

## Summer Course on Advocacy

NCAS conducted summer course for students pursuing post graduation in varied disciplines from 20th May to 20th June 2015. The aim of the course was to develop a holistic and nuanced understanding of social issues that plague our country. It sought to build a pro-people perspective and impart knowledge and skills necessary for adopting effective advocacy measures. The entire course was spread over a period of four weeks. The course was a mix of theory; practical experience in the form of field visits and compiling assignments and guest lectures by subject experts and advocacy practitioners. Some of the topics covered in the course incorporated- Indian society, social movements and social change, Political theories and governance, Human rights and social justice, Applied economics, Development theories, and People centered advocacy. The methodology was participatory and consisted of case study analysis, discussions on films and interactive sessions with experts. For more practical and field based experience, NCAS organized two field visits. The first one was at Yavat where the aim was to get the students acquainted with Community Based Monitoring (CBM), a feature under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). Yavat is a village in Daund taluka in Pune district. The team visited the government hospital there and interacted with activists of MASUM (Pune district nodal organization for CBM) and the local CBM committee members. Students learnt about community based organizations (CBOs), people's movements, and how and people's representatives with the help of voluntary organizations directly give feedback about the functioning of public health services. They also got to know about how the community monitoring process involves a three-way partnership between healthcare providers and managers (health system); the community, community-based organizations, NGOs and Panchayati Raj Institutions and how the emphasis is laid on the developmental spirit of 'fact-finding' and 'learning lessons for improvement' rather than fault finding. The second visit was at Shashwat, a non-governmental organization at Manchar which is about 90 kms from Pune. The visit was planned with the aim to show how the NGO works in tribal area. Shashwat was formed in 1996



Summer course students on field visit.

and helped tribal communities develop sustainable fishing in the Dimbhe reservoir. In recognition of Shashwat's accomplishments, it was awarded the 2012 UNDP Equator Prize for Freshwater Resource Management chosen from among 812 nominations in 113 countries. Students visited the Dimbhe dam and learnt about fishing, fish distribution and the ways and means of livelihood for the fishermen there. They got to know about the Katkari community (one of the three PVTGs in Maharashtra) whose first generation is receiving education presently.

Students were also made to visit Malin village in the Ambegaon taluka of the Pune district. Exactly a year ago, a landslide had occurred there. The landslide which hit early in the morning while residents were asleep was believed to have been caused by a burst of heavy rainfall, and killed at least 134 people. Activists told students about how it happened and some of the reasons attributed to the

landslide; how people survived and how Shashwat helped them. The landslides were caused by heavy rainfall that had begun the previous day, with the village receiving 10.8 cm of rain on 29 July 2014 and the downpour continuing throughout the following day. The environmental destruction that resulted in the landslide is believed to have had more than one cause - mindless deforestation in the area being one of the important ones. Change in agricultural practices - villagers had recently shifted from cultivation of rice and finger millet to wheat, which required leveling of steep areas - contributed to instability of the hills. Also, the construction of the nearby Dimbhe Dam ten years ago was considered as a possible reason. The instability of the hillsides was due to the construction activities, which are often done without careful analysis of environmental consequences. Stone quarrying, among other types of construction, was also outlined as one of the causes for the instability of the hillside. Students also visited the anganwadi (ICDS Center) there and interacted with the workers.

Apart from the in house faculty, NCAS invited external resource persons to conduct guest lectures. Prominent subject experts shared critical insights with students. Prof. Madhav Gadgil, an eminent ecologist, spoke on issues in governance of natural resources. Dr. Shailendra Kharat and Dr. Shruti Tambe from the Savitribai Phule Pune University spoke on Indian Politics and Indian Society respectively. Mr. Ajit Abhyankar, Trustee, Academy of Political & Social Studies and a senior trade union leader spoke on the issues in Indian economy. Mr. Henry Tiphagne (Executive Director of People's Watch) talked on the concept of Human Rights. Ms. Kiran Moghe, senior leader of the All India Democratic Women's Association spoke on women's rights issues. Ms. Seema Kakade



Session in progress

elaborated upon the practical part of the social audit process under the MGNREGS. Ms. Mayuri (Action of the Rights of the Child - ARC) and Mr. Sandeep Barve (Yuvak Kranti Dal) shared their views on child rights and issues in RTE. Mr. S P Shukla, Chairman of Centre for Policy Analysis, New Delhi and Former Secretary, Finance, Government of India delivered the valedictory address. He threw light on the current policy paradigm and possible areas for advocacy in near future in his speech. Students were assigned a topic each in their interest area on which they researched, deliberated and wrote detailed assignments and submitted by the end of month. They visited many places and collected information about their specific titles. Around 20 students had enrolled for the course from multiple states including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.