

## **ACTIVITY REPORT OF SANCHAL FOUNDATION FOR THE YEAR 2002 TO 2003**

In 2002-2003, the Sanchal Foundation continued to support two programmes that were initiated in the previous year:

- I. Building Alliances in Delhi
- II. Women's Experiences with Sterilisation in West Bengal

### **I. Building Alliances in Delhi**

Based upon the cumulative experiences through the years 2000 and 2001, the current project on Building Informed Alliances in Delhi was formulated and initiated by the Hazards Centre of the Foundation in April 2002 with the following objectives:

- Information dissemination through popular and attractive media, emphasising on the need to build alliances at the community or settlement level with a focus on the anti-poor nature of current and proposed 'development' projects.
- Professional support and training for community activities with advocacy centring on the "right to live with dignity" and using a "participatory-governance" approach.

As part of the outcomes of the project, while the ability of Hazards Centre to provide user-friendly material on CDs and floppies was severely curtailed because of the non-availability of finance, about three hundred meetings were held in various settlements where information was disseminated through pamphlets, posters, handbills, and computer based graphics on evictions, resettlement policies, land use changes, development projects, privatisation of public utilities, groundwater quality, and Right to Information etc. An estimated 60,000 copies of the pamphlets have so far been distributed at the community level while twelve issues of the Sajha Manch Samachar have been brought out. A draft Manual on People's Planning in Delhi in English was circulated to experts and community groups (with a short summary in Hindi). In addition, design, research, and campaign support has been provided to ten community interventions by the residents of unauthorised colonies, slum settlements, rag picker and auto-rickshaw driver associations, while they have been encouraged to make public interventions on at least twenty-four occasions. Sixteen workshops have been organised with the community volunteers, and other activists from a range of groups to promote this kind of intervention.

A review of the work done in the year 2002-03 indicates that information provision and training have significantly enhanced the capacity of community groups to gather data, analyse it, and use it for meeting their needs of daily survival. The process of building alliances between groups also has been slowly emerging, as more networks are asking for workshops where information can be shared and joint strategies evolved. While earlier years had demonstrated a need to go beyond a dependence on intervening in courts, the Centre has pursued two cases in this year. In addition, members of Sajha Manch have been collectively participating in forms of mass action such as rallies and demonstrations. Thus enhanced organisation both at work and at home has paved the way for enlarging the space for civil society intervention. Alliance building to combat the anti-poor measures being pursued by the State has succeeded in some measure with the Sajha Manch endorsing a People's Alternative Policy on Housing and constructing its Annual Convention around the theme of "Save Shelter, Save Employment". Efforts to build campaigns through people's organisations and community volunteers on common issues have been intensified through the year. However, the dissemination activity has inevitably

been followed by a discussion at the community level about the lack of organisational leadership to carry the process further. Support from middle-class advocacy groups and media remains a vexed issue.

## **II. Experiences of Women with Sterilization Procedures**

This pilot research project was developed last year to document the experiences of women who have undergone surgical and non-surgical sterilization to limit the size of their family. Through women's response, we hoped to find out their reasons for choosing a particular method and their experiences during the procedure. While the interviews with over 60 women were completed last year, this year the study also extended medical support and follow up treatment that the doctor recommended to the women who consented to a medical examination. In all 53 women underwent the medical examinations, which were conducted in Kolkata at a professional centre.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the interviews are being completed this year, and we are also in the process of analysing data from the medical examinations. We hope to complete this work and, soon after, to have a manuscript ready on the subject by the beginning of the next financial year.

There were several meetings of the research team in 2002. They met in Kolkata to evaluate the interview process and find solutions to the logistical problems of bringing women from a rural district for medical tests and issues surrounding medical follow-up of women diagnosed with problems requiring medical attention. In addition, meetings were held with the International Advisory Board, in Montreal, and again in New Delhi and Kolkata, along with other members of the research team.