A Positive & Vibrant Interface: Intra-group Exposure Visits in 2010

The Arpana team had recently identified pockets of resistance and prejudice which disallowed women from approximately 35 villages, taken up in 2010, to consider the favorable and beneficent path of forming collectives.

In October workers talked to women in these villages, talked to their families and persuaded them to be allowed on visits to villages Madanpur and Taprana (IDRF villages).

Madanpur has 11 self help groups (SHGs), while Taprana has 12. In both villages practically all households have a member in one of the groups. The savings generated through the groups have grown over the years. Through easy and ready access to credit, families have found new levels of security and opportunity.

Arpana requested them to collectively host 30-50 women from the new target area. The groups of Madanpur and Taprana responded with enthusiasm. They were ready to share with their peers, their experiences of togetherness and sharing as well as of development and financial security.

The SHGs of Mandanpur and Taprana held networking meetings in their villages and planned the visits. They deputed members for cleaning, cooking, welcome and overseeing preparations. Halwais were identified; each SHG deputed volunteers for preparing & serving the ‘Preeti Bhojan’ and all was ready to welcome their sisters from faraway villages.

80 women from the new groups of Inri Block participated in an intra-group visit to the villages of Madanpur and Taprana. The SHG women were the hosts in both villages. Their warm and affectionate welcome and the carefully made arrangements for their visitors were deeply appreciated by the visiting women.
The visitors were greatly impressed by the firsthand narration of women’s successes and achievements during the period of 5-10 years during which they have been SHG members. These true stories made a strong impact on the perceptions of the visitors.

They returned to their homes with their doubts dispelled. Their confidence and conviction in their newly formed collectives received a strong impetus. The Arpana workers found that former confusion and fears, that had blocked progress, had been dispelled.

The self help groups in the 35 villages where Arpana has recently started activities were strengthened and new members also joined. One more such intra-group visit will be arranged in 2011. There are still women from some remote villages who fearful. They also need to visit, observe, and make their own enquiries and learn from a personal exchange of view with their peers in more experienced self help groups formed by Arpana.