

District Level Workshop on Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Land Rights

Venue-Hotel Mamata Palace, Deogarh

Date-22nd December 2010

Organized by Nari Surakshya Samiti, Kundhegola Branch, Deogarh

Supported by DCA, New Delhi

Nari Surakshya Samiti, Kundhegola Branch, Deogarh organized a one-day District level Workshop on Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan and Land Rights on 22nd December 2010 at Hotel Mamata Palace, Deogarh with the aim to make aware the civil society, especially the Dalit sections about the SC sub-plan and land rights for its effective implementation. A total of 45 participants involving members of women SHGs, members of village youth clubs, representatives of Panchayatiraj Institutions and lawyers participated in the programme. Mr.Chitta Behera, an eminent social scientist and advisor to Orissa RTI Campaign and Ms.Pinkirani Nanda an Advocate at Deogarh Bar attended the programme as Resource Persons. The programme started at 11.30 a.m.and continued upto the luncheon at 3pm The session was chaired by Ms Smitarani Pattanaik, Secretary, NSS.

At the outset Ms Anjana Mahakud on behalf of NSS welcomed all and on her request all the participants gave their self introduction. Ms.Smitarani Pattanaik, Secretary, NSS briefed the house on the background of NSS and also that of the programme being held. She also shared about the women and Dalit issues on which the NSS has been focussing since its inception. Further she told about the SC Sub Plan, a Scheme of the Central Govt in place for the economic, educational and social development of SCs and its basic objective was to reduce poverty and unemployment along with the development of human resource by way of providing proper education and health services. Besides the Plan also administers the provision of financial and physical security against all types of exploitation and oppression and for creation of productive assets in favour of the SCs for their sustainable growth and development. Then she observed that if we dream of our development, we first of all need to identify our problems and accordingly should make formal representations to the concerned Govt officials to sort them out as per the norms of the Govt run welfare programmes. She also suggested that we need to retain the photocopy of all documents that may be required in connection with further interaction with the Govt officials, especially in cases where we happen to get deprived of our legitimate dues.

Then followed a participatory discussion on various Government agencies that are in place at both Central and State levels to address to different welfare needs of SC populations such as State SC Development Finance Corporation. Besides there also exist various kinds of schemes and programmes meant for the welfare and uplift of the marginalized sections including the SCs.

Sri Chitta Behera, a resource person, before speaking on the subject, wanted to know from the participants whether they have received any loan from any Corporation, Bank or any other source for their economic development, and if so, then how much interest they were to pay against the same. In reply Ms. Khiroda Behera, a member of Maa Bhawani SHG of Tarang G.P shared that the co-members of their group received a loan from Union Bank, Reamal, Deograh to the tune of Rupees 5 lakh with a subsidy amounting to Rs 1 lakh and 20 thousand.

Ms. Smitarani Pattanaik informed about the SC Development Finance Corporation and said that it is the Block Welfare Officer and District Welfare Officer who recommend the names of beneficiaries for availing of the loan from the Corporation. One can get the information in respect of how many people applied for loan and how much amount was sanctioned to them from the above sources. She also informed that a landless Scheduled Caste person can also apply for land for doing any business like kitchen garden and mini-rice holler by way of submitting the application to the District Welfare Officer.

Advocate Ms. Pinky Rani Nanda in her talk observed first of all that with the increasing incidence of domestic violence against women, the goal of women empowerment, especially the Dalit segment of women was getting lost away. Then, for sensitising the participants on Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 she discussed about its features and also clarified who can file a complaint against whom, where to lodge complaint, and what are the penalties provided under this Act. She explained that the comprehensive definition of domestic violence as provided under the above law included the cases of mental and physical abuse, economic exploitation and sexual abuse.

Mr.Nanda further informed that that there is at least one Protection Officer (P.O) in each district to register and deal with the cases of domestic violence. She also pointed out the duties of the Protection Officer, such as to make a Domestic Incident Report to the Magistrate, to produce a protection order for the victim, to conduct spot intervention and enquiry where the incident occurred, to arrange free legal aid and medical treatment and also to make available a safe shelter for the victims, if necessary.

Ms.Nanda also stressed the need for using RTI Act as an effective tool to check corruption and to ensure transparency in all developmental works. Due to lack of information on Govt programmes and ongoing activities the people are not able to access them, be it at G.P, Block or District level. If you need any information relating to IAY or a land scheme or about any Govt programme you can access the related information by using RTI Act 2005. To a query as to whom to apply for information, Ms Nanda informed that the PIO, APIO or in their absence, any designated/authorized officer can be approached for the purpose.

Mr.Behera supplemented Ms.Nanda by saying that as per the provisions of Section 4 on suo motu disclosures the applicants can access instant information in the regional language from the concerned public authority or PIO in respect of 17 categories of information. Alternatively one can also seek information by making an application for the purpose under Section 6 of the Act. As per the Orissa RTI Rules 2005 one has to use Form A and pay cash or Treasury Challan of Rs.10/-. If no information is received or incorrect, incomplete or misleading information is received, the concerned applicant may prefer 1st appeal. As per the Orissa State Rules, the 1st appeal is to be made to the 1st appellate authority in Form D accompanied by court fee stamps worth Rs.20/- affixed thereon. If aggrieved by the decision of the 1st appeal, one can file 2nd appeal to the Information Commission on Form E affixing Rs.25 worth of Court fee stamps thereon. Under the circumstances, there is a wider scope for every individual to get benefited in terms of information on and access to different schemes and programmes of govt. by using RTI.

Ms.Nanda also emphasised the need for marriage registration and observed that every one should register his/her marriage to avoid future complications. Further, to promote

inter-caste marriage the government has floated a scheme to pay Rs 50,000/- worth of award to the concerned couple, she said.

Mr. Chitta Behera felt the need for appraising the participants on the Excise Policy of the state government, since quite many persons including Dalits and women have been subject to unnecessary police harassment due to their ignorance. He opined that earlier in the past most of the women in rural areas used to brew pure Mahuli liquor out of Mahuli flower for their own consumption. But now the poor people are being exploited by BhatIs (Out-still Shops) licensed by the Government in different rural and tribal areas of the State. The tribal communities have thus been deprived of their traditional right to making liquor in their own home for their consumption. The Government has been licensing the BhatIs simply out of its motive to make money irrespective of the ill consequences of its Bhati policy.

In reply to a query by Ms.Anjana Mahakud as regards why the poor persons were being arrested on the ground of brewing Mahuli liquor in their homes, Mr.Behera clarified that as per Para-29 of Orissa Excise Policy 2010-11 the preparation of home made Mahuli for personal consumption is allowed and as such is not liable to any penal action. It is only due to ignorance of the people about this provision that the police and excise officials in connivance with the Bhati owners have been harassing and arresting the home based liquor brewers. In this context Mr.Behera gave the glorious example of Kandhamal, where in 2008 all the BhatIs were ordered to be closed by the Government following a massive rally of 3000 women held on the occasion of international women's day on 8th March and the symbolic demolition of a Bhati by the rallying women. If similar actions could be taken by the women in other districts, the excise administration of the Govt shall be forced to order the closure of Mahuli BhatIs there too.

Then Ms Smita Pattanaik wanted to know from the participants if they knew who were the beneficiaries of 'Mo Kudia Scheme'. In reply Mr. Bipin Pradhan, a Ward Member, Karalaga G.P. under Reamal Block informed that the BPL persons not having Indira Awas would be eligible for Mo Kudia Scheme. Eswar Naik, a Volunteer of NSS observed that those who lost their homes due to fire accident/natural calamity would be eligible under Mo Kudia Scheme. Ms.Smitarani Pattanaik summed up the discussion by saying that while allocating the benefits under the scheme, priority would be given to the destitute women, unwed mothers, HIV/AIDS affected persons and victims of fire accidents. Mr Chitta Behera suggested to the participants for seeking information about the list of households who have received homestead land under the Vasundhara Scheme.by way of using RTI.

On the occasion of the programme, display posters on Prevention of Atrocities against SC/ST Act 1989 and a booklet on compilation of laws and schemes on human rights published by NSS were distributed to all the participants. The programme was closed at 5 p.m with vote of thanks and New Year Greetings to the Resource Persons and participants by Ms.Anjana Mahakud on behalf of NSS.