



Introduction

Along with the celebration of two decades of work at Nirantar, the past year was quite eventful in terms of trainings, events, research, and so much more. We have been involved in a number of perspective and capacity building activities. We've also facilitated gender and sexuality trainings for large institutions as well as small organizations.

This year can be counted as one of the major transitional phase the organization has ever seen. After the new structure came in place in the month of April, initially there was some skepticism regarding new system of work, several additions to the Nirantar team, the structure, and various new projects and initiatives. But what came across as a challenge soon started shaping the road ahead for the organization. Most of the projects deadlines were met and responded to, including the demand and challenges.

This year also brought in many notable changes in the structure of Nirantar and its extensions. The separation of SSK and KL is complete now, leading to discussions on the nature and form of the organization that is currently functioning as a resource group. New forms of partnership, consolidation of work, and a geographical expansion to other regions of the country, are also on the anvil now. SSK and KL have started functioning as independent organizations in this period. Both the organizations have organized their own Board meetings and Nirantar members have participated in a different capacity as Board members or advisors.



Organizational Highlights

- **Twenty Years Celebration**

This year in April, Nirantar celebrated twenty years of its work. The two-day celebration included a seminar on gender and education – Nirantar’s core area of work. There was also a multi-media presentation of Nirantar’s work and its growth as an organization, a photo exhibition and film screenings. The two-day event on April 11th- 12th had nearly 250 participants that included members of SSK, KL, our partner organizations, academics, members of the women’s movement, friends and well wishers. The discussions drew on personal journeys of people in education, feminist engagements on issues of education, and creative and innovative interventions on issues of gender and education. Two films- *Bioscope- Non- Binary conversations on Gender and Education* and *Banda Ki Batiyaan – Stories of women’s education from Bundelkhand* were also screened. The celebration would not have been complete without songs and new publications. Two books- *Bhay naahi, khed naahi* (on Pandita Ramabai, a pioneer in women’s education) and the *Yuva Pitara* series were released during the event. The cultural programme was a big hit with Shabnam Virmani singing Kabir songs and Sahjani Shiksha Kendra and KL performing *Rai*. The Muslim women’s leadership group that Nirantar and Sanatkada have trained in Lucknow made a presentation for the first time of their work at Nirantar’s twenty years celebration.

- **Annual Review**

In April we organized our annual review exercise in Pachmarhi. The three-day exercise included a review of projects and team functioning, individual reviews, a reflection on the functioning of work areas and systems and visioning for some areas of work. The review provided a forum for members, both new and old to articulate their concerns and issues. As the year had been extremely busy, this was a good opportunity for us to take stock of our work and also plan for the future. We revisited the strategic plan and fine-tuned it based on the discussions around the interventions in this period of work. This gave us greater clarity vis a vis some areas of work, like mainstream education. The need for external facilitation and more time was felt during the review.

- **Organizational Development**

Based on the feedback from recent review meetings, a process was undertaken where Nirantar Team was given responsibility of working out a system of



decision-making as another follow up of the review of new structure. In this period, as the transition phase of Nirantar continued, we went through an OD process that was facilitated by Gagan Sethi. It was a good opportunity to talk about the organization with new and old team members. It also helped us look at things through an organizational lens and understand our limitations and strengths.

Another two-day OD input was coordinated by Jaya and facilitated by Gagan in the month of October. The broad objectives of the OD workshop were; 1) to discuss the team dynamics and promote team building practices and 2) discuss and decide the decision making structure of Nirantar. It was quite a good and insightful exercise where we could engage with many theoretical and practical aspects of being a feminist organization and how we relate with it at individual level.

- **National Consultation on GBV and Sexuality**

In order to advocate our learnings from the work on GBV and sexuality, a National Consultation was planned in April 2014 wherein we planned to share our report -‘Gender based Violence and Sexuality- Acknowledging the Elephant in the Room’. The four organizations which partnered us for this work- MS Bihar, MS Assam, MS Andhra and Vanangana also presented about their fears, anxieties and the experiences of the programme on GBV and Sexuality.

- **Trust Meeting**

The main focus of the trustee meeting this year was strategic planning, efforts related to fund raising, and discussion on organizational issues.

- **Report Submission**

Along with submitting a ‘Sexuality Mapping’ report to AJWS that was well appreciated, we have also finalized the early marriage report that was submitted in May 2015.

- **Half Yearly Review**

The half yearly review in the first week of November was another opportunity where we as a team reflected on some of the processes that were started in the OD workshop; we could also take stock of the situation both in terms of work as well as human resources.



Major Works

Women's Literacy, Education, and Empowerment

As a resource group, we have continued to provide inputs to partner organizations as well as other field based organizations working on literacy and other issues around it. In June 2014, the SDTT project came to an end, thus this phase also involved the compilation and consolidation of our literacy work. In addition to the project based developments, our team at Nirantar also conducted many annual and need-based training throughout the year.

Review and Reflection meeting

In August, we held a reflection meeting with first phase partner organizations as it was imperative for everyone involved to reflect on the processes of learning, outcomes and challenges. This meeting was attended by heads of organizations and coordinators of the literacy project. We reflected on their capacity building processes and partner organizations shared their work. Nirantar shared the highlights of the M&E including the data from the consolidation of the basic phase and the data from the MIS of the advance phase.

In the advance phase, there were a total of 6 organizations, 155 advance centers, with 1853 women enrolled and 0% dropout rate. It is clear that in the advance phase there were no dropouts. This indicates that the problem of dropouts which was a challenge in the basic phase was not a big challenge in the advance phase.

Support and Follow up Visits to partner organizations

In the last six months, members of the literacy team visited FACE and HWA (first phase organizations). Since these organizations have completed three years of literacy programme, the purpose of these visits was to assess the learning levels of learners related to language and numeracy skills, to understand the functional skills and empowerment process of women and to discuss future strategies and possibilities for the women.

Nirantar along with Sahjani Shiksha Kendra (SSK) also organized and facilitated the exposure visits to SSK, Lalitpur for three partner organization - Sakar, Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan and BAIF. The idea was to learn from the field by observing various literacy strategies and interacting with women, teachers and other team



members of SSK. These exposure visits were useful in understanding the different strategies and ground realities.

Teachers' Refresher Training

We conducted a teachers' refresher training, provided ongoing support, facilitated exposure visits and conducted reflection meetings with 5 partner organizations from the second phase of the literacy work. During our field visits and review reflection meeting, we observed that almost all organizations have adopted different programme strategies such as residential and non-residential camps, *Akshar Mela*, Day camps and *shivirs* at different stages to strengthen the programme. Most organizations have managed to make linkages with the local administration such as PRI, Anganwadi, and school, and the literacy programme. These institutions have provided spaces for running literacy centers for women.

In the review reflection meeting with both phases it came out clearly that local language becomes very important because in Jharkhand, women speak tribal languages or Bengali and there is a need to create material in these local languages. This has a significant impact on their learning.

Advocacy on Women's Literacy

Nirantar has produced a 10 minute long documentary film on women's literacy and learning. Through the experience of work and of the learners in SSK, the film seeks to capture the impact of literacy programmes on the lives of rural women. These include how women learn in their rural contexts, some of their challenges and struggles, how they are using literacy in their life. This film will be used in Literacy workshops and trainings to motivate NGOs and CBOs and to influence government and other agencies working on women's issues and education. Nirantar is presently working on a report to showcase its work on women's literacy with 14 organizations in 4 states (Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan) with 4500 women.

National Consultation on Women's Literacy

Nirantar and SSK organized a 2 day '*Rashtriya Sammelan on Women's Literacy*' in June 2014 in Lalitpur. In the past 12 years, around 4500 women have participated in SSK's literacy programme. These women have gone beyond reading and writing skills and have found a new place and identity for themselves in the society. This journey hasn't been easy but together we have faced trials and tribulations, converting those into new opportunities for ourselves. We wanted to celebrate this journey through this consultation. During these 2 days we organized 4 major sessions on – Women's



literacy and women's experiences, learning and challenges, MNREGA and Literacy, Right to Education and Literacy and women's groups, sangathan and Samitis participation in Literacy programmes.

Along with 300 women from the community, partner organizations shared their experiences of working on women's education and empowerment. Some of the government officials in Lalitpur and organizations like Aga Khan Foundation Behraich, Beti Foundation, Lalitpur, Grameen Development Services, Lalitpur, Sanatkada, Lucknow, Society for Pragati Bharat, Lalitpur, Saijyoti, Lalitpur as well as grass-roots activists and workers attended this consultation. Many women's literacy partner organizations such as, GVSS (Pratapgarh), Navjeevan, (Kishanganj, Bihar), Vanangana, (Chitrakoot), Pradan (Purulia), Mahila Haat (Almora), IBTADA (Alwar) also participated in this Consultation.

M&E Related Work

Second phase organizations have been oriented to the Endline format as they have completed the basic literacy phase in April. We have done 2 rounds of meetings with the consultant to discuss the consolidation of the baseline-end line and the quarterly MIS at Nirantar level. We have worked on the questions for consolidation and sent to the consultant. The MIS person has joined from October and she is getting oriented and has started working on the MIS related formats. With the full time person for MIS we are hoping to bring Nirantar level consolidation on track that has been pending for a long time. The data consolidation will include both the quantitative as well as qualitative data.

Formulation of New Education Policy, 2015 (NEP)

Nirantar took active part in the thematic consultation for the formulation of New Education Policy (NEP). It was organized by NLMA (National Literacy Mission Authority), MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) & Department of School Education and Literacy in New Delhi in August. "*Theme 6 - Accelerating rural literacy with special emphasis on Women, SCs, STs & Minorities through Adult Education & National Open Schooling System*" of the NEP talks about the rural literacy. Important issues regarding the approach to literacy, strategies, need for institutionalized literacy programme for adults with the approach of lifelong learning, budget allocation, convergence and collaboration with various stakeholders etc. were discussed and the recommendations were presented at the consultation. As a later step, the information related to the NEP and its process was shared to literacy partners so that they could become part of the process of the consultations at the gram panchayat, block and district levels and share back information with Nirantar.



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Material Creation Workshop

A three day workshop to develop capacities of creating reading material in local language was done in October. It was organized for the second phase partner organizations. All 5 organizations developed 3 types of reading materials- case study, entertainment/Lok katha and information in the workshop and total 15 drafts were developed. Nirantar will further work with these organizations to provide inputs for finalizing and getting the reading material printed.



Early Marriage, Young People and Empowerment

The early marriage project team has engaged in research, advocacy, resource creation, and capacity building activities over the period of 2014-15.

Finalizing and Launching the Landscape Analysis Report

After many rounds of back and forth with external AJWS Editors and the staff of AJWS, the content of the report was finalized in March. Following this, the report was designed by the AJWS New York and simultaneously translated to Hindi by Purwa, Sadia and Yogendra.

The Hindi report was then designed and the reports were printed in end April. The reports were launched on 5th-6th May at a consultation organized at India Habitat Centre. The launch included a presentation of the study findings followed by academics, organizations and individuals working on the field responding to our study findings. We also had speakers from different movements including the women's movement, labor movement, LGBTQI, child rights, sex-worker rights, masculinity studies and others respond to our findings and others. These speakers responded to our findings and highlighted linkages with early and child marriage and their own respective work. The second day we invited participating organizations to share their experiences of working on the field to discuss gaps in current approach and ways forward in working on early and child marriage. Organizations highlighted the challenges of working with young people, and the need to work with newly married brides, boys and men and the need to collectivize in order deal with the issue at a structural level. The launch and consultation also gave us a space to gather critical feedback on our research, and helped us identify its gaps.

State Consultations and Research Dissemination

Following the launch, Nirantar participated in 3 state level consultations in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal that were organized by AJWS partner organizations in these states. We presented our study at each of these events and engaged more deeply with specific state contexts around early and child marriage. Through each of these efforts we learned a great deal about how to better articulate our findings. We also found many resonances from state level experiences and our findings, and learnt from discussing ways forward within these contexts. Additional to these, we were invited by other agencies and organisations to present our study findings. We made presentations for UNICEF India (New Delhi), Vikalp (Jaipur), Akshara (Mumbai), and Global Fund for Women (Sri Lanka) which were well received.



Action Research

After a few months of intensive advocacy and dissemination efforts, we turned our attention to the upcoming research. There was an ongoing conversation about an action research with AJWS. Between February and June we fleshed out what we as Nirantar imagine and envision in this research. Motivated by a workshop conducted with the Nirantar team by Akshay Khanna and Effie Makepeace in 2014 on using theatre as a research method, we tried to incorporate this as an important component within the action research.

After many rounds of meetings, it was decided that we would carry out a pilot phase of the research with 1-2 partner organizations, and scale up after the first year. We visited 2 of these 3 organizations to conduct workshops with their youth groups to get inputs regarding the context and plan the research methods workshop. At the culmination of the month – we organized a 6-day workshop in which all the participants of the research came together and we came up with the research questions and methods in a collective and participatory manner. Alongside this, participants were also given a thorough training on theatre activities and methods developed as part of the “Theatre Of The Oppressed” school of practice. An important part of this research process is reflective writing. Through many types of writing exercises, such as embodied writing, descriptive writing, ethnographic writing, free flow writing and others – we learned the various forms that “documentation” within a research can take.

The workshop was followed up by visits to Vikalp and Muskaan to conduct the first workshops with the groups they had decided to engage with for the action research project. When we went on the field, however, we realized that each group would need at least a month or two for preliminary trust building and group building before we can introduce them to the idea of research. We have planned our next visits with these organizations based on how long they thought this process would take for them. Since each organization functions in diverse contexts and have very diverse nature of their work – it would be impossible to create any standardization across these organizations. Nirantar’s role within this context will be to help each organization to reflect back on its own experiences and create spaces and possibilities for cross learning between the partner organizations. We also envisage our work to include conducting workshops with the organization staff to reflect back on their own experiences with gender, sexuality, power, marriage etc – in the hope that it will show in their work on the field.



International Advocacy

Additional to our dissemination and advocacy work in India, we also made presentations at various international forums based on our study. The first of these was in March at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. Following this, we participated at the Girls Not Brides meeting in Morocco in May and also organized a panel at the World Assembly of the International Council for Adult Education in Montreal in June. We received varied responses at each of these events, but the need to include sexuality in the discourse around early and child marriage emerged as a common thread across each of these forums.

Capacity Building

As part of the AJWS project, we also provide capacity building support to 7 organizations across India. Over the past several months, the ideas around how capacity building would take place have gone through a lot of changes. Finally, it was agreed that Nirantar would offer two institutional courses to these organizations. Additionally we will conduct one workshop per organization with their staff members. Based on the preferences of grassroots organizations, 7 organizations were chosen to partner with Nirantar through this year. Currently, we have identified criteria for a detailed needs assessment of each of these organizations to assess the design and content of the institutional courses, and are organizing to visit them before December.



Gender, Sexuality, and Education

Gender and sexuality team has undergone major changes in this period, with the dual blow of funding and lack of human resources. However we do have some resources to carry on some of the activities in the project. We have also over the months tried to incorporate gender and sexuality directly and indirectly in our other projects.

Annual Training

In May 2014, we did our second annual training – a five day training in which there were 28 participants from organizations working for young people’s rights and women’s rights. Participants working on issues of Gender based Violence; young people’s sexual and reproductive rights were part of this workshop. The final outcome of this workshop is a document called *Yaunikta ke Aayam* which was the culmination of many issues discussed in the workshop.

Nirantar organized its third ‘*Yuva Aur Gender Aadharit Hinsa: Yaunikta ke Nazariye Se*’ Training from 28th February 2015 to 3rd March 2015. There were twenty seven participants in the training. The trainers were from the Nirantar team. Nirantar gave a group activity to participants to reflect and share the changes they would want to make in their existing materials on Gender, Sexuality and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights after the training. We also shared the document from the 2014 course with the participants to build their capacity on how they can take a few sessions differently.

Second Yuva Yaunikta Aur Adhikaar Course (YYA)

In October 2014, we conducted a 7 day course with 30 participants from across India. These participants were either coordinators of NGOs, or coordinators of field level programmes or research students. At the end of the seven day course, we brought out a document called ‘Empowering Sexuality Education’ that mention issues which are compulsory to make programmes with young people empowering.

Partnership work with Vikalp and MS-Bihar on young people and Sexuality

Vikalp works directly with the youth in Rajasthan on issues of gender based violence and early/child marriage. To help Vikalp understand issues of Sexuality and to incorporate these issues in their field level interventions, we organized first round of input on gender and sexuality in August and another in December which was a training with 23 male volunteers on gender and sexuality with a special focus on sexuality and work. This was the first attempt of the sexuality team to conduct workshop with male young volunteers who are between the age of 16 to 28 years of



age on sexuality and rights. Nirantar is in a dialogue with MS-Bihar leadership to start the work on sexuality with their Mahila Shikshan Kendra's staff.

Partnership with MS-Assam

Nirantar had a meeting with trainers of MS Assam and State Level Consultant for follow up work on GBV and Sexuality. After an initial round of meeting, it was decided that the follow up on GBV will be organized in two districts of Assam. This follow up visit is in January 2015.

Young Muslim Women Leadership

From June 2014 a new batch of Young Muslim women got started. In the mobilization process we identified 60 women out of which we finally selected 20 women. The women were between eighteen to thirty years age group and all were 8th pass. They all were from the economically marginalized sections. During the programme they were provided ICT inputs and trainings on using computer including MS- office and Internet (blog, social networking websites etc.) They were also given inputs on maintaining privacy and security on the social networking sites. Along with this, they were given regular perspective building inputs on Gender, Socialization, Patriarchy and Sexuality. Almost in the last two months they were given inputs on basic photography and basic videography, including shooting and editing the content by Srishti Lakhera. Providing ICT skills along with the perspective building trainings helped them choose themes of their films and photographs. The themes of their films were 'Domestic Labour Division', 'Colour Discrimination' and 'Shame'.

Dissemination of Bioscope- Non Binary Conversations on Gender and Education

We produced and conceptualized a film on gender transgression and education called Bioscope. In this phase the dissemination of the film continued in several places. In all the places, the dissemination of the film was followed by a discussion where members of Nirantar were present to answer queries. The film screenings were done at:

- Chennai Queer Film Festival - 26th July 2014
- Labia and TISS, Mumbai - 24th July, and 26th July 2014
- TISS, Hyderabad - 8th August 2014
- Wajood and Queer Campus- 10th August 2014
- Anweshi - 11th August 2014

Though Bioscope was well received by many groups and people from educational institutions, we felt that the demand of this film is not coming from LGBT groups. Therefore, we plan to ask few activists from the LGBT group and queer movement to write a review of Bioscope.



Bicycle Project

During our Heterormativity Audit on RMSA, the major observation was the difficulty faced by girls to use the cycles provided to them under RMSA because of their families. To explore and understand these realities, Nirantar and IDS came together to work on a project that focused on understanding this. We conducted a workshop in October with staff members of Sahajani Shiksha Kendra and Vanangana in Lalitpur and discussed the role of bicycles in their lives. The outcome of the project is a calendar with illustrations of different issues. Some of the themes illustrated through the stories of these women are gender discrimination, women's desire to ride cycles and the kind of violence associated with this.

This year has seen a number of activities and developments in regards to Nirantar's existing projects, latest initiatives, and organizational structure. While the discussions and planning regarding the coming year is already in action, we will also be focusing on expanding our reach of work based on the changing socio-political scenario of the times.