

Review of Nandlal's Work – 2006-07

This is a synopsis of what we did last year:

Education - I am the in charge of the overall coordination work. We have two main purposes to the education aspect - reach out to children who aren't going to school and introduce a new way of teaching.

Currently, there are only 2-4% of children who are not going to school. Three days back there was a meeting with all the teachers. From the 20th of May, school centers will close for a one month vacation. We will conduct a survey and identify children who are not going to school.

As to how the children are performing in the school, you could visit the school and speak to the children and see for yourself. You can see it in their confidence and in what they have learnt. This could be assessed by a third party in comparison to govt school children.

Non-formal education centers (night schools) - When we started these 80% of the children never went to school. Now there are some centers in which almost all children are also attending day school. We are thinking closing down such centers and opening a center catering to adolescent girl children.

RTI/RTF/RTW Campaign

We took part in the following activities related to the **RTI** campaigns this year-

1. For 15 days we had a camp for RTI at the block level
2. Our team went for the social audit of the NREGA scheme for 10 days in Hardoi district
3. We joined dharna against rti amendments for 8 days in Delhi
4. We took part in Action 2007 in Delhi for 8 days in which we were asking the government to improve the functioning of the following schemes - RTI, RTW, RTF (Information, Work, Food)

In working with the **RTF** - we did a social survey on mid-day meals and ration cards. We then organized a public hearing in Varanasi. We filed cases for people who had been left out of the lists. In the survey we were able to cover 20 villages in Arajiline block.

We created a report based on the survey of the mid-day meal (MDM) scheme. In the mid-day meal scheme we checked the quality of the food being served for one month and worked with the Gram panchayat and the teachers to make sure that the scheme was well implemented. We made pamphlets (about 10,000) and distributed them to children and other member of the village. These pamphlets provided information about the working of the MDM scheme and the aanganwaadis, etc.

We had a training for 70 of the aanganwadi workers. We have noticed good improvement since then - better nutrition for the kids, increased attendance by kids. We are working on getting more aanganwadis started in villages where they do not exist. Corruption is

rampant in this scheme and we are working with other organizations in the area to address this. NDTV did a survey for 4 blocks and showed results, interviews to the DM. Things started getting better after this also. Then we had the public hearing which was attended by 1500-2000 people along with officials.

RTW - 2 years back there was work being done by some laborers but after two days the laborers were dismissed and machines were brought in at night to do the work. 400 people from village surrounded the work site and protested against this. I also went to the site and we called the DM office as well as the police. Later the rest of the work was completed using manual labor. All this came to the attention of the media and as a result there were similar protests in a lot of villages against using machines to complete work under this scheme. Even though the work was done, the block development officer (BDO) held back the money. About a month back, based on a survey of the gram panchayat, there was a notice issued by the SC to DM. The effect of this percolated down through the CDO, BDO and the Gram Panchayat. We reached an agreement and the matter was resolved and the people (96 laborers) received their wages.

Panchayat - There are 2 sittings/meetings in a year with the whole village and details are discussed about who will work on road construction, who will be on the below-poverty line (BPL) lists, ration cards, etc. We create awareness programs about this and provide written applications for people who want to join any of these schemes. We also had a training for Gram panchayat members - educating them on what schemes are available for the village. Different aspects of the panchayat work is done through different panchayat committees - but they normally don't work. Most of the work is dependent on the Pradhan. We try to get all these committees active. We haven't been very successful with this as we did not get too much time to work on this. Mukesh, a volunteer with our group, being Pradhan, we get a whole lot of information about the process.

Women empowerment - There are 25 self-help groups (SHG). We organized 3 training programs for them related to - functioning of SHG, women's health issues and effective working of the panchayat. There is a target to increase to the SHG's to 40 this year.

We had two big programs this year - one on Women day in front of the DM headquarters and another which was a women's cultural program.

Water Rights Struggle - We organized 3-4 main programs

1. There was a 100 day protest
2. The Water Rights Tour (jal adhikaar yatra)
3. Survey of water table in and around Mehdiganj - with Chandrika's help - http://www.ashanet.org/austin/mehdiganj/visit_reports/water_table_status_report.pdf
4. Had a cycle rally to create awareness

Plans for the next six months are being worked out, along with plans for the Kalamanch team.