

SPANDAN SAMAJ SEVA SAMITI

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019



ENRICHING MARGINALIZED KOR KU TRIBE

From Director's Desk

SPANDAN continued its forward strides toward its Mission to empower the marginalized Korku tribe community in a manner that they secure their rights and lead a dignified life.

The core focuses of the organization were: Nutrition, Food Security, Behavior Change and Preservation of aboriginal Korku language and culture. Most of the activities were corresponding to these areas.

Community Based Malnutrition Management has been continued with a focus that most of the children recover in a non-facility based care at home itself. The emphasis has been that mothers be educated at home based care of their children, bring about diet diversification, vaccinate the child on time and know the current nutritional status of her child and act accordingly. Our endeavor at reviving Millet and Traditional Crops has been encouraging with more farmers opting for mixed cropping. The Millet Seed Banks have been a great support to farmers by providing Millet seeds. We also had opportunity to participate in various events to demonstrate variety of Korku tribe foods made from local ingredients.

With regard to agriculture, the stress has been on developing neighborhood land and water resources. It was really heartening to see women coming forward to undertake works in their villages. A range of structures have been erected to hold water longer and increase the per hectare yield. In a hunger prone region this is important to reduce the household food crisis, which lingers for most of the poor farmers for at least 2-3 months every year.

The systemic reform in the form of revamping Anganwadi centers has continued. The toys and recreational materials have contributed to make the center genuinely Child friendly and thereby increase the retention time of children and so help them access most of the ICDS services.

Our proactive research and documentation has been crystallized to churn our variety of awareness and community education materials that has contributed to Behavior change and demystification of malnutrition. The anecdote has been a tri-lingual dictionary and Teaching Learning materials developed for the Anganwadi Centers in aboriginal Korku dialect. The citizen partnership was also mobilized with Rotary Club organizing a cloth distribution camp just before Diwali. Similarly our Youth Group –Lakshya has been demonstrating Individual Social Responsibility by working on SDG achievements.

This year we also initiated efforts on Child Rights. Key staff was trained and we participated in forums that are striving to address various Child Rights issue.

Overall we have been inching towards our goal to reduce hunger and malnutrition among the target Korku community and help them access most of the public welfare scheme entitlements.



Seema Prakash

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Community Based Malnutrition Management Program

It is the core program with dual emphasis- to relieve the currently malnourished children and create a Food Secure environment. It upholds that most of the malnourished children can recover in the community in a non-institutional care. Very few children with multiple infections and needing medical attention can be referred to Nutrition Rehab Centers. There has been a general reluctance on part of the family to send the mother and child to NRC leaving behind other children, home and farm.

This year we tracked and followed-up 4135 malnourished children and 1193 pregnant women and 1463 Lactating mothers. 74 children were helped to reach Nutrition Rehab Centers. 1773 women and children were catered through Outpatient clinics and received diagnostic and medicine support.

Our CBMM undertakes early tracking to identify the malnourished children. Regular assessments are held using WHO recommended anthropometry (age, weight and height) to classify the children into moderate or severe malnourishment. The victim children are taken up in the program and followed up with regular home visits, nutritional counselling, assistance to access food and employment scheme entitlements. A due care is also taken to help the kids get immunized. A special focus has been placed so that most of the children access Vitamin A and Deworming, considered being one of the contributing causes of malnutrition.

300 Severely malnourished children have been identified across 30 villages that are provided with a food basket consisting of cereals, peanuts, sesame oil, lentils and so on. The mothers are instructed to feed their malnourished children exclusively.

The families of malnourished children are supported with vegetable seeds to grow Backyard Nutrition Gardens, vertically in a polyurethane sack or in part of land they have in the backyard or in the field. It helps them to diversify their diets with inclusion of vegetables for at least 5-6 months in a year. The vegetable production does not happen much in summer months as the region is reeling under severe water crisis. Only those who have tube wells persist even in summer months. A process has been initiated to collect indigenous seeds so that the whole program can be sustained. Consumption of vegetables helps in absorption of micronutrients.

We had initiated Grain Banks that can be accessed in times of hunger periods. We have 30 grain banks that have been community managed and have been helping poor year after year. Needy family can borrow grains when they need and return as per their convenience but with little added to keep the Bank reach out more needy families.

Anganwadis have been assisted to turn them into genuinely child friendly spaces. Range of materials support has been extended – toys, recreational materials, furniture and teaching learning materials. 50 Anganwadis were supported this year. This year 19 events were organized in Anganwadis to precipitate more participation of mothers and access most of the benefits available.

One important pilot project has been running to manage community crèches. These crèches in the community setting provides day care for children below 03 years and ones belonging to mothers who have none to care when she goes to the fields or wage earn. Nearly 120 children served through these crèches have shown steady weight gain and less prone to sickness and happier of course.

The organization collaborates with the Women & Child Development and Health Departments to reach out children in very remote locations with Vitamin A and Deworming.

The focus on sanitation included helping families construct Sanitary Latrines and teaching handwashing to nearly 4000 Anganwadi and school children.

Proactive grassroots collaboration exists with Anganwadi workers, ASHA and Multipurpose Health worker. They are engaged in periodic experience sharing and planning sessions to reduce malnutrition and diseases in the area.



Conservation of Land & Water resources

Since past couple of years, the water crisis has deepened across the region with most of the water bodies drying out by January. It causes tremendous stress on women and cattle to access water. Hence it was decided to intensify the work of land and water conservation. Two goals were set to increase the retention of water and develop lands for increased yield. The process has been ongoing but this year an extra effort was employed. A range of water conservation structure were made, repaired or renovated. The stone farm fences were erected using idle stones on the fields to treat the degraded land, increase moisture retention time and sow more seeds.

These works have been done on the ideology of mutual help and volunteerism that has been the hallmark of tribal communities. Women showed greater participation and engagement in contributing their *shramdaan* in these works. More than 100 small or medium structures were created or renovated. The voluntary labor contribution was nearly 10 thousand man-days. If it is converted into currency based on existing Minimum Wages, it would be 17, 40,000 INR. 2900 women worked compared to mere 665 men. The wage earners who volunteered were incentivized with a fistful of cereals, pulses and edible oil and clothing support.



Agriculture Pathway

A concerted effort has been directed to revive the Traditional Crops and Millet. In seventies the entire region witnessed an agrarian shift that replaced traditional crops and Millet with cash crop like soybean. Paradoxically they cultivated soybean but it could not become a part of their Food Culture. This also aggravated the Household Food Crisis and most of the marginalized families lacked food for at least 3-4 months. They were forced to buy substandard rice from the market. Some borrowed money or grains from moneylenders or big farmers. This period also coincides with increase in malnutrition and child mortality in *alarming* proportions.

To offset this crisis and restore the nutrition backbone of Korku community , a sustained campaign was run to not only motivate the farmers to revert back to their traditional crops and Millet but also to garner Millet seeds from those who still had them. The process that began with about 2 quintals of Millet has grown significantly. The Millet Seed Banks have been established at strategic locations for willing farmers to access seeds. The Community manages the Seed Banks and a norm has been set to return the seeds after harvest with little added to let the Banks have more seeds and increased outreach. 10,000 farmers have reverted back to growing Millet.

The farmers have been assisted to access the benefits of Agriculture Department and Central Institute of Agriculture Engineering (CIAE) Bhopal. They have provided the implements to ease the farming operations and use of new technology and tools. Korku farmers could also access seeds, manure and equipment from various schemes and subsidies.

A process too has been initiated to promote Sustainable Agricultural Practices and gradually be capacitated to prepare and use organic manures and pesticides. Various interventions are underway.



Women Empowerment

Being a woman led organization there has been an endeavor to engage, involve and empower Korku tribe women. They have shown encouraging caliber at participation in various programs, develop their natural resources and contribute voluntary labor. The leadership traits were also forthcoming in these women with very low literacy rate.

Various Field level programs related to awareness, information inputs, sensitization and skill building have been ongoing. Women participation has outnumbered men in most of the programs.

Women also have been engaged in managing their own SHGs through making small savings. They have been associated with the first women produce company. Named Korku Mahila Kisan Producer Company has been duly registered and will soon begin its operation. The capital is mobilized and they will focus on procuring and trading Millet and Backyard Poultry. The profits will be shared amongst the shareholders. Despite cash crunch of women in this poverty pocket they have been keen to participate in this Company. They have chosen their Board of Directors. Spandan will handhold the Company till they are able to manage it.

Considering the interstate temporary distress migration especially by young girls a series of orientation and discussion have been facilitated at the community level to alert the young girls and their parents on dangers of exploitation and trafficking at destinations. They are helped to get an identity card from the organization duly attested by the Sarpanch. It has important phone numbers of local police station, labor department and Panchayat that they can reach when in trouble away from home.

The focus on Women's Health has been on tracking Pregnant and Lactating mothers and pay greater attention to High Risk mothers. This year 1843 High Risk mothers were monitored and assisted to get their ante-natal checks done. They are also provided Vitamin supplements.



A concerted effort was to help women wage earners too get wage employment under MGNREGA. They were facilitated to demand work, engage in developing job calendars and submitting work proposals in respective

Gram Sabha. 1600 wage earners got employment under MGNREGA. Similarly eligible women were also assisted to access benefits under National Maternity Benefits scheme. A proactive dialogue, deliberation has gone in to help Tribal women learn more about the provisions of Domestic Violence Act and how best they can use it. Gender sensitization has been facilitated alongside.

Women's Day was celebrated and women and adolescent girls from many villages gathered to celebrate the event. Along with experience sharing the issues discussed included gender equality, major points of Domestic Violence Act and dangers of trafficking for adolescents girls especially during migration. The major concurrent problem of water crisis too was discussed and most of the adolescent girls determined to save water wherever they can.

The girls of our youth group Lakshya has met regularly and have continued to gesture their Individual Social Responsibility for selected SDGs.



Clean Air Program

It has been observed that the morbidity pattern among women and children has high rate of Respiratory Infections. The major reason being the use of traditional wood stoves that emit lots of black shoot and consumes large quantity of wood that women toil to gather, walking long distances and carrying headloads. The very structure of Korku tribe's dwelling has no ventilation and the kitchen is within or adjacent to living spaces. We have introduces a zero-cost smokeless stoves that can be easily made by the women and has no cumbersome process. Nearly 1000 famines have switched over to these innovative smokeless stoves and can recount its economic, health and environmental benefits.



Behavior Change Communication

It is an unguided and proactive program component. The thematic areas included – Diet diversification, Antenatal care, Revival of Millet, Demystification of malnutrition, Leadership Development, Scheme Benefits, Menstrual Hygiene, Evoking scientific temper among the Community opinion Leaders and preservation of language. A range of communication materials have been developed in aboriginal Korku dialect to accelerate Behavior Change. A serious effort has gone into helping Community Opinion Leaders especially Bhumka (the tribal priest) and Padiyar (the tribal healer). Still Korku tribe community has more reliance on them than the existing system. Myths too exist on causes of malnutrition. Consequently chants and herbs and elements are used to ward off the anger of deities and evil eye. The program is aimed at helping these key opinion leaders understand the causes and consequences of malnutrition and advise the community accordingly. Many such leaders have been trained and they can now identify malnutrition by observable physical symptoms and use MUAC tapes to know the nutritional status of a child. They are beginning to advise their kinsmen to prefer scientific treatment over chants and rituals that can follow the child's recovery to normalcy. Diet demos have been conducted to help women discover the traditional food items and their nutritional advantages. Various recipes that have been restricted to grandmothers have begun to re-appear. One such example is that of Mahua and we are learning its nutritional benefits and how it has been a key resource to survive in drought situations. The corroborating effort is to gather information on available and accessible food items in the neighborhood. It will help in boosting the production of ones that are declining and revive that have become extinct and ones that can be further increased.

We have promoted the Korku tribe's food and recipes to outside world. We could participate in various food festivals and events. The organization received the First runners up award in a cooking contest held in Mumbai for presenting Korku style chicken curry and Millet Bread.



Preservation of Korku language and Culture

Korku language is one of the 196 endangered languages in India as per UNESCO. The language is restricted to oral traditions and does not have a script. The new words are not coined and there has been no conscious effort on part of the community to facilitate inter-generation transfer of valuable aboriginal knowledge and skills. Korku children have been in dilemma as the mother tongue and mainstream schooling language differs.

We have persisted with proactive research into the oral traditions and collate the available information. The younger generation is being presented with variety of materials containing information on Korku language and culture.

Anecdote has been the development of a range of Teaching Learning materials in aboriginal dialect for preschool education materials for Anganwadi centers. It covers numerals, names of flora and fauna in the neighborhood, words related to biodiversity and so on. It has helped children in language learning age to learn many words and will contribute to language preservation.

This year we have come out with a Word Collection that records hundreds of indigenous words related to life cycle, daily chores, environment and ornaments and their folk songs and folk tales.

Another important production has been a unique calendar of Korku festivals. It has helped many Korku families reiterate the uniqueness of their festivals and customs.

Capacity Building

Various meetings and training were held to build perspectives and skills implied in the core focus of the organization. Women, Mothers, Adolescent girls, Community opinion leaders, Farmers, grassroots health and nutrition workers, SHG groups and Producer Company members and frontline staff were targeted through various capacity building initiatives like – training, workshops, brainstorming, village meetings, planning and review sessions, information inputs were organized. Nearly 2000 people were engaged in this training and capacity building process.

The themes of capacity building initiatives comprised a range- Malnutrition management, Reproductive Health and Hygiene, Adolescent girls' training and orientation on care during migration and safety from trafficking, Leadership and Communication, Diet diversification, Poultry management, management of Producers' Company, Violence against women, MNREGA provisions, FRA and NFSA provisions, Diet diversification and so on.

A special program was implemented to reinforce Digital Democracy. In set of villages a kiosk was set up that taught youth and children to use digital techniques to access information, use social media and even register complaints and grievances online. Many people gained the skill at using the digital platforms and many could access various scheme benefits and get their grievances redressed.

Research and Documentation

We have been engaged in research and documentation of various aspects related to Korku tribe's life and development. This year a major study was conducted on Nutrition and Language of Korku tribe. The study highlighted the problems and challenges and also set a tone for further work and advocacy. A proactive

documentation is being done to present the case of Korku tribe community with three stresses. First they be included in Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Group(PVTG), Millet produced by them are procured at MSP by the government and redistributed through PDS and third Korku language be included in preschool and elementary learning.

We celebrated Annual Korku tribe festival that helped outsiders to learn about the rich folk culture and food. Similarly World Mother Tongue Day was organized to facilitate civic engagement in Language preservation.

Relief Operations

Wherever possible we have been responding to catastrophes. This year fire broke out in a distant village Awaliya –Nagotar. Half a dozen houses were gutted. We conducted a relief operation and could provide- grains, clothing, tarpaulins, suitcases, water sieves, utensils and books and stationary for children.

Similarly a cloth distribution event was held in Bhagpura village prior to Diwali. Entire village could have clothes and other materials so that they could celebrate Diwali happily. It was urban excesses becoming a rural resource.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- The community based malnutrition management program has been helping many children recover at homes in a non-facility based care. This year about 700 children recovered in the community care. The mothers have shown increased participation and grown awareness on better feeding and caring practices and to get the kids immunized. Nearly 1900 High Risk Pregnant mothers too could be reached out with Home visits, counselling and motivation to avail corresponding trimester checks. The community crèches continued to provide day care for children belonging to wage earning mothers and unable to reach Anganwadis. Similarly the food baskets provided to SAM children have proved their efficacy and have helped most of the children grow healthy and happy.
- The initiative of Backyard Nutrition Gardens has been well accepted and has helped most of the beneficiary families (especially ones with malnourished children) have vegetables for at least 4-6 months in a year. This has helped in diet diversification and so helps vulnerable mothers and children access micronutrients; More than 2000 families were provided vegetable seeds and by now nearly 4000 families have diversified diets with vegetables of their own.
- The women participation has been outstanding in contributing their voluntary labor to develop their neighborhood land and water resources. They outdid their men counterparts to develop more than 100 small and medium water and land conservation structures. 10,000 man-days of voluntary labor would have amounted to 1, 70, 00,000 INR as per the stipulated Minimum Wages.
- The revival of Millet has been noteworthy. By now nearly 10,000 families have used a part of their fields to grow Millet and 50% of them have regularly included it in their diets. 15 Millet Seed Banks at strategic locations are managed by the community and has accelerated the revival process.
- There has been positive Behavior Change observable in the community towards malnutrition. Most of the mothers have opted for better feeding and care over chants and rituals and quacks. The tribal community opinion leaders have demonstrated scientific temper. They can identify malnutrition by external physical symptoms and many of them can even use MUAC tapes. They have been critical to demystify malnutrition and even help in convincing the reluctant families take their children to Nutrition Rehab Centers.
- The work on preservation of Korku language & culture has made a further stride. A range of community education material has been churned out of oral traditions' research. Chief among them have been the Korku festival Calendar and Word Collection. The efforts are on to facilitate wider citizen engagement and the World Mother tongue Day organized could increase the engagement. The Annual Korku fest held provided a rare opportunity for urbane to witness the rich culture represented through Korku dance, music and exhibition of their antiquities.
- A range of Teaching Learning Material has been developed for Anganwadis in local dialect. It has helped children learn about their aboriginal life, environment, food and folk culture.

Awards & Recognition

- Runners Up in Meri Paushtik Rasoi , Glenamrk Foundation Mumbai
- Certification by W&CD Khandwa for participation in various events

Stakeholders

In our endeavors we would like to thank following stakeholders, whose participation, contribution and suggestions helped us in inching towards our goal:

- Glenmark Foundation, Mumbai
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation , UK
- CASA New Delhi
- CARITAS India
- Vikas Samvad Bhopal
- UNICEF
- GEF/UNDP/MoE&F/CEE
- GOONJ New Delhi
- Access Livelihood Company Hyderabad
- Korku Tribe Community
- Women & Child Development Department Khandwa
- Madhyanchal Forum MP
- IDOBRO Mumbai
- Intern from Narsee Monjee Management Institute Mumbai
- Lakshya Youth Group , Khandwa
- Rotary Club Khandwa



