

TUESDAY, MAY 08, 2007

Hindustan Times

She leads the fight for rights of villagers

Pushpa Gohe a gramdoot for a Betul village

Sravani Sarkar
Bhopal, May 7

PUSHPA GOHE (38) is a rural woman with a difference. The woman has fought against the system to get her village Golhai Buzurg in Betul district what was due but normally denied. She mobilised a self-help group of the village against sarpanch and panchs and got allocation of wheat and cash under the Swarna Jayanti Gram Rozgar Yojana restored to genuine beneficiaries.

She took up the matter with the Janpad Panchayat CEO. She also mobilised villagers to oppose illegal mining of sand by a contractor: with help from another person of nearby Katsur village Pushpa prevailed upon block-level officials to release deferred wages of the villagers under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

Pushpa Gohe's fighting spirit can be attributed to the Gramdoot project. 'Gramdoots' are a select group of voluntary social leaders working to bring about change in the rural landscape through information dissemination on government schemes. Gramdoots also seek to empower villagers to get their due.

Pushpa and 570 others like her are instruments of silent revolution in 450 villages of Mandla, Dindori, Betul and Chhindwara districts. They work under a project launched in the year 2004 by the National Institute for Women, Children and Youth Development (NIWCYD) and eight other partner organisations under the Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) programme.

In the last three years, the organisations have developed a strong base of social leaders who help village-folk in various ways



Gramdoots from various parts of the State have arrived in Bhopal to participate in a convention by the National Institute for Women, Children and Youth Development. Pushpa Gohe is seen on the left.

Gramdoots to be feted today

GRAMDOOTS FROM the 450 villages would be felicitated and administered oath to remain committed to their mission during a two-day convention to be organised by NIWCYD at the Gyan Vigyan Bhavan of the Barkatullah University on May 8 and 9. The convention would be inaugurated at 11 am on May 8 by Speaker Ishwardas Rohani. MP Human Rights Commission chairman Justice DM Dharmadhikari would preside while eminent Gandhian Dr SN Subbarao would be special guest. DIG Anuradha Shankar Singh and state coordinator of UNFPA P R Deo would also be present.

without any remuneration.

NIWCYD director Rajesh Malviya claims more than 75 per cent of the Gramdoots have excelled in their mission beyond expectation.

"A gramdoot is selected unanimously by gram sabhas and acts as liaison between the community and the outside world" Malviya explains. The gramdoots in the four districts have been successful

in raising issues like implementation of NREGs, establishing village self-help groups, disseminating information on and getting government schemes implemented, initiatives on educa-

tion, water and health aspects; taking issues to Janpad, block and district levels, ensuring participating in self-governance process, preventing child marriages and enforcing prohibition.

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2007

Hindustan Times



MUJEEB FARUQU/HT

Speaker Ishwardas Rohani (centre) enjoys playing a traditional dhol during the inaugural session of the State-level convention of Gramdoots on BII premises in Bhopal on Tuesday.

'Gramdoots can be bridge for society'

DESCRIBING THE 'Gramdoots' as protectors of human rights in rural areas, MP Human Rights Commission chairman Justice D M Dharmadhikari today said that these voluntary social leaders could also become the bridge between government and society to achieve necessary development.

He was speaking at the chief guest at the inaugural session of the two-day convention of Gramdoots organised by National Institute of Women, Child and Youth Development (NIWCYD) that commenced at the Gyan Vigyan Bhavan on Tuesday. Speaker Ishwardas Rohani presided over the function and expressed happiness over having the opportunity to interact with persons who are doing social work in mission mode totally voluntarily.

Both the MPHRC chairman and the Speaker said that it is very unfortunate that a majority of people in rural and tribal areas still remain deprived of very basic needs of life despite so much funds with spend on so called developmental works.

The guests were welcomed in a traditional manner by representatives of Baiga tribe. These Baigas also presented traditional dances attired in typical apparels. The guests – mainly Speaker Rohani – also participated in the cultural presentation.

Special guest – eminent Gandhian Dr S N Subbarao said that we should ask ourselves whether the country is really independent. The government officials get facilities to work for the poor people but they hardly reach the rural areas. In such situation, the work done by Gramdoots towards achieving

Mahatma Gandhi's dreams is appreciable. DIG Anuradha Shankar Singh and former chief election commissioner G S Shukla also spoke on the occasion. Chief executive of NIWCYD Rajesh Malviya explained the concept of Gramdoot project. Some of the gramdoots including Rajesh Pawar of Chhindwara and Pushpa Gohe of Betul also expressed views on the occasion. Uma Goswami of NGO Adiwasi Sewa Sanrachana Sanstha also spoke about role of gramdoots.

On May 9, at 11.00 am the gramdoots would be administered oath of voluntary work by former judge of MP High Court DPS Chouhan. Former DGP SC Tripathi would be present. Baiga dances would also be presented on the occasion.

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Wednesday May 9, 2007

Help for development, Dharmadhikari to NGOs

FREE PRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL

MP Human Right Commission Chairman Justice DM Dharmadhikari has exhorted NGOs to help in achieving the development target by working as a chain between government and common people.

He was speaking during the inaugural function of state-level Gramdoot session on Tuesday.

This two-day session, presided over by assembly Speaker Ishwar Das Rohani, has been organised by National Institute for Women, Child and Development, Nagpur. A total of 576 Gramdoots, arrived from various pockets of the state, participated in the function.

Dharmadhikari dubbed gramdoots as representatives of villages and lauded their efforts. He also advised them to work against violation of human rights.

He informed that people could also register their complaints on toll free number 1800-2336399. Rohani said that Gramdoots should share the responsibility in over all development. Gandhivadi thinker Dr SN Subbarao said that there is great space for development in rural sector. On this occasion, DIG Anuradha Shankar was also present.

the pioneer

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Active participation needed for rural development: Speaker Addresses State-level session of *Gramdoots*

Staff Reporter | Bhopal

Igniting violence is easy but active participation for rural development is quite challenging' State Assembly Speaker Ishwardas Rohani expressed these thoughts at the State-level session of Gramdoots, organised by the National Institute of Women, Child and Youth Development at Barkatullah University.

Rohani regretted the pitiable condition of the tribal community despite lakhs and crores of rupees wasted in the name of rural development every year. 'Gramdoots represent the exploited and oppressed

class of the rural society and need support of all sections of the society,' added Rohani.

It is notable that Gramdoots are volunteers and social activists, working for the National Institute of Woman, child and Youth Development network.

Chief Guest of the function, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission Justice DS Dharmadhikari termed Gramdoots as the guardians of human rights.

He expressed the need for a link between the State and the society. Senior Gandhian Ideologist, SN Subbarao charged the

Government employees for not performing their duties regarding rural areas despite sufficient resources. He applauded the works of Gramdoots in fulfilling the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi.

A number of Gramdoots also shared their thoughts at the occasion. They discussed about their selection process, their endeavours and the challenges they are facing in their work. A total of 600 Gramdoots and 200 social activists from the districts Mandla, Dindori, Chhindwara and Betul participated in the programme.



State Assembly Speaker Ishwardas Rohani beats a drum alongwith Bega tribes during the inauguration of a two-day convention of 'Gramdoot', organised by National Institute for Women, Children and Youth Development (NIWCYD) in Bhopal on Tuesday
Pioneer photo