

Jan Chetna Manch

Bokaro

Annual Report 2006-07

Chamrabad, Chandra, Chandankiari, Bokaro, Jharkhand, 828134
Registered under Societies Registration Act, 21/1860
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Jan Chetna Manch – Forum for People’s Awareness

Jan Chetna Manch, Bokaro (JCMB) continues to work for empowering the poorest and weakest section of villagers in the Chas and Chandankiari blocks of the Bokaro district.

This past year has been particularly challenging. The demands for expanding the activities of JCMB from the community continue to increase. Requests have come from far flung villages of Chandankiari and Chas, which had been neglected by developmental activities. Villagers have requested JCMB to implement both health and micro credit activities. JCMB has tried to respond to this demand.

‘NABARD’ has supported JCMB in the expansion of women’s self help groups in distant and remote villages. It also supported the training of traditional birth attendants, most of whom were selected from these villages. The ‘National Foundation for India’ supported JCMB in strengthening the women’s groups, and the capacity building of the federation of all the groups, the ‘Mahila Mandal Samiti’. They also supported the health activities of the Women’s Health Centre. JCMB appreciates the financial help that these organisations have provided in order to continue these activities.

Plans for the following year include the expansion of the Women’s Health Centre (particularly in the sphere of maternal health), improving access to health care in far flung villages through outreach programmes and training of village women as health workers, the promotion of agro-based livelihoods and production of herbal medicines through the self help groups. We are confident that the activities of the next year will continue to benefit the poor and marginalised villagers of Chas and Chandankiari.

Satyaban Bose

Secretary

May, 2007

One step forward and two steps back: Development in the villages of Chandankiari and Chas

The year began with much optimism that changes were beginning to reach our far flung and backward villages. With much fanfare the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the National Rural Health Mission, the Right to Information Act and other schemes had been launched, and gave up reason to hope.

The year has ended, however, with much of this hope turning into despondency. The poor villagers have not much benefited from the Employment Guarantee Scheme, with most of them being denied work. Those that did manage to get work on some government project were paid well below the minimum wage. The contractor system and rampant corruption remain intact.

Similarly the National Rural Health Mission has failed to improve the health of the village poor. The 'Janani Suraksha Yojana' is plagued by bureaucracy and red-tapism, with payments not being paid to pregnant women when they are in need. The hospitals and sub-centres remain inadequately staffed and equipped. The programme of the government to train one village woman as a voluntary health worker (the 'sahaya' as she will be known in Jharkhand) has failed to take off altogether.

The health services of JCMB have continued to fill a much-needed gap, and it has been involved in the implementation of the 'Janani Suraksha Yojana' since February. There has been an increase in the willingness on the part of the government health department on Bokaro to work with NGOs such as JCMB. Our health centre has been accredited to provide institutional deliveries, immunisation, TB medicines under the DOTS programme, birth spacing, etc.

Good intentions and well meaning central government programmes will continue to fail unless the poor have knowledge and awareness of their rights, and the means to realise them. For this to happen the women's self help groups can become a strong grass root organisation to achieve their rights. During the year JCMB has attempted to use the Right to Information Act, in the interest of poor villagers, and is planning to propagate its use amongst the village poor in the near future. Jan Chetna Manch has realised more than ever that the 'jan' (people) need 'chetna' (awareness).

Activities of ‘Jan Chetna Manch, Bokaro’: 2006-07

➤ Expansion of the women’s self help groups

New women’s self help groups were facilitated in the distant villages of the Chandankiari and Chas blocks. There are now 400 SHGs with a total membership of nearly 7,000 women. The total savings of all these groups by March 2007 was Rs. 80 lakhs. More than half of these groups have opened bank accounts, and 50 have received loans from the banks for income generating activities.

➤ Strengthening the ‘Mahila Mandal Samiti’

The federation of the women’s SHGs – the Mahila Mandal Samiti – has grown both in terms of its financial strength and the number of members. Since last year in order to become a member of the MMS each member has to contribute Rs.100. By March 2007 the total amount of their corpus fund was Rs. 2,54,000. From this fund the MMS lends out money to those SHG members who are in need and the interest collected is distributed among the members as dividend. This year the total interest collected was Rs. 26,000/-.

➤ Livelihood promotion

JCMB continues to help and encourage poor, village women in their entrepreneurial efforts. The cooperative in the ‘Women’s Community Centre’ has grown slowly throughout the year, producing food products such as roasted gram (‘chana ka sattu’), baby food, roasted peanuts, spices, It also produces an increasing array of herbal medicines. Two of these women attended a training programme in Singhbhum in March, where they learnt more about herbal medicines.

A growing number of women are taking up soap making in their respective villages. JCMB helps them by buying the raw materials in bulk, which are then bought by the individual women in smaller quantities. Women from 6 villages are now involved in soap production.

➤ **Women's health programme**

During the last year the health services available in the women's health centre of the 'Women's Community Centre' have been accessed by a growing number of village women and children. Currently two clinics are held every week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Around 600 patients avail health services each month. Many come for antenatal care, gynaecological problems, immunisation and illnesses of children. We continue to receive the valuable support of a gynaecologist and a paediatrician in providing these services. In spite of financial constraints all the services have continued, with the support of the community. The number of deliveries increased again this year, with 100 women successfully delivering in the centre this year.

➤ **Health Training**

This year another 15 village women were provided training in the skill upgradation programme supported by 'NABARD'. The 6 months programme included delivery care, nutrition and herbal medicines. Most of the women are traditional birth attendants. Training in health care, particularly delivery care, has also been extended to other organisations in Jharkhand.

The women health supervisors of the health centre themselves accessed training from various places this year in order to upgrade their skills. They spent time in a private nursing home in Bokaro, and a busy hospital in Chattisgarh.

➤ **Strengthening the 'Mahila Mandal Samiti'**

In order to strengthen the 'Mahila Mandal Samiti' an exposure visit of group leaders to Andhra Pradesh was organised. They were much impressed by the discipline of the groups, and the eagerness with which the women access credit. On their return they have attempted to introduce some of the practices they witnessed. The scenario in Jharkhand, however, is vastly different from Andhra Pradesh, and some of the practices cannot be introduced here.

This year the Women's Annual General Meeting, the 'sammellan' was organised on International Women's Day – 8th March – in Chandankiari. It was attended by

around 5,000 women with the usual enthusiasm. The entire cost of the ‘sammellan’ was born by the MMS this year.

➤ **Herbal medicine promotion**

JCMB has continued to promote herbal medicines this year, in the women’s cooperative and the health centre.

With the support of ‘NABARD’ a training programme on medicinal plant cultivation for local farmers was organised. Experts from Madhya Pradesh attended this weeklong programme. Members of some other NGOs of Bokaro district had also sent their activists to participate in this training programme.

Jan Chetna Manch, Bokaro’s team: 2006 – 07

Dr Ranjan Ghosh	Director
Dr Lindsay Barnes	Director (Health)
Dr Nivedita Dutta	Consultant gynaecologist
Dr Chandreya Bannerjee	Consultant paediatrician
Kajola Devi	Health Supervisor
Shikha Mahato	Health Supervisor
Shivani Mahato	Health worker
Bonolata Devi	Health worker
Mussoora Devi	Health worker
Fulchand Mahato	SHG supervisor
Ali Hussain Ansari	SHG supervisor
Sahdev Mahato	SHG supervisor
Satul Mahato	SHG supervisor
K.N.Das	Accountant
Santosh Pandey	Office clerk
Sanjoy Mahato	Driver