

All know the way, few actually walk it....



**Name: Shri Rakesh Chandel
Sarpanch
Village Mehraon
Itarasi Block, Hoshangabad District
Madhya Pradesh**



Mehraon somewhere down the line lost the script regarding settlement planning of their village. The village center, which ideally should have served as the village square for villagers to congregate and interact, had been converted into a garbage dump. This had become a site for inviting a health epidemic. The square had some 40 years ago, turned into a garbage dump and the villagers had got used to it. There were occasional murmurs; however complacency in changing the accepted order meant that nobody actually took an initiative to get rid of garbage dumped in the middle of the village.

It is said that action should not only be based on the recollection of our past, but also on the responsibility for our future. The training program conducted by RCVP Noronha Academy reiterated this fact by highlighting that poor WATSAN in the village would mean debilitating (sometimes permanently) the wellbeing of the village children. This thought was scary for Rakesh, the Sarpanch of Mehraon, who was one of the participants in the training programme. What appeared even worse to him was that

unwillingly he would be a party in the impending disaster, by not doing anything about the sanitation problems in the village, despite being the Sarpanch. The training had shown him the path, now it was for him to walk on it.

Back in the village after the training, Rakesh called for a village meeting and explained why proper sanitation was important. He also reiterated that Meheragaon residents including himself should be ashamed of the garbage dump in the village square. Initially there were few takers, villagers especially the women protested saying that moving the garbage dump to an alternate location would mean travelling longer distances to dispose off household garbage. Rakesh, based on the knowledge gathered at the training, put forth the proposal that there would be no garbage dump at all, there would be garbage receptacles at strategic locations in the village and a system of garbage collection and disposal would be put in place. Villagers wondered whether it would work- however the idea appeared to be novel and worth a try. Soon there were converts to Rakesh's idea. Having won the first round, Rakesh made his second move- the garbage dump would be cleaned by the villagers themselves. There was a round of protest; villagers argued that the panchayat should take up this responsibility. Rakesh knew this was going to be difficult, patience and tact was required. He explained to the villagers that Mehragaon was their home, and was it not natural for the family members should clean their own home. The logic and simplicity of Rakesh's analogy was convincing. Soon there were hordes of volunteers with spades, shovels or an

improvised stick working fervishly to clean up the garbage dump. Mehraagaon had waited forty long years for this historic day!

Job accomplished, Rakesh made his third move. He was not confident whether he would be able to pull it off this time- would he be third time lucky? Rakesh suggested that they convert the cleaned garbage dump into a park. This time the consensus was surprisingly easy to achieve, the villagers had tasted success through collective effort, and they were not ready to allow the initiative to die out. A call for donations was made, and Rs. 5000 collected. However, this was not going to be enough, then something unexpected happened- the villagers decided that they would use waste material to make the park. Soon one could see villagers bringing in bullockcart wheels, discarded tractor parts, bamboo poles, wood planks, concrete slabs and anything else which they thought could be of use. The local carpenter, mason and ironsmith chipped in. The enthusiasm was palpable; the villagers seemed liked school children working on their summer project. The villagers decided on the theme of a hill station for their park. With indigenous design, labour, material and spirit, the park started taking shape. A quaint bridge, a beautiful chhattri, a statue, an abstract sculpture and many more all made out of waste material came up brick by brick, sweat by sweat.

Today the park is ready; children can be seen playing, villagers strolling around and women congregating for an evening chat. The park is now an inseparable part of daily life in the village. People from neighbouring villages come to visit the park. Mehraagaon has its own replica of the

Chandigarh Rock Garden. If Nek Chand was to visit Mehargaon park, he would be proud of what the villagers could achieve, using his principal of utilizing waste material which he pioneered at the Chandigarh Rock Garden.

Power of Collective Action



**Name: Smt Mala Jokhe and Smt Seema Uprela
Village Silpatti
Athner Block, Betul District
Madhya Pradesh**

Mala and Seema are the secretary and president respectively of the Jagdamba Self Help Group, Silpatti village. The SHG for them was a means for supplementing the household income for their members. They had never realised that the SHG could be an instrument for collective action for improving the sanitation situation in their village. The training on using pure drinking water and sanitation, organised by RCVP Noronha Academy of Administration, made them aware of the importance of sanitation, and the tool of collective action in bringing about change.

They shared what they had learnt in the training with the SHG members and suggested that SHG members could collectively do their bit in improving the sanitation situation in Silpatti. There were doubts in the mind of the members whether the effort was worth it; however the enthusiasm of Mala and Seema was convincing enough. Soon a motley group of women could be seen going from door to door spreading the message of hygiene and sanitation. During this door-to-door contact the SHG group realised that, one of the biggest problems in the village

pertaining to sanitation was open defecation. Their movement had now got a concrete agenda- convincing the villagers to use toilets.

The group managed to get 42 BPL families construct toilets by availing themselves of the government grants and subsidies. They also embarked upon a campaign to convince the households who had constructed toilets in their homes actually to use the facility. . The campaign comprised of one to one conversation with such households and reasoning out the benefits of using a toilet. The group can boast of having succeeded in making a number of converts for using toilets.

What started as sharing of their training experience by Mala and Seema with their SHG group cumulated in a process that has lead towards significant change in the sanitation situation in Silpatti.

Be the change that you want to see in the world.....



**Name: Smt Laxmibai
Village : Dhaunkhade
Hoshangabad District
Madhya Pradesh**

Mahatma Gandhi once famously said “Be the change that you want to see in the world”. This credo could not have been better exemplified in action than what was

accomplished in the Dhaunkhade, a remote village in Hoshangabad district. The main protagonist of the change initiative, Smt. Laxmibai would always question why Dhaunkhade village had such a poor sanitation record? She would often pose the question to the members of the SHG group of which she is the president, and the common refrain would be that the villagers are more concerned with eking out a livelihood for their families than being concerned with a clean village. The answer was clear, village sanitation did not figure amongst the individual household priorities. Though uncomfortable, Laxmibai had reluctantly reconciled to the situation. However this situation was about to change!

The change was catalysed by the training imparted by RCVP Noronha Academy under the aegis of the CBPR Programme to which Laxmibai was invited to attend. The training made her realise that while she had been speaking agitatedly of the poor sanitation practices in the village, members

of her own household would go for open defecation. The training programme made her realise that she had to be the change, which she wanted to see in her village. Back from training she got a toilet constructed in her own house, and also motivated the members of her SHG to follow suit. Consequently, the female members of neo convert households (including herself) found a sense of dignity in not having to wake up at the crack of dawn to look for secluded places (for defecation) in fields to avoid embarrassment. Other advantages included convenience, saving of time and improved health status. Armed with the practical results, Laxmibai along with her SHG and Sanitation Committee members went about systematically convincing two households a day on the benefits of toilets eliciting their own example. Laxmibai's arguments were now more cogent and convincing, for she was preaching what she practised. She managed a sizeable number of converts.

While conversion rate from open defecation to construction and usage of individual household toilets was high, there were still a significant number of detractors, who despite all efforts continued open defecation. Laxmibai's confidence seemed to waver; she had reached a dead end. She and her group debated over their next strategy on how to get the diffident group of open defecators come into their fold of toilet users. The group came up with an unconventional strategy. The children in the village would be mobilised to follow the open defecators, shouting slogans on cleanliness and benefits of toilet usage. While children were enthusiastic, the question was who would lead the pack. The reaction of the open defecators could be

violent, the risk quotient was high. Laxmibai volunteered to lead the pack. So at the crack of dawn the motley crowd of children lead by Laxmibai would literally stalk the open defecators with slogans and chants on sanitation. The result was dramatic, the number of open defecators gradually dropped. While the initial drive was embarrassment, the follow-up through counselling did the trick. Today thanks to Laxmibai's efforts, Dhaunkhade can claim almost 100% toilet coverage, not a mean achievement given that a few months back almost none existed.

When the solution is simple, God is answering.....



Name: Village Sanitation Committee

Village: Taroda

Hoshangabad District

Madhya Pradesh

In Taroda village you would most probably come across villagers humming Ram bhajans, as they go through their daily chores, which seem deceptively familiar (in musical texture and notation) to the ones sung across the Hindi heartland in India, until you carefully listen to the lyrics. The lyrics eulogise the connection between God and cleanliness which is a departure from the conventional Ram Bhajans. ***Ram Milan Tabhi, Jab Ho Saaf-Saafai*** is the lyric of one such Bhajan. The advocacy on cleanliness through use of Ram bhajans has been so effective, that these bhajans have become a part of the oral tradition of the village. This phenomenal effort of using religious symbols to ingrain in the psyche of the villagers the need for cleanliness is a first rate case study in social marketing. So spectacular has been the effort that even in the mainstream religious festivals like the Ramsatta function in Taroda, Ram bhajans on cleanliness are sung. The credit of initiating this process goes to the sanitation committee in Taroda, who got this idea after attending the training under the CBPR programme organised by RCVP Noronha Academy.

While advocacy did bring a realisation on the importance of cleanliness, deep rooted inhibitions put a spanner on the self help approach to digging toilet pits being popularised by the Sanitation Committee- a strategy learnt at the training programme. To break this inhibition the sanitation committee at Taroda along with Shri Shambhu Dayal, Sarpanch (also a trainee under the CBPR Programme) took a very unconventional step. Hesitatingly and with lots of diffidence they proposed to the district panchayat leaders and officers to initiate a toilet pit digging exercise in Taroda. To their surprise the response was very positive. One fine afternoon, Shri Chandra Gopal Mallaiya, member District Panchayat and Shri Shailendra Singh, Chief Officer In Charge Janpad Panchayat, Hoshangabad , got down from their official vehicles at the Panchayat Bhawan and proceeded directly to select households to personally dig toilet pits. When Leadership leads by example, support is not difficult in coming- the toilet pits in Taroda got dug in record time. Today this medium sized village of 336 families with 100% toilet coverage is considered a model village not only in the district but in the State of Madhya Pradesh. Lord Ram would not have been more pleased.....

If there is intent...results follow



**Name: Smt Kaushalya Bai
PTA President
Village Padhariya Rajadhar
Begumganj Tehsil, Raisen District
Madhya Pradesh**

If you manage to reach Padhariya Rajadhar village after trekking on foot for fifteen kms through a dense jungle, you may chance upon a frail tribal woman chasing monkeys from the fields. She is Kaushalya Bai, the president of the Parents Teachers Association of the primary school in the village. Kaushalya has herself never sat in a school classroom in her life. Her poor economic background, low societal awareness of benefits of education and her gender meant that Kaushalya could never get education, despite her yearning to study when she was a little girl. Kaushalya lives her dream to attend school through her daughters, whom she sends to the village school. This however means that she has to work extra hours as a daily wage labour - grazing goats, collecting cow dung, cutting fodder or chasing monkeys.

It is obvious that PTA President's post does not really count for much in Padhariya Rajadhar; this explains how an illiterate poor tribal woman could get elected. To Kaushalya, as well to the villagers, the PTA President was just a figure head; there was no attendant authority or responsibility. The post changed nothing in Kaushalya's life nor did any change occur at the school. High teacher absenteeism, partially filled classrooms and poor

educational attainment of the students is what characterised the primary school at Padhariya Rajadhar.

Then one day Kaushalya along with the School Teacher, Sarpanch, Up Sarpanch got a communication from the Block headquarter at Begumganj to attend the training programme on school management being conducted by RCVP Noronha Academy. Kaushalya could not really fathom the need for such a momentous training. Her logic was simple- what is there to learn, when as the PTA President there was nothing to do. The training also meant loss of three days of wages. However it was difficult for her to refuse trainer Deepak Soni who personally went to Padhariya Rajadhar to solicit participation of Kaushalya and her colleagues in the school management committee to attend the training.

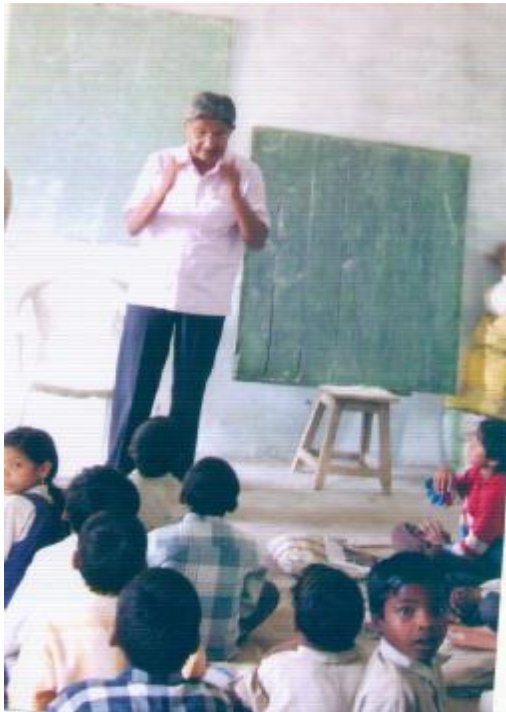
The training changed Kaushalya's perception towards her role in school management. She realised she could do so much to turnaround the school in her village. As she would trudge back every evening to her village from the training site she would think that if the school were to function better may be some students could go on to do bigger things in life and make Padhariya Rajadhar proud. Slowly a dream began to form, which soon would become a mission. The villagers were pleasantly surprised when the trainer team on invitation from Kaushalya visited this rather remote village. Kaushalya had signalled that things were going to change.

Post training Kaushalya was transformed. The hitherto non-interested PTA president started questioning the way the school was being run. She

was adamant that things had to change, it did not matter what it took, she was ready to give her all. As a first step she undertook a door to door campaign along with two other PTA members to increase school enrolment. Kaushalya's amateur theatre group, extolling the virtues of education became a common sight in the village. The message began to register, the school enrolment and attendance showed a marked increase. Kaushalya makes it a point to visit the school regularly to check on teacher and student attendance. Sometimes she would carry toffees and biscuits bought from her meagre earnings for the students as a reward for them to attend school. Needless to say, the children look forward to Kaushalya's visits. The teacher attendance has dramatically improved and the school now opens every day and full time. To improve school results, she was able to convince some of the educated villagers to volunteer for teaching the children. The results have showed an improvement since then. Kaushalya regularly checks the amenities in the school. Once finding the lavatory in an appalling state, she herself cleaned it. Startled by this action, the teacher now ensures that the toilet is regularly cleaned. She has also got the hand pump at the school repaired so that children have safe drinking water available. She has also been able to get regular health camps conducted in the school. Last year when the school celebrated the Independence Day for the first time, the students put up an impressive cultural show which was witnessed by the whole village. The proud parents clapped the hardest.

Primary School at Padhariya Rajadhar has been transformed. Kaushalaya who was previously shunned and not taken seriously is now a celebrity. The neighbouring villages also consult her regarding school management. Kaushalaya continues to pursue her dream which she had dreamt during those lonely walks to the village from the training site- one day some students of her primary school will grow up and do Padhariya Rajadhar proud, who knows may be the state and the nation too. Meanwhile the monkeys at Padhariya Rajadhar are a happy lot; Kaushalaya has less time for them nowadays.

PRI representatives who teach the children lessons on hygiene and sanitation



Sh Chandragopal Mallya, president, sanitation committee, Hosangabad, teaching the children at primary school, Sankheda on good practices that should be adopted in personal hygiene

**PRI representatives
Village Sankheda
Kesla Block, Hoshangabad District
Madhya Pradesh**

Sankheda till recently had nothing much to recommend itself for. It was another average village, with more problems than prospects, and without any drive to achieve a better future. This is not true anymore, for it is a new lab for a unique experiment, which has made other villages in its vicinity to sit up and take notice. The saga started with the training of the PRI representatives of the village at the training

program organised by the RCVP Noronha Academy on improving water and sanitation. The training made the PRI representatives resolve that change in hygiene standards in the village has to be brought about.

They had to decide the appropriate vehicle through which to sensitize the villagers about good hygiene practices. The PRI members energetically discussed the possible strategies and drew up a list. After a long discussion and debate, using the process of elimination, they came up with a unique idea- to use the children in the village as ambassadors of hygiene and

sanitation. The strategy had two fold advantages- the children have influence on their mothers who in the household take decisions on the hygiene practices, secondly if children inculcate the habit of sanitation and hygiene, the next generation in Sankheda village would be automatically more aware and better informed. The logic of using the children as messengers of hygiene and sanitation was intuitively appealing. Well done is better than well said- but how was the strategy to be implemented? The PRI representatives, who till yesterday were trainees at the Bhopal Academy training programme, decided to turn into trainers and educate the children. The transformation was not easy, teaching children is not simple, getting their attention, making the lessons interesting and showing patience was the key. There were instances of failure when the PRI representatives (turned neo trainers) fumbled through their teaching task. However with perseverance and trial and error, they eventually could hold the attention of the children in the classroom. The PRI representatives also made another innovation; they appointed hygiene minister in each class from amongst the children. This class hygiene minister was to mobilise the children to be more cleanliness and hygiene aware. Peer group interaction and pressure was the tactic.

The transformation has been gradual but sure, the children can be seen sharing their new knowledge on cleanliness with their parents and siblings. The good hygiene habits and practices are percolating- Sankheda is in midst of a revolution that is taking off.

Leadership is practiced not in words but in attitude and in actions



**Name: Shri Tulsi Ram, Sarpanch
Village : Virpur
Begumganj Block, Raisen District
Madhya Pradesh**

Shri Tusli Ram, Sarpanch of Virpur village in Begumganj Block, Raisen district has a favourite Sant Tulsi Das couplet:

Karma Pradhan Vishwa Kari Raakha | |

Jo Jas Kariya So Tas Phal Chaakhaa | |

(God made one law for the world: Actions are rewarded according to the deeds performed. In other words: As you sow, so shall you reap)

Shri Tulsi Ram has sown the sapling of education in Virpur and true to the edict of Sant Tulsi Das the results have been substantive. How he achieved it, is a story of astute leadership and perseverance.

Till recently Virpur was indifferent to the prospects that education has to offer. This indifference had permeated to the way school was run. Tulsi Ram, a university graduate, always knew how education can transform lives, he himself being a beneficiary of the state run education system. Now a prosperous farmer and a known authority on astrology in the region, Tulsiram believes that the education he received gave him a head start. After being elected the Sarpanch , Tulsiram selected education as a vehicle

for transforming his village. While he had the passion and intent, he was not sure how to translate it into performance. The training programme on school education under the CBPR Programme organised by the RCVP Noronha Institute which Tulsi Ram attended could not have been more timely. The training provided Tulsi Ram with a framework for action at the field level, and also positively reinforced his belief that improving education opportunities especially for the girl child has tremendous positive externalities.

On return from the training programme, Tulsi Ram went about in a systematic way in realising his goal. He organized a meeting of P.T.A (Parent Teacher Association) presidents Smt. Saubhadra Bhai of girls' primary school, Kishan Verma of primary school, and Ram Raj Singh of secondary school and former Sarpanch Shri Ram Kumar. During very long deliberation and discussion, Tulsi Ram posed several questions regarding punctuality of teachers and students, the ratio of teacher and students etc. He learned that the schools at Virpur exemplify how a school should not be run. The situation was dismal - the motivation of teachers was low, the infrastructure poor, the parents/children apathetic and the results embarrassing. The challenge was significant and no quick fix or patch work solution possible. Taking a cue from his classroom discussions during the training programme, Tulsi Ram in consultation with the group zeroed in on two root causes- school infrastructure and community attitude towards education- which would have to be attacked if education attainments are to be improved in the village. Problems identified, a strategy was put in place.

For the first time, Tulsi Ram had been able back his rhetoric for improved education with a concrete road map and a plan of action. He made a charter of demands regarding school infrastructure including posting of additional teachers, improvement of school infrastructure especially toilets for the children and drinking water etc. Tulsi Ram after a number of rounds of discussions and petitioning with the education department officials was able to clinch for Virpur its charter of demands.

Enthused with his initial success, Tulsi Ram embarked upon the more difficult task of convincing villagers on the importance of education for their children. Convinced of the “one brick at a time” approach taught at the CBPR Training programme, he took the arduous task of going door to door and discussing with individual households at length how education offers a means for their children to not only improve their livelihood options but also to learning important life skills. The door to door campaign in a village with a population of 2100 is not a mean task. It required missionary zeal and conviction on the part of Tulsi. The success was slow but sure, the attendance graph of the school showed an upward rise, the growth trajectory getting steeper with each passing month, as Tulsi Das covered more ground on his door-to-door campaign.

One problem which got highlighted during his padyatra in the village was that the girls cannot pursue education after VIII, since there was no high school for them in the village. Getting a sanction for a new school from the education department was not an easy task. The business of getting a school sanctioned would have been a time-consuming process. It had to be

expedited. Tulsi Ram sought appointment with the Hon'ble State Education Minister at Bhopal and made a pitch for a High school for girls in Virpur. It is said that "what convinces is conviction", the state machinery got into motion and today Virpur has a functioning High School for girls running out of the middle school building. The process of getting a separate building is ongoing.

The school education system has seen a sea change in Virpur after Tulsi Ram's intervention. The community collaborates with Tulsi Ram in ensuring that schools in Virpur are run efficiently. Tulsi Ram's intervention in Virpur proves that thoughtful, committed citizens can bring about significant changes, probably it is the only thing that ever has.

I light my candle for their torches.....



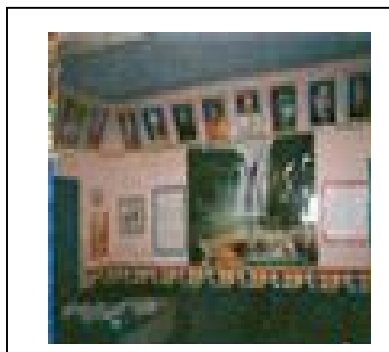
**Name: Shri Prem Narayan Sharma
Village : Kokalpur
Begumganj Block, Raisen District
Madhya Pradesh**

It is amazing how lives of great people impact us in so many different ways across disparate contexts and dispersed geographical settings. One such example is from Kokalpur village, Begumganj Block, Raisen District, where Prem Narayan Sharma, the PTA president got inspired by the case study on the life of Mother Teresa presented at the CBPR training programme which he attended. It dawned on him that every action need not have a commensurate pecuniary benefit and that the inner satisfaction from selfless work is immense. He brought the teachings of Mother into fruition through his effort in turning around the secondary school in Kokalpur as a model school in the district.

Post training, at Mr Sharma's instance, the PTA meetings is held regularly and all attendant problems/issues regarding the school are discussed and strategies chalked out. Each PTA member has been allotted a group of students, whose academic performance is tracked by the member. The member also visits the parents of the children, under his purview, who are not performing too well at school. The mid-day-meals have been

outsourced to the women SHG in the village under strict quality control of the PTA members. Women volunteers have been enlisted to promote girl education. Twice a month in the evenings, the school teacher apprise the villagers of the innovative teaching methods, extra curricular actives and games being implemented in the school and the contribution expected from parents for effective learning outcome of the students. A purchase committee comprising of women members and the Mahila Mandal representatives has been assigned to purchase school uniforms. The slew of reforms brought in at the initiative of Mr Sharma and his colleagues in the PTA has made Kokalpur High School a benchmark for other schools in the district. In the work of Mr Prem Naryan Sharma echo the words of Mother Teresa ***“There are no great things, only small things with great love. Happy are those”***.

Key to success is the ability to adapt....



Shri Mansingh(PTA President) / Smt Jeera Bai (VP)

Village : Khiranti

Begumganj Block, Raisen District

Madhya Pradesh

Few months back the mention of Khiranti village (Raisen District) in the corridors of the Education

Department in the district would be meted with exasperation and a sigh of hopelessness. No teacher would ever want to be posted here, because of universal disregard for literacy and education in the village. The problem was that, the attendance was dismally low, and no effort at improving it bore fruit. The Khiranti village file was ominously thick with transfer request and repeated posting orders. The teacher turnover was alarmingly high. The mandarins in the education department in a hope to bring about a turnaround at the village primary school posted two of the best teachers in the district to Kiranti primary school. Both the teachers – Shri Vrindavan Prasad and Shri Nilesh Kumar faced stiff resistance from the villagers (mostly daily wage laborers) in sending their children to school, the PTA did not help the matters either. In despair both of them also send in their requests for transfer, terming the ground situation in Khiranti as hopeless.

During this time an offer for attending the training programme under the CBPR Programme conducted by RCVP Noronha Institute was received at Khiranti Primary School, wherein the school teachers, the PTA Members

were invited. The PTA president Shri Mansingh and VP Smt Jeera Bai attended the programme. What happened thereafter is what fairy tales are written about. The attendance rose from almost single digit to 80%. It was nothing dramatic that made it possible. It was sheer hard work which the PTA put in to bring about an attitudinal change in the people. Till now it was the teachers who were making an effort to bring in students, now members of the community made the call for increasing attendance in the school. The cost and benefit of education was explained, the incentive of midday meal was driven home; the possibility of breaking the vicious circle of poverty through education was emphasized. Door to door contact, moral, persuasion, incentives and community pressure all added to the positive outcome. Khiranti is an apt candidate for a detailed case study of what a motivated community leadership can do to harbinger change. Shri Vrindavan Prasad and Shri Nilesh Jain have since withdrawn their application for a transfer; they are now part of the transformation at Khiranti, which till a few months back seemed a distant dream.

Meeting the Prime Minister of India.....



**Shri Deepak Soni, High School Teacher
Shashkiya Uttkrisht Vidyalaya, Begumganj Raisen
District
Madhya Pradesh**

It was a proud moment for Madhya Pradesh and Raisen district, when Amreen Begum a student class XII of Shashkiya Uttkrisht Vidyalaya, Begumganj , walked up to the stage at the Indian National Science Congress held in Shillong amidst applause from the top scientists in the country , to shake hands with the Honb'le Prime Minister of India and receive an award for the Best Student science project. It is not often that a student from a rather nondescript government school situated in one of the hundred most backward districts in the country would bring such laurels. It is a story that fairy tales are made off.

The preparation for this moment goes a year and a half ago, when Shri Deepak Soni, High School science teacher at Shashkiya Uttkrisht Vidyalaya, Begumganj was nominated by the District Collector, Raisen for the Training of Trainers Programme under the CBPR Training Programme at the RCVP Noronha Academy. On completion of training Shri Soni along with forty other Master Trainers were tasked to roll out the decentralised CBPR Training Programme for the education sector in Begumganj and Obeidullahganj blocks, Riasen. Mr Soni with two master trainers would

camp at remote villages and conduct the training programmes for education sector functionaries. The classroom discussions would be spirited and Mr Soni could see the resolve in many a trainees to do something constructive for the schools and students under their purview. This enthusiasm started to rub off on Mr Soni and during evenings after the day's training programme, Mr Soni would contemplate how he as a science teacher could possibly bring about a positive change for his school and the students under his charge.

Contemplation made him realise that his performance as the district coordinator for the National Children Science Congress had not been of any note- none of the projects nominated from Raisen would ever make it to the State shortlist for representation to the National Children Science Congress. Mr Soni saw an opportunity for himself, what if he could get atleast one state representation from his district, better still from his school. The goal was worth a try.

Back from his intermittent training stints, Mr Soni encouraged his students to suggest topics for possible science projects. He also identified potential students and counselled and discussed possible science ideas with them. Amreen Begum a student of class XII along with Sanjeev Soni and three other students formed a team and suggested the possibility of developing a bio pesticide. Guided by Mr Soni, his team of student researchers scoured through the traditional knowledge (available by word of mouth) in rural Begumganj, and chanced upon the pesticidal possibilities of a number of locally available plants against mustard aphid (mustard is the principal

crop of the region). The problem was to identify the most effective plant agent in their list (or a possible combination) which could be the best deterrent against mustard aphid. With the research question defined, the extensive experimentation in the school chemistry lab and the concurrent field trials for testing efficacy of various combinations started. The experimental stage was frustrating, there were a number of failures, but Mr Soni kept the morale of his young group of researchers high, telling those stories of how successful scientists at the first instance had not met with instant success. Finally after months of hard work, the team struck upon the most potent combination- castor seed mixed with Lal Kaner (*Nerium Indicum*) had eliminated the entire mustard aphid in the test plots. They had discovered a brand new bio-pesticide.

While Mr. Soni was guiding his students through their bio-pesticide project, concurrently in his capacity as the district/Block level coordinator he was also mentoring four projects, three of them from neighbouring schools in Begumganj itself. The projects were on industrial pollution, noise pollution and vermi- composting. He would guide the teachers and the students, help them secure equipment and the know-how. The dream he was able to sell to all the project team was that of representing Madhya Pradesh at the National Children Science Coingress. Mr Soni however had this niggling doubt- will he be able to pull it off! , had he dreamt too big a dream! What if like every year, Raisen projects did not meet the grade!., Was he and his team good enough for the challenge!., What will he tell his team of student researchers in case they failed!

As was for every year, five nominations from Raisen district were submitted for State level selection. Mr Soni and his team were in for a very pleasant surprise- of the total of seven projects shortlisted for representing the State of MP, four were from Begumganj Block, Raisen. The science teaching community was surprised as to how Raisen district could pull this off. As a guide, Mr Soni was relieved that the dream he and his student researchers had dreamt and the hard work that had been put was finally vindicated. The resolution Mr Soni had made on those dreary evenings at the training sites had been fulfilled.

His student teams put up a very impressive show at the National Children Science Congress at Dimapur. Another surprise was awaiting Mr Soni and his team. The pesticide project was adjudged amongst the best in its category nationally. His student team was to receive an award from no other than the Prime Minister of India at the Indian Science Congress at Shillong. As Aneesa Begum climbed up the stage to receive her award from the Hon'ble Prime Minister, a thought reached out for her teacher who had made it all happen- Sir, Thank You.

Neither the design team at DoPT or at the RCVP Academy could have fathomed that the service delivery personnel training designed and implemented by them could have such a far reaching impact.

The first step is the most difficult to take.....



**Smt Anjum Bi
PTA President, Shaskiya Shaskiya Kanya
Vidyala, Begumganj Raisen District
Madhya Pradesh**

Anjum Bi makes a living as a daily wage labourer involved in rolling tendu leaves. However determined to give her daughter

better options in life, she sends her to the government run middle school. Her daughter is a diligent student and a top ranker¹, by virtue of which Anjum Bi got nominated as the PTA president of her daughter's school. However this did not mean much to Anjum Bai, who continued her daily routine, oblivious of the roles and responsibilities of a PTA President. Neither was there any awareness nor an inclination in her to make any effort to improve the lot of the school. She considered the president's post as being thrust on her.

Anjum Bi had reluctantly agreed to attend the CBPR Training programme organised by the RCVP Noronha Academy. Three days of lost wages weighed heavily on her mind. Clad in a burqha, Anjum Bi had seated herself in the last row. Though a reluctant starter, the morning session on the first day seemed interesting, she found herself raptly listening to the lecturer and the class room discussion.. Hidden amongst the crowd of

¹ In Mdhya Pradesh, the parent of the top ranking student is nominated as the PTA president of the school

trainees, Anjum Bi was quite content in her comfort zone. Suddenly the trainer turned towards her and requested Anjum Bi to narrate the problems in her school. Anjum Bi was terrified to stand up and address a class of thirty trainees, she was able to mumble a few lines regarding poor water supply/toilets in the school and was more than relieved to sit down. Though not a stellar performance, this was the first time Anjum Bi had ever in her life stood up and spoken to such a large group. She realised that it was not that difficult. Gradually as the training progressed Anjum Bi started taking an active part in the classroom discussions and participative activities. On the penultimate day each of the trainees was to give a two minute speech on what he/she would do to improve the school system. Anjum Bi was able to lucidly explain her agenda, starting with the line “there is so much to do and there is so less time, for each day we lose, we probably irreparably damage a child’s future. I am not ready to take that blame”. Very profound words that too coming from a woman who came to the training programme as a not so confident person. She listed out the actions she would take for the school of which she is the PTA President. The trainer asked her, whether she was sure to be able to do what she had listed out. She replied, “Please visit my school after three months, you will see the difference”. Anjum Bi had accepted the challenge, and true to her words in the next three months Shaskiya Kanya Vidyala, Begumganj has been transformed. Today the teachers are regular, children have their entitlements to books, uniform and cycles and the midday meals are much better. Anjum Bi makes it a point to sample the midday meals herself, often

questioning the thickness of the roti (bread), if it appears that 100 gm per of flour per roti (bread) norm has not been followed.

Her efforts still continue. Anjum Bi can be rest assured, she will not be questioned for not trying enough.



Shri Pradeep Soni
Teacher, Prathmik Shala, Gamaria
Raisen District
Madhya Pradesh

Loha Pitas as they are commonly known in Central MP are a group of nomadi iron blacksmiths, who make Begumganj their stop for approximately four months. On their migratory cycle which take s them as far as Karnataka and Orissa. These four months during monsoons, is probably their longest stay in one place. Loha Pitas due to their migratory lifestyle means that their children never go to school. They are the marginal lot of children, whom even the state education doesnot actively pursue. Mr Praveen Soni, teacher has been able to change this situation. Mr Pradeep got the idea for helping the Lohapitas during the CBPR Training Programme organised by RCVP Noronha Academy which he attended. While doing group work on identifying the clientele of the school, it had occurred to Mr Pradeep that there were many childrens on the margins which the education infrastructure of the State does not benefit. Once significant such group was the children of the Loha Pitas. He had discussed with his peer group in the training programme of the possible strategy possible to bring these children in the ambit.

Back from the training programme, Mr Soni contacted the families of these children who at that point of time were camping in Begumganj. The

problem was that these children had never been to school and that their stay in Begumganj would be seasonal. Special classes would be needed for such students. The present system at his school, did not allow for such a flexibility. However for Mr Soni, leaving out these children from benefits of education was unacceptable. He started a special evening class, which he would himself managed. He also went about convincing the loha pita community to sent their childresn. The xommunity members were pleasantly surprised to have a government functionary in there midst, tal=king of their welfare and going out of his way to accommodate the special needs of their children. Un used to such proactive action by a functionary of the state, the community at the outset was a bit suspicious. Soon children started to trickle in, and Mr Pradeep Soni's special classes started. Realising that these children would be temporary residents, he devised an innovation. At end of the three months special class, when the Loha Pitas were to migrate, he would give to each student a detail of his/her educational attainment along with a certification. Either the child could show these papers to another school in the vicinity of their new temporary camp, or when again in Begumganj in their seasonal migratory cycle start from where they had left.

It is needless to say that the CBPR training programme helped germinate this idea of including the children in the margins of education. Another small brick has been added by Mr Soni to the edifice of a literate India, which we would want our children to inherit.

They taught me how to innovate.....



**Shri Deepak Soni, High School Teacher
Shashkiya Uttkrisht Vidyalaya, Begumganj Raisen
District
Madhya Pradesh**

Till recently Shri Deepak Soni's approach to science teaching followed the traditional format. Factual information would dominate his lectures without being supported by any kind of practical activity or demonstration. Therefore most of the theories discussed in the classroom would remain largely incomprehensible for his students.

All this changed when Mr Soni was trained at RCVP Noronha Academy as a Master Trainer for rolling out the CBPR training initiative pilot for cutting edge education functionaries in Raisen District. It was for the first time in his long career as a teacher he could appreciate that learning is a cognitive process and that activity based teaching is important.

On his return back to the school, Mr Soni resolved to make the science classes interesting. With the learning theories taught at the Noronha Academy still fresh in his mind, he could well appreciate



The working model of the eclipse phenomena developed by Mr Deepak Soni

the difficulties faced by the students to comprehend the complexities of science in absence of any working models. He set about developing a working model to demonstrate the phenomenon of eclipse and also help predict future eclipses. The idea to reality was not easy. Mr Soni spent hours designing on paper the model and then scouring through kabbadi shops and fabricators to get the right materials to construct the model. With trial and error and with a little help from internet resources, the model was ready. He now uses this model in his class lectures. The phenomenon of eclipse which took such an effort to explain on the blackboard (with limited success), is now so intuitive for the students to understand with the help of the model. Realising that schools are reluctant to allow the students to use the expensive telescope provided as teaching aid, Mr Soni has designed and fabricated a low cost telescope which he allows the students to borrow to see the night sky. The telescope uses two slotted (to adjust focal length) pieces of PVC pipes fitted with optical lenses and an eye piece. Getting the right kind of lens made Mr Soni travel to almost all big towns of MP till an optician in Ujjain could match the specifications. So popular has been the low cost telescope, that Mr Soni is receiveing orders from other neighbouring schools in Begumganj. Mr Soni's repertoire includes ten other working models demonstrating various kinds of scientic phenomena. Science teachers of other schools in the block have evinced interest in building similar models based on Mr Soni's original design for the benefit of their students. Mr Soni regularly displays his models in various science fairs in the State

It appears that the training programme helped acted as a catalyst to motivate the hitherto talented teacher to walk the extra mile to make the science classes interesting. His models have helped his students to reach out to the stars.

Tough time never last but tough people do....



**Shri Ghulam Mohammad Dar,
Teacher, Boys Primary School Batapora,
Village Batapora Kanihama, Block Magam, District Budgam, J
& K**

Budgam district, though adjacent to the summer capital city of Srinagar, ranks lowest in literacy in the State and ranks 13th out of 14 districts in literacy as per the 2001 census. The educational scenario in the District is gloomy, although, the number of educational Institutions in the District has gone upto 761 including 8 mobile Schools for Gujjar boys as against 694 in 1990-91. The total population of the district is 6.29 Lacs as per the 2001 Census. With a predominately rural outlook, 86% of the population in the district lives in its villages and are primarily involved in agricultural operations. There are total 509 villages in the Budgam district and shri Ghulam Mohammad Dar is a primary school teacher in one of them. He teaches in Boys Primary School Batapora, Village Batapora. He is one of the young teachers who completed his study under the reign of terror and opted teaching as a profession to earn his livelihood. Before attending the training course under the CBPR-Training Initiative, he had undergone a training organised by the District Institute of Educational Training (DIET) regarding the methods of teachings to improve the productivity. He had observed that the people are reluctant to send their children to schools as they are of the view that their children have murkiness in their future as learning in school is not going to give them freedom from the hostile conditions and non-conducive environment of the valley. During the training under CBPR-Training Initiative Ghulam Mohammad Dar, who is a young guy got new dimensions to overcome from the catastrophic situation which is being faced by the whole state through the involvement of the communities in achieving the development targets.

After attending 3 day training programme under CBPR-Training Initiative in Budgam district organised by the IMPA, J & K, when he returned back to his workplace, he could not sleep two to three nights and offered prayer late in the night and prayed to Almighty to give him strength for moving ahead to educate the whole village as he perceived education is the only mean by which they can get rid of the problem of militancy in which innocent youngsters are being used to carry out suicide attacks and due to lack of proper knowledge of the Holy Quran as well as its misinterpretation these youngsters of stunning valley of Kashmir are becoming scapegoat. Next day after offering his morning prayer he discussed the significance of the modern education with the villagers who were present in the mosque in the light of the Holy Quran. He recited Quranic Ayats and translated those Ayats before the villagers and interpreted the same in the present context, stressing the magnitude of the modern education for the achievement of the goals which have been assigned to them by the Almighty. During recess in the school, he also discussed his experiences as a trainee under CBPR-Training Initiative programme implemented by the IMPA J & K with his colleagues. He tinted the significance of the community participation in the implementation of the schemes and programmes as he learnt during a practical exercise provided in the training. He motivated them to impart quality education to the students as Almighty has assigned the task of building the future of these children to them and they are responsible to the Almighty. The number of students in the village school was substantial low as proper school building was not in place. Ghulam Mohammad Dar convened a meeting of parents along with his colleagues in the school and emphasized their role in the education of their wards. He asked them, “it is not only the responsibility of the government to provide education to the children; parents/guardians of the children are more responsible than anyone else”. Everyone realized the need of the hour and come forward with Ghulam Mohammad Dar in his effort to improve the functionality of the

village school. Since the village school has insufficient infrastructure and good school building is vital for retention of the students in the school. But due to lack of government land near the school premises, school building could not be constructed. Ghulam Mohammad Dar as had learnt during the training that through community mobilization hardships can be overcome, so he went door to door to convince the villagers to donate the land to the school. He asked the villagers that their deeds in this regard will bring the blessings of Almighty as in the case of their donation of land for the construction of mosque or madarssas bring. After several meetings and deliberations the land holders agreed to donate the land to the school for the construction of the school building and play ground. Meanwhile he approached the higher authorities in the Education Department and gets approval for the construction of school building on near about 16000 sq ft land, which is three times of the previous area of the school. A considerable increase in the number of children enrolled in the school has been noticed, moreover, their retention has become hundred per cent. The Boys Primary School has been proposed for upgradation upto middle level, and it is expected that by the next year it would become middle school. Ghulam Mohammad efforts in this direction are commendable. He sees his primary school as high school and intermediate college in the village. He has become the mentor and motivator of the villagers.



**Shri Shabbir Ahmad Shah,
Head Teacher, Middle School Lowher Check,
Village Lowher Check, Block Bonmakhama,
Budgam District, J & K**

Shabbir Ahmad Shah joined the service in the education sector as a primary school teacher in 1988 after MA, B. Ed. These days were the beginning of the militancy in the valley of Kashmir. On

the one side the militancy were flourishing day by day under the patronage of the foreign agents while on the other side a young guy, Shabbir Ahmad was starting his career in the education sector with the commitment of providing quality education to prepare his younger generation to lead the community for a safe and peaceful world. Thousands of lives have been lost since 1989 due to the intensified insurgency, a widespread armed insurgency started in Kashmir with the disputed rigged 1987 election. The zeal of the young guy faded away due to the changing surroundings. Village Lowher Check is amongst the many similar villages of the Budgam district, Jammu and Kashmir State with high percentage of BPL families and minimum literacy rate facing continuous problem of militancy. Since the school buildings or public buildings were the primary targets of the militants in the valley, in a very short span of time most of the infrastructure ruined by their evil acts. It was a very tough time for Shabbir Ahmad but he had learnt to live with this. Gradually time changed and the conditions become comparatively better by the sincere efforts made by the citizens and Government altogether. Shabbir Ahmad name was nominated by the District Education Department for the training under the CBPR-Training Initiative implemented by the IMPA, J&K. He sincerely participated in the 5 day training programme organised in the district by the IMPA, J&K and after training he was taken to the field under the

supervision of a trained trainer to intermingle with the community and inquire about the societal problem, which stalled the implementation of the developmental schemes and programmes. Soon after completing his training, he called a meeting of the members of the Village Education Committee (VEC) and informed them about their roles and responsibilities towards improving the existing primary education of their wards in the school and accentuated the need of their active participation for improving school infrastructure and standard of education. As he had learnt a new lesson under CBPR-Training Initiative programme that through community mobilization and its active participation unattainable task can be accomplished with ease, so he cited many practical examples before them and seek for their help and support. After school timings he used to visit households for one to one discussion with the households members and explained the critical role of modern education in the development of the societies by referring suitable examples. Thus, the number of the students amplified in the schools by 35%. He introduced modern methods of teachings in the school by replacing traditional means of teachings like learning by doings, recreation through educational games etc. and it is observed that the learning capacity of the children has been enhanced since the inception of these methods of teaching. With the support of the community, he has also established a mini science laboratory in the school and a small library with proper sitting arrangement for the students and teachers where 250 latest books have been kept to study. Previously smoke chullah was used to cook the mid day meal, Shabbir Ahmad with the help of the VEC constructed a kitchen with LPG cooking system in the school. New construction of the school building is also being going on. Now the foremost problem before him was to make necessary arrangement of potable drinking water as there is acute shortage of the drinking water in the village. He called a meeting of the parents and VEC and discussed the seriousness of the matter with them. The members of the VEC and parents took the matter seriously and decided that

till the permanent arrangement of the drinking water made, they will give boiled water to their wards in a bottle for consumption in the school. Shabbir Ahmad's individual efforts and continuous interactions with the community members are bringing change in the mind set of the villagers and hope for the better future is being nurturing in them. The Middle School Lowher Check has become one of the famous schools in the area and students from private schools are being enrolled in the Government Middle School.