

Review of Fellowship - Nandlal Master



Background and Experience

- Hails from a sari weaver family near Varanasi
- In 1994 he gave up his study of B.Sc and started teaching kids in the village
- Inspired the youth to teach in the schools and was able to start 10 such schools (2 day and 8 night) without any outside support
- He got his MA and BA degrees in Sociology in 1999 and 1997 from Purvanchal University, Jaunpur.
- In 1999 at the age of 22, he founded Lok Samiti – a people's organization. Lok Samiti has now spread to 25 villages

Background information ...

- Started the Kala Manch – a cultural team which went to different villages to raise awareness on social issues through the medium of street plays and songs
- In 2001 – he became the State Convener (from U.P.) of the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM)
- In 2003, he led the community struggle against the Coca-cola plant in Mehdiganj demanding the people's right to water
- Formation of 30-35 self-help groups for women
- Initiated campaigns in 2-3 villages to raise awareness about the right to information, the right to work and the right to food

Lok Samiti

- Lok Samiti – a people's organization with no religious or political affiliations was founded in 1999. Any sustained change can only be brought about by people participation rather than a single person
- Helps organize people so that they can represent themselves. The organization is democratic in structure with the representatives answerable to the people
- The group focuses on the issues of the people and works to find their own solution by collaborating with other Lok Samiti or other groups in the area
- Lok Samiti has committees in 20 – 25 villages
- Encourages people to stand for elections to the Panchayat – Mukesh was elected as Pradhan in Nagipur and Urmila was elected as a Panchayat member in Benipur
- Increase awareness on various social issues through the Kala Manch

Education initiative

- Started teaching kids from the neighborhood in 1994 (that is why he is called Nandlal Master)
- Most children in the area worked with their families in the local Benarasi sari industry. Started evening schools for the children so that they could continue working. Believes that the children are learning useful skills which could help them earn their livelihood
- Make the government schools accountable – for educational content and schemes like the mid-day meal
- Started about 6 education centers for adolescent girls (Kishori Kendras) and one sewing center
- Stopped at least 5 of the night centers because many of the children had been mainstreamed
- Currently there are 2 permanent centers and 3 night schools

Day School at Mehdiganj, Rajatalab



One of the night schools (NFE's) run by Lok Samiti



Independence Day Celebrations at the school – Aug 2007



Teacher Training

- Organized a teacher training and workshop in September
- Attended by 100 teachers from different Asha schools – Hardoi, Lucknow, Ballia, Kanpur
 - Value of present day education and need for change
 - New methods in education and their results
 - Government's role in RTE
 - Direction of independent education

Teacher Workshop/Training at School (September 2007)

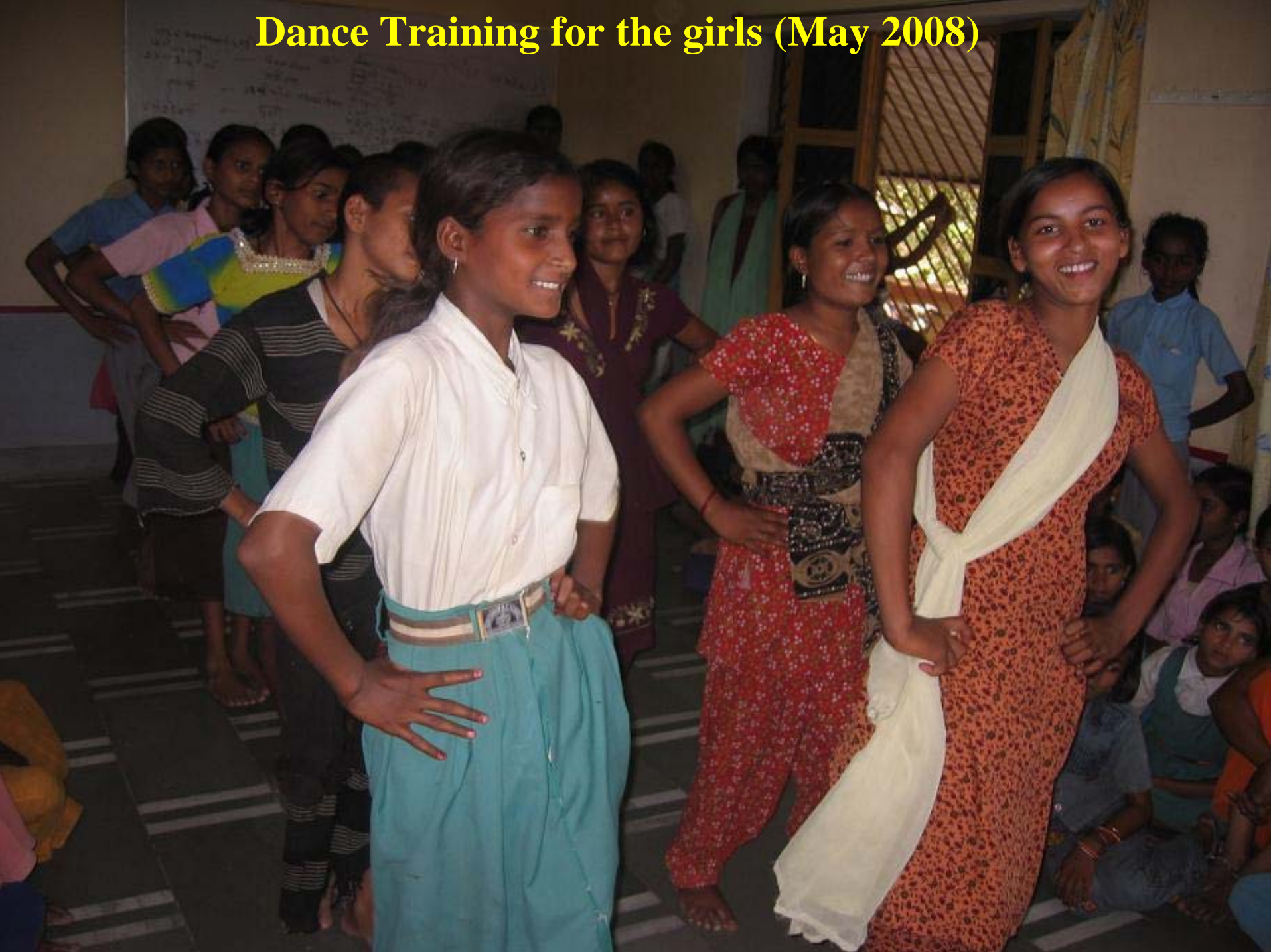
कार्यशाला
विषय - वर्तमान शिक्षा व्यवस्था की दशा एवं दिशा
दिनांक - 5-6 सितम्बर 07
स्थान - आशा सामाजिक विद्यालय नागपुर
आयोजक - लोक समिति, वाराणसी



Kishori Kendras

- Caters to adolescent girls who have never been to school. Some of them are recently married
- Provide them with basic education, health camp, training in sewing, awareness about their rights and other ways to empower them
- Had a one week training program at the end of May – 50 girls participated including girls from community
- There were different workshops on – Art, Music, Dance, Embroidery, Painting, Mehndi designs, training as beautician, etc

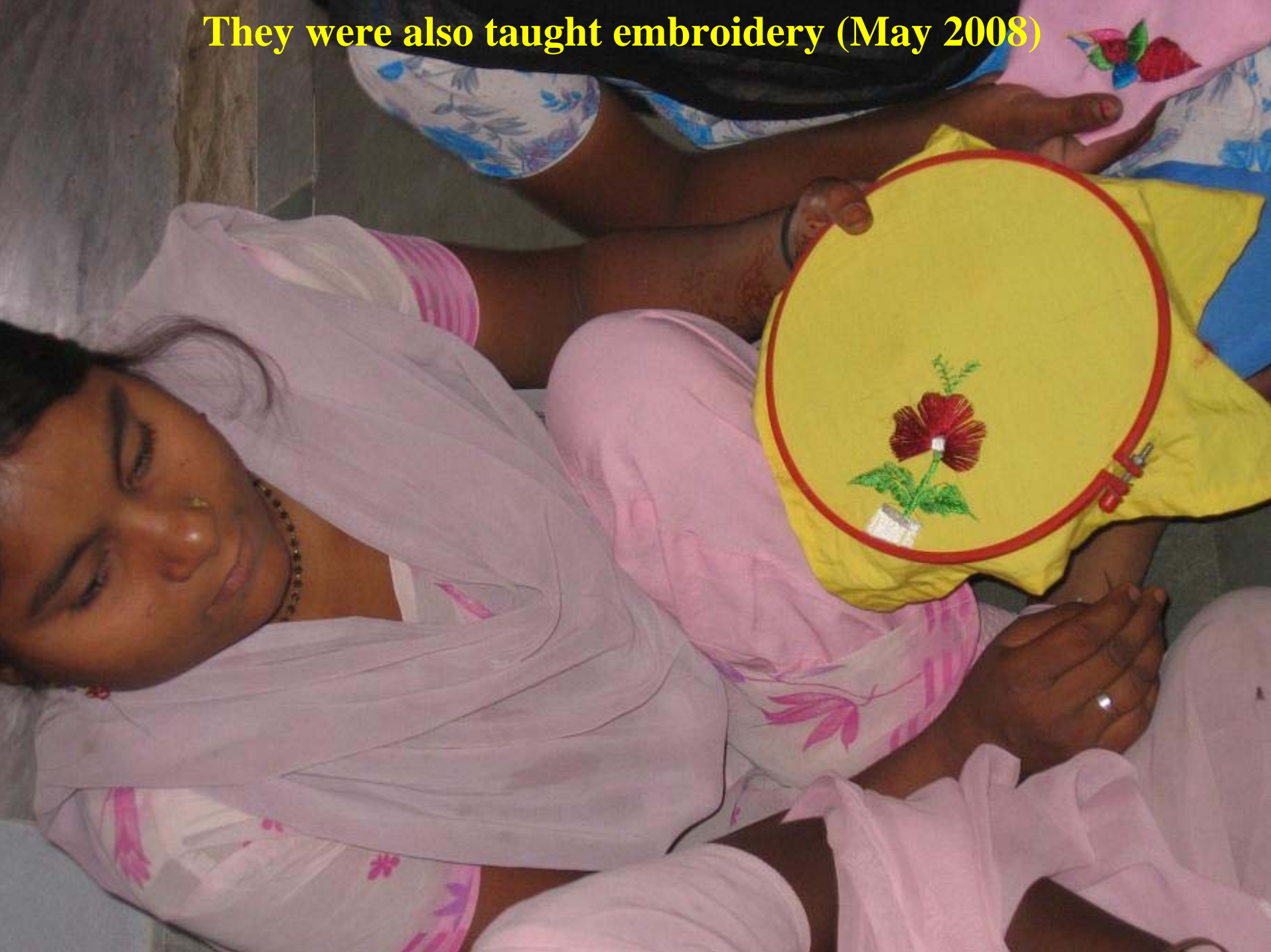
Dance Training for the girls (May 2008)



The girls learnt painting on cloth (May 2008)



They were also taught embroidery (May 2008)



Group picture of participants in the week long training (May, 2008)



Women Empowerment

- Women traditionally do not have much rights – whether it is the household or the community
- Organized the women into self-help groups to deal with issues common to them. Created about 35 such self-help groups so that they can be financially independent – this will enable them be equals in rights and responsibilities
- Organized multiple training for the SHG –in May, August and one in January
 - Explained the basic functioning and importance of SHG's
 - Talk about health issues and various government schemes
- Running one sewing centers for girls
- The struggle to conserve water and the protest against the Coca-cola plant has been led by women groups

Self Help Group Training



Another SHG Training – (Jan 2008)



Community Marriages

- Organized a community marriage program for the last two years with no dowry
- First year 22 couples were married and this year 28 couples were married
- This year raised about Rs 236,000 by local support in cash and in kind
- Gifted a bicycle, sewing machine, clothes, utensils and watch to the couples
- 50 guest invited per family
- 2500-3000 people in all
- Message to community – marriages need not be a very expensive deal

Community Marriage Program (May 2008)



Couples at the Community Marriage Program (May 2008)



About 3000 people attended the community marriages (May 2008)



RTI and NREGA campaigns

- RTI Camp in Sep 2007
 - Hand out flyers and fill out RTI applications for people in two blocks
- NREGA workshop in Feb 2008 at the BDO's office
 - 300 people participated
 - DDO and BDO explained the scheme
 - Block president, panchayat president, panchayat members took part
- People were left out of list – not one woman in the list
- Did a survey and applied for job cards for 1500 - 2000 applicants

Right to Information (RTI) Camp being held in Sep 2007

हमारा पैसा-हमारा हिसाब, हम जानेंगे-हम जियेंगे
सूचना का अधिकार बर
जागरुकता अभियान एवं शिविर
सौजन्य से:- लोक समिति-वाराणसी एवं
सूचना का अधिकार अभियान उ.प्र.



NREGA Workshop: Distributing flyers & materials (Feb 2008)



NREGA Workshop – Feb 2008

राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारन्टी योजना पर-
एक दिवसीय कार्यशाला
दिनांक :- 19-02-2008 दिन-मंगलवार
स्थान - ब्लॉक मुख्यालय का सभागार कचनार राजातालाब-वाराणसी
आयोजित लोकसमिति वाराणसी एवं भोजन व काम का अधिकार अभियान-उ.प्र.



About 300 people attended the NREGA Workshop (Feb 2008)



Health Camp

- Started an eye-camp for villagers at Rajatalab
- 12 cataract operations were performed
- Now on 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month there is a health camp at the center
- Children of the school are regularly checked and medicines are provided
- Many children suffer from nutritional deficiencies like vitamin deficiency

Eye Health Camp organized at Rajatalab (Jan 2008)

नेत्र चिकित्सा शिविर

दि. 20, 21 जनवरी 2008, स्थान:- डाक्टर्स चैम्बर - राजातालाब

डा. डी. के. मौर्या M.S. (नेत्र), डा. सतीश जायसवाल M.D.

मोतिया बिन्द, समलबाई, नाखुना एवं आँख के समस्त रोगों का आपरेशन व चिकित्सा

आयोजक:- लोक समिति - वाराणसी { मो. न. 9415620516, 9839017693,

सौजन्य से:- डाक्टर्स चैम्बर जी.टी. रोड, राजातालाब-वाराणसी

Doctors conducting an eye check-up (Jan 2008)



Kala Manch

- Kala Manch consists of 8 – 9 members who go from village to village raising awareness about social issues through the medium of street plays, songs, public meetings, etc
- Identify problems/issues in a particular village and then make plays addressing those problems
- Issues addressed include education, elections, corruption, women rights, implementation of government schemes like the right to work, right to food, right to information, mid-day meals in schools, etc
- Team has been invited to various places to perform like the Asha Hardoi center. After the Gujarat riots, the troupe went there for a week trying to spread the message of communal harmony. They took part in the Indo-Pak peace march from Delhi to Wagah. Visited Orissa after the storms and earthquakes there to try to alleviate some of the sufferings of the people using the medium of songs and plays

Struggle for water

- Organized a movement against Coca Cola because the company is drawing large amounts of ground-water while the community is facing an acute shortage of water. The company is also guilty of encroaching on Panchayat land, evading stamp duty and dumping harmful sludge on fields
Organizes water stops – providing free drinking water at railway stations, market places, etc emphasizing that water is a basic human right and not something that should be bought and sold for profit
- Mobilize people to start building lakes and rain-water harvesting structures to actively work on conserving water

Water Struggle

- Worked with people from other struggles – Ballia, Jaunpur, Kaladera, Plachimada
- Jaunpur plant is no longer working. At Ballia struggle is gathering momentum
- Report from GWB shows falling water levels in and around Mehdiganj

Waste/Sludge from the Ballia plant lying strewn in the open



शीतल पेय प्लांट की बंदी को आंदोलन करेगा प्रधान संघ

बलिया: प्रधान संघ के संरक्षक चन्द्रकेश सिंह में कहा कि बीपीएल सर्वे सूची जनपद स्तर पर पूरी तरह गलत है। जिसके कारण पात्र व्यक्ति सरकारी सुविधा से पूरी तरह

◆ बैठक कर तय की गयी रणनीति

वंचित हो जा रहा है। गड़वार विकास खण्ड के सिंहाचवर में स्थित कोकोकोला प्लांट का तत्काल लाइसेंस निरस्त करने की मांग जिलाधिकारी से की गयी। श्री सिंह रविवार को लोनिवि के डाक बंगले में आयोजित बैठक में बोल रहे थे। कहा कि यह कम्पनी लाखों लीटर पानी रोजाना जमीन से निकाल रही है और धड़ल्ले से बेच रही है। जिसके कारण उस क्षेत्र में पानी का संकट हो रहा है। वहीं लोग बुरी तरह रोगों से ग्रसित हो रहे हैं। प्लांट को तत्काल बन्द किया जाय। अन्यथा सिंहाचवर के ग्रामवासियों के साथ ही बहादुरपुर, सिंहपुर, एकौनी, कच्चीपरुआ, नरायणपुर, जिगनी, पियरीयां, कोपवां, आदि ग्राम प्रधानों/ग्रामवासियों के



लोनिवि डाक बंगला में एकजुटता प्रदर्शित करते ग्राम प्रधान।

साथ मिलकर 23 अक्टूबर को जिलाधिकारी कार्यालय के समक्ष धरना दिया जायेगा। साथ ही कोकाकोला प्लांट तक पद यात्रा व 24 अक्टूबर को धरना प्रदर्शन होगा। जिलाध्यक्ष दिनेश्वर गिर ने मध्यस्थता करने का वादा किया।

पंचायतों के खाते में न जाने पर रोष जताया। बैठक को राधेश्याम यादव, शम्भू सिंह, महेन्द्र गुप्ता, संतोष सिंह, दयाशंकर भारती, सत्यदेव सिंह, ऐके सिंह आदि ने सम्बोधित किया।

The pradhans (village chiefs) of 30 villages ask the government to close the Ballia plant

Water Right Conference

- Organized from Mar 28th – 30th
- local people, government officials, volunteers from different UP chapters, people from different movements in Kaladera and Ballia, Medha Pathkar, volunteers from various Asha chapters, people from different countries studying/working on water rights,
- 2000 participants



Water Rights Conference (March 2008)

Very good attendance by the locals and even people from other states at the Water Rights Conference (Mar 2008)





Medha Pathkar at the Water rights Conference (Mar 2008)

Water Stop



Sandeep giving water to children from the free water – stalls

Other activities

- Participated in various events and organized protests
 - World Environment Day – June 5th
 - Trip from Nandigram to Narmada to Gorai, Mumbai (organized by NAPM)

Protest by the local people on World Environment Day at the DM office — June 5, 2008

