testament to FSI's commitment to its mission amidst adversity. By adapting to new challenges and innovating its approach, FSI continued to empower communities and promote human dignity. Moving forward, FSI will:

- **Expand Training Programs:** To address emerging issues such as digital literacy and climate resilience.
- **Strengthen Networks:** By building partnerships with global development agencies.
- **Policy Advocacy:** To push for more inclusive and sustainable development policies.
- **Enhanced Monitoring:** To assess and adapt programs based on community needs.

Conclusion

The year 2020-2021 has been a milestone in FSI's journey. Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, FSI has remained steadfast in its mission to uplift marginalized communities. We extend our deepest gratitude to all partners, staff, and stakeholders for their unwavering support. Together, we look forward to continuing our efforts towards building a just, inclusive, and sustainable society.

Contact Information

Forum for Social Initiatives (FSI)

Address: P.O. – Sadaquat Ashram, Sewa Kendra, Kurji, Patna – 800010

Phone: 0612-2272048

Email: biharforum@rediffmail.com

Website: www.fsisk.org