

NIRNAYA

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CHANGE AS WE SEE IT!

Howzzat!

As promised earlier, Nirnaya's Managing Trustee, Indira Jena introduced the Vikasini girls to the game of cricket. Anita Mishra from the Hyderabad Association of Cricket is the children's coach. Sixteen of them have been selected for weekly coaching in the grounds near the school. They are coached every Wednesday and Friday and this training has also been taken seriously by the girls' parents who accompany their children to the grounds and back. The fact that little girls from the poorest of the poorest sections of society are being provided with coaching in a sport that is the domain of middle class boys and men and that they are responding with equal enthusiasm and being supported by their parents reflects that true opportunity can never go unanswered. There is much talent waiting to be tapped and many people reaching out to be helped. Vikasini is a perfect example!



Mr. Uday S. Varma said, "Vikasini is an exceptional experiment by Nirnaya in spreading literacy and education among the not so fortunate members of the society.

Their commendable work needs encouragement. The NGO is committed to excellence and I am proud to be associated them in a small way!"

Rising conciousness...

On 10th of Dec, Human Rights Day, about fifty-seven women in the Digidhi Panchayat of the Dumka district in Jharkhand, participated in the demonstration of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty by wearing white bands on their wrists. Following this, they resolved to form a forum amongst themselves, which would organize a demonstration against poverty not only at the block but also at the district level on the 10th of December, this year.



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Editorial

Indira Jena
Aruna Masarguppi
Supriya Rao

NIRNAYA

an indian women's fund
11, Deepthi Apartments,
S.P. Road, Secunderabad - 26
A.P. India.

Phone : 91 40 2780 5089
Fax : 91 40 2771 7305
hyd2_nirnaya@sancharnet.in
www.nirnaya.org

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Nirnaya News

Stopping Violence - We can and we shall!

Human Rights Day - Launch of the 88-day Campaign!

A lone woman in Kurnool's slum created a history of sorts in her community when she once and for all put an end to the daily beating by her husband. How did she do it? Where did she get the strength for it? She says her SHG group gave her the courage. When her inebriated husband, as was his wont, got violent one evening, she, instead of succumbing meekly, as she usually did, got up and in all ferocity held his hand, pushed him, went out of the house and yelled for help. And help she got, and how! The whole community of women turned up in support and roundly reprimanded the husband and got him to promise that he would never ever abuse her.



The newfound strength in numbers gave the women a new hope. This group, which is supported by Nirnaya, requested it to educate them in legal rights so that they could stand on their own and put an end to this violence, which is almost as old as mankind. Violence against women has increasingly taken a hideous turn. But this cannot go on for long. We must act! The experience of the woman from Kurnool is proof enough that activism, education and support from community can do wonders. The woman could raise her hand in defense only because she was sure of the support of her fellow community women, a factor that was absent all these years.

On the 10th of December, Nirnaya launched the 88-day women's rights campaign with a press meet at the News Service Syndicate in Hyderabad. Indira Jena, managing trustee of Nirnaya explained the purpose of the campaign while Ms. Usha Ashok Kumar, advisory member & Ms. Rajamani, board member, released the pamphlets and launched the campaign by putting a rupee each in their clay pots marked with the 88 symbol. The press was invoked for its instrumentality in reaching out to a widespread audience and Ms. Jena spoke of the significance of the media's commitment and ability to facilitate social change. This campaign was directed at generating a thought within every individual that participated in it. It was felt that with every act of placing a rupee, the thought opposing violence against women would resonate and culminate into awareness within the person. Ms. Usha Ashok Kumar reiterated that it was not so much the monetary contribution but the thought accompanying the act that

This incident set Nirnaya thinking. It saw a resonance in the practical activism of Her Fund, Hongkong, which developed the idea of an 88-day campaign to generate awareness and raise local funds. Incidentally, the period between December 10th, World Human Rights Day and March 8th, International Women's Day constitutes exactly 88 days emphasizing that today's greatest need is to acknowledge that women's rights are as much human rights as any other!

"Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture, or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development, and peace."
 —UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, 1999

would contribute towards the real change. The campaign was simultaneously launched by the various partners of Nirnaya at Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh, Hubli in Karnataka, Krishnagiri district in Tamil Nadu, Dumka district in Jharkhand and Deogarh district in Orissa as also on an Asian level by other women's funds in Nepal, Hong Kong and Mongolia.

Program Updates

Program Related Investment

- ◆ In Sangareddy, Nirnaya facilitated the issue of SBI loans to 16 differently able women. These women have invested the money in various businesses like vegetable selling, petty shops, sewing machines and the procuring of milch animals. Mere economic assistance has had a tremendous impact on the lives of these women. Their daily income has risen by 30-40 Rupees and they have repaid the first two loan installments with great confidence! It has emerged from the project staff's personal interactions that some of these young women are the only income earners in the family consisting of elderly parents.

"In order that she may be able to give her hand with dignity, she must be able to stand alone."

*- Margaret Fuller (1810-1850)
Author and philosopher*

- ◆ The slum-women of Kurnool have also begun to take the lead. An interesting update was shared by the women who cured and sold sheep gut, which is utilized for making the thread that, is used for suturing wounds. They have now established direct links with Johnson and Johnson Company in Bangalore and sell the raw material at Rs.80 per 100 meters of gut instead of at Rs.40 as they did through the middlemen.



- ◆ The adapted MTC tool as part of Nirnaya's capacity building program has been received well by the sex workers' self help groups at Chilakaluripeta. Their reporting methods have improved considerably and that has enabled us to understand the real impact of the assistance delivered to them. According to Meena (name changed), not only does she have a means of livelihood with which she can support her family, she has been able to educate her daughter until her graduation against all the odds of child-marriage and repatriation into prostitution. Today many of these women are able to buy their monthly provisions as well as return their loans. They are able to summon the courage and talk to government officials and feel extremely overwhelmed that so much has changed for them not just economically but also socially.

CONFERENCES/ MEETINGS/ SEMINARS/ VISITS

- ANWF meeting 25th October Bangkok - Asian Network of Women's Funds meeting : attended by Indira Jena and Supriya Rao
- INWF meetings (26th Oct, Bangkok) - International Network of Women's Funds meeting : attended by Indira Jena and Supriya Rao
- The Association of Women's Rights in Development Forum (27th - 30th October, Bangkok) : attended by Indira Jena and Supriya Rao.
- FFP Meeting (4th, 5th and 6th Nov, Hyderabad) – The Annual Meeting of the Foundation For Peace: hosted by Nirnaya.



Vikasini in Hubli



In June 2005, another Vikasini school was established in Hubli, Karnataka. This project has seen some amazing results. The twenty girls inducted from the slum area of Altaf nagar have shown perceptible improvement in their health and skill absorption. The mid-day meals being provided to them have had a massive impact on their nutritional status. The children are now eager to go to school and a close observation of the attendance trend revealed the same. Monthly reports on every single child's performance, attendance, and problem areas, as also observations made by the children's parents since their induction into school, are submitted to Nirnaya as feedback. The reports also reveal that the children thoroughly enjoy their learning exercises, particularly rhyming words!

Development as conceived by Vikasini

Amulya (name changed), a six-year-old student at Vikasini was found to be extremely slow at grasping what was being taught in class. She had already repeated a year and still could not cope with her studies. At a parent-teacher meeting, her mother was asked to look into the matter and help the child perform better. Despite this, the child's performance did not improve. Later it was revealed that her father regularly beat the child and the reason was her gender. Her father had wanted a son but all his children were girls. Amulya and her mother had therefore become the victims of his anger and frustration and as Amulya continued to struggle with her assignments at home, her father's anger doubled. The school staff finally decided that the child would not be asked to take work back home. Instead they created a separate syllabus for the child that was tailored to her pace of learning. Today one notes a perceptible difference on the face of the mother and the child. They appear much more relaxed and happy. The alternative course of action was to evict the child as

many persons had suggested but the staff of Vikasini and Nirnaya's Managing trustee strongly opposed that suggestion since it was possible that the child may have been abused further, sent to work as child labour or even led into prostitution. For Vikasini, the child with the learning disability perpetuated by her father's beatings was not a threat to the academic bearing of the school, it was an opportunity to look into the overall development and well being of the child as the name Vikasini itself suggests.

"I fall, I stand still... I trudge on. I gain a little... I get more eager and climb higher and begin to see the widening horizon. Every struggle is a victory."

Hellen Keller (1880-1968)

*the world famous author and public speaker,
on her studies at Radcliffe College*

Building Capacities

“Making the Case: A Learning and Measurement Tool for Social Change” was initiated by the Women’s Funding Network, U.S.A., an international partnership of women and girls’ foundations, donors and allies, of which Nirnaya is a member. The Nirnaya staff and Advisory board members underwent a 3-day exercise with Ms. Lin Chew from 14th to 16th October. While the encounter with the MTC tool was very stimulating and thought provoking, the staff agreed that the tool would have to be adapted, to suit grantee requirements in terms of translation, simplification and local specificity. It was essential that it also be used, as a capacity building tool for grassroot organizations that otherwise cannot be integrated with the mainstream organizations.

As a result of this, on the 23rd, 24th and 25th of November, Nirnaya’s grantee partners from Nalgonda, Kurnool, Sangareddy, Shamshallapur, Hyderabad, Chilakaluripeta in Andhra Pradesh and Hubli in Karnataka participated in a revised MTC training conducted by Dr. Sujatha Rita, Nirnaya’s advisory council member. The workshop invited the participants to be introspective in understanding their work, analyzing their different experiences as part of that work and

examining how it had brought about a change in their lives as women, through various exercises. The grantees discussed that they had become more self-confident. They were now able to get bank loans by themselves, talk to government officials, gain an improved status within the family, educate their children and save for the future.

A training session was also organized and conducted in Orissa, by Ms. Lalita Missal, Nirnaya’s board member in November, for Nirnaya’s partners in Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand. During this period, the participants were also engaged in a two-wheeler rally that was organized in observation of the International day opposing Violence Against Women 25th November 2005.

It was felt that the training was immensely useful in building the capacities of Nirnaya and well as its grantee partners. The importance of understanding how to examine change and the significance of documenting it was well received by the participants and it is hoped that this change will be reflected in the course of our collective endeavours to bring about social change.



Issues of Gender and Identities in contemporary India

In the month of November, Nirnaya supported a two-day seminar conducted by Hengasara Hakkina Sangha, Bangalore. The seminar constituted articulations of the experiences of marginalized groups of women and those that did not fall into society’s conceptions of what men and women should be like. A particularly moving articulation was made by a hijra activist who explained what it was to be born and live in her body, how the hijra community had been ostracized despite its existence for centuries and how she and others like her found it difficult to access even the most basic public utilities like education and health. She gave an account of how difficult it was to get even a passport because she was not accepted within the categories of man or woman and there existed space for no other.

Children's day

The 14th of November is celebrated as children's day every year in our country. It is accompanied by the routine parades and picnics for school children all over. But for the children of Vikasini, celebration of children's day was something they could not have ever imagined as part of a life where the girl child is shunned and where poverty engulfs every other thought and action. The parks that they visited and the snacks that they ate were perhaps for them a tiny slice of the normal life that other children experience every other day. The NTR gardens and Lumbini park were green and clean and so different from their own locality. And the joy that they radiated was simply matchless! Finally at 6 in the evening they were ready to go back home and as they were walking towards their bus, a media person photographed them and enquired about them. The next day, to their utter surprise and joy, the children found their photograph in the Eenadu newspaper!! The parents of the children were also very overwhelmed when they got to see their children's photograph in the newspaper.



Human Resource Development

- In the Dharwad district of Karnataka, the pilot programmes in zari-zardosi training were extremely successful. The Handicrafts promotion officer from the Handicrafts Department of Government of India who visited the center at Holtikotti village was very impressed and promised to issue centralized artisan passes to all the individual members of the group which would allow them to participate at state, national and international level exhibitions. They would also be given priority during the allocation of stalls at the exhibitions. Also the handicrafts promotion officer promised to introduce the women to a big artisan who could help market their work. In addition, the passes would help them get orders from wholesalers. This result has been extremely heartening and has encouraged Nirnaya to support 3 more of such trainings.
- In Altaf nagar at Hubli, Karnataka where the second Vikasini school had been established, Nirnaya has supported a training programme for women in cutting and tailoring. It is expected that this endeavor would also culminate fruitfully as a garment-manufacturing unit is being set up at Hubli and there would be a requirement for more women tailors.

Introspection

In Dec 2005, our partners in Bhumika, a monthly, feminist magazine in Telugu, brought out an issue on HIV/AIDS calling upon its readers to look further into the social dynamics of the problem. Bhumika's Editor, Ms. Sathyavathi enunciated that linking HIV/AIDS explicitly and solely with sex and the moralistic overtones that revolve around it, deprives people of the space to fully understand, discuss or even get treated if they are infected by the virus. The issue emphasizes upon the gendered impact HIV/AIDS and how women are more vulnerable to the infection because of their lack of control and decision-making power over their bodies and sexuality. Sex-workers are a particularly marginalized section of women in this regard.

We condole the demise of our grantee, Ms. Naarne Nirmala, who succumbed to AIDs at the age of thirty-two on the 27th of January 2006 in Chilakaluripeta, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh.



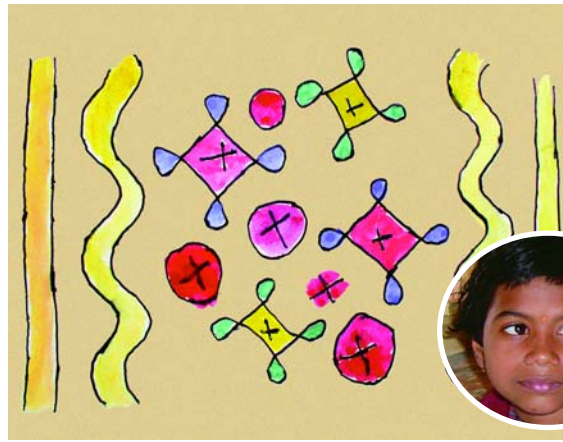
Greeting Cards...

At Nirnaya, one of the important ways of raising local funds is through the sale of greeting cards every year. But the greeting cards are also a direct link between the students of Vikasini and the people who choose to support them, because the greeting cards' process is initiated by none other than the little girls of Vikasini itself. It is their imagination, their hope and aspirations that translate into the theme on the greeting cards. A painting event was held among the Vikasini schoolgirls in August, where Mansoor Hussain, a textile designer did a motivation session with the children. Four of these paintings were translated into greeting cards after which Nirnaya approached various organizations and individuals for orders. Many of the clients were so impressed that they placed orders again and the printing process that had been completed, had to be started again!! This year, the greeting cards' sale doubled to about 12,700 cards!

The little hands behind the greeting cards...



Ambica, UKG, 8 years



Vaishnavi, UKG, 7 years



Divya, UKG, 6 years



Shravani, UKG, 8 years

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- Navya Printers for having sponsored the Hindi and English pamphlets for the 88-day women's rights campaign.
- State Bank of India - Commercial branch, State Bank of Hyderabad, Ms. Anita Mishra, Ms. N.B. Raj Kumari, Ms. P. Prema Latha, Ms. M. Seshu Kumari, Mr. Manzoor Hussain, Ms. Kiran Seth and Ms. Meenakshi Subramaniam for their gestures of support to Vikasini and the HRD center at Addagutta.

Donations to Nirnaya are exempted from tax under Section 80G of the IT Act, 1961.

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