

### ***Sister Grace Kodiyan***

Sister Grace Kodiyan is a nurse and member of the religious congregation, Sisters of Notre Dame, and was nominated by her peers for this Award. Since 1987 she has dedicated her life to the poorest of poor people in Bihar, North India. There she started working from a health centre in Gahiri, reaching out to villages that are not only geographically but also economically and socially remote, by a network of health and community development programmes. She has used a rights-based approach to ensure that the women and girls of the villages, who were the most deprived, could receive education and therefore have opportunities for community-based decision making.

Only some of the activities with which Sister Grace is involved are: conducting mobile health care and immunisation clinics in the remote villages; training village health workers for mother and child health care; family counselling to prevent abortion and female infanticide; organising self-help groups in the villages for sustainable livelihoods and well-being; empowering village women to take up social issues; conducting and promoting non-formal and formal educational programmes for women and children not going to school in the villages; organising people's movements to fight against bonded labour, child labour, and the evils of the caste system, and other social issues that have adverse effects on the development and well-being of village people; and income generating programmes by growing vegetables and rearing goats, pigs and buffaloes. All these were done without even electricity, although that may now be installed. Although Sister Grace left Gahiri in October 2003, the health-outreach programmes are continued by competent medical personnel. She herself moved to another centre at Piro, to start the same work all over again.

Sister Grace is an active member of various health movements and also promotes indigenous medicines. She is a core group member of INSA-INDIA (International Nursing Service Association) and Convenor of the District Forum of Bihar Voluntary Health Association.