



A JOURNEY • एक सफर





C O N T E N T S

FOREWARD	2-3
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 1 <i>Women's Rights = Human Rights</i>	6
CHAPTER 2 <i>Key Concepts</i>	8
CHAPTER 3 <i>Women's Rights In Practice</i>	12
CHAPTER 4 <i>MISSI: Where women count</i>	21
1. Creating Changemakers	21
2. Building Collectives	30
3. Women As Entrepreneurs	36
4. Women In Leadership	44
5. Other Initiatives	60



Chotanagpur Sanksritik Sangh and MISSI is delighted to present this important and very first publication of MISSI to the people of the villages we work in, government officials, non- government organizations, our dear patrons and friends.

MISSI has been functional since 1995 through thousands of women in Jharkhand. Through helping women become changemakers, building women's collectives MISSI has seen many women taking up leadership not only in their private spaces but in public spaces thereby improving the living conditions and also building the economy.

At MISSI we believe that women are the future and we need to Count women and not exclude them as we are progressing towards development. One of the first works would be to change the skewed sex ratio across the country and specifically Jharkhand which now seems possible through collective action of many organizations, individuals and the community collectives.

MISSI has been working for and with victimized women, violence affected women for the last many years. Working with Women with Disabilities had not been the focus of MISSI in the beginning. However when we had Women with Disabilities come to MISSI, form groups and participate in different programmes and initiatives, it gave a perspective to our work and a broader scope to include the additional challenge a women faces when she is with Disabilities.

Being associated with women's rights work in Jharkhand since the beginning of my career, I do not accept any justification for discrimination and violence against women.

I dream of a society that is equal and gender just; a society free of all forms of violence.

I thank the MISSI members, for contributing and participating in the preparation of this book because they are the real-life champions without whom MISSI is just another word. Also thanks to CSS, Australian Aid, NBJK & CBM for turning this book into reality.

I am sure this will be inspiration for many many women as it has been for me.

Sachi Kumari
Founder, MISSI



Whenever people think about rural women they often imagine a women labourer, someone from the backward class or somebody who is poor! This is entirely a myth. In reality women are creators. They look after their families and also protect it. This is precisely what MISSI has been trying to do; showcase this other side of rural women to the world. I am fortunate because I have been part of this battle since the first day of MISSI; in fact I have a role to play in the beginning of the thought of a MISSI.

In 1995, at Pakhalmeri Village of Ranchi District saw the beginning of a new chapter of women empowerment in the presence of thousands of women from the villages of Jharkhand. The event was the inception of MISSI which was presided over by Mr. Himanshu Kacchap, Chairperson, DRDA Ranchi among many other distinguished guests including the village women. Since that day I have believed that under the able leadership of Sachi Kumari, Pushpa Khalxo, Puniya Lakra, MISSI will leave a mark in the minds of the village women and history will be written.

I have since with MISSI since the beginning for the past so many years. I make it a point to be part of the annual MISSI meet. I have been able to see how women have been fighting for their rights. My body is now exhausted but in my mind I keep thinking that MISSI will definitely reach its goal.

We women have been fighting and dreaming for a violence free society. We want that women and girls should not be treated as second class citizens. We have to fight many Social, economic challenges and ensure our rights; women now have to be active in politics.

Rose Kerketta

Gender Activist, Writer,

Retired Reader of Ranchi University Regional Department



E
Q
U
A
L
I
T
Y

E
Q
U
I
T
Y

J
U
S
T
I
C
E



“Suno-suno meri awaaz
Mujhe pankh mile hai aaj
Mujhe leni hai ek parwaaz”

- A Women empowerment song

Introduction

MISSI means 'SISTER' in local Mundari language of Jharkhand. MISSI was established on 8th March 1995, on International Women's Day, towards promoting rights of women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against them. After twenty seven years of addressing women's issues and working towards their rights, Chotanagpur Sanskritik Sangh realized that a separate wing for rural women is needed for the organization and so MISSI was born.

MISSI is an unregistered organization devoted to advancement of human rights of women and girls. During the period 1995-2000 its main activities included organization of women for speaking out against discrimination against them and breaking the shackle of traditional practices. Group meetings, training, workshops, guidance and counseling, legal support, formation and promotion of SHGs, networking with like minded NGOs etc. were the initial work with the women.

During 2000 to 2005 focus of the Organization was on providing need based emergency services to women and girls in distress and with special needs. Activities like Celebration of Days like women's Day, Human Rights Day, World Disability Day, Girl Child Education Day etc. also started during the period.

From 2005 till date beside the focus has been supporting women to take up leadership in the PRI and other spaces so that women can take

decisions regarding their villages and the state. Advocacy for implementation of legislations and laws has been an active work of MISSI. MISSI has played an important role in legislation of "Prevention of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.", implementation of the Persons with Disability Act 2005 apart from advocating for the formation of "Women's Commission" in Jharkhand as well as the formulation of 'State Policy for Women'.

In 2015 MISSI initiated its work for Women with Disabilities (WwD) and the organization's vision was to address gender and disability and socio economic inclusion of Women with Disabilities.

The Mission of MISSI has been primarily promoting the human rights of women and girls, their socio-economic empowerment, providing need based referral and rehabilitation services, and highlighting the need for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. At the community level our Group has been successfully advocating for inclusion of women in decision making positions, entitlement realization and proper implementation of government programmes and schemes.

MISSI is, and has been functioning as an unregistered organization having formal administrative system. All the members of the organization are women. In 2018 an important milestone for MISSI was formation of cooperatives, FPOs, Farmer's Clubs and other producer groups.

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN'S RIGHTS = HUMAN RIGHTS

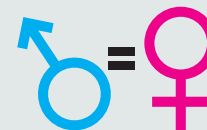
I. International Law And Global Commitments

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. It proclaimed the equal entitlements of women and men to the rights contained in it. In drafting the Declaration, there was considerable discussion about the use of the term “all men” rather than a gender-neutral term. The Declaration was eventually adopted using the terms “all human beings” and “everyone” in order to leave no doubt that the Universal Declaration was intended for everyone, men and women alike.

In 1967, United Nations Member States adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which states that discrimination against women is an offence against human dignity and calls on States to “abolish existing laws, customs, regulations and practices which are discriminatory against women, and to establish adequate legal protection for equal rights of men and women”. Less than a year later a proposal for a legally binding treaty on women’s rights was made. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. Its preamble explains that, despite the existence of other instruments, women still do not enjoy equal rights with men.

The Convention articulates the nature and meaning of sex-based discrimination, and lays out State obligations to eliminate discrimination and achieve substantive equality. As with all human rights treaties, only States incur obligations through ratification.





However, the Convention articulates State obligations to address not only discriminatory laws, but also practices and customs, and discrimination against women by private actors.

With these general principles as an overarching framework, the specific obligations of States to eliminate discrimination against women in political, social, economic and cultural fields are laid out in 16 substantive articles.

2. Global commitments

Women's rights have been at the heart of a series of international conferences that have produced significant political commitments to women's human rights and equality. Starting in 1975, which was also International Women's Year, Mexico City hosted the World Conference on the International Women's Year, which resulted in the World Plan of Action and the designation of 1975–1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women. In 1980, another international conference on women was held in Copenhagen and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was opened for signature. The third World Conference on Women was held in Nairobi, with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women having begun its work in 1982. These three world conferences witnessed extraordinary activism on the part of women from around the world and laid the groundwork for the world conferences in the 1990s to address women's rights, including the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 (see below). In addition, the rights of women belonging to particular groups, such as older women, ethnic minority women or women with disabilities, have been also addressed in various other international policy documents such as the International Plans of

Action on Ageing (Vienna, 1982 and Madrid, 2002), the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001) and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1982).

3. Sustainable Development Goals

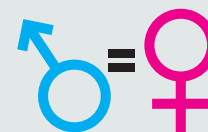
In 2000, the international community agreed to eight time-bound development goals, the Millennium Development Goals, to be achieved by 2015, including a goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as one on the reduction of maternal mortality. Seven of the Goals have specific targets to measure progress. The Millennium Development Goals were an important political commitment which has galvanized international support for some of the world's most daunting problems.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ("Rio+20") brought Heads of State and Government to Brazil in 2012. At "Rio+20", countries renewed their political commitment to Sustainable Development, agreed to establish a set of Sustainable Development Goals and established a high-level political forum on sustainable development. Importantly, the outcome document, entitled "The Future we want", also reaffirms the commitments of States to "women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making" and includes explicit references to accelerating the implementation of commitments in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The outcome document also states that "gender equality and the effective participation of women are important for effective action on all aspects of sustainable development" and calls for the repeal of discriminatory laws and for ensuring women's equal access to justice.

CHAPTER 2

KEY CONCEPTS

The following sections examine some of the key concepts that are critical to the protection and promotion of women's human rights.



1. Gender

Gender refers to socially constructed identities, attributes and roles for women and men. The term gender is not interchangeable with women. Society's social and cultural meaning for these biological differences results in hierarchical relationships between women and men, and in the distribution of power and rights favouring men and disadvantaging women. This social positioning of women and men is affected by political, economic, cultural, social, religious, ideological and environmental factors, and can be changed by culture, society and community.

Gender is also an important term to understand in the context of gender identity. Gender identity reflects a deeply felt and experienced sense of one's own gender, which may or may not conform with the biological sex one is assigned at birth. Gender identity is separate from sexual orientation, which refers to which sex one is attracted to; for instance, many transgender persons are heterosexual.

Gender is a choice or gender is a role or gender is a constitution that one puts on as one clothes in the morning that there is a 'one' who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today. - Judith Butler

2. Non Discrimination and Equality Between Women and Men

Non-discrimination and equality between women and men are central principles of human rights. The definition of discrimination encompasses a variety of possible discriminatory actions (any distinction,



exclusion or restriction) having either the express purpose or the actual effect of discriminating against women. It not only requires equality between women and men, but also prohibits practices that can perpetuate women's inequality. Discrimination and inequality can occur in different ways, such as when a law or policy restricts, prefers or distinguishes between certain groups, for instance, prohibiting women from learning certain skills or professions, owning land or inheriting property.

Laws, policies or programmes can also have detrimental effects on women even though they appear to be gender-neutral. For instance, aid programmes which distribute benefits to the "head of household" may not benefit women equally since men are often considered the head of a household. Similarly, given women's disproportionate representation among those living in poverty, a government lending scheme to buy land may be inaccessible to women due to its cost—even if the scheme is open to both men and women.

3. Equality and Equity

Gender equality, equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations

and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

"Equality is leaving the door open for anyone who has the means to approach it; Equity is ensuring there is a pathway to that door for those who need it."

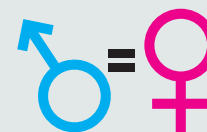
4. Violence Against Women

Violence against Women is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." It took a long and persistent struggle by the women's rights movement to persuade the international community to discuss violence against women as a human rights concern and recognize that gender-based violence is a serious violation of human rights of global importance which poses a threat to human development as well as international peace and security.

"It is time that we all see gender as a spectrum instead of two sets of opposing ideals."

– Emma Watson





Women in all countries, irrespective of status, class, age, caste or religion, experience violence in virtually all spheres of life, whether in the home, at work, on the street, in government institutions, or in times of conflict or crisis. Violence is also present throughout the lifetime of a woman, affecting girls and older women too. Specific groups of women suffering from various forms of discrimination, such as women with disabilities or migrant women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, are particularly vulnerable to violence. Understanding that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.

Violence against women in the family can take the form of domestic violence or harmful or degrading practices that are violent to and/or subordinate women. Harmful and degrading practices, such as dowry-related violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and sex-selective abortion or so-called honour crimes, also continue. There are different forms of violence and abuses - physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual violence. Marital rape, femicide or gender-motivated killings (domestic murder, ritual killings or killings of women accused of witchcraft, lynching, as well as gender identity- and sexual orientation related or ethnic or indigenous identity-related killings) are the outcome of patriarchal system.

Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace - Kofi Annan

5. Multiple Forms of Discrimination

Multi-level forms of discrimination have always existed, although they have been more broadly acknowledged only in recent decades. Age, socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic background, religion, national origin, citizenship, status, health, particularly HIV/AIDS and disability, as well as poverty and sexual orientation, are examples of factors that can exacerbate or otherwise influence the nature of discrimination faced by women. Many women face additional barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights because of such factors as their race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or socioeconomic class or because they are indigenous people, migrants, including women migrant workers, displaced women or refugees. There is need to integrate a gender perspective into relevant policies, strategies and programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, and related intolerance in order to address multiple forms of discrimination.”

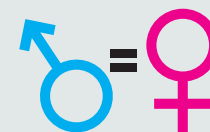


CHAPTER 3



Women's Rights In Practice

Women constitute half the world's population and are entitled to all human rights on an equal basis with men. The focus here is on: the right to an adequate standard of living, public and political life, sexual and reproductive health and rights and access to justice. The needs of girls suffering from multiple forms of discrimination—e.g., with disabilities, from poor or rural areas and belonging to minority communities—should also be considered.



Ensuring equality in education requires financial resources as well as continued awareness-raising about the importance of girls' education.

Women lag behind men in the enjoyment of rights related to the private sphere. Women are forced to enter marriage, they do not enjoy the same rights with regard to guardianship of their child, they are not allowed to transfer their nationality to their children and husbands, and they do not have equal legal capacity.

Women's access to their rights is linked to women's mobility. Mobility is an issue that is gendered both

ways: on the one hand, mobility determines women's and men's access to participation in society; on the other hand, women's and men's mobility is determined by gender roles and inequalities.

If people's access to mobility is hampered, they will experience difficulties in accessing their rights. Mobility also enables economic participation. Without a reliable means of transport, they cannot go to the library, participate in leisure activities or meet their friends and family. Mobility encourages social and cultural participation. And lacking mobility, they cannot



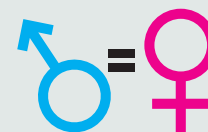
go to meetings or demonstrations, vote or lead an effective election campaign: mobility allows political participation.

Women use public transport such as buses, which are not available at all hours and do not reach all destinations. The gender inequalities limit their full use of buses, trams and the underground: their fear of crime is much higher than men's and makes women limit their presence on public transport to certain hours and certain routes that are perceived as safe. Due to the unequal distribution of household and care work, they are more often transporting grocery bags, prams and children. For the same reason, their itineraries are less linear and more often interrupted than men's, making women's mobility more complex and time consuming. Because of their longer life expectancy, women are more likely to reach old age and to experience difficulties in accessing public transport for reasons of reduced mobility.

Therefore, a gender-neutral mobility policy is not fair, because it is due to disadvantage women and contributes to their continuing inequality and exclusion. Activists have an important role to play in enabling women to enjoy their full human rights.

1. Women's Right to adequate standard of living

Women's rights to land, property, food, water and sanitation, as well as work and social security, are intrinsically linked to the right to attain an adequate standard of living. All these rights are guaranteed under international human rights law, including the right to enjoy these rights on an equal basis with men, without discrimination. Women's access to services, to education and to productive resources is paramount to the realization of the above-mentioned rights.



Land & Property: Rights to land, housing and property are essential to women's equality and well-being. Women's rights in, access to and control over land, housing and property are a determining factor in their living conditions especially in rural economies, essential to women and their children's daily survival, economic security and physical safety. Despite the importance of these rights for women and female-headed households, women still disproportionately lack security of tenure. This is often because property is registered in a man's name; the father, husband or brother. In the event of separation, divorce or widowhood, the man or his family often retains rights to the property or the land whereas the woman becomes homeless or will have to share the property with her in-laws without gaining control or rights over it. Women are excluded from community decision making processes that are led by men who normally are the landowners. In rural communities, ownership of land determines both social status and the way in which control is exercised over a household's resources and income. Women's disadvantaged economic position in this regard creates a structural dependence on men for access to resources, which in turn can subject women to insecurity and violence.

Food, water and sanitation: The rights to food, water and sanitation are equally crucial for women's well-being, dignity and enjoyment of other human rights. Poor female nutrition early in life reduces learning potential and productivity, and increases reproductive and maternal health risks. This undermines attempts to eliminate gender inequalities throughout a woman's lifespan, having an effect on issues such as women's access to resources.



Investing in women's nutrition improves the overall development capacity of a country, considering the role women have in the household with regard to food production, food preparation and childcare.

Women and girls have greater need for privacy when using toilets and when bathing, especially when menstruating, and in addition not having easy access to toilets and bathrooms makes them more vulnerable to rape and other forms of gender-based violence.

Decent work and to social security: In addition to other rights, the right to work and to social security is closely linked to the right to an adequate standard of living and the continuous improvement of living conditions for oneself and one's family. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), women experience systemic barriers in almost every aspect of work, ranging from whether they have paid work at all, to the type of work they obtain or are excluded from, the availability of support such as childcare, the level of their pay, their working conditions, their access to higher paying "male" occupations, the insecurity of their jobs, the absence of pension entitlements or benefits, and the lack of time, resources or information necessary to enforce their rights. Women make up the majority of the poor in both developed and developing nations, and they face multiple barriers to accessing social security too, owing to their roles as mothers, carers, informal workers, migrants, and precarious and part-time workers.

2. Women's right in public and political life

Historically, women have been excluded from

political life and decisionmaking processes. Women's campaigns for participation in the public and political arena date back to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and continue today.

Although women's right to vote has now been secured in nearly every country of the world, in practice, the right to vote can sometimes be meaningless when other conditions make it virtually impossible or very difficult for both men and women to vote, such as the absence of free and fair elections, violations of freedom of expression, or lack of security, which tends to affect women disproportionately. In some countries, women cannot register to vote because they are missing a birth certificate or identity papers that are issued only to men. Other obstacles such as stereotyping and traditional perceptions of men's and women's roles in society, as well as lack of access to relevant information and resources, also inhibit women's possibilities or willingness to exercise their right to vote fully.

Participation in public life is, however, much broader than elections or being elected to public office. The political and public life of a country is a broad concept, and can refer to the exercise of political power, in particular legislative, judicial, executive and administrative powers, all aspects of public administration and the formulation and implementation of policy at the international, national, regional and local levels. Women's right to participation also includes participating in civil society, public boards, local councils and the activities of political parties, trade unions, professional or industry associations, women's organizations, community-based organizations and other organizations concerned with public and political life.



3. Women's access to Justice

Ensuring women's access to justice requires that women enjoy their right to equality before the law, that procedures are in place to guarantee nondiscriminatory access to justice and that women have effective access to remedies when their rights have been violated.

Significant progress has been made globally and in India with regard to revising laws that discriminate against women and drafting constitutions that incorporate guarantees of equality and non-discrimination. A legal and constitutional framework which guarantees women's rights at the national level is fundamental for women to access justice. However, discriminatory laws remain an issue in several countries and the implementation of laws even more so. Laws that are seemingly gender-neutral can have discriminatory effects in practice, and laws that guarantee equality between women and men or women's rights may not be applied, which means they do little for the advancement of women. Extending the protection of the law to include, for instance, sexual and gender-based violence, work in the informal sector and migrant women is essential. The obligation of States to ensure that laws are applied and have an actual impact on women's lives is also important to emphasize.

Justice systems reflect society's power imbalances, including those that disadvantage women. Both social and institutional barriers inhibit women's access to justice. Families choose to reconcile through the customary system instead of seeking redress for victims. This leads to women victims of rape being forced to marry the rapist, following the ruling of male village elders applying customary practices. Traditional authorities, such as village elders in many rural areas, rule over issues and disputes regarding land

and property rights, as well as matters involving “supernatural interference”, including allegations of witchcraft. Women who are accused of practising witchcraft are ostracized by their communities and displaced as a result of these allegations, often violently driven away, physically assaulted or even murdered.

In many instances many customary laws and secular legal system exist in parallel and often get mixed up, and practices are applied at local level, such as child marriage, denial of the rights of widows and inheritance rights of women. Local councils of locally influential men, mediate cases including those related to women’s rights and violence against women. Their decisions are binding and arguably “inherently discriminatory against women”

Some good practices integrate services and offer women victims everything from health care and counselling to legal aid and collection of evidence in one place, reducing barriers and cost. Specialized and mobile courts are another successful example of how women’s access to justice can be improved in practice. Increased representation of women within the police and the judicial system as well as mainstreaming gender within the judiciary can also improve their responsiveness to gender issues and make it easier for women to seek assistance or report their cases.

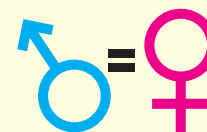
4. Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Women’s sexual and reproductive health is related to multiple human rights, including the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education and the prohibition of discrimination. Women’s right to health includes their sexual and reproductive health. This means that States have obligations to respect, protect and fulfil rights related to women’s sexual and reproductive health.

Violations of women’s sexual and reproductive health rights are often deeply ingrained in societal values pertaining to women’s sexuality. Patriarchal concepts of women’s roles within the family mean that women are often valued according to their ability to reproduce. Early marriage and pregnancy or repeated pregnancies spaced too closely together, often as the result of efforts to produce male offspring because of the preference for sons, have a devastating impact on women’s health with sometimes fatal consequences. Women are also often blamed for infertility, and ostracized and subjected to various human rights violations as a result.

Women’s lack of information on contraception has a direct impact on their right to decide on the number and spacing of their children, as well as on their right to health. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,, explained that “in order to make an informed decision about safe and reliable contraceptive measures, women must have information about contraceptive measures and their use, and guaranteed access to sex education and family planning services. Such information should be scientifically accurate and free from discrimination.

Persons with disabilities face particular risks of being



subjected to involuntary medical procedures pertaining to their sexual and reproductive health.

Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death and disability among women of reproductive age in developing countries. States are obliged under international human rights law to respect, protect and fulfil human rights in relation to maternal health, pregnancy and childbirth. The human rights-based approach facilitates reaching specific groups of women who are excluded from access to essential health services.

5. Impact of Migration and Displacement on Women's Rights

Every country is affected by the phenomenon of migration, as country of origin, transit or destination, or a combination of these. More than 200 million people now live outside their home countries, for reasons ranging from seeking better economic opportunities to escaping persecution. Female migrants form half the world's migrant population and outnumber male migrants in developed countries. Traditionally, immigration has been looked at mainly from an economic perspective, as a by-product of globalization or a solution to unemployment and poverty. This has to some extent led to immigrants being treated as commodities instead of individuals with rights. A purely economic analysis of immigration fails to take into account the human value of the individual immigrant and the inherent human right to a life in dignity.

Female migration has both positive and negative repercussions. It has great potential and can advance gender equality by empowering migrant women, since many migrate independently nowadays and become the main breadwinners for their families. However, migration can also increase vulnerabilities and put



migrant women at risk of discrimination and violence. Women and children who migrate also become more vulnerable to other forms of exploitation. Those in an irregular situation are particularly vulnerable. Women migrants are often found in segregated and unregulated sectors of the economy, such as domestic work, typically unprotected by local labour laws and organizations.

In many countries, the fields of work are not regulated and thus the women are excluded from any protection of the law. Women migrants may also face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as racism, in addition to discrimination based on sex, women migrant workers often receive lower wages and suffer deplorable working conditions, and lack access to appropriate health services, including reproductive health services. Domestic workers in particular are vulnerable to physical, sexual and other types of abuse by their employers. Access to justice in countries of destination is also limited for many migrant women. Migrant women in an irregular situation are particularly vulnerable to abuse, isolation and limited access to health services or to the justice system.



6. Violence Based on Identities

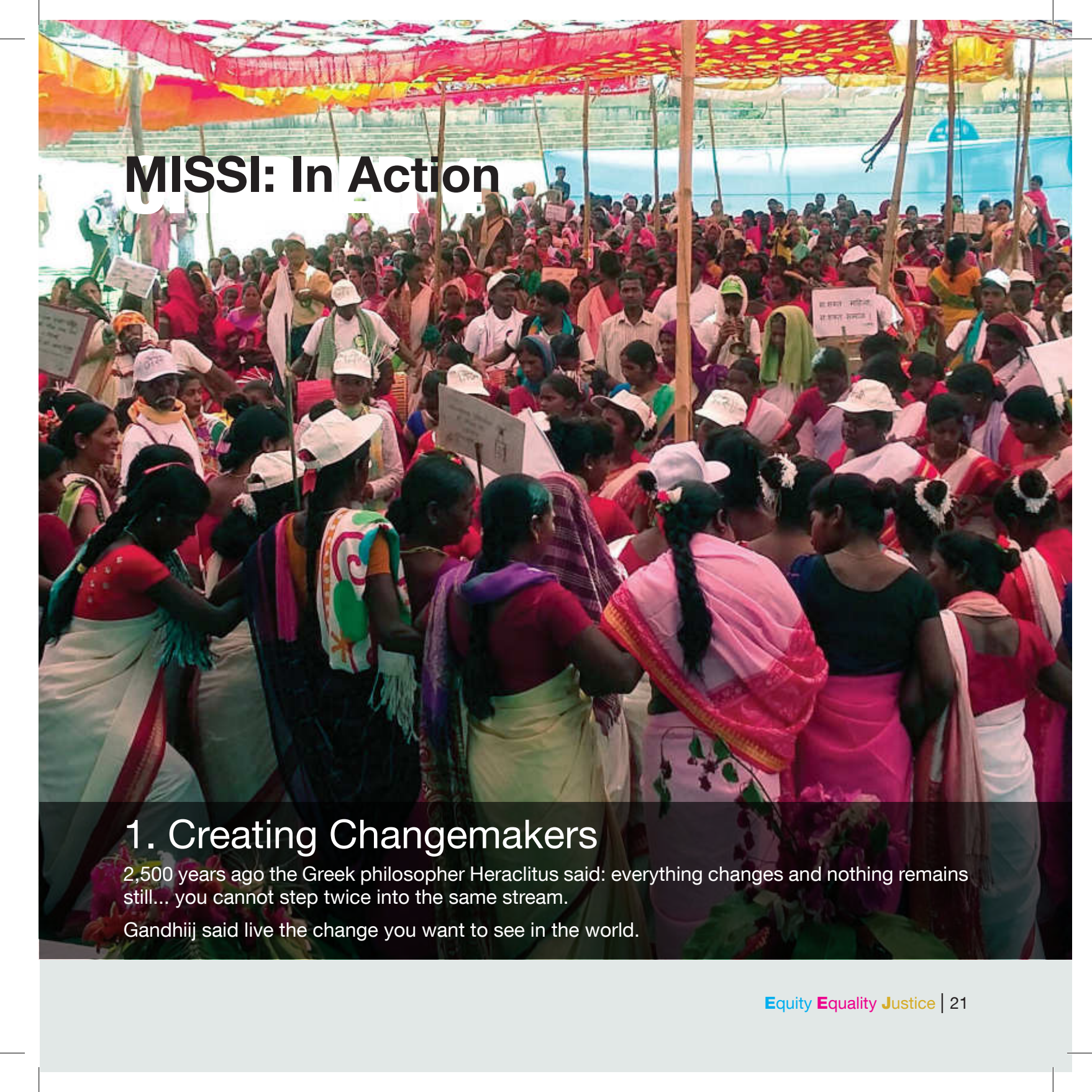
India's social problems are also rooted in the religious practices and beliefs of its people. Many forms of social issues and problems find their origin in the religious and cultural practices of the people of India.

Caste-related violence has occurred and occurs in India in various forms. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, "Dalits and indigenous people (known as Scheduled Tribes or adivasis) continue to face discrimination, exclusion, and acts of communal violence. Laws and policies adopted by the Indian government provide a strong basis for protection, but are not being faithfully implemented by local authorities.

We have already read above about violence on women just based on their biological identity of woman. Another non-acceptance comes in the form of discrimination and violence against people based on their sexual identity who do not confirm to the acceptable heterosexual patriarchal norms and instead choose to be from the LGBT community. Also people who do not confirm to the gender attributes assigned to males and females and not accepted.

Through our work we observe that there is wide spread intolerance among people due to identities, including religious identity, caste, biological and sexual identity, class, etc.

Gender inequity is a major human right concern in India. It cuts across all other forms of discrimination and represents an added bias denying women and men the freedom to choose the means for their development and growth. Despite Government's increasing concern and endeavour to promote gender equity the disparities have grown vast and a resulting outcome in the poor socio economic condition of women. In the context of Jharkhand there exists a major difference in the child sex ratio and life expectancy at birth of the state.



MISSI: In Action

1. Creating Changemakers

2,500 years ago the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said: everything changes and nothing remains still... you cannot step twice into the same stream.

Gandhij said live the change you want to see in the world.

Change means very different things to different people. It is embraced by those who can glimpse better lives and futures for themselves and others. We live in an era in which enormous differences in the pace of change between and within different societies, can bring about clashes and conflict, sometimes violent, in families and households, communities, cultures and nation-states. The pace of change is unpredictable, rarely smooth, sometimes terrifying. For human beings the question is whether we choose to be bystanders, or choose to be active agents of change in the world – change which goes beyond merely sustaining life, and seeks to enhance it.

Changemakers of MISSI are people who one way or another are ‘makers of change’, embracing change in their own lives, and promoting change in the institutions of which they are a part – in the family, household, community, voluntary and private sectors, and the state. They have chosen not to be bystanders. Attitudinal change is a key to the change and discussion revolves around the influences on a person’s attitudes of both social norms and sanctions, and private or personal relationships, and what the interplay is between these influences.

Appreciation of constraints and challenges is central to measuring what has been the change and by how much. Applying indicators in blanket manner to measure change on issues such as VAW may provide only a partial view of the truth. The social and cultural contexts of the women is much important in assessing the kind of changes women have been able to bring in their lives.



ROSHAN ARA, 38

Village-Itki Gulam Toli, Block-Itki, District-Ranchi

Roshan Ara lived with her grandparents and her grandfather being a progressive person encouraged her to study and also go out and learning new things. However her parents got influenced by the community people and started restricting her movements and eventually married her off at the age of 16. Marriage began with lot of challenges for Roshan being an abusive relationship.

Roshan's niece once invited her to attend a meeting in the village where other women in the village were present. Roshan was excited after the meeting; because after many years she was able speak openly without any fear. She was also surprised to find many women part of this meeting and also a group facing several challenges like child marriage, dowry, domestic violence. Roshan decided she would be part of this group with much resistance from +her husband and family. She became a regular member of the group and so panchayat members, many key persons in the village started interacting with her over regular affairs of the village. Her husband, her family and the community realized Roshan's importance in their spaces.

This time Roshan didn't give up and continues her work as women's group member. She realised that women faced violence throughout her life because society treated women of less value so most of the women in their community couldn't get the opportunity to explore their strengths and family, society, especially men were not allowed them to go outside, tried to restrict their mobility. Roshan was criticized a lot by the community men. Sometime women also gave up and irregular in group meeting or couldn't attend important training programme outside their villages. She faced lots of

challenges to sustain their groups but she never gave up, she motivated all the women to keep touch with the group. And when the group savings increased and women had started taking loan from the group fund and able to support their families then their family members, especially men understood the value of the women group.

Roshan had a good rapport with the panchayat members, local health department. They nominated her name as a community based health worker (ASHA worker). Then she started to perform another important role in her village. As ASHA worker she has been taking care of all the pregnant and lactating mothers of her Gram Panchayat. She also arranged referral services in the medical emergencies. She loves this role very much.

Once she contested in local panchayat for the position of Panchayat Samiti Member (Sarpanch) prodded by her group members and community people but lost by a very low margin.

Roshan is a core member of the MISSI federation and has mobilized many women in her community to ber pare of the initiative. Roshan also actively worked with the women helpline and also with Anjuman Islamia

As Roshan says, "Through my life experiences I have observed that women have very less value in their family, community and various forms of deprivation is due to this." Roshan wants to ensure that no girl in her community is deprived of her rights including her right to education as well as their status in their family, society is an empowered one.



BASANTI DEVI, 34

Village & Post-Khatri Khatangar, Block-Bero District-Ranchi

Basanti Devi was born in an elite family, they were like zamindars of their village. She had everything at home according to her need but still faced restrictions on her mobility. These rules were only for girls and she saw that her brothers had no restrictions; they could do whatever they want. She was good in studies but after passing matriculation exam she would have to go to a far off place because there was no college that time. Her father didn't want to allow her to stay outside for studies and she also didn't want to stay in a hostel. Finally she didn't enrol into college and in a few days she got married.

After getting married, her in-law's home posed the same restrictions for Basanti Devi. All the women were confined at home. Her husband motivated her for doing any work and always encouraged her for further study but she couldn't do that. Few years later when her father-in-law died then she applied for a job at G.P level as ICDS worker. Through Gram Sabha meeting she was nominated 2 or 3 times for this post and finally she was selected as ICDS worker.

Some of the relatives and neighbours influenced her mother-in-law and husband against allowing her to do a job outside home but her husband didn't listen to them and encouraged her for continuing whatever she wants. That time some women came to her village and motivated all the women to form women SHGs under a women's federation called MISSI Federation. They encouraged them to learn income generating vocations. After that Basanti Devi and other women formed 5 groups at their village and learnt the skills. They also motivated many other women from different villages and supported them to form 30 more women SHGs. They in turn taught the skills to those women. These groups have their bank account and everyone contributes certain amount of money to the funds.

The SHG groups have a good amount of money and run an entrepreneurship programme called Mukhyamantri Daal-Bhat Yojna which is coordinated by Basanti. She is the Secretary of her group. She motivates many women to come out from their homes and become self-dependent.

Basanti Devi raises her voice against different issues, like witch hunting, child marriage, dowry to name a few. Along with her group members she spread awareness. Human trafficking is also a critical issue at



her community. Few years ago a class ten girl got trafficked and when her parents went to the police station to lodge a complaint, police refused to take the complaint but then Basanti Devi forced them to take the complaint and take action on the case. The girl was rescued. Basanti has also stopped the early marriage of many girls in the village. MISSI Federation motivated her to develop understanding on gender equality and women's rights. Before association with this federation she herself believed in Witch hunting but after associating with the federation she understood that it was a mere superstitious belief.

Five years later she wants to see herself as ICDS supervisor. She wants to see MISSI Federation become a big cooperative. At least 10000 – 15000 women would associate with the federation and become economically independent also they could take small loans from this cooperative. Basanti dreams of a violence free, equal society for women in her village and all other places.

PARVATI BHAGAT, 45

Village-Khakshi Toli, Block-Bero,
District-Ranchi

Parvati Bhagat belonged to the Tana Bhagat community (Freedom fighters).

Like other village girls Parvati Bhagat spent most of the time in household chores and farming from a very early age. When she completed her matriculation then her father forced her to marry.

After her marriage she was busy with her family and children but Parvati wanted to do something different, something that would bring change to her community. Parvati happened to attend a meeting held by the MISSI group in her village where she was first introduced to the concept of women SHG formation and women empowerment. She liked the concept and started mobilising community women to form women SHGs. The group members conducted surveys to identify persons with disability and also made efforts to include them in their groups and advocate for their rights.



Parvati always had the urge to learn. She used the MISSI platform and attended lots of training for developing her orientation on women's rights, disability rights and livelihood skill development trainings. She started travelling to different places to attend these trainings and even residential trainings. While community people raised eyebrows Parvati was ecstatic of her new found mobility and started mobilizing other women to take up the trainings and develop their knowledge and skills. She formed around twenty women SHGs at their community.

Parvati has promoted vegetable cultivation in her community. She was also a CBR worker.

Parvati started a school for the children at her village teaching children who were unable to attend school for

different reasons. Few years later she was chosen as village level ASHA worker in Panchayat level meeting and her experience and with the SHG work helped her become a role model for other ASHA workers.

Parvati wants to strengthen the MISSI Federation and aware young women and girls to join this federation. She remembers at the beginning they worked very hard and were able to increase their credibility in their community. A lot of women and girls were facing violence at home against which she and her group members fought rigorously. Now she wants that more girls and women should get involved with this federation and raise voice against any forms of discrimination and violence.



Parvati talking to a pregnant woman of community



PUSHPA KHALKHO, 66

Village: Kudarkho, Block Bero, District Ranchi

Pushpa Khalkho remembers her childhood as one where she never saw any extra privilege given to her brothers or cousins or male members of the family. Everybody had lunch or dinner together and the household work was divided equally among the family members. When she passed her matriculation exam immediately she got a job in local primary school as teacher. Having said that, Pushpa's marriage was fixed when she was just 18 years old and it was not her choice. She got married but continued her job.

That time her husband had no job but few years later when he got the job she was forced to leave hers as the family no longer needed her income to run the household. Pushpa was very upset at that time and still she carries this regret.

Pushpa was brought up in the town and so had no experience in farming but she had to learn after marriage which she started liking and looked for new skills and techniques to use in the farm. So when she was introduced to composting technique by Secretary of Chotanagpur Sanskritik Sangh she was very excited to learn the skill and started teaching other women in her village. They formed a self help group in the village and started collecting group fund. The women understood the benefits of organic farming and soon started making the compost in their groups. Pushpa formed many groups in the nearby villages and she became an active member of the MISSI federation. The women's group members started talking to community people about practices like untouchability and witch hunting. Being from a scheduled caste herself Pushpa was also a victim of untouchability and so could talk to people from her experiences.

Pushpa believes that education, working together and becoming independent will give women a lot of strength and confidence. She herself started a literacy programme for the women in the community. Pushpa contested for the President position of MISSI federation at the block level and won the same. Pushpa dreams of a progressive society when men and women will have equal rights and value.

Pushpa's contribution towards safe drinking water and sanitation in her village in Kudarkho is commendable. Pushpa is also a mechanic of India Mark 3 Hand-pumps.



Pushpa Khalkho with her daughters





MISSI: In Action

2. Building Collectives

Commonly, collective action refers action and agency to the act of mobilising people around common or shared concerns. For MISSI the people have been the village women from the three districts that MISSI has been working with to empower them and to aware them of their rights and their livelihood. Collective action for and by women has a long history. Collective action has been and can be a potent force change in women's empowerment. Today collective action has taken on a whole new dimension as it draws on the connective power of social media and online platforms to inspire, initiate and facilitate people's need to highlight and find solutions to shared problems from gender-based violence to ethnic and religious discrimination and child marriage.

MISSI collectives have been taking:

- actions to solve public goods problems that directly impact on women's lives and livelihoods, such as managing a shared natural source, or monitoring local health and education services or maintaining community forests;
- actions that expand the set of opportunities and enhance women's decision-making power within the household and community for example, through self-help savings and loans groups that boost the flow of capital and support women's businesses, to cooperatives providing access to training and new markets, to village education groups providing adult literacy classes;
- actions that explicitly challenge the social norms and behaviours that, often irrespective of social status, continue to constrain female agency within the public domain and within the family context. These actions seek to significantly shift the balance of local norms that in turn creates new space for women to express their agency. Actions might include women's groups agitating about norms around age at marriage, seeking legal recourse on oppressive dowry practices or promoting women's suitability for political office. Collective action in this sense

is less about solving particular practical development problems and more about shifting the whole context in which women and girls can engage fully and fruitfully in the process of development.

From the years of working with the collectives MISSI has seen a growing consciousness amongst women. Women's participation in SHGs has paved the way for active engagement with local governance institutions. By enabling collective spaces, reinforcing norms of equality and inclusiveness through debate and negotiation, building networks across villages and supporting each other through conflicts, the MISSI collectives have demonstrated that processes of collective action can lead to effective participation.





HIRAMANI KACHAP, 42
Village-Malar, Block-Itki, District-Ranchi

Hiramani's was among the first groups to be formed under the MISSI federation. The group has been fully functional since 2005 and Hiramani as the President represents the groups in different forums. She is among few of them who can read and write and so has to take responsibility of keeping records, etc.

The group members get together almost once a week, they collect group fund from each member, have a bank account and women have been able to take loan from the group for meeting their emergencies. Hiramani and her group also celebrate Women's Day and take up different awareness programmes with women. Women facing violence come to them for support who are given different support including writing FIRs to legal help etc. Women are aware of their rights. Villagers especially men respect the position of the women in the group and in a society where women are valued less, the group gives women the inner strength and power. Men and youth in the village now accept women as equal and able to participate in community decisions.

Hiramani is invited to all important community meetings to represent the women and her group. Hiramani says she considers herself as the head of her house as well. The school documents often ask for the father's name of the child and Hiramani makes it a point to put her name and sign because she says it is equally valid to put the mother's name in all statutory documents.

Hiramani and her group initiated the traditional Pacha system or rather a custom of mutual cooperation among the scheduled caste (Oraon) community. Here farming work is taken up as a team and not individual. Women work together so that they can complete a task

at hand faster and overcome individual challenges. The tasks are most farming like reaping, thrashing, etc. The money thus collected goes into the group fund. Thus Hiramani and her group have been able to preserve age-old tradition. When we are talking about preserving the Pacha system it is imperative to mention the name of Chariya Lakra who along with Hiramani is actively involved in leading their group.

Hiramani says women are afraid and not confident of taking loans, or doing business or going out to sell. She feels if the MISSI federation as a cooperative can get the women together then it would help the women to be more confident and every woman can participate in the economic development of their villages.





ETWARI TIGGA, 45

Village-Palma, Block-Itki, District-Ranchi

Etwari was in college, thanks to her immense interest in studies but marriage made her eventually stopped her short of her dream of becoming a graduate and taking up a job. Her husband was also not educated and didn't have a decent job so their struggle for two square meals a day began with working as daily labourer. Her husband and she chose to do working as daily labourer. In the tough circumstance too Etwari and her husband prepared for government jobs, tried in the police but with any luck.

Etwari's urge to learn got her to form the women's group in the community because she felt as a group they could learn new skills and work together for a better living. With support from the MISSI federation Etwari not only formed many SHG groups but learnt skills like vermi compost, organic farming, pisciculture, mushroom farming, etc. Very soon the groups started putting their skills to practice and earning a decent income to support their individual needs. Etwari and the group members got more exposure through different trainings and sessions organized by MISSI. Their economic stability and confidence helped them to take their business to new places at the block and district levels. In 2006 Etwari was selected to represent her block at a national level Women Federation meet in New Delhi.

Etwari lost her husband and a constant support in an accident which left her traumatized but her group helped her overcome the difficult times.

Etwari was selected for the post of ICDS worker. Etwari loves to spend time with children at her ICDS. She has a goal to complete her graduation and become a supervisor in the ICDS.

Etwari is a team player and loves her role in her group. Their SHG group has linked with NRLM and hope to get a loan with which they plan to buy land and start collective farming.





MISSI: In Action

3. Women as Entrepreneurs

In a country that is dominated by a patriarchal society, participation of women in the workforce has always displayed an appalling picture. In its India Development Report released in May 2017, the World Bank said the country had one of the lowest female participation in the workforce, ranking 120th among 131 countries. While overall job creation has been limited, most of the new ones have been grabbed by men given the social norms, the report said.

To eliminate this gender disparity, Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goal aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the public and private spheres and to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources and access to ownership of property. Widely Goal 5.5 ensures women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. And Goal 5.a undertakes reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

This goal specifically enlists us as a country, as a government and as a society to give equal opportunities to women in the workforce and create a conducive environment for them to lend a hand towards the country's development. The UN and International Labor Organization suggests that India's GDP could jump by 4.2 percent if more women were drafted into the workforce.

Indian Government recognizes the importance of women entrepreneurs as a contributor to the country's GDP and hence policies and schemes have been designed to promote women entrepreneurs. Women social entrepreneurs in India show the same spark and promise as men in adopting innovative ideas that can impact lives of several thousands of people. If India has to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth as defined in the SDGs and truly emerge as an economic powerhouse then more women entrepreneurs especially social entrepreneurs are needed.

All the women from the MISSI Federation also

started to seek the economic independence and wanted to reinforce their energy into the socio-economic development. A lot of woman leaders become SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR to explore their potentials, innovation and creativity; Journey to creating a benchmark in the social economic growth: Collectives known as the women's groups of MISSI Federation are formed by the women in the villages of the three districts of Ranchi. Having challenged their own situations and ensured their own rights, the women Changemakers now work together to bring changes in their neighbourhood, in the lives of other young girls and women. Women are trained to become small entrepreneurs by saving their own funds. MISSI Federation has done much research on entrepreneurship options and marketing strategies for the women and women have taken up many such enterprises.





PREMNIKA TIGGA, 38,

Village-Keshapuroi, Block-Bero, District-Ranchi

Having polio detected in both her legs at a very early age made Premnika walk on her knees. She was considered a bad omen for the family by many but only her father stood by her! That was the reason why she could think of enrolling in the local school. Soon she realized that the school would also be a challenge as nobody would accommodate her needs. but this couldn't take away her positive and cheerful attitude away. Premnika started believing that her dream of becoming educated could never see the light of day!

Premnika was 9 then when through practically a stranger she got to know about a school that catered to special children; taking the help of the person she got enrolled into the school without informing her parents. However soon her secret was out but her parents allowed her to continue in the school where she went on to get not only education but vocational skills.

One of Premnika's teachers in the special school loved her very much and took all her responsibility and so when Premnika was 17 she supported her to get her both legs operated. The operation helped Premnika start using prosthetic legs. Unfortunately as fate would have it she lost her dear teacher; the dear teacher however left behind some funds for Premnika to continue her support. Premnika had to drop out of school again as she had lost her mentor.

This was the time that Premnika thought of using her tailoring skills to practice. She decided she would start a tailoring business from her home. As it had always been resistance from the family and community who didn't believe in her capabilities discouraged her and Premnika almost decided against taking up the business. This is the time she got associated with Jharkhand Divyang Jan Manch and then with MISSI. For the first time she got positivity from people around her; she was even appointed to teach tailoring to other girls and women, including differently able and went on to teach about 59 girls. MISSI Federation with whom she has been associated for the past 12 years, helped her to support and fight for the rights of disabled girls and women. She even formed 8 to 9 self help groups in her village and oriented them about their rights and encouraged them to collect group funds and motivated women to become economically independent.

According to Premnika, disabled persons, especially if she is a woman, become a stigma for the society and MISSI Federation gave a platform to such women to establish themselves and find their dignity and identity.

Premnika is a successful business person today. She has her own shop, has appointed women tailors to meet the large order that she is able to collect. Her once abusive husband also supports her in the business as well as housework. Premnika's daughter has visual impairment but she is confident that she will be able to support her daughter because being a person with disability herself she can very well understand their needs and challenges.

Premnika encourages more and more women to take up independent opportunities for a better tomorrow; she dreams to establish her own clothing cum tailoring store at her block with the help of her special students.





MONIKA GARI, 47

Village-Baridi, Block-Bero, District-Ranchi

Monika was born and brought up in a joint family and so learnt sharing, importance of working together and adaptability from the family. On the other side she had to give up her liking for studying, cycling and all that an adolescent would want to because of the restrictions posed by her mother. Just after her intermediate examination her mother fixed her marriage and protests and pleas didn't work and she got married at the age of 19.

After marriage she worked very hard at home doing household chores and then farming in their field. During this time she got linked to the women federation called MISSI. Monika was excited because this was the first time her thoughts matched with others. In the meetings they spoke about girls and women getting educated; encouraged women to start learning; helped women to get organized into groups. Monika felt inspired after attending this meeting.

She had joined MISSI Federation and decided to form women SHGs. After doing all her house works and farming, she took out time to forming women's groups and mobilised women to form women SHGs. In that way many women's SHGs were formed. In her group all the women started savings and raised group funds. They had also opened a group's savings bank account. Then she started teaching to the community women. That time community people and Panchayat members selected her as Para teacher in local primary school.

Few years back some personnel from National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) came to her village and they gave plants to the villagers who had their own lands. She had her own land for farming but it was not sufficient as per their policy. But then she requested them to visit her land and assured them if they gave the mango plants then she would surely cultivate them well and prove to them that she could do a business from this farming. They agreed with her proposal and gave her mango plants. The department officials appreciated her efforts and seeing her progress two other group members also took plants under the NRLM and started farming in their lands.

Monika earns enough from this farming and this is a full fledged business model for others to learn from. She sells her produce directly in the market and there are

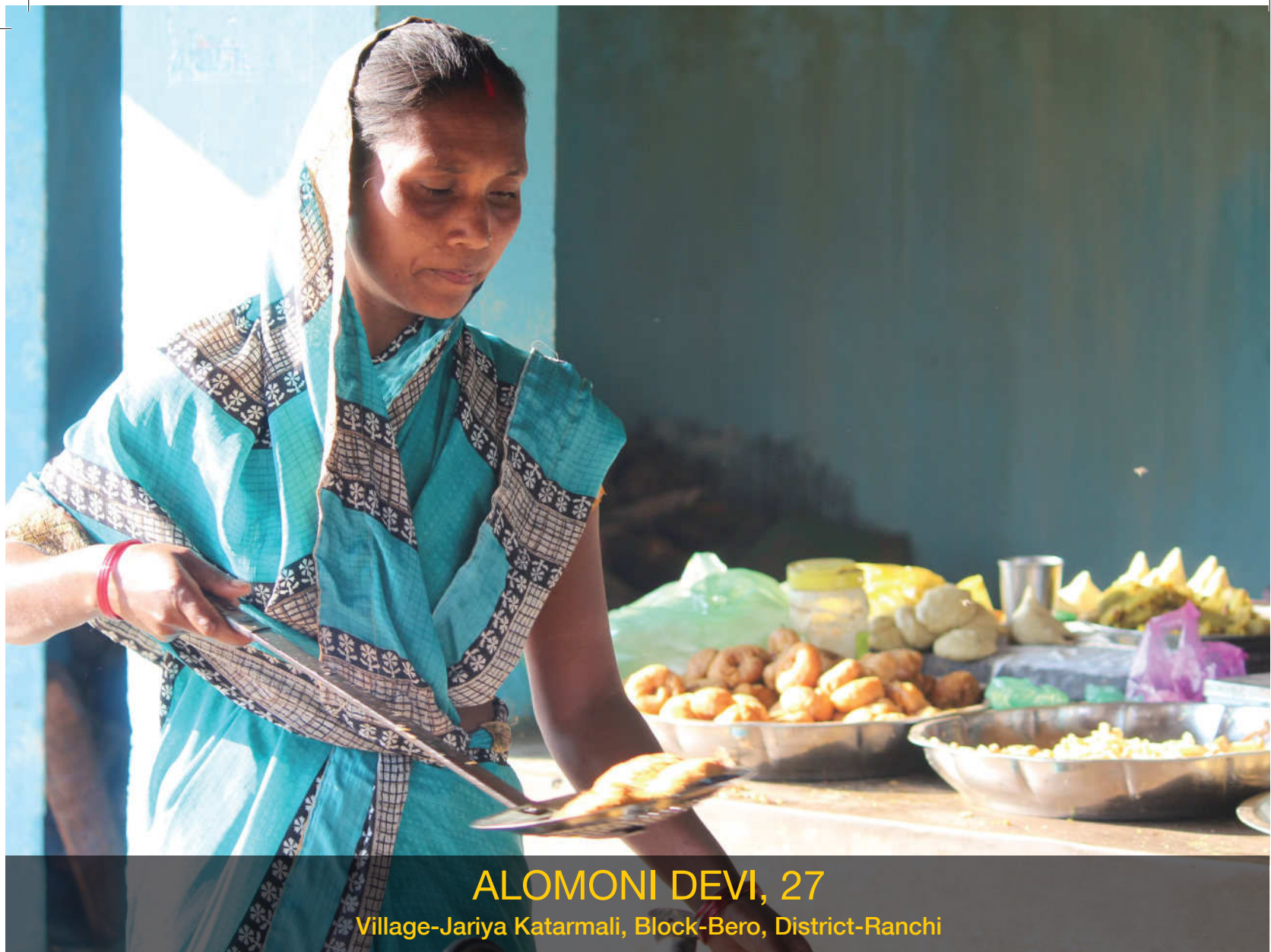
no middlemen with whom she needs to share her profits.

Monika is leading the Cooperatives and has targetted to reach out to 2000 women to become part of the MISSI federation.

Monika says that even today lack of education is a challenge in the villages which would make them even more successful entrepreneurs. Monika says women are born to be entrepreneurs and their life experiences teach them many practical lessons. Monika also says that other challenges like early marriage in her community pose great challenges which can be overcome by spreading awareness among the villagers.

Monika believes if women become educated and economically independent then society would be more progressive.





ALOMONI DEVI, 27

Village-Jariya Katarmali, Block-Bero, District-Ranchi

Alomani was married at sixteen and since had been busy with her household, family, husband and children. But she has a wish to start studying again and she enrolled herself in the same school, where she studied before and passed matriculation exam few years back.

The Mukhiya (Gram Panchayat Head under PRI) of her G.P Urmila introduced Alomoni Devi to a SHG meeting. They introduced the concept of women's SHGs and the benefits of formation of group and concept of group funds. Then she and other women from her community formed such groups. All the SHGs opened savings account at local bank and started raising their funds and each month each member contributed to their group fund. Using the funds all the women has started their individual business. Alomoni has also started her own snack shop. Some women have started vegetable shops, grocery shops in their village. In addition to providing provisions to the villagers these women were also successful in evacuating the liquor shops from their villages. When women came out from their homes and united for working collectively then men understand their strength and capabilities. Alomoni helped other women in the village to set up six village shops in her community.

During one of the Gram Sabha (Panchayat level public meeting) Alomani happened to stand by and listen to what was being discussed. Selection of a supervisor of sanitary works at G.P level was one of the positions vacant at the panchayat level for which suitable candidates would

be screened. Alomani being present there and also being an active SHG member was an immediate probable candidate. Though her qualification was only till Class VIII, the Mukhiya and other key stakeholders thought her to be the right fit for the job as she was an active member and worked for development of their community. She was selected for the post.

Alomani juggles between her role as the Jal Sahiya (Water and Sanitation Volunteer), her business, her role in her SHG and her family with ease. She also has the new role as NRLM book keeper. Alomoni is also an active member of MISSI Federation and a role model for other women in the federation.





MISSI: In Action

4. Women in Leadership

Rural women are the human face of poverty and development. They figure as a statistic—women comprise 70% of all agricultural workforces and the number seems to be growing. They toil on their farms, but lack access to land titles and are, therefore, not recognized as farmers. This, in turn, denies them access to updated farm technology, training, finance and markets.

It's time for the world to view rural women for who they really are—as the new generation of dynamic entrepreneurs, job-creators and economy drivers, committed to bringing a change in their communities. When women learn and move forward, they leave no one behind: These leaders take other women along and create powerful peer learning networks for sharing information and ideas.

When women have the support of other women, and when they have income of their own, they are able to fight their own battles in their own way.

Once a woman knows what she wants, she's not afraid to take risks. "If we cannot break through, we just find a way around."

MISSI Federation also believes that women have that strength and potential to become a leader at all spheres of their life. They only needed opportunity to explore and experiences which they want and it would be helped them to realize their inner strengths and creativity. From the beginning of the Federation a lot of extensive trainings, exposure visits, and capacity building exercises organized to build a strong leadership network. After years long journey MISSI Federation has a strong women leaders' network.





PUSHPA DEVI, 48

Village-Puriyo, Block-Bero District-Ranchi

Pushpa Devi studied up to class VIII at her village then she dropped out from school because her school had no further class. After six months she got completely detached from studies. She was very upset. Her parents sent her off to Hazaribag to another school but she couldn't follow the lessons because of her long gap from studies. One day a boy sent her a letter which her brother got to know and this made her very nervous. She was very afraid and couldn't concentrate in her studies. She tried but couldn't pass in her class ten examinations. She had to return home.

Pushpa's father was a teacher and he never stopped her from going outside or doing any other work that her brothers did. However all her friends in the village got married early and so Pushpa was very lonely. That was when neighbours and relatives forced her to get marry as early as possible. She had no idea about marriage and tried hard to postpone her marriage but couldn't. Pushpa however continued to study after marriage and gave her class ten examination.

After marriage she worked very hard at home as well as in the field, sometime working twelve hours at a stretch. She thought she would never face any physical violence at home but most of the time she didn't get enough food and worked the whole day. She thought her in-laws treated her like a slave. She however had the support of her husband who wanted her to do some work. That was when she heard of a vacancy for the post of ICDS worker which she applied for. The community people also showed their support to her but she was forced to withdraw her name because her father-in-law didn't allow her to do this job. She felt very angry and she converted her anger into her strength.

That was when Pushpa got to know about the MISSI federation and immediately joined as a member of one of the women's SHGs under this federation. She felt it was a great opportunity for her and she thought if she wanted to change the patriarchal attitudes from the society then she should start it from her home. She raised her voice against the gender discrimination she faced at home. She contested for the post of Panchayat Samiti member and won the post as a Sarpanch. Few years later she was elected as Ward Council. She was then selected for the post of Up-Mukhiya, Deputy Head of the Panchayat.

At MISSI Pushpa got many trainings on women's rights, child's rights and she got an idea of different govt. Schemes and policies for the social development. This orientation gave her the confidence to perform her

role as Up-Mukhiya at village level to the best of her capacity. Pushpa has motivated many women to fight for getting their rights. Pushpa has stood up against witch atrocities and child marriage and stopped many such incidences.

Pushpa is thankful for her orientation on gender equality that she developed only because of this association with MISSI. She got the confidence to develop a gender equal attitude in her home and community. Pushpa has included almost thousands of women and many others under govt. Schemes and helped several women SHGs to get loan from the govt. to start group level business. She had also mobilized women to fight against different social issues like domestic violence, child labour, trafficking etc. Pushpa was called from the Jharkhand state level Radio broadcast Akashvani to share her journey.

Puspha believes that her farming skills are equally valuable to her which she carried on with passion even today. She is grateful to her husband, children and definitely all women of MISSI federation for what she is now.





ASHA RANI PANINA, 35

Village-Nehalu Ambatoli, Block-Bero, District-Ranchi

Asha Rani was in class seven when she failed in class. She didn't give much importance to studies and also didn't have guidance from her illiterate parents and so initially it didn't affect her much. One day when she was ridiculed by a neighbour, the incident upset her and she wanted to study hard and thanks to her uncle and aunt this was made possible. She never looked back from there on... completed her graduation and even after marriage she did a course on nursing.

Asha got married before completing her graduation and her family, villagers and community people thought she would not be able to complete her graduation. During her graduation she also conceived and now she would carry her child to college along with a lady to support her. Thanks to a supportive husband and her determination Asha did complete her graduation, in a village where most men and women were illiterate! After graduation the next was the nursing training for which she had to travel to the city and so a challenge but again her husband, her teachers, her classmates encouraged her and thus she complete her nursing training.

Asha was always troubled by the inadequate medical facilities in the remote villages especially for women and girls and wanted to do something about this. This is when she got associated with MISSI and soon realized that by forming collectives and self help groups it would be the best to reach the local village people.

In the meanwhile Asha contested for the Panchayat Pradhan elections and won it thanks to the family and group support. Her association with MISSI and the SHGs helped Asha take up different social issues, especially related to women's rights as the pradhan. At the time many young girls were being trafficked from their village and witch hunting was an alarming issue. She and her group members spread awareness and mobilised people to fight against these issues. She also advocated for rescuing the girls who were victims of trafficking or witch hunting. She organized many panchayat level meetings for supporting the causes of women and children who were victims of domestic violence or child marriage. Asha took up all aspects of the panchayat development with much confidence thanks to her exposure with the MISSI federation. Asha remained a Pradhan for only one term but she was and is a well known and active person in the village and whom community people have a lot of faith in and come to for support.

Asha continued her work with MISSI federation and now there was 5 SHGs in her village. As women SHG member attended lots of training programme on livelihood, women's rights, they started saving at the group level. At the time Asha came up with the idea of creating Rice Bank, where instead of money the group members would be saving just one fistful of rice. The group would also sell the rice at a subsidized prize to people during their emergency times. The group started earning small amounts from this initiative and soon other SHGs took up the idea. Soon the SHG became financially strong where women would take loans and start small term businesses. The credibility of MISSI federation increased and community now came to the group for different kinds of support.

If and when any women and girls face any kind of violence or injustice then Asha and group provide support. They also make them aware to become self independent and find livelihood options. She along with her group members started a grocery shop in their community. She also established a health clinic at her home, where primary health check up is done. She organizes monthly health camp where she puts special emphasis on reaching out to women with disabilities. She distributes iron and calcium tablets, sanitary napkins to poor and single women.

Asha has the confidence to achieve greater heights. She has a dream to build a hospital and for fulfilling that dream she bought a land at Bero and believes one day she will be established her dream project. She also has a dream for the MISSI federation that if all the members give their effort then in few years they will be form a MISSI Cooperative and have their own office providing livelihood options to women and strengthening the economy of the village and the country.



URMILA DEVI, 45

Village-Jaria, Block-Bero, District-Ranchi

Urmila lost her father when she was a toddler and so the family went through difficult times making ends meet. Her mother and brother worked while the sisters had to take care of household work. Urmila was very keen to go to school and even though her mother couldn't afford a school dress she would still attend school. Urmila was very fast learner and sharp to grasp not only her lessons but would play cricket and other local sports. Urmila says she doesn't blame her mother but the family and social pressures led to her getting married when she was 16.

Urmila's first experiences in her husband's family were unpleasant; she was a girl from the town who had to adjust to the village culture and practices. The family had very basic income from a cycle repairing shop whereas most men in the household were into drinking. Urmila being a lively young girl would play with her sister-in-law and very soon went on to have her first child at 18 and consecutively three children! Urmila remembers that she had no awareness about family planning or contraception, which she talks about to other young women now. She had no choice about having the children.

Urmila got busy managing a difficult household, her marriage and the children but these pressures couldn't take away the zeal in her. A member of CSS spoke to her about their work with women and girls and suggested Urmila to meet Sachi Kumari, Secretary of CSS. Urmila was inspired by her visit to CSS and started working as a volunteer connecting other women and girls to the groups. Around the same time Urmila became a Sahayika (Under ICDS) contesting the Anganwadi selections. Through CSS and MISSI and her role in the Anganwadi Urmila would reach number of women talking to them about their health, their rights.

Urmila was member of a 25 member team who were sent on an exposure visit by MISSI to the state of Chattisgarh to understand the functioning of the PRI system, roles and responsibilities taken up by the Mukhiya. Urmila was a fast learner and her participation was in such visits, meetings, were not only an opportunity for her but she would bring back interesting learning to her SHG members. These experiences and motivation of the village members inspired Urmila to contest the Panchayat elections in 2010 which she won. Urmila had to give up her position as Sahayika.

Through her exposure with CSS Urmila would take out rallies, talk to women about rights, about reservations

etc. which were added support to her role as the Mukhiya. Urmila was happy that she was in a leadership position where her decisions would be valued. Urmila says being a woman Mukhiya helped many women and needy persons in the villages to take her help. Women facing violence at home would not be as comfortable talking to a male! Being a Mukhiya, says Urmila gave her mobility because she would have to reach anybody in trouble even at night time.

Urmila contested the elections in 2015 and again won by a huge margin. From the PRI she visited Kerala for an exposure and was inspired by the women and their hard working and energetic nature. Urmila continues her association with CSS because it gives her new avenues to learn and exchange ideas. Recently she has been able to know about disability rights, about child rights, and these information only add to her role as a Mukhiya. Urmila says her achievement as a Mukhiya has been to take up different programmes and implement them successfully, e.g. her Panchayat and all villages are ODF. Urmila says trafficking, witch hunting, early and child marriage are issues that are still a challenge in her village but she knows she has to work towards changing these situations.

Urmila actively worked for the Integrated Nutrition and Health Programme supported by CARE (INHP). She was also a community worker in the PACS programme. She raised the slogan, "Sau mein pachaas kursi, mahila karegi iski purti". Urmila was able to apply this to her real life!

Urmila says her achievements have been her role in empowering women, her becoming Mukhiya for two terms, making her Panchayat 0 drop out and many more. In 2013 Urmila passed her Class X examination and so her personal achievements and growth as a woman is equally an indicator for success to her.



PUNIYA LAKRA, 45

Village-Tero, Block-Bero, District-Ranchi

Puniya learnt farming skills when she was just seven because in her family children got engaged in managing the household as well as things like preparing alcohol from rice. Puniya had no option but to participate! Her menstrual cycle began when she was about seventeen but she was married off at fourteen. In a family where children had to work reproductive health and awareness were very alien.

Puniya had her first and only child after three years of marriage, a marriage which was unequal and violent, abused by her husband physically, sexually, emotionally. Puniya had learnt to tolerate violence and remain silent. One day her husband left her and the child which only worsened her condition as violence was still present only the perpetrators were her in-laws and in the forming of deprivation of food, etc. Her parents and relatives still taught her to accept as she had no other option and needed a roof above her head. Puniya realized that with some education she would have been able to overcome her obstacles in life. This is when Puniya also got introduced to the MISSI Federation and soon realized that she was not alone in this struggle and there were many other women like her. She felt a sense of belonging and got the strength to fight against all forms of discrimination and violence. She thought that domestic violence is a personal issue but had become the issue of many many women.

The first change Puniya experienced from getting involved in MISSI was starting to study again. Many in her village laughed at her and thought she should concentrate of earning money instead of wasting her time studying or learning other skills as she was too old for that. That didn't change Puniya's decision and gave her confidence to do different jobs and sustain her family. But what Puniya liked most was talking and connecting with other women. She also started mobilizing to form SHGs and become part of the MISSI federation. Initially Puniya single handedly enrolled about two hundred women in the MISSI federation. Puniya thought it her responsibility to educate women and girls and make them aware of problems with child marriage, about girls education, about women

becoming economically independent and she did from her real-life experiences and stories. Her message for women and girls was not to be quiet and to speak up and speak out!

Puniya was able to prove that education is not a waste at any time of life by qualifying for the post of ICDS worker at the Gram Panchayat . The community members supported her immensely and so did the women in her village collectives. Presently the President of the MISSI Federation, Puniya believes more and more women from Jharkhand should be part of the Federation. Puniya also believes that MISSI can become independent and an enterprise or cooperative where women take leadership towards building the economy of our state and country. Puniya dreams that one day MISSI women will not be independent but will be able to prove the strength of women collectives.





GITA KUMARI, 43

Village-Dahu Toli, Khatri Khatanga, Block-Bero, District-Ranchi

Gita's father was a businessman. She got married when she was nineteen after appearing for her class twelve examinations. Her father-in-law was a University Professor. The family however lived in the village where her mother-in-law was a farmer. Gita's husband would help with the farming. Gita's father had married her off hoping she would have a comfortable life in the city. Gita decided to live in the village.

Gita got introduced to MISSI in the year 1998 after two years of her marriage. She formed a SHG group but without much knowledge and foresight the group was not successful. Gita didn't lose hope. She decided to work towards education in her village and so got together children and women in the village. The community helped her build a mud house where she started teaching about forty children. Gita had to struggle to manage continue this initiative and she was successful. Later this school got linked with Education Guarantee Programme of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Now the school has been established as a Primary School.

Gita's continuous work and efforts have motivated the village women once again and they are hoping to form SHG group. All along Gita also continued her education.

Gita has now become a para teacher and till now she has taught about 400 children and women.

Gita is a role model for the women in the village. She leads from the front and along with the women take up different community initiatives. Gita says she will ensure that no girl in her village and if possible in her whole block should remain uneducated. Education, she feels is an important tool for empowering girls to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

Gita is actively involved in the MISSI federation. She along with MISSI women are wanting to form strong collectives in the villages so that women from the far fetched villages do not face any violence and can become independent to stand up for their rights.





KALAVATI DEVI, 56

Village-Bharra, Block-Itki, District-Ranchi

Kalavati grew up in a very poor family with a sister and a brother. That time there was no school in her village. She was usually busy with herding and farming at a very young age. When she was just eleven years old, her father arranged her marriage. She strongly protested against her father's decision but was forcefully marriage off.

She was very young and her husband was thirteen or fourteen years old. Both had lot of fights between them. Her mother-in-law forced her to do all the household chores and also farming, taking caking care of livestock at home. She didn't like to do all these work but she was forced to do them. During one of her regular fights with her husband she got injured in her left eye and lost its sight. She left her husband's home and permanently came back to her maternal home. Her father, other relatives like uncles, cousins forced her to go back but that time she was firm with her decision.

Kalavati started farming and taking her produce to Ranchi. During one such visit she approached Chotanagpur Sangskritik Sangha. They motivated her and some other women to form women SHGs and raise funds for themselves. Then all of them formed groups and started savings rupees fifty a month and when they were able to save a considerable amount one of the members would drop the money in the group's bank account. Women started saving money and economically independent.

Kalavati and her sister managed to get a piece of land allotted by the government under the Indira Awas Yojna scheme. However she didn't get the papers of this land. They went to local panchayat to know the reason of delay but didn't get proper answer. She raised this issue at group meeting and MISSI Federation members also heard about this issue. They supported and suggested

her and other people who were deprived of their land to go to the higher authorities, if possible even minister level. Then Kalavati decided to write a letter claiming the papers by addressing local panchayat pradhan, local police station, the BDO and also to the Chief Minister of Jharkhand. Kalavati Devi and some other women started visiting the authorities and appealing for taking action to get the paper of the land. There were many people who tried to create problem against their initiatives but she didn't lose the hope and fought with a strong determination. Finally Kalavati and the women were able to get the due documents for their land.

In another instance Kalavati was able to help one of her group members to recover her money saved in a fraudulent company. Kalavati would often tell people that she might not be educated but that didn't mean that she were stupid.

Kalavati feels MISSI Federation motivates all the women to become self-sufficient and to understand and fight for their rights. Kalavati owes much of her determination to work for her own as well as women's rights from MISSI.

Kalavati was able to build her house in the land for which she fought so strongly. She is a role model in her community not only for women but especially for women with disabilities.



LAXMI KUMARI, 40

Village-Dighiya Chatti Toli, Block-Bero, District-Ranchi

Laxmi Kumari was challenged with physical disability by birth. When she was very young and during the age of her school admission her father told her not to go for school admission because he thought Laxmi couldn't walk or might be hurt in school.

He advised to stay at home rather than going outside but she didn't follow his advice. She requested her father to admit her into school and convinced him by showing her determination. Along with her father she went to the school but teacher didn't want to take her admission after seeing her physical challenges. She carried a slate and chalk and drew a straight line to prove that she can which was liked by her teacher and she got her admission. Laxmi she went to school for fifteen days without her slate and observed her teacher very well that how she wrote any letter in the board and on the sixteenth day she carried her slate and wrote whatever the teacher had been instructing till that day. After that she never looked back, her classmates, teachers all of them encouraged in her every step of life.

After her schooling Laxmi completed her college from a distant place. She travelled everyday by bus and faced

lots of challenge. That time she met Sachi Kumari, Founder of MISSI Federation. She introduced herself to the federation. She started attending training programmes there. Laxmi felt that MISSI federation had an important role in every woman's life. MISSI and Sachiji gave her all the support from then on.

She had a dream to do a nursing course and get a secured job. Her father was apprehensive and assured her that he would take all her responsibility and she should not try to do a job outside. Laxmi explained to him her need to become independent. She started teaching in a school for one year. After that she came back to village and started study support for the children. That time one of her teachers called media to cover a report on her incredible journey. After publishing the report on Laxmi, Dr. Sureswar Pandey who is one of the founder members of Gurunanak Homes for the Handicapped children congratulated her and offered her a job in the hospital.

Laxmi has proved herself to be one of the efficient employees of the hospital. Laxmi feels her journey has just begun and she has a greater role to plan in supporting other women especially disabled women to find their identity and feels the MISSI platform is the best ways for her to do that. She feels women and girls with disability must pursue education and most of all should have faith on their strengths. Laxmi says disability is just a challenge and overcoming it makes you find your identity and your purpose in life.



MISSI: In Action

5. Other Initiatives

ADOLESCENT GROUP & ASSOCIATION

MISSI believes that to bring a positive and long lasting change in the lives of women, it is necessary to start young! About 1000 adolescent and young boys and girls are Changemakers (Peer groups) formed by the MISSI collective through our different initiatives and programmes in the villages. MISSI holds regular events every quarter of the year to bring together young people to help them showcase their thoughts, feelings as well as express their rights. Adolescent groups in the village level help boys and girls interact with each other and bring local issues into the larger forums. They share and learn from their different experiences.



ADVOCACY & LEGAD SUPPORT

ADVOCACY is the voice of protest against any form of discrimination and violence by the collectives; inform, demand, explore and access: A relatively small yet

very crucial of MISSI Federation and services is the provision of legal aid and services for women and girls facing severe forms of domestic violence. There are two aspects to legal advocacy; one is providing free legal aid where women can access the courts and ensure their rights. Another part is where law keepers including judiciary, police provide training to women and young people on how they can access the police and law with proper information and skills. Parallel to this MISSI also holds trainings, meetings with the judiciary and this bridges the gap between the law and accessibility and safety for women.

Counseling, psycho-social support, referral services, mainstreaming, are also some of the services provided by MISSI.

ENTITLEMENTS & RIGHTS

One of MISSI's important initiatives has been identifying and linking the women members with their entitlements thereby ensuring that the government schemes and programmes are accessed by the women in actual need of such support. Cases of entitlements are identified and women are supported wherever it has got stuck. One of



the biggest challenges for women is not having proper identity documents. This is aggravated by the fact that girls leave their parents' home for their husband's home and so all documents have to be changed accordingly; most often women are left with incomplete or incorrect documents. One of MISSI's work has been ensuring that MISSI members do not face this hassle.

FARMERS GROUP AND COOPERATIVES

The MISSI Collectives or SHGs are linked with NABARD, NRLM, ATMA, BAU and other schemes.

There has been a target to reach 2000 Women Farmers with about 600 women with disability within them and bring them together to form the " MISSI Mahila Kisan Cooperative Ltd", towards farm based economic sustainability, promotion of Organic Farming, supply and Marketing of Vegetables, Promotion and Business of Agricultural Products, etc.

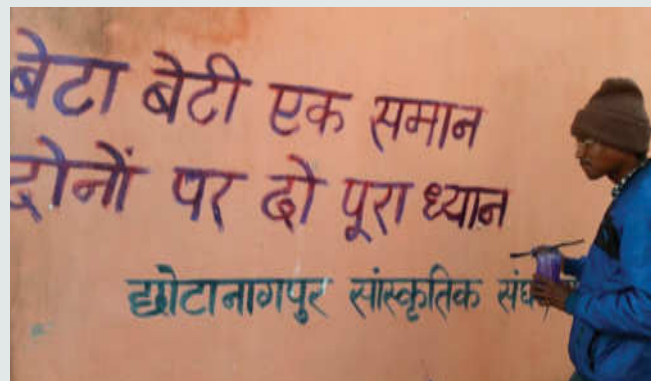
About 100 Farmers Clubs which will be men and women farmers are being set up with 40% of the club members being women. This is work In progress.

MISSI has promoted 345 Women SHGs and these SHGs now are associated with the NRLM with their around 24,500,000 savings.

WORKING WITH MEN

As we have said earlier in this book, Women's Rights are Human Rights. Being a woman or a man does not automatically make us gender sensitive or vice-versa; in fact age-old beliefs, traditions, practices affect our thoughts. So MISSI believes that it is important to include men in our fight for justice and equality.

MISSI has formed father's groups, men groups, boys groups in the village level where men are encouraged to be part of the collectives and also demonstrate actions



that break the norms like taking care of household work, bringing up children etc. Men also participate in community level initiatives and actions.

PRESERVING HERITAGE & CULTURE

MISSI has a strong role in preserving the cultural traditions and practices of the local people. Many of the MISSI Collectives practice the Pacha System which is an age-old practice of mutual cooperation where women work together sharing the work as well as the money.





As we know that our governance system almost led by Men, so we are also engaged with those Male traditional leaders.

MISSI women have formed dance and performing arts groups and are invited by many forums. MISSI women also have formed a drum-beating group, which is traditionally played by the men! They are reviving 'AKHRA' (a traditional village meeting place). Many tribal women are a part of PARHA SYSTEM (A local traditional governance system) and trying to strengthen them.

NETWORKING

MISSI believes that women's groups and organizations need to work together to bring big changes towards women's rights. Some of the networks that MISSI is

part of are Breakthrough , Jumav Manch , NAWO, Safe city for women , Jharkhand anti trafficking network , One billion rising campaign

RECOGNIZING WOMEN

In MISSI we believe that women are breaking gender norms, stereotypes and many women have overcome much challenges and violence to become role models for other women and girls in their village, town and district. Through MISSI's strong presence in far-flung villages we try to identify women achievers in Sports, Arts & Culture, Business women, Writers and Activists, to name a few. MISSI has initiated two Awards namely Jharkhand Prernashrot Samman and the MISSI Didi Samman and more than 500 women have been recognized through these awards statewide.

AT A GLANCE

9

All Women Board Members

Policy decisions, alliance building, networking, advocacy

7

Advisors-5 female, 2 male

Important role in expansion and formalization of MISSI

57

Clusters Leaders

Information dissemination, communication, liaisoning, support village level members

258

Village Level Key Members

Village level task force advocates of change including women with disabilities

ACHIEVEMENT

2000

MISSI women are role models for their families, community

1000

MISSI women are Vendors / Entrepreneurs

108

Women PRI members

120

ICDS Workers

45

ASHA Workers

345

Self Help Groups including Inclusive SHGs linked with (formerly SGSY), presently NABARD, NRLM

1256

plus free legal aid and rehabilitation provided

750

Women Farmers' Cooperatives created; target to achieve 2000 including 660 women with disability

ABBREVIATION

ASHA - Accredited Social Health Activist
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
ICDS – Integrated Child Development Services
ILO – International Labour Organization
NABARD – National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development
NAWO – National Alliance of Women's Organization
NRLM - National Rural Livelihood Mission
NGO - Non Governmental Organization
PwD – Person with Disability
PRI - Panchayati Raj Institution
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal
SEWA - Self Employed Women's Association
SHG – Self Help Group
UN – United Nation
VAWG – Violence against Women & Girls
WwD - Women with Disability

BIBLIOGRAPHY

United Nations Human Rights Manual
wikipedia
sustainable development.un.org
women empowerment quotes

This Book has been designed and printed with support from:



Content Development

Sachi Kumari
Founder MISSI

Colours For All Rang
Kolkata

Email: rangkolkata@gmail.com

Design and printed by

Addon Advertising Pvt. Ltd.
Kolkata

Email: addon.kolkata@gmail.com

Support

Amar Kumar



AN INITIATIVE OF GRASSROOTS WOMEN

WORKING OFFICE:

House No HI-98, Harmu Housing Colony (Near Sahjanand Chowk), Post-Doranda, Ranchi 834002, Jharkhand, India

FIELD OFFICE:

Jamtoli Road, Bero (Near Cold Storage), PS & PO-Bero, District-Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Telephone: 95049 00583, e-mail: jharkhandmissi.1995@gmail.com