

President's Message

Greetings from PREM, Mandiapalli village, Ganjam district in Orissa, India. In this issue of PREM E-News, we highlight an exciting new program that will facilitate vocational training for more than 10,000 youths—mainly girls—in PREM's operational area. This is an important intervention as vocational training is the paved road from education to a secure and sustainable livelihood. Similarly, we developed a workshop to equip youth with the skills to engage in media advocacy for development of their communities, whether as activists for change or in a future vocation in the media. We have continued our commitment to child participation in all areas of development, as you can read in our many programs and activities below. I hope you enjoy this informative issue of PREM E-News and that you will send us your feedback.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jacob Thundyil
President, PREM

Highlight of the Issue

Project PREMA



PREM is honoured and excited to announce a new partnership with Axis Bank Foundation to fight poverty and build up the livelihood capacities of marginalized communities in Orissa. This new initiative, called Project PREMA, will develop and facilitate **Vocational Training for Adivasi and Dalit Youth** in PREM's operational area in 4 districts—Ganjam, Gajapati, Puri and Kandhamal.

Axis Bank Foundation has a vision to develop education for under-privileged children in India, and it generously supports sustainable development projects through various program grants.

Like Axis Bank Foundation, PREM believes that youth can and should be instrumental actors of social change and be assets to the development of their communities. One of the

most important elements of building the capacities of youth to affect social change is to develop their potential to turn education into meaningful livelihood. Unemployment afflicts many youth in PREM's operational area, where the majority are not only semiliterate or undereducated but also possess no technical/business skills for employment. Those who happen to complete higher secondary education still lack extra qualifications necessary to fulfill the market demand for skilled workers.

Unemployment and dropout from school/college leads to early marriage especially for girls and contributes directly to migration of the young men. There are significant numbers of unemployed youth in these four districts of Orissa. Unemployment compounded by poor development endemic in the area exacerbates the problems of joblessness and lack of livelihood for Adivasi and Dalit peoples. These issues are in fact primary contributors to the continuous cycle of poverty from which these communities have not been able to rise up.



Therefore PREM and Axis Bank Foundation have come together to implement Project PREMA to motivate the youths and to help them to lead a productive life by acquiring the skills and training necessary to seek skilled, well-paying employment. The project will target more than 10,000 youth (the majority of them young women) for training in one of several key sectors—computer hardware, computer software, hotel management and tourism, electronics, driving, security guarding, nursing, advanced agriculture, and women's leadership and livelihood (Grihini)—after which the youth should have the requisite skills and confidence to enter the job market and obtain gainful employment, and should have the ability to contribute to the future development of themselves and their communities.

All students enrolled in Project PREMA will have their training supplemented by Character Development courses to build their confidence, their leadership skills and their professional attitudes to help them succeed when they enter the job market. Project PREMA arranges tie-ups with corporate employers and other sectors of the job market to ensure that graduates of vocational training are reaping the benefits through good jobs and job security. PREM monitors the progress of all students once they reach the job market to ensure no one is left behind. Students enrolled in Project PREMA will contribute a small amount toward course fees, while PREMA will provide the balance and stipends. By investing in their own development, these youths will take ownership of their success. They will also develop the skills to become leaders and skill-developers in their communities, and inspirations to the younger generations. In this way, Project PREMA is committed to the broad development of poor communities through vocational training.

By addressing the issue of accessibility to vocational training, Project PREMA hopes to make as its ultimate impact the tangible reduction of poverty in Adivasi and Dalit communities in Orissa.

Notes from the Field

Children Learning Outside the Classroom



Children from the six model schools in PREM's area in Chilika made an **Exposure Visit** to Bhubaneswar in January. A total of 120 students from the 5th, 6th and 7th classes took the trip to visit first the Regional Science Park in the state capital, where they saw different scientific models of inventions and discoveries on display. They learned about scientific principles, laws, biodiversity and nature. Next they visited the Planetarium where they watched a special show on *Weather of our Earth and Outer Space*. Then, at the Zoological Park at Nandankanan the children got to see various animals, birds and other creatures. On the second day of this trip, the children went to

Khandagiri, an historical place of monuments and caves. Afterwards they went to the Aeronautical Engineering College to view the aircrafts and know more about airplane technology. Lastly the children visited Dhauligiri, the historical place of peace sacred to all religions. The children expressed their satisfaction that this two-day trip was very educative, informative and enjoyable for them, and has stimulated them to continue their education.

In February a school-level **Sports Competition** was organized in each of 5 schools of Mohana block of Gajapati district, in which children participated in nine events—skipping, running, ringball, musical chairs, puchi, handball, long jump, high jump and frog race. PREM provided the sports materials. The top 20 children from each school were awarded prizes. Then these 20 children from each school (100 total) competed in an inter-school sports competition in the same events, and finally 30 children were awarded overall prizes. These programs created a platform for the children to explore their talents and strengthen their active participation in activities outside the classroom.

"I am delighted that PREM organized this kind of program for us, which provides an opportunity for me to explore my inner potential and talent. It gave me a scope for group learning."

*--Tapaswini Nayak, 6th Class,
Naringi School, Mohana.*

A block-level **Literary Competition** was held in February in the same sector office in Mohana, in which children participated in essay writing, speech, song, math games and drawing events. Children from each of 5 schools were invited to participate; 70 took part and 50 received prizes. By getting involved in these activities, the children are encouraged to utilize the skills that they learn in the classroom in new and fun ways. They become more confident with their education and improve their inner potential.

Ongoing Initiatives

Advocating for the Rights of the Fisher People

At the Carey Centre in Gopalpur-on-Sea in February, representatives of the East Coast Fisher People's Forum, which is convened by PREM, met for a two-day program, the 9th **National Consultation on the Rights of Fisher People and the Rights of the Child**. More than 120 representatives of people's organizations attended, from the states of Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The chief guests included Dr. Pradip Panigrahi, Orissa MLA for Gopalpur, Mr. Mohammed Asif, Programme Director of Plan India, Dr. K. Krishnan, Executive Director of the Adivasi Solidarity Council, Mr. Ramakrishna Raju, Director of BREAD, and Dr. Subhas Mahapatra, Human Rights Advocate.



The National Consultation on Rights of Fisher People and Rights of the Child garnered wide media coverage, including this article in the 27 February 2011 edition of Sambad.

On the first day, the participants listened to presentations from Dr. Subhas Mahapatra and Mr. Ramakrishna Raju, and then representatives from each of the four states gave presentations on the current situation and important issues of Fisher People in their areas. Then the participants formed working groups to discuss the issues that are pertinent to the Fisher People and fisher communities in the context of legal and human rights. They developed action plans for unified lobbying and advocacy efforts in their states that will address these issues and try to bring government and various levels into the efforts to seek solutions.

On the second day, the participants interacted with MLA Dr. Pradip Panigrahi who expressed his desire to hear about their discussions and action plans. They listened to presentations by Mr. Mohammed Asif of Plan India and Dr. K. Krishnan of Adivasi Solidarity Council, as well as Mr. Richard Johnson, VSO Volunteer from Canada and Communications Advisor at PREM. Then the participants read aloud and formally adopted their 34-point Memorandum on the Rights of the Fisher People and the Rights of the Child. This memorandum was presented to MLA Dr. Pradip Panigrahi for his submission to the Orissa state government and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

PREM Program Activities

Health

Four health-training programs were organized at Nuagada, Rayagada, Parimala and Gumma blocks from 17-20 January, respectively. PREM arranged for boys' and girls' Youth Club members, village committee members, SHG leaders, as well as PREM staff to participate in these sensitization programs. The training was focused on **HIV/AIDS** and other STIs as well as **Reproductive Child Health**, and how to prevent common diseases, reduce infant mortality and mother mortality, and avail government health schemes and resources.

PREM presented its data and programs on things such as immunization, prenatal checkups, the importance of institutional delivery, birth registration, supplemental feeding for malnourished children, and protecting communities against the spread of disease. The participants committed themselves to organize more meetings at the village level to sensitize their communities on these important health issues.

Child Participation

In January PREM's VSO Volunteer from Canada, Richard Johnson, initiated a four-part workshop called **Utilizing the Media in Development Work**, in which 13 Adivasi and Dalit youths from Gajapati district—who are all students at the Central School of Gopalpur—have participated. The goal of the workshops is to train these youths on the basic concepts of the roles that both the media and average citizens have to play in promoting development. The student learn how they can get involved, either as active citizens helping to connect the media to important issues in their communities, or as aspiring journalists who would like to learn to create articles and other media documents.



Students in the media workshop analyze newspaper articles and suggest ways to improve them.

Education

In January PREM in partnership with Plan India facilitated a block-level interface workshop with government officials, PRI members, VEC members, MTA members, PTA members, teachers and students. The workshop, held in Mohana in Gajapati, was organized on the theme of PREM's **School Improvement Program**, including accessing government schemes and benefits to improve education. 98 participants met to discuss issues such as bridge courses to get dropout children back to school, and retention of students transitioning from one class to the next. The School Inspectors and BRCC shared with the participants the various government schemes and benefits that can help them improve their schools, to



Students participate in a rally on Quality Education, following a workshop on the School Improvement Program.

keep children attending and learning. PREM presented its School Improvement Program. The participants took the decision to get more involved with government schemes and the PREM activities.

The day after the workshop, a **Children's Rally** was held involving 200 participants—students, teachers, parents, and school management committee members of 5 schools—which started from PREM's sector office in Mohana and passed through the main road and market of the town. During this rally, children distributed leaflets on quality education, sanitation, and fear-free learning for public awareness. They

chanted slogans about stopping child labour, child marriage, corporal punishment and other abuses against children. At the end of the rally, the children submitted a memorandum on these issues to BDO, Revenue Officer and BRCC for necessary action and for forwarding to the District Collector.

PREM organized a training session on **Mothers' Roles in Children's Education** in Mohana in January, with 50 mothers of children in PREM's model schools attending. Working in discussion groups the mothers addressed their roles in ensuring good education for their children, such as sending the children to school regularly, supporting good hygiene, monitoring their children's use of uniforms and textbooks, monitoring the implementation of Mid-Day Meal scheme of their children's school, monitoring the safe learning environment by ensuring protection from abuse and corporal punishment, and supporting local initiatives to access government schemes and benefits for rural education. At the end, the mothers took an oath to carry out these activities faithfully.

Livelihood



In February, PREM in its continuing partnership with ISRO held a **Kissan ("Farmers") Mela** at its campus in Mandiapalli. The Chief Guest was Dr. S.B. Choudhury, Senior Scientist at ISRO, who spoke to a group of 40 visitors about the upcoming launch of a new ISRO satellite that will improve existing communications between PREM's broadcasting studio and its 8 regional Village Resource Centres that are connected via satellite link. He also

told how the new technology will aid development work with the potential to map groundwater sources and levels, soil quality, land usage and agricultural opportunities; all to be a permanent resource for future study. The participants—all development workers and community leaders in PREM's area—engaged in a lengthy question and answer period to know more about how this can benefit them.

PREM facilitated a sector-level **Self-Help Group (SHG) Training** at Adava in January. 37 SHG leaders from different villages participated in this training, whose objectives were to build capacity for the smooth and effective functioning of SHGs, and to empower women in the family and in the village. Topics discussed included: proper maintenance of SHG records and registers; the process of writing timely and need-based records/registers; discussing actions at the SHG level before proceeding; mentioning bank and loan details in the registers; maintaining an emergency fund of 10%-25% of total SHG funds; maintaining all financial transactions in individual savings passbook, individual savings register, and individual loan register (receipt and payment); and getting 2-3 witnesses to sign all records. They also discussed the advantages of collective marketing and bank linkages, and the government provisions that can help them. The training was very effective both for staff as well as SHG members to enhance their knowledge, attitude and skills.

Water, Environment & Sanitation

In January PREM organized 4 village-level training workshops on **Water Testing** in 4 sectors—Brahmagiri, Satapada, Krishnaprasad and Konard—of Puri district, where water management and quality are key issues in people's lives. The workshops invited two youths

from each of 153 villages (306 total participants) to discuss water-related issues and learn about water testing. The objective was to create village-level Self-Testing Systems whereby people are working locally to test and manage their water, and taking action with the government officials if there are problems. The youths in this workshop held discussions on the value of water, issues of water scarcity, the parameters of good water management, and water-borne diseases. They received training on water testing for levels of iron, alkaline, fluoride and other chemical components. Then they put their training into practice by doing some tests. The impact was clear as the youths developed a strong interest in testing and managing their water, because this was the first time that such testing had involved the participation of community members. They felt that their understanding of water issues was increased and that the health of their communities will improve.

Research

In January PREM undertook a comprehensive research study on migration in 4 districts of Orissa. The study and forthcoming report are called **Migration, Livelihood and Financial Inclusion: An Empirical Study of Migrants in Odisha, India**. With the support of International Network of Alternative Financial Institutions (INAFI), PREM conducted interviews of more than 10,000 migrants and migrant families in 231 villages of 73 panchayats in 4 districts—Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal and Bolangir. This research will help guide development work by PREM and other interested organizations toward interventions aimed at ensuring that migration is improving people's lives and building capacities of individuals and communities to avoid negative consequences of migration such as trafficking, child labour, sexually transmitted diseases and exploitation of girls and women.

Success Story

Giving Back What He Has Learned

S. Bheema Rao has long been inspired to work for the development of marginalized communities in Orissa. Now he is getting the chance to inspire others.

Mr. Rao, 32, is currently a teacher of Microfinance Management at an innovative college program—**Post-Graduate Certificate in Management for Development**—at the Human Development Foundation School of Management in Bhubaneswar. What is most remarkable about the program is that its students are primarily from Adivasi, Dalit and Fisherfolk communities—the very people that development work in Orissa is targeting.



The program, which is a one-year (three-semester) course certified under AICTE, began in 2009 and Mr. Rao was among its first teachers. In the first year, 23 students graduated with specializations in Microfinance, Development Management or Livelihood Management. The 23 students spent 50% of their studies in the classroom and the other 50% in the field, putting their theoretical knowledge into practice at established Civil Society Organizations and NGOs in Orissa. By now they've gone on to positions such as Regional Manager, Development Executive, Branch Manager, Project Coordinator, etc with CSOs and NGOs all over India.

“So many people have encouraged me along the way, like PREM. Now I have the opportunity to do the same.”

--S. Bheema Rao

Mr. Rao credits PREM for a lot of his success in fulfilling his dream to be a part of community development. He is from the village of Venkatraipur, a Fisherfolk community near Gopalpur in Ganjam district, Orissa. He first became aware of PREM in 1989 when the organization came to his village to conduct public workshops on education, health care and other social issues. Inspired to get involved, Mr. Rao joined the Kalinga Fisher People's Union—an advocacy group supported by PREM—in 1992 as a Youth Member, organizing other youth to work for social advocacy and community awareness on important issues and rights. These Youth Clubs utilized

cultural programs—song, dance and other performance—to raise awareness.

In 1999, with the facilitation of PREM, Mr. Rao went to work with Lutheran World Service India, and found himself busy helping fishing communities recover from the disastrous super cyclone of that year. Since then he has also worked for NGOs such as World Vision and International Justice Mission Bangalore, before the teaching opportunity came his way in 2009.

“My passion is to do work for my community,” he says. “And I hope to continue to work for development of the fisher people.” This energetic young man is not slowing down. Though he already has a MComm from IIMM in Pune, as well as post-graduate diplomas in Rural Development, in NGO Management and in IRPM, now he is working on his PhD in the field of Microfinance. And he hopes one day to go back to the NGO sector especially to help build movements for change among the Fisherfolk.

For more information about the program at Human Development Foundation School of Management, visit www.hdf.ac.in. The program helps arrange loans for students, and they network with CSOs, MFIs and SHGs all over Orissa to promote the program and find potential students. Interested students must have completed +3 High School Graduation and demonstrate an interest in development work.

PREM Family News

PREM Staff Continue their Education

In January 2011 PREM in partnership with Plan India conducted a two-day staff training program on **Government Schemes and Provisions for Education**, at St. Vincent Retreat Center, Gopalpur. 47 participants attended, including sector staff, head-office staff and managers. The resource persons were Sri Bhrugunandan Rath and Sri Lokonath Panda, from Sikhya Sandhan, Bhubaneswar.

The main objectives of this training program were to understand the various efforts taken by government in the fields of education, schemes and provisions, to understand the evolution of the Right to Education movement in India, and to understand the salient features of RTE and state rules.

The training program highlighted the roles and responsibilities of School Management Committees and voluntary organizations under RTE, and the provisions under SSA and ICDS—two government education schemes. Participants worked in groups to discuss concepts of education, definition of the child, utilizing the value of education in the

community, building relationships between teachers and the community, managing school governance, creating fear-free school environments and creating linkages with government.

At the conclusion of this important capacity-building training, PREM staff reaffirmed their commitment to education—the core of PREM’s intervention in marginalized communities—and pledged to continue to create awareness and reach out to everyone in the communities where the organization is working. More awareness will be given at the community level on education-related information and schemes, which will create better opportunities for the children to complete their education.

Quote

“The ability to secure an independent livelihood and honorable employ suited to her education and capacities is the only true foundation of the social elevation of women, even in the very highest classes of society. While she continues to be educated only to be somebody’s wife, and is left without any aim in life till that somebody either in love, or in pity, or in selfish regard at last grants her the opportunity, she can never be truly independent.”

--**Ms. Catherine E. Beecher** (1800-1878), U.S. educator and author, written in 1851. She devoted her life to female education and vocational training.

PREM E-NEWS

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