

## **Fellowship Update and Renewal for the year 2010-11**

The following are some of the key areas in which work was done over the last year -

### **1. NREGA - National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**

Lok Samiti has been working on implementation of NREGA for the last few years. Sometime last year they started working with the group Gender at Work (GAW) - <http://www.genderatwork.org/>. Nandlal is in touch with their Delhi office and this organization actually has a global presence.

They are looking at the condition of women and the kind of work they get through NREGA. They are funding Lok Samiti for two years for working on NREGA and dalit women issues. GAW said that Nandlal and his group were free to work within their own framework. They are helping with costs for training. GAW is sponsoring about Rs 2 lacs for each year and for two years. This covers training, traveling, organizing programs for NREGA. Mahendra (one of the persons working with Lok Samiti) is the lead on this effort and another lady Sarita is being paid as a field worker. This program started in June 2010 and will continue to Dec 2011. Discussion on this program started last June.

The first stage of the work was a survey. The plan is to collect data from the different panchayats and the report of the same has been published. The link to the reports are here -

Baseline survey - [http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/707/NREGA\\_Baseline\\_Survey\\_Report\\_1.pdf](http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/707/NREGA_Baseline_Survey_Report_1.pdf)  
District-wise charts - [http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/707/NREGA\\_Survey\\_District\\_wise\\_Charts.pdf](http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/707/NREGA_Survey_District_wise_Charts.pdf)

Second part of the survey was to collect information about the job card holders from amongst family and dalit women. The data for this part of the work has been collected and it is now being organized into a report - which will take about another two months. The third part of program - is to create an awareness program and capacity building of the job-card holders. This will provide information about NREGA and other schemes and in the fourth stage - it will work on how to make sure the benefits reach the stakeholders. Currently the metric chosen between Lok Samiti and GAW is to increase the benefits by at least 30% for the stake-holders i.e., increase the participation at every level by at least 30% - for example - the number of job card holders, the number with active bank accounts, the average number of days of work, the average number of days of payments received, etc. The goal is - at every stage try to reach an increase of 30% of the benefits. One of the prime focus of Lok Samiti will be to work on the dalits getting work.

Some stories from doing the survey --

Musahar - is one of the most discriminated communities (considered the dalits among dalits). The target is to get 100 families with job cards. Out of the 30 panchayats surveyed only 2 have issued job cards to this community. There have been two successes of the surveys - in Ganeshpur during the survey itself about 20 families received the job cards and secondly - in Birbhanpur - 25 families got their accounts started only after the survey. Typically the Musahar work in brick-kilns, making leaf plates, field work in Punjab. Another issue is that when they do get work through NREGA also, Musahar families are made to work more as was seen in the two villages they actually got work. They were told they need to work for a certain number of hours and not a certain the amount of work.

## **2. Community Marriage**

This year Lok Samiti again held the community marriage program in April/May and got 32 couples married. The whole event was supported through local donations and a total of Rs 3,71,171 was collected as donations - in money and goods. To highlight the case of discrimination amongst Musahar - 2 families who wanted to participate in the program backed out in the end because there would be people from the Musahar community on the stage.

## **3. Summer Camp**

65 girls took part in the summer camp from 15th May to 20th June. They had computer class, embroidery and sewing class, painting, handicraft, artificial jewelery, beautician training and papad making. Each of them got a certificate. There was a small exhibition of products made and also sold a bunch of stuff made by the girls. The GM of the local Union Bank of India offered a fashion design training course to about 30 of those who participated in the summer camp. 30 of these girls/women went for training from 1st July to 7th August. They were given certificates. They have made some clothes through this process and looking to sell some of these products.

## **4. Education**

NJSS - This is the schooling/education efforts done by the Lok Samiti and is supported by Asha Chicago. All the education related activities have been going on fine. 30 children gave the class 5 exam to mainstream them with the class 6 in other schools.

Attila and Dora - two volunteers from Hungary have been working with the NJSS schools for the last year of so. They are providing support to 40 children support through a SAC like program they have started. This is done through the Chance India Organization. [www.chanceindia.org](http://www.chanceindia.org). Twice a week they teach English and computer classes to the children. The children who are under this SAC program are those children who have finished class 5 with the NJSS schools and were admitted to 6th grade in local schools - both govt school and good private schools. All school expenses of the 40 children have been covered. They were provided with clothes, books, bag etc for school. They are spending from Rs 3000 per child to upto Rs 10,000 per child - depending on the school, admission fees and the grade of the child. Children are very happy. They have found one donor for one child. They also try to communicate with the donor through Skype.

## **5. Training**

Many organizations have asked Nandlal to give a workshop on NREGA and in community organizing. He went to Bihar for four days - same area as the floods to talk about organizing the people. In Benaras - went to provide training on - SHG, workers unions, NREGA and community organizing.

## **6. Water Rights**

Lok Samiti is working on doing some constructive work. Rainfall is low and water levels keep

dropping. How do we recharge the ground-water? They did a survey on the plants in the area - how many 50 year old trees? What plants are being planted today compared to the older trees?

People grew all types of trees - medicinal trees, shade trees, etc before but now most trees grown recently are only fruit, flower or food providing. Lok Samiti decided to plant trees - banyan and peepal trees. Planning to plant 100 trees - in public lands - talking to schools, places of worship, panchayat bhavan, government locations. 15-20 trees have been planted - getting the saplings from Department of Forestry.

**7. Panchayat Elections** - We are fielding some candidates as sarpanch in three villages, others as ward members, and block members and district members. We are creating awareness programs - how to submit forms, keep candidates honest, make sure reservations are respected, make sure elections are not rigged. Four elections are being held at the same time - teaching people how to go about the process of voting.

### **Other updates -**

- Gina wrote an article about Mehdiganj, which got published in "Daylight" - <http://www.daylightmagazine.org/programs/mehdiganj-india>. \$500 were given for publishing the article. She sent the money to Mehdiganj to use for some constructive work. <The copy of the paper is available with me. Need to check if it can be uploaded in a public domain. Please contact me if you interested in reading it>
- Arvind Kejariwal has started a Swaraj campaign. He is asking for better local governance - more rights to the gram-sabha and not the gram panchayat. We got him to visit couple of times.
- Nandlal was wrongly diagnosed with malaria and because of wrong diagnosis he was given very strong medicines as a result of which he was very sick from 12th May to almost 20th of June. He was limited to bed rest.
- Program for communal harmony in Varanasi and Mehdiganj - on Sept 7th - in light of the impending Babri Masjid ruling.

### **Next year plan**

- Work on the panchayat elections till the end of October
- NJSS - work on the co-ordination of the project. RtE has passed and we will need to work on this aspect. Will discuss this issue at the Asha conference. Within two years all Asha schools will have to conform to the requirements of the school. What is going to be the effect of the Act on Asha schools, other non-formal schools, and other schools? The Act is very strong - guardians can be jailed if children are not sent to school, 25% percent of private schools to include under-privileged children, children cant be punished and cannot be failed. All schools to follow a common syllabus? Quality education in all schools, but how to check or implement? UP will need 5 lakh teachers approximately.
- Community marriage plan
- NREGA - 30 percent improvement across different metrics.