

## Save the Earth, feed the World

The area in and around Baruipur shows two contrasting agro-ecological features one of waterlogging and the other of good cultivable soil. On the one hand, Baruipur is known for its fruit orchards and on the other hand it is also known for growing a single crop in the winter. The good soil has suffered continuous chemical aggression since the 1960s. The myth of increase in productivity has now vanished in thin air. Cost of inputs has made agriculture costly for the small and marginal farmers. It has made the farmer totally dependent on the market for seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and even water.

Suffering of the women is double-fold in that they cannot exercise their right to own their father's property especially in terms of agricultural land. The women share a major portion of agricultural activities with the men, but are deprived of the status of a recognized farmer.

Nishtha has been trying to impart training in sustainable agriculture to young girls, women and men from farming families in order to optimize food production, stop use



NISHTHA ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09

of chemical pesticides, reduce use of chemical fertilizers, reduce market dependence of the small farmer, promotion of indigenous seeds and for providing year-round nutrition for the family from the homestead garden. 16 farmer groups in 3 GPs of Baruipur Block could be organized last year. They received training in the philosophy and techniques of sustainable agriculture from two experts one from the government and the other from a resource NGO. These farmer groups were helped in accessing different provisions of the government. Many of them were helped in opening their PF accounts.

A Core Team has been formed from among these farmers that takes care of coordinating the groups, conducting meetings and resolving conflicts among them. The Core Team receives special training from the facilitators of Nishtha. The members of the Core Team in turn train the members of the group to which he or she belongs.

Two rallies, 6 stakeholder meetings and 45 wall writings were done for general awareness about sustainable agriculture. Nishtha established linkages between 6 of these groups and the banks. Some of the farmers have utilized this linkage in accessing loans from the banks. 20 girls were trained as



NISHTHA ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09

*krishibandhu* who went round the villages to train 60 adolescents in the techniques of sustainable agriculture and integrated home gardens. These 80 adolescents together organized 45 adolescent groups to form a Youth Federation. The Federation launched a campaign on sustainable agriculture. 3,500 posters were put up in different places to raise the level of awareness against the use of plastic. Two Vegetable Fairs were organized. 12 shows were conducted in different marketplaces. 60 women farmers were trained who in turn trained 352 women in their own villages. All of them have developed nutrition gardens in their homestead.



NISHTHA ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09