

Women Empowerment

- Women traditionally do not have much rights in UP – whether it is the household or the community
- Organized the women into self-help groups (SHG) 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 sessions for the SHG –
 - 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
- Organized the community marriage program for the last 5 years, which has been very popular and very well supported locally

Training Session for a SHG



SHG Meeting



Community Marriage Program

- Lok Samiti has been organizing a community marriage program for the last 4 years and this was the 5th year.
- It is organized for poor families and for people from socially marginalized groups – musahar, dalit, rajbhar.
- This year 46 couples were married. It started with 22 couples in the first year and it has grown over the years. (22,28, 32, 32 and 46)
- Message is to provide an alternative to expensive marriages and to move away from the practice of dowry
- Each family involved is allowed to invite 50 guests



गोपल है
का ठहरे
भूमिति



There were singers to provide music



Community Marriage Program

- The whole event was funded by local contributions and food was served to about 6000 people
- Lok Samiti collected Rs 5,06,651 which included cash and gifts. Donation of 400kgs of grains were also received.
- All the newly married couple received gifts like a bicycle, Benarasi saris, utensils, jewellery, watch, clock, etc.
- The event was well attended by the locals and many elected representatives of the area.

Gifts for the newly married couples



Food being prepared for the marriages



Couples with their marriage certificates



NREGA – Gender at Work

- Lok Samiti has been very active over the last few years – working to make sure the provision of NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) are implemented well.
- Over the last year, Lok Samiti has teamed up with Gender at Work (GAW) – to study and help dalit women to get more benefits from NREGA. They are looking into how NREGA can help bring about gender equality amongst dalits.
- Survey Part 1 - Survey 30 villages and document the situation as it was before start of their intervention
 - http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/707/NREGA_Baseline_Survey_Report_1.pdf
- Survey Part 2 – Collect information about job card holders among family members and dalit women
 - http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/707/NREGA_Baseline_Survey_Report_2.pdf

NREGA – Gender at Work

- Phase 2 included an awareness program to make the women, especially dalit women, aware of their rights. GAW first trained the field workers to understand gender issues – some of the issues are difficult to understand because they are socially ingrained in the lives of the people. They organized a training for dalit women to use NREGA for economic and gender benefits.
- Phase 3 is to make sure the benefits reach the dalit women and see how it impacts their lives and gender equality
- Phase 4 would be to have a dialogue with the government – explaining the whole project (18 months), the condition at the start of the program and how it benefitted the community. This could be used to spread it to other villages and communities.

Training for Dalit women about their rights.



Training for Dalit women about their rights.



NREGA - Survey of dalits

- Musahar is one of the most discriminated communities – considered the dalits among dalits.
- Lok Samiti did a survey of 700 musahar and dalit families in the 30 villages where they work. The results of the survey were published and distributed to different government bodies.
- The Project Director for the area, came across the report and he sent out an order to the different officials to make sure that these families received benefits under NREGA and other schemes and to make sure that their condition improved.
- Govt has now started issuing job cards and giving out work to the families in different villages.

कार्यालय जिला ग्राम्य विकास अभिकरण, वाराणसी

पत्रांक 3176 /मनरेगा/अ0व0प0/2010-11/दिनांक 22 फरवरी 2011

खंड विकास अधिकारी
आराजीलाइन्स वाराणसी।

विषय: विकास खंड आराजीलाइन्स में अति वंचित परिवारों की सूची उपलब्ध कराने के संबंध में।

आपको अवगत कराना है कि सामाजिक संगठन लोक समिति द्वारा आपके विकास खंड में 30 गावों के अति वंचित परिवारों की पारिवारिक स्थिति का सर्वे किया गया जिससे यह संज्ञान में आया की उक्त 30 गावों में निवास कर रहे लोगों की आर्थिक स्थिति बहुत ही खराब है एवं जनपद में चल रहे कल्याणकारी योजनाओं से भी वंचित हैं। आपको उक्त गावों की सूची संलग्न कर इस आशय के साथ (ईमेल के माध्यम से) प्रेषित है कि सर्वे सूची की समीक्षा कर उनको महात्मा गाँधी राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारण्टी योजना अन्तर्गत जॉब कार्ड जारी कर उन्हें योजना का लाभ दिलवाने की प्रक्रिया प्रारम्भ करें ताकि उन्हें इस योजना का लाभ दिलाया जा सके। इसके साथ ही जनपद मुख्यालय को भी प्रत्येक सप्ताह इसके प्रगति से अवगत कराते रहेंगे।

अतः संलग्न सूची का गहन अध्ययन कर आवश्यकतानुसार कार्यवाही करें।

संलग्न: उपरोक्तानुसार।


परियोजना निदेशक
जिला ग्राम्य विकास अभिकरण
वाराणसी।

Order from the Project Director - to the BDO

NREGA – Workers Gathering

- Lok Samiti organized a Mazdoor Samelan on March 15th
- About 3000 workers came for this gathering
- Lok Samiti is trying to organize the workers under a Workers Union so that they can work together for their rights.
- NREGA has been in effect for 5 years, but there are still many issues in its implementation. These were highlighted during this gathering and the same was communicated with the govt officials.

Workers gathering – March 15, 2011

मनरेगा मजदूर महासम्मेलन

दि. 15 मार्च - 2011,

स्थान - ब्लाक मुख्यालय, राजातालाब - वाराणसी

—: आयोजक:—

मनरेगा मजदूर यूनियन, लोक समिति वाराणसी ।



Future Plan

- Major focus will be to work with GAW on NREGA
- Work with Asha India to figure out the future of the schools, once RtE comes into effect
- Community marriage program

Fellowship Proposal

- The proposal is to continue support of the Fellowship at Rs 15,000/month
- Chicago chapter is willing to help out Austin chapter by supporting Nandlal's fellowship for the remainder of the year. The money will be sent in two installments – first one from Chicago for this year and the remaining from Austin covering the next year.