



E-NEWS

May-June 2010

Volume 1

Mandiapalli, Berhampur
760-007 Orissa, India
+91-680-224-2266
www.prem.org.in
premooffice_1@sify.com

President's Message

WARM GREETINGS TO ALL FRIENDS OF PREM from Mandiapalli, Ganjam District in Orissa, India. We are very pleased to inaugurate our bi-monthly digital newsletter, **PREM E-News**, with this very special edition. People's Rural Education Movement (PREM) is a humanitarian, secular, non-political and non-profit voluntary organization which has been working in Orissa since 1984.

PREM's vision is the creation of a new social order in which the present unorganized and marginalized people have a say in decision making, where education creates awareness and develops skills and fosters the growth of talents, where culture is ever creative, where men and women are totally liberated from all dehumanizing and oppressive forces and where the decisions of individuals and communities are based on the values of social justice, equality, truth, freedom and the dignity of human life.

Every two months PREM will publish this brief and informative newsletter to highlight our activities, achievements, partnerships and commitments. I sincerely hope that you find it enlightening, and I look forward to your feedback and continued support of PREM.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jacob Thundyil,
President, PREM

Highlight of the Month

Learn Without Fear

The *Learn Without Fear* campaign seeks to create an environment for children in the school, home and community that is free of violent punishment and abuse of all kinds, and works with school, community and government leaders to achieve this goal. Abuse in schools—which may take the form of corporal punishment, sexual harassment, bullying, verbal and emotional abuse, and neglect—disrupts the development of the child in such a way that may prevent him or her from ever achieving in life. PREM believes in the value that fear-free education is not only a basic right of all children but also an essential element of successful childhood development. Sharing this value with various relevant social groups and facilitating its appropriation by society is one of PREM's most important goals.

As part of this ongoing campaign, PREM with the support of Plan International facilitated a one-day workshop for the ongoing campaign *Learn Without Fear* at the Hotel Padma in Puri in early



May. The participants included Village Education Committee (VEC) members from four areas of Puri district—Konark, Satpada, Krushnaprasad and Brahmagiri—comprised of headmasters, teachers and children from existing 16 model schools, as well as Anganwadi Workers (AWW), mother's groups, Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) members, and representatives from various partner NGOs and government.

The objectives of the workshop were documenting best practices and making them available for wider dissemination for the scaling-up of

the schools of Puri district. The workshop representatives, working in groups, discussed different aspects of corporal punishment, abuse and bullying in schools, and the Right to Education Act. The groups sought to bring to light new ideas to implement the *Learn Without Fear* campaign to sensitize and involve all members of society but especially school environments.

PREM also facilitated in May a children's debate on the subject of violence and fear in schools. This event was conducted via satellite link thanks to PREM's partnership with ISRO, by which PREM has a studio at its Mandiapalli headquarters that is linked to 8 regional communications centres in remote areas where other access is difficult. Interacting with each other on computer screens, children debated the issues associated with abuse in schools and came to better understand their rights and roles in a fear-free learning environment.

During the month of June in Bhubaneswar, PREM and Plan International hosted a two-day state-level consultation on *Learn Without Fear* in the context of the Right to Education which included participants from tribal children's clubs, parents, teachers, administrators and CBOs and network partners. In addition there were key speakers representing PREM, Plan International, UNDP, Bernard van Leer Foundation, and the Government of Orissa.



In concluding the workshop, the children's debate and the consultation, all participants emphasized the need to improve teaching curricula to include child psychology and alternative methods of positive discipline in schools in order to achieve the elimination of harsh punishment for all children. Children's clubs and parent-teacher groups should be empowered to monitor abuse and enforce fear-free schools. From the perspective of the child, *Learn Without Fear* means a safe environment to learn, to grow and to succeed in life.

Child Based Community Development



Child Based Community Development (CBCD) is PREM's commitment to fostering the holistic development and successful transition of young children in remote Adivasi areas of Orissa. PREM has, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, helped build and operate more than 350 CBCD centres in small villages where government facilities for early childhood care and education are not available. PREM is also working with existing government ICDS centres, which have a similar mandate, to strengthen and improve the quality of their service.

In these centres, young children aged 3 to 5 come for pre-school education which will develop their mental and social skills for primary school (*top left photo*). CBCD centres are also meeting places for mothers to come to learn and share about the importance of education for their children and their community (*top right photo*). PREM helps train teachers to develop stimulating and tribal-context learning methods and materials such as song, dance and clay sculpture (*below left photo*). Learning and working together in a wide range of activities, young children can know the value of education for their future success in school and life (*below right photo*).



Ongoing Initiatives

Promotion of Self Rule in Tribal Areas

With the support of Concern Worldwide India, PREM together with Orissa Adivasi Manch (OAM) is implementing a project called **Promotion of Self Rule in Tribal Areas**, in 1700 Adivasi villages of Gajapati, Ganjam, Sundargarh, Kandhamal and Rayagada districts of Orissa. The goal is to empower the Palli Sabha institution through implementation of the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act in its true spirit. Any development program for Adivasis must aim to organize and strengthen these communities at the village level through empowering Palli Sabha, which can engage in an influential way with processes of governance, particularly where such processes involve decision-making with regard to the allocation of development funds other resources. Presently the major areas of work for Orissa Adivasi Manch include proper implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Forest Rights Act (FRA), and food and social security entitlement. Additionally OAM is engaged in cadre building and capacity building from the community level to state and national levels, by networking and building alliances with other tribal groups to lobby and advocate for the rights of the people.



The recently elected state-level leaders of Orissa Adivasi Manch at a planning meeting in Gopalpur, June 2010.

Edu-Leadership Program Initiative to Empower the Marginalized



Youths attend an orientation workshop on Edu-Leadership in Chandragiri.

With the support of NEG-FIRE (New Education Group – Foundation for Innovation and Research in Education) New Delhi, PREM is implementing the **Edu-Leadership Program Initiative** in 8 GPs of Padampur block in Rayagada district, with a goal to ensure enrollment, retention and completion of quality education. The primary objective of this program is to make primary education more accessible and effective, especially for young girls of marginalized communities and children with special needs. The program also fosters the development of tribal-context education that calls attention to the ecological, cultural and psychological characteristics of Adivasi children, which is necessary for education to make a long-term impact.

PREM Program Activities

Education

PREM in partnership with Plan organized a district level workshop in Mohana in June, on the **School Improvement Program (SIP)**. 236 participants came, comprised of members of VECs, PRIs (Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, Zilla Parishad), PTAs, MTAs, youth groups, and children's clubs, as well as school headmasters and superintendents, and the BDO of Mohana. The chief speaker, Mr. Babanath Sahu, BRCC of Mohana, delivered a keynote address on the schemes, provisions and benefits of the various government departments concerned with education for SC and ST children. He challenged the participants to consider how the provisions can be implemented, how the tribal and Dalit children can get these benefits and how schools can be improved. The participants agreed to take up the challenge with lobbying and advocacy.

Governance



A district level youth training workshop on **community governance** was conducted at Parlakhemundi in June, with 74 participants from seven sectors participating. The workshop brought together leaders of children's and youth clubs with the Zilla Parishad chairperson, who engaged in a discussion about the implementation of government programs in tribal areas, and encouraged the youths to report issues of implementation regularly to the Zilla Parishad office. Children should be encouraged to participate in issues of

implementation by utilizing Right to Information and strengthening their children's clubs.

In May, PREM organized leadership training for Panchayat-level youth, PRI and VEC members and community leaders on the issues of **Gender and the Rights of Children (ROC)**. The one-day training sessions were held in Munising GP on May 5 and Luhangar GP on May 17, and involved more than 80 participants. The session covered subjects including child participation in family, community and school; child representation in Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha; the roles of various stakeholders in creating opportunities for child participation; and the role of the Panchayat to involve children in Panchayat activities. The participants committed to official resolutions to consult youth and children's groups before finalizing action plans, and to form a GP-level children's committee.

In Chandragiri in May, PREM facilitated a teachers training session for 24 area school teachers on the subject of **Child Participation**. Specifically, the session focused on the importance of forming and sustaining children's clubs especially for girl children, and the roles of parents, teachers and VECs in encouraging child participation. The impact of the session was that the

teachers will strengthen existing children's cabinets in school, organize awareness meetings for Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), encourage more involvement of children in school events, and strengthen school committees to take more responsibility for grievances reported by children and children's groups.

Livelihood

In June, PREM organized training sessions for women's Self Help Groups (SHGs), representing the districts of Rayagada, Nuagada and Gumma, on the topic of **book keeping, documentation and record keeping for SHGs**. The training focused on maintaining accurate records of financial transactions, cash books and other monetary documentation to ensure transparency and accountability in the operation of the SHG. Nearly 150 participants took part and learned the value of these important issues. Proper record keeping helps SHGs obtain loans, maintain budgets, do marketing and share profits.

Child Protection

During the months of May and June, PREM in coordination with Plan International facilitated several block-level and district-level workshops on Child Protection, which focused on the objectives of **building the capacity of children's clubs** and interfacing the leaders of these clubs with other community leaders (government officials, PRI representatives, block-level officials, etc) on the subject of protecting the rights of children. Participants included Zilla Parishad members, Block Development



Officers (BDOs), ICDS supervisors, sarpanches, school headmasters, journalists, ward members and representatives of children's clubs. At the district-level workshop in Chandragiri, Gajapati district, the chief guest was the District Collector. All participants engaged in discussing their roles with regard to fostering Child Protection and participating in children's issues in society. All present pledged to improve the situation for children participating in development of their communities, to work towards full implementation of Right to Education, and to activate Child Welfare Committees at the district level.

Also in June, PREM held a quarterly review of 59 **Social Watch Monitors** in Chandragiri on the issue of Child Protection. These SWMs, working at the grassroots level in their communities, report that problems such as child abuse, child trafficking, child labour, child marriage, migration, corporal punishment and child (especially girl child) neglect are still prevalent in some areas. The SWMs came together with PREM to formulate an action plan for strengthening children's clubs, sensitizing communities on Child Protection, discussing these issues with PRI members, and liaising with government officials.

Health

In Rayagada in May, PREM in coordination with Plan International ran a one-day workshop on **pre- and post-natal care** for 40 health care workers and ICDS facilitators. The highlights included the benefits of institutional delivery, the importance and availability of immunization, nutrition for mother and child, colostrums feeding, and maintaining growth charts. The workshop also emphasized pregnant mother care including nutrition and regular health check-ups.



In May and June, PREM facilitated two special presentations via its satellite broadcast to Village Resource Centres (VRC), on **Eye Care and the prevention of eye-related maladies**. One was a cultural program presented by a cultural team of two performers from Sanakhemundi. The second was offered by Dr. Nageswar Patro, retired Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) of Gajapati district. The audience included tribal village leaders and health care workers in remote areas. Dr. Patro raised awareness on common eye care such as cleanliness and hygiene

which can reduce incidents of eye disease by 40%. He also emphasized the need for regular vision checkups and wearing spectacles when required.

Success Story

Tribal Children Achieve Great Results in School: A Case Study

Thirty-one tribal children from Gajapati district, all students at the Central School of Gopalpur, achieved unprecedented success in June when the results of the tenth standard examinations revealed that they had all passed with flying colours.

These 31 students are supported by PREM in conjunction with a partner CBO, Bal Bikas Trust, and with the generous support of Plan International.



The two top students, with cumulative scores over 90%, were Jaya Prakash Majhi (left photo) and Swarna Rekha Parichha (right photo). Jaya plans to become a school administrator in the future, as he is motivated by a desire to ensure all children have access to education. Similarly, Swarna aims to fulfill her dream to become a teacher. She says she is inspired to help other children achieve what she has been able to thanks to her education.



PREM's President, Dr. Jacob Thundyil, described the success of these children as a milestone in tribal development in Orissa, for which PREM and its partners like Plan International have worked so tirelessly over the past many years.

More than ten years ago, the Bal Bikas Trust was established in Mandiapalli village in Ganjam district as a CBO to provide hostel and care facilities to Adivasi children so they could attend nearby English-medium schools. Previously there had not been any initiative like this in the area. Tribal children had virtually no access to education and were likely to grow up in their remote villages without ever sitting in a formal classroom, or learning English and Oriya languages, or developing the skills to help their communities rise up from extreme poverty.

PREM sowed the seeds of this project by facilitating education awareness campaigns in these tribal areas and by establishing bridge courses to transition previously uneducated Adivasi children to formal primary school within six months. The partner CBO provided hostel and care for the children near the schools because their villages are more than 50km away.

These 31 tribal children started from the age of five or six, and now ten years later they have completed the 10th standard class and are achieving success in school at rates equal to or better than non-tribal children. With a firm commitment from PREM and various partners to these and many other Adivasi children, their future is very bright.

PREM Family News



In April PREM was pleased to welcome **Mr. Richard Johnson** from Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO), who has come to PREM for a period of one year to work as an advisor on communication and documentation. Richard is from Toronto, Canada and is very happy to have the opportunity to live and work here in Orissa. VSO is a partner of PREM and a global volunteer organization.

Quote of the Month

"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

--Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1969