

SPANDAN SAMAJ SEVA SAMITI



ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

**AN INTERGRATED APPROACH TO ADDRESS MALNUTRITION
AMONG KORKU TRIBE COMMUNITY**

FROM DIRECTOR'S DESK

The year 2017-18 was yet another anecdotal year in Spandan's Journey to Development. We persisted with our layered approach to address the issue of malnutrition among the lesser known & vulnerable Korku tribe.

The early tracking and quality follow-up of malnourished children across 150 villages was complemented with efforts to bridge nutritional deficiency in diets and help marginalized families revive Millet and Traditional crops in their fields. Hundreds of tribal farmers have done so and that has increased the food availability for longer time during the year.

Behavior Change Communication focused more on Community opinion shapers by helping them imbibe a scientific temper and so become community behavior change agents. This is helping in demystifying malnutrition and helping families prefer treatment over incantations.

Preservation of Korku language and culture was supplemented with collection of more information from the oral traditions and was used to input into developing IEC and TLM materials. There has been a growing interest and more individual researchers have ventured into this endeavor. Korku peoples' collective have been raising issues related to their development.

We have moved into addressing indoor pollution problem considering it to be one of the major contributors to malnutrition and mothers' ill health.

Collaboration with the government was reinforced with undertaking joint field programs, campaigns and experience sharing. Thanks to all our donors and well-wishers who have helped us march forward.

Finally my heartfelt thanks to the Team who have been highly motivated and committed to the organization's Mission of addressing Hunger and Malnutrition.

Seema Prakash

Recipient of Stree Shakti Samman Puruskar



COMMUNITY BASED CARE MODEL

It is a non –facility based care that is based on a belief that most of the children can recover from malnutrition at the community if tracked early and appropriate intervention is undertaken. The children are nutritionally assessed by recording their age, weight and length on a monthly basis and graded using WHO measuring tables. The children (less in numbers) with multiple infections and needing medical attention are referred to Nutrition Rehab centers while most of the children are taken care of in the community itself. The pregnant and lactating women too are followed-up. The Home visits and nutritional counseling are the integral component f the program. Frontlines meet mothers, apprise them of child’s nutritional status, counsel them to diversify diets in field and plates, complete immunization and take best advantage of public food & employment schemes like ICDS, PDS, NMBS and MGNREGS.

Mothers capacity building is done through a series of meetings, field level trainings and celebrations like Anganwadi Diwas and Immunization mobilization Camps. Thematic areas related to better child care, diet diversification, exclusive breastfeeding, care during pregnancy and importance of ICDS services are covered. Various campaigns with Women & Child Development Department are help periodically.

Two Campaigns needs mentioning: The Breastfeeding Week and Community egg feeding program. The Egg Campaign saw 70% children gain weight. Another Campaign wherein we are outreaching more than 1000 children in remote villages with Vitamin A and Deworming. Vitamin supplementation is provided to nearly 300 High Risk pregnant women.

Health Camps are held in remote locations to bridge the service delivery gaps. The diagnosis and medicines are provided..938 families benefited through 7 Health Camps.

2207 malnourished children and 8197 pregnant women and lactating mothers were reached across 150 villages of Khalwa (District Khandwa), Khaknar (District Burhanpur) and Bhimpur (District Betul) were outreached .



COMMUNITY CRECHES

It is an innovative initiative to provide community based care to children below 03 years. It is the most susceptible to malnutrition age and does most harm physically and to cognitive growth. Most of this age group children do not make it to Anganwadi as they either accompany their mothers to field and work sites or left alone at home in care of some elder sibling or aged and are so grossly neglected.

To offset this problem we began community crèches as a pilot in certain villages. The crèche worker is a community woman and identified on the bases of her reputation in the community, having a motherly attitude and a place adequate to house 20 children. The women who have no one to take care of their kids leave the children for the day. They get day care – food , rest, growth monitoring, play way learning and health checks. The mothers frequent the center , help by way of contributing vegetables or fuel wood. They also have meetings and give suggestions and encouragement to the worker.

160 children are being cared for and 75% of them have shown steady growth.



BRIDGING NUTRITION GAPS

Korku tribe of our Project area are victim of protein deficiency. The kind of malnutrition among their children is clinically termed as Protein Energy Malnutrition(PEM). It has been existing as their main sources are getting out of reach of most of the marginalized families.

We have been promoting Backyard Nutrition Gardens and Backyard Free Range poultry for the purpose. Most of the families with malnourished children and those prone to food crisis were extended these support. 250 more families received poultry support while 480 families were helped to raise Backyard Nutrition gardens. The families received 7-9 varieties of green and leafy vegetables and could consume them for most of the months during the year.

The families who raised poultry could have meat and eggs for many months while some earned a sizeable income from selling the chicken.

Two Poultry sheds have been installed at strategic location so that chickens can be easily accessed by the keen families. More families have been demanding seeing the success of the poultry their neighbors could achieve.

These interventions most of all helped the families including children absorb protein and micronutrients directly and that has a distinct advantage.

Another anecdote program was the Egg Campaign that was held across 50 villages. The children were fed boiled eggs for a month. 70% children showed weight gain. Many climbed out of malnutrition.



REVIVAL OF MILLET

Korku tribe community landed into the unsavory situation of childhood malnutrition. Somehow it could be related since the time they left growing their Millet and traditional crops. By 90s one would hardly find them in fields or plates. But it remained on their consciousness and they recalled its taste and nutritional advantages. The soybean they switched to could not find itself in the food culture of Korku tribe. We began a sustained campaign to bring back Millet since 2011. Series of personal and group interactions were held, folk tale related to Millet as a god given element was widely used for sensitization. The campaign also gathered lots of information on Millet – varieties, its usage, its way of cultivation, its nutritional advantages and so on. The campaign literally requested the families having perennial Millet and Traditional Crop seeds to contribute voluntarily and in this way nearly 200 kilograms of Millet seeds were collated. The motivated farmers used apart of their fields to cultivate them. The process moved on and Millet seed banks had to be establishes to disseminate seeds more widely. This year too nearly 500 farmers took to revival of Millet. The major varieties being grown are Kutki (*Small Millet*), Swaraiya (*Indian Barnyard Millet*) and Jowar (sorghum). There has been significant increase in land being used fro growing them. IN 2011 it was mere 2% as per official statistics. This has helped many marginalized families have food round the year ad tide over peak hunger times. The effort is on to reduce the drudgery of women having to grind it on mud grinders. Machination is being tried out. Framer collectives have been formed and the process is on to set up a Producer's Company soon.



BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION

It has been an integral part of our initiative. Our being a community centric approach needs demystification of malnutrition, building close relation with the community and engaging them in various programs.

There has been a misconception and high held belief that malnutrition is due to an evil eye or deities' curse. Consequently a range of local treatment including rituals, incantations and use of elements and herbs. These treatment methods are applied by Bhumka (the tribal priest) and Padiyar(the tribal healer).

The Behavior Change Communication strategy had following elements- more use of local Korku dialect during conversations or designing communication materials; simplifying many terminologies used in relation to malnutrition and health and various public laws for poor to access benefits. Village level meetings, health and immunization camps, distribution of posters and handouts to ones who can read and pass on the knowledge and information to ones who cannot read. Wall paintings with with catchy messages are means to generate widespread awareness and.

The orientation of Community opinion shapers has been aimed at. It tries to help them know the real causes and consequences of malnutrition, the ways to measure and know by observation of obvious symptoms and counsel the victim families to opt for home based care or go to Nutrition Rehab Centers. A scientific temper is sought to be evolved in the community with their opinion shapers playing a lead role.



COMMUNITY ASSETS BUILDING

Considering the region being struck with widespread household food crisis our efforts since the beginning has been to engage community in developing its own neighborhood land and water resources. The old custom of mutual help among the Korku community was revived. They especially women came forward to deepen the wells and ponds, erect sandbag check dams to arrest water flowing waste, plant trees and install stone fences around their fields using idle stones and even cleaning the hand pump surroundings or making outlets for water clogging on the streets.

People decided what they would do and were incentivized (no wages paid) with clothing and handful of grains for the good work they did. This year nearly 10 acres of land was amended land bund , 03 riverbed were desalted for 478 square feet , 10 wells and 03 ponds were deepened. Apart from that sand bag check dams, street and stream cleaning works were also undertaken. 503 persons contributed 405 man-days of voluntary labor (shram dan).

The idea has been welcome and has gone a long way to exhibit peoples' willingness to work even without wages and develop their own livelihood assets that makes a dent into hunger scenario.

Goonj contributed through materials support for this venture .



CAPACITY BUILDING

A range of training, meetings and campaigns were held to build perspective and develop skills of the community mothers, Community Opinion Leaders and the Project team. Some of the major capacity building interventions included :

- Community level Mothers Meetings
- Training of Community opinion leaders
- Training on Diet diversification
- Training of organic farming
- Training of community volunteers
- Nutrition Campaign
- Campaign on Millet promotion
- Training on Poultry Raising and Backyard Nutrition Gardens
- Celebration of Anganwadi Divas
- Training on FRA
- Training of MGNREGS wage earners
- Training of Women farmers
- Training on SHG Management
- Training on Importance of Producer's Company
- Staff capacity building



PRESERVING KORKU LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Korku language is one of the 196 endangered languages as per UNESCO. It is restricted to oral traditions and with number of speakers reducing. Korku children have to study Hindi as mainstream education language that differs from their mother tongue. Most of the oral traditions are restricted to older generation that is passing away. There has been no conscious effort by the community to pass traditional knowledge and skills to younger generations.

We are conducting a proactive research into the oral traditions and generating vital information that is being inputted into developing communication materials and Teaching- Learning materials for Anganwadi children. Lots of resource material has accumulated and we are in the process of developing more hand outs, posters, lexicons and researched documentations. We intend that these materials can be used among youth, researchers and academicians to preserve Korku language and culture.

Korku community members are keen that government should look into their plight and come forward to promote Millet production, introduce Korku language in elementary education and include them in Primitive Vulnerable Tribe category for more development benefits.



IMPACT

The program during the year saw following results and achievements:

- Nearly 1000 malnourished children showed signs of improvement with 500 reached normalcy
- 70% children in our crèches exhibited steady weight gain
- Nearly 1000 families with malnourished kids or food insecure could access food and nutrition for most of the months in a year.
- 500 more families took to reviving Millet and traditional crops in their fields and plates
- Demystification of malnutrition has been on rise
- Widespread awareness among Korku tribe to preserve their language and culture
- Significant collaboration with W&CD and Health Department.



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