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Bridging Borders under Immersion and Learning Exchange : JEEVIKA's Stat Jeevikoparjan Yojana Inspires International Collaboration

JEEVIKA has emerged as a global knowledge hub for the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana, successfully hosting international delegates in Immersion and Learning Exchange Program. The program's focus on sustainable livelihoods and rural development has garnered global recognition, and JEEVIKA's commitment to facilitating firsthand experiences for international participants has enhanced its impact. Through these initiatives, JEEVIKA has created a dynamic platform for the exchange of best practices, technological innovations, and policy frameworks, fostering a two-way flow of knowledge.

JEEVIKA In a landmark event that accentuates the power of international collaboration in addressing social challenges, a high-profile delegation from Indonesia descended upon the historic city of Gaya in Bihar, India. This distinguished group, led by the Hon'ble Governor of West Sumatra, Mr. Mahyeldi, included representatives from the Indonesian Government,



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BRAC International, BRAC Indonesia, and Bandhan Konnagar, to delve into the transformative depths of "Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana" (SJY) – An initiative of Bihar Government implemented by JEEVIKA. The arrival of the delegation on November 28, 2023, marked the commencement of the Immersion and Learning Exchange (ILE) program, a collaborative effort initiated by JEEVIKA in partnership with BRAC International and Bandhan Konnagar. This program aimed to facilitate a unique opportunity for the Indonesian representatives to witness firsthand the successful implementation of SJY, a program that has become synonymous with livelihood

enhancement, capacity building, and financial support for the most vulnerable communities.

Setting the stage for the proceedings, Mr. Rahul Kumar, the Chief Executive Officer of JEEVIKA, warmly welcomed the participants. He illuminated the commitment of JEEVIKA to uplift extremely poor families, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and marginalized communities through the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana, launched in 2018. This initiative, implemented by the Rural Development Department, spans the entire state, covering both rural and urban areas and engaging in a myriad of livelihood activities. The impact of SJY is monumental, with 1.84 lakh families already benefiting from the scheme. Mr. Kumar emphasized that the state-sponsored initiative for extremely poor families is a pioneering effort that has garnered attention not only nationally but also internationally. Recognizing the significance of learning from Bihar's successful model, JEEVIKA, in collaboration with BRAC International, initiated the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana-Immersion and Learning Exchange (ILE) program. The Indonesian delegation, including Governor Mehyeldi, Wahyu Suharto, and representatives from BRAC International, embarked on a two-day tour of Gaya district to seek feedback for the potential implementation of a similar program back in Indonesia.

Comprehensive presentations on SJY were conducted for all representatives, providing them with a detailed understanding of the program's objectives, implementation strategies, and outcomes. The delegation, consisting of 14 members, led by CEO Rahul Kumar, visited the Manpur and Banke Bazar blocks in Gaya district to observe the activities under SJY. In the Nauranga Panchayat of Manpur, discussions were held with beneficiaries like Sunita Devi, focusing on the tangible impact of schemes such as SJY and other convergence schemes of the government on the lives of beneficiaries. Sunita Devi, a beneficiary of these schemes, shared her transformative journey from extreme poverty, emphasizing how her life changed through SJY and JEEVIKA.

The delegation continued its exploration in Lakhnapur Panchayat in Manpur, interacting with Sanju Devi, a successful entrepreneur running a sewing shop. Conversations centered around the positive changes in the lives of women beneficiaries associated with JEEVIKA groups under SJY. Moving to Banke Bazar Block, the team from BRAC International witnessed firsthand the activities of beneficiaries under SJY. Beneficiaries shared their experiences, highlighting how they overcame challenges and became successful entrepreneurs after receiving training and support through the program.

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Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana provides financial assistance of up to ₹200,000 to the poorest families or those previously engaged in traditional occupation of tapping and selling of toddy and country liquor, enabling them to transition to new livelihoods. The program aims to empower families to sustain their livelihoods and uplift themselves, and the Indonesian delegation keenly absorbed these aspects during their immersive experience. The visit extended until November 30, 2023, with the delegation acknowledging the importance of the learning and knowledge exchange facilitated by the ILE program. The collaborative venture aimed to build bridges of understanding, cooperation, and shared strategies for poverty alleviation.

Fast forward to December 1, 2023, Patna played host to another significant chapter in this cross-border collaboration. The Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development, Sh. Shrawan Kumar, alongside the Secretary of Rural Development Department, Mr. N. Sarawana Kumar, and CEO of JEEVIKA, Mr. Rahul Kumar, extended a warm welcome to the Indonesian delegation. The distinguished guests, led by Mr. Mahyeldi, the Hon'ble Governor of West Sumatra, and comprising 14 delegates from the Indonesian Government, BRAC International, BRAC Indonesia, and Bandhan Konnagar, gathered to participate in the Immersion and Learning Exchange (ILE) program.

Ms. Heidi McAnnally-Linz, Global Lead for Policy and Partnerships from BRAC International, Mr. Abdurrahman Syebubakar, Country Lead from BRAC Indonesia, and representatives from Bandhan Konnagar added to the diversity and expertise of the delegation. The delegation, entrusted with leading poverty alleviation programs in Indonesia, expressed a keen interest in understanding the nuances of the Government of Bihar's SJY program. Mr. Mahyeldi shared the

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experiences of his and his team's visit to Gaya, exploring the Manpur, Banke Bazar, and Bodh Gaya Blocks from November 28 to 30, 2023. During this time, they interacted with beneficiaries, government officials, and local communities to gain insights into the success and challenges faced by SJY.

"Bihar takes immense pride in the success of the JEEVIKA Project, initiated in 2006, impacting 1.3 crore families and the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana launched in 2018, benefitting 1.80 lakh families. The schemes have achieved success beyond expectations, earning recognition at both national and international levels," stated Hon. Minister of Rural Development, Sh. Shrawan Kumar. The success of the SJY program is not only reflected in numbers but also in the smiles on thousands of faces, emphasizing the human-centric approach adopted by the initiative. Mr. N. Sarawana Kumar, Secretary of the Rural Development Department, remarked, "During your four-day visit, you must have acquainted yourself with the details of the scheme through interactions with numerous beneficiaries. I hope this visit will contribute to the creation of a plan for extremely poor families in your country."

The Immersion and Learning Exchange program symbolize the commitment of Bihar towards fostering global partnerships for the shared goal of poverty alleviation and community empowerment. The collaboration extends beyond a mere exchange of ideas; it is about building lasting relationships and creating a network of support that transcends geographical boundaries. Speaking on the collaborative venture, Mr. Rahul Kumar, CEO of JEEVIKA, shared, "In 2023, we joined hands with BRAC International and Bandhan Konnagar to launch the SJY Immersion Learning Exchange program, a transformative initiative spanning three years from 2023 to 2026. Beyond knowledge exchange, this program is about forging bonds that transcend borders and empower communities globally."

Beneficiaries are not only benefiting from SJY but also from other government initiatives like housing, insurance, health cards, ration cards, etc. Regular reviews by the CEO of JEEVIKA, directives from the Hon. Chief Minister of Bihar, and support from departmental authorities ensure the scheme's successful implementation and continuous improvement. As the Indonesian delegation concludes its visit on November 30, 2023, the bonds forged during the ILE program are expected to pave the way for continued collaboration, ensuring that the success of Bihar's Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana inspires positive change beyond borders. The stories of transformation, the shared commitment to community upliftment, and the lessons learned during this exchange will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark on the global fight against poverty.

Programs & Initiatives

JEEVIKA's Retrospect with Mr. Auguste Tano Kouame, Country Director, World Bank at Patna

On the 23rd of November, 2023, the Patna region witnessed a transformative exploration led by Mr. Auguste Tano Kouame, the Country Director of the World Bank. His visit was strategically designed to delve into the tangible impacts of development initiatives orchestrated by JEEVIKA at the grassroots level. During the visit, Mr. Kouame have delved into the diverse experiences, encompassing visits to villages, fisheries intervention, community learning forums, and interactions with self-help groups.

The day commenced with a journey from Patna to Gopalpur village, laying the foundation for a series of immersive experiences. The first stop offered Mr. Kouame a glimpse into the entrepreneurial journey of JEEVIKA's Self-Help Group (SHG) members in Gopalpur village. This early engagement set the stage for a day focused on understanding the economic dynamics and grassroots innovations that underpin sustainable development. The visit to the Jal Jeevan JEEVIKA Fisheries Producer Group provided a unique opportunity for Mr. Kouame to engage in discussions with SHG women organized into the Producer Group. This segment shed light on the JEEVIKA's initiatives that empower women and foster economic sustainability within communities.

Transitioning from Gopalpur village, Mr. Kouame then visited the Sahara Cluster Level Federation (CLF) office, to interact with CLF leaders, members, office bearers, and community professionals, offering a deeper understanding of the CLF's

functioning and the myriad development initiatives it spearheads. The visit to the Sahara CLF included stops at stalls featuring Agri-entrepreneurs, Didi Adhikar Kendra, Bank Sakhi, Brass & Spices displays, and Health & Nutrition exhibits. This segment highlighted the diversity of initiatives implemented by JEEVIKA, ranging from agricultural entrepreneurship to health and nutrition.



The day's schedule also encompassed a return journey to Patna, with a visit to the Green Delight* outlet for further interaction. The focus on Green

Delight underscored the World Bank's interest in sustainable practices and eco-friendly initiatives that contribute to both economic growth and environmental conservation. Lunch was served at Didi Ki Rasoi at Patel Bhawan, a canteen operated and managed by women Self-Help Group members. This segment not only provided a culinary experience but also underscored the role of women in managing and operating successful enterprises.

The latter part of the day involved a transfer to the JEEVIKA State Project Management Unit (SPMU) office. Here, Mr.



Kouame engaged in discussions with SHG members involved in Solar Mart and improved cooking stoves. A brief presentation on the history of Bank support to JEEVIKA and insights from bankers on the role of SHGs in micro-financing added depth to the understanding of World Bank-supported initiatives.

As the day concluded, it left behind a trail of experiences that highlighted the collaborative efforts shaping the sustainable development landscape in Bihar. Mr. Auguste Tano Kouame's visit not only showcased the World Bank's commitment to community-driven development but also underscored the pivotal role of JEEVIKA in translating these initiatives into tangible, positive outcomes at the grassroots level.

The day's itinerary reflected a thoughtful curation of experiences that ranged from economic activities in households to interactions with community leaders, showcasing the multifaceted nature of JEEVIKA's interventions. It is through such collaborative efforts that the seeds of positive change are sown fostering potential impact of community-driven development initiatives supported by global institutions like the World Bank.

Transforming Lives**Empowering Change : Babita's Journey from Struggle to Triumph**

In the heart of Ara Sadar Block, Babita Devi's tale unfolds—a narrative that transcends personal challenges and transforms into a beacon of empowerment and change. Married at the tender age of sixteen to Manoj Choudhary, Babita stepped into a world where the insidious grip of alcohol held her family captive. Post-marriage revelations exposed her father-in-law's detrimental habit of alcohol consumption, leading to verbal abuse and uncouth behavior. The repercussions were not only confined within the family but extended to the economic stability of the household. Frustration mounted as Babita's husband, too, succumbed to the allure of alcohol, exacerbating the already tense domestic environment.



In 2015, Babita joined JEEVIKA as a member and, owing to her literacy skills, assumed the role of a JEEVIKA Mitra in 2016. Her association with the self-help group allowed her to voice her concerns during group meetings. Together with other group members, she initiated efforts to enlighten her husband and father-in-law about the detrimental consequences of alcohol consumption. The message was clear—there would be consequences, including legal repercussions, if they persisted in their destructive habits.

The turning point arrived during one of Babita's deliberations in a weekly group meeting. Another member shared her own struggles, unveiling a harrowing narrative of daily physical abuse and verbal insults perpetuated by her husband, also a victim of alcohol addiction. This revelation fortified the resolve of the women in the group. It became evident that the problem extended beyond individual households; it was a pervasive issue affecting the community's socio-economic fabric. Babita, now armed with knowledge and determination, seized the opportunity presented by a district-level program where she interacted with district officials, including the District Magistrate. A toll-free number was provided, and armed with this information, Babita spearheaded an initiative to expose illegal alcohol trade in Saranpur village through police intervention.

The ripple effect was profound. Babita mobilized her fellow group members to organize awareness rallies, warning the entire village against the perils of alcohol consumption. The group's efforts culminated in a coordinated operation with local law enforcement. A marriage celebration in the vicinity, where alcohol distribution was rampant, was identified as the focal point of the crackdown. The local police, acting on Babita's tip, apprehended the alcohol vendor red-handed. Local awareness, combined with the diligence of the JEEVIKA Devis, instilled fear in the hearts of those engaged in illegal alcohol trade. The social stigma associated with the trade became so potent that several vendors abandoned their ventures, and some even found themselves behind bars. The success of the JEEVIKA Didis, under Babita's leadership, marked a paradigm shift in the Saranpur village. The pervasive fear among illicit alcohol traders bore testament to the efficacy of the initiative. Today, some of them have given up the trade entirely, while others are serving sentences in prison.

Babita Devi's journey from a vulnerable young bride to a leader of transformative change stands as an inspiring saga. Her relentless pursuit of justice, coupled with the support of JEEVIKA and the local administration, showcases the immense impact grassroots movements can have on societal well-being. Saranpur is no longer just a village; it is a testament to the triumph of collective determination over the shackles of alcohol addiction and the dawn of a new era of empowerment and sobriety. Babita Devi has become a beacon of hope, illuminating the path towards a brighter, more resilient community.

January

Calendar of Events

COMING UP IN THE NEXT EDITION

- Bihar Saras Mela 2023
- Tableau of JEEVIKA



**Empowering Lives in Badgama Pahad :
A Journey of Transformation**

Nestled on a hill, six kilometers from Block Pirpanti in the district of Bhagalpur, the village of Badgama Pahad was once a place where life revolved around selling toddy. However, the landscape changed dramatically with the prohibition of liquor in Bihar. The resilient villagers found new hope and purpose through the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojna.

Badgama Pahad, with its 32 scheduled tribe households, spoke their tribal language, Pahadia, and had limited understanding of Hindi. The village lacked basic facilities, with no concrete houses, a thatched roof, and walls made of clay or wood. The absence of fertile land made farming a challenge, and the villagers faced difficulties in the rainy season due to the hardened soil. In this challenging environment, the lack of health centers and schools further compounded their struggles. The nearest Anganwadi center, located 1.5 km away, was difficult for children to access regularly. Unemployment loomed over the village until the year 2020 when the JEEVIKA formed three self-help groups comprising 32 members.

The turning point arrived with the introduction of the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana in February 2020. During a visit by the Community Resource Person (CRP), all members were seamlessly integrated into the scheme under the Basant JEEVIKA Mahila Gram Sansthan. A micro plan was crafted based on the members' aspirations, leading to the establishment of grocery shops, goat and cow rearing, and dairy farming. Twenty members embraced goat farming, ten took up dairy farming, and two ventured into running grocery shops. The Livelihoods Investment Fund (LIF), Livelihoods Gap Assistance Fund (LGAF), and Special Investment Fund (SIF) became instrumental in kickstarting these businesses. For cow rearing, an LIF of Rs. 50,000, LGAF of Rs. 7,000, and SIF of Rs. 10,000 were provided. Goat rearing received LIF of Rs. 16,000, LGAF of Rs. 7,000, and SIF of Rs. 10,000, while the grocery shop entrepreneurs were given LIF of Rs. 20,000, LGAF of Rs. 7,000, and SIF of Rs. 10,000.

This transformation not only meant a departure from the liquor trade but also a collective shift towards sustainable livelihoods. The villagers now sell their milk to Sudha Dairy, and the women, who were once solely engaged in the liquor business, find themselves employed in diverse and fulfilling occupations. The increase in income has not only brought economic prosperity but has also strengthened the community bonds as husbands join hands in supporting their wives' endeavors. Badgama Pahad stands today as a testament to the power of empowerment and collective effort, where a ban on prohibition became a catalyst for positive change, turning the page towards a brighter, more prosperous future.