



Women in Blue

Bela is a village with 3500 population, like in most of the villages, there is no community centre or a place for the villagers to gather together. The tree just in the outskirts of this village has become *Œuvre des Pains'* meeting place for years now. Under this tree, many programs for the development of the village have been conducted through many resource personal.

The meeting there in August 2015 was really remarkable. It made us extremely happy, because we could see the change for which we have been working for happening in there. The women started to question the

existing corrupt system and try to fight against injustice !

They started to gather courage to face the higher officials responsible for the development of their villages and go as far as they have to get their rights. This is really wonderful ! Last year, they went to the *Block Development Officer* to get the *Ration Card* for the villagers. Now they went to meet the *Sub District Magistrate* for the compensation which was promised.

हंगामा प्रदर्शनों की भेंट चढ़ गया तहसील दिवस

संगम
आदि
शुरु
कार्य
आन्दोलन
खनता का
संगठन अपनी मांगा का
लेकर तहसील दिवस में धरना
प्रदर्शन करने लगे हैं। जब
कोई न सुने तो अपनी मांग
मनवाने के लिए धरना प्रदर्शन
त आन्दोलन करना जायज है।
मगर सवाल यह भी है कि
सुबह से लेकर दोपहर तक
हंगामे व धरना प्रदर्शनों के
बीच क्या उस आम आदमी को
भी अपनी बात रखने का
मौका मिल पाता है। मंगलवार
को संगम के तहसील दिवस में
सुबह 10 बजे से दोपहर 2 बजे
तक धरना प्रदर्शन त हंगामों



संगम में जब तहसील दिवस का घंटा बजे तो धरना करने वाली महिलाएं।

महिलाओं ने हंगामा कर मांगा मुआवजा

संगम | हिन्दुस्तान संवाद

असमोली क्षेत्र के गांव बेला की
मुआवजे की मांग को लेकर
महिलाओं ने हंगामा किया। प्रदर्शन
के खिलाफ नारेबाजी की।
हंगामा देख पुलिस भी
एसडीएम ने शासन से
मुआवजा दिलाने का
आश्वासन दिया है। मंगलवार को गांधी

महिलाएं नारेबाजी करते हुए तहसील
दिवस पहुंचीं। महिलाओं ने तहसील
दिवस के बाहर प्रदर्शन करते हुए
मुआवजा न मिलने की बात कही। कहा
कि हम विभिन्न तरीकों से गरीबों को
मदद करते हैं मगर हमारी मदद अफसर
नहीं कर रहे। कई बीत जाने के बाद भी
ये फसल का मुआवजा नहीं मिल पाया।
नारेबाजी करते हुए महिलाएं तहसील
दिवस सभागार पर पहुंच गईं। यहाँ तैनात
पुलिस ने महिलाओं से जानकारी की तो

भड़क गई। यह देख अंदर बैठे नखासा
थानाध्यक्ष राजवीर सिंह आ गए। उन्होंने
महिलाओं को समझाकर अंदर भेजा।
महिलाओं ने एसडीएम से भी मुआवजा
दिलाने की मांग की। कहा कि आसपास
के गांवों में मुआवजा वितरण हो गया है।
इसलिए बेला में भी मुआवजा वितरित
कराया जाए। शीला, अमरावती, जैबुन
निशा, दयावती, विद्या, छोटी, सरबरी,
चमन देवी, शकुंतला, दुलारी, शारदा,
गोमती, राजवती, सुमित्रा आदि रहीं।



मुआवजा न मिलने पर शिक्कयत करती महिलाएं। जागरण

मुआवजे को लेकर महिलाओं ने सौपा ज्ञापन

संगम : फसल बाढ़ी का मुआवजा न मिलने से परेशान किसानों ने तो आस
छोड़ दी है। ऐसे में महिलाओं ने एकत्र होकर मुआवजे दिलाने की मांग करना
शुरु कर दी है। इसी के तहत मंगलवार को गांधी महिला मंडल की महिलाओं
ने एकत्र होकर तहसील दिवस में ज्ञापन देकर कहा फसल बाढ़ होने के
बाद सरकार ने किसानों को मुआवजा देने की घोषणा की थी लेकिन अभी तक
मुआवजा नहीं मिला है। ऐसे में किसान इस बार धान की फसल की बुवाई भी
नहीं कर पाए हैं। महिलाओं ने कहा हमारे गांव के आस-पास के गांवों को
मुआवजा मिल चुका है लेकिन अभी तक गांव बेला के किसानों को मुआवजा
नहीं मिला है। मुआवजा न मिलने से अभी तक बच्चों की पौंस जमा भी नहीं
हुई है। साथ ही कुछ किसान तो भूखमरी के कगार पर हैं। उन्होंने ज्ञापन
देकर चेतावनी देते हुए कहा कि अगर जल्द ही मुआवजा नहीं मिला तो सभी
महिलाएं आंदोलन करेंगी। इस दौरान शीला, जैबुन निशा, दयावती, विद्या,
अरमवती, सवीना मौजूद रही।

Many newspapers covered the story of the « Women in Blue » and their march for the respect of their rights.

The Ration Cards

The Indian ration card is mainly used for purchasing subsidized food and fuel for cooking and lighting the house. It is also used as an important tool for providing proof of identity and a connection with government databases. *India's Public Distribution System* (PDS) operates based on the ration card, including its functions of identity, eligibility, and entitlement. Since it is voluntary to obtain ration card, many are not well aware of its benefits and don't take the initiative to apply for the scheme.

There are ration cards for those who are *Below Poverty Line* (BPL) and those who are *Above Poverty Line* (APL). The BPL ration card entitles the holder family to more benefits, for example, more food grains and kerosene at more subsidized rate.

There are plenty of problems with the PDS ration system. There are millions of ineligible, fake and bogus ration cards ! At the same time, there are millions of poor without any ration card...

A PDS shop exists in each village. Often, the PDS owners in collusion with government officials divert the subsidized food supply and petroleum to black market. There is an inflated number of ration cards, bogus ration cards, fake people (imaginary, dead, real person but not eligible) and duplicates from other areas. The ration quota of fake people and unused quota by real beneficiary is shown as fully used-up and the products are diverted to black market, causing huge subsidy loss of public money.

There were many families in the village of *Bela* without proper ration cards. 70 women from the village went to meet the *Block Development Officer* and requested help to get the ration cards for all the villagers. The officer directed them to the person in charge of this section and after one year, they all received their ration card !

Sabri Husain is one of those who got a new ration card. Her family has 6 members. With this new ration card she will be able to get
2 liters of kerosene oil,
2 kg of sugar



The Mahilamandals in their blue uniform made a strong impression in the town of Sambhal.



On the way to meet the Sub District Magistrate... Let's go !

and food grains with a much reduced price. They will be able to save a good amount with this new card.

The Relief Fund for the agricultural loss

2015 was a bad year for the farmers in the area of *St-Anthony's School*. Their paddy/wheat, which was getting ready for reaping was destroyed by unusual rain and storm in the month of March. The government took up the issue and declared that the farmers would get a compensation 1200 rupees per biga (6 biga = 1 acre) from the government relief fund. That news was welcomed with joy but as months passed by, people started to lose their hope. Some villages got the money, but *Bela* was not in the list.

In the month of August, women from *Bela* got organized ! They gathered under the tree to plan their course of action. After several meetings and discussions, they came to a decision : to go to the higher officer, the *Sub District Magistrate* at the *District head quarter* !

Every Tuesday the *Sub District Magistrate* (SDM) has to be present in his office to attend to the petitions of the common people. This is the only day people can surely meet him. This office is in the city of *Sambhal*, at the district head quarter. They decided to go to his office to explain their problem. They hired a tractor from their village and shared the expense for the diesel for the transportation. When

they reached *Sambhal*, they marched together with slogans to the *SDM* office and met the officers.

Jena, our field staff was part of them to support their march and to guide them but stayed behind the scene. *Sheela Devi*, one of our senior member of *Mahilamandal* (women's group) took the leadership, she led the group and discussed the issue with the *SDM*. The *SDM* looked into the matter and told them that the bill has been sanctioned, but the money is not yet released.

He said : « As soon as the money come to the account, *Bela* village will be the first village to get it ». He agreed to speed up the process, however, even till now they did not get the money. Women kept going to enquire and now they received the information that their money reached the local administration and they will get it soon. It is sad however to see that the money sanctioned to help the villagers as a relief in emergency has not yet reached them even after 8 months ! This is nothing unusual in India, this is the way things work there...

A group of women marching towards the office with much determination was a first time in the history of the city of *Sambhal* ! Mean-



Sabri Husain had to fight to get the ration card... In India, corruption is everywhere and most of the time government programs don't reach the needy.

Dear all,

I want to Wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I want to thank you for helping me to study in St. Anthony's School. My parents were not able to send me to school, but your help has brought me the great gift of education !

We celebrated Christmas on the 23rd after our exams. Now, we have 10 days holidays. We were so excited to make christmas crib and decorate it. Like Deeevali, the festival of light, we celebrate Christmas also, Christmas Papa gives us sweets on that day ! We are happy to see the Baby Jesus in the crib !



« Merry Christmas & Happy New Year ! »

From all the sponsored students of St-Anthony's School

while, they got the attention all around : « Who are these women in Blue sari ? », « Where are they coming from ? », « How could they organise themselves ? » These three questions were in the mind of all the people around, including the district officers. Many newspapers covered the story and the importance of this event was highlighted. Women usually don't come out in open or show themselves in front of men.

The group was happy and proud about what they did, it gave them even more courage and confidence ! There are lot of obstacles on their way, but their courage is stronger now than the opposition.

Women who were confined to their kitchen are not only getting out, but also challenging the existing system. We were so happy to see this transformation for which we have been working since the beginning of our projects.

« Panchayat » election

Local self government in India since 1992 has been formalized under *Panchayat raj* system-rule by village committee for 5 years. It was intended to create greater participation in local government by people and more effective implementation of rural development

programs. The *Panchayat* election in Sambhal district, the area of St Anthony's School Dugawar was on December 9th. We used to tell our field staff to prepare our *Mahilamandal* women to contest the election. They used to tell us that our women are not ready for it yet. We could not understand why a selected member of our women's group could not win the election in the village even after having a lot of influence on the women.

This time, to our surprise, we saw in each of these villages 8 or 9 people contesting. Most of them are people with no educational background, they sell their land and spend all the money trying to persuade the people to vote for them. Contestant distributing sari to the women, alcohol to men, good meals to the children, are the common sight during this period in the village. In the village of *Rahrai*, where we are currently building the new *St-Anthony's School*, one of the persons from whom we bought some land spent all the money he received from us in this election... in vain ! He was very sure to be elected but was disappointed when the result came. Why are those who have no interest or experience in politics stand for the election ? Because, if elected, they can divert the money which is allotted for the development of the village into their own pocket during the next 5 years ! Winning the election is like winning the lottery...