Usha Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd
12/5 Nilmani Mitra Street, Kolkata 700 006

email: usha_multipurpose@yahoo.co.in Phone +91 33 2530 6619/3148 Fax +91 33 3543 7777

Usha Multipurpose Cooperative Society, an initiative of sex workers’ collective (Durbar) has begun its journey on 21 June in 1995 over coming several challenges including the “immoral” status of sex workers. On the very ground they were denied registration of their co-operative society to begin with. Starting with only 14 members, its success story has created a history in last 20 years. Usha is now proclaimed as the backbone of economic security of sex workers what in turn has established their political identity as workers. The most deprived section of the working women in our country. So called ‘Fallen’ and immensely ostracized community grab this opportunity and slowly they could rise and make their voice heard not only across the country and also the world by surprise. Presently there are 20,000 member of USHA and the cooperative is own and run by the sex workers for themselves. Performance-wise this year USHA stands at the top of the list of all cooperatives in West Bengal.

What Usha has done for sex workers?

Economic security and recognition:
Before 1992, sex workers were compelled to take loans from the private money-lenders who use to charge high rates of interest since the public sector banks and financial institutions did not allow these hapless women to open accounts in their branches for various reasons. The dubious money-lenders known as Kistwalas and Chatwalas used to take advantage of compromised social status of sex workers and their socio-economic vulnerabilities. Their extreme dependency on the grey financial market forced many of them to live in a lifelong debt-trap that continue to weaken their social and economic position enhancing vulnerabilities to other societal forces. Being in the sex work they were at the mercy of local goons, police and politicians alive. Usha has saved them from this precarious condition. Now they can open account anytime, save their hard-earned money, take loans with simple interest and pay back under flexible terms. This has helped thousands of sex workers in addressing their insecurities vis-a-vis improvement of quality of life for themselves including their family members.

Social security and recognition:
Usha has also created a unique example in community development through its multifarious activities. The residential hostel for the children of sex workers in Baripada as well as Sports Academy run by them are two most important areas of activities among others. USHA has started eco-friendly cultivation and other business endeavors with an objective to create new paths to community development. Not only the sex workers, Usha has taken up projects for development and empowerment of other disadvantage and backward communities like the tribal, Shabarns in Amlasole, Fisher women in South 24 Parganas and East Midnapur among others. The Election Commission has recognized the savings passbook of Usha as the identity proof for sex workers for availing voter card, Ration card etc. This has not only enabled sex workers and their families to exercise their voting and other rights but also to raise their voices against the social exclusionary practices of the mainstream society.

Usha is striving ahead at the time when market-driven consumerist and competitive culture is trying to wipe out the idea of development based on intra and inter-community cooperation, solidarity and empathy. The government’s obsession with the GDP as the only measures of development with an idea that it would trickle down below has ignored the specific needs and aspirations of the economically and socially marginalised communities but also their potential to make change for themselves. The agency of the poor and specially women belonging to the lower socio economic caste and occupation background has never been recognized in our development paradigm. Under this backdrop Usha has opened up a dialogue based on an alternative pathways of development, what could have drawn attention of both academicians and policymakers what has not happened till this point. Thus can not be measured based only on the number of members in USHA or the number of sex workers who has benefited from this venture. Usha has created a sort of movement the lesson of which is relevant not only for these section of women who otherwise are socially excluded but for other marginalized communities also. We want to develop a platform to share values, process and strategies development experienced by the member of this community in the coming year. We have planned to develop a series of programme to commemorate completion of 20 year of Usha Multipurpose Cooperative Society through out the year 2015. We solicit your participation and help to make the programs successful.

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ঔষধিমাল্টিপার্পাস কো-অপারেটিভ সেসাইটি-র স্মরণীয় বিশেষতিম বর্ষ পূর্তি

ঔষধিমাল্টিপার্পাস কো-অপারেটিভ সেসাইটি ১২/৫ নবাবদী মির স্টিট, কলকাতা ৭০০ ০০৬

ঔষধিমাল্টিপার্পাস কো-অপারেটিভ সেসাইটি ১,৯৫৪-এর ২১ জুন মাসে ১৩ অক্টোবর দিয়ে যার মাধ্যমে তাদের পার্শ্ব দানের স্মরণীয় বিশেষতিম বর্ষ পূর্তি। এই মেলায় শায়েস্তা কষ্টনামা সরকারের প্রধানমন্ত্রী হীরাক অহমদ তাদের প্রভূত প্রশংসা করেন।

সামাজিক কাজ ও উন্নতি

ঔষাধি মাল্টিপার্পাস কো-অপারেটিভ সেসাইটি এর অন্যতম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কাজ হল সামাজিক কাজ ও উন্নতি। বাণিজ্যিক প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোর সামাজিক উন্নতির জন্য যে কৌশল ও যোগাযোগ প্রদানের জন্য তাদের সাহায্য দেওয়া হয়, তা অন্যতম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ।

ঔষাধি মাল্টিপার্পাস কো-অপারেটিভ সেসাইটি এর আদর্শ তথ্য এবং সামাজিক উন্নতির জন্য সামাজিক ভেক্টর প্রদানের জন্য তাদের সাহায্য দেওয়া হয়।

ঔষাধি মাল্টিপার্পাস কো-অপারেটিভ সেসাইটি কর্তৃক অন্যতম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কাজ হল সামাজিক উন্নতি।

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