

QUARTERLY UPDATE

Swayam Shikshan Prayog

January - March 2023

25th Anniversary of SSP !!

We were officially registered as an NGO on 27th March 1998. We would like to thank all our partners, well-wishers, and most of all our powerful women leaders or 'Sakhis' for making SSP what it is today.

From starting our work on disaster rehabilitation after the Latur earthquake in 1993, to the growth of our women-led climate resilient farming model and development of women's entrepreneurship in rural Maharashtra, we have come a long way in the past 25 years. While remembering our Founder, the late Ms. Prema Gopalan, we are committed to taking her vision forward by raising SSP to new heights with all your support.

In the next 10 years, we envision the creation of strong rural value chains run by women-led Farmer Producer Organisations, and the systematization of local processes so that every region is financially sustainable and functions independently as 'mini-SSP's. Watch Out Story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MuGVFzEGV4>

Prema Gopalan Sakhi Prerana Award

Women Innovators of Osmanabad, Solapur, Latur and Nanded districts were honored with 'Prema Gopalan Sakhi Prerana Award' on February 1st 2023, for their transformational grassroots development work. Thirteen women changemakers from different villages in Marathwada were felicitated for their exemplary work in areas such as organic farming, micro-entrepreneurship, environmental protection to counter climate change, skill development, and solving issues related to water, health, community sanitation, education, etc.

The event 'Sakhi Prerana Divas: Birthday Remembrance of the Late Ms. Prema Gopalan' was also attended by scores of women community leaders, corporate CSR heads, and other luminaries from the social sector. Reshma Anand, Regional Director, Ford Foundation and Aloka Majumdar, Head of Corporate Sustainability for HSBC India, were the Chief Guests on the occasion.





Program Updates

Sustainable Water Management

The 'Marathwada District Transformation Model' program, supported by Hindustan Unilever Foundation (HUF), focuses on developing and implementing a model of sustainable water usage in agriculture in Marathwada. This program aims to improve water security and wellbeing of one lakh women farmers across 6 blocks in the drought-prone Osmanabad district of Maharashtra. The achievements of the last quarter are:

- 46,000 farmers from 6 blocks in Osmanabad have adopted the Women-led Climate Resilient Farming Model.
- A certification course of 100 sakhis on watershed management has been completed and they make the Watershed Proposals of own villages with the help of Gram panchayats. 52 plans are ready.
- 1361 Demonstrations were conducted on Demo farms with different activities.
- Conducted 6 Block level Workshop on Watershed with GP members and Farmers.
- 100 Village level Awareness meeting with GP, and Gram sevak.
- 3 Days FPO Director Capacity Building training at Sahyadri Farms, Nashik.
- District level Dialogue workshop with Govt. Officials for progress of watershed program
- 5 Block level Dialogue workshops with Govt. Officials for Schemes Conversion.
- District level Learning Exchange workshop with sakhis for exchanging ideas.
- One State level dialogue workshop at YASHADA, Pune.

Women's Entrepreneurship and Value Chains

The European Union-supported project "ISUDWOG - Inclusive and Sustainable Development for Women and Girls" will be run in the Osmanabad district of Maharashtra state. The global objective of the project is to strengthen the ability of civil society and its organizations to be influential in socioeconomic development, through participatory bottom-up processes, strategies, and actions for the main benefit of women. The major achievements in the last quarter include:

- A five-day basic training session on business start-up, along with training sessions on "how to make a business plan," has been successfully conducted across four blocks. A total of 100 women participants have actively taken part in these training sessions. As a result, 20 business plans have been created, reflecting the participants' newfound knowledge and skills in developing comprehensive strategies for their entrepreneurial ventures. The training aimed to equip women with the necessary tools and expertise to initiate successful business endeavors and foster economic empowerment in their respective communities.
- Block-level dialogue workshop to engage with the VCN (Value Chain Network) focus group. The workshop included 458 women participants from Bhoom, Kallam, Paranda and Washil blocks.
- The five-day workshop focused on scaling up farms' capacities in the areas of organic farming and climate resilience. The workshop has been conducted in three blocks of Osmanabad and 120 women participated in it.
- Capacity building training workshop focused on gender issues and mainstreaming. The workshop has been conducted in four blocks and 80 women participated.

Program Updates

Clean Energy and Women's Entrepreneurship

The South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP) project, supported by RTI International and funded by USAID, is focusing on scaling-up access to innovative and energy efficient solutions through the promotion of biodigesters and vegetable (subjee) coolers for rural populations in 500 villages across 5 districts in Maharashtra (Latur, Osmanabad, Solapur) and Bihar (Gaya, Nalanda) through a women-led micro-entrepreneurship model. The major achievements in the last quarter include:

- Training for 194 women micro-entrepreneurs in 8 batches from 8 blocks of Maharashtra. While 65 Sakhis received the full 6-day planned training; 129 Sakhis have completed some part of their trainings and the completion is due in April 2023.
- Women micro-entrepreneurs from pilot batches in Solapur and Latur districts participated in training evaluation sessions organized by SSP's knowledge partner, Re-emerging World.
- Women micro-entrepreneurs executed last mile promotion campaigns to generate demand and drive sales of clean energy products.

Gender Transformative Program

SSP in partnership with UNICEF, MAVA and CORO India are implementing the Gender Transformative Programme in Osmanabad. which seeks to reduce the gender disparities in Osmanabad by engaging with students and teachers of upper primary and secondary schools. Under this, SSP has started sessions with students and teachers of 20 schools in Osmanabad. The achievements of the last quarter are:

- 7 Gender fairs were arranged in Osmanabad which was attended by 2900 community members
- 32 School Management Committee Gender sensitivity trainings were held which was attended by 283 school staffs
- 260 gender sensitive trainings were held where 1250 students participated

Health and Nutrition

The "Health and Nutrition Project" is being implemented by SSP with the support of Kamal Udwadia Foundation in Loha block in Nanded district of Maharashtra. The project was focussing on following programs in the last quarter:

- Regular track on Antenatal Care (ANC) and PostNatal Care (PHC), health and nutrition and also on immunization. Covering economical aspects, landless and marginal farmers have been oriented for livelihood activities and agri allied activities.
- Focus on water, sanitation and health (WASH) issues in the villages, selected for model villages. Problems are sketched with the better participation of women and their collectives.
- Liasoning with different line departments at the taluka and district level is the other major project process that took place in the quarter.

Program Updates

Women-led Resilient Development and Leadership

Improvement of the socio-economic conditions of women from poor households - The Misereor supported project focuses on community driven resilience and change that is led by women. This project envisions women-driven change in communities, markets and local governance systems, and aims to reach 50,000 farmers across 500 villages in 10 blocks in Latur, Solapur, Osmanabad, Nanded and Jalna districts of Maharashtra.

The partnership between community groups led by women and the governance systems required innovations in the delivery of social protection services and means of communication. The rural women, engaging with the government system for the first time in large numbers, gained self-awareness and confidence, used technology and social media for local communication, and consolidated their farming practices to focus on health, food and nutrition security for their households and communities. SSP's Women's Initiative to Learn and Lead (WILL) program facilitates mentoring and support for women farmers, and invests in building the capacities of farming communities by expanding their inclusive approaches to socially marginalised and landless groups.

The major achievements in the last quarter include:

- Awareness generation of women's land rights to giving land entitlement to women and 2,543 women had their names in Government Land Records.
- 5,139 women farmers received Rs. 15,898,230 as support from various government schemes on agriculture, health, and agri-allied business.
- With the help of SSP's facilitation 4,255 women received Rs. 61,856,000 value loan from the national bank as well as local banks (micro finances) for agri and agri-allied activities.
- SSP trained 2,489 grassroots women of Village Action Group (VAG) leaders with the knowledge module of leadership development in last quarter.
- 2,533 women were trained with the Entrepreneurship development program (EDP)
- 1,668 Village Action Group members attended meetings with the Gram-panchayat in their respective villages and discussed on the better planning of utilisation of available resources.
- 3,999 women farmers are successfully continuing their vermicompost business and sustaining the vermicompost value chain established in the Kallamb Block, and able to sale 3 lakh worth of the compost in a quarter.
- SSP team organised the workshop with 7,367 women farmers on the improved organic farming practices and climate resilient farming.





Program Updates

Strengthening civil society and mobilizing grassroots women to demand and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable value chains

The Power of Voices FAIR for ALL Program, supported by Huairou Commission, aims to economically empower 30,000 farmers by 2025, and is being implemented in Wayanad district of Kerala, and Osmanabad district of Maharashtra. The project is focusing on strengthening civil society and mobilizing grassroots women to demand and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable trade and value chains. The major achievements in the last quarter are:

Advanced business training

Entrepreneurship Development (EDP) Training was organised to groom women as business leaders to start agri and agri allied business. The trained pools of business women will bring strong FPOs with different value added products for scaling and reaching out to a better market for earning money, recognition and promoting organic produce at fair price.

Agricultural Value Chain

Formation of Sarayi FPO in Bhoom is a major step to bring powerful women farmers and entrepreneurs in the value chain network. The Sarayi FPO started in year 2 and the membership drive is going on in all the project villages with shareholder strength of 250 women. We have identified Milk Separator to process milk, ghee and butter milk.

In Wayanad, Kerala 502 members have become shareholders in the Keravriksha FPO so far and opened the second outlet at Venniyode on 1st March 2023. Opening of FPO outlet in Wayanad, Kerala is another major step in strengthening the business as well as reaching out to bigger markets. Branding of the FPO is going on and in the coming year Keravriksha FPO will bring innovative products to the market. The outlet got a response from the community as a lot of people visiting the town will be able to shop for organic/traditional products from women entrepreneurs and farmers.

Advocacy

Advocacy efforts at local and district level were organized to strengthen the coalition in the agricultural value chain. Different government departments, women leaders and civil society organisations joined together to discuss various challenges in women in the agriculture sector, available schemes and programmes that can be useful for women farmers to scale up their farming and recognition of women and leaders at local level was discussed.

In Maharashtra, SSP is working with grassroots women leaders and FPOs in innovating value added/unique products to promote in the larger market. Flax seeds are one of the main crops that Sarayi FPO wants to cultivate and sell at a larger level. We have conducted a pilot in flaxseed farming with proper study in villages. The investment in flaxseed farming is very less and the sale price is encouraging. The investment cost in 1 acre is Rs. 4000 (\$ 50) and the profit was Rs 24000 (\$ 300) and this is an encouraging result for women farmers. Milk based products in Bhoom block will strengthen the business opportunities once they bring technology and partnership.

Stories from the Field



Najmath Rahim, from Vypady village in Wayanad, Kerala is leading women in her community to become financially independent and empowered after she became a mentor and leader with SSP. Three years ago, Najmath and four women from her village started a Sakhi Farmers Group, Vypadi, one of SSP's first women's groups in Kerala. In 2021, Najmath joined the newly created Keravriksha Farmer Producer Company as a promoter and she inspired more farmers to join the FPO as shareholders, and identify opportunities for training farmers. As a leader and mentor, Najmath was successfully able to bring 50 new farmers as shareholders to the FPO. Today, Najmath sells her vegetables at the local Kudumbashree market and to the FPO of which she is a part. She is earning an income of Rs.6000 per season from the vegetable cultivation and another Rs.30,000 per year from goat rearing.

"Today, I have a good standing in the community and I am well respected and recognized for my work in helping women farmers", says Najmath.

In the Media

On the Contrary - Podcast by IDR

SSP is glad to be a part of the 5th season of IDR's podcast 'On the Contrary by IDR'. Naseem Shaikh, Associate Director of Programs at SSP, was part of the panel discussing "What will the future of farming in India look like?". This season, the podcast supported by Hindustan Unilever Foundation, dives into a range of issues pertaining to water security in India - groundwater levels, the future of agriculture, and the role of women - and what business leaders, policymakers, and civil society can do to address these challenges.

Link to the podcast with transcript:

<https://idronline.org/podcasts/on-the-contrary-podcast-social-impact/what-will-the-future-of-farming-in-india-look-like/>



Stories from the Field



Gokarna More, a woman leader and entrepreneur from Yakatpur village in Latur, Maharashtra recognised the importance of livelihoods diversification and supported her family by starting four small-scale businesses in her village. Always interested in learning, and seeking to improve her family's economic situation, she began to attend trainings on entrepreneurship development and the one-acre farming model organized by Swayam Shikshan Prayog. With the support of her family, started bio-farming and vegetable cultivation in the initial 22 guntas of land. From the first season itself, Gokarna tai noticed an improvement in family health, and reduced costs of having to purchase food from the market. Today she, along with her husband, carry out bio-farming on 3 acres of land, selling the produce in the village, block (Ausa) and district (Latur) market.

Bolstered by this success, Gokarna tai decided to diversify into other agri-allied businesses based on the training she had received from SSP. By reinvesting the profits of the vegetable and goat business, they were able to increase their herd to 25 goats in 2022. A savvy businesswoman, Gokarna tai also purchased a buffalo in 2018 and entered the dairy business. The milk is sold to the village's Laxmi Dairy, and Gokarna tai receives the money directly into her bank account. Today, Gokarna tai has 2 buffalos and one cow whose milk she sells.

Events

Presenting First Medical Plant Harvest to Kerala Ayurvedic Cooperative Society, Kozhikode

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) collaborated with the Kerala Government's State Medicinal Plant Board (SMPB) and the Kerala Ayurvedic Cooperative Society, Kozhikode, to promote ayurvedic medicinal plants for health and entrepreneurship. On March 6, 2023, Ms. Valsamma Stephen and Ms. Najmath Rahim presented their first harvest of the Kiriyaatha herb to Kerala Ayurvedic Cooperative Society, Kozhikode at a simple ceremony in Perambra. The occasion is a significant step forward in SSP's efforts to expand and strengthen medicinal plant cultivation in Wayanad. Through this partnership, Sakhi farmers are earning a livelihood and gaining financial security, while benefiting the environment by carrying out sustainable cultivation as well.

Stories from the Field

Usha Jadhav, a rural woman leader in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, is transforming how women look at health and nutrition of their families, through awareness raising and promotion of organic agriculture. Usha tai first got associated with SSP in mid-2019, when she began to attend trainings on the integrated ‘one-acre model farming’ model and health and nutrition. She soon emerged as a strong leader, and moved on to address larger women’s meetings in her village, conducting trainings on health and nutrition, organic farming, vermicomposting, and women’s rights and access to government social protection schemes.

In 2022, Usha tai mobilised women in her community to attend the quarterly Gram Sabha, and presented the maps, along with women’s agenda’s to the Gram Sevak and Panchayat members. As a result, the Panchayat took immediate action to improve lighting and sanitation in the village. The repair of the access road to the village, another major issue, is currently underway. Further, issues related to water and tree plantation have been formally introduced into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan and officially approved.

Usha tai says that there has been a visible change in her village over the past 2.5 years, with over 40 women starting to cultivate food crops like vegetables, grains and pulses using organic methods and vermicomposting. Some of the more enterprising women are also selling surplus vegetables locally, as the village does not have a market.



Events

Women entrepreneurs invited to International Women’s Day celebrations by the Government of Kerala

Swayam Shikshan Prayog is honoured to have been invited to participate in the International Women’s Day celebrations in Thiruvananthapuram by the Government of Kerala. District Industries Centre, Wayand District selected Ms. Preena Muralidharan, Director, Keravriksha FPO and Ms. Valsamma Stephen, model farmer and member of Keravriksha FPO to participate in the event along with 16 women entrepreneurs from Wayanad. On Women’s Day, exemplary women from various sectors were recognised for increasing their monthly income through innovative work and gaining respect in the family and community. Smt. Veena George, Minister of Health inaugurated the event and Shri. P. I. Rajiv, Minister of Labour, presided over the function.

Stories from the Field

In a society increasingly dependent on Internet Communication and Technology, this year's IWD theme of 'DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality' becomes more relevant than ever. Dwarka Jadhav, from Bhopni village in of Latur district, Maharashtra comes from a farming background. After joining SSP in 2021, she slowly expanded to organic vegetable cultivation and even started a photocopy shop in her home. This is an account of her journey of digital transformation in a rural setting.

By attending SSP's entrepreneurship and digital literacy training, Dwarka tai learnt how to use mobile applications for maintaining accounts, finding the daily market rate of vegetables online, online banking etc. Using what she learnt, she was able to increase her vegetable sales from INR 2000 per month to 8000 per month approximately.

In 2022, Dwarka tai used her savings from the successful vegetable business to purchase a photocopy machine, and started the first 'xerox' shop in her village. Though she received basic training, she found herself confused and facing problems in operating the machine. In this situation, showing remarkable resourcefulness, Dwarka tai resorted to searching the internet for tutorials, and was able to teach herself how to operate the machine through online training videos. She even repaired the machine using online training manuals on two different occasions when there were minor problems. Today, Dwarka tai makes a profit of around INR 10,000 per month from her photocopying business alone.

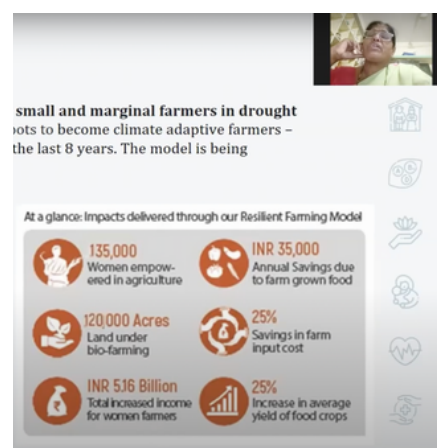


Events

C20 IHH Policy Event - Nutrition

Naseem Shaikh, from Swayam Shikshan Prayog, spoke at the C20 IHH Policy Event - Nutrition (webinar) on 16th March and highlighted the role of women in climate and nutrition sensitive farming strategies. The C20 provides a platform and space for grassroots level and global CSOs to contribute in a structured and impactful manner to the C20 discussions.

Watch Here: <https://youtu.be/v5D2sitP9E4?t=4210>



Events

Clean Energy Awareness Fair, Bihar



Entrepreneurial skills should be further enhanced within Sakhis, so that they can educate customers, sell affordable energy solutions and run campaigns to make aware of the challenges in climate change and carbon emission. SSP organized a three-day clean energy women entrepreneurship fair from February 18th to 20th, 2023, at Atma village in Nalanda District, Bihar.

Around 35,000 visitors learned about clean energy products such as biogas, vegetable coolers, solar energy products, organic manure and vermi beds during this fair. Representatives of product partners participated in the fair on all the three days and helped Sakhis in creating awareness among people. The event was part of the project 'Improving Access to Clean Energy through Women's Entrepreneurship' supported by Misereor, Germany.

District Advocacy Dialogue, Wayanad



More than 250 women farmers and leaders across Kottathara and Edavaka Panchayats in Wayanad, Kerala came together to have dialogue with Government officials and other development stakeholders on 1st March 2023 in Venniyode. This event was attended by various government officials to listen to women farmers' problems and explore relevant government programmes and schemes. The event was inaugurated by Padmashree Cheruvayal Ramettan, who spoke about the role of women in protecting the environment by practicing ecological farming.

Prior to the dialogue event, the second outlet of Keravriksha Producer Organisation was inaugurated by Padmashree Cheruvayal Ramettan at Venniyode. Sakhi Farmers and people from different walks of life attended the event. The outlet showcases healthy and chemical free products such as turmeric powder, coconut oil, rice, arrowroot powder, dried mango, bird's eye chilli, honey, eggs, vegetables etc produced by the Keravriksha FPO members.

In the Media

Women Talk Health Campaign on Twitter

SP participated in the Women Talk Health Campaign on Twitter, coordinated by the organisation Swasti. The campaign was focused on the stories and lived realities of marginalised women in and around healthcare. SSP's Aarogya sakhi's and Clean Energy Entrprenurs were featured as part of this campaign, for their work in promoting menstrual health, hygiene, sanitation and nutrition amongst rural communities in Maharashtra and Bihar.

Link: https://twitter.com/hashtag/WomenTalkHealth?src=hashtag_click



Women farmers and SSP's Climate Resilient Farming Model in Wayanad

Thirunelly's seed festival celebrates traditional climate-resilient seeds and farm produce

by Max Martin on 20 March 2023



Swayam Shikshan Prayog, an award-winning NGO, promotes women-led climate-resilient farming and works with local women in a farm produce start-up called Keravriksha (coconut palm) and smaller ventures in Wayanad, Kerala.

Kartyanaiamma in her 70s prepares and sells vaduku, small friable balls made of rice flour, turkey berry, garlic and other medicinal herbs from her farm. P.K. Radha, another village elder, distributes vegetable seeds treated with ash, smoke and cow dung that keep pests away, a technique taught by her ancestors. Her friends say she will be called Vitthamma (Mother Seed) soon. Sreejisha, a young Kurichiya adivasi woman, rotates vegetable crops in her rice paddy after harvest in “a very small first step, a beginning”, technically called the one-acre model. “The challenge, however, is to keep wild boars, pythons, monkeys and leopards away,” Kartyanaiamma said.

Read here: <https://india.mongabay.com/2023/03/thirunellys-seed-festival-celebrates-traditional-climate-resilient-seeds-and-farm-produce/>

In the Media

SSP recognised as one of the top five NGOs in the country

SSP was recognised by the online news portal India.com as one of the five NGOs that have changed the face of women's livelihood in India in 2022.

Link: <https://www.india.com/viral/5-ngos-that-have-changed-the-face-of-womens-livelihood-in-2022-5832182/>

Scroll article on Eco India Premier film

This Scroll article, published on March 22, 2023, mentioned the Ramnath Goenka award-winning film that featured Swayam Shikshan Prayog - SSP's one-acre farming model. The film focuses on the efforts of women farmers in Maharashtra's Marathwada region to take ownership of land and to tackle persistent droughts. The film is produced by Eco India Premier team and was published by Scroll on: <https://youtu.be/49EB20h4n1g>

Read the article here: <https://amp.scroll.in/latest/1046103/scrolls-eco-india-show-wins-ramnath-goenka-award-for-report-on-maharashtras-women-farmers>

Our Partners:

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