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Walking the Talk ...

In our last issue we promised to share our experiences with foundations that have walked the talk of empowering women by helping build the capacities of regional women's funds. In the evolution of Nirnaya many have played vital roles. The Global Fund for Women, USA was Indira's inspiration to set up a women's fund. The name, the structure, the geographic outreach crystallized over time – but it is from the grantmaking of The Global Fund that the recognition of a need for a basket of resources purely for women, to access and determine appropriate use of the same by themselves took root. There is a uniqueness in the grantmaking of The Global Fund for Women which was spearheaded by Anne Firth Murray and is carried forth by Kavita Ramdas and the team. Nirnaya had just entered its second year in April 1999 and had to expand its office from Indira's residence to a regular office space and take on staff. We felt the need for our office to be centrally located since our objective was local fundraising. We found a place but the rent was way beyond what we could afford from the Mama Cash grant. Indira sent a mail to Kavita Ramdas, President of Global Fund explaining our predicament. Kavita e-mailed back saying, 'Go ahead with signing the rental agreement, we can complete formalities in due course...' This risk taking, is a practice Nirnaya religiously follows despite many fallouts, failures on the part of its grantees. From then on, there has been no looking back for Nirnaya. Global Fund has supported Nirnaya at every step, be it for Nirnaya's participation in international conferences, be it for recommending and sponsoring Nirnaya at important international forums. Global Fund has played and continues to play a vital role in Nirnaya's evolution as the only Indian women's fund. While we feel that there need to be checks and balances with respect to Global Fund's grantmaking we must, at the same time,

honestly state that we would not be where we are but for the cutting edge grants that they have made us.

The Global Fund for Women is an international network of women and men committed to a world of equality and social justice.

The Global Fund makes grants to seed, strengthen and link women's rights groups based outside the United States working to address human rights issues that include:

- Ending Gender-Based Violence and Building Peace
- Ensuring Economic and Environmental Justice
- Advancing Health and Sexual and Reproductive Rights
- Expanding Civic and Political Participation
- Increasing Access to Education
- Fostering Social Change Philanthropy

"We are part of a global women's movement that is rooted in a commitment to justice and an appreciation of the value of women's experience. The challenges women face vary widely across communities, cultures, religions, traditions and countries. We believe that women should have a full range of choices, and that women themselves know best how to determine their needs and propose solutions for lasting change. The way in which we do our work is as important as what we do. This philosophy is reflected in our flexible, respectful and responsive style of grantmaking."

To know more about the exciting work that Global Fund for Women is involved in please log on to www.globalfundforwomen.org

This year has been a rewarding but also a challenging year for Nirnaya. Our newsletters only bring out the brighter side of our work. The challenges have been many and of a varied nature. One challenge has been that of finding staff at different levels with the attitude and perspective that underpins the organizational vision.

The greatest challenge is that of transparency and accountability from our grantees. There have been several really bad experiences where we have had to resort to action which was distasteful and unpleasant nevertheless necessary. This kind of action has exposed us to serious risks.

Vikasini Girls School Addagutta, Secunderabad and Hubli have posed their own curious challenges. While in the former it was an attempted burglary (more to scare us than steal anything), in the latter it was fraudulence by the coordinator. In both cases it was the 4 – 12 year old children who were inconvenienced.

Does any of this faze us? An emphatic NO.

There is attrition but this has revealed the solid support of the board and advisory council. We also find new people

whom we train, mentor and delegate responsibilities to.

Our tireless efforts to impress upon our grantees the importance of accountability continue. We know we are seen as being too demanding but we also see that if we were not a women's fund the 'demands' would be accepted as statutory requirements for grantmaking.

We have our grantmaking and human resource policies as well as fundraising strategies in place.

We resort to hiring 24x7 security services for the Addagutta school premises. We hire a new coordinator for the Hubli school.

We move on and ahead into 2007 with the conviction that we are on the right track, we are making a difference in the lives of vulnerable women and girls, and it is going to be an enriching year in terms of fundraising.

Radhika

Human Resource Development

Resource development through skills enhancement for marginalized women is a silently successful program that Nirnaya has been supporting since year 2000. The skill development programs have been varied but the benefit of the acquired skills have been felt by 70% of the women and girls who have participated in the programs.

Addagutta, Secunderabad has been a challenging area of work and the communities difficult to bring together on a common platform. Seeing that cutting and tailoring was a skill the women could use sitting at home and earn extra income, Nirnaya started a HRD center in Addagutta. It was next to impossible to even get five women to attend the class. There were people waiting to donate tables and sewing machines but no women willing to take the training. After much persuasion and the pressure of the mothers of the Vikasini children, twelve young women started attending the course. It took more than the earmarked six months but the first batch of trainees



completed their examinations and got certificates. All the twelve women are able to carry on some work at home and they even stitched the schooldresses of the Vikasini playschool girls free of cost. Some of them are working as assistants at dressmaking shops while a few have actually managed to buy sewing machine and get good tailoring orders from the women and girls in the neighborhood.

Girl Child Education

Vikasini-In full bloom!

June saw the children rejoin their classes after the summer break and a reversal to their old violent abusive behavior, more marked among the older children. The discipline, punctuality, sense of personal hygiene and grooming inculcated into them seemed to have mysteriously disappeared. The months of July, August and September were spent in addressing this problem and trying to get the children back into the groove. Another disturbing trend is that some of the older children have resorted to stealing money. There is a perceptible change in attitude as negativism and indifference has crept in. Ms Indira Jena counsels these children on an informal basis once a month but the need for a professional counselor to deal with such behavioral problems is deeply felt. Breaking into the school as an act of intimidation by unknown vested interests resulted in security for the school on a 24-hour basis.

The Vikasini Girl Child Education Trust (VGCET) Board met in July and August to chart out the future course of action for Vikasini. One of the board members Ms. Dolly Srivastava has agreed to undertake



the task of training the teachers. At the meeting it was decided how to share responsibility in obtaining government recognition, sending funding applications to various donors and obtaining recognition from the Home Ministry for foreign funding. The website put up for VGCET in June by Josh Timonen, USA free of charge has attracted many donors. Prominent among those who made a commitment to Nirnaya are The Global Fund For Children, USA and Filia German Women's Fund. Global Giving, USA sent a representative for evaluation in order to get an

appraisal report before making a commitment. This representative spent a whole day at the school interacting with the students, teachers and Indira. Ms. Renuka Motihar, India Consultant For Global Fund for Children, USA did the preaward appraisal for Vikasini by interacting with the students, teachers, board members and was present as an observer at the Vikasini board meeting.

August 15, 2006 saw the Rotary Club of Secunderabad West sponsor the Independence Day celebrations. The children put up a cultural programme, which was well received. Mr. P.K. Roy, President hoisted the national flag and Mr. P. Nagaraj, a veteran Rotarian addressed the gathering. Teachers' Day on September



5, 2006 was celebrated with gaiety. The children put up a lively programme, which had them performing songs and dances. The teachers were felicitated and given mementos.

The month of October will remain etched in Indira's memory as the children planned a surprise birthday party for her at the school premises. The children kept asking her to go inside and finally managed to position her under the fan. The fan was switched on and she was showered with flowers and confetti. There were beautiful drawings put up on the blackboard greeting Indira on her birthday. The children's excitement was tangible and Indira was touched as she says that this was the very first time that she cut a cake on her birthday!

The follow up oral hygiene camp was conducted on November 14, 2006 by Drs. Prasad and Suma Chitra and Dr. Aarti. The doctors made a commitment to have a review every six months to evaluate the level

of oral hygiene as it is directly linked to the wellness level. It was found that thirty-eight children needed treatment which was arranged by Dr. Prasad Chitra free of cost at the Army College for Dental Sciences on December 6, 2006. Dr. Yellamma Bai the Head of the Department of Pedodontics evinced a lot of interest and said that the school would be intimated the next time a dental camp was held.

The Inner Wheel of Rotary Club of Secunderabad visited the school and donated steel plates and two shoe racks. The Rotary Club of Secunderabad – Sunrise donated cooking oil for the year. Its members Mr. Ramayya, Mr. & Mrs. Chandrasekhar, Ms. Tanvi and Mr. Amarnath visited Vikasini along with two visiting Rotarians from Poland Ms. Agnes and Mr. Christopher on December 5, 2006. The Rotarians donated ninety pairs of canvas shoes and cash gifts.

There was also a commitment by the club to provide milk and Horlicks for two months.

The sports events and games were held in December and the prizes won will be distributed on the Annual Day. Other competitions such as drawing, word game, etc will be held in January 2007. The cricket training has paid rich rewards as A. Narmada and V. Swathi represented the Hyderabad District at the State Level Inter District Sub-Junior Girls Tournament, which is no mean achievement. The extent to which these girls' self esteem and confidence has grown is evident from the following anecdote. During a 10-over cricket match, one of the spectators pointed out to Narmada and commented loudly, "What will that black girl play?" On hearing this, Narmada ran across and slapped the boy for having dared make such a comment.

Social Justice and Women

Syeda Faizunnisa our program volunteer in Kurnool has once again proved that one has to have the courage and conviction to push marginalized women out of their homes, publicly address gender issues and make a demand that women's rights are human rights. On December 10, 2006, she organized a two hour program in which 150 women from the various self help groups, 50 students, representatives from 5 NGOs in the area and 4 media representatives had gathered. The issue of child labor was also addressed and a practicing lawyer conducted an interactive session with the participants giving practical solutions wherever possible.

The program it was given to understand was the only one of its kind in Kurnool town on the occasion this year and the participants returned home a much



happier lot in the knowledge that there can be legal redressal of their problems.

The print and electronic media coverage were excellent and this is significant in view of the fact that the media plays a vital role in any social change initiative.



Building up capacities towards empowerment

Smart Growth by making the case...

The Peer Review Reflection (PRR), Smart Growth Training Series held on August 7, 8 & 9, 2006 at Satyodayam, Hyderabad was a training designed for Nirnaya's grantees to be able to review the current progress of their work, to understand report requirements and to look critically at their strategies. Advisory council member Dr. Sujatha Rita, a trainer and counselor facilitated the sessions. A session on accounting procedures was done by a chartered accountant, Ms. Subbalakshmi. PRR is part of the Smart Growth Capacity Building Program supported by Mama Cash, The Netherlands and is a three year program starting August 2006.

Rural Development Project

Direct monitoring results in remarkable change!

Nirnaya implements and coordinates activities at Gomahar village, Nalanda district, Bihar by working directly with Dr. Bhagwat Prasad from August onwards. An interesting feature of this village is that it is entirely inhabited by women, children and old men with the exception of three young men. The young men have migrated to other parts of the country in search of employment.

Nirnaya hopes to upgrade the play school at Gomahar with each passing year. The children have been given uniforms. It is heartening to witness the difference that the school has made in these children's lives. They are more disciplined as they reach school on time and can now say a prayer by themselves. This school will follow the Vikasini syllabus and lesson plan and eventually the unit test and examination system followed by any mainstream school as per the CBSE syllabus. A batch of twelve women completed the tailoring course and has voluntarily stitched school uniforms for the village children. The success of this course has seen thirty women being enrolled for the next course. Another heartening piece of information is that the three Self Help Groups (SHGs) formed have managed to collect Rs.8000 which was deposited in the cooperative bank. Some of the women have undergone training in making pickles, jams and fruit squash but need to hone their skills if marketing of these products is to take place. This is an area Nirnaya would help in. As there is no auxiliary nurse and midwife the A&C Kumar Family Foundation through Nirnaya is sponsoring two women for training - one as a paramedic and the other as an auxiliary nurse and midwife. Medical camps for the area are also on the agenda as doctors have already committed to holding



such camps once a month. Apparently Nirnaya's direct monitoring of village initiatives has resulted in remarkable change.

A major initiative was put into action when Drs. Arvind and Chitra Kumar got a solar panel fitted in the village on November 27th. Nirnaya plans to construct a community hall, which will serve as a Training & Production Center. In fact, there was a large turnout at the laying of the foundation stone by Drs. Arvind & Chitra Kumar on November 27th. Nirnaya will register the land, which is donated by Dr. Bhagwat Prasad, and the construction costs will be through a grant from the 'A & C Kumar Family Foundation'. The level of trust imposed by the foundation in Nirnaya is evident from the fact that they have made a grant of \$ 5000 and also committed to raise resources in order to make Gomahar a model village with all amenities and an improved quality of life for the people. The planned community center will be in Nirnaya's possession for three years and the activities conducted in this community hall will be directly monitored by Nirnaya in order to ensure optimal use of the premises for constructive purposes.

Intensive training is being planned for Dr. Bhagwat Prasad and the staff on a monthly basis to help them chart out their goals, achievements, challenges and required modifications in order to function more

effectively. Dr. Sujatha Rita, Advisory Council member will be designing a yearlong orientation and capacity building program to enable the vision of a model village become a reality. The village committee is quite active as it does its best to garner the maximum number of government schemes and programs like irrigation, drinking water supply, etc. A real indicator of success would be when young men come back to the village and generate an income within the village. There is a palpable excitement and hope in the air!

The good work continues

The good work by our grantee JEETA in Deogarh district, Orissa continues as five Self Help Groups (SHGs) have been formed in five villages. The untiring efforts of the team at empowering tribal women have made these women aware of their rights especially to forest produce are showing some results. In four villages, cultivation was begun on two acres of wasteland after which six of the tribal women filed an application in the Revenue Inspector's office and the Tehsildar's office to get legal entitlement for the land.

JEETA has started an initiative on sustainable agriculture for tribal women in Barkote Block of Deogarh district. The SHGs have learnt preparation and usage of bio-fertilizers. The SHGs of three villages have come together and formed a cooperative through which they sell non timber forest produce. The SHG in yet another village protects 150 acres of forest. The

group has also arranged for a loan to purchase fishing nets in order to start a collective fishing initiative.

The groups have formed grain banks as a crisis reserve for themselves.

An interesting case study is that of Jaitri Pradhan a SHG member who participated in JEETA's training on preparation of bio-fertilizer. She took this learning forward and shared her knowledge at her



SHG meeting. At the individual level she prepared the fertilizer at home with cow dung, cow urine and oil cake. She also made bio-chemicals (pesticides) at home and used the same in the paddy fields. She found the yield to be much better compared to the previous years. Her success has led to many enquiries on the preparation of bio-fertilizers and bio-chemicals.

Urban Slum Development Project

From strength to strength

Vikasini School at Hubli has been going from strength to strength as the number of students has risen to fifty and the school has been shifted to a more spacious premises in a more centrally located area. Ms. Manjula Kulkarni who runs a women's welfare organization inaugurated the new premises. Stiftung Natur Mensch Kultur, the



German foundation has sanctioned a grant to support Vikasini Girls School Hubli for the second consecutive year. The foundation takes great pride in the fact that it is instrumental in the emergence of a generation of empowered women from a minority community that is also economically vulnerable. Sireesha Elizabeth Soans as coordinator of this project should be commended for working hard to make the school environment more 'child friendly' by revamping teaching methods, making learning more interesting and improving the ambience of the school.

A good reason to be happy!

This season has given Nirnaya a good reason to be happy, as the demand for our greeting cards has doubled. It just shows that many think of Nirnaya as being truly worthy of their support. A big thank-you to our generous donors!

Ring out the old and ringing in the new...

Nirnaya had a lunch meeting on December 26th at its Smart Growth Center where a few donors, wellwishers, Nirnaya board and Advisory Council members as well the Vikasini Girl Child Education Trust members, staff of Nirnaya and Vikasini Girls School, Addagutta were present.

Sheela Mathews, fundraising and documentation officer presented the successes of Nirnaya and Vikasini following which the major annual task of sale of greeting cards was discussed at length. The point everyone unanimously agreed upon was the



grow and some of those present promised to start putting in time for this work. The delicious lunch and camaraderie were the best way to ring out the old and ring in the new year.



fact that it is selling the cause which is the crux of the problem and not the quality of the greetings which are usually paintings of the Vikasini children. There was general agreement that the artistic potential of some of the children must be given every chance to



Fundraising

Nirnaya has been able to raise resources in the present financial year for increased grantmaking from Global Fund for Women and institutional scale up from Mama Cash. The commitment of foundations like Global Fund for Women and Mama Cash in building Nirnaya's capacity as a women's fund, we are sure, will bear the desired results.

Grantmaking

In the latter half of the financial year Nirnaya has made 10 new grants towards marginalized women's advancement in different parts of India. Simultaneously, the capacity building of the grantees will also take place so that there is critical reflection, peer learning and setting of success indicators for subsequent benchmarking. We recognize the fact that we have to make our work tell the story and also generate measurable impact indicators. This learning we are passing on to our grantees so that women are recognized as being able to make their case.

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

Please tick your commitment below :

- ☐ I would like to donate a sum of
Rs. _____ monthly.
- ☐ I would like to donate a sum of
Rs. _____ annually.
- ☐ I would like to make a one time
endowment of
Rs. _____
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Name _____

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Cheques/Demand drafts should be drawn in favour of NIRNAYA payable at Secunderabad.

Donations in cash could be made at :

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secunderabad - 500 026, a.p. india.
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