



Red Light Despatch

Volume VI Issue 2

February 2013

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My Dream

Moushmi Das

Kolkata: I have been living in Sonagachi since I was born 8 years ago. My mother, Ruma Rani Das was very tense about my future. One day I met a few *Didis* and *Dadas* from Apne Aap. They asked me if I wanted to stay in a hostel and carry on with some vocational skills along with my studies. I immediately agreed to the opportunity and got admitted in Ramakrishna Vivekananda Mission

“I aspire to be a doctor someday, and serve the of people of Sonagachi”

Hostel in Barasat. I got admitted in class III but at present my life has changed radically.

Every day I get up early in the morning and prepare myself for the prayer sessions. After the prayers, we take breakfast and move for the tuition classes. We get to play with other team mates and learn vocal music, and do gardening. The teachers are very friendly. We enjoying our life. This is the first time I got a chance to learn so many things other than studies.

I aspire to be a doctor some day. One day I dream of having a clinic of my own in Sonagachi to serve the local people. I would also like to take my mother out from the red light area and settle somewhere far off from this place.

I Rallied Outside the Parliament

By Hurbai

Najafgarh, Dharampura: My Aap center I gave my name as a name is Hurbai I am 34 years volunteer. Besides, I also old. I live in Dharampura with discussed the matter with two of my four daughters. Recently, I my neighbours and they also got participated in a rally outside the ready to go to the rally. Parliament House in New Delhi. When we reached to the rally I am sharing my experiences of I saw that so many people were that here. delivering speeches on the topic

I participated in the rally of women’s freedom. At first I because of two reasons: First, I felt a bit strange in the crowd but had never participated in this soon I took interest in the topic type of programme earlier, and and I liked what I heard.

second because I wanted to get I listened to the speeches that involved in a programme that is were given by many educated about the empowerment of girls people and it filled me with and women. I wanted to join in enthusiasm. The most touching the voice against the sexual thing for me was that there were harassment of girls and women. men there fighting for the rights

When I came to know about of women. I was a bit surprised the protest rally at Jantar-Mantar as in my experience a man never on Parliament Street through wants the woman to win her *Didi* Mamata (our community place.

outreach worker) at the Apne (Contd. on Pg.2)

NY Students Meet Sonar Bangala SEG

By Hindol Dutta

New Delhi: Munshiganj, group an award of Rs.1550.

Kolkata: On 4th of February In this way the group is four students from NYU visited earning money during various Munshiganj and met with the events. But they are constantly in Mahila and Kishori Mondals. search of a more regular That day the Sonar Bangla SEG clientele. We are also trying to group invited them to have lunch get that clientele by approaching at Munshiganj Community different offices in the near by center. They cooked and served areas of Watganj and Chicken Biriyani to the guests Khidderpore. The group was who were delighted with the formed when they were all tasty dish. The students gave the (Contd. on Pg. 6)

How I Got My BPL Card

By Saidun Bibi

Kolkata: My name is Saydun Bibi, I am residing beside Park Circus Railway tracks in a temporary plastic shade with my family members after being evicted from the Bridge number 4 area in Topsia by hired musclemen of the government agency which is constructing the bridge with active support from the ruling party and the police.

Before eviction we met regularly with our group and Apne Aap member in our area in Topsia and discussed different legal rights issues and entitlements. In one of the meetings we talked about the Below Poverty Line (BPL) Card and its importance. A *Dada* (Community Outreach Worker) from Apne Aap told us about the procedure to collect the BPL application forms and complete the required relevant formalities. He also told us that the government had issued a notice to enlist the urban below

poverty line families lying within the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. He suggested us to collect the forms from local councilor's office.

The next day I, along with our community members lead by Mumtaj, went to the local councilor's office and collected the BPL application forms after producing the necessary documents.

The following day we asked a *Dada* from Apne Aap to assist us to fill the BPL application forms as most of us cannot read or write. All members of our group submitted the application forms along with the necessary documents to the concerned Kolkata Municipal Corporation office with lots of hope of getting the BPL cards.

Two and half months later it was informed by Apne Aap that my name along with all my family members was published by the

government as BPL members and also issued a number mentioning the BPL Card number. This information made me very happy because after our eviction from the Bridge number 4 area in Topsia, we had lost our shelter and earnings, so most of us could not arrange food for our children regularly. Now we will get government subsidized food like rice at Rs.3 per kilogram from government Ration Shops. It will be very helpful to families like us. Now we can also avail free medical treatment and medicines from government hospitals by showing this BPL Card and we can apply for residential units under government scheme for the urban poor under the Rajiv Awas Yojana.

I thank the entire team of Apne Aap Women Worldwide for assisting us women and out families in getting this BPL Card from the government.

(Contd. from Pg.1 "I Rallied...") this type of a programme. I got a chance to sit amid people of our society who are very conscious about this matter and there were no limits of my thinking. I had felt fear because of the recent Damini case that had happened in Delhi. After that we now hesitate before sending our daughters outside the house.

Everybody has a question mark about the girl-child today. Where are they safe? Where is the place that we can say a girl or woman can live freely and safely? When I heard the people who were delivering the speeches on this

topic, I felt at last that the society was with us and I felt I was somehow secure. I came to learn that we can get the solution to our problems if we share our sorrows and problems with others instead of hiding them. When I participate in such activities I get to learn many things. I take a lead in our community because I want to make my daughters feel they are a part of a larger society and my daughters also get a chance to learn new things.

I was hugely inspired by this rally. I had seen protests for basic needs like water, sanitation and garbage in our locality, but this

was the first time I participated in a protest for the rights of women. If there are more such activities in the future I will definitely participate in them too. I feel myself to be more determined and strong after attending the rally. I can still hear the slogans in my ear that says...

*"Humey chahiye Azadi, Azadi, Azadi
Bhaigiri se Azadi, Baapgiri se Azadi
Pappugiri se Azadi, Dadagiri se Azadi
Balatkar se Azadi, Gangrape se Azadi
Halla Bol, Halla Bol,
Jor se Bol, Uncha Bol
Arey aur Uncha, aur Uncha,
Uncha Bol*

A Day at Dharampura

By Katie Smith

Delhi: I was fortunate to be invited to join a group of visitors on their trip to visit Apne Aap's school in Dharampura. The group was comprised of approximately twenty donors from across Canada and America, all of whom had spent the past year fundraising to raise money for Indian charities tackling the issue of human trafficking: one of which is Apne Aap. They were visiting Dharampura as part of a tour of India which aimed to give them the chance to see how their money would be spent and to meet some of the people it would be helping. The visit allowed them to see first-hand the work being done by Apne Aap, and corroborated the information given to them about

self-empowerment groups by Ruchira in the morning's lecture.

We were warmly received by the women and children of the school, who made us feel very welcome in their community. We were given a tour of the building, and shown the safe space used by the self-empowerment groups for their meetings. We were treated to *chai* and *samosas*, before being taken to the rooftop terrace where the girls put on an impressive dance performance. Afterwards, the girls managed to persuade

some of the visitors to dance with them, which provided great entertainment for everybody involved.

The women and children of Dharampura were very welcoming and friendly, and were confident in approaching and talking to the visitors. I asked one of the visitors how the school in Dharampura turn out as compared to her expectations to which she responded by saying that the children and women were happier, livelier and more outgoing than she had anticipated. In my opinion, this is reflective of the both the hard work being done by Apne Aap's staff, and also of the resilience and strength of the human spirit.

VOLUNTEER JOURNALS

My Experience at Apne Aap

By Rohini Siva

New Delhi: After reading *Half the Sky*, I had decided to come to Apne Aap and put in my share of efforts to address the needs on women's rights as well as to fight against human trafficking. My experience in Apne Aap has been very unique: apart from it being my first time working with an NGO, I also got a taste of their work by visiting some field sites.

Going to Nizamuddin *basti* with a group of New York University students gave a first-hand perspective on the life of the last woman that this organization wants to support and protect. For these children, Agha Khan Foundation has supported a school that is equipped with great teachers, talented kids, and state of the art technology such as a

computer lab. Foundations like this and Apne Aap target those who are the most vulnerable and believe that education gives the strength to rise against the circumstances.

One of my favourite parts of the trip has to be going to Dharampura to visit one of Apne Aap's schools. The teachers there shared with us the reality of the situation. Often vulnerable families refuse to send their children, especially girls, to schools. These situations serve as one of the main challenges of actually reaching out to the most vulnerable women and children. After speaking with the teachers, we met the children who were friendly and giggling at the site of new faces. Calling us *didi* they

waved at us and sent us away with goodbye kisses.

Apne Aap taught me to understand the difference between what is and what should be. We first need to realize that human traffickig exists and that it disproportionately affects women and very young girls. When girls of just nine should be playing games, they are instead coerced into a world of slavery, where their voices, dignity and identity is completely subdued. What should it be like? With NGO like Apne Aap there is definitely a movement towards progression. All of us need to dream of a place where every human being is seen in free and equal terms. These dreams will need to be translated into positive actions.

Programme Planning for the Last Girl

By Raju Kumar

Kolkata: When I saw the mail from Ms. Swati Chakarborty, Head Monitoring and Evaluation of Program Workshop at Kolkata, I was thrilled as well as curious about the upcoming happenings lying ahead. Since joining Apne Aap Women Worldwide, this is my second time attending such a workshop. This kind of workshop not only enhances my knowledge, but also upgrades my capabilities to face new challenges. This workshop gave me a platform to understand my work related to adolescent girls and Women In Prostitution (WIP), Women At Risk (WAR) and those that are Vulnerable in accordance to our organization's mission, vision and goal. We stand with Apne Aap Women Worldwide in our belief that prostitution is not a choice but a form of male violence against women, which is born from inequality, poverty and lack of opportunity and is driven by the demand of male buyers for purchased sex. The workshop was organized by Ms. Judith Bruce from the USA and Ms. Virajita

David of Population Council, New York.

At the onset Ms. Bruce delivered a speech on 'Systematic Program Planning'. As part of my job, I meet people from marginalized community to mobilize and educate them about

DIARY OF A SOCIAL WORKER

their rights. Before attending this workshop, I only discussed among Kishori Mandals and Mahila Mandals, prominent personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Kalpana Chawla, Madam Bhikaji Cama among others while also talking about their fight for their rights and entitlements. In this workshop I learned various things on how to implement and complete asset for adolescent girl. I learnt that every girl or woman in their respective age groups needs to know the

information about their rights and entitlements. For example girls between 5 to 9, 10 to 14 and 15 and above of age groups need to know about issues like health, trafficking, education through a well-structured plan. Feudal system, specific safety plans, financial leadership, social asset, child sexual slavery are some of them. I have learned about almost one hundred asset cards meant for adolescent girls and how to use activities methodically through asset cards for different age groups of Kishori Mandal girls.

Later we discussed Resource Mapping, Resource Analysis, Economic Resource, Specific Program Planning, Mapping Information, Resource Mobilization etc. and how to implement resource mapping through GPS system. It was very helpful to me in identifying the farthest location in a map or finding out appropriate data from any database or survey.

How Apne Aap Is Changing My Life

By Usha Rai

Delhi: My name is Usha and I live in *sapera basti* at Rawta Mod. I have two children one son and one daughter. My son is studying in 5th class and my daughter is handicapped since childhood. I sometimes become embarrassed due to my daughter's disability. She is deaf and mute. She is totally dependent on me. My husband works as a tailor. We are surviving with lots of difficulties due to our daughter because we have to take care of her whole day due to her disability and it is very

difficult to manage our family day to day expenses because we can not go outside to earn due to her. We are very poor.

One day I met some people from Apne Aap Women. I joined Apne Aap through a women's group that staffs from Apne Aap formed in the local area. Being a member of the women's group, I attended many meetings and programs organised by Apne Aap. I later came to know about Self-Empowerment Group (SEG) and their savings and credit. We

requested to convert our mahila mandal into an SEG so that we may be able to save some money for the future.

Apne Aap shares and discusses various government schemes and programmes and help us link with them to enjoy the benefits. Many social issues are also discussed. Apne Aap helps us solve our problems time to time. Now I want to admit my daughter into Apne Aap's women's hostel from where she can have a safe future. I am glad to have joined Apne Aap.

Art Defies Rape

New Delhi: Following the heinous Delhi gang rape case in December 2012, where the victim was left dying and who later succumbed to her injuries, a poster competition titled Rise Against Rape was organised by Apne Aap Women Worldwide on the occasion of One Billion Rising Day celebrations on February 14, 2013. It attracted keen participation from students of institutions like The College of Art, New Delhi, The National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi and Jamia Millia University. The posters were displayed at the National Law University Auditorium, Sector 14, Dwarka, New Delhi. Entries were adjudged by eminent personalities from the social and the art world. The jury was comprised of

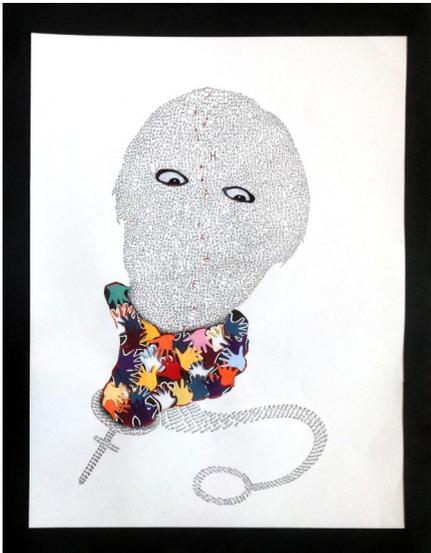


Chief Guest Manisha Parekh giving away the prizes as M.K. Raina, known theatre and film personality looks on.

and were awarded deserving prizes. Posters made by Ashish P. Deshmukh and Aporva Shroff Sheba Chacchi, renowned artist and feminist and Indra Chandrashekhar, Editor of Publisher of Tulika Books. Posters made by Atul Verma of College of Art, New Delhi, Savita Yadav of

College of Art, New Delhi and Vrinda Mathur of NIFT, New Delhi were declared outstanding and were awarded deserving

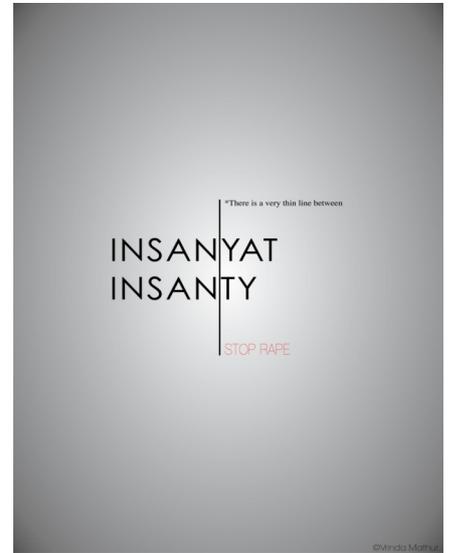
the participants through their posters. In response to a query she said, "The roar may have died down but the issue hasn't. The



Poster by Savita Yadav



Poster by Atul Verma



Poster by Vrinda Mathur

Lekha Poddar, art connoisseur, founder of Devi Art Foundation, Sheba Chacchi, renowned artist and feminist and Indra Chandrashekhar, Editor of Publisher of Tulika Books. Posters made by Atul Verma of College of Art, New Delhi, Savita Yadav of

prizes. Posters made by Ashish P. Deshmukh and Aporva Shroff Sheba Chacchi, renowned artist and feminist and Indra Chandrashekhar, Editor of Publisher of Tulika Books. Posters made by Atul Verma of College of Art, New Delhi, Savita Yadav of

response of the people is very reassuring,"

The posters were later displayed for a week at the quadrangle at the India International Centre, New Delhi for public viewing. A noble work of art indeed!

We Rose with the One Billion Rising

By Jahan Ara

Forbesgunj, Bihar: On the occasion of One Billion Rising Day, on February 14, a cultural programme was organized by Apne Aap Women Worldwide, Bihar at Apne Aap Office premises, Jagdish Mills Compound, under the banner of "One Billion rising" with the theme of Dance, Strike and Rise. About 96 women and girls from different Self-Empowerment Groups (SEG) and Kishori Mandals participated in the event which aims to empower adolescent girls and members of Self-Empowerment Groups of Apne Aap and achieve its mission, vision and goal to bring an end to sex trafficking.

Everyone present there enjoyed the programme and felt to end the feeling of second grade citizen where girls are commonly mistreated and are used for fun. In

other places women do not get respect and they hardly understand their value but in an occasion like this things seem to be different. Women are respected, honoured and empowered by the such organizations. People who were present in the programme talked about empowering of women. Women who have no voice of their own and their mouths are muffled and crushed, fight for women's rights and voice for rights of others.

Apne Aap and its staff want them to be strong and empowered. The Kishori Mandal girls and all the women who are related to Apne Aap Women Worldwide proved that they were no less than others. Some girls and women from our groups who were the leaders, motivate the women and build courage and confidence.

were the chief guest of this programme and honored by the state coordinator, Apne Aap Women Worldwide, Bihar. The guests included people from our families, like uncles, sisters, mothers, grandfathers who encouraged us.

We were very happy to see them and it motivated us to do our best to feel stronger by singing and dancing. It taught us that women are no less than men and women have the proved their strength by the support of Apne Aap Women Worldwide. In the past, rallies were organized to celebrate this kind of occasion but this time it was something different. This occasion allowed us to forget our miseries and display our confidence that we have through this new concept. Indeed we need to dance, strike and rise against women violence.

(Contd. from Pg. 1 "NY...")

looking for something they could take up as a dignified and sustainable livelihood option. They wanted to start something where they could use the skills which they all possess. During a group meeting they decided make cooking that livelihood option. They decided to start a canteen where they could sell cooked food to people working in the area. And thus in 2009 the Sonar Bangla (Prosperous Bengal) SEG was formed by ten survivors of sex-trafficking living in Munshiganj Red Light Area in Kolkata.

In the words of Ayesha Begum, the leader of the group, "Since we all are getting old, it's tough for us to do work that needs hard labour or concentration. We are also too old to learn new skills. So as we all love to cook,



we find it a good solution to our livelihood problems. We think it

will be successful because there is no good canteen in and around the area where lots of people come to work in the offices. If they get clean and tasty lunch, they would definitely come back to our canteen again and again.

On the basis of that group decision they started to cook and supply lunch to the Apne Aap employees in Kolkata office from May 30th 2012. It became a tool for us to help ourselves and not depend on others. The group wants to see themselves as a renowned food supplier through the canteen and make hungry people feel happy.

News and Events

Apne Aap Girl wins Second Prize in Slogan Writing Competition

New Delhi: Pooja Yadav, a student of class 12th at Govt. Girls Senior Secondary School, Khaira, Najafgarh participated in the All India Slogan Writing Competition in February, organised by The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India and won the second prize. She currently lives with her family in a high risk area in Najafgarh and finds herself very fortunate to have such loving parents and grandparents who encourage her to follow her dreams.

She had enrolled herself in an applique course in the Gender Resource Centre (GRC) at the Apne Aap Women Worldwide

centre at Najafgarh. She was happy to inform that she was enjoying her time at the GRC and grateful that Apne Aap was providing important information related to her community.

She was glad to have won the prize but also sad that she could not go in person to receive the prize from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former president of India due to her pre-board exams. In future she wants to work as a Company Secretary and get settled in society like any other normal woman.



Manohar Rana, Co-ordinator, Najafgarh Centre, receiving the prize on behalf of Pooja Yadav from Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Poem

तू बोलेगी मूह खोलेगी
तभी तो ज़माना बदलेगा
तू चुप रह कर जो सहती रही,
तू चुप रह कर जो सहती रही,
क्या ज़माना बदला?
तू बोलेगी मूह खोलेगी
तभी तो ज़माना बदलेगा
में बोलूंगी मूह खोलूंगी
में बोलूंगी मूह खोलूंगी
तभी तो ज़माना बदलेगा

- काजल

राह

राह देखता तेरी बेटी
जल्दी से तू आ जाना
ठुमक ठुमक कर चलना घर में
पैज़ानियां खनकाना ।

- पूजा यादव

Dance, Stand, Strike

Delhi: A programme was held on February 14, at the Dharampura centre in New Delhi to celebrate One Billion Rising Day. It was a global event where one billion

Momal, member of a Kishori Mandal group shared her story and dreams. She loves dancing and wants to become a dancer one day, and even though life is difficult for her she is working hard to achieve her goals and is very thankful to Apne Aap for supporting her.



The program ended with an open dance session where everyone was welcome to dance and feel free and stronger.

women and girls across the globe danced to raise their voice to end violence against women. Priyanka, a social worker staff from Apne Aap hosted the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Rana, state coordinator, Delhi, stressed on the issue to fight against trafficking so girls are saved from being prostituted and exploited for personal gain.

One Billion Rising Celebrations

Bihar: There were celebration of One Billion Rising Day at the Forbesgunj centre in Bihar where a number of women and girls took to the stage and danced to show strenght and courage against violence against women.

Mohammad Kalam, the state coordinator anchored the program and was glad to a part of this movement.

Did You Know?

According to a report by the National Human Rights Commission, about 5 children go missing every hour in the country.

The Justice Verma Commission Report noted that the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act, 1956, did not provide a suitable definition of trafficking. The report therefore advises that Indian Legislation adopt the following definition of Trafficking:

“Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

This definition is taken from the UN Palermo protocol and will criminalise trafficking for any exploitative purpose, rather than just for the purpose of prostitution as was previously the case.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) ordinance issued by the government of India in January 2013 also adopts this definition of trafficking. We hope that this is passed as law by the parliament.

Source: Report of the Committee on Amendments to Criminal Law, 23rd January 2013, page 164.

The *Red Light Despatch* is a monthly newsletter published exclusively by Apne Aap Women Worldwide. It compiles articles, testimonials, speeches and interviews by women participating in Apne Aap's Self-Empowerment Groups (SEGs) and other initiatives, as well as by staff members, volunteers, and media figures. The central objective of the RLD is to offer a space for the unique voices of our girls and women. The particular writing style has been implemented to best preserve the original tone of the speakers.

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