



E-NEWS

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President's Message

WARM GREETINGS TO ALL FRIENDS OF PREM from Mandiapalli, Ganjam District in Orissa, India. In our latest edition of PREM E-News, we are pleased to highlight a number of achievements, including a noteworthy victory in the battle against corruption, great success in registering rural Adivasis for employment under NREGA, and the continuation of our CBCD program with the renewed support of Bernard van Leer Foundation. We've also had some good news close to home, with a pair of tribal children supported by PREM winning awards for drawing, and a long-time PREM employee gaining a prestigious diploma. As always, I hope you enjoy this newsletter and that you'll send us your feedback.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jacob Thundiyil,
President, PREM

Highlight of the Month

Citizens Against Corruption



PREM has helped establish RTI Clinics like this one in Nuagada block of Gajapati district. The clinics are resource centres for citizens to learn about how to use Right to Information to fight corruption in their communities.

In India high levels of corruption in public life exist with equally high levels of mass poverty, illiteracy and under-development. Institutionalized corruption and the inability of politicians to tackle it effectively is one of the most serious issues facing the country. The overall cost of this corruption is in the continued marginalization and indebtedness of people who are unable to access their just entitlements. There is a direct correlation between corruption and usage of public services and government provisions across departments and states. Areas with relatively high levels of corruption have low usage of public services. Government provision of public service has been made for low-income households, but as a result of corruption in public service the individuals for whom the provision has been made are

benefiting least. In other words, corruption is most likely to occur in poor, rural areas of India, meaning victims of corruption are most often the poorest people of the land, including the communities where PREM operates.

PREM's vision is to help build up civil society organizations to combat corruption and bring about social justice for marginalized and vulnerable communities. With the support of PAC Bangalore and funded by Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF-USA), PREM is implementing an innovative project called **Citizens Against Corruption** in 12 Gram Panchayats of Nuagada block in Gajapati district, Orissa. The goal is to reduce corrupt activities by local government employees, Panchayat functionaries and local contractors in three key public service provisions through direct monitoring and exposure of corrupt activity. The project empowers people's organizations and communities to use Right to Information (RTI) as a tool to raise awareness of their entitlements and strengthen the linkage between community and local government for closer collaboration on sustained action against corruption.

For an example of the early success of this program, read a case study in the Success Story section of this edition of PREM E-News.

Notes from the Field

Tribal Children Win Awards for Drawing

Two Adivasi youths from Gajapati district, who are students at Kendriya Vidyalaya school in Gopalpur and are staying in nearby hostels with the support of PREM and Plan India, recently won awards in a local drawing competition in Berhampur. Junesh Bhuyan (right photo) an 11th class student, and Kalemoti Mallick (left photo), a student in the 10th class, were honoured for their portraits of **former Orissa Chief Minister Nandini Sathapathy**. A portraiture contest sponsored by *Dharitri*, a local Oriya-language newspaper, enticed the boys and so they decided to enter. For Junesh it was the first time he had ever tried drawing a portrait. Both boys were selected as winners and received their trophies at a celebration at Berhampur Town Hall, where their work was displayed. They also had their portraits published in the *Dharitri* newspaper. PREM congratulates Junesh and Kalemoti for their outstanding work in gaining distinction as young artists.



Ongoing Initiatives

Expansion of CBCD Program in Orissa

PREM is very pleased to continue its partnership with Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) in its program for **Child Based Community Development (CBCD)** in Orissa. The new partnership from 2010-2013 will focus on developing multilingual early childhood care and education for tribal children in Orissa, including developing new curriculum, training facilitators and supervisors who work at PREM's 350 CBCD centres in rural areas, and strengthening links with

government-run ICDS centres to improve the overall quality of pre-school education and child care in remote, tribal areas.

In the new phase of this program, PREM will also work in collaboration with the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) and the Committee for Legal Aid for the Poor (CLAP), two other NGOs based in Orissa, and with the state government of Orissa, to ensure effective planning, consulting, implementation, advocacy and sustainability of quality early childhood care and education for the Adivasi people.



Studies by PREM and others have shown that tribal children who begin pre-school education in their mother-tongue language are more likely to make a successful transition to primary school and less likely to drop out in the future. Despite many advances in education in India, the progress among Adivasi communities has not been good enough. Rates of non-attendance, dropout and migration in tribal areas of Orissa are among the highest in the country. Much of the poor performance by tribal children in primary school has been linked to the fact that most of them are not exposed to the Oriya or

English languages as young children, so they begin school in a foreign tongue. By facilitating a multilingual pre-school environment, where the child is introduced to formal education in his or her native language while also learning some Oriya and English, PREM is continuing its commitment to holistic education development through positive and culturally sensitive learning methods and materials.

Employment for Adivasis under NREGA

PREM with its networking partner Orissa Adivasi Manch, and with the support of Concern Worldwide India, has been working in 1700 villages covering 177 GPs and 33 blocks of Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Rayagada and Sundargarh districts of Orissa. In a project called **Promotion of Self-Rule in Adivasi Areas** which has as its goal to empower Palli Sabha local governance, PREM has taken up the issue of proper implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), as well as other government laws and schemes.



Since this program began in 2006, PREM has targeted more than 57,000 tribal households for registration in NREGA, of which 52,748 have been registered so far. Of 33,995 individuals who have demanded employment through their NREGA registration, 32,805 have received work. This has generated more than 1.3 million days of employment and earnings of more than Rs 12 crore, of which Rs 7 crore has already been paid out while the remaining is pending. Among the work being done is the construction of village ponds, farm ponds, bridges, culverts, irrigation wells and canals, as well as general land development and rural road development.

PREM Program Activities

Governance

In July PREM facilitated a participatory discussion via its ISRO satellite link with remote Village Resource Centres (VRC) on the topic of implementation of the **Forest Rights Act (FRA) and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in Orissa**. FRA, which was passed in 2006 by the Government of India, extends ownership rights to tribal communities over lands on which they have lived and worked. These rights include access to collect and use forest produce for livelihood, graze animals, build villages, manage conservation of resources, maintain and preserve traditional knowledge as part of intellectual property, and in-situ rehabilitation in cases where the rightful inhabitants have been evicted or displaced. NREGA is a scheme passed by the government in 2005 which promises job cards guaranteeing minimum 100 days' work for all adults in semi-skilled manual labour, and further guarantees that work is made available within 5km of the worker's village or else he should receive extra wages. The discussion among the 65 participants focused on understanding the rights promised by these two laws, how communities and individuals can benefit from them, and how to identify and address violations of the implementation of FRA and NREGA. The participants expressed their willingness to take initiative on these issues in their communities.



Water, Environment and Sanitation



Relevant to the monsoon season which is this time of year in Orissa, PREM organized an awareness workshop on **Rainwater Harvesting** for schools in rural areas. Utilizing rainwater effectively helps conserve other sources of water, such as bore wells and streams, which are the main sources of fresh water in rural areas. Through its ISRO satellite link to rural VRCs, PREM's presentation focused on the installation of low-cost domestic rainwater harvesting systems on corrugated iron or clay tile rooftops, using various forms of guttering, forest flush diverters, and plastic or ferro-cement tanks for collection and storage of surplus rainwater. This water can then be used for

personal use, washing and sanitation. The participants were advised on how to protect stored water from contamination by mosquitoes and algae. Students can be taught in school how to participate in rainwater harvesting in their communities.

Education

PREM facilitated a discussion and workshop on the formation of **Science Clubs** in schools and implementation of science activities in education. Approximately 50 teachers, parents and school administrators participated in this workshop by ISRO satellite computer link between PREM's headquarters and regional VRCs. The participants were advised on how to generate interest in science with such activities as model making, nature field studies, science exhibitions and seminars, forming science clubs and children's science congress, etc. There should be exposure visits for science clubs to visit scientists on field studies and interact with them. The participants urged each other to do whatever they can to encourage interest in and study of science among their students.

Success Story

Case Study: A Victory in the Battle against Corruption

In June, Mr. Nahasan Majhi, a GP activist of Angur Panchayat, filed a Right to Information (RTI) request at Punjab National Bank, at Udayagiri in Gajapati district, which concerned the loan details for 204 families in Angur. Mr. Majhi had received training from PREM on RTI and fighting corruption, and as a result of his training he thought he should inquire about some suspicious discrepancies in the loan details that were brought to his attention by local SHGs.



A clipping from the August 26 edition of Sambad newspaper about the corruption crime against the people of Angur.

Utilizing RTI, he got the information from the bank manager about the names of the all persons who had taken out loans and the amounts of the loans given to each. He verified the list with the people in his GP. It was found that the bank's records for the value of the loans and the actual amount the people received were vastly different figures.

According to the bank's records, the value of the 204 loans was between Rs 45,000 and Rs 90,000 each,

while the families had only received between Rs 800 and Rs 1000 each. Mr. Majhi discovered that the former Sarpanch, Mr. Suku Gomango, had taken the land *patas* (deeds) from the 204 families to include them in the loan details. So while the families only intended to borrow a small amount, the bank would require them to repay the much higher figure. By this way, Mr. Suku Gomango and certain accomplices at the bank conspired to steal more than Rs 1.8 crore from the villagers of Angur Panchayat.

Immediately, with the help of PREM-trained activists like Mr. Majhi, these 204 families formed a committee against the bank corruption and approached the district collector, NABARD regional manager and the police. Slowly people gathered and reacted to this corruption. They invited all the print media and TV media and exposed the matter. Since then, there has been regular coverage in daily newspapers and TV telecast in OTV and ETV. With the issue gaining momentum, the district administration came forward to resolve the issue. The district collector

and SP of police assured to the people to take action against the corrupt officials and refund the land pata bank loan clearance as soon as possible. The citizens group will continue to monitor the implementation of this justice.

PREM Family News

In August, **Mr. Israel Sabar**, a staff member of PREM for more than ten years, successfully completed a post-graduate diploma in Child Rights at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Mr. Sabar completed the six-month



program with the generous support of Plan International, and with his certificate he was named the best student in his

class. The basis of Mr. Sabar's research was a 'Rights Based Approach to Working with Children' in Orissa. He conducted a research study on child labour migration among Dalits and Adivasis. He conducted counseling sessions with children and youth and made them aware of child rights. He also conducted focused group discussions and counseling sessions with parents and self-help groups.

"I am very happy to obtain this diploma in child rights, through which I have gained more knowledge on child rights and child protection laws and acts. All of these are powerful weapons to combat problems such as school dropout, child labour, migration, child trafficking and child marriage, especially among tribal and Dalit communities of my area. I am thankful to Plan International and PREM for their kind help and cooperation, with which I now have the opportunity to enhance the community on child rights for children's development." –**Israel Sabar**

PREM congratulates Mr. Israel Sabar for his outstanding success, and looks forward to benefiting from his experience working for the development and protection of children.

Quote of the Month

"Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self."

--**Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**, historian, philosopher and author of the Indian Constitution, 1950.

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