

GLIMPSSES INTO OUR GRANTS IN AID



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FARR works on poverty alleviation of the tribal communities in Rayagada district of Orissa. With Nirnaya's project support in 2007, FARR started working in 18 villages to improve quality of life of the tribal people by promoting women who can collectively fight for their rights in their family, village and society level. FARR enhances capacity of women leaders to implement village developmental work. They have also formed SHGs to implement income generating programs. The appreciable fact is that a woman from the SHG received a best farmer award from the Village Panchayat, in the Nirnaya supported project area. According to FARR spokesperson Pramila Swain, women in these villages are now free from financial constraints by engaging themselves in income-generating activities. Apparently, the financial conditions of these women have gradually increased and become stable. Trafficking among women has reduced significantly. The night shift employment of women for tractor labour has also reduced. There is good yield of profit by selling the forest products collected by these SHG women from the nearby forests.

JEETA

JEETA implements the Nirnaya supported project in 5 tribal villages in Angul district of Orissa in which 74 families are in the process of utilizing organic fertilizers as a result of which they have been able to harvest more than the previous year. Eleven women

from the SHGs received the land entitlement papers. A total of 30 families have got the legal papers. The incidence of domestic violence has reduced. The system of child marriage is abolished. Women are now capable of approaching the revenue officer directly and make a demand for their land papers. JEETA encourages people to use the waste land for agricultural purposes. JEETA has been able to help bring about a significant change in the living standards of the community. JEETA trains women on seasonal agriculture which has shown results in the form of increased yield. Women are involved in Panchayat Raj and actively participate in all areas of importance. They feel equal with men. Now they are able to send their children to school. The women are also writing their name instead of thumb impression. They are able to work together with men. The women are using the forest produce in different and more profitable ways. They are able to market their produce directly for a better price.

Mahila Sewak Samaj

Mahila Sewak Samaj was started in the year 1981, when communal riots broke out in Biharsharif. There was complete chaos and the worst affected of the whole episode were women of minority community. MSS was formed with a basic idea of rehabilitating these women and later on it started providing skill training to poor women in order to build up their capacities to help them

Cont. on Pg 6...

The memory of a dear one is forever. Set up a Tribute Fund!

Investing in Change...

Being involved in women's issues since the past three decades, I wonder at when we will be able to move ahead where we can make real gains and sustain the same. We have come a long way and brought along women in numbers, who think, feel and talk to each other about the issues which we have been able to effectively address.

The depression that suffocates me at times is the regression trends I see. Taking the case of sexual harassment in our own context in our role as fundraisers, I have to admit there have been grey areas in the past.

As a women's fund I remember that in the early years there was always this massive difficulty we had with regard to fundraising. Our whole effort was to bring about social justice focusing on gender inequity. How do we approach men for money without compromising on our values in any way was a big question. We had a whole team of young attractive women working with us... quite often there would be a condition that if a particular staff member visited him Mr. X would give the donation. My condition was that he should either send the cheque by post or personally hand over the same at our office - but no visits or dinner dates. He came over and gave the cheque but it was the first and last one. There were comments later from his circle of friends that such strict norms would not fetch money. I merely said we were a women's fund and not a procurement agency. There was, for several years, a very thin line between 'making a donation' and 'propositioning' with regard to men. This bothered us and our younger colleagues felt that I was being hyper sensitive - they said it was part of the occupational hazards. I did not and do not agree. I feel the lines should be clear. When we are working towards a society where there is no sexual harassment, we cannot tolerate it in any form. Any open or disguised form of it is unacceptable to us.

It took us about six years to be recognized for our work locally and appreciated for the same. Now it is almost a cake walk for our fundraisers.

It may sound flip on my part to say this but somewhere down the line we need to be uncompromising on issues crucial to social change. True, it takes courage, it is alienating, in the beginning. The fear of this should not pull us back. Ultimately we will not only be appreciated but joined by others.

As changemakers we have to be risk takers too on our stand.

– Indira Jena

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Tekari

In an effort to enhance the skills of young women and adolescent girls in Tekari village of Gaya District, Nirnaya took initial measures to support these women by providing a vocational training center in the village. At the centre, tailoring classes were conducted by a qualified tutor Farida. The centre commenced on 24th August 2007. Since it was the first of its kind there was a demand for admission into the first batch but the ceiling was fixed at 20 members. Understanding the fact that tailoring as a part of vocational training has several components, Nirnaya did not sanction more than one sewing machine in the first 3 months. On the other hand, all the 20 members were equipped with a pair of scissors and drawing materials so that they could sharpen their cutting and measurement skills. As a result of this all 20 members have gained experience in stitching women's garments (both internal and external) within a span of 6 months. Nirnaya would be sanctioning two more sewing machines in order to help them improvise on their skills in tailoring.

Conferences/ Meetings/Seminars

- Women's Funding Network - Annual Conference 2008 attended by Managing Trustee/CEO, Lalita Missal from April 30 – May 3, 2008, at Hyatt Regency Crystal City, USA
- Foundation For Peace Network / Victim Empowerment Conference held at Belfast from May 20 – 25, 2008, attended by Sujatha Rita.

Urban Slum Development Project

Syeda Faizunnisa, Program Volunteer from Kurnool expressed her heartfelt greetings and thanks to Nirnaya for giving her training which has helped her in inculcating a sense of independence with increased self-confidence. Nirnaya's systematic training has helped her overcome many challenges in her life recently as a result of which she is able to make a comeback and actively participate in the programmes. International Women's Day was celebrated on 8th March 2008, in which a large gathering of local women participated. Nirnaya has been supporting the celebration of Women's Day for the last four years, and this has created awareness and issue based action among women regarding women's empowerment, social justice, child labour, legal aid and counseling particularly on the issue of domestic violence.

Vikasini, Secunderabad

This academic year started with two students of Vikasini being mainstreamed into a well-reputed government high school in order to enable them complete their class 10 examinations successfully. There has been a drop out incidence in the school in the current academic year since the parents opted for enrolling their children into government recognized high schools as soon as possible. This is a heartening and welcome sign since it indicates that the parents are concerned and committed towards educating their girl children. This was not the case when Vikasini started. The school has admitted 19 students in the LKG class.

One aspect that has surfaced sharply is the fact that given all the encouragement and exposure possible by Nirnaya, it is a major hurdle for the children from the under privileged section to compete with the privileged sections of children in so far as the absorption, retention and articulation capacity of their lessons go.

Keeping the socio-economic background and the domestic scenario in mind, the effort is continuous among us in trying to understand and resolve the disconnect between the classroom learning and everyday life.

If Nirnaya is able to achieve this goal even up to 10% of the total strength of the school, it will be significant.

We also see that encouraging short-term volunteerism for teaching / interaction with the students creates a

temporary euphoria but somewhere derails the steady long-term flow of learning. There are a lot of issues that Nirnaya needs to reflect upon in order to streamline and strengthen the system.

A peep into the social life of a Vikasini child...

One Sunday, I visited Addagutta Slum. The purpose of my visit was to get acquainted with the familial, social and economic background of the students studying at Vikasini School and to develop rapport with the community living in Addagutta Slum. Though I am in developmental sector and had been to various villages as a part of conducting project activities, this visit was a slightly different experience as here I could literally peep into the living pattern and every day life of these pre teen and teen-aged girls. Since it was Sunday I was in a holiday mood and was under the impression the girls were also enjoying being at home. When I reached I started searching for the girls on the street, as it was a picture in my mind that they must be playing around. Contrary to my imagination the girls were at their homes and some of them were busy with domestic work. I was surprised and now probably you are too, to know that the girl studying in Class I, washes vessels, cleans the house and helps her mother in other household work. That moment I could relate it to myself or the girls whom I know. At this initial period of my married life where I have to complete very few household tasks, which I am finding difficult to manage with professional responsibilities, how can a six or seven-year-old girl child perform both the duties!!! I really could not understand why such a vast difference between the way privileged sections of urban girls are brought up and the way these girls are... At this age any child we know will be involved in either playing or studying - a real carefree age. But for the Addagutta girls, it's entirely different. We often talk about child rights but now I realize pragmatically its execution is a question. During the interactions with girls, teachers and the community representatives, I observed that some of the girls are going through some or other kind of family problems. What would be the mindset of these girls? I really wonder... will be they able to fulfill their dreams to be an IAS officer or doctor?

I strongly feel the parents need to be sensitized towards their daughters' education. And what would be our role? Let's contribute for these needy girls-by financially supporting the school, so that the girls will get ample exposure....by providing voluntary services for the studies of these students or even counseling for the parents and children....or by sponsoring a student's education.... **Dhara Oza.**

Vikasini, Hubli

Children were waiting anxiously for March 31st, as it happens to be the last working day of the academic year. Students have done their exams well including the dull ones who have proved their potential as good students. Parents collected the report cards and thanked the teachers and the organization.

Children attended the school on the reopening day, but with slight disappointment on their faces. Revision test was conducted to refresh and recollect whatever they were taught during the last academic year.

Nirnaya's 10th Anniversary Day was celebrated on 22nd April 2008. The tailoring students including the former students were the invitees and every one took part in the competition conducted by Sireesha with Kamakshi and Farhan as the judges. Prizes were distributed to the winners. A donor Mr. Vasant Shetty, an owner of a hotel, hosted lunch.

Since the tailoring students were slightly discouraged about the new teacher's teaching procedure, Sireesha arranged for a meeting to break the rift between the teacher and the students.

Sireesha finds difficulty expressing her passion for Nirnaya but it is nevertheless very obvious in the manner in which she motivated the whole batch of the tailoring students and teacher to make the schooldresses for both the Hubli and Secunderabad schools for the current academic year and despatched the required lot of dresses to Secunderabad within 2 weeks of the school reopening.

10th Anniversary Celebrations of NIRNAYA

Nirnaya celebrated its decennial celebrations in Bhubaneswar on 1st April 2008 at Hotel Swosti Plaza. Lalita Missal, Managing Trustee / CEO and Indira Jena, organized the celebrations with the active support of the staff of NAWO – Orissa Chapter. The NAWO team had artistically decorated the inaugural lamp which was lit by the women activists present. Welcoming the gathering Lalita Missal briefly traced the 10 year journey Nirnaya has traveled, saying that we glowed with pride over the successes and somehow managed to stand steady, while stumbling over the many blocks along the way. Several development activists had come from outside of Bhubaneswar for the event which signifies that the opening of an office in Orissa was a step in the right direction. It was also possible for the member funds from the Asian region of the International Network of Women's Funds and the Executive Director to be present and share their good wishes for Nirnaya's progress. After Indira shared her reflections on the reason for starting a women's fund in India several members present came forward and shared their reflections on what they saw as different in a women's fund, thereby justifying the need for one.

Ten years of one candle lighting another. Little did we realize that this would have such a spin off effect and it would be one candle lighting 10 - maybe even 100 candles. The steps are at first tentative but when the speed picked up we were caught unawares.



to earn their livelihood. It is registered under the society registration act, 1860 in the year 1987 with an objective to work for the upliftment of women. The vision of MSS is to initiate need based strategy for community development through participation of the rural community in social development for the emergence of a society free of exploitation based on caste, gender, religion and class. The mission of MSS is to adopt strategies for women's development. The main objectives of this organization are: to promote and support programmes for mobilising and organizing rural women and help them build a platform. It works on issues of education, health and poverty alleviation of the Muslim minority and dalit women in Biharsharif, Nalanda Bihar. MSS seeks Nirnaya support to enhance agricultural activities among Muslim minority women. The strategy of MSS is to organize programmes like

- 1) One day block level legal awareness programme
- 2) One day sensitization workshop for women
- 3) One day workshop on women's rights on March 8th.
- 4) Wall writing on women's issues.
- 5) 24 training programmes on legal issues and legal rights.

Addressing gender violence...

Razia Self Help Group was formed in Paharpura village with the help of MSS. Ishrat Bano, a member of the group lives with her 8 year old sister Mossarat in the village. Around 12 noon on May 8, 08, Ishrat went out on some work leaving Mossarat behind at home. A young man named Sonu from the same village took the girl out to a lonely spot by enticing her with some sweets, raped her and fled the scene leaving behind an unconscious child. Ishrat with the help of the group members searched and found the child and took her to the hospital for medical help. The expenses were met from the group savings of Rs.300/-. The group then filed a case with the local police and pressurized them to nab the accused and put him behind bars. This was done fast due to the sustained pressure from the SHG. The accused is now behind bars and the case proceedings have to start.

Saheli Adhyayan Kendra

Saheli Adhyayan Kendra's close interaction with the people has geared up to the level that they are able to submit their petitions at the government office, their problems are now given a hearing by the government personnel. SAK liaisons with the government agencies and ensures that the people are aware of the schemes and plans implemented by the Government. Saheli Adhyayan Kendra focuses on women's issues. SAK also works on women's human rights and equal inheritance rights. In an untoward incident, where a Muslim truck driver raped 6 tribal girls, SAK took up the issue and was successful.

The project applied for is 'Bringing Change Through Livelihoods, Justice and Awareness Initiatives Amongst Women of Tribal community of Sahebganj, Jharkhand.'

The project's

Aim

To bring a change in tribal women's lives through enhanced livelihoods and a violence free atmosphere, based on justice.

Objectives

- To strengthen tribal women's livelihoods through improved control and management of agricultural and livestock resources
- To create a violence free atmosphere, based on justice for them

Target Population

Tribal population of selected 5 villages each of two blocks – Mandro and Boreo of Sahebganj district (total 10 villages)

Activities

- Building women's organization at the district level through panchayat and district level meets.
- Mapping resources of one village each in both panchayats and sharing the findings.
- Agro-livestock training in both the panchayats

- ✦ District Seminar on domestic violence Act (PWDVA).
- ✦ Demonstration unit on Vermiculture in both panchayats
- ✦ Helping women obtain justice through case follow up and counseling in Panchayats and Courts.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF WOMEN'S FUNDS ASIA REGION ANNUAL MEET 2008

This meeting that took place between March 31- April 2, at Bhubaneswar was significant for us because

- ✦ the Nirnaya branch had recently opened.
- ✦ it was an occasion when the transition process within Nirnaya could be shared with sister

funds in the region.

- ✦ the first steps towards regional fundraising were taken.

We must thank Tina for making every effort to help the regional funds go ahead by raising some critical issues for discussion.



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

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Cheques/Demand drafts should be drawn in favour of NIRNAYA payable at Secunderabad.

Donations in cash could be made at :

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