

# 12-member team travels 940 km in Marathwada to find ways of dealing with drought

## The long march to show them a ray of hope

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**S**TARTING from January, a team of motivated people, with a resolve to trigger a thought process on dealing with the perennial drought-like situation amongst the poorest of the poor in Marathwada, embarked on a journey on foot from Kasari Tanda, a village in Beed district. Fiftynine days later, and after covering more than 940 km, their journey ended at Mahatma Gandhi's ashram Sewa Gram, in Wardha. They cov-

ered 160 villages across nine districts and what they saw was the failure of various systems of livelihood caused by the drought in the area.

"Agriculture, cooperative, governance as well as irrigation and other alternative sources of livelihood have failed at the village level in Marathwada," says Kaustubh Dewle of Pune-based Green Earth Consulting, one of the participants of the walk. The details of the journey were shared with participants of the peer learning workshop of Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) programme, held at

Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA) on Sunday.

According to Dewle, it is the failure of livelihood support systems that has resulted in the high migration rate from Marathwada. "As a villager, it is one's right to expect that there shall be some sort of livelihood in the villages or in nearby areas, but that is not there. The government's projects seem to work only in 10 per cent of the villages," he says.

As many as 12 participants completed the entire stretch

of the journey while 12,000 people participated in various phases. The walking team was backed by a team of assesses comprising experts from various sociological fields. The team reached the villages two-three days before the walking team reached to assess and discuss the various effects the drought was having on the people. "The objective was two-fold — getting information and triggering a thought process amongst the villagers to deal with various drought related problems," Dewle says. According to PACS

### PACS

- PACS has been able to reach out to 35 lakh of people in Marathwada and Vidarbha region.
- Supports 24 projects covering 68 blocks and 1,900 villages.
- Supports around 2,500-3,000 self help groups (SHG's) in the two regions.

Marathwada and Vidarbha regions have remained neglected due to lack of infrastructure development and investments in agriculture and industries.