

MAHILA SHANTI SENA TRAINING PROGRAMME

Organised By:- BISWA (NGO)

Conducted by:- Unnayan

Training period:- 10.12.09 to 12.12.09

BACKGROUND:- The concept of Mahila Shanti Sena was initiated by the Gandhian Acharya Rammurty with the objective of developing consciousness and a sense of responsibility among rural women to solve problems and bring about harmony at the grass root level. The concept was launched in Odisha by Unnayan and it has been working successfully in different districts. Unnayan has been conducting Mahila Shanti Sena trainings programmes and meetings at Mayurbhanj, Jagatsinghpur, Anugul and very recently at Sambalpur. A three days work shop was conducted by Unnayan and its team at Sambalpur in December 2009. It involved 30 women from Maneswar block of Gunderpur village. The training programme was organized by BISWA (NGO)

WELCOME AND INAGURATION:- At the outset of the meeting everyone present inside the hall welcomed each other by passing on a floral bouquet. Then the secretary of Unnayan Mrs Rashmi Mohanty lighted the lamp and offered floral tribute at the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. It was followed by a welcome song i.e “*Ame Karma ra upasana karibu..... Ame dharma ra Aradhana Karibu* (we will understand our duties and responsibilities and bridge the gap between men and women) Prof Srigopal Mohanty was also present at the meeting.

GOAL:- To spread the message of Mahila Shanti Sena among a large number of rural women belonging to western Orissa. The idea is to bring different groups of women into one platform and develop in them a sense of unity and responsibility so that they can understand the root cause of their problem and look for their own solution in a peaceful way.

MEDIUM OF TRAINING:- Group discussion, Sharing of knowledge, ideas and experiences, questionnaire, game etc.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

After the welcome ceremony the participants were asked to recall some of the very touching and unforgettable moments of their own life. They were asked to recall the importance of those persons who have contributed to their happiness be they parents, teachers, peers, neighbor or anyone else who played a positive role. Gradually it was noticed that the participants were lost in deep thought. To develop a sense of harmony among the participants Prof Srigopal Mohanty said that life was a collection of moments that is filled with memories. When we recall any particular moment of our life we find that some one in some way is responsible for it. So everyone should understand his/her importance in life and act accordingly. He also emphasized that unity brings strength and all the participants were an inseparable part of the group.

To break the ice an animal game was played at this stage. In this game each participant selected their group member and exchanged their name and other information about their family, village etc. At the end of the game the participants were more relaxed and comfortable with each other.

Group discussion:- At the end of the game all the participants were divided into four groups to discuss different problems that are encountered by the women in their life time. Then each of the groups gave a presentation on their discussion. Through this presentation there was an articulation of all the negative aspects of being a woman.

The present was followed by a “Chocolate game”. Through the game the participants were made to realize and appreciate the need and importance of co operation.

The next day the previous day's activities were reviewed. In particular the difficulties faced by women were looked into in detail. Participants were put into four groups and were urged to discuss and come up with possible solutions to the problems.

In general the participants felt that the education of a girl child is essential. Secondly there is a need for women to be economically independent. Thirdly, the participants

agreed that women in a group could achieve that they cant independently. At this stage the history of the Mahila Shanti Sena and the experiences of different Mahila Shanti Sena groups from Jagatsinghpur and Mayurbhanj were shared by the facilitators with the participants. Some of the participants from Sambalpur shared their experiences of how collectively they have been able to protect the Jungle and how they have been able to construct paths to their village.

A paper game was played to reinforce the idea of collective success. This game led the foundation for the next discussion which was on collective co operation and action. The participants were asked to reflect on the need for change and how to bring about this change through the MSS movement. The emphasis of he discussion were on

- Gender equality
- Democratic participation at the grass root level.
- To act against injustice.
- To solve their own problems themselves.
- The qualities of a good leader was analyzed and each of the participant was urged to develop and respect these qualities.

A session on health and hygeine was organized by the former Chief District Medical officer to aware the participants about general health problems.

The participants were asked to think about how they were going apply this training to their life and what action they would be taking to carry the movement forward. Finally the participants took the MSS oath.

Brief review of the training programme:-

- Harvesting time was the wrong time for conducting a training programme in a rural area.
- Participants should be selected more carefully for the training to be effective – Many of the participants could not follow simple oriya nor were they regular.

- In future an MSS training programme should be treated as a Training of the trainers and therefore the participants should not only be receptive but also have good communication skill.
- The trainers or the facilitators should be speaking the local dialogue.



