



QUARTERLY UPDATE

Swayam Shikshan Prayog

Welcome to the New Year 2022!

There is much to remember when looking back at the past year. As the COVID pandemic continues to rage on, grassroots leaders have been taking innovative steps to address its impact and keep up the momentum on spreading awareness of COVID protocols.

Sakhi Task Force leaders once again led from the front lines by addressing issues related to health, livelihoods and food relief cycles.

The past year, which has been eventful, has provided us with immense learning and strength to take bold steps in the coming year.



Highlights of the Year

- Community leader, Malan Raut, was a microenterprise finalist for the CII Foundations 'Woman Exemplar Award 2021'. Many of our women leaders received recognition for their outstanding agriculture-related and community work from various avenues.
- **Grassroots leaders are defining and leading inclusive community development** with the local government by ensuring adequate social protection reaches the most vulnerable populations. They supported migrants and vulnerable families in accessing the MGNREGS as a source of income.
- **Enhanced Digital knowledge of women leaders** to communicate and interact through virtual space in COVID restrictions. The leaders used digital skills to do surveys and negotiations through online dialogue platforms to support their inclusion in local decision making on COVID prevention.
- **Developed Partnership with various stakeholders** to help vulnerable communities in reducing the impacts of COVID through awareness, as well as relief and recovery efforts.
- **Four Farmer Producer Organisations** with more than 3000 shareholders are taking lead in agriculture and value chain sector.

Entrepreneurship initiatives

- **Interest-free loans were provided to women entrepreneurs and farmers** to rebuild their enterprises during the harsh economic environment caused by COVID with the support of grants and donations received by the organization.
- **Leaders were able to leverage government schemes, resources and bank loans** with the support of SSP, who facilitated dialogues between the women and officials from the local government and financial institutions.
- **SSP took lead in exploring new markets**, providing women's collectives more opportunities to promote their organic products.
- **Collaboration with private sector, to build agri and agri allied value chains and enterprises** on dairy/milk production, poultry, goatry, grains and pulses.
- Through the **online portal Gaavkhoj**, SSP has brought many rural entrepreneurs into the online space, by providing them with larger markets to sell their products.

Conversations

A crisis is an opportunity to recognize women's leadership

In this interview with IDR, Prema Gopalan of SSP talks about building an ecosystem that enables women to take charge, the role of agriculture in building sustainable livelihoods, and how crisis can be an opportunity to fast-forward development.

Highlighting the role of SSP, Prema recounts that SSP focuses on women-led entrepreneurship and leadership in rural India. Working in areas such as agriculture, nutrition, clean energy, and health and sanitation, SSP has over the years empowered women at the grassroots to solve problems in their communities.

Read the full article here: <https://idronline.org/article/gender/building-an-ecosystem-for-women-leaders-in-rural-india/>

Gender inclusive entrepreneurship



Panel member, Prema Gopalan, Founder and Executive Director of Swayam Shikshan Prayog, unraveled what it takes to make entrepreneurship gender inclusive at the Access Development Services Livelihoods Summit 2021.

"Women, having worked towards innovation, possess no land title, no credit subsidies, training, and are refused bank loans on account of having no collateral to show for it- but they still remain undeterred."

Watch the entire conversation here: <https://lnkd.in/gmM8bWYR>

In the hands of women

The German Newsmedia Welt-sichten published a conversation with Naseem Shaikh, Associate Director, SSP, on agriculture, market and farmers issues in India. With the withdrawal of the controversial Farm Laws by the government, she explains which reforms are urgently needed to support small rural women farmers in particular.

Read the conversation here: <https://bit.ly/3GbyRTK>

Vaccination Drive

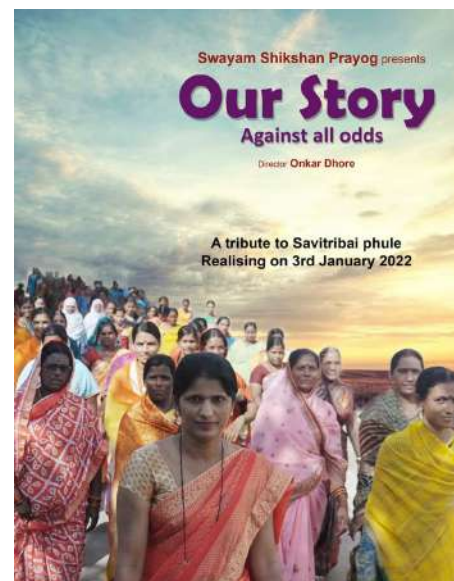
Successful cluster-level vaccination camps were organized in Osmanabad district, Maharashtra with the support of SSP and the National Stock Exchange Foundation as a part of the COVID response and preparedness efforts. Fostering partnerships with the local government authorities and the health establishment was recognized as a priority for ensuring success of the vaccination drives.

SSP team tied up with various PHCs to organize vaccination camps. Women leaders trained by SSP on COVID-19, its impacts, prevention measures and importance of vaccination. They carried out a detailed survey of the villages to identify unvaccinated people, and then targeted them during the awareness campaign. Repeated household visits were accompanied by counseling, as well as public awareness using an AV van that drove through all the villages. Throughout the vaccination drive, women remained at the forefront of these efforts.



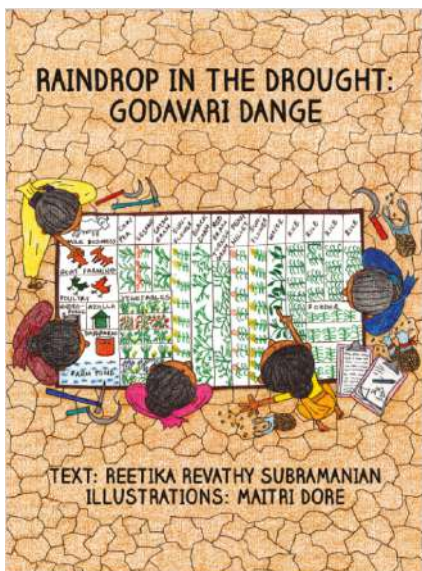
Release of 'Aamchi Ghoshta (Our Story)'

SSP was proud to release its short film titled 'Aamchi Ghoshta (Our Story)' on January 3rd, 2022. This four-minute film, available in Marathi with English subtitles, is an incredibly powerful and inspiring story showcasing the transformation of marginalised rural women into leaders, entrepreneurs and decision makers in the community. Fighting many challenges, these women have emerged as change-makers in critical sectors like agriculture, energy, climate and water. As an organisation, SSP has continued to believe in, mentor and support rural women in aspiring for change and following their dreams.



Watch the film here: <https://youtu.be/7MuGVFzEGV4>

Raindrop in the Drought: Godavari Dange



SSP member and community leader, Godavari Dange, was featured in her very own comic book titled 'Raindrop in the Drought: Godavari Dange'. This comic book illustrates Godavari's journey from a homemaker to a well known women's leader, working with hundreds of women farmers to address social issues and climate crises like droughts in rural Marathwada.

Written and illustrated by Reetika Revathy Subramanian and Maitri Dore, this comic was created after they visited her village and interviewed Godavari's family, friends, colleagues and the SSP team to better understand her work.

The comic can be downloaded in English and Marathi at: <https://www.goethe.de/ins/id/en/kul/kue/mmo/brg.html>

Rural women are using climate-smart technology to get a better market value for their products

Renuka Wanve, from Govindpur village in Osmanabad, Maharashtra, got associated with SSP in mid-2020 and started growing organic vegetables after receiving training on the 'one-acre model'. While she sold the produce throughout the village to earn extra income for the family, she noticed that she had to limit the amount of vegetables she grew to prevent them from rotting.

Renuka availed of a loan from her group to build a sabjee cooler, that required very few resources, on her land. The 'Sabjee Cooler' project by SSP, in partnership with NABARD and RuKart, was started with the aim that small farmers could prevent excessive vegetable spoilage, store their vegetables in a way that maintained freshness and get a better price for their produce.

Read Renuka Wanve's story here: <https://bit.ly/3GaaJRx>



Successful Stories from the Field

Moving to sustainable organic cultivation



Facing an unstable income from conventional farming methods, Malan Kasre, from Matewadi village in Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra successfully adopted the 'one acre model farming' after attending many trainings provided by SSP. She was also able to leverage her success to expand into vermicomposting and fruit tree cultivation by availing government schemes and external finance.

Read Malan's story here: <https://bit.ly/3F7Q1jS>

Attaining income security through an entrepreneurial spirit



Sangita Askule joined SSP after learning about it through her fellow SHG members. After attending multiple trainings, she adopted organic agriculture practices. Having bigger aspirations than simply selling her produce locally, she built networks in the large market at Kallam town and now runs a successful vegetable business along with her husband. With her increased income, Sangita has now re-invested her money into livestock rearing activities as well.

Read Sangita's story here: <https://bit.ly/3zGGuPv>

Milking her way to success



Lata Langade, from Gaur village in Osmanabad district, is running a successful dairy business that collects substantial amounts of milk locally, benefiting the community and increasing her own family income by Rs. 6000 per month. By providing a fair and standardised price at her milk collection center, she is also supporting and increasing the income of other farmers who are selling their milk to her!

Read Lata's story here: <https://bit.ly/3f33tLI>

Promoting clean energy as a leader



Sunita Bharati associated herself with SSP's Clean Energy Program in Bihar, through her SHG in 2020. She received training on entrepreneurship development and selling clean energy products like solar LED bulbs, solar lanterns etc. under the Clean Energy Entrepreneurship Program. She also started spreading awareness of the health and environmental benefits of clean energy by organising meetings with women and putting up stalls to sell the products.

Read Sunita's story here: <https://bit.ly/3ta6GAJ>

International Days: Stories from SSP

World Soil Day



Uma tai Karhad became associated with SSP in 2018 and received training on dairy, organic farming methods and soil management. Through careful application of these practices, she slowly improved the soil health. Every year Umatai collects a soil sample and gets it analysed by the local Krushi Sahayak, which helps her in growing crops more suitable to the local soil and environment.

Read Uma tai's story here: <https://bit.ly/33im1nT>

International Day for Eradication of Poverty



Jijabai joined SSP in 2019, after the Covid-19 pandemic pushed her into a difficult economic situation. She undertook various trainings from SSP related to animal husbandry and goat rearing. Jijabai also joined a Farmers Producer Group, made up entirely of goat farmers. Through SSP's support, they are being given loans and being linked to various markets to sell their goats.

Read Jijabai's story here: <https://bit.ly/3Gdj1be>

International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction



Devshala Thorbole, a farmer from Gojwada village in Osmanabad was solely dependent on rainfall for irrigating her farm. Increasingly erratic rainfall patterns and frequent dry spells led to stunted growth of her crops. With training from SSP, she has managed to reduce the climate risk through innovative water resource management techniques including construction of 'jalkumbh's' on her farm.

Read Devshala's story here: <https://bit.ly/3HQTwwW>

World Food Day



Having been associated with SSP since the inception of its climate resilient farming initiative, Vanita More is a pioneer who has inspired many women farmers to experiment with diverse agriculture practices and marketing strategies. Vanita tai processes her own pulses, and has also developed partnerships with various institutions and consumers, to market her products.

Read Vanita tai's story here: <https://bit.ly/33jt53C>

Publications

WASH Field Notes

The 'Women-led Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Resilient Practices' (W-SHARP) project, was designed to increase the resilience of communities threatened by the risk of drought in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra in India. SSP implemented this project with the support of UNICEF and the Government of Maharashtra. The project relied heavily on the participation of women of the Marathwada region, who are singularly the most important facet of this project.



WASH Field Notes are available here: <https://bit.ly/31FIUQg>



Source: Scroll.in

Scroll.in's 'Eco India' show won the Ramnath Goenka Award for reportage on Maharashtra's women farmers trained by Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP).

They reported on women farmers in Maharashtra' Marathwada region, and their efforts to take ownership of land and to tackle persistent droughts. The farmers received training from non-profit organisation SSP in taking informed decisions about crop patterns, food consumption patterns and the sale of their produce.

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3qa4yXR>

Recognition

Ramnath Goenka Award

Rural women walk the pathway of community resilience and development



Recognizing that community priorities had changed post-Covid, Village Action Groups were created in 35 villages of Lohara Block, Maharashtra. This region has seen multiple disasters in the past 30 years. To ensure social inclusion, Village Action Group members were drawn from different castes and communities.

These groups were tasked with creating Village Action Plans that illustrated the new development priorities that emerged after the pandemic. Each micro-plan had three major focus' – economic resilience; access to social protection, entitlements and basic services; and village infrastructure. The process was primarily women-led, with Block level leaders and mentors being elected to support and build capacity of these Village Action Groups.

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3taeBxX>

Events

COP26

Presidency Event: Hearing from the Frontline

SSP made its presence felt in Glasgow, with Naseem Shaikh and Vaishali Gughe participating virtually in the COP Presidency Event on November 8, 2021. They highlighted the role of grassroots women in addressing climate change adaptation at the local level.

Naseem and Vaishali presented SSP's climate resilient farming model that aids marginal women farmers in building food, nutritional and income security, thereby allowing them to diversify into more sustainable livelihood activities. In closing, their key asks were to donors and international organisations, who should focus on investing in grassroots women's leadership by building capacity and providing untied funds directly into the hands of women to create a repository of evidence-based practices that adequately address climate and disaster risks. Watch the full session here: <https://bit.ly/3HMOMs3>



'Warriors, Not Victims: Women-led Approaches to Building Resilience' at the South Asia Resilience Hub

SSP co-hosted this session along with SDI and the Huairou Commission at COP26, with Prema Gopalan, Vaishali Gughe and Godavari Dange participating in the panel virtually. They spoke about how grassroots women's groups should be recognised as climate leaders, and tapping into the potential of millions of SHGs that are already connected to the government in South Asia. They also stressed on the replicability of local women's climate adaptive solutions that can be scaled up for better agriculture and water management strategies. This will have a long term impact in resilience building for future crises. The ability of women to experiment and innovate on climate solutions when they are tasked with managing their own money has been amply illustrated through the work of SSP over the past years.

Watch the full session here:

<https://youtu.be/XbeviafS9mQ>

Rural women entrepreneurs bring in an early Diwali

Rural women's enterprise collectives showcased their food products in Latur & Osmanabad cities on 29-30 October 2021, in twin exhibitions attended by over 5000 people. SURE, a distribution company, and Gaavkhoj, an online retail platform, supported SSP to connect buyers and entrepreneurs with rural businesswomen. These events provided an opportunity for SSP teams and women entrepreneur groups to attract customers in the cities for the first time.

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3r05tcB>

Haqdarshak



Haqdarshak, a mobile app has made it easy for rural communities to get information on government welfare schemes and how to avail them. Since November 2021, SSP (with the support of Haqdarshak) has been training 50 women leaders as Field Agents to provide application support services for government schemes in their community and also earn an independent income in the process.

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3trSSC7>



Events

Product launch at Wayanad, Kerala

The product launch of Kera Vriksha Coconut Producer Company was held at Pallikunnu, Wayanad, on December 18, 2021. Twenty-five Sakhi Farmer's Group members and SSP representatives participated in the event. As their first entrepreneurial initiative aiming to reach value-added products into the market, the Keravriksha Producer Company has started marketing of coriander powder, chilli powder, turmeric powder and kashmiri chilli powder. There are ongoing plans to further expand their business after receiving critical feedback from customers.

Read about the medicinal plant cultivation project in Wayanad here: <https://bit.ly/3nd4rJb>



Dedication ceremony of 'Mundar Rehabilitation Project'



The devastating floods of 2018 severely affected Mundar village in Kottayam, Kerala. Three years later, the village has undergone a complete transformation, facilitated by SSP in partnership with Habitat for Humanity India and HSBC India. On December 28, 2021, a dedication ceremony was held at Mundar to hand over the 'Mundar Rehabilitation Project' to Kallara Gram Panchayat.

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3FfHoDM>

Launching the 'Fair for ALL' project

SSP is happy to be a part of the Huairou Commission - Oxfam Novib supported 'FAIR for ALL' project, launched in October 2021.

SSP will be implementing this project with grassroots women entrepreneurs and producer groups in Maharashtra and Kerala, with the aim of scaling up to new communities in Odisha and Bihar over time.

The programme supports and strengthens grassroots organisations to play key role as mobilizers, mentors, creators and change makers in making trade and value chains FAIR for ALL.

Project partners across the world will focus on advocating for alternative business models through partnerships with the private sector. These partnerships focus on inclusive business practices and fair value chain relationships, such as inclusive ownership and governance.

The SSP team and women leaders extend our deepest thanks for standing with us to steer the COVID Resilience Initiatives.

Our Partners:

Ashoka Innovators for the Public, Aventus, Climate Fund Managers, Crypto Relief, DASRA, Digital India Corporation, European Union, HSBC, Habitat for Humanity India, Huairou Commission, Kaushalya Foundation, Smiles for All, Kamal Udwardia Foundation, Kamal India Foundation, Shapoorji Pallonji, MacArthur Foundation, Misereor, NSE Foundation, Oxford South Asian Society, Roddenberry Foundation, UMED-Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission, GIZ, Welthungerhilfe, Womanity Foundation

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