

Knowledge Fair- Guwahati 5-6 February, 2020



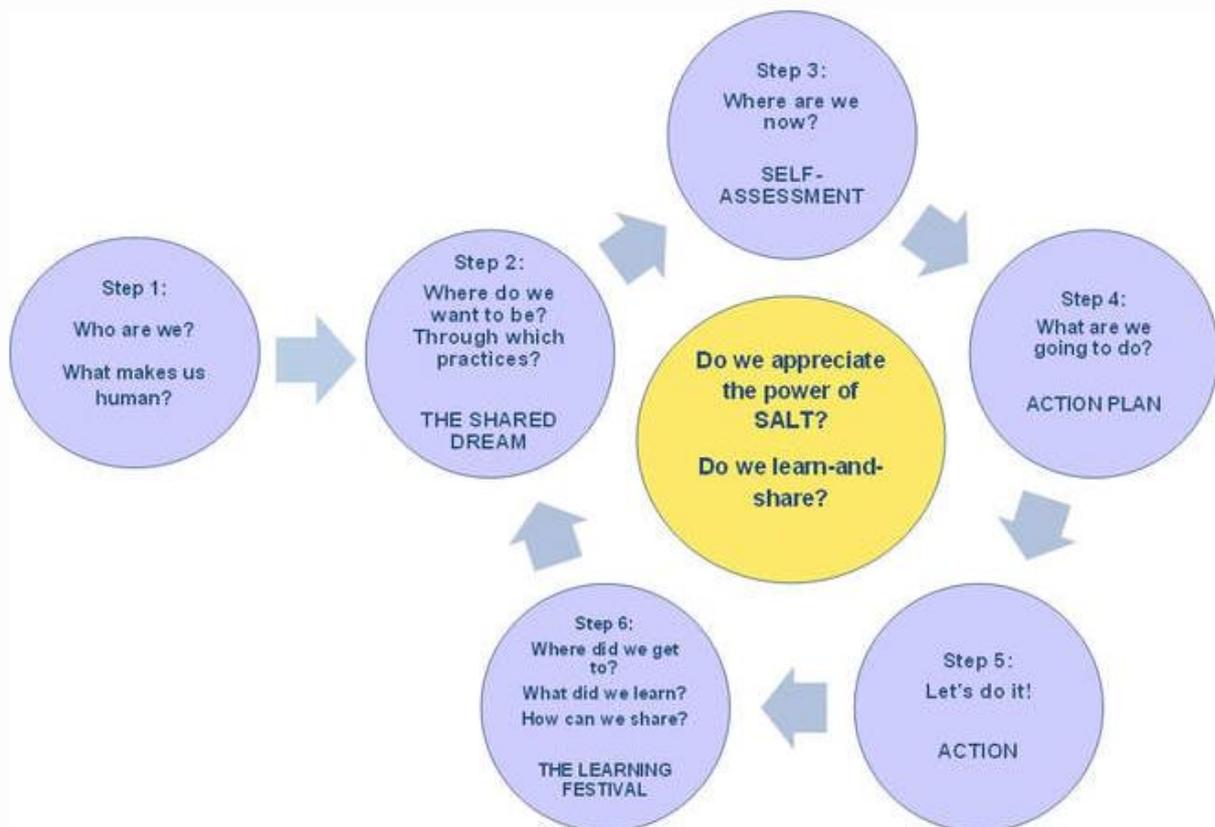
“We could not differentiate or segregate as to who was the community, who was the NGO, who was the leader, who was the facilitator here”. Laura Simms, Story teller based in New York

“For two days our SALT communities from New York to Assam and from Himachal Pradesh to Rajasthan truly became a mini constellation integral to the bigger Constellation and firmament that we are so proud to be a part of.” Ruchira Neog, Voluntary Health Association of Assam

Background of the project: Constellation, Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI), Centre for North East Studies & Policy Research (C-NES) have been facilitating Community life competence process and SALT for past 2 and a half years in three districts of Assam, India. The aim has been to stimulate communities to respond to the issue of child using the strength-based Approach. Objective of the Knowledge Fair was to bring together community members to share and exchange their experiences so that they can apply their learning back in their village.

The Community Life Competence Process (CLCP) is a form of learning cycle where a community takes action and learns from its experience. That learning becomes the basis for another round of action and learning. The cycle goes on indefinitely: there is no end point. The steps of the learning cycle allow a community to divide what can feel a frightening challenge into a set of specific and manageable steps. SALT is the way in which facilitators interact with communities and gives energy to the action learning cycle.

- S** Stimulate and Support
- A** Appreciate
- L** Listen, Learn, Link
- T-** Transfer, Team



Knowledge Fair- Knowledge Fair is a step in CLCP when we bring together communities to share and learn from the actions they have been taking. -The state level Knowledge Fair was held at Ginger Hotel, Guwahati on 5-6 February, 2020 with the theme “Communities take action on SDGs using Community Life Competence Process (CLCP)”. The program was jointly organised by Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI), Centre for North East Studies & Policy Research (C-NES) . The event was supported by Taos Institute and the Constellation. The event was attended by the community members from Udalguri, Kamrup and Bongaigaon districts, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), SALT champions, SALT facilitators and the representatives from the organisations such as Medtronic Foundation, MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child, Catholic Health Association of India(CHAI).

Preparation meeting- The Conference officially begins when all participants gather, but the actual beginning occurs in a series of preparatory meetings. The facilitation team met twice on skype and then in person a day before the event. The group of facilitators discussed their dream for the meeting based on what took place last year, and what issues have surfaced among community members and staff. We discussed questions which might be asked to stimulate a deeper conversation was the soil of our contemplation. We were using the tool of storytelling as a way of encouraging a fuller and more intimate conversation.

Proceedings at the Knowledge Fair

The Knowledge Fair included the sharing of field experiences in regard to mobilization of community through the SALT approach and its outcomes. The program began with a welcome address by Ms. Ruchira Neog of Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) in which she briefed the objectives of the event. She also gave a short background of the project SALT.

This was followed by an innovative and interesting round of silent introduction by the participants. After the round of introductions, the participants marked the regions they belong to or associate with, by placing coloured bindis on the map of India.

Furthermore, Ms. Bhaswati Khaund Goswami, Communication Officer of C-NES added that people associated with SALT are like small stars in the Constellation and they share their experiences and with each other at a platform like the Knowledge Fair.

Renowned story teller of international repute, Ms. Laura Simms travelled all the way from New York, to participate in the Knowledge Fair, and listen to the stories of the communities from Bongaigaon, Kamrup and Udalguri. She started the session by sharing a story of the post-earthquake effect in Haiti where she visited to listen to the voices of the women affected in the devastating Haiti earthquake.

The next session was the group activity where the participants were divided into 12-13 groups. The participants in each group were asked to share their stories with other members of the groups. They were given the following questions to share among themselves:

1. Name a problem which was solved through the SALT approach.

2. What motivated you to do the work?
3. Why didn't you do it before?
4. What changes did it bring?



A few snippets from the participants are as follows:

Ms. Junti Daimari, a SALT champion from Silabandha village of Udalguri district shared “Before getting oriented into SALT process I used to drink alcohol and consume intoxicating substances. But after I got involved in the SALT approach of mobilising my community to take action on their dreams, I realised that I had to change myself first before asking others to change. So, I decided to stop drinking alcohol.”

A community member of Kadamguri village shared “Earlier the practice of open defecation was highly prevalent in our village. People had been waiting to get pucca toilets from Public Health Engineering Department(PHED) and therefore, they didn't construct toilets by their own. But after the SALT process, the villagers were motivated through the SALT approach and they constructed toilets in their household instead of waiting to get toilets from the Government department.” And now they feel that their village smells better!



Jagdish Sarkar, a community member of Bongaigaon district shared the changes they noticed after the SALT process. He mentioned “Because of poor road connectivity, the people of our village had to face lot of problems and one of the major problems was road blockade during the rainy season. But when the community was motivated through the SALT process they took the onus on themselves, and started building bridges with locally available resources such as bamboo to solve the problem.”

Lipika Bharali, a SALT Champion from Demow village shared “In our locality, the content of iron in water was high and as a result of this people were suffering from stomach problems. And this emerged as an issue that we would like to resolve through our action plan. The SALT process enabled us to assess the level of our problems and how we can take collective action to improve the situation. For instance, once we identified that the harmful effects of high iron content in our water was affecting the health of our people, almost every household started constructing filter with locally available resources so as to lessen or contain the iron content in our drinking water.”

Many success stories and stories of dreams and aspirations, emerged during the program. Apart from the above mentioned, Auxiliary Nurse Midwifery (ANMs) present at the program shared that through the SALT process people became more sensitized about the importance of immunisation and were ready to accept the responsibility of ensuring complete immunisation for their children, and now they take active participation in immunisation.

SALT visit to Hiragata village of Kamrup District on 6th February, 2020

There was a SALT visit to Hiragata village by the team from VHAI, C-NES, the Constellation, MAMTA-HIMC and CHAI. The visiting team interacted with the community of Hiragata and the School Management Committee of Hiragata L.P School. They also observed the best practices in school and as well as in the community.



“In the village, community leaders were the main voices. But we had a chance, because of our storytelling focus, to ask questions that let others, particularly women respond, who may not have dared to speak when so many strangers were present.” Laura Simms

Following are some strengths of the village as shared by the visiting participants:

- Male participation in familial responsibilities and household chores sharing has improved.
- Villagers have done self-assessment following the CLCP cycle and set up goals and there has been active participation of the villagers.
- Villagers have sense of ownership and vision.
- Engaging the local govt. set up would be an effective way forward for sustainability
- Self-realization among the community about the importance of immunization.

Thus, the two day Knowledge Fair and SATL Visit were hectic but an enriching experience in that it was a tremendous learning and unlearning of sorts...there were experiences that were common, learnings that were new, there were stories shared, of grit, determination and perseverance from Haiti to Assam, from Himachal Pradesh to Rajasthan and it opened up wider vistas for learning how the SALT approach and CLCP continue touching the lives of people, inspiring them to take action and change their lives for the better.

After Experience Reflection (AER)

Participations did an After Experience Reflection (AER) from the Knowledge Fair 2020 .The organising team discussed on what went well, what didn't go well and what can be improved.

- The event was well coordinated but the time management could have been better.
- Participants expressed openly and were confident.
- All the participants were good listeners.
- The participants were given a chance to speak.
- As part of dream building in SALT, communities can be encouraged to express their dreams through Role play, Dance, Music and other interesting forms of communication.
- We should have encouraged the community members (rather than the leaders) to present in the village SALT visit
- In the community, it might be interesting to have an evening class for parents to record the stories they heard growing up and their life experiences and memories, making a living library at the school about the growth and history of the community - create a biology course based on what grows there etc.. create and make books, as well as consider health from the point of view of what their grandparents knew about healing. All giving more strength to everyone.
- An accompanying array of conversations was always taking place between activities and at meals where people could share more deeply based on what they observed and needed. All the elements of our gathering were supported by these seemingly on the side connections.

Blogs and videos on the Knowledge Fair

[Knowledge is Fair](https://aidscompetence.ning.com/profiles/blogs/knowledge-is-fair)

<https://aidscompetence.ning.com/profiles/blogs/knowledge-is-fair>

[A small revolution of human resourcefulness and creativity](https://aidscompetence.ning.com/profiles/blogs/small-revolution-of-human-resourcefulness-and-creativity)

<https://aidscompetence.ning.com/profiles/blogs/small-revolution-of-human-resourcefulness-and-creativity>

[SALT effects go deep within](https://aidscompetence.ning.com/profiles/blogs/salt-effects-go-deep-within)

<https://aidscompetence.ning.com/profiles/blogs/salt-effects-go-deep-within>

[Deep conversations when people dare to be themselves](https://aidscompetence.ning.com/profiles/blogs/deep-conversations-when-people-dare-to-be-themselves)

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(We sincerely acknowledge and appreciate the support by Taos Institute which enabled communities from the three districts to share their experiences. A big thank you!)