

Annual Report

2004-2005

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Vision

To build a society free from social, cultural, economic, religious, geographical and gender discrimination.

Mission

Prayas believes that self-esteem is an essential element to bring about an everlasting quality improvement in people's life.

Objectives

- ◉ Enable opportunities for social, economic, physical and cultural growth of marginalised communities.
- ◉ Create alternative knowledge and mechanisms for community development,
- ◉ Work to defend social, economic, political and cultural rights of all with focus on socially excluded segments
- ◉ Respond to contemporary poverty related community needs,
- ◉ Campaign for gender sensitive conduct and equity.

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Preface

Prayas completed twenty-five years in 2004. During this period its work focussed on to build a society free from social, cultural, economic, religious, geographical and gender discrimination. Beginning from one dispensary in crumbling old palace of Devgarh in 1979 to 13 field offices and over 90 members, Prayas has indeed come a long way.

The issues on which the organisation activities are centred include human rights, right to health, natural resource management, rural housing, ensuring safe childhood, universalisation of education, reducing violence against women..... The list is perhaps all encompassing. Some say that this is lack of focussed approach; we believe this is the demand of our work area.

We at Prayas have always maintained that we are merely facilitators. We believe that no change is possible unless it is wanted and is brought about by the people themselves.

To document all the activities and programmes conducted by Prayas is very difficult. Nevertheless, this is an attempt to briefly outline the major activities undertaken by Prayas in the last one year.

Your critical comments, observations and feedback are most welcome.

Human Rights and Civil Liberties

Chittorgarh as in most other parts of the country is beset with social, economic, cultural, political and gender disparities. These inequalities are grossly visible and inhibit people's access to basic essential requirements of life viz. food, housing, water, and most importantly secured sources of livelihood which can help them to buy all required amenities including mental peace. Prayas, based on its working experience of 25 years, believes that instead of providing direct services, people from the vulnerable sections of the society should be mobilised to demand what is rightfully theirs, in the framework of the constitutional rights of every Indian citizen. At the same time they should be united for their rights to initiate a campaign, which actually would enable more and more people to seek relief from atrocities and exploitation.

With this view the several advocacy campaigns were initiated which aim towards suitable changes in the government policies and programmes. These human right campaigns focus at ending the discrimination in society which leads to atrocities, economic and social exploitation of the deprived people, cruelties on women, alienation from land, caste based discriminations etc. Prayas has carried out many people led campaigns at the local level and actively participated in national level campaigns on food rights, employment, right to health, rights of dalits and women. Some of these campaigns and activities taken up in 2004-05 are briefly described in the following pages.

Mahua Episode: Story of Vijaypur

Mahua trees are plentiful in the forests of Vijaypur, an area about 40 kms from Chittorgarh town. These are located in forest, revenue, Government and private lands of individual farmers. Before independence in the erstwhile Mewar State, the zamindar of Vijaypur had the right of ownership of these trees. The jagirdar continued to exercise right over these trees after independence as well. The Jagir Commissioner of Rajasthan while settling properties after the promulgation of Jagirdari Abolition Act. 1952 allowed ownership of the ex-jagirdar over all fruit bearing trees irrespective of their location in all the sixty villages of erstwhile Vijaypur jagir. So a very strange situation existed while the land belonged to individual farmers or forest but the trees were owned by the ex-jagirdar.

For collecting mahua flowers the collectors clean the shadow area of the tree so that the flowers can be picked up easily. As these flowers are eaten by birds, monkeys, cows and buffaloes, they have to keep watch day and night. While the flowers are used for making liquor and eaten as vegetable, the mahua fruit is used for making cooking oil.

The zaghirdar imposed the condition over all the collectors of mahua that they will have to provide half of their collection to zaghirdar. Most of these collectors were tribals such as Bhil, Meena and other dalts such as Chamar, Meghwal. If the people objected to this or refused they were treated insolently and virulently and the produce was taken away from them forcefully. There was strong discontent amongst local people to this practice but neither Government nor any other social group raised voice against this unjust practice. Local people were already terrified to take any stand.

From the last six years Prayas engaged with the local people in raising voice against these atrocities. Prayas members talked to the villagers but they were initially very scared of the Thakur. After a deal of persuasion and support of Prayas and Khetihaar Khan Mazdoor Sangathan, 450 adivasis (including 120 women and 330 males) formed a delegation and met the Collector twice in March, 2004. But nothing substantial came out of these meetings.

On the other side, the ex-zaghirdar sent his protégés to villages to recover Mahua from the Adivasis, and made an attempt to force them. Prayas also highlighted the problem in the media. At the same time, a public writ was filed in the Rajasthan High Court against this forced recovery.

In the first hearing the High Court asked for the explanation from the State Government as why forced recovery is being made from the individually and Govt. owned trees. The judge was astonished to find that Jagirdari system was still surviving in the State in this age of independence and that the State Government is giving impetus to this. The Court then passed an injunction and directed the State Government to ascertain that Mahua is not recovered from the adivasis and that the safety of the local people and petitioners is ensured.

This decision made the villagers happy. In a way this was a historical and land mark achievement that Mahua flowers forcibly taken away for ages, at last succumbed before the power of unity. In monetary terms the villagers have benefited by 34 lakh rupees annually including 22 lakh rupees of Mahua flowers and 12 lakh rupees of oil from the mahua fruits

The adivasis earlier gave 50% of the yield to the zaghirdar, now they are in the process of setting up a community fund by contributing 10 to 25% of the yield. The villagers would operate this fund themselves and the money would be used in cases of emergency, reducing dependence on the moneylenders.

Jan / Dalit Adhikar Chetna Rally

About 400 bhils tribals and dalits from Chittaurgarh marched on foot to Jaipur. This rally was organised from December 25th, 2004 to January 5th, 2005. During these coldest days of the year these people walked a total of 327 kilometers, i.e. about 30 kilometers a day. The people were demanding that their land which had been encroached upon or illegally occupied by the so called higher castes be set free and restored to them in accordance with the provisions of the Rajasthan Land Tenancy Act. of 1955.

Agricultural land measuring thousands of bighas belonging to bhil tribals and dalits in Chittorgarh has either transferred to the influential people of higher castes allegedly by subterfuge or declared as government property by misuse of the legal provisions during the past four decades.

According to the limited sample survey conducted by Prayas, Khetihar Khan Mazdoor Sangathan and Adivasee bheel Parishad, in Chittorgarh District 1,389 bigha agricultural land of 415 bhil families in 92 villages is currently in the possession of higher castes through mortagae or transfer of title. The total value of the land has been estimated at Rs. 10 crores.

After the rally a Jan Sunwai was conducted at the Statue circle, Jaipur. In the Jan sunwai they demanded transfer of land owned by Scheduled Castes and Tribes be stopped forthwith and their land rights be restored. Among others, noted social activist and member of the National Advisory Council, Aruna Roy, president of the Rajasthan Unit of people's Union of Civil Liberties, and Than Singh, and Brahmadev Sharma of Bharat Jan Andolan, Sreelatha Srinivas, Nikhil Dey, Vijayalakshmi Joshi etc- addressed the Jan Sunwai and emphasised the need to protect the land title of tribals and dalits.

The participants in the Jan Sunwai pointed out that the revenue officials were misusing Section 175 of the Rajasthan Tenancy Act by referring the cases of dispute and encroachment on land as Government Property.

On the other hand, the powers granted to tehsildars under Section 183-C of the Act, providing for summary proceedings for eviction of encroachers are never exercised, depriving the weaker sections of their land rights. The tribals demanded that Section 175 be repealed and the revenue officials be directed to strictly implement Section 183C.

A memorandum was also submitted to the industries minister to be handed over to the Chief Minister, Vasundhara Raje which called for the appointment of a high-level committee to review all cases of transfer of land "under coercion" and establishment of a fast track court to decide these matters. It also sought to protection of land rights of Bhil tribals and their inclusion in the BPL category.

Equal Opportunities and Rights for the Disabled

People with disability have been ignored both by the administration and the society. In the rural areas there are no special privileges accorded to them. To ensure the partnership of the government machinery in their rehabilitation, a public dialogue was organised. The public dialogue aimed at advocacy for the rights of people with disability, provide equal opportunities and creating suitable conditions for their active and positive contribution to the society.

For this event, the government departments collaborated were the Social Welfare Department, the Rajasthan State Roadways Department, Medical and Health Department, Post and Telegraph department, the Education Department, the Panchayat Samitis, and the District Rural Development Agency. The district administration was represented by the collector, Sh. Ashutosh Gupt.

After the event people with disability identity card, bus pass and railway pass were issued and applications were submitted for pension, scholarship, and other economic benefits. Supportive equipment such as hearing aids, crutches, tricycles etc. were also distributed on the occasion.

Micro-Credit Movement

In an effort to bring about empowerment of women through economic security, Prayas has worked extensively in the formation and facilitation of micro-credit groups in traditionally economically backwards communities. In these communities, dominated by Dalits and Adivasis, women work primarily in agriculture or as marginal labourers. These women are often the victims of economic exploitation. Women do not receive remunerative pay for their work, are subjected to high interest rates on loans, and are generally looked down upon by society. The purpose of the micro-credit movement is to create an institutionalised system through which oppressed sections of the population can meet their credit needs.

Forming and actively participating in micro credit groups these women could initiate new hopes in their families and community. Many families who lost their productive agricultural land to the moneylenders got their most important assets back. Others used this new economic opportunity to invest in buying other productive assets ranging from purchase of cattle, brick making, and additional inputs in land to get increased agricultural production and collection from trading in minor forest produce. Overall dependence for credit from moneylenders for quick cash has reduced. Membership to micro credit groups has assured an important economic and social position to these women within families and outside and led them to plan for more sustainable life style.

Prayas' Micro-credit Program facilitates the creation of community groups linked to banks through which women are encouraged to save money and have the opportunity to take out loans at low interest rates. This program began with the formation of a single group in Ranpur and has now spread to all the villages in which Prayas is active.

Micro-credit groups operate through monthly meetings of group members. In these meetings several tasks are performed, including collection of repaid loan instalments, disbursement of loans, collection of membership fees, and completion of cashbooks, ledgers and stock books. Additionally, these micro-credit groups serve as a venue in which problems in the villages can be discussed and information can be shared about such issues as combating drought, income opportunities for women, women's violence, availability of essential resources such as water, fodder and fuels, education of children, health problems, issues of women headed households, and local political affairs.

Micro credit groups have also brought in a better social cohesion among women and their families and many social conflicts are easily resolved through this medium. The forums have also given women a new strength, both collectively and individually. Women of these groups have organised on many occasions to demand for more infrastructure development, employment, routing out of corruption and exploitation and efficient delivery of social sector services rendered by the Government such as health care, drinking water, education, child nutrition, sanitation, etc.

Empowerment of Rural Poor for Better Health

PRAYAS began working in an area, which was and still is inhabited by people who come on the last rung of development. Prayas has always worked with people who are socially marginalised based on their caste, economic status or gender.

These are the people for whom there is no surety of the next meal. Delay in rains in one year could mean indebtedness for entire life; which often leads to loss of cattle, land and even bonded labour. Hence it does not come as a surprise that health is not really on their agenda, survival is.

But statistics clearly indicate that expenditure on medicines and treatment is the biggest cause of indebtedness among the rural poor. Lack of nutritious food and unhygienic conditions often make the people easy prey to several infections. In the absence of rational treatment, deaths form simple infectious diseases like diarrhoea or heavy indebtedness for expenditure on cure of malaria (treatment for which is provided free in public health centres) is not uncommon.

Trends of health seeking behaviour among rural community have shown that an overwhelmingly large number of families for about 80% of their morbidities do not access services offered by the state health facilities.

Initiating Action in the Community

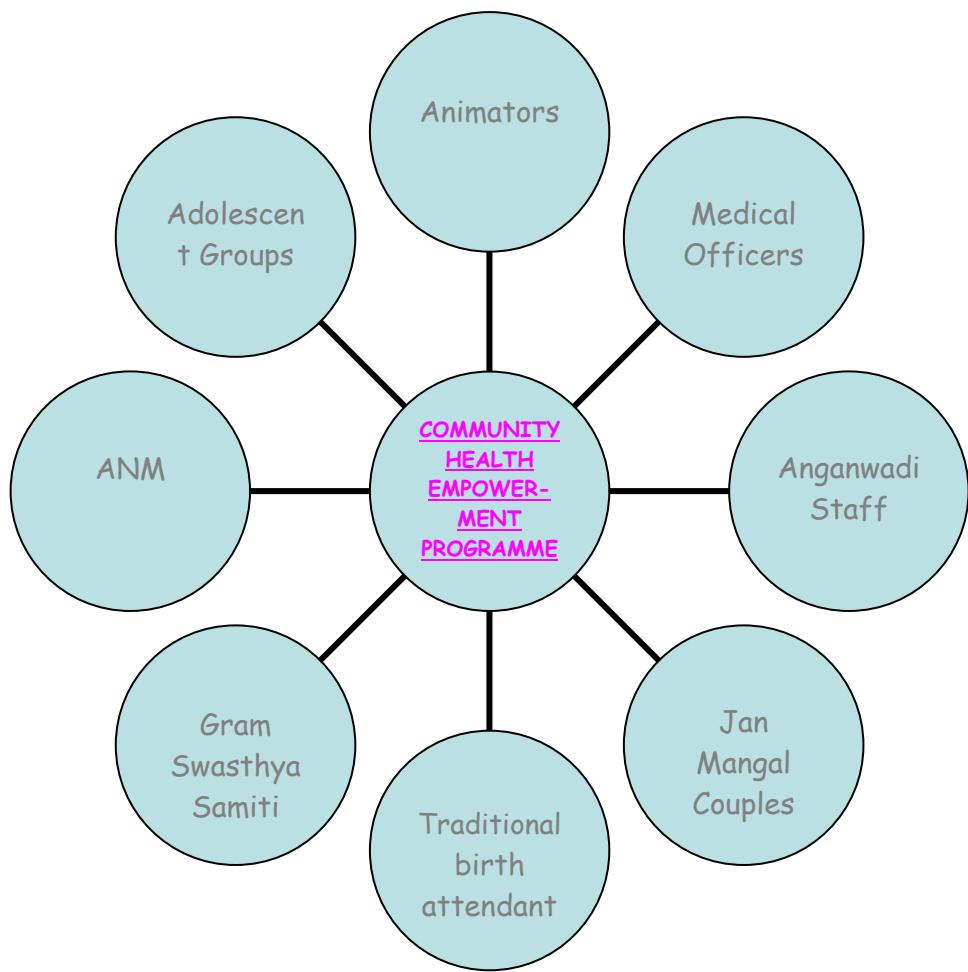
As part of our commitment to de-glamorise medicine and handing it back into people's hands, Prayas is running community based health projects which aim at empowerment of rural poor. This helps in creation of community responsibility for its own health. Simultaneously, Prayas has been working at strengthening the public health care system and aiming to make them what they were intended to be-accessible and affordable to the poor.

The specific issues that Prayas is working with respect to health are:

- ❖ Primary Health
- ❖ Personal hygiene
- ❖ Right to health care
- ❖ Strengthening public health care services
- ❖ Awareness of the community so that the demand is created and accountability of the health services is ensured.

In keeping with the ideals of Prayas, empowerment of rural and tribal poor is the final outcome and is evident in the process and strategy by which Prayas works. The community is lead by, not Prayas, but people from within the community. Our partners in the endeavour for attaining the goal of health for all are given in the following diagram.





After the environment building and initiating curiosity and awareness in the community about health, the first activity was to form village level health mobilisation groups commonly known as the *Gram Swasthya Dal* (GSD). One GSD is formed in every village consisting of an equal number of men and women, based on relative representation of the people. The anganwadi worker and the village dai are also members. These members are given training, which aim at developing a scientific understanding about health. The GSD helps in spreading awareness in the villages. This is reflected in the increased number of vaccinations given to children and pregnant mothers, more number of people accessing the public health services instead of Bhopas and Bengali doctors, decrease in the spread of infectious diseases etc.

Working on the community health are also the animators, who are agents of change at this level. The animator is the '*Utpaprak*', who mobilises the community to seek effective control of their health problems by disseminating information about health, keeping the surroundings hygienic, washing hands with soap or ash before eating and after defecation, getting deliveries conducted by trained health personnel and other basic information on healthful practices to combat illness and diseases etc.

This kind of sustained programme has resulted in increase in the number of people seeking health care from the public health services, regularity in the visits of the ANM in the village as the community has started to demand services from her, increase in the number of vaccinations in children and pregnant mothers. The incidence of the infectious diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera has also decreased. Prayas is currently conducting an endline survey to gauge the exact percentage of change in the health status based on the health indicators.

But the road to safe and healthful life is still long and this is only a beginning.

Catching them Young...

The group in the village which is most ready for change is the adolescent group. They are growing up, are curious not only about themselves but also about the opposite sex. They have not yet totally internalised the traditional narrow minded attitudes of the society and if correct information is given to them at this time then lifetime healthy changes can be brought about. They are the future and thus need to be taken very seriously. A positive change can be induced in the social fabric by giving a message to the youth who will shape up tomorrow's destiny.

Keeping this as the background adolescent boys' and girls' groups are formed in the village known as the kishori samooh and kishor samooh. Various activities are organised for these groups which include regular meetings, health melas, sports melas, slogan writing, rallies etc.

Liasoning with the Government Health Staff

Prayas regularly conducts orientation workshops with the government health service providers. The primary objective of these workshops is to form partnerships with the health machinery and get their support in the common aim of achieving, "Health for All."

Thus, in these workshops not only information is disseminated about the activities of Prayas, but also action plans are drawn up to work jointly with the Government health staff. For example, plan to ensure complete immunization, developing a strategy to control and prevent infectious diseases, seasonal diseases and ensure safe deliveries.

Formation of District level, CHC and PHC Committees

To strengthen primary health care services of the district and review and plan the health activities Prayas was able to initiate the formation of District Level Committee under the Chairmanship of CMHO. Prayas is the member secretary of this committee. The other members of the committee are the District Reproductive and Child Health Officer, Dy. CM&HO, Medical Officer Incharge of CHCs, Child Development Project Officers and Block Development Officers of the respective blocks. This committee meets once in 3 months to perform the following functions:

- ❖ Review and plan to strengthen the Primary Health Care activities of the district in general and of CHCs Chhoti Sadari and Bari Sadari
- ❖ Plan to organize social and gender sensitization trainings of the health care providers and skill building workshops to apply epidemiological principles in planning and delivery of services.
- ❖ Evolve strategies and plans for implementation to seek community support in strengthening of primary health services.

Similarly, PHC/CHC committees have been formed and are instrumental in bridging the gap between the service providers and the community. These committees provide a platform for the health service providers- medical officers, ANMs, MPWs, LHV and the village animators and representatives of the VHCs to sit together and work out strategies for better delivery of primary health care services in their area.

Because of the perceived hierarchy, with the service providers being seen as the *givers* and the community as the *passive recipients*, the relationship has never been *equal*. The community never felt that it could question or demand from the service providers. But now with the two sides actually sitting face-to-face at health facility, that notion is changing. Common people and more specifically the women, facilitated by village health animators have begun to feel more confident to talk to the ANMs and doctors to demand quality health care from them. .

Dialogue on Quality of Care

The overall condition of health services of Rajasthan is in a dismal state. In this scenario systematic and comprehensive quality reproductive health care services are virtually non-existent. One way to ensure quality reproductive health services for the community is to engage in advocacy. Prayas organised a public dialogue to initiate a sustained advocacy network on Quality of care in Jaipur in December 2004. This state level Public Dialogue or Samwad aimed at spearheading an advocacy initiative aimed at improving quality of care of Reproductive Health and Family health services.

The Honourable Health minister of Rajasthan, Dr. Digambar Singh was the chief guest on the occasion and in his inauguration speech stressed on the need to upgrade the rural health services. He also said that government was considering starting health insurance policy for the pregnant women in rural areas.

Esteemed scholar and health specialist **Dr. S. G. Kabra** also spoke on the occasion and stressed on the need of regulatory mechanisms in the area of health care delivery. Dr. Abhijit Das, from Kriti, Lucknow, outlined various dimensions of quality of care and what it should mean for the masses. The other panelists included Dr. Vinaya Pendse, Dr. Sudir Verma, Dr. Pritam Pal, Ms. Preeti Oza, , Ms. Kavita Srivastava, and Dr. Pavitra Mohan

After the dialogue recommendation were made for further work at the level of Community based organisations, Government and public health systems, networks and mass organisations and media.

Participation in Jan Swasthya Abhiyan: Health as a Fundamental Right

In 1978, at the Alma-Ata Conference, ministers from 134 member countries in association with WHO and UNICEF declared “Health for All by the year 2000” selecting Primary Health Care as the best tool to achieve it. This, as we all know, was never achieved. The health status of people, especially those living in developing countries have not improved and may have rather worsened.

The efforts of Governments and international bodies have not helped. Thus, it had become essential to build up people centred initiatives and increase pressure on decision-makers, governments and the private sector to ensure quality health care for all.

With the above objective, several international organisations, civil society movements, NGOs, women's groups came together for the first time and organised the 1st People's Health Assembly in Savar, Bangladesh.

At the first People's Health Assembly, 2000 in Bangladesh over 1453 participants from 75 countries came together to create and endorse a consensus document called the People's Charter for Health. The charter, which reflects the vision of the PHM, is most widely endorsed consensus document on health since the Alma Ata Declaration of 1978.

The Indian chapter of People's Health Movement is known as the *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* (JSA). Apart from participating in the international and national activities of JSA, Prayas is also actively involved in initiating and spreading JSA in Rajasthan. Dr. Narendra Gupta is also the convenor of JSA Rajasthan.

In 2004-05 the activities that were organised under JSA in coordination with other members were:

1. Rally and street play in Jaipur against coercive population control programmes and policies on the occasion of World Population Day (11th July). A charter including demand of repeal of two child norm was also presented to the Health Minister.
2. Under the campaign on 'Right to health care' National Human Rights Commission in collaboration with JSA held public hearings in the whole country. Prayas coordinated the testimonies to be presented from Rajasthan in western region public hearing held in Bhopal on 29th July 2004. 10 people from different districts of the State-Jaipur, Jodhpur, Chittorgarh testified before the panel comprising of NHRC officials and State government health officials.
3. *Jan Swasthya Abhiyan* organized a dialogue with the representatives of various political parties before the elections in New Delhi on 8th September 2004. 6 members of Prayas health team participated in the dialogue. Issues like the need to increase budget allocation in health, ensure availability of medicines, strengthen primary health infrastructure were raised.
4. A two-day consultation of JSA Rajasthan was organised in Jaipur on 21st and 22nd March 2005 to discuss the issue of 'Right to Health Care' in the context of the failure of the government to realize the goal of 'Health for All by 2000 AD', National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) being launched by the State and Central governments and to strengthen the functioning of JSA in the State. A total of 85 people from across the State attended the consultation. At the end of the workshop memorandums were sent to the Union Health Minister and the State Health Minister appealing to them to consider the issues of concern in the implementation of the NRHM and regarding the enforcement of standard treatment protocols and essential drugs list.

International Women's Health Meet

The 10th International Women's Health Meet is being held in New Delhi, India from 21st to 25th September 2005. The IWHM has its roots in the global women's movement and includes a wide range of organizations, networks, and grassroots women's groups. Prayas was invited to be on the core committee of the western region event for the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Goa. Prior to the western region event a two-days Rajasthan state consultation was held in Jaipur on 15th and 16th February 2005 which was jointly organized by Seva Mandir, Udaipur and Prayas.

About 65 people working on issues related to women's health in the government and non government sector across the state participated. Ms. Pawan Surana, Chairperson, State Commission for Women was the chief guest. Ms. Sabala who is a member of the national and international organizing committee of the IWHM attended the consultation. The sessions held over the two-days included Women's Health Scenario in Rajasthan, Public Health Sector, Health Sector Reforms and Gender, Community Based Organisations in Women's Health and Role of Non-Government Organisations and Panchayats in Improving Women's Health.

Ms. Pallavi Gupta, Coordinator, Prayas presented her paper, 'Policy Matters and women's health in Rajasthan' at IWHM, New Delhi in September 2005.

Spreading Awareness about HIV/AIDS amongst Youth: Programmes for Tribal Youth and School Children

The tribal areas of Pratapgarh block were thought to be pretty much untouched by the menace of HIV/AIDS. As it was unheard of, there was also no awareness about this infection and the subsequent disease, AIDS. But now as more and more young men from the area seasonally migrating to cities such as Jaipur, Ahmedabad, and even Mumbai, some cases of HIV/AIDS were also reported, mostly after the death of the person. A Voluntary Testing and Counselling Centre (VCTC) was also started at the district hospital in Pratapgarh.

It is in fact, in one way become a challenge for us to introduce a 'new' disease to them and other way a strength because when people have no knowledge then there is no chance to have preconceived notions.

The only way to combat HIV/AIDS is prevention and that is possible only with the spread of correct information and awareness. In this context Prayas has initiated a programme called 'HIV/AIDS prevention and care programme for the Rural and Tribal youth in India.' renamed as '*Hillore*' which literally means waves. With this programme Prayas is reaching out to 2400 rural and tribal out-of-formal education system young (13-25) people as direct target group.

The objectives of the programme are:

- ✿ To increase access of youth friendly, gender sensitive information about youth related health issues including HIV/AIDS prevention, care and sexuality.
- ✿ To engage civil society, public and private sector organisations to build and manage the cultural and area relevant community based activities related to the reproductive health issues; especially for young women including HIV/AIDS prevention and care.
- ✿ To advocate reproductive and sexual rights of young people and facilitate a supportive environment to meet their reproductive and sexual health needs.
- ✿ To work jointly with NGOs, public and private sector organisations to lobby for creation of community specific strategic action plans to address young people issues including HIV/AIDS and influence related policies at district, state, and national level.

Expected outcomes of the interventions of the programme are:-

- ❖ Increased awareness in the community about young people's reproductive and sexual issues including vulnerability to HIV/AIDS so as to provide a conducive environment for young people, especially girls to access information and services specific to their needs.
- ❖ Reduction of stigma associated with HIV/AIDS and greater acceptance of voluntary testing for HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Better accessibility to Public health services especially for youths.
- ❖ An environment is created to initiate a debate/dialogue on the need to break the common gender and social stereotype.

To achieve the above following activities are carried out in the village:

Kala Jattha Programmes

Thus keeping in view this thought we are trying to generate awareness campaign in 60 villages through two Cultural troupes locally known as *kala Jattas*

The kala jattha programme is part of environment building which helps in talking on sensitive issues of sexuality and HIV/AIDS. It is also a form of entertainment by which people are informed about the programme objectives.

Gram Swasthya Dal

Gram swasthya dal (GSD) work as the village health resource and mobilisation group. After the formation of the GSDs they were given a training on various health issues including HIV/AIDS. The participation of the village people during the training was absolute.

The training is also beneficial in developing a common understanding of the people on health related issues as well as developing a common consensus to work on such issues.

Peer education

The messenger is as important as the message. While working with the young people of the community on the issue of HIV/AIDS peer education has been introduced keeping this in mind. Peer educators are the key messengers at the interpersonal communication level. Peers are people who are alike in several respects: age, gender, interest, language, use of time, aspiration and so on. Peer education respects the influence peer brings to bear on each other. Peer education recognises that education about HIV, abstinence, condom use, health issues,

alcohol and drug avoidance, has a better chance of leading to behavioural change when its source is a Peer as compared to a superior. Along with this special care is taken to instill life skills education.

Care is taken to ensure that the peer educator is from within the community and is relatively young falling in the age group of 13-25 years, which is also the target age group. The qualities that a peer has include capacity to communicate and motivate and an added hold amongst peers.

Setting up Youth recreational centre (YRC)

8 villages have been chosen to establish the Youth Recreational Centre (YRC) At present the centre is only providing information on SRH, HIV/AIDS, RTI/STI, etc. With the help of YRC, RTI/STI camps for women for the women. Eventually these would also be used vocational training for the young people.

Partnership and capacity building

Prayas has collaborated with the Primary health centres and the district hospital based VCTC. Along with this health service providers have been identified who are willing to establish YFHS in their respective areas. They are from both public and private sector and having good rapport in the community as health service providers, and will be providing information as well as services to the people on sexual and reproductive health. Till date, we have identified 10 PHSP who are willing to have collaborated with us.

The biggest challenge here for Prayas is spreading information about HIV/AIDS that can induce healthful behaviour without giving any space to myths and stigma related to the disease.

Universalisation of Education

EDUCATION is one of the powerful vehicles to reach out to people and foster critical discussions on issues concerning their lives. Prayas considers universalisation of education as an integral step in empowerment of people.

Prayas started working on this issue since its inception. It began with setting up adult education centres. Soon it was realised that there was an equal, if not, an urgent need to start schools for children also, as there were none in the vicinity. After operating five primary schools opened for these children for about 4 years in early 80's. The intervention in the field of education reached its peak during 1996-2000, when Prayas collaborated with Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) programme of *Lok Jumbish Parishad* (LJP). At this point Prayas was running 70 centres in the clusters of *Rampuria*, *Devgarh*, *Chiklad*, of the *Pratapgarh* block; *Mungana* in *Dhraiyawad* block of *Udaipur* and *Keljhar* of *Chittorgarh* block.

As has been said earlier the schools were set up where there was a need and with the setting up of government schools Prayas has been reorganising its work. Prayas is currently running 16 alternative schools in the *Devgarh*(4) and *Mangalwar*(7) blocks of *Chittorgarh* and *Mungana* of *Dhariyawad* Block of *Udaipur* (5). Total number of children studying in these schools at present is 660. The attendance varies from 80-82%.

No fees or any other charges are taken from the students. The only support that is required from the community is a place for the school in the village and maximum enrolment of children in the school.

The schools run for 6 hours a day during which children are taught Hindi, mathematics, environmental studies, basic English and other arts and crafts. The educational material used and the teaching methods are specially developed to suit the local needs, and inculcate scientific temper in the children along with developing genuine interest for knowledge and learning.

After the school gets over the teachers stay back for two more hours and evaluate the work done by each student. After the school hours the teachers work for 2 more hours to analyse the work and performance of each child. On the basis of this performance the next day's activities are planned. There are no exams till the 4th standard and the students are judged on their overall performance. After the 4th standard the children are taught according to the Rajasthan Board curriculum as the aim is to send these children to the mainstream schools.

24 teachers are currently employed in the schools. Teachers are selected from the village itself as far as possible. These selected teachers are then given specialised training involving several rounds. The first orientation training is for 40 days. After

this there are refresher training/workshop for 10-20 days. The trainers include the resource team of Prayas and experts from Digantar.

This effort is supported by Digantar, an organisation working in the field of education, and has helped in simplifying and making education interesting along with bringing about marked improvement in other aspects of quality education.

The success of this programme is evident in the performance of the students in the government run schools. These children have given exemplary performance in the government schools, better than the children who have been studying there since the beginning.

Residential camps are held for preparation of the Rajasthan board examination for the 5th standard, usually ranging from 1½ -2 months (15th February to 15 April). The duration of this camp ranges according to the performance of the students and the resources. As per the performance of the children they are selected to give the exam – on the basis of his/her understanding of the study courses. Rajasthan board curriculum is followed so that the child is able to cope with these changes in a regular government run school.

The performance of these students in government run schools has been exemplary; even as compared to students who have attended government schools since the beginning.

The books and notebooks are kept in the school. The children study only in the school and usually do not get any homework, as according to the local conditions:

- 1) there is no electricity,
- 2) there is housework to be done, and
- 3) studies should not feel like a burden for the child and especially the family.

We believe that if the student spends 6 hrs of quality time in studying then no more work is required. The of 5th standard who are required to do more work (as per their need) to clear the Rajasthan board, stay for longer hours

The performance of every student is analysed everyday; including the child's learning speed, hurdles faced by the child in learning and the quality of the child's learning.

There have been instances where children have completed the study of 1-5th Standard in 1½ yrs and have joined the 5th standard. Usually most children complete the 5-year studies in about three years' time.

One another positive outcome of these schools is their contribution to reduction in child marriages, especially in the Mangalwad area. As long as the children especially girls keep coming to school for studies, they do not get married! Thus this is a direct linkage between a increase in literacy and decrease in child marriage. Thus these schools are also a symbol of happy, healthy and safe childhood.

Presently these schools are supported by Prayas at its own level. Since last year two years the funds have been drying up and as of now these schools are facing closure. Five schools in Mangalwad and five in Devgarh have already been closed temporarily due to lack of funds.

Reducing Gender Disparities

In a country where resources are limited and the basic necessities of life are not easily accessible to most, conditions for women are even worse than they are for the men. Rajasthan in this context is especially notorious with history of *satis*, rigid caste based discrimination and secondary status to women. Women have a low status and are considered as inferior and there is a strong belief that men are superior to them and even own them. In this context, women fall victim to traditional practices that violate their human rights. The persistence of the problem has much to do with the fact that most of these harmful customs are deeply rooted in the tradition and culture of society.

Gender Sensitisation Trainings for the Health Care Providers

Chittorgarh has been the one out of two district in the country where gender sensitivity workshops were conducted for health care providers in 2002-03. These workshops aimed at orienting all cadres of health care providers towards the different facets of gender discrimination and how it impacts women's health. The workshops stressed on the barriers experienced by women in accessing treatment for their health problems and why it is essential for health care providers to be sensitive for providing gender sensitive health care services.

These trainings are now being imparted in the other districts of Rajasthan which are covered under the Integrated Population and Development Project of the Medical and Health Department, Government of Rajasthan.

Taking this further, a second round of gender sensitisation trainings are being conducted in Chittorgarh. This round aims at the **operationalisation of gender sensitivity** in health care, especially reproductive health care. Under the programme, over a thousand medical and paramedical staff of the Medical and Health Department would be imparted this training.

Setting Up of Garima: The Family Counselling Centre

Along with the activities described above Prayas is also trying to address gender-based violence directly. As a step in this direction Garima, a family counselling centre was set up in Pratapgarh block of Chittorgarh. Garima is based in the Pratapgarh District Hospital Campus.

Garima has been functioning since December, 2004 and till the publication of this document 106 cases have been registered out of which 57 have been solved through negotiations.

Apart from dealing with cases, Garima is also involved in advocacy for women's rights and spreading awareness about issues pertaining to gender based violence. In this respect workshops have been conducted with the media, and training workshops for the sathins are being organised. Workshops with doctors, and government officials including the police are also in the pipeline.

Campaign against Declining Child Sex Ratio

Declining Child Sex Ratio is an issue that needs immediate attention and intervention across the country. The sharp decline reflected in the 2001 census as compared to 1991 census is a strong warning to take stock of the rapidly deteriorating situation. This is a clear indication of the discrimination meted out to women in our society. The reducing number of girls is an interplay of the social practices and attitudes that favour male children; coercive population control policies of the government like the two-child norm further aggravate the bias against women and also mark the failure of the administration and judiciary to effectively implement laws such as the Pre Conception Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act. which prohibit any sex selection and sex detection during pregnancy.

Prayas took up the issue in the form of a campaign in collaboration with 'Population Foundation of India' who also provided partial financial support for the campaign. Various activities were organized in six districts of Rajasthan in collaboration with the local district level organizations. The six districts are Barmer, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Dholpur, Jhunjhunu and Rajsamand. Interactive workshops were held with health professionals, panchayat representatives and media persons in which the participants were apprised with the current scenario, there were discussions about the causes and consequences of declining child sex ratio and role of each stakeholder in addressing this problem. To take the issue to the youth literary activities like essay, debate, poster and story writing competitions were organized. Street plays, puppet shows and rallies were also held to bring the issue amongst the masses and generate awareness. The varied nature of the activities helped in reaching out to a large section of people both in the government and non-government sector.

Rural Housing

“One must have the comfort of home to be able to deliver his or her best.”

The rural housing programme integrates gender sensitive and livelihood aspect with the housing for the tribals in the Devgarh area of southern Rajasthan. Its most significant feature is the “people’s” approach, which provides housing for the individual family through participatory processes of Community mobilization, Resource mobilization and Livelihood promotion.

Key words: People’s Participation, Dovetailing Resources, Local Building Materials, House Construction.

A typical house in the identified villages is completely kutcha mud house roofed by country tiles. Wood is profusely used in building the house because it is easily available in the nearby forest. In fact use of abundant wood in building houses has been a reason for decrease in tree cover. Most houses are just one room that is used for living, storage, cooking and all other household activities. In most houses the same room is divided into two and one part is used as shed for domestic animals. There is no pattern in building these houses and absolutely no ventilation of any kind, which keep the entire place dark and full of smoke during cooking. Very few families in these villages have built semi pucca houses using the masonry technique. Even these pucca houses are also built without any proper design and ventilation. In some villages pucca houses under Indira Awas Yojna (IAY), upgraded IAY and tribal sub plan schemes the design factor has been considered. But these are few and again haphazardly made.

Every family in the area try to economize its construction as much as possible, and usually end up building the houses on its own. The family members generally provide entire labour and if any outside labour is required, it is on sharing basis. People have their no perception of properly ventilated gender sensitive house and nor do they build houses taking these concerns into account. A good and ideal house in their mind is masonry built pucca house with adequate space to tie animals and storage of feed for animals. A courtyard and open space is also preferred.

Access to affordable building materials is one of the main constrains on the poor to provide adequate housing for them. Sustainability or affordability in housing is same thing viewed from different perspective. Affordable housing can be embedded in a development strategy, which in turn strengthens economic self-reliance of household members.

PRAYAS' overall goal is to provide environment friendly cost effective and gender sensitive houses to the poor, and in tandem with this, the housing unit works with the following focused objectives:

- ⊕ Introduce the concept and rationale for appropriate and gender sensitive housing among rural poor.
- ⊕ Mobilize finance to enhance rural housing.
- ⊕ Evolve model for decentralized financing for housing among rural poor.
- ⊕ Promote the concept of CEEF technology in rural housing.
- ⊕ Advocacy for policy framework to promote rural housing.
- ⊕ Create CEEF building material and Rand D production center.
- ⊕ Create proto types for good and gender sensitive houses for rural poor.

Several innovative features are used in this rural housing programme such as, Soil Compressed Mud Blocks and pre cast door and window frames.

The Financial concern within the project are:

- Creating internal financial resource base through microcredit and savings group.
- Tapping up grants loans and subsidies available through government schemes, banks and other financial institutions.
- Promote PRIs role in ensuring housing security to people in rural area.

This has envisaged us to mobilise more finance to the rural markets. In this process we are focusing more on group savings to be linked with livelihood and on the other tap government resources for the needy.

Capacitisation of masons and local youths as well as SHG groups was conducted within the campus itself.

Current Performance

- ✿ Design options are explored with their cost analysis.
- ✿ 19 families facilitated to acquire land patta.
- ✿ Dovetailing of funds under Credit cum subsidy scheme accomplished for 6 families.
- ✿ Linkage established with banks for housing loan to 4 individuals.
- ✿ Viable linkage established with government department.
- ✿ Construction of 4 houses under completion.

Community Based Natural Resource Management

Natural Resources provide important economic resources to village communities and are also tightly linked with community health. In recent years degradation of forestlands have been fuelled by scarcity of agricultural land, encroachment, transfer of land for development activities and high levels of natural resource withdrawal from forestlands. Additionally, due to droughts in the area and inadequate understanding of proper use of natural resources, there have been high levels of deforestation and degradation of forest resources in the Pratapgarh area of Chittorgarh district in southeastern Rajasthan. Across India, Joint Forestry Management (JFM) schemes have been developed which seek to encourage participation of local communities in the management of forests in cooperation with the Forest Department. The struggle to give village communities control over natural resources has the dual purpose of protecting natural resources and providing communities with livelihood opportunities.

Local Forest Protection Committees have been formed through which local communities are given authority over local resources and have access to the economic benefits of resource preservation. Rajasthan adopted the Joint Forestry Management scheme in 1991 and since then Prayas has been working with local communities to spread awareness of the hazards of deforestation and motivate people to form Forest Protection Committees.

The focus of Prayas' work is to ensure that the benefits of forest protection and regeneration reach the communities directly and are distributed equitably.

Prayas has organized re-election and registration of Forest Protection Committees and fought for their recognition by the Forest Department. As of now, 45 forest protection committees and management committees formed by Prayas are working in southern Rajasthan managing and protecting about 70000 hectares of forestland. These committees have formed a federation which is named 'Lok Van Vikas Parishad' having its headquarter at Pratapgarh, Distt. Chittorgarh.

The objectives of formation of these committees was management of forests by villagers and inhabitants themselves and carry out developmental work in the area from the income generation through rightful forest produce.

Prayas has always appreciated and facilitated the concept of Joint Forest Management (JFM), and has been relentlessly working in order to empower people so that they can demand for what is rightfully theirs. Thus, under its JFM and natural resources management project Prayas acts as a catalyst in this process. Also another aim is to facilitate the marketing of the items made out of forest produce so that the people can get the real value of their produce.

In this work the people are at the centre. It is with people that Prayas is concerned. In this context prayas tried to bring the people and the forest officials at the state level on one platform so that there could be a straight dialogue. And as a result of this in March 2005 a state level event was organized in which Rajasthan Natural Resources Management Group was formed.

Felicitations

Sh. Khemraj Choudhary

Director, Prayas was awarded the prestigious Bhoruka Charitable Trust Award for his lifetime contribution to the welfare of Dalit and Tribal people.

Sh. Tejram Jat

Programme Coordinator (Health), received the prestigious International Scholarship from the Ford Foundation and is currently pursuing Master of Science in Health Policy Planning and Financing from London School of Economics and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, U.K.

Visits

Conference of International Society for Equity in Health

Dr. Narendra Gupta Participated in the Third Annual Conference of the International Society for equity in health held in Durban, South Africa from 10th to 12th June 2004. Dr. Gupta Also presented a paper in the session on Community monitoring and Action research for health equity.

Dr. Narendra Gupta and Ms. Pallavi Gupta participated in the 'Short Course on Health Equity- Research to Action' organised by Global Equity Gauge Alliance in Durban, South Africa from 15th-17th June 2004. There was a two-day conference before the course (June 13th-14th , 2004) on building global and national coalitions for action in Health Equity. The conference focussed upon forming equity gauges at state, national and regional levels to monitor the health inequities and work towards addressing these inequities. Participants from Prayas also coordinated the session on 'Building Regional Processes to Support Global and National Coalitions in Asia.'

World Social Forum

Dr. Narendra Gupta participated in the World Social Forum on Health and Vth International Forum in Defence of People's Health held in Salao de Atos da Ponifícia University at Porto Alegre, Brazil from 23rd to 25th January 2005. He spoke in the plenary session on "Critical analysis of the orientation and possibilities of change in the direction of the running process of health and social security reforms looking to the respect to the human and social rights" on the first day and then on 2nd day as a representative of the People's Health Movement, India.

Sh. Khem Raj and Dr. Narendra Gupta participated in the Vth World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil from 26th to 31st January 2005. Dr. Narendra spoke in three workshops organized by the Global People's Health Movement, PIDHDD. He also organized a workshop in the WSF on "Alma Ata Revisited" in the WSF. Sh. Khem Raj took part in the workshop on land rights of dalits.

Exposure Tour for the Village Animators

Exposure tours to other society groups working on similar issues is always helpful in expanding knowledge and workable strategies. Two exposure tours were organised for the animators and staff members.

One group of animators and staff members visited Society for Social Uplift through Rural Action (SUTRA), Solan District of Himachal Pradesh.

Another group of animators from the villages of the Chhoti Sadari block went for an exposure tour to observe the work of other similar organisations in the area of community health. The organisations that they visited were:

- ✿ SEARCH, Ghadchiroli, Maharashtra
- ✿ CRHP, Jamkhed, Maharashtra
- ✿ IRHP, Pachhod, Maharashtra
- ✿ Sewagram, Madhya Pradesh

Projects

The specific projects that were taken up in 2004-05 and some of which are currently being run are:

- ❖ Advocacy initiative on declining child sex ratio in Rajasthan
- ❖ Child Empowerment Project
- ❖ Community activity for Primary Health Care
- ❖ Electric income generation
- ❖ Family Counselling Centre
- ❖ Gender Sensitisation Trainings for the health providers of Medical and health department
- ❖ HIV/AIDS prevention and care for the rural and tribal youth
- ❖ Joint forest Management
- ❖ Non Formal Education Centres
- ❖ People centred area development programme
- ❖ People's initiative for health security
- ❖ Rural Housing
- ❖ School AIDS Program
- ❖ Women and community health security

Our Strength

The Prayas Members

Chairperson
Sh. Balmukund Sanadhya

Director
Sh. Khemraj Chaudhary

Secretary
Dr. Narendra Gupta

Executive Committee Sh. Balmukund Sanadhya (Chairperson)
Dr. Narendra Gupta (Member Secretary)
Sh. Khemraj Chaudhary
Sh. Sudhir Katiyar
Smt. Preeti Oza
Sh. Ajay Saxena
Dr. K.C. Sharma
Smt. Supriya Seth (Special invitee)
Dr. Vinaya Pendse (Special invitee)

Chittorgarh Ms. Pallavi Gupta
Sh. Chhatrapal Singh
Sh. Rameshwar Sharma
Sh. Vikas Aggarwal
Sh. Anand Singh Tanwar
Sh. Phoolshankar Sharma
Sh. Shyamlal Prajapat
Sh. Madhav Lal Meghwal
Ms. Anjali Sharma



Devgarh

Sh. Rajendra Mathur
Sh. Jawahar Singh Dagur
Ms. Anita Pratima Minz
Sh. M.N. Sasi
Sh. Baharul A.F. Barlaskar
Sh. Ravindra Singh Kushwaha
Mohd. Babar Mirza
Sh. Lalit Kumar Purohit
Ms. Radha Meena
Sh. Narayan Lal Salwi
Ms. Mamta Sharma
Ms. Rekha Meena
Sh. Mukesh Meen
Sh. Rameshchandra
Sh. Raya Lal
Sh. Manna Lal
Sh. Shambhu Lal
Sh. Bheru Lal
Sh. Prithviraj
Sh. Gotam Lal
Sh. Jeewan Lal
Sh. Shankar Singh

Chhoti Sadari

Sh. Govardhan Yadav
Sh. Laluram Gameti
Ms. Jonie Gameti
Sh. Govindram Rebari
Ms. Shabana Gauri
Sh. Ashutosh Nagda
Sh. Prakash Heda
Sh. Onkar Singh

Bhadesar	Sh. Pankaj Kumar Jain
Nimbahera	Sh. Chhoga Lal Bandi Sh. Udai Lal Gadri Ms. Sona Gameti
Mungana	Sh. Vijaypal Singh Sh. Karu Lal Ms. Vijaylakshmi Choube Sh. Dinesh Kumar Yadav Ms. Israt Jahan
Parsoli	Sh. Udai Lal Meghwal Ms. Asha Sharma
Mangalwad	Sh. Kanhaiyalal Sanwariya Ms. Kiran Lodha Ms. Narayani Devi Ms. Uma Amera Sh. Jawaharlal Meghwal Sh. Bansilal Meghwal Sh. Kailash Garg Sh. Nirbhay Kamad Sh. Udailal Meghwal
Manpura	Ms. Geeta Mathur Sh. Mangilal Meena
Chiklad	Sh. Magilal/Hoorji Meena

Rampuria	Sh. Lal Singh Chauhan Sh. Nagulal Meena Sh. Ramchandra Meena
Pratapgarh	Ms. Julie Swarnkar Sh. Gaurav Saini
Vijaypur	Sh. Shankar Ms. Rekha Nagda Sh. Bapu Nath