

SAHAJANI SHIKSHA KENDRA,
MEHRAUNI- LALITPUR, U.P
October 2015 to March 2016

Summary of the Outcomes Achieved

Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Means of Verification	Total Target	Achieved from April 015 to march 2016
Total number of villages covered	Panchayat	Baseline survey	75	45
Total number of Literacy centers	Village		50	26
Total number of women covered under Literacy Centers	Literacy center	Monthly report	3500	1111
Total number of women covered through Residential Camps	Block	Reports	700	53
Total number of Literacy and Information Centres (LIC) to be opened	Panchayat	Monthly Reports	20	15
Total number of women covered under literacy and information (LIC) centres	Panchayat	Monthly Report	2500	628
Total number of MGNREGA camps organized	Block	Monthly Report	5	3
Total number of schools covered	Village	Monthly Report	125	65
Mobilization of women for LIC (According to the number of LICs opened)	Village	Monthly	20	15
Total number of capacity building training of Teachers, Supervisors, LIC facilitators	Organizational	Six monthly report	5	3
Total number of women forums	Collective at	Six monthly	40	50

strengthened	village level	report		
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Introduction

Lalitpur district, situated at the border of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, is quite a backward region where “poverty is widespread and gender-based discrimination common. Women’s Literacy rates in the past have been as low as 20% in Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) areas”. The Sahajani Shiksha Kendra has been working with rural and Adivasi women on issues of their empowerment through education and literacy programmes at Lalitpur since 2002. SSK is a women’s organization that works with a feminist perspective with the women and girls from Dalit, Adivasi and marginalized communities. Various issues like children’s education, MGNREGA, child marriage are addressed and information regarding different governmental policies is provided by the organization. The organization works towards inculcating leadership qualities amongst the women and encouraging them to raise their voice on different issues pertaining to their lives.

In the last six months, primary focus has been on the initiation of Literacy & Information Centers (LICs) and Literacy Centers. SSK has undertaken mobilization activities with women and communities with the intention of inviting them to be part of learning at and running the Literacy & Information Centers and Literacy Centers. The capacity building of staff has been done to effectively run these centers with a thorough understanding of the pedagogy, and by inculcating a critical gender perspective among various levels of staff. In addition, material has been created so there are substantial devices available (as contextualized stories, case studies etc.) to initiate and carry forward teaching and learning through the said pedagogy and a gender perspective. These have been some of the core activities carried out during this period, to support the opening and effective working of LICs and Literacy centers.

Alongside this, SSK has been drawing links between women’s literacy and empowerment and carrying forward our work with *Samitis*, MGNREGA, government schools, conducting residential camps. The aforementioned activities have been described in detail below;

1. Capacity Building of Program Staff

Capacity building of the field level volunteers, who register and enter the program for the very first time is done with objectives of providing orientation regarding nature of the program, roles and responsibilities and an understanding of literacy work and how gender is built into that.

Training Programmes for Center Teachers, Supervisors, LIC facilitators were held at the SSK office, Mehrauni in the months of November and December, 2015. Nirantar collaborated with SSK to conduct these two 6-day

trainings for Teachers, Supervisors, and LIC facilitators. The objectives of the trainings was to understand the women's literacy program, pedagogy of teaching Language, Mathematics, and methodology of teaching, knowledge of center records and its structure and also understanding the roles and responsibilities of Teachers, Supervisors, and LIC facilitators.

In this training, these objectives were achieved through the medium of activities, games, capacity building for pedagogy and methods of learning, perspective building on Women's Literacy, case studies, presentations, and role-plays. During the training it was observed that teachers had many questions about word pedagogy. As these teachers have themselves studied in formal education system, they find it hard to accept this pedagogy, and take some time to learn this as well. With regards to Mathematics, the uncommon ways of teaching, like the concept of zero, chronological numbers, and other basics of the subject make it challenging and time taking for the teachers to follow. The participants act out these issues as a role-play, which are then worked upon through the feedbacks from the facilitators.

During the training, participants are shown movies and through geet (songs), and stories participants are taught how to talk about gender and issues. In addition, they are informed about the environment of the center, maintaining of records, etc.

2. Material Creation

SSK staff was part of a 3 day material creation workshop organized by Nirantar in which material was created (given in the table below) and compiled to provide a medium of discussions and discourse for women at the centers. Like mentioned previously, the process of the material creation was to assess the need first, (what is needed for the centers) and then developing a draft for the same.

Name of Issues	Name of Material	Number of Copies
Early and Child Marriage	Jani Patrika	1000
MGNREGA	3 posters for case studies	300
Ration	Informational Pamphlet	1000
Pension	Informational Pamphlet	1000
RTE	Informational Pamphlet	1000
Geet and Slogans	Book	50
Curriculum for Girls	Hindi, Geography, Science	1

3. Literacy and Information Centers (LICs)

In order to continue education and increasing community participation at LICs, mobilization activities have been done to invite the community to engage with the LICs. Mobilization activities were done at the three blocks of Mandwara, Birdha and Mehrauni in 55 Gram Panchayats with 10,000 women and 5000 men belonging to Dalit, Adivasi and marginalized communities. The intention of the mobilization is to inform the

community about the vision of the LICs and the ways in which the community can be involved with them. Discussions with the community were held on how people from the community and women's literacy centers would be linked to different government policies through the literacy and information centers. Further, it was discussed how the literacy and information centers would be situated within the village at a location that is accessible to all and also that everyone's equal participation would be ensured in the opening and running of the literacy and information centers.

Keeping these objectives in mind, for the first phase 35 villages have been chosen for opening literacy and information centers (LICs) across the three blocks. The main challenge here is that women from marginalized communities do not want to go to Dalit communities. Our effort will be to keep the centers at such a location where women from different communities can come participate at a common platform and hopefully this would serve to bridge differences amongst them.

A ten-day process was initiated in 15 Gram Panchayats to mobilize the individuals from communities. These individuals were brought together at the Panchayat, or public spaces on the day of opening the LICs and were oriented about the purpose of these centers. It was informed to them that LICs were being opened to include women learners with the Panchayat in the literacy program, as well as to connect the community with the Panchayat's plans and schemes. Through these, people would be able to access information in better way and receive help in filling forms for pension, MGNREGA, or ration. In addition, there would be a coaching and library facility for children.

Individuals were briefed about the timings of the centers and informed that women could utilize this space for studying, in creating awareness on education and information, and take steps with regards to schemes in community spaces. Alongside this it was shared with the community that LICs would have teaching-learning material for women, forms for Panchayat-level schemes, MGNREGA demand application, Jani Patrika (based on early and child marriage), pamphlets on RTE, storybooks, and informational books.

This process also included registration of women at these LICs wherein 671 women were enrolled in the Information and Literacy Centers, opened in a total of 15 Gram Panchayats.

Name of the Block	LICs at the Panchayat-Level	Number of Women
Mahrauni	10	412
Mandawara	5	260

4. Literacy Centers

To begin with, villagers were mobilized through a rally to the location of the centre. With the help of a few women and the Sahjani Team, some slogans, songs, and 'Fad' were performed. While encouraging people to participate in the ensuing group discussions, they were also informed about the literacy centers. The enrollment process was then initiated for women who showed interest in joining the literacy centers. All the teaching-learning material was displayed at the center and about 40 to 60 women were enrolled in each Literacy center. At present, women who enrolled are coming to the respective centers everyday for a minimum of 3-4 hours, to work on their literacy skills and build awareness.

In November 2016, 26 village-level literacy centers were opened with a total enrollment of 1453 women.

Name of the Block	Number of Centers or	Number of Women
Mahrauni	10	480
Mandawara	10	372
Birdha	6	259

5. Block Level Residential Camp

Two 10-day residential camps were organized in Mahrauni in the months of December 2015 and January 2016. In these camps 53 women participated from 3 blocks. These residential camps were organized with the objective of strengthening literacy skills. Since these camps are residential in nature the women participated were in better position to engage in different activities, and learn more substantially without having to worry about their household chores or responsibilities. A residential literacy camp is usually organized at the Mehrauni block as women come from far off villages participate in it.

At the camps, importance is given to creating an environment conducive for learning and studying so learners feel motivated. Women coming to the camps usually belong to Dalit, Adivasi and marginalized communities. These communities do not easily engage with each other and this usually presents itself as one of the major challenges at the camps and the efforts of the organization have always been towards creating an atmosphere where women from the different communities can come together and learn without their differences coming in the way. An understanding is created amongst women on issues like gender, equal rights of women, etc. which concern to them and the various means through which these issues can be addressed by them is also discussed at the camps.

During this camp discussions were held around the issue of child marriage. Women were encouraged to have internal discussions regarding the issue of child marriage with different community level groups based on the understanding that they have developed from the discussions held during the camp.

Like mentioned previously, this 10 day camp was held in the month of December 2015 and January 2016, in which women from different villages of Mandawara block participated. To understand the literacy level a test

was administered, and based on women's competency level, they were divided into groups and taught language and Math.

NAME OF THE BLOCK	NO OF VILLAGES	NO. OF WOMEN
MANDWARA	9	20
MEHRAUNI	10	19
BIRDHA	5	14
TOTAL WOMEN	24	53

LITERACY LEVEL OF THE WOMEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CAMP	NUMBER OF WOMEN	LEVEL AFTER CAMP
<p>BASIC LITERACY LEVEL 1</p> <p>Those who could not write their name or their village name and could not recognize alphabets. Similarly had limited knowledge pertaining to numeracy.</p>	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All women learned to read and write their name and their village name. 10-11 women learned to read and write a letter till lesson 5 All women learned to read and write 1-9 numbers 8-10 women learned to read and write numbers from 1-50 and developed understanding regarding unit and tens
<p>BASIC LITERACY LEVEL 2</p> <p>Knew how to write their name and village name could recognize few alphabets and read and write 1-9 numbers.</p> <p>Difficulties in recognizing few numbers</p>	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All women learned new letters and vowels in lesson 5 and learned how to make new words from those letters. 8-10 women learned how to write complete sentences and read small passages. Learned about unit and tens, to read and write the numbers from 100-500 and about basic addition and subtraction.
<p>BASIC LITERACY LEVEL 3</p> <p>Complete understanding of alphabets and vowels, could read and write words and sentences. Some women had difficulties in writing words with long vowels or complex words.</p> <p>Were aware of numbers till 1000 and could do basic addition and subtraction</p>	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All women's reading abilities were strengthened and they learned to write paragraphs and stories. Understanding about phrases and sayings developed amongst women. In math, learned to read and write numbers up to 1000. Learned addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of big numbers.

P.s. Ten women who attended the Block Level residential camps were only able to participate for 4-5 days. They were also unable to appear for the test and therefore information regarding their literacy levels is not available.

The discussions at the block level residential camps focused on several themes, one of which was Village level women committees or *Samitis*. Their work, organization, and leadership were discussed at the camp. In addition, several types of information were shared during these discussions with women, such as taking initiatives for schemes through Information Centers and committees. Taking ownership and responsibility of the LICs was discussed with women and they were given complete information about the MGNREGA form and application.

Further, detailed information regarding Ration Cards was provided to them; which included a list of items that individuals can get with the card, form filling, information update form, where to submit, etc. were also spoken about. Women were also taught about different measuring units of wheat, rice, and other items.

Moreover, different sessions were organized to develop an understanding on the issue of early marriage and its social and gender implications. These sessions explored the said themes through asking learners about the different aspirations and dreams they nourished apart from marriage, and whether or not they got a chance to fulfill these. Another question was about the advantage and disadvantages of marriage, and if advantages were found in marriage, then probing with regards to the conditions are which women have to fulfill to attain these advantages.

A pivotal part of these sessions was women sharing their experiences and some of these are listed below;

- Most women shared how they were married at an early age, and that only minimal importance was given to education. Had there been a chance they too would've accessed educational spaces and studied. They also shared that they wished their children would complete higher education.
- Women spoke about how they faced health issues such as severe anemia, T.B and a weak uterus as a result of being married at a young age.
- Women revealed that after marriage they were subject to neglect and taunts from different family members. If they didn't perform household tasks, they were at risk of facing physical violence and more often than not they were victims to domestic violence.

6. Monitoring and Information System (MIS) for Literacy Programme

To get an estimate of the current literacy and numeracy skill levels of the women enrolled and come to study at SSKs' centers a baseline surveys was undertaken. . This was a week long process which helped in planning and reevaluating the program accordingly. As the number of women registered at SSKs is very high this process was done in the form of sampling, in which 310 women from the program were chosen randomly to fill the baseline format.

With the help of an expert agency 'IMPACT', formats were developed for every level of monitoring and to collect data of the entire program. For example, the format was developed for the report of center-teacher, which will include monthly center-level information and data collection. In the same way, the reporting formats for supervisors and block coordinators were also developed. All these formats and data were then compiled by the project coordinator on the program level to produce a consolidated report. This report then can be used in the programme review and planning in future.

7. Linkages of Women's Literacy and Empowerment

Work in Schools

The work with schools is crucial to providing substantial inputs within the community. This work is done at the level of the school and the community. SSK works with schools with the ideology that they enroll more number of children from diverse backgrounds and provide quality education, and follow the mandate of the RTE. With the community, SSK works with the same goals, that is to push more numbers of children to join government schools so that the young in the community are better able to reach education. With these broad goals, SSK organizes camps/*Shivir* for government schools.

One of the objectives of the camps held in government schools from the end of January to the end of February were to get the names of those children enrolled, whose names are not already registered with the school. In addition, the aim was to engage with the teachers and organize interesting activities related to education through which interest for the syllabus can be generated and maintained amongst the students. For children to develop a relationship or bond with the school, to ensure regularity in attendance and to strengthen literacy levels amongst students so they are better able to access their rights were also the goals of organizing these two camps

Number of block	Total vi	Total sch	Number of teachers	Total enro	Present attendance	Attendance for after camp se day
3	35	57	205	7117	38	44

During the camps, door-to-door visits were done at the village level and discussions were held with the community people and SMC members regarding their roles and responsibilities. It was observed that children from privileged backgrounds attend private schools and hence this section of the community displays apathy towards issues that plague the existing government education system.

Some of the issues, which came forth during these camps, are as follows. In all the 57 schools, the initial and final attendance was documented and it was found out that 8 schools were not serving meals regularly. Along with this, it was observed that mid-day meals were not being made available for a month now at the primary schools of Kuraura and Ramesra. According to the teachers, there was no conversion cost money since six

months now, so they had to stop the meals. It was also observed that the mid-day meals and milk distribution is irregular or of low quality in 25 schools.

It was found that a teacher was suspended from the primary school in Ajaan as he did not distribute dresses to the students. With no teacher available in the school now, the children were found teaching each other at the school. Further, there is a shortage of teachers at the primary school in Pathrayi, and at the upper primary school, Bhadaura. Teachers have to cover quite a distance to reach these schools, resulting in their infrequent attendance. Moreover, according to the teachers, the block's ABSA and ABRC have come for inspection of meals several times, but to no avail. Most teachers are not going to school because of their assigned board exam duties. Also, it was observed at the community-level that most parents preferred to send their children to private schools, because of the poor quality of education in the government schools. Lastly, it was seen that 57 schools the SMC meetings had not been held and that schools are being run only with *Anudeshaks*.

A meeting was held with the Block Education Officer and BSA office at the block level to address the above issues. Many changes have been observed in the schools after these meetings and regular follow ups. Some of the changes that were observed were – in some schools teachers started coming on time, the quality of food improved and teachers have started conducting some of the activities held at the camps with their students.

Strengthening of Samitis (Village Level Women Committees)

The village level samitis were opened with the intention of bringing women from the Literacy Center's into leadership roles. SSK's vision for the Samitis is that the women, who join these, are able to develop leadership skills and are also able work towards the development of their respective communities with a certain sense of ownership. Following this vision, monthly women committee meetings were held in 50 villages, with 15-25 women participating in every village. In these meetings, women talked about ration, pension, MGNREGA, and children's education.

During discussions in the committee meetings, it was discovered that in several villages including Gauna, Madanpur, Didauniya, Parsaata, Saurayi, only 5 out of six members are listed in the ration card. As a result of this finding, Samiti women questioned the ration distributor about the same, and people were informed to fill out their forms again. In addition, the ration distributor was withholding the cards of a few people, which he was asked to return.

Another problem, which emerged during these meetings, was about individuals being unable to get work under MGNREGA. There was a delay in providing work to individuals, firstly, due to elections and secondly, because of the appointment of a new Panchayat Pradhyaan. It was decided that Samiti members will fill the forms, and that women from the committee will come together to write to the *sarpanch* and the Panchayat for work under MGNREGA. The filled-in forms were sent to the Panchayat secretary.

Samiti members have regular meetings at the school and discuss different issues regarding the quality of education and food being served at the schools. In some villages it is not being possible to conduct regular meetings as a lot of women have migrated due to bad crop during this season.

Initiatives in MGNREGA

Efforts were made to link women who are at the literacy centers with MGNREGA and stalls were set up at the block level so as to provide detailed information regarding MGNREGA in December 2015 and January '16. The aim was to empower women to use their literacy skills and demand for work under MGNREGA in written. MGNREGA stall was put up in Mehrauni and Mandawara block during one of the market days so that maximum number of people can be reached. In addition, the issue of female MGNREGA mates not finding work was also addressed. Through these MGNREGA stalls, around 610 people were given information in Mehrauni and Mandawara block and many of them also found employment through these stalls.

Information regarding MGNREGA was distributed in Village Level Committee meetings and camps at the centers. In Mehrauni and Mandawara, 509 people from 50 villages filled the 'Maang-Patr' and 900 people found employment under MGNREGA. Several 'Mahila Mate' from Sahjani Center were chosen and listed as social workers like PaanBai, HeeraBai, Gajra, Lali, Durga, Rajkumari, and Ram Kali.

In reality, labourers who need work are not getting work, and the ones who find employment under MGNREGA do not get wages on time. Further, if individuals get their wages on time they do not get the rightful amount (as per the number of days that they worked for). In addition, their attendance is mostly filled at home, and corruption is prevalent on the part of MGNREGA mates and Panchayat members. There is almost no work done under MGNREGA in remote villages and even now, many people do not have job cards. Information regarding all this is given to people and they are told that they would be supported if they show willingness to take up these issues. In cases of pension for widow and senior citizens, the Sarpanch and secretary are pushed to deliver pensions to the concerned parties.

Panchayat Pradhaan Meeting

A one-day meeting was held on 8th March 2016, in the community center of the Mehrauni, block, with the Panchayat Pradhans of Mehrauni, Birdha, and Mandawara blocks. Around 114 people took part in this meeting, out of which there were 33 male Pradhans, 4 female Pradhans of Gram Panchayat and the rest were ward Members Sadasya, Panchayat Mitr, Sahjani volunteers and staff. All the teachers and team members of Sahjani Center were also present there. The objectives of this one day meeting were to share information about the whole SSK program, planning of literacy program activities with the female Pradhan members of Gram Panchayat, including their own literacy and capacity skills. How SSK can work together with Gram Panchayat on schemes, outreach, literacy, and other developmental issues was also discussed at this meeting. In addition, women who are Panchayat Pradhans, were awarded with a shield to honour their achievements.

This meeting was considered successful in terms of participation from the Panchayat members and SSK. They appreciated SSK's work on many levels and plans for working together are also under process now. Another highlight of this meeting was the honor and recognition provided to the female Pradhans. This meeting was culminated into a rally, which was also to mark the International Women's Day, from Mehrauni Bazaar while women sang slogans and songs.