

**The Hindu - Delhi    14.08.2009**

## **Suvidha Kendras taking the schemes and benefits within the reach of the urban poor**

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*70 NGOs enlisted to survey areas of the Capital*

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NEW DELHI: Sixty-two-year-old Jhinkan Prasad has come to Mahila Vikas Sansthan, a Naraina-based non-government organisation here in the Capital, to apply for old age pension.

The NGO has been demarcated as a Suvidha Kendra and a Gender Resource Centre by the Delhi Government as part of its Mission Convergence programme launched in 2008.

“As a Suvidha Kendra, it is a site of single-window clearance where the poor can apply for schemes and benefits they are entitled to. A Gender Resource Centre is where women below the poverty line come for courses in vocational training, legal aid, knowledge on nutrition and health care, formation of self-help groups and non-formal education free of cost,” says Shyamala Shiveshwarkar, consultant with the Centre for Advocacy and Research.

Those who finish the courses receive diplomas awarded by the Union Government.

The Mission Convergence programme was launched to place schemes and benefits within the reach of the urban poor in the Capital.

“For this purpose, the Delhi Government enlisted 70 NGOs which sent their outreach workers to survey areas of the Capital door-to-door. The NGOs came up with a list of 40 lakh individuals who were classified as below poverty line.” says Ms. Shiveshwarkar.

The classification took place on the basis of place of residence, people who are socially vulnerable and those who are occupationally vulnerable.

“The outreach workers explained to the people the concept of GRCs and SKs and told them about the single form to be filled even if they were entitled to benefits from several schemes. The people were informed about GRCs in their neighbourhoods,” adds Ms. Shiveshwarkar.

Individuals like Jhinkan Prasad learnt about GRCs from people who visited his house during the survey.

He displays a piece of paper with his details on it and also the name of the survey worker who met him.

Mission Convergence director Rashmi Singh says: “The BPL classification has been expanded to include vulnerable categories instead of limiting it to classification based on income. The programme is still in a transitional stage, services have to be directly carried to the people and there may be objections to change in the traditional systems of delivery mechanisms. Five lakh women have already benefited from GRCs.”

Girja Kumari Sahu, who works with the District Resource Centre, South, adds: “At present GRCs are equipped to help individuals in applying for five-seven specific schemes as decided

Written by Administrator

Friday, 14 August 2009 07:31 - Last Updated Friday, 14 August 2009 07:33

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by those in charge of Mission Convergence. The aim is to enable GRCs to deliver the benefits of above 40 schemes.”

The programme also aims to provide those who have been identified in the survey with biometric cards. These cards will serve multiple functions including identity proof. The 78 operational GRCs-SKs, which are being pitched as the face of the Government at the community level, are the main interface between the two.

Dr. Gyanendra Kumar, executive director of Mahila Vikas Sansthan, says: “When people come to the SK to apply for schemes they are entitled to, they have to submit the self-attested application form, details of their bank account and statement, affidavit and residence proof. These forms are then sent to the District Resource Centre and finally the Department of Social Welfare.”