

NIRANTAR ANNUAL REPORT 2010- 2011

INTRODUCTION

The year 2010-2011 has been very significant for Nirantar, in terms of enabling the organisation to move to newer areas of work and ways of functioning. As a resource group Nirantar has responded proactively to requests for trainings and inputs on women's literacy and gender and education, as well as taken on the initiative of organising forums for wider advocacy. We have intervened in policy-level dialogues around the 12th Plan and have lobbied for inclusion of concerns related to gender and women's literacy in other forums.

The project titled Sahjani Shiksha Kendra (SSK) now reaches out to women and adolescent girls in 112 villages across Mehroni and Madawara blocks, and is now beginning to establish its presence at the district level in Lalitpur. In December 2010, SSK and Nirantar organized a Bundelkhand level event on women's education and the Right to Work which brought together over 350 women, 12 organisations, and the local administration. Nirantar organized a national level consultation on Women's Empowerment and Thematic Literacies in December 2010. Nearly 80 development workers and practitioners participated in this two-day event to share experiences and strategies and to advocate collectively for more effective programmes.

Nirantar has been invited to conduct trainings and Trainings for government programmes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Maharashtra and Orissa) and Bihar Rural Livelihoods Mission, and other networks and institutions like New Education Group (NEG) FIRE and National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). We were also involved in visualizing and co-ordinating the subtheme on the Body for the Indian Association of Women Studies (IAWS) conference, held in January 2011 in Wardha.

Two new projects have come through in the last three months – a grant from the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) that supports Right to Education related work in Lalitpur and the second, a small grant to support leadership development for Muslim, Dalit and tribal women in UP. With these two projects, our work in UP has intensified and we are looking at newer ways of functioning. We have also worked with a wide range of groups, and these partnerships have enabled us to learn a lot from the field and from partner organisations.

NIRANTAR RESOURCE CENTRE

Highlights

In the last one year Nirantar has functioned pro actively as a resource group, responding to demands for trainings and providing inputs to several groups across the country. This is in addition to the project specific trainings and workshops that we have organized during this period. Nirantar members have also been part of committees that have provided recommendations on programmes and policies related to gender and education. A member has been appointed by the

National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) as the State Advisor for Uttar Pradesh for Right to Education. Organizationally we have worked with a wide range of groups, some in close partnership, while with others, as a resource group.

Description of work done

Members of Nirantar continue to play a resource group function to several external agencies in the domain of gender and education. Nirantar has also been part of advocacy forums on gender, education and literacy.

a. Inputs on Gender and Education

National workshop on 'The Muslim Girl Child' (July 14-16)

Nirantar has been actively interacting with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, advocating for the need to mainstream gender issues into equity and quality related issues of SSA. We were requested by MHRD to conduct eight workshops on "Equity and Gender" in twelve months. The first workshop was on 'The Muslim Girl Child' held in July 14-16. This was attended by SSA gender coordinators, also from MCD districts, KGBV personnel, National Programme for Education of Girls and Elementary Level (NPEGEL) programme officers, Haryana cadre of SSA, MS programme staff. There were 80 participants from 13 states.

Gender Sensitization Workshop for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Chhattisgarh

SSA Chhattisgarh invited Nirantar to conduct a three day residential training for KGBV wardens on issues of gender and empowerment of girl child. The training was conducted for 3 days – from 17th to 19th August 2010. There were 90 wardens and teachers from KGBVs across the State of Chhattisgarh.

SSA Workshop, Orissa - 27-28th December 2010

A day long workshop was held with the SSA district coordinators in Orissa working on gender. There were close to 15 participants in this workshop.

SSA workshop, Pune – 20-23rd December 2010

SSA Maharashtra invited Nirantar to conduct a four day long gender training with its teachers, block coordinators and principals organized by the Maharashtra Prathamik Shiksha Parishad. The training involved 250 participants. A team of seven resource persons went to conduct the training, three of whom were not members of Nirantar.

Jeevika Programme- Bihar Rural Livelihoods Mission- 15th-18th December 2010

Bihar Rural Livelihood Programme (Jeevika), a large state level government sponsored programme invited Nirantar to conduct a training on Gender for the Gender coordinators of the state, district and the block level. There were 37 participants.

b. Inputs aimed at strengthening adult, secondary and higher education

State Resource Centre, Haryana- 16th-17th January 2011

Nirantar was invited to provide inputs to SRC Haryana on developing teaching learning tools for work with adults.

National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education

A Nirantar member is part of the expert committee that has been set up to advise the National Literacy Mission (NLM) on the National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education. In addition to this we have also provided inputs to the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) on curriculum development for adult learners.

Member, Satyen Moitra Memorial Literacy Award

A member of Nirantar was part of a committee set up by the Directorate of Adult Education to nominate districts, states and panchayats for the annual Satyen Moitra Memorial literacy award. This year the awards were being given on 8th September (International Literacy Day) for the effective implementation of Sakshar Bharat scheme.

Contributing to module for IGNOU

As reported in the previous report a member of Nirantar was invited by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to write a unit which is part of the 'Queer Liberation' module of the M.A. in Gender Studies. The unit seeks to explain in accessible ways certain key concepts related to sexuality to an audience who has perhaps not had academic exposure to issues of sexuality earlier.

Desk review of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Board (RMSA)

In November, Nirantar took on a desk review of the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) from a social equity perspective. This study was commissioned by the World Bank, who will support the government in the expansion and improvement of secondary education (SE). The assignment involved a social assessment of the secondary school framework, 'to identify the social issues that constrain achievement of the goals of access, equity and quality in SE, and the most effective strategies to address them'. The TOR set out two major tasks – to do a qualitative and quantitative mapping of the barriers to SE in India, as well as to analyse the RMSA framework from a social equity perspective. Towards this, over a very short duration (6 weeks), we were required to review pertinent quantitative data as well as micro studies available on the status of SE in India.

c. Advocacy

Presentation at the 12th Joint Review Mission of SSA (19th July)

Nirantar Member presented to the Joint Review Mission members the design of the training organized for SSA staff.

The pitch of the presentation was to reiterate that gender/equity issues need to come into the recommendations that the JRM makes; that the perspective of the gender coordinators needs to be built on not only issues of gender but also on other domains on inequity; that the quality indicators for the SSA programme develops needs to include gender. The presentation argued for new methodologies of training programme staff in order to have space for open discussions around contested issues like religion and community.

National Consultation on Women's Empowerment & Thematic Literacies

Nirantar organised a two day national consultation on 7th-8th December 2010. The consultation focused on the issue of thematic literacies, looking at linkages of literacy with SHGs, MNREGA and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Over 70 participants from 40 organisations, including NGOs, resource groups, and government institutions participated in this Consultation.

Grassroots groups working on the issue of women's literacy shared their experiences through presentations and group discussions. Materials, pedagogy, strategies and challenges related to thematic literacy were shared and discussed. Women learners, teachers and facilitators working on literacy also presented their experiences. The consultation was organised at a time when the Planning Commission has introduced its challenges for the 12th Plan. These challenges were discussed during the consultation and the need to include adult women's literacy and education was strongly recommended. This was also a time when the government scheme for adult literacy, Saakshar Bharat, has completed one year. The consultation provided a good forum for groups to discuss the status of the scheme and its implementation. Groups also made recommendations for strengthening the scheme and extending it beyond the 11th Plan process. In order to share the main issues and recommendations and to provide insights on government initiatives to strengthen women's literacy, Nirantar also invited representatives from the government and state sponsored institutions to the consultation. These included Ms Anshu Vaish, Secretary School Education and Literacy; Ms Anita Kaul, Additional Secretary; Mr. Jagmohan Singh Raju, DG, NLM; Ms. Syeda Hamid, Member, Planning Commission; Ms. Shanta Sinha, Chairperson, NCPCR and Mr. S.S. Jena, Chairperson, National Institute of Open Schooling. At the end of the Consultation, a one day meeting was organised to initiate a network on women's literacy. This is a network of civil society organisations that has been formed by ten groups. The objectives of the network are:

- to lobby and advocate collectively on issues of women's literacy
- to share experiences and challenges related to the issue
- to develop collective strategies for strengthening programmes related to women's literacy
- to monitor the implementation of government initiatives related to women's literacy and Education

d. Involvement in other Forums

Gender at Work

In order to understand issues of gender equity within organisations and communities that they work with, a Nirantar member joined the Gender At Work action learning process. Gender at Work is a collective of gender and organisational development practitioners who have experience of working on these issues with NGOs. The Action-Learning Programme aims at strengthening gender equality within organizations as well as in their programmatic interventions in communities by encouraging the planning and implementation of practical changes that have a direct, positive impact both on the organization and the communities they serve. The first workshop in this process was held in April 2010 (10th-13th) in Delhi. The objective of the first workshop in which seven organisations participated, was to enable participants to not just reflect on gender issues in general, but to do so within the context of organization building and the specificities of the work that their organization is doing. Another important objective of the workshop was to actually enable participants to apply this learning to bring about some concrete change within their particular work contexts.

Three Day Documentation Centres Meet, Mumbai (March 2010)

The Documentation Centres Meet was organised by CED, Akshara, and Aalochana to discuss the changing context of technology and the problems of maintaining a clippings based documentation centre, and take stock of and share the knowledge of the new innovations in this field. One member of Nirantar attended this meet.

Two-Day Brainstorming Session for Creating Reading Materials on Science & Technology, Environment & Scientific Outlook for Disadvantaged Sections (Aug 2010, CIAE Bhopal)

The brainstorming session was organised by Vigyan Prasar, National Institute for Science Communication. One member of Nirantar participated in this meeting and a ten-minute presentation on materials produced by Nirantar with a feminist perspective, where issues of content and presentation were highlighted. At the end of the meeting Nirantar also committed to supporting processes of review of materials as well as participatory materials creation by women, as part of future endeavours of this group.

Participation in Women's Consultation for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan- 18th-19th December 2010

The Planning Commission organized a consultation in Chennai on 18th and 19th December, to invite inputs from women's organisations from across the country on issues and concerns of women for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan. The Voluntary Agency Cell of the Planning Commission has organised similar consultations on different thematic areas. Nirantar participated in the one on 'women'. Most of the discussions were around the existing 12 challenges that have been identified by the Planning Commission for the Twelfth Plan. Nirantar provided inputs on women's education and literacy, as well as on microcredit. The recommendations emerging from the Consultation were compiled in the form of a memorandum and submitted to the Planning Commission. Nirantar also sent in separate contributions directly to the Planning Commission on recommendations in the area of women's literacy and on engendering microcredit programmes.

e. Research: Study to track status of Mahila Shikshan Kendra (MSK) learners

As part of a project supported by the European Union (EU), Nirantar initiated a study to track the status of about 50 women who had participated as learners in the Mahila Shikshan Kendra (MSK) and Kishori Kendra in Karwi and Tindwari (UP) between 1994-2000. This Tracer Study has been designed to understand the longer term impact of the educational intervention and to track ways in which women are using literacy and education in their lives. Information from about 62 learners was gathered through questionnaires and worksheets designed to track the use and retention of literacy and numeracy by women in their everyday lives, and understand the impact of empowering education on their lives. We also conducted two workshops in September and December 2010 to understand whether there have been changes related to perspectives on gender, access to resources and opportunities, involvement in decision making, mobility and levels of awareness and information.

f. Support to Sahajani Shiksha Kendra (SSK)

Facilitated Reflection and Consolidation of MNREGA Shiksha Abhiyan (Lalitpur)

An important resource support role played by Nirantar was in helping the team to reflect on the activities that had been undertaken as part of the MNREGA Shiksha Abhiyan. As part of this Nirantar has engaged in many activities, like – organizing and facilitating a one-day reflection and consolidation workshop with the SSK team, engaging in discussions with experts who have been working on issues of gender and ‘right to work’, attending meetings and forums to share the learnings, making efforts to documents and ‘showcase’ the learnings of the MNREGA literacy work in order to inform and influence other interventions. The main elements of the one-day reflection and consolidation workshop were in looking back at these aspects - building a better understanding about livelihoods, migration and employment concerns in Mehroni and Madawara blocks, issues related to the strategies applied for making the MNREGA-literacy linkage, and issues related to mobilization of SC, ST women towards samiti-building and local action. Besides reflection, Nirantar helped the team to map its achievements, limitations and areas for future work. Reporting and documentation inputs to the SSK team were also part of this consolidation workshop.

g. Internal Capacity Building

Participation in ASPBAE Events

One member of Nirantar participated in a Quality Adult Education (QAE) Benchmarking Workshop held in Indonesia in November 2010 organized by ASPBAE, the Asia-South Pacific Regional Network on Adult Education. Nirantar was invited not only to participate in this workshop, but also to co-facilitate the session on "Education for Women's Political Participation and Citizenship". There were about 35 participants from across the region at this workshop. Another ASPBAE event that we participated in was the second phase of the Regional Facilitators' Training (RFC) for which one member of Nirantar had been selected. . This phase of the Training was an opportunity to share the 'echo workshops' that participants had conducted in their own organisations and programmes after going back from the first phase of the Training. The member from Nirantar shared the work she had done as part of the women's literacy unit, as part of her 'echo workshops'. Much of the learnings from the Training that were applied in these trainings had to do with methodology.

Participation in other Workshops

Members of Nirantar have also themselves gone for capacity building inputs. Two new members of the team have been sent for orientation trainings on gender, while one member of Nirantar attended a Training that was held for potential trainer-facilitators on adult education at the regional level.

WOMEN'S LITERACY

Highlights

The Women's Literacy Unit has undertaken numerous capacity-building initiatives. This has meant playing a resource support role for Nirantar's own field areas as well as inputs provided to other organisations. It is in this phase that Nirantar entered into partnership with the UNDP as a technical resource groups for Functional Literacy. This is the largest literacy programme that

Nirantar has provided inputs to thus far. The team has also provided resource support to over 10 other programmes and projects working on women's literacy. This phase also saw a significant advocacy event - the National Consultation on Women's Empowerment and Thematic Literacies which was organized in December, with nearly 80 participants from 40 organisations.

Description of work done

a. Inputs to Sahjani Shiksha Kendra

CE Baseline

Support has been provided to the SSK team for conducting the baseline in the CE villages. This baseline will form the basis for work in CE Phase 1. Nirantar conducted this baseline and also built the capacities of the SSK team in the process, with the aim of building them as a local resource in Lalitpur for our own programme as well as for others. Therefore, the input included a one-day orientation on 13th September on the baseline format following which Nirantar provided 'on-site' inputs to the team while filling up forms over the subsequent three days. Following this, the baseline was carried out in 28 villages, covering 263 women. At the end of each day, a systematic debriefing was done, to reflect on the experience and learnings from the process of filling up the forms.

Following the field level data collection, Nirantar worked with Lokniti/Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi (CSDS), for data entry and analysis. This involved developing definitions of 'basic literacy', 'advanced literacy', 'functional literacy', 'empowerment', and 'literacy for empowerment index' among other indicators.

Training of SSK Centre Teachers

A six-day training programme was held for new SSK volunteers from 11th to 16th of November 2010 in Mehroni, Lalitpur. A total of 46 teachers from Mehroni and Madawara blocks participated in the training.

The objectives of the training were as follows:

- Building perspective on adult women's literacy and gender
- Skill building on literacy and numeracy pedagogy
- Understanding the functioning of a centre and records to be maintained
- Final selection of teachers for running the centres in the basic literacy programme

Developing MIS for Basic Literacy

Nirantar has done a lot of work on developing the MIS for the basic literacy programme. There were workshops held in August and October, and ongoing work on it at Nirantar level. The SSK programme will now involve about 50 part-time staff (literacy centre teachers), 30 literacy resource group (LRG)/samiti members and more than 20 members of the Sahjani team, and they will all be involved in implementing the literacy and continuing education programmes.

b. Support to other Literacy Initiatives

Work with four partner organisations

The work with Women's Literacy started in the current year, to place Nirantar as a resource

agency working with four partner organisations on the issue. These organizations were the ones willing to take up literacy work with women in the community. Since the programme in Nirantar was expanding, a need was felt to expand the team as well and thus two new members were recruited in February this year.

Follow-up visits

This was done both for hand holding during roll out and for providing specific inputs. This was a collective process in which all the four partners visited one field area and discussed observations. Specific inputs were provided on issues that emerged from the visit.

Providing support in Management Information System (MIS)

Inputs were provided on concepts of monitoring and evaluation together with developing tools for the same, record keeping related to learners.

To address the evaluation aspect an unplanned activity was taken up based on the requirement of the programme. This work was to develop a baseline format encompassing different approaches of literacy, conducting the survey and analysing the data for the same. The format was developed internally by the Nirantar team with some technical inputs from a statistician in JNU, Dr. Sujoy Charavarti, on how a format should be designed for greater accuracy of quantitative data. As part of this process, in addition to capturing the more tangible literacy and numeracy aspects, we also addressed basic dimensions of empowerment. Some of the portions in the format were also designed as a self assessment tool to make the whole process empowering. The survey was conducted by partner organisations and the data entry and analysis was done by a group of research assistants formally hired from JNU for the purpose.

Developing a resource pool on Women's Literacy

One of the objectives of this intervention was to develop a resource pool, a Core Group, on literacy in different organizations. But the idea of the core group did not work as there was no fixed group that managed to come to all the inputs provided by us. Although desirable, this was perhaps not a realistic strategy, given the realities of field based organizations.

Collective Reflection on the process

Every activity or capacity building process was followed by a reflection meeting of the Nirantar team. This was to understand the design as it worked, the deviations from the plan, the feedback of the participants, the role of the Nirantar team members and the improvisations required for further processes. This process was also done with the Project coordinators and heads of organizations once as a mid-term reflection and once after the completion of the six months process. It helped us to understand the expectations of the organizations from a resource agency and also the specific needs of the organizations.

Capacity building of the Nirantar team members

The two new members of the team also participated in the trainings and workshops that we conducted for the organizational teams. They documented the process and eventually facilitated sessions in workshops. This also built their perspective and capacities to an extent that they can now facilitate some sessions independently.

Support to Tejaswini Programme in Women's Literacy

Nirantar was invited by officials of the Tejaswini programme run by the Department of Women and Child Development of the Government of Madhya Pradesh (MP) to help them envisage, plan and design a pilot project on women's literacy in two districts of MP – Tikamgarh and Balaghat. The Tejaswini programme is aimed at women's empowerment, covering a total of 1.8 lakh women across the state. These women are organised into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Nirantar was invited to help plan a literacy intervention within this framework.

Nirantar conducted two 2-day workshops as part of providing this support. The first workshop was held with the leadership, and was focused on perspective-building and discussion broadly on strategies, pedagogy and materials. Nirantar also shared the findings from its research studies on microcredit and literacy. The second workshop was held with representatives from the districts as well. The focus of this workshop was more nitty-gritty planning of the pilot programme, developing timelines, and designing the training programmes.

Functional Literacy Project in Eastern UP

This is an intervention with seven partner organisations in the districts of Jaunpur, Mirzapur and Sant Ravidas Nagar (Bhadohi) where Nirantar is providing technical assistance on literacy to partners working on women's empowerment, supported by UNDP.

c. Developing a Toolkit for Women's Literacy

Since the work with four partners on women's literacy has intensified, we felt that there is the need for developing a resource book or tool kit on Women's Literacy, Education and Empowerment. Through such a toolkit Nirantar would be able to document its approaches, experiences and expertise on women's literacy, and disseminate it to a much wider audience interested in women's literacy. A concept note has been written and work on this resource book/tool kit has started. This will be resource material for grassroots organizations and field facilitators, on various aspects of a programme and can be used by those who want to start a women's literacy programme in their own field areas.

GENDER AND EDUCATION & MUSLIM WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Highlights

- The completion of a second successful Gender and Education Training in October this year has been one of the highlights of this period. The Training was held in Delhi University this year and marked the potential of future collaborations and institutionalization of this Training. Publications were given a push, and this phase saw the printing of another textbook report (the Gujarat report), as well as the second Gender and Education reader.

- Dissemination of the textbook study happened within and outside Nirantar, through workshops, presentations and papers.

Description of work done

a. Training on Gender and Education:

The second ten-day Training was held at Delhi University from 22nd October till 31st October

2010. Forty participants attended the Training, including a mix of students from the women studies department in Kurukshetra University, the Hindi Department and Central Institute of Education (Delhi University), B.El.Ed students from Lady Irwin College and the Institute of Home Economics. Fifty percent of participants were students, the rest came from different organizations and networks, including Doosra Dashak, New Education Group (NEG FIRE) Eklavya, Mahila Samakhya (Sitapur), Pahal (an NGO working on CSA in Banaras), MESWA etc. There were two lecturers who attended the Training, one from Benaras Hindu University and another from Ginni Devi Girls College in Modinagar. Sixty per cent of the participants were women. The Training reached out to over 25 organisations and Universities. It established a presence of Nirantar in Delhi University, drawing on DU faculty and resources, as well as broadening the content to include aspects of interest to various DU departments, especially education. There were almost 10 external resource persons, including Poonam Batra, Anita Ghai, Vimala Ramachandran, Sarada Balagopalan.

b. Gender and Education Training for Activists

Considerable work was done on planning the Gender and Education Training for activists, which took place from January 31st to February 4th 2011. The push to do this Training quite soon came from participants of the NEG FIRE network who had come for the Gender and Education Training in Delhi, and were keen to have us do a version of this Training for their field level 'Edu Leaders', who provide teaching support in elementary schools in 39 schools of 4 districts of UP. We worked out a structure for this Training that was rooted in the realities of these participants, who were field workers in the area of education. Each concept therefore – gender, sexuality, marginalisation – was thus discussed through lectures, activities and collective readings, and then applied in the context of the school space, so that it did not remain an abstraction for the group.

The group of 31 participants, predominantly male, responded well to the Training. The structure of the Training – i.e. dividing the day into a conceptual session and applying that session to the live/work of the participants seemed to be effective. The participants were able to understand concepts like gender and marginalisation very well, even though it was their first exposure to these. They were also able to understand the concept of intersectionality – and made connections between gender-sexuality-marginalisation.

c. Teaching learning material

Gender and Education Reader Part 1

The first volume of Gender and Education Reader consisting of 280 pages is out. An external person was hired for editing work, but team members also spent lot of time and energy in reworking, shortening or simplifying the articles. Permissions were requested from authors and publishers located in India as well as in other countries. Fortunately we were able to obtain permission for all pieces barring one. This reader would be of use to a range of people students, researchers, trainers and field coordinators.

Textbook Study Reports:

The Gujarat Report was finally printed and the quality of the printing is possibly the best, as a lot of effort went in to clean scans, lighten or darken visuals.

d. Dissemination of Text-book Study:

Workshops

A day-long input was done for 150 students of education – graduate and post graduate – and teacher trainees at Jamia Milia in September 2010. The workshop was quite challenging, as understanding of the group on gender, and substantive quality versus formal equality in textbook content, was quite weak. The framework and approach of the study was therefore difficult to communicate, and received some resistance from both students and faculty members.

Study week organized by Indian Institute of Advanced studies in Shimla:

As part of recent research work done in the domain of women studies and gender a section of the Overall Analysis done by Nirantar was presented which covered the manner in which tradition and modernity are represented in language textbooks. A publication is being planned by the Institute in which a collection of all the papers presented at the seminar will be included.

Presentations at the Indian Association of Women's Studies, Wardha 2011

Since it was the first conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies after the publication of the textbook study reports, the gender and education team took this opportunity to disseminate the findings of the study in as many forums as possible. Abstracts were sent in to present in two subthemes – one on Language and Representation, and one on Nation and Citizenship. Both were accepted.

Presentation on Textbook Study

A presentation on Nirantar's textbook study was done at the Indian Institute of Advanced studies in Shimla in a study week organized by the Institute on the most recent research work done in the domain of women studies and gender. A section of the Overall Analysis done by Nirantar was presented which covered the manner in which tradition and modernity are represented in language textbooks.

e. Interface with School Education

Presentation on Gender and Education to SSA State directors (June 10)

Nirantar made a presentation on the importance of gender issues in the next phase of work that will be undertaken by SSA and what are the factors that need attention in the transition to the implementation of the Right to Education Act. We drew on the recommendations made in the Harmonising from SSA to RTE Sub Committee Report to advocate with SSA senior functionaries on how gender needs to be integrated and monitored in the future.

Kerala SCERT Class 10 Hindi Textbook Committee meeting (10-12th July)

A member of the team was asked to be part of this meeting to discuss content for the Class 10 Hindi book. The class 10 book included the themes of urbanization, poverty, environment, health. We raised the issue of gender in these contexts. The content was also very north centered. We suggested some writings by/about women – Baby Haldar and Mannu Bhandari – which could be discussed in terms of the impact of urbanization on women. We have to see if these suggestions are

taken on board. We have also sent them a lot of material after returning, including a set of back issues of Pitara.

Meeting co-organised by UNICEF and NUEPA on Developing a Roadmap for Girls Education. (2nd August)

We were called to be part of an advisory committee to give feedback on this roadmap. Regional consultations had happened and the learnings from these were shared at this meeting. Ratna Sudarshan has been asked to develop this Roadmap, on the basis of these learnings, and feedback from this advisory group.

Women's tribunal on education and political participation organized by Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan, Ahmedabad (5th September)

Nirantar was invited as a jury member for the Education for all session. The organizing committee had planned to focus for the four major component of MDG to assess the impact at grassroots those are 1) Education for all 2) Comprehensive health services 3) Economic Disparity and 4) social political disparity. Each of the four topic had panel Jury members to respond to the testimonies presentation. This was an enriching experience.

MUSLIM WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Highlights

- The narratives used in the Muslim Women's Education Reader weave together concepts and experiences. They develop a political understanding of how education intersects with other identities in the context of Muslim women. They also seek to locate some contemporary debates in a historical perspective and throw light on the range of efforts and visions towards the education of Muslim women from a feminist perspective.
- The Nirantar team is gradually being recognized by external agencies as a resource team on issues related to Muslim women. The team has provided inputs to other groups and individuals and researchers from universities. We were invited by the Haryana Institute of Public Administration (HIPA) to facilitate a half day session on '*Challenges facing the Muslim Community and Implications for Muslim Girls Education*' and '*Addressing issues of Representation and Marginalization in Textbooks*'. 30 government officials and members of the Waqf Board participated in the session where we shared our learnings from the Muslim women's education and textbooks study projects.

Description of work done

a. Work on Muslim women's narratives

In order to complete the field work for the narratives in Bihar, the team made two visits to Patna in 2010. This visit focused on the new settlement of the Bakkho community. The team went to Phulawaria Sharif area and tried to establish a rapport with the community settled there. In the previous visit we had identified a group of 2-3 girls who are first generation learners. In the second visit we spent time with their families and elders of the Bakkho community. Discussions were also held to fill in gaps in some narratives.

The finalization of the background note for Moradabad has given us useful insights and has

helped in strengthening the background note for Lucknow considerably. The background notes provide a socio-political context to the area and help the readers locate the narratives of individual women in this context. Though the process of gathering information on government schemes in Lucknow has been tough, the note is now ready.

The team has also spent much time on the preparation of the first draft of the background note for Bihar. It has been reworked once after initial feedback. This time it was decided that background note should be on the state itself; information concerned with selected districts (Patna and Kishanganj) would be incorporated simultaneously.

Field visit to Kishanganj in March, 2010 was very important. The Team went there almost after 15 months. A largely rural district, Kishanganj has 67% Muslims and has the lowest literacy rate in Bihar. Significantly, it has had no communal riots. Kishanganj is also on the MCD list and has been the focus of several state initiatives, some in conjunction with community initiatives, for the purpose of “mainstreaming”. The Team has successfully identified 3-4 women from different backgrounds during this trip. 3 to 4 more field visits will be required for writing their narratives.

b. Kalaam-e-Niswan, reader on Muslim women's writing

Kalaam-e-Niswan, the reader on Muslim women’s writing is going to be a first book of its kind. Though the text is now ready and one expert has been identified, issues regarding the use of less familiar Persian and Arabic words still exist. The introduction to the book is yet to be written. This is an extremely important resource on women’s writings and thoughts on education pre-independence.

SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Highlights

- The main focus of the work has been writing and finalizing of the first volume of the learning package on sexuality aimed at community based staff members of organizations, teachers, etc.
- With respect to Adolescence Education, building on earlier advocacy efforts, we moved to efforts at collaboration with respect to working with agencies such as NCERT and UNFPA to rework the AEP conceptual framework, content and materials. Work related to funding was done vigorously in phase.
- Nirantar was involved in the process of visualizing and co-ordinating the subtheme on the Body for the Indian Association of Women Studies (IAWS) conference.
- The process of placing in the public realm linkages between sexuality and gender based violence (the focus of Nirantar’s future work) began in this phase through presentations and discussions at conferences.
- The despair around funding began to ebb with positive responses from some funding agencies. This phase also witnesses an exciting development in terms of new partnerships for the future – the Mahila Samakhya programmes in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

Description of work done

a. The Learning Package

The chapter writing of volume 1 has been completed in the last one year. The illustrations for

volume 1 have almost been completed and the design work has begun. Most of the chapters for volume 2 have been written. The editing of the chapters of volume has started.

b. Capacity Building

Though there have been no sexuality workshops in this phase, in the workshops and Trainings on gender and education conducted by Nirantar, we have been addressing issues of sexuality and gender transgression. The Training on Gender and Education that took place in this phase had a 2 day module on sexuality. The Training in February 2011 aimed specifically at activists included a day long module on sexuality. Issues of sexuality and gender transgression were also included in the workshop conducted by Nirantar for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Programme in Maharashtra. Issues such as the social construction of sexuality, marginalization based on sexuality, and the linkages and differences between sexuality and gender have been covered in these modules.

Capacity Building on Sexuality Education for young people

Sexuality education for young people forms part of the inputs on sexuality provided by Nirantar in its gender and education workshops/Trainings. The importance of addressing fear, shame and addressing sexuality in a positive and a political way is discussed in these inputs. The experience of transacting issues of sexuality in Janishala continues to form an important part of the inputs. Nirantar provided another input to the volunteers of the YP foundation on sexuality education for young people. The YP foundation has been regularly contacting Nirantar for inputs on sexuality education to its staff and also the volunteers. These inputs were also a source of learning since our experience has largely been limited to a rural context.

c. M.A. Gender Studies Training, IGNOU

A member of Nirantar was invited by IGNOU to write a unit which is part of the 'Queer Liberation' module of the M.A. in Gender Studies. The unit seeks to explain in accessible ways certain key concepts related to sexuality to an audience who has perhaps not had academic exposure to issues of sexuality earlier.

d. Coordination of the 'Body' theme at IAWS

Nirantar, along with Paromita Chakravarty, Jadavpur University, had been invited to coordinate the sub theme related to the Body for the Indian Association of Women's Studies conference which took place in January 2011. The sub theme entitled "*Body Talk: Interrogating Boundaries and Hierarchies in Feminist DisTraining*" sought to create the space for discussion on areas of silence and the binaries related to the Body that exist within the women's movement. 18 papers were presented as part of the four sessions on 'Examining the Pleasure-Danger binary', 'Exploitation vs. Liberation?', 'Continuum and identities' and 'Silences and Margins'.

e. Highlighting linkages between Gender based Violence and sexuality through presentations

A reflective paper on the Younikta Aur Hum programme has been written, which is being published by the Institute of Development Studies, U.K. as a Working Paper. This is a part of Nirantar's commitment to IDS, being a partner organization in the IDS programme on Sexuality and Development. A chapter based on the paper is also going to be published in a book by Zed, coordinated by ids.

During the Training of the ‘Younikta Aur Hum’ capacity building programme in the last phase of work, several key linkages emerged between sexuality and gender based violence. These related to sexuality being one of the reasons why women go back to abusive husbands; the exclusion of sexually marginalized women and transgender people from existing VAW programmes.

In order to gather evidence related to these linkages so that these could be placed in the public realm in an indepth and effective manner, Nirantar conducted FGDs with case workers linked to Vanangana as well as interviews with survivors of violence. The material that emerged was significant. The learnings were shared at the IAWS conference struck a strong cord of resonance with other feminists. The responses to the presentation validated our understanding that these were issues that were at the core of gender based violence and need to be taken forward. The response was reminiscent of when Nirantar first began raising issues that emerged from a feminist critique of SHGs. Other feminists had at that time appreciated that what they had been thinking in more instinctive ways was being articulated and forums were being created for such a dialogue. The presentation on gender based violence was made jointly with a member of Vanangana. A similar presentation was also made at the LASSNET (Law and social sciences research network) conference held in Pune in December 2010.

f. Advocacy/engagement with the mainstream

This reporting period has seen a shift from advocacy towards active collaboration with key stakeholders towards seeking to ensure that young people have access to empowering sexuality education. This has involved working with the NCERT, UNFPA and other civil society representatives towards reformulating the approach, content and training design related to NCERT’s Adolescence Education Programme (AEP).

Nirantar proposed the idea of ‘guiding principles’ to be included in the conceptual framework, in an effort towards ensuring that there was an articulation of the overall vision that could then inform the programme. This suggestion was accepted. The guiding principles include points such as the need for the programme to be non-judgmental, not prescriptive, stigmatizing or fear inducing. They also include the point that there is a need to recognize that adolescents are heterogeneous and that there is diversity in terms of urban, rural, caste, class, religion, region, cultural beliefs, dis/ability. Diversity related to sexual orientation was however deleted from the final version of the document.

Nirantar also worked intensively on the Growing Up section of the content outline of the AEP programme, in which, along with other organizations, we managed to include the content that a positive and empowering approach requires.

g. Capacity Building on Sexuality Education for young people

In this reporting period Nirantar was also invited to conduct a day long input with teachers of branches of the Heritage School, a private school with students from fairly high income backgrounds, based in and around Delhi, on issues of sexuality. Nirantar also conducted a session on ‘Advocacy on Sexuality Education’ as a part of the ‘Know Your Bodies Know Your Rights Workshop’ organized by The YP Foundation.¹ Both inputs were interesting for Nirantar since our experience with sexuality education thus far had been limited to a rural context.

PITARA

HIGHLIGHTS

The final issue of Pitara was published.

-The 99th issue was a 48 page double issue that focused on the theme of “love stories”.
 -A lot of research went into preparing the material for the last issue of the magazine. There were a lot of love stories available in literature but not all of them were ones that we could use for the magazine. The Pitara team read a lot of material from sources of literature such as folktales, letters, diaries, biographies, autobiographies, novels, short stories, memoirs etc. The team also made an effort to portray different aspects of love in this issue. The team included a lot of such stories which broke the barriers of caste, class, age and gender for the sake of love.

SAHJANI SHIKSHA KENDRA

A lot of the work at Nirantar Resource Centre (NRC) and Sahjani Shiksha Kendra (SSK) level has been to consolidate the learnings from the previous four years, and to feed it into a strategic plan and proposal for the next four years. Much of the work has revolved around the review processes, financial audits, proposal writing and other activities in this regard.

The SSK team is now more empowered than before to take decisions and take on managerial as well as leadership roles. Due to this, the SSK field team has clearly articulated stakes in programme strengthening and expansion for the next phase. Much of this has been facilitated a great deal due to the intensive organisational development (OD) process and its follow-up. These are processes that will have to be supported, sustained and promoted over the next few years as well.

Highlights

- Village-level camps using a thematic literacy module in 24 new villages of Mehroni block
- Two ten-day camps for mainstreaming a total of 28 Janishala and centre learners
- A ten-day block-level literacy camp, catering to specific needs of women leaders and advanced learners
- Resource group role played by Sahjani team members for training others on literacy and empowerment
- Sahjani Shiksha Kendra and Nirantar hosted a UP/Bundelkhand event on Women's Education and Right to Work, which brought together over 350 women, 12 organisations, several activists and the local administration on issues of gender, education and MNREGA.
- About 30 women from amongst the samiti leadership are now Literacy Resource Group (LRG) members, involved in the monitoring and support for the literacy, continuing education (CE) and samiti work in Lalitpur
- Currently there are 52 young women in Janishala, of whom 50% are Adivasi and 50% are Dalit
- 30 women appeared for and passed mainstream examinations for Class V (7 women), VI (6 women), VII (9 women) and VIII (8 women).

There has been a greater separation and focus in the roles being played by the SSK team and

by Nirantar. On the one hand, the SSK team has taken the lead and ownership in many fieldlevel activities, like mobilisation for centres, selection of teachers, opening of centres, doing camps, etc. On the other hand, there are some strategic activities for which Nirantar has given the push – for instance facilitating the visioning of basic literacy, CE and samiti strategies, along with curricular and materials development, working on a monitoring and information system (MIS) for the basic literacy intervention and planning and carrying out the trainings for teachers, for Literacy Resource Group (LRG) and samiti. Nirantar has also worked intensively with the SSK leadership, for bringing them into newer roles within SSK, as well as helping them play a resource group role for other organisations.

This report is structured around the following areas of work in SSK:

- Setting up a district-level office
- Basic literacy
- Continuing Education and Samiti
- Janishala
- SSK as a Resource group
- Participation in other forums and network

Description of work done

a. Setting up a District-level Office

In terms of outcomes, the year has seen the opening of the SSK Lalitpur office, and the establishment of a district level presence for SSK. After the review workshop in the last phase of work, there have been a series of subsequent workshops for detailed activity planning for basic literacy as well as Continuing Education (CE) interventions. Some of these have been held in Delhi and some in Lalitpur. Besides this, there have been regular monthly meetings at block and district levels to review and reflect on how the plans are shaping, what the gaps are, and what steps need to be taken further.

b. Basic Literacy

One of the main activities has been the rolling out of the centres across Mehroni and Madawara blocks. The target was to open 50 new centres in these two blocks out of which we managed to open 27. Finding new volunteers and motivating them for teaching has been a great challenge which we are still facing for the rest of the centres. Currently, there are 27 centres running, 17 in Mehroni and 10 in Madawara block.

Some initial work has been done before the launch of the centres which are as follows:

Identification of villages- 50 new villages were identified and profiled in both the blocks, out of which 30 were in Mehroni and 20 in Madawara block. At least three rounds of meetings were held with women and men in each of these villages.

Volunteer selection - The teachers (who are also called volunteers) are part-time staff for a period of nine months, and are expected to teach for about four hours every day at the literacy centre in their village.

In October and November, Nirantar planned the volunteers' training and developed an MIS for the programme. A total of 46 volunteers attended the training and 34 were selected as those who could immediately start their centres. The remaining still required inputs, especially to strengthen their own literacy skills. One challenge was that of all the people identified as potential volunteers, not all came for the training. There were last minute drop outs and a new

set of people also arrived, who had not been identified by the programme.

Literacy Centres- The centres started on 15th December. Currently there are 27 centres running. SSK has identified a pool of 20 people who are potential volunteers who will be trained in April at the end of the harvest season.

MIS for literacy- Nirantar has done a lot of work on developing the MIS for the basic literacy programme. The programme will now involve about 50 part-time staff (literacy centre teachers), 30 literacy resource group (LRG)/samiti members and more than 20 members of the Sahajani team, and they will all be involved in implementing the literacy and continuing education programmes. Therefore, the first task was to list the work and responsibilities of people at every level. Broadly, it was articulated that the teachers will be responsible for the teaching in the literacy centre and its related activities. She would keep minimal record related to attendance and progress of learners, as well as a brief monthly report on her own achievements and challenges in teaching. The LRG would be involved in mobilisation, samiti-building and engaging with the community, as well monitor some of the centre's activities. Each field worker for basic literacy is to be overall in-charge of 10 centres in Mehroni and 5 in Madawara, and provide support to the volunteer in all literacy related planning, implementation and support the LRG member in community-level activities and monitoring. Block coordinators for basic literacy would consolidate and coordinate the work in the centres in their respective blocks, identify and do capacity-building, curriculum and materials development, and consolidate and maintain reports, records and the MIS.

c. Continuing Education (CE) and Samiti

As mentioned above, before the beginning of CE Phase I, a baseline was conducted involving 263 women in 28 villages, led by Nirantar. Nirantar also led the process of developing the strategy for CE Phase I. Work in this phase has a strong component of functional literacy and action by samitis that involves use of MNREGA-related real materials (job cards, demand for work forms etc). At the field level, 16 village-level camps have taken place over October-December, and follow-up activities conducted in all the 28 villages. Over this time period, 304 'demand-for-work' forms have been filled during camps and follow-up. Most of them have been collective applications.

Literacy Resource Group (LRG)

A significant aspect of the CE strategy has been the role played by the Literacy Resource Group (LRG). This is a group of about 30 women leaders from amongst the samiti membership, who have been identified and trained as women who have been proactively taking forward the programme's mandates of women's literacy and empowerment. These are neo-literate women, who have engaged with SSK through its various strategies over the past nine years. The role of the LRG members is to assist the SSK team in mobilisation activities, conducting camps, undertaking follow-up visits, samiti-building in newer villages and leading local action on the issues of MNREGA and Midday Meals (MDM). They also give about 6 days a month to SSK's work in other villages, for which we provide a compensation for their wage loss in the form of minimum wage.

Capacity Building of LRG

The first training of the LRG was held in November in Lalitpur. The main objectives of this five-day training were to:

- Build a shared understanding of the similarities, differences and relationship between the samiti and LRG
- Orient the LRG members on approaching teaching-learning processes as a facilitator of language and maths pedagogy
- Discuss about and identify some areas of literacy-MNREGA linkages and action on MNREGA

Exposure Visits

During this quarter different groups of amongst the Sahjani team and samiti women have been for exposure visits to various organisations. The objective was to participate and observe sammelan and events organised by different women's collectives, and to be exposed to the various issues that women's collectives and federations are working on in their own areas. One of the events was organised by Dalit Mahila Samiti, supported by Vanangana in Bundelkhand region of UP. The other event was a Livelihoods Mela organised by Anandi (Gujarat) in Ahmedabad. In the livelihoods mela, the session on 'education' saw the Sahjanis and the samiti women sharing their experience of thematic literacy linked to their livelihoods issues. They did a sharing of the MNREGA Shiksha Abhiyan and how the 'right to work and employment' is linked to education and literacy.

Samiti functioning

Samiti work has been taken up in the 28 CE villages in Mehroni. The main highlights of this work are:

- One intensive training programme for 23 samiti women was conducted in September. The training provided an opportunity for the samiti members to discuss what should be some of the priorities and values for their samitis.
- More than 400 women have been involved in regular village-level samiti meetings in the last one year.
- LRG members have been visiting new villages and sharing their own experiences to motivate women to form their own samitis.
- Regular village level samiti meetings have taken place to share information and discuss issues
- On 28th December'10, a 'dharna' was organised at the district level on MNREGA related issues.

d. Janishala

An achievement of this quarter has been the mainstreaming of Janishala learners. Two 10-day camps at block level have been held in this quarter for coaching of 28 women and girls who appeared for the Class V and Class VIII examinations. For the first time, besides the Janishala learners there were three women who were centre learners. They appeared for Class V examination, while most of the Janishala learners appeared for Class VIII examination. In the two months after the examinations, regular and structured follow-up has been done of all the Janishala learners in the two blocks – Mehroni and Madawara. This has involved helping them fill worksheets and studying from the material that was given to them at the Janishala closing.

The Janishala opened in the month of September. Currently there are 52 young women in

Janishala. 50% of them are Adivasis and the remaining are Dalits. A special effort has been made this year to retain the Adivasi girls. Since community-level activities have consistently taken place in 112 villages across Mehroni and Madawara, there has not been much of an issue in mobilizing young women for Janishala. Initially, it was a huge struggle to retain some of these young women, but over a couple of months, the number at Janishala had stabilised.

e. Building SSK as a Resource Group and strengthening local presence

One of the mandates of the new phase of work is to promote and strengthen the role of SSK as a resource group on gender and education and a learning ground for other groups. Some of the activities and events through which this has happened are:

- Women's education and right to work mela in December 2010
- Inputs provided to other organisations on women's literacy – for instance, at a Master Trainers' Training in Vanangana and to partner organizations linked to the UNDP programme
- Participation in campaign, networks and forums of other democratic rights movements (like the 'right to food' campaign)

Women's Education and Right to Work Mela

The Sahjani team and Nirantar organized a two-day sammelan on the theme “Women’s Education and Right to Work”. The sammelan was organized in Lalitpur on 5th - 6th December. Nearly 350 women from the community and workers from 12 different organizations of UP, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh participated in this sammelan. Around 200 amongst these women were from Mehroni, Madawara and Birdha blocks. In addition government officials (District Magistrate, Chief Development Officer, and the District Development Office), social activist Arundhati Dhuru (who is also the UP Advisor to Supreme Court on the Right to Food case), sarpanches and media persons were also present in the sammelan.

The main objective of the sammelan was to explore and share with organisations from across Bundelkhand and UP, the linkages between continuing education, literacy and right to work/MNREGA. The idea was to provide a common platform where various issues related to MNREGA and women's education could be discussed. Another objective was also to provide a forum for organisations to come together to work on issues of MNREGA, gender and education at the UP/Bundelkhand level. Therefore, the mobilisation for this sammelan was done, not only at the district level but also across other districts of UP (and indeed, other states across northern India) where SSK and Nirantar had links with groups working on issues of gender, women's education and MNREGA.

The highlights of this sammelan were as follows:

- It was for the first time that the Sahjani team had organized a large scale event at the district level. It was also for the first time that government officials were present in large numbers at a SSK event and showed their interest in the issues raised.
- In the opening plenary of this event, eight women from different organizations shared their experiences and struggles of becoming literate and how they are using their literacy in demanding for their rights and entitlements. There was representation from various collectives and organizations like Parmarth, Vanangana, Mahila Samakhya Uttarakhand, and Sahjani Shiksha Kendra. The experiences shared ranged from struggles of newly

literate Panchayat leaders, SHG federation leaders, those working on issues of MNREGA and food security to the challenges in giving examinations for mainstreaming under the NIOS open school system.

□□ On day one of the sammelan, there were group discussions on specific issues related to MNREGA. Delays in payment, problems in social audit, job card and demand for work forms, role of Panchayats in MNREGA and need for women's literacy to address each of these issues were discussed in small groups. At the end of the group discussion a memorandum of demands was prepared by the participants.

Inputs to Other Organisations as Resource Persons

Members of the SSK team have been involved in providing inputs on women's literacy strategies and pedagogies to Vanangana as well as to several partner organisations working in eastern UP (as part of a UNDP-support functional literacy programme). SSK has played a supportive role in Nirantar's capacity-building initiatives – in the form of teacher trainings – one for Vanangana and one for the Master Trainers of the UNDP project. Some members of the SSK team have also been working with Nirantar to provide regular inputs to the Vanangana team in its women's literacy project. SSK team members have provided inputs on MIS (e.g. 'pragati akhya'), assisted in capacity-building of teachers in Vanangana's programmes, and made follow-up visits to Vanangana's field areas.

For the UNDP Master Trainers' training, the SSK team was involved in planning for and cofacilitating some sessions. The training was attended by 30 Master Trainers who are about to start work on women's literacy with self-help groups (SHGs) across 3 districts of eastern UP. Along with the Nirantar team, members of SSK chalked out the session plans for building a basic understanding on perspectives and skills for working on literacy for women's empowerment. In the field, they facilitated the field exposures to various villages, to demonstrate teaching-learning processes that take place in centres and camps.

Monitoring implementation of Right to Education

Nirantar has entered into a partnership with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) for doing an action research study on monitoring the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. SSK and Nirantar would be involved in this ten-state study, representing UP where social audits would be conducted in 25 Panchayats across Lalitpur district, over the next year. A team of eight members has been identified to work on this. The initial discussions and the first training for the team concluded recently.

f. Participation in Other Forums and Networks

The Sahjani team has also participated in meetings and forums organised by various organisations. One of these forums was a workshop organised by Gender at Work in Hyderabad as a visioning and planning workshop for beginning or strengthening interventions on Dalit women's rights vis-à-vis MNREGA. Sahjani Shiksha Kendra is one of the partners for this and three members of the SSK team were part of this workshop, where they presented the work done so far in Lalitpur on MNREGA and Dalit women's issues, and also made a 15-month plan for the future Training of action.

Nirantar has also recently initiated a network on women's literacy of which SSK is a member, and will be involved in doing advocacy on women's literacy and monitoring Saakshar Bharat, among other things. Besides, dialogue has just begun with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) for doing an action research study on monitoring the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. SSK and Nirantar would be involved in this ten-state study, representing UP where social audits would be conducted in 25 Panchayats across Lalitpur district, over the next year.

KHABAR LAHARIYA

Highlights

- The new phase of work has been initiated with the foundation of a new edition of KL in Sitamarhi, Bihar. Intensive work has been done to select, train and begin production with a new team of women journalists. Members of the KL team have come to play impressive roles as resource persons in this process
- There has been a more systematic focus on building women's readership, after the readership survey results, resulting in weekly readership activities with 200 neo literate women in 25 literacy centres in Chitrakoot. Other partnerships towards this end are also being explored.

Description of work done

Khabar Lahariya: Sitamarhi (Bihar) edition

After a long process of conceptualising and planning for the expansion of KL, this period saw us working intensively in Sitamarhi to lay the foundation for the new edition, and preparing for its launch in end January/February. The focus has been to set systems and develop capacities within the new team to function.

Production

There have been 4 dummy production workshops in Sitamarhi from November 2010. Nirantar and KL (Banda/Chitrakoot) members have been present at all of them. The process has been quite interesting, and involved a high degree of energy and rigour from Nirantar and KL both – pushing us to convert our learnings from the field we were familiar with, into creative solutions for new realities. While we have had experience in training women in the area of rural news gathering, the experience of working so closely with a group from a different region has been quite new and highly educational.

During a 3-day editorial meeting cum workshop, Nirantar and KL have facilitated inputs or discussions on newsgathering (as well as accompanied reporters to the field), gender and caste, local development issues, schemes etc. and how to cover it, as well as oriented the team into the systems that involves – checking sources, writing and proof reading, DTP and layout, illustration and editorial writing.

Khabar Lahariya: Chitrakoot and Banda editions

Khabar Lahariya's journey has been a strenuous one, from a fortnightly community paper, with one edition, to a 2-edition weekly run virtually independently by 2 teams of rural women. As an idea too, Khabar Lahariya has reached fruition in this period. This journey has involved building the

capacities of a pool of women to gather information, setting up systems for production, distribution and management, editorial and advertising policies and so on. It has also meant travelling and interacting with groups, and media professionals, students across the country to talk about Khabar Lahariya, develop and showcase documentation of the project and discuss its future.

In June, as part of a fellowship awarded to the team, KL produced a four-part series of special pages covering Panchayati Raj in Banda and Chitrakoot. This was something of a significant way to culminate the project period, seeing the team reach a new level of gathering information from the community and giving them information. In this phase of the Banda and Chitrakoot editions, the focus has been to build readership among women, as well as enhancing skills of the team as resource persons.

a. Building women's readership

A concrete strategy has been developed for building women's readership. One team member of KL has been given the responsibility of planning and monitoring the women's readership activities, and Nirantar works closely with them on this. The challenge is considerable, since women's literacy in the areas that KL circulates is dismally low. In September, a detailed 6-month plan was developed to increase the number of women readers. This has three main aspects:

- Partnerships with local NGOs working on literacy and/or women's issues
- Familiarising the local administration (for instance the Basic Shiksha Adhikari) with KL, and working with them to push the paper into secondary schools and KGBVs as reading material
- Targets for women readers for all reporters of KL

In the context of partnerships with NGOs, we have begun work in collaboration with Vanangana, whose literacy programme was launched in Chitrakoot last year. This involves running 30 centres across 2 blocks in Chitrakoot district. KL members have done sessions with volunteer centre teachers (in September and October 2010) on how KL can be used in literacy sessions, to strengthen the reading skills of women. Reports on issues of local relevance are read by the teachers/learners and discussed in the centres. A member of the KL team visits the centres regularly to monitor these activities and provide support. Around 25 centres have been visited and reading activities are taking place.

Another positive development has been meeting with the Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA), and also visiting three KGBVs in Karwi, Manikpur and Mau blocks of Chitrakoot to explore the possibility of sessions with the teachers on KL. With the support of the teachers and administration, KL members plan to do reading sessions of KL in the KGBVs, developing the reading habit as well as an interest in local issues.

In October, KL members had meetings with Asha workers who work in villages where KL is circulated, to speak with them about reading KL out with women as they do their rounds. The women expressed interest and willingness, and KL is now exploring the option of involving the Asha workers as stringers, who will also form women readers' groups at the village level.

b. Expanding Horizons: NFI Media Fellowship

Khabar Lahariya applied for this annual fellowship in November 2010, and it was awarded to Meera, from Banda. It is a year-long fellowship, which involves writing 10 stories on a chosen area. Beginning February, Meera will, gather information and write on monitoring the implementation of the Right to Education in Chitrakoot and Banda.

c. Resource group role

The Khabar Lahariya team has strengthened their role as a resource group, and managed to independently provide inputs on a range of issues to different groups.

- Rural communication and community based training: September 24-30 2010, Chitrakoot like the previous rural communication training, one KL member was involved in preparing for this training, and in collection of resource material. This member also co-facilitated sessions throughout the training, and shared rich field experiences in both perspective building and skill building sessions. Other members of the KL team were involved in accompanying the participants in the field when they went for newsgathering, or sharing feedback on the participants' experiences in the field and on their writing.

- Gender and Education training: October 22-30 2010, Delhi

2 members of the KL team were resource persons in a session on adult women's education in Nirantar's Gender and Education training. The session was structured in the form of an interview, with members of Nirantar and KL, covering their journey from literacy to news gathering and the role of education in their lives.

- Khabar Lahariya, Sitamarhi, Bihar

The specific role of KL members in the building of the new edition in Sitamarhi has been notable. Since November, when the first dummy productions began, a member of the KL team (most often Kavita) has travelled to Sitamarhi for the production, and provided inputs on the editorial and reporting processes, charted out the division of responsibilities in the team, and supported the production of dummy issues.

- National Consultation on Thematic Literacy: Nirantar, 7-8 December 2010, Delhi

A member of KL shared experiences of producing special issues on Panchayati Raj in Khabar Lahariya, as part of the session on thematic materials.

- Material Production workshop: Gender at Work, Lucknow 11-12 December 2010

KL and Nirantar were invited to provide an input to UP groups who had conducted baseline surveys on the participation of Dalit women in NREGS, to help them produce material for disseminating the findings of their survey. The groups had to create newsletters, posters and power points at the end of the workshop, and Nirantar and KL provided the technical hands-on training to facilitate this process.

d. Role of Nirantar resource group

Khabar Lahariya Readership Survey, August 2010

A survey of the outreach and impact of KL was both part of the SDTT project plan, as well as a recommendation of the external review in February. While the readership survey was initially planned as an internal one, discussions within and outside Nirantar strongly recommended that it be externally designed and implemented so as to ensure that the results are as objective as possible. After exploring a number of market research and survey agencies, Nirantar finally decided to collaborate with CSDS.

The Survey was done from 14th August to 22nd August 2010 in 9 blocks in the two districts of Chitrakoot and Banda. In 10 days 527 interviews of readers from both the districts were collated. Nirantar and Kl members did not go into the field with the surveyors, but were present in Banda and Karwi to monitor the process and check the quality of the forms.

CSDS helped with the data entry and analysis. The survey provided some new insights into KL's outreach, as well as reiterated many perceptions we had. It emerged that an astonishing figure - 16 people - read each issue of KL, and that the profile of readers included SC/ST and women readers who access no other paper except KL. Local information and local language content of KL makes it attractive to readers, even those who do read other mainstream papers.