

On 23 November 2024, Prof. Nibedita Ray-Bennett (founder of the Ambassadors Programme), Dr. Stephen Samuel (ADN Advisor), Dr. Madhulika Sahoo (ADN Regional Coordinator), Mr. Rajesh Patra (ADN Project Coordinator), and Ms. Usha Behera (ADN Ambassador Coordinator) visited the Case Station for Avoidable Snakebite Deaths (CaSA) in Ganjam District of Odisha, India. CaSA functions through a health promotion and education programme called the Ambassadors Programme.

The team met with 22 Ambassadors from three villages and assessed their level of knowledge retained from the awareness-raising programmes delivered throughout the year. They also identified a plan for action (PoA) for 2025.

SU MONDAL

Nine people (three men and six women) attended this meeting arranged at the community hall. Of which one was the sarpanch, one was the gatekeeper for the Ambassador Programme, and the remainder were the Ambassadors. The Ambassadors confirmed that they attended the October outreach workshop and spread the information to their neighbours and family members about what they had learned. We also revisited some of the questions from the October and previous Workshops to assess their retention level. The retention level was very high.



Picture 1: Community Hall, Su Mondal

For the next year, the sarpanch, gatekeeper and a few other Ambassadors identified the following PoA for 2025.

- Hold a rally before the monsoon season (third or last week of June).
- The rally should target the participants' villages to raise the programme's visibility on the snakebite issue at a local level.
- Develop a few laminated posters and put them up in public places, roadsides and local schools.
- Arrange a meeting at the block level with all the sarpanches and block development officers in June.
- Develop short reels during the rally. Ambassadors should develop these reels.
- Target local WhatsApp groups to cascade information.

The discussion also focussed on the sustainability of the Programme through the engagement of the local coordinator and Ambassadors.

Problems identified: Anti-snake venom (ASV) is not available at the Community Health Centre (CHC), according to the sarpanch and gatekeeper. The nearest hospital is 80 km from Su Mondol. Therefore, according to them, a patient cannot reach this hospital within 60 minutes of the 'golden hour'.

Action taken: Prof. Nibedita Ray-Bennett has raised this problem with CaSA Advisor Dr Amarendra Mohapatra, who has kindly agreed to visit three health facilities of our field site towards the end of December and cross-check this information. Does the CHC stock ASV? If yes, why is the community unaware, and why is ASV not administered? If not, why?

BURUJHARI

Seventeen people (two men and 13 women) attended this meeting arranged at the village temple. Of the 13 women, two participated in the October outreach workshop. Most Ambassadors did not attend this workshop due to the central and local level elections and an ongoing five-month strike to

demand funds from the newly elected BJP government. A couple of women also reported that snakes had entered their houses. Burujhari is a mountain village with many surrounding forests. So, there are lots of snakes. Since most Ambassadors did not attend the October outreach workshop, we ran three scenario-based learning exercises. We also discussed the POA for 2025.



Picture 2: inside the temple, Burujhari



Picture 3: Outside the temple, Burujhari

The women Ambassadors liked the idea of a village-focus rally and posters with helpful content. They identified the content that they would like:

- Local helpline numbers;
- Dos and Don'ts when bitten by a snake at home or in the field.

They also identified where to put up these posters: i) schools; ii) Anganwadi centres; iii) centre of the

village; iv) entrance of the village; v) temples; vi) panchayat office; vii) local shops.

Action to be taken: Develop posters in consultation with the Knowledge Exchange Network and position them during the rally in June 2025.

CHACHINA

Twelve women attended the meeting arranged at the SHG office, half of whom also participated in the October outreach workshop. We asked them several questions from the workshops, and their knowledge level was very high. They remembered all the answers for three scenarios.

One woman Ambassador informed us that three snakes had recently entered her house, and she paid INR 1500 to hire a private helpline person to remove them.

All women who attended the workshop agreed to be Ambassadors. We discussed the roles and responsibilities of an Ambassador, the importance of organising monthly meetings and assessing the feasibility of achieving this. We learnt that the Self-Help Group (SHG) Mission Shakti - meetings occur two to three times a month, and one of these meetings can be leveraged for the Ambassador Programme discussion. We also learnt from the women Ambassadors that they enjoy attending meetings because they give them opportunities to exchange knowledge and solutions, share medical information and meet with friends – among other things.

We asked whether the Ambassador Programme is making any difference to their lives. The women Ambassadors answered: 'We are informed and aware'; 'We know now that we should go for medical treatment for a snakebite'; 'We learnt a lot'; 'Thank you for coming to our village. We attend various meetings and raise awareness about snakebites with other group members.'

Problem identified: A couple of women Ambassadors requested for the local snake helpline phone number.

Action taken: On 7 November 2024, the phone number was shared with all the Ambassadors



Picture 4: SHG Mission Shakti Office, Chachina