

SPANDAN SAMAJ SEVA SAMITI

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23



Let's Make World a Better Place

HIG 44 RAMNAGAR KHANDWA 450001 MP

email: spandan4change@gmail.com

website: <http://www.spandan4change.in>

contact : 9826681165/9691964626

From Director's Pen

The year was full of activities during the period -some new some ongoing. The Program goal is to *“Create a Food Secure environment wherein most of the marginalized families can access most of the food and nutrition in their neighborhood itself.”* Most of the activities and interventions revolved around it. The community participated enthusiastically and even contributed voluntary labor to develop land and water resources. The training of Anganwadi workers and supervisors from all across the district is ongoing.

The promotion of Backyard Nutrition Gardens and cultural crops was an ongoing process that attracted many mothers and farmers. Families could access vegetables for most of the months.

A range of BCC activities was implemented to help the families diversify their diets and access most of the scheme benefits. Traditional Community opinion leaders were tapped in to help demystify malnutrition and food myths.

Goat rearing has been a new initiative and collaborating partners contributed through technical and loan support.

The entrepreneurship program for young and migration-prone tribal girls progressed with advanced skilling and tools support. Most of them are able to earn and add to petty family income.

The FPO is being hand-held and most of the unschooled women farmers could indulge in trading of grains and making meager profits. It is bound to escalate.

The collaboration with District Administration especially W&CD and Health departments was encouraging and helpful.

The Team was highly motivated and mutually supportive to bring about significant changes.

Thanks to the target community that helped us in furthering our Mission in various ways.



Seema Prakash

Founder- Director

INTERVENTIONS

Community and its challenges: Our primary focus is on the lesser-known and nutritionally vulnerable Korku tribe with their major habitation in the Central Indian states of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh, they dwell primarily in and around the Satpura Mountain range passing through the Khalwa Block of Khandwa district in MP.

For a few decades, the Korku tribe has been reckoned for an alarming rate of malnutrition and deaths among their U5 children. We are primarily working with the community to help them overcome this problem. The area due to backwardness is a Fifth Scheduled area and one of the Aspirational districts by Niti Ayog.

The latest NFHS V report indicates that 35% of children are stunted while 60% of mothers are anemic.

We have adopted a layered model that tries to address both micro and macro causal factors and bring sustainable changes

The following activities were undertaken:

Community-Based Malnutrition Program

It's the core program that has continued for nearly a decade now. The key focus of the program is to help malnourished children and their families. It strives to help children in various ways -home visits, nutritional counseling, anthropometry, and other tangible supplies to help most of the children recover at homes in non-facility-based care. Families are often reluctant to take children to Nutrition Rehab Centers for at least a fortnight-long treatment protocol. Early tracking and care help a lot in recovery and very few children have to be referred to NRCs. The program runs in close collaboration with Anganwadi workers and the women collective of the village.

During the reported period 9038 Anganwadi-going children were reached with nutrition and

The pregnant and lactating mothers to are helped through home visits, motivation to get ANC/PNC, and taking care of their health and well-being through appropriate diet.



Child-friendly Anganwadis

25 Anganwadi centers were taken up at the request of the government and local administration to adopt an Anganwadi program. They were repaired, revamped with paintings, and equipped with toys and sitting arrangements, and TLMs. Most of the TLMs were developed in the local Korku dialect and are being used in preschool education. Children enjoy coming and staying at the centers. It helps in reaching them with nutrition and immunization services



Backyard Nutrition Gardens

It's an important program that has helped food-insecure families access vegetables from their own gardens and hence many micronutrients. At least 8-10 varieties of seeds are provided twice a year – both during Rabi and Kharif seasons. This program has been appreciated by the families and more and more families are willing to take it up. Since they access vegetables only once a week during the weekly bazaar and sometimes do not have enough money to buy many types and mostly substandard vegetables are sold by city traders.

This year 557 families were helped with seeds and encouragement to grow their own Backyard Nutrition Gardens.

Now we are working towards establishing Community Nutrition Gardens managed by women collectives so that enough vegetables are available locally and women can become Nutri-entrepreneurs.



Promotion of Millet and cultural crops:

The agrarian changes since the 70s have posed a peculiar problem. The tribal farmers have gradually shifted from traditional crops to cash crops like soybean and wheat mainly. Interestingly they do not consume soybean and most of the wheat is sold off to offset debts, social functions, illness, etc.

A couple of years back we began the revival by encouraging the community to contribute Millet seeds to begin a seed bank. We began with about 2.5 quintals of seeds of Kutki and other small millet. Now many farmers have allocated a piece of land to grow them and also consume them. It's on their taste buds.

This year 313 families took the initiative at using a part of their land to grow Millet and cultural crops especially Kutki and traditional black rice variety.

There is a gnawing problem but there is no market and they are worried about the surplus. If they don't find it they may shift to something else maybe more harmful. We are advocating that the government procure it on MSP and supply it through PDS. It will have many benefits.



Behavior Change Community

It's an ongoing and undergirding process. We are employing a range of thematic IEC materials and participatory techniques. We rely more on the Korku dialect which does not have a written script and is one of the endangered languages of India. It is easier to communicate and get the message across.

Community meetings, thematic training based on participatory learning techniques, micro-planning, awareness campaigns, and FGDs are some of the key techniques employed. 196 community-level meetings were organized and 3129 men and women participated.

Alongside 32 thematic training were held being attended by 509 participants.

55 village-wide awareness campaigns were organized that could reach 1826 people. The themes were diet diversity and child care in First 1000 days.

We are making a significant effort to build scientific temper among the community opinion leaders especially their priest (*Bhumka*) and healer (*Padiyar*). It's a hereditary office with knowledge transferred to the next generation. Since their hunter-gatherer state these have been a ready help. They perform a range of rituals and use herbs and elements to treat various sicknesses. Due to service delivery gaps in remote villages, the community's trust and reliance on them is at large. We are trying to orient them and build their skills to know and measure malnutrition, identify physical symptoms of malnutrition, and promote diet diversity. In a given situation this available human resource can bridge the gap of awareness and help in sensitizing their kindreds to adopt the right treatment and care and avail of existing health and nutrition benefits.



Livelihood Initiatives

This program began post -COVID when many young tribal girls reached home with great hardships. Back home they did not have many wage-earning options and were not keen to go back on migration.

After lots of meetings and discussions and brainstorming couple of trades were earmarked: repairing motorcycles and mobiles and beautician training. The first two were the trades generally considered to be in the male domain. A series of skill training was organized and tools were provided. Most of them have set up shops in remote villages and are earning and feeling confident. Two of them have set up a garage in Block HQ. The Forest Minister was appreciative and encouraged the Garage Girls by gifting them a compressor.

This effort has received wide appreciation and more migration-prone girls are motivated to do it. BBC too covered this story.

The other livelihood option has been to promote goat rearing. Linkages have been established to get loans and technical inputs for goat rearing. Young women have been skilled to work as barefoot veterinary workers (Pashu Sakhi) who visit home, treat ailments, and even vaccinate. This is a great service they are providing to reduce morbidity and mortality among goats.





Land & Water Conservation works

Many village communities especially women came forward to carry on the tradition of mutual help through *shram daan* (voluntary labor contribution) to develop the neighborhood land and water resources like land bunds, digging and deepening of village wells and tanks, constructing sandbag check dams, and so on. This has helped women relieved of efforts and time in fetching water for men and cattle and also clearing the debris of farms to have more sowing area and thus more crop production. 19 such works were undertaken and a handful of donated grains were provided as an incentive for their gesture of good. A total of 1610 man-days of voluntary labor was contributed.



Capacity Building of Anganwadi Workers:

It's a district-wide program that has focused on building the knowledge, skills, and capacity of nearly 1800 Anganwadi workers. The training titled Securing Nutrition & Building Resilience (SENU) is ongoing across 8 blocks of the district. Based on the PLA technique, three rounds of training are underway. The Anganwadi workers back home are strengthening women collectives, sensitizing them to the importance of diet diversification and mobilizing the community, and enhancing male participation in food-related decisions.

The program also played a supportive role in celebrating programs like- World Breastfeeding Week and National Nutrition Month through a range of engaging activities.

The training has produced Master trainers from among the trainee Anganwadi workers and is expected to carry on the process of empowerment.



IMPACT

- The incidences of severe malnutrition have declined and wasting has gone down as observed in the field.
- The behavior changes leading to women adopting dietary diversity have been accelerated by Backyard Nutrition Garden support and have become a precedence for those trying to work on malnutrition reduction programs.
- With a sustained capacity building of Anganwadi workers, sensitization and participation have been on the increase. It is setting a platform for wider social changes, empowerment of women, and access to scheme benefits.
- The women's engagement in village development is significant. They have taken the lead to develop neighborhood land and water resources and contributed to the development.
- The livelihood initiatives for most of the migration-prone tribal girls have been lauded. They have learned and have taken up works generally considered to be in the male domain – like motorbike and mobile repairs. Being placed in remote villages with no such facilities for miles they are rendering a useful service and earning and are full of confidence.
- The unschooled Korku tribe women farmers have set up their own Farmers' Producer Company (FPO) and hav250 shareholders. They began business by buying and selling maize and soybean locally and made earnings of 22000 rupees. They have got the license as well.
- The innovative design of Smokeless Stoves has been appreciated and the demand has grown as it eliminates indoor pollution and consumes less fuel and is culturally accepted.
- The collaboration with government agencies and local MLA has been strengthened and they have encouraged and helped with field activities.
- The partnership with donors, resource and technical agencies, and well-wishers thrived.

CHALLENGES

- The seasonal distress migration often hampers the ongoing efforts and process. As local wage-earning options are limited and most families are marginalized farmers growing cash crops. face household food crises for at least 2-3 months in a year.
- The stunting among U5 children remains high and that points to a state of chronic hunger. Even 60% of women in their reproductive age suffer from anemia.
- The journey to revert back to Millet and cultural foods is full of challenges. Tribals too are attracted to urban foods and substandard packaged food is a thriving business of urban traders. Though it is still being reverted back to. Unless government procures it from the farmers on MSP and redistributes it through PDS the farmers will soon shift to something else that can be still more harmful.
- Many food myths and misunderstandings exist regarding the causes and consequences of malnutrition. The century-old traditions and rituals are so cemented that it will take time to demystify them.
- The women and children lack vital micronutrients and with current foods absorbed is not enough to bridge the gaps.

FUTURE PLANS

- ✓ Scale up our layered approach with its utility and learnings to neighboring blocks and districts.
- ✓ Undertake biodiversity conservation by large-scale plantations (green cover) and promote organic and sustainable agricultural practices.
- ✓ Women entrepreneurship program to have more diversity and marketing potential.
- ✓ Work for the extensive promotion of culturally relevant smokeless stoves.
- ✓ Preservation of the tribal's endangered dialects and egalitarian values
- ✓ Explore feasible nutrient supplements from various agencies working on it
- ✓ Continue demystification of malnutrition and food myths and create a field force of traditional opinion leaders with a scientific temper to act as social behavior change agents.
- ✓ Address any emergency food crises.

