COMMUNITY MEETING AND TRAINING
OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS AT
SANJAY COLONY

Date: 19th October 2013
Day: Saturday
Timings: 12:00 – 3:30 PM
Venue: Residence of a local community member

Organized by: FIAN Delhi

Participants:
From FIAN Delhi –
1. Ms. Suman, President - FIAN Delhi
2. Mr. Praveen Kr. Singh, Community Organiser/ FIAN Delhi Board member
3. Ms. Kanikashree Bhalla, Coordinator-Projects
4. Ms. Shashi Singh, Volunteer

From Community –
Footfall of around 35-40 residents of Sanjay Colony including women, men, elderly, youth and children, during both the sessions

Proceedings:
On October 19th, 2013, FIAN Delhi organized two sessions with the migrants living and working in Sanjay Colony. These sessions were organised by Ms. Shashi Singh, Mr. Praveen Kumar Singh, and Ms. Kanikashree along with the core group in the community, which comprises of 7 persons including community leaders, men, women and youth. The group has been active in organising this community meeting. Ms. Suman, President, FIAN Delhi presided over the sessions.

The proceedings of the day began with a round of introduction. The members from the community shared their places of origin, reasons for migration, living and working conditions here –
- Most of them belong to different districts of Uttar Pradesh namely Balia, Mathura, Palwal, Firozabad, Bulandshehar, Azamgarh, Mau. Some of them have come from Rajasthan, Bihar and Haryana as well.
- These families have come to Delhi in search of employment as their native places failed to support them due several reasons such as draught, landlessness, lack of alternate income generating activities, and subsequently poverty.
- They have been living in Sanjay Colony since 10 to 40 years.
- These migrants work in the unorganised sectors as unskilled labourers.
- The people here largely work in nearby garment factories, or as labourers, mostly on a daily wage basis. This means they have no weekly off; the day they don’t work, they don’t get paid.
The women of this colony also work and are mostly engaged in the ‘kataran’ work which mainly requires sorting of assorted pieces of clothes according to their colour, material etc. They are paid Rs. 100-150 per day for working 10-12 hours a day whereas men who are working in factories are paid on monthly basis and earn between Rs. 3,000 – Rs. 4,000 pm.
- The women do not get any social security or other employment benefits.

Then, the community were formally informed about FIAN and its work. Ms. Suman told the members present that our organisation helps to make people aware of their rights and also helps to put pressure on the Govt. through policy advocacy. She made it clear that FIAN is a support organisation; we support them in their fight for their rights.

TRAINING OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The first session was a TOT with the community members - migrants living and working in Sanjay Colony on their rights as citizens of India, irrespective of their migrant status; and more specifically the constitutional safeguards.

Ms. Suman talked about migration in general, that people always move for better opportunities. People from villages move to urban areas while those in cities move abroad. In fact, Indian Constitution bestows upon all its citizens to move freely within the country and settle in any part. In fact it is the duty of the Govt. to provide them with identification/ registration; proper housing & sanitation; employment security, equal & adequate wages & other work related benefits; and ensure their basic human rights to adequate food and safe drinking water.

Ms. Kanikashree then spoke on the constitutional provisions on right to settle in any part of the country (Article 19); equal right of men and women to an adequate means to livelihood (Article 39); and that the Govt. must make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disability (Article 41).

The community members were then informed of the Inter State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 which regulates the employment of interstate migrant workers and provides for their conditions of service. The main provisions of which are -
- Licensing of all principal employers and contactors employing migrant labour
- Issuing identity cards (passbook) to the migrant employees;
- paying them according to the Minimum Wages Act 1948;
- providing suitable residential accommodation;
- providing medical facilities free of charge;
- Payment of journey allowance including payment of wages during the period of journey

Finally the community members were also informed about the National Food Security Scheme and its main provisions –
- It will cover households already covered in Below Poverty Line (BPL), Jhuggi & Resettlement and Antyodaya Anna Yojna categories.
- The scheme is Adhar-card based; the senior most female member of the family will get smart card
- Wheat will be available for Rs. 2 per kg and rice for Rs. 3 per kg.
- Every person in the eligible household will get 5 kgs grain in a month.

COMMUNITY MEETING
Post the training session on their rights and various laws/constitutional provisions, the platform was again declared open for discussions over tea and snacks.

As the previous session ended with the National Food Security scheme, the first concern that was raised was lack of ration cards. The community members shared that they have applied for ration cards to the concerned authority, sometimes even twice or thrice, but to no effect. Many shared that they have also complied with the official’s demands for a bribe. Despite this, very few migrant families have got their ration cards issued. To add to this problem is the lack of access to benefits under the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) using the ration cards.

Another major problem, almost as grave as this one, was the irregular water supply. The residents are dependent on the tankers that are sent by Delhi Jal Board (DJB). As reported by the community members, the frequency of the tankers in their lanes depends on their personal relationships with the local MLA. If they are in the good books of the local MLA, the tanker visits their lane after the usual 3-4 days, otherwise families have to wait for as long as a week for their turn to access water. Also the water tankers don’t have a fixed time of coming, as a result, women and/or children have to stay back at home and wait the entire day for their share of water, thus impacting their daily wages.

Other concerns and problems faced by them in their day-to-day living at the colony included –
- **Low daily wage** - The majority of dwellers are working in the unorganized sector, earning wages between Rs. 3,000 – 4,000 per month, which does not commensurate with the existing market rate of Rs. 297 per day or Rs. 7722 per month.
- **Poor working conditions & occupational health hazards** – The *kataran* (small pieces of clothes) work involves women workers to sort out pieces of clothes including filthy and dirty ones and is thus poses a great hazard to their health. The fluff in the cloth pieces, when
inhaled while sorting them out, accumulates in the lungs resulting into respiratory diseases such as asthma and TB. Besides this, there is long working hours and no weekly offs.

- **Shortage in Electric supply**– Though the residents have proper meters in their homes, and also pay their bills in time, but still they face major power cuts, irrespective of the seasons. In fact, we had to change our venue from a hall at the ground level to the sunny terrace due to lack of electricity.

After a lengthy discussion on their concerns, it was mutually decided that we must begin with focusing on one of the prime concerns i.e. issuance of ration cards. Together a **plan of action was formulated with the community members**. As part of the plan, whosoever amongst the migrant families want to get their ration cards made or to access the facilities under the PDS system using their ration cards, must get their following papers together –

- Address proof
- Proof of annual income
- Receipt copies of application for ration cards at earlier instances. It was clearly told by Suman ji that they must never give the originals to any officials.

Also, they were asked to prepare a list of the neediest persons in the community who require the ration cards at the earliest. This could include widows/ separated women; women whose partners are sick; disabled and old persons. For this the core group in the community, comprising of 5-6 persons, would facilitate the collection of papers from all and submit the same with the local community woman representative.

**OBSERVATIONS**

- Despite the day being a working one for the community members (Saturday), they took out time to attend the meeting and training session, which lasted for a good 3 ½ hours.
- These sessions were attended by around 35-40 persons in all including women, men, elderly and youth. It were the women who were the most active participants.
- Also it was felt that the target group are fairly conversant and keen to be helped in sorting out these issues for good.
- The core group has also been an active support to FIAN Delhi. They have helped us in organising the venue, informing the residents about the meeting, arranging for refreshment. They have also helped us in conducting the baseline survey of the Sanjay Colony.