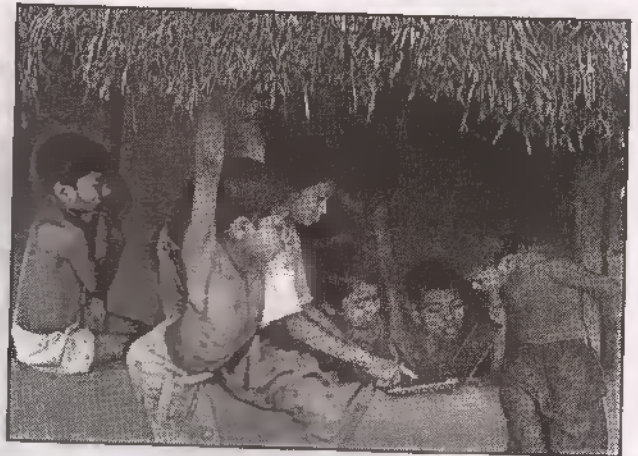


The Reality of Rural Children in Independent India

The modern age depicts India as 'incredible India' but does it really apply to the rural parts of our country? We proudly admire the urban developments but often forget to see the tragic situation of rural India. They are deprived of basic facilities like proper education, good health and sanitation, employment, etc. When the children in the cities are exhausted with modern curriculum the children of the village long for it but are often forced to drop out in order to support their family.



According to the recent studies more than half of the village students in 5th class are unable to read the lessons taught in 2nd class. When the students in cities run for the coaching classes the students in the village have no option but to graze their cattle. More than 80% girls of scheduled caste and 90% of scheduled tribes who join the 1st standard do not complete SSLC. Even those who pass +2 in first division discontinue their studies due to the financial problems and are forced to work in the fields for Rs.50/- or 60/- per day. The absenteeism of teachers in government schools is 25% highest in the world according to a UNESCO study. Indubitably the numbers of drop outs are rapidly increasing in the villages and the saddest fact is that the majority of them are girls.

Here, I am reminded of a life story narrated by a teenage girl. 'Once, I was with my mother at our rooftop and at the corner of

it, a bird sat. I demanded for it and she got it for me. I felt its gasping for life when my mother asked me to get a scissor. I asked, why? She said, we will cut off its feather and by the time the new feather comes you can tame it.' Yes, we ought to feel with these unfortunate children of our society and help them bravely to fly freely. I wholly agree with Nelson Mandela, "The true character of a society is revealed in how it treats its children." Not only the elite sessions but also the village children make the society and have the right to be educated. Their deprivation must move the hearts of privileged children studying in our institutions and that's our responsibility. I earnestly look forward to the freedom of every citizen in our country and it can only happen when we all try to do as Nelson Mandela said, "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respect and enhance the freedom of others".

Sr. Brigit John SSpS, Dharampuri

Uday Community Development Project - Sirpur

The Street Play: The Uday CDP, Sirpur organized a street play to educate the villagers regarding the PDS (Public Distribution System) and MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act). It was held on 18th to 20th May, 2013 and was performed in all its villages, namely: Malgaon, Kundaimal, Madhani, Salyakheda, Bhagawa and Sirpur. The street play was put up by a professional group - Mr. Yogesh and team and about 2500 people watched the play and benefitted from it.



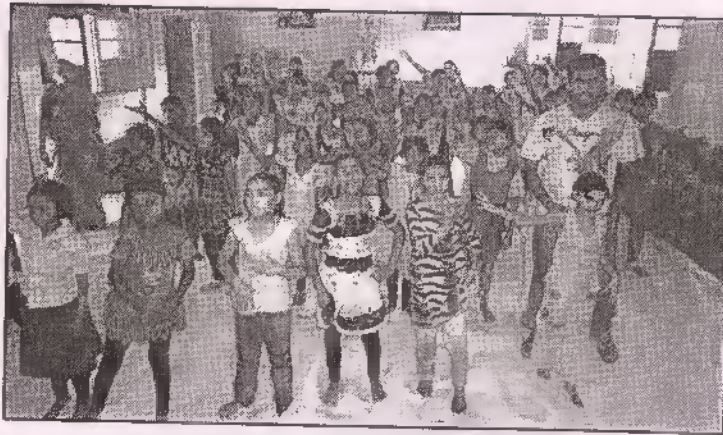
After every performance the team spent time with the viewers and took their feed-back. The responses of the people were very positive and promising. They shared that the street play helped them get better knowledge about the available government schemes. Besides, they also took a collective decision to find out whether the beneficiaries are getting their PDS provision such as prescribed quantity of wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene from the ration shop. The people were very grateful and appreciated the team for putting up such a wonderful, creative and informative awareness programme.

Thereafter, we had the follow-up programme regarding the success of the street play. The result showed that the people are aware about the available

schemes and have started to enquire from Panchayath for the full 100 days of job through MNREGA.

The Summer Camp for the rural girls was held from 22nd to 26th May, 2013. Fifty girls from all six villages took part and benefitted from the programme. The theme of the programme was, 'Importance of Education'. The main resource person of the event was Ms. Raj Kishori from KDSS (Khandwa Diocese Social Service). The assistant parish priest of Sirpur, Fr. Nevin, the animators Raju and Rajesh, also the youth, Arun was a great help through out the programme.

The camp helped the children understand the significance of education in life. It was made further attractive and inspirational by showing them films and organizing games. From the perspective of encouraging the



girls an exposure programme was arranged with few of the government offices in

Khandwa. There, they had the interaction especially with women employees and few among them shared their life experiences too. All these triggered their inner-self to take studies seriously and have vision in life. At the end they expressed their gratefulness for the wonderful camp which motivated them to have great ambitions in life.

Sr. Anna Tirkey SSps, Sirpur

A Brief Look at the achievements of IBC Project, Uday

I would like to share with you a general impression about the project 'Empowerment of Women and Holistic Development of Children - 2012-2015'; since its initiation in 17 Villages of Khandwa and Jhabua districts of Madhya Pradesh. It is a project supported by IBC (Italian Bishops Conference). The major problems of women and children identified in these regions were migration, poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, high school dropouts, absenteeism of teachers, student's disinterest for studies and women in particular lack leadership, coordination and knowledge about their rights. In order to meet these requirements of the villages the project had planned various agendas like street play, summer camp, etc.



Indeed the materialization of the project's set agendas in all its three clusters - Sirpur, Aulia & Badi Dhamini during the year 2012-2013 was quite challenging. However, its directresses, Srs. Nirmala

UDAY News

Marandi, Anna Tirkey and Vigi together with their community members and staff made a considerable outcome. Through their stupendous efforts the project could achieve its set target to a great extent. Regular review meetings, visits to the project area and support from the external consultant also have added to its success. Working with it I learnt the techniques and skills required for managing a project. The following information display the success of the project.

Activities implemented during the reporting period:

The main focus of the project was Awareness Generation and Capacity Building herce it upholds the right approach and doesn't lean towards charity. So the activities were:

1. Formation of community based organizations self help groups (SHGs) and groups of adolescent girls.
2. Capacity building programmes for the women.
3. Improving governance especially the functioning of Gram Panchayts.
4. The other programmes were:
 - a) Integrated Child Development Schemes, (ICDS).
 - b) Government schools and Public Distribution Service (PDS).

The strategies used were street play, training of the members for Gram Panchayath, women SHGs, exposure to various places, observing important days like Women's Day, Children's Day and Teacher's Day, summer camp for children,

organizing workshops for ICDS workers and school authorities, training the project personnel - on RTE (Right to Education), RTI (Right To Information), SMC (School Management Committee), ICDS, PDS, MSS (Matru Sahyogini Samiti), MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), PRI (Panchayath Raj Institutions) and printing and distribution of booklet, posters, pamphlets on government schemes and social legislations.

The main achievements of the project:

1. The women have become aware of available government development programmes, welfare schemes and their role in the local self government (Panchayath).
2. Emergence of women as leaders in every project village for example In Badi Dhamini when the Panchayath didn't respond to the request of SHG for water facility in the village they went ahead and met CEO (Chief Executive Office) of Janpad Panchayath and then the District Collector. As a result the collector studied the matter and dismissed the irresponsible secretary and gave order to provide hand pumps.
3. The village communities have started to utilize the available Government schemes in their Panchayth.
4. The children going to school and ICDS centres have considerably increased.
5. The SHGs began to take interest on issues of the village like ICDS centers,

- government schools and other developmental works.
6. The community participation towards the project has improved both in personal and kind.
 7. For the first time 788 women from SHGs participated in the Gram Sabha meetings besides, men also took active part in it.
 8. Improved collaboration with government institutions have helped primary stake holders to avail facilities and provisions from the government schemes especially in Sirpur like subsidized loan for SHGs, 2500 trees free of cost, women and girls were given the opportunity to attend the trainings arranged by various government departments, etc.
 9. There is a cordial rapport maintained with government schools, ICDS centres and Janpath Panchayath office. The team in Aulia visited 23 government schools on the occasion of Teacher's Day and honored the

teachers. This opened the ways to work on RTE and SMC in the Government schools.

Conclusion:

- a) The second phase of the project began in the month of April 2013 with greater focus on the points given below:
- b) The project's major focus shall be MNREGA to solve the issue of unemployment.
- c) It would take initiative to identify the likeminded organizations as it is greatly required to join in networking with them.
- d) The adolescent groups would be encouraged to involve in the developmental programmes of the village as agents of change
- e) SMC members would be motivated to conduct meetings regularly in the school as per the rules and encourage the dropout children to go to school.

Sr. Lizy Thomas SSpS, Bhopal

Hearty Congratulations to Sr. Vimla Jacob SSpS & teachers of St. Raphael's, Mrs. Gaisha, Mrs. Mahua Dutta Gupta & Mrs. Celine Vincent.

Sister and teachers received from Science Olympiad Foundation for the 'Best Principal & Best teacher award 2013, M.P.'; the award carried a Shield, Certificate and a cheque of Rs. 10, 000/- Besides, Mrs. Celine Vincent won National Award for 'The Best Teacher'.

Uday Community Development Project, Badi Dhamini

A Heroic Act of SHGs: The empowering presence of Uday CDP has helped the women somewhat to stand bravely for their rights. Generally people are scared to come forward yet there are positive responses from people especially women. The following event is a clear example for it. In the recent past the SHGs put an application to the Sarpanch for three hand-pumps in three places of the village. But they didn't get any response from the authorities so, they went from one post to the other. Finally they approached the Collector with the request. Without much delay he took action and as a result the village got two hand-pumps in two places. This heroic act of SHGs flared-up the lower level authorities in the village and many were threatened even the staff of the project.

"Every opportunity has a difficulty, and every difficulty has an opportunity" said J. Sidlow Baxter. The women boldly took the step under the guidance of CDP and now both parties have to face the consequences of it. Perhaps it's another opportunity for the people to stand together and face their new problem as said in the above quote. So, let the time reveal the truth which is always blessed by God.

The Summer Camp for the village children was held from 22nd to 26th April, 2013. There were 43 children from villages namely Kotda, Mojal and Badi Dhamini. The main focus of the camp was 'Child Development'. Mrs. Vidya, Mrs. Reena, Mr. Preetam and I took care of all its sessions and other related programmes. Values like



respect for one another, cleanliness, the need to be regular in attending the classes, etc. were tried to inculcate in them. Various games and talent show with prizes gave lot of enthusiasm and vigour to the children. Movies were shown with time for analysis that helped them get to know the realities of life. A one day picnic to Ratlam was indeed an exciting and memorable day for all of them.

International Women's Day was celebrated on 9th March with the theme of 'Women Empowerment. The celebration was made wonderful with the encouraging presence of 72 women. Sr. Shanta Jamra SSpS was the resource person. She dealt with the topic 'The importance of Women's Day. With much patience and very creatively she explained to them about the significance of celebrating the life of a woman. Taking the examples of women in America and France, Sister encouraged the women to come out of their secluded world.

They were motivated to raise income for their family especially through SHGs and to educate their children in order to eradicate poverty from their life. The

women were happy and thanked sister for enlightening them on the importance of their persons in family as well as in the society. The programme ended after the

spirited games with award for the winners followed by a delicious meal for all.

**Sr. Nirmala Marandi SSps,
Badi Dhamini**

International Domestic Workers' Day 2013

The International Domestic Worker's Day was celebrated by IDWS (Indore Domestic Worker's Solidarity) on 16th June at Gandhi hall. The day was significant as ILO convention C - 189 signed the Bill - 'Decent Work for the Domestic Workers'. In spite of bad weather nearly 10,000/- women domestic workers gathered at Regal Bridge and formed a human chain



demanding the government to gravely consider the Bill. Prior to the function the leaders of domestic workers had a press conference at the Press Club, Indore. They also invited the press for the celebration of DW's day on 16th June. After the effective protest at the bridge they assembled in Gandhi hall for the delightful event.

The honourable guests were The CHMO - Dr. Sharad Pandit, Assistant Labor Commissioner - Mr. L.P. Pathak, the High Court Advocate - Mrs. Jyoti Tiwari and the Mayor - Mr. Krishnamurari Moghe. The women presented a wonderful cultural programmes and one among the dances portrayed the importance of women getting literate. Few DWs also gave their testimony and shared how IDWS have helped them to come up in life. The respected guests

through their inspiring speech invited the women to hold on to their right convictions and seek help whenever required from the right authorities.

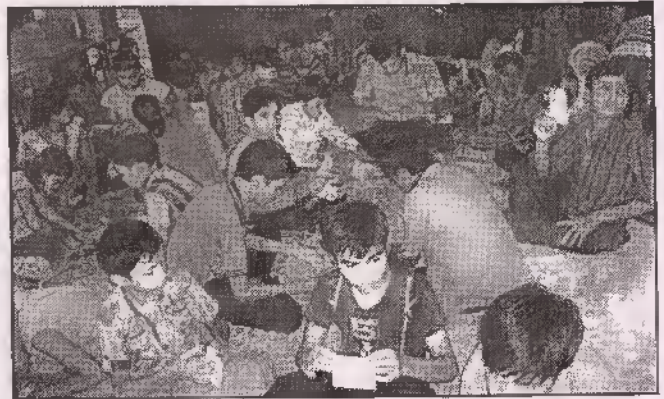
On the auspicious occasion Dr. Sharad Pandit announced the Insurance of Rs. 30,000/- (Thirty thousand only) for all the DWs under RSBY scheme. The booklet named, 'Informative Handbook for Domestic Workers on Various Government Schemes' was also released on the same day. Some of the DWs were given a token of appreciation for their relentless service for the welfare of all DWs. The programme ended with greater hope of getting their job as one of the decent works. Moreover, unanimously they decided to work hard to get the Bill passed.

Sr. Rosily Panjikaran SSps, Indore

Awareness Programme for the Children of Jatkhedi slum

Child labour is one of the greatest social evils which need to be contempt. The results of some studies leave us shocked, it is estimated that about 250 million children in the world are engaged in child labour. At least 1,00,000 children go missing in India every year and trafficked by criminal gangs to be sold as labourers and sex workers. In some cases abject poverty forces the parents to sell their children as young as 5 years. These children are trafficked to various parts of India like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata. They are made to work in cloth factories, to stitch bags and perform various hazardous and odd jobs. Many of these children are also forced to work to pay off an inherited debt. Considering the seriousness of the issue the 'Uday' organized a two day awareness programme for the children of Jatkhedi on 11th and 12th of June, 2013.

On the first day our staff creatively and innovatively explained to the children about child labour. They were informed how the children are exploited in India and deprived of their education as well as lovely childhood. On the second day the staff from



Samvesh - Society for Development and Governance made the children aware of the importance of learning different skills. They were motivated to have positive attitude and self-confidence.

The sessions on learning skills like making cycle's wheel ring, skeleton, flute and boat out of simple paper, hat, bag, etc. helped them to have several options to meet their livelihood. Hundred and one children from 1st standard to higher secondary participated and benefitted from the programme. The children were very happy and requested if they could have such skill based awareness programme in every six months.

Sr. Rosina Joseph SSPS, Bhopal

Santa: You cheated me.

Shopkeeper: No, I sold a good radio to you.

Santa: Radio label shows 'Made in Japan' but radio says this is 'All India Radio!'

