

QUARTERLY UPDATE

Swayam Shikshan Prayog

January - March 2024

Swayam Shikshan Prayog is delighted to share with you the key achievements and progress that has been made during the quarter of January to March 2024 toward our organisation's mission. We are immensely proud of the strides we have taken to empower communities and create a positive impact.

Key Achievements

Empowerment Initiatives: Throughout the quarter, SSP has witnessed remarkable participation from grassroots women across diverse communities, alongside significant progress in our community development and women empowerment initiatives.

Innovative Projects: Our innovative projects continue to yield outstanding results. Through the dedication and hard work of our teams and community leaders, we have seen success in areas such as sustainable livelihoods, climate resilience agriculture, clean energy, health and nutrition and sanitation.

Partnerships and Collaborations: We have established new partnerships and collaborations with like-minded organisations and stakeholders such as Axis Bank Foundation and SBI Foundation which has furthered our reach and impact within the communities.

Recognition and Awards: SSP's work and our women leaders have been recognized locally and nationally with awards and acknowledgements from partners and stakeholders. For instance, the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) recognized SSP's Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) model. Additionally, Lokmat Sakhi Manch honoured Anjali Masalkar, a grassroots woman leader from SSP, as one of the Lokmat Women Achievers of Latur-2024, acknowledging her remarkable journey in agricultural leadership. These accolades serve as a testament to the positive changes we are effecting in people's lives.





Highlights of the Quarter

Women-led Climate Resilient Agriculture

Raising Farmers' Awareness through Trainings

SSP organised an awareness campaign, drawing over 1080 women, with the assistance of ward sakhis in Wayanad District in Kerala. The focus was on empowering women through active participation in agriculture and climate-resilient farming, including the cultivation of vegetable gardens for personal consumption. Sessions highlighted essential components of climate-resilient farming, stressing the role of production in ensuring family income and self-reliance. Participants were urged to implement knowledge to enhance food crop cultivation, prioritising ecosystem sustainability. Emphasis was placed on using bio fertilisers and pesticides for cost-saving benefits, alongside vermicompost and waste compost utilisation. The advantages of multi cropping and indigenous seeds were discussed, along with renewable energy's potential in the Women-led Climate-Resilient Farming (WCRF) model. Participants expressed interest in community engagement in the WCRF model. Sessions concluded with a call to action, urging participants to embrace their roles as agricultural cultivators and resilient farmers. Capacity-building efforts with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Wayanad and Regional Agricultural Research Station Ambalavayal included sessions on natural farming and soil test based plant nutrition, benefitting 80 and 30 women farmers, respectively. These initiatives aimed to equip women with practical skills, further empowering them in agriculture.

Demonstration of Improved Agricultural Practices

Under these activities, Sakhis demonstrated various improved agricultural practices in 320 villages on around 750 farms in Dharashiv district of Maharashtra. Total of 33,734 farmers participated to observe and learn from these demonstrations. Demonstrations were conducted for farmers to see the difference between regular practices and sustainable, climate-smart practices, which are helpful in improving crop growth and yield. According to different crop stages, a crop advisory for identification and control of pests and diseases using organic methods was delivered to Sakhis in the form of videos, digital leaflets, and images through whatsapp. Sakhis also distributed this information to farmers by organising meetings with Farmer Group meetings. "Out of all Digital Information, the Water stress Management advisory was very beneficial to farmers because there was a huge interval in rain (30 to 45 days) and crops were shown water efficient and all farmers were worried about crop".

Through these demonstrations, 1.50 lakh litres of dashparni (bioinsecticide) and 50,000 litres of jivamrut (natural fertiliser) were prepared by farmers and sprayed on crops, which reduced cultivation costs, increased soil fertility and improved crop health in Maharashtra.

Identification and Creation of Demonstration Plots

After conducting field visits to understand the opportunities, resources, and challenges at the field level, three demonstration plots were identified in Wayanad District: two in Konathukunnu and one in Valiyakunnu. Farmers were given necessary guidance, and Sakhis conducted frequent field visits to support them in setting up demonstration plots.

Training for Community Resource Persons (CRPs) on the WCRF model

Training on the Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) model was organised for 356 community resource persons, to share insights from SSPs work in Dharashiv District. The objective of this training was to improve the capacities of CRPs in climate adaptation and climate-resilient farming practices, resulting in better impact on the field. As community leaders, CRPs play a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge and fostering resilience among women farmers.

Prepared a WCRF model implementation plan for Wayanad District

The community resource persons, women leaders and staff were involved in preparing a plan for implementing the WCRF Model in Wayanad District, with a focus on Kottathara Panchayat. This plan was developed by devising five implementation strategies based on factors such as landholding area, cropping systems, changes in weather patterns, and crop durations. The data collected and compiled by SSP was finalised with the support of the scientists from Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) Ambalavayal, scientists from Integrated Farming Systems Research Station (IFSRS), subject matter specialists from Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), the project director of Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), and the agricultural officer of Kottathara Panchayat.

Peer Learning Exchange on Chemical-free Vegetable Gardening

As part of a peer exchange learning initiative, 15 women farmers from three villages in Kottathara Panchayat visited Safiya's vegetable garden in Puzhakkamvayal Panchayat, in Wayanad District. Safiya showcased how she cultivated 10 different types of crops using organic and sustainable methods. She also shared insights on practices like composting, bio-fertilizers, and bio-pesticides that she used. The exchange was mutually beneficial, empowering participants with knowledge and confidence in vegetable gardening. They shared experiences and techniques, aiming to increase productivity for personal and community consumption. Many expressed interest in adopting new methods and promoting indigenous seeds for higher yields. Overall, the peer learning exchange facilitated informed decision-making and ownership of vegetable gardens among the participants.





Training on Seed Management and Seed Exchange

SSP organised training on seed management, led by block leaders in Dharashiv district. The series of trainings were attended by 7,872 farmers from 273 villages. The training focused on the advantages and proper management of locally adapted seeds for the upcoming Kharif season, emphasising sustainability. The sessions also facilitated a seed-exchange among women farmers in the villages, promoting community resilience and agricultural self-sufficiency.

Establishment of Traditional Seed Banks

In the last quarter, SSP started the seed bank in Wayanad, with various indigenous seeds of pea, beans, pumpkin, lady's finger, and bitter gourd, with the vision of conserving indigenous seeds and promoting their cultivation. The seeds were collected from the women farmers of Kottathara and Thettupad Panchayats. Women farmers from the Valiyakunnu Panchayat also approached SSP to collect the indigenous seeds for cultivation and were ready to multiply the indigenous seeds. SSP has decided to provide the indigenous seeds of pea, beans, pumpkin, lady's finger, and bitter gourd to the dedicated and interested women farmers on the agreement of its multiplication. SSP also started to maintain a record book to collect the names and details of the seed donors and receivers. The seed bank and multiplication of seeds will be good to developing the trust, credibility, and visibility of the SSP's intervention among the stakeholders as well as among the women and community.

Training on Vermicompost Production

In the quarter, 16 demonstrations were conducted on creating vermicompost, attracting participation of 150 women in Dharashiv district. Additionally, a soil testing demonstration for vegetable cultivation was held in one village, with 34 women actively taking part. These demonstrations aimed to provide practical insights and hands-on learning experiences to women farmers in their respective value chains. The sessions focused on showcasing best practices and techniques to optimise productivity and quality in vermicompost production and vegetable cultivation. Overall, the demonstrations contributed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of women farmers for improved agricultural practices and increased yields.

Rabi Crop cutting Experience

Crop-cutting experiments were conducted across villages in Dharashiv district to evaluate major Kharif and Rabbi crops like green gram, soyabean, tur, gram, wheat and jowar. In each village, detailed documentation was prepared, focusing on farmer details, crop specifics, and sowing/harvesting dates. Training sessions, both online and face-to-face, were conducted for Block Coordinators and village sakhis on plot selection and yield calculation methods. A total of 960 experiments were carried out by 320 sakhis, covering gram, sorghum, and wheat crops.

Linkages with Government Institutions

Visits were made to various governmental institutions including Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS), Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA), District Industries Centre (DIC), and the Agriculture Office to gather information about the extension services offered to farmers. The objective was to establish connections between these institutions and SSP's women farmers. Training and capacity-building sessions were scheduled on specific topics, to be conducted by subject matter specialists from RARS, IFSRS, KVK, ATMA and DIC.

Drought Mitigation Initiatives

In response to drought conditions, extensive efforts were made to equip women farmers with essential skills for managing fodder effectively. Through targeted training sessions, a total of 2,645 farmers received training on hydroponics and azolla cultivation. The training sessions focused on imparting practical techniques and strategies tailored to the specific needs of farmers facing water shortages. Participants learned innovative methods for cultivating and conserving green fodder, ensuring its availability during periods of low rainfall. By adopting these practices, farmers gained the ability to sustain livestock feed supplies even under adverse climatic conditions, safeguarding their livelihoods and agricultural productivity. Moreover, the training programs fostered knowledge sharing and collaboration among farmers, enabling them to leverage collective expertise and experiences in implementing effective fodder management practices. This collaborative approach not only enhanced the efficacy of individual farming operations but also promoted community-wide resilience to drought-related crises.

Field Visits to Demonstrate Implementation of the WCRF Model

SSP organised 10 field visits in the quarter to the villages in Dharashiv, Solapur and Latur in Maharashtra, where a total of 165 women actively participated, immersing themselves in on-site learning experiences. The visits provided invaluable opportunities for women to observe firsthand the implementation of the WCRF model, including its techniques for sustainable agriculture and resource management. Through interactive sessions and practical demonstrations, participants gained insights into innovative farming practices and strategies for enhancing productivity while preserving natural resources.

Government Scheme Convergence

Under Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh's Natural Farming Mission, 718 women across 14 groups from six blocks of Dharashiv district were chosen for specialised training in the government's organic farming initiative. Over a 3-year period, these women farmers will transition to fully organic farming, aiming for certification upon completion. Furthermore, the ATMA department of Kallamb Block in Dharashiv District, provided Neem Ark and safety kits for spraying to 855 women.

In total, 1,573 women from Dharashiv have benefited from various government schemes, marking a substantial step towards agricultural sustainability and women's empowerment.



Clean Energy

Creating Awareness on Clean Energy

SSP organised meetings in 325 villages on 'Biogas Plant Operation and Maintenance', reaching out to 3,461 families from Dharashiv, Latur and Solapur districts of Maharashtra and also from Nalanda and Gaya districts of Bihar. These sessions, facilitated by SSP's staff and Sakhis, focused on operating the biogas units and troubleshooting the most commonly occurring problems.

Training on Sale and Promotion of Biogas

SSP organised two-day training in three districts of Maharashtra, which was attended by a total of 88 micro entrepreneurs (Swayam Sakhis). These entrepreneurs were trained on business expansion, developing business plans, marketing and promotion to attract new customers, as well as financial and digital literacy. In the last quarter, these Sakhis from Maharashtra have earned a total of Rs. 4.05 lakhs as a result of the sales of biodigesters. By installing biodigesters at home, farmer families save on their costs for purchasing LPG. The usage of biodigesters instead of LPG led to a reduction of approximately 6,721.26 metric tons (MT) of carbon emissions in the quarter.

In Bihar, training of the Sakhis including the operation, maintenance, promotion and marketing of biogas units was organised in partnership with technical staff from Sistema.Bio. This was followed by exposure visits to farms where biogas units were being operated successfully.





Women's Entrepreneurship and Value Chain Development

Launch of 'Project Swalamban'

As part of the Axis Bank supported 'Project Swalamban', focuses on uplifting rural livelihoods in Latur District by diversifying opportunities across various domains, aiming for holistic village development. Significant strides were made in the last quarter, with meticulous completion of preliminary preparations and careful selection of 220 villages for intervention. Notably, innovative features like the Multiple Poverty Index and advanced technologies such as the Management Information System (MIS) dashboard were introduced to ensure efficient project monitoring and evaluation. The formal launch, attended by the Axis Bank Foundation Team and regional executives, marked the beginning of a transformative journey towards rural prosperity.

Mobilisation and Awareness Raising

In the last quarter we actively engaged and mobilised 12,104 women farmers in Dharashiv, Latur, Solapur and Pune to create awareness about SSP's work in the entrepreneurship sector, through the 'Fair for All' and 'Swabhiman' programs. The focus of these sessions was to ensure that grassroots women were aware of their rights, especially land rights, and various government provisions and schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREG), and others from the Agri department and Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) that could benefit them. Furthermore, women were introduced to the grassroots women-led Sarayi Sakhi Farmer Producer Company in Bhoom at Dharashiv and details were shared about upcoming training sessions planned for the village. Women were also mobilised to participate in SSP's entrepreneurship development training program as part of the Citibank N.A. supported project on Building resilient communities by generating livelihood opportunities for women in Solapur, Latur and Pune districts in Maharashtra.

Agriculture Value Chain Enterprise Development

In the Bhoom Block of Dharashiv District, a series of Value Chain Promotion Meetings were organised with 400 women farmers, of whom 80 women joined the farmer producer groups in their villages. These groups are set to be integrated into the Sarayi Sakhi Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) for facilitating product sales. Participants received detailed briefings on the value chain system and its associated economic advantages, with the primary goal of fostering women's economic empowerment through enhanced market connections for their Produce. Moving forward, the FPO will extend support to these producer groups in efficiently promoting and marketing their products.

Mentorship and Handholding for Women Entrepreneurs

SSP's women leaders provided mentoring and handholding support to new entrepreneurs across five blocks of Dharashiv by helping them access government schemes, bank loans and formally registering their enterprises with the government. Mentors supported the Udyam Adhar registration of 481 enterprises, the registration of 129 shops and helped 99 entrepreneurs get their FSSAI (food licence).

Entrepreneurship Development Program

Basic Training

In the quarter, SSP achieved notable strides in empowering women through Basic Business Training. With a total of 11,980 women from the three districts of Maharashtra undergoing training, these trainings delved into essential subjects such as business planning and financial management, aiming to cultivate entrepreneurship and enhance skill sets. Despite encountering obstacles related to connectivity and accessibility, SSP prioritised inclusivity, ensuring widespread participation and knowledge dissemination regarding government initiatives.

Advanced Training

Through SSP's Advanced Entrepreneurship Training program, 480 women entrepreneurs from Bhoom Block of Dharashiv District received specialised training in various domains, each meticulously facilitated by invited subject matter experts. The sessions focused on the women entrepreneurs' respective enterprises, along with crucial topics such as market analysis and financial planning, thereby enriching participants' understanding of business dynamics.

As part of the Startup Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP) program, SSP carried out Community-Based Organization (CBO) orientations, Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP) training, skill development sessions, and mobilizations in Jalna District of Maharashtra in the last quarter. As a result, in the Jalna and Bhokardan blocks, there are a total of 72 Community Resource Persons for Entrepreneurship Promotion (CRPEP) and 9 trainers.

A total of 65 Enterprise Development Program trainings have been conducted in the Bhokardan block, with 1,697 women entrepreneurs participating, and 53 trainings have been conducted in the Jalna block, with 1,329 participants since the project started in April 2022. Furthermore, a total of 554 new enterprises have been initiated in Jalna, and 602 in Bhokardan block. Additionally, there are 84 supported enterprises in Jalna and 81 in Bhokardan. Block-level and cluster entrepreneur meetings have been conducted to facilitate networking and collaboration during the project period.





Value Chain Enterprise Development and Producer Groups Training

SSP organised comprehensive Value Chain Enterprise Development Training for 1,493 women farmers and entrepreneurs across six key sectors: Vermicomposting, Vegetable, Egg, Turmeric, Pulses, and Jowar across six blocks of Dharashiv, Latur, Nanded and Solapur districts. This training focused on bolstering business acumen, market understanding, and sustainable practices within each value chain. Through interactive sessions and expert guidance, participants gained vital skills to excel in their respective agricultural sectors.

In the last quarter, 110 producer group meetings were convened across various villages across the above four districts in Maharashtra, attended by 2,776 women farmers. Discussions revolved around critical topics like data collection on production yields, market exploration, and identifying potential linkages with market channels and the FPO. Detailed deliberations were also held on the cluster business concept, aiming to foster collaboration among producer groups for collective growth and sustainability. Moreover, participants exchanged insights on adopting efficient cultivation methods to ensure a consistent and high-quality supply to meet anticipated demands in the upcoming seasons. These initiatives aim to empower women farmers, enhance market access, and promote sustainable agricultural practices for long-term

Producer Group Members attend KVK Training

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) conducted a one-day training session on turmeric pickle preparation, attended by seven women producers affiliated with SSP. The training organised in Nanded district provided a comprehensive demonstration of the pickle recipe, equipping participants with the necessary skills for production. By imparting knowledge on turmeric pickle preparation, the training sought to empower women producers to explore new market opportunities and expand their product portfolios. Overall, the session facilitated skill development and product innovation among women entrepreneurs in the community.

Mechanisation of Value Chain Enterprises

There are six value chains being implemented in the six blocks of Dharashiv, Solapur, Latur and Nanded blocks, to be more specific, the vermicompost value chain in Kallamb Dharashiv, the Egg value chain washi Dharashiv, the Pulses value chain in Latur, Turmeric value chain in Loha Nanded, Jawar Value chain in North Solapur block of Solapur District & Vegetable Value chain in South Solapur block of Solapur District. SSP has provided some machinery to each value chain enterprises to smoothen their businesses.

In the last quarter, each value chain received essential support machinery from the SSP through the Misereor support project to enhance productivity and efficiency. For turmeric production, machinery such as the dhol polish machine, turmeric powder machine, stitching machine, and weighing scale were provided. Vermicompost operations were supported with 10 vermicompost beds, a weighing scale, and a stitching machine. Egg production benefited from packaging trays, a weighing scale, and a packaging machine. Additionally, vegetable growers received two solar dryers to aid in food preservation. Lastly, the jawar value chain was equipped with a gradation machine, weighing scale, and stitching machine, facilitating improved grain processing and packaging.



Development of Local Markets

The buyer-seller meet organised by SSP in the Washi block of Dharashiv District facilitated direct transactions between egg buyers from hotels, wholesalers, and grocery shops with local farmers. Buyers outlined their demand, agreeing to purchase directly from farmers, fostering fair prices and smoother transactions. This initiative established transparent and collaborative links within the egg supply chain, benefiting both parties by eliminating intermediaries.

Concurrently, SSP's efforts in local market creation and customer acquisition yielded promising results. Through targeted marketing and outreach initiatives, SSP could acquire 638 new customers across various value chains. This expansion signifies a significant milestone in promoting women farmers products and services by fostering transparency, collaboration, and market growth.

Data Collection to Strengthen Value Chains

SSP's team conducted an updated data collection of production from 3,494 adopter farmers to gain insights into their productivity levels and market trends. This data analysis, conducted with the support of the Misereor-supported project, aimed to identify patterns in production volumes and understand the selling structures adopted by farmers. Additionally, we sought to assess the impact of various factors on their production, such as weather conditions and agricultural practices.

Government Scheme and Credit Linkages

ISSP's Sakhis supported 302 women entrepreneurs in submitting business proposals and plans to banks, resulting in 198 women receiving loans totaling Rs. 39,35,300. Additionally, CRPs facilitated linkages between 110 women and government agricultural programs, such as sorghum and kardi seed distribution, spray medications, and fertiliser for seed treatment, amounting to Rs. 2,36,86,760. These initiatives aim to foster the growth of women-led businesses and enhance agricultural development at the village level.

Under the Sanskruti Mahila Taluka Sansadhan Kendra in Bhokardan, 347 enterprises were supported with a total loan disbursement of INR 1,20,96,000. In Jalna, 399 enterprises were supported with a loan disbursement of INR 1,36,41,000 through the Pragatishil Mahila Taluka Sansadhan Kendra. Handholding support, including bank and government scheme linkages, was provided to these enterprises, contributing to their growth and sustainability.

Block Dialogue Workshop

SSP organized a Block Dialogue Workshop in Dharashiv district, convening officials from the ATMA and Agricultural departments. The workshop focused on fostering collaboration and addressing agricultural challenges faced by women farmers. Noteworthy aspects included expert input, interactive exchanges, and deliberations on governmental initiatives and cooperative resolutions. Participants actively engaged in constructive conversations aimed at advancing sustainable farming methods and improving farmers' well-being. This workshop played a pivotal role as a hub for knowledge sharing and capacity building, establishing a solid foundation for unified efforts in agricultural progress.

Impact Assessment Study Commissioned for Milk Value Chain

SSP had commissioned an external evaluation of the Avendus Capital supported project on Repositioning Rural Women as advanced entrepreneurs and business leaders in Latur and Dharashiv districts. The evaluation was designed to: Identify & measure the impact of the EDP on the women entrepreneurs; Assess the impact on their income, wealth/asset creation, decision-making & business management skills; Assess the efficacy of the various elements of the EDP in facilitating and growing entrepreneurship among the women. Total of 549 women beneficiaries were involved in the interviews for the impact study conducted between December 2023 to January 2024. Findings of the study indicated impact on women's social and economic life:

- Increase in income a substantial and measurable increase in incomes across the board, as well as the ability to earn a regular stream of income.
- Financial Autonomy - A strong sense of financial independence and autonomy is experienced by receiving payments in their own bank accounts.
- Growing Knowledge - Improvements in the understanding of the way business is conducted, learning the ins and outs of a trade, and implementing these in day-to-day activities.
- Increased Yields tangible growth in productivity & yields in their chosen areas of business.
- Autonomy - For the first time in their lives, they have experienced the ability to be independent - not reliant on their family/spouse in aspects of finance and decision-making.
- Self-reliance - See themselves as independent economic entities, and not reliant solely on the family.
- Courage to explore a sense of confidence & courage to foray into the world of business, start new ventures and grow.



Water Conservation

Awareness Raising on the Importance of Water Conservation

In the last quarter, SSP's Sakhis organised awareness raising and sensitisation meetings in 74 villages in five blocks (Dharashiv, Tuljapur, Lohara, Kallam and Washi) of Dharashiv district. These sessions had an outreach of 2247 women. During the meetings, Sakhis emphasised the importance of water in agriculture and daily household activities. They supported the community in preparing water budgets at the village level, reinforcing the critical role of water in their lives. This awareness campaign resulted in a community-driven response, with villagers participating actively in water conservation efforts.



Implementation of Water Harvesting Initiatives through Community participation

SSP worked with communities in 150 villages in the five blocks - Dharashiv, Kallam Washi, Tuljapur, Lohara in Dharashiv district to construct water harvesting structures, thereby conserving a substantial amount of water. Some major highlights include:

- Communities in 23 villages constructed Continuous Contour Trenches, to help control flooding of water and facilitate soil and groundwater recharge. The total size of the trenches constructed was 271 cubic metres, conserving approximately 271,000 litres of water.
- Communities in 3 villages carried out desilting of drainage channels, to reduce risks of flooding during monsoons. The total size of these channels was 51 cubic metres, conserving approximately 51,000 litres of water. Meanwhile, in Irla village, the drainage channel desilting was carried out through community contribution, as well as the building of 4 dug-out sunken water pond structures, helping to conserve 70 lakh litres of water.
- Communities in 4 villages constructed Compartment Bunds to retain rainwater and arrest soil erosion. The total size of the structures created was 132 cubic metres, conserving approximately 132,000 litres of water.
- The community in 1 village constructed a Loose Boulder Structure to arrest excess erosion and water loss during the rainy season. This method was used in Sarati village, where a structure of 15 cubic metres was constructed, conserving approximately 15,000 litres of water.
- SSP created eight demonstration villages in Dharashiv which implemented best practices in watershed management.

The success of these initiatives is a testament to the power of community-led efforts in addressing environmental challenges. The cumulative impact of these efforts is substantial, contributing to the sustainability of these communities and the preservation of their natural resources.

Government Scheme Convergence

SSP's Sakhis collaborated with the Department of Soil and Water Conservation for implementation of the Galmukt Dharan Galyukt Shivar Yojana of the Government of Maharashtra in Dharashiv district. As a result, out of the 14 village pond desilting applications submitted, 5 applications received technical and administrative sanctions from the government. Through this initiative, communities will conserve 4.2 crore litres of water and 200 acres of land will be brought into cultivation.

Sakhis supported 300 farmers from Dharashiv district in applying for the Chief Minister Sustainable Agriculture Irrigation Scheme through the Department of Agriculture. Out of these, 16 applications received pre-sanctions from the government for construction of farm ponds.





Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development

Awareness Raising on Women's Empowerment

SSP's Sakhis organised a meeting on women empowerment and leadership in Kottathara Gram Panchayath, Wayanad. The session, attended by over 1,000 women, focused on leadership skill development like communication, negotiation, and decision-making. Success stories of women farmers in indigenous seed cultivation inspired attendees to initiate similar efforts. They pledged 100% participation in local government meetings, aiming for community development. The session ignited enthusiasm for indigenous vegetable cultivation and active involvement in Gram Sabha and local development initiatives.

Women's Initiative to Learn and Lead (WILL) Network Meetings

SSP's WILL Network organised a meeting in Bhoom Block of Dharashiv District, bringing together 427 Village Action Group (VAG) leaders. Participants exchanged success narratives, participated in capacity-building workshops, and devised community development strategies. The gathering encouraged networking, skill enhancement, and gender priorities and community advancement. Detailed action plans were also made to reduce the obstacles and promote women's empowerment schemes.

Micro-Plans Developed by VAG Leaders

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) meetings were organised by SSP's leaders aimed to engage VAG members and grassroots women in 13 villages in Dharashiv district for identifying and prioritising the needs of their respective villages. Through interactive discussions and collaborative activities, participants shared valuable insights into community challenges and opportunities. Subsequently, the block leaders convened a meeting focused on micro-plan preparation, building upon the data collected during the PRA sessions. During this meeting, strategies were devised to address the identified needs effectively, ensuring alignment with the community's aspirations and available resources.

Training on Women's Leadership Development

SSP organised 13 Training of Trainers cluster meetings, attended by 265 VAG leaders from Dharashiv. The discussions revolved around creating job cards for landless and marginal farmers, ensuring them government-assured employment opportunities. Additionally, strategies for enhancing women's participation in various agricultural schemes were deliberated upon.

Subsequently, 147 meetings were organised in respective villages, with 1,470 VAG members actively participating. These gatherings aimed to disseminate information about government schemes and initiatives, empowering women with knowledge and resources. As a tangible outcome, 257 women were successfully issued job cards by the government, marking a significant step towards economic empowerment and livelihood security. In the last quarter, a total of 1,015 women also successfully obtained their land titles, marking a significant milestone in their journey towards land ownership and economic empowerment.

Health, Nutrition and Sanitation

Project Inception Workshop in Wardha

SSP organised a two-day Inception Workshop as part of the 'Nutrition Behaviour Change Among Cotton Growers Of Maharashtra and Gujarat' program, with Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and the project implementing partner Welspun, as well as the team from Wardha and Kutch Districts. The workshop focused on developing a common understanding on linkages between health, nutrition and agriculture and the concept of food security. Participants also developed a Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) in collaboration with the team from Welspun.

Baseline Survey and Data Collection

SSP conducted a baseline survey to collect data on health, nutrition, agriculture, sanitation and hygiene in Wardha and Kutch Districts. A total of 362 families were surveyed, along with Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Prior to the survey, a two-day online training was conducted with staff from both states, to explain details of the survey process, team allocation and other details.

Master Trainer Training

SSP organised a four-day training for the project team from Maharashtra and Gujarat, attended by 25 participants. The training focused on the LANN+ PLA (Linking Agriculture and Natural Resource Management towards Nutrition Security plus WASH and Participatory Learning and Action) methodology, developed by Welthungerhilfe as reference material for facilitators and resource persons. The sessions focused on health and nutrition, and its linkages to agriculture, water and sanitation. The training was conducted using participatory methods and tools like FGDs, demonstration activities, games, and exposure visits.

Poshan Mitra Selection and Training

As part of the GIZ supported Securing Nutrition, Enhancing Resilience (SENU) project, SSP selected 40 Poshan Mitras from 6 blocks of Washim District, after a thorough evaluation of their skills and commitment to nutrition awareness. A three-day training introduced them to SSP and the collaborative Poshanam (SENU) project with Welthungerhilfe (WHH), GIZ, and ICDS. The sessions covered topics such as malnutrition, child growth monitoring, and community engagement strategies. Leaders learned about their roles in conducting village surveys and collecting data via Google forms. They expressed their understanding and readiness for village-level work during feedback sessions. Overall, the volunteers responded positively to the training, showing enthusiasm and comprehension. Their feedback reflected alignment with project objectives, particularly in promoting behaviour change through the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBC) approach.

Coordination Meetings with ICDS Department, Washim

Between January and March, SSP engaged in over 13 meetings with the ICDS Washim department. These gatherings were aimed at following up on various initiatives such as the District Level Workshop, Training for Anganwadi workers, Training of Trainers, exposure visits, Social and Behaviour Change strategy cultural programs, etc. SSP's team also collaborated closely with the District Program Officer (DPO) and the ICDS team to ensure effective communication and progress on these fronts.



Project Orientation Activities

Grassroots Leaders' Orientation

SSP organised two online workshops, focusing on explaining various concepts, goals and expected outcomes of the 'Nutrition Behaviour Change Among Cotton Growers Of Maharashtra and Gujarat' program. The session also provided an orientation on tools such as the LANN+ PLA and the Nutrition Sensitive Integrated Farming Systems (NSIFS) model. The sessions were attended by 67 new leaders from Wardha and Kutch Districts.

Community Orientation

SSP organised 67 village-level meetings with selected farmers, to orient them on the 'Nutrition Behaviour Change Among Cotton Growers Of Maharashtra and Gujarat' program. Farmers gained knowledge on concepts of nutrition, and its links to health and agriculture. They were also trained on the methods to improve food security and income for the cotton growing families.

Government Orientation

SSP organised introductory meetings with officials from various Line Departments linked to the Nutrition Project in Wardha and Kutch Districts. Leaders also met with members of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and District Health Office to explain program implementation and explore opportunities for joint activities to create awareness on nutrition in the community.

District Level Workshop in Washim, Maharashtra

SSP organised a District Level Workshop on January 17, 2024, at the Zilla Parishad Office in Washim, Maharashtra, which was attended by 32 project team members including the District Program Officer and supervisors. The focus of this workshop was to review the progress of the Poshanam (SENU) project's first and second phases, along with planning for village-level meetings. Additionally, an orientation was provided on the project and the subjects on nutrition, health, sanitation and social and cultural behaviour change to be covered in the upcoming third phase training. The workshop highlighted the status of the two previous village-level meetings and sparked discussion on the topics for the third phase, receiving positive feedback from the ICDS team.

SSP's MIS system

SSP, with the support of Astanor and collaboration with Dhvani RIS, worked to continuously improve and integrate features into the SSP's Management Information System (MIS). All project forms were embedded with duplicate check functionality to streamline data entry and prevent errors. Additionally, SSP established a master beneficiary's database for each project, ensuring that only designated beneficiaries received project benefits. A large number of major projects master beneficiaries were uploaded to the Dhvani Portal (MGRant), with more being added over time. This system enabled precise tracking of beneficiaries, facilitating the proper delivery of benefits and services. Currently, SSP is in the process of developing organisational dashboards to illustrate sector-wise SSP impacts, demonstrating the effectiveness of its initiatives.



January to March 2024 Outreach

Program Input	Outreach
Agriculture, Water, Clean Energy, Health and Nutrition	
Awareness Meetings	23065
Agriculture & Nutrition Trainings	4295
Master trainers Mentors training on WCRF	170
Agriculture Demonstration	1100
Training & Dialogue workshop with Government	907
No. of Farmers access Government linkage	2628
Amount access from government linkage	16537500
Entrepreneurship and Value Chain Development	
Mobilization for entrepreneurship	12662
Basic entrepreneurship Trainings	15556
Advance enterprise development Trainings	480
Agriculture value chain trainings	3176
No of women access credit linkage	1321
Amount of credit linkages	38932000
Women went outside SSP for learning Exchange visit	190
Women's Leadership	
VAG leaders trainings on leadership	338
VAG leaders participation in governance & development Meetings	2177

Events

Capacity Building Workshop for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

SSP organised a two-day workshop in Dharashiv, Maharashtra on January 22-23, 2024, focused on building the capacities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Eleven organisations from Dharashiv District participated in the event, with the aim of bolstering their capabilities and efficacy. Through engaging sessions and collaborative exercises, participants acquired valuable insights and tactics to catalyse constructive transformations within their communities. Key themes included the role of women in governance, the agriculture sector advocacy, and sustainable development. Discussions also focused on empowering CSO teams to address obstacles of women farmers related to the agriculture value chain. Overall, the workshop nurtured a conducive atmosphere for learning, networking, and collective advancement among CSOs.

Huairou Commission Asia Regional Planning Meeting

Godavari Dange and Archana Mane participated in Huairou Commission (HC) Asia Regional Planning Meeting from 30 January to 1 February 2024 at Kathmandu, Nepal hosted by HC's local partners - Community Women Forum (CWF) and Lumanti Support for Shelter.

Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) Strategy Cultural Program

From January 24 to March 9, 2024, the Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) Cultural Program was conducted across six blocks of Washim District, totaling 30 shows. It aimed to promote good nutrition habits, breastfeeding, and nutrition gardens, emphasizing the importance of the first 1000 days for mothers and babies. Targeting adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating mothers, women aged 15 to 49, and men of all ages, it effectively raised awareness on nutrition and hygiene. SBC Volunteers conducted household visits, formed male groups, held influencer meetings, ideal couple sessions, and discussions on nutrition gardens and breastfeeding. The initiative received positive community feedback and engagement.

Training on WCRF for Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) Students

SSP conducted a two-day training session with 21 RAWE students from the College of Agriculture, Ambalavayal, Wayanad on 5-6th March, 2024. The training offered a mix of theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience through field activities guided by grassroots women farmers. Emphasis was placed on promoting the uptake of climate-resilient farming practices led by women. The students actively participated in interactive sessions, delving into the core elements of the SSP's WCRF model to deepen their understanding of climate-smart, sustainable farming.



Women-led FPO stall at District Krushi Mahotsav

The grassroots women-led Sarayi Sakhi Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) in Dharashiv put up a marketing stall showcasing their agricultural products like ghee, mild products, masalas, cereals, pulses, pickles, etc. at the District Krushi Mohosthav in Dharashiv district, aiming to promote direct sales and market visibility. This initiative served to connect local farmers with a broader consumer base, facilitating community economic growth.

Peer Learning Exchange between farmers from Dharashiv and Wayanad

In February, SSP organised a two-day peer learning exchange between women farmers from Dharashiv and Wayanad Districts, to study the WCRF model. The peer exchange was attended by eight women leaders from Wayanad, who got the opportunity to see the benefits of long-term implementation of the WCRF model by farmers in Dharashiv. The training extensively covered each component of the WCRF model and explored strategies for implementing it in Wayanad, considering the agro-ecological specialties of the region. The program included both theoretical and practical sessions, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of the model's applicability and key field-level considerations.



Inauguration of Sakhi Flour Mill in Wayanad

The women-led Keravriksha FPO launched its first 'Sakhi Flour Mill' in Thangalmukku, Kottathara Gram Panchayat, Wayanad on March 20, 2024. The inauguration ceremony was attended by over 150 women farmers and leaders. Following the inauguration, women farmers and other stakeholders share their own entrepreneurial experiences. Ms. Shamla Ismail, a distinguished entrepreneur from Wayanad, delivered a keynote address, sharing her journey, challenges faced, and strategies for success in both national and international business expansion.

The establishment of Sakhi Flour Mill marks a significant milestone for Keravriksha's growth and serves as a catalyst for entrepreneurship development in Wayanad. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable support received from government linkages, particularly through the ATMA grant, which facilitated the acquisition of our flour mill machinery and continues to support the Keravriksha Farmer Producer Company.

SHEPrenuer Mela at the US Embassy, Delhi

SSP's leaders participated in the SHEPrenuer Mela, organised by USAID, on 20th Feb 2024 at the US Embassy in Delhi. As a partner of the USAID supported South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP) program, SSP's stall displayed clean energy products like biogas, subjee cooler and solar lights, that women entrepreneurs were promoting in their communities. During this event, SSP's team had the opportunity to interact with the USAID team, embassy staff as well as the US Ambassador, Mr. Eric Garcetti, explaining our work on climate-smart agriculture, women's entrepreneurship, value chain development, and promoting grassroots women's leadership.



National-level Workshop on Linkages in Agriculture Value Chain

SP organised a National-level Workshop on the theme of 'Linkages in Agricultural Value Chains' on the occasion of International Women's Day, March 8, 2024, in Dharashiv, Maharashtra. The event, attended by 140 participants from diverse organisations, focused on exploring partnership opportunities for sustainability in the agricultural value chain. Ms. Delphine Brissonneau, Senior Representative of the European Union Office in India, attended the event and emphasised the importance of women's empowerment in agriculture. The workshop focused on presenting the status of the four agricultural value chains positioned under the ISUDWOG Action, explore the possibility of meaningful exchanges, collaborations and partnerships for the value chains with diverse stakeholders, discuss the potential forward and backward linkages for sustainability, and seek to understand the sectoral best-practices that may be integrated into their functioning. The workshop would also focused on constituting a forum of stakeholders that would bring together government officials, officials from local authorities, private partners, technology suppliers, entrepreneurs and women leaders that would function as a platform for further mutual engagements.

International Women's Day Celebration at Venniyode, Wayanad District

The 'Impactful Women's Day' Celebration on March 8, 2024 was organised by SSP, with the participation of 130 women farmers at Venniyode, Wayanad. The event aimed to honour the achievements of five empowered women in literature, entrepreneurship, and chemical-free vegetable cultivation, regardless of their caste, sex, race, or religion. Esteemed guests like Mrs. Jaime Saji, a renowned entrepreneur, and Mrs Shinu M., the short story writer, graced the occasion, emphasising the importance of investing in women to accelerate progress. Discussions highlighted the pivotal role of women in village development and recognized the interventions of Swayam Shikshan Prayog and women-led Keravriksha Farmer Producer Organiser.

National Round Table on ‘Scaling-Up Action of the Alliance of Sustainable and Inclusive Development of Dharashiv (ASIDO) and the District Service System (DSS)’

On March 12, 2024, SSP organised a National Round Table on the theme of Scaling-Up Action of the Alliance of Sustainable and Inclusive Development of Dharashiv (ASIDO) and the District Service System (DSS) in Dharashiv, Maharashtra. This event was attended by over 100 representatives from various CSOs, the private sector, government sector experts and ASIDO - DSS members. The round-table focused on developing an exit-strategy for the Inclusive and Sustainable Development for Women and Girls (ISUDWOG) program. District-level Officials and members of the Animal Husbandry, Agriculture, Horticulture, Gender Equality and ATMA departments, local CSOs, Banks and representatives of the State Government presented their views on the exit strategy and pledging the support of their respective departments/agencies to strengthen local value chain development. Over the past three years, the ISUDOW program worked to develop 4 priority value chains: Pulse, Goat, Milk and Vegetables in Dharashiv District, connecting over 3000 women farmers to the value chain.

International trilateral cooperation study visits

As part of the European Union support project, "ISUDWOG - Inclusive and Sustainable Development for Women and Girls", the Indian delegation Mr. Upmanyu Patil and Mr. Kiran Mane along with the rural women entrepreneurs Ms. Sumitra Shirai and Ms. Vaishali Ghuge, travelled to Italy from 6th to 10th February, 2024. The study visit was hosted by the Italian Coordination of the European Women’s Lobby LEF Italia. The study visits included visits to farms and meetings with public and private, profit and non-profit organisations. LEF Italia representatives have selected these organisations based on good practices developed locally by individual enterprises and social enterprises, business support organisations, local authorities and agri-food supply chains in the field of sustainable and inclusive agriculture and public-private-civil society. During the study visits, the SSP delegation was accompanied by Maria Ludovica Botterelli, General Secretary of LEF Italia, and Francesca De Paula, Expert of LEF Italia.

From March 10th to 14th, 2024, representatives from the Women’s NGO Forum of Kyrgyzstan visited women entrepreneurs involved in the ISDWOG project in Dharashiv district, witnessing their active participation in business, agriculture, and social initiatives. The visit aimed to foster programmatic relations with the Women's NGO Forum of Kyrgyzstan, facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration.



Recognition and Awards

SSP's WCRF Model Recognised by NIDM

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Swayam Shikshan Prayog was recognised by the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), Govt of India, for its trailblazing work in development and promotion of the Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) Model, a mechanism that is reducing disaster risk and empowering women in climate risk vulnerable areas of India. Naseem Shaikh, from SSP, attended the event on 8th March, 2023 in New Delhi, which was based on the theme 'Women's Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction'. SSP's WCRF model of agriculture, implemented by women farmers in Maharashtra, Kerala and Bihar, was included in IUINDRR-NIDM's 'Compendium of Best Practices on Agenda 3: Role of Women in Disaster Risk Management', which was launched during the event. This comprehensive resource showcases empowering initiatives and strategies for promoting gender-inclusive disaster resilience.

Link to the publication:

https://swayamshikshanprayog.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NIDM_Compndium-of-Best-Practices-04.03.2024-4.33-pm-1.pdf

Grassroots Woman Leader Anjali Masalkar honoured by Lokmat Sakhi Manch

On International Women's Day, Lokmat Sakhi Manch honoured Anjali Masalkar, a grassroots woman leader from SSP, as one of the Lokmat Women Achievers of Latur-2024, recognizing her remarkable journey in agricultural leadership. An award ceremony was held in Latur on March 8, 2024 to celebrate the launch of a coffee table book on the 'Achievements of Inspiring Women in Latur' published by Lokmat Sakhi Manch. This Coffee Table Book will inspire future endeavours of diligent women and record their efforts, facilitating the growth of accomplished women leaders.

Anjali has been associated with SSP for a decade, igniting leadership and momentum in her work. Anjali established 248 self-help groups in AUSA taluka, promoting organic farming through the women-led climate-resilient farming (WCRF) model, benefitting nearly 800 families. She provided organic agricultural training to 3,000 women and facilitated vocational training for pursuing related businesses. Many women are now confidently engaged in organic farming and agriculture, with Anjali's continued support.



New Partnerships

Swalamban: Empowering Livelihoods in Latur District

The three-year project "Swalamban", supported by Axis Bank Foundation aims to support vulnerable households from the small and marginal farming community (farmers & agricultural labourers) in three blocks of Latur district in Maharashtra.

With a focus on diversifying livelihood options, the project seeks to drive comprehensive village development. In the last quarter, significant progress has been achieved. All initial preparations have been meticulously completed, and 220 villages have been selected for intervention. A key aspect of this project is the introduction of innovative concepts like the Multiple Poverty Index and advanced technologies such as the Management Information System (MIS) dashboard for effective project monitoring and evaluation. The project was formally launched in the presence of the Axis Bank Foundation Team and the Axis Bank regional team, signalling the beginning of a transformative journey towards rural prosperity.

Strengthening Small Farmer Collectives for Women Empowerment

The three-year project supported by SBI Foundation envisages to strengthen the livelihoods of four thousand small and marginal women farmers in the districts of Dharashiv and Latur through comprehensive development of four farmer producer companies (FPCs) owned by them. The project aims to achieve this objective by meaningfully intervening in all key aspects of their agricultural value chains, such as infrastructure development, building forward and backward linkages, delivery of inputs and services to members, hand holding and capability building. Capitalising on the potential of the local production market-consumption economy, investing on the main regional produce, and professional management of FPCs are key themes of the project.



SSP's Guiding Principles

Swayam Shikshan Prayog:

- Is dedicated to empowering women by providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to become agents of change in their communities.
- Strives to promote gender equality and challenge societal norms and practices that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and inequality.
- Works towards creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for women, enabling them to achieve economic independence and improve their quality of life.
- Aims to build resilient communities that are equipped to tackle challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, and socio-economic disparities.
- Engages in advocacy efforts to influence policies and practices at the local, national, and international levels, ensuring that the voices and needs of women are heard and addressed.
- Focuses on building the capacity of women leaders and their organisations (FPO) to implement effective and sustainable development initiatives, fostering leadership and collective action.
- Is committed to innovation and continuous learning, exploring new approaches and strategies to enhance the impact of its programs and initiatives.
- Believes in the power of partnerships and collaboration and works closely with government agencies, NGOs, civil society organisations, corporate companies and other stakeholders to achieve its goals.



Our Partners:

Axis Bank Foundation | Astanor |
Aventus | ADM Cares | Citibank N.A. |
DASRA | European Union | GIZ &
Welthungerhilfe | Give | Hindustan
Unilever Foundation | HSBC | Huairou
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Group | SBI Foundation | SIDBI | SJNEFFL |
UNICEF | USAID-SAREP | Maharashtra
State Rural Livelihoods Mission-UMED.

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