



Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangh

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SAS 2017-18 Note on Activities

SAS is registered under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act. It is a voluntary, nonprofit organization working for the integral development of the socio-economically disadvantaged, under privileged and marginalized sections of society. Its area of operation consists of Belgaum and other Districts of North Karnataka 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 decisions making process that affects their lives. It works with all irrespective of their religious, caste and political affiliations. Its target group is women and rural households who are victims of general socio-economic backwardness, inadequate and inefficient finances and marketing services. The size of their land holdings is small and are often over-manned resulting in low productivity of labor. Their agricultural practices are neither economically nor environmentally viable. They are not able to make use of modern agricultural practices hampered by ignorance of such practices, high costs and impracticality due to small land holdings. SAS has various initiatives to empower them:

1. Women Empowerment

During the year SAS animated and guided 925 SHGs with 14,973 members. Their cumulative savings as on 31st Dec 2017 was around Rs. 186,963,147/-. The money circulated among the respective group members taking care of their immediate financial needs. SAS's constant guidance, motivation, and accompaniment of the SHG members made that possible. As part of the SHG movement many women maintained organic kitchen gardens and their households relished vegetables free of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The SHG movement helped women to assert their rights and to benefit from MGNREGA and other legal entitlements and poverty alleviation schemes of the government. 7646 SHG members, during 2017 applied for work under MGNREGA and 5564 women worked for 294104 days and earned Rs. 246/- as daily wages. Their cumulative earning during 2017 was the sum of Rs.72,349,584/-. SAS motivated and guided another 2209 SHG women to apply for job cards under MGNREGA. SHG women are organized into Federations at village, panchayat, taluka and district levels. They come together for celebrating the International Women's day and they find time for attending training in personality and skill development and also for cultural and educational tours. SAS staffs visited every month each of the SHG group and also organized many training programs during the year for their overall development.

2. Functional Vocational Training

Target group of Functional Vocational Training are school/college dropouts rural girls from low socio-economic strata of society. The direct beneficiaries of that initiative in 2017 were 56 rural women, who were trained, empowered to function as teachers/trainers and 587 girl students, who were trained in functional vocational skills and life coping skills. Functional Vocational Training program aimed at the overall development of adolescent rural girls with emphasis on enhancing their personal growth and income generating capacity. The program prepared them to face their future with courage, self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. It included garment making skills, value education, sex and family life education and other life coping skills.

3. Organization Building of Nomadic Shepherd Community

The activity covered 12 Districts of North Karnataka with the help of 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 to the shepherding community. SAS collaborated with the government institutions, commercial banks and community leaders and *gram panchayat* to achieve its objectives. The movement had the cumulative strength of 1413 shepherd SHGs with 19322 members. The SHGs became economically stable and carried out various IGAs successfully. They had the cumulative savings of Rs. 63,700,000/- and obtained bank loans to the tune of Rs.10.820,000/- during the year.

Other contributions to the community during the year

- Release of death compensation for sheep and goats to the tune of Rs. 1,400,000/-.
- Government added 8 ambulatory clinics at the cost Rs. 6,500,000/-.
- Appointed 550 fresh veterinary graduates to various hospitals in the State.
- Shepherd SHG zonal federation leader of Mabnoor formed a youth club which gave Rs.5000/-each interest free loan to 10 club members for purchase of Seed Rams.
- 8 migratory shepherds took up stall feeding with own sheep sheds and fodder plots.
- Organized a workshop on stall-fed goats with the support of Asian and Australian Dairy Goat Network Malaysia, and Agriculture College and Dairy Science College Bengaluru and National Dairy Research Institute Bengaluru during the month of April 2018.
- Formation of Davangere Stall-Fed Sheep and Goat Club to encourage stall feeding practices.
- Organized Seed Ram display at Garag and Kelegeri villages of Dharwad District.
- Formation of 6 additional shepherd cooperatives in 5 districts.
- Supported spinners and weavers from shgs of Salapur to participate in *Krusha Mela*, and demonstrate spinning, and blanket weaving.

Summarized appraisal

The objectives of O B of the shepherding community are satisfactorily achieved. It has resulted in the socio-economic, cultural and political development of the community. Various activities taken up by the community leaders in the areas of education, healthcare, and development of skills among both the genders are worth recognition. The modernization of management practices, healthcare, and productivity among the animals is to be appreciated. Government bodies such as Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, the KSWDC, the KCSGR Federation, IAHVB, Department of Textile and Handicraft and the Karnataka Veterinary and Fisheries University including the Department of Cooperatives and the commercial and District Central Cooperative Banks have extended their support towards community development. The shepherds' SHGs, Regional and North Karnataka Federations and the Shepherds' Cooperatives have taken full advantage of the various schemes offered by the government. SAS would like to continue the Organization Building Process and modernize management practices with improved facilities, establishment of stall-fed sheep and goat farms and introduction of local pedigree sheep and goats with modern nutrition and marketing facilities. SAS foresees a bright future for the shepherding community which would be in the long run sustained through their own initiatives.

4. Biogas Plant cum Toilet Units for Rural Households

The project is especially meant for small farmers who have a maximum of 2 ha non-irrigated land at their disposal and are dependent on rain for agriculture. People cook with wood, cow dung and harvest residues. On average each household needs 6 kg of fire wood a day which is already in short supply. Because of scarcity of wood women and their children, especially the girls spend many hours collecting fire wood and harvest residues, drying cow dung and maintaining the fire. That not only involves carrying of large loads but also exposure, on their long marches to gather firewood, to dangers such as snake bites, and assaults of wild animals and men. Cleaning the cooking utensils is very time consuming because of the grime and soot that develop when burning wood and dried cow dung. Because of the pressure of household work girls' education suffers. Women and children are exposed up to biting smoke which results from cooking with wood, harvest residues and dried animal dung. Amongst other things due to exposure to the carbon dioxide and fine dust the risk of women and children getting ill is greatly

increased. By burning dried cow dung and harvest residues valuable organic fertilizer is lost for agriculture and the soil gets progressively less fertile. Chemical fertilizer has to be purchased at high prices. Biogas manure is a rich and hygienically safe organic fertilizer. It provides the soil with nutrients and improves the structure of the soil. By burning gas from cow dung and human excrements as cooking fuel, dangerous greenhouse gases can be effectively reduced. Women suffer the most from not having access to a toilet. They respond their toilet needs at night on the access roads into the village. During the day they hold back their needs and even during menstruation they do not have any privacy for personal hygiene. As a result, gynecological, bladder and kidney problems are wide-spread. SAS's Biogas Plant cum Toilet Unit intervention effectively tackles all such problems.

SAS constructed and commissioned 695 Biogas Plant cum Toilet Units in 2017 for 695 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. Households cooked on biogas from units linked to their toilet. The households experienced that biogas intervention reduced indoor air pollution caused by smoke and soot resulting from use of traditional ovens. Besides, the time spent on gathering fuel wood and cooking is greatly reduced. One of the women interviewed reported: *"Cooking a meal is easy and fast. I am a liberated woman! The time I previously spent on cleaning soot-blackened utensils and surfaces, I now use in more productive ways. I have around 4 hours of extra time a day for myself and my children."* The hygiene in the kitchen, house and surroundings improved; women and children and other family members enjoyed better health; all of them were very happy to have their own toilet; they used it and kept it clean.

5. Educational Assistance

The initiative gave financial assistance to poor students to meet the expenses of their professional courses and higher education. The initiative was started in 2004. During the financial 17-18 year SAS made available the sum of Rs 1,252,540/- . 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. Ninety percent of the students successfully completed their education and found satisfactory jobs. SAS is happy that the initiative has shaped the lives of many students and opened a window into their future.

6. Xavier Farm Initiative

Nestled along the outskirts of Machhe village, Xavier Farm is an ideal place to experience the marvels of nature and learn with Nature. The farm is being developed as an organic farm. Farm provides livelihoods for many persons from the neighboring villages. The farm supplies fresh milk to a number of institutions in Belagavi at reasonable rates. The cow dung serves as feed 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. SAS has this initiative as a challenge in the spirit of *'Laudato Si'* (*'On Care for Our Common Home'*) - an appeal from Pope Francis addressed to "every person living on this planet" for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. The farm has been the venue for various meetings, training programs and outings for school children and families from Belagavi. SAS uses the facilities in the farm for conducting training for the participants/beneficiaries of its initiatives in the area of Women Empowerment, Functional Vocational Training, Organization Building of Nomadic Pastoralists, Organic Farming, Biogas plant cum toilet initiative, etc. The Xavier Farm also provides lodge, board and study facilities for the rural camp of students studying for Masters in Social Work.

7. SAS Staff

SAS completed 40 years of uninterrupted service in June 2018. It has left its mark on many lives in north Karnataka and in south Maharashtra, and more especially on the people of Belagavi district. Thousands of people have come in touch with the organization and have benefited from its various initiatives. Obviously, the credit goes to its dedicated staff and its funding partners. The greatest blessing that SAS has is its staff most of whom are from the communities it serves. They get joy and satisfaction in serving

their brothers and sisters and neighbors. They spare no effort in reaching out to the poor and needy in their area of operation. Often they affirm: *“We are proud to work with a NGO that walks the talk”. “The respect we get, because we are part of SAS, from the government officials, the beneficiary households and the general public, is more than what can be gained with all the money in the world.” “We are proud that the fruit of our hard work is benefitting the most deserving households”*. SAS and its staff, over the years, transformed themselves from service providers to organization builders. SAS movement is a story of teamwork, high motivation, dedication and commitment. SAS makes a difference because its staff honestly and sincerely ‘walks the talk’.

8. Conclusion

SAS does its work among the shepherds and the construction of biogas cum toilet units in partnership with Andheri-Hilfe, Mackestrassse 53, 53119 Bonn, Germany. 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. SAS also has other smaller funding partners from abroad and India. SAS is immensely grateful to all of them for their generous support. May God bless our partners, friends, benefactors, and well-wishers!

(Detail Report is available at: www.shramik.in)

Joseph Kurian Chenakala
For S A Sangh (Secretary)

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