



E-NEWS

September-October 2010
Volume 3

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President's Message

WARM GREETINGS TO ALL FRIENDS OF PREM from Mandiapalli village, Ganjam district in Orissa, India. In this issue of PREM E-News, we focus on the struggle for Human Rights. PREM's commitment to fostering and defending human rights in India is rooted in our value-based approach to development, which aims to build the capacities of marginalized communities to fight injustice and demand their rights. The work necessary to build a society that respects and protects human rights for all people has many forms, from campaigning for fear-free schools to organizing participatory poverty assessments in villages and building educational facilities in areas where previously there was no opportunity for children to study and build successful lives. You can read about all these initiatives and more in this issue. I hope you find it interesting and that you'll send us your feedback.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jacob Thundyil,
President, PREM

Highlight of this Edition

Human Rights Workshop



Forum and staff members of PREM.

In September, PREM organized a pair of Human Rights workshops at Gopalpur and Daringbadi. Dr. Jacob Thundyil presided over the workshops whose chief guest was Sri George Pulikuthiyil, a lawyer cum social worker from Kerala who is the director of the **Jananeethi Institute**, a non-profit human rights foundation that offers training to young people on how to be responsible citizens and demand their rights. Other honoured guests and speakers were Dr. Subash Mohapatra, a human rights lawyer, and Prafulla Samantara, a social activist. The 100 total participants included other NGO leaders of Orissa, sector facilitators, members from Orissa Adivasi Manch, members from East Coast Fisher Peoples

The main objective of the workshop was to bring together new ideas and fresh perspectives on

how to mobilize marginalized people as well as civil society organizations on human rights and implementation of various ways to protect and defend those rights. Some of the issues affecting these communities include corruption, lack of access to services that are basic rights such as food and water and livelihood, and the absence of justice and the burden of debt caused by having litigation tied up for years by the courts and police. Together the participants discussed and evaluated constitutional human rights acts in India, social responsibilities of citizens, the role of elected political people in defending human rights, and the need for a litigation free society. They shared various case studies relating to the struggle for human rights.

All participants agreed to renew their commitment to human rights among the poor of India, and share their ideas and successes in the future. PREM is grateful to the Jananeethi Institute and all of the honoured guests and participants for helping in the struggle for human rights.

Notes from the Field

Signature Campaign: Learn Without Fear



In September the **Learn Without Fear Signature Campaign** was conducted by PREM in collaboration with Plan India as an advocacy campaign to create awareness among people about the important issue of violence and abuse against children at school. The Learn Without Fear initiative was launched by Plan International on 20th November 2008 at New Delhi and since that time PREM has been committed to implementing it in its operational areas.

Staff members of PREM engaged in taking signatures of school children, parents, teachers, community members, PRI members and other citizens. By signing this petition, these stakeholders agree to combat the practices of violence against children at school and elsewhere. PREM collected 68,000 signatures during the month of September and the campaign has made a positive impact for creating an environment where all children can live and learn free from fear.

The signature booklets from PREM and many other organizations in India will be submitted to the Honourable Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh to encourage the government to combat violence at schools across the country.

Ongoing Initiatives

Computer Aided Learning in Chilika

Since July 2009, PREM in partnership with Plan International and with the generous support of Aircel India, has been implementing an integrated educational program in a school of the Chilika

Lake area of Puri district. The **Computer Aided Learning Centre** at Basudev High School of Baghamunda village, Satapada block, provides an opportunity for students to get training on computer applications as well as to practical use of computers in many of their daily activities at school.

PREM helped conceive this project and identify a school where computer aided learning could make an impact. Once the school was chosen, PREM was directly involved in preparing teachers and students to use the computer lab, and PREM was successful in leveraging the school's financial contribution towards installation of the lab.

The high school authority agreed to provide necessary number of rooms for computer labs, as well as to provide for electricity connection, security measures, and air conditioning. The school and PREM made a joint effort to liaise with education department officials at the school, block and district levels for a full-fledged setting of the computer lab there for the benefit of children's education.



The objectives of computer aided learning in this project are to enhance children's learning potential through access to digital learning materials, applications and the Internet; to increase children's interest in their education by connecting them to the world outside their school and providing them with technical and practical skills to succeed after they graduate; and to develop and promote IT among children from underdeveloped communities of the Chilika Lake area.



Last year 340 students of the 8th, 9th and 10th classes had their daily school work integrated with computer instruction and use. This year another 250 are using the computers.

Now the Computer Aided Learning Centre is running smoothly and has been received with great enthusiasm by the students as well as the teachers.

In the future, this five-year project hopes to reach out to students of six nearby schools to provide them access to the

centre at Basudev. PREM is also working with partners to improve the computer-based curriculum so as to continue to enhance education for these and future children.

PREM Program Activities

Education

As part of its ISRO program for satellite broadcasting to Village Resource Centres, PREM in September created a **Spoken English Workshop** conducted by Mr. Richard Johnson, who is a VSO Volunteer from Canada spending a year at PREM. Mr. Johnson led a two-hour conversation class for 14-16 year-old students who come from remote communities in Orissa. These students have studied some English but do not have many opportunities to practice what they have learnt. The participants interviewed Mr. Johnson in English about the traditions and characteristics of his country, while he challenged the students to compare and contrast his answers with Indian culture and society. All participants enjoyed the opportunity to practice their English skills and learn about Canada.



In PREM's studio: Mr. Richard Johnson with staff Manas Behera (above), and Mr. Mitrabhanu Panigrahi and Mr. Aruna Chand Dash (below).

Also from PREM's broadcast studio, a discussion group was held on the topic of creating an **Integrated Learning Environment** in schools. Mr. Aruna Chand Dash, retired headmaster, and Mr. Mitrabhanu Panigrahi, PREM's youth coordinator for Chilika, presented to the audience of teachers and school officials about the School Improvement Program of PREM/Plan and how to enhance education through School Vision Planning, a student-teacher ratio of 30:1, regular meetings of school management and development committees, stimulating learning materials, and community involvement. The participants came away with a better understanding of how all aspects of a school and its community must be integrated to benefit the children most.



Livelihood

PREM in September presented a program on **Systematic Rice Intensification (SRI)** for improving paddy cultivation for farmers in rural, tribal areas. Mr. Balakrushna Badatya of PREM led the discussion via PREM's satellite broadcasting centre, with participants tuning in from communities that depend on paddy agriculture for livelihood. The SRI method of rice cultivation is an eco-friendly method of paddy



farming that uses scientifically proven seed technologies and local materials like clay and buffalo dung as soil additives, which serve to keep the crops affordable and replicable. Mr. Badatya emphasized that the SRI method further enhances rice production by more effectively retaining water. Thus SRI can be implemented in areas where water is scarcer. Furthermore, with SRI farmers can learn to more effectively place their seeds in rows, which maximizes output while minimizing the amount of seeds to be purchased. The participants in this program learnt about this to improve their cultivation and pledge to implement in their communities.

Governance

In September and October PREM in partnership with Concern Worldwide conducted a **Participatory Poverty Assessment** study in two villages of Kandhamal district of Orissa. The objective of the study was to evaluate the schemes managed by the State and Central governments to create opportunities for the poorest people residing in interior pockets to raise and present their voices on poverty issue, to get information on different benefits, and to know which institutions are working for sustainable livelihood for the people. The survey evaluated the changes on gender issues among the communities and families, and attempted to trace out different directions for the communities on present climate change issues. Participants in these two villages expressed their well being, the status of their families, past and present issues of the village, and what they envision for their communities after 10 years. The results of this survey will help PREM and Concern evaluate the progress of rural development in this region.



Success Story

Case Study: Where there was once no education, tribal children now study



One of PREM's major objectives over the years has been to strengthen the education of tribal children in rural areas of Orissa. In fulfilling this objective, PREM with the support of Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) has helped established CBCD centres for **Early Children Education** (ECE; i.e. preschool) so that tribal children can be exposed to education at a young age and then make a successful transition to primary school and beyond.

In Chinariguda village in Regeda GP of Gunnapur block of Rayagada district, before

four years ago no children were attending primary school at all, due to lack of awareness in the community on the importance of education, lack of access to Anganwadi centres and government schools, and the non-functioning these schools in the area. Chinariiguda has a population of 260 inhabitants in 45 households who are from the Saora tribe.



PREM entered this community to consult with village leaders, parents and other community members about how we can work together to address the issue of lack of access to quality education for the children. One of the focuses was to make parents aware that they have a responsibility for the education of their children. PREM surveyed the community to identify the eligible age children for preschool and primary school, and conducted an enrolment drive to encourage all community members to put their children in school.

With the support of the community, PREM established a CBCD centre there in 2007 and conducted many sensitization meetings and counseling with parents, children, and community leaders. Gradually the parents' involvement increased and as a result their children became interested in school, and attendance at the CBCD increased. In the first year, 23 children were enrolled at the centre.



The CBCD centre required one facilitator who was chosen from the community with their involvement. The community provided a small wooden structure with a tin roof to serve as the centre. PREM developed the curriculum and trained the facilitator on ECE. PREM also facilitated an introductory visit for the facilitator and children to the nearest primary school in a neighbouring village, and consulted with this primary school to accept the children from Chinariiguda village. In 2010, after lobbying and advocacy by PREM and the community, the government agreed to open a primary school in Chinariiguda so that these children can attend school closer to home.

Since 2007, 20 children from the village have made the transition from the CBCD centre in Chinariiguda to primary school, with a 100% retention rate. At present there are 16 children

attending the CBCD centre in the village, and all school-age children from Chinariguda are enrolled in and attending preschool or primary school.

In just four years the CBCD project of PREM and BvLF has made a strong impact on the lives of this tribal community.

PREM Family News

Recently two staff members of PREM, Mr. Pruthwiraj Dandasena and Ms. Sanjukta Tripathy, attended a week-long training program in Bangalore about **Process Documentation**. This training program was organized by Concern Worldwide with a total number of 22 participants from 11 of Concern's partner organizations across India. This training program aimed to develop best practices for documentation to improve the capacities of organizations to communicate and evaluate their programs and projects.



"This was a new experience," said Mr. Pruthwiraj Dandasena. *"The workshop capacitated us to reflect on our work and document it for impact."*

Participants practiced case studies, process calendars, context analysis, disaggregated data, and organizational / thematic / programmatic maps and photographs.

"I am very happy to have this opportunity, which will improve my knowledge on documentation and communication," said Ms. Sanjukta Tripathy. *"I express my thanks to PREM and Concern Worldwide for giving me this chance, through which I can contribute to my success in my area of work."*

The two staff members of PREM will also be able to share their experience and knowledge with other PREM staff in order to improve the entire team. PREM congratulates Ms. Tripathy and Mr. Dandasena for their commitment to improving their skills and the organization.

Quote

"The value systems of those with access to power and of those far removed from such access cannot be the same. The viewpoint of the privileged is unlike that of the underprivileged."

--Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese human rights activist, 1999.

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