

Report on Gender Workshop- 31st Oct, 2019

The staff and community of JEEViKA gathered on 31st Oct, 19 in Adhiveshan Bhawan, Patna on the day of commemoration of late Archana Tiwari (the then SPM of Social Development). A gender workshop was organized to pay obeisance to the demised soul and let not the spirit of equality lessen in Bihar. The event was chaired by Shri Arvind Chaudhary, Secretary RDD, Bihar and headed by CEO- Jeevika Shri Balamurugan D. Veteran leaders and practioner on gender equality addressed the staff and community to sensitize them on gender and bridge the gender disparity prevalent in the society, Srimati Neeta Kejriwal, Joint Secretary Ministry of Rural Development, Srimati Usha Kiran, Deputy Director Global Health Program BMGF, Sister Sudha Verghese CEO Nari Gunjan and Srimati Kamla Bhasin Social Scientists, Development Feminist Activist, founder of Jagori)

The event began with keynote addressed by Program Coordinator- Financial Inclusion, Mr. Mukesh Chandra Sharan who talked about late Archana Tiwari madam's vision for a better social life for the women of Bihar. He highlighted her contributions to community and Jeevika in bringing about liquor ban and promotion of sanitation, facilitation of government entitlements for the rural poor.

CEO- Sri Balamuruguan D. spoke about Jeevika's journey, how it came into being as an initiative for poverty eradication by mobilizing and organizing the women into SHG's. Jeevika has empowered the community socially and economically. To sustain social empowerment economic empowerment through livelihoods generation and its necessity. He highlighted on women's participation in decision making and the role of Jeevika as a catalyst in breaking the social norms.

Jeevika women who have achieved success in social development domain shared their experiences-

Ruby Devi brought into light the importance and need of Food Security Fund. She shared her experience how she and her family used to starve due to poverty and her husband was indebted for food grains. The Food Security Fund was a much relief to the poor, it not offers grains at the time of need but has also infused collective decision among the community through procurement process of food grains like rice, wheat, pulses, soybean and the alike. Over the years her CLF Lakshya located in Sitamarhi district has procured food grains for the 14th time at an average rotation of 3 to 4 times a year.

Rinku Devi of Chamatkar CLF, Samastipur shared how she along with other Jeevika didi's fought for anti-alcoholism. From organizing rally to boycott by collectively breaking the liquor brew hub. She told that she lost her husband who was mostly inebriated and fell sick. Despite medical treatment he could not recover the illness. But she did not loose hope and the local women left no stone unturned to lessen her spirit. With her undaunting valour she sought help from the local administration and Archana didi, who punished those miscreants after intoxication. She has played pivotal role in imposing liquor pan.

Heena Kumari who has been serving as Jeevika Mitra shared her experiences of bringing behavioural change in her village. She said that as a Jeevika Mitra she has facilitated SHG meetings and their savings but instilling changes in behaviour towards use of toilet was a challenge. She initiated the toilet construction in her own house against her father's will. Later in the monthly and weekly meetings she aware the women about the benefits of using toilet, the respect of women associated with the use of toilets and how it will lead to have a safe and clean environment. She also shared the challenges faced in bringing about the change. The VO decided to grant loans to the community for toilet construction but still some preferred going out for defecation. She along with the women of VO formed a monitoring committee who went early in the morning with torch lights. But she did not move back from her vision to attain an open defecation free village.

Rekha Devi of Dobhi block of Gaya told about MGNREGA a tool for livelihood for the landless. She told that the CFT made the women aware about 100 days of employment guarantee through MGNREGA. Majdoor Sangathan was formed and a VRP for the community who is illiterate. They had CFT meetings which was facilitated by MGNREGA faciliator and 42 Labour Organization. They have constructed Leach pitch, 10 ponds and have planted 275 saplings. Besides, the VO now owns and runs the PDS in the village.

Poonam Devi of Mushari block, Muzaffarpur shared the achievement of her CLF Sangam. She said that Jeevika came into being like a God in the lives of the women. Earlier women lived in veils struck in reinforced myths of patriarchal dominance and female inferiority. Jeevika has empowered the women and brought into the mainstream by infusing decision making ability. With a turnover of Rs 2.5 crores CLF has started its own Project called Sangam Srijan Yojna for promotion of micro entrepreneurs and generation of livelihood in its precincts. Sangam Vidhya Nidhi has been started to provide one time unilateral funds to the children who have to for go education due to financial constraints.

Samta Devi of Araria a Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojna beneficiary shared her experience of possession coming out of deprivation. She was indebted for her husband treatment who was a TB patient, and lost his life. She worked as wage labourer to feed her family and keep their soul and body together. There were days when they did not have food and starved out of hunger. With the help of Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojna she is now able to start her own enterprise and send her children to school.

Srimati Neeta Kejriwal on this occasion addressed the works of Late Archana Tiwari, her contribution towards empowering the women and bringing out a revolutionary change in Bihar. She also highlighted the gender interventions and achievement of NRLM. The strategies to further reduce gender disparity by bringing the women into the mainstream and the change in their status. The women owned institutions have had an impact in the lives of the women.

Sister Sudha Varghese shared her experience of working with the socially excluded dalit women and helping the women attain government entitlements. The destitute who did not have money to buy a packet of biscuit for their children are now engaged in cultivation practices. With the help of adolescent girls she identified cultivable lands for practice kitchen garden for the community. She then bought around 3 bigha land for the women to grow crops and later she purchased those crops from the women for her hostel's canteen. Presently the women themselves are taking land on lease for agriculture. Through education and training of young girls she has changed the lives of the Mushar community.

Srimati Usha Kiran focused on gender equality and health of women. She said that her experience of visiting Bihar in the past 10 years she has observed that Jeevika didi's are courageous and she derives inspiration to work from them. These women are resilient and have brought about irreversible changes in the society. She highly applauded the operational scale of SHG's and its functioning. She even said that better discussion in the groups have brought reduced inequality and that the diffusion of health practices among SHG members is better in Bihar than elsewhere.

Srimati Kamla Bhasin addressed the event by sensitizing the participants towards gender and the need of equality. She told that everyone is equal by the Constitution of India and reflected upon her assimilated experience of discrimination faced by the women in India. Recognising the subtle ways in which gender roles are inculcated in everyone, with time the society continues to foster and typify a woman's way of being. Her reflections on gender equality gave each and everyone a deeper perspective about women and their existence. She moved the crowd

with her words and left them all in dilemma if each one of them could practice what need to be preached to the community.

At the end of the event Sri Arvind Kumar Chaudhary concluded the event with his experiences of what the community was during the inception of Jeevika and what it has come out to be. Earlier women who used to seek permission to leave their houses are now accompanied by their husbands to station when they go in other parts of state for mobilizing the women and formation of their institutions. His words have marked that the staff and community of Jeevika has been investing time and effort to have better lives. It has given the women a change, a reincarnation, reinforcement of positive change and transformation. This powerful tool of empowerment that they are and will continue to experience in a lifetime.