



Trustees

Indira Jena
Lalita Missal
B. Rajamani
Suman Kumar
K. Sandhya Reddy

Advisory Council

Annie S. Mathews
Gitanjali Mishra
Jhumur Lahiri
Sujatha Rita
Urmila Subba Rao
Usha Ashok Kumar

Editorial

Indira Jena
Aruna Masarguppi

NIRNAYA

an indian women's fund
11, Deepthi Apartments,
S.P. Road, Secunderabad - 3
A.P. India.

Phone : 91 40 2780 5089
Fax : 91 40 2771 7305
hyd2_nirnaya@sancharnet.in
www.nirnaya.org

Participatory Impact assessment (PIA):

Grantee progress

Nirnaya regularly holds participatory impact assessment programmes with its grantees to take stock of the progress made by each group. PIA, apart from being a kind of a report card for the groups also helps them identify their individual and group's strengths and weakness as through a SWOT (strengths/ weaknesses/ opportunities/ threats) analysis. This exercise helps in course correction, mapping of the groups future and helps identify areas that need rethinking. It is also an opportunity for the group to reflect on various issues facing it and reflect upon the impact made over time. As the PIA clearly throws up the needs of the community, it becomes easy for Nirnaya to fund activities needed by the community, instead of thrusting programs on it.

This exercise is extremely useful for the group as well as the funding agency. It is done every quarter as well as annually. The latest status of some of the groups funded by Nirnaya have been briefly captured to give readers a birds eye view of Nirnaya's work.

RDC, Denkanikottai, Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu.

About the group

This group was selected for support by Nirnaya in 2002 to enable K. Gowri to study and analyze the community, area and needs of her work focus. She started with initial interactions with the Irula tribal community. In consideration of the difficult terrain of work, Nirnaya extended a fellowship to Stalin, another associate. During this period they built up their work, secured legal status for RDC in 2004 and established their

credibility with the local government and other actors of civil society like medical personnel, Lions Club, college and schoolteachers and lawyers.

Follow up to the Building Links conference 2003, need and use of revolving fund for income generation purposes and assessment of programmatic and financial management capacities of key functionaries in terms of scaling up project and organization were some of the broad areas of the PIA.

The PIA clearly reflected vast changes in the personality of the participants, their growing confidence and courage to take on the world to grow and self actualise.

Mariamamma who had stepped out of the village the first time to attend the conference in May 2003, recollected how she had shed fear, since she understood that fear is more in the mind. It was the same with Letchumi, who said, "Before going for the conference I would tremble at the sight of a man in uniform but after the conference we have been able to lobby with the departments and collectors and they are now afraid of us!" She added that all this was possible because they got organized into sangams and learnt what they could fight for their rights. They



Change begins at home

'What about me?' was a poignant cry of the woman protagonist in the play by the same name, staged to commemorate the women's day by Nirnaya.

Eons have passed, be it in the times of Mahabharata or Ramayana or the present day in the twenty first century, little seems to have changed for the woman. This static sprint – if we can call it that, was beautifully brought out in the play.

A woman plays her part as a dutiful daughter, good sister, loving wife, devoted mother all her life, little wondering what has become of her, a woman, an individual, along the way!

It is really strange; women make half people on earth and are yet discriminated against across the cultures, across the countries and continents, and across time. The universality and staying power of this phenomenon is in itself a baffling wonder. Has the masculine overpowered the feminine gender or has the female let herself be lorded over?

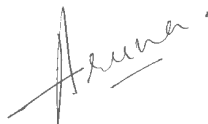
Being a woman and looking dispassionately within, one gets an uncomfortable feeling that the latter could be somehow true!

Woman is essentially a nurturer who looks beyond herself, to the safety of her offspring, wellbeing of her home, care for husband... in the process takes a second place as a trade-off for this assurance. Probably pampering the 'mankind' somehow could have become a practice, an obeisance to the role played by the male once upon a time, of a hunter-protector in the cave man days.

But one must understand that the times have changed, and the male and female roles in society have almost become monosexual. The feminist movement started precisely to bring home the message, but sadly after decades of legislating, card carrying, rallying very little has changed for the woman on the ground. She is discriminated for being a female, then for bearing a girl child, (because it comes with a dowry tag), she is denied education, is under nourished, she is treated as an unpaid servant in her in-laws family, she is burnt for dowry, divorced in the most frivolous way in some communities, the list runs endless.

All this only proves that some thing more has to be done to break the deep 'taking the second place' conditioning. This can happen only when an attitudinal change come from within the society-especially woman.

Woman is the one who brings the male as well as the female into the world, hence she controls the destiny. If she wants to put a stop to male domination of the female kind, it is within her power. All she has to do is to begin treating her male and female progeny at par and inculcating a strong sense of equality in both and respect towards the female in the minds of the male children. This may not change things overnight, but surely will transform the world when the attitude gathers critical mass.



recognised the efforts of RDC the financial and capacity building support from Nirnaya in bringing about this change. The members present found the need for impact assessment for their own development because now their status had changed from mere wage earners, and the government too was taking note of them.

Lessons for dealing with practical life problems like saving, money sources and income generating schemes were brought out through skits and games.

The remarkable thing about the group was they valued the financial support by Nirnaya and wanted to protect the corpus by exploring other means of finance such as bank loans, government subsidies etc.

On the whole the group has matured in every way, be it facing day today problems, handling finances or outlining the future.

The terrain in which RDC chose to work is a daily challenge. The entire area falling within the forest reserve area the inhabitants are in pockets, neither accessible to each other nor to the town.

Guleti and Thaluvapeta villages are glaring cases of the way in which the Irula community in the area exist as non persons. Pursuing the goal of getting the community the status it has a right to RDC commenced work in the additional villages of Guleti and Thaluvapeta by motivating the community to form sangams. There are 20 families in Guleti resettled with government housing. The community men and women are striking because they are quite young and already have more than 4 children. Finding the need for a school in its village the community got together and put up a thatched roof school. They also pay the teacher a nominal amount so the children get an opportunity to study. While the health and nutrition status appears to be normal, hygiene level in the surroundings of the village is poor. The occupation of the community is basket weaving. The product is very crude for two reasons, the first being that the people can only take the crude bamboo for their use, and the other is that they lack skills for this activity. RDC is lobbying with the government to process the community certificates, which will enable the community to access non timber forest produce etc.

Participatory Impact assessment

Disability does not stop Janaki

Janaki is our speech and hearing challenged program volunteer in Nalgonda district who completes one year. In this connection Nirnaya held a participatory impact assessment with her. Jointly cross checking on her action plan and achievements we could see that she had completed all her plans. This was on the basis of a needs assessment of the differently able women in the three villages, Gaddikondaram, Cheruvupally and Rajupeta of Thiparthi mandal.

Her achievements

Single handedly, despite her disability, Janaki has managed to get the women to form themselves into sangams. She has lobbied with the government to get the women the necessary medical certification. With this certification of their disability seven women were sanctioned tricycles as part of the poverty alleviation program, Velugu. Ten members in each of the 3 villages have been awarded pensions by the local government.

She has helped open savings accounts for the sangams in State Bank of India. She not only managed to do all this in one year, but has also convinced Nirnaya to sanction revolving funds to each of the sangams for carrying out income generating activities.

When Mohan from Nirnaya asked her how she felt about all these achievements and how had the Nirnaya fellowship helped her, she answered with a gleam in her eye and a wide smile, using the sign language "I have been able to do so much for women who were totally neglected. I am perceived as a person who can get things done with the government / bank etc, ... the people in the villages would initially look at me with pity, they now greet me with a 'namaskar' and



ask me to share a meal with them."

Some of the achievements as she sees are: women with disability are sitting together in their groups and discussing about their own development. The mothers of women with disability are keen to ensure that their daughters are not left in the lurch and they see the sangams as a group which will take up collective responsibility.

Among the women who got the tricycles is a young girl who has just taken her 10th class examinations. She used to be carried from home to the bus stop, to the school and back every day. Since she got the tricycle she has become independent and mobile. This mobility is a great relief to the affected women and their families.

The local government offices recognize Janaki as a reliable representative of women with disability and co-operate with her. There is good press coverage of her work. Janaki's future plans are to:

- ❖ Expand the area to another 3 villages in the same mandal with disabled women.
- ❖ Motivate women who are 'normal' to form separate groups.
- ❖ Ensure sustainability of the IGPs that the sangams have started.
- ❖ Focus on skill training.



Participatory Impact assessment

HRD initiatives support in Kurnool

Nirnaya has sponsored zari /zardozi embroidery and fashion designing training centres in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh. Vasantha Kumari from Nirnaya visited the centres to interact with the students and assess the impact of the training in terms of the future plans of the students.

Impact

It is proven to Nirnaya many times over that investing in women is about the wisest thing to do. Rarely has an investment in skills, activities desirable to a community gone awry. There is a mutual satisfaction of time and money well spent.

Out of the 15 students in the zari/zardozi embroidery training, four have already received supply orders. Eight expressed their desire to teach at the same zari training centre. They would like help in marketing their work in the initial stages. All the students are confident of getting orders or employment.

The significant change that Nirnaya support has brought about in terms of increased skill levels, earning potential, ability to repay loans, changes in their lifestyle are evident from the case studies of Aktar Unnisa, Mahubia and a few others. One Faiz Unnisa spoke about her future plans to open a school for girls between 6 and 13 years of age. She is also considering setting up a small unit with some of her co-trainees, to conduct Zari embroidery trainings in the near by villages as there is a lot of demand for it. Her ultimate mission is to open a boutique with these students.

Nirnaya Highlights

Fund Raising



Nirnaya organized a dance theatre production by Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant and her troupe on the theme, 'What About Me?' in commemoration of women's day and in aid of women with disability. The show was held in Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad on the evening of 6th March 05, and was co-sponsored by State Bank of India, Andhra Bank, Canara Bank, Smart Forex & Travels (P) Ltd, Jana Chaitanya Housing Pvt. Ltd. all from Hyderabad, and two individuals, Uday Varma and Verona Groverman from the U.S.A. and The Netherlands respectively. The chief guest of the evening was Ms. Gayathri Ramachandran, I.A.S

There was an appreciative audience. The dance was brilliant, sensitive, thought provoking, challenging all at the same time.

The press coverage was good in view of our having organized a pre-event press meet.

The proceeds of the donor pass sales were handed over to the representatives of the Dhalakshmi Mahila Vikalangula Sangam of Cheruvupally, Thiparthi mandal, Nalgonda district in Andhra Pradesh by the chief guest. The group comprises of disabled women who want to start a tent house as a means of living and earning with dignity.

Program Related Investments

Coming into their own -and how!

The development of the two dalit women's groups, Ambedkar Mahila Sangam and Goutam Buddha Mahila Sangam of Shamshallpur village, Nyalkal mandal, Medak district in Andhra Pradesh is one of those heartwarming cases where one feels that all the trouble is worth it. These two community - based women's groups were formed 4 years ago at the motivation of an erstwhile program volunteer of Nirnaya. Since the past year however, the groups have been functioning independently with a monthly visit from a Nirnaya representative.



Achievements

The groups have been careful to ensure that all the members got to avail of the loan from Nirnaya's PRI. Their repayment of the installment is on the day the Nirnaya representative visits them. There have been some delays by one or two members but it is made up in the next month. The manner in which all the women stand up for each other despite underlying tensions among them is admirable.

So beholden were the women of the community that they decided to honour Indira Jena, the head of Nirnaya, as a token of their gratitude on March 28, 2005.

The two women's groups took up the responsibility. The occasion was carefully planned. The women came dressed in their Sunday best. Indira was offered a special chair, the two group leaders one by one and applied 'kum kum' and draped a shawl around her and presented her with a memento. A group photo followed this. Following this, Lakshamma distributed biscuits to all those who gathered and we were served the local 'chai' or tea. What was touching was that

the members chose to forego a day's wages just to be there for the occasion.

In Kurnool it was a thorns and roses story where one of the 7 groups who had availed of the PRI from Nirnaya could not carry out the proposed activity and therefore also defaulted in loan repayment. For the rest of the groups it turned out that all the members made a profit which they spent on



medicines, education of their children, business, vegetables, repair of their house, buying clothes, creating assets like sewing machines etc., One young woman who is unmarried, kept the money for her dowry.

One of the women said that initially her husband used to ridicule her, but now that she is contributing to running household, she is treated with respect. It was evident from the discussions and personal interviews that the members benefited from the PRI and while creating direct economic empowerment it indirectly contributed to their social empowerment.

For the first time in the history of the area the Women's Day celebration in March 2005 brought together 500 women on a common platform.

Women are good managers of money and investing in them will lead to an investment in a whole community and thereby result in a holistic society where greater harmony and sustainability prevail.

Supporting the Disabled

Nirnaya's essential mission has been to help the women, and that too those who are too poor too illiterate even to access funds or support from any formal avenues. In keeping with her aim, Nirnaya selected Zubeida, who is a 23-year-old for extending small grant support.

She is physically challenged and added to it has been deserted by her husband. The support is for helping differently able women from the poorer section of society by organizing them into groups and mobilizing them to access their rights. She works in three villages of Sangareddi of Medak district, Andhra Pradesh. Nirnaya has awarded her a fellowship for a period of three years starting March 2005. Zubeida's plan is to help create an identity and status for disabled women at the family and larger society levels, make them conscious and confident that they are no less than the other 'normal' people.

Zubeida has some clearly defined objectives in mind, like, build the women's self-esteem, create sensitivity towards these women among the local community, get the women to shed their inhibitions and start to feel they are normal, stop marriages of the affected women to already married men or to 'temple god', stop these women from resorting to beggary as a means of living.

She plans to achieve these objectives from some well thought out activities like, helping the women organize themselves into sangams, getting all the women the necessary medical certification and getting them the benefits under the Disabled Commission Act.

While Zubeida will be sending the regular reports on the progress, Nirnaya has also evolved some benchmarks, and will be doing the impact assessment on regular basis.

Ayo Aidari

Ayo Aidari meaning women's rights in Santhali language is an organization with a stated mission to work towards making Santhali women literate, improve their health status and create livelihood opportunities. Located in the forest of Dumka, Jharkhand the team members Munni Hembrom, Agatha Avasthi and Agnes Murmu are santhali women and have a quiet determination to improve the status of their community women but need to build up their skills to strategize effectively. Vasantha Kumari from Nirnaya team visited Ayo Aidari Trust, in January 2005 to learn about its activities, interact with the team and make a couple of field visits. She visited two villages in Sillingi, Gopikandar Prakhanda along with

the 3 women team. She found that Ayo Aidari does its bit to build community health by distributing medicines at low prices or free of cost. During discussions with the community based women's group members it clearly emerged that the women wanted to form groups in order to save money and get loans. They also wanted to become literate in order to understand the significance of legal rights and human rights. Their occupation is primarily agriculture, and during off-season, they collect tendu leaves from the forest for leaf plate making and sale. The people want to adopt better agriculture practices for higher yield. It was clear that Ayo Aidari takes a need based approach in its work.

Bandarjodi, the next village visited and situated opposite to Dumka, the community based women's groups has got loans from government for goat rearing. The community needs a shelter for goats. There are about four groups between one to three years old in the area. The savings range between Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 23,500/-, and the groups regularly take small loans which they repay. Each group has 14 members. Though the group has bank accounts with pass books and members save regularly, the individual members have no clue to its working. Ayo Aidari has some very definite goals and an action plan.

It is interesting that Ayo Aidari got financial support for 4 years from Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, the outcome does not have not impressive indicators. But the other side of the coin is the fact that the community based women's groups are still functioning and the credit for this can be attributed to Ayo Aidari. The team members are well educated and have the experience of working in a Bihar based NGO. The community based women's groups formed by Ayo Aidari have potential to grow if both of them are trained in organizational functions, management, health issues, book keeping, leadership and capacity building.

Affus Women's Welfare Association (AWWA)

AWWA has at its helm Farida Khan and Wahida Khan, skilled trainers in fashion designing, zari embroidery and beauticians. Encouraged and supported by their spouses they plunged into women's development work and are spread out over Anantapur and Nalgonda in Andhra Pradesh and Hubli and Dharwar in Karnataka. After visiting four villages in Dharwar, Vasantha Kumari from Nirnaya zeroed in on Holtikotti where she met a group of very enthusiastic women and adolescent girls who wanted to form groups and organize themselves in order to earn their own living, lead a better life and be independent. Nirnaya is sponsoring a HRD centre in tailoring in Holtikotti.

Time out with Vikasini

Vikasini Girls School, Addagutta, Secunderabad celebrated Republic Day on January 26th by holding a 'rangoli' competition among the students.

The Annual Day held in February was a colourful and fun event. Some donors attended the event as well as the proud parents of the school children. Rotary Club of Secunderabad West sponsored the prizes.

The mothers of the students celebrated International Women's Day in March by attending a 'tea party' organized by the teaching staff and participating in some indoor games. It was a few hours of fun and laughter for all who were present.



Rotary Club of Secunderabad West organized an eye camp for the school children in March 2005.

HRD Center - Adagutta slum



As the popular saying goes it does not help to give fish to a hungry person, but teach him to fish.

Nirnaya too strives to build the skill and capacities of women while giving them financial support. One such effort is the vocational training for the women in the slum of Addagutta,

Secunderabad. Regular tailoring classes are being held for 9 women presently and sewing machines have been donated for the centre. The training is imparted by Shamala Rao, finance manager of Nirnaya who is a skilled designer and can help establish market linkages for the women who have taken up tailoring. Nirnaya believes that the full potential of an individual should be exploited to benefit the beneficiaries, and the staff too concur by giving in their best. Classes started with a group of six women, all mothers of children who are student of Vikasini school. All of them know how to stitch, but then need to develop neatness and matching color schemes in their work. All of them are quite thrilled at stitching frocks for their children. Close on the heels of training classes workplace giving funds have come in for the Tailoring Centre.

By February the students got their first order of stitching petticoats, Banubee, Rajamani and Suryakala executed the order and got Rs.8/- for each petticoat, from which Rs. 2/- went into the centre's kitty box. The students will learn children's and adult's wear designing.

Donations to Nirnaya are exempted from tax under Section 80G of the IT Act, 1961.

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- I would like to donate a sum of
Rs. _____ annually.
- I would like to make a one time endowment of
Rs. _____
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