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2021-2022 SAS Summary Annual Report

Background of SAS

Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh (SAS) locally known as Jana Jagaran (JJ) is a registered Society under the Karnataka Societies' Registration Act. It is a voluntary, non-profit organization working for the integral development of the socio-economically disadvantaged sections of society. Its area of operation presently consists of Belagavi and Kolhapur District of Maharashtra. It works for the rights of people to sufficient and nutritious food, good health, education, employment and a dwelling place in a clean and healthy environment with opportunity to participate in the decision making process that affects their lives. Hence its development strategy is to use the available resources for the empowerment of the common masses of people and to bring about lasting improvements in the economic, social, cultural and environmental spheres. It works with all people of good will irrespective of their religious, caste and political affiliations. All its initiatives are for creating the conditions necessary for strengthening the village communities and enabling the rural population to live in a clean and healthy environment. Its strategy is awakening and empowering the poor to assert their rights and gain confidence and power to take control of their lives.

It believes that at the heart of 'sustainable development' is the 'human' development, involving investment of resources and time, harnessing the energies and aspirations of the people and developing in them skills and capabilities in order to develop themselves and contribute to the wider community. To achieve that SAS provides the overarching inspiration, guidance and vitality and initiates field activities. Since the last 44 years SAS has been implementing a number of initiatives for Integral Rural Development with highly satisfactory outcome.

Action 1: Integrated Rural Development [supported by Action Solidarite Tiers Mondes (ASTM) Luxembourg]

Activity 1.1: Capacity building of SAS staff: The SAS staff met once a month in order to re-charge themselves and enhance their capacity to accompany the target population, to report on the previous month's activities, to plan for the month ahead and to modify the activities as per the convenience of the target groups. The project staff took extra care to look into all the festivals and schedule the activities on dates most convenient for the target groups. Staff also celebrated the annual family get-together on 30th December 2022.

Activity 1.2: SHG Monthly Meetings: SAS staff accompanied 976 SHGs through 9724 meetings with the participation of 122601 persons during the period under report. SAS staff guided them with their savings, loans, Income Generating Activities and accounts and bookkeeping.

Activity 1.3: Capacity building training for SHGs: SAS conducted Capacity Building training across 24 days with the participation of 2,382 members of 196 SHGs from 66 Villages. These training laid stress on **Issues affecting women:** Importance of organization, gender justice and social and gender equity, equal opportunity, importance of peace, tolerance and social harmony, prevention of child marriage, dowry system, gender discrimination, violence against women, female feticide, human trafficking and provisions under POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences). **Economic freedom through SHG:** Savings, loans, effective use of loan amount, self-reliance, freedom from moneylenders, linkages with banks and other government institutions. **Awareness on Covid-19:** SAS gave the awareness on Covid-19, SoP and the Covid-19 vaccines at all the meetings since the outbreak of the Pandemic. **Cleanliness drive in the villages:** Importance of a clean village, need for good water supply and drainage system and segregation of garbage and ‘no’ to open defecation. The SHG women and the general public were made aware of their rights and the government entitlements for poverty alleviation and improvement of their situation and their village infrastructures.

Activity 1.4: SHG leaders training: SAS staff conducted 6 training for 178 old SHG leaders from 88 SHGs during the project year. Some meetings were rescheduled and others got cancelled due to excess untimely rains. In the meeting the leaders shared the difficulties they faced in their groups and worked on possible solutions. SAS staff encouraged the leaders to carry on the work with joy and greater commitment.

Activity 1.5: Training on Government Entitlements: SAS conducted 22 workshops for 1,794 participants from 226 SHGs of 53 villages on various Government Entitlements. Due to Covid-19 lockdowns and related controls and restrictions many people lost jobs and many SHG members began to take up works under MGNREGA. SAS motivated in the project year 23,385 people from 105 villages to apply for work under MGNREGA and 19,559 people (men & women) got work. They worked for 12,90,270 man days received as wages Rs. 285/- and Rs.10/- as rent for their implements per day. SAS guided SHG members and others earned the sum of Rs. 38,06,29,650/- as wages for work under MGNREGA. SAS also helped 4,956 people to get new job cards and 3,334 persons to get labor cards.

NRLM (National Rural Livelihood Mission): SAS encouraged SHGs to participate in NRLM activities and gave them assistance to prepare the required documents and submit applications. 380 SHGs from 53 villages applied for NRLM scheme and 122 SHGs received revolving fund the sum of either Rs.75,000/- or Rs.1,50,000/-. In many Gram Panchayats, the amount had been credited to the GP account but it was yet to be disbursed to the individual SHGs.

Activity 1.6: Para Legal training for local grassroots leaders: SAS conducted 5 Para Legal training and for 424 women from 82 SHGs. Those meetings were conducted in the

village set up and many others from the village participated and gained knowledge on the given topics.

Activity 1.7: Training in women's rights/empowerment for new SHG members: SAS formed and animated 48 new SHGs with 675 members in the project year 2021. SAS conducted 5 training from April to November 2021 with the participation of 369 members from 31 SHGs. The training covered the following topics: introduction to SHG, its aims and objectives, rules, regulations, expectations; introduction of SAS to new members; role of SHG women in the SHG and in the village and *Gram Panchayat*; human rights and economic freedom through SHG savings. The participants were made aware of their rights and responsibilities in the family, village, *Gram Panchayat* and society at large. The training boosted their personality and gave them a sense of dignity and wellbeing.

Activity 1.8: Advocacy and Mobilization: The SAS conducted training programs at Village, Gram Panchayat, Taluka and District levels for federations. The training provided information on recent Farm Laws and the Farmers Protest; inputs on prevention Covid-19, the importance of vaccination, the Indian Constitution and the responsibilities of Indian Citizens. SAS conducted meetings of **Village Level Federations** across 22 days with 1157 participants from 142 SHGs and 31 villages. SAS organized meetings across 16 days for **Gram Panchayat Level Federation** with 873 participants from 198 SHGs of 21 *Gram Panchayats*. SAS organized 8 meetings for **Taluka Level Federation** Members with 249 participants who represented 144 SHGs from 135 villages. SAS facilitated at the **District Level Federation** 2 trainings with 63 participants from 50 SHGs.

Activity 1.9: Training of FVT Trainers and Trainees: In April 2021, SAS successfully completed Functional Vocational Training for 677 trainees. Their training had started in September 2020. Over the months, they were trained in garment making skills and life coping skills. SAS planned the FVT Annual Gatherings separately for the Kannada and Marathi speaking students across 4 days. Besides the usual cultural activities, they got inputs on Human Rights, the Indian Constitution, etc. The FVT trainees happily came on the stage and exhibited their talents. The annual gathering showcased how the shy and timid girls who entered the FVT centers in Sept 2020 transformed themselves into self-confident, bold and well-groomed ladies to face the future challenges of life with hope and confidence.

Training on women's rights/Empowerment for students: SAS started the FVT centers for the Indian Academic Year 2021-2022 officially in August with 694 trainees through 66 centers under the guidance of 64 experienced guides. SAS's stress was on Human Rights and the Indian Constitution, and the Freedoms it enshrined. SAS staff conducted 7 such training for 690 trainees of 66 centers. SAS supplied teaching/learning materials to 694 trainees. Both the trainee and trainers benefitted from the legal awareness program arranged for them by SAS.

Activity 1.10: Formation/animation of new SHGs and Training in financial management: During the project year 2021, SAS formed and animated 48 new SHGs and trained 131 SHG members in accounting and financial management. The training was spread across 3 days. In the training, the participants learnt about SHG accounting and book-keeping

methods. They were happy that SAS had customized the accounts and the book-keeping methods to suit their specific situation.

Action 2: Biogas Plants cum Toilet Units [supported by BMZ/Andheri-Hilfe e. v Mackestrasse 53, 53119, Bonn, Germany]

This project aimed at Reduction of greenhouse gases, protection of forests and enhancement of the livelihoods of poor rural households, especially women, through household biogas plant cum toilet units in Belagavi District, Karnataka. SAS's rural development work aims to improve the living conditions of people in the villages in a sustainable way and prevent migration to the cities. People need to be empowered to manage the development process themselves and to achieve structural changes in socio-economic and political spheres. SAS constructed 556 Biogas plant cum toilet units across four blocks of Belagavi district under the BMZ Project in the year 2021. Besides the units built under the BMZ Project SAS constructed dozens of biogas plant cum toilet units for poor households with its own funds.

Table showing units built under BMZ						
TALUKA	VILLAGES	UNITS	CATEGORY			SIZE
			SC	ST	OTHERS	2cm
BHL	10	27	0	1	26	27
HUK	19	106	1	25	80	106
KNP	96	316	3	6	307	316
BGM	37	107	1	7	99	107
TOTAL	162	556	5	39	512	556

The project beneficiaries were the poor rural households. The beneficiary households enjoyed multiple benefits from the unit. SAS's success in changing the mindsets and motivating and accompanying the beneficiaries in such large numbers was overwhelmingly impressive. They not only accepted the innovative idea and technology but also played very active role to construct their unit and to improve the quality of their lives and to protect 'our home' - the mother earth. They were made aware of the harmful effects of cutting trees for cooking fuel and for the so called 'development'. The project provided them a viable alternative to cooking on firewood.

The biogas cum toilet unit is a great blessing, especially for the women and girl children. All the household members, both the men and the women agreed that cooking on biogas was very comfortable and it took less time. Earlier, there used to be tension and fights in the family regarding collecting and storing of firewood. Women wanted the help of men to collect, to carry and to store fire wood. After the biogas installation men were at peace and relished tasty meals cooked on biogas and even volunteered to prepare some dishes and women were happy that they did not depend on men for everything.

The biogas plant cum toilet unit intervention saved women folk the time and energy spent on collecting firewood. They spent not only spent less time in cooking but also enjoyed cooking. Their kitchens became clean and neat and utensils sparkled. The toilet in the backyard gave

them a sense of freedom and dignity. They had time and privacy for personal hygiene. They no longer waited for the dawn and the dusk for responding to nature calls. They enjoyed better health. They had a deep sigh of relief!

Action 3. Organization Building of Nomadic Shepherds Community in North Karnataka [supported by Andheri-Hilfe e. v Mackestrassse 53, 53119, Bonn, Germany]

This project was spread across some of the districts of North Karnataka - Belagavi, Hukkeri, Gokak, Ramdurg, Bailhongal, Chikkodi, Raibag, Soudatti and others. 2021-2011 was the winding up phase of the project. The staff of SAS with the support of Shepherds, Shepherds' Self Help Groups of Men and Women, Shepherds' SHG Federation Leaders and Leaders of Shepherds' Cooperative Society Federation, and the Leaders of Gram Panchayats coordinated the work among shepherds across Balagavi, Haveri, Gadag and Dharwad Districts and other districts.

The SAS staff received positive response from the SHGs, Regional Federations, NK Federation and the Shepherd Cooperative Societies. It was only because of their interest and involvement that SAS could carry forward the empowerment and developmental initiatives of earlier days. The strong leadership from the community, that SAS nurtured, and the good rapport that SAS/Shepherds maintained with the government departments and officials was the secret for the success of the movement. The government of Karnataka responded well to the needs and aspirations of the shepherding community. The various programs and projects under taken for poverty alleviation by the government and SAS showed result in the form of higher income generation, better finances and services from the banks and the department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services.

Action 4. Enhance Educational and Health Status of Women and Children of Belagavi District [supported by INTERSOL, Kreuzstrasse 9, 5020 Salzburg, Austria]

The project had the following objectives: To enhance the educational and health status and the socio economic status of young rural girls; and provide medicines and laboratory investigations free/at subsidized rates to the patients from poor households. The project is a collaborative venture of Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh and Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo at Cardinal Gracias Hospital, Nirmal Nagar. The 2nd batch of health assistants that started their course on 01 Sept 2020 continued to the end of 2021. It had started with 16 students. Two of them discontinued after the four months of theory classes as they realized that they did not have an aptitude and a heart to be with the sick and the suffering. All the girls were from poor background and school dropouts - either of single parents, or of alcoholic parents. Many of them were ambitious, wanting to achieve something in their life. But their family background and the financial situation did not permit them to pursue their studies. Initially they were home sick due the new environment. But classes, games and other activities made them, feel at home. In spite of the 2nd wave of Covid-19 the training of the Health Assistants and other

project activities continued. The project provided in 2021 free/subsidized medicine for 563 patients and lab test for 703 patients.

The third batch of health assistants' course began on 1 Jan 2022 with 16 students. Out of those two discontinued after 45 days due to personal reasons. The course is of one year duration. The first four months they learn the basics of Anatomy & Physiology of human body, Basics of Pharmacology, Healthy Nutrition, Activities of Daily Living, Common disorders, Basics of Gastro Intestinal System, Reproductive Health, Care of Terminally Sick, Care of Pregnant Mothers and New Born Babies, etc. They also get training in Spoken English. In batches they learn basic computer skill. Presently, they have practical in the various units of the hospital under the supervision of Mrs Bharathi, the Nursing Coordinator and other senior Nurses. These young girls are moving ahead holding their head high, rewriting their history and building their future using the Health Assistants' Course as their stepping stone. The project continues to provide medicines and laboratory tests to many poor patients. The data for of the patients who received medicines and laboratory tests completely free of cost or at subsidized rates will be provided in the 2022-23 report.

Action 5: Vocational Training for under Privileged Rural Women [support to buy equipment by Jesuit Missions, Inc., USA]

The project was implemented as planned. SAS acquired 26 Sewing Machines, Scissors, Stools, etc., and distributed the same to the different villages where under privileged women undergo Functional Vocational Training in Garment Making Skills under the guidance of Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh.

Action 6: Educational Assistance to poor students

The initiative, started in 2004, has completed 18 years. Many poor students have benefited with SAS's educational assistance. The initiative has 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 2021-2022 financial year SAS spent for educational assistance the sum of Rs. 10,24,400/- and it received the sum of Rs. 8,90711/- as contribution from the students who were helped earlier.

Action 7: Xavier Farm Machhe

Xavier Farm Machhe is an experiment in organic farming and self-subsistence in agriculture. The farm grows cash crops, vegetables, fruit trees and spices. The farm also has a dairy which provides unadulterated milk and organic manure. The day-to-day care of the farm is entrusted to three husband and wife pairs. During the year many women from the neighboring villages work in the farm and earn their livelihood and support their families.

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. The biogas plant cum toilet units also provides rich biogas manure for farming activities. The farm has been the venue for various meetings, training, exposure and outings for school children 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 from colleges of 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.

Action 8: Covid Care Unit [supported by Andheri-Hilfe e. v Mackestrasse 53, 53119, Bonn, Germany]

The project is a joint venture of SAS and Cardinal Gracias Hospital (CGH) managed by the sisters of St. Charles Borromeo. People were unprepared for a 2nd wave of covid19. Almost everyone was affected by the second wave in one way or the other. On 9th May 2021 SAS submitted to Andheri-Hilfe a proposal for a “Covid Care Unit”. The proposal was approved by Andheri-Hilfe and the ‘Covid Care Unit’ became functional from May 17, 2021. And it proved to be a tremendous help to many poor persons who were positive for Covid-19. Many villagers visited the Covid Care Unit to get treated. Soon the 10 bedded Covid Care Unit became insufficient due to the increasing number of cases and C G Hospital added 15 more beds. The Covid Care Unit treated 84 in-patients and 424 out-patients. The poor patients received free/highly subsidized medicines and health care. By June-July 2021 the 2nd wave of Covid-19 seemed to have passed. The vaccination program picked up speed all over India. We hoped and prayed that India remained free of Covid-19.

Action 9: Covid-19 Relief and flood relief Measures

Due to Covid-19 Pandemic the whole country went under lockdown mode from 24 March 2020 for a rather long period. After that, on and off lockdown and Covid-19 related restrictions were imposed and that made life difficult for the common people. It badly affected their work and livelihoods. The lockdown was sudden and without any warning. For months people remained confused and directionless. For many their future and survival were in question. During the strict lockdown SAS staff worked from home. They contacted and helped and guided people in their area. Whatever they did for the least of their brothers and sisters were counted as work and that they got their full salary during the 1st and 2nd wave of Covid-19. SAS reached out to many people of Belagavi District of Karnataka and Kolhapur District of Maharashtra across Belagavi, Khanapur, Bailhongal, Hukkeri, Gokak, Ramdurg, Saundatti, Chandgad and Gadinglaj taluks. SAS was in touch with 648 villages and 1409 Self Help Groups. SAS counseled and accompanied a large number of persons in difficulty and helped them to avail of government help. Many were given free masks and sanitization materials. Persons from the shepherd community, handloom weavers, farmers and others

were motivated and assisted to benefit from the government entitlements. SAS reached out to 274 households with food provision and assisted 1950 persons to get work under MGNREGA. SAS contributed the sum of Rs. 20,000/- towards flood relief at Chiplun and spent Rs.90, 552/- towards poverty relief. Though the major threat of Covid-19 seems to have reduced radically, there are people all around who struggle to make the both ends meet. SAS in its own way continues to accompany at least some of them.

Conclusion

All the initiatives of SAS are planned and implemented as part of the Integral Rural Development vision of SAS, viz., community health work; work with the marginalized social groups like the traditional shepherds; reduction of greenhouse gases and protection of forest and enhancing of livelihoods of poor rural households, especially women, through household biogas plant cum toilet, etc. SAS is in constant contact with the rural population. As SAS presents its short report for 2021-2022, 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 its office and field staff continue to be its strength at all times. May God bless them all, our staff, partners, friends, benefactors, and well-wishers!

For SAS, Belagavi, 17 September 2022