

# **NIRANTAR ANNUAL REPORT**

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**Nirantar**  
**A Centre for Gender and Education**  
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# **Nirantar - A Centre for Gender and Education**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The last on year has been an important period for the organization with new partnerships being forged with organisations across different states. In this role the number of trainings, inputs and materials produced has also been quite significant. At the policy level, we have intervened in the XIIth Plan process and have also been part of other advocacy forums.

The work on women's literacy and gender based violence has enabled Nirantar to enter into formal partnerships with nearly 14 organisations. Nirantar has conducted centralized inputs for these organisations and has also addressed specific needs of several of these groups by providing support at the field level. Both these interventions have given the organisation a new profile whereby we are being approached by other organisations and agencies and our support is being sought for trainings and materials. As a resource group we have also completed two courses on gender and education during this period.

Nirantar has emerged as a significant player in the domain of mainstream education with the work on monitoring Right to Education in Lalitpur and the production of Pitara booklets for adolescents. The RTE work has been challenging, yet extremely exciting for the Sahjani Shiksha Kendra team; it has provided greater visibility to the programme and has given team members greater confidence to interact with the administration and other groups. The Pitara booklets produced so far have also been appreciated for their content and design that cater to the needs of young readers.

Nirantar has also set up an UP state office in Lucknow. The office is fully functional with three staff members working on different projects. The office was set up in July 2011 and in the last three months we have been able to define the objectives of this office and the roles of team members in Lucknow. While more time is required before we are able to profile our work at the state level, some beginnings have been made in this period.

The Organisational Development process with Sushma Iyengar and Bishakha Datta has enabled the organisation to reflect on its structure, its relationship with the field programmes and forums for planning and sharing of work. The process has been valuable in concretising discussions around establishing Khabar Lahariya as an independent media unit and looking at models for expansion and sustainability of this unit. The relationship with SSK has also been discussed and ideas for strengthening the local leadership and registering the programme have emerged through discussions both with the team in Delhi and the SSK leadership.

## **NIRANTAR RESOURCE CENTRE**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

This period has seen Nirantar take on significant capacity building and resource support and advocacy in the arena of gender and education for a variety of players, from central and state government departments, to large development agencies and NGOs. Nirantar has been invited to consultations and meetings on issues of quality, equity in the context of secondary education, education for Muslim girls by DFID, MacArthur Foundation, the World Bank and NUEPA in this period.

#### *a. Joint Review Mission, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*

In the fifteenth Joint Review Mission held by Government of India, one Nirantar member was invited to be GOI representative and part of the core drafting team of the Mission. She visited Assam and prepared a report of the State, following a seven day field visit. Many observations regarding equity and quality links were made both in the State and the national report. Following the State visit, the section on Gender, and other marginalized groups was drafted for the National Report and recommendations made. What was pushed for in the final report was the need to re-introduce gender trainings with links with other marginalized categories, particularly Muslim children and strategies to ensure that the next phase of RTE implementation does not invisibilize gender concerns. There was also an effort to make recommendations in the direction of concrete links with quality of equity issues.

#### *b. National Consultation on Gender and Media Literacy*

Nirantar organized a National Consultation on Gender and Media Literacy on March 20-21, 2012 in Lucknow. The consultation was designed as an event that would bring together organizations working on issues of women's literacy, empowerment and media. We also saw this as an opportunity to build Nirantar's profile at the state level in UP and introduce the office in Lucknow. NGOs and government programmes working on issues of gender, literacy, education and ICTs were invited to participate and make presentations at the consultation. The three broad themes of the consultation were: i) The use of ICTs in educational curricula, ii) Skilling marginalized communities to use media and iii) Rural Journalism.

The consultation was also an event designed to bring together partner organisations working on women's literacy. The second day of the consultation included a meeting of the women's literacy network. This meeting was designed to look at the status of state run literacy programmes in different states. An objective of the meeting was to enable civil society groups to monitor these programmes and produce a report that would look at the government's ability to meet the commitments made towards women's literacy at CONFINTEA VI, the international conference on adult education held in 2010. At the time of writing this report the consultation was in progress. We will share the nature and impact of this consultation in the next report.

Apart from this there were some short and one time inputs that we conducted on gender and sexuality. One was an input in the course organized by Delhi University on Feminist theories where Nirantar was called to provide gender related inputs. Though we went for it, but we also realized that sometimes, institutions like Delhi University just use the resources (knowledge) that Nirantar has but does not give its due recognition.

### c. Inputs on Gender, Identity and Education

*'Understanding Muslims', Oxfam (Delhi, September, 2011)*

A one-day input for all OXFAM staff was conducted on 8<sup>th</sup> September with National Advisory Council member Farah Naqvi on 'Understanding Muslims'. Over 100 participants were part of this interaction. The objective of this input was to highlight the need for working with Muslims as a marginalized group; the nature of exclusion they experience today; identity issues related to Muslims and to unpack the participants' own stereotypes related to the community.

*SSA Workshop on Gender and Caste, February, 2011*

Nirantar was requested by MHRD in 2010 to conduct two workshops on Equity and Gender. The second of these national level workshops, on Caste and Education, was organized with the Technical Resource Group (TSG) for Elementary Education, SSA in February 2011. Nirantar visualized and planned this workshop. Dr. V. Geetha from Chennai, Uma Chakravarti from Delhi University, Linda Hess and Deepa Dhanraj were called in as resource persons.

This was the first time that the SSA and Nirantar too had done a workshop of this kind, and understanding participants' own notions regarding caste, labour, work was a challenging process. Activities were designed to discuss key concepts regarding the moral values attached to labour, the absence of particular types of labour, the gendering of labour and how the laboring poor are at times presented through the eyes of a middle class sensibility as 'others', who perform physical labour. From this we moved to caste and the link between labour and the emergence of the caste system. V. Geetha's lecture on the history of caste traced the roots of the system close to over 2000 years. This drew on how production labour and resources underpinned a system that became layered with norms of reproduction and cultural capital to create an elaborate and complex system of graded inequality.

On the second day, two lectures were delivered by Uma Chakravarti in which gender as a concept was discussed and then a link was made between graded inequality and graded patriarchy. The public private divide and ways in which control is exercised were discussed. From this Dr. Uma Chakravarti moved to a discussion on the idea of schooling particularly in the context of women and girls. Can education be empowering? What is the potential the teacher and the educational space hold for children from marginalized sections? There is a recognition that large sections of men and women's knowledge is excluded from the 'mainstream curricula'. Thus processes of viewing such communities not only as victims but

as carriers of creative ability, skills, art, poetry, literature is necessary for the school to be inclusive.

To provide a window into how this is done, we called in three different resource persons. One was the Kabir Project films, where Dr. Linda Hess laid out the rich, poetic and diverse oral tradition of singing Kabir across large sections of central and Western India. Another was a set of films made by Deepa Dhanraj on teaching history / social sciences through local contexts and involving poor rural children in learning the process of studying history in Karnataka. The third presentation was related to Mr. Ramaiah's journey in developing a curriculum through theatre and art for rural children. We wound up the session listing ways in which they can implement or initiate action on these fronts on various levels.

#### Reflections

*This workshop included planners and state level functionaries from over 15 states from both pedagogy and gender unit, something that Nirantar had insisted upon. This was a good decision as it helped integrate the issue of gender within issues of pedagogy, content of textbooks and processes of transactions.*

*At the end of the gender session the group was shaken up by the critique of schooling in the context of gender and education and were constantly asking us what they could do. Over the last day they were reassured about the clear and concrete strategies that were given and shared with them. Sharing of experiences received a positive response.*

#### *d. Desk review of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Board (RMSA)*

In November 2010, Nirantar took on a desk review of the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) from a social equity perspective. This was commissioned by the World Bank, who is supporting 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, we were required to review pertinent quantitative data as well as micro studies available on the status of SE in India. A consultant was taken on to assist with the quantitative aspect of this assignment, but the project on the whole was challenging and involved a steep learning curve. We struggled both with the arena of formal secondary education, of which we had little experience, and more so with the quantitative data sets, which we had to gain a command over in a very short time period. Team members from Nirantar met numerous government officials, bureaucrats and researchers and activists in the area of SE, as well as read reports on schemes available, work done in India and outside. The final report presented to the WB in March 2011, argued for the need to interweave the aspects of provisioning for quality education with equity issues at the secondary level - quality of what, and for whom?

*'Quality and Equity are tied together, where one impacts the other in critical ways. As a result quality needs to integrate a vision of equity to be meaningful and equity issues have to expand beyond a simple division of educational resources equally among all as part of a formal understanding of equality. For Secondary Education to be promotive of social justice and equity not merely the hardware but the software of education requires intervention. These areas cover a range of domains in Secondary Education such as curricula, teacher education and training, language and identity concerns and the promotion of non-discriminatory practices.'*

The report was well received. Nirantar has since been invited to present on issues of concern in secondary education at various forums. Learnings from this report contributed to our inputs and recommendations in the XIIth Plan process.

e. *Advocacy on Gender, Education and Literacy - Participation in Twelfth Five-Year Plan Process*

Nirantar has been involved in advocating for women's education in the XIIth Five Year Plan process. Two members of the organisation are part of sub groups on (a) Elementary Education and (b) Adult Education. As committee members, we have engaged with experts in the area in order to strengthen the recommendations on girls' education.

12<sup>th</sup> Plan Sub Committee on Elementary Education - Work in this Committee began in June 2011 and continued till mid September. As Committee member Nirantar was requested to write the chapter on Girls Education and provide support on the chapters regarding Muslim Children's Education and Mahila Samakhya. As part of these committees, consultations were held with Gender Coordinators from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mahila Samakhya staff, NGO's and Experts working on these issues, Researchers, Madrassa board members etc. Close to five such consultations were organized and held in July and August. Following this, Nirantar was part of a smaller drafting committee that put together and finalized the Elementary Education section of the plan.

In terms of impact of our own advocacy agendas some key recommendations that we were able push through were:-

- a) Appointment of block level gender and equity facilitators in all NPGEL blocks.
- b) Provision of KGBV day boarding model in Muslim Concentration districts.
- c) Special scheme for creating bridging centres for girls from SC, ST, Muslim communities to be run by NGO's.
- d) Focus on better provisioning and mainstreaming of Muslim children rather than promoting primarily separate schemes special Madrassa modernization schemes.
- e) Special trainings for women members of School Monitoring Committees (SMC's) on empowerment and gender issues.
- f) Provision of trainings on equity, gender equality and rights for both staff and students in Residential schools for tribals, SC's and Girls. Dissemination of process and mechanisms of grievance redressal in case of violations to be part of these trainings.

*f. Review of Bihar Bal Bhavan-Kilkari*

Nirantar has been contacted by SSA Bihar to the review of their initiative now also an NGO called Kilkari. Kilkari started as programme by SSA to provide a space and opportunity to govt. school children for their creative expression. Soon it was registered as an organization and now also replicating the Bal Bhavan model. Bihar Bal Bhavan as it is known as caters only to the govt. and poor children mainly residing in urban slums. We decided to take up the work thinking of reaching out to Bihar SSA and have better report with education department in context of our other works in Bihar. Additionally we also realized that it will be another kind of intervention in terms of working on RTE and mainstream education.

It was quite an exciting experience to be part of the space full of energy and creativity. During our two and half day review we met with teachers, trainers and director who are involved in providing training and skill building to children. We also visited three organizations that are collaborating with Kilkari and running training centers for children in various locations. The trainings that are most commonly provided to the children are arts and craft, Natak, Dances, Judo Karate, creative writing and English Speaking course. Though it was evident that much more creativity and qualitative interventions could have been done, given the kind of space and resources that organizations has, it is still an innovative idea that needs to be developed further and strengthened. Our meeting with experts of various art forms also strengthened the idea that this is a good platform for children but need to be better planned and executed.

The director of the organization though a well intention person who has been part of the SSA earlier lacked the vision and long term agenda for the space like Bihar Bal Bhavan. However it is not entirely aimless as Principal Secretary Mr. Anjani Kumar had very clear ideas and vision regarding where he wanted to take and what are the possibilities in future for it. They were also interested in Nirantar's material and we promised them to also provide inputs on how to create accessible and interesting material.

*g. Participation in the South Asian Network of Women (SWAN)*

The South Asian Network of Women (SWAN) organised the Third Annual Conference in Dhaka on 2-3 July, 2011. The SWAN network is a programme headquartered in the Academy of Third World Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, in Delhi. The aim of this network is to bring together women to share experiences, identify best practices and work towards issue-based collaboration across South Asia. SWAN has eight thematic areas that include health, education, literature, crafts and textiles and livelihoods. Nirantar was invited to the conference to participate and represent the work related to gender and education in India.

The theme of the SWAN conference was 'Women and the Green Ecology'. The conference provided a good opportunity to interact with groups working on education across South Asia. Nirantar made a presentation on the overall context of gender and education in India and its work to address these issues. From presentations made by different partner organisations in South Asia, it was clear that in most countries the issue of access to education is being

addressed, however, critical issues related to content and pedagogy have not been analysed. The work being done by CAMPBE and the Pakistan Coalition for Education also focus on looking at issues of quality in education. Our work on analysing school text books and monitoring implementation of right to education was appreciated by other partners working on education. The conference also provided an opportunity to share and discuss the need for a South Asia Consultation on gender and education.

In September one member of Nirantar also represented SWAN in a regional conference on girls' education organized by UNGEI and UNICEF in Kathmandu, Nepal. At the conference we made a presentation on Nirantar's work to bring in a gender perspective in educational content and pedagogy. We also shared the work being done to monitor RTE in Lalitpur.

#### **h. Additional outputs of the Course: Feminist Capacity Building, Sangat (Kathmandu, September 2011)**

A two day session on understanding gender in education was conducted with 35 participants from over 9 countries attending a Gender and Development Course organized by SANGAT (South Asian Initiative). This was the first time that we conducted such a session with participants from such diverse contexts. The research and material generated for our gender and education course was both utilized and expanded to include a South Asia perspective.

The effort of the two days was to provide a framework to participants on how they can unpack women and girls education within their own national context. One session was on Aims of Schooling Women, which was explored through the Mirat Ul Urs story that is still part of the curriculum in Pakistan and in Madrassa textbooks in North Indian states like U.P. and Bihar. Another narrative was of Ramabai Ranade. This discussion was preceded with participants sharing one key memory of their own experience of school. This enabled us to get a quick sense of the location and context of the participants. The extracts worked well to communicate 'schooling' and 'domestication' of women as concepts. This was followed by a viewing of short section of the film Teen Batti Char Rasta to this open up the issue of how the Nation works towards 'schooling' women. Finally participants read 'Sultana's Dream' and discussed the potential of writing as an act of challenging existing structures and imagining new ways of being.

The most effective session was a collective reading of Rubina Saigols' article on textbooks in Pakistan. We read together marked out sections on history and this led to a fascinating discussion between the participants from India and Pakistan on how the same events in the past get constructed within the National narrative of a common past in history textbooks. Nadir Shah's invasion account provided the contrast in terms of how someone can be viewed as 'heroic' or then a 'marauder' across existing borders. A presentation on Nirantar's own efforts to integrate gender issues in textbooks was shared and discussed.

*i. Participation in Consultation on Saakshar Bharat*

Nirantar was also invited to participate in a two day consultation organised by the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) on Saakshar Bharat. The objective of the consultation held on 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> June in Bangalore was to strengthen Saakshar Bharat, the government's flagship programme for adult education, in the light of two international frameworks for adult education, namely, the Belem Framework for Action and LIFE (Literacy Initiative for Empowerment). Nirantar provided inputs to strengthen Saakshar Bharat by addressing the issues related to thematic literacy, the need for long term investments in adult education and the need to create and sustain literate environments.

*j. Annual Review*

March 5-6<sup>th</sup> was devoted to the annual review of the organization which included individual reviews as well as review of organizational issues and of projects and their teams. The effort was not to make this a stock -taking exercise of the project work done but to focus on critical concerns that need discussions in the larger group. Some of the important decisions that were clinched in the annual review are as following;

- The long pending decision regarding the work areas was finally decided on as 1) Women's Literacy & Empowerment 2) Mainstream Education and Young people's Education 3) Gender and Sexuality and 4) Khabar Lahariya. All projects or areas of interventions were divided into these four categories on the nature of intervention and where the focus of intervention has been in the past.
- Certain protocols were developed and shared with the entire team, building consensus and agreement on these. These protocols relate to setting guidelines for authorship and acknowledgements in Nirantar Publications. The second being the honorarium and consultancy guidelines. The policy was discussed and the final draft is circulated to all the members for future consideration. This document will be finally cleared by the Nirantar Board.
- Many administrative issues were also dealt with. One major decision taken was that the office will remain closed on all Saturdays. It will be a five day week. However to compensate for the reduced number of hours the working day will be extended by an hour every day. In addition to this there will be no compensatory off for five day field visits. It was also decided that the working hours will have to now be taken very seriously. If people fail to observe the minimum working hours, in the next two months, they will be asked to work on Saturdays. Many other issues including forums and administrative systems were discussed and there was a consensus that we needed to be more prompt in following organizational policies and pay extra attention to make the forums meaningful and vibrant.

## **WOMEN'S LITERACY**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Completion of technical support provided to UNDP in Eastern UP
- Selection of new partner organisations for the current phase of work on women's literacy
- Intensive work with nine partner organisations on different aspects of women's literacy.
- Finalization and production of primers and workbooks on health, SHGs

#### **a. Annual Literacy Training**

Nirantar organized the annual seven-day training on 'women's literacy and empowerment' in Delhi and Lalitpur from 9th to 15th May, 2011. Participants from 18 different organizations from Uttar Pradesh (UP), Madhya Pradesh., Chhatisgarh, Rajasthan, Assam, and Jharkhand attended the training. Out of these organizations, 15 have received funding support for women's literacy programmes. The training design included inputs on new topics such as PRA and PLA tools, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and on developing indicators.

#### **b. Technical Resource Agency for a Functional Literacy Project**

Nirantar as a technical resource group with a functional literacy programme for women learners in three districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh – Jaunpur, Mirzapur and Sant Ravidas Nagar. Nirantar's role was to build capacities of the staff of seven grassroots organizations that would implement the programme. We were expected to provide inputs on various elements of the programme ranging from training of master trainers to teachers trainings, to creation of supplementary reading materials and designing the monitoring and evaluation component. This was the final phase of UNDP project which ended with rigorous and large amount of work. Various activities took place during February to April that included the finalization of supplementary materials, the toolkit, baseline format and the final report of the UNDP.

#### **c. Women's literacy work with new partners**

The process of selection of organizational partners for the women's literacy project started immediately after the annual training. Nine organizations have been finalized with whom Nirantar has agreed to work as a resource group. This was done through meetings with each partner organization to understand the specific needs of their contexts and field projects, and also to finalise the work plan and time line with them. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was prepared separately for each organization. The MoUs have initially been signed for one year, with a detailed work plan for six months. As a resource centre, Nirantar has done three centralized inputs with all the selected partners for their capacity building and provided some specific inputs to individual organizations as per their requirements. The partner

organisations include: Agricultural Society of India (ASI), Pratapgarh (UP), Human Welfare Association, Varanasi (UP), Mahila Haat, Almora(Uttarakhand), IBTIDA – Alwar (Rajasthan), VANangana- Karwi (UP), Mahila Kalpana Shakti, Delhi, Gram Vikas Sewa Sansthan (GVSS)-Pratapgarh (UP), PRABALA- Jamtara (Jharkhand) and Foundation for Awareness, Counseling and Education (FACE), Pakur (Jharkhand).

**d. Developing literacy materials and finalizing M&E**

The team finalized the Health Primer and the workbooks on SHG, Health and Maths. The second part of the health primer is still in the process of being written. 6 chapters have been compiled into part 1 of the primer and the other 6 chapters would be compiled as part 2.

The team worked rigorously on creating formats for monitoring and evaluation for the Women's Literacy programme. There were several rounds of work done by the team as the team was also struggling with the framework and the format which would best capture the data at different levels. The formats that were finalized were one consolidation format at the cluster level to be filled by the supervisor with the help of the teachers and the other 3 monthly consolidation format to be filled in by the supervisor and the MIS person at the block or district level.

**e. Support to organisations working on Women's Literacy**

*Input to Vanangana*

In February, Nirantar conducted a seven-day input for the Vanangana team and assisted them in conducting a residential camp. This was the first camp and it served as an 'on-the job' training and demonstration camp for the Vanangana team, in which Nirantar successfully demonstrated the camp methodology, including planning, conducting, daily sharing, reporting and assessment. Before the camp started, there was a two-day orientation training with 25 participants (resource persons, teachers, monitoring team and project coordinator), who would subsequently be teaching at the camps.

The objective of the camp was to provide the team with a learning opportunity, as well as consolidate the principles and fundamentals of teaching-learning processes, and pedagogy. It was envisaged that the team would be able to practice the theory that they had learnt in earlier trainings and could build their skills in facilitating literacy camps in the future. As part of the orientation, we provided inputs on pedagogy (group work, environment building etc), syllabus to be covered and session planning. In addition, we also provided inputs on how to use teaching-learning materials. We did teaching demonstrations, and discussed ways of documenting the process and assessing learners' skills ('Pragati Akhya'). We also suggested ways of preparing the camp venue. During the orientation, the team also prepared teaching aids.

*Camp Inputs to GVSS*

Two days camp input was provided by two team members to GVSS in Pratapgarh in September 2011. It was a block level camp input for 50 advance level learners. The objective was to strengthen their literacy skills and do perspective building on gender and right to work issues. On the first day we oriented the team on the camp methodology. On the second day, we facilitated the camp by joining the team for various activities planned. This was their first camp experience which they found very useful and creative. The team also realized that

the camp process is more rigorous and resource intensive and it requires time and energy. It also requires mobilization of women in a different way which was not done well this time.

*Orientation of Society for Labour Development on Adult Literacy*

SLD, an organization working on children's and women's literacy in Gurgaon and in Bihar, had approached Nirantar for an input on the approaches to literacy, perspective and pedagogy on adult literacy. There were around 12 participants from Gurgaon as well as from their Bihar office.

*Teacher training for DISHA*

In September we have conducted a five day teacher training for DISHA, an organisation in Saharanpur, UP. While DISHA is not our partner organisation, we did a one-time input based on their interest on women's literacy.

f. Tracer Study of MSK learners

Nirantar completed the first draft of the tracer study of the learners who attended the Mahila Shikshan Kendra (MSK) in Banda between 1994-2000. The executive summary of the study was completed and sent to ASPBAE; this will be included in a publication being produced by ASPBAE. We are currently working on a documentary film on the MSK learners. The first workshop/field visit for the film was organized in November 2011. The film will trace the impact of education and learning on the lives of select learners.

g. Regional Conference on Women's Literacy - Chiangmai, Thailand

In October three members of Nirantar participated in a regional conference on women's literacy organized by ASPBAE in Chiangmai, Thailand. At the conference we made three presentations on: a tracer study of the learners who attended the Mahila Shikshan Kendra (MSK) in Banda between 1994-2000, our experience of using an ethnographic approach towards women's literacy and numeracy and using gender sensitive evaluation methods for women's literacy programmes. As a partner organisation of ASPBAE in the study on women's literacy, we also facilitated sessions and were involved in identifying issues for advocacy on women's literacy.

h. Women's Literacy Network

In December 2010 Nirantar had initiated the women's literacy network (WeLit) with ten organisations working on women's literacy, education and empowerment. In August a WeLit Network meeting was organized in Lucknow. The objective was to follow up on the work agreed upon by the network members. The work comprised following up on the status of the Saakshar Bhaarat in their respective states and districts. As part of the workshop partners were also given literacy primers produced as part of the Saakshar Bharat programme to analyse with a gender and empowerment perspective. Since the group had limited information on Saakshar Bharat, we made a presentation on the provisions of the programme which was followed by an open discussion. In this the participants who had followed up on the programme in their districts and states also shared their experience and the status of the programme.

i. Document on effective practices

Nirantar is documenting the work of four organisations on women's literacy as part of an effort to produce a document on effective practices related to women's literacy. The

organisations being documented are: PRADAN, Purulia; Vanangana, Chitrakoot; Mahila Samakhya, Andhra Pradesh and Sahjani Shiksha Kendra, Lalitpur. The objective is to look at strategies designed by organisations to create a demand for literacy, link literacy to women's contexts and make efforts to sustain the literacy work. The document will be used for advocacy on women's literacy with the government, other NGOs and international agencies. The work of PRADAN has been documented so far. The publication will be produced by February 2012.

**j. MIS follow up workshop**

In February 2012, A 3 day workshop was organized in continuation of the first MIS workshop. The primary objective of this follow up workshop was to gain feedback from organizations using MIS formats that were introduced last October. Most of the organizations reported that they were able to use the format and found it useful too. Some organizations also gave useful suggestions which helped us further improve the system of data collection. The MIS format was thus finalized in this workshop. Along with finalizing the MIS format, the team also compiled the data collected through the previous version of the MIS to get an idea of the nature of information that this MIS was able to provide. Now MIS formats are available for each level of basic literacy intervention. At present all organizations are using the same format to keep track of the progress made.

**k. Review Reflection meeting with Literacy Partners**

The above mentioned activities formed part of the partnership with nine organisations. Since 8 months of the partnership have been completed, the experience was reflected upon in a workshop organized by Nirantar on 27th and 28th December 2011. Heads of organisations and women's literacy project coordinators of almost all partner organisations participated in the workshop. This meeting was also attended by SDTT representatives

In this 2 days workshop, organisations presented work done on women's literacy over the last 8 months. The presentations provided concrete information on the status of work and processes followed in the implementation of the work. A detailed exercise was done to reflect on the qualitative aspect of the programme to identify the gaps if any. The workshop also proved to be useful in reflecting on the strategies, the materials and the capacity building forums that have emerged or been built in this period for the effective implementation of the programme.

As this workshop was attended by almost all of the literacy partners, it gave us a good opportunity to share the interim data with partner organisations that was collected and analysed emerging from the baseline conducted by Nirantar. A presentation on the follow up visits done by the Nirantar team was also shared on the second day of the workshop where we emphasized key concerns that Nirantar as a lead organisation experiences particularly in terms of coordination and quality of follow-up in organisations post inputs provided to them by Nirantar. The presentation suggested changes in methods and strategies for better coordination and implementation of the programme.

This workshop was also used by the partner organisations to plan and present their strategies for the next six months. During this entire process we ensured that partners learnt whereby new and innovative strategies introduced by some organisations were understood and incorporated by other organisations in their implementation plan. The Terms of

Reference with each partner organization was also prepared and shared with a detailed work plan for the next six months.

The workshop proved to be a good platform for mutual sharing of new ideas and strategic planning among partners. It was also a learning experience for Nirantar in terms of incorporating concrete ideas in the process of capacity building (like involvement of the community in monitoring) for more effective implementation.

#### 1. Follow-up visits

As part of our work as a resource organization for nine partners, we visited t partner organisations with the following objectives:

- To visit the centres to understand their functioning and identify the gaps in the implementation
- To understand the context and the feasibility of strategies in the face of field realities
- To handhold the organization on issues related to their project both at the field and programme level.

The follow-up visits were made in the month of November, December and January 2011-12 to Mahila Kalpana Shakti, Ibtada, FACE, Human Welfare Association, ASI, GVSS, and Mahila Haat. Each trip constituted a one or a two day follow-up visit where 2-3 centers were visited in every organisation. Nirantar also provided inputs during these visits to the field team and teachers.

The follow up visit indicated that detailed planning of sessions was not being done according to the level of the learners. Due to this the facilitation of sessions was not very effective. An input was given to teachers on detailed planning of sessions on language and math. Another input was provided to draw out the links between the literacy program and the other intervention areas of the organization. The objective being that the literacy centre emerge as a vibrant space for forging the inter linkages. As an outcome of our visits and interactions with field teams and centers we also observed that

- Capacity of teachers needs to be built on gender issues in order to help them facilitate discussions on the content of the primer.
- Women's writings and expressions should be displayed in the centre to create a motivational environment. These should also be encouraged as part of the curriculum for better practice of what they have learnt.
- It is important to emphasize during the visit that detailed plan would mean better preparation of teachers for the next day as it will also be easy for them to plan according to the levels of the learners

The learners' response to the pedagogy was found to be very positive. They also claimed the centre as their own space, where they could go everyday to learn and engage along with learning the alphabet. Peer learning was quite visible in the classrooms which strengthened solidarity in the centre. The women also shared that they use their knowledge and literacy skills for making demand related to their entitlements and to push the local government to be more accountable. Overall it was felt that the organizations are making sincere efforts to implement the literacy programme despite many challenges.

### Coordination of supplementary materials and baseline forms

Nirantar is also providing regular support to partner organisations in the development and creation of supplementary TLM. This has been an intensive process of hand holding organizations in deciding and finalizing illustrations, design and content for the material along with coordinating for the production. Eight partner organizations had requested us for this kind of support and it took lot of our time and energy to work with each one on this. We also feel that it was good capacity building experience for each organization where we have also been able to impact the quality of the material keeping the content, local language, and interest of the learners tied to the context of each organization's location.

Meanwhile literacy partners have also filled the baseline formats for each learner based on the MIS developed for the purpose. The entry of these formats based on the score and code sheet was done by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in coordination with Nirantar. The interim analysis also helped us build a better understanding of the context of the region where partner organizations are working as resource groups. It also helped in understanding the present status of the learners through the baseline which in turn will be useful in drawing out strategies for the projects of different partners. It has also given an insight for the follow-up visit to these partner organizations with specific objectives and gaps in mind.

#### m. Participation in Literacy Events

Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) Regional Training on Adult Education Advocacy, in Manila from 22 to 28 November, 2011.

The regional training organised by ASPBAE was attended by one Nirantar member involved in women's literacy work. The objective of the Regional Training was to build a cadre of advocates to strengthen the movement for transformative adult education in the Asia South Pacific region. These adult education activists and campaigners at the country level are expected to mobilise and strengthen the action of stakeholders on the Adult Education as a right.

## **SAHJANI SHIKSHA KENDRA (SSK)**

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Expansion and stabilization of the basic literacy work; currently 26 literacy centres are running; 18 centres have completed a total of nine months.
- Village-level camps have been held in 12 villages of Meherauni and Madawara that have completed nine months of the basic literacy centre.
- Four block level camps, covering 35 women from basic literacy and a total of 120 women from Continuing Education (CE) villages.
- CE work with 151 women in 22 villages, with concrete linkages of literacy and issues.

- Training of 40 neo-literate women 'supervisors' (mates), a CE strategy for better implementation and monitoring of NREGA, as well as for increasing women's participation.
- The literacy resource group (LRG), now comprising of about 11 women, is an emerging force within the programme, contributing to quality checks in literacy centres and engaged in mobilisation of women.
- 35 girls successfully passed out of the third batch and 38 in the fourth batch of Janishala
- Active mobilization and action on NREGA and RTE
- Exposure visits made by the SSK team and samiti women to three different programmes, after which they have come back and worked towards building and strengthening women's collectives.
- School and household surveys, and social audit on the Right to Education Act done across 25 Panchayats in 5 blocks of Lalitpur district, which has included mobilizing and building samitis at the community level, supported the formation of good School Management Committees (SMCs) and also built the team's skills and confidence as well as the SSK profile at the district level

The past 12 months have seen an expansion of the basic literacy programme within Sahajani Shiksha Kendra (SSK). Besides that, the continuing education (CE) work has taken on newer dimensions in the way that linkages have been made between issues and linkages, especially on two specific issues - National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and the Right to Education Act (RTE).

While Nirantar has trained about 75 teachers for the basic literacy centres, and mobilized the community in 50 villages across Meherauni and Madawara blocks, it has been a huge struggle to keep the centres going. The issues related to this are explained below in the 'basic literacy' section. But it is a matter of concern for the Nirantar and SSK teams that we have been able to meet a target of only 26 centres.

On the other hand, some of the work that has really taken off in SSK is the NREGA and RTE work. One of the biggest achievements of the past few months has been the training of 40 newly-literate worksite supervisors under NREGA (also called 'mates') for increasing women's participation at all levels, and for improved implementation and monitoring of NREGA in the area. Besides training these women from Lalitpur district, the SSK team has also trained 23 other women from across the state (from Banaras, Banda, Chitrakoot and Jalaun districts), who are either newly literate or less literate. Parts of the curriculum and module from the mate training have fed into the CE camps. This curriculum has now been published as a book for wider dissemination and was released on 26<sup>th</sup> November by the Principal Secretary (Rural Development) N.S.Ravi at a book release function in Lucknow.

Nirantar and SSK team, as well as about 30 samiti women went for exposure visits in April to other samitis/sangathans, with the objective of building an understanding and a vision for

their own samiti. These visits have given a lot of energy to the samiti formation process at the ground level. More and more women are coming for the village-level samiti meetings and getting involved in their common issues of concern as collectives. There is a demand both for information and an awareness of entitlements due to them.

#### *Facilitating New Ways of Relating to the Administration and Local Government*

*In the past 6-8 months, there has been big shift in the way that Nirantar has facilitated the SSK team's interaction with the local administration. Through a variety of interactions, SSK's profile and engagement with the local administrations has only increased. It is about a year since we set up an office in Lalitpur, at the district-level, but it has not been easy to build a relationship with the district or block administration, or to profile the SSK programme in Lalitpur.*

*The NREGA work, the mate training and consequent follow-up has led to a relatively positive environment in which SSK and the local administration are 'working together'. This is a more constructive effort of enabling women's participation in NREGA. It began at the time when the state-level mate training was undertaken in Lalitpur, with support as well as participation. While some impetus for this came from the fact that the Gender at Work Resource Group had initiated dialogue on this at State level, concrete efforts were made by Nirantar locally to build the confidence of the SSK team to engage with officials like the District Magistrate (DM), Chief Development Officer (CDO), Programme Director (PD) of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and officials at Block and Gram Panchayat level. While some engagements have taken place with these officials in the past three years, this is the first time this led to an environment of mutual respect and appreciation for each other, and has profiled SSK's work in very positive light. SSK has also been setting up an information kiosk at the block office in Mehrauni giving the weekly NREGA divas.*

*As far as RTE is concerned, the relationship has been more complicated. For one, it is NCPCR and the Central government that has appointed Nirantar/SSK for the social audit and concurrent monitoring of RTE in Lalitpur. Due to this, locally we are seen as an 'imposition' and in fairly negative light to start with. Besides this, the work related to the survey and monitoring of RTE has put Nirantar/SSK always in a mode of 'questioning' and 'demanding accountability', which is resisted by the Education officers as well as by the community of teachers. However, after the block meetings in July, and the continued dialogues with various stakeholders in the process, including the community, the administration, the teachers and elected representatives, this relationship is changing and becoming more constructive. The interface with Pradhans is also something that has potential to grow through RTE interventions.*

*There have been a few fallouts of these interactions with the administration. One instance when a Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) forcefully came into our office and Janishala and questioned and abused the team members, and two instances, where Sahjanis were attacked verbally and physically in the field in Madawara, are also directly and indirectly related to the growing presence and growing force of SSK locally. In response to the SDM's actions, Nirantar and SSK immediately organised held a 'dharna' at the Tehsil the next day in a show of strength where close to 50 - 60 samiti women also came, and this gave a signal to the administration and to the public that we would not tolerate such bullying. The SDM was pressured into coming out and apologising to the Sahjanis collected outside. In the same way, as far as the Madawara cases were concerned, Nirantar guided SSK to strategically file FIRs in both cases. Then we collectively met the Lalitpur*

*Superintendent of Police (SP), and put pressure of the local police stations to take action on these cases. Now one of the cases has been charge-sheeted and is in Meherauni court. We even met the Chief Judicial Magistrate to ensure that he is aware of SSK's presence and of the nature of the cases that will eventually come to him for judgement.*

*All in all, the past few months have seen a changing face of SSK locally. During the samiti exposure visits we had learnt from multiple experiences across the country that with both grassroots mobilisation as well as institutional support, one can strengthen the community-level work and presence of the organisation locally. This seemed to be unfolding very positively for us in Lalitpur. In hindsight, we feel that the intensive work in these past months with the administration and local government, and these new relationships that are being forged, would be critical for the long-term growth of SSK as a UP-based women's organisation.*

#### **a. Basic Literacy Centres: Core of the Programme**

The past one year has seen a huge expansion in the basic literacy programme through the opening of literacy centres in both Meherauni and Madawara blocks of Lalitpur. Over the past six months, the Sahajani team has mobilised women in the Dalit and Adivasi hamlets in about 50 villages across Meherauni and Madawara. And a total of 75 teachers have also been trained, one batch in December'10 and the second in April'11, on perspectives on gender and education, pedagogy, and use of primers and materials for teaching in the centres.

Over six months, a total of 45 centres have been opened across both blocks. However, currently there are 40 literacy centres running, 25 in Meherauni block and 16 in Madawara block. Over the past few months, there has also been a reflection exercise undertaken to examine the reasons for closing down of centres. Some of the main issues related to the closing down of these centres are explained below.

##### *Issues related to Mobilisation*

The actual number of women attending centres regularly ranges from 10 to 25. On an average 8-15 women attend the centres. Although in some villages the number is higher over the first few months of the centre. Dalit women have dropped out mostly during the busy agricultural season. Undertaking literacy work with tribal (Sahariya) women has also been a huge challenge. Mobilization has been weak. The Sahjani team has faced difficulties, one with block co-ordinators under performing Babita's illness too has affected the pace of work. Getting tribal women out to become the face of the programme too has not taken place. There is a need to work with the communities on issues concerning them. New strategies are being developed and intensive work with them at the village level is now yielding new understanding of the realities of their lives.

##### *Centre Teachers*

Of the 75 teachers that have been trained, the dropout rate of teachers has been very high. There are many reasons for this, ranging from struggles of young newly married women, concerns related to mobility caste dynamics especially dalit-tribal issues and low levels of literacy. This has also been Nirantar's first experience of working with part-time staff in the

field, so our own understanding about how to manage and monitor this kind of a group organisationally is gradually developing.

#### *Tracking Women's Progress*

Amidst all of the difficulties, it is heartening to see that in each centre there are at least three or four women who can be considered the 'fast' learners. They have been attending the literacy centres regularly, and have been serious about the sessions. Many of them progressed very well in both literacy and numeracy. However, we have still not developed a proper system of tracking individual learners, tracking their progress and consolidating the data at the organisational level.

#### *b. Recent Activities*

18 of the literacy centres that have completed nine months were identified for conducting village-level camps. Camps were held in 12 of these villages in the month of November. Besides building on women's literacy skills, these camps became the strategy for strengthening mobilisation at village level and to also generate a vibrant environment for women's literacy and education.

#### *Block Basic Literacy Camp*

In June 2011, one camp was held for the women from basic literacy centres. Around 35 women from Meherauni and Madawara attended this camp. The focus of this camp was to accelerate learning of some of the centre learners. The women were divided into three levels, and maths and language sessions were taken accordingly, using the health primers. For many of the women who attended this camp, it was the first time that they had come for something like this. At the camp these women were able to interact with women from CE villages who have a longer history with the SSK programme, and this provided them with a source of motivation. Sessions on gender were also taken with this group in the evenings during the camp. These camps have also been a site where some of the good centre teachers have had the opportunity to stay and learn about the camp methodology and take sessions at the camp. It has been a training ground for some of them as well.

#### *Block Level Camps for Sahariya Fellows*

The fellows are undergoing capacity-building inputs, and have so far attended two ten-day block-level camps. They have also been given some community level responsibilities. Through the block level camps, they have been provided inputs on language and numeracy skills, basic gender, caste, tribal issues, RTE and MNREGA. They are learning fast and emerging as a resource group for initiating literacy related activities in Madawara block. They are also paid a monthly stipend as compensation for wage loss. These are the women with whom some engagement had taken over the past couple of months; they are women who attended literacy centres regularly and also attended some camps, have exhibited leadership qualities, have the confidence to conduct meetings, and were genuinely interested in building community level collectives and pushing the agenda of education for children, girls and women.

### *Block Level Camp for Basic Literacy Centre Learners*

One block-level camp was conducted in December with 68 women learners. Most of the women who attended the block-level camp were from the villages where shivirs and jathas had been done in the month of November. The sessions focused on basic literacy-numeracy teaching. Some sessions on gender and education, the Right to Education (RTE) Act and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) were also held during the camp, in order to build the women's understanding on rights and entitlements. During the camp, discussions were had with the women in order to gauge whether the centres that had shut down in their villages could be reopened or not. Based on this, a reassessment was done, and plans were made to identify potential teachers, and re-open the centres.

### *Capacity Building of Sahajanis*

Another point of reflection has been the skills of karyakartas (full-time as well as part-time) for supporting the literacy program. It has been felt that the literacy work requires strong literacy skills whether for teaching in centers or for supporting the literacy work with a huge impact on the quality of the program. Over a period of time, Sahajanis have come into newer roles of supervision and support for centre teachers. Their own weak literacy skills have sometimes made it difficult for them to perform their tasks in an effective manner. Also finding literate women as teachers (the part-time staff) from the Dalit and Sahariya community has also been a huge struggle. Low literacy levels of our functionaries has adversely impacted various aspects of the literacy programme, like teaching in centers, planning, maintaining the records, writing reports, supporting teachers, etc. To deal with this it has been decided to bring in some flexibility in the selection criteria of teachers. It has been decided that while priority would be given to Dalit or Sahariya women; we would be open to take a small and fixed percentage of women from other communities as well who have good literacy skills.

#### Capacity-building of SSK Team

In September, we also did the annual training of the SSK team. It was a 7-day training held in Delhi from 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September, and we covered perspectives, skills and information for this karyakarta training. It was attended by 21 Sahajanis of whom 6-7 members were very new. The training was thus designed keeping in mind that some would be new and some fairly experienced members in the team.

The training provided participants the space and opportunity to share their personal experiences, and to link it with the larger structural issues of gender, caste, ethnicity, education, etc. Besides, as it was consciously part of the training design, there were exercises and case studies that led to a lot of rich discussion on how these issues influence work in the field with communities, as well as team functioning. Multiple methodologies were used during this training, like case studies, group work, creative and cultural activities, film discussion, power point presentation, and brief survey. The training also proved to be a space where the facilitators and the team leaders could engage with and understand each of the Sahajani karyakartas more deeply.

Broadly, the plan for the training was as follows:

Day 1	Understanding gender and sexuality
Day 2	Understanding gender and sexuality in the context of the team as well as the field
Day 3	Understanding caste issues and implications in the team and in the field
Day 4	Understanding Adivasi issues and implications in the team and in the field
Day 5	Understanding teamwork and leadership Organisational values and objectives
Day 6	Understanding gender and education, and implications in the team and in the field
Day 7	Understanding gender and education, and implications in the team and in the field

Some of the areas for future work that emerged from this training were the fact that we need to strengthen the understanding of Adivasi issues within the team. This is the first time they had exposure to it, and it was a challenging session to conduct. Understanding communalism and secularism are also areas that we need to provide the team with inputs on. In addition, as part of the organisational development (OD) process, we might need to specific inputs on an ongoing basis for a new generation of leaders that is growing and coming into their own.

#### *c. Field-level Continuing Education (CE) Follow-up*

At the field level, CE follow-up visits have been taking place in 22 CE villages with about 151 women. This has involved literacy-numeracy follow-up as well as meetings related to awareness and monitoring of NREGA, RTE and samiti formation. As regards NREGA, at least 200 women have filled collective applications for demanding work under NREGA in the CE villages. In about 9 villages, women have proactively given applications for getting Job Cards made in their own name, as heads of households. The discussion has begun with them on whether they would like bank accounts in their own names or not, to have better access to and control over the wages they earn.

#### *d. CE Block-level Camps*

In the past six months, SSK has conducted three CE camps, one in January, one in May and one in June. A total of about 120 women from CE villages have been through these camps. At all the camps, for the language and maths sessions, women have been divided into three groups depending on levels and the SSK team has worked with them accordingly. The information sessions at the camps have ranged from gender, caste, RTE, NREGA and training for women mates. This has proved to be a good strategy since women see direct links of literacy with their real lives and have been motivated to pursue learning.

#### *e. The Literacy Resource Group (LRG)*

A pool of about 35 women has been built as the LRG. They are providing support in the literacy centres and are also involved in dealing with issues in difficult centres. Side by side

they have been playing a significant role in the SSK programme by strengthening the samitis in their own villages, calling for the monthly meetings, and motivating and mobilising women in other villages. Over the last six months the role of the LRG has been systematized. Each LRG member gives six days a month to mobilize women in other new villages and in supporting new teachers perform their roles in the centre. The LRG women have emerged to play a critical role, both in terms of monitoring the work not only of the centre level teachers but also provided feedback on the Sahajani field level worker's quality of intervention. They have also demanded CE camps for themselves as there is a push to strengthen and sharpen their reading and writing skills given the forms and reporting they do on a monthly basis.

#### f. Work on NREGA

As regards NREGA, at least 200 women have filled collective applications for demanding work under NREGA across 19 villages of Meherauni. This kind of mobilisation has also positively affected attendance and participation in literacy activities. In 9 villages, women have proactively given applications for getting Job Cards made in their own name, as heads of households. The discussion has begun with them on whether they would like bank accounts in their own names or not, to have better access to and control over the wages they earn. Due to work on NREGA, a strong relationship has also been built with the officials across 18 village Panchayats and the local SSK team. The SSK team too has gained confidence.

#### Educational Stall in NREGA Diwas

The strategy for putting up a stall every month at the NREGA Diwas for information dissemination and grievance redressal has been continued. NREGA Diwas is held in the Tehsil on the second Wednesday of every month. The NREGA Diwas was begun by the UP government with an effort to provide the community with a window for grievance redressal and for a formal interface between the community and the local administration. With SSK setting up a stall here every month, this has also become a forum for women to come with specific queries and complaints regarding the implementation of NREGA in their villages.

#### g. Training Women Mates: A Continuing Education Strategy

One of the biggest achievements of the past six months is the integration of literacy with the issue of NREGA, and the development of a new continuing education strategy through technical training of women supervisors (known as 'mates') in NREGA. SSK organised this training with support from Nirantar and Gender at Work, and with encouragement from the Additional Commissioner of Rural Development in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Shri Anurag Yadav. Not only have 40 women from Meherauni and Madawara been trained, SSK has also trained 23 other women from across UP, belonging to Banaras, Banda, Chitrakoot and Jalaun districts. The other groups that participated in this process were Lok Samiti, Parmarth and Vanangana. Nirantar played a strong support role to make this training happen successfully.

For the past couple of years, SSK has been a partner with other organisations and has been working towards increasing the participation of women from Dalit and other marginalised

communities in NREGA. From a survey done by Gender at Work in 5 districts of UP, it emerged that only 1% of the post of 'mate' is held by women. In order to truly increase women's participation in NREGA, SSK and Nirantar had brought in a feminist perspective to the NREGA work and proposed that women labourers should also be strengthened in semi-skilled as well as technical work. Over the last year and more, the NREGA Abhiyan has been closely tied to both dissemination of information, accountability and learning about NREGA, even through primers. This was seen as a bold step where we sought to bring leadership, literacy and skills together in creating women 'mates'.

The broad design and topics of the training module of women mates is given below.

- Building an understanding on gender and work
- Understanding the NREGA legislation - its history, vision, and provisions
- Tracing the steps in NREGA implementation in order to understand women's participation at each level
- Understanding the work and responsibilities of mates
- Practice sessions on working of mates at NREGA worksites
- Literacy-numeracy linkages in a mate's work which involved (these sessions were carried in the training as well as on site at NREGA worksites):
  - Filling of muster roll and daily diary
  - Understanding the concept of 'volume'
  - Learning to use the measuring tape
  - Measurement of work done
  - Understanding and calculating wages as per the Schedule of Rates (SOR) for NREGA

Sessions from this module have been incorporated into the planning of the CE camps and specific sessions on literacy-numeracy and linkages with the roles and responsibilities of mates have been integrated into these camps. The sessions have been - filling the muster roll, understanding and calculating volume, using the measuring tape, calculation of wages as per work done, etc. The confidence of the women mates as well as of the field workers from participating organisations grew immensely during the course of the training. While literacy was empowering for the women who are neo-literates, with technical training they seemed to grow even more in confidence. Those who were less literate had problems in filling the muster roll, but they were equally quick and confident as the neo-literates in learning to use the measuring tape, and performing calculations of work and wages.

This training provided the opportunity for the SSK team and women mates to also engage with the local administration involved in NREGA implementation - from the Pradhans and Rozgar Sewaks, to people at the Block and District level. Soon after the training, the rains started in Lalitpur, and many of the NREGA works were stalled. Currently, eight women mates are working in their villages on NREGA worksites. In many villages, women labourers are being mobilized in large numbers, and hopefully, all the women 'mates' will be able to work successfully in their villages. SSK members have been undertaking follow up work in each of the villages, introducing the mahila 'mate' to the Pradhan, the samiti women and the

community, and providing support at the community-level as well as at worksites. This work is fairly intensive and has required virtually daily follow-up by the Sahjanis.

#### **Establishing the Women Mates**

16 women mates in Lalitpur district have begun supervising the NREGA worksites on a regular basis. Intensive handholding support is provided to them at the worksites. A lot of grassroots advocacy work has been done with the Block Coordinator, the Rozgar Sewaks and Pradhans to make this a reality. For the women it is a slow and steady but sure struggle to establish themselves as mates. Some of the problems they have been facing are as follows – muster roll is not available on the worksites, and if they are there, they are kept away from the women mates because they are neo-literates. At other places, there are more fundamental issues related to implementation of NREGA like poor mobilisation of labourer, delays in starting NREGA work by Pradhans, non-payment of earlier wages, etc.

#### *Editing and Producing the Mate Training Module*

Nirantar also played a critical role in producing the mate training module that Sahajani had committed to publishing as part of the commitments from Gender at Work. This module was released by the Principal Secretary, Rural Development, Government of Uttar Pradesh, on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011. This module will now be disseminated widely across UP and other Hindi speaking states.

#### **h. Building and Strengthening Women's Collectives (Samitis)**

Women's samitis have been formed in all the 22 CE villages where SSK is working. Of these, currently, about 14 villages across Meherauni block and about 2-3 villages in Madawara block have very active samitis that are meeting regularly every month. Most of these villages have active LRG women who are taking the leadership to call the village-level meetings based on the collective agenda decided in the LRG meetings, and are mobilising women not only in their own villages, but also motivating women across the other villages where they visit as part of their LRG work. In the 14 active samitis, the meetings have taken place regularly. Samitis like Dongra and Badhai ka Kuwan have been particularly active under the leadership of the LRG women in these villages. The LRG women have continued to call meetings, share information about NREGA and MDM in their villages. Some dialogue has begun on the inclusion of samiti women as member parents in the School Management Committees (SMCs) that are being constituted in every school as per the provisions of the RTE guidelines.

#### *Samiti Exposure Visits*

In the month of April, thirty-four women (from the samitis, SSK and Nirantar teams) were part of visiting different organisations in order to understand different kinds of women's collectives, how they were formed, their current work and organisational structures, etc. The objective was to build an understanding about the various kinds of samitis, their forms, values and workings, and to generate ideas about future samiti work in SSK. The three samitis that we visited were as follows: Autonomous federations promoted by Andhra Pradesh Mahila Samatha Society (APMSS) on issues of education, health, governance,

justice, and economic empowerment; Livelihoods-based federations promoted by Pradan in Purulia (West Bengal) that have recently taken on literacy work as a strategy for federations and leadership building; and Adivasi Adhikar Samiti (Chhattisgarh) which works on issues of food security, health, nutrition, right to work and forest rights, and women have been taking the initiative to study and appear for examinations. Briefing and debriefing workshops were done by Nirantar before and after these visits, respectively, to help orient and consolidate the learnings from these visits, and propose directions for the future of samiti work in Lalitpur.

#### *Bank Exposure Visits for Samiti Women*

Another strategy that has been adopted for capacity-building of samiti women is the strengthening of their linkages with formal institutions. In this phase, the focus has been on strengthening institutional linkage with banks. Almost all these women are NREGA workers and often have no direct engagement with banks for opening bank account, depositing money, withdrawing wages, or availing of the banks' other facilities. This structured capacity-building was done in partnership with bank officials to help the samiti women develop a positive relationship with bank officials, as well as to gain information regarding the functioning of banks, including key schemes. At the end of this visit, literacy-numeracy sessions were held in order to help the women use the real materials. So far, samiti women from 10 villages have undergone this training. Samiti women from other villages will undergo this training in subsequent months.

#### **i. Janishala**

- 35 girls passed out of the third batch of Janishala and appeared for mainstream examinations for Class V, VI, VII and VIII – April 2011
- Nearly 115 girls and women were mobilised for the fourth batch Janishala; 80 learners joined the centre, out of which 38 finally graduated. – 15<sup>th</sup> April to October

#### *Janishala (Third Batch)*

The third batch of girls from the eight-month residential centre in Meherauni block graduated in April and appeared for mainstream examinations – 8 girls in Class V, 13 in Class VI and VII and 14 girls in Class VIII. There were 16 Sahariya girls from Madawara block in this group. They were supported in April-May 2011 to appear for the class five or eight exam in order to enter the mainstream.

#### *Janishala (Fourth Batch): The Madawara Janishala*

The experience of the Madawara Janishala has brought to the forefront issues related to the stark impoverishment of the Sahariya community. We have been able to understand better some of the social and economic barriers which make the nature of their exclusion from education a reality. A reflection process was undertaken to understand the resistance to sending Adivasi girls to the residential school. The most significant is that these tribal women and girls are significant contributors to the household, village and local economy, as they

take primary responsibility for household, agricultural and wage labour. This has impacted to the retention of Adivasi girls in Janishala. The resistance to letting these girls stay on at the residential school has come not only from the families, but from the girls themselves as well as from powerful members of the community like landlords belonging to so-called 'upper' castes, officials of the Forest Department, etc, who have even come to the doorstep of Janishala and demanded that these girls be sent back to their villages to work. In such a situation, parents and other family members have not been able to do much under pressure.

A second crucial and linked issue is the extreme marginalisation and vulnerability of the Adivasi community in the area. Historically, politically and socio-economically, the community is on the margins, and has never had any 'voice'. For these communities, who have never had any exposure or opportunity in the so-called 'mainstream' society, their fight for survival, identity and recognition is immense, and for them, education has not acquired the same kind of value that it has for the more politically and socially mobile Dalits of UP. They are not only economically impoverished and socially ostracized but also have no voice and political identity in the region. It is only in 2004 that Sahariya community got Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in Uttar Pradesh (UP). Prior to this they were clubbed as Scheduled Castes.

**j. Expansion and Capacity Building of the Literacy Resource Group (LRG)**

There is now a pool of 60 women who have been identified and trained as the Literacy Resource Group (LRG) across Meherauni and Madawara blocks. While the n Meherauni group have been playing the role of LRG for a considerable amount of time, in Madawara they are just beginning to start work. In Meherauni, the LRG is providing support in the literacy centres and are also involved in dealing with issues in difficult centers. Side by side they have been playing a significant role in the SSK programme by strengthening the samitis in their own villages, calling for the monthly meetings, and motivating and mobilizing women in other villages. Over the last few months the role of the LRG has been systematized. Each LRG member gives six days a month to mobilize women in other new villages and in supporting new teachers perform their roles in the centre. The LRG women have emerged to play a critical role, both in terms of monitoring the work not only of the centre level teachers but have also provided feedback the quality of interventions made by the Sahajani's in their villages.. A four-day capacity-building input was done with the Meherauni LRG in January, with a focus on deepening their understanding on gender, caste and education, and on honing their mobilization skills. Issue based sessions and a field visit were designed into this input.

In Madawara, where the villages are newer and participation of women is beginning to increase, separate strategies have been adopted (mainly the fellowship programme) and separate forums have been created to help them play the LRG role. They have a specific role in mobilizing the community on the issue of education. Specifically, they are monitoring the Right to Education (RTE) Act by visiting the schools in their own villages. Their work also involves getting 'out-of-school' Sahariya children into the mainstream system. They have

managed to bring about 200 'out-of-school' Sahariya children into the school system and monitor them on a daily basis to ensure that they do not drop out. Through school monitoring, they are also demanding greater sensitivity from the teachers to the needs of Sahariya children, and are also keeping an eye on the quality of teaching.

The most significant intervention with these women since December has been the block-level literacy/numeracy camps and trainings focused on building their skills and perspectives as future workers on education in Madawara. With this group, we have done perspective-building trainings on gender and education, building confidence and skills of mobilisation and leadership, and shared information on significant legislations like RTE and NREGA.

The LRG comprises of potential leaders of the samiti as we have envisaged it. The plan for the structure and capacity building of the samiti will be clinched in the SSK annual review in April.

**k. Work on Right to Education (RTE) - Concurrent Monitoring**

The concurrent monitoring of RTE has continued across 98 schools of 25 Panchayats. We have been actively involved in promoting women's participation and leadership in School Management Committees (SMCs) and other community forums for ensuring that the RTE Act is implemented in letter and in spirit. SSK is working closely with the Basic Education Department at block and district levels. A regular forum for dialogue between the administration, community and us, has been the monthly block level meetings.

**Ensuring Democratic Processes in School Management Committees (SMCs)**

We have been working on encouraging women's participation and engagement with SMCs. Constant engagement has continued with the SMCs and the communities to ensure that their monthly meetings are taking place and issues are being properly raised and addressed in these meetings.

*Shivirs in Schools*

An important aspect of the work on RTE in Madawara has been to work with the school system, that is teachers, Assistant Basic Shiksha Adhikari (ABSA or block-level Basic Education Officer) and other representatives of the local administration, to be more sensitive and responsive to the needs and realities of 'out-of-school' Sahariya children. Besides doing this through regular monthly block meetings which are a forum for dialogue between the community, the administration and us, we also did school level shivirs in 6 villages across the months of January and February. This experience has been very fruitful. It has helped to bring 'out-of-school' children into the school system, and has also been a demonstration of quality teaching-learning sessions for the school teachers and the Education Department. The momentum generated by these 'shivirs' needs to be sustained. Here the skills of Sahajanis in running the Janishala in teaching language and maths through creative and activity based processes was used in highly productive ways.

## **KHABAR LAHARIYA**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Discussions and work on a plan for the expansion of Khabar Lahariya, in UP and Bihar
- The printing and distribution of the Sitamarhi edition has already created considerable excitement in villages of Sitamarhi and Sheohar in Bihar
- Three special issues, on the Right to Education, the water crisis and child labour were produced by Banda and Chitrakoot editions
- Members of the team have played a key resource role in a project to train young Muslim and Dalit women in Banda in ICTs. Members of Khabar Lahariya also participated in this project, and set up a blog for Khabar Lahariya
- The efforts to gain larger women's readership have paid off, with the paper reaching 888 women each month

This period has seen sporadic work on proposals for expansion of Khabar Lahariya, to the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and SDTT. However, in the last few months, as part of the OD process, the team has spent time fleshing out a model for the scaling up of Khabar Lahariya which may be exciting as well as viable/sustainable. This involves the creation of a separate Khabar Lahariya unit, which will work in a focused way on expanding KL, and bringing it into the domain of media, in terms of structure/functioning, and profile to the outside world. A slightly less resource intensive model – involving smaller bureaus (with 3 journalists) in a district, feeding into an edition (which will cover 3-4 districts) has been worked on, to cut the costs as well as push the outreach of each edition of the newspaper. However, issues of language of these editions, as well as distribution and support to news bureaus, needs to be further discussed. The financial viability and possibilities of financing of Khabar Lahariya also needs to be worked out. A meeting with journalists and some people who understand KL and the media market will be held to discuss some of these issues.

#### **a. KHABAR LAHARIYA: SITAMARHI (BIHAR)**

##### *Launch of the edition*

The new edition of Khabar Lahariya was launched in Patna and Sitamarhi on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of September. The former event happened in conjunction with a state organized Teacher's Day event, in which the Chief Minister Nitish Kumar launched the newspaper. Consequently, the paper got considerable coverage in mainstream press in Patna, and generated interest at the state level. In Sitamarhi, the event was attended by women readers, local NGO staff and journalists. Interviews and coverage appeared in national Hindi dailies.

While the team was greatly motivated by the launch, the role of the federation, Pragati ek Prayas, in organizing even the local event in Sitamarhi itself was poor. The team was pushed to take more initiative in profiling and managing the newspaper locally, with less dependence on the federation. Over the last 2 months, this has improved, and apart from financial issues, the responsibility of the newspaper and coordination with Nirantar is the co-editors'.

#### *Production*

Fortnightly production at Sitamarhi has been regular. The team of eight reporters has grown more confident, more familiar with their beats and more recognized. Their awareness and sources of news have increased. Certain areas still require support: for instance, when the panchayat elections were going on in Bihar, the team found it difficult to do reporting both at the village level or the administrative level. The quality and quantity of news varies from edition to edition. Often the distance that reporters have to travel, or circumstances like illness of team members, rains or lack of transport (especially around the panchayat elections) have resulted in fewer stories per reporter than the required number. Overall, though, and considering that the group has had only one training in journalism, their quality of news is good, as is their production skills. Next month the team will be supported to produce their first special issue.

#### *Printing and Distribution*

The printing and distribution of the paper was delayed by two months, as the systems and quality of production needed strengthening, as did certain organizational management systems (detailed in the next section). Considerable efforts were made to find a printer relatively close by – in Sitamarhi or Muzzafarpur, and then even in Patna – who could print the paper. Either colour printers were not available, or the quantity and quality of printing required was not possible. Efforts to get the paper printed at local presses were extremely delayed. Finally, it was decided that the paper would be printed at Allahabad, where the Banda and Chitrakoot editions are printed, and that 2 members of the team would get it printed. In the meanwhile, members of the team and the federation would find a printer in Muzzafarpur or Patna. This system continued for 2 months, resulting in very erratic circulation cycles. A printer has now been identified by the team in Patna, and the printed paper is sent by the printer by bus to Sitamarhi.

At present, 1000 copies of the paper are being printed, and distributed in 8 blocks of Sitamarhi and Sheohar district. 80% of the distribution is being done by the reporters. The remainder is to be distributed by federation members, which is done irregularly, despite numerous meetings with the federation leadership in Sitamarhi. Overall circulation has much potential to grow, as do the numbers of copies reaching other MS federations in the Bajjika belt. However, learning from the Banda-Chitrakoot experience, the team is being encouraged to stabilize their readership, their women readers, as well as move to weekly periodicity before increasing numbers of copies. With 6 months of regular distribution completed, the team has now prepared their beat-wise subscriber lists, with the help from Nirantar and Pahal. At present, the newspaper is printed from Patna and the printed paper is sent by the printer by bus to Sitamarhi. The option of printing the paper in Allahabad, where

the other KL editions are printed is being explored, since Allahabad is well connected with Muzzafarpur.

#### *Challenges of new Edition*

There have been understandable challenges and struggles in establishing a local edition of a newspaper in a new area. Some of these have been offset by the fact that the team of journalists in Sitamarhi is committed to the paper, and feel responsible about its production, distribution and quality, even about its identity and growing reputation in the area.

Forums like the monthly meeting have been regularized over the last four months, to discuss issues of quality of production and distribution, issues relating to newsgathering and addressing team and leadership issues. Apart from this, the co-editors of the newspaper report on the field and production status of the edition every month. An important aspect of this phase, and especially the period after the formal launch of the paper is the greater independence and confidence of the co-editors to deal with editorial and management issues of the newspaper. Nirantar and KL (Banda-Chitrakoot) members have travelled for monthly meetings and production and separately provided the co-editors support on these visits.

#### *Capacity Building*

The KL Sitamarhi team visited Chitrakoot for a 5 day exposure to the newsgathering, production and distribution process of a local newspaper. While some of the reporters had attended a rural journalism course, many new reporters had not had this opportunity and so the exposure visit was an important and intensive learning experience for them. The team accompanied the KL (Banda and Chitrakoot) reporters into the field and observed newsgathering and distribution of the paper. They also observed a production meeting, and the selection and finalization of stories that were to be included in the paper. The KL (Banda-Chitrakoot) team took short sessions at the end of each day to consolidate the learnings from the field, as well as reiterate certain important aspects of rural journalism. At the end of the exposure trip, the Sitamarhi team was supported by the Banda-Chitrakoot team in producing their first issue (that was printed).

A member of the Sitamarhi team also attended a course in New Media, organized by Nirantar in Banda in March, in which she built computer, internet, photography and video skills. She has used these skills proactively in her work over the last few months, for communication with Nirantar, in accessing information on the internet when possible, and in using the digital camera for photographs for the newspaper.

Two members of the team were given an input in DTP (pagedmaker and photoshop) skills in September that have enabled them to handle their productions independently and efficiently. We see the possibility of the newspaper becoming weekly by the beginning of 2012.

#### **b. KHABAR LAHARIYA: CHITRAKOOT AND BANDA**

##### *Production and Distribution*

Production and distribution in these editions has been regular. Younger members of the

editions are being mentored to take on greater responsibility in the editorial process. New team members have also joined and both editions now have strong and enthusiastic reporters and office staff. Senior members of the team are able to play a greater role in capacity building (both within and outside these editions), overall monitoring of production and distribution, building women's readership, and new media – for example, in visualizing the Khabar Lahariya blog. This has been necessary due to various issues that have emerged over the last year, to do with dipping quality of the newspaper, and the need to increase women readers.

As part of a fellowship received by KL from the National Foundation of India, the team has been covering the provisioning and implementation of the Right to Education act in some detail. In March, a special issue on the RTE was produced, in which the situation as regards the provisions of the RTE were monitored in 5 panchayats of each district. The preparation for this special issue included a meeting with the Special Representative on RTE for UP on the provisions of the act, after which a senior team member did a similar input for the whole KL team. The process of reporting on the issue increased the level of awareness and information within the KL team, as well as at the village and administrative level, where knowledge of the RTE was still quite scarce. Features on the RTE written by KL as part of the NFI fellowship have been printed in mainstream newspapers like *Dainik Jagran* and *Amar Ujala*.

A special issue was produced on the water crisis in May. This was an issue that KL had reported on intensively last year, in the build up to the UP Panchayat elections. This year, in many areas suffering from water crisis for at least 5 years, there was seen to be a demand for a special focus on water. The reportage acquired greater importance in the light of the announcement to focus the funds from the Bundelkhand development package this year to addressing the water crisis in Bundelkhand. KL reports investigated the quantity and channeling of these funds at the ground level.

In addition to these, shorter special issues have been produced, one in September on the Mahamaya Arthik Madad Yojana, and one on child labour. The team is also running an Election Special column in the buildup to the Vidhan Sabha elections in February/March 2012. In all the special issues, the concern over quality and the lack of a certain depth and rigour of reporting has been expressed by those within and outside Nirantar. Efforts have been made to convey the importance of building an understanding of the team on issues they focus on, as well as more careful news reporting. However, this remains an area where support from Nirantar, even if to provide critical feedback to 'special issue' stories, or even hold pages, is required.

#### *Building Women's Readership*

A senior member of KL and a reporter, as well as a member of Nirantar have worked in a more focused manner over the last 6 months to increase the number of women readers of KL. The strategies being followed are:

- Weekly visits to 28 literacy centres run as part of Vanangana's literacy programme in Chitrakoot. KL members interact with literacy volunteers to strengthen their abilities to use KL as reading material in the centres. News reports from KL are collectively read by women and discussed. To encourage women to read the paper, news reports from their villages are included in KL. Stories written by the women have also been printed in KL.
- Networking with NGOs, government programmes and institutions (like KGBVs). Meetings have been held with NGOs, Mahila Samakhya and social and educational institutes to disseminate the newspaper in their areas. Sessions on reading KL have been conducted by KL members at MS meetings and at KGBVs, with much success. Regular follow up needs to be done to consolidate these readers, and encourage them to subscribe to the paper. Some NGOs in Banda have requested KL to come and do sessions with the groups of women they work with.
- An attempt has been made to streamline the efforts around building women's leadership, and focus on regular touch with these readers. Below are some numbers of different readers built at different forums.

Number of Women Readers added by KL group	200
Number Women Readers in Vanagana	259
Number Women Readers in other NGOs	149
Number of young readers in KGB Mau, Shivrampur, Baberu and Naraini	170
Number of women and young girl readers in Gugtagu Manch	50
Number of women readers in Dalit Mahila Samiti (Vanangana)	30
Number of volunteer women readers	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>888</b>

### *Capacity Building*

Members of the KL team attended a workshop on New Media organized by Nirantar in Banda, to build computer, internet, photography and video skills. Since members of the team had already had inputs in these technical media, the workshop further strengthened their skills, and encouraged them to use them to produce new media content, and upload text and audio visual material on their experiences as rural women journalists on a Khabar Lahariya blog. A follow up workshop to orient the team on blogging, and setting up the KL blog was organized by Nirantar in April. In the current work on new media that is on going in Banda,

members of KL are encouraged to upload news stories and photographs on their blog, as well as use the video cameras to shoot while they do their news coverage.

#### *Resource Group Role*

Members of the KL Banda and Chitrakoot editions have come into greater resource group roles in the past 6 months. A member of the team has provided regular inputs to the Bihar edition of the newspaper, travelling for production and/or monthly meetings, setting up systems for the edition and strengthening the ability of the Sitamarhi team to implement these systems, whether for office management, production and distribution quality control and team functioning. The Khabar Lahariya (Banda and Chitrakoot) editions were also responsible for planning and facilitating the exposure visit for the Sitamarhi team. The exposure visit was the first time that all the editions had met in this manner, and the Banda and Chitrakoot teams made an effort to create a comfortable and energizing forum for learning and sharing common issues.

A member of the KL team supported the production of a newsletter on the RTE in Lalitpur in March, where the SSK team was beginning a social audit of the RTE. The KL member accompanied members of the RTE team doing the social audit to the field, identified issues to report, and provided an input in how to write reports for a newsletter.

The Banda team hosted a group of Muslim women, who were participating in a leadership training (organized by Nirantar and Sanatkada, Lucknow) in February. The objective of the visit was to observe the work of women led community organizations, and strategies for working with gender, identity and development at the grassroots level. The Banda team planned field visits where participants observed rural reporting, as well as made presentations and facilitated discussions on the experience of KL in bringing out a rural newspaper, and enabling women to come into the role of journalists.

A member of KL was an 'apprentice trainer' in a weeklong workshop on New Media for Empowerment, organized by Nirantar in Banda in March. The workshop was for 30 Muslim and Dalit girls from Banda, Chitrakoot and Lalitpur. The KL trainer provided support in mobilizing participants for the training, advising on the training design and curriculum, as well as co-facilitating sessions. This was her first experience as a trainer in ICTs, and her presence, and her own journey of becoming familiar with ICTs was a source of motivation for the participants.

*'In no corner of my mind did I ever imagine that I would learn [these technical skills] and then reach the stage that others would learn from me. So I really enjoyed this experience. And not just as a trainer, but I felt like I was learning so much from the participants... Even in my own team, I'm trying to teach others, so that some of my skills are strengthened.'* (Meera, trainer, and co-editor, KL Banda)

From August onwards, a project for sustaining of new media skills is being implemented in Banda, involving running a weekly computer drop in centre, as well as blogging and visual documentation inputs. Meera has played a key role as a trainer in the computer class, and also to support the 15 girls to make short video films, and run a Banda based news blog – khulakhaata.wordpress.com

## **YOUNG PEOPLE’S EDUCATION AND MAINSTREAM EDUCATION**

### **YOUNG PEOPLE’S EDUCATION**

#### **a. Leadership Building with Muslim and Dalit Women and Skilling in New Media**

This project was designed as a follow up in the leadership building process for Muslim and Dalit women that was implemented in Lucknow and Banda from January 2011 to March 2011, by Nirantar in collaboration with Sanatkada (Lucknow) and Pahal and Vanangana (Banda). This leadership building process involved inputs on gender and identity, field visits to community based organisations and DTP and new media training (digital photography, videography and blogging).

This time, in addition to sustaining and strengthening computer skills and community-based work of the group of Muslim and Dalit women who had completed the previous phase, the objective was to further develop skills of filmmaking and ICTs to establish their control over this technology while simultaneously boosting their self-confidence to use the visual medium to communicate effectively on issues that concern them. Another key activity has been the development and transaction of a contextualised English language course, with the objective of improving the access of both leaders and other learners to jobs in the market, that demand familiarity and a working knowledge of English. The capacity building took place at two sites, as in the previous phase – Lucknow and Banda. The bulk of the activities took place in Lucknow, towards strengthening the ‘emerging leaders’, and was done in partnership with Sanatkada. The Banda component was not as intensive a training process, focussing on new media and was implemented in collaboration with Pahal, a local women’s media collective.

#### ***b. Mobilisation***

In the first phase of the leadership programme in Lucknow, we had 33 participants, of which 12 were from Lucknow. These participants took forward the training in their own ways: some had started taking up civic/development issues at the community level, like getting ration cards etc made or talking to their ward member for different problems. Some got jobs and some have continued their studies. Consequently, for this phase, which required Lucknow-based participants, since there were regular activities to attend, we had only 12 women to take on, and of these only 7 were able to come back. A fresh round of mobilisation needed to be done to select around 15 more women. Some of the participants came from previous

trainings that had been done by Sanatkada, who we had been in touch with over the years, others came from community work that the apprentices had done after the last phase of work.

Finally after many meetings (with participants and their families) and telephonic conversations, the shortlisted participants filled in an application form which described the entire 5-month training process, and explained the commitment that would be involved on the part of the participants. We now have 18 participants as emergent leaders working in 11 different mohallas of Lucknow.

*c. Curriculum design and Resource material creation*

The gender and identity inputs that were done in a structured or non structured manner drew on the previous phase curriculum design and resource material. The other issue based inputs were planned in detail each month with team members and resource persons. For the computer inputs, the curriculum included revision of the previous skills as well as some additional inputs on blogging. For the video training, the new media curriculum designed for Banda in the last phase was adapted for Lucknow.

The English course curriculum was what we had no prior experience in designing. Internal discussions within the partnering organisations, as well as consultations with English teachers were planned to share our experiences of language teaching for adults. The curriculum was finally designed in collaboration with the teacher who took on the 3 month course, and based on principles like contextualised content, participatory methods that brought the worlds of the learners closer to the world of English, and a focus on interactive, conversational English which would be useful to learners. A pool of teaching learning material was created before the course began, consisting of stories translated from Hindi/Hindustani, comic strips created by young community leaders, short profiles of the learners, and visual material that was from a familiar/accessible context, from which to build text. Apart from this, existing English teaching material for non-native speakers of the language was reviewed, and some worksheets and dialogues were adapted or created based on these. Dictionaries and alternative reading material located in the Indian context (by Tulika or Tara books) were provided to learners.

*d. Strengthening Leadership skills: components of the follow up training*

*- Monthly planning*

At the start of each month, meetings were held with the emerging leadership group. These meetings provided a platform to discuss and reflect upon their issues - whether concerning skills, confidence, group dynamics - develop strategies and plan activities with the group.

*- Issue based inputs*

Issue-based inputs were organized for the leadership group based on specific learning needs identified by the group, and also emerging out of the community work that was being done. We made these issues as the theme of the month to work in respective mohallas. September:

media and women, October: Citizenship, November: Right to Education; December: accessing entitlements – scholarships, ration cards, identity cards, voter cards etc.

Gender and Identity: A 2-day input for the first-time participants who had joined the training programme was organised, on *gender and identity*. This included building an understanding on social construction of identity as well as gender norms/roles and socialization. Participants took up the difficult ideas quite quickly, considering the duration of the input. Also significant was the fact that the input was facilitated to a large extent by the apprentice trainers.

Citizenship: Understanding rights and duties, and the concept of citizenship was a significant concept for a group of Muslim women to be aware of. This was important for their role as leaders, as well as for their community work, where rights and entitlements were key aspects of community discussions. Also in the context of UP, elections were approaching, in February 2012, so it was important for our emergent leaders to understand the larger political context in which they were to work.

A two-day input was designed where emergent leaders were given the understanding of their fundamental rights as per the constitution and about the systems in place to ensure access to them. This was followed by an interactive and exciting session on elections and politics, focussing on how we choose our representatives and how much we know about them or their party.

Right to Education: While working in different mohallas emergent leaders identified education as one of the main issues concerning the community. This is relevant in the context of the notification of the Right to Education in UP in July 2011. Emergent leaders were taking up the issue of education (the lack of access of poor Muslim children to the state system, as well as to entitlement to educational scholarships etc) in their mohalla meetings already and now a need was felt to orient them on the law and its provisions.

A 2-day workshop was organised to orient the group to the RTE, its implementation process, roles and responsibility of different stake holders etc. In preparation for this input, the group did a mapping exercise in their mohallas as to understand the availability and access to different kinds of schools within mohallas. This gave them ground level information on the status of the community with regards to education access, and a real context in which to understand the RTE.

#### e. Skill building workshops

##### Computer Class:

In the first phase of the program when we held the computer class for ten days, we covered all the basic concepts of computer operation, Microsoft word, internet through various assignments. The computer inputs in this phase moved a step further, building a more

comprehensive knowledge of MSWord, Internet – concept of search engines, and finally making a blog for the entire group. The whole course is designed as such:

- Recap (Basic Computer, MSWord Basic & Internet)
- MSWord (versions 2003-2007), Page Setup, Print Setup, Cover Page, Resume Template, Page Background, Page Number, Page Border, Highlighter
- Inserting & Copying pictures, Shapes & Figures, Table Formatting
- How to operate a blog.

#### Videography training:

In a five day photography and video training workshop, it seemed like a magic wand appeared in the hands of the emergent leaders. They learned the rationale, art and craft of documentation and filmmaking. The workshop was located in the context of the lack of media concerned with telling stories of women, and those on the margins. After the technical input, the focus was for participants to create stories they wanted to tell – about people or places – and then go out and shoot these themselves. With the still cameras, participants shot portraits, and then photo features in nearby mohallas in groups. With the video cameras, participants came up with short stories in groups, either around a place, a person's life, or a story based in Lucknow, and worked on story-boards. They then went out in groups, each participant responsible for at least one shot of the film. At the end of workshop participants were divided in 5 groups and given the task of shooting longer films. The themes that were given are: covering a wedding, a love story, a story about reading, Education and Nawabs of Lucknow. These were to be shot in preparation for the editing workshop. The idea was that the films would document issues that emerged from the areas that the women were working, from their own locations and perspectives, and would be shown in the community in order to help facilitate discussion and action around the issues.

#### Video editing workshop:

This was also a 5 day workshop where participants learned the art of editing using a basic software, Windows Movie Maker. The workshop was both extremely exciting as well as frustrating. Participants realised editing was not easy work, it requires a lot of patience. We also realised that we were underprepared in terms of the logistical requirement for these kinds of workshops. Video editing required computers with a specific kind of configuration, which we didn't have, as a result the editing experience was even more challenging for the participants.

After the workshop, the women had to edit their longer films in preparation for their screening in their mohallas.

#### f. Community based work

Through the month, as emergent leaders, participants had a primary responsibility to gain some responsibility of community based development work, interacting informally as well as in community meetings with women, building an understanding of the issues and needs of the area, and increasing awareness of the rights and entitlements that citizens should

access. They were meant to take initiatives in their localities, around gender, civic or development issues – education, sanitation, electricity, roads etc.

#### *Media survey*

a survey designed to know the reading habits and access to news within the Muslim community was done in 11 mohallas. Participants chose over 50 respondents each to fill in qualitative questionnaires. The experience was aimed to give the women an insight into gathering information at the community level, for the first time building their mobility and confidence to interact with strangers. It also formed the starting point for the video workshop, since participants already had a sense of the lack of access of women to media. The data entry and analysis of these forms is yet to be completed.

#### *Mapping Exercise for Right to Education*

As mentioned above, a participatory mapping exercise was done in 9 wards, where women from each ward were encouraged to draw a map of their locality and to point out each school located within it. This triggered a discussion about the kind of education and facilities available.

#### *Mohalla meetings*

While working in their respective areas, emergent leaders identified some issues around which they mobilised women to come for community meetings. This has been a mixed experience, as all of them were new to this kind of work. Most of the leaders are young women, and have taken time to be taken seriously by older women. Facilitation of meetings too is something that has required support from trainers and apprentices. While the confidence to mobilise women has been gained in the last few months of regular community visits, a deeper understanding of gender, identity and development issues, and how to address this at a community level needs to be built over time.

#### **g. English course**

Within this leadership training, an English learning course was designed with the objective of providing an important skill for the young women leaders to participate in the public domain. English is a language of power, critical to provide opportunities for employment. Handling new technologies - mobile phones, cameras or computers - demands a functional knowledge of English. However, existing English learning courses available are far from the worlds of non English speaking learners and reiterate hierarchies of class and gender. The 3-month course designed has been open to the group of young Muslim leaders, and another batch has been open to students, school drop outs and others from Lucknow. 49 learners have participated across two batches.

The selection process was intensive, as we wanted to identify those who showed interest in sustaining the language skills, or use them in some way. Simultaneously, we were keen to find a teacher who would be open to creating a distinctive contextualised curriculum and pedagogy. We started with 60 girls but now settled with 49. The group has been divided into

two batches based on their levels. The one-hour class is followed by another hour in which the learners practice what they have learnt through dialogues, reading, comprehension, hinglish/ english songs, english films etc.

#### **h. BANDA**

In Banda, the focus in this period has been to sustain the basic computer skills and internet use that were part of the media training in Banda in the first phase. Additionally, the objective was that participants use new media – still and video cameras and blogs – regularly to create content that reflects their lives and locations.

A list of young Muslim and Dalit women from Banda was put together, most of whom were part of Vanangana's Guftagu Manch, and had had computer inputs before, either through Vanangana, Sanatkada or Nirantar. Around half of the 15 girls had come for the March trainings. Vanangana supported the selection process and also mobilised the girls to come for the first month's computer classes. The number of girls coming for the classes fluctuated between 7-15 every week, since they were either students, or working, or constrained by domestic duties.

A flexible structure was designed for the computer clinic, to be run all through the day on Saturday. The girls could drop in for hour long practice sessions when they were free. A set of assignments was prepared, keeping mind the varied levels of the group: typing news stories from the paper, a significant personal experience, searching for a certain topic on the internet, sending emails. From the third month onwards, some of the participants began to post entries on the blog, khulakhaata.

The new media work – photo, video and blogging – was streamlined in this component, as the focus was on the use of the skills and not on further capacity building. Since the blog (created in the first new media training in March) was not being used or owned by the girls, it was suggested that they run it as a news blog, identifying stories in Banda – reportage, features, interviews, personal stories – in text, photo or video form. These could be leads for local newspapers and channels to follow. This caused a lot of excitement and motivation. The group shot news stories on MNREGA, local events like Diwali and Dussehra, and NGO events. These were uploaded on the blog. They also took the cameras into the city every week, to investigate the news stories in town from their own perspective. The concern around the place of the new media skills in the everyday lives of the participants, or how they would sustain these has been assuaged by the sight of these young women as confident local stringers, who have the potential to create distinctive media content from peri urban India.

#### **APPRENTICE TRAINERS**

In this phase, 2 apprentice trainers have continued from the last phase in Lucknow, and one in Banda. In Lucknow, the apprentices supported the mobilisation process, since they had also established themselves in some mohallas and done community work. Coordination and

handholding newer participants in this phase was an important part of the apprentices responsibility, and this was done to large extent. Each community meeting was prepared for and facilitated with support from the apprentice trainers. However, since there were many new skills built in this period – technical, especially - different capabilities emerged across the group and this caused some tensions in the group, specifically with the apprentices who often found it hard to be ‘just’ participants. Documentation was taken up with regularity by the apprentices: they wrote on meetings in the community, based on their visits to each participant’s areas and they also wrote monthly reports. Separate meetings were held to coordinate and plan with the apprentices, and also to support their specific roles in terms of handholding the participants.

In Banda, the apprentice trainer’s role has been considerable. She has been part of the initial assessment of the levels of the participants of the computer inputs, and helped to designed the different assignments and curricula. Subsequently, she has been the trainer-in house for all the weekly computer classes. She has also shot a short film along with a participant for the blog.

## **OUTPUTS**

- 18 emergent leaders in Lucknow, with basic computer skills, video and photography, community mobilisation and understanding of gender, identity and development issues. Presence established in 11 mohallas of Lucknow
- Fellowship applications and forms for UID cards filled by leaders and apprentices
- 15 young Muslim and Dalit women in Banda with ability to engage in new media – internet, digital audio-visual content
- 2 community blogs: Khulakhaata and Badalti Fiza
- 9 short films in Banda and 11 short films in Lucknow
- As part of the English course, a basic curriculum; word bank, profiles of 50 learners; short stories, comic strips and other interactive material (song lyrics etc)

### **i. DOCUMENTATION**

In the last phase of the leadership training, considerable resources were invested in creative documentation outputs, which would be used to disseminate the idea of this kind of non conventional capacity building widely. In this phase, documentation has been locally managed by participants, in the form of written reports on community meetings, monthly reports written by apprentices, as well as photo and video documentation of each component of the capacity building. The two collective blogs – one in Banda and one in Lucknow form an important part of the documentation of the project, on which experiences, photos and films produced have been uploaded. Further, the documentary film produced in the last phase has been subtitled in English for wider dissemination.

### *ii) Non conventional aspect of capacity building*

The project aims to provide and sustain skills of photography, videography and computers with Muslim women. Photography and video trainings specifically, involving

the visibility and mobility of girls in public spaces - raised issues within the community. However, an important lesson learnt was that this innovative skill building, as well as the intensive handholding provided by trainers and apprentices, built both abilities and confidence of the women to vision a host of futures for themselves. And it resulted in not a single drop out in this phase of the capacity building.

*iii) Design of capacity building*

By and large, the design of this phase of training, focused on strengthening and sustaining skills of community work and technical knowhow, worked to create a bright, creative and committed group of young women in both Lucknow and Banda. However, the short term and tight schedule did throw up some challenges. In the context of Lucknow, there was little time to develop a depth of engagement at the community level, since the attention of the leaders was divided among multiple areas. This needs focused work with a smaller group, over a longer period. In Banda, the flexibility of the computer clinics meant a floating group of learners, who often found it hard to break their domestic routines to make space for themselves. A more structured, regular engagement (perhaps in the form of a weekly blog class) needs to be planned.

*iii) Novelty of English speaking course for adult women*

The three month English speaking course for the emergent Muslim leaders, as well as for other Lucknow based learners, posed multiple risks. It was an intensive course – requiring learners to attend classes 6 days a week for 3 months. It also had few precedents, in terms of a contextualized spoken English curriculum for Muslim women. Language cannot be learned in such a short time, and numerous creative methods and material were developed to make this possible. Setting a benchmark for the learners levels to be achieved at the end of the course was a challenge. Sustaining the level achieved, especially for learners for whom English is not linked to their daily life, will be a challenge, and something that needs further support.

*iv) Issues of sustaining technical inputs*

The technical trainings, while providing perhaps the greatest motivation for the group to continue through an intensive course, they threw up issues of the high technical resources necessary for such trainings, as well as to sustain the skills. Both technical skills like computer, video and even language skills require resources, opportunities and an atmosphere in which they can sustain. Between the last phase of capacity building and this one, in both Lucknow and Banda, we noticed a drop in the technical skills of the women due to the lack of continuity/atmosphere to sustain these. The risk of forgetting English language and technical skills is high, if there is no use for these skills in the participants' lives after the training period. While the group is committed to the programme, opportunities for sustaining and taking these skills forward need to be identified and provided. We have to do a concrete future planning with them and encourage them to sustain this input.

#### j. The initiatives taken by the group

##### *Badalti Fiza: New Media presence*

The collective blog created through the training process – Badalti Fiza – will continue to be used by the group, to share their work, information and resources, as well as inform a wider audience of the availability of a trained group of women to take on office, media and community work.

##### *English Course*

The English course has been successful in providing spoken English skills through material and pedagogy that is contextualised and bridges the gap between the learners and the world of English. This curriculum requires further work and should definitely reach a wider pool of learners, given the demand for good and innovative English teaching learning material.

##### **Banda**

##### *Khulakhaata: maintaining a news blog*

The Blog maintained by the group of young women in banda will continued to be used as a bank for local news stories, features, interviews and personal experiences, keeping the women in touch with the world of internet and media, and also encouraging to observe and comment on the world around them. This blog will continued to be linked with local media and state/national new media initiatives to keep the bloggers stimulated.

## MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

#### a. The Gender and Education Course (September 12-22<sup>nd</sup> 2011, Delhi University)

The third annual residential ten-day Gender and Education course was held at Delhi University from 12 September to 21 September, 2011, in collaboration with the Faculty of Education (earlier CIE), Delhi University. This year 36 participants from eight different states (Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi) attended the course. 50 percent of participants were students from seven universities. The rest came from different organizations and networks, including Azim Premji Foundation, Room to Read, Awaaz-e-Niswaan, Sahiyar, Eklavya, Lokmitra etc; two were school teachers. 60 per cent of the participants were women, and 50 percent participants were post graduate students, M.Phil. and Ph.D level. The course followed broadly the modules of the previous years, with some changes in content.

- A presentation and discussion on RTE (Right to Education)
- A session on curriculum of science and mathematics
- Nirantar's experience of writing the new NCERT textbooks to demonstrate how gender is integrated into the subject content.

- A module on Muslim Women's Education
- Understanding Equity and marginalization

*Reflections on the course*

- *An observation from last year's course was that many resource persons came in quick succession which resulted in some fragmentation. Keeping this in mind, the number of external Resource Persons (RPs) was kept minimal this year with stress on resource persons being part of inputs over a longer period. RPs spent a full day or at least half a day with participants. They successfully built on concepts worked on in previous sessions. This year a significant number of sessions were taken by members of Nirantar working on different aspects of the course content.*
- *A visual presentation on new definitions of home and conjugality and new spaces created for women in the nineteenth century, by women like Pandita Ramabai, Dr Anandibai Joshi, Rakmabai gave a historical perspective to the outcomes of women's education. It helped many participants understand the issue of 'agency'.*
- *While the Gender and Sexuality module always has had considerable impact on participants, they have found it difficult in the past to make linkages with education. This year it was focused and well connected with issues of education within the formal structure.*
- *Participants understood 'transgender' as a new and critical concept. A video film on transgender persons' educational experiences was made especially for the course by Nirantar. In this one hour film we used clips from an interview with Rajashri, a transgender teacher from Kolkata, who was a very effective resource person in the last two courses. In addition to this, fresh interviews were done with young transgender persons for the film.*
- *This year again we included theatre sessions in the course as participants' previous experience was positive. A young actor-director from National school of Drama (NSD) conducted these sessions. She helped participants reflect on their experience of power and powerlessness during school, at home or at work. Participants also shared the first time they became aware of their gender identity. Theatre sessions helped in facilitating a kind of bonding amongst participants, who were from very diverse backgrounds. As many questions were asked during the sessions and the level of discussion was good, participants felt that their understanding of gender and education was deepened, and also that they'd learnt substantively at the individual level. However, we felt that they were unable to build their understanding collectively. Concepts seemed not to have gripped this group of participants with the same degree of intensity as previous years. This could be as a result of the nature of the group; therefore our selection process needs to be more careful.*
- *The two-volume reader on Gender and Education in Hindi published by Nirantar proved very useful for the participants of the course. An additional compilation of new reading materials in spiral-bound form was also prepared and used in this course. Only three new articles were translated for this course as other articles were available in Hindi.*

<p><b>New Material for Gender and Education Course 2011 included:</b></p> <p>§ <i>A Room of One's Own - Virginia Woolf (translated into Hindi)</i></p> <p>§ <i>Exclusion and Discrimination in Schools: Experiences of Dalit Children - Geetha B. Nambissan (translated into Hindi)</i></p> <p>§ <i>Conjugality and its Discontents: A Story Told Through Photographs- Uma Chakravarti (translated into Hindi)</i></p> <p>§ <i>Meri Sahitya Yatra- Mahadevi Verma</i></p> <p>§ <i>A piece on the origin of the caste system - Jyotiba Phule</i></p> <p>§ <i>Muslim Educational Backwardness: Competing Pressures of Secular Religious Learning - Imtiyaz Ahmad</i></p> <p>§ <i>Sahaj samajh, Jatil samasya - Imtiyaz Ahmad</i></p> <p>§ RTE booklet - BGVS</p> <p>§ <i>Developing adult literacy- Juliet Mc Caffery, Juliet Merrifield, Juliet Millican</i></p> <p>§ Introduction to 'Ruchira', Sanskrit textbook for Class 6</p>
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#### b. Muslim Women' Education Narratives

The writing work on the book on narratives of Muslim women's education, mainly the pending work on the Bihar (Patna and Kishanganj) narratives, has been completed in this period. There is only one team member, and although her primary commitment is to this project, she is involved in other publications and trainings and ongoing work at Nirantar.

During this period considerable time was spent on finalizing the three narratives of selected Muslim women from Patna. Drafts were circulated to get feedback on content, style of writing, structure etc. Feedback given by Nirantar colleagues and internal advisors to the project was incorporated.

A copy of the draft narrative was shared with the women in order to ensure that they had no objections to what was going under their name. Except for minor factual changes there were no changes in the structure and the content of the narrative. In the Bakkho community we indeed found it difficult as nobody was interested in reading or listening to the draft narrative. We therefore crosschecked some facts during our informal conversations.

In Kishanganj, our narratives consist of women from the Surjapuri Muslim community, another from Shershahwadi or Bhatia community and another from the Irani basti. These narratives capture diverse cultural, ethnic and linguistic identities in this border district. Final drafts of all these three narratives have been written. Work on the background note for Kishanganj and Patna was done simultaneously. Its first draft is ready.

In order to complete the field work for the narratives in Kishanganj (Bihar), the team made a visit in July 2011. This visit involved long interviews with identified Muslim women and their family members. Despite the fact that our visit was after a long gap, we managed to establish a good rapport with them. The team also met some respected and well known significant citizens of Kishanganj to get a deeper understanding of the region, like Maulana Naimudeen Kashmi, a retired teacher and social activist, Mr Pankaj Kumar Jha, convenor of local Childline network, Binay Kumar Ajay, a local journalist and Isahaq Alam, a local Congress

leader. Isahaq explained the functioning of his party and described the role of Sabera Begum, a district level leader whom we identified for a narrative. Being a border district, the issue of human trafficking is a burning issue in Kishanganj. We also met with different NGOs and individuals who threw some light on the status of women in general.

The team visited the KGBV school run by Mahila Samakhya as one of our narratives was about an ex teacher of KGBV and illustrated her life in this residential school. Our team spent time with some teachers of KGBV and some students from marginalized communities.

A critical issue that arose in Kishanganj was that of getting information about the Irani Basti, which is the site for our narrative. This is a settlement in Kishanganj inhabited by Shia Muslims of Iranian origin. They were primarily nomadic traders, but settled here in the early 1980s. Traditionally the inhabitants of this colony were traders, involved in horse trading. Nowadays they deal in semi-precious stones, sun glasses, locks, knives etc. Male members of the Irani basti travel extensively and the women stay at home. Their economic condition is not good. The land where the Iranis live belongs to the Shia Waqf Board. However, some of the Iranis have bought small plots of land in the town. Some Irani families are migrating to neighboring states in search for work and better living conditions.

Various issues alerted us to the situation of the community and the lack of access to basic entitlements. Names of some members of this community were recently deleted from the voter lists due to some local 'politics'. There is a legal battle going on, but nobody could provide us details. Children are being denied enrollment in government school. Typically, girls' education is more affected by this disputed citizenship issue. Even the aanganwadi kendra located in the Irani Basti refused to allow entry to the children of this Basti. Narratives of Rukaiya and Nagma, first-generation learners, highlight the plight of their community. Another visit to Kishanganj was required to fill in the gaps in these narratives. Apart from that we gathered more information that fed into the background note for Kishanganj.

According to our senior advisor Prof. Imtiaz Ahmad, the narratives provide a rich description and detail on the women's lives that can help develop a more sociological perspective. In Nirantar's annual residential 'Gender and Education Course' (September 2011) a half-day session was organized around the narratives from Patna. The participants found these narratives layered with complex realities of Muslim identity that intersects with other identities based on gender, class, caste, region and language. The narrative based on the Bakkho community raised the controversial issue of caste-based hierarchies within the Muslim community. This narrative tried to break many stereotypes. Participants of the course debated issues of poverty, Islamization, claims made by government's development policies, communal violence, Urdu language etc. All these issues were reflected through incidents from individual lives in the narrative.

Professor Imtiaz Ahmed has expressed an interest in writing the Introduction of the book of narratives on Muslim women's education, as he sees this as a crucial addition to the

literature in this area. The team will work on that introduction with Professor Imtiyaz and will finalize it. The team also sees this as a good way to profile the book.

As mentioned in the previous period as well, Nirantar is now being recognized by external agencies as resource team on issues related to Muslim women's education. The organisation has given inputs to other groups and individual researchers from universities. Students of Delhi University, Jamia Millia University, Ambedkar University, who are enrolled in M. Phil. and Ph.D. Programme contacted Nirantar to gather information regarding MWE issues. Some of them have acknowledged Nirantar's role in their submitted research work.

c. *Kalaam- e-Niswaan: An Anthology of Muslim Women's Writing*

Work on the final draft of Kalaam-e-Niswan, the reader on Muslim women's writing was stalled has been completed, with the help of an external language expert. The team is now working on writing the introduction for the book.

A session on Muslim women's writing was conducted by Nirantar in a leadership training with Muslim and Dalit women, supported by the Canadian Development Agency (CIDA). This training was organized by Nirantar and Sanatkada in March 2011. Material from Kalaam e Niswaan was used for this session, and the pieces provoked considerable interest in the young Muslim women participants, as well as motivated to write articles of their own.

Preliminary research has been done in terms of linking up with a mainstream publisher – like Vani or Rajkamal – which will help in the wider dissemination of both Kalaam-e-Niswan and the book of narratives.

d. *Modules on Gender and Education*

Nirantar has used its considerable experience of designing and running courses on gender and education to contribute to the designing of institutional courses on the same. A module on Gender and Education was submitted to IGNOU in June 2011, and inputs were provided to Professor Uma Chakravarti in designing a course on gender and education for the UGC.

e. *Session on Gender at Delhi University, June 2011*

A refresher course on Education was organized for the teaching faculty of B.Ed and B.El.Ed Departments by the Centre for Professional Development in Higher Education, (CPDHE), University of Delhi. Faculty from NEUPA and from Universities from Punjab, Mehalaya, Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh were also present. Nirantar conducted a day-long input as part of this course, entitled 'New approaches to understanding Gender in Education'. Basic concepts such as Patriarchy were unfamiliar to a majority of participants. The session reaffirmed our belief that gender in education is discussed as an attitudinal issue rather than as an issue of power. We drew on our own readings from the course on patriarchy and concluded with how education is both implicated in maintaining power structures and can also potentially de-stablize gender relations.

f. *Disseminating the Textbook Study*

A concerted effort to disseminate the findings of the textbook study through different media and forums has been made this year. The study has also been critically appreciated by activists and academics. It has been included in compulsory reading lists of institutions with courses in Gender and Education (the report on the Tamil Nadu textbooks in the Social Science Education course at TISS). Flyers and mailing lists were prepared for dissemination of the textbook study reports.

Three articles have been written to disseminate Textbook Study findings:

- Forging a Vocabulary for the Nation: A Feminist Reading of Language Textbooks (Economic and Political Weekly, May 2011)
- Plotting the Contours of the Modern Nation: A Feminist Reading of Geography Textbooks (Contemporary Education Dialogue, Forthcoming)
- Unpacking Tradition and Modernity in School textbooks for a Publication from Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla (Orient Longman, forthcoming)

g. *Textbook study dissemination workshop, JNU, March, 2011*

A two day dissemination workshop was held at Social of Social Sciences, JNU, titled 'The Politics of Inclusion'. 41 students from different departments, such as political studies, educational studies, social medicine and community health, Historical studies, regional development, economic studies and planning participated in the workshop. The workshop was conducted by Nirantar, along with Dr. V. Geetha from Tara Educational Research Society. Dr. Geetha who was a research partner from Tamil Nadu who came in as a resource person for this workshop.

The workshop was conceptually framed by an understanding of what a feminist critique of education opens up for understanding both gender and other social structures: how is the norm of citizenship constructed, and who is excluded on the basis of this. Critiques of development, the emphasis on hygiene and the reappropriation of violence, war and dynastic control informed the categories of analysis that were developed.

h. *Sharing research and praxis: an effective pedagogic strategy*

The final session was on Nirantar's own experience of re-writing Sanskrit and social and political life textbooks. The effort was to communicate the complexities involved in including diversity not only in terms of caste, class, region, gender and religion but also of experience. Standardization or homogenization of experience too is a challenge. Also each subject negotiates the politics of inclusion based on the nature of debate that exists within that discipline or subject or language. Changes are possible, yet textbooks come with their own history and frameworks. Mere ideology is not the only factor that influences inclusion. Power works through norms and practices of writing the textbook and inclusion involves a contestation with these too.

The feedback to this workshop was positive: students said that they found the discussions insightful and stimulating. Many students said they would be interested in reading/researching these areas further. Nirantar also sold over 35 copies of the overall

textbook study report, 10 sets of the Gender and Education reader and close to 8 complete sets (including regional reports).

**i. Pitara Booklet Series for young Readers**

A set of 12 booklets were to be produced based on the thematic areas of Pitara magazine. The initial idea of this work was to simply re print the material that was already available with Nirantar in form of thematic Pitara editions for wider dissemination. The booklets are to be produced for the upper primary (6-8<sup>th</sup> class) school children. These booklets were conceptualised as additional reading material around the themes and topics that are covered by the mainstream school curriculum. However, as Nirantar does not have previous experience of writing booklets for this age group, it was planned that we should field test our existing material with children. In addition to this it was also planned that we should consult some experts who have engaged with or written for children.

For field testing, we chose two types of schools-one a KGBV school and another mainstream Delhi Municipal School. A framework was developed for testing and it was done with around 90 girls in KGBV and nearly 75 boys and girls in Delhi school. The testing gave us some new insights about the way children related with things and also helped us understand the level of comprehension of children. We came to know through these field testings that the understanding of issues was much sharper among KGBV girls as compared to children in Delhi schools. While we realized that KGBV girls are older than mainstream school children, the gap in understanding was much wider compared to their age difference. Thus it was a challenge for us to pitch our material at a level so that it interests all kinds of children (rural/urban/ KGBV/ mainstream etc.) and also can be comprehended and read easily by them, both in rural and urban areas. The advisors on board for these booklets are Anupama Jha, Mukul Priyadarshani and Latika Gupta. Consultations with advisors also helped us screen the kind of material appreciated by children.

**j. Gender Resource Manual**

A resource manual for teachers, that transcreates the principles and communicate concepts and approaches to gender and equity is to be developed under this project. A panel of advisors comprising of Uma Chakravarti, V Geetha, Sarada Balgopalan, Apoorvanand and Chayanika Shah was identified to help us think through and plan for the manual. Till now we have held two brainstorming meetings - one with Chayanika Shah for gender equity and science and another with Apoorvanand for gender equity and languages. However, there has not been much success in getting the advisors together and we need to find a less unwieldy manner of working. The workshops with SSA functionaries too are bringing up new questions that we need to consider in the light of how and what will be part of the content and design. This resource book (approximately 200 pages) is also to be developed by Nirantar through a series of consultations with teachers, DIET Trainers, SCERT members, BRC, CRC members, Gender coordinators educationists, illustrators and designers. For this purpose, two states were selected in consultation with MHRD. The two states decided for the consultation were - Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

### *Design of the Consultation*

The consultation was planned keeping in view that we wanted a thorough understanding of the perceptions as well as concerns of the teachers and planners regarding integrating and addressing issues of gender and equality in class room teaching. Thus a questionnaire was developed with quantitative and qualitative questions which was to be filled by everyone at the beginning of the consultation. One part of the questionnaire dealt with the information and facts that teachers presently possess regarding gender and the status of women. The other section of the questionnaire dealt with the links between school education and gender, where there were questions exploring what the teacher views as the aims of schooling girls, its outcomes for boys and girls, their understanding of equity in the class-room and within the school space.

In the consultations we also developed specific discussion questions on what was the experience of teachers of gender trainings, its effectiveness in clarifying concepts within gender, key words and sessions they found useful and its applicability in the classroom. There were also Master Trainers in this group and we sat with them specifically to understand how they structured and conducted their trainings and what materials and resources they found effective. Despite clear instructions that we required participants in these consultations who had undergone at least 2-3 gender trainings, it turned out to be that some of teachers who came to participate in the consultation had received no training or inputs on gender. However they were part of major initiatives and programmes at the field level that sought to promote girls education. This subsequently proved to be useful as it enabled us to understand how in education gender has become a 'project' with no or little understanding of what it means..

### **Consultation with Teachers and Planners to Assess their Understanding on Gender and Equality to Develop Gender Resource Manual – LUCKNOW (UP) and – HYDERABAD (AP)**

The first consultation was done in Lucknow from 19-20th December 2011, at Gomati Hotel and second during 10-11th January 2012, at Anmol Hotel in Hyderabad. The consultation was attended by 35-40 participants from different departments and areas of work within the education system. The mix of participants was planned in a manner so that teachers, trainers, gender coordinators as well as master trainers from different districts of UP were represented to bring variety of issues and concerns regarding gender and school education.

The state SSA Gender Co-coordinator was involved in providing logistical support in organizing these consultations. These consultations gave a clear idea of the level of understanding regarding gender and education among different stakeholders in the school system and how they perceive gender in their specific work areas and engagements. Trainers and teachers were forthcoming in sharing their concerns and issues they face in their day to day dealing with parents and children regarding gender and their teaching experiences. Teachers also shared their feedback on various training programmes that they have been part of and what kind of changes they would like to see in these. We shared different kinds of

material ranging from training manuals to textbook chapters to understand what appeals to them as teachers and planners. Teachers' trainers were also asked to rate the material on scale of 1 to 10 in terms of its effectiveness, attractiveness, clarity of idea/communication and ease in transacting it in a training or class room situation.

Majority of the sessions in the consultation were done through group discussion so that there was enough time with teachers to discuss and gauge their opinions regarding what worked and what did not work previously. As the primary objective of the consultation was to gather opinions and feedback of teachers around training programmes, modules and various materials, we used a variety of illustrations and styles used for creating material to know their preferences as well as to gain an idea around what works best in their context.

#### k. Social Audit under RTE Act

Nirantar through Sahjani Siksha Kendra has taken up the work of the social audit process under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, in Lalitpur District of UP. The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has supported this work and it began with an assessment of the state of school education in 25 panchayats of 5 blocks in Lalitpur. The five blocks covered under social audit process are – Mehrauni, Madawara, Birdha, bar and Jakhora. The social audit process started with a post facto survey of 98 schools and 58 villages. It was a fairly rigorous and intensive process which took place during the months of April to June 2011.

The social audit process included household survey of each house in 58 villages of 25 Panchayats, for enumeration of all children in the age group 6-14 years. This exercise was done to identify the out of school children and their reasons to be not in schools. In addition all the 96 schools in these 56 villages were also monitored and interviews were conducted with head teachers and teachers (including Siksha Mitra) to understand the status of school infrastructure and quality of education. Interactions with the community and school children were crucial methods in this social audit process where the information gathered through schools and administration was corroborated as well as the perceptions and problems regarding school in their village were also assimilated through group meetings with different communities. It also included creating awareness at the community level regarding the RTE act and its provisions. For this purpose, a parcha and a phad was created which was used in organizing meetings with the community.

The survey was done with the help of formats developed by NCPCR, though we made some minor changes, we largely used the NCPCR formats for all the 10 states where the social audit process began in the first phase. Due to delay in getting the final Hindi formats from NCPCR, the time left for completing social audit became very limited. The work became all the more challenging as it started in April and May 20th was last date when schools were closing and 98 schools and 58 villages across b blocks were to be covered during that time. As we started the work we realized that it was not possible to do the survey in its holistic form in all the Panchayats keeping the schools and field realities in view. Thus it was decided

to cover all the schools in first phase and then do the community and household survey in 2<sup>nd</sup> round. In this manner the survey continued till June and we had all the data collected by the end June 2011.

Data collected from the field was further compiled and analysed (selective parts only) for the block meetings which were to be done as part of the social audit process. These block meetings were organised in two blocks with block and district level administration as we as community people. The Bar meeting which covered Bar and Jakhora blocks was presided by Deputy Basic Siksha Adhikari Mr Hardayal Verma. The officials present in the meeting were District Coordinator, Girls Education, ABSA, Jakhora and ABSA Bar. The meeting was also attended by the President Prathamik Siksha Sangh along with his colleagues. The Mehrauni meeting which covered Mehrauni, Madawara and Birdha blocks was attended by Malini Ghose from Nirantar Trust, Delhi, Kiran Bhatti from NCPCR, Annie Namala Member NAC, Basic Siksha Adhikari (BSA) Lalitpur, Assistant Basic Siksha Adhikari (ABSA) from Mehrauni, Madawara and Birdha and President Basic Siksha Sangh.

These block meetings had a dual objective of sharing data collected through the survey and also bringing the community and the administration on one platform to listen to the grievances community. Both block meetings were successful in mobilizing people especially from Dalit and Adivasi community and they also highlighted some stark realities of the schools in these blocks. The community also came up and spoke for their children's rights and the local administration had to listen to their complaints. The written reports were also submitted to the BSA which was collected during survey while interacting with the communities on issues of their village schools. The role played by NCPCR in this process was also supportive and encouraging.

The block meetings and issues raised through data sharing were covered by the media also which created a stir in the education system and there was lot of reaction both at the field and level by the teachers and in the system. Several transfers and suspensions took place and for almost two weeks everyday there was some or the other news related to schools in the local editions of various news papers. It created lot of energy in the team and provided positive reinforcement to continue the work.

Follow up after the block meeting was further challenging and there were some bitter experiences when teachers retaliated and had tense moments with the SSK team members. But in most of the villages the community supported the work and appreciated the efforts made. There were incidences when children called the SSK office and registered their complaints against the school and the teachers. Phone calls came from community also during admission time when teachers were taking fees. The SSK samiti women in some cases took initiative and also demanded that teachers return the fee charged. During all this the relationship with administration became bitter and needed a better strategy to bring positive changes in the school education at Lalitpur level at least. The regularity of teachers and improvement in MDM are two distinct areas which have improved substantially in the past 3 months.

For the advocacy work, it was felt that we needed to do some creative and positive work also in addition to monitoring and pointing out issues in the system. In this process a meeting with Pradhans was organised where their support was called upon. The BSA also interacted with them as part of this meeting. Also Panchayat facilitators who were appointed to do regular and concurrent monitoring of the schools have been told to help teachers in teaching especially in schools which are managed by only one teacher. In addition, we have also shared our observations with the teachers in order to build a constructive relationship with schools and teachers.

In the concurrent phase, we are also trying to get in touch with SMC members and trying to get involved in their capacity building especially of women members so that they can play an active role in their functioning.

## **SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

### **Work related to Gender based Violence and Sexuality**

The work related to Gender based Violence and Sexuality (GBV) started in the previous reporting period after considerable follow up with the partner organizations. In this phase too, several rounds of follow up interactions were held with other organizations including Mahila Samahkya Andhra Pradesh and Assam.

A Training was organized with the sangathan women of Vanangana, which was part of the organizations; plan to conduct several rounds of training on GBV and Sexuality with its women. There were 20 women from the community and a member of Vanangana and Nirantar co facilitated it. A 3 day training was organized where issues related to sexuality were discussed, linkages with GBV and sexuality were made and mock counseling sessions held with participants.

A 4-day training was organized in Hyderabad with District Project coordinators, Resource persons at the State and District Level, Junior Resource Persons, of Mahila Samakhya Andhra Pradesh. In the first day of the training a baseline was conducted with the members followed by the training. 30 members from MS attended the training. This was followed by two trainings at the District in Vizag and Secunderabad. This training was conducted with close to thirty five karyakartas and JRPs of MS, in each district. A critical objective of the training was to encourage mater-trainers identified at the state level to conduct the training at the district level. There were two- three trainers in each group.

### *Work on GBV and sexuality with new partner*

New partnerships were explored and built with MS, Assam agreeing to work on GBV and Sexuality. Nirantar has been keen on collaborating with MS given the large scale nature of the programme and our own engagement with MS on various other issues.

In a pattern similar to Andhra Pradesh, one state level training was held with 25 people from 12 districts. In March, two trainings will be conducted at the district level (with master trainers co-facilitating with Nirantar the training of Cluster resource persons and other karyakartas..

a. Materials and Publications

*The Learning Package*

In this phase of work the chapter writing and illustrations for all the three volume have been completed. The editing of the second volume and the third is underway. The 2<sup>nd</sup> volume mainly focuses on marginalized sexualities. One of the chapters in volume two is on same sex desire. This chapter consists of fictionalized case studies as well as real life experiences. At the level of concepts the chapter is significant in that it takes the issue beyond identities to a broader realm of sexual diversity and fluidity and is not limited to those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Underlying this is the recognition that same sex desire is not limited to those people and communities who identify on the basis of sexual orientation. Sexual diversity is of relevance to all sections of society not only to certain identities. The chapter on transgender issues focuses on people who transgress gender norms including transgender people, hijras and intersexed people. The learning package approaches issues of disability in a manner in which this understanding of disability establishes the issue as one that is of relevance across society and not only to those who are disabled. The chapter moves on to focus on the manner that the sexuality of disabled people is perceived and the challenges that arise therein. The chapter on sex work addresses concerns and human rights violations of sex-work. However, along with rights of sex-workers, the chapter addresses the challenging issue of whether there should be a 'right to do sex work'. In the chapter on marriage, we seek to analyze how marriage as an institution relates to women's reproductive and productive labour. The last chapter focuses on the critical theme of linkages of issues of sexuality with the work that community based organisations are engaged with such as health, education and violence against women.

The third volume comprises of activities which can be done by trainers on sexuality. This activity module was drafted in the last sexuality workshop of the "Yaunikta and Hum Programme" with the help from partner organizations. The finalization of this module happened in this phase. The activities complimented the concepts in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> volume.

*b. Mainstreaming sexuality in Nirantar's capacity building on gender and education*

In this phase of work, sexuality has been increasingly mainstreamed in the capacity building work related to gender and education that has been undertaken by Nirantar. The capacity building related to gender and education has also begun addressing issues of gender more broadly in the framework of gender transgression, including all challenges to existing gender norms, and not only those related to the biological category of woman. The course on Gender and Education that took place in September 2011 (detailed in the report) included a 2 day

module on sexuality. Another course conducted in February 2011 aimed specifically at practitioners included a day long module on sexuality.

*Input on Sexuality and Gender based Violence for a national network on VAW*

In this reporting period Nirantar joined the Aman network, a national network of organizations working on Violence against Women. Nirantar made a presentation at a meeting of the network in March 2011 on the linkages between Gender based violence and sexuality. Members of the network who participated in the meeting shared that the presentation closely resonated with their experience and that these linkages are strongly present in their case work. Nirantar was then requested to conduct a session in the next Aman network meeting that May 2011.

This input to Aman network has provided Nirantar many platforms to share the linkages of Gender based violence and Sexuality. We have been invited by AALI, Jagori Rural and CREA to provide inputs.

Nirantar was invited to provide inputs for the training programme organized by Jagori Rural on violence against women for women police constables and Jagori rural women working on VAW at the community level as well as staff members. The input provided by us focused on issues of sexuality and VAW and the sessions covered almost two days of the four day training. The training focused on deconstructing the idea of the good woman and the linkages that flow from that with gender and sexuality. The discussions sought to evoke the participants own experiences in order that they relate to the concepts in a less judgemental manner. This was important particularly given the gendered nature of the experiences of the police women at the work place and at home despite the fact that they were in a profession which in other ways challenges gender norms. Cases handled by the police women and the Jagori Rural team formed an important part of the training. An effort was also made to assess the impact of the input. This proved to be revealing about the extent to which shifts had been made, and the areas that still remained challenging. It was clear that the sexuality issues that related directly to the lives of the participants as married women were the ones in which the most shifts in attitudes took place, and the issues related to marginalized sexualities were more resistant to change. At the same time the training also helped us to reflect on the need to focus more on issues related to heterosexual married women's sexuality in our activities and materials, since it is necessary for us to ensure that the journey of challenging sexual norms is rooted firmly in a critical understanding and questioning of their own realities.

*c. Training for Oxfam staff and partners in South Asia*

Oxfam organized a training entitled 'Women's Sexuality Rights in South Asia' that was held in Kathmandu from 11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> March 2011. Nirantar was asked to provide suggestions related to the planning of the training and to take sessions on the politics of sexuality, linkages between sexuality and gender based violence as well as addressing sexuality issues during work with the community. The presentation on the Politics of Sexuality was

significant because it was the first time that Nirantar was sharing its conceptualization on the linkages between sexuality and power as part of a training.

An important outcome of this training was that Oxfam articulated sexuality as “Politics of Pleasure”. We have used this extensively in our articulation and materials including the IDS paper. After this input to Oxfam Partners, Nirantar was invited for a capacity building input by AALI, Lucknow for a session on ‘Politics of Pleasure’ and Gender based violence and Sexuality. This was an important development for us because we have been trying to bring up issues of sexuality not only from a positive perspective but also from a political perspective.

#### d. Work related to Gender based Violence and Sexuality

In this phase, Nirantar could work intensively on Gender based Violence with Mahila Samakhya Bihar. Mahila Samakhya Bihar agreed to work on GBV and Sexuality and to train 300 women in each of the 13 districts they are working on the same. A MOU was signed between Mahila Samakhya Bihar and Nirantar about several workshops that Mahila Samakhya will undertake till June 2012. The first workshop with MS Bihar was with the DPCs and the RPs of 13 districts. We had a 5 day training with them. A baseline was also developed during this phase to understand the field level realities on Violence against women and also the perspective of the staff working on these issues. We had planned to do an endline after some rounds of workshops.

The baseline was also used with the sangathan women in the Rohtas district of Bihar. A 5 training with case workers who are also sangathan women was organized with 40 women from the Rohtas district of Bihar. This workshop was a part of the several workshops that Bihar MS had planned to do till June 2012. They have also asked Nirantar to train the KGBV teachers on issues of sexuality.

A training of trainers was also organized with the staff of Vanangana and MJAS in this phase. The training was a perspective building workshop on issues of sexuality and gender based violence as well as a training on how to do cases in a holistic way. False counseling sessions were organized during the workshop and simultaneously a perspective building was done on these issues.

#### e. Sexuality Education for Young People

##### *Advocacy/ engagement with the mainstream*

Nirantar has been 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 has managed to impact the AEP in significant ways, although not all the changes that we wished to make were accepted. The proposed 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, 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.

Nirantar also worked intensively on the content outline of the Growing Up section of the AEP programme, in which, along with other organizations, we managed to include content that a positive and empowering approach requires. However when the content outline was translated into training content, which is in effect what will be transacted, there was a dilution. For example, the definition of sexuality was removed. We had used the WHO definition but this was not considered to be appropriate. As part of a long and intensive process, involving numerous meetings and working sessions, we continued to strategize. One of the ideas that seemed to work was that of including a question box, which would gather questions being asked by adolescents in schools. Nirantar suggested this as a strategy that could be drawn upon to include issues of sexuality that are currently left out for the fear of public outrage. The nature and frequency of questions being asked in the question box would be used to argue for the need to include such issues if the education system is to be true to its mandate of being learner centred. We also strategized about how to steer clear of the danger of assuming and asserting only heterosexual desire. As part of this we ensured that the language did not use terms such as attraction to the opposite sex, and that references to 'opposite sex' were dropped. We included a box on the judgment on section 377 as part of the section on discrimination based on gender and sexuality but this was deleted. On the other hand we did manage to include positive ideas about sexuality, sexual diversity and gender transgression in activities rather than in the sections related to concepts and information which draw greater attention.