

**SahjaniShiksha Kendra**  
**April 2015 to March 2016**

## **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.

Since the last one year was the first year of the programme hence primary focus was on mobilizing women and communities with an intention of inviting them to be part of learning at and running the Literacy & Information Centers and Literacy Centers. At the same time Literacy and Information centers and Literacy Centers were established. SSK did the capacity building of staff to effectively run these centers with a thorough understanding of the pedagogy by inculcating a critical gender perspective among various levels of staff. In addition, material was created so that the teacher would have substantial contextualized stories, case studies to initiate and carry forward teaching and learning with gender perspective. Altogether block level camps, village level camps, school shivirs and bridge course were organized. 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 the work done with *Samitis*, MGNREGA, government schools, conducting residential camps.

## **Mobilization for Literacy and Information Centers**

SSK is running the literacy programme for past 12 years but in order to increase participation from the community few changes were done in the programme. Mobilization activities were conducted in three blocks of Lalitpur; Mandwara, Birdha and Mehrauni in 55 Gram Panchayats with 10,000 women and 5000 men who belong to Dalit, Adivasi and marginalized communities. During mobilization it was discussed that LIC will be accessible to all and ensures everyone participation. LIC will be linked to different government policies and hence forms related to these policies will be made available at LIC. In the first phase **35 villages** have been chosen for opening literacy and information centers across the three blocks.

## Baseline Survey

Though SSK is working for more than a decade in the field but to get more in-depth information regarding some Panchayat and communities SSK in collaboration with Nirantar and Impact (Impact is an organization that largely works in the field of research and have expertise of doing monitoring and evaluation) conducted a base line survey across 40 villages of Lalitpur. Different tools like questionnaire, Focused Group Discussions were used for the purpose of this survey. Panchayat level guidelines and formats were also made available to the people. Questionnaire was personally administered and FDG's were conducted in 55 gram Panchayat across 40 villages with 500 women. Data on the level of literacy in villages was also gathered through the survey.

## Literacy and Information Centers (LICs)

In order to continue education and increasing community participation at LICs, mobilization activities were conducted to invite the community to engage with the LICs. In the first phase 35 villages were selected for opening literacy and information centers (LICs) across the three blocks. The main challenge was that women from marginalized communities do not want to go to Dalit communities. A ten-day process was initiated in 15 Gram Panchayats to mobilize the individuals from communities. 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.

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. 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.

## 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 initiated for women who showed interest in joining the literacy centers and about 40 to 60 women were enrolled in each Literacy center. In November 2016, **26 village-level literacy centers were opened with a total enrollment of 1453 women.**

## Block Level Residential Camp

Three residential literacy camp is organized for 10 days in the Mehrauni block, where 96 women participated in different activities without worrying about household chores or responsibilities. During the camp one of the major challenges was to facilitate communication between Dalit, Adivasi and marginalized communities as these communities do not easily engage with each other.

During this camp discussions were held around the issue of child marriage and Village level women committees or *Samitis*, women were encouraged to take back the understanding that they have developed to their communities and have internal discussions regarding the same with

different community level groups. Further, detailed information regarding Ration Cards was provided to them; filling the form and submitting the same. A test was administered to all the women to understand their literacy levels. Based on their competencies, they were divided into groups and taught language and Math.

LITERACY LEVEL OF THE WOMEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CAMP		
BASIC LITERACY LEVEL 1, 30 WOMEN	Those who could not write their name or their village name and could not recognize alphabets. Similarly had limited knowledge pertaining to numeracy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All women learned to read and write their name and their village name.</li> <li>10-11 women learned to write the read and write new letter till lesson 2.</li> <li>All women learned to read and write 1-9 numbers</li> <li>8-10 women learned to read and write numbers from 1-50 and developed understanding regarding unit and tens.</li> </ul>
BASIC LITERACY LEVEL 2, 30 WOMEN	Those who knew how to write their name and their village name could recognize few other alphabets and read and write 1-100 numbers. Had difficulties in recognizing few numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All women learned new letters and vowels till lesson 5 and learned how to make new words from those letters.</li> <li>8-10 women learned how to write complete sentences and read small passages.</li> <li>Learned about unit and tens, to read and write the numbers from 100-500 and about basic addition and subtraction.</li> </ul>
BASIC LITERACY LEVEL 3, 26 WOMEN	Had complete understanding of alphabets and vowels, could read and write words and sentences. Some women had difficulties in writing words with vowels or complex words. Were aware of numbers till 1000 and could do basic addition and subtraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All women's reading abilities were strengthened and they learned to write letters and stories.</li> <li>Understanding about phrases and sayings was developed amongst women.</li> <li>In math, learned to read and write numbers till 1000.</li> <li>Learned addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of big numbers.</li> </ul>

Note: 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.

## School Shivirs

School shivirs were organized with an objective to get the names of those children enrolled, whose names are not already registered with the school and re-enrolled dropped out children to school, especially those belonging to the marginalized communities of Dalit and Adivasis. Also shivirs were important in engaging with teachers to take some interesting activities to develop students' interest in studies. **In 122 schools shivirs were conducted wherein interaction with 15316 students was done.**

During the camps, SMC members were contacted and discussion with them held regarding their roles and responsibilities along with door to door visits in the villages. Some issues like poor hygiene and teachers' absence and late coming from the school were observed during the camps.

## Capacity Building of Program Staff

Training for Center Teachers, Supervisors, LIC facilitators were organized at the SSK office, Mehrauni in the months of November and December, 2015. Nirantar collaborated with SSK to conduct two trainings 6-days each for Teachers, Supervisors, and LIC facilitators. The objectives of the trainings were to make understand the women's literacy program, pedagogy of teaching Language, Mathematics, knowledge of center records, its structure and also understanding the roles and responsibilities of Teachers, Supervisors, and LIC facilitators.

In this training perspective building on Women's Literacy was done through case studies, presentations, and role-plays. Since the teachers studied in formal education system, they found hard to accept word pedagogy. 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.

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.

## 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.

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

## **Monitoring and Information System (MIS) for Literacy Programme**

To get the current literacy and numeracy skill levels of the women enrolled and come to study at SSK's 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 SSK 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. All the data was compiled by the project coordinator on the program level to produce a consolidated report.

## **Issue Based Work**

### **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 community 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, members got to know the problems regarding not getting Ration, unable to get work under MGNREGA and actions were taken to resolve these issues. 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 conducting regular meetings were not possible as a lot of women had migrated migrate due to bad crop during this season.

### **Initiatives in MGNREGA**

To link women with MGNREGA stalls were set up in December 2015 and January '16 at the block level, this provided detailed information regarding MGNREGA. 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 blocks 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.

### **Panchayat Pradhana Meeting**

A one-day meeting was held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016, in the community center of the Mehrauni, block, with the Panchayat Pradhans of Mehrauni, Birdha, and Mandawara blocks. Around 114 people participated in the meeting, out of which there were 33 male Pradhans, 4 female Pradhans of Gram Panchayat and the rest were ward Members Sadasya, Panchayat Mitra, Sahjani volunteers

and staff. All the teachers and team members of Sahjani Center were also present. The objectives of this one day meeting were to share information about the whole SSK program, planning of literacy program activities with the female Pradhans 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.

As SSK focuses on empowering women through literacy it also does it through enabling them to access their rights, entitlements and builds their understanding on different social issues. 20 women from 100 villages were filled the form for social worker along with the work entailed above this year SSK built awareness on Food Security Bill, Right to Education Act, MGNREGA, ill effects of early and child marriage etc. For this purpose meetings were held with community members, to discuss the issues, meetings were conducted with parents to discuss the issue of early and child marriage. The number pertaining to the outreach made is given below:

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Issue persuaded</b>	<b>No. of Villages</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>
<b>1</b>	Demand followed under MGNREGA	62	150
<b>2</b>	Payment under MGNREGA made available	62	600
<b>3</b>	Awareness on Food Security Bill	50	200
<b>4</b>	Rashan card made	50	200
<b>5</b>	Rashan distribution	50	1000
<b>6</b>	Awareness on issue of early marriage	50	3421 (females 1532, males 470, Ad girls 962 and Ad boys 457)
<b>7</b>	Jani Adhikar Samiti meeting	62	2200
<b>8</b>	Meetings under Right to Education Act	50	4927 (females 1681, males 531, Ad girls 1888 and Ad boys 847)