

SWAYAM SHIKSHAN PRAYOG

From Margin to Mainstream



QUARTERLY UPDATE

January to March 2021

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The 'WASH sensitive Covid intensive Gram Panchayat preparedness and Community resilience' project covering three districts of Maharashtra was implemented by Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) in partnership with UNICEF Maharashtra since July 2020 to March 2021. The project offered a unique opportunity for strengthening government systems to build better economic and social resilience for communities and local government to face disasters and COVID. We have reached out directly to three lakhs households and positively impacted communities in 2700 villages across Osmanabad, Solapur & Latur districts.

UNICEF and SSP have organized a State Level Lessons Learnt and Way Forward Online Workshop in March 2021 in order to capture the leanings at the state level on the Covid-19 response and recovery. Key outcome of the workshops include innovations related to strengthening of districts to GP coordination, strengthening health services for better access to women and children and vulnerable groups and making reaching out social protection and social security schemes to the vulnerable households.

State level officials led by the State Disaster Management Authority, Health and Rural Development Department officials participated and shared their experiences on how they overcame challenges faced in the social sector recovery. Leaders from the PRI systems and COVID Action Sahayata Samiti including women leaders shared their experiences on creating COVID free villages.

- SSP has initiated the project "Breaking the Chain - A Multi Sector Approach to Address Malnutrition in Maharashtra" supported by WeltHungerHilfe in 100 villages of Aurangabad and Ahmednagar districts.
- A coconut Producer company started in collaboration with promoters, shareholders and women farmers in Wayanad, Kerala.
- Ten dairies established in Latur district to get good prices for milk in the market which benefits to increased income of 1000+ farmers from INR 10,000-25,000 per month. Over 15,000 other farmers indirectly benefit from the dairy business.
- One month Campaign for Women's Day celebrated by eight inspiring stories of women leaders published on SSP's social media platforms.



Climate Resilient Farming

Women across Latur and Osmanabad districts of Maharashtra have been trained on Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) model to bring in a shift from cash crops to food crops. With One acre model farming, they have introduced bio fertilisers and bio manure to reduce the input cost, save money and ensure availability of healthy and nutritious food at the local level.

SSP mobilized women groups into the Sakhi Farmers Group to initiate climate resilient farming and alternate livelihoods. Over 25 Sakhi Farmers groups were formed and identified priorities to find a solution in partnership with local government and other stakeholders such as Dairy department, agriculture department etc.

To enable women groups to lead resilience activities, SSP introduced Community Resilience Fund (CRF) to implement innovative solutions and scale up to more communities.

Economic stress on the whole population will need mitigation and quick changes in policy. The economic slowdown could aggravate malnutrition. To overcome this situation Sakhi Farmers Group decided to start income generating activities with skills and low investment. The WCRF model has paved the way for agricultural allied income.

Six members of Aneri Sakhi Farmers group were given classes on Agriculture practices and methods through the online Zoom platform. Women have started vegetable cultivation on 75 percent of land and started small scale sales. The Sakhi Farmers Group has increased their revenue by producing and selling locally marketable vegetables and their value added products.

Coconut Producer Company - SSP Wayanad team initiated the work to start a producer company in collaboration with promoters, shareholders and women leaders.

Winter Vegetable Cultivation - Sakhi Farmers of Kottathara have come up with unique solutions to address the Covid crisis. They are creating a platform to revive farming through partnership with the government with an initiative for winter vegetable cultivation.

One-acre farming model propagates a shift from cash crops to diversified organic farming

Introduced to SSP's one-acre model set Ms. Archana Tawade from Latur district on the path of sustainable agriculture. Developed specifically for small holding farmers, the model propagates a shift from cash crops to diversified organic farming. "We were growing Soyabean and using chemical pesticides on our one acre. We barely saved 30% of our earnings," says Archana. "After the training, I convinced my husband to give me 10,000 square feet of farmland to apply my learnings". Experimenting with a variety of crops - vegetables and cereals and using only organic fertilizer, Archana was amazed to see the yield multiple three-fold.

While she netted a tidy profit, her biggest accomplishment was the nutritious food she put on the family table. Encouraged by the success, Archana's husband adopted the one-acre organic farming model. Cultivating 23 varieties of crops - vegetables, pulses, cereals and oil seeds, they save almost 60% of their earnings.



Health and Nutrition

SSP started implementing the project “Breaking the Chain - A Multi Sector Approach to Address Malnutrition in Maharashtra” supported by WeltHungerHilfe in 100 villages of **Aurangabad and Ahmednagar districts.**

Women were trained on Sustainable agriculture to shift from chemical to bio farming, cultivation of vegetable garden for household consumption to address malnutrition. Community Resource Persons were trained to develop demonstration sites for learning exchange, adoption of low cost agricultural inputs, bio farming concepts and SSP’s one acre model farming and fodder cultivation of azolla. To empower women as decision makers with linkage them with government schemes to gain cultivation rights, to sustain farms through effective water management and the purchase of bio farming inputs. Farmer groups of 20 farmers each were trained to establish cluster level enterprise and with support from UMED for Producer group formation.

In **Nanded district**, Arogya sakhis assisted and monitored quarantine people households by daily home visits and providing awareness on COVID-19 prevention and precaution. Over 7183 women and Families participated in home based awareness care meetings. Online meetings were conducted for giving awareness on ‘water conservation and budgeting’, ‘health and sanitation practices’ and training on antenatal care, postnatal care, infant care and vaccination’. Lack of nutrition and changing eating habits cause concerns for women and girls in rural villages. To address this issue, women leaders and farmers from 15 villages of Nanded district organised a Nutrition Festival with Health centers and front-line workers. While 27 Community health fund groups through monthly savings have disbursement loan to women beneficiaries for health emergencies.

To promote Menstrual Health and hygiene sensitization 900 Sanitary Napkins were distributed to adolescent girls, married women in age 20 to 35 and women group above 35 years of age.

Community water purification solution plants: 30 of Aarogya Sakhis and women leader had dialogue block development officer, Tehsildar and Nayab Tehsildar government officials and gram panchayat officials of Madki and Bhendegaon for Livinguards water plants installation.



Dialogue workshop with Government Officials: Aarogya Sakhis and women leader raised issues to Government officials regarding ration cards, MNREGA jobs, widows, handicapped and old age pension with officials. As outcome of dialogue workshop BDO assured the fund release towards soak pits under MNREGA, commitment to arrangement of health testing camps for adolescent girl’s hemoglobin and expediting the livinguards community water purification solution in villages.

Women Entrepreneurship and Leadership

Advanced entrepreneurship trainings for women were conducted with an objective to make women in rural areas self-reliant with guidance on business models and to identify the business opportunities in the village and business expansion methods. Advanced Entrepreneurship training was conducted for 196 women across 26 villages. Training of Trainers were conducted for 116 women and 391 women from 67 villages took up a basic entrepreneurship training program. Women were trained and encouraged to start cluster level businesses.

Market study and analysis of machines-management-skills were conducted: women were acquainted with market rural and urban opportunities. Women were trained to start agri-allied businesses of value added products marketing. Mentoring and business support-specific-skills and knowledge: Mentors visited 91 women businesses for hand holding of their business.

Farmer Producer Company was established to provide business knowledge to women in rural areas and to create business opportunities through integration of various business models. The director of the company and members are women farmers. The main purpose of setting up this producer company is to provide market opportunities in villages and cities. The company will enable smallholder farmers to buy kharif and rabi season fertilizers together, saving them time, labor and money. The farmer producer company will be owned by minority women farmers. Credit will be taken from bank for growth of the company and various schemes of the government will also be obtained.

Startup Village Entrepreneurship Program in Jalna district of Maharashtra - Block Resource Committees (BRC) have formed in Jalna and Bokahrdhan blocks in Jalna district. Subcommittees introduced to BRC members are: Enterprise Approval committee consists of members including the 5 BRC members with BRC President, SVEP Block Mentor and BM appointed from MSRLM; Fund Disbursement Committee; Loan Redressal committee and Marketing Committee.

Three Wheeler Driving Training: CSR Box and SSP, supported by Jamnala Bajaj Gram Vikas Sanstha (JBGVS) have embarked upon creating Micro-Entrepreneurs through three wheeler Driving Training and Life Skill Program. The initiative aims to create opportunities for marginalized women to become empowered drivers, entrepreneurs, earn better livelihoods and lead a dignified life. The training program which includes three wheeler driving, vehicle procurement, driving licence processing and life skills of basic business acumen, digital financial services, communication & forward market linkage will enable women to reach the last mile.



Market Linkage Support: Linkage From SSP SURE Business with Projects Stakeholders benefits from the Gaavkhaj online application and gives digital support for Providing Mobiles Platform App to Improve Standard Market for Women stakeholders business. Market Linkage to Group business at the exhibition of Hirakani Mela where Umang Producer Group, from SSP participated and showcased the Organic farms Vegetable & Jaggery stall at Krida sankul of Latur.

Business Support: Provided 7 Udyam Registrations Certificate to Individual business of women stakeholders. also gives 3 FASSI licenses to their business stakeholders. From the Project Stakeholders, 9 women are registered their business on Gaavkhaj app to make their shop/enterprise on the Digital platform with the support of SSP - SURE Business.

Financial Literacy Training Program: Promoting their business by giving training on how to use the “BHIM” app & “Google-Map”, why its important to their business. Provided 59 women from projects Digital capacity-building training to women entrepreneurs on the “Mera bill” business app which is helpful for supporting their business, economically growing their business, and keeping a Records of accounts.

VOICES OF WOMEN

SANJEEVANI MORE

Barshi, Solapur



Widowed early, Sanjeevani More started a small tailoring business to support her family. With few orders coming in, she earned a paltry 4000 rupees (55 USD) a month, barely enough to scrape by. Desperate to enhance her income she enrolled in an entrepreneurship course offered by SSP.

Sanjeevani is one of the many successful entrepreneurs who have accessed SSP's Entrepreneurship Development Training. Putting her learnings to action, she took a loan and opened a boutique in the local market. Strict attention to quality and personalized service won her a dedicated clientele of over 250 women. With orders pouring in, she expanded within a few months, employing five women and clocking a healthy profit of approximately 40,000 rupees (550 USD) per month.

DHARMASHEELA DEVI

Gaya, Bihar



Limited and erratic power supply keeps millions of Indian villages in darkness. A heavy reliance on kerosene and wood for energy needs, keeps many in a state of poor health. "Women in my village suffer from breathing problems and smarting eyes due to smoke from firewood", says Dharmasheela. "We desperately needed a solution, and when I heard about SSP's solar initiative, I knew we had an answer". Dharmasheela wasted no time and enrolled herself for clean energy entrepreneurship course. Not only would she be promoting a healthy lifestyle, she would also market these products – the earnings a welcome addition to the family income. Knocking on every door, she reached out to all households in her village convincing them to switch to solar lights and lamps. Setting up a stall on busy market days, she attracted customers by offering a two-year guarantee on the products and easy payments through installments. Today, Dharmasheela owns her own shop, has sold 1000 products till date, earning rupees 10,000 (140 USD) per month. Dharmasheela's enthusiasm for renewables has inspired many to make the shift from kerosene to solar.

EVENTS

Building COVID-19 Resilient Communities

16th March 2021
10:30 am to 1 pm (IST)

Virtual Workshop on Building COVID 19 resilient Communities with GO-NGO Collaboration by SSP and UNICEF India

The COVID-19 Pandemic, and the resulting humanitarian and health disaster required a rapid crisis recovery and resilience program to reduce the distress being faced by rural communities and to ensure that the spread of the infection was restricted. SSP and UNICEF jointly with the State and the Local Government supported the communities across 2700 villages for rapid and dynamic response and recovery. The workshop on 16th March 2021 from 10:30 am to 1:00 pm. The workshop aimed to bring together the key policy makers from National and State level along with the village level change makers and discuss the critical learnings. Key State and District officials and UNICEF Representatives, elaborated on Maharashtra's coordinated efforts to improve access to social protection schemes and basic essential services during COVID-19 and a systematic approach for safe and secure food and livelihood opportunities for those in economic distress during pandemic. Grassroots women leaders were part of collaborative efforts to secure entitlements for the most vulnerable households, during challenging times. People in the frontline striving to build resilient communities. Video link - <https://youtu.be/uD0dxiGklvg>

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Prema Gopalan honoured with Aadarsha Mata Award by Parkhe Foundation

Prema Gopalan, Executive Director of SSP received the “Adarsha Mata Puraskar” - Motherhood Felicitations Program by Parakhe Foundation, held at Pune on March 27, 2021, for indomitable courage in adverse situations and to have raised women in her community to become successful leaders. Building on women's capacities, Ms. Gopalan steered them through a broad-based development strategy of economic and social empowerment. "Women leaders are no longer beneficiaries. Women in grassroots communities do not look at themselves as recipients. They look at themselves as farmers, entrepreneurs, leaders, resource persons, and even partners to the governments and the corporates." Parkhe Pariwar Trusts: A collective representation of the Charities & Awards promoted by the erstwhile Parkhe Group, instituted in 1976. <https://www.findglocal.com/IN/Pune/291308657610429/Parkhe-Pariwar-Trusts>.



IN THE NEWS



Pulses for Planetary Change Recognizing World Pulses Day

Food Sustainability: Growing pulses can improve the livelihoods and nutrition of low-income farmers, including women. Executive Director Prema Gopalan founded Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) in 1998 to address malnutrition and health problems for rural women by establishing capacity-building programmes and promoting sustainable farming - <https://bit.ly/3xkCguY>.



Our Women Leaders Interviews with Saksham Network YouTube channel

Naseem Shaikh - Associate Director SSP, Talks about how Swayam Shikshan Prayog - SSP's journey of empowering the grassroots women for the past 22 years in an interview with Saksham Network <https://youtu.be/x2PMH2KJu1w>



Godavari Dange, grassroots leader from SSP talks about her experience of working in the development sector for over two decades. Godavari is a well known sector expert on climate resilient farming and a visionary on bottom up women led models for sustainable development. Link to the video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hHjKByQaz8>



To know more write to us at:
sspindia1@gmail.com
www.swayamshikshanprayog.org