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Women Empowerment through SHG Movement in 2014-2015

In 2014-2015 SAS animated and guided 763 Self Help Groups (SHG) among the general population. These 763 SHGs, with 12423 members, are distributed over Belgaum District of Karnataka State and Kolhapur District of Maharashtra State. They are well organized at the group level; and are doing well in their respective group activities like savings and income generation initiatives.

The formation of SHG Federation created a wider platform to address various issues faced by SHGs in particular and women in general. Such a platform proved very useful for assisting the government departments to deliver welfare measures and development programs to the target groups. SHG federation played a vital role in resisting exploitation and in asserting women's rights.

- ✚ 9938 (80%) of the women are involved in income generating activities, e.g., livestock rearing, kitchen garden, horticulture/agriculture, vegetable vending, small businesses.
- ✚ More than 6212 (50%) women in the SHGs put pressure on the authorities to get their rights; 52% of such demands filed with the authorities were realized: e.g. regular water and electricity supply, houses for the homeless, old age pensions, biogas cum toilet units for 1175 rural households and bank loans with subsidy and reduced interest for many shgs.
- ✚ Implementation of MGNREGA – Because of our intervention, many persons who wanted to work under MGNREGA got job cards and work. Outcome – 2733 families put in 210,635 workdays and earned a sum of Rs. 40,231,285/- as wages during the calendar year 2014. They were from 15 villages spread across nine *panchayats* (village councils) of Belgaum District.
- ✚ 80% of 12423 members of 754 SHGs have better self-confidence, better status within their family and society and better economic situation. Their financial transactions were to the tune of Rs. 161,984,794/- at the end of 2014. Our 763 SHGS with 12423 members had a net savings of Rs. 113,269,581/- at the end of 2014.
- ✚ 2987 SHG women participated in capacity building training sessions.
- ✚ Followed up 763 groups on a monthly basis with 8604 meetings and 111061 participants.

- ✚ SAS formed Federations of shgs at Village level, Village Panchayat level, Taluka level and District level.
- ✚ The formation of SHGs and their Federation created a wide platform for 12423 rural women to address issues faced by SHGs in particular and women in general. Such a platform ensured that poverty alleviation schemes of the govt are delivered and the rights of the poor are respected. SHGs & Federation played a vital role in resisting corruption and in asserting people's rights.
- ✚ 652 women from 172 SHGs of 111 Villages attended lectures, exhibitions and visited farmers practising organic farming and compost making.
- ✚ Women were taken to organic farmers in Karnataka and maharashtra. Some of the farmers with who they interacted are Mrs. Vasundara of Pune, Mr. Babu Rao Jairam Korade of Satara, Mr Suresh Desai of Bedkihal, Shankar Hanumanth Langatti of Gudenatti, Mr Sadashivappa Bhosle of Devagiri, Mr. Ramnath Naik of Savgaon and Mr Ganapathi Rama Mahut of Guramatti.
- ✚ 200 SHG women were motivated and supported with a sum of Rs. 600,000/- to adopt organic farming techniques.

Organization Building of Nomadic Shepherd Community

Area of Operation: Twelve districts of North Karnataka divided into three zones with their respective Self Help Groups of Men and Women and the Registered Shepherds' Cooperatives in the project area covered by our Project Staff.

Project staff: Dr. Z. Baig and 11 others

Planned objectives and outcome:-

1. Organised and incorporated 1145 SHG's into federation main stream, strengthened SHG clusters for effective coverage and consolidated and sustained their activities.
2. Strengthened and expanded the three zonal federations and Apex federation of men and women and brought in new leaders into the movement.
3. Revived and revitalised 106 Registered Shepherds' Cooperatives in the project area and assisted in the formation of a federation of registered shepherd cooperatives based at Belgaum.
4. Through the synergy of SHG's zonal and apex federations and the leaders of registered shepherd cooperatives, and the local influential leaders, SAS established a strong platform of

shepherds to promote net working and advocacy at the State level to derive maximum benefit from the Government and allied bodies, and engaged in favourable policy intervention to give shepherding community its rights and enhance its developmental opportunities.

5. Continued to promote income generation activities such as lamb fattening, goat breeding, dairy farming, fodder production and non-traditional income generation avenues and further enhanced the economic empowerment of shepherd SHGs.
6. Trained the leaders of registered shepherd cooperatives and made the cooperative movement more service oriented and self sustaining, e.g., the cooperatives gave various services such as supply of breeding rams, assistance in lamb fattening, goat breeding, dairy farming, supply of de-wormers, facilitating vaccinations, documentation and forwarding of mortality compensation claims to Karnataka Sheep and Wool Development Corporation, supply of feed concentrates, fodder seeds, mineral supplements.
7. Intensified zonal and central networking with Gram Panchayats, Taluka Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats, and the officials of District and State level government bodies, the Karnataka Sheep and Wool Dev. Corporation, NGOs, Banks and other developmental agencies for promotion and development of shepherds' livelihood, and empowered them socio-economically and politically.
8. Intensified the awareness regarding the importance and urgency of bringing legislation for marketing of sheep and goats on live weight in all the sheep markets of Karnataka, among shepherd masses in the migration areas, sheep markets, village shandies, jatras, shepherd cooperatives, the government officials, officials of sheep and wool development corporation
9. Intensified the networking efforts of zonal, apex federations and the shepherds' cooperatives to interact with the Govt agencies at Taluka, District and State Level to support and improve fodder cultivation, service delivery and timely distribution of vaccinations and de-wormers.
10. Networked with State Govt officials: to work out a breeding policy that protects the indigenous breeds of sheep and goat; to plan vaccination and de-worming campaigns during disease outbreaks; to produce of new vaccines for emerging diseases; and to establish diagnostic centres in the migration areas.
11. Promoted extensively training in ethno veterinary practices among the members of SHGs.
12. Updated the data on the registered shepherd cooperatives in the project area, the developmental agencies at Taluka, District and State level, financial institutions, and other govt institutions that are meant to promote the shepherd community's cause.
13. Conducted Capacity Building Training for our staff to better equip them for SHG cluster management, for strengthening zonal and apex federations, to impart skills to train and manage shepherd cooperatives, and organise networking sessions, seminars and symposia.

SAS initiative benefitted 106 Cooperative societies across 9 districts with a membership of 29001 members and Rs. 15616256 share capital and 3218806 ruminants.

SAS project staff formed animated 1145 SHGs of shepherd men and women with the membership of 15986 persons across 12 districts, 49 talukas and 439 villages. While in immediate and direct beneficiaries of the shepherd SHG movement were the 15986 members and on average 7 other persons of his/her family, i.e., 127,888 persons from the community, the indirect beneficiaries of the SHG movement were around 191,832 persons.

Functional Vocational Skills

Functional Vocational Training aims at the overall development of adolescent rural girls with emphasis on enhancing their personal growth and income generating capacity. The program helps them to pick up life coping skills and prepares them to face their future with courage, self confidence and a sense of self worth. We do this by training them in garment making skills. The training incorporates value education, sex and family life education and other life coping skills. It keeps the girls meaningfully engaged for yet another year and automatically postpones their marriage and gives them a golden opportunity to be better prepared for their marriage and the future.

Target group – Rural girls, who are school dropouts, mostly in the age group of 15 to 25 from low socio-economic strata of society.

- 59 teachers trained and employed (4 teachers had 2 batches of students)
- Conducted 63 Centers with 675 students.
- Supplied learning materials for 675 students.
- Organized 10 months training for all the students in garment making skills and personality development.
- Conducted 2*3 days Seminars for 354 (man days) for 59 teachers on personality and leadership development and professional skill (fashion design) development.
- Conducted 9 monthly follow up training for 59 teachers.
- Conducted 43 one day training for students on personal and social empowerment, on health, hygiene, nutrition, marriage and family life, aids and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Community Health

Doctors are needed to help us remain healthy. Can we also take care of our health? To enable the villagers to protect their health, our Community Health Workers (CHWs) played a vital role. Besides ensuring health facilities, the program motivated people to get health services under the National Rural Health Mission of the government.

Direct beneficiaries:

- 45 rural women who were trained and appointed as community health workers and their families.
- Direct and immediate beneficiaries were 21168 persons (10387 male + 10781 female), who approached the CHWs for medicines for common ailments.

Indirect beneficiaries:

- The population of 45 villages (around 55927 persons) who got access to basic health with the help of CHWs/ASHA from the primary health centers and hospitals.

Activities and outcome

- Trained, and monitored the work of 45 Chws across 5 revenue blocks of Belgaum district and provided them with medicines for common ailments.
- The program facilitated immediate treatment of fever, malaria, diarrhea, scabies, cough, cold, wound, eye, ear and other minor/common ailments and referral services.
- Our staff regularly visited the villages for training and logistic support to the Chws.
- Helped the villagers to access government facilities.
- Conducted health awareness programs in the villages.
- Created health awareness in the general population, motivated and organized people for preventive measures eg- safe drinking water, waste disposal, construction of toilets and biogas plants.
- Sensitized people about preventive measures and collaborated with the primary health centers of the government and the people for the administration preventive measures - vaccines to children and TT injections to pregnant women.
- Popularized traditional / indigenous system of medicine in all the villages under the project.
- Promoted biogas plant cum toilet units for many rural households.
- Promoted kitchen garden and income-generating activities in many villages.

Majority of the beneficiaries of the program were women and children and persons from the socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Assistant Nurses' Course

The 7th batch of ANC course started on 4th August 2014. We had interviewed 75 students and selected 25 students for the course. Out of 25 students, 22 of them joined the course in the first month. Later, four students dropped out due to various reasons like: not able to cope up with the studies, home sickness, pressure from the parents to discontinue the course and ill health. We successfully trained and transformed 18- poor rural girls into Assistant Nurses.

First two months, (August and September) the students attended full time theory classes with classroom practical and regular exams. The next four months, (October, November, December and January) the students attended half a day practical in the hospitals and in the evening theory

in the St. Paul's campus. We had tied up with 7 hospitals for the practical training. The last two months (February and March) the student worked as full-fledged Nurses in the hospitals.

During these eight months students learnt various skills:

- ✚ Personal skills: Punctuality, Pleasing Personality, Sincerity, Loyalty, Responsibility, Reliability, Spontaneity, Ethical/Moral Sense, Self-Esteem, Presence of Mind and Hard Working Nature
- ✚ Work Skills: Assisting a Doctor/Nurse, Taking Care of Patient, Bed Making, Records and Reports, Taking Care of Elderly, First Aid, Working in an Emergency Situation, Disaster Management Skills and Counseling the Patients.
- ✚ Leadership Skills: Empathy, Impartiality, Coordination, Animation, Facilitation, Approachability, Decision Making, and reaching out the needy in the hospital.

On 11th April community college conducted its Valedictory ceremony for the nursing students. They enthralled their parents and the audience for 2.30 hours with various songs, dances and skit. They too shared their beautiful growth experience - how they had come in with a lot of fear and anxiety and now they go out with courage and boldness and skills to manage a family as well as the works in a hospital.

Biogas Plant cum Toilet Units

The project is being implemented in the Belgaum district. During the financial year 2014-2015 we constructed 1175 Biogas Plant cum Toilet Units with funds from BMZ Germany and other donors and subsidy from the government and contribution from the beneficiaries and own funds. The project villages were selected on specific criteria: The villages are already in contact with us through our earlier interventions or via local staff and volunteers. The selected households have enough space for the construction of the unit and enough cow dung and water to maintain the plant. The beneficiaries are willing to contribute to towards construction costs. The beneficiaries are eligible for subsidy through ZP Belgaum. The households are ready to have their Toilet attached to the Biogas Plant and have overcome personal and cultural barriers to use biogas for their regular cooking.

Impact of the “Biogas Plant cum Toilet Unit” Initiative:

The impact of this initiative is very impressive and easily noticeable in the following areas:

- ✚ Contribution to improve the livelihoods of rural poor households.
- ✚ Contribution to improve the land productivity through increased soil fertility.
- ✚ Contribution to women empowerment/gender equality (health, leisure).
- ✚ Contribution to the environment through the protection of forest and reduction of CO₂/CH₄ emissions.

Biogas Plant and climate change:

Biogas Plant is a fantastic device for reducing CH₄ emissions through improved manure and night soil management. It is assumed that biogas plant can achieve a 50% reduction in emissions from manure in cool climates. In warmer climates a reduction potential of 75% is possible through biogas plants. Biogas systems also produce slurry that can be applied directly to agriculture fields instead of using untreated dung. This also leads to reduced methane emissions. Anaerobic digestion in biogas production substantially mitigates nitrous oxide and methane emissions. **(For more details refer to the book: “Livestock’s Long Shadow” – Environmental Issues and Options – FAO 2006).**

Biogas Plant cum Toilet units brought about results such as:

- Increase the fertility of land through the use of nitrogenous organic manure. The digested slurry contains important plant nutrients, including nitrogen, which is mostly preserved during anaerobic fermentation.
- A small family size biogas plant of 2m³ capacity, using 50 kg fresh dung a day, gives 10 metric tonnes (10000 kg) of good quality organic manure annually. Hence 1175 units would give 11750 metric tonnes of air dry organic manure annually.
- Even at the rate of 2m³ meter gas per day, a small family size biogas plant of 2m³ capacity saves the equivalent of 452 liters of kerosene or 1752 kg of fire wood annually.
- Hence 1175 units would save the equivalent of 531,100 liters of kerosene or 2,058,600 kg (2059 metric ton) fire wood annually.
- 1175 households stop cutting of trees and destruction of forest for meeting their cooking fuel needs.
- 1175 households - especially women and children - improve their general health - by making their kitchen smokeless and through better sanitary facility.
- Women/men of 1175 households have reduced workload because of their easy access to cooking fuel.
- The 1175 units trap annually (2m³ gas* 365 days* 1175 units) 857,750 m³ of biogas produced by cow dung and night soil and reduce pollution.
- The toilets attached to biogas plant take care of a major sanitary problem of 1175 households.
- The 1175 units created employment worth around Rs.8,225,000 for many unskilled workers and masons.
- Brick making is a cottage industry in Belgaum area. Many farming households and landless labourers are engaged in brick making. Construction of biogas plant cum toilet units created additional work worth Rs. 7.050,000/- .
- The local supervisors got around Rs.1,775,000 as wages for supervising the construction 1175 units.
- One cattle gives 10 kg of dung per day. One kg dung produces 0.037 cum gas. So per cattle one can get 0.371 cum gas per day.
- A family with 5 persons and 2 cattle can get around 2 cum meters of gas per day. Gas consumption for cooking per person per day is 0.300 cum meter. Hence a family of 5 needs around 1.5 cum meter gas per day. Thus a biogas cum toilet unit for a family of 5 persons with 2 cattle easily takes care of the cooking fuel needs of the family.

➤ 1175 biogas plant cum toilet units takes care of the cooking fuel needs of 5875 (1175*5) persons from 1175 rural households.

Pre-Schools (Balwadi)

The beneficiaries of the program were children from poor families. The program aimed at the integral, i.e., mental, physical and social development of children. Preschool teachers get monthly refresher training during which they do practical with the syllabus that they have to cover during the month.

We conducted 7 Pre-school Centers with great success and initiated 168 children - 76 girls and 92 boys, into the school system. As an essential part of this program we organized 12 trainings for teachers during the year. The teachers received also in-service training in the village under the supervision and guidance of our staff.

Sounskara Kendra (Value Education Center)

Sounskara Kendra initiative aimed at creating better opportunities for the rural children. Basic education is available in all the villages. Number of school going children is increasing. There is marked increase in the number of girl students. However the villages often miss quality education. Nobody accompanies children after the school hours. Most of the teachers come from outside and they go back to their villages/city after the school hours. Children live in small houses with no facilities. They do not have a place where they can study quietly, no proper light. Children get no help or guidance in their studies. All these factors contribute to high rate of school dropout.

Sounskara Kendra is a modest attempt to change the situation. We motivate the children to come together in a common place under the guidance of an able guide from the same village. The guide helps them and supervises their studies. These children get special inputs in personality development and human values, etiquettes and opportunities for singing, dancing, dramatics, drawing and public speaking. Sounskara Kendra is tailor made to the needs of the students; students are grouped according to the class and are helped with their studies. Questions or doubts of the children are answered. Students are encouraged to ask questions.

We conducted 31 centers during the reporting period. Through this initiative we reached out to a total of 878 children. Of these children 426 were boys and 452 girls. Sounskara Kendra, among other things, also becomes a catalyst in bringing about communal harmony, inter religious and cultural understanding and in promoting eco-friendly practices in the villages.

‘Mahadevi Project’ - Student Sponsorship

‘Mahadevi Project’ initiated in 2004 has completed 11 years of association with 225 students and their families - reaching out to them with educational assistance and interest free loans to meet the expenses of their professional courses.

During 2014-15 Mahadevi project enrolled 18 students who took up professional/ job oriented studies/courses like General and BSc Nursing, Bachelor's degree in Social Work, Electronic Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering, Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering and Master's Degree in Computer Applications and Business Administration.

Assistant Nurses' Course

St. Paul's Community College (SPCC) has been a venture of the Jesuits of the Goa Province in Belgaum district in the State of Karnataka. It is located on the premises of St. Paul's High School and the Jesuit Residence, Belgaum. SPCC functions as a Unit of Belgaum Xavier Company Pvt. Ltd. Since June 2015 SPCC is under the aegis of Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh (Jana Jagaran).

SPCC started the VII batch ANC course on 4th August 2014. We had interviewed 75 students and selected 25 students for the course. Out of 25 students, 22 of them joined the course in the first month. Later, four students dropped out of the course due to various reasons. SPCC successfully trained 18-students and transformed them as Assistant Nurses.

Fist two months, (Aug-Sep) the students attended full time theory classes with classroom practical and regular exams. The next four months, (Oct-Jan) the students attended half a day practical in the hospitals and in the evenings theory classes in the St. Paul's campus. We tied up with 7 hospitals for the practical training. The last two months (Feb-Mar) the students worked as full-fledged nurses in the hospitals.

In those eight months students learnt various skills. Some of them as follow.

1. Personal skills: Punctuality, Pleasing Personality, Sincerity, Loyalty, Responsibility, Reliability, Spontaneity, Ethical/Moral Sense, Self-Esteem, Presence of Mind and Hard Working. Nature
2. Work Skills: Consciousness, Assisting doctors/nurses, Taking care of patient, Bed making, Records and Reports, Taking care of elderly, First aid, Working in an emergency situation, Disaster management and Counseling skills.
3. Leadership Skills: Empathy, Impartiality, Co-ordination, Animation, Facilitator, Approachability, Decision making, and reaching out to the needy in the hospital.

On 11th April 2015 SPCC conducted its valedictory ceremony for the nursing students. They enthralled their patents and the audience over two hours with songs, dances and skits. They also shared the experience of how they came in with fear and shyness and how they transformed themselves into beautiful persons - bold and ready with skills to manage a family, and even a hospital ward. 5 hospitals wanted 25 nurses to work for them. But we left the students free to opt for hospitals of their choice.

Xavier Farm

Xavier Farm continued to be the venue for conducting training for our initiatives in the area of Women Empowerment, Community Health, Preschool, Functional Vocational Training, Saunskara Kendra, Organization Building of Nomadic Pastoralists, Training in Organic Farming, and Training in Herbal Medicines for human and veterinary use. The Xavier Farm House provided lodge and board facilities to groups of students, who came to our organization for a lived in exposure cum experience in the field of Integral Rural Development. The farm provided livelihoods opportunities for farm hands and many agricultural laborers from the neighboring villages.

Recently we installed photovoltaic solar panels in Xavier farm to produce 6 kv electricity. The solar energy initiative at Xavier Farm is a great success. It takes care of 100% energy needs of the farm, including energy for running the irrigation pump sets.

JJ Staff

Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh and its staff over the years transformed themselves from service providers to organization builders. SAS movement is a story of teamwork, high motivation and dedication and commitment of its staff. SAS makes a difference because all the players honestly and sincerely try to ‘walk the talk’.

SAS has a team of highly motivated and committed staff. SAS team represents the cross section of peoples and cultures with whom it works. Its initiatives address developmental, socio-cultural and environment issues. It works with people of all cultures and social groups in its area of operation. It believes in the active presence and working of God in nature, in all cultures and peoples. So it avoids imposing a particular culture or value system on people with whom it works and tries sincerely to acknowledge the wonders that God works with all peoples and cultures and in nature. In the context of widespread cultural prejudices and religious fundamentalism SAS’s work with men and women of all cultures and religions is a tremendous help to promote peace, justice and harmony.

A Brief Activity Report of SAS and its Unit PLD (Jana Jagaran) - 2014-15

As SAS completed another project year, there was a sense of fulfillment that it was achieving progressively it’s the overall objective, i.e., building strong local communities that play an active role in the planning and the implementation of programs for creating socio-economic, and cultural conditions that enable them to have access to basic necessities of life in a clean and healthy environment.

Joe Chenakala, sj

(For Shramik Abivrudhi Sangh)

Belagavi: August 2015