

## You Lord Empowered Me and I Lead Your Flock, Patna, India



“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor”.  
Luke 4: 18

I am Sister Mary Alka working with the villagers of Chenari & Rampur Blocks under Rohtas and Kaimur in Bihar. We work with youth, women & children. We have 113 Community Based Organizations of women numbering 1600 women. The Dalits, people who are vulnerable & poor due to caste, class and gender and thus remain at the lowest strata of the society are prey to all types of violence. Jeevan Mashal Society (JMS), meaning centre for torch bearers of life, is the Social Work Centre of Sisters of Notre Dame Chenari. I have 5 co-animators working to address the issues of the Dalits of our villages.

This year we are focusing on the rights of our Dalit women. The present program is named Entitlement Realization of Dalit Women. The objective of our programme is to promote women leadership, their dignity, rights and gender equality. Through training camps, campaigns and meetings we impart information regarding schemes for dalits and women, in particular. The effect of the camps, training & campaigning bore much fruit as the villagers and women approached the local leaders & government officials demanding for their rights.

The local self government is meant to take care of the development work of the people within its territory. But most of the elected members neglect their duty. As the women have realized their rights, they approached the Block Development Officer under whom the panchayats function & pressurized the panchayats to conduct the village assembly where the villagers were able to put before the local elected members to look into their problems. It was in view of establishing a good rapport and creating liaison between leaders and government officials of the Block and Panchayat. Our villagers realize that their empowerment is not easy but one could achieve it only by united struggle and collective efforts.

Sister Maria Aloysia keeps inspiring me through her words “The more good we have done here for God, the more glorious will be our reward up there”. I am deeply grateful to the Lord to sing His Glory along with Mary our Patroness for He has done wonders in the lives of our people!