



Sunbird Trust  
PEACE THROUGH EDUCATION

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020 - 2021





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## From The CEO's Desk

Dear Friends of Sunbird Trust,

Another year has passed, so very different from any that we have ever experienced in our lifetimes. The pandemic has affected every aspect of people's lives, some more than others. In the remote rural areas of North East India where Sunbird Trust works, as elsewhere, the lockdown has greatly impacted livelihoods and family incomes. The education system, already tenuous, has been further shaken by long periods of school closure. For some children, the break has severely impacted the momentum and continuity of their learning. The financial stability of rural schools have been deeply impacted with children not able to pay their fees. Teachers have had to go by with none or bare minimum salaries.

During the ongoing crisis, the norm across the country has been "work from home" with many enterprises including NGOs severely curtailing operations. Yet, if at all, it is these very circumstances that has brought out the best of our young Trust. For a start, almost all team members stuck to their posts in remote villages. Even though schools were mandatorily shut down, the teams endeavoured to get the learning to the children in their homes through worksheets and other innovative means. Parents were encouraged that "education" of their children did not only mean classroom instruction, but also imbibing in them the practices and cultural traditions including farming, weaving, basket making and the like. The lockdown meant a shortage of essentials like cooking gas and fresh vegetables at our locations. This compounded with iffy connectivity and electricity supply imposed difficult conditions on our team members, yet these conditions were simply taken as the "new normal" and work went on unhindered and, in fact, with renewed vigour.

At Bangalore, over 30 organisations from North East India sought the help of Sunbird Trust to get ration aid to their members across the city. Our generous donors and partners sprung to our assistance and over two months, we were able to provide rations and other relief for over 14,000 persons. Importantly, we worked in close coordination with the Government of Karnataka and received their acknowledgement for our work.

If Team Sunbird Trust was not only able to weather the COVID crisis, but, in fact expand our work during this time, much of the credit should go to our valued partners, donors and advisers. We are much indebted that at the most challenging time, they stood by us robustly supporting our every move. Indeed, the crisis has thrown up new partners with shared objectives and values. Our host partner communities too supported our team members and even helped us complete various infrastructure projects.





About our plans for the year ahead – we march on with our “Vision 2025” of helping educate 25,000 children and help raise 50 institutions (schools and hostels). Our humanistic and inclusive work has endeared us to all and resulted in requests for supporting more and more new schools across 7 North East Indian states. The coming year should see us commence building at least three more schools and two hostels. With our expanded work, we also envisage considerably increasing the size of our team so as to adequately staff our various locations. Additionally, we expect to expand our “Team of Teams” to new organisations with shared objectives and values.

Thank you, dear friends, for your support for our journey of Peace through Education.

With gratitude,

Col Chris Rego (Retd.)



## Trustees' Report



The ongoing pandemic has dramatically affected normal life across the world. All our Sunbird project areas were similarly affected and our partner schools closed. However, the difference is that our work not only did not stop, but perhaps increased; Given the needs of our children and supported communities, we quickly adapted our work to those requirements. We are pleased to present the highlights of the year gone by:-

- A total of 5933 students are now sponsored for education under our "Sponsor a Child" scheme in 58 partner institutions across 7 North East Indian states including Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.
- 14 of our sponsored students graduated during the year. Out of these 11 are now interning with Sunbird Trust in Manipur.
- A total of 53 undergraduate students are sponsored for their studies at various locations in the country. These include 4 for Engineering, 5 for Law, 2 for Agriculture, 1 for Nursing and 41 for BA/BSc and others.
- During the year construction of schools or school infrastructure was carried out at 12 locations in Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Sikkim states. We



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were privileged that Gen Manoj Naravane, the Chief of Army Staff inaugurated our dormitory at the Kohima Orphanage and Destitute Home at Kohima. We were also happy to build our first school Dewdrops Academy at Nongshken Village, Meghalaya.

- Thanks to the kind sponsorship of Prestige Foundation, we were able to donate a critically needed ambulance to the Primary Health Centre at Oinam Hill village in Manipur.
- During the migrant crisis of May to August 2020, our team at Bangalore was able to distribute ration kits for over 14,000 North East Indian persons who were deeply affected by the lockdown. We received a note of appreciation of our work from the Government of Karnataka.
- Our first three prospective Fellows of our North East Sunbird Trust Fellowship (NEST) are being given more

opportunities to develop their skills. The Fellowship is intended to build leadership and agency amongst dynamic local youth.

- Amongst our livelihood development activities, our Singhat team conducted training in poultry farming, roselle tea cultivation and mushroom farming. Work also progressed well at our new Sloping Land Agriculture Technique (SALT) farm that was inaugurated at Puichi Village
- We entered into a new partnership with Alpha School at Kachai in Ukhrul District of Manipur. In the coming year we expect to renovate the entire school campus including the hostels
- This year, we are happy to welcome 8 new members to our team while 10 others transitioned out. We expect our team to grow substantially in the coming year.

As we expand our activities and build our organization, we thank you for your continuing support and solicit your help at this critical stage of our growth.

Mr. Ryan Lobo (Founder Trustee)

Dr. Dayaprasad Kulkarni M.D. (Trustee)



# Building Access to Education



## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

During the current year Sunbird Trust has supported development of educational infrastructure in partner institutions in the states of Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya and Sikkim

### **Dormitory for Kohima Orphanage and Destitute Home (KODH), Kohima, Nagaland**

The Kohima Orphanage and Destitute Home that was founded in 1973 serves 94 lesser privileged children from across Nagaland and some parts of Manipur. In

2015, during his tenure as Inspector General Assam Rifles (IGAR) at Kohima, Gen Manoj Naravane, the current Chief of Army Staff had recommended to our founder Col Chris Rego to assist this Home in any way possible. Accordingly, Sunbird Trust with the generous sponsorship of Caring Friends helped build a much needed dormitory for the children at this location. The dormitory was inaugurated by Gen Naravane, the current Chief of Army Staff on 25th Nov 2020. The event was attended by several senior Assam Rifles and Army officials. The 3rd Assam Rifles battalion located at Kohima assisted in contributing furniture for the Home and in organizing the inauguration.



**Infrastructure for Lyzon Friendship School, Khomunnom Village, Singngat, Manipur.** In our endeavour to raise the complete infrastructure at LFS, new buildings were constructed as under:-

**Science Lab.** To provide a platform for live scientific experience, a fully functional science laboratory was established at LFS. It can accommodate 40 students at a time and comprises basic equipment, charts and models to aid in student learning.

**Six Classroom Block.** The school got its complete complement of classrooms by the inauguration on 15th August 2020, Independence Day, of the Six Classroom Block. This block was constructed under the generous sponsorship of the Axis Bank DilSe initiative.

**Yaapal Friendship Hostel (YSFH), Wangkhei Colony, Kakching District, Manipur.** With generous sponsorships by Mastek Foundation, HDFC Credila and Mr Paresh Sukthankar and Ms Sangeeta Sukthankar, construction commenced on the first block of the YSFH. The work is proceeding expeditiously and when completed (as planned) by August 2021, the hostel can house 50 students.







**School Infrastructure for Hope Foundation Academy (HFA), Langmei, Manipur through Anaha Trust.** Since partnering with Sunbird Trust in 2017, HFA has grown exponentially and now has over 250 students. It will see its first batch of students appearing for the 10th Std exam for the 2021 – 2022 Academic year. Thanks to the generous support of Sunbird adviser and mentor Mr Balagopal Chandrasekhar (who served in the IAS in Manipur in the 1970s), almost the entire school, currently lodged in dilapidated and leaking structures is being rebuilt. Construction has been completed on a KG Block and toilets for staff and students. Work on 6 new classrooms, an Activity Room (with a library and computer lab), a staff toilet and a 50,000 litre water tank are expected to be completed in the coming months.

**Haite Memorial Friendship School (HMFS), Mualdam Village, Dima Hasao District, Assam.** Located in a very remote part of Assam, the existing school in Mualdam is housed in dilapidated bamboo and tin sheds. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of Manas Foundation, Kolkata, work is progressing expeditiously to complete

construction of HMFS. This is despite the huge challenges posed by the lockdown. It is expected that the new school building will be inaugurated by August '21. When complete, the school will have classrooms from KG to Std 10.





**Majuli Gurukul Academy, Jokaibowa, Majuli Island, Assam.** The school administration sought the help of Sunbird Trust after the school building was badly damaged during a storm. Accordingly six classrooms of the school were rebuilt through the kind sponsorship of Prestige Foundation

**Computer Laboratory for Hope Foundation Academy, Langmei.** Kurlon sponsored a twelve terminal computer

laboratory for children of HFA. Installation of the same is likely to be completed in the coming months.

**Staff Toilet at Paangkriang Friendship School, Ijeirong Village, Manipur.** The dire need for a toilet for the teachers and staff at Paangkriang Friendship School was fulfilled with the construction of a staff toilet on the campus. This building was sponsored by the HT Parekh Foundation.





**Kulamao English Medium School, Majuli Island, Assam.**

In a storm during second week of April 2020, Kulamao English School at Majuli Island was badly hit and the entire school building was demolished. The Principal of the School, Mr. Sanjay Pegu requested the support of Sunbird Trust to rebuild the school. A total of 10 Classrooms were built under the sponsorship of the Prestige Foundation and the work was completed by February 2021. With this, the students were once more able to attend classes.

the students' hostel at this school in a remote part of West Sikkim is being completely renovated



**Hostel Renovation at Sikkim Himalayan Academy, Bariakhop, Jorethang, West Sikkim.** At the request of the management of the Sikkim Himalayan Academy, Sunbird Trust, with the kind sponsorship of Featherlite,

**Dewdrops Academy at Nongshken Village, Meghalaya.**

Hearing about Sunbird Trust, Ms Genefava, a social entrepreneur at remote Nongshken Village in Meghalaya approached us for funding to build a school from Classes Nursery to 4. The school was built under the kind sponsorship of Prestige Foundation. It currently has 85 pupils and a Principal with 6 staff members.



## OTHER OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



Ambulance for Oinam Village, Senapati District, Manipur. The Primary Health Centre at Oinam Village serves over 30 neighbouring villages but does not have an ambulance. On the request of the Rogi Kalyan Samiti of the village and with the generous sponsorship of Prestige Foundation, a Tempo Trax Ambulance has been purchased for the PHC. It is planned to formally hand over the ambulance during April'21.





# Building Peace Through Education

## LEARNING IN THE TIME OF CORONA

Due to the COVID lockdown that commenced from March 2020, almost all partner schools of Sunbird Trust had to close down for several months. Regardless, when most people had to work from "home", home for Sunbird Team members was our villages. Hence all Sunbird Trust team members continued to remain at their locations. The aim was to have continuity in the learning for the children through all possible measures not in contravention of the COVID related rules regardless of the challenges posed. Some of the steps taken by Sunbird Team members and our partner schools were:-

- Tuition classes for small groups of children, especially in Science and Maths
- At Lyzon Friendship School, teachers carried interactive worksheet – based homework for the children. This included local curriculum, activity based content and art and craft itineraries.
- At Paangkriang Friendship School, Ijeirong, local youth volunteers conducted support classes for students of Class 10.
- At all locations, parents were informed that "learning" also constituted their traditional work including agriculture, basket-making, weaving and other occupations and were encouraged to teach their children these skills during the lockdown.

## REPORTS FROM SUNBIRD TRUST LOCATIONS

### Ijeirong Village, Noney District, Manipur



Ijeirong was the first village in North East India, where our founder Col Chris Rego, that time still a serving Army officer with the Border Roads Organisation, facilitated building of the 1st hostel call Sunbird Friendship Hostel at the local Paangkriang Friendship School (PFS). In the following years, Sunbird Trust has built several other assets including the second hostel, computer and science laboratories, dining hall, multipurpose hall and a music academy. The school serves at least 8 neighbouring villages.

During the shutdown, our team members remained at the village engaging with the children and the community. Thanks to the strict lockdown they endured many hardships with the lack of proper rations and provision. Notably, even though the schools were closed, team members encouraged parents to keep up the learning by teaching their children traditional skills like basket making, weaving and the like.

After a yearlong shutdown of the school, PFS reopened on 23rd February 2021. On the day of reopening, PFS saw an enrollment of only 151 children. This was apparently due to the fear of COVID 19 which is why parents were not willing to send their children to the school. In fact, some of the neighboring villages started their own primary schools so that they don't have to send their children all the way to PFS. However, after a month of reopening of the school, PFS had approximately 330 children in the school and 170 children in the hostel.

**New year, New beginnings!** PFS Founders and Principal requested Sunbird to help them in procuring Teaching/ Learning Materials (TLMs) for their Teachers. Sunbird then procured white boards, charts, globes, stationary, books, and variety of other TLMs.

**Music Lessons, Paangkriang Friendship School.** With a dedicated teacher and teacher-trainer on board, the future looks musical for PFS. Samuel Joseph a Licentiate in Music from Trinity College of Music London and one of the country's top guitarists, and Siam Paite, a hardworking, motivated and self-taught



musician joined Sunbird/PFS as a music teachers. They now takes regular classes for the students at the fully equipped music academy with instruments donated by Furtados Music through co-owner and Sunbird Trust well-wisher Mr. Joseph Gomes

**Visit Crew Cut Media.** Jatin Luck of Crew Cut Media, Sunbird Trust's official videographer visited Ijeirong, Puichi, Khumji and other neighbouring villages from 1st Mar 21 to document our work. Jatin was the videographer of the Luminous video on our CEO Col Chris that got over a million and a half views on YouTube

**Visit of CEO.** Col Chris visited Ijeirong twice during the year and met with team members, teachers, students and parents. He was also invited for a meeting by the Ijeirong Village Authority during which important issues of the village were discussed.

**Visit of Team from Oinam Hill Village.** Ten representatives from Oinam Hill Village visited Ijeirong on 11th March 21 to see the work of Sunbird Trust. The visit was with the view of developing a partnership of Oinam Hill Village with Sunbird Trust for the improvement of the local schools and the Primary Health Centre. Among those who visited were the Principal of the Government Hig School, Oinam, Chairman of the Rogi Kalyan Samiti of the PHC at Oinam and representatives of the youth and women associations in Oinam Hill. This visit has marked the beginning of a fruitful engagement of Sunbird Trust with Oinam Hill village.

**Visit of Team from Rongmei Naga Baptist Association (RNBA).** The RNBA is involved in several educational and developmental works mainly among the Rongmei villages, but also in other parts of Manipur. With a view of a possible partnership with Sunbird Trust, Mr Dim





Gong, Development Secretary and two associates from the RNBA visited Ijeirong on 18th March. The objective was to see the work of Sunbird Trust, understand its vision and evaluate the possibilities of partnering with each other.

guests enjoyed cultural dances by our children and the traditional local food. Before leaving, our donors pledged to construct a large amount of educational and developmental infrastructure including an entire school at Kachai Village and solar electrification of 120 households around Singngat.



### Singngat (Khomunnom Village)

Sunbird Trust partner Lyzon Friendship School is located at Khomunnom Village on the outskirts of Singngat town in Manipur. Sunbird Trust has been involved with building this school since 2014. In 2018, through the generous contribution of Mr Ravishankar Dakoju and Ms Paola Ravishankar, a new school building was constructed. Currently four Sunbird Trust team members are stationed at this school to assist in its development.

**Visit of Donors and Mentors.** Mr. Ravi Modi, owner of Manyavar and Mrs. Shilpi Modi accompanied by Mr. Pawan Agarwal, Director of Srijan Realty Private Ltd and Mrs. Manisha Agarwal visited Ijeirong and Puichi Villages from 8th March to 11th March 21. They interacted with our school children at both our Paangkriang Friendship School at Ijeirong as well as Sungcham Friendship School at neighboring Puichi village. They spent time with our team members and staff enquiring about their work and giving valuable suggestions. Our





**BaLa Project (Building as Learning Aid), Lyzon Friendship School.** To create a colorful learning space for the 3rd Grade students, BaLa project was initiated with the help of teachers and students. Three walls of the classroom were painted with different themes in sync with the current syllabus. Topics like the Food chain, Transport system, Vowels, Map of India, and Great places of the world were covered. This project intended to create a playful and positive space for both our students and teachers where elements of visual arts could be incorporated within the school's infrastructure to serve as effective learning aids.

**Library Program, Lyzon Friendship School.** The library program was introduced at the school that included a variety of activities and games. Teacher-led activities included Story hour, Dicey, Quiz time, Alternate ending to stories, etc. To improve their reading and comprehension skills, each student was issued two books for independent reading. Games like scrabble, Pictionary, crosswords, and math puzzles were conducted during the library classes.



**Computer Club for Students and Local Youth.** 10 students from classes 7 and 8 as well as 3 local youth were chosen to participate in a 'Summer Computer Camp' organised by the Computer Club. The project coordinator for digital literacy designed a fun activity-based curriculum that challenged the learners. Apart from basic computer skills, the curriculum also focused on the introduction to algorithmic thinking and block coding through an experiential learning philosophy.

The 'Summer Computer Camp' helped strengthen the computer skills of the students and youth and introduced new perspectives about computers

**Diwali and Republic Day with Assam Rifles, Singnat.** Students of Lyzon Friendship School celebrated two auspicious occasions, the Festival of Lights and Republic Day with 2 Assam Rifles in their camp. They exchanged greeting cards, sweets, and gifts, and bonded over food and crackers.

**Staff Picnic, Singnat.** The staff of Lyzon Friendship School visited a nearby river site for a fun filled and day-long picnic



**Talent Hunt.** Students from grade 1 to 9 participated in different competitions to showcase their talents. These included singing, dancing, One Minute to Fame, walking the ramp, amongst other events.

**Pi Day.** Pi Day was celebrated on 15th March to create a "gamified" space for students to learn Math. Many activities were organized based on the number Pi (3.14). It was a day filled with fun and numbers. Some of the activities were, Pi recitation, Mental Math battle, Pi measurement, Pi treasure hunt, etc.

**Sports Day.** Lyzon Friendship School celebrated their Sports Day in April, 2020 with sports activities like football, volleyball, tug of war, Kho-Kho, etc.





**North East Sunbird Trust (NEST) Fellowship.** This is Sunbird's 2 years leadership development program for the youth of North East India. The Fellowship is conducted under our Team member Pratip Ganguly in and around our Lyzon Friendship School at Khomunnom Village near Singngat. Its main focus is on building knowledge, skills and mindset. The programme commenced in January 2020 and currently has 3 Fellows. Among the major activities carried out during the year were a Firki session (designed by Teach for India) where the Fellows learnt about planning, behavioural management and engagement with parents. The Fellows actively engaged with the local community around our partner Lyzon Friendship School. Besides their own learning, they conducted teacher training for fellow teachers and also training on various social work methods. With schools closed with the pandemic, they assisted teachers in making worksheets that were delivered to the homes of the children at their remote locations. Importantly, the NEST Fellows played an important role in coordinating Sunbird Trust's COVID relief activities

### Langmei Village, Tamenglong District, Manipur

Our partnership with Hope Foundation Academy (HFA) commenced in 2017 when we were invited by the local Army officials to help build capacity in this school which was doing yeoman service for underserved children from several neighbouring villages. Since then, with the generous support of Anaha Trust and its founder Mr. Balagopal Chandrasekhar, Sunbird has commenced rebuilding the entire school that was hitherto lodged in dilapidated structures. We also received the generous sponsorship of Aspect for construction of the Aspect-Sunbird Trust hostel. Sunbird now has two team members permanently stationed at Langmei to help develop the capacity of the school.

As part of the engagement with the community, Sunbird Trust conducted an internship for local youth. Among the activities was learning modern teaching methods and analyzing Case Studies of various rural entrepreneurial initiatives across India to learn and draw inspiration from them.

**Prize Distribution Day.** Hope Foundation Academy

celebrated their Prize Distribution Day with CO 4 Bihar Col. Nishant Nair as the Chief Guest. Class and school toppers were awarded gifts by 4 Bihar. Students and teachers actively participated in the program by rendering speeches and songs. Col. Nair also graced the assembly with words of wisdom and encouragement.



**Farm Visits.** Sunbird team members actively participate in farming and fishing activities at Langmei. The village authorities announced that all villagers must engage in farming to ensure resources for the coming year in case the lockdown extends.

**Day Trip.** The team members at Langmei went to a local river Ahang-ki with the YIPL interns and teachers for a day trip. In a local style picnic, they collected firewood, cooked and ate together.





**Dikiuram Visit.** Sunbird Trust team members at Langmei visited the Inbiu Longrian school in Dikiuram with the LNBA executive secretary and other members. The school principal, teachers and LNBA staff requested the visit to see the condition of the school.



**After School Clubs, Hope Foundation Academy.** Five clubs, viz Music and Movement, Sports, Art, Handicraft, Reading, and Soft Skills were started and run by the YIPL interns from the village. With the students returning to schools after a long pandemic-driven lockdown, we wanted them to experience the joy of learning through play in order to bring a shift in our goals and vision of education. These clubs focus on the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth of the learner. Through these clubs, we are able to increase student comfort in classrooms, build communication skills, focus on emotional well-being, enhance problem solving skills, and build self-confidence.

**Youth Internship Program (YIPL).** The purpose of the YIPL internship was to provide a source of income to the educated youth of the village who had returned to the village from cities amidst the pandemic. The interns received training and guidance on some 21st-century skills. Afterwards, they took the responsibility of successfully running the five after-school clubs.

**RLLE Internship.** Two students from The Xavier School of Rural Management (XSRM), Bhubaneswar attended the Rural Living and Learning Experience (RLLE) in Langmei. The purpose of this endeavour was to introduce the interns to the social realities of rural life and problems. The interns were assigned the Development Project Report and were supported by YIPL interns for

the data collection for their project.

**Online Teacher Training.** Teachers of Hope Foundation Academy, Langmei attended an online teacher training conducted by facilitators from Azim Premji University. They discussed techniques to use art and storytelling as a tool to make learning fun and effective for elementary students.

### Puichi (Octan) Village, Noney District, Manipur

In 2017, the Army vacated its camp at Puichi Village in Noney District of Manipur. With the partnership of the village community and Sunbird Trust, the camp was turned into a primary school (Sungcham Friendship School(SFS)) for the village. This was a great relief for parents who previously had to send their tiny tots to our partner Paangkriang Friendship School over 4 kms away. Since then, Sunbird Trust has sponsored the education of the children and running of the school. Three Sunbird Trust team members have been stationed at the village for community development work, mainly the two major engagements viz running SFS and for opening our new SALT (Sloping Land Agriculture Technique) Training Farm.



Skill Development Curriculum. During the year, a contextualized skill-development curriculum was designed for Grades 1 to 4 at SFS. The curriculum promotes the Inpui tribe's traditional practices like basketry, skills for up-cycling natural resources, and sewing. Assistant School Leader, Senjam Henna



conducted internal training sessions. Contents shared with the teachers were centered around the socio-emotional development of the trainees along with team-building games. Topics included the impact of positive reinforcement, the cycle of beliefs and types of development in children.



**Exposure Visit to Imphal.** Among the activities for the year was a two day fun-filled and highly productive exposure visit to the state capital Imphal.

**Empowerment of Lady Teachers.** As a part of personality development drive among the teaching staff, lady teachers undertook the responsibility of being the voice of school while communicating with the parents. The school has implemented the culture of following a bilingual instructional strategy (local dialect Inpui and English). This initiative was planned by the Sunbird Trust ASLs Michelle and Henna after their keen observation and experience of living in the remote hill community. The goal was to bring about more participation of the women in the administration & decision-making of the village. (P – 28 Teachers)

**Diwali Celebrations.** As part of our endeavours to promote diversity, plurality and awareness of other cultures, the first ever Diwali celebration in Puichi was held in November 2020. Team members Amisha Singh (Langmei) & Henna (Puichi) adorned the school

assembly ground with marigold flowers, earthen lamps on banana leaves, and candles. The Chairman of the village and the youth added to the festivities by encouraging the elders and children to participate. This was the first ever Diwali celebration at Puichi.



**SALT (Sloping Agriculture Land Technique) Programme.** Shifting or "jhum" cultivation is widely practiced across the hill areas of North East India. It is a relatively inefficient and environmentally damaging form of agriculture. Under the guidance of international agriculture expert Mr David Gandhi, it was decided to institute a SALT training farm at Puichi. This technique is environmentally friendly, less labour intensive and more productive. The Puichi Village Authority had donated 4 acres of village land and work on the farm will commence from April 21.

**Parents Participation in Classroom Construction.** Sunbird Trust helped raise funds for purchasing wood to construct a classroom at Sungcham Friendship School. The parents of the students contributed bamboos and joined hands with the school-board to build the classroom. Parents, guardians and siblings of SFS students showed up to weave bamboo stick walls and contributed by carrying stacks of bamboo to the school

**School-Bag distribution for all children in Puichi Village.** The family of our team member Senjam Henna donated 300 custom-made bags to all school-going children of Puichi village. A bag distribution event was organised by the Puichi Student's Organization, Sungcham Friendship School (SFS) board members, and volunteers.



### Aben Village, Tamenglong District, Manipur

Aben, a remote village in the Tamenglong district of Manipur, is one of the latest addition to Sunbird locations, where Sunbird staff is placed. The staff here work under the mentorship of Mr. David Gandhi and Ms. Usha Gandhi who have spent 5 years in the village assisting the locals with various development activities.

**Aben Upper Primary School.** Ms Usha Gandhi was entrusted by the village to take care of this small village school with 40 students. She was ably assisted by our ASL Chitra Suvarna and alumna intern Baruisailu Onrwan. During the lockdown, tuitions were conducted at the school. Chitra under the mentorship of Ms Usha Gandhi conducted several teacher training sessions. During the year, Sunbird has contributed computer related infrastructure, solar and educational teaching aids such as whiteboards for the school

**Tuition Classes.** Besides routine classes for the tiny tots at the Primary School, Imran and Chitra conducted evening tuition classes for high school students from 7th to 12th grade teaching them English, math and science to keep them engaged during the lockdown.

**Youth Development.** Sunbird Trust assisted in sponsoring an 'Inter-Village Sports Meet' to build

relations with the neighboring villages and encourage sports amongst the youth which took place from 6th October to 8th October, 2020 at Aben, Manipur.



**SALT Farming.** Imran Thangboi, a Sunbird Trust alumnus intern, trained under the mentorship of Mr. David Gandhi in Sloping Agriculture Land Technology (SALT) for a period of 6 months. The hands-on training involved site visits and conducting seminars in neighboring villages like Impa Ningdi, Mandeu,



Tousem, amongst others. Some activities Imran trained in include insect pest management, animal husbandry, pruning hedgerows and trees, making compost pits and compost, mulching, preparing IMO and low-cost greenhouse construction

### **Kachai Village, Ukhrol District, Manipur**

Kachai is the newest Sunbird Trust project – we were introduced to the Alpha School at this village renowned for the “Kachai lemon”. The school founder Mr Mataisang and his entire family have been looking after the school with passion and dedication for over 2 decades. The school serves underprivileged children from Kachai and several neighbouring villages. Currently the school has dilapidated structures that are critically in need of renovation and repair. There is also a requirement to sponsor the school fees of the children and to improve



facilities for the over 100 “self-help” children in the hostel here.

At the request of the founder, Sunbird Trust has commenced its partnership by placing four of its own alumni graduate interns to teach in this school. Plans are afoot to station Sunbird school leaders and to help rebuild the entire school and hostels at this location.

### **MUSIC VIDEOS**

Sunbird's talented team and partner schools and institutions, have produced a series of high quality music videos. Our team members Rucha Deshpande and Ravi Kumar assisted by Samuel Luis and Siam Paite worked with the youth of Ijeirong village and children from our schools to produce these videos. Importantly, on the occasion of Sunbird Trust 6th Foundation Day on 11 Dec 2020, our partner organisations and our well wishers produced and contributed excellent music videos. Notable among these were videos from Ijeirong village, Hope Foundation Academy, Langmei, Happiness Home Churachandpur, Khongjom Standard English School, Lyzon Friendship School, Sungcham Friendship School and Majuli Island Hummingbird School. We are grateful to Grace Maureen from Shillong and Lino Awomi from Dimapur besides our very own graduate alumni-interns Sakhamlu and Alung for their outstanding performances on the occasion. Sunbird Trust was honoured to receive messages of congratulations from the Hon'ble Najma Hapatullah, Governor of Manipur and Ms Mary Kom, Olympian Boxing Medallist and member of Parliament. We are extremely grateful to Jatin Lucky and his team member Thomas Daniel for producing the final video.



# Community: Building Capacity For Sustainability

Sunbird's work is not limited to our children, but also to the communities from which they come. Our engagement with our village families include livelihood sustainability, health and modern farming methods, all with through our partner organisations like Anaha Trust and SELCO.

**Roselle Tea.** Roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) from the hibiscus family is grown in several parts of India, Africa and South East Asia. The stems are used for the production of bast fibre and the dried flowers are steeped to make a tangy infusion. Realizing that the plant was cultivated by marginal farmers across Manipur and that they had not realized the potential of marketing it, our team member Pratip Ganguly swung into action. Working with community members around Singhat town, he designed attractive packaging and made the product available across India. Now several farmers have taken up production of roselle the sale of which is making a notable contribution to their disposable income.



**Mushroom Cultivation.** In the same vein as the roselle cultivation, team member Pratip Ganguly is trying to spread mushroom cultivation as a means to boost income and nutrition amongst subsistence farmers in the Singhat area. The local entrepreneurs are faring well at times harvesting 15 to 20 kgs as many as four times a year.



**SALT Farming:** Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT) is an agricultural system that reduces soil erosion and contributes to improving and/or maintaining soil fertility through nitrogen fixation. Sunbird Trust alumnus and intern Imran Thangboi trained under the mentorship of Mr. David Gandhi in SALT, which included activities such as pest management, animal husbandry, pruning hedgerows and trees, making compost pits and compost, mulching, preparing IMO, low-cost greenhouse construction, etc. The hands-on training involved site visits and conducting seminars in neighboring villages.

**Poultry Training.** A Poultry Training Program was conducted in Singnat by a trained resource person with experience of over 10 years in poultry farming. Beneficiaries who attended the training program were



provided insight into the various processes of poultry training and will be involved in the project of handling a solar egg incubator which will benefit their poultry farms.

**Plastic Waste Management-Bottle Bricks.** Improper waste management is a major issue in villages across Manipur. Concerted efforts are being made to implement changes and our intern Shweta introduced the idea of bottle bricks in Singngat and its neighbouring villages as an alternative to burning plastic waste. She conducted awareness campaigns at schools and community gatherings. Bottle bricks were collected and used to make a bench in the community space.

**Home Visits.** Building community and fostering authentic connections comprise the core beliefs of Sunbird Trust. Team members visit the houses of students and other community members to understand the context and realities that the students come from. To garner trust among our students and the villagers, we

have been consistently engaging with the villagers and actively participating in local functions and activities. We are also working towards understanding the needs and requirements of the community.

**Government Scheme Survey.** Our NEST Fellows surveyed around 200 houses from different villages in Singngat block to understand the kind of documents/schemes that are available to the stakeholders. We are looking to partner with Haqdarshak to bring the access of 7000 schemes to 3500 households.

**Creative Vision Football Academy.** There is no dearth of talent for football in the entire North East India. However, there is a deficiency of any training or nurturing of this talent. Creative Vision Football Academy (CVFA) located in Churachandpur town in Manipur aims at addressing this gap through empowering and transforming talent of local youth. Sunbird Trust supports this visionary endeavour of Mr Ginkhan Mang Taithul, the founder of CVFA, through sponsorship of the lesser privileged children who attend the Academy.



# COVID-19 Response



## SUNBIRD TRUST SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT DURING THE COVID CRISIS

The COVID lockdown announced on 23rd March 2020 to safeguard against spread of the COVID virus resulted in great difficulty for migrant populations across India. Among those badly affected was migrants from North East India literally trapped at places like Bangalore. Realizing Sunbird's focus of working in the NE, as many



as 39 NE organisations such as Manipuri Diaspora Bangalore (MDB) and organisations representing the diaspora of Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh at Bangalore approached us for assistance. With the generous support of partner organisations like Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, Prestige Foundation, Caring Friends, Life Trust, Diya Ghar and several others, Sunbird Trust was able to distribute ration kits that would have helped over 14,000 migrant people in and around the city. Sunbird sponsored students at Bangalore worked tirelessly to help prepare thousands of ration kits and load and unload truckloads of relief material. The work of the organisation was widely commended in several print and online media.

In recognition of the work of Sunbird Trust in Bangalore, the Principal Secretary to Government, Panchayat Raj and Member Committee for Coordinating with NGOs, Private Sector and International Organizations and COVID - 19 related responses, commended Sunbird Trust with a message:-

*"I have pleasure in commending the role of the team*





*of Sunbird Trust and its Founder – CEO Col Christopher Rego (Retd) in supporting the Government of Karnataka in its COVID – 19 relief work.*

*The Trust has distributed dry rations to numerous migrant persons in need of assistance especially those from North East India during April and May 2020 in partnership with nodal organizations from North East India at Bengaluru.*

*I wish the team at Sunbird Trust all successes in their work and appreciate their spirit of altruism"*

The nationwide lockdown owing to the COVID-19 pandemic affected the rural communities in multiple ways, of which the biggest issue was the unavailability of rations. In Singngat, Sunbird Trust members and NEST Fellows volunteered to set up and run community quarantine centres to manage the influx of people returning to Manipur from cities across India. Masks, sanitizers, oximeters, PPE kits and gloves were distributed at District Hospitals and Community/Public Health Centres across five districts in Manipur. 4,000 ration kits were distributed across seven districts of Manipur which benefited 20,000 people of different backgrounds such as immigrant workers, cultivators and unemployed artisans. Various surveys were conducted



to assess the situation. Accordingly basic rations such as daal, rice and potatoes were distributed. In Langmei, Sunbird Trust sponsored groceries for around seventy households in the village. The families received rice, oil and other basic resources during this food drive at Hope Foundation Academy campus.

### **SPONSORED UNDERGRADUATE AND NEWLY GRADUATED STUDENTS**

Sunbird Trust currently sponsors 45 undergraduate students who are studying in various disciplines at colleges in different parts of the country. Of these 35 were at Bangalore and Kolar studying in the Engineering, Law, Science and Arts streams. In Oct 2020, 13 students graduated from St Joseph's College (Autonomous) Bangalore. Currently 12 of our sponsored graduates including two from the Agriculture stream had joined Sunbird Trust as interns at our various locations. We take pride that this is the completion of a full circle from sponsored students to graduates and now as our colleagues. All are set for the next stage whether post-graduation or full-fledged employment.





# Team Sunbird Trust



During a difficult and most unpredictable year, almost all of our team members stuck to their posts in their remote villages and weathered the vagaries of the COVID pandemic and its effect along with the village communities. Team members rose to the occasion to meet all challenges and innovated to the best of their ability to help our children continue their studies with digital aids and worksheets.

The flexibility and adaptability of the organisation was in evidence with the seamless transition of our team members from school to community outreach in the form of COVID relief activities. Whether in Manipur or in Bangalore, team members proactively associated themselves with COVID relief in terms of distribution of rations or medical supplies and equipment. Those in our project areas shared the hardship brought on by the lockdown including non-availability of basic food items and cooking gas with their village hosts.

A truly remarkable happening of the year was when as many as 12 of our very own sponsored graduates joined our team as interns on completion of their graduation. Importantly, it was back to roots in their home state Manipur for all of them. All were given duties in our schools under the mentorship of the "seniors" in the organisation. The pandemic has severely limited options for our young graduates, but after spending a year or two with Sunbird Trust, they would adequately fortified with experience to take on the next phase, whether of post-graduation, giving competitive exams or seeking

careers in fields of their choice.

**Farewell.** During the year team members Shivalika Gill, Angela Mathew, Arpan Sen, Michelle Markos, Rucha Deshpande, Josmy Joseph, Konish Naidu, Vishwanath Hiregoudar, Sharmistha Dey and Arjun Belliappa transitioned out of Sunbird Trust for varied career and life options. We are grateful for their immense contributions to the organisation.

**Welcome.** In addition to 12 graduate interns, all former sponsored students, we welcomed Sharmistha Dey, Chitra Suvarna, Amisha Singh, Senjam Henna Chanu, Imran Thangboi, Akanksha Rajgulati, Ankita Sanyal and Devansh Soni



**Visit of Mrs Myrna Rego,** who, along with Col Chris Rego, helped conceptualize the idea of Sunbird Trust, accompanied Col Chris on his tour of our projects across Manipur state from 15 Feb 21. Travelling extensively across the state, they had over 40 engagements with our team members, partner institutions, village authorities and Army and Assam Rifles officials.

## WORK WITH OUR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Sunbird Trust is privileged to have corporate partners and private individuals who walk with us in our challenging journey of Peace through Education. We are immensely



to them for their thoughtfulness and generosity. As ever, we are conscious of the trust that they have reposed in us and to faithfully pass on their contributions to the intended beneficiaries. We have been blessed to have so many organisations and individuals to support us, all of which cannot be mentioned here. However, prominent among these are the following:-

**Caring Friends.** We are deeply indebted to Mr Ramesh Kacholia, who, for over 5 years has mentored and supported us. He has tirelessly campaigned to bring many new donors to support us through his organisation Caring Friends. This support has helped take our Trust's work to a new plane altogether.

**Prestige Foundation.** For the past three years Prestige Foundation have joined us in supporting our operations and raising educational infrastructure across North East India. During the current year, they have helped us rebuild the Gurukul School (that was destroyed by a storm) and construct a Boys' hostel in Majuli Island Assam, construct Dew Drops Academy in Meghalaya, build a toilet for girls in Happiness Home and contribute an ambulance for the Primary Health Centre at Oinam Hill village in Manipur.

**Axis Bank Dil-Se Project.** Our partners since 2019, Axis Bank have contributed immensely to developing our partner Lyzon Friendship School at Khomunnom Village, near Singhat in Churachandpur District of Manipur. Besides school infrastructure like new classrooms, an auditorium, water supply and toilet blocks, they are also sponsoring the salaries of teachers and team members under their Axis Dilse Project

**HT Parekh Foundation.** Our partners since the past three years, the HT Parekh Foundation has supported building of educational infrastructure like the HDFC – Sunbird Trust Dining Hall for 250 children at Ijeirong, a Sunbird staff centre and a hostel for lesser resourced children. The Foundation also helps sponsor the education of over 112 children besides supporting teacher training and staff salaries.

**Anaha Trust.** Mr. Balagopal Chandrasekhar, a former IAS Officer and renowned entrepreneur and philanthropist, the founder of Anaha Trust has visited Sunbird Trust's remotest villages twice over in the past couple of years. He has contributed most generously towards raising the entire Hope Foundation Academy at Langmei Village and 4 computer centres. With a deep interest in



environmental protection, he sponsors Sunbird Trust's SALT (Sloping Agriculture Land Technology project at Puichi Village). Importantly, Mr. Balagopal is regularly in touch with our young team members mentoring and inspiring them.

**Manas Foundation.** Our generous donor Mr Ravi Modi, owner of the renowned Vedant Fashions (Manyavar) has sponsored building of an entire school at Mualdam Village in Assam (Haite Memorial Friendship School). Post visiting us in March 2021 along with Mrs Shilpi Agarwal, he has pledged more funds to build another school (Alpha Friendship School) in Ukhrul District of Manipur and sponsor nutrition support of 130 children and teacher salaries at the same school.

**Featherlite.** One of the top furniture companies in India, Featherlite has contributed chairs for our schools across Manipur and also contribute to our Nutrition Scheme. Additionally, they have helped completely renovate a hostel at Sikkim Himalaya Academy at Pani Tanki Dara, Bariakhop in West Sikkim. Featherlite has also pledged to send us over 120 bunk beds for our Sunbird Trust hostels.

**Smiths Detection Systems.** During the Financial

year, Smiths Detection Systems have made a generous contribution towards sponsoring 200 underprivileged children in three schools, one in Manipur and three in Assam. Their generous support will help positively impact the lives and destinies of these children.

**Mastek Foundation.** We are immensely grateful to Mastek Foundation for contributing Rs 20 lakhs towards building a students hostel at Wangkhei Colony near Khangshim Village in Manipur. The hostel will be completed by August'21

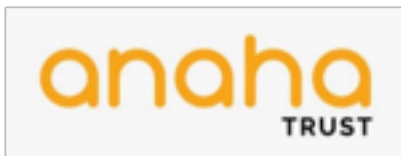
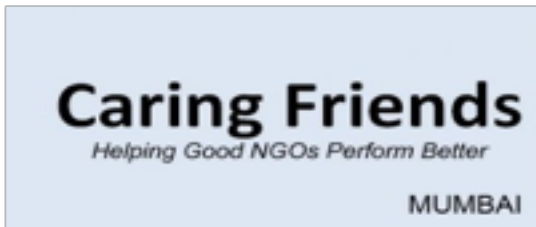
**Kurlon.** In the past, Kurlon has provided us with hundreds of blankets, bedsheets, pillows and dohars. During the current year, they have supported raising a Computer Laboratory at Hope Foundation Academy at Langmei Village in Tamenglong District of Manipur. The laboratory is likely to be inaugurated in August' 21

**Aspect (Now Alvaria).** Our partners since three years, Aspect had earlier sponsored the building of a hostel for 50 children at Hope Foundation Academy at Langmei. The continue to partner with us by sponsoring the education of 250 lesser privileged children in Manipur.

**Rapid Response Funding Initiative by RCRC for COVID – 19.** Sunbird Trust received the kind support from the Rapid Rural Community Response to Cope with Covid – 19 (RCRC) through Srijan. The aim was that the network CSOs would support the lower end of India's population based on income distribution in managing and mitigating the challenges that arose with COVID – 19. Thanks to this support, Sunbird Trust was able to distribute critically required rations and medical supplies during April to July 2020 to residents of 12 villages in Manipur, Assam and Meghalaya



# Donor & Partner Organisations





## SUNBIRD TRUST ON TELEVISION AND THE PRINT MEDIA

**Interview for Podcast on The Brand Called You.** Col Chris was interviewed for a videocast / podcast on 10th Dec 2020 on the platform The Brand Called You (TBCY) by Ashutosh Garg, noted author, storyteller and founder of the Guardian Pharmacy. TBCY is a videocast / podcast global platform where senior professionals, start-up and established entrepreneurs, social sector professionals, private equity professionals and authors from across the world are interviewed. Interviewees share their experiences, learnings, life's journey, and wisdom.

<https://youtu.be/-E2musJTHGM>

**Interview on One India Channel.** Col Chris was interviewed by well-known Kargil war veteran and "Blade Runner" (Amputee) Major Devender Pal Singh (Retd.) on 8th Oct 2020 as part of the Never Say Die series. The series brings inspirational stories of former soldiers who drew lessons from their days in uniform to face the struggles of everyday life successfully and contribute to society.

<https://youtu.be/8u45j2mINAA>

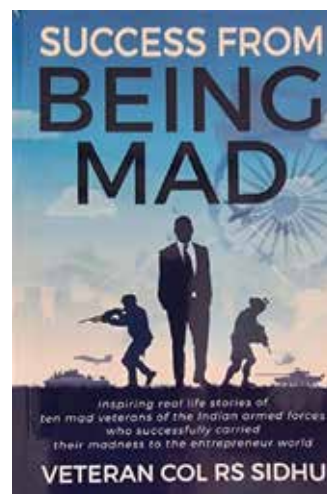
## PRINT MEDIA

Several articles appeared in various print media during the current year. Some prominent instances are as below:-

- Col Chris Rego was featured amongst ten selected armed forces veterans in the book "Success from Being Mad" by Col RS Sidhu (Retd.). The book projects inspiring real life stories of ten "mad" veterans of the Indian armed forces who successfully carried their

"madness" to the entrepreneur world.

- "Fostering Peace through Education", an article in Armed Forces magazine Medals and Ribbons of the quarter Jan – Mar 2021
- FPSJ Review of Art and Politics, Imphal, article "Sunbird Trust with big presence in Manipur opens Relief Centre for Food for Distressed young NE Professionals stranded in Bangalore."
- Good Samaritans Galore in Bangalore Say Stranded People, Eastern Mirror Nagaland, 20th May 2020
- Caring and Sharing during COVID 19: Manipur Migrants in Bengaluru Safety Net, E Pao online portal, 20th May 20.
- Article Sunbird Trust reaches out to NE folks in B'lore, Sangai Express, Imphal, 10 Apr 2020
- Sunbird Trust supports NE Indian Community at Bengaluru, Editorial of 9th Jun 2020 in the Morning Bell newspaper, Imphal.



- Article "Working-Selflessly-in-Times-of-COVID-19" by Ms Rashmi Oberoi in The Citizen, 1st May 2020

- Article "COVID Lockdown Crisis: Bengaluru Citizens Rally to Support Assam Migrants" Northeast Blog, Assam, 26th May 2020

- Article "A City rises to support its Migrants amid COVID – 19", by Jaishree,

Womens' Web, 27th May 2020

- The Good Samaritans in Times of Crisis, News4 Masses, 22nd Apr 2020



## CONNECT WITH US

✉ [connect@sunbirdtrust.com](mailto:connect@sunbirdtrust.com)

🌐 [sunbirdtrust.com](http://sunbirdtrust.com)

**f** [Sunbird Trust](#)

📷 [sunbird\\_northeastindia](#)