

Social Families

In the Empowerment of Marginalized Communities



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Bulletin

Observation Tour of the Social Families(SFs)

-- An effective Instrument for Fostering Mutual Tolerance / cohesiveness

In keeping with its objective of fostering social understanding, inclusion and promoting affection between the Hills/Mountain based Social Families (SFs) and Terai-based SFs, SAMAGRA has been launching Observation Tour Programme for the Hills/Mountain SFs to visit the Terai SFs and vice versa regularly for the last few years. In doing this, mistrust /misunderstanding, that has been on the rise, between Hill/Mountain People (commonly known as Pahade) and the Terai people (commonly known as Madhesi), at the initiative of some vested interest groups has been evidently minimized. Such observation tours facilitate productive interactions between those communities through sharing experiences, lessons learnt, and obstacles encountered, while putting their acquired skills, knowledge, and information to practice in the field.

SAMAGRA, thus, organized this time, a three-day observation tour for the Hills/Mountain SFs in Siraha, Saptari and Udayapur districts to visit/interact with the concerned SFs thereof. The program bore special flavor because of the presence of Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary and some members of the General Assembly in addition to SAMAGRA's staff / volunteers in the visiting team.



The tour programme came to the end as scheduled having effectively facilitated the interactions and sharing experiences between the two sets of SFs. There were 42 SFs members from the hills/mountain, who were well received by Terai SFs members and SAMAGRA created a good ground for sharing the experiences, good and bitter, with the visiting Pahade SF members. They were given an opportunity to get oriented/educated on the historical/cultural importance of some local important sites, operation system of industries and social status of the local people on the way and all these proved to be very exciting and memorable to the visitors, while upgrading their level of exposure. All ended in effecting better understanding of the current social, political, civil and economic status as between the two diverse SFs, brought up in different environment. The interaction parties included local civil societies, cooperative members and the model SFs members in all the three districts.

In the morning on 29 November, the SF members visited Pipra Chahaka in Saptari, where they held interactive meeting with the members of Dalit Welfare SF. Briefing on their socio-economic plight, chairman Mr. Satrugan Ram informed that 32 families in their locality, found themselves suddenly turned into landless desperate lot without any resources following the devastating floods from Chahaka stream that struck their river-bank settlement. SAMAGRA came to their rescue. Besides, other local agencies such as, Sarashawati and Vatabaran (Environment-cocerned), joined hands with SAMAGRA in the rehabilitation task. Consequently, the flood-affected families got resettled, along with the gradual development of basic physical facilities/infrastructure in their settlements. Besides, at the initiative of the SF, they have been able to tap local public resources for the development of local roads, installation of tube-wells made possible through claiming for their rights and justice.

They have started pig farming and vegetable farming. The interactions that went between two groups of people representing Madheshi Chamars and Pahade Dalits and Janjatis was in itself a quite important event. Welcoming the Pahade Colleagues/guests, the "Dalit Kalyan SF" members expressed their pleasure and pride in being able to brief them on their achievements. Similarly, the touring Pahade SFs reached Trijuga Municipality in Udayapur, where they were received by the Chairwoman Ms. Ganita Chowdhary, along with her 30 members of Samajsevi Mahila SF. Dressed in pink-coloured uniform sari, they stood in queue and welcomed them in traditional way offering red tika (red powder), flower garlands and burning incense sticks. In the same way, when the visiting team reached Kalyanpur in Siraha, the

local women, standing in queue, received them carrying water-filled pots on their heads. The visiting team also got an opportunity to visit the famous Goddess Gadhi Mai temple in Bara district.

SAMAGRA's Regional Coordinator honored as the Year's Excellent Human rights Activist

Mr. Durga Prashad Mahato, the Regional Coordinator of SAMAGRA's Lahan regional office, has been declared as the most outstanding activist in the field of human rights advocacy of the year 2009 by Human Rights Network based in Siraha. That prestigious title was declared for him at a public event organized on 10 December 2009 in Siraha to celebrate the International Human Rights Day. The HR Network announces the names of three distinguished personalities, doing excellent work in the fields of human rights, journalism, and dalit rights; the other two personalities, who were declared to have done excellent jobs were Maniram Biswaram and Ram Kumari Das respectively.



What Can Social Families do?

Pokharichour is remotely located on the 2200 meter high hill top, at Tasharpu VDC in Dhading district. The village can be reached after a three-hour trekking from the highway at the base. It is largely inhabited by poorest Tamang communities, whose agricultural yields could sustain themselves hardly for three months. Their daily diet consists mainly "Dhido" –the cooked corn-flour paste. To grind the corn grains grown in their field into flour, they had to climb down the hill with load of corn and climb up with the load of flour. The people had no electric service; they used kerosene lamps at night. All these circumstances had led children to suffer. Their school attendance was very poor and quite a large number of them quit the schools.

Under the empowerment programme launched by SAMAGRA, the local women formed Sramjibi Social family with the active support from their husbands. They got empowered absorbing skills, knowledge and information imparted by SAMAGRA. Claiming their due share and rights in the local public resources/utilities through peaceful means, they have been able to develop their locality as a model village. They managed to draw electric line from the main grid and with the availed electric services, the SF established micro-grinding mill with the fund they raised out of their collective savings. As a result, the local people saved time and efforts required for carrying the grains down to the market. It was trekking up-hill and down-hill for about three hours. They constructed a community building and which is used for consumers' goods store. The local people got tremendous benefit from that store where several household goods could be purchased so easily and conveniently at cheaper prices.

The SF tapped resources from Hefer International to be utilized as for goat farming and the programme has been continued till to-date. Above all, the SF has, with the collective efforts of all SFs of Tasapur and nearby VDCs, been able to bring "Food for People" programme conducted by Premsagar Foundation Nepal and sponsored by The Prem Rawat Foundation. The programme has proved to be a boon for the school-going children to ensure their rights to education. The food serving facility has been providing daily nutritious foods at no cost to 500 kids who have been deprived of school education or those who became absentees from the schools for the lack of food at home and to 100 old citizens.

As it stands today, those kids who discontinued school attendance in the past, are punctual for the schools, formally dressed carrying their reading materials in their schools. Before they process to the school, they assemble themselves at the Foundation, washing their hands and feet and then after having the stomach -full lunch, they proceed to the school in cheerful mood. As a result, on one hand, the schools have become very happy because their performance has become much better, on the other hand, their guardians feel relieved and thus obliged because their financial expenses and time that went to cater to the kids' food have been saved and thus they got more time to earn more. Besides, they have become very happy because their children have not only progressed in their studies but also looked healthier and physically sounder.

If a Social Family is organized and empowered, it acts as a fertile ground for any new helping agency where a small seed of help can produce enormous output.



Second Strategic Partnership Meeting held

On 1 December 2009, the second Strategic Partnership meeting was convened at SAMAGRA office. The meeting reviewed the operational and budgetary status of the program activities implemented under the strategic partnership and the meeting was chaired by Bal Krishna Lal Joshi, Chairperson, SAMAGRA. The meeting was attended by key representative of Strategic Partners, SAMAGRA's Managing Director and programme / finance managers and officer(s).



During the review, the programme activities under implementation over the last five months, their outcome were discussed. At the end, Mr. Lars Christensen, the Programme Coordinator, Danida HUGOU expressed his pleasure in observing that SAMAGRA is proceeding towards the right direction in the field of human rights monitoring and reconciliation / conflict transformation and he wished that programme activities be furthered in quantum.

Regular activities implemented / completed in the month of Manshir (Nov/Dec)

Activities		Number of activities	Participants		
			Female	Male	Total
1.1	Human rights monitoring at local level	2	31	16	47
1.3	Awareness campaigns against human rights violation	1	54	43	97
2.2	Pre-implementation study	4	138	51	189
2.7	Exposure Visit	1	18	24	42
2.10	Linkage / Networking and Interaction / Lobbying	6	119	23	142
3.2	Interaction for peace building	1	23	13	36
3.3	Post-conflict re-conciliation events	3	62	16	78
3.4	Events for Peace and Harmony	10	515	357	872

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