



SPANDAN SAMAJ SEVA SAMITI

Enriching lives of Korku tribe



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Stree Shakti - Rani Laxmibai Puruskar

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Spandan Samaj Seva Samiti is a grassroots organization that has been working among the lesser known and nutritionally vulnerable Korku tribe for two decades now. Its core focus is to ensure the Food & Nutrition Security among the marginalized families. Consequently, it has adopted a multisectoral approach to address the household food insecurity and malnutrition. The organization's work has been largely lauded and the founder Seema Prakash received prestigious **Rashtriya Stree Shakti -Rani Laxmibai Purskar** in 2014 for her work with tribal women and children. It also was selected as one of the 50 organization by World Economic Forum for their work during COVID in real remote regions. Niti Ayog also appreciated the COVID relief work.

Its major programs include:

- **COMMUNITY BASED MALNUTRITION MANAGEMENT** that enables most of malnourished children to recover at the community level and thus reduce the burden on Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs), It tries to help children recover at homes in a non-institutional care. A mobile health unit visits villages, do follow up of malnourished kids and pregnant mothers and periodically organize health camps in remote regions.



- **BACKYARD NUTRITION GARDENS** is an initiative that helps most of the mothers of malnourished children, high risk pregnant women and adolescent girls to use their backyard to grow various kinds of seasonal vegetables and include them in their diets. 10-14\ varieties of vegetable seeds are provided and now many families are exhibiting positive deviance in their behavior by increasing the variety of vegetables in their diets. ***Our vision is to see rainbow in every poor's plate.***



- REVIVAL OF CULTURAL CROPS AND MILLETS:** Since seventies a major agrarian shift forced Korku too to divorce their cultural crops and Millets in favor of soybean and wheat. The major Millet like Kodo-Kutki, Sawa, Jowar et al gradually began to disappear. Soybean never became a part of their food culture and most of the wheat is sold to pay off debts and meet other contingencies. Very little is left for consumption and that triggers the household hunger, It is manifested in the fact that 35% of children below six years are stunted¹. It is



universally believed that stunting is the outcome of sustained hunger prevailing in the area. To offset this the organization is running a campaign to bring back cultural crops and Millet in the community, our sustained effort has motivated 1000+ families to use a part of their fields to grow Millet and some places one can find Millet Banks that provides seeds to interested farmers as they are not sold in the market.

- PROMOTION OF ORGANICS:** We have also taken initiatives at promoting increased use of organic manure, pesticides and potion for plant growth. Many families have come forward to adopt the same and they have become models for others to learn. Framers' Field Schools are conducted to facilitate exchange of knowledge and experience and exposure to new innovations.



- BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION:** Its an underlying activity that is focused on demystifying malnutrition among this aboriginal tribal community. Having settled from their hunter-gatherer life to a settled life during late 19th and early 20th century they



¹ According to NFHS V the government official statistics

have their age-old beliefs and rituals and dependence on their traditional priests and quacks who use herbs, chants, rituals and sacrifices as medium to heal various ailments. So, the challenge is how to build a scientific temper and reinforce faith in government health system. We are orienting the traditional; priests and healers to know the causes and consequences of malnutrition, measure malnutrition using MUAC tapes and observe seven apparent physical symptoms to identify a malnourished child and advise proper scientific treatment above rites and rituals. They are also promoting Millets to come back to farms and fields by stating the nutritional advantage they had erstwhile. A range of IEC materials in their local dialect are used to sensitize the community. ***We are trying that this already available and trusted by community is a valuable resource and if assisted properly can bridge the health service gaps to a large extent.***



- NEIGHBORHOOD NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT:** Being a woman led organization, the power of tribal women was discovered early. Though unschooled but being close to nature and resilient enough to face challenges they came forward when the opportunity was given. They could visualize their world in their own village and neighborhood and its responsibility lay on them to conserve it, protect it and replenish it. Its they who had to walk miles to fetch water, take care of home, kids and cattle and often wage earn to make the families end meet. The hard times would force them to seasonally distress migrate. So, lot had to be done. They volunteered to contribute their labor (shram daan) and develop their neighborhood land & water resources. They accomplished 100 of acres of land amendment through constructing land bunds, water conservation through digging new wells, clearing debris o old wells, erecting sandbag and loose boulder check dams, repairing damaged structures and even deepening a part of river near their habitations. Their initiatives became an inspiration for women far and wide and their stories were covered by local and national media. A list of land & water conservation works done is annexed. They were not paid in cash but incentivized through a handful of grains to sustain their motivation.

Over all these years Korku tribe women have exhibited leadership and unity to accomplish things that have become ideal and honor for the district and has motivated many women across.



- CHILD FRIENDLY ANGANWADIS:** We had initiated this long back as we found that children were not keen to stay at center and would come during mealtimes only. We mobilized resources and the citizen sector to donate materials like clothing, toys, seating arrangements and other essential amenities like fans, water containers and so on. GOONJ New Delhi and Glenmark Foundation Mumbai came in a big way to support this initiative and even local citizens have enthusiastically donated woolens and blankets and so on.

Recently as per the government directives we have been assigned 25 Anganwadis in Khalwa and Pandhana blocks to transform them into a genuine child friendly space. Minor repairs and paintings have been done and they are being equipped with toys and games and seating arrangements. **The purpose is to enhance the retention time of children at centers so that most of the ICDS services can be accessed at the center itself.** A range of services and activities have been planned to make these villages malnutrition free.



Another important aspect has been to strengthen the pre-school education component as it is critical to physical and cognitive development of growing up children. Tribal children face a dilemma when they speak their dialect at homes and in school must learn the mainstream language – Hindi in our case. We are working constantly to develop Teaching -Learning materials in Korku dialect and in pictorial forms.

- WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM:** This program has helped women to congregate through various meetings, Self Help Groups and undertaking Nano economic enterprises. To curb migration that has been increasing the women who used to migrate or were migration prone were assisted to set up grocery shops, selling cosmetics and artificial jewelry, vending pani pooris and selling coconut and incense sticks at temples. Most of them have fared well and are able to contribute significantly to their livelihood.

Our recent ambitious program for young tribal girls prone to migration is named – **Karmyogini**. Its unique in the sense it equips selected girls to learn three skills at a time - repairing motor bikes, beauty parlor skills and repair of electrical gadgets. The logic is that the flow of income will come daily from at least one or two works. They received basic training and basic tools and materials to set up their own shops. **Repairing Motorbikes was an idea that we too were not sure would gain currency, but these young girls dared to step into what is considered in male domain alone and have been proving their worth.**

Honorable Minister of Forests visited the training site and promised all help to these young girls in their endeavor.



- COVID RELIEF PROGRAM:** Since the first wave and lockdowns the organization responded to most vulnerable mothers and children through regular Food Baskets to 600 needy families for nearly 8 months. As Anganwadis were shut down and essential commodities could not reach remote places due to supply chain breakdowns, this support was of much help. We also provided a months' ration to families in reverse migration. We also conducted awareness programs on following COVID appropriate behavior, distributed masks and soaps and motivated reluctant families to get vaccinated. At vaccination centers COVID selfie points were installed. We used decorated bullock carts to go to every street with messages of awareness through loudspeakers.



- KORKU LANGUAGE & CULTURE PRESERVATION:** Korku is one of the 196 endangered languages according to UNESCO. It has no script and is limited to oral traditions. We have been making efforts to preserve it by extensive research & documentation and collating it into TLM for Anganwadis and other awareness materials. We have also documented their history and folk and culture extensively and are trying to pass it to next generation. It has generated widespread awareness and many Korku individuals and organizations are engaged in preservation of their language and culture.

FUTURE PLANS

- ✓ Transforming 25 villages to become malnutrition free. It will be a joint effort with government too playing a supportive role.
- ✓ Facilitate the Nutrition sensitive People Learning and Action (NPLA) program that aims at empowering 1800+ Anganwadi workers and supervisors over next 2 years
- ✓ Undertake micro land & water conservation works through peoples' participation
- ✓ Promote Goat rearing and scaling it in such a manner that families have milk, manure and livelihood support and thus address malnutrition at homes and in the community.
- ✓ Strengthen the Women entrepreneurship program so that more young girls find employment and dignity.
- ✓ Conduct micro planning at village level and encourage more women's participation in Gram Sabha and get the plans included in Gram Panchayat Development Plan.

List of Villages where Soil & Water conservation work done

sl	Village	Nature of work
1	Ambada	Top to down land bunding, Deepening of well, sandbag check dam
2	Kotwariya Mal	Land bunding to check soil erosion
3	Kharimal	Sandbag Check dam to conserve water
4	Dabhiya	Land bunding, bag Check dams Sand
5	Khorda	Contour trenches and land bunding
6	Mamadoh	Land bunding
7	Langoti	New Well dug by women, check dam
8	Piplioya Bhawliya	Check dam
9	Dhama	Land bunding and well deepening
10	Buti	Land bunding and well deepening
11	Mozwadi	Well deepening
12	Indrakheda	Land bunding
13	Gadhdiya Kheda	Land bunding
14	Manpura	Well deepening
15	Devli Kalan	Land bunding and well deepening
16	Rehtiya	Well deepening
17	Awaliya Nagotar	Well deepening
18	Barakund	Land bunding and sandbag check dams
19	Bhagpura	Well deepening and river desilting
20	Jamnapur	Land bunding and gully plugs
21	Chimaipur	Soak pits and stone dam
22	Ambapat	Well deepening, chin gully plugs, loose boulder check dams, Vermibed , land bunding

List of Villages Taken up For Malnutrition Free Villages

संस्था - स्पंदन समाज सेवा समिति, खण्डवा

क्र	ब्लॉक	सेक्टर	गाव /केंद्र क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	कुल लागत (रु.)
1	खालवा	पटाजन	डाभिया केंद्र क्र 02	दीवार की नीव एवं सतह की मरम्मद रंगाई पुताई ,चित्र कारी	18,858
2	खालवा	पटाजन	डाभिया केंद्र क्र 03	दीवार की नीव एवं सतह की मरम्मद रंगाई पुताई ,चित्र कारी	11,208
3	खालवा	पटाजन	लगोटी केंद्र क्र 01	दीवार की नीव एवं सतह की मरम्मद रंगाई पुताई ,चित्र कारी	21,308
4	खालवा	पटाजन	लगोटी केंद्र क्र 02	दीवार की नीव एवं सतह की मरम्मद रंगाई पुताई ,चित्र कारी	14,208
5	खालवा	पटाजन	लगोटी केंद्र क्र 03	दीवार की नीव एवं सतह की मरम्मद रंगाई पुताई ,चित्र कारी	14,208
6	खालवा	पटाजन	खोरदा केंद्र क्र 01	दीवार की नीव एवं सतह की मरम्मद रंगाई पुताई ,चित्र कारी	11,208
7	खालवा	पटाजन	दगडकोट क्र 01	1 कालम मरम्मद ,2 दरवाजे, खिड़की, बेलिंडंग कार्य	10,308
8	खालवा	गुलाई	चाकरा केंद्र क्र 02	छत व दीवाल मरम्मद खिड़की ,दिवाल पुताई	11,300
9	खालवा	देवलिकला	मानपुरा केंद्र क्र 01	सतह की मरम्मद रंगाई पुताई ,चित्र कारी	7,400
10	खालवा	रोशनी	खातेगाँव केंद्र क्र 01	छत मरम्मद वाटर फुफिंग ,3 खिड़की ,बेलिंडंग कार्य,रंगाई पुताई	23,680
11	खालवा	गुलाई	सुहागी केंद्र क्र 01	2 खिड़की बेलिंडंग व कार्य, रंगाई पुताई	9,570
12	खालवा	रोशनी	बाराकुंड केंद्र क्र 01	जमीन का समतलिकरण ,	11,800
13	खालवा	देवलिकला	इन्द्राखेडा	प्लास्टर ,रंगाई पुताई	26146

14	खालवा	खालवा	मैदारानी	रंगाई पुताई	5242
15	खालवा	खालवा	मानपुरा केंद्र क्र 02	रंगाई पुताई	5242
16	पंधाना	खालवा	जगतपुरा केंद्र क्र 01	वाश वेसिन ,पेढिया ,सीलिंग मरम्मद ,पुताई	7235
17	खालवा	गुलाई	सुहागी केंद्र क्र 01	रंगाई पुताई	5400
18	पंधाना	दीवाल	भुल्याखेडी केंद्र क्र 01	कारपेट ,लेटबाथ का दरवाजा रिपेयर ,दीवार कार्य मरम्मद प्लास्टर ,सीडी एवं रंगाई पुताई	9000
19	खालवा	रोशनी	चबूतरा	छत व दीवाल मरम्मद खिड़की दरवाजा वेल्लिंग	13900
20	खालवा	रोशनी	चट्टू बट्टू	न्यू की दिवार मरम्मद ,प्लास्टर ,रंगाई पुताई	12160
21	खालवा	सेधवाल	सोनपुरा	रंगाई पुताई	3070
22	खालवा	देवलिकला	सेदाबाद	रंगाई पुताई	9254
23	खालवा	सेधवाल	गुलरढाना	दीवाल मरम्मद ,रंगाई पुताई	5242
24	खालवा	खालवा	मोजवादी	दीवाल मरम्मद ,रंगाई पुताई	15304
25	खालवा	सेधवाल	रहटिया	छत मरम्मद कार्य	9800
26	खालवा	खालवा	उदियापुर रैयत	रंगाई पुताई	5242
	कुल				2,97,293