

**DBSS orientation (Barrackpore)
24th, 25th and 26th of March**

Day I

The team of SBSS joined the Barrackpore DBSS as they were facilitating the 14th joint Area Committee meeting (members of the four areas: Nurshikdarchak; Canning; Khari [Dist. South 24 Pgs]; and Maliyapota[Dist. Nadia] and CME representatives from the four chosen pastorates)

The meeting started with devotion where the reverend Shubhra Mandal, DBSS board member set the tone of the coming days by talking about the importance of introspection and understanding the problems within as well as outside. The process of 'mirroring' oneself was very important according to him.

This was followed by the Barrackpore DBSS welcoming all the SBSS staff and participants. A quick round of introduction followed thereafter. During the introduction a graphic representation of the area covered by the DBSS, the staffs responsible for those areas and the people's movement in those areas was drawn up.

This was followed by the presentation of the last meeting's minutes. This process is usually done through reading of the minute report, but Ms. Moni from SBSS suggested that this time it should be done through group presentation. The gathering was divided according to the areas that they belonged to and were asked to go through the report and then present whatever had been done in their respective areas. This process ensured the maximum involvement and participation of the participants as well as helped in internalizing and understanding the activities that had been done.

After the presentation of the minutes a question was posed to the community: 'Do you think that you are a part of a very strong people's organization?'

There was a mixed response to this question where one male member said 'yes' and one female member said 'no'.

The reasons for it being strong:

- Is giving voice to the voiceless
- Are able to negotiate at the bloc level
- More involvement of women in Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha

The reason for it not being strong:

- No follow up of events and activities
- PO as a strong cohesive force has failed to emerge
- Membership stagnant and not increasing
- Pace of programmes and activities have decreased

This led to the discussion of the weaknesses and strengths of peoples organizations which was decided to be done as a group work.

Group work:

The next session was devoted to the understanding of the present strengths and weaknesses of the three people's organization existing in the areas: Bishnupur Bakershawar Nagarik Manch (BBNM); Sundarban Narayantala Nagrik Manch (SNNM); Mathurapur Manavadhikar Sangram Samiti (MMSS). This session was facilitated by Rev. P Kawa.

For this the participants were divided into five groups- three groups representing the three PO's, one group comprising of the CME representatives and the fifth group comprised of the DBSS community Enablers. The groups were then asked to discuss the following questions and come up with their understanding of the same.

***What are the existing achievements and failures of the people's organization?
How can you maximise these achievements and turn the failures into successes?***

The following were the points of presentation:

Failure	Solution/ Suggestion
No Identity and recognition (visibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office building • Increase in membership
Meetings not held regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting should be held at least once a month, preferably twice.
No proper follow up of the programmes and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure proper follow up of programmes
Membership stagnant, not increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meeting • More awareness
Lack of youth membership and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen leadership
Lack of representation of the daily wage labourers	
Level of understanding of the political know-how/ knowledge is very low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More building of capacities on political know how
Don't have strategic tools to deal with political pressure	
Unable to develop a model to attract mass base	
Lack of involvement of the CE	

Day II

The day started with a recap of the previous day. The failure of the participants to recap what happened the previous day showed that perhaps there was a little problem with the structuring of the sessions. It was realized that the sessions were a little loosely structured because of which the desired message got a little diluted. Thus it was decided to make the coming sessions more structured.

This was led by concluding the session with the community representatives

The next session Orientation of the DBSS

Before starting the next crucial session with the DBSS staff and the community enablers the SBSS team sat together to chalk out the plans for the sessions. It was important to link the previous sessions together with the planning agenda as well as make the session more of mirroring process for the participants.

The following points of reference were discussed:

- Devotion
- Realization/ reaction
- Expectation
- Agenda (area coverage; issues; gender; CME)

For this it was decided to start with the messages that were given in the previous day's devotion (the need for introspection and mirroring oneself; understanding the problems within as well as outside which hinder our work; compassion; importance of planning).

This session facilitated by Miss. Moni of SBSS the DBSS staffs were asked to draw out there learning from the devotion. The following were the answer:

- Compassion/ love
- Planning/ listening to what people want
- Reviewing our position
- 'Who am I?' introspection
- Mirroring

(This session was done mainly because of some tension/ point of contention that was recognized between the CE's and the community). This session led to an exercise that asked the participants to look at themselves in the mirror, understand the problem and then set an agenda for each of them to solve that problem. The following were some of the problems:

- Not enough field visits
- There is an imposition of ideas
- People want a welfare approach more than an RBA
- Lack of follow up and no link between activities
- Communication gap between the staff and the community
- Gap in information
- Lack of leadership

The agenda that the participant set for themselves were as follows:

- Increase in field visits
- More follow up and linking of activities
- Data collection and analysis
- Capacity building
- Increase in area coverage and making it more compact.
- Negotiation

The next session facilitated by Amen aimed at trying to answer the question WHY?

The participants were divided into groups and asked to try to answer WHY they wanted to make those changes in themselves and their work? The answers received were as follows:

- To enable the poor access and control their rights
- Build mass movement

This led to the participants discussing the importance of having a clear understanding and assessment of the issue of the particular reference community. This session was facilitated by Deepak. It was felt by the SBSS team that there was a lack of proper understanding of the issue and its importance in the whole process of movement building. Thus the session was devoted to the proper procedures of understanding the problems and issues of the community.

The example of the issue of food security and livelihood was taken and then explained stepwise how it needs to be tackled and resolved.

The importance of this session was that it gave the participants the opportunity to look back and see where they had gone wrong or right in their paths and to take the necessary action during the next project phase.

Day III

The session started with the recap of the previous day's session facilitated by Ms. Suramya from SBSS. The recap showed that the participants had internalized the sessions of the previous day.

The next session facilitated by Ms. Moni wrapped up the sessions of the last couple of days, reiterating the important points that should be kept in mind during the planning of the next project.

The last session was the Feed back session where the participants were given an opportunity to share their feelings and learning of the sessions.

Observation

- Time management: it was felt that there were some sessions took longer than they should have because of which some other sessions had to be hurried and adequate attention could not be given to them.
- Lack of structure: some sessions lacked a concrete structure due to which the message was somewhat lost.
- More planning on the part of the SBSS team was required as to structures of facilitation would be used and in what areas the 'mirroring' process was required. So that a more systematic process could have followed with better results.