

Mobiles and Empowerment of Minorities in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra

The socio-economic conditions of the Muslim community of India present a dismal picture. The Muslims are deprived of due representation in public employment even at the lowest level. India's rural Muslim population needs support to sustain itself and retain the faith.

The project Mobile 4 Minority Empowering Minority (M4ME), is trying to weave Dalit Muslims together and serve them with quality content focusing on developmental messages.

In association with Gramoday NGO, Gadchiroli, we have launched innovative initiative of ICT4 Minority Empowerment under eduVARTA Project. Being the project theme was presented in the national consultative Summit on Digital Minorities during Manthan Award held in 2011 at New Delhi, the name of newsletter entitled as "EkNaiPahel", started on 1st May 2012 on the occasion of Maharashtra Day. The main objective of this project is to provide the relevant information to minorities with the right path.

The literacy and work participation amongst the Muslims is low as compared to other minority communities. The majority of them are engaged in traditional and low paying professions, or are mostly small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, small traders, craftsmen and so on.

The information help minorities to get aware about education, employment and several Government non-government schemes.

The project has collected 15500 minority youths who are using mobile data. Through these data of mobile, the project has targeted 15500 minority youths as change agent of community across Maharashtra. As we have planned and implemented the ICT4M project through mobile SMS. We don't charge any fee for SMS and SMS Newsletter service.

The project received more than 500+ call regarding appreciation of this initiative and many of Community activists ask for their participation and want to play a role in the betterment of the community. Mr. Nasir Hashmi who is leading the project in Maharashtra, personally spoke to all the callers and noted some common issues raised by community people. Here are some issues raised by the minority community:

- Government of India stated 'Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Corporation' for Financial Assistant of Minority, according to the callers there is no proper guidance and assistance to get benefit of the scheme. More than 1000 files are pending and no one is entertaining those files. Finally minority especially Muslim youths are dropouts from the development stream.
- In continuation with the financial assistant related issue, most of the times banks are not co-operating. Banks ask for assets and guarantor for processing loan. Many times these youths are not able to provide such bank demands and as a result, proposal for loan gets refused by many banks.
- Many callers ask for Minority Cast Certificate.

- Some Muslims belong to OBC category. Govt. issued them such OBC certificates but these people do not get specified validity to their cast certificate. More than 6 month passed and no proper answer received from the concerned department.
- Many education trusts has minority colleges assisted by special minority grants and funds from government. But in reality many of these minority colleges and trust are collecting donation against the admission for minority students. In this case, monitoring system is expected that minority benefit should be given to the minority students for free.
- As government schemes are made to empower the minority but there is no single office at district level in Maharashtra who can assist and guide the minority youths to get benefited. MDC (Minority Development Corporation) should start on the basis of TDC (Tribal Development Corporation).
- Scholarships schemes for higher education such as MBA, B.Ed. are available now-a-days but the benefits of this scheme are not given to the student in the stipulated time.
- Many minority youths have completed their higher education and seeking for good job. They need proper guidance and support to get satisfactory jobs.
- It is advocated that minority commission starts a help line on phone where minority youths get proper support and guideline.
- Content availability is a major issue related to the minority support.

Project Report by

Mr. Ravi Ghate

Director, SMSOne (EduVarta Project)