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2020-2021



**SAMAJ PRAGATI SAHAYOG**

VILLAGE JATASHANKAR, TEHSIL BAGLI, DISTRICT DEWAS,

MADHYA PRADESH- 455227

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### *Theory of Change and the Year in Review*

Over the last 3 decades, Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) has grown to be one of India's largest grass-roots initiatives for water and livelihood security, working with its partners on a million acres of land across 72 of our most deprived districts, mainly in the central Indian Adivasi belt. We take inspiration from the life and work of Baba Amte (our *Pramukh Sahayogi*) who rejected charity and successfully empowered even the most challenged. SPS is headquartered in a drought-prone, tribal area in the Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh, which typifies the most difficult problems facing the country. We believe that to address India's long-standing problems, we must graduate to an alternative development model based on the principles of equity, sustainability and people's empowerment. Our focus has been on finding sustainable ways of ensuring water security, which provides the foundation for livelihoods and economic growth. We have tried to address the crisis of Indian agriculture by evolving an alternative low-risk and low-cost approach, reducing dependence on chemical inputs. We have also attempted to work out alternative livelihoods, which reduce the dependence of people on agriculture.

We believe that all this work has to be based on strong institutions, led by women. In our view, persistence of poverty in India owes a great deal to the absence of powerful institutions of the poor. We also believe that these institutions have to be led by women. Experience of development programs all over the world, as also our own work over the last 3 decades, underscores the key role played by women's leadership in their success. For it is only women who show a steadfast commitment to a sustainable path to development, with an abiding commitment of the well-being of communities, with a central focus on improving health and education outcomes. It is also women's institutions that show the requisite courage to enforce the necessary accountability on public systems.

These women-led institutions open up radically new possibilities of transformation, especially for those living in remote tribal regions, in at least 4 different ways:

1. To enable the poor to extricate themselves from the clutches of usurious moneylenders, without which it becomes impossible to free themselves of the debt trap, condemning them to a vicious cycle of poverty
2. To make it possible for the most vulnerable to take advantage of the possibilities opened up by the market. A solitary small and marginal farmer has no chance when confronted by powerful forces in the market, whether as consumer or producer
3. To ensure accountability of government systems, which are meant to serve them but instead become another source of exploitation, given their non-transparent character and functioning

4. To be able to adequately utilise the huge political potential opened up by democratic systems of representation and decision-making, especially through Panchayati Raj Institutions, which have remained dormant so far

Powerful people's institutions, led by women, help overcome each of these constraints. And we believe that only a strong set of partnerships with communities, PRIs, people's representatives, government, academic, corporates and other NGOs can make civil society action truly powerful in India. The problem has many dimensions and hence solutions have to be multi-pronged, layered on top of and complementing each other and scalable. They should have strong convergence with government programmes and should be able to leverage public investments. SPS has been working with this theory of change for the last 3 decades.

We concentrate all our direct interventions in about 574 villages and towns in 8 blocks of 3 districts (Dewas, Khargone and Amravati) in the States of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. This work is not so much a model as a living laboratory of learning for others to adapt to their own areas. To facilitate this mutual learning, in 1998 we set up the Baba Amte Centre for People's Empowerment in tribal village Neemkheda, where our watershed work began in the early 1990s.

This year's challenges were a true test for this model SPS follows, and we are proud to admit that its strengths far-outweighed the limitations imposed on it due to the pandemic and the resulting lockdown that threatened the basis of our work. Our women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) form the backbone of all of our other interventions by creating a beneficiary base for our other programmes, including those on health, sustainable agriculture, livestock and water management, and provide monetary support for these services. This year when lakhs of people lost jobs and incomes from traditional livelihoods dwindled, our SHG federations, which follow a bank-linkage model and have a reducing Rate of Interest ensuring easy payback, managed to provide loans worth Rs. 1 crore to their members. We already had field data on SHG members' financial status due to the incorporation of CIBIL for record maintenance, gauging which we could identify the most needy households whom we could distribute the Covid-19 relief kits to. These relief packages also included food ration bought from the non-pesticide farmers working with us who had nowhere to sell their produce during the lockdown. This kind of financial support that helped SHG members bounce-back to normality relatively easily was lacking for the poor in our area who relied on microfinance institutes that run on a model of flat Rate of Interest. Our beneficiary records for other programmes like health, agriculture and livestock also helped us maintain contact with them and provide them with virtual services like counseling when physical meetings were difficult. With regard to some other areas, we also found ourselves lacking, especially in terms of use of technology. For instance, even though our media team produced many films and podcasts this year, they couldn't reach audiences as widely as we would have liked them to; most households in our work area do not have a smartphone for that to be possible. Member participation for our SHG meetings had to be reduced to 5-6 members per

meeting to maintain social distancing norms after unlock began- this defeated the whole purpose of collective decision-making that our SHGs serve. We also explored virtual meetings for SHGs, but a major hindrance was the lack of basic smartphone connectivity with households, so even that did not remove all our hurdles in conducting these meetings. We also gravely felt the lack of an online store for Kumbaya, as Trifed cancelled a huge order mid-pandemic, leaving KPCL in a scenario where it could not break even for the first time ever since it began operations almost 25 years ago. Currently, work on the Kumbaya online store is ongoing. However, we think that the pandemic was a great teacher for us in many respects, holding up the mirror to us where we were lacking, as well as, making us witness the strength of our self-built networks and partnerships. So, we choose to work on areas where we lack and set examples where we can, despite all.



## 2 WATER MANAGEMENT

### *2.1 Watershed Development*

With low and erratic rainfall, and increasingly long dry spells in between, the farmers in our work area are facing the brunt of climate change first hand. While some farmers have access to irrigation, through dug wells and bore wells, the underlying aquifers are also not strong enough to sustain the ever increasing demand of irrigation in the region, leading to drying up of many sources which used to be perennial. Watershed Development has emerged as a fundamental intervention to ensure water security in such areas. Such interventions not only allow farmers to provide crucial protective irrigation during the dry spells in the Kharif season, but also help check soil erosion and surface run-off, and in the long run help recharge the underground aquifer systems, ensuring drinking water availability.

While a robust watershed intervention may increase the supply of water, SPS has strongly focused on the collective and sustainable governance of this water. This is done through written user agreements around equitable water-sharing covering demand side issues such as hours of pumping, sequence of irrigation, cropping patterns and watering intensities.

SPS strongly believes in leveraging funds for direct implementation of watershed development from government programmes like Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP). In this regard, SPS has taken an in-principle decision to use donor funds strategically to fund capacity building of the human resource required for leveraging such public funds, working at different levels from Gram Panchayat to District Panchayats.

This year, we have received the sanction for Watershed Development Programme under the Watershed Development Fund, NABARD to work in the Watershed covering the villages of Gurarda, Tantukhedi, Patakhali, Anjanpura, Birjakhal and Potla. The project cost is Rs. 547 lakhs and would focus on land and soil conservation along with support to livelihood enterprises.

#### *2.1.1 Activities this year*

Under IWMP, SPS is the Project Implementing Agency (PIA) for two projects, one in Bagli Block of Dewas district (IWMP-08) and one in Bhikangaon block of Khargone district (IWMP-12).

SPS has been implementing IWMP-12 in Bhikangaon block of Khargone since 2013-14 over 4530 hectares of watershed area, covering 5 micro-watershed spread across 6 gram Panchayats and 11 villages. Along with IWMP-12, the SPS-ABF watershed project is working in an additional 11 villages across 6000 hectares. Further, APPI has also been supporting our watershed interventions in the IWMP-12 villages.

*Table 1.1: Watershed interventions across various projects and locations this year*

<b>Project</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Villages Covered</b>	<b>Storage Capacity (Cu m)</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>Labour days</b>
IWMP-12	Stopdam (11 No.) & Checkdam (5 No.)	17	Sangavi, Amankhedi, Padlya, Paldi, Pattharwada, Untkheda, Banjari	137365	15751864	21640
	Farm Pond	15	Padlya, Sangavi, Kholwa, Keshavpura, Paldi, Pattharwada	57781	4958881	
	Farm Bunding	21447 Rm	Paldya, Keshavpura, Pokhra Bujurg, Pattharwada	-	1787573	
	Staggered Contour Trench	10171 Rm	Paldya, Paldi, Pokhra Bujurg	-	772230	
	Gabion	21	Banjari, Padliya, Kholwa, Paldi	-	1094106	
APPI	Farm	26544	Sangavi, Paldi,	-	1801486	11807

	Bunding	Rm	Pattharwada, Amankhedi, Banjari			
	Earthen dam renovation	3	Paldi, Kholwa, Sangvi	49329	1288000	

**New Watershed Project:** SPS received a new sanction from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to carry out Watershed interventions in the villages of Potla, Neemanpur, Tatukhedi and Gurarda at the Udainagar location of Bagli block in Dewas in a total area of 3037 hectares. The total budget for this project is Rs. 547 lakhs and it will be implemented in three phases. In the first phase, a watershed committee will be formed comprising of families residing in the watershed and a Detailed Project Report will be prepared and submitted to NABARD. In the second phase, capacity building and training activities will be undertaken for the Watershed Committee along with implementation. In the third phase, full implementation of the remaining area will be undertaken accompanied by agriculture and livelihood interventions.

Village-level meetings were held in seven villages/ mohallas to talk about the project. A watershed-level meeting was held in Peepri Sita Mandir where representatives from all villages were present along with Mr. Avinash Tiwari, DDM, NABARD, Dewas and the Federation Leaders of Udainagar Pragati Samiti. The Village Watershed Committee was formed with 13 members from all the villages.



*Image 2.1: Community contribution in the form of labour work at the Gurarda Watershed site*

**Interventions to activate MGNREGA in our area of work:** In the months prior to the lockdown, SPS had been doing groundwork for identifying the scope of work which could be done under MGNREGA in its area of operation. Intensive surveys were conducted in 4 of our locations for carrying out farm bunding. In Bagli block, 5000 migrant labour returned home from nearby towns like Indore, Dewas, Ujjain and some from even further away. After coming back, these labourers faced the problem of finding work in the village. SPS decided to use the data from the survey to activate MGNREGA. We chose 8 of the most vulnerable Gram Panchayats in Bagli block of Dewas as a starting point. It took several such meetings with government officials at different levels, members of Gram Panchayat and the village community, before we were able to start any work in the area. The government rules initially did not allow for farm bunding due to a blanket restriction on the activity in Dewas district. But our continuous engagement at the block level yielded results as the administration changed their rules to include farm bunding as an activity under MGNREGA. Another strong stance the team took was to challenge the implementation structure under MGNREGA that had set in over the years. The costing of structures was being done keeping in mind the use of machines (something not permitted under MGNREGA). The Schedule of Rates (SoR) used for estimation of cost of works was heavily oriented towards the rates to be if machines were to be used. Our team, however, stuck to its guns and said that the purpose of initiation of MGNREGA works is to provide employment and we shall under no circumstances allow the use of machines. One needs to mention that our engagement with the administration was also positive as we received assurances from the CEO of the Bagli Block Panchayat to smoothen the implementation process of MGNREGA works. He helped us by forming a WhatsApp group named MGNREGA Mitra, where all our key team persons were included. This group became a platform not only for monitoring work progress but also to raise issues related to delays in work, release of payment and other such practical problems of direct implementation.



*Image 2.2: Screening a film on MGNREGA scheme for awareness in one of the project villages*

After getting work sanctions, we started working intensively with the village community in order to generate interest in the programme. We faced some hurdles there as some farmers were not in favor of field bunding as they thought it would reduce their land under cultivation. Our team explained to them the importance of bunding as a way of stopping soil erosion and improving soil health. Though farmers realized this quickly, they were still hesitant as they were unsure of timely payments under MGNREGA. Our teams assured them that we have the support of the Block Panchayat and there would be no delays in payment. We promised that all farmers will get a chance to work in their own fields. We ensured that the names of eligible family members are added to the job card as well as created new job cards of the labourers. We also constantly monitored the progress of work and payments, and ensured that there was no discrepancy in the account number linked with the job card and the labourers' actual account. Our teams assisted several members who did not have bank accounts to open accounts in their name. The village community soon understood that this is mandatory under MGNREGA as no cash payments are allowed. We established constant direct contact of the labourers with government officials like CEO, Assistant Engineer, Rozgar Sewak etc. We also paid attention that the laborers get work in their own village so that they do not have to go to another village for work. We also prepared wage lists of labourers and passed them onto the Rozgar Sewaks so that the wages of the labourers could be paid on time. This led to favourable outcomes, with labour getting their wages in time. In some GPs, the success in implementation has sparked an interest in MGNREGA with more people approaching our team for work.



*Image 2.3: Villagers working on soil and land conservation work through the MGNREGA scheme*

We have also received a re-purposed grant from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, Initiatives (APPI), which focuses on better implementation of MGNREGA and entitlements programmes like PDS, ICDS etc (ADHIKAR). The objective of this project is to closely work with the state governments for better working of these programmes in the context of COVID-19. Our team is actively working across 45 panchayats across 3 blocks (Bagli, Kannod and Barwah) over the course of 18 months.

### ***2.1.2 Challenges***

- (i) There is a lack of awareness among the people about the corona epidemic in rural areas, due to which they did not follow the rules made for prevention properly. Working with these conditions remains challenging.
- (ii) Under the government's project IWMP-12 Bhikangaon, the team's work has been affected due to the sudden setting of new targets by the government, because during this time, taking any kind of risk could have been harmful for the villagers, even in such an odd situation, too much pressure was being put on by the government. At present, a new target of 50 lakhs has been given by the government in the month of June, which is being pressurized to achieve it, whereas it is difficult to do construction work due to the rainy season being near. Such pressure also weakened the morale of the watershed team.

## ***2.2 Participatory Groundwater Management (PGWM)***

The Participatory Groundwater Management (PGWM) program was initiated in the SPS work area in the year 2016. The program began with an objective to ensure water security through infrastructure development and creating comprehensive water sharing plans in order to preserve water resources for the future. The emphasis of the program lay on managing the increasing demand on groundwater resources as people increasingly started gaining more access and became heavily reliant on this finite resource. The area where the PGWM program was piloted was the *ghat neeche* region within the SPS intervention area. Fanged on both sides by the Vindhyan and Satpura ranges, the *ghat neeche* area of the Narmada valley is underlain with hard rocks consisting mainly of basalt and sandstone. The area receives an average rainfall of 700 mm annually. The rainfall pattern is discontinuous; periods of heavy rainfall are interspersed with long dry spells which lead to the risk of crop failure. So, farmers in the region heavily rely on groundwater for irrigation.

SPS's PGWM programme has been working on enhancing the community's understanding of the regional aquifers, while promoting collective use and governance of groundwater sources. With



the collaboration of ACWADAM and SDTT, the hydrogeology of the region between the Khari and the Kanad river have been mapped. Based on the different rock systems forming the aquifers, and the degree of ground water dependencies, the region has been classified into different typologies. Currently, a network of wells and borewells are being regularly monitored and local rain gauges have been monitoring the micro-climate in the region. SPS has also promoted community institutions built around governance of water sources and encouraging them to shift to water saving agricultural practices. Currently, SPS is working with 8 such water user groups. Since last year, the programme has also been increasingly focusing on drinking water, working with communities to ensure equitable access to safe drinking water.

### *2.2.1 Activities in the last year*

#### ***Groundwater monitoring, sensitization and campaigning:***

**a. Rainfall monitoring:** The PGWM team has set up localized rain monitoring gauges in collaboration with the local community to monitor the daily rainfall. With 7 new rain gauges installed this year (3 in Kantaphod location, 2 in Punjapura location and 3 in Barwaha Location), the rainfall monitoring network has rain gauges installed in 24 villages. The rain data along with the water level data provides for a good analysis tool in understanding the fluctuations in water level viz a viz the rainfall pattern. The rainfall data in itself provides good localized data which helps in identifying the change in patterns of rainfall, especially with respect to dry spells during the *kharif* season. Data on rainfall trends over the years is also important when discussing mixed cropping as a protective measure against crop failure.

**b. Groundwater level monitoring:** The PGWM team has been collecting regular water level data of 135 spatially representative dug wells and 12 borewells across three locations. This water level data is used as an input for further discussion and awareness in the community about the depleting trends.

**c. Jal Didi Training:** In an effort to empower women to monitor their own wells and take decisions based on information about their aquifers, the PGWM team has started a training program for our women leaders. The idea is to make women the champions of water monitoring, management and governance systems, while at the same time demystifying ground water level data. In this aspect, we have identified 30 women who are willing to regularly monitor their own wells and provide data for further analysis. Our hope is to influence whole villages to monitor their own wells, share their data with each other and plan for their cropping seasons together.

**d. Wall Paintings:** Wall paintings promoting mixed cropping as mitigation against erratic climate were done in two villages. Three wall paintings, one on rainfall and groundwater and another two on mixed cropping were done in three villages.



*Image 2.4: Wall painting on groundwater made by the PGWM and SPS Community Media team at a village*

**e. Crop Water Budgeting:** Crop Water budgeting is an important decision making tool for farmers to collectively plan their water requirements for the Rabi season based on the availability of water and rainfall patterns. Before the sowing season for Rabi started, crop water budgeting presentations were done in focus villages of Kali Ratdi, Umar, Singladeh, Potla, Deonalya, Mahigaon and Semlikheda. Due to the above average rainfall in the last two years, there has been a growing trend of farmers increasing their area under wheat, which puts the ground water stock in risk for the coming years. The focus of the exercise was to promote farmers to maintain a minimum area under Gram, which is less water intensive. The benefits of crop rotation to soil health was also discussed. Less water intensive variety of wheat was also promoted.

**e. Hydrogeological mapping:** Geological surveys of the villages of Borpadav, Singladeh and Laxminagar were done to understand the subsurface geology of the area around the Khari River.

**f. Water Quality testing:** Water quality testing was done in four locations (Udainagar, Hatpiplya, Punjapura and Kantaphod) under both ABF and Water Aid projects. The team received enthusiastic support from the PHE Department in Bagli. Wherever an instance of bacterial contamination was found, the dependent households were informed of it and advised to consume the water only after boiling. Possible sources of contamination were also discussed.





*Image 2.5: Water quality testing and awareness creation at a village*

- Flouride Contamination in Khakhrud Mohalla, Kanad:** The Health and Nutrition team in Udainagar Pragati Samiti had reported fluoride above the permissible limits in Khakhrud Mohalla of Kanad during their regular quality testing. Based on these inputs, a visit was made to the Mohalla to ascertain the extent of the problem. The mohalla, situated on slightly higher elevation than the surroundings had two sources of groundwater – a hand pump and a borewell, both of which had fluoride upto 2 mg/L (The safe limit is 1 mg/L). The mohalla has more than 20 children and young adults and almost all of them show various degrees of dental fluorosis. The older members of the mohalla also complained of itching and body aches. They always have found the taste of the water to be bad. But since they realized the root of their problem was their drinking water, they have been trying to avoid using it. A sustainable and safe source has been identified with the help of the community, to access which they need a pipeline around 800 metres long and it was decided that this issue would be raised in the next gram sabha.

**g. Water User Groups:** The team has been working with 7 water user groups at Potla, Kali Ratdi, Singladeh and Deonalya to ensure smooth functioning and access to water by all members. We do this by regularly assessing their successes and challenges in managing their shared water resource(s).

### ***2.2.2 Trainings***

**i. Webinar - ACWADAM on data cooperation:** Water Practitioners' Network arranged a webinar with ACWADAM for creating a resource for collecting well data with the help of the government. At present, the Central Groundwater Board (CGWB), various other state government bodies and independent CSOs are collecting well-data frequently; however the methodology for each stakeholder is different. In order to bring this data to a common platform efforts need to be generated to collate the data across various geographical locations to be presented to the government. A standardized methodology would be agreed upon across the consenting CSOs to make their data free source. The webinar highlighted the various aspects on why well data collection is necessary and what are the protocols to be followed while collecting such data.

**ii. Webinar - Water Quality:** A webinar on the current status of water quality was conducted by Water Practitioner's Network with INREM Foundation's founder Dr. Sunderrajan Krishnan. The webinar highlighted the importance of good quality drinking water and the perils of ignoring the most important aspect of drinking water - its quality. This webinar inspired conversations around the importance of clean drinking water, problems with faulty toilets and irresponsible waste disposal leading to groundwater contamination. The webinar was attended by both professionals and CRPs alike.

**iii. Crop-water budgeting workshop with WPN –** A two-day online workshop was conducted by the Water Practitioner's Network on crop-water budgeting. Many stalwart organizations such as FES, SPWD, ACWADAM and BIRDS presented their methodology of conducting crop-water budgeting exercise and their experience with the community. Our team also made a short presentation on the various context-specific experiences and community related challenges that the team has faced during the crop-water budgeting exercise. Many commonalities with regards to the methodology were observed and a need to collaborate and further the knowledge of crop-water budgeting was agreed upon.

**iv. Webinar on water quality with INREM –** The members of the team and some other members of the various locations attended a webinar organized by WPN with INREM Foundation on water quality as a burning issue around water. Groundwater dependence has led to exploitative behaviours unearthing new problems of quality. The interconnectedness of toilet constructions and groundwater pollution was brought to fore during this webinar raising several concerns regarding our own water sources.

**v. A training on using the JAL-TARA Water Quality Testing kit** was organised online with specialists from WaterAid demonstrating how to use the kit on the field. The hands-on training was attended by total 30 employees from 4 different federations.

**vi. Water quality and health training** – A short training on the interconnectedness of health and water quality was conducted at the Punjapura location. The training was conducted to draw attention to the aspects of safe drinking water. Questions pertaining to what makes water drinkable were addressed. This training was a precursor to the water quality testing exercise which is to begin in the next quarter. The attendees were also briefed on how one can identify which sources to test, why and when.

**vii. On field training on using water quality test kits** were done with the Health and Nutrition team of Kantaphod Pragati Samiti and Udainagar Pragati Samiti. In Udainagar, the water quality kits provided by the PHE department were also used for the training, while in Kantaphod the PSI testing kits were used.

### *2.2.3 Case study*

#### *Women leading the way for equitable access to drinking water*

Kali Ratdi is a remote village in the Satwas Block, Dewas District, inhabited mostly by the Barela community and some families of Korku, Jat and Gouli communities. With no available sources of surface water and no shallow aquifer, people of Kali Ratdi are completely dependent on the few deep aquifer sources. Participatory Ground Water Management Programme has been working in Kali Ratdi promoting women-led collective governance of ground water sources. A Water User Group of 37 farmers was formed who are collectively irrigating 90 bighas (2.3 ha) through seven shared borewells. Through their example, another 8 farmers collectivised around one shared borewell to irrigate 5.3 hectares of land. The shared irrigation and water user groups, along with the Self Help Groups allow the women to come to a common platform assess their progress and plan collectively. In the multiple discussions in these meetings, the issue of drinking water in the village came up. As the village had no wells, the people were completely dependent on the borewells for both drinking and irrigation water. Though they had borewells which served as drinking water source through the summers, the women pointed out that there was no proper distribution system. The government borewells were situated too far and women depended upon privately owned borewells to fill water for drinking and domestic purposes. This meant that they had to fill water according to the availability of electricity, as there was no storage facility. Since they are dependent on the pipes used for irrigation for filling drinking water, running the motor in the rainy seasons became an issue, as water would also flow into the fields. There was also a great wastage of water as women lined up to fill water from a running pipe. Water tanks, connected to a reliable source came out as a possible solution and the women started discussing the possibility of such work with their Sarpanch. After multiple negotiations, the work progressed through the collective pressure of the women and culminated in a drinking water storage and distribution system in three mohallas of Kali Ratdi village.

In the Tappar mohalla, there was already a concrete water tank which needed repairs. The Panchayat repaired the tank and installed a tap for collecting water. After exploring multiple sources, a borewell was selected to supply water to the pump and a pipeline network was set up for which the community contributed in labour. This tank is benefitting 12 families with 60 members.

Following the success in Tappar mohalla, the women also demanded a drinking water system near the Anganwadi Kendra of Anjan mohalla, with nearly 40 children. After further negotiations, the Panchayat agreed to provide a 1500 litre plastic tank, constructed a platform for the tank and connected it to a nearby government borewell. The people did shramdaan in laying the pipeline and building the platform for the tank and also provided the stones and bricks required for the work. Along with the children of the Anganwadi, this tank serves 15 households with 75 people.

The third water tank was planned in the Sarpanch mohalla, where many families of our first WUG also lived. The Panchayat provided the water tank, cement and bricks which the community arranged for the sand and stone. The pipes were provided through SPS. This third tank serves 12 families.

Though the Panchayat of the village had initially been reluctant to wholeheartedly work on drinking water, the success of the work in Kali Ratdi has inspired the Sarpanch to think about doing similar work in the villages of Singladeh and Umar, both which fall under the same Panchayat. Discussions regarding the same are ongoing between the community and the Panchayat.

The example of Kali Ratdi beautifully demonstrates how women led participatory governance of water resources can bring about a shift in both the community's and the local government's perspective on water use and conservation. Women, who are at the forefronts of the drinking water crisis are also the most equipped to identify and visualise their problem and also mobilise the community towards possible solutions.



*Image 1.6: A water tank that came up after the continuous efforts of women at Kali Ratdi village*

#### **2.2.4 Way Forward**

It has been decided to put the program on pause for the coming days. We are also working to develop an online application for well data collection that helps to improve the accessibility and storage of well data.

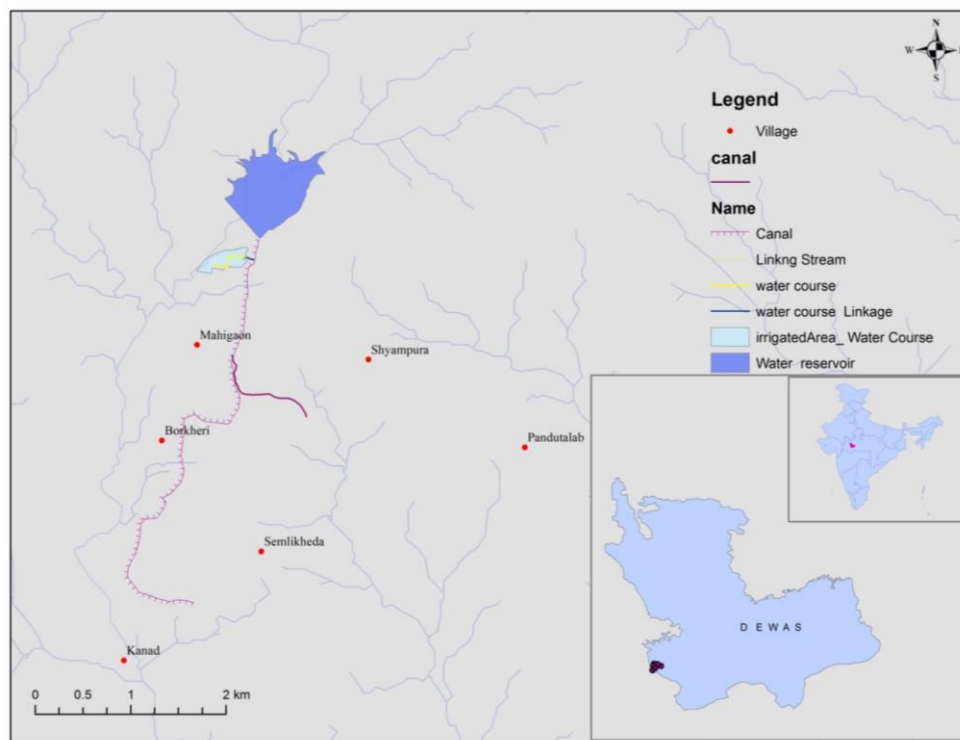
### **2.3 Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM)**

SPS's Participatory Irrigation Management initiative started with the Mahigaon Irrigation Project with a group of 12 women farmers from Mahigaon village, a head end village of the dam. These 12 farmers got together to build a system of canals to irrigate their fields, in the process not only ensuring steady and timely supply of water to their fields, but also saving 24.3 million litres of water per year for the approximately 10 hectares of land, which was previously wasted through leakages. After the initial success of the Mahigaon WUG, the work was expanded to Semlikheda and Kanad, where a total of seven such Water User Groups are being established and work on the water distribution system is under way. Under the programme, efforts are made to build women-led institutions which govern the equitable distribution and use of the dam water by building and maintaining the water distribution systems and having an agreement based on

which agricultural and irrigation decisions are made. Such WUGs work towards settling any disputes regarding the water use and also represent the collective interest of the farmers to the higher government authorities. This year, the PIM programme has expanded its focus to work with farmers in the command area of Pankua and Paras Irrigation Projects too. In a significant progress, the PIM programme has successfully advocated with the block administration to leverage MGNREGA funding for the construction of watercourses.

### *1.3.1 Activities this year*

#### **1) Mahigaon Irrigation Project:**



*Image 1.7: Map of the Mahigaon Irrigation Project Area*

- Mahigaon:** The PIM team has been working with a Water User Group called Jhirpaniya Jal Upyogkarta SamooH consisting of 12 farmers in Mahigaon village irrigating 9.75 hectares of land. The WUG members, supported by SPS, built a watercourse to direct water from the main canal of the dam to their fields. The Jhirpaniya Water User Group has successfully completed 4 irrigation seasons, adhering to the points of their Water User Agreement. Based on the agreement, crop decisions and irrigation schedules are



made in meetings to ensure smooth and timely access to water of the canal. The members also contribute a sum of Rs. 50 per month for the repairing/maintenance of the watercourse, which is saved in the WUG's bank account. During the irrigation season, the members save an additional Rs. 50 per month, which is used to appoint a Kolaba Sahayak from amongst them. The Kolaba Sahayak is responsible for overseeing the system during the irrigation season, to ensure that people are using the water according to the mutually agreed schedule. The Kolaba Sahayak is remunerated for their work using the group's savings. The successful operation of the system has drastically reduced their input cost to agriculture. Previously they had to spend money on pipes and motors to access the water for irrigation. The system has also reduced crop loss due to leaking pipes and water logging.

- **Kanad:** Kanad is a village situated at the tail end region of Mahigaon Irrigation project. Due to various defects in the main canal, farmers have to deal with overflows and seepages, which affect the crop productivity in the fields adjacent to the canal, due to which the farmers farther away are unable to access this water. Many farmers are forced to buy water for irrigation from farmers with borewell. The PIM programme has been working with 17 farmers, organised together into the Bhumiya Baba Jal Upyogkarta Samuh to construct a water course to irrigate 18 hectares of their farmland. The work on the watercourse is nearly complete and the farmers have been using the system for irrigation. However, the defects in the main canal structure continue to trouble the farmers in the village, an issue which would require the cooperation of government departments to solve in the future. This year, due to constraints of funding for huge capital investments, PIM programme has been focussed on completing the work in Semlikheda.
- **Semlikheda:** Despite being in the command area of the Mahigaon Irrigation project, the farmers of Semlikheda had no means to access the water as the main canal was separated from the village by a small hill. In previous attempts, through a display of great collective strength, people had dug up a narrow canal through the hill to direct the water towards a stream that flowed by the village. Despite this success, the stream water was inaccessible to many who were situated far from the stream or those who could not afford the cost of so many pipes. The PIM programme is currently working with 119 farmers to irrigate 164 hectares of land using the canal water. A 3 km long underground pipeline is being constructed to bring the water from the canal to distribute it among 6 planned watercourses. 2050 metres of the pipeline is complete along with the distribution chambers of five chaks. One watercourse has also been completed. The community contribution to the project is 15% of the total cost, amount upto Rs.4, 34,000. For the remaining 5 watercourses, we are also planning to leverage MGNREGA funds through the Gram Panchayat. The process of preparing estimates is currently underway. Since a

large number of farmers are using the system collectively, ensuring smooth conflict-free functioning of the Water User Group is extremely important. The farmers have organised themselves into chak level Water User Groups. In order to maintain the main pipeline, 2 members from each chak were selected and formed into a Committee, which would oversee the irrigation schedule and the maintenance of the main pipeline collectively. It was also decided that during the irrigation months (December, January, February) each farmer would contribute Rs. 25/- per Bigha each month for the maintenance of the pipeline, which would be deposited in the bank account maintained by the Committee. During the rest of the year, the farmers would save Rs. 20/- per bigha. Additionally, anyone intentionally damaging or harming the system would be fined Rs. 500/-. Farmers from the 5 chaks have made their irrigation schedules (Barabandi) and have also appointed Tolasingh-Atmaran as Kolaba Sahayak, who will receive Rs. 800/- month as remuneration for his work. An irrigation register has also been kept at each chak to ensure smooth functioning of the system. Additionally, three other committees were formed, with an average of 12-13 women in each. One is the social committee which is responsible for the running of the WUGs, ensuring timely savings etc. The 2nd committee is responsible for proper water distribution while the 3rd is entrusted with the work of resolving any conflicts around water.



*Image 1.8: Panala, a farmer from Semlikheda village irrigated his farm land for the first time in the winter session as a result of the PIM work done by SPS. This evidence is captured in the*



*NDVI images produced by the sentinel-2 satellite imagery by the European Space Agency (dark green colour represents dense vegetation that means availability of crop in the field whereas light green colour represent low vegetation that means unavailability of crop or unhealthy crop).*

Last year, only 11 farmers of one of the chak had been able to irrigate using the canal water. In Semlikheda, the main pipeline was extended to a total length of 2050 meters during Jan-March 2021. This quarter has also witnessed the construction of 5 Chaks (Kolaba). This construction of Chaks has helped 47 farmers to irrigate their 41 hectare of land without water pump and electricity for the first time.

## **2) Paras Irrigation Project:**

Paras Dam Irrigation Project has a command area of 1507 hectares, this dam supplies water to 10 villages for irrigation and 23 villages for drinking water. Due to silt deposition and poor canal infrastructure, tail end villages such as Kardi, Mansinghpura and Birupura are denied timely water. The outlet of the minor which comes out of the main canal also does not have a gate, which leads to excessive wastage of water.

Paras dam's main canal enters 3 habitations/villages of Paras-Pipli panchayat, namely Bhuriyapura, Kholchipura and Garkheda. These villages have not been receiving adequate water for irrigation supply. The total length of the field channels is 2.8 kilometers irrigating an area of roughly 95 hectares. The main problem is that the field channels are unlined causing excessive seepage for head-end farmers and no access to water to tail-end farmers. Further, siltation in the unlined canals also adds to problems in maintenance, where every year farmers have to dig the channels to access water. This causes increased problems for tail-end farmers who have to resort to lifting water from nearby *nalas* costing them a whopping Rs. 2,00,000 (including motor pump, electricity, pipe and other miscellaneous expenses) annually.

During the last irrigation season, farmers had contributed and collectively cleared the silt from the main canal so that water can flow downstream more easily. This year, a meeting was held with the EE of WRD, Dewas, where members of the Water User Association, the Sarpanch of Punjapura and employees of SPS explained to them the benefits of working on the distribution canals and requested them to allow work on the canal and field channels through MGNREGA. The required permissions were given to the Panchayat and work on lining the Bhuriyapura canal has been completed upto 300 metres. The lining of the field channels will increase the area under irrigation by 30 hectares and also reduce seepage in approximately 15 hectares of land. This work will see a 20% net increase in production while also increasing an amount of 2.5 lakh cum of water saved. This work will also facilitate planned division and subdivision of water while also reducing the operation and maintenance cost of running the *chak*. A total 55 farmers owning upto 95 hectares of land will be benefited by this.



*Image 2.9: The Paras Irrigation Project canal*

The water from the main canal is diverted to the villages through unlined minor canals. However, no mechanisms were in place to control the flow of water. This meant that whenever water flowed through the main canal, it also entered the minor canals, even if the farmers did not require it. Many farmers tried using sand bags to block the water, but this has also not been very successful. This not only causes huge loss of water, but also damages the crops due to water logging. Looking at the situation, a WUA for the minor canals was formed and a petition was submitted to the Irrigation department to install an outlet gate in the main canal to control the flow of water. However, after six months of inaction, the members of the WUA decided to collectively contribute to build the outlet gates to avoid the crop loss due to excessive water. Through the initiative and support of the community, three outlet gates were constructed, while a fourth one was created by leveraging funds under MGNREGA. The total cost of the initiative was around Rs. 42,000/- rupees.

During the Rabi crop season (Jan-March 2021) the focus was shifted from construction of field channel to the sustainability of structures. The sustainability could be ensured only through the formation of WUAs (Water Users Association). This season has witnessed many efforts from WUAs by talking to the farmers and exposure visits to the existing water user associations. 36 farmers composed of 23 female and 13 male farmers from Bhuriyapura, Kholchipura, Sutaripura and Paras village were taken to visit Mahigaon irrigation project. During the visit farmers met with the members of water user associations of the Semlikheda and Mahigaon. These farmers were also trained for the formation of the water user associations.

### ***2.3.2 Challenges and Lessons Learnt***

In the work area of PIM, the irrigation infrastructure is extremely poor and no mechanisms have been put in place for the farmers to divert the water to their fields. Addressing this requires huge capital investments on the field, along with intense capacity building of the water users and therefore requires reliable funding support in the long term. PIM has been actively working to leverage government funds for the work, while ensuring that the community also contributes a significant portion to the project, mostly through voluntary labour and WUG savings. We are exploring further funding opportunities to help support our work further.

Our experience this year, in the backdrop of the global pandemic, has brought to light many important lessons to guide our future work. The lockdown tested the strength and resilience of women-led participatory water governance which has been the bedrock of all our work and the focus of our capacity building interventions. In Semlikhedha, where intensive work on the pipeline was planned for the summer months, we faced a big setback due to the sudden national lockdown. Since construction period is mostly limited to the summer months, before the arrival of the rains, we were losing out on precious time. When, the lockdown rules were relaxed to allow rural construction work, there was a rush to make optimum use of the remaining summer days. The shock of the lockdown also affected our access to immediate funds. At this point, the WUG members decided to utilise their own money to go ahead with the work. Each farmer had committed to contribute Rs. 3200/- per bigha to the total project cost. They contributed both in cash and in labour, in various instalments. The cash contributions were saved in the group's bank account. During the beginning of the lockdown, this saving amounted to Rs. 1,75,000/- and this was used to procure pipes from Indore. Throughout the procurement and payment process, the members of the WUGs displayed strict commitment to transparency and active participation. This show of collective strength had allowed us to extend the pipeline further by 400 metres before June, 2020. The experience of the farmers during the lockdown and the consequent success they achieved has also facilitated the formation of a committee for the maintenance of the main pipeline, with two members each from every chak level WUG.

### 3 SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Samaj Pragati Sahyog's agriculture programme aims to assist the small and marginal tribal women farmers with a package of agricultural practices that is finely tuned to water conservation and cost effective agriculture. In a typical watershed, agriculture accounts for 80-90% of the water use and areas of our intervention are typical dryland regions, with low and sometimes highly erratic rainfall often characterized by long dry spells between rainy days which makes agriculture difficult and increases farmer vulnerability. Another major issue faced by the farmer are health related risks due to usage of chemical pesticides. This chemical based farming causes lethal disease such as cancer and diabetes, apart from degenerating ecosystem components.

In order to cope up with such issues, in 2008, low cost and low risk agriculture was promoted in the form of Non Pesticide Management (NPM) agriculture as a way forward. The idea of the NPM movement is to encourage farmers to grow crops without any chemical pesticides, create an identity for their produce and link these small producers to markets. NPM agriculture emphasizes building up soil fertility through appropriate management practices (such as composting and recycling of agricultural residues, use of farm yard manure, cattle urine, green manure crops, and application of tank silt) with a gradual phasing out of chemical fertilizers. NPM also promotes sustainable management of water through ecologically suitable and diversified cropping patterns, promotion of crops varieties that require less water, utilisation of soil moisture and enabling participatory processes in crop choices.

At present, about 7718 farmers from 122 villages are part of the NPM agriculture programme, with total agricultural area under NPM farming rounding up to 10000 hectares across 3 district and 7 locations.

#### *3.1 Activities this year*

**1) Soil Health Improvement:** We used the following to improve our farmers' soil health this year:

- **Vermicompost** - Vermicompost is a product of the decomposition process using earthworm. It contains water-soluble nutrients and is an excellent, nutrient-rich organic fertilizer and soil conditioner. It is used in farming and small scale Non Pesticide Management Agriculture. Earthworms feed on organic waste material and their resultant granular excreta (cocoons) is known as vermicompost. A wide range of organic residues, such as straw, husk, leaves; stalks, weeds, etc. can be converted into vermicompost.
- **Farmyard Manure** - Farmyard manure is a fertilizer composed of waste products, dung and urine, produced by farm animals, most commonly cows. The waste products contain a wealth of nutrients, including the extremely important element that plants need—nitrogen.

- **Sanjeevak** – Sanjeevak is a mix of cow dung, cow urine, water and jaggery which has a boosting effect on crop productivity as it makes the soil fertile by adding essential nutrients required by plant to the soil.
- **NADEP** – The NadeP Compost is a method of organic composting which uses a wide range of organic materials such as crop residues weeds and forest litter and kitchen waste giving an end product fertilizer that serves as a good alternative to farmyard manure.
- **Tank Silt Application** - Tank silt is a fine soil from catchment areas along with crop debris which is deposited as sediment in the tank and decomposes over a period of time. This silt is considered to be rich in organic matter. The silt can be spread on the field in order to increase the fertility of soil. Tank silt has a significant amount of organic carbon and also has great moisture holding capacity.

**2) Soil sample** – Samples help measure the Micro & Macro nutrients present in the soil. This helps calculate which nutrients are lacking or are in excess throughout the soil in a field. The sampling can help in determining the most favorable fertilizer and its amount to be spread in field in order to increase or maintain yields of the plants. It also calculates the amount of organic carbon, PH and other nutrients is seen in the field. In agriculture program, samples of soil from 200 farmer's fields were taken and given for testing to Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

### **3) Income generation and promotion of NPM through Bio-repellents Units**

In order to promote NPM agriculture, the Sustainable agriculture programme has helped set up 23 bio repellent units across 7 locations. These units are run mostly by landless or small and marginal farmers from the village who prepare these Bio Pesticides in bulk. Mainly Paanch Patti Kaada or Neem Ark, and Char chatni are made and distributed to the farmers who cannot make these bio repellents on their own. This is basically done to have a continuous supply of the bio-pesticide so that farmers do not shift to chemical pesticides and also to provide an alternative means of livelihood in the village.

Currently, we have 23 people across locations who make and supply this bio-pesticide to our NPM farmers. The demand for these bio-repellants has significantly increased over the years, and this activity holds the potential to generate incomes for many people who choose to produce them.

### **4) Horticulture and Border plantations along farm boundaries**

NPM agriculture also promotes horticulture & border plantation. This not only has the potential to provide alternative incomes to farmers but also gives food security and adds nutrient value to their food.

This year, in all our locations, 86 farmers who were willing to give some of their land for horticulture and were marginal farmers, were given saplings of Mango, Jackfruit, Guava, Citrus,

Lemon, Sapota, and Custard apple. This can help in giving them extra cover from shock and vulnerability.

### **5) Promotion of local varieties suiting the local agro-ecology**

Some of the crops which were once the part of the food system have been replaced by wheat. Over the period of time, these crops have started disappearing from the food chain. In order to bring them back, the agriculture programme has started the initiative of ‘Mandate crop’, under which each NPM farmer has to plant a mandate crop on 40% of their land.

Each location is suggested different mandate crop based on the topographical, edaphic and other environmental factors. Some of the mandate crop farmer sows in the field are

- **Pulses** - Red Gram, Green Gram, Black gram, Peas
- **Millets**– Jowar
- **Oilseeds**- Sesame and Groundnut

### **6) Working with Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY) and MGNREGA**

The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna was launched in February, 2016. It is a government sponsored crop insurance scheme that provides insurance cover against failure of the crop which helps in stabilizing the income of farmers thus preventing them to bear huge loss. The farmer who has applied for bima yojana is paid the difference between the threshold yield and actual yield. The threshold yield is calculated based on the average yield for the last seven years and the extent of compensation is set according to the degree of risk for the notified crop. The scheme is compulsory for farmers who have availed of institutional loans.

Samaj Pragati Sahyog also initiated the process to connect farmers to PMFBY scheme as this year, due to excessive rain in the Kharif season, farmers had a low crop productivity. So, SPS decided to ensure that more and more farmers are covered under the PMFBY scheme. Farmers without Kisan Credit Cards or with dysfunctional bank accounts who were eligible for the insurance were also covered.

Under MGNREGA, SPS initiated farm bunding for agricultural fields at the Bagli, Udainagar and Punjapura locations. This not only generated an extra income source for people, but also helped improve their fields.

### ***3.2 Covid-19 Relief Intervention- The Rahat Programme***

In order to relieve farmers from the pandemic’s ill impacts on livelihoods, Samaj Pragati sahyog initiated the Rahat Karyakram to support them. Relief packages were provided to about 2784 most vulnerable among the NPM group of farmers which would support their cultivation in the Kharif season.

The Rahat package included crop seeds of Maize, Black Lentil, sorghum, Red gram, sesame, mung and castor, along with four types of bio-culture for seed treatment to ensure a successful crop. The seeds were chosen keeping in mind promotion of local varieties that suit the region's agro-ecology for a more sustainably cultivated crop and more nutritious diets. Along with that, crop protection products, including pheromone and sticky traps, were also distributed as part of the Rahat package.

### **Challenges during the Rahat programme**

1. Due to the lockdown, there was a delay in arrangement of seeds, especially the Red gram seeds that were ordered from Maharashtra. Distribution was a challenge as movements were restricted.
2. As all the seeds could not be arranged at the same time, some seeds of the package had to be distributed after 3- 4 days.
3. Two rounds of distribution of seeds led to doubling of the work of mitaans and professionals.

### **3.3 Case study**

#### ***The Rahat Programme's Impact: Cases of Two Beneficiary Farmers***

Budhi Bai of village Patharwada in Bhikangaon location was under deep stress as she used to take loans every season for agri inputs from micro finance institutions or money lenders. Even after working with full dedication at her farm, she failed to save money or lead a happy life because either the crop failed due to weather extremes or the profit gained by selling the produce usually vanished after paying up the loan with high interest rates that she took.

Later, she joined a Self Help Group of SPS at her village. Through the SHG, she got connected to the agriculture programme and became a member of NPM farmer group where she learned about the natural ways to keep pests away (Bio Pest Repellent and Integrated Pest Management technique) and to increase soil fertility. She adopted these natural farming methods and observed that her farm-expenditures came down. Subsequently, she was able to repay her pending loans and was also declared amongst the best NPM farmers with SPS.

However, due to the pandemic-induced lockdown, Budhi bai had to go in for distress sales of her Kharif produce, and the blow almost brought her back to her earlier stage of a very vulnerable farmer. It became very difficult for her to buy farm inputs for the next season, preparations for which had to be started soon. However, around the same time, she was chosen as one of the farmers who were to be provided with the relief package under the Rahat programme of SPS.

After cultivation, the seeds provided to her yielded almost double the amount of her yields in earlier years. These seeds were of crops including red gram, sorghum, and yellow maize, which are local to the landscape. The yield success actually made Budhi bai change her choice of cultivated crops to more locally suited varieties, and also increased her trust on SPS.

Similarly, the Rahat programme helped many other farmers, like Rekha Bai of Kardi village, who could avoid pest infestations in crops after using the cultures provided in the relief package.



## 4 SELF HELP GROUPS AND BANK LINKAGE

The women's Self-Help Group (SHG) programme forms the bedrock of all of SPS' work. We have formed 2800 women's SHGs in 535 villages and 15 towns with 40489 members. Most members of these SHGs belong to marginalized groups- poor, Adivasis, Dalits, landless and displaced people. The persistence of endemic poverty and hunger, seven decades after independence, points to the glaring lack of good governance in rural areas. It is our vision that federations of these women's SHGs are a key building block for effective empowerment of the poor in the tribal dry-lands of India, giving these regions the necessary voice in the development process. It is true that the full potential of our watershed work can only be realised if it is supplemented by the SHG programme to ensure long-term livelihood security to the poor. The programme works to promote financial inclusion, savings, and access to formal institutional credit among women. The SHG programme can be successful only if it is tied up with livelihood programmes such as improved agriculture, dairying, marketing etc. Thus, the SHG and livelihood programmes are complementary to each other and their simultaneous implementation is the key to poverty alleviation.

Our SHGs offer their members a range of financial products including interest on savings, recurring deposits, fixed deposits, loans against fixed deposits, loans for emergencies (the veracity of each of which is carefully judged by the members themselves), collective purchase of basic needs of daily life, loans for cattle and well construction, cattle insurance, life insurance etc. In the year 2019-2020, 2,329 SHGs were linked to banks, had an annual savings of Rs.50.36 crores and provided loans worth Rs.405.57 crores to their members.

### *4.1 This Year's Performance Indicators*

*Table 4.1: Macro Key Performance Indicators of SHGs this Year*

<b>S.No.. NO.</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Figures C. 2020</b>
<b>1.</b>	Total number of districts	2
<b>2.</b>	Total number of blocks	7
<b>3.</b>	Total number of towns	15
<b>4.</b>	Total number of villages	535
<b>5.</b>	Total number of SHGs	2800

<b>6.</b>	Total number of clusters	159
<b>7.</b>	Total number of federations	14
<b>8.</b>	Total number of SHG members	40489
<b>9.</b>	Percentage of SHGs linked with banks/financial institutions	91.81
<b>10.</b>	Total amount of bank/FI loan disbursed (in crores)	429.16
<b>11.</b>	Total savings (in crores)	53.89
<b>12.</b>	Average savings per member (in Rs.)	13311
<b>14.</b>	Total loan outstanding (in crores)	99.39
<b>15.</b>	Average size of loans per SHG	356876
<b>16.</b>	Loan recovery ratio	95%
<b>17.</b>	Total number of individual savings bank accounts opened	37361
<b>18.</b>	Total number of members insured	30304
<b>19.</b>	Total number of bank linkages	2349

*Table 4.2: Location-Wise Data of SHG Programme*

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Name of location</b>	<b>Villages</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Total members</b>	<b>Total Savings (in Cr.)</b>	<b>Corpus (in Cr.)</b>	<b>SHG Contribution (in lakhs)</b>
1.	Udainagar	56	189	2880	3.58	5.89	11.64
2.	Kantaphod	36	223	3556	5.55	9.99	23.03
3.	Bagli	49	255	3921	4.96	9.74	29.35
4.	Barwah	48	203	3075	3.88	6.73	16.03
5.	Dewas	0	229	2884	4.27	9.96	7.84

6.	Khategaon	42	253	3666	5.18	9.68	18.06
7.	Hatpipliya	45	191	2497	4.37	7.80	21.58
8.	Maheshwar	29	200	2664	4.46	7.05	14.94
9.	Kannod	47	207	3315	4.27	7.23	17.14
10.	Bhikangaon	43	187	2495	2.65	3.61	4.35
11.	Punjabura	26	138	2090	2.69	4.12	9.96
12.	Satwas	36	195	2977	3.27	4.87	15.67
13.	Sanawad	40	170	2356	2.85	4.61	14.36
14.	Lalkheda	38	160	2113	1.72	2.38	8.87
	<b>Total</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>2800</b>	<b>40489</b>	<b>53.71</b>	<b>93.67</b>	<b>212.82</b>

#### ***4.2 Covid-19: Course of Action to Deal with Impacts***

A major setback to the SHG programme & its method of functioning was the Covid-19 lockdown as meetings of the SHGs could not be conducted in the beginning, which caused an initial impediment to the primary mandates of the programme. However, as the unlock guidelines from the state and central government came, the SHGs and the programme team tried to adapt to the situation by altering SHGs' functioning method according to the situation. New methods to normalize and secure the environment for members and the programme team were ensured by implementing strict guidelines of wearing masks, maintaining physical distance and sanitization of hands before and after conducting the meeting, and secure sanitization practices were introduced and shared with the members. The number of members in a meeting was reduced to five-six, on condition that they sat in a well-ventilated area to ensure the flow of fresh air and maintain social-distancing norms. These initiatives helped the Community Resource Person (Mitaan) to achieve 100% attendance in SHG meetings. This time period also marked a challenging phase to promote savings and ensuring repayment of interest and loan amount from the members as many members were facing financial crisis & pressure.

**April-June**

**Loan Disbursed- 3.11 Crores**

**July-September**

**Loan Disbursed- 8.89 Crores**

**October-December**

**Loan Disbursed- 11.59 Crores**

*Image 4.1: Loans disbursed during the different quarters of 2020*

#### ***4.3 Post-Lockdown Situation***

The programme soon gained momentum and made strategies to cope-up with the major issues that emerged after the imposition of the nation-wide lockdown and which were affecting the growth and progress of the programme. Soon after the lockdown was imposed, all the locations under the leadership of the different SHG federations conducted surveys to maintain the records of the migrants who returned to their respective homes from different states.

For this the team members made their best efforts to make the collectors of the respective districts aware by preparing an updated list of migrants and share it with them periodically. This was done so that proper care and facilities could be provided to the migrant population since both their health & their livelihoods had become a huge challenge in India under the shadow of Covid-19 & lockdown protocols. In this regard in first phase, grocery shops in the nearby area were identified to know about the status of stocks so that the situation of overstocking could be prevented which could lead to emergence of unfair practices in future. In the second phase of the relief work, the main focus was shifted to those families who didn't get covered under beneficiary efforts provided in the first phase. It was identified that these families did not have a common list of requirements and after discussion it was seen that direct cash transfer could be a relevant and reliable option to provide relief to the targeted families.

The following groups were identified and targeted for the second phase of relief work:

- SHG members who could have a fund requirement shortly and would not be able to manage it through SHG loans.

- SHG members who could have a fund requirement that could be meted out by the social fund of SHGs.
- Families who were daily wage workers and have had lost their jobs.

#### ***4.3.1 Mask Distribution Drive with the Help of Kumbaya***

With the outbreak of Covid-19, shortage of face masks and hand sanitizers became a grim reality. In addition, a sudden increase in the demand was observed with shortage of supply. To overcome the emerging situation and to meet the non-negotiable needs of the members and the common people, Kumbaya came into action. It was the time when all regular sale channels for Kumbaya were shut down and the producer company was struggling to generate work for and retain its producers. To tackle this, the SPS SHG federations extended their hand in solidarity. Our 14 SHG federations placed a bulk order of 1 lakh masks to Kumbaya. This not only resulted in providing an economic boost for Kumbaya and its producers, but it showed a strong example of women solidarity in the time of crisis.



*Image 4.2: SHG members conducting meetings following social distancing norms, wearing Kumbaya-stitched masks*

The produce safely reached the federations and each SHG member was provided with two masks. The cost of one mask was Rs. 16. However, every member paid Rs. 5 per mask and Rs. 11 was paid from the surplus of their SHG groups.

#### ***4.3.2 Social Fund: Displaying Financial Solidarity with Economically Weaker Members***

In the second phase of the relief programme during the lockdown, SPS reached out to 32,249 families. In the second phase the total budget was Rs. 1.79 crores. The SHG Programme

provided for Rs. 99 lakh to 16,232 carefully identified families by the SHG Federations themselves from their saved up surpluses. This is an extraordinary gesture in these times and only goes on to prove the robustness of a programme like this and the effectiveness of having community institutions in place.

**Distribution of Grocery loans:** Apart from the relief operations and activities, the SHG Programme also provided special loans to its members in Dewas and Barwah- the semi-urban locations which consist of a majority of daily wage workers and labourers. The special loan facilitated families to procure essential provisions for their home for a period of 2-3 months.

#### ***4.3.3 The Switch to the Virtual: Equipping People with Tech***

The Covid-19 pandemic prompted a global shift in meetings and events. Samaj Pragati Sahayog embraced these changes not only during the uncertain times but also to enhance its members' and programmes' potential to have proper accessibility to its federations at a time when connection and smooth working have great importance.

This was an extraordinary year which called for extraordinary coping mechanisms. The team caught up with these changing times and engaged in learning the digital ways. Money transfers via e-wallets, web-based meetings and interactions, virtual meetings with SHG members were part of the new strategy that was devised by the programme. There was enthusiastic participation from the team to learn and adopt these new ways of working. The team conducted its review meetings virtually. It has been an exciting opportunity for all team members to cope with changing times and adapt to newer ways of communication. The Monthly Federation meetings in a few locations were conducted virtually as well with the assistance of mitaans. The programme initiated its monitoring of every SHG using the KoBo Collect app which makes it easier to record and analyze location level data.

#### ***4.3.4 Distributing Kirana to Economically Weaker Members***

During the coronavirus outbreak, our SHG federations along with our donors and friends came forward to help members who were most affected by the lockdown and the resulting loss of jobs and incomes. As part of the SHG programme, SPS records member data on CIBIL, using which 12 thousand most vulnerable households, out of the nearly 45 thousand households we work with, could be identified in consultation with our SHG members for distribution of a Covid-19 relief package to them. Some of the items in the package were sourced from the SPS supported FPO, RRPPCL. This helped provide some economic relief to our NPM farmers too, who had nowhere to sell during the pandemic and were resorting to distress sale of their produce.

The distribution had its own challenges, as mid-pandemic it was very difficult to arrange for transportation permits for such huge quantities of ration, while following all pandemic protocols.

List of items that were distributed were:

S.No.	Grocery Items	Quantity
1)	Cooking Oil	2 liters
2)	Tur Daal	2 kg
3)	Sugar	1 kg
4)	Salt	1 kg
5)	Necessary spices like turmeric, chili powder etc.	500 g
6)	Wheat Flour	10 kg
7)	Bathing Soap	4 bars
8)	Washing powder	1 kg

The packages were distributed among the members after fulfilling all the necessary guidelines issued by the central and state government for Covid-19.

Protocol followed during Kirana distribution:

- Before distribution of groceries, all the goods were packed by the shopkeeper so that few people would come in contact with the packages. The groceries were being distributed from a loading cart that was fully sanitized before the packets were loaded onto it.
- The division of responsibility was also done in advance such as - who will go to the office in which area, how many people will go, who will supervise, etc. so that everyone knew their responsibility in advance and there was no confusion while doing the work.
- It was important for staff members who were distributing the packets to protect themselves by wearing face masks appropriately and sanitize their hands regularly. Members were required to cover their heads, wear full sleeves shirts and were advised to not touch any surface during grocery distribution.
- During grocery distribution, members were advised to maintain adequate distance from people and wear their mask properly. People were advised to sanitize their hands after receiving the packets and to immediately take bath and wash their clothes after reaching home.

- Members who were sick or were suffering from cough and cold were advised to not come. Children and older people were kept away from the grocery distribution centre.
- The instructions given by the government were followed at the time of the grocery distribution, the people were not allowed to rush and the members were asked to maintain adequate distance.

#### ***4.4 Registration of a New Federation***

**Kannod Mahila Pragati Samiti-** an SPS administered SHG Federation was registered under the Madhya Pradesh Societies Registration Act on 16th September 2020. This is the 11th SPS SHG Federation to have been registered out of our 14 federations. The Kannod location office had come up with a plan to initiate several livelihood activities in the area. Registration of the federation gives a good opportunity to take these forward and build closer links between the Federation and the local administration. The Kannod location has expressed its desire to expand work under livestock programme and also explore possibilities in the northern part of the location, near village Kusmania. Located at the foot of the Vindhya hills, this area has ample scope for watershed development activities. Another idea was to work closely with the Forest Department on Community Forest Rights (CFR) under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, in the 18 villages of Kannod and Satwas locations, which are located close to the forest area. This would be a big step forward for SPS in carrying out work on CFR in Dewas district.

#### ***4.5 Case Studies***

##### ***1. Women in Ratatalai petition for rice at the local Ration shop***

At the Adivasi dominated village of Ratatalai, in the Bagli block of Dewas district in Madhya Pradesh, about forty women took on the arduous task of activating the Public Distribution System (PDS). The task of providing food security in areas characterized by backwardness and chronic poverty poses many hurdles. More often than not, the public systems in place fail people in different ways creating an endless cycle of poverty, hunger, and food insecurity.

Sita Bai from Ma Durga Pragati Samuh has been an SHG member for the past 18 years. She is an active member of the Shri Sainath Pragati Sankul- a cluster of SHGs that actively takes up social causes in the village and strives towards development. In our conversation with Sita Bai, she mentioned how no rice was distributed from their PDS shops since March 2020, after the national lockdown after COVID-19 started. A few women had collected information from the nearby villages only to realise that rice was very much available and being distributed in other villages. Champa Bai, a member of Manglashri Pragati Samuh from the same village found out that the nearby villages of Kishangarh and Pankua had also faced the same problem however for



a much lesser period until the rice was distributed to all. However, almost three months had passed and no distribution was made in Ratatalai.

To find a resolution to this, about forty women from the village visited the Panchayat office only to find its doors locked. They met with the Sarpanch at his house who refused to cooperate in the beginning. He denied responsibility for the situation and casually remarked that this did not fall within his jurisdiction of work. The women refused to leave without an answer. They waited for 3 hours after which the Sarpanch along with the Panchayat Mantri agreed to address the cause.

The women of this cluster sought assistance from the Punjapura Pragati Samiti, a registered SHG federation in the area to draft a petition which was later forwarded to the Food Inspector in Bagli. Although the Sarpanch wanted to solve this issue without anyone getting to know, he was forced to forward the women's petition upon insistence and mounting pressure by the women. A telephonic inspection soon took place by the Food Inspector from Bagli and rice was made available for distribution in Ratatalai within a week.

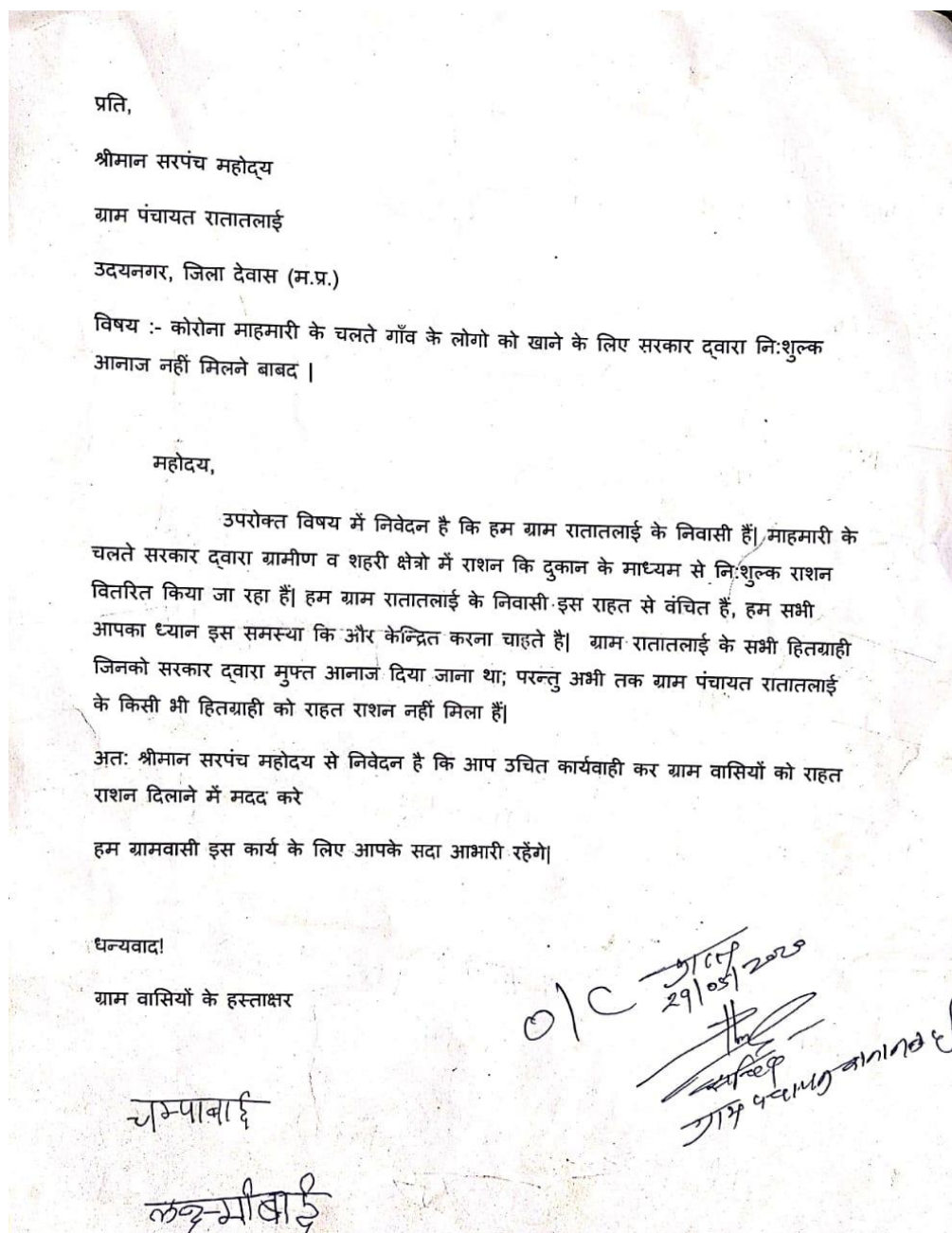


Image 4.3: A copy of the petition submitted by the SHG members of Ratatalai

Ratatalai has a history of women's collective efforts towards village development and securing rights for the people. Women of the village had taken up the responsibility of running a drinking water scheme in the village through their collective effort. The public distribution system is supposed to play a pivotal role in ensuring food security for the poor through Panchayati Raj Institutions in place. This story is, however, an example of how women-led community institutions of the poor can step in when our public structures fail the poor and vulnerable in different ways and make them accountable to the people.

## ***2. Youth Employment Training organized by Khategaon Pragati Samiti***

The Khategaon Pragati Samiti has been working for the last 13 years to solve the socio-economic problems of its SHG group members. Many youths of the regions are largely unemployed, however. In view of this problem, a coalition was arranged and held on 26th November, 2020 collaborating with NRLM, NGO and Bank for solving the problem of unemployment. Khategaon Pragati Samiti made efforts by conducting a survey in its area to analyze the important skills the people have in the region. The people were then divided into groups based on their interests and skills, which was later shared with the Bank of India and Tata Trusts under the Youth Development Program. The financial help for this was provided by the Bank of India, Dewas (RSETI- Rural Self Employment Training Institutes). RSETI is an Initiative of Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) for building dedicated infrastructure in each district of the country to impart training and skill up-gradation to rural youth that is geared towards entrepreneurial development. The Khategaon Pragati Samiti organised the training program in Ricchi Pragati Sankul for 11 days in which 35 members participated. The people were trained in and given detailed information about goat rearing, diseases related to them, treatment, and animal husbandry. Various other training programs related to skill development and motor winding were also conducted in which members falling under the BPL (Below Poverty Line) category were trained. The joint efforts of Khategaon Pragati Samiti with Banks and Tata Trusts helped 7 members to get employed in Vardhamaan Company on 8000-12000 salary.



*Image 4.5: Student receiving a certificate after attending the youth training organized by the Khategaon Pragati Samiti*

## 5 COMMODITY AGGREGATION

### ***Ram Rahim Pragati Producer Company Limited (RRPPCL)***

RRPPCL is working across different villages in four development blocks viz Bagli, Udainagar, and Satwas of Dewas district, and Barwaha of Khargone district, in Madhya Pradesh. The main objective of RRPPCL is to link small and marginal landholders, who are in majority in the region, to organised markets and provide fair value for their produce. Today, the company is owned and run by over 6000 small and marginal women farmers from 390 Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) promoted Self Help Groups. The authorized capital of RRPPCL is Rs. 1 crore and the paid up capital is Rs. 70.55 lakhs.

RRPPCL began its operation in 2012, however SPS has been engaged in aggregation and marketing of farmer's primary produce since 2008. It began its journey with aggregation and selling of the agricultural produce of its members. At present, it does not only carry out cleaning, grading and processing but does sortex and retail packaging of the processed Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) products before selling it in the organised market. The company also provides quality inputs like seed and bio-pesticides to the farmers.

In the last Financial Year 2019-20, the annual turnover of the company was Rs. 5.2 crore. The net surplus of the company was Rs. 10.29 lakhs. In 2020-21, the company managed to grow by 60% and generated Rs. 8.36 crore despite the Covid-19 induced economic crisis. The company also raised its equity by Rs. 12 lakh at the end of January 2021, taking it to Rs. 71 lakh. The net profit of the company grew by 90% and reached INR 19.57 lakh. Some of the reasons that were instrumental in bringing the success were efforts put in by resilient farming communities by ensuring timely and adequate production, efficient post-harvest management and value addition. Table 5.1 provides details of business transacted.

*Table 5.1: Business transacted by RRPPCL (2018-21)*

<b>Particulars</b>	<b>FY 18-19</b>	<b>FY 19-20</b>	<b>FY 20-21</b>
Total volume of grains / seeds procured (Quintals)	13,378.5	12068	22332.5
Total volume of grains / seeds sold (Quintals)	1428.78	1239.5	17817.58
Revenues from operation (INR in lakhs)	493.54	498.23	799.53

Other Income (INR in lakh)	24.58	23.66	37.29
Net Profit (INR in lakhs)	1.20	10.29	19.57

### ***5.1 This year's progress; next year's targets***

RRPPCL started the year 2020-21 with the finalization of the forward contract with its partner Safe Harvest Private Limited (SHPL), for the supply of NPM Wheat, Wheat Flour, Gram, Chana Dal, Red Gram, Tur Dal, Mung, Maize flour and Daliya for the whole year. The same year, the company aggregated a record 2023.2 tonnes of wheat, Chana, maize and red gram, surpassing the previous peak of 1394.55 tonnes in 2017-18. It processed 730 tons of wheat, 170 tons of Bengal gram and 153 tons of red gram into wheat flour, chana dal and tur dal respectively. RRPPCL has grown significantly in its other segments, like input supply (seeds) in 2020-21, where it sold 105.2 tonnes of (Kharif and Rabi seed) worth INR 1.6 crore, its highest ever sale.

In the coming year 2021-22, it plans to aggregate, cold-store and mill over 1100 metric tonnes of wheat, 600 tonnes of Bengal gram and Kabuli chana, 200 tonnes of Red Gram, and 62 tonnes of Mung respectively. RRPPCL shall also be dealing in over 200 tonnes of broken wheat (Daliya) and 800 tonnes of Maize in FY 2021-22.

Table 4.2 provides details of business transacted by the company with its forward partner SHPL, maize aggregation, job work and seed sale in the financial year 2018-19 and 2019-20 and in 2020-21(unaudited).

*Table 5.2: Business transacted with SHPL, maize aggregation, job work and seed sale (2018-21)*

	SHPL		Maize Aggregation		Job Work		Seed Sale	
Financial Year	Tons	Value (Lakhs)	Tons	Value (Lakhs)	Tons	Value (Lakhs)	Tons	Value (Lakhs)
2018-19	648.91	257.06	618	90.59	16.5	0.16	102.5	96.9
2019-20	740.9	331.57	0	0	15.2	0.31	101.8	127
2020-21	913.8	433.70	214.2	29.58	485	19.10	105.23	159.6

It can be noted from table 4.2 that in the financial year 2020-21, the phenomenal growth in job work owes to the launch of retail packaging operations at Avantee Mega Food Park, Dewas.

## ***5.2 Actively Participating in Covid-19 Relief Interventions by SPS: Steps, Challenges and Successes***

### **1. Aggregation during the lockdown**

The harvesting of wheat and gram generally starts in the beginning of March and the aggregation commences from mid-March every year. However, with the imposition of the lockdown with effect from March 24, all operations came to a standstill. The crop had been harvested by then. Considering this, the government gave relaxation to start agriculture-related activities during the lockdown period. However, since our field area consists of multiple locations, falling in different block/district jurisdictions, permissions and approvals were required from the multiple concerned authorities. To overcome the challenges posed by the lockdown, our first step was to arrange movement passes, both for our employees and our transport vehicle, from the local administration so that farmers who were going in for distress sales due to lack of market access could be helped. Permits were only granted to a handful of people, including four *hamals* (porters), the driver and helper of our transportation vehicle, and a couple of people from the aggregation team.

Times were tough, as the crops were ready for sale, but market-channels had been cut-off. Small traders were hesitating to visit villages, farmers were afraid to step out. Gram was purchased and stored at the village collection center but its lifting remained a concern. Once RRPPCL received permits, our employee Din Dayal started the aggregation work from his native village and gradually reached other villages. The location managed to purchase a total of 2900 quintals of wheat and 800 quintals of gram, also receiving criticism from other traders for giving high prices to the farmers, like Rs.1850/quintal for wheat. Even government-purchase of crops started much later. However, the team at our location office mentioned that it could not access some of the villages due to time constraints posed by the permission guidelines. The team worked diligently through these difficult times. The commitment was such that team members started their day early in the morning and reached their home late at night only after ensuring aggregated produce reached a safe place for storage either at our Bagli warehouse or a cold storage.

The company aggregated 760.5 tonnes of Wheat, 115.1 tonnes of Gram (*Vishal Chana*), 80.8 tonnes of Chickpea (*Dollar Chana*), 3.8 tonnes of Gram (*Kak-2*), 2.2 tonnes of Red Gram and 6.3 tonnes of Green Gram in the months of April and May 2020 from 700 farmers at remunerative prices. The procurement of the given commodities ensured that a fair amount was paid to the small and marginal women farmers for their produce. This greatly helped them tide over this unprecedented situation.

## 2. Wheat Flour Supply to SPS for the Covid-19 Relief package

In view of the unprecedented humanitarian crisis, Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) supported 12000 vulnerable households across 191 villages and 10 towns in five blocks of Dewas and Khargone districts of Madhya Pradesh by providing them with a Covid-19 relief kit consisting of dry ration items, worth Rs. 1000 for each kit. A key element of this operation was that the wheat flour in relief kits was aggregated and processed at Avantee Mega Food Park at Dewas by RRPPCL. So, while 12000 households were being helped with the relief kits, the produce of several of SPS's NPM farmers was being bought for the purpose, helping two categories of distressed groups. A total of 118.40 tonnes of wheat flour worth INR 37,88,800 was transported to various locations for distribution as part of the relief package.

### 3) Seed Sale

Due to the lockdown, we anticipated that the availability of quality seeds was going to be challenging for farmers for the Kharif season. Therefore, we contacted company dealers within time and bought adequate quantities of seeds at fair prices. These were made available to our women shareholder farmers for buying through their SHGs.

- **Kharif Seeds:** During the Kharif season 2020-21, a total of 288.48 quintals worth 75.14 lakhs of maize seed of different varieties were sold to 2153 women SHG farmers. Location wise seed-sale data is given in table 4.3.

*Table 5.3: Location wise maize seed sale details*

S. No.	Location	No. of Members	Quantity (in quintal)	Amount (INR in Lakh)
1	Punjabpura Pragati Samiti	660	127.5	33.07
2	Udainagar Pragati Samiti	914	84.5	21.70
3	Kantaphod Pragati Samiti	235	20.8	5.85

4	Bagli Pragati Samiti	270	48.6	12.50
5	Barwaha Mahila Pragati Samiti	37	4.0	1.12
6	Bhikangaon Pragati Samiti	37	3.1	0.90
	Total	2153	288.5	75.14

Additionally, RRPPCL sold seeds of red gram, castor, Jowar, maize, Mung, Tilli and Urad worth INR 44.06 lakhs to SPS for its '*Rahat Karyakaram*', a Covid-19 relief programme providing seeds, bio-culture, and feed respectively for the NPM farmers and livestock-owners with whom SPS works.

In total, RRPPCL sold **466 quintals** of seed worth **Rs.1.19 crore** during this year's Kharif season.

- **Rabi Seeds:** During Rabi season 2020-21, RRPPCL sold seeds of Wheat, Gram, Sunflower and Coriander to its women shareholder farmers and to SPS. Overall 586.34 quintals of seeds worth Rs. 37.71 lakh to 900 women shareholder members were sold during this season.

### ***5.3 Expanding Retail Packaging Operations at Avantee Mega Food Park, Dewas***

In 2020-21, RRPPCL took a major leap forward in the direction of value chain addition with its entry into Avantee Integrated Mega Food Park, Dewas. RRPPCL leased in 1500 sq. ft. of space at the food-park in the month of September 2020 in addition to the 1500 sq. ft. taken in March/April 2020. The increased the total available space to 3000 sq. ft. The rent is Rs. 17 per sq. ft. The installed machinery include- two sealing machines (used in packaging), a vibro machine (used for flour filtering), a moisture machine (used to measure the moisture of grain), printing machine (used for printing batch no., MRP, etc.) and a compressor (for food preservation).

From October 7, 2020 onwards, the company started doing job work of retail packaging for its forward contract partner SHPL. The key feature of this new initiative is that the packaging is



done by the women residing nearby. This has created livelihood opportunities for women, equipping them with new skills that will ultimately enhance their capabilities and make them self-dependent.

### ***5.3.1 Case Study: Our Employees at the Avantee Mega Food Park, Dewas***

Mamta Chauhan of Binjania village used to work as a seasonal agricultural labor in the field which was 5-7 km away from her house. She was the only breadwinner in her family and was single-parenting her children after separation with her husband. She was finding it very difficult to run the house and educate her children. After joining RRPPCL, her home condition has stabilized and she now earns Rs. 220 a day and has a fixed monthly income.

Before joining RRPPCL, Lalkunwar Parmar of Rajeev Nagar village was a housewife and her husband was the sole breadwinner for the family. After he met with a severe accident eight years ago, he could not work. Thus, to support her family, Lalkunwar started working first as a farm labourer, later on with RRPPCL, which helped her support her of her family. Like Mamta didi, she is also earning Rs. 220 a day and has a fixed monthly income now.

### **Retail Packaging**

Currently, retail packaging of more than nine products, including Bengal Gram, Whole Chana, Vishal Chana Dal, Kabuli Chana, Mung Whole, Tur Dal, Wheat Daliya, Whole Wheat Sharbati, Wheat Atta, and Jaggery of different Stock Keeping Units (SKUs) is being done for SHPL.

RRPPCL packed 33 tons, 51.18 tons and 74.4 tons of processed agri-commodities into retail packages of 1 kg and 5 kg in the month of October, November and December respectively and sold the same to SHPL during this period. SHPL is giving Rs.4.06 per kg to RRPPCL for retail packaging job work. In the first 3 months of its operation, RRPPCL generated revenue of Rs. 6.43 lakh through this job work.

We anticipated packaging of only 60 ton processed agricultural produce monthly but within a short period, for instance in February we reached the level of 110 tons with 15+ commodities in our basket.

Our use of the facilities at the food park will be a precedent for many other farmer-led enterprises to initiate business partnerships which are similar in nature.

## ***5.4 Managing other aspects of being an FPO***

### **1) Access to Credit**

During the year 2020-21, RRPPCL was able to meet its working capital need of Rs. 2 crore through loans of equal amount from Nabkisan Finance Limited, a subsidiary of NABARD at an interest rate of 11% per annum, and from Friends of Women World Bank (FWWB) at an interest rate of 14% per annum.

## 2) Post-Harvest Storage

RRPPCL transports the aggregated produce from its collection centre to a protected environment at the Bagli Warehouse or the cold storage unit at Avantee Mega Food Park. At the former, the produce is stored in cocoons, which are hermetic storage bags with regulated gas composition. This technology aids in killing insects that have already infested the produce, preventing further damage. Currently, RRPPCL has 167 tonnes of cocoon capacity. At the cold storage, separate chambers are booked, ensuring that food grains do not come in contact with non-NPM commodities. RRPPCL had booked 600 tonnes of space in Avantee Cold Storage in 2020-21.

## 3) Milling of Gram

170 tons of Vishal Chana were milled at GDM foods at Indore, in the month of October and November. They charged INR 4.5 per kg for the job of milling to Chana Dal. We got 125.5 tonnes of dal, and the remaining ‘waste’ amounting to 4.45 tonnes was sold at INR 14.5 per kg.

## 4) Red Gram Aggregation and Milling

99 tons of Red Gram worth Rs. 54 lakhs was aggregated from 350 farmers across 93 villages in our field area. The quantity aggregated doubled this time when compared with last year's figure of 50 tonnes.

*Table 5.4: Location wise aggregation of Red Gram for the year 2020-21*

S.No.	Location	Quantity Aggregated (in Tonnes)
1	Bagli	12
2	Punjabura	30.1
3	Kantaphod	16.1

<b>4</b>	Udainagar	24
<b>5</b>	Barwah	17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>99.2</b>

This year Red Gram was directly sent from the field to Sinhal Enterprises, Ujjain for milling. The idea was to avoid the extra labour and transportation cost incurred due to multiple handling and intermediate storing of the commodities. Milling of Red Gram took place in the months of February and March 2021.

*Table 5.5: Milling details of Red Gram held in February and March at Sinhal Enterprises*

<b>Particular</b>	<b>Quantity (in tonnes)</b>
<b>Red Gram Inward</b>	<b>98.6</b>
<b>Tur Dal Output</b>	<b>56.1</b>
<b>Husk</b>	<b>23.8</b>
<b>Sortex Rejection</b>	<b>8.7</b>
<b>Khanda</b>	<b>3.98</b>
<b>Gota</b>	<b>.28</b>

RRPPCL also did the milling of 49.2 tonnes of Red Gram aggregated during Kharif Marketing season 2019-20 into Tur Dal at Sinhal Enterprises, Ujjain in October 2020, out of which 35.25 tonnes of tur dal was received.

### **5) Capacity Building Training**

Due to the pandemic and related restrictions, our training activities, Board of Directors (BoDs) meetings and interactive events took a backseat. Another challenge was to reach out to our large number of shareholder SHG members who are geographically spread at different locations.

As lockdown restrictions relaxed from January 2021, RRPPCL started its training session for SHG members and the staff. During the last quarter of the year 2020-21, we conducted shareholders training in SHG meetings, where they were informed of the RRPPCL activities. In total, we reached 480 women SHG members.

**Training of RRPPCL Functionaries:** RRPPCL had three training sessions on Institution Building, the first two of which were held online on February 15 and 16, and the final session was held on February 21 (face to face interaction) by Shri Rangu Rao, CEO, SHPL. Discussions were held on issues like fundamental reasons behind starting an FPO, its basic requirement, distribution of company's profit amongst shareholder members, roles and responsibilities of BODs, increasing outreach to shareholder members and recent increase in paid-up capital of RRPPCL from Rs. 58.8 Lakh to 70 Lakh.

RRPPCL also had a day-long session on Aggregation Strategy on March 22 held at the Baba Amte Centre for People's Empowerment, Neemkheda by Lohit Mohan, Partner Relationship and Procurement Manager, SHPL. Issues such as the challenges faced by RRPPCL during aggregation, need for factoring in various aspects while fixing prices of aggregated commodities and quality analysis of wheat samples were discussed during the session.

**Exposure Visit to Avantee Mega Food Park, Dewas:** Exposure visits for all locations were planned for the month of March. However, due to the rising Covid-19 cases, we could conduct the exposure visits for only 24 women shareholders from two locations - Udainagar and Barwah. These women visited Avantee Mega Food Park packaging plant and learned the retail process that is followed by RRPPCL.

### **6) Annual General Meeting of RRPPCL**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of RRPPCL was held virtually on December 26, 2020. The meeting had a participation of about 300 shareholder women farmers from SHGs that form the company's member base. Avinash Tiwari, District Development Manager (DDM) of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Dewas, was the Chief Guest. He provided a brief description of various schemes like Rural Innovation Fund, Rural

Mart and Wadi project (orchard programme) supported by NABARD and highlighted the importance of sustainable agriculture practices. He also acknowledged the work and efforts put forward by RRPPCL for economic upliftment and social empowerment of its women shareholder farmers. During the AGM, board members Meera Bai and Sugan Bai talked about the initiatives taken by RRPPCL at Avantee Mega Food Park, Dewas, the importance of the Mandi system and the need for its expansion in our region. Mr. Rajat Tomar, RRPPCL CEO, talked about the work done by the company in the previous year and outlined its future vision. Our forward linkage partner Safe Harvest Private Limited's CEO, Shri Rangu Rao emphasised that numerous farmers' groups fail to survive or expand. Small farmers find it hard to pool in enough money as shareholders and banks do not find them creditworthy enough to provide loans. He also emphasized that FPOs must get better access to bank credit at low rates in order to compete with rich private companies. Technical glitches with regard to high speed internet connectivity marred the meeting as few women shareholders couldn't express their views.

### *5.5 Challenges faced and their possible solutions*

- a) Credit guarantee to FPO's from nationalized banks is still a dream as banks rarely lend to those associated with the farm sector. This has made it difficult for FPOs to arrange funds to carry out their primary activity, in turn forcing them to look out for alternative financial institutions like FWFB and Avanti Finance. These institutions lend loans on higher interest rates, which impacts the producer company's profitability severely, resulting in an unsustainable FPO business model. As in the case of RRPPCL, the margins are already very low, and additionally, the high cost debt makes the situation worse.

Therefore, it becomes imperative for policy makers to take an account of the situation and come up with solutions like including FPOs in priority sector lending of banks so that they are obliged to lend money for working capital at low cost to producer organizations.

- b) It is crucial for an FPO to move up in the value chain and have a diverse portfolio of products so that it can cater to the maximum number of consumers, increasing the profit and decreasing the risk significantly. In light of this, RRPPCL took up processing and retail packaging of its agro-produce at the Avantee Mega Food Park, Dewas entirely funded by NABARD. But the charges quoted by the mega food park are clearly meant for the established food processing entities and corporate, and aren't viable for us. To help cope with this, the government should come up with a pilot project wherein they initially work with a few selected FPOs for some years and support them via funds or provide concession in the charges, like in the case of MNCs, where the government gives subsidies & various benefits at marginal rate to them in their formative years.

- c) One of the major issues faced by FPOs in general is the severe dearth of experienced and skilled personnel from reputed rural management institutions due to their inability to meet compensation expectations of professionals who possess skills to manage the operation of the company efficiently. Such students may be encouraged to work in the rural sector through provision of fellowships and schemes by the government. The skills of such personnel will help catapult FPOs like RRPPCL to another level.
- d) Small and marginal farmers have inadequate access to basic infrastructure required for aggregation of produce, like transport, value addition (cleaning, grading, sorting), warehousing and cold storage. FPOs open ways of accessing these facilities for them. However, FPOs themselves face many infrastructural challenges, like unmaintained roads that hinder transportation of commodities. In this context, infrastructural investment by the government can support FPOs to perform well in the long run.
- e) Cost of holding stocks is another major item of RRPPCL's expenses, accounting for about 15%. The need to maintain inventory is on account of the price fluctuations in commodity markets as well as on account of the processes of cleaning, sorting and grading of the produce. The need for maintaining stocks can be minimized if RRPPCL is able to directly market the commodities from the farms themselves, which is not possible in many cases. However, as part of training of our farmers, we are increasingly trying to raise awareness of the farmers about the need to maintain quality of their produce. A lot of cleaning and grading can be done at the farm gate itself, which can minimize the need for loading, unloading and stocking to be done by RRPPCL.
- f) Increasing efficiency of operations is another major avenue where RRPPCL needs to work. Collection expenses come to about 13% of the total expenses of the company. As mentioned earlier, some part of this is inevitable given the difficult geographical situation of our project area. But still, many of these costs can be reduced through careful planning of aggregation efforts such as opening collection centres and optimizing vehicle trips. We are also working on value addition of the primary product, which will enhance the value of what we sell in the market and help us cover most of our costs.

## 6 LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Livestock has proved to be a viable and fruitful alternative means of livelihood for the small and marginal farmers in the drylands of India. Goat rearing and poultry activities are relatively less input intensive than farming and thus are suitable for farmers with a low or no resource base, especially in the case of landless labour and tenant farmer. Moreover, these activities allow the farmers to diversify their income stream making them less susceptible to weather shocks and other unforeseen circumstances. The Livestock Programme at SPS started with dairy farming but now promotes other forms of livestock in the form of goats and poultry as they have proven to be better suited for low income households of small and marginal farmers which cannot afford large animals.

The Livestock Development and Support Programme has seen a successful phase of growth in the past year across seven locations in the Bagli, Kannod and Dharni blocks. With its success in the existing locations and demand from farmer members engaged in the SHG and Agriculture programmes, the programme has initiated its operations in the block of Barwah as well. This will be a step towards expanding our model of risk mitigation and poverty alleviation for the agrarian community.

*Table 6.1: Livestock programme's reach*

<b>Blocks Covered</b>	<b>Bagli, Kannod and Dharni</b>
<b>Total village covered</b>	207
<b>Total Members</b>	7346
<b>Total Producer Groups</b>	285
<b>SPS Locations</b>	Kantaphod, Udainagar, Punjapura, Bagli, Kannod, Hatpiplya, Barwah, Melghat, Bhikangon

### ***6.1 Healthcare during the pandemic***

Throughout the year all types of the health and veterinary support services including vaccination, de-worming, castration, treatment, artificial insemination etc. were delivered to animals at door step of the members. However, in the beginning of the year delivery of the services got restricted at some extent due to the nationwide lockdown followed by the corona pandemic which put an adverse effect on the health of the animals. But to lessen the impact of the lockdown, during that

time too our para-vets, who are locals, tried their best to reach households to treat animals. During the year various drives were conducted for services like vaccination and de-worming which were free of cost. The treatment service was provided on the basis of members' demand and also administrated at the time of regular member's home visit (animals were treated if they were found ill during regular visits).

*Table 6.2: Figures for healthcare and vet services provided this year*

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Figures</b>
Regular Treatment	7933
No. of HS-BQ Vaccines administered (Cattle)	9791
No. of FMD Vaccines administered (Cattle)	8456
No. of ET Vaccines administered (Goats)	11416
No. of PPR Vaccines administered (Goats)	10792
No. of Ranikhet and Ghambaro Vaccines administered (Poultry)	18516
De-worming (Small and large animal)	14416
Poultry De-worming	23612
Castration	827

## ***6.2 Covid-19 Relief Intervention: The Rahat Programme***

The corona virus outbreak and the consequent national lockdown have severely affected lives and livelihoods across rural India. Agriculture and allied sectors employ more than half of the workforce in the country. A majority of India's farmers (85%) are small and marginal farmers with less than two hectares of land. A large number of farmers directly dependent on livestock activities and wage works for their source of income but the lockdown led to the complete halt of livestock businesses and disrupted the entire value chain causing huge losses to farmers associated with it. Similarly, members of the SPS Livestock Programme were also badly affected and faced damage due to various reasons. In such a situation, these farmers needed additional help to be able to resume business and get back on track.



With this in mind, the SPS livestock programme focused its attention on restoring the livestock business and supporting farmers in their businesses and devised five schemes to support eligible farmers, mainly associated with goat and poultry farming.

*Table 6.3: Schemes under the Rahat programme*

<b>Schemes</b>	<b>Particulars</b>
Induction of new goat and feed to farmer (Scheme-1)	One female Goat over 3 month of age, 100 kg. Goat feed, 3 kg. Mineralbrick, 1 litre Liver tonic
Support of feed and nutrition for goat (Scheme- 2)	50 Kg. Goat feed, 3 kg. Mineral brick, 1 litre Liver tonic
Induction of Satpura desi poultry with feed support (Scheme-3)	50 Satpuda desi chicks (15 days old fully vaccinated), 150 Kg. poultry feed
Feed support for desi backyard poultry (Scheme-4)	50 Kg. Poultry feed
Providing Animal Healthcare Services like vaccination and de-worming	Vaccination & De-worming for all animal

The schemes were designed keeping in mind the interest of all kinds of livestock farmers practicing goat rearing, Desi backyard poultry farming, and Satpuda Desi poultry farming, among others. A total of 7 locations in Dewas and Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh were covered under the relief program where SPS livestock programme was being run before the lockdown. The different schemes offered by us are listed below:

- 1) *Induction of goat animal and input support-* Members are provided with one female goat, 100 kg of goat feed, 3 kg mineral brick and 1 litre of liver tonic. A total of 95 members were selected under this scheme and have been provided with female goats over 6 months of age. A female goat will help the members to increase the size of their goatery and also increase the income. These beneficiaries have also agreed to donate a female lamb over 3 months of age when the goat gives birth to a SHG member who wishes to begin goat rearing. This will be instrumental in setting off a virtuous cycle within the members themselves.

- 2) *Input support for goat rearing*- Members are provided with 50 kg of goat feed, 3 kg mineral brick and 1 litre of liver tonic. A total of 553 members were selected to provide relief under this scheme. A total of 27.68 tons of goat feed, 1659 kg of mineral brick and 487 litres of liver tonic were distributed among the selected members. The support given would provide relief to the members and compensate their losses to some extent which the members had to bear as they were unable to sell the animals during the lockdown. In addition, the input support will provide the animals with all the necessary nutrition and help them gain weight.



*Image 6.1: Goat Feed Distribution at Barwah, Khargone*

- 3) *Induction of Satpuda desi chicks and rearing support to satpuda desi chicken farmers*- Members are provided with 15 days' old 50 satpuda desi chicks, 150 kg poultry feed and rearing support including vaccination and de-worming. A total of 183 members were selected under the scheme. These members were active in the previous year with satpuda desi farming and meeting others parameters set by the program. A total of 2950 satpuda desi chicks with 8.85 tonnes poultry feed were distributed to 59 members in first round and in the 2nd round a total 2900 satpuda desi chicks with 8.70 tonnes poultry feed were distributed to 58 members. This will help farmers restore their business. Each farmer should earn somewhere between Rs. 12,500-Rs.15,000 in over a span of two months and can reinvest their income to stabilize their businesses.
- 4) *Input support for desi poultry farmers*- Members are provided with 50kg of poultry feed. A total 81 members were selected under the scheme on the basis of indicators set by the programme. A total of 4.05 tonne of poultry feed were distributed among 81 members

under the scheme. This feed will provide essentials nutrition including calcium to hens which furthers the capacity of laying more eggs in hens.

- 5) *Preventive veterinary healthcare services*- Members are provided with ET vaccination and de-worming services. Preventive measures are very essential as it prevents animals from diseases which lead to mortality in animals in case of a disease outbreak. The lockdown resulted in a month's delay in these services. Hence, the programme incorporated it into its relief activities and drew up a separate plan to provide services to as many members as possible. A total 2426 families were received benefits under the scheme.



*Image 6.2: A farmer getting her goat vaccinated under the livestock programme*

### ***6.2.1 Impact of the Rahat programme***

- Very positive feedback was received for the entire work. Most of the goats given to members under scheme-1 have now given birth to new lambs, resulting in increase in the number of animals owned by them, which will help them earn a good income. All the goats are under the care of our paravet, so that no animal has to face any kind of health problem.
- All the members who were provided with goat and poultry feed along with other essential nutritional and veterinary support mentioned that it has had a great impact on their animals. Due to the lack of availability of proper feed and fodder during the lockdown, the health of their animals had been adversely affected and their weight dropped. Now

their health condition has improved and animals have gained weight. Some members also said that they have sold many animals at good prices.

- A total of 59 members who were provided benefit under scheme-3, on which the total incurred cost by the programme was about Rs. 3, 87,000, have sold 1985 chickens for Rs.5,55,215. Therefore, on an average each member has earned an income of Rs. 9,410 which they are using for scaling-up their poultry business as well as on other necessities. After selling remaining chickens, the total sold value would reach to Rs. 8, 25,130, as the average sold rate of per chicken calculated is Rs. 280 approx. Therefore, on an average each member would be able to earn an income of Rs. 13985.

### ***6.3 Capacity building for the team***

**Veterinary Training for Paravets-** This year, a number of trainings were organized for our Paravets through virtual mode, largely around providing health support services like de-worming, treatment, vaccination etc. During the training, paravets from all locations participated. They were taught many topics such as basic veterinary science, blood type in animals, names of new drugs and their use in treating animals, animals' anatomy, physiology and so on. All the training was organized and conducted by Dr. Jayanti.

**Software training-** The livestock programme has moved towards digitizing all its work and is in the process of eliminating all manual data organizing and reporting work by adopting a dedicated software. For successfully implementation of this plan, various training sessions were conducted throughout the year on the livestock software. Training was also provided on basic computer applications to our field staff, the paravets, as most of them had no any prior experience of working on computers.

### ***6.4 Providing shelter facilities, poultry chick distribution and feed services***

**Shelter service:** Proper housing facility plays a vital role in proliferation of livestock farming. It prevents the draft animal from general seasonal sickness and also provides protection from predators such as dogs, cats, snakes, rats and thieves. At SPS, we promote low cost shelter as well as support members to construct the shelter both financially and technically. The most significant thing to notice is that in shelter building, members contribute near about 60% cost themselves in the form of cash and kind, and in case of poultry shed, it is close to 75%.

Throughout the year, members were supported and assisted in the construction of night shelters, free-ranges for poultry, and goat sheds.

*Poultry chick-distribution:* Under the backyard poultry farming programme, 15 days old chicks of Satpuda and Kadaknath breed are promoted and delivered to farmer members at their doorstep after proper vaccination. This year, a total of 19550 Satpuda desi and Kadaknath breed chicks were delivered to members as per their demand. The Satpuda chicks have characteristics like fast growth rate (becomes ready to sell within 3 months) as compared to desi chicks (a local breed which becomes ready to sell after a minimum of 8 -12 months). The main quality of Satpuda chicken is that it looks like desi chicken in every respect, on account of this character member gets a fair rate of satpuda desi breed chicken in local market that varies between Rs. 300 – Rs. 550 depending on their growth. In this way members get a better earning in just a few months.

*Feed and fodder service:* As health, growth and almost everything depends on a better animal feeding habit, the program is very attentive for improvement of feeding practices in draft animal. Under this service, nutritious feed & its supplement is made available to farmer members for goat, poultry and cattle. During the quarter we supported members to get nutritious feed for their animal by providing them with goat feed bag, mineral brick and liver tonic.

### ***6.5 Case Study: Bouncing back to Business***

Basanti Bai is a resident of the Nimlay Village in the Kannod Block of Dewas district in Madhya Pradesh. She is a member of the Sheetla Mata Pragati Samuh. Both Basanti Bai and her husband Ramlal are landless and depend on daily wage work to earn a living. The couple also rear goats and poultry at home for an increased income. Basanti Bai is also member of the SPS Livestock Programme. In the past few years, she has been doing poultry farming successfully, taking loans from the SHG to scale her business and arrange for working capital to scale up.

The couple was performing well in their business until the nationwide lockdown was imposed due to Covid-19. All sale of poultry came to a screeching halt and the couple exhausted their little savings to survive in the initial phase of the lockdown. The situation worsened because of rumours in the region about contracting Covid-19 through the consumption of poultry.

With no savings in hand, it was almost impossible for Basanti Bai and Ramlal to resume their poultry business after a few months of the lockdown. Around this time, the SPS Livestock Programme designed their relief schemes and reached out to the couple. Towards the end of October, under the third scheme of the Livestock Relief Programme (Induction of Satpuda desi chicks and rearing support to satpuda desi chicken farmers), the couple received 50 chicks, 150 kg poultry feed and other rearing support including vaccination and de-worming. The chicks were 15 days' old and they became ready to be sold by the middle of November. She sold all 50 chickens during the festival of Diwali and had an income of Rs. 14000. She re-invested this income to purchase a goat which will help her begin a goat-rearing business at home. These relief schemes are primarily aimed at enabling small and marginal farmers to restore their livelihoods which were ravaged due to the pandemic.

Similarly, Bondar Bai was not ready to throw away her chickens in a day because of the rumour that Covid-19 can be spread through poultry. She decided to keep them at home despite what her neighbours said. She incurred extra costs of feed and fodder as she kept her poultry stock instead of dumping them. A resident of the Nanda Nagar Mohalla of Paras Village in the Bagli block of Dewas, Madhya Pradesh, Bondar Bai and her husband Ramesh are marginal farmers engaged in agriculture, agricultural labour, poultry farming and goat rearing. They have three sons who all live together and do the same work.

Bondar Bai is an SHG member of Punjapura Pragati Samiti, a women-led SHG Federation in the area. She has been practising poultry farming and goat rearing and receives support from the SPS Livestock Programme. Their poultry business was slowly scaling up and Bondar Bai had recently begun rearing Satpuda chicks which would further enhance their income. She would sell 500-600 chicks every year and earn Rs. 50,000-60,000 every year. This was a critical source of livelihood for their family.

The announcement and sudden imposition of the Covid-19 lockdown was a drastic blow to her business. Not only could she not sell her stock anywhere but also incurred extra costs in arranging for feed and fodder for them. Once the situation improved slightly and the rumours died down, Bondar Bai managed to sell her chickens locally. But the money earned was used to meet all unprecedented expenses in the household as the lockdown had thrown the family into financial crisis with all work coming to a halt.

For Bondar Bai and Ramesh, restarting their poultry business seemed like a distant dream. This is when the relief efforts of the SPS Livestock Programme came into action. The couple received support in the form of 50 Satpuda chicks, feed and other veterinary support. So far, they have sold 40 chickens in the local market and earned approximately Rs. 20,000. With this money, she has been able to meet some of her household needs and she has re-invested the rest into building back her poultry business again.

## **6.6 Challenges**

### ***Member level:***

***Sudden shutdown of markets:*** Due to the sudden closure of local markets, members were unable to sell their animals mainly goats and chickens; due to which farmers had to spend extra money as an additional input cost for feed and fodder on such animals which were worth selling which causing them exorbitant losses.

***Decrease in demand:*** During the lockdown, the meat industry saw a record low demand due to various rumors which were spreading rapidly such as the consumption of meats could cause

COVID 19. This put the poultry sector in jeopardy. Our poultry farmers also suffered heavy losses due to these rumors as they were unable to sell their poultry even locally. Some incidents were reported in which the farmers were forced to dump and destroy their poultry by the local people because they were scared of contracting the virus.

***Lack of animal healthcare facilities:*** Livestock programme succeeded in providing healthcare services to many remote tribal villages through its pools of para vets with However, during the lockdown, the lack of preventive and curative veterinary health care services led to animal mortality, as the mobility of our para vets and other essentials supplies became somewhat restricted compared to earlier. Proper feed and fodder for animals were also scarce due to a disruption in the supply chain.

All the above problems adversely affected livestock businesses and farmers' incomes. Some farmers had to give up goat rearing and poultry farming and many others were completely ruined.

***Paravet Level:***

- Due to the lockdown, the mobility of the paravets got impacted their reach were shrunken from usually 6-8 villages to only 1 or 2 villages.
- Due to the lockdown and covid-19 fear many villages were not allowing outsiders including paravets to enter in their villages.
- Some paravets had also fear of being contracted from corona.

***Programme level:***

***Delay in work:*** Due to the lockdown timely implementation of the project work got impacted.

***Problem in mobilizing members after lockdown:*** The programme faced problems in persuading new members to build a night shelter for their chicken as they were apprehensive about the future of poultry farming. Based on the rumour, it was also feared that chicken might increase Covid-19 cases.

***Procurement of vaccines:*** The biggest challenge faced by the programme was to provide E.T. vaccines to locations. The supply chain of this vaccine was disrupted. We get the vaccine from a vendor in Indore who sources it from Hyderabad. A constant temperature needs to be maintained which was difficult in these times of uncertain travel.

Another challenge faced by the programme was to resume the hatchery for poultry activities which was temporarily shut down in the initial days of the lockdown. Interstate travel continued

being an impediment and chicks were brought in much later than the stipulated date from Jalgaon, Maharashtra.

***Delay in shed material delivery:*** This year the programme could not make available goat shed material to members on time as our supplier faced a problem in the procurement of Babool wood that is used to make the goat shed's rib. On account of that, construction of targeted sheds for the year got slightly delayed.



## 7 HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The Health and Nutrition (H&N) programme is being implemented in 203 villages of 129 Panchayats, and 2 Nagar Panchayats, in the Bagli and Kannod blocks. The programme works in consonance with state institutions including 434 primary and middle government schools, 346 Anganwadis, and 110 PDS shops in the region. Its main objective is community capacity-building through rights-awareness and training to strengthen the functioning of these local institutions, thus creating a contingent cycle of access to basic rights guaranteed by law for all beneficiaries.

### *7.1 Work during the pandemic year*

During the lockdown, in our working area, many families who had migrated to nearby cities had come back to their respective villages. These migrants neither had work nor were they fully aware of the beneficial schemes run by the government. The H&N team identified the 25 Panchayats who had been most affected due to the Coronavirus epidemic in Bagli and Kannod blocks and ensured to provide the benefits of government schemes to them. A total of 8133 families across the two blocks were identified with the help of a survey which was held in the initial stages of the lockdown.

We had to redesign our work strategy owing to the lockdown, by making use of phones and technology. We faced challenges such as network issues, arranging beneficiaries' mobile number and poor mobile conditions and network in many villages.

- 1) Ration distribution under PDS-** To provide support to vulnerable rural households during the lockdown, the central and the state governments decided to provide free ration of 5 kg per person (4kg wheat, 1kg rice or 5kg wheat) under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana to 32 lakh eligible families for 3 months. Our team with the support of Janpad and Panchayat was able to identify the list of families who were eligible for the scheme but were not receiving the free ration and later on sent them to the ration shop after which they could finally receive the benefit.

*Table 7.1: PDS Beneficiaries reached by the H&N Team*

S.No	Location	Village	PDS	Surveyed Family	No. of households that benefitted under the PMGKY in Bagli and	No. of households we helped provide the benefit of PMGKY in Bagli and Kannod

					<b>Kannod blocks</b>	
1	<b>Bagli</b>	44	24	522	501	21
2	<b>Kantaphod</b>	29	15	371	356	15
3	<b>Satwas</b>	38	17	428	374	54
4	<b>Punjapura</b>	26	14	274	253	21
5	<b>Udainagar</b>	50	21	501	442	59
6	<b>Hatpipliya</b>	41	24	438	323	115
7	<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>2534</b>	<b>2249</b>	<b>285</b>

2) **ICDS Functioning** – Anganwadi functions, like preparing nutritious meals for beneficiary women, adolescent girls and children, had to be changed due to the lockdown. So, the government mandate that dry ration that could be taken home by beneficiaries should be distributed by anganwadi workers instead of preparing meals, in order to maintain social distancing norms. Also, immunization services by the anganwadi have continued throughout the pandemic. To ensure that these duties were being properly performed, our team surveyed 386 Anganwadi workers of Bagli and Kannod blocks. Our team did regular monitoring to ensure the daily nutrition and timely vaccination of pregnant women and children. The women and child development department also allowed measuring children weight which is started in September. Our team has helped Anganwadi and Asha workers in measuring weight, distributing dry ration and vaccination to Anganwadi beneficiaries. A total of 6228 children and 4511 pregnant women have been vaccinated and all frontline workers have been given mask and sanitiser for safety by our team.



*Image 7.1: Our team member measuring a child's height*

- 3) **Interventions for MGNREGA:** MGNREGA work was a major boon to all who lost their jobs during the pandemic. We trained our team to understand the MGNREGA law and henceforth, worked in consonance with Panchayat officials, in order to ensure MGNREGA work in the village whenever people required it. Till date, we have been able to ensure work progress in 25 Panchayats where 78,016 person-days of employment have been generated with wages worth Rs. 14,823,040, out of which payment of Rs. 1,18,180 has been completed. We are trying to ensure payments for others who have not been able to receive them.
- 4) **Ensuring long-term food security and nutrition through kitchen gardens:** Nutritious iron-and-protein-rich meals are especially important for pregnant women and children, the most economical sources of which are home-grown green vegetables. Keeping this in mind, H&N team helped 100 households at Bagli location in planting a kitchen garden on land lying unused near the house, significantly reducing their market dependence and costs for vegetables. For this, our beneficiaries were pregnant women, lactating mothers, adolescent girls and malnourished children's households to whom we distributed seeds and helped create a kitchen garden for them near water sources or where they dispose

wastewater. This initiative also helps increase food diversity in diets of the household who require it the most.

## ***7.2 Project Adhikaar***

Under this APPI funded project, SPS wants to convert into reality its vision of the marginalized in our work area self-demanding their rights and standing up for what the government entitles them to. Through this project, which is being implemented by the H&N team, SPS is trying to make people aware of the various state government schemes they are beneficiaries of, and also bringing them those benefits if they're somehow unable to receive them. The schemes related to pensions, ration, medical services (Ayushman Card), and MGNREGS are the focus of this project right now. However, there is also a provision to help people struggling with entitlements under other schemes available with our team.

To find out the extent to which people were not receiving scheme benefits, surveys were conducted at some selected, most vulnerable Panchayats, which also gave us the targets of ensuring those scheme benefits that we had to meet.

It is being hoped that we will take this project forward by designing training sessions for the empowerment of the local community, both through awareness generations on their rights and familiarization with the legal process through the efforts of our team members, and their collectivization for these issues.

*Table 7.2: Schemes, benefits, and current reach under Project Adhikaar*

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>MGNREGS</b>	<b>Bagli</b>	<b>Kannod</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	Number of vulnerable households identified	3350	1739	5089
2	Number of new Job Cards made during the reporting period	1114	689	1803
3	Number of existing Job Cards which got renewed through intervention during the reporting period	1273	669	1942
4	Number of new workers registered during the reporting period	2338	1040	3378

5	Person days generated with your intervention during the reporting period	41969	36047	78016
	<b>PDS</b>			
1	Number of families were included in PDS during the reporting period	353	225	578
2	Number of person(s) included in PDS during the programme	1192	1399	2591
3	Number of families that received free ration as per the PM Gareeb Kalyan Yojana during the reporting period (counting a family only if it received full re-entitlement in all three months)	5104	3961	9065
	<b>NSAP</b>			
1	Number of people included from different pension schemes during the reporting period	239	286	525
2	Number of people received pensions during the reporting period (Count a person only if all three month's pension is received)	128	94	222
3	Number of people supported with documentation/ grievances for accessing pension during the reporting period (Count all people who have been helped with application, registration, grievances)	236	123	359
	<b>Other Schemes</b>			
1	Number of people added/ included in the scheme during the reporting period	571	256	827
2	Number of people who received full entitlements during the reporting period	422	209	631

### ***7.3 Trainings***

**Water quality training and testing:** 14 physicochemical parameters of water testing such as pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, residual chlorine, turbidity, nitrate, fluoride, phosphorous, iron, hardness, ammonia, faecal pollution and alkalinity were discussed along with their related illnesses and impacts to the ecology.

The team tested 30 community drinking water sources in Chandupura, Kardi and Paras Panchayat. We mainly found bacterial contamination, high ammonia, fluoride and absence of chlorine in the water. For a few water sources, the test result showed that the water sample did not meet the EPA drinking water standards. Hence the water was unsafe for human consumption.

As per our field observation, more people with disabilities, malnourished children and health issues were found in Paras and Kardi Panchayats, where these contaminated drinking water sources existed and also increased the risk of diseases like diarrhoea, nausea, stomach problems to children and people with a severely compromised immune system.

We have been continuously sharing the water sample test with the community, making them understand its harmful health effects and contacting the panchayat to request for cleaning of water sources. At Kharadipura and Bhuriyapura villages, where the conditions of drinking water sources are worst, we have been continuously organising meetings with the community and Panchayat representatives for repairing and cleaning of drinking water sources in the village.

**Anganwadi Training on WASH:** With the support of ICDS, we conducted a WASH session with 29 Anganwadi workers of Chandupura, Paras and Kardi Panchayat. We had a discussion on the current status of the water, sanitation and hygiene on the ground, how it relates to anganwadi work, and how the workers can play an important role in their community by taking timely precautions. This was followed by a movie screening focusing on the importance of clean and safe drinking water and how the daily practice of hand wash can improve the health of the children as well as the community. At the end of the session, we briefly explained the water testing process and did a few tests such as iron, pH, and nitrate on a water sample for practical demonstration purposes.



*Image 7.2: Training on WASH for Anganwadi workers*

### **7.3 Case Study**

#### ***The story of Nilesh (Child with Severe Acute Malnutrition)***

We have been working with Punjapura Pragati Samiti to reduce and remove malnutrition in children through various projects. However, many times we are presented with situations that leave us flabbergasted. Recently, a 3-year-old male child with fever, diarrhoea, low weight (6kg) and difficulty in breathing was admitted to the Bagli NRC (nutritional rehabilitation centre) after multiple home visits to convince parents for intensive care and immediate treatment. NRC Bagli referred the child to the District Hospital in Dewas, which further referred the child to a hospital in Indore. Due to lack of knowledge and exposure, the parents came back home after they were scolded by the doctors for having ignored the child's health for so long. The child, Nilesh, has 5 other siblings and is the second youngest in the household. His father is a daily wage worker and the mother stays at home. They have no land or access to any other means of income. His 4 elder sisters are like second mothers, taking care of him when his mother is unable to, having to constantly tend to the youngest 1-year-old while managing the rest of the household. When we previously came in contact with this case, the professionals in-charge all sent him away to the NRC, but due to extreme medical complications, he was either referred forward or was sent home thinking of him as a hopeless case.

As the parents were not ready to take their child to Indore and the NRC was not ready to provide even basic care, the team was on the verge of giving up as it had tried everything learnt over the years. We even spoke to the ICDS department, Health department and doctors, requesting them to at least provide basic facilities to the child but no one wanted to take the responsibility. Finally, with the efforts of some SPS professionals, the UNICEF agreed to support the child and he was admitted to MY hospital for proper medical care.



*Image 7.3: Nilesh, after receiving medical care*



## 8 KUMBAYA

The air trembled with the roar of sewing machines as seam after seam looped out, eyes fixed on needles moving at an invisible frequency. Yards of fabric, millions of colours, spools of thread, boxes brimming over with shirts and dresses to be sent, there were heaps of ironing, and the hiss of steam, people running between the rows to keep up the feverish pace of production. We were racing to finish orders and send them off - before the financial year ends, before the summer turns into a blaze, before the *mahua* flowers start falling, and the *tendu* leaves are ready to be plucked, before the marriage season begins and before it's time to start preparing the land for sowing. We were in the middle of March 2020.

### *8.1 Kumbaya amidst the pandemic*

Then one day, just like that, everything stopped. No warning. The entire country abruptly froze in total lockdown.

As uncertain days blurred into weeks and months, we worried. Suddenly more than Rs. 62 lakhs worth of confirmed orders waiting to be despatched were not picked by Trifed at the last minute because of the lockdown. Then consignments that had already been dispatched were returned by them. Fabric suppliers began clamouring for payments, so we took out all our reserves to pay them. Over the years they had become our valued partners, giving us long periods of credit out of consideration and respect for our work.

Without this money, how could we give work? How would the artisans of Kumbaya survive? How many days would the relief package and cash transfers stretch? We knew that most of the women were the only paid workers in their families. The rest were landless, entirely dependent on wage work, or else came from families with small landholdings.

For Kamala Bai from Bhikupura village, Kumbaya is not just a source of livelihood. As a young girl she learned stitching here as far back as 2001. She returned in 2013 after her marriage, when she moved to village Bhikupura nearby. In a gruesome and ill-fated incident, her husband passed away leaving her to take care of their children and his parents. Kumbaya provided unconditional support, and a place for friendships where she found strength and safety. Working at Kumbaya gave her the courage to stand up to her in-laws who were trying to throw her out of the house. Her earnings helped her buy out her share from them finally. Sitting in the small mud house she owns, she despaired as the weeks went by and kept talking of going in search of work to Indore. She has two young children to feed.

Shivani has been working in Kumbaya since she was 18. For 7 years she firmly resisted family pressure, refusing to get married and managed to keep working in Kumbaya. This summer she had to stop saying no. As soon as the lockdown opened, she was hastily married off to a family in Indore.

Laxmi was trained in quality assurance, to check each piece carefully as it came off a sewing machine, accepting the perfect ones and returning the ones with mistakes for correction. Looking into Laxmi's eyes, one sees Geeta, her mother and one of the first women who came to Kumbaya way back in 1997 because she had been abandoned by Laxmi's father when she stepped on a live electric fence accidentally. The electrocution permanently twisted and burnt her foot. She had a limp and could not work in the fields. Kumbaya was started for women like Geeta. When she started earning regularly at Kumbaya, the husband begged her to return, and so Laxmi was born. Twenty years later Laxmi joined Kumbaya, and what a feeling of achievement it was for all of us; to have lasted out all these years, against all odds, and still be there to stand up for our daughters.

But in May, Laxmi did not return. She went back to working as agricultural labour. Just like Tulsa, who had shifted to Punjapura village close by so that she could work at Kumbaya and send her children to school, but then in this period of uncertainty, had to go back to her ancestral village to work in the fields. Manisha was sent off by her parents to work in a factory in Indore. She was a part of Kumbaya for the last 5 years. Many others could not come back, there were no buses on the road, there was the risk of catching Covid, and the marriage season broke out - where hordes of people from red zones like Indore and Dewas travelled to our area increasing the risk of infection. Even then, there were still so many women who did not want to go to the marriages, and desperate to come back to work. But their family members would not understand.

It was the first time in twenty five years that the Kumbaya Bhavans were closed for more than a week. For the first time ever, we did not have the money to pay our artisans. Yet, risking everything through the lockdown in April, May and June, Pushpa, who heads operations at all three centres, went from house to house across villages twenty kilometres apart, to deliver work to those artisans who walk on their hands. Just like everyone else, Pushpa also learned how to stitch here twenty years ago.

## ***8.2 A Hundred Thousand Masks and the Power of Women's Institutions***

Then 41000 women came to our rescue, and gave us an order for a hundred thousand masks in July! Each one is a member of the 14 Women's Federations promoted by Samaj Pragati Sahayog! These Federations are formed by thousands of women and their Self Help Groups. This generous order was given by women who are struggling themselves. They are all from poor families and marginalised communities; but who's combined savings, painstakingly collected month after month and year after year, have the strength to leverage enough loans from public sector banks to provide for everyone's needs – consumption, emergencies, health, livelihoods, housing, education. This order came at a time when we needed it the most, when we were facing a dead end. The women could have easily bought masks in the market, but chose to express solidarity and support Kumbaya instead.

So the Kumbaya Bhavans came alive in the monsoon. We bought 800 kilos of dead stock from fabric dealers in Indore. We did not want to put our producers at risk by making them travel in public buses, so Pushpa made sure that the cut fabric reached as many producers as possible so that they could stitch masks from home. Some producers even bought sewing machines so that they could continue working. Through the monsoon rain, women walked and cycled to reach the Bhavans. Some even coaxed family members to drive them on motorcycles to work and back.

Banno has been with Kumbaya for the last twelve years, during which she was married, widowed, and left with the responsibility of looking after her own parents as well as her husband's. She said, "When work started again at the Bhawan, I could not reach because there were no buses. So I took a loan and bought a second-hand scooter so that I can work again".

A hundred thousand masks provided employment to many of our producers for over a month. This order stands like a beacon, where federations of poor women create employment opportunities for other marginalized women of the area, an example of the power of women's solidarity and resilience in extremely tough times. We have done many orders over the years, for city stores and designers from India and overseas. But making a hundred thousand masks for the women of our area was sacred. It was the most precious, the most distinguished order of all, an honour and privilege for Kumbaya. What will remain as an abiding flame in the heart of Kumbaya is that 41000 women held out their hands to help us up. How can we not believe in women?

### ***8.3 Setbacks and Impact of Covid-19 on Producers***

**Safety Guidelines and How Production Centres Have Been Impacted** - All Kumbaya production centres and offices maintained strict Covid-19 safety guidelines such as wearing masks, washing hands and sanitising the work area on a regular basis, maintaining social distance of at least 6 feet, and allowing only a restricted number of people to work in a workplace depending on its size. To ensure safety, only 15-20 producers could work in each the centre. So we were working at very low capacity.

Even when the restrictions lifted to allow more people, only those producers who were able to walk down or come by their own transport could safely work in the Bhavans because taking public transport would have been too risky. Therefore, many people who used to come to work by bus were left out. We were unable to provide work to all of them and kept trying to think of ways to help them out financially to provide some relief.

**Delivering work at home** -To help producers who were unable to come to the Bhawans for work, especially people of disability, Pushpa personally travelled through mud and rain and the dangers of the pandemic to give masks and patchwork for stitching at the doorstep of as many producers as she could in villages near and far.



*Image 8.1: Ms. Pushpa working with Kumbaya producers at their homes*

#### ***8.4 Kumbaya Loses its Workforce***

When our Bhavans were shut during the lockdown, many of our producers had no option but to find alternative means of earning a living. Even when our centres opened again, a lot of people did not come back, and stopped working with us for different reasons. Some opened their own businesses and others went in search of work to Indore. Due to the multitudes of migrants who walked out of cities after the sudden lockdown, work was more easily available in the cities. Some of the valued producers who left are:

1. Manisha d/o Chensih, village Udainagar - Worked in Kumbaya for 4 years but left to work in a chocolate factory in Indore.
2. Shivani d/o Madhavsih, village Neemkheda - Worked in Kumbaya for 7 years and one of the best producers. During the lockdown she was married off and shifted to Indore. Now she is a tailor at home.
3. Hari Baghel, village Neemkheda - He worked in Kumbaya for more than 4 years. Now he has started his own tailoring shop in Punjapura.
4. Lakshmi w/o Mohan, village Bhuriyapura - She worked in Kumbaya for 4 years and was trained in quality checking. Now she has bought land in partnership with someone and is working on the farm.

5. Tulsa w/o Bhawansing, village Postipura - She worked in Kumbaya for 3 years. She lived in Punjapura on rent to educate her children, but due to the school shutting down, she went back to her village and is now working as agricultural labour.
6. Sangeeta and Phool Singh, an invaluable team, opened a shop in their village. Both of them were affected by disability in their legs. Phool Singh needed a crutch and Sangeeta had a severe limp. Sangeeta handled all the data entry in registers and Phool Singh was skilled in different production areas like cutting, using the buttonhole machine, apart from being good at stitching.

**Losing Management Professionals:** In the uncertainty of Covid-19 and the lockdown, many professionals who may have been prepared to take on the challenge of working with a social - enterprise in a rural area under normal circumstances became hesitant, preferring to search for safer options closer home in urban areas. Back in December 2019, Kumbaya hired an IRMA Graduate as an Executive for Marketing and Sales starting from May 2020. He was recruited to strengthen sales, marketing and communications through various channels including retail partnerships, on-ground exhibitions, print media and web-based platforms. At the last minute, just as he was asked to join in September 2020 after the lockdown opened and it was safe to travel, he informed us that he could not join due to a personal issue.

Soon after, Vikas Vishwakarma, who had been with Kumbaya for over seven years suddenly resigned. He was being groomed to take over as CEO of KPCL and belonged to the local area. He was planning to leave after serving a notice period of five or six months but unexpectedly got a job in Bangalore that did not allow him time. So he left at short notice within a month.

Meanwhile, we were fortunate to have Sunita Verma and Narmada Guha Roy, who were there at Kumbaya through 2020, and could bravely shoulder the burden of responsibility that suddenly came on them.

Through campus recruitments at the end of March we selected two post graduates from Azim Premji University as development professionals for Kumbaya. The search is on for more professionals from any background who would want to be a part of strengthening the social enterprise.

### *8.5 Case study: Skill-sets open way to self-reliance*

Phool Singh joined Kumbaya in 2012 and worked his way up to shoulder more responsibilities. He was taught how to stitch on a machine, cut different styles, making button holes using the button holing machine





and assist in many day to day responsibilities at the Neemkheda Bhawan. He got his wife, Sangeeta Gangrade to Kumbaya in 2017 for learning how to stitch. Unlike her husband, she was unable to stitch well. But Pushpa discovered that she had had studied up to the 10<sup>th</sup> standard, and could read and write. She could study as her husband's earnings at Kumbaya made it possible for her to pursue an education. But she had to drop out when she became pregnant. Pushpa taught her bookkeeping of the Bhawan, how to maintain registers for daily attendance, the work register that listed what every producer worked on daily, and receipts of entry and exit of goods from and to the Bhawan. All this paperwork requires an eye for detail, patience and a dedication to update multiple important registers on a daily basis! With both of them working at Kumbaya they could bring their children, Sangam and Saloni, to the Bhawan with them, as the couple lived separately from their family.



When Kumbaya was forced to shut all its production centers for months due to the nationwide lockdown, the couple was left with no work. In that difficult period Kumbaya provided them with relief packages of groceries and some monetary assistance. But they felt that to truly be free of worry, they needed to rely on themselves. So in May 2020 they decided to open a grocery cum tailoring shop in their village Pankua.

With the help of the government assistance they built their shop on the main road on their ancestral land and purchased necessary material for their shop. Phool Singh tends to the tailoring shop while Sangeeta handles the grocery store. Phool Singh initially stitched only simple blouses. But now he stocks embellishments and different trims for his customers, who can directly buy those items and get him to stitch them on. He has also started stitching children's frocks.

Even though it is a big loss to us as we had invested so much in building their skills, we feel proud that we could be the foundation on which they will build their own future. Both Phool Singh and Sangeeta are exemplary figures for the people around them and the future generation.

### ***8.6 Impact of Covid-19 on Production and Sales***

*Pending Trifed Orders and Payments*— In 2019-2020, almost 60% of our sales would have been from bulk orders that Trifed gave us. 14 regional offices of Trifed placed orders worth Rs. 74.85 lakhs to Kumbaya. Trifed Regional Officers claimed that they would accept orders until March

2020. But when the consignments were ready for delivery, they backed out of paying for the orders claiming a lack of funds at the end of the year. Only six consignments worth Rs.13.55 lakhs were accepted by the regional offices of Trifed Delhi, Bangalore, Ranchi, Jagdalpur, Delhi E-com, and Pune. Some of the payments for these arrived. However, a huge part of the order is still lying ready with us as stock that they did not pick up. The value of this is worth Rs.61.29 lakhs. Moreover, some consignments that had been accepted were returned in the middle of the lockdown as well.

A major part of the payments we have to make to our suppliers have been due for almost a year now. To produce for Trifed we purchased fabric worth nearly Rs. 43 lakhs from our suppliers, the first lot delivered as early as August-September 2019. We have only been able to function and complete the Trifed orders of 2019-2020 because of the privilege of extended credit periods generously given to us, based on the long-standing relationships of trust we have established with our suppliers over the years, and the respect that they have for our work. With payments delayed yet again for months on end, like last year, our relationships with different suppliers have come under immense strain – particularly as the economic hardship of the Covid19 pandemic lockdown affected everyone.

*Table 8.1: Orders we received from different regional offices and their status*

<b>Trifed Order Summary Sheet</b>							
<b>No.</b>	<b>RO Office</b>	<b>Order Qty Pcs</b>	<b>Amount INR</b>	<b>Order Sent</b>		<b>Order Ready</b>	
				<b>Qty Pcs</b>	<b>Value INR</b>	<b>Qty Pcs</b>	<b>Value INR</b>
1	Jaipur	1875	939167			1875	939166
2	Delhi	1950	813839	1053	432848	897	380992
3	Delhi	1750	720275			1750	720275
4	Bhopal	1438	704286			1438	704286
5	Bhubaneswar	578	263614			578	263614

6	Bangalore	1475	668374	1212	548637	263	119737
7	Ranchi	190	84571	190	84571		
8	Jagdalpur	354	134905	303	125763	51	9142
9	Hyderabad	1374	638910			1374	638910
10	Dehradun	4038	1641137			4038	1641138
11	Chandigarh	620	262680			620	262680
12	E-Commerce	170	101179			170	101179
13	Ahmedabad	725	347976			725	347976
14	Ecom Delhi	288	144243	288	144243		
15	Pune	50	19881	50	19881		
<b>Total</b>		<b>16875</b>	<b>7485037</b>	<b>3096</b>	<b>1355943</b>	<b>13779</b>	<b>6129094</b>
Amounts are not inclusive of GST							

We have been in touch with the Regional Manager of Madhya Pradesh in Bhopal and have been raising this issue repeatedly. The only answer we received was that the head office in Delhi declared that since there is no demand they could not take this stock; and that Trifed did not have the money to buy the stock that they had given purchase orders for.

The major reason for Kumbaya and many other artisans across the country going out of business, facing a crisis of livelihood, and probably facing insolvency, is because Trifed did not honour commitments. We are in an extremely serious financial situation. In November 2020 we had written a letter of appeal to the MD of Trifed, regarding the Rs. 61.29 lakhs that Trifed owes us for the orders they placed. We did not receive any response. In February 2021, we have appealed



to officials at the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for help in this regard. We are happy to report that in March a few orders trickled in.

*Retail Stores Shutting Down*— 21% of our sales was from retail stores in the previous financial year. From March 2020, for more than 6 months, most of the retail stores that we supply to hardly had any walk-ins. Basava in Bangalore, Gokulam in Mysore and Gram Bharat in Delhi had to shut down. Even today the volume of sales at other retail stores remains low.

*Exhibitions Cancelled*— Exhibitions in major cities accounted for 25% of our sales.

### **8.7 Export Orders**

Export orders accounted for 11% of our sales. The work that we have done with designers from Sweden, Australia, U.S.A and the United Kingdom is what kept our morale up and sustained our spirit. At the peak of the lockdown they were in constant touch, trying to figure out ways to get fabric and materials across to us so that the producers could have some work to do. One of the main reasons for working with designers from other countries is for the team to imbibe best practices, and be exposed to different people, culture, values and aesthetics through design. The work we have done this year on export orders is as follows:

**Labvisby, Sweden-** As soon as the first lockdown opened, in the brief gap before the mayhem of marriage and festival season, we managed to produce 10 different styles for our Swedish buyers, Labvisby, and shipped it by June 2020. The amazing thing is that it was all cut and kept ready by our Master Cutter Nandkishore ji and our Quality Assurance Incharge, Pavan at the peak of the lockdown. When Bagli opened the lockdown for an hour for essential services under police surveillance, they would reach Jatashankar Bhawan, cut all day and return home in the hour that the lockdown lifted in the evening.



*Image 8.2: Models in Labvisby designs*

**Alcana, Australia**- 17 styles of an Australian brand called **Alcana** were graded in 6 sizes, and production was completed in October and November. In spite of Dussehra and Diwali, the consignment was shipped by the end of November to be in the shops before Christmas.



*Image 8.3: Models wearing Alcana*

**Slubbed Limited, Wales, United Kingdom** – works with men's apparel in Indian artisanal fabric. We have started working with them on their brand called Dypta.

**Happy French Gang** - We will also be working on a collection for Happy French Gang from the U.S.A.

**Woven Studios, United Kingdom** -We have been in conversation with Laura Miles and Woven Studios on samples since 2018. We had worked on samples just before the lockdown last year. Then the lockdown, problems like parcels being stuck in Customs and other issues delayed production. In January 2021 the first order of two styles was placed.



*Image 8.4: Designs by Woven Studio*

By mid-February we had completed the order and dispatched the consignment. This was the message we got as soon as she received it.

“Just to let you know that we received the box and the garments are absolutely beautiful, you have done an amazing job and I’m so happy, will transfer the money for the invoice tonight and finalise the next order tomorrow, so happy to be working with you.....”

She immediately placed 2 more orders and this time there are 9 different styles.

**Designers From India** – The sudden lockdown resulted in the mass exodus of migrants from urban areas, people who held up the economy by their hard work and skill in all sectors. Most small garment fabrication workshops shut down. As a result, we have had some enquiries from designers in India, wanting to get their styles stitched by us. We are working with Naushad Ali, a designer based in Pondicherry, on his own collections as well as for the brands he supplies to.

### ***8.8 Kumbaya Production and New Styles***

This year, apart from masks, and the export orders, we were only able to work on a limited range of our own designs and products. Most of these were unfinished work from before the lockdown. We have worked on styles that are loose and comfortable, with some pieces that are unisex.

1. Women's Kurta V-Neck
2. Round Neck Loose Unisex Shirt Button Down
3. Unisex Shorts
4. Women's V-Neck Top
5. Relaxed Trousers
6. Industrial Apron and Cap for Food Processing Factories
7. Mandarin Collar Long Pleat Dress
8. Overlap Half Sleeve V-Neck Top
9. Baggy Pants
10. Slim Cropped Trouser
11. Sari Blouse
12. Drop Waist Short Dress
13. Patchwork Kimono Jacket
14. Mandarin Tunic
15. Dress V-Neck Ruffle Hem
16. Dress V-Neck Swing with knit fabric
17. Dress V-Neck Sleeveless knit fabric
18. Crop Top Button Front
19. Dress Boat Neck Sleeveless with embroidery
20. Top Boat Neck Sleeveless with embroidery
21. Dragonfly Embroidery Collection: Tote Bag, Square Bag, Wallet, Sling Bag
22. Patchwork: Bags, Bedcovers, Curtains, Table Runner, Pouches & Kimono using different techniques

This year has been like starting from ground zero. Sometimes it is like staring at a blank canvas. Or discovering a window full of light behind the place where a large almirah had been - full of nothingness and ripe with possibility. At other times, it is like standing in the middle of an aftermath, surveying things falling apart. Not knowing where to begin, what to salvage, whom to turn to. All we had was the opportunity to focus on providing work to our producers, working with very small teams on export orders and our own styles, as well as providing regular work at home to people of disability.

### ***8.9 Covid-19 Relief Grant from Give India Foundation***

In this scenario a grant from Give India Foundation of Rs. 30 lakh on the 20th of August 2020 was a godsend! This was facilitated by Axis Bank Foundation.

The sudden outbreak of Covid19 and the national lockdown that followed have adversely affected MSMEs like Kumbaya perhaps the most. The closing down of urban markets, breakdown of value chains, difficulties in sourcing raw material, lack of mobility and lack of access to finance for meeting working capital needs has made work come to a standstill. To re-emerge from the post pandemic situation, we sought help from Axis Bank Foundation and Give India Foundation for rebuilding our market links -listing Kumbaya on online platforms, seeking other bulk buyers, tying up with more retail stores, increasing exports and launching our own online store.

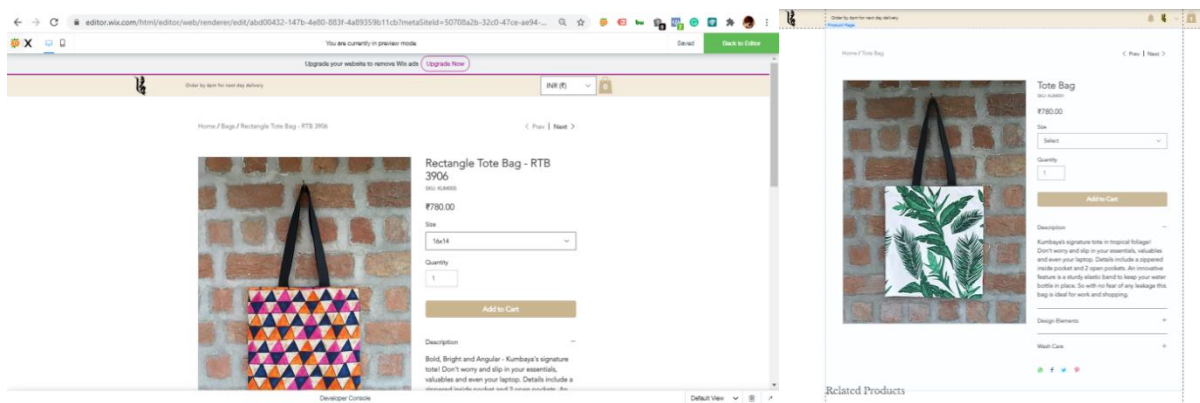
### ***8.10 Digital Marketing with Trilliant Digital***

There has been a consistent demand in the last few years for Kumbaya to have an online store of its own. We have been working on it with in-house skills since last year, especially during the lockdown months when most of us were confined to working from home. However, the progress has been slow given the multiple responsibilities that each of us in the team handle. Now we have outsourced it to Trilliant Digital, a firm based in Bangalore. This decision was taken given the time consuming and specialised nature of the job, as also the sudden resignation of Vikas Vishwakarma in September, a key member of our team involved in setting up the store. Outsourcing the job of the online store to Trilliant Digital is far more economical and efficient than trying to do it in-house. They have the requisite expertise and experience. The contract includes setting up the Kumbaya online store as well as listing us on other e-commerce platforms like Amazon India, as well as Amazon International, Flipkart and so on. It took two months for both parties to finalise the contract and work began in December. The kind of work that was done by our team for the store was:

1. Photographing all products according to the requirements of an online store. With the help of SPS Community Media we did a photo shoot of 4 days where we tried to photograph as many products as possible. As always, this was done with the support of SPS women team members who sportingly agreed to model. In the near future, the plan is to set up a studio in the office to facilitate photographing products immediately when they are made and entered into the stock. We have the backdrops and are currently discussing the technical equipment required.
2. Writing product descriptions for each and every style in apparel, bags, cushions and home linen – we have hundreds of different products.
3. Articulating the policies such as Return, Refund, Exchange, Delivery etc.

4. Given the fact that we are 60 km away from Indore working out the logistics for different online requirements is a challenge. At the end of January, Delhivery – a pan India shipping company, opened an office in Chapra just 8 kms from Bagli; thanks to our Purchase Officer, Imran Ali, who has been persistently negotiating with them since November last year.
5. Making measurement charts and specifying sizes, especially of different clothing styles.
6. Taking a complete inventory of finished products and developing a digital system that will keep the stock updated and be user-friendly for people who are not fluent in English with the help of special mobile based applications.
7. Setting up the payment gateway.
8. Updating prices, and trying to optimise expenses for packaging and couriering charges from Bagli.

The online store will be on our website which is hosted on Wix. The pictures below give a glimpse how products on our online store will appear.



*Image 8.6: Making of the Kumbaya Website*

Just as we were getting ready to launch the online store and promote it on social media, where we already have a significant following, the Kumbaya Facebook page got taken over and hacked on the 7th of March! The two people who were admins were removed by the hacker and obscene content was being posted on our page regularly. They changed our profile picture and cover photo. The two administrators of the page, Kumbaya and Trilliant Digital repeatedly wrote complaints through Facebook Support and Help Centre but to no avail. We were advised by IT professionals to take the following steps:

1. Report copyright infringement by filling the form generated from Facebook's end
2. Contact Facebook support via Messenger
3. Lodge a complaint with the Indore Cyber Crime Department as under the new IT laws we could be held liable



We discovered that Facebook is truly faceless! There was no way to contact anyone directly for a response. We did not get any response or solution to our issue from the Facebook Help centres or support. Meanwhile this incident caused us immeasurable loss in terms of reputation, and the dignity of our endeavour. Also Facebook was our only way of advertising. Every day we received messages from our customers alerting us to the vulgar and objectionable content.

Finally, Trilliant Digital helped us find email ids of Facebook's senior management. On the 27th of March 2021 we sent an appeal letter and immediately got a response. Within 24 hours we were able to restore our Facebook page. It has been such a relief! We are being very cautious still. We seem to have surged in dubious popularity from 4K to 11K followers in this period – 7000 weird followers that have to be blocked one by one.

### ***8.11 Online Partnerships***

1. Habba - We partnered with Habba, an online marketplace started by Rang De, for a nationwide campaign – *Handmade Dil Se*. This was to raise awareness about the pandemic-led crisis our artisans are battling. Thousands of artisans, weavers and craftspeople have had no orders in the past several months, and are holding large inventory. It has affected their livelihoods and confidence to continue their craft. Many have now turned to manual labour to support their families during the pandemic.

The campaign in partnership with NDTV began by broadcasting a telethon where our founder, Nivedita Banerji spoke about Kumbaya, its creation and the challenges it is facing due to the pandemic. The broadcast on national TV created a lot of awareness about Kumbaya's situation. We received many enquiries from well-wishers and as a result sold our 37 of our most expensive items, the patchwork bedcovers in a short period of time. So far, through Habba, we have sold 65 gift hampers worth Rs. 87,500 in November and December.

This campaign was a great learning experience as it served as a practice run-up to our own online store. The entire team got to experience how they will need to function to sell online. By resolving the difficulties faced, we developed our own system of receiving, packing, dispatching and keeping track of every order. Learning from some of Habba's packaging guidelines, we adapted our own. However, we are still trying to figure out a more cost effective way to courier orders. At present every third or fourth day a team member makes a trip to Indore to drop orders to Delhivery - the designated postal service by Habba. Our remote location is not covered by this courier service. But India post and Speed post have emerged as the most reliable way to ship within India and internationally, although they may not be as quick as courier services. In the recent months we have shipped successfully to places like Andaman Nicobar by speed post and to Canada by India post.

No.	Item's Pictures	Description	Work Care	Code	Size (cm)	Price (Rs)	Comments
1		<b>Resing-Bitch Cuskin Corner</b> Medium size, the best of its kind. Perfect for adding a touch of elegance to your already existing cushion set-up, or use it with Kumbaya's range of Resing-Bitch Cuskin Corner for an elegant display. Display in your home to show your taste and style. Not for use in a room where you do not have a couch. • Made of Cotton (The pattern is as the Resing-Bitch Cuskin Corner does not come with a filler) • Actual colour may vary slightly according to screen setting and resolution.	• Wash separately • Colour may bleed • Do not iron • Dry in shade • Shrinkage is 5% • Machine washable (cold water, gentle cycle)	CCOV-4661-8	50x50	120	Kumbaya online store CCOV-4661-8 120 pc
2		<b>Art Embroidery Bagkin Cuskin Corner</b> The glow of gold, copper and bronze, bringing out the best in the fabric. The glow of gold, copper and bronze, bringing out the best in the fabric. The glow of gold, copper and bronze, bringing out the best in the fabric. • Made of Cotton (The pattern is as the Resing-Bitch Cuskin Corner does not come with a filler) • Actual colour may vary slightly according to screen setting and resolution.	• Wash separately • Colour may bleed • Do not iron • Dry in shade • Shrinkage is 5% • Machine washable (cold water, gentle cycle)	CCOV-4661-8	50x50	120	Kumbaya online store CCOV-4661-8 120 pc
3		<b>A smart and convenient wall</b> - the perfect complement to your bag life. Fit to your bag to a wall and you are done. It is a perfect gift for your friends and family. It is a perfect gift for your friends and family. • Made of Cotton (The pattern is as the Resing-Bitch Cuskin Corner does not come with a filler) • Actual colour may vary slightly according to screen setting and resolution.	• Wash separately • Colour may bleed • Do not iron • Dry in shade • Shrinkage is 5% • Machine washable (cold water, gentle cycle)	CCOV-4661-8	50x50	120	Kumbaya online store CCOV-4661-8 120 pc

Image 8.7: A glimpse of products sold at the campaign

Habba is an initiative of Rang De, an NBFC that raises working capital loans at low interest rates for poor artisans and entrepreneurs through crowd sourcing. Apart from helping us through Habba, they also found donors who made cash transfers of Rs. 1000 as a Diwali gift to each of our artisans at Kumbaya, as well as to all SHG members who are weavers at Maheshwar.

3. Ikikai - We have also entered into an agreement with Ikikai – a newly launched online platform for products made by social enterprises. A few sales have been made.

## 8.12 Financial Systems and Management Information Systems

As we are going online, we are revamping our backend system and digitalising data for better faster cheaper operations in the future as well. We are in the middle of a physical stock check of finished goods, semi-finished goods and raw material at all our offices, production centres and partner retail stores. In the next quarter we will be developing an ERP system to keep track of all activities in real time.

## 8.13 NABARD grant

On the 13th of February 2021, the AGM NABARD Bhopal, Ms. Amita Agarwal and the DDM of Dewas, Mr Avinash Tiwari visited the Kumbaya Neemkheda Bhavan. The DDM had visited us many times and had asked us to submit a proposal for a small grant on capacity building to NABARD last year. This proposal was rejected by the Bhopal office in the initial round because the project proposal evaluation committee were not convinced that Kumbaya actually existed and that we were located in a rural area of Dewas district. However, Mr. Tiwari continued to rally in



our support and immediately after the very successful visit from the AGM Bhopal, our proposal was approved. We received 7 lakhs for a year from NABARD. It is a very important development as we would like our relationship with NABARD to grow.

An interesting fact here is that when we started in 1994, NABARD helped Kumbaya with a loan of Rs. 50000, with which we bought our first 10 sewing machines and some fabric.



*Image 8.8: DDM, NABARD visiting Kumbaya Bhavan*

#### ***8.14 Mentoring and Capacity Building of the Team***

This year has been a disorienting and traumatic time for the Kumbaya team with people leaving, financial constraints, and uncertainty about the future of our work. In this period of flux, it was observed that while some team members rose to the challenge by taking on leadership roles, the performance of others fell dramatically. The lockdown period brought in feeling of inertia along with complacency. Some members of the local team could not adapt to the change in requirements. This pulled back everyone's performance and enthusiasm.

To help this situation we invited Imrana Khan, Director, Dusty Foot Productions, to work with the team for 2 weeks. She has had rich experience in working with diverse teams under tough conditions in India and abroad for over 15 years. While she is familiar with our work and context, having been associated closely with SPS for many years, helping Kumbaya on many marketing events, she was also an independent observer and a new person for the current Kumbaya Team. Therefore she was the ideal person to help streamline daily work planning and execution protocols, sort practical, confusing or contentious issues, bridge gaps, and help people communicate with each other better. She held individual sessions to help each person understand their strengths and limitations, speak their mind, articulate their problems and resolve issues. She also gave an honest evaluation of each person which has been very helpful in assessing how to

improve everyone's performance. We plan to have more sessions with her to prepare the local team in particular for larger leadership roles in the running of Kumbaya.

### ***8.15 KPCL Share Capital – Converting Debt to Equity***

Over the years, with the help of grants and its own sales Kumbaya created stocks of finished products. In the transition from a social enterprise promoted by SPS to a separate producer company called Kumbaya Producer Company Limited (KPCL), this stock was donated by SPS to the producers of Kumbaya who were to become shareholders of this new company.

KPCL sold this stock on behalf of the producers and converted the debt from them into equity in the name of their producer groups making the groups collective shareholders.

The entire plan was shared with producer groups in detail to make them specifically understand the importance of such an action plan. Several meetings were held in small groups such that every single doubt could be clarified. At the same time, the significance of their ownership of the company, their rights and duties as shareholders was explained; as also how the initial capital fund would be utilized, what the legal implications are and the timeline involved in the transfer. This was approved by the producers.

But before beginning, the authorized share capital of the company was increased from 10 lakhs to 30 lakhs and permission for private placement was taken from MCA. Once we received permission, the plan to increase share capital was chalked out in two phases. In the first phase, new shareholders were included through a private placement process and in the second phase, a plan of increasing the share capital through the right issue process was executed.

There were several challenges to this process:

- Company law is a complex legal and technical matter, very difficult for anyone to understand. To simplify it for the producer groups, most of who were unlettered women, took dedication and a lot of effort from the team.
- Half of the members had no knowledge of mobile banking. It was a daunting task to make them travel to the bank during Covid-19.
- Many queries were generated from the MCA, like share valuation reports etc., and legal compliances, which the team successfully handled.
- KPCL had a problem of liquidity due to payments withheld by Trifed. The producer groups agreed to temporarily use their savings so that we could successfully plan the process in two phases instead of three.
- A few producers had left but were still registered with KPCL as creditors. It was a very complicated process to explain to these producers over the phone that the amount due to

them was actually part of collective shareholding of the producer group. Their consent was obtained and reinvested in the share capital of KPCL

**Exhibitions 2021 Bangalore:** At Pause for a Cause, on the 19th - 20th March and Sobha Forest View Exhibition 21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> March Kumbaya sales were Rs.3 lakhs. Dr. Mridula Banerji, Sunita Verma, Imran Ali, Narmada Guha Roy and Nivedita Banerji participated. We showcased our Polka Collection.

**Exposure Visit to Desi – 23rd March:** The Kumbaya Team – Sunita Verma, Imran Ali and Narmada Guha Roy, visited the Desi flagship store at Southend Circle in Bangalore with Nivedita Banerji to understand the successful business model of this organization. Earlier, Nivedita Banerji had met Prasanna, the famous theatre actor, director and writer who founded Charaka Trust and Desi. She visited the Charaka Trust in Heggodu village, in Shimoga, Karnataka, one of the centers where handloom woven fabric is naturally dyed and garments are stitched. These exposure visits were aimed at helping the team conceive and design Kumbaya's new plan to scale up sales at local markets as well as decentralize production adapting to the new situation due to Covid19.

#### ***8.16 Kumbaya Data 2020-2021***

Total Kumbaya sales in 2020-2021 were only **Rs. 53.29 lakhs**.

*Table 8.2: Kumbaya sales in 2020-21*

	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Sales in Lakhs</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Sales %</b>
<b>SPS Campuses</b>	SPS JS Campus	6.71	12.59%
	SPS NK Campus	0.74	1.39%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7.45</b>	<b>13.98%</b>
<b>Retail Stores</b>	Kriti Eco Boutique , Pondicherry	1.12	2.10%

	Maya La Boutique (Kraftwork) Mysore	1.77	3.32%
	Mesh, Local Shopping Centre, New Delhi	0.15	0.28%
	Serenity, Bangalore	0.19	0.35%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>6.06%</b>
<b>SHG Federations</b>	14 SPS SHG Federations	11.18	20.97%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11.18</b>	<b>20.97%</b>
<b>Other Sales</b>	Individuals	3.28	6.15%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>6.16%</b>
<b>Online Stores</b>	Ikikai Lifestyle Pvt Ltd c/o IshaBedi	0.11	0.20%
	Rang De Habba Fair Price Market Place Foundation	0.69	1.29%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.50%</b>
<b>Export Orders</b>	Alcana c/o Hannah Mitchell, Australia	6.7	12.57%
	Labvisby, Maria Camila Jensen, Sweden	5.2	9.75%
	Woven Studio, Laura Miles, United Kingdom	2.14	4.01%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14.04</b>	<b>26.35%</b>
<b>Exhibitions</b>	Pause for A Cause Bangalore Exhibition & Sobha Forest View, Bangalore, March 2021	3	5.62%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5.63%</b>
<b>Trifed</b>	Trifed Pune	0.21	0.39%

	Trifed Bhopal	1.13	2.12%
	Trifed Chandigarh & Haryana	0.32	0.60%
	Trifed Delhi	6.4	12.00%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8.06</b>	<b>15.12%</b>
<b>Honey Sales</b>	SPS JS Campus	1	1.87%
	SPS NK Campus	1.23	2.30%
	Ms.GarimaPoonia, Andaman & Nicobar	0.02	0.03%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>4.22%</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>53.29</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Patchwork Products Made</b>		
1	Wallet		903
2	Pouches		30
3	Bedcovers		171
4	Patches		2398
5	Mask		83325
6	Laptop Bag		502
7	Dresses & Tops		170
8	Patchwork Kalamkari Rucksacks		212

*Table 8.3: Kumbaya Training and Production Details*

	<b>Training &amp; Production</b>	
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1	Number of Producers at 3 Production Centers and Jatashankar	70
2	Number of New Producers	3
3	Number of Trainees	0
4	Number of Pieces Produced at all 3 Production Centers	2553
5	Number of Masks Produced at all 3 Production Centers	83325
6	Number of Patches Produced From Fabric Waste at all 3 Production Centers	2398
7	Value of Fabric Purchased	22.73 lakhs
8	Value of Patchworks Products Made Out of Waste	31.33 lakhs
9	Value of Patchworks Products Sold	14.41 lakhs
10	Value of Honey Purchased	.19 lakhs
11	Value of Wages Paid to Producers	30.78 lakhs

### ***8.17 The Plan Ahead***

In the business plan made for KPCL in 2019, we had shown how it will be possible to break even in the year 2022-2023, after a decade of enormous support from ABF for skill building.

No one could have imagined an eventuality like Covid19 at that time, which would swiftly and silently corrode the structure painstakingly built over the years in one stroke. We slid back in time by a few years. Nothing could have prepared us for Trifed reneging on paying for purchase orders worth Rs.62 lakhs and more. If the payments from Trifed had come through, Kumbaya would have had enough capital to tide over this difficult period and build on its strengths. One of the major risks we felt was our dependence on a single bulk buyer, and trying to diversify by reaching out to Fab India and other brands. But before that could happen, the consequences arrived at our doorstep like a comet instead.

To adapt to the new situation SPS has to re-imagine its strategy for skill building, and creating artisanal livelihoods through social enterprise. The events of the last year made it clear that we will still need support through grants. For Kumbaya to try and break even and meet all its expenses at this point by focusing on business alone means down-sizing and shrinking; which

also means letting go of talented people – master craftisans, who have honed their skills to specifically address the unique challenges of making the art of stitching work for poor women and people of disability, and at the same time manufacture for cognisant Indian and international markets.

**Kumbaya Design School:** The new idea is to fully realise and unleash the potential of the work here done here for the benefit other organisations and individuals, like a training ground and laboratory to design and do creative work for the 99%. In the course of our work we have trained many organisations - sharing our skills and experience on the art of stitching, design, working with waste, pattern making, production operations, marketing, and business management. We have been approached by many other organisations for training as we have the advantage of experts on the team, with years of experience in garment technology and manufacturing. There are also young people, designers from NIFT and other design schools, management graduates from IRMA, who want to gain experience by working here at the grassroots for brief periods. Apart from this we also work with a number of designers from other countries who are deeply committed to working for the poor.

What we envisage is a design centre or school where the practical and creative skills of working with craft, design, livelihoods, manufacturing, and marketing are experienced deeply, along with a strong understanding of financial management and institution building. A collective design resource owned by a community of compassionate creative people wanting to share their knowledge to ‘design for the 99%.

We will be seeking funding from various sources for this idea and hope to build collaborations with individuals and different institutions with the hope that this will eventually be based on a revenue generating model.

**Kumbaya Producer Company Limited:** SPS will also be seeking grants to support the work of Kumbaya Producer Company Limited for a few more years. The primary goal is to build the company to ensure skill building and employment for most of the year. We will have to rethink our strategy here as well. What else will we make? Who else will make it, and where? Who else will we make it for and where all can it sell? What will be the price? Since we are back to zero in some respects, we have to rework all the numbers again.

We have always been able to meet almost half our costs. The following are some of the strategies we will work on to increase income, and reduce costs and lower our dependence on external grants. Most of these had been outlined in the business plan made in 2019-2020, before Covid19 struck but with new additions that require some shift in focus areas.

*1. Marketing and Sales:* To increase the sales and cover for risk we are multiplying sales channels, with a major focus on e-commerce. Kumbaya is now online with its own store. The visibility online will make it easier to list Kumbaya products on Amazon and other online market

places. It will also help us reach out to more retail stores in different cities, attract bulk orders and get more work from designers.

A major part of our sales is dependent on orders from Trifed. Given our past experience of leaning heavily on orders from one agency alone, we have suffered the debilitating financial and social impact of a sudden withdrawal of large orders to random factors first-hand. While we diversify our marketing efforts, it will take time for us to find other bulk buyers.

We had shown a conservative rise in the sales at 15%. Along with the online store and searching for other bulk buyers, we want to add to our business model to include local marketing that will support production for the local area as well.

A marketing plan for the local area is being carefully worked out based on market research. Urban areas around us like Dewas, Indore, Maheshwar, as also Barwah, Khategaon, Kantaphod, Hatpipliya and Bagli can be good markets for the stocks that have piled up and for products made during training. We are discussing the possibility of putting up temporary stores with the help of SPS SHG offices located in these towns. We are even thinking of having a mobile Kumbaya shop in a vehicle, which can roam from place to place to sell in the villages during weekly market days. Also, we will sell through small shops for the local market, either our own or through other local vendors. Eventually, the idea is to hand over the local marketing effort to women entrepreneurs from SHG groups.

*2. Production:* To increase the number of artisans, the volume of production, as well as the design and product range, we plan to work with weavers in Maheshwar; block printers, tailors, and quilters in Jaipur, and also outsource our designs to other women's groups working in our region.

During the pandemic many of our artisans suffered a loss of wages as they could not reach the production and training centres. To safeguard artisans from travelling in public transport in the future during pandemics, we will be trying to design some products in a way that artisans can make them from home, in a decentralised manner while maintaining quality.

*3. Equity:* Finally, KPCL has 5 Self Help Groups with 85 members, and 10 individuals as shareholders, with a shareholding of Rs 24.33 lakhs. This was one of the most challenging steps we undertook. It was crucial for KPCL to be financially sound, have independence, with decision making powers in the hands of the producers to whom the company belongs. Having its own money has the advantage of being able to avail of working capital loans from NBFC's and public sector banks also to ease cash flow.

*4. Re-use:* We have always specialised in working with waste. Our dream is to be able to focus more on this to create a new range of products and materials - clothing, fabric, accessories,



packaging, even brand labels - using waste from other industries so as to generate more work, reduce our reliance on sourcing fresh material, and hopefully cut costs.

## 9 SPS COMMUNITY MEDIA

The Community Media programme supports all other programmes at SPS through creation of training material, documenting stories of change and the landscape's stories, in general. It does so through various media formats, including films, podcasts, print issues and photos.

Its core team members are locals who are trained in film-making and the creative documentation process.

### ***9.1 The Pandemic's Impacts on Media Dissemination***

During the entire lock-down period after the outbreak of Covid-19, SPS Community Media followed all the protocols of physical distancing and stopped film screening in the villages as well as in people's groups from April till October. The number of film-disseminations in groups, Angwanwadi centres and in class room trainings is, therefore, very low. While the film screening began only by November, podcast story listening began around August.

*Table 9.1: Dissemination of different media by the Community Media Team this year*

<b>Media Dissemination</b>		
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Particulars</b>	<b>Total</b>
	No. of Villages [Dissemination outreach]	366
	No. of People's Groups [Dissemination outreach]	1035
	Interactive film screenings in small groups	592
	Mobile Cinema Screening	5
	Film screened at Aaganwadis	46
	Story reading in small groups	1158
	Films screened in classroom sessions	17
	No. of Films Screened	50
	No. of Podcasts shared	8
	No. of audience members (approximately)	17000

## ***9.2 Media Production***

Although film dissemination was put on hold, our team continued producing films and podcasts.

*Table 9.2: The different media produced by the team this year*

<b>Media Production</b>		
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Particulars</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1.</b>	Films Produced	14
<b>2.</b>	Podcast Stories Produced (TERRA TALES बदलती ज़मीन पलटते पन्ने)	7

## Films Produced:

14 films were produced from April to December, three of which were films for awareness generation amongst locals about the pandemic. These short and simple videos about the dos and don'ts and taking care during the pandemic were circulated through WhatsApp for a wider reach. This was especially important in our work area, where myths around Covid-19 were widespread.

1. **Corona Virus** - A short video explaining Covid-19 pandemic situation and the basic perceptions and physical distancing protocol in Nimadi language. The video was circulated amongst the village people via Whatsapp.
2. **Mask Humara Sabka Sahara** - An animation video that explains how a simple mask can be the biggest defense against Covid-19. The video was circulated amongst team SPS and the village people via Whatsapp.
3. **Yahan Wahan Saare Jahan** – This is a 5 minutes long animation film on awareness about Covid-19. Even after several months since the lockdown began in India, Covid-19 remains a threat. The virus also began spreading rapidly in rural areas during the second wave. Unfortunately, most people drop their guard as soon as the situation seems to be “normalizing” and start behaving alarmingly casually. *Yahan Wahan Saare Jahan* is an attempt to reinforce the need to take all the safety measures. The video was circulated amongst team SPS and the village people via Whatsapp. This film was also officially selected for the International Association of Women in Radio & Television (IAWRT) Film Festival 2021.
4. **‘Apni Company’**, a film on Ram Rahim Producer Company Limited (RRPPCL), documents the process followed by the company from aggregation to sale, and the involvement and leadership of our small and marginal women farmers in the entire process.
5. **‘Biyadadh’**, set in the remote tribal village in Bagli Block, Dewas District, the film follows the trajectory of two families when their girl children get admitted to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Center (NRC) at Bagli to be treated for severe malnutrition by the Health and Nutrition team of SPS. It is an ethnographic documentation of poor tribal families that stay in isolated and remote forest areas struggling for survival and how working towards their health and well-being is a challenge from many fronts - the Health and Nutrition team of SPS is seen taking on that challenge.
6. **Understanding CPR Groundwater**- An animation film about understanding the nature of groundwater in local aquifers and its properties, how it could be efficiently managed by communities at the village level.
7. **Storativity in Aquifers** - A short animation clip that explains the concept of the total volume of water that can be stored by an aquifer.

8. **Bonded** – Santosh is in Satwas tehsil of Madhya Pradesh, where he was tricked into becoming a bonded labourer by a moneylender farmer. The film documents how his wife, with the help of her SHG partners finally plans to free her husband from the usurious clutches of the moneylender.
9. **Ghar ki Murgi Sona Barabar 2** - This film documents the poultry business of Rukma Bai from the Jinwani Village of Kantaphod.
10. **Jangli Pyaz** - a short film on the local uncultivated edible green *jangli pyaj* (wild onion) found in this region.
11. **Entrance Exam** – In a remote village in Central India, school teachers put their heart and soul to prepare a group of children for an entrance exam for admission in a Government-run School of Excellence (Utkrisht School). Public-funded, these schools take care of the complete expenses for the students ensuring their continued studies as most of them are first-generation school-goers from underprivileged families. '**Entrance Exam**' unfolds many layers of struggle in this intense journey as much as many pleasant surprises.

This documentary is an internship project film by Aditya Verma, a student of School of Design, Doon University, which was made under the mentorship and support of SPS Community Media. This was his Design Thesis Project, part of his final execution of the Design Process in a professional context, under the guidance of academic and professional mentors. It is a demonstration of both the understanding of inputs received during 7 semesters of education and also, the preparedness to independently execute design projects.

12. **Kitchen Garden** – This film tells the story of Rami Bai and her kitchen garden. She has been growing Non-pesticide Management (NPM) vegetables for the past 6 years. She grows around 10 varieties and not only has plenty of fresh and pesticide free vegetables for her family but also manages to earn regularly by selling the surplus. Rami Bai's lush vegetables inspire her neighbours and community members to adopt NPM farming and kitchen garden practices at home.
13. **Paani ki Parakh** – An animation film on the importance of testing drinking water quality.
14. **Lockdown Mein MGNREGA** - The countrywide lockdown during the first phase of Corona pandemic had left the labour class without any work. The government employment guarantee MGNREGA was a much needed source of employment for the rural people. SPS implemented the scheme in several panchayats. A marginal farmer from village Jhiri had not been able to cultivate his barren land; rain water would wash away the top soil. The only harvest he had was a seasonal grass that used to grow there during monsoon. Farm bunding was implemented in the land under MGNREGA where the family worked and earned wages. With proper bunding, the barren land was able to retain moisture and the farmer could cultivate crops for the very first

time.

### 9.3 Audio Podcast produced under Terra Tales बदलती ज़मीन पलटते पन्ने

7 podcast stories were produced by the community media team which were shared with team SPS as well with members of SHGs. These stories are published online in our blog Terra Tales बदलती ज़मीन पलटते पन्ने

1. **Fatima Didi:** Fatima didi and her husband were forced to travel across states because they had an inter-religious marriage, looking for menial work, living a life of penury and discrimination. Yet in the most desperate of times, people helped them and touched their lives with compassion and warmth. It is this compassion and warmth that Fatima didi chose to hold onto and follow. Today, when the whole world reels under a harrowing lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, Fatima didi is providing many with the same touch of kindness she received in her journey. This audio story celebrates her life, her experiences and the extraordinary work she is doing in these times.
2. **Kiran Didi:** Kiran Didi's life is an inspiration - forced to drop out of school because of discrimination, had the courage to walk out of an abusive marriage, bring up her child as a single mother and pushing herself to acquire new skills to be one of the most reliable and efficient *mitaan*, the field facilitator in the women's Self Help Group (SHG) Programme. The audio story is a celebration of her endurance in life, a tribute to her struggles and achievements.
3. **Karz:** Karz brings stories of people in endemic poverty, their struggle with credit needs and their vulnerability against the exploitative credit market that take advantage of their situation. As the number of private micro-credit companies are on the rise, our podcast aims at telling the stories of multiple women and their families, experiences of loaning from private companies vs. people's institutions.  
Like all the podcasts, the process of writing this documentary story was a collective one, and it is special in being our first attempt at recording multiple dialogues and sounds by the people of the villages.
4. **Ek Safar Aisa Bhi:** This is a conversation with Arjun Bachhaniya, the *mukhiya* of a group of migrant farm labourers, narrating his journey of travelling and working across states at the time when a nation-wide lockdown was imposed due to the pandemic. Like thousands of migrant labourers across the country, Arjun and his friends walked back 500 kilometres to their village Kharadi in Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh from Rajasthan. This is thus a chronicle of grim realities, laden with uncertainty, misinformation and violence yet punctuated by instances of kindness and compassion that our workers had to face during the pandemic lock-down.

5. **Naashte Ka Thela:** The story narrates one day in the life of Devi didi and her family, the everyday routine that she and her husband Hirala and their children follow to run *naashte ka thela*, the snack stall. As the story moves from early morning till the bed time, it flashes back to their early life and struggles, gradually unfolding to the fact that their life is solely dependent on the daily meager earning from the *naashte ka thela*. In the narrative, a creeping tension builds up of the impending virus and the day ends with the announcement of the sudden country-wide lockdown due to the pandemic covid-19. The listener is left to imagine the possible plight of Devi didi and her family in the month long lockdown. The podcast was released at a time when news of thousands in a similar situation who were facing starvation and humiliation due to the sudden lockdown was heard everyday.
6. **Indra Nagar Ki Kahani:** This is the story of a village where in spite of a government installed hand-pump and an Angawadi centre catering to children's food and nutrition security, the village faced issues like acute malnutrition and struggling to access drinking water. The women's collective comes forward to take up the matter in their hands, determined to bring a change.
7. **Raahat:** How did the country-wide lock-down due to the pandemic impact the working class? The obstacles and the difficulties faced by the *raahat* (relief) team to extend help, adds yet another layer to the story.

#### ***9.4 Wall Paintings - Awareness through Public Art***

This year, SPS Community Media initiated wall paintings to help spread ideas on sustainability in villages.

- a. **Promotion of mixed cropping in Singladeh Village of Kantaphod:** The traditional good practice of mixed cropping is rapidly being replaced by mono-cropping of cash crops. Mixed cropping helps maintain the quality of the soil, along with protecting the farmers from unforeseen damage that can happen to their crops. In our area, farmers are largely taken to growing soybean and maize in the kharif season. This year, the maize crops were infested by pests and the rains destroyed most of the farmer's produce, while the soybean crop failed. It was very urgent to reorient the farmers to the safe practice of mixed cropping to address food security.

The media team chose simple narrative comic panel paintings to illustrate the benefits of mixed cropping. It tells the story of two farmers - one who has followed mixed cropping of jowar, *tuar-daal* and maize; and the other who has followed monocropping of just maize in the Kharif season. The rains and pests destroy the fields of maize, while the farmer who had grown *tuar* and jowar along with maize survived the season.

The location of the wall was very strategic, right at the entry to the village, ensuring that the wall paintings were seen by the villagers, as a constant reminder of their mixed cropping practice. It

was part of the Participatory Ground Water Management (PGWM) work where the team wanted an easy form of communication. The PGWM team conducted discussions with the villagers around the issues depicted in the painting and the benefits of mixed cropping. The process of painting the wall intrigued children; they would hang around watching and discuss about the crops in the picture and even assess the advantages and disadvantages of the farmers in the painting.



*Image 9.1: Wall painting to promote mixed cropping at Singladeh village*

- b. **Wall Painting for Kali Ratri Crop Water Budgeting** - The aim of this wall painting was to update and rework on the existing rain data chart with a more invigorating and illustrative painting, with additional information on aquifer level, a comparative chart on the amount of water required for the Lok 1 variety of wheat vs the Poorna variety, and the Vishal variety of chana. The painting allowed periodically updating the measurement of water with chalk, and could be used by the PGWM team to illustrate that to people, whenever required.
- c. **Painting and Image Making Workshop** – Focused on the different aspects and elements that go into making an image. It began with an understanding of the participant's ideas on what a picture is with a theoretical introduction to painting, followed by an exploration of composition and texture.





*Image 9.2: Participants at the image-making workshop*

By the end of this workshop, the participants collaboratively made the cover image for the podcast story- '*Ek Safar Aisa Bhi*', which is part of SPS Community Media's podcast initiative **Terra Tales – Badalti Zamine, Palatte Panne**. This 2-day workshop enabled creation of image to tell a story with drawing and collage, and equipped the participants with the technical know-how of online publishing.

### **9.5 Online Story Sharing Series: KHAYALI OTLA खयाली ओटला**

SPS Community Media started an online story sharing (films and podcasts) called *Khayali Otlā* for Team SPS in January 2021 as the mobile cinema screenings were on hold due to the lockdown.

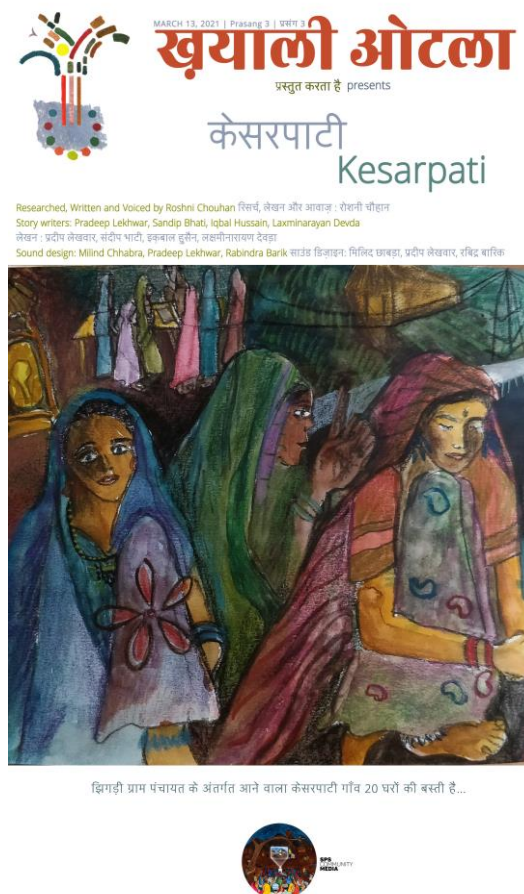
Each film or podcast story was shared via e-mail or whatsapp. After a week of the announcement, an hour-long discussion via Zoom was conducted with a team of designated panelists and a moderator from Team SPS.

The programme drew inspiration from Rabindranath Tagore who considered art to be a central part of education and human understanding. Conversations around art not only build communication but also cultivate the faculty of critical judgment. The initiative was started with the vision to open up the world in and around as cinema and storytelling help trigger the imagination, which is crucial for designing a better world. It also had the objective of nurturing the feeling of community within Team SPS, while being enjoyable and fun at the same time.

The first episode, a film titled ‘Nirnay’ (decision) and directed by Pushpa Rawat, is the director’s personal journey as she tries to make sense of her own life, and that of her women friends. Set in a lower middle class neighbourhood in the outskirts of Delhi, it explores the lives of women, who are young, educated and bright, but who feel bound and helpless when it comes to taking any major decision regarding their life, be it career or marriage.

The second episode is an audio story on the title character Kiran Didi, whose life is an inspiration. Forced to drop out of school because of discrimination, she had the courage to walk out of an abusive marriage, bring up her child as a single mother and pushing herself to acquire new skills to be one of the most reliable and efficient *mitaan*, the field facilitator in the women’s Self Help Group (SHG) Programme. The audio story is a celebration of her endurance in life, a tribute to her struggles and achievements.

*Kesarpati*, the third episode is an audio story that tells the inspiring story of the women of Kesarpati, who as a collective strived to get electricity to their village and succeeded.



*Image 9.3: A screenshot from the online published audio story Kesarpati*

### ***9.6 Mobile Cinema Screening***

Due to the pandemic and the resultant lockdown from April 2020 to January 2021, mobile cinema screening could not be carried out for almost a year. From March 2021, the screenings began following all the Covid-19 protocols but the screening had to be discontinued within a month with the rise of the second phase of Covid-19.

During March 2021, films on MGNREGA were screened. SPS worked hard to revive employment the MGNREGA scheme so that people could find employment during the lockdown, but due to negative experiences with MGNREGA work in the past, people were a bit reluctant to come forward for work. The films explained the procedure for applying for MGNREGA and the compensation under it, explaining how to demand for work when in need of employment, what the remedial steps are when the panchayat does not allocate any work even after people's demand, and several other aspects of the scheme.

**100 Days Work:** Made in 2011, this film brings out the importance of the 100 days employment guaranteed under MGNREGA through the story of a family who benefits from it at their village.

**Lockdown Mein MGNREGA** - The countrywide lockdown during the first phase of Corona pandemic had left the working class without any work. MGNREGA was a much needed source of employment for the rural people. SPS helped implement the scheme in several panchayats. The film narrates the story of a marginal farmer from village Jhiri, who has not been able to cultivate his barren land; every monsoon, the top soil on his landholding gets washed away. His sole harvest was a seasonal grass that grows during monsoon. Farm bunds were created on his land under MGNREGA where the family worked and earned wages. Due to it, his barren landholding was able to retain moisture and his crops started sprouting up for the very first time.

Two animation films on awareness on Covid-19 were also screened - ***Mask Hamara Sabka Sahara*** and ***Yahan Wahan Sare Jahan***.



*Image 9.4: Mobile cinema screening at Keotiyapani village*

### ***9.7 Awards and Festivals this Year***

SPS Community Media films won 6 awards this year. Four of our films won awards at the Europe Asia Festival of Cinema 2020, with *Jadui Jungle* (Magical Forest) receiving the Silver Award, and *Jowar Gatha* (Jowar Ballad), *Malipura Dam*, and *Nari Sangh* getting the Bronze Award.

At the Tamil Nadu Film Festival, *Jowar Gatha* was conferred with the award of Best Documentary Film of the Festival, while the Special Jury Award went to *Jadui Jungal*.

*Jadui Jungle* and *Jowar Gatha* were screened online at the 3<sup>rd</sup> South Asian Short Film Festival, Kolkata.

The Tamil Nadu Film Festival also screened these two films. The Europe Asia Festival of Cinema 2020, screened 4 of our films- *Jowar Gatha*, *Jadui Jungal*, *Malipura Dam* and *Nari Sangh*.

Our film titled *Ek Din Banenge No.1* was a finalist at the All Living Things Environmental Film Festival 2020. It was also a semi-finalist at the Chalachitram National Film Festival 2020. *Yahan Wahan Sare Jahan* (Here and Everywhere) was the official selection at the International

Association of Women in Radio & Television Film Festival. Mhari Topli Ma- Phaang (In My Basket- Phang) was an official selection at the Dharamshala International Film Festival.

## 10 NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

### *10.1 National Consortium of CSOs on MGNREGA*

The National Consortium on MGNREGA is a loosely federated collective of civil society organizations which have come together to try and make MGNREGA a success. The consortium that came into existence in the year 2008 with the initiative of Samaj Pragati Sahayog, is now operational in 11 states of central India, working with 64 partners stretching over 78 backward districts. The consortium is committed to ensuring that rural livelihoods, particularly for the poorest and disadvantaged segments i.e. women, adivasis, dalits, landless, small and marginal farmers must focus on creating durable livelihood assets like land and water through leveraging NREGA funds. It is built on participatory principles, where an effort is made to involve the people in planning and management in partnership with PRIs and other line departments.

The Consortium's interventions on the ground are centered on three core areas that are fundamental and lie at the base of all the challenges that the rural poor is faced with. Broadly its activities can be said to focus on drought, poverty and distress migration. The consortium seeks to address these issues through: -

- Drought mitigation through effective management of land and water
- Poverty alleviation through livelihoods skill building
- Stemming of distress migration by facilitating livelihood options

#### *Pandemic impacts and efforts for mitigation*

The virtual shutdown of all economic activities due to Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a massive loss of livelihoods. Workforces in the unorganised sector have been one of the worst affected sections of society. MGNREGA, the rural employment guarantee programme, has had a mixed track record in terms of providing adequate employment to those who need it the most, the quality of asset creation and adequacy of wages offered. Further, a significant part of this workforce has reverse migrated from cities to rural areas. During Covid – 19, our location partners' involvement was no different. They participated in relief and rehabilitation practices, disseminated critical information necessary to contain panic, and worked with state and central mechanism supplementing their efforts and work. However, the traditional roles of partners notwithstanding, the magnitude of pandemic warranted them to move towards formulation and testing of innovative means of service delivery under controlled conditions.

Following the national lockdown, many household belonging to low-income groups and daily wage earners found themselves stranded without money, food and advance payment from their employers. The location partners directed their efforts towards addressing immediate concerns.

The responses elicited by the partners, while working with the affected population, can be grouped as follows:

1. Immediate relief
2. Awareness generation
3. Accessing social welfare and protection measures
4. Support for livelihoods
5. Support to the migrant workers

***Partner wise progress***

*Table 10.1: Partner-wise progress in implementing NREGA work in quantitative terms*

		<b>Gram Sudhar Samiti (Sidhi district , MP)</b>			<b>Lokshakti Samiti (Raigarh district ,CG)</b>			<b>SATHI-UP (Faizabad district , UP)</b>		
Sl. No	Description	FY 2020 - 2021	FY 2019- 2020	Progress made	FY 2020- 2021	FY 2019- 2020	Progress made	FY 2020 - 2021	FY 2019- 2020	Progress made
01	Person days of employment generated so far	581252	316285	264967	631052	306251	324801	730167	366398	346669
02	percentage of total person days in SC community	8.36	6.45	1.91	12.36	13.43	1.07	25.46	9.43	16.03
03	percentage of total person days in ST community	37.62	33.86	3.76	39.14	35.75	3.39	9.14	5.75	3.39
04	Women	49.64	47.36	2.28	48.84	47.19	1.65	48.84	37.39	11.45

	person days out of total person days (%)									
05	Total households that completed 100 days of wage employment	1676	591	1085	1715	401	1314	1895	517	1378
06	Total households that worked under NREGA	13798	7496	6302	14786	7492	7294	15738	7892	7846
07	Total individuals who worked	26569	12786	13783	27637	12140	15497	28657	11268	17389
08	Percentage of expenditure on NRM work (both community and individual)	69.87	36.98	32.89	68.24	34.43	33.81	71.35	34.43	36.92
09	Total fund utilised ( in lakhs)	1385. 65	669.5 5	716.1	1482. 85	718.9 9	761.86	1591. 85	716. 75	875.1
10	Wage amount ( in lakhs)	835. 25	405.1 6	430.09	1088. 09	507.9 7	580.12	1192. 15	567.36	624.79
11	Percentage of wage payment made within	98.07	94.51	3.56	98.07	94.51	3.56	98.46	88.55	9.91



	15 days									
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### ***Pandemic lessons: MGNREGA to check labour migration***

A prolonged national lockdown to stem the spread of Covid-19 and an unprecedented reverse migration of workers have brought the spotlight back on country's largest social protection program called Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). With millions of guest workers having returned to their home states and the pandemic continuing to bring heavy tolls on economy and jobs particularly those in the informal sector, a much scorned job scheme is being sought after by governments and desperate citizens like never before. In May alone, (13% rise from the previous year earlier) was availed under MGNREGA. In short, with most rural households lacking decent safety net, MGNREGA has emerged as a ray of hope for many as the threats of global pandemic remain at large. It is no surprise that the highest demand for MGNREGA work has come from states with a large migrant population, such as Uttar Pradesh (UP), Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh (MP).

The merits of the MGNREGA programme highlighted above make it an attractive proposition in times such as the COVID-19 crisis and the consequent reverse migration. Yet, at the same time, MGNREGA is plagued with some design and implementation issues which can reduce its effectiveness as a tool that can be employed to enable the economy to recover from the recession and the migrant crisis. While several judgements have prohibited MGNREGA wage rates from being below the minimum agricultural wage rate of the state.

Furthermore, MGNREGA workers suffer regular payment delays. Such delays, especially in the current critical economic climate, will reverse the gains made in poverty reduction and be detrimental to the achievement of the first Sustainable Development Goal of 'No poverty'.

By design, MGNREGA is not a targeted, budget driven programme. It should provide work to every person applying for work within 15 days of such application. In the event of failure in doing so, the worker is entitled to an unemployment compensation. This feature makes it particularly attractive to be used in rehabilitating the reverse migrants of the COVID crisis. The administrative rationing that plagues MGNREGA casts doubt on its ability to accommodate the existing rural aspirants, let alone serve the additional demand created by the new reverse migrant aspirants.

### ***Challenges & Suggestions***

### 1) Prioritise Individual Benefitting Schemes

Work schemes that can be taken up by individuals and small groups of 4-6 workers must be prioritised. Across many parts of the country, preparation for the kharif season will be underway soon, and individual schemes such as repairing and strengthening bunds on land used for paddy cultivation and fencing of croplands can be introduced. Additionally, schemes for building individual assets such as goat and poultry sheds, dug wells, and farm ponds should also be given priority. For as long as the lockdown continues, work schemes that are relatively less material-intensive should be taken up, as it is difficult to ensure material procurement at worksites.

### 2) Increase The Number of work Schemes

Currently, there are only 2-3 work schemes running per panchayat, which is leading to the crowding of workers at worksites. To prevent this and to ensure that all willing households are able to access employment through NREGA, the number of schemes needs to be increased and 6-8 schemes must be introduced in each village.

### 3) Pay Workers Immediately

Rural households urgently need cash-in-hand, and so the emerging demand is for immediate payment to workers. NREGA payments are frequently delayed by weeks or months. Given the circumstances, such delays will be entirely counterproductive. It is recommended that in remote areas, wage payments should be made in cash, and paid on the same day. In other areas, they must be ensured within a week of submission of muster rolls.

### 4) Modify Daily Workloads

In compliance with COVID-19 guidelines, workers are wearing masks and other forms of face protection. NREGA works typically involve hard physical labour and workers are finding it challenging to breathe comfortably while working. Consequently, for as long as workers are required to wear masks, the daily volume of work assigned to them must be reduced. All NREGA work sites must be adequately stocked with the necessary supplies, including water, soap, and sanitiser, to ensure workers' safety in compliance with COVID-19 safety and hygiene guidelines.

### 5) Increase Wages

When the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana was announced, it included a relief measure for NREGA workers: The daily-wage rate would be increased from Rs 182 per day to Rs 202 per day, effective 1 April 2020.

### 6) Increase Guaranteed Days of Work

In light of the limited income-generating activities available in rural India, the number of days of work per job card should be increased from 100 person days per year to 200 person days per year. This move will be especially valuable in blocks that have a high percentage of marginal and landless farmers, Adivasi households, and where migration is high—particularly in the tribal belt of central India.

#### 7) Issue Job Cards

Job cards were issued to all those who demand NREGA work, within 24-48 hours of receiving an application for the same. In cases where job cards are in the custody of middlemen, these should be reissued immediately.

#### 8) Include Single Women

Often, at NREGA worksites two people from a household will work on a scheme together—the men dig the soil and their female counterparts take on the role of head loaders—transporting the excavated soil. In compliance with COVID-19 guidelines, the muster rolls that are currently being issued are limited to 5-6 workers. While this ensures physical distancing at work sites, it is also resulting in a tendency to avoid enrolling single women workers who are seeking employment through NREGA.

#### 9) Strengthen Delivery Mechanisms

For NREGA to function effectively, government departments cooperated adequately to support the demand for work, oversee work sites, and make timely payments. This means that people who are staffed to NREGA departments—engineers, supervisors, and others—need to be available for NREGA-related work. Since the announcement of the lockdown, the focus of the government machinery has shifted to providing relief. While this is critical, it should not be at the cost of implementing NREGA.

### ***10.2 Water Practitioners' Network***

The Water Practitioners' Network (WPN) is a grassroots initiative to promote the adoption of a paradigm shift in water management among water practitioners including water users, civil society organisations, researchers, institutions and policy makers. It provides a knowledge-sharing platform through the identification of a range of best practices and proofs of concept which would facilitate such a paradigm shift in the management of water resources in India.

The vision of WPN is to bring together the wisdom of a wide range of water practitioners across the country on crucial issues like demand management, water quality and groundwater protection. The network of practitioners put together form a huge repository of valuable

experience of working on the theme of water as a common good. Hence, within the group of water practitioners, there is the immense possibility of cross-learning, which the network aims to facilitate. Consolidation of experiences would help various constituents of the network to think in terms of expanding and scaling up their efforts, individually and collectively.

**i) Online film screening of “Malipura Dam” (March, 2020)**

WPN organized a four days online film screen of “Malipura Dam”, a film by SPS Community Media. Film screening was organized on the WPN website ([www.waterpractitioners.org](http://www.waterpractitioners.org)) by 28th Feb to 2nd March 2020. The purpose of this activity was to create awareness on water issues through the sharing well documented knowledge (Video documentary). Screening was advertised on various digital platform such RRA network, WPN network, Facebook and WhatsApp. According to website database, we have received (126) unique visitors during the online film screening.

**ii) Workshop on Conceptualization of the idea of a Groundwater Data Co-operative in India**

Nearly all the organisations working under the umbrella of Water Practitioners Network gather data on groundwater levels. This is done perhaps with different purposes. For some organisations, the data is used as part of the baseline-to-impact analysis of watershed management interventions; for others, it may be of great importance on programmes such as participatory groundwater management. Whatever the purpose, it has become imperative to consider the prospect of correct collection of data and developing a set of standardised procedures of analyses and interpretation leading to a variety of inferences. Moreover, if data-sets on water levels become standardised, there is a great potential for the data to be used not just on a project-to-project basis, but also for a common good, such as making a contribution to the national assessment of groundwater that organisations like CGWB attempt on a periodic basis. An effort of this kind will constitute the first, perhaps baby-step towards making the idea of open-access data a reality. The new water policy that is being drafted will also be able to highlight the possibilities and significance of a ‘data co-operative’ in water. In this context, a web-workshop on groundwater level data was organised in collaboration with Advanced Centre for Water Resource Management and Development (ACWADAM), Pune and Water Practitioners Network on 1st – 2nd June 2020. 9 participants from 6 organisations (PSI, WASSAN – AF Ecology Centre, FES, ACT, SPS and DSC) came together to share their ideas.



*Image 10.1: A screenshot from the web-workshop on groundwater-level data*

**iii) Webinar: "India's next biggest challenge - Water Quality, also its biggest opportunity for change" (18<sup>th</sup> June, 2020)**

Through this webinar, Dr. Sunderrajan Krishnan, executive director of the INREM Foundation, addresses water quality issues and their interconnections with some of the most pressing issues of our times, like climate change. Krishnan has led a team of researchers working on the mitigation of fluorosis (dental enamel damage and skeletal deformities caused by excessive intake of fluoride) in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh, and showed that the disease is reversible. The webinar was moderated by Dr. Himanshu Kulkarni, executive director and secretary at ACWADAM, Pune. Dr. Kulkarni has been actively involved in the advocacy for stronger programmes on groundwater management in India.

**iv) Knowledge sharing workshop on Crop Water Budgeting: concept, experiences, tools, and techniques**

Water Practitioners' Network held a two days national level knowledge sharing workshop specifically focused on the concepts, tools and techniques on Crop Water Budgeting. Bharati Integrated Rural Development Society (BIRDS) has been the pioneer in advancing CWB in India and BIRDS have kindly agreed to lead this theme within WPN. The event is organised in online mode on 13th and 14th July, 2020. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together

experienced organisations on a single platform so that different approaches could be discussed and a common menu could be evolved. Around (18) participants from various organisations (GIZ, WOTR, APU, FES, SPWD, WASSAN, ACWADAM, and BIRDS) shared their experiences on ‘Crop Water Budgeting’.

**v) Setting-up working Group on “Crop Water Budgeting”**

WPN created a Working Group on Crop Water Budgeting (WG-CWB), as the follow-up to the online workshop on CWB held on 13th and 14th of July, 2020. The WG-CWB brings together experienced organisations on a single platform so that different approaches could be discussed and a common menu could be evolved. Bharati Integrated Rural Development Society (BIRDS) have kindly agreed to lead this Working Group with WPN. CWB Working Group offers a platform for other civil society organizations, professionals, researchers, students and farming communities to share their experiences on CWB. Mr. Paul Raja Rao, (Director- BIRDS) is appointed as Chair for the working group.

**vi) Webinar: "MGNREGA- Its contemporary relevance and the way forward" (7<sup>th</sup>, August 2020)**

The relevance of the MGNREGA programme has become even more apparent after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with reported widespread job losses and decline in income in the rural areas. In this webinar, two leading proponents of MGNREGA in India, Ms. Ashwini Kulkarni (Director, Pragati Abhiyan) and Shri Pramathesh Ambasta (CEO, BRLF), discussed the current status and future relevance of MGNREGA. Both the speakers highlighted the relevance of MGNREGA in the lives of small and marginal tribal farmers in the rain-fed areas, geographies that also represent the largest concentration of poverty in the country.

**vii) Webinar: "Watershed Management - learning from the past, re-imagining the future" (27<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)**

Over the past 25 years, Watershed Management has emerged as an effective approach to ensuring water security in the rain-fed regions of the country. In this webinar, developed as a conversation between two leading experts in the field of watershed management, Shri A Ravindra and Shri MV Rama Chandrarudu. Together these experts bring out the need to re-imagine the focus and scope of the watershed approach in the current context and envision the implementation architecture of the new generation watershed programmes. Shri A Ravindra heads Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) and has been working on the issues of rainfed agriculture. Mr. MV Rama Chandrarudu is associated with RRA Network and WASSAN Group of Institutions in various capacities and roles, since 2000. He was a member of the Steering Committee for IWMP, DoLR, GoI.

**viii) Webinar: Does the Water of our Rivers flow "Wastefully" into the Sea? (17<sup>th</sup> September, 2020)**

A long-standing engineering axiom states: "We must not allow river water to flow wastefully into the sea". This axiom can be said to have been the foundation of the Nehruvian paradigm of river development ever since Independence. Growing understanding of water and recent research has raised multiple questions about this instrumentalist way of looking at rivers. In this webinar, Dr. Mihir Shah seeks to understand from Prof. Debasis Sengupta how the recent Ocean Mixing and Monsoon (OMM) Programme and allied research can help us better understand these issues

**ix) Developing a customised category of MGNREGA works for relief, recovery and resilience during emergency / crisis situation in case of natural and biological catastrophes.'**

A series of consultations was organized to engage the key stakeholders including CSOs, government departments, policymakers, technical support organisations, Mahatma Gandhi NREGS participants, farmers and labourers. Overall, nine (9) consultations (online mode) at national level were held during 13<sup>th</sup> October to 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2020, engaging over (40) institutional bodies including civil society organisations and government departments working in various geographical regions of India.

This report highlights the priorities related to immediate relief, recovery and rebuilding of the rural economy and raising its resilience to external shocks like COVID-19 or Natural disasters. Report discusses the choice of works at the state level providing the master categories of works under MGNREGA. New works that can be adopted in the MGNREGA are suggested in the report focusing flood prone areas, coastal areas, forest areas etc. Additional recommendations and suggestions are also provided for effective implementation of MGNREGA.

### ***10.3 Revitalizing Rainfed Agriculture Network (RRAN)***

SPS has been part of RRAN since its inception in 2009. Through interface with various state governments and central government ministries and departments, RRAN has been able to move the agenda of increased public investments in rainfed agriculture. With an attempt to pool together the accumulated learning of policy related work of the previous decade.

#### **Consultative Process towards Public Policy for Living Soils**

Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) hosted this project on behalf of the Working Group on Soils of the Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network (RRAN). Though the project proposal was submitted early, the sanction for the project came in January 2020 and the release of the first instalment happened in February 2020. We started to visit and document the materials and methods

practiced by the farmers to maintain the living soils, mostly the 3Ms (soil microbes, soil moisture and soil organic matter), in different states (Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh) with the help of the RRAN partners. However, the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020 affected the project badly, as mobility was severely restricted and the process of data collection had to be done through the internet or via telephones, till further movement was allowed.

### Key Activities Under the Project:

- (i) **Identification of the RRAN partners working on living soils:** organisations or practitioners working on living soils are identified and requested to share their material on the theme.

*Table 10.2: List of organizations working on living soils*

	<b>Name of the Organizations</b>	<b>Place</b>
1	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP)	M.P. and Gujarat
2	Dharamitra	Wardha, Maharashtra
3	Centre for Sustainable Agriculture	Hyderabad, Telangana
4	SRIJAN	New Delhi
5	Watershed Support Services And Activities Network (WASSAN)	Hyderabad, Telangana
6	Mr. Bharat Bhushan Tyagi (Natural Farming Practitioner)	Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh
7	DSC Foundation	Gujarat
8	Advanced Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (ACWADAM)	Pune, Maharashtra
9	Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS)	Dewas, Madhya Pradesh
10	SOIL	Karnataka
11	PRAGATI	Koraput, Odisha
12	M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)	Jeypore, Odisha



13	Development Research Communications and Research Centre (DRCRC)	Kolkata, West Bengal
14	ARANYA	Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh

## (ii) Field visit and preliminary documentation on Living Soil Practices

Before the Covid outbreak, the team made visits to several RRAN locations documenting field level practices on the living soils.

### Farmers - CSOs consultation on living soils

Three consultations were organised in online mode on living soil with farmers and CSOs at Western Odisha, Western MP and Karnataka.

- Consultation for Western Odisha region:** An online consultation was organised on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2020 in Balangir, Bargarh and Nuapada districts of Western Odisha. Total (72) participants participated in the consultation including activists from different part of the country, farmers, CSOs and officials from Western part of Odisha. Padma Shri Bharat Bhushan Tyagi graced the consultation by sharing his valuable thoughts on living soils and agro ecology. The polling points discussed were: (i) Preparation of organic inputs at the block or GP level, setting up units with the help of DIC; (ii) Maintaining crop diversity; (iii) Promotion of bio fertilizers and cultures; (iv) Green manuring crops and seeds available at the local level; (v) The only way to go ahead, which is to keep the soil and its health as central to all agriculture; (vi) Moving towards an "Ecology based economy" in agriculture.
- Consultation for Western Madhya Pradesh:** A virtual consultation on the living soil was held on 11 November 2020 for Western Madhya Pradesh. Farmers, CSOs and practitioners participated to share their experiences working in districts of Khargone, Khandwa and Dewas. Srijan Foundation, Eklavya Foundation, and Development Support Center (DSC) Foundation participated actively in the consultation. A total number of 35 members participated in the consultation. This consultation, starting with experienced and learned practitioners of living soils from Western MP lead to a district and state level formulation and implementation of policies for living soils.

- **Consultation for Karnataka:** The Working Group on Living Soils and Karnataka State Chapter of Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture (RRA) Network organized a farmer - civil society dialogue on living soils in Karnataka on 24 December 2020. The purpose of this consultation was to learn from the diverse practices of maintaining soil health from the practitioners in the farming systems in Karnataka. In this public consultation, we heard from the farmers and CSOs about their practices, constraints that they have faced and what they expect from the state policy at different levels such as the local Gram Panchayats, the state government and the Government of India.

Farmers from eight districts including Kolar, Tumkur, Chamarajnagar, Ramanagar, Chikmagalur, Mysore, Mandya and Raichur participated in the consultation. Dr. Ashok S Alur, Director, Centre of Excellence for Farmer Producer Organization, and Savita Hiremath of Solid Waste Management Round Table, Bengaluru were also among the participants. Dr. Alur discussed “Organizing soil organic matter with locally available resources” and Savita Hiremath spoke on “Urban Compost: Affordable and Accessible to farmers”.

## Key Learning

The key learning of the project came from documenting the materials and methods on living soils practiced on field, what we have got from our partners through talking to them, scanning their literature, discussion in the three consultations with our partners and farmers regarding the living-soil farmers’ practices.

- We have gained an understanding of the land use pattern, fertilizer consumption rate, soil status, crop details and combinations, and climatic condition of different agro-climatic zones.
- We have also acquired knowledge of many traditional practices, materials and methods of soil and pest management, soil conservation measures, etc.
- After the compilation of farmer’s experiences and secondary data from different sources, we have a good repository of best practices on soil health management, which are very specific to the agro climatic zones where such practices are undertaken. It also gives a clear understanding on how we can generate local employment by promoting local bio input units through utilizing the local resources, waste materials and supply organic inputs to the farmers to maintain soil health, and minimize the use of chemicals, labour cost, time requirement for preparing those inputs and the number of migrant labours.
- This documented experiential knowledge can form the background for detailed consultations with the district and state level key actors – RRAN partners, local communities, gram panchayats, government officials, people’s institutions, other civil society organisations etc.

- We can take forward these practices into our decentralized living soil policy briefs and move towards the national policy goal on living soils.