

Annual Progress Report **2014-15**

SAMVAD SAMAJIK SANSTHAN

Head office

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From the President's Desk.....

We are extremely happy to share this annual progress report with all our stakeholders and well-wishers. The basic theme of our activities has been to realize human right and entitlement for development of people. In all areas where we work we have made all-out efforts raise people's socio economic status by means of making them aware of their own rights and for attaining them we have mobilized them into Community Based Organizations.

The givers of major human rights are the constitution or the government or in a limited sense the Supreme Court. Basic rights such as the right to education, right to basic health care, right to work, right to food security and disability related financial support and right to information are provided by the central government as also by state government. Mid-day meal scheme is claimed in a limited way by children of government schools. These rights and entitlements go unavailed for want of awareness about them and also because people who are eligible have no voice and organized strength to get them realized.

All through this year our main concern has been know your right so that you may get it since this lets you develop.

In this Annual Progress Report an attempt is made to bring out the emphasis that Samvad has placed on imparting knowledge on rights and entitlements with a view to enabling people to realize their rights and for smoothening this process to organize them into well-informed community Based organizations.

We thank all the stakeholders, Gram Pradhan, Head Masters, AWWs, ASHAs, School Management Committee Members, CBOs and Panchayat Committees for supporting the people's cause practiced by us. We thank our Donors European Union, Action Aid and Plan India for their financial support and guidance and our project Staff team without whose sincere support, these results would not have been achieved.

Ram Badan Shukla
President

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Throughout the year we were engaged in a well-integrated programme aimed at socio-economic empowerment of the disadvantaged communities including Dalits, Muslims women, children (especially girl children) and physically challenged persons in our operational areas comprising of 20 Gram Panchayats in Kalakankar Block, Pratapgarh district and 17 Gram Panchayats of Nindura Block in Barabanki district.

Both Pratapgarh and Barabanki are 2 of the 17 districts that fall under Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF), where Government of India has been making all-out efforts to uplift the downtrodden community and women by intensive capacity building efforts and involving their participation in government programmes dispensed through Gram Panchayats.

We attempt to narrate our efforts in this well integrated programme under the following 5 heads:

- 1- Enhancing Community's Access to Public Services
- 2- Enhancing Responsiveness of Local Administration
- 3- People's Participation in Development
- 4- Promotion of Girl Child Education and Health

1- Enhancing Community's Access to Public Services

Since a vast majority of the rural folk are not literate enough and many are even illiterate the rural people do not have adequate knowledge about their rights, entitlements, public schemes launched by both the central and state governments, because of which either they do not demand or avail them or when they seek to derive benefit under the schemes, they are duped by the middleman or even the government officials. Cases of misappropriation of Janani Suraksha Yojna or bungling under various kinds of pensions and other schemes are quite rampant. Many times lethargy and lack of responsiveness among the service provider fraternity cause delay in realization of entitlements by the people. The often-quoted statement that the rupee one travelling down to the masses for whom it is meant becomes just 15 Paise in the hands of the target beneficiary. The phenomenon is caused by extremely

poor access the community has to public services coupled with lack of adequate responsiveness of local administration towards the community.

1.1 Awareness and Capacity Building

In keeping with our annual action plan based on participatory and rights based framework we mobilized the community firstly by making use of door to door campaign, group discussion, holding rallies and camps in ways that are liked by people. As the prelude to our dialogue with the community we held street plays and puppet shows. We discussed the matter of realization of community's rights under the existing schemes and realized that initially people had to be informed about the schemes and they required to be identified as eligible to their need-specific schemes. Even identifying their specific scheme-wise eligibility was not enough. They need an on-going forum where they meet with the project staff to seek help in making applications or raising a demand to realize their right, which was hither to nearly unknown to them. As per our action plan, the community members who had a bit of spare time and eagerness to help the rest were identified and mobilized into Community Based Organizations.

Having been trained on participatory planning, gender responsive budgeting the project staff team trained the CBO workers in participatory learning approach so that in due time they can prepare participatory planning of their own village. Generally gender perspective eludes inclusion in the exercise of village level planning and budgeting. But with a view to make the training programme useful in enabling the CBOs to prepare an effective Village Development Plan inputs on ELBAG, BRGF and e-governance were provided.

Small wonder then that the CBOs supported by the government officials concerned, who had already trained on responsiveness towards the community, prepared 20 Village Development Plans for our area of operation in Pratapgarh and 17 Village Development Plans for our operational area in Barabanki district. The Village Development Plans reflect the need identified by the community to construct toilets for households to put a stop on the existing practice of open defecation which was recognized not only as a health hazard but also as an indignity and danger for the honour of the women.

A Village Development Plan contains basic data on Gram Panchayat including Village map, details on education and health facilities, agricultural crop-cycle, natural resources, geographical details like rivers, canals, animals, and means of livelihood, migration pattern, Panchayat Samities and their members. The Plan gives details on the extremely poor and the socially excluded people.

The CBOs were trained on Central and State government sponsored schemes and the Right to Education. They were also briefed on the provisions under the flagship scheme – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which is a great saviour for the extremely poor and Muslims including women of all communities. Enhancing participation of Dalits, Muslims and women has all along been our strength.

With a view to enabling the community to go on deriving benefits from the central and state government schemes, we established one Panchayat Information Centre at each of the 20 Gram Panchayat in Pratapgarh and 17 Gram Panchayats in Barabanki district.

Besides the above Panchayat level committees were borned in each of the target villages. These committees have started monitoring the functions of Public Distribution System, Schools, Community Health Centers and MNREGA at village level.

2- Enhancing Responsiveness of Local Administration

Both central and state governments have deep seated concern for the disadvantaged rural people, but despite huge resources, reaching out to the needy people has been an enigmatic experience for even the most well-intentioned public servant. Most of the government servants fail to wield the kind of responsiveness needed by the community for resolving their problems and needs related to public schemes. These officials do have knowledge and experience, but due to being over-burdened appear to be not so responsive towards the community. With this in view a number of sensitization workshops were conducted for Panchayati Raj Functionaries and Block Development officials of Pratapgarh and Barabanki districts covering our operational area. It goes to the credit of the quality of training that a Block Development Officer accepted that the delay in responding to Right to Information decreased after the training provided by Samvad Samajik Sansthan. He also requested us to provide computer training, National Rural Livelihood Mission

implementation and also help the Block Administration by bringing out a compendium on different public schemes in the form of a CD. We have since brought out a booklet on various public schemes titled "Aaiye Janen, Sarkari Yojnayen (Come let's know Government Schemes).

Our capacity building programmes were hailed for their effectiveness, so much so that when our project team met the block authorities before starting the exercise of preparing Village Development Plans in the PRA mode, the block officials concerned took proactive part, as a result of which the participation from the community was also encouraging. Village Development Plans of all 37 Gram Panchayats (20 for Pratapgarh and 17 for Barabanki) were discussed in the Panchayat meetings and also in Gram Sabhas for mobilization of funds. As a result of VDP exercise, problems of many villages acquired the attention of the authorities and were being solved. Villagers of Bhaddiv (Pratapgarh) admit that provision of electricity as also construction of the connecting road was major outcomes of the village Development Plan.

It is also a fall-out effect of the sensitization workshops that Panchayat level committees were formed in each of 37 target Gram Panchayats. Panchayat level committee member monitoring of NREGS has resulted in encouraging people to submit their work demand applications in terms of the provisions of the scheme.

3- People's Participation in Development & Good Governance

Community development is essentially participatory. It calls for interaction between the government and the people. People are diverse and at different stages of development. Amongst them they need an atmosphere of purpose and peace, mutual respect and care. People in villages are satisfied in terms of castes and many sections are even today socially excluded. With a view to bringing the sense of common purpose and respect for each human being in all our interactions with the community, we began all our daily programme activities with motivational songs inspiring unity and respect for diversity, removal of evil practices like child marriage, child labour and concern for girl child education and health.

People's participation, has all along been the style and approach of our work. Starting with the technique of imparting training to the project team, PRI functionaries and Block

Development Officials or members of community Based Organizations/ Panchayat-level Committee Members, the method employed has been participatory.

This participatory approach resonates in holding village-level Participatory Rural Appraisal including all sections of the community in ascertaining and assessing their own needs to prepare Village Development Plan. 37 Village Development Plans were prepared not only by the project team in the presence of the CBO members. They were surely assisted by the project team as it was their very first effort, but also well supported by the Block Development authorities who were present during the exercise to guide the community's efforts.

Establishment of 37 Information Resource Centres (20 in Pratapgarh and 17 in Barabanki) is a standing example of people's participation in that many Information Resource Centres are housed in the residential houses of the community members, accommodation provided by people as token of their voluntary contribution and participation in a combined endeavour for a common cause.

It is the CBO members who man the Information Resource Centres where aside for imparting information about various schemes, they fill in the relevant application forms for claiming benefits under the schemes for which community members are eligible. They pursue the matter further with the government department concerned and see to it that the need is fulfilled. At these Information Resource Centres IEC materials brought out by Samvad and other sources are displayed. It is the CBO members, who hold their meetings regularly, review their own activities as also carry out monitoring of their activities.

At the core of our activities this year was "Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability for Governance (ELBAG) which is a process and methodological framework that comprises in organizing people, developing grass roots monitoring mechanism democratizing knowledge and using participatory tools and methods for building public accountability and transparency and initiate people centered advocacy processes. ELBAG for our operational area meant democratic and people centered planning, meaning thereby that the village Development Plans are made with the consent and at the instance of the community, eliciting their views and needs. It involves making budget in monetary terms well understood by the community. We trained CBO members on ELBAG. The CBO members now understand

that in the budget a government translates the promises and commitments into practices, which impacts the life of the poor and marginalized sections of society. Similarly, the CBO members learnt about the need for gender budgeting which was reflected in identifying the need of enough number of toilets in homes, schools and public places to adequately cater to the needs of women folk. As a result of training programmes on ELBAG and gender budgeting, a right perspective was built in terms of which women's right to land, access to water, better sanitation facilities, was being well-recognized.

With a view to enabling CBO members to hold the PRIs and Block authorities accountable, Samvad Samajik Sansthan has chalked out a programme of conducting social audit by the trained CBO members in accordance with the provisions of the MNREGA. It has brought out a simple training module cum manual on Social Audit of MNREG Act.

We look forward to hold a series of Public Hearing programmes on the issue of the status of Access to Public Schemes. We also look forward to get a team of CBO members trained on conducting Social audit of MNREGA.

4- Promotion of Girl Child Education and Health

Since July 2014 we launched a special and focused program on creating a special niche of importance in the minds of parents for imparting education to their daughters on par with sons.

The middle of the year saw us in the midst of an innovative programme named "Ek Sal Aur" or "One Year More" to stress on the point to let education of a girl child continue one year more and in this way till it finds its completion up to her marriageable age staving off child marriage in its process.

Thus a year long program commenced on 1st July 2014 with a view to improving the awareness and knowledge on the importance of education for adolescent girls.

Process Adopted

- We identified the mothers of those girls who had gradually become irregular in attending their classes as also those who had become drop-outs.

- Our staff team mobilized these women to form groups with the of taking care of their daughters' education and health, so that they in due course evolve into well informed educated and healthy citizens and the responsible mothers to the next generation.
- We therefore organized them into Shiksha Mata Samuhas on organizing regular meeting and deliberating on the issues and difficulties related to the furtherance of their daughters' education.
- Mothers themselves realized that in many cases their daughters lagged behind in studies because they were forced to help them in domestic chores which kept them from proper schooling.
- During periodical capacity building efforts, we made the mothers aware of the rights to free and compulsory elementary education. We informed them about the role of School Management Committee in managing over all functioning of the school.
- We motivated them to take keen interest in school affairs including the arrangement of the Mid Day Meal Scheme.
- Some members from Shiksha Mata Samuhas started taking interest in the MDM scheme to satisfy for themselves whether clean and nutritious cooked food was being served to their children.

Given below is a case study which is an example of the empowerment of women.

In a Shiksha Mata Samuha meeting at Hinahu Gram Panchayat (District Pratapgarh) one Mr. Ibrahim throw an open challenge to our project staff that you cannot to solve the difficulties faced by the community. He mentioned then that the AWW was brazenly flouting her duty rules. Pushtahaar was as a matter of practice sold off instead of being distributed among the children, many of whom suffering from mild to severe malnutrition. He asked the staff to stop this dishonest practice. The challenge was accepted. The staff discussed the matter in the meeting. Shiksha Mata Samuha decided to take up the matter.

The Samuha women met the Block Development Officer the very next day who assured to look into the matter. The matter was enquired into and now the AWW regularly distributes Poshahar. An awestricken Mr. Ibrahim thanked the workers for timely action. He is a friend of the project now.

As a fall out effect of Shiksha Mata Samuha members regular meetings and purposeful deliberations women internalized the lesson that negligence from their side is contributes to the factors obstructing girl's regular attendance.

Given below is a case study how non-payment of school fee in a private school is a potent cause of a girl's becoming irregular in attendance.

In a Shiksha Mata Samuha, the matter of irregular attendance in the school was being discussed it was noted that Reshma – daughter of Chaurasa Devi is irregular. Women of Nancy SMS enquired into the reasons. Since Reshma unable to pay monthly fees, she was continuously absent. Women then continued to discuss how Reshma would make up for the loss of her studies during her remaining out of school. Even if she deposits the fees she would suffer loss of studies. As these points were being discussed, her brother appeared on the scene and promised to pay the fees. The brother met the Head Master who assured him to arrange extra classes for Reshma to make up for the lessons gone arrears.

This has increased a hope in the minds of women that by applying their minds and acts in a concerted manner they can solve various kinds of snags and irritants that make girl child education a perplexed problem.

Girl child education flounders among Dalit's because poverty coupled with caste based discrimination. A Shiksha Mata Samuha solved such a problem as this in the manner given below.

Anju and Anjali, daughters of Shri Radhey Shyam were not served food along with the rest on account of being Dalits during Mid Day Meal distribution. This used to cause embarrassment and agony to Anju and Anjali. The girls avoided going to school. The matter was brought in by their mother in a next regular meeting of Shiksha Mata Samuha. The agitated members went to the school, met the Head Master, who accepted the mistake being made by the cook, without being brought to his notice.

Both Anju and Anjali are happy. The incident has averted a possible hurdle, which would have made these girls irregular and possible drop-outs.

Shiksha Mata Samuhas are platforms of women. They celebrate International women's day child Right Week during which apart from token celebration, they discuss on women rights and child rights and pledge themselves to the cause of girl child education in a gender discrimination free environment both at home and school. They have started making inroads into School Management Committees and Anganwadis and sounding a clarion call that they are the trend of girls stealthily vanish from the scene of elementary education needs sustained efforts for a long time. Possibly we may have to continue Project at "Ek Sal Aur" for many years more.

Our efforts under "**Ek Sal Aur**" project gave good results as under

- Twenty two girls, who had become school drop outs, were relinked with their schools.
- As many as 157 girl students who had become quite irregular in attending the school were made regular and punctual in attendance.
- By and large Shiksha Samuhas became CBOs holding meetings, discussing problems faced by their daughters and as and when necessary came up like a force to solve problems.