

Empowering the most Vulnerable: Urmila Devi Vishwakarma in Uttar Pradesh

Rural poverty is highly prevalent in the heartland of India. Working in Mirzapur district of UP, Urmila Devi is at the very center of it. Her work focuses on organizing workers at the lowest level of society for better wages and better working conditions. She also educates people about opportunities for education, health and employment through government programs. Mirzapur is a mountainous area marked by extreme disparity of income. It is also heavily affected by Naxalism. IFA has supported Urmila since 2016.

Target groups

- *Stone quarry workers
- *Wood cutters and others living off forest produce
- *MNREGA workers and their families
- *Children and adolescent girls

Urmila works in 20 villages and 35 towns. Her work impacts 1000 workers. Of these 300 are directly linked to her organization (**Khadan Mazdoor Union – Quarry Laborers Union**). She also works with about 400 NREGA women workers and 150 young girls.

2022-2023 Highlights

Her work involves Dalits, Mushahars (extremely under resourced migrants from Mushahar areas of western Bihar), and under resourced women in Mirzapur district. She visits villages and localities, meets with local authorities, organizes rallies and protests, and make people aware of their rights (MNREGA, workers cards, ration cards, fertilizers, etc.) and facilities, conducts workshops on specific observances (e.g. International Woman's Day, Gandhiji's birthday, Rakshabandhan), and disseminates information (health programs for children, etc.). This past year her work was spread out over 20 villages and impacted ~2,000 villagers. Notable achievements include getting work for women, admitting children to schools, getting needed medicine to 150 laborers, getting labor cards, Ayushman Bharat cards, pensions for women, Aadhar cards for Mushahar families, rations. In addition to the select 20 villages, she has added 5 new villages with 500 additional people in her work area. Below are some pictures of her work in action.



*Urmila Devi with two faces of women's empowerment: -
Women with their labor cards and youth group on International Women's Day*

-- IFA Liaison: Siddharth Dasgupta