



Youth leaders carve a silent rural transformation

BANGALORE, January 10, 2010: Naxalites killed her husband before her very eyes. Instead of punishing the guilty she set out to reform them into good human beings. This is a story of astounding transformation of Rita Singh 29, from Bihar. “The killing of my husband shattered me completely and even made me contemplate suicide. That is when I was introduced to the Art of Living programmes which gave me a new direction. It made me want to reach out and transform lives, including that of the accused.” While she has been successful in reforming her husband’s killers, she has also brought a difference in the lives of over 600 prisoners at the Motihari jail through Art of Living’s Youth Leadership Training Programme (YLTP) and other stress- elimination programmes.

This was one of the many success stories, as over 1200 rural youth leaders from over 14 states of India gathered at the Art of Living International Centre in the city to share their experiences of bringing about a silent yet strong developmental revolution in the villages of India. This brigade of committed youth leaders had come together for a 3-day YLTP Refresher Meet which concluded today.

While Suchitra along with her team from Bangalore has built 300 houses for the slum dwellers in Kanakapura Road, constructed 130 houses for the homeless in the flood affected area of Bagalkot, Jayant Bhole has successfully managed to curb farmer suicide in 6 districts of Vidarbha in Maharashtra. “Between 2005-2006, there were 2500+ farmer suicides on account of crop failure in Vidarbha. My team educated the farmers in chemical-free, low-budget, natural farming which not just increased yield but also their profitability. Women were encouraged to start cottage industries, thus augmenting family income. Since Jan 2007 ever since we started our programmes, there have been no further suicides in these 6 districts.” he shared.

“At the meet, we had the opportunity to hear the real hard-hitting stories of struggle, success and strategies of these youth leaders. Stories of how YLTP made villages alcohol-free in Chattisgarh, reformed Naxalites to take up constructive social work in Bihar, enhanced the quality of life of slum dwellers in Karnataka & stopped farmers from committing suicide in Maharashtra are just a few of the stories that were presented. It is humbling to see the motivation, energy & leadership qualities of the youths in rural India”, said Nirali Desai, National YLTP coordinator for the Art of Living.



YLTP programmes which started in the year 1999 have so far touched over 37,000 villages in India. The youth leaders have so far built 1527 homes, 5670 toilets, 1036 bore wells, 820 biogas plants, planted 22,51,000 trees, conducted 48,800 hygiene camps, 23,600 medical camps, 1,21600 stress release workshops benefitting 25,82,500 people.

Some of the youth leaders sharing their success stories to the press at the Youth Leadership Training Programme (YLTP) Refresher Meet, at the Art of Living International Center in Bangalore.