



OCTOBER 2020

# WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN RESILIENCE

SSP FIELD UPDATE - 4



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Our world will never be the same after COVID19 and women leaders at the grassroots are making sure it is better. This update from Swayam Shikshan Prayog focuses on how women are committed to lead the transformation.

'Sakhi Task Force' has moved from relief to recovery during these months in various ways and have risen to the unexpected challenge of COVID19 pandemic. The women's movement that SSP started as a leap of trust 25 years ago has proved to be an invaluable resource in these difficult times. Our experience illustrates that women's holistic, integrated and inclusive approaches matter the most. At the frontline of the COVID19 crisis, Sakhis acts as a volunteer force providing information on COVID19 and connecting to health emergency services, meeting shortfalls in masks, sanitizers, conducting regular check-ups, running community kitchens, linking with daily work, addressing livelihoods and negotiating with financial institutions.



SSP facilitated these programs reaching out to over 200,000 families across 15 districts in Maharashtra, Bihar, Odisha and Kerala in COVID19 response and recovery initiatives.

## 2. ENTERPRISE AND ENTREPRENEURS

The focus of the program on "Inclusive and Sustainable Development for Women and Girls" in eight blocks in Osmanabad district, Maharashtra is to increase adoption of sustainable farming through bio-farming concept and entrepreneurship development of women's groups by establishing cluster level enterprises and a sustainable network.

Main thrust of the Sakhi's activities is to assist women in establishment of income generating activities during COVID.

With the support of European Union, INR 15 Lakhs allotted for the women in Osmanabad for main income generating businesses include Vegetable selling, Goatry, Poultry, Dairy, Harvesting such as chicken and mutton, Hydroponics - Cattle supplements, Bio- farming. 17 milk centres were established in Tuljapur and Washi blocks.



In Osmanabad, Sakhis took the step to support vulnerable women and families with COVID19 relief fund and they were educated on adopting hygiene practices and hand washing demos. They helped 1500 women to start livelihood activities through small businesses such as mask making, tailoring, poultry, goatary, vegetable selling, etc. Dry ration food kits were distributed to 250 poor and needy families in 11 villages.







### **New business opportunities during COVID**

COVID has its effects on big businesses, but women in villages are now equipped with online training through zoom and have started businesses such as vegetable selling, grocery shops, poultry farming, goat rearing and sewing business. So far 111 women have started new businesses in Deoni and Washi blocks in Maharashtra by investing as less as INR 5000 and with the help of Self Help Groups. SSP supported these women with basic entrepreneurship training, market identification and handholding for running their businesses.

"People are learning to live through the pandemic. Even in days of dawn, SSP has always shown the path of empowerment" says Manjusha who runs a tailoring and flour mill business. She now earns INR 18,000 per month.



Sonali Mali returned to Tuljapur during lockdown to stay with family, but with no less land and no work, it was difficult for her family to sustain. During the crisis, Sakhis identified her problem and supported through the Community Resilience Fund. Sonali has bought seeds, bio-fertilizers to grow vegetables in her small farm. Gradually she started earning INR 6000-7000 monthly by selling vegetables to the local market.



## **3. HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

### **SSP partnership with UNICEF for COVID preparedness**

When ordinary rural women are banded together as a Task Force and are empowered with support and recognition from Government, you see the emergence of women leaders even in times of crisis.

After addressing immediate challenges posed by COVID, SSP with UNICEF India's support is now scaling up their prevention initiatives and learnings from the first intervention, across 250 villages in 3 districts in Maharashtra reach out to 2500 women leaders as task force.

SSP is activating Panchayati Raj Institutions, Women's groups and women leaders, to build up their confidence so they address challenges that women and other vulnerable groups in rural communities are likely to face, due to low levels of health and hygiene. Women are at the frontline as COVID carers and they become active members of the village level Sahayata Samiti.



"With no money to run a family earlier, today, I run my own business" says Anita Dhole from Yevati village in Osmanabad district. Anita started a grocery store with a loan of INR 20,000 from Self Help Group and received her training in basic entrepreneurship from SSP. To sustain her business During COVID, she met local wholesale vendors, bought goods and sold. The prompt selling made their shop reach the forefront in and around her villages with 30,000 customers. Anita exemplifies how women can leverage the strength of their community institutions to reverse their dire situations and secure a better future for themselves and their families.

'My Family, My Responsibility' campaign was launched by the Zila Parishad CEOs and Collectors in Latur, Osmanabad and Solapur districts on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti with the support of State Disaster Management Authority Maharashtra and UNICEF. 300,000 soaps for frontline workers and communities in hospitals, municipalities, communities and Gram Panchayats were provided by UNICEF Maharashtra in partnership with Hindustan Uniliver and SSP.





## **COVID19 and Women's Health**

The COVID has made nutrition elusive for those on the margins, particularly in rural areas. Pandemic or not, communities continue to face the burden of malnutrition. SSP recognizes that a robust and diverse food supply is an essential part of health and nutrition. Women farmers participated in education programs organized on preventive measures to be taken during COVID.



## **POSHAN MAAH at SSP**



Sakhis of SSP celebrated Rashtriya Poshan Mah, 2020 from 1st Sept to 30 Sept 2020. During COVID times, the saying holds true "let's build wellness rather than treating disease". To demonstrate the importance of nutrition and healthy eating, information on proper diet was given to mothers and children under the age of 6. The importance of eating greens, fruits, pulses and grains in different seasons was explained in the diet, while demonstrating by making a goodmeal. The family was given awareness on what crops to be grown in their field in various seasons.

In Nanded, Arogya Sakhis organized poshan melawas and food recipe demonstrations in 24 villages where 530 women participated in Nanded district. Sakhis educated participants about nutrient meal intake while encouraging them to practice it by growing their own food at home. COVID prevention guide, balanced diet pamphlets were distributed while an interactive game on snakes and ladders was introduced to impart knowledge.



## **Menstrual Health and Hygiene during COVID**

Breaking the silence on menstruation is a first step towards improving the lives of women and girls. In a first of its kind, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, Delhi (WSSCC) held a 2 hour online training session Surekha Lambe to educate women and girls on 'Menstrual Health and Hygiene' where 30 women including Arogya Sakhis participated from Loha block of Nanded. The training focused on sensitization and avocation on WASH practices in order to enable the adolescent girls to adopt safe hygiene practices.

By promoting safe management of menstruation and menstrual waste management, this training has made real progress in breaking the silence on menstruation, says Revati Kangule, Block Coordinator, SSP. SSP distributed 15,000 sanitary napkins to girls across 4 districts till now.





## 4. CLIMATE RESILIENT FARMING

Women from Masla village in Osmanabad demonstrate that they are good learners and innovators in climate resilient farming. After the successful introduction of One Acre model in this village, over 100 women have adopted this model to ensure food security and nutrition for families. During COVID crisis, these women farmers ensured and promoted chemical free vegetables and food grains for local markets and communities. From half acre to One acre, they have introduced bio fertilisers and bio manure to reduce the input cost, save money and ensure availability of healthy and nutritious food at local level.

These farmers have been transforming the lives and environment of the village by innovative approach in farming. Listen to the news published on this model - <https://bit.ly/3dyiiUx>



### Small steps in COVID crisis

Grassroots women in Wayanad district who have faced recurrent floods and landslides are showing leadership skills in tackling COVID crisis and food security.

SSP facilitated Sakhi Farmers have joined the Subiksha Keralam programme, (an initiative of Government of Kerala to address the food security). The groups accessed the Community Resilience Fund (CRF) to start the cultivation and identified uncultivated land in Kottathara and took 29 acres of land on lease. In partnership with Kottathara GP, 52 Sakhi Farmers accessed MNREGA programme for land preparation and cleaning for farming. The Sakhi Farmers have started the cultivation of indigenous rice varieties of Gandhakasala and Jeerakasala and Uma to address food availability during COVID crisis.

Sakhi Farmers are ensuring indigenous rice for their consumption which has high value of nutrition and sells surplus to market. Nine women received the skills training are involved in door to door marketing and selling products in nearby towns. Two sakhi farmers started poultry and goatery in Edavakara using CRF to generate income during the crisis.



### An initiative of production & sale of pulses by women in villages

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) program implemented by SSP with the support of Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission (MSRLM) saw a group of women farmers from 10 villages in Osmanabad block to come together to form Nari Shakti Utpadak Sangh.

The program takes the initiative of training women farmers for the production and sale of pulses at the village level and how to grow and market them. MSRLM-UMED officials and SSP team encouraged the women farmers by launching the business. Watch video - <https://bit.ly/2GO459q>

## 5. MEDIA AND NEWS



### Climate resilience through women's leadership

This video shows how grassroots women are making advances in reducing the impact of climate change and disasters. Women have accessed the Community Resilience Fund (CRF) and started innovative ways of resilient farming practices and alternate livelihood initiatives in Ganjam, Odisha. Watch the video - <https://bit.ly/3j6dgQi>





## Green Action Week 2020 Launch, Wayanad, Kerala

Green Action Week 2020 was launched by SSP with the support of CUTS International on 2nd October in Wayanad. The project focus on sharing community concepts to encourage various stakeholders to collaborate within their communities to increase access to sustainable goods and services.

Keynote speaker, Mr. V N Unnikrishnan, Vice President of Kottathara Gram Panchayat stressed the need for partnership to address the waste management issue, protecting nature, especially during COVID pandemic.

Haritha Karmasena offered their support for developing a green environment network. Chandran P, Programme Manager, SSP briefed the activities with focus on generating awareness, developing IEC materials on concepts and establishing Green Exchange Platform (GEP) with stakeholders. Over 48 people from Sakhi Farmer Groups, Gram Panchayat and Kudumbashree participated the event. SSP created and released a promo video about the project.



<p><b>16</b></p>  <p><b>Sakhi Food Secure Agriculture Model</b> Swayam Shikshan Prayog</p> <p><b>Project Budget:</b> INR 2 crore per annum (10000 farmers) <b>Duration:</b> Ongoing since 2016 <b>Key Project Partners:</b> Ashi Farm (Micro-finance), Indira AIFP, NARDA, National Government Partnership Committee, local government - village, block and district authorities, local network, gram Panchayats, empowered women's groups, community level foodbanks, PMU, (empowered) and homile women, Kashi Vigyan Kendra, Agriculture Technology and Management Institute (ATMI) and Agriculture University of India, district and state level <b>Targeted Communities:</b> Marginal, landless or sub-cultivated (cultivated) tribal women farmers in low income, drought prone and climate threatened communities <b>Problem Addressed:</b> Enabling women to lead transformative processes to reduce poverty and increase community resilience in the face of climate breakdown <b>Solution:</b> Equipment that help skills to farm products for climate resilient sustainability • Transition from cash to food crops • Bio-diversity, better soil and water conservation • Diversified livelihood through farm allied enterprises • Building women's capacities to leverage existing social programs to access entitlements, credit and market networks <b>Implementation Strategy:</b> • Managed by local women organized into Self Help Groups &amp; women • A knowledge operation process including on existing resources, identifying community assets, resource mobilization, mentoring women farmers and sustaining farmer groups with market connections linked with government schemes • The social enterprise builds unique Rural Enterprise (SURE) groups based on local marketing • Daily transactions done (100) through innovative finance for women farmers • Daily value chain partnership with cooperative, helping women to individualize</p>	<p><b>29</b></p>  <p><b>Start-up Entrepreneurship Program</b> Swayam Shikshan Prayog</p> <p><b>Project Budget:</b> INR 2 crore per annum (5000 entrepreneurs) <b>Duration:</b> Ongoing since 2016 <b>Key Project Partners:</b> NERDC (Government of Karnataka) <b>Government Partners:</b> Communities, local government - village, block and district authorities, social network, gram panchayats, empowered women's groups, community level foodbanks, PMU, (empowered) and homile women <b>Targeted Communities:</b> Rural women from low income communities across 350 villages in two blocks from climate hot spot areas <b>Problem Addressed:</b> Converting excluded and resource-poor communities into hubs of economic growth and social progress through a community led sustainable model of empowering women entrepreneurs <b>Solution:</b> Supporting women entrepreneurs in rural &amp; non-rural locations to convert their business model &amp; market orientation business skills to digital &amp; scale up their enterprises • Training and business support to women farmers by experienced entrepreneur • Create a robust local community driven ecosystem that includes access to a network of micro-entrepreneurial and local-level initiatives, social, block, regional centers to sustain the enterprises through mentoring, market and financing support <b>Implementation Strategy:</b> • Create a code of women farmer and mentor • Basic Resource Centres as an ecosystem hub for access, finance and markets • Platform financing access to seed fund capital and business incubation - know through microfinance institutions • Disturbance facilitating and marketing, identifying by existing rural business opportunities in health, clean energy, water, marketing, creating access to a network of grassroots entrepreneurs, who act as support system</p>
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## Co-creating Sustainable Livelihoods in India: A Compendium of Best Practices & Project Ideas (Vol-I).

We are featured - <https://lnkd.in/e4ZYtxt>.

The India Livelihoods Collective Compendium sets directions for organizations to understand each other's projects and maps the avenue for collaboration to scale-up and replicate the practices. Vol 1 covers 45+ livelihood practices and Swayam Shikshan Prayog is proud to be one of 26 organizations to be part of the effort to curate tangible solutions addressing various livelihoods challenges.

SSP's best practices are presented as 'Sakhi Food Secure Agriculture Model' addresses enabling women to lead transformative processes to reduce poverty and increase community resilience in the face of climate breakdown and 'Start-up Entrepreneurship Program' addresses converting poor communities into hubs of economic growth and social progress through a community led sustainable model of empowering women entrepreneurs.



To know more write to us at: [sspindia1@gmail.com](mailto:sspindia1@gmail.com)  
Phone: +91 7387057974  
[www.swayamshikshanprayog.org](http://www.swayamshikshanprayog.org)