

SPANDAN SAMAJ SEVA SAMITI

ANNUAL REPORT



2015-16

**COMMITTED TO REDUCE MALNUTRITION AND HOUSEHOLD HUNGER OF KORKU TRIBE
AND PRESERVE THEIR ENDANGERED LANGUAGE**

FROM DIRECTOR'S DESK

Year 2015-16 was yet again full of activities, events, learning and challenges as we as a team inched along our Mission to reduce the malnutrition and hunger among the Korku community and preserve their critically endangered language and culture. This year onwards we expanded our geographical reach by including another 50 Korku dominated villages of neighboring Khaknar Block of Burhanpur district. We are currently catering to 150 villages across two adjacent blocks: Khalwa in Khandwa district and Khaknar in Burhanpur district.



U5 Malnutrition has been the core issue and our approach has been to ease the sufferings of currently malnourished children and work towards creating an environment that will ensure increased access to food & nutrition by the marginalized families. Various activities and interventions catered to implementation of this strategic position.

The approach to addressing the *alarming* malnutrition situation has been to help most of the malnourished children recover at homes in a non-facilities based care and engage the families and mothers in particular to participate in the process of caring and recovery.

Spandan emphasized biodiversity conservation and has been at solving this global challenge in its work area. Trying to bring back Millets and traditional crops, promoting organic pesticides and backyard nutrition gardens and backyard poultry and smokeless stoves have been directed to that end.

A special carried forward from previous years included micro land and water conservation with dual focus of not only developing neighborhood resources but fostering the spirit of volunteerism. This was done by community and women in particular undertaking range of works by voluntary labor contribution.

Behavior Change communication persisted with demystifying malnutrition and helping more families imbibe a positive health seeking behavior. Korku dialect was used increasingly to develop communication materials. A concerted effort was carried forward to engage Community opinion leaders through sustained discussions and meetings and training. The aim was also to help mothers diversify diets with food items available in the neighborhood especially Millet, vegetables and wild growing greens.

Range of training and orientations were organized both in-house and in the field. The major themes included diet diversification, adequate care of malnourished children and women empowerment.

Proactive research on aboriginal Korku life, language and culture is underway gauging vital information from oral traditions. We now have a substantial material on their history, folk culture, food and dietary practices, farming and crops and herbal medicines. This information was used not only to prepare communication materials but also inputting into various awareness and advocacy campaigns.

In all these interventions and consequent processes, women were the most benefitted. They expressed it through collective actions, participation in programs, taking lead in presenting grievances before appropriate authorities. Also hundreds of children recovered and their lives were saved from the devastating malnutrition.

In nutshell we are pitted against a nutritional catastrophe kind of situation that presents its own challenges.

Finally I would like to thank my team, supporters and donors who have stood by us and helped us to inch along achievement of our Mission.

PROGRAMS

COMMUNITY BASED MALNUTRITION MANAGEMENT

This is the core program that aims at helping scores of children recover at homes and in a non-facility based community care. For this end the U5 children are early screened using the anthropometric measures a like age, weigh, height, MUAC and head circumference. The identified malnourished children are taken in the program. Some of the malnourished children found with multiple medical complications are assisted to reach Nutrition Rehab Centers. These numbers are usually very small. During the reported period we 2254 malnourished children were so identified and 253 were referred to NRCs.

The identified malnourished children are followed-up regularly with home visits, nutritional counseling, helping mothers to diversify diets, support to families by way of seeds to grow vegetables and Millet and raise Backyard poultry. The mothers are assisted to access food and nutrition entitlements especially from Anganwadi and PDS Ration shops.



A mobile team too follow-up the cases through periodic visits, diagnosis and provision of medicines. They too counsel mother of various aspects of health and nutrition and vaccinations.

The frontline staff also conduct regular meetings, community trainings and awareness campaigns to not only help the victim families participate in the program but in the process have better knowledge and skills at better care of their children as they grow up. 79 meetings could be organized.

For children below 03 years and being most susceptible to onslaught of malnutrition are cared for through community crèches. Presently 08 such crèches are piloted. Daily wage earning mothers unable to leave the kid at home, leave their kids. They too participate through visits, meetings and sharing resources like firewood or vegetables grown in their fields. More than half of the 160 children cared for through these crèches have shown steady weight gain and less proneness to sickness.

33 Grain Banks now wholly community managed have continued to help the poo access grains in peak hunger times. It now has 373 members and 5323 kilograms of grains could be provided to hunger prone families.

This year too we complemented the government efforts, through conducting Health camps in remote locations and outreaching left out children (ones living in remote hamlets) with administering Vit.A doses. 2776 children across 33 distant villages were so helped. Similarly 20 Health camps were organized that could significantly bridge the service delivery gap through outreaching 435 women, 839 children and 435 men with diagnosis and provision of medicines. Assistance was also extended in Pulse Polio Campaign and Suposhan Abhiyan.

36 Anganwadis were extended clothing and Toys support and events were provided to enhance the participation of mothers and help kids stays longer at the centers. Voluntary grain support was received that was extended to severely malnourished children.

The dialogue with government grassroots departments, Health and ICDS in particular was facilitated. 7 grassroots experience sharing session were held apart from ICDS sector level dialogue with grassroots functionaries.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women have been the key focus of the program not because of our policy alone but also due to their flair and leadership and contributions in various ways. Alongside informal community group they have also begun to organize themselves in Common Interest Group (CIG) and undertake works like running mutual help groups, engaging in community development works and participating in various forums may it be for learning or presenting their grievances. We too have strived to direct various capacity building interventions to help them develop right perspectives and have skill building.

19 CIGs with 217 members collected 105700 rupees this year and could also extend financial support to 56800 rupees to needy members. 02 of CIG have also begun economic enterprise like processing of Millet and running a flour mill.

1611 Pregnant women and 1781 Lactating mothers were outreached by our front line workers and mobile health team with home visits, nutritional counseling and other helps.

10 Mothers trainings were held to help tribal mothers have more positive health seeking behavior and diversify their diets with food items available in the neighborhood. 79 community level meetings too were conducted.

Women participation in Cloth for Work initiative wherein they contribute voluntary labor to develop micro land and water resources in the neighborhood has been very encouraging. This year 43 works related to land amend and 5 works related to water conservation were undertaken. It included: land bunding, well deepening and construction of sand bag check dams.

A process is underway to help and strengthen growing number of adolescent tribal girls prone to distress Migration. The process includes profiling migration prone adolescent girls and helping them with training, orientations and provision of identity cards. This year 444 adolescent girls could be listed.

Women showed great enthusiasm and lead at engaging in neighborhood land and water resources voluntarily. It included well deepening, land bunding, constructing sand bag check-dams and plantations. These works have received wider appreciations and women initiatives at village Langoti to further deepen their well through own means has yet again received applause all around.

The Women participation was very encouraging in discussing and resolving the menstrual hygiene issue. Women and adolescent girls have been articulate and shared various problems and taboos and have showed keenness at adopting proper sanitary napkins provided by GOONJ. Currently more than 400 women and girls have stories to tell about what difference these pads have made their lives.



BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

A distinct focus has been placed towards biodiversity conservation as the region referred to has been experiencing a rapid shift from traditional and nutritious crops and Millet to cash crops like soybean and wheat and cotton. Since 70s the advent of soybean practically replaced all traditional crops and more than 60% of total cultivable area was used as compared to traditional crops and Millet shrinking to bare 2-3%. This change has brought its own pitfalls with it. The historical timeline shows simultaneous growth of malnutrition and household food security. Apart from that the land degradation too has been extensive due to use of chemicals. The rainfall since couple of years has been erratic and soybean crop has failed desperately leading to indebtedness of most of the poor farmers.

To offset this we have been promoting Revival of Millet and traditional crops. The traditional seeds were mustered, sensitization camps were organized and farmers were prompted for reversal. This year 355 families took to growing Millet and sowed a significant part of their fields to grow Millet. Some of the farmers had bumper crops and that has motivated many to opt for it through *-seeing is believing*. In one of the villages the women CIG was assisted through installation of a Millet de-hulling machine. They could process and sell some in the neighborhood.

Backyard Nutrition gardens were promoted targeting mostly mothers with malnourished children, pregnant and lactating mothers. 569 such families were provided seeds of green and leafy vegetables. Some grew it in fields while some opted for vertical gardens in polyurethane bags. Most of the families had sufficient vegetables for diets for at least 4-5 months his year. 50 Families were also supported with backyard poultry. The results were good and enough learning in place to scale it up.

We have also been promoting home preparation and use of organic pesticides. Using local ingredients like cow-dung, cow-urine and green leaves it can be easily fermented and used. 36 families prepared and used it and can testify its effectiveness.

An extensive voluntary initiative was taken up especially by womenfolk to develop their neighborhood land and water resources. 43 land amendment works were undertaken apart from 16 sandbag check dams and well deepening works. Across 20 villages, people contributed 6184 man days of voluntary labor that according to existing official wage-rates would amount to Rs. 9, 85,256. Along with this 455 wage earners were assisted to access work through helping them by filling job applications and listing work demand on job calendars.



PRESERVATION OF KORKU LANGUAGE & CULTURE

This has been another important initiative considering the fact that Korku is one of the 196 endangered languages of India. In their current scenario their aboriginal culture, traditions and egalitarian values are also dissipating.

We are proactively in the research of oral traditions and significant volume of data has been generated. This year the focus was on collating the aboriginal songs sung on various occasions.

The information available has been widely used to create IEC materials. We are currently using a lexicon, a handbook for migrant labors, preschool learning material for crèche children, range of charts and posters on various themes.

A conscious process is on to hand over the knowledge and traditions to younger generation. The aboriginal language has been increasingly used in meetings and trainings at grassroots.

This year we have mounted a campaign to popularize Rengu Korku who has been recently recognized as only one from the community to have participated in Freedom struggle along with Tantya Bhil. The community level discussions and deliberations are on to raise demand for inclusion of Korku tribe in PTG category.

Annual Korku Fest was held in Khandwa and it could exhibit the shades of aboriginality of Korku tribe. A Photo exhibition was held and urban community could see their colorful dance and aesthetic music. The discussion was held and prime focus was on advantages of Millet over cash crops and livelihood options that can be accessed in the neighborhood.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

More activities related to fulfillment of Mission included

Vitamin A Doses : Nearly 2500 children residing in 33 geographically remote forest villages and hamlets were administered Vitamin A . The team outreached them

RELIEF OPERATIONS

This year flash floods brought havoc and caused extensive damage to villages in the block and nearby districts as well. Spandan team rose to occasion and extended relief to Rahatgaon and Sodalpur in Harda district and Mehlu a distant forest village in Khandwa district. Clothing and food grain support were extended to affected families.

MIGRATION

To address the problem of migration in the region, a series of deliberations were held with the migrant labors especially adolescent girls. Most of the willing migrant labors are being provided an Identity card duly endorsed by the Sarpanch as well. The adolescent girls were provided a kit containing toiletries, sanitary pad and books and note books etc.

CHILD FRIENDLY ANGANWADIS

36 Anganwadis were revamped through provisions of toys, clothing and donated grains. His is to help the children come and stay longer at the centers.

FEEDING DEMO:

A special event was organized for staff, crèche workers and women leaders to learn to prepare various dishes from Mahua that is plentifully available in the region. Facilitated by an expert, various dishes were learned with their nutritive advantages. Participants agreed to try it out in child care centers ad also in homes.

PLANTATION

5000 shady and fruit saplings were planted across 20 villages through community participation. The saplings were planted across villages and fields. People also erected temporary guards to protect the saplings.

POSHAN SAMVAD: This program was jointly organized with IFPRI and Vikas Samvad. A series of ICDS sector wise dialogues were facilitated and that provided the grass roots service providers like ASHA, ANM and Anganwadi workers ventilate their experience and challenges. A range of vital learning could be had.



IMPACT

The intervention this year could generate following tangible and intangible impact

- ✚ 997 U5 children recovered at home in the Community Based care and did not have to go to a prolonged facility based care. This greatly relieved their mothers the pains of having to go to Nutrition Rehab centers for a fortnight long institutional care. 253 children needing medical attention were referred to Nutrition Rehab centers.
- ✚ Grain Banks continued to provide vital support to families in times of need. 373 families during peak time hunger could access 5323 kilograms of grains and so could be succored from going hungry or be more indebted. This initiative now genuinely community based has been scaling and outreaching more food insecure families.
- ✚ Revival of Millet and Traditional crops has been carried forward with more farmers having grown them. The seed banks could be started and could help 355 farmers opted for them. Most of them had food at home for prolonged time and this has motivated their neighbors too to consider growing it next season.
- ✚ Nearly 600 families were helped to grow Backyard Nutrition gardens and most of them had vegetables in their diets for 3-4 months and some had surplus to sell as well. This has greatly assisted women and children in particular absorb essential micronutrients directly.
- ✚ Women leadership and participation is on rise demonstrated in their drive, initiatives and participation in decisions and works.
- ✚ Nearly 1000 mothers have shown attitudinal change towards health seeking behavior and diet diversifications.
- ✚ Korku tribe in general has shown concern over preserving their language and egalitarian traditions.
- ✚ We as a Team too benefitted by new learning and insights and enhanced cohesion with the target community.

