

Empowering the Unorganized Workers: Delhi Fellowships

Prakash Kumar and Parvati Barthwal

Prakash Kumar and Parvati Barthwal are two committed social activists who work as a team. They have been supported by IFA since 2008 (Prakash) and 2010 (Parvati). Prakash has extensive experience in the field of development from grass-root level work to policy making. He started his work with mobilization of Delhi waste pickers in the 2002, and later extended to head-load workers. His work is mainly focused in different clusters of waste pickers and some agricultural markets of Delhi where a large number of head-load workers work. He is the founding President of the *Kachara Kamgar Union* (a collective of Delhi waste pickers) and Gen. Secretary of the *Rashtriya Hamal Panchayat Evam Anya Asangathit Kamgar Union* (an all India collective of unorganized workers). He has been receiving IFA fellowship since 2008. **Parvati** has been working for empowerment of the community women, marginalized children and waste pickers for last twenty-one years. Her focus has been child education and formation of S.H.G.s. Their work includes awareness generation, capacity building, organization building as well as mobilization and advocacy by liaising with policy makers and by creating pressure in the streets.

Accomplishments so far

The Covid-19 Relief

For the second year in a row the pandemic continued to occupy a lot of the time and energy of activists. Prakash led various efforts by various organizations to provide as much relief as possible. Funds were mobilized from many like-minded civil society/citizen groups.



Prakash (L) and Parvati (R) distributing covid-19 relief kits. Over thirty metric tons (30,000 kg) of dry ration worth over INR twenty-five lakhs (USD 33,000.00) were distributed among 1500 families of the workers in 2021. Overall around 20,000 people have benefitted from their various interventions during the Covid crisis.

Workers Welfare Promotion

1. Homeless Survey: Facilitated coverage of over 5000 waste pickers and their dependents under homeless survey conducted by the Delhi Govt.
2. Insurance Coverage (Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna): Facilitated enrolment of over 2000 families of waste pickers into Govt. of India's flagship program to provide family health insurance for informal workers.
3. Enrollment with Unique Authority of India: Facilitated enrolment of over 5000 waste pickers and their dependents with UIDAI to enable them to get benefits of social security schemes.
4. Electoral Rights: Ensured political mainstreaming of 3000 waste pickers by their enrolment to electoral rolls of Delhi.
5. Licenses for Hamal (lead load) workers: Pressurized the A.P.M.C. authorities to issue G-category licenses to 1370 head-load workers.
6. Facilitated issuance of occupational identity cards to over 500 waste pickers from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.
7. Facilitated (Covid) vaccination of over 2000 waste pickers and community women.
8. Facilitated registration of over 2000 waste pickers with e-Shram portal,
9. Financial inclusion of over 500 workers by facilitation of their account opening with nationalized banks
10. Facilitated food security of around 1000 families of waste pickers.
11. Enrolment of over 1000 children with formal schools including municipal, Delhi Government and private schools.

Policy Interventions: Delhi Mathadi Bill

Modeled after the successful Maharashtra law, this bill has been in the making for a number of years. Prakash has been a major force behind it and his consistent efforts have yielded significant results including codification and finalization of the Bill and issuance of an advisory by the national government to states to consider this model for empowerment of the unprotected workers. Although the Council of Ministers of Govt. of Delhi approved it they have not notified it. Prakash has been leading agitation against this inaction. He has also filed a writ petition in Delhi High Court on behalf of R.H.P against government's ongoing denial of legitimate rights of workers. Well-known Supreme Court Lawyer, Mr. Prashant Bhushan is helping them in this legal action.



Delhi HC issues notice to Kejriwal govt on plea seeking revision of fees to headload workers

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The Delhi High Court on Thursday issued a notice to the Delhi government and others on a petition seeking to revise the piece rate fees payable to headload workers as per the inflation index.

मंडियों में पल्लेदारों के वेतन में संशोधन मुद्दे पर जवाब तलब

हाईकोर्ट ने याचिका पर दिल्ली सरकार व अन्य को नोटिस जारी किया
अधिकारियों और वायुमैनिकों के लिए अलग-अलग पेंशन नियमों को चुनौती

Delhi High Court response and media coverage of their legal interventions on behalf of the workers.

Other Interventions

1. Prakash and Parwati regularly join other activists in rallies and other activities in support of **people’s democratic rights** including against hate speech and against the curtailing of citizen freedoms by the new Afghanistan government.
2. Engagement with the authorities on issue of the **homeless zero waste management**.
3. Played a key role including lecturing at a **workers’ capacity building** session at the V V Giri National Labor Institute.
4. Both Prakash and Parwati are active members of the Indian Community Activists Network and attended the annual meeting in Varanasi this past December.



and

Prakash leading a protest at Rajghat against Delhi Govt. failure to notify the Mathadi bill.



Participating in a Delhi rally in support of the democratic rights of the people of Afghanistan.



Prakash at a December '21 rally at the Uttarakhand Bhawan against hate speech.



Prakash and Parwati at an ICAN 'Jan Samwad' or 'Dialogue with the Community' session



Interacting with the waste pickers in their colony

--IFA Liaison: Zini Joshi