



Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh

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2020-2021 SAS Summary Report

Brief background of SAS

Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh, a non-profit organization registered under the Karnataka Societies' Registration works for the integral development of the socio-economically disadvantaged irrespective of their religious, caste and political affiliations. Its area of operation presently consists of Belagavi and other Districts of North Karnataka and Kolhapur District of Maharashtra. Since the last 43 years the SAS has been implementing a number of initiatives for Integral Rural Development with highly satisfactory outcome.

Integrated Rural Development supported by Action Solidarité Tiers Monde (ASTM Luxembourg): The target group of this project is women and rural households. They are victims of illiteracy, general socio-economic backwardness, inadequate and inefficient finances and job opportunities. The two components of the project - *Women Empowerment* and *Functional Vocational Training* are for enhancing their capabilities and income generating skills.

Action 1: Empowerment through Self Help Group Movement and Related Activities

SHG is a holistic program covering many aspects of self-employment and organization of the rural poor into small groups for their capacity building. SHG is self-governed, peer controlled, informal group of people having a desire to collectively work for their betterment. The core values of the group are self-reliance, and concern for social justice, and mutual help. SHG responds to the social, economic, psychological needs of its members. Organization and empowerment of rural women speed up the process of socio-economic development. As an isolated individual, a woman is powerless. However, by coming together as a group, they initiate and take forward the process of societal transformation.

SAS successfully formed and animated SHGs distributed mostly across Belagavi, Khanapur, Gokak, Bailhongal, Ramdurg and Hukkeri and Chandgad and Gadhinglaj revenue blocks. Direct beneficiaries of accompaniment of old and new SHGs and formation of SHG federations were 928 SHGs with 14759 members as on 31-12-2020. Indirect beneficiaries were 14759 members*4 family members = 59036 persons and the general public across 8 revenue blocks. SHG responds to the social, economic, psychological needs of its members. The SHG movement has made a lasting impression on the lives of men/women associated with SAS. It inculcated among SHG members the habit of saving and banking. The group members took loans to meet unexpected expenses and for income generation activities. All SHG members have personal saving bank accounts and receive amounts from the government's poverty alleviation schemes directly into their bank accounts. Most of the women had never interacted with a bank before they joined SAS's SHG movement. SHG also contributed to their personal and social development. They came forward to learn new skills. SAS staff monitored every month 928 SHGs with 14759 members. They conducted during the year 8817 group meetings with the participation 111265 persons.

SAS conducted Capacity Building Meetings across 23 days with the participation of 2120 members of 166 SHGs from 46 Villages. Its target for 2020-21 could not be reached due to Covid-19 lockdown and *Gram Panchayat* elections in the month of December 2020. Due to Covid-19 restrictions SAS had to conduct programs with fewer participants. In the capacity building training SAS helped participants to understand socio-economic issues affecting them and also issues of human rights.

SAS conducted 5 training for 187 old SHG leaders from 84 SHGs. Number trained was less due to Covid-19 restrictions. Leaders got motivated to contest GP election; shared their difficulties and ways to resolve them; shared how the SHGs helped them to avail the government entitlements.

SAS conducted 11 workshops for 659 participants from 105 SHGs of 15 villages on various Government Entitlements. The focus was on right to work under MGNREGA and other poverty alleviation schemes from the government, e.g., National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).

Other statistics of achievements through SHG movement:

Motivated 30991 people to apply for work under MGNREGA and 24561 people from 103 villages got work. They worked for 810,386-man days; received as wages Rs. 285 and Rs.10 as rent for their implements per day. They earned Rs. 239,063,870/- under MGNREGA. SAS also helped 3,278 people to get job cards. SAS encouraged SHGs to participate in NRLM activities and assisted them to do the required documentation. 125 SHGs from 16 villages applied and 51 SHGs received Rs. 15,000/- each as revolving fund (total Rs. 765,000/-). SHG members were made aware of other schemes like old age pension, widow pension, and schemes for housing, and SC/ST, and for physically and mentally challenged/differentially enabled.

Para Legal training: Due to Covid-19 lockdown and related restrictions, SAS managed to conduct only 3 trainings and cover 220 women from 25 SHGs. The training included lecture, group discussion and question-answer session. The participants went home better prepared to respond to injustice meted out to them.

Training in women's rights: Formed and animated 55 new SHGs with 799 members and conducted training for 466 members from 43 SHGs in 17 trainings. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, SAS could not reach the target. Topics were Introduction to SAS, SHG Concept; the women were made aware of their rights and responsibilities in the family, village, *Gram Panchayat* and society at large. The training boosted their personality and sense of dignity and wellbeing.

SAS also helped SHG women to form village, panchayat, taluk and district level federations. SAS conducted across 34 days meetings of Village Level Federations with 1787 participants from 243 SHGs and 26 villages. SAS conducted meetings, across 10 days, for Gram Panchayat Level Federation with 468 participants from 130 SHGs and 15 Panchayat. The training session helped them to avail Govt. schemes and also to share such information with others.

SHG Federations at Village, Gram Panchayat, Taluka and District levels functioned well. Besides accessing government schemes and entitlements, 78 women from the SHGs contested GP elections. 7 of them withdraw their names just before the elections and finally 71 contested the elections. 38 of them won the elections. The winning or losing was not important for SAS, but what mattered was 78 women were confident and felt that they were ready to compete on an equal footing with men. It also witnessed to the effectiveness of SAS's SHG movement.

Action 2: Functional Vocational Training:

Functional Vocational Training aimed at the overall development of adolescent rural girls with emphasis on enhancing their personal growth and income-generating capacity. The program helped them to pick up life coping skills and prepared them to face their future with courage, self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. SAS did that by training them in garment-making skills. The training incorporated value education, sex and family life education and other life coping skills. Through a process of animation and awareness building, both the teachers and the learners were sensitized about gender discrimination.

SAS had 62 FVT Centers, 65 guides and 677 students. SAS made extra effort to train the poor from the lower strata of society. 51.25% of the trainees belonged to SC, ST and OBC category.

SAS conducted 13 days training for FVT guides during the project year 2020. The topics covered: personality and skill development. SAS trained FVT guides with life coping skills and skills to tackle issues that affected young girls. SAS worked out a month by month syllabus for the FVT centers and trained the guides to handle the syllabus.

During October and November SAS provided training on the laws and rights related to girls/women. SAS managed to conduct training across 14 days for 646 students of 64 centres, in spite of Covid-19.

During the months of October and November SAS distributed learning/teaching materials to 677 students of 62 FVT Centers.

SAS held separate annual gatherings for the Kannada and Marathi speaking students. The students shared their experience and put-up cultural programs. The resource persons gave inputs on current issues - CAA, NRC, and NPR. SAS encouraged all the students to come on the stage. For the students, it was their first appearance before a big audience and they did it with finesse and grace. The annual gathering showcased how they transformed themselves into self-confident and well groomed ladies to face their future.

Since last many years Action Solidarité Tiers Monde (ASTM), 55, av de la Liberté, L-1931 Luxembourg, has been SAS's partner for its "Integrated Rural Development Program" which mostly deals with women empowerment through SHG Movement and FVT Centres.

Action 3: Organization Building of Nomadic Shepherd Community

The activity covered 11 Districts of North Karnataka with the help of one social activist and SAS's former Village Level Workers, Self Help Groups of men and women. The movement included shepherd leaders, leaders of shepherds' cooperative societies and leaders of various district central cooperative banks, directors of Shepherds' Cooperative Federation, and members of gram panchayats, officials of Animal Health and Veterinary Services, and functionaries of various other government departments. Organization building has been a continuous process. SAS's VLWs, with the support of members of SHGs and shepherds' cooperatives were able to bring more shepherds into the process. The VLWs showcased various development programs, IGAs and the programs supported by the government of Karnataka, the KSWDC, and the Textile Department for the shepherding community. SAS collaborated with the government institutions, commercial banks and community leaders and gram panchayat to achieve its objectives.

Strengthening and Consolidating the Organisation Building Process: During the year the social activist visited Belagavi, Gadag and Haveri District to strengthen SHG, community leaders and cooperative leaders. Two each new women shgs were formed at Sidnal, Turnoor, Toranagatti with the membership of 68; similarly new men shgs were formed at Arebhenchi, Inamahongal, Kurubarhattis with 65 members.

The activist contacted the shg members, NK shg federation and cooperative leaders, community leaders and former VLW Mr. Ramesh and visited the villages; Conducted meeting and motivated people and formed new SHGs. Many of the SHGs applied for bank loans for their IGAs, participated in gram panchayat election, developed their skills to deal with authorities, e.g., banks, government officials; grew in group solidarity, became aware of gender equity and the need for children's education.

Formation of two cooperative societies at Budihal of Raibag taluka was under process - Aranya Siddeshwar and Bhrahmalingeswar at Galataga of Chikkodi taluka Mr. Maruti Patil and Mr. Amar Hegde are the chief promoters of the new societies. But due to government norms they did not succeed. The Deputy Registrar of Coop Socs and KSWDC refused to register them by saying that there already existed cooperative societies.

SAS conducted 4 district level networking at 4 different places with the support of 210 men and 10 women members from SHGs and cooperatives.

SAS organized two central level networking sessions with Minister of Animal Husbandry and President of Karnataka Sheep and wool Development Corporation with the help of 22 men and 15 women at Gadag and Shiggav.

SAS conducted 5 local shepherds' trainings at 5 different places for 107 members. As the out come shepherds understood the strength of organization building and process of the gram panchayat election, importance of self-help group and its benefits. They availed the scheme of Kisan Credit Card loan. They availed loan from District Central Cooperative Bank, Belagavi – loans of Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 5 lakhs for their Income Generation Activities through self help groups.

SAS conducted 4 SHG level trainings at 4 different places for 98 leaders with the help of 7 Resource persons.

SAS conducted 3 Shepherds cooperative leaders' training at 3 different places for 108 leaders with the help of 6 resource persons. The training strengthened the shepherd cooperative leaders to develop their society.

SAS staff visited 13 times sheep markets at 9 different places. The market is an ongoing process. The price of ruminants goes high during the festival season. The shepherds do not have formal education, but they manage well the marketing of sheep and goat. SAS's intervention to promote live-weight marketing was of some help in sharpening the shepherds' marketing acumen.

The Activist met the project director (Joseph Chenakala) every month for guidance and for reporting on the project implementation and planning and course correction as needed. Due to that he understood what field activities, meetings and trainings needed to be conducted as per the project objectives and implemented all the programs successfully.

Income Generation Activities: The Activist Mr. Sanjay Upari visited Halasiddappa Parasannavar, Vittal Tadasnur, Laxman Parasannava of Khagaov, Somling Vaddagavi of Dundanatti Basappa Biranavar and Halsidappa Biranavar of Midaknatti and Halappa Goudappgol of Benchanmardi and empowered the shepherds to segregate wool while shearing to get better prices.

The Activist shared with youth of shepherding community that in order to get extra income they could try seed ram production. Shrishail Hugar of Kesari Yuvshakti men shg at Inamahongal and Mallikrjun men shg of Kurubagatti and others made the effort and earned profit.

Fattening of weaned lamb by shepherds' shgs for enhancing income is an ongoing process. The members of shgs fattened the weaned lambs regularly and sold them for better price. Shg members of Umrani, Karoshi, Jodkurli, Hosur, Sidnal, Salapur, Sattigeri, Surebhan, Ramdurg fattened and sold lambs during the reporting period with good profit.

SHGs of Salapur, Salahalli, Chandrgi, Itnal, Tegyal, Jeevapur, Hosur, Umrani, and others continuously bred goats for income generation. Some of them sold them directly to the breeders in the village and some in the nearest market like Nippani, Sankeshwar and Yargatti. Usually shg women bred one or two goats by purchasing kids from a local shepherd or in the market with Rs.4000 to Rs.5000; they bred it with fodder, feed concentrate and timely de worming and medical care; then sold them after 4-5 month with great profit. They had extra goat milk for their own consumption.

The Activist motivated the shg women who had agricultural land and plenty of fodder for dairy farming and buffalo breeding. They maintained well their existing animals. The members did not need to invest again and again. Once they bought a cow or buffalo it remained productive for many years. The milk was sold directly to the consumer or to milk cooperative society in the village after meeting their needs.

Hemaraddy Mallamma SHG of Ramdurg, Saraswati shg, Mahalaxmi shg, and Karemadevi shg of Mullur, Banashankari SHG of Madamkeri, Gouri Ganesh shg of Chunchanur, Kaveri shg of Jeevapur, Vaibhavlaxmi shg of Torangatti took loan of Rs. 5 lakh each from DCC bank of Yaragatti, Ramdurg branches for dairy farming. Women earned extra income. They utilized it for home appliances, household expenses, children's education and healthcare and repayment of loan.

Other Contributions due to this activity:

- KSWDC distributed 300 kits of tent, mat and solar lamp.
- Strongly worded memorandum was submitted to Chief Minister, Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Ministry of Cooperative by persons other than those from SAS's target group, from the district of Bidar and Chikkaballapur; they too put pressure on the authorities to restart the ex-gratia compensation scheme for death of sheep/goat of Rs. 5000 each and for the death of lamb/kid Rs.2500.
- Meat on wheels vehicles were released by KSWDC for sale of mutton and allied food through shepherds' cooperative society.
- Ramdurga MLA Mr. Mahadev Yadwad raised the issue during state assembly session at Bengaluru regarding vacant posts of veterinary doctors.
- The Lead Bank Manager Mr Rahul Injumuri insisted that the local banking officers should give loan to the shepherd community under Kisan Credit Card.

- Ministry on Animal Husbandry launched a help line number 1962 for the shepherds.
- Rs. 5 lakhs each was made available to the heirs, by Bailhongal Shepherd Cooperative Society, of 3 shepherds who died due to lightening and one migratory shepherd who committed suicide near Neginhal after the death of his 35 sheep due to the flood. The shepherd cooperative leaders took initiatives and brought the *Tahasildar* to the spot and requested him to sanction compensation, which he did.
- At Sulaga, 15 sheep belonging to 3 shepherds died but government did not give them any compensation; our shepherd leader Baganna Narote brought it to the notice to local MLA Mrs. Laxmi Hebbalkar and she visited the village and gave Rs. 5000 per sheep each from her MLA fund.

Summarized appraisal and self-assessment: The one man army (Social Activist of SAS) is optimistic about the positive response from the shgs, regional federations, NK federation and the shepherd cooperatives. It is only because of their interest and involvement that SAS carries forward the empowerment and developmental initiatives of earlier days. The strong leadership from the community, that SAS nurtures, and the good rapport that SAS/Shepherds maintain with the government departments and officials, are the corner stone of the movement. The government of Karnataka still responds to the needs and aspirations of the shepherding community. The various programs and projects under taken for poverty alleviation by the government and SAS are showing its result in the form of higher income generation, better finances and services from the banks and the department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services. Since last many years this activity has been supported by Andheri-Hilfe e. v Mackestrassen 53, 53119, Bonn, Germany.

Action 4: Biogas Plants cum Toilet units

Location of the Project: Belagavi, Khanapur, Bailhongal and Hukkeri Revenue Blocks of Belagavi District. The project contributes to: Improving the livelihoods of poor rural households in Belagavi district in a sustainable way; Increasing gender equality; Safeguarding the environment through the protection of forests and the reduction of greenhouse gases through conversion of cow dung and human excrements to biogas, and Improving the soil fertility through the use of high quality biogas manure.

SAS constructed and commissioned 567 Biogas Plant cum Toilet Units in 2020 for 567 households. All of them now cook on biogas and use toilets. They know how the unit works. Ritual barriers in cooking on biogas were overcome through education/awareness. The households experienced that the biogas intervention reduced indoor air pollution caused by smoke and soot from the use of traditional ovens. Besides, the time spent on gathering fuel wood and cooking is greatly reduced. The hygiene in the kitchen, house and surroundings improved; women and children and other family members enjoyed better health; all were very happy to have their own toilet; they used it and kept it clean. 567 households cover at least 80% of their energy needs for cooking with biogas and in doing so save 1752 kg of firewood households/per year. Deforestation, degradation and conversion of forest land for agriculture and settlement put tremendous pressure on forest. Thousands of tons of firewood are consumed for cooking and heating purposes. Biogas proved to be a viable alternative source of energy for cooking. The beneficiary households use biogas manure on their fields and save costs for chemical fertilizer and supply healthy agricultural products.

The households feel that biogas cum toilet unit improved their standard of living and enabled them to live with dignity. Women enjoyed the badly needed privacy and felt liberated from the curse of open defecation. Biogas is most valued for its time saving work efficiency. Most women expressed great satisfaction, particularly with the cooking aspects of biogas, indicating that biogas is quicker, easier and safer for cooking than firewood and it provided the additional benefit of a hygienic toilet. A large number of beneficiaries became aware of the role of biogas in the conservation of environment. Many of them pointed out the improvement of family health as a significant benefit. They backed that up by stating that biogas was smokeless and did not require constant attention or blowing to keep the fire burning. Some pointed out that introduction of biogas resulted in behavior changes of the individuals regarding general cleanliness in the residence, improvement in the toilet habits which ultimately minimized family health problems, and health related expenses. Many women stated that there have been positive changes on family relations after the adoption of biogas. Males in the households corroborated it by saying that many men and elderly women started assisting in the kitchen because of the ease in cooking on biogas. That was a great help for women and girls and that also improved relation and team work in terms of gender division of labor at household level. Since last 10 years this activity has been supported by Andheri-Hilfe e. v Mackestrassen 53, 53119, Bonn, Germany.

Action 5: Enhance Educational and Health Status of Women and Children of Belagavi District

The project "Enhance Educational and Health Status of Women and Children of Belagavi District", financed by INTERSOL, Kreuzstrasse 9, 5020 Salzburg, Austria of SAS is implemented by Dr. Sr. Sindhu Mathew, Medical Officer, Cardinal Gracias Hospital, as a collaborative venture of Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh, Cardinal Gracias Hospital and the Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo. And it brings hope and confidence and zest for living into the lives of many in the project area. In spite of the 2nd wave of Covid-19 the training of the Health Assistants and other project activities continued uninterrupted. The Pandemic really jolted us out of our comfort zones almost forcing us to care for the Covid-19 patients. Initially we were confused. But we realized that change always starts with confusion. Soon, we could come to the aid of quite a good number of Covid patients.

At the same time we realized our responsibilities towards the young school dropout girls who were being trained as health assistants. The second batch of health assistants' course 2020-21 has now 14 students. Out of the initial 16, two discontinued after the four months. All the girls are from poor background either of single parents, or of alcoholic parents and school dropouts. Many of them are highly ambitious, wanting to achieve something in their life. But their family background and the financial situation do not permit them to pursue their studies. Initially they were home sick due their new environment. But classes, games and other activities made them, feel at home and adjust to the new life.

Some of them were deeply wounded, not able to let go of the wounds of shame, un-forgiveness, hatred and mistrust inflicted upon them by their families of origin (places where they expected to feel safe). But now in this new place they find a peaceful haven with all the facilities to learn the necessary skills to be health assistants.

Here these students are helped to recognize their gifts and talents, to nurture and develop them. After a short orientation program, they are given theory classes for first four months in the following subjects: Basic nursing skills, Activities of daily living; Simple anatomy and physiology; Nutrition and hygiene; Pharmacology and laboratory tests; Reproductive system - obstetrics and gynecology; Orientation in the labor room and Operation Theater; Simple disease conditions and their management; Classes on Covid-19 - Prevention and Precautions; English Classes; and Value education classes. Along with these subjects they were thought to manage their hostel kitchen, marketing, gardening and cleaning along with their seniors and supervisors. They were also given demonstration classes and practical knowledge before being posted in to the clinical wards of the hospital. The girls are taught health and hygiene with the emphasis that we cannot give to others what we don't have within ourselves. They are trained to provide health and hygiene education to the patients and attenders and thereby training them to be good community health workers.

With the finances provided by INTERSOL we are able to reach out to a good number of patients who otherwise could not afford to undergo the required laboratory tests and the much needed treatment. From our patients' record, we have a case history of one patient Bharmappa aged 58 years from a far off village who had a small wound on his testicles which he neglected due to financial constraints. When it became unbearable, he approached a village doctor who treated him with some indigenous medicines. After 10 days of all these incidents, by the time he reached our hospital, he was in a bad shape. There were about 60 big maggots (worms) in his wound and the skin around the testis decomposed. We cleaned the wound twice a day. He started improving gradually. We have done a skin graft for him and he is healed remarkably. There is such a great joy and relief on his face. Another story is of the little boy who also is from a poor family with accidental burns on the chest and back. The project played a great role to provide the necessary medicines and the laboratory tests for the Covid Patients during the second wave. 1st half of 2021, due to this project 448 patients received free lab tests; 519 received free medicines and 48 Covid-19 patients received help.

Action 6: Educational Assistance

The initiative, started in 2004, has completed 17 years. During that period SAS helped 319 students with their professional studies, brought joy and gave wings to the dreams of the students and to their families. SAS gave gratuitous educational assistance to many students to meet the expenses of their education and professional courses. During the 2020-2021 financial year SAS spent the sum of Rs 1,229,072/- and it

received the sum of Rs. 6,63,899/- as contribution from the students who were helped earlier. It is heartening to see the youngsters after their studies handling responsible jobs and taking care of their families. Many have made the best of their studies and took up jobs in different parts of India, while a few braved the odds and went abroad.

Action 7: Xavier Farm

Xavier Farm Machhe engages in ecological agriculture, horticulture and dairy management. The day-to-day care of the farm is entrusted to three husband and wife pairs. The farm nurtures many varieties of trees; cultivates sugar cane, maize, potatoes and sweet potatoes, fodder grass and a variety of vegetables. There are also mango, jackfruit, coconut, banana, papaya and medicinal plants. The fruits are ripened naturally without the use of chemicals. SAS's Farm Project provides shelter and perennial livelihoods for three households and wage labour for persons from the neighbouring villages. The farm supplies fresh milk to a number of institutions and households at reasonable rates. The cow dung serves as feedstock for the biogas plants, which supply biogas for cooking to all the families that reside in the farm and rich biogas manure for farming activities. The farm has been the venue for various meetings, training, exposure and outings for schoolchildren and families from Belagavi. SAS uses the facilities in the farm for conducting training for the participants/beneficiaries of SAS initiatives in the area of Women Empowerment, Functional Vocational Training, Organization Building of Nomadic Pastoralists, and Alternate Energy and Organic Farming. The Farm also facilitates the field visits of students of Masters in Social Work, representatives of NGOs and funding partners who come to SAS for a lived-in exposure cum experience in the field of Integral Rural Development.

Conclusion

As SAS presents its short report for 2020-2021, it deeply appreciates its funding partners, Goa Jesuits and the Catholic Diocese of Belagavi for their generous support to SAS over the past many years. It's also grateful to the government machinery and its functionaries at various levels. The unstinted loyalty, hard work and dedication of our office and field staff, continue to be our strength at all times. May God bless them all, our partners, friends, benefactors, and well-wishers!



Joseph Kurian Chenakala
For S A Sangh (Secretary)

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