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SAMAJ PRAGATI SAHAYOG
VILLAGE JATASHANKAR, TEHSIL BAGLI, DISTRICT DEWAS,
MADHYA PRADESH- 455227

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. WATER MANAGEMENT	9
2.1 WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT	9
2.2 Bhikangaon Watershed Development Programme	9
2.3 NABARD Watershed Development Project, Bhikangaon	10
“जो आणा श्रमदान पर, उसे लगाया जाएगा पहले काम पर”	12
2.4 Gurarda Micro Watershed Development Project, Udainagar	13
2.5 Narmada Landscape Restoration Project, Maheshwar	14
2.6 Sustainable Livelihoods and Water Security Project, Khategaon	18
2.7 Melghat	20
2.8 Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) Udainagar & Punjapura	22
2.9 Participatory Groundwater Management (PGWM)	24
2.10 Challenges	25
2.11 Success Story	26
3. SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE	28
3.1 Expansion of the program	28
3.2 No. of villages covered	30
3.3 Support to farmer groups for Non-pesticide Management Farming (Farmers)	30
3.4 Support to farmers for soil health improvement activities (farmers)	30
3.5 Crops covered under crop diversification (no. of crops)	31
3.6 Crop varietal trials (No.)	31
3.7 Support to farmers for Seed germination and Seed treatment activities (farmers)	31
3.8 Supporting families undertaking kitchen garden practices (HH)	32
3.9 Other Activities	33
3.9.1 Interactive Film Screening	33
3.9.2 Night Meeting	33
3.9.3 TraceX	34
3.10 Training on FFS	34
3.11 External Audit	35
3.12 Champion Farmers Training	35
3.13 Case Study 1	36
The story of NPM vegetables - A new leaf in the NPM journey of SPS	36

3.14	Case Study 2	37
	NPM – A key for Betterment	37
3.15	COMMUNITY FOREST RIGHTS	39
3.15.1	Organized Capacity Building	40
4.	Self-Help Group and Livelihoods Programme	42
4.1	Performance indicator	43
4.2	Location-Wise Data of SHG Programme	44
4.3	Achievements and Recognition of SHG Program	45
4.3.1	APMAS Award	45
4.3.2	NABARD LEDP Grant	45
4.3.3	NABARD Watershed Development Fund	46
4.4	Digital Literacy	47
4.5	Bank linkage	48
4.6	Kirana Distribution	48
4.7	E-rickshaw	49
4.8	The SHG program started in Melghat	49
4.9	General Body Meeting	50
4.10	Special Loans	52
4.11	Capacity Building	52
	Internal Capacity Building	52
4.11	Case Study	52
	Driving through the stereotypes	52
5.	COMMODITY AGGREGATION	54
5.1	Major Activities Undertaken By RRPPCL	54
5.1.1	Seed Sale	54
5.1.2	Aggregation in Rabi season 2022-23	54
5.1.3	Retail Packing RRPPCL	55
5.1.4	Kirana Item Sale	56
5.1.5	General Body Meeting	57
6.	LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT	59
6.1	Livestock Program Outreach	60
6.2	Member and Beneficiary Engagement	60
6.3	Producer Groups and Community Cohesion	61

6.4	Member Engagement and Empowerment	61
6.5	Meeting and Trainings	61
6.6	Goatary	63
6.6.1	Treatment Activities	63
6.6.3	Deworming	63
6.6.2	Vaccination Activities	63
6.6.4	Sale & Purchase	64
6.6.5	Housing Structure	64
6.6.6	Feed & Nutrition	64
	Goatary Data Table	65
6.7	Poultry	66
6.7.1	Housing Structure	66
6.7.2	Vaccination Activities	67
6.7.3	Deworming	67
6.7.4	Feed & Nutrition	68
6.7.5	Sale & Purchase	68
	Poultry Data Table	69
6.8	Conclusion of the Livestock Program	70
7.	ENTITLEMENTS HEALTH and NUTRITION	71
7.1	ICDS	72
7.2	Pregnant women	73
7.3	Ayushman Bharat Yojna	74
7.4	Gram Sabha	75
7.5	Pension Schemes	76
7.6	Patrata Parchi	76
7.7	Hissedari Sabha	77
7.8	Dudh Kela Karyakram	78
8.	KUMBAYA	79
8.1	Rebuilding	79
8.2	Capacity Building	79
8.2.1	Embroidery and Natural Dyeing Workshop	79
8.2.2	Menstrual Health Workshops	81
8.2.3	Digital Literacy at Kumbaya	82
8.3	Support Networks	83

8.3.1	Women on Wings	83
8.3.2	Creative Dignity	83
8.3.3	Two Hundred Million Artisans	84
8.4	Emerging Partnerships	84
8.4.1	Zazi Vintage	84
8.4.2	Reliance Swadesh	86
8.5	Orders and Exports	86
8.5.1	Client Orders- Woven London, Rani & Reine, Labvisby TRIFED Bulk Order	86
8.5.2	Order for Kufri Life - Mili Suleman	87
8.6	Exhibitions	88
8.7	Reaching out to New Stores	88
8.8	Visits and Knowledge Sharing	89
8.8.1	Visit from Axis Bank Foundation appointed third party for documentation	89
8.8.2	New York University - Abu Dhabi students visit	90
8.8.3	Exposure Visit from Eicher Group Foundation's supported organisation	91
8.8.4	Visits from GreenHub, Jamia Millia Islamia and Sahyadri School	92
8.9	Sales Data for the Financial Year 2022-23	92
	Table No. 1 Number of Producers and Trainees	92
	Table No. 2 Sales through Retail Shops and Orders	93
	Table No. 3 Sales of Honey through Retail Shops and Orders	94
	Table No. 4 Sales through Export and Client Orders	94
	Table No. 5 Sales through Bulk Orders	94
	Table No. 6 Sales through Exhibitions	95
9.	SPS COMMUNITY MEDIA	96
9.1	SPS Community Media (2022-23)	97
9.2	Media Production	98
9.3	Report on Mobile Cinema Screening	104
9.3.1	Impact on the Community	104
9.3.2	Engagement with Youth	105
9.3.3	Collaborations	106
9.4	Photographic Documentation in Project Work	107

9.4.1	ABF Project	107
9.4.2	Visual Documentation	107
9.4.3	Communication and Reporting	107
9.4.4	Monitoring and Evaluation	107
9.4.5	Awareness and Advocacy	107
9.4.6	Documentation for Historical Reference	107
9.5	HDFC Project	108
9.5.1	Focused Documentation	109
9.5.2	Performance Evaluation	109
9.5.3	Communication with Stakeholders	109
9.5.4	Community Engagement	109
9.6	SPS Planner 2023	109
9.6.1	The Planner for 2023 serves multiple purposes within the organization	110
9.7	Green Hub (Central India) Film Festival	111
9.8	Food Diaries	112
9.9	The Ant Organization's Exposure Visit	112
9.10	Accolade	114
9.11	Capacity Building Workshops organized by SPS Community Media	117
9.12	Green Hub (Central India) Script and Story Telling Class	119
9.13	Hatpipliya Mahila Pragati Samiti Training	119
9.14	Training SPS Staff on Photographic Documentation	120
10.	NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS	121
10.1	National Consortium of CSOs on NREGA	121
10.2	CSO Partner Network in Three Districts of Maharashtra	121
10.3	Capacity Building of CSO Partners	122
10.4	Agriculture and RRPPCL	123
10.5	Watershed	123
10.6	Water Practitioners' Network	124
10.7	Objectives	124



1. INTRODUCTION

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.

‘Work Builds, Charity Destroys’ - Baba Amte

SPS derives its inspiration from Baba Amte's journey of life and his fight for the cause of people who are shunned by our society's apathy. He rejected charity, believed that every human deserves a chance and that we should come and work together to build. SPS is driven by that same cause, we have been working for the last 3 decades in a region that typifies the most difficult problems of India and created a live demonstration at scale of the way such a transformational change could be brought about.

SPS's Theory of Change aims at bridging this gap with an alternative development model founded on the principles of equity, sustainability, and people's empowerment and not the conforming top-down bureaucratic approach wherein the ones who are really plagued by the pressing issues are left out and have no stakes in the development process meant for them. SPS has transformed landscapes, addressed agricultural crises, and has contributed in the making of landmark changes in the national policies which has helped us to have a colossal impact on peoples' lives. SPS believes that location-specific watershed development combined with low-cost, low- risk agriculture, other nature-based livelihoods and women-led institutions can result in sustained higher incomes and empowered communities. This approach arrests distress migration towards the metros and liberates the rural poor from the clutches of usurious moneylender-traders. Our central mandate is the empowerment of India's most disadvantaged people – women, Adivasis, Dalits and the poor, which we believe contributes to strengthening our fragile democracy at the grass-roots and can ensure that the ones at the last mile are given their due.



In our country, the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots has been a longstanding concern. The power mongering forces have always had an upper hand over the vulnerable, distressed, and marginalized sections of the society. The abject poverty that the marginalised are subjected to can be credited to the fact that there is an absence of strong institutions of the poor and thus, their lesser participation in the process. We, at SPS, have the opinion that these institutions must be led by our women and other minorities. Women at leadership do great as their unflinching commitment towards a sustainable development, diverse views and perspectives, and prioritization of health and education can pave the way for an accountable, accessible, and thus, more inclusive development.

Women-led strong institutions can open new horizons and help us ward off the constraints on our way, especially for the ones surviving at the fringes, in the remotest tribal corners, in 4 different ways:

1. They can build the capacities and enable the poor to liberate themselves from the clutches of usurious moneylenders whose exorbitant interest rates push them in a vicious cycle of 'debt' and hence, to the state of extreme poverty.
2. These strong institutions of the poor can 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 but a collective solidarity has the courage to fight it off.
3. 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. These institutions can be ground-breaking in spearheading anti-corruption crusades.
4. They can channelise efforts to adequately utilize the huge political potential opened by democratic systems of representation and decision-making, especially through Panchayati Raj Institutions, which have remained dormant so far. But for us to realise this vision of a gender justifiable world, we believe that we need to have a strong set of partnerships with communities, PRIs, people's representatives, government, academic, corporates and other NGOs so that we can make civil society action truly powerful and impactful at the same time, in India. Our problems are multidimensional 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's Theory of change is founded on this very ground.

Our direct interventions are mostly concentrated in about 600 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.

In the wake of the post-COVID scenarios, the world grappled with the enduring aftermath of the pandemic, facing a multitude of challenges. Uncertainty loomed large, and a pervasive sense of despair gripped communities worldwide. Amid these trying times, Samaj Pragati Sahyog emerged as a beacon of hope, tirelessly striving to alleviate the difficulties posed by the lingering impacts of the pandemic.

Our women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) serve as the cornerstone for all our interventions, forming a beneficiary base for our diverse programs, including those centered on health, sustainable agriculture, livestock, and water management. These SHGs also provide financial backing for the implementation of these services. Despite the challenges faced during this period, with a substantial loss of jobs and diminishing incomes from traditional livelihoods, our SHG federations have continued to offer loans to their members. Operating under a bank-linkage model, these federations maintain a reducing rate of interest, facilitating manageable repayment for the borrowers. Notably, the SHG members have collectively accumulated savings exceeding 50 crore, demonstrating remarkable resilience amidst the uncertainties brought about by the repercussions of the pandemic.

With constraints, the Community Media Team has also produced films and podcasts this year, the outreach was feared to be limited, owing to the spread of virus in the second wave of the pandemic, but commendable work has been undertaken by the team. They have made posters, audio clips for COVID-19 sensitization campaigns.

Our Entitlements, Health and Nutrition Team relayed information to our members and facilitated the process of accessing their rights and entitlements. We had slowly resumed our SHG meetings with proper social distancing norms and had also explored virtual meetings but lack of smartphones and connectivity has been a grave concern and hindered the collective decision-making process of our SHGs.

Kumbaya, our social venture, had to endure tough times, but our SHG Federations and our women rescued Kumbaya by ordering A Hundred Thousand Masks. Kumbaya has also been working on the online store with Trilliant and has focused more on local area marketing to liquidate our stocks and also to give the local people a sustainable clothing option.

2. WATER MANAGEMENT

2.1 WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT

Over the past 30 years, the SPS Watershed Team has successfully enhanced the water table, expanded irrigation coverage, and enforced measures for soil and water conservation within their operational zone. Post-COVID-19, there has been a significant return of migrant populations to villages, particularly in the Melghat and Bhikangaon regions, where distress migration remains a prominent concern.

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 firsthand. 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 for irrigation in the region, leading to the 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 programs like the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP). In this regard, SPS has taken an in-principle decision to use donor funds strategically to fund the capacity building of the human resources required for leveraging such public funds, working at different levels from Gram Panchayats to District Panchayats.

2.2 Bhikangaon Watershed Development Programme

Bhikangaon watershed team engaged in regular follow-ups worked extensively on liaison with the local and district administration, sought necessary permissions from SPS and Panchayati Raj Institutions, and completed multiple technical and field surveys while planning and constructing watershed structures. 3 structures have been constructed, 1 stop dam (Khashiram Bhai) at village Sultanpura, 1 earthen dam renovation site (Mansharam Bhai) at village Sangvi, and 1 farm bunding at village Goripura. Moreover, newer structures have also been identified – 5 Gabion, 3 Earthen Dam, 4 Farm ponds, and 10 Stop Dam renovations. The technical survey and site selection of 3 Earthen Dam under APF has been done in the Paldi, Palasi, and Siralabad villages of the Bhikangaon location.



Jagdish Bhai's Farm pond

The stakeholders under this work have been oriented about the benefits of the structures and the team had intimated the Panchayats about the same.

Also, the team had directed its focus towards community mobilization to improve people's participation through regular meetings, exposure visits to proposed sites, etc. Our efforts have borne fruits as it has been observed that the community has made significant contributions to Lalkheda and Sultanpura's farm bunding work.

To enhance the internal capacity of our team, SPS organized training sessions wherein the participants learned about the data management system, SPS's data entry framework, data visualizations, and data upload process.

2.3 NABARD Watershed Development Project, Bhikangaon

A significant milestone for the Bhikangaon Watershed team was the approval of a new watershed development project at Banjhar village under the NABARD Watershed Development Fund (WDF). While pursuing the necessary No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Zila Panchayat, the team encountered a minor setback when the former ZP CEO, who had initially provided verbal approval, was transferred before formal procedures could be completed. Subsequently, the team regrouped and effectively engaged with the new CEO, eventually securing the required NOC.

Following the NOC acquisition, the entire SPS watershed team collaborated to swiftly develop the project proposal within a tight timeframe of 15 days, subsequently presenting it to NABARD's District Development Manager, Shri Vijendra Patil. Leveraging the experience of the Gurarda Watershed Team proved to be instrumental during the drafting process of the NABARD WDF proposal. The selection of Banjhar village for this project was primarily motivated by the prevalent challenges of water scarcity, unemployment, distress migration, and drinking water problems within the community.

“जो आएका श्रमदान पर, उसे लगाया जाएगा पहले काम पर”

During those 4 days of shramdaan, around 210 villagers actively participated and constructed 500 contour trenches. Later, the villagers sent their representatives for an exposure visit to Neemkheda Watershed for one day. This exposure made the villagers aware of the benefits of watershed treatment activity. It acted as a catalyst in the formation of the Village Watershed Committee (VWC) in Banjhar. The Banjhar VWC is composed of 11 women leaders who will execute and oversee the project.



2.4 Gurarda Micro Watershed Development Project, Udainagar

Udainagar Pragati Samiti has been working on Gurarda Micro WSD funded by NABARD since 2021 in our 1462-ha project area consisting of 3 villages: Gurarda, Anjanpura, and Birjakhal. The project advances in two phases: the Capacity Building Phase (CBP) and the Final Implementation Phase (FIP). To receive an FIP sanction, you need to complete work in 10% of the area proposed for intervention. The CBP phase has been completed and has been evaluated by the NABARD RO officials. Post CBP phase review, the team has prepared the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the FIP phase and submitted the same to NABARD RO, Bhopal. In the DPR of the FIP phase, a total of 8 farm ponds and 2 farm bunds would be constructed in an area of 181 hectares. The team is awaiting final approval for the FIP phase.

Three types of works were included in the DPR.

- a) Soil and Moisture Conservation Measures.
- b) Climate Proofing/Adaptation and Risk Mitigation Measures.
- c) Livelihood and Women's Development.



Farm bunding work has been planned and completed, and 1440 person days of employment have been generated. Three boulder checks have been constructed to prevent soil erosion. A socio-economic survey of 423 families in the villages Gurarda, Birjakhal, and Anjanpura has been completed, and 1200-hectare net planning work has also been completed. In Gurarda MWSD, historical climate analysis has also been done. Net planning work has been done to analyze the land's capability. In 2021, a Gurarda watershed committee was also formulated with 14 members (10 are women and 4 are men) and these members were trained on soil and water conservation, agricultural productivity, and learned how these conservation methods can boost farmers' profits and result in enhancement of the quality of non-irrigated land. To keep up with the momentum, VWC has been registered under the M.P. Firms and Society Act and regular meetings are held to encourage discussions amongst the members. Gurarda WSD's work has paved the way for forging a bond with Gurarda Panchayat. They have sanctioned a contour trench under MGNREGA which is going to employ 38 people.

Under the Gurarda Project, the team conducted multiple training sessions to build the capacities of the community members. A training session on ‘Climate Change’ was organized by agronomist Shri Narendra Tambe Sir and two trainings were imparted on alternative livelihood to 120 people (goat rearing and poultry rearing) by the UPS livestock team. They disseminated the knowledge of better livestock management to the members to reduce animal mortality and provide an avenue for the members to diversify their incomes.

2.5 Narmada Landscape Restoration Project, Maheshwar

Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) collaborates with the Indian Institute of Forest Management for the implementation of field activities and capacity building within the Narmada Landscape Restoration Project (NLRP). The primary objective of the NLRP is to enhance the quantity and quality of water in targeted tributaries of the Narmada River through comprehensive and sustainable landscape management interventions. The project is concentrated in the catchment area of the Narmada River, spanning 55 kilometers between the Omkareshwar and Maheshwar Dams, situated under the Barwaha block (South Bank) in the Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh, India.



The NLRP aims to bring about a tangible improvement in the region’s water resources by employing inclusive strategies and sustainable approaches to landscape management. By focusing on the tributaries of the Narmada River within the designated area, the project endeavors to enhance the overall water quantity and quality, ensuring the long-term ecological sustainability and socioeconomic well-being of the communities dependent on these water resources. Through the joint efforts of SPS and the Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, the NLRP seeks to foster a comprehensive and impactful initiative for the restoration and preservation of the Narmada River’s vital ecosystem.

The watershed team hosted a one-day capacity building Training (On-Field) on “Soil and Moisture Conservation Techniques in the North and South Bank of the project area. Three watershed structures have been constructed in the North Bank area. The stop dam renovation work of village Aarsi in the South Bank of the project area was completed before the onset of the monsoon. Two Gabion structures have been constructed on the south bank as an integral part of drainage line treatment and runoff control structures. In the second quarter, revenue maps were digitized after getting the maps from the revenue department. Technical surveys have been done for cost estimation of the proposed NRM structures by the team.



In terms of Institution Building and Community Mobilization, a Water User Group (WUG) has been formed in Aarsi and FGDs have been conducted to build rapport with the community. SPS has organized training sessions on Watershed Software to build the team’s capacities. Residential training on how to engage with the PRI authorities, MGNREGA basics, muster roll, and job cards was conducted at Neemkheda. SPS Team has drawn inferences with the help of digital mapping tools such as GIS (QGIS), Remote Sensing data (Using aerial imagery, Digital elevation model, etc.), and GIS-based mobile applications like (Q-field) and has tried to capture the detailed information in digital format.



SPS invited ACWADAM to provide geological and hydrogeological inputs to the proposed watershed development activities in the north and south banks of River Narmada. The purpose of this study is to undertake aquifer mapping of the study area delineated for the Narmada Landscape Restoration Project (NRLP).



While the long-term aim is to map the aquifers of the region, the preliminary field visit was undertaken by the ACWADAM team from the 7th to 12th of October and subsequently on the 21st and 22nd of November 2022 with the following objectives: -

- (i) Geological mapping
- (ii) Training and capacity building of Community Resource Persons (CRP) for good inventory and periodic data monitoring.

The team made use of the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) to understand the vegetation health of the project area. Under the landscape treatment activity of forest conservation and protection, a plot for bamboo plantation has been identified and Plants of bamboo have been planted in the village – Veklya, North Bank area.



In the NLRP project around 27 LBS (193.70 running meters) were constructed in the Lachora village in the South bank of Narmada. Three stop dams have been constructed (Gulawad and Bagdara). The final version of DPR has been approved by the PMU team and has been sent to IIFM. Fortnightly monitoring of 90 wells has been done under NLRP in the north and south Bank of Narmada.

In NLRP, smokeless chulha has been distributed to 100 beneficiaries of Vaiklya and Navrangpura villages under the forest conservation and protection measures adopted by the team. Smokeless chulha is going to reduce the dependence on forest-based firewood in the project villages.





2.6 Sustainable Livelihoods and Water Security Project, Khategaon

Khategaon ‘Towards Sustainable Livelihoods and Water Security in Villages of Central Indian Tribal Belt’ project is being implemented through HDFC Parivartan, the CSR arm of HDFC Bank. This project is committed to making a positive impact on the rural, tribal community. The thematic areas under this project are as follows: Natural Resource Management, Skill and Livelihood Development, Education, Healthcare, and Financial Literacy.

In Khategaon, the watershed team renovated and upgraded 3 government schools into **SMART SCHOOL** in Rajor, Kudgaon, and Tikwada villages of Khategaon.



Tikwada Village Smart School



Inspection of smart school by SHG women members of Richhi village

6 DOP (Dug-out Ponds) have been constructed in the HDFC project area to facilitate the groundwater recharge process and provide protective irrigation to Kharif crops.

Khategaon WSD team has conducted technical surveys to identify the structures and has engaged in Detailed Project Report (DPR) preparation of 8 villages & 5 Panchayats for an area of 5620.80 Hectares. As per the DPR, 19.75 crores of NRM work would be implemented, 3.11 crores would be funded by HDFC and the remaining would be done through convergence with the government. Hydrological and Aquifer Mapping is one of the significant components of DPR preparation. The WSD team has engaged with ACWADAM for the same. Apart from this, the team has also conducted intensive skill development training on well monitoring. A rain gauge has been installed in Richi village to keep track of monsoon rainfall. Water User Groups have been formed and timely labor information meetings have been conducted. Multiple training on Net Planning and well-monitoring surveys have been completed as well. The team has also completed 1 5-hectare farm bund work. Regarding capacity building, the team organized in-house training on water testing and its 15 parameters such as pH value, temperature, etc., for their Community Resource Persons and Professionals.





Farm pond of Gangotri Bai Ramvilas in Sukardi village

Khategaon watershed team treated 3 wells in Bangarda and Bokiya villages and installed 2 RO units for clean drinking water for the community to realize UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 i.e. safe drinking water.

2.7 Melghat

Maharashtra's Melghat stretches across a vast expanse of forest area and is well known for its Tiger reserve. But it carries an infamy of being a region reeling with the chronic issue of malnutrition. Although hundreds and thousands of NGOs have found their ground in Melghat, the issue of malnutrition remains a grave concern. Samaj Pragati Sahyog has started to operate work in Melghat this year and would anchor all its interventions (Watershed Development, Agriculture, SHG, Entitlements, Health, and Nutrition) to ensure food and livelihood security to the tribal community of Melghat region.

Melghat Watershed Team has started stone bunding work in convergence with MGNREGA to increase the catchment area and aid in groundwater replenishment. Bamboo plantation has also been done by the Melghat Team. Melghat Team conducted Shivar Pheri with the PRI authorities (Sarpanch, Rojgarsahayak) and has identified works such as Nala Deepening, Stone Bund, Farm Bund, Loose Boulders, etc. Thousands of person days of employment have been generated and the community has reaped benefits from these structures.

The implementation of extensive contour trenching across multiple villages in Melghat, including Kotha, Jambu, Sosukheda, Bothara, Nanduri, Harisal, and Chakarda, serves a crucial purpose in mitigating the challenges posed by the local landscape. Additionally, the completion of LBS (Loose Boulder Structure) work in Zapal village, spanning 15 hectares, under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) signifies a concerted effort to address the region's specific environmental concerns.



Melghat, characterized by an annual rainfall ranging between 1100 and 1200 millimeters, confronts significant water loss to its rivers. This phenomenon highlights the urgent need for comprehensive water conservation measures to preserve and optimize the utilization of this valuable resource within the region. Furthermore, the undulating topology of the area, situated on the Deccan Traps, contributes to the complexity of water management, necessitating tailored solutions that accommodate the challenging geological composition. The presence of layers of solidified flood basalt rocks underscores the geological intricacies that the area grapples with, emphasizing the critical role of strategic interventions like contour trenching and LBS construction in ensuring effective water retention and management.

2.8 Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) Udainagar & Punjabura



The old canal of Paras Dam was repaired to transport the water to the fields

Dams in India often fail to reach their full potential due to insufficient maintenance, mismanagement of water resources, political intervention, and negative environmental impacts. Neglected upkeep reduces storage capacity, while inefficient water distribution systems worsen regional water scarcity and waterlogging. Political and bureaucratic involvement often distorts decision-making processes, impeding fair allocation of resources. Environmental consequences, including community displacement and ecological disturbances, further impede dam efficiency, leading to conflicts and protests.

Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) serves as a pivotal strategy in addressing the shortcomings of conventional dam management. By engaging local communities, farmers, and stakeholders in water resource decision-making, PIM ensures transparent and equitable water distribution for agricultural and other purposes. This approach fosters sustainable water management practices, resolves conflicts, and optimizes agricultural productivity. Empowering communities through PIM facilitates efficient water resource utilization, promotes environmental conservation, and maximizes the long-term benefits of Indian dam projects. PIM's significance lies in its ability to enhance cropping intensity and sustainability, focusing on providing water access to all farmers, particularly those at the tail end of irrigation commands.



Both the National Water Policy and State Water Policy underscore the importance of PIM as an essential strategy for maximizing benefits from irrigation projects, leading to government initiatives that involve users in water distribution and canal maintenance at the grassroots level. PIM also aims to restructure irrigation systems for improved water management, offering financial aid to beneficiaries and their families while creating valuable assets.



Gyarasi Bai irrigating her fields for the first time

In PIM work, **Sahasthradhara Yojana**, a sub-plan of the MNREGA scheme has been a boon as multiple works related to canal irrigation management have been approved in the Paras project area and the Mahigaon project area. New minor watercourses have been constructed to help out the small and marginal farmers who had to face seepage issues in the fields and their crops didn't get enough water.

A canal user group of women farmers has been formed which would hold monthly meetings, do monthly savings, look after the watercourse, appoint a person to monitor and operate the watercourse, etc.

Under the organization building work in PIM, water user groups of women farmers have been formed in all three projects (Mahigaon Irrigation Project, Paras Irrigation Project, and Nanduri Irrigation Project.) The main objective of WUGs is to oversee that water available for irrigation isn't misused, and that all the farmers can access equal amounts of water whether they are based in the head, middle, or tail areas. These groups conduct regular monthly meetings wherein they discuss issues like monthly savings, regular maintenance amount, etc. that the group has to pay for irrigation management. Multiple trainings and exposure visits of Canal Water User Groups and farmers have been organized in all the project areas to make farmers and WUGs aware of the 1999 PIM Act, their roles and duties, explain to them the watercourse construction process and how vital it is to have more women participation in PIM, NRM component of MGNREGA, etc. In the Paras Irrigation Project, the construction work of 1 1-kilometer watercourse in village Bhuriyapura has been completed by Paras Panchayat which cost Rs 14 lakhs. In the Mahigaon Irrigation Project, a watercourse is being constructed under MGNREGA of 9.36 lakhs which is being implemented by Mahigaon Panchayat.



Farmers of Semli village dug a channel to get water for irrigation from Mahigaon Dam to their fields

2.9 Participatory Groundwater Management (PGWM)

Groundwater is a vital source of drinking water and for agriculture. It is an invisible common pool resource and overuse for personal consumption can lead to a situation where they would unequal water accessibility to the community. PGWM helps in making people accountable and brings a sense of discipline to groundwater management which would make the process sustainable. PGWM has been started in 15 villages (5 each in Bagli, Barwaha and Bhikangaon).

2.10 Challenges

- Red Tapism in the approval process for water course construction is a major challenge in construction for water courses through MGNREGA. The incessant delay in payments is also a major deterrent for material works in MGNREGA as local small businesses cannot wait for long payments.
- In Melghat, water harvesting structures like DOP are practically not viable as all farmers in the region are marginal farmers with 2-3 acres of land. Other water harvesting structures like Stop Dam, Gabion, and Earthen Dam are not possible because the main drainage falls under the forest department, and getting permission is a challenge. The same is happening in NLRP as the majority of the project area comes under the forest department and permission is pending for South Bank projects.
- The NLRP team is facing issues with newly elected PRI officials who turned out to be unsupportive. It is quite difficult to get them on board when it comes to sustainable development
- Forging connections with the farmers motivating them to attend meetings and making them mindful of solving real-life problems is quite a tough task. As our beneficiaries are economically vulnerable sometimes there is difficulty in collecting contributions from their side.
- Management and availability of laborers becomes a concern and they need to be awakened to continue their work with the same zeal.
- The sudden transfer of Zila Panchayat CEO rendered the team helpless and the team had to repeat the whole process once again.
- The villagers of Dharni block are unaware of the MGNREGA process, benefits, and PIM programs. Even though the minimum wage rate is higher than in Madhya Pradesh, a lack of communication between the community and the PRIs discourages the community from participating in the schemes. People migrate as a result of the high level of poverty, which has an impact on the continuity of work.
- Slow fund flow can be seen as a key challenge for implementing watershed development work on time.
- Owing to the Panchayat elections, community mobilization and other work related to social benefits haven't been conducted.

- The wage rate provided by the government norms is comparatively much less than what is being provided by the local farmers for farming activities. For example, people were not interested in the government wage rate of Rs 204 per day. Also, local laborers had negative experiences with Panchayats working on water conservation work like delay in payment and insufficient payments, etc. therefore, they didn't agree to work with the watershed team.
- The wages under the project are paid only in the bank account of the labor. Payment is not made in other bank accounts. That's why labor has to open new bank accounts
- The labor crisis in the construction of watershed structures was one of the significant challenges for the watershed team as people migrated in search of work and the team had to make last-minute arrangements for labor from nearby areas...
- Before the construction of watershed structures, getting permission from the farmers and local beneficiaries is of utmost importance in our watershed development work. At the village of Sultanpura, the construction of watershed structures started before they got hold of permission from the local beneficiaries. Initially, local beneficiaries did not agree to this permission. Later, the team was able to convince them after having long discussions wherein they illustrated the countless benefits of watershed structures and planned exposure visits to the nearest water harvesting structures to widen their understanding about the same.
- Shortage of water in construction work – selected villages under the project area are under serious threat of water crisis which goes too high in the summer season. Therefore, arranging water for the construction work was very difficult for the team. Thus, water tankers were arranged from the surrounding villages.

2.11 Success Story

Gurada, Udainagar

Prachi Didi and Manisha Didi are the residents of Gurada village of Udainagar Tehsil, Dewas District. Manisha Bai has around 6 bigha of agricultural land on which her 5-member family survives. Prachi Bai has 12 bigha of agricultural land which has undulating murum soil filled with boulders. The area is in a dryland ecosystem, with water scarcity during the Rabi season. Thus, only rain-fed crops are grown there. Both families make a living by farming primarily in the Kharif season and engage in agricultural labor to supplement their income. During the Rabi season, they migrate to the Malwa region for agricultural labor. They would migrate in shifts, one member would always stay back to look after their livestock.

The labor would fetch them 150 rupees if they worked locally. The wage rate is twice 300 in Indore. Out of this entire land, Manisha Bai had four bighas of land and Prachi Bai had eight bighas of land, on which their crops would not grow even in the monsoon. Because of geographic and climatic conditions, dryland soils are vulnerable to soil and water erosion. The top layer of soil gets washed off and boulders are exposed. The soil loses its organic content and its fertility gets dampened.



One fine day, they got to know about the Gurarda watershed project implemented by the SPS with the support of the NABARD WDF project. When the watershed team went to survey the fields for net planning, Didis were waiting with bated breath to convey the issue of their farming lands. The watershed team had conversations with them, surveyed the area, and told them about the work of stone farm bunds.

In September 2021, the construction work began. The soil erosion in Didi's field stopped and deposited in the field. At the same time, the fallow land improved. A total of 264 person days of work were created through this work.

The positive repercussions of the structures are being observed now. Manisha Bai planted crops in her whole six-bigha land. She has planted maize on four bigha of land, and two bigha of red lentils, and Prachi Bai planted maize on 2.5 bigha. Thus, this year crops have started to grow in their fields, which has helped in checking the weathering of the topsoil and has increased moisture content in the land. This year Manisha Bai expects to clear the debt of Rs. 42,000 taken for farming at a rate of 3% from the moneylender. They are predicting 32 quintals of maize and two quintals of red lentils. It is predicted that an amount of Rs. 70,000 will be generated. Prachi Bai wasn't able to plant her entire land as she lacked money to buy seeds. Thereafter, she joined the SHG program and plans to join the Agriculture program as well.

Thus, it could be inferred that the stone bunding has led to improved soil health, boosted incomes, and motivated them to live a better life. The improvement in crop productivity and quality has encouraged them to increase livestock as Manisha Bai uses cow dung as a bio-fertilizer in her field.

3. SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The use of chemical pesticides in agriculture has indeed caused harmful effects on the health of humans, animals, soil, and the environment. These chemicals not only pollute the soil and water but can also affect the health of farmers, consumers, and wildlife.

Non-chemical pest management (NPM) is a sustainable solution to reduce the harmful effects of pesticides. NPM techniques aim to reduce pest populations by using natural methods such as crop rotation, biological pest control, and cultural practices such as tillage, weed control, and sanitation. These methods help to create a healthy and diverse ecosystem that supports beneficial organisms and reduces the need for chemical pesticides. Non-chemical pest management is not only environmentally friendly but also economically beneficial for farmers. It reduces the cost of production and improves soil health, crop yield, and quality, leading to higher profits.

In rural areas, farmers are not fully aware of the harmful effects of chemical pest management on their health, soil, and environment. Therefore, creating awareness among farmers about the importance of sustainable agriculture practices is crucial to promote a healthy and sustainable ecosystem.

Samaj Pragati Sahyog's initiative to promote non-chemical pest management and sustainable agriculture practices is a significant step towards creating awareness among farmers. Through our program, we are not only providing farmers with the necessary knowledge and resources but also creating a platform for them to network and share their experiences.

Creating awareness among farmers is a long-term process that requires continuous efforts and engagement from all stakeholders. It is important to involve local communities, farmer organizations, and other key actors in the process to ensure that the message reaches a wider audience.

Currently, 8452 farmers from 120 villages are associated with SPS's NPM agriculture program. Out of the total agricultural land spread across seven locations (Bagli, Barwaha, Bhikangaon, Kantaphod, Melghat, Punjapura, and Udainagar), a total of 10,731.37 Ha. Agricultural land area is under the NPM program. SPS has implemented a protocol of minimum 40% saturation which means that in all villages where the NPM Agriculture program is under operation, it is mandatory to have at least 40% of farmers practicing NPM agriculture. The purpose is to scale up the initiative, maintain the NPM protocol, and avoid NPM crop contamination with chemicals.

3.1 Expansion of the program

More and more farmers are joining the NPM agriculture program. This year a total of 862 farmers with 1320.63 Ha. Of land has joined the program. Expanding the program to new locations, such as Khategaon, is also a positive step toward promoting sustainable and cost-effective agriculture. Farmers are moving towards NPM (Non-Pesticidal Management) agriculture for a variety of reasons, including

Lower costs: Conventional agriculture often relies heavily on chemical inputs like fertilizers and pesticides, which are expensive. NPM practices often use natural and locally available inputs, which are less expensive than synthetic inputs like chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Improved soil health: NPM practices can help to promote healthy soil by reducing the use of chemicals and encouraging natural processes like nutrient cycling and soil microbe activity.

Reduced environmental impact: By reducing reliance on synthetic inputs, NPM agriculture can help to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Higher yields: Although NPM practices may not provide immediate benefits, they can help to build soil health over time, leading to more resilient crops and higher yields in the long run.

Better food quality: NPM practices can lead to crops that are healthier, more flavorful, and free of harmful chemical residues.

Increased food security: By promoting sustainable and regenerative agriculture, NPM practices can help to build more resilient food systems that can adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Overall, farmers are turning to NPM agriculture as a way to reduce costs, improve soil health, and promote sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices. As more and more farmers adopt these practices, it has the potential to lead to significant improvements in both agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability.



3.2 No. of villages covered

A survey has been carried out in 125 new villages for the Promotion of cultivation of different crops through NPM techniques.

Number of farmers groups stabilized & new formations - A total of 200 groups were formed in newly adopted villages and stabilized in the NPM agriculture program.

3.3 Support to farmer groups for Non-pesticide Management Farming (Farmers)

This includes the adoption of different activities to maintain the NPM protocol by the farmers in their cultivation system Under this hand and mechanical weeding, the inclusion of different biofertilizers and bio pest repellents, seed treatment, pest monitoring tools, etc. are some of the activities which are carried out by farmers on their land.

Area covered under NPM (ha.)- A percent land of 1273.85 hac. has been added to NPM agriculture with the addition of new farmers in the program.

3.4 Support to farmers for soil health improvement activities (farmers)

Different soil health management practices are promoted for improving soil health and quality. It gradually improves the soil's organic carbon content. Under this activity, farmers adopted Bhu NADEP, and Pucca NADEP techniques to prepare good quality compost for the addition of organic matter into the soil.



3.5 Crops covered under crop diversification (no. of crops)

Under crop diversification different crops like cereal crops, legume crops, oilseed crops, and millets are covered. The 3 crops namely; Wheat, gram, and maize have been cultivated in all seasons for crop diversification.

3.6 Crop varietal trials (No.)

Varietal trials play a crucial role in agricultural research and development by providing empirical data on the performance of different crop varieties under varying agro-climatic conditions. These trials help farmers and agricultural researchers identify the most suitable and high-yielding crop varieties for specific regions, enabling them to make informed decisions regarding crop selection and cultivation practices. By evaluating the adaptability, disease resistance, and overall productivity of various crop varieties, these trials contribute significantly to enhancing agricultural productivity, ensuring food security, and promoting sustainable farming practices.

Across multiple locations such as Kannod, Bhikangaon, Bagli, Udainagar, Punjabura, Khategaon, and Satwas, a total of 149 trials were conducted to evaluate the potential yield and feasibility of specific crop varieties including Sesamum, Urad, Sunflower, and wheat. These trials serve as essential assessments to determine the adaptability of these crop varieties to different environmental conditions and their potential for successful cultivation in diverse regions.

3.7 Support to farmers for Seed germination and Seed treatment activities (farmers)

Seed treatment plays a critical role in ensuring successful germination and establishing robust crop yields. By subjecting seeds to appropriate treatments, such as bio-culture applications, farmers can effectively protect the seeds from diseases, pests, and other detrimental factors that may impede germination. Seed treatments also enhance seed vigor, stimulate early root and shoot development, and promote overall plant health, leading to improved crop establishment and higher productivity. Moreover, seed treatments contribute to the optimization of resource utilization, as they enable farmers to attain better yields with reduced seed input, thereby ensuring efficient and sustainable agricultural practices.



Women farmers doing seed treatment



Women farmers buying bio-pest repellents for pest control

Assistance has been extended to farmers for their seed germination and seed treatment endeavors through the provision of bio-cultures, enabling improved seed germination processes. A significant number of 4831 farmers were engaged in seed germination tests, while 3695 farmers actively participated in seed treatment activities.

3.8 Supporting families undertaking kitchen garden practices (HH)

Having personal kitchen gardens helps the farmers to obtain several types of vegetables year-round grown through NPM techniques to enrich their daily diet with nutritious food. A total of 3925 farmers started kitchen gardening for their daily vegetable needs around the year.

Capacity building for farmers, primary producers, and community leaders (person days) - As a part of the program 4642 trainings were provided to the farmers on different aspects of SHM and NPM practices, crop diversification, etc. the technical know-how of the bio-products making is also discussed with the farmers for the better adoption of the NPM practices.

Capacity building for mittens and senior mitans (person days) - Training was conducted for mitans and senior mitans on the extension of NPM farming this helped them to carry out and disseminate NPM practices among the farmers.

Capacity building for professionals and field supervisors (person days) - A total of 381 different training cum exposure visits, training, and orientation programs were organized to train professionals and supervisors on NPM agriculture practices.



3.9 Other Activities

3.9.1 Interactive Film Screening

In meetings and training to show the members local stories on NPM agriculture. Movies like Jwar Gatha, How to Make Paanch Patti Kada, How to Make Char Chatni, bad effects of pesticides on soil, etc. were shown to the members to make them aware of the bad effects of pesticides and how to adopt NPM practices for better soil health and crop yield.



Farmers and SHG members watching films on NPM agriculture

3.9.2 Night Meeting

Due to the seasonal work farmers were not able to attend the training and meetings in day time so to increase the participation of farmers in NPM Agriculture night meetings were organized. A total of 19-night meetings were organized to discuss with farmers on SHM and NPM practices.



Agriculture Mitan conducting night meeting with farmers

3.9.3 TraceX

Traceability is the ability to identify the origin of food and its sources particularly when grains and pulses are found to be damaged when it reaches their destination. This model helps an organization to locate a product that goes through various stages from production to consumption. In the Kantaphod location, TraceX usage has taken place so that the consumer can easily identify the NPM produced from this area.

3.10 Training on FFS

Training on Farmers Field School (FFS) has been organized. FFS is a popular approach to agricultural extension and capacity building in rural communities. The FFS model involves organizing groups of farmers who come together to learn about different aspects of agriculture and improve their farming practices. The aim is to build the capacity of farmers to adopt activities and take action as per their field condition as the approach is mainly ecosystem-based. Through FFS, farmers can learn about a variety of topics, such as crop management, soil health, pest management, water management, and post-harvest handling. They also learn about new technologies and techniques that can help them increase their yields, improve the quality of their crops, and reduce the impact of climate change on their farms



Women Participating in Farmers Field School

3.11 External Audit

An external audit was conducted across five locations, namely Barwaha, Bagli, Punjapura, Udainagar, and Kantaphod, to authenticate the Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) produced by the N+3F team. The audit, carried out by an independent third-party auditor, aimed to ensure that the NPM product adhered to the necessary certification standards. It entailed a comprehensive assessment of the production practices employed by farmers, encompassing the utilization of NPM techniques, pest and disease management, and the use of fertilizers and other inputs. Furthermore, the auditor scrutinized the traceability system implemented to monitor the NPM produce from its origin on the farm to its ultimate destination. Following the successful implementation of the auditor's recommendations, all five locations received approval and were subsequently certified for the cultivation of wheat and gram during the rabi season.

3.12 Champion Farmers Training

Champion farmers training was conducted to train farmers and make them the lead farmers of their village on Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) practices. The program aimed to train farmers who have demonstrated a strong commitment to adopting sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices and who have the potential to become leaders in their communities. The idea is to create master trainers at the village level to tap their local presence and potential to enhance the penetration of NPM practices.



Training conducted with women champion farmers



3.13 Case Study 1

The story of NPM vegetables- A new leaf in the NPM journey of SPS

Background: Sudha Bai Ambarak, aged 45, a resident of village Behari in Dewas District, is a farmer who is majorly involved in growing vegetables. She has a family of 7 members and the major source of income for her family is selling these vegetables in the local market and mandis through which she generates approximately an annual income of 50,000. She grows vegetables in an area of 0.75 hectares and she has been a part of the NPM agriculture program for the last 1 year which enables her to grow her vegetables without the use of chemical pesticides. Prior to 8 months, they did not have their own land, but before 8 months their land was divided and since then, they are cultivating their own land with their choice of vegetables.

The Story of Change: Since vegetables are more pest-prone than cereals, it is a challenge to grow them through NPM. Sudha bai grows Cauliflower, Fenugreek, Spinach, Coriander, Brinjal, Tomato, and Flatbeans throughout the year depending upon the season.

Sudha Bai has been practicing NPM since the last one year. Prior to that, they used insecticides for controlling the sucking pests and caterpillars but since the last year they have entirely discarded the use of all pesticides and have started the use of bio pest repellants like Panch Patti kadha and Chaar Chatni Kadha in place of that. This change did not happen overnight, rather she started by only experimenting with 5 lit of Panch Patti Kadha in cauliflower and then when she could see clear results, she adopted it entirely for all her vegetables and entire coverage. Since last year she has been cultivating only NPM vegetables successfully. Not just NPM, she is gradually moving towards organic by not even using Urea or DAP in the last season, on her vegetables which is quite remarkable to see.

Benefits reaped: In the last one year of learning and practicing NPM, Sudha bai has seen and experienced several benefits which she enumerates as firstly the saving of money. Before NPM, she had to bear expenses up to Rs. 2000-3000 for buying several insecticides and pesticides every season which are now saved and can be put to better use. She also mentions the difference in the health of plants and soil that she has noticed over time. She explains that the quality and taste of the vegetables has also improved and she is happy to have moved to NPM.

Challenges: However, in spite of being satisfied with the results of practicing NPM and its production, she faces challenges marketing the produce and getting fair prices for her produce. At present, they sell their produce at mandi, but even there the prices are fluctuating and rarely do they obtain a price that is satisfying or desired by them. Also, as vegetables are perishables and due to lack of storage facilities it leads to distress sales at times which again is concerning.

Conclusion: Thus, it can be concluded that even if we've come a long way and it is a success in itself, that the farmers are convinced and observing the benefits of switching to sustainable agriculture and are practicing even vegetables under NPM, a lot needs to be done to provide them market facilitation and ensuring that they get fair and premium prices for their efforts and hard work.

3.14 Case Study 2

NPM – A key for Betterment



Sukhma Bai doing seed treatment

Sukma Bai Rupsingh, a native of village Dhantalav in Bagli block, is a member of the NPM Kisan group Varsha under the SPS's agricultural program, who adopted every NPM activity and is considered to be a champion farmer for the village Dhantalav. For the last 5 years, she has been using only NPM products in her field to control insects and pests. She makes all the bio-products used under NPM practices and sells them too and many farmers frequent her to purchase bio-products like paanch patti kada and char chatni.

She is the inspiration of the other members of the village in adopting NPM farming and making bio products. At the initial stage, when the team started to communicate with her regarding NPM farming, she did not trust us as she believed that farming was not possible without applying chemical inputs. She didn't show any interest in our meetings and training.

The agriculture team asked her to attend meetings and training on NPM techniques conducted by the agriculture team in the village. The team showed different movies, and demonstrations and explained all the NPM-related activities. The team gave them training on how to make bio inputs for application. After that, the members understood the fact and agreed to cultivate crops through NPM techniques.

The farmers who have adopted the NPM techniques saved their cost of cultivation, obtained improved quality produce and well as their soil quality has also improved. Sukma bai was one of those beneficiaries. She started earning more income through NPM farming. Besides the activities, the team helped her to get good quality seeds for sowing which gave her a good return. Through adoption of the NPM techniques in farming, the cost of cultivation was reduced as she started to prepare different bio pest repellents at home for crop protection.

Once she had started to achieve the benefit, she became an early adopter of different techniques. Our team suggested she made bio inputs and to sell to other farmers. She did not think it would work and rejected this proposal. The team suggested she shared her story with the other farmers around her. Our team helped her in this and arranged village level meetings to tell other people how Sukma didi is making bio-inputs for her field and getting benefit from it. Her cost of cultivation has reduced and the soil health condition has also been improved by not applying any pesticide in the crop.



Sukhma Bai setting a pheromone trap in her gram crop

Sukma didi showed the making of these bio-products and also tell them about the benefits of applying it she said that “jaivik dawaiyo ke chhidkav se meri kheti ki lagat me kami aayi hai or mitti me bhi sudhar hua hai” after listening her many other farmers also started using bio-products on their land.

Gradually people started noticing visible differences in their soil, the fertility of the soil got improved and the cost of cultivation also got reduced by adopting NPM practices. This created the demand for bio-products among the members and they started demanding more bio products. Sukma didi started selling bio products for the farmers and this year she sold 535 lit of bio-products to the farmers. This helped her to earn extra income from it. This is how she influenced others also to adopt NPM farming on their land which helped them to get increased yield and achieve better soil health conditions in their village.

3.15 COMMUNITY FOREST RIGHTS

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006, also known as the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights Act), was established to address the historical injustices faced by forest-dependent communities, which led to the curtailment of their customary rights over forests, resulting in their marginalization and displacement. This act acknowledges and bestows the right to utilize, manage, and conserve forest resources, as well as the legal ownership of forest land for cultivation and residential purposes for forest dwelling communities. It emphasizes the pivotal role played by these communities in forest survival, sustainability, and biodiversity conservation.

In the Melghat region, Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) took the lead in implementing the Community Forest Right (CFR) under the Forest Rights Act. Initially, SPS identified Sosokheda, Rangubeli, and Chethaddar as the focus villages for conservation and management efforts, and commenced awareness-raising initiatives. They facilitated village assemblies, conducted focus group discussions (FGDs), and held meetings with villagers, highlighting success stories from other villages such as Mendha (Lekha), Rahu, and Payvihir. Subsequently, a Community Forest Right Management Committee (CFRMC) was established under rule 4(1)e, followed by capacity development training and exposure visits to successful villages. The process for the CFR conservation and management plan involved activities like demarcating the CFR area, mapping area resources, conducting stock mapping of forest resources, household surveys, and Shivarpheri (Transact walk), among others.



Forest rights meeting with village people

3.15.1 Organized Capacity Building

Block Level Workshop: A Block Level Workshop was conducted to provide comprehensive training on the Forest Rights Act of 2006 and the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act of 1996, focusing on social mobilization and its impact on the livelihoods of tribal communities and forest dwellers. The workshop was held for one day in each block, namely Dharni and Chikaldhara, on 05th July 2022 and 06th July 2022, respectively. The sessions took place at the Sub District Office (SDO) in Dharni and the Forest Training Institute in Chikhaldara, Amravati, in collaboration with SPS.

The training was essential to equip participants with a comprehensive understanding of the Forest Rights Act and the PESA Act, emphasizing their implications for the sustainable management of forest resources and the well-being of tribal and forest-dwelling communities. By fostering knowledge about these key legislative acts, the workshop aimed to promote community empowerment, enhance participation in decision-making processes, and strengthen the effective implementation of forest conservation and management initiatives. Additionally, the training sought to foster awareness about the rights of forest-dependent communities, promote inclusive governance structures, and encourage the equitable distribution of benefits derived from forest resources.

Cluster Level Workshop: A Cluster Level Workshop was organized to facilitate the training on the Preparation of Community Forest Right (CFR) Conservation and Management Micro Plan (CFRMP), focusing on enhancing the livelihoods of tribes and forest dwellers. The workshop spanned over 4 days, with each cluster in the Dharni block allocated 1 day for training. The sessions took place on 19th & 20th September 2022 and 03rd & 11th October 2022, hosted at various locations including the Sub District Office (SDO) in Dharni, Government Ashram School in Chikhali, Government Ashram School in Susarda, and the SDO office in Dharni. Notably, a total of 311 participants, including CFRMC members, Foresters, Talathi/Patwari, Gram Sevak, and CFR Barefoot Technicians, actively took part in the comprehensive training sessions.

The training was imperative to equip the participants with the necessary knowledge and skills required for the effective preparation and implementation of the Community Forest Right Conservation and Management Micro Plan (CFRMP). By educating key stakeholders on the intricacies of CFRMP, the workshop aimed to enhance their understanding of sustainable forest management practices, foster community participation, and empower local communities to effectively manage and conserve forest resources. Furthermore, the training sought to promote collaborative decision-making, improve forest governance, and ensure the sustainable utilization of forest resources, thereby contributing to the overall well-being and livelihoods of tribal communities and forest dwellers.

Best Practices: The resolution passed by the Government of Maharashtra recognizing Gram Sabhas as the implementing agency under the MGNREGA for CFR is a significant step towards empowering local communities and promoting sustainable forest management. In response to this resolution, the So So Kheda Gram Sabha made a well-considered decision to choose the Gram Panchayat as the agency for tree plantation instead of relying on the Forest Department. This decision showcases their confidence in their own capacity to manage their forest resources and participate actively in the MGNREGA program. Under the guidance and follow-up support from SPS and Hon. Mr. Mahesh Patil, Block Development Officer, Panchayat Samiti, Dharni, the initiative to plant 2000 trees in Sosokheda village was launched.



Villagers doing plantation in the forest



Collecting grass from protected forest area



The tree plantation is being carried out in line with the Bihar pattern, where 200 trees are planted for each laborer, creating employment opportunities for 10 people over the next three years through MGNREGA. In total, 4400 saplings have been planted across the three villages and covered 10 ha. degraded forest area with 22 people are engaged in this important ecological restoration effort. This approach not only provides employment to the local community but also strengthens the local ecology, promoting sustainable forest management practices.



Watering plants during summer

4. Self-Help Group and Livelihoods Programme

The Women's Self-Help Group (SHG) Programme serves as the foundation for all the Social Progress Society's (SPS) initiatives. The majority of SHG members come from marginalized backgrounds, including the impoverished, Adivasis, Dalits, landless individuals, and displaced populations. This program provides a crucial avenue for the economically disadvantaged to break free from the grip of exploitative moneylenders. The federations of women's SHGs play a pivotal role in empowering the impoverished communities in the arid tribal regions of India, ensuring they have a voice in the development process. These SHG federations act as community institutions, collaborating closely with the government, other federations, and civil society organizations.

It's important to note that the SHG program extends beyond mere financial assistance; it represents a significant step toward women's empowerment and independence. Through the utilization of accounting-cum-MIS software, Pragati Mitra, and field-level software, Pragati Vistaar, SHG operations are streamlined, organized, transparent, and more efficient. Notably, the SHG Programme is unique in its practice of sharing CIBIL data with other financial institutions, in addition to using it to ensure responsible borrowing by marginalized SHG members. In an era of digitization, SPS is actively working to digitize the entire process, with a focus on promoting digital literacy among all members. This effort also includes linking financial institutions to members' mobile numbers and facilitating bank linkages.

SPS-affiliated SHGs offer their members a wide range of financial products, including interest-bearing savings accounts, recurring deposits, fixed deposits, loans against fixed deposits, emergency loans (assessed and approved by the members themselves), collective procurement of essential daily necessities, loans for livestock and well construction, cattle insurance, life insurance, and more.

Currently, SPS oversees nearly 2837 SHGs, benefiting around 39,055 members, spread across 550 villages in three districts. SPS firmly believes in keeping the financial resources within SHGs in circulation. Therefore, they actively promote loans, savings, interest earnings, and income-generating loans. Presently, the combined savings of all SHGs amount to Rs. 54.28 crore, while the outstanding loans total Rs. 108.5 crore.



SHGs installing swings in Anganwadi from its surplus earnings



Women discussing development plans for the village

4.1 Performance indicator

Macro Key Performance Indicators of SHGs this Year

S.No.	Indicators	Figures
01	Total number of districts	3
02	Total number of blocks	7
03	Total number of towns	15
04	Total number of villages	550
05	Total number of SHGs	2837
06	Total number of clusters	163
07	Total number of federations	11
08	Total number of SHG members	39055
09	Percentage of SHGs linked with banks/financial institutions	86%
10	Total amount of bank/FI loan disbursed (in crores)	567.59
11	Total savings (in crores)	54.28
12	Average savings per member (in Rs.)	13899
13	Total loan outstanding (in crores)	108.5
14	Average size of loans per SHG	382585
15	Loan recovery ratio	95%
16	Total number of individual savings bank accounts opened	34235
17	Total number of members insured	24208
18	Total number of bank linkages	2368



4.2 Location-Wise Data of SHG Programme

S.No.	Name of location	Villages	Group	Total members	Total Savings (in Cr.)	Corpus (in Cr.)	SHG Contribution (in lakhs)
01	Udainagar	56	191	2938	4.39	8.84	16.18
02	Kantaphod	37	225	3536	5.94	12.94	27.62
03	Bagli	51	268	4145	6.02	12.80	31.90
04	Barwah	52	222	3184	4.61	8.54	25.87
05	Dewas	0	229	1508	0.62	1.33	19.64
06	Khategaon	36	241	3462	4.78	12.28	16.32
07	Hatpipliya	39	163	2157	3.64	7.94	26.11
08	Maheshwar	30	190	2556	4.46	9.34	26.05
09	Kannod	47	206	3053	4.48	9.65	20.22
10	Bhikangaon	46	198	2707	3.48	5.70	19.43
11	Punjabura	26	139	1995	2.94	5.94	17.16
12	Satwas	35	194	2685	3.32	5.85	12.91
13	Sanawad	30	150	2220	2.94	6.39	20.29
14	Lalkheda	38	174	2379	2.65	3.90	13.54
15	Dharni	27	47	530	0.02	0.02	0.00
Total		550	2837	39055	54.28	111.45	293.25



Kantaphod GBM Meeting

4.3 Achievements and Recognition of SHG Program

4.3.1 APMAS Award



Udayanagar Pragati Samiti President Yashoda Bai receiving the APMAS award

One of our oldest federations Udainagar Pragati Samiti (UPS) has won the second-best SHG federation award from APMAS NABARD at the regional level among 320 other SHG federations. The Andra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society Awards (APMAS) are given to the SHG federations that have impacted women's empowerment with financial inclusion. This award recognizes the efforts of UPS in promoting financial inclusion and empowering rural women.

4.3.2 NABARD LEDP Grant

Maheshwar Mahila Pragati Samiti has received a Livelihood Enterprise Development Program (LEDP NABARD) grant of Rs. 9,39,000 for stitching and embroidery. This is the first individual project for Maheshwar and the members involved are hopeful to make it successful. This grant aims to promote livelihood generation and income generation for SHG members.



NABARD's DDM
conducting training with the MMPS Team

4.3.3 NABARD Watershed Development Fund

Sub-location Lalkheda integrated with the watershed development programme of Bhikangaon Pragati Samiti has received a project sanction for the NABARD watershed development fund project for the watershed development project at Banjhar village. The people in the village have their main livelihood dependent upon daily wages, but during summer, they find themselves struggling to get any work around the villages.

The project was initiated in the village because it was the women of SHG who kept bringing the issue of unemployment forward. The project was sanctioned to the village after conducting leadership training, exposure visits, community contribution, and the making of a Detailed Project Report. A huge part of the process was Community Contribution in the form of Shramdaan which was to be done for four consecutive days, where the work of Rs.50000 needed to be done. The Women put their foot forward and made the task a huge success. In the end, a federation was formed that may work with all the financial matters and be the decision-makers in the upcoming project.

The village also faces the issue of water scarcity since the early summer season itself. This project will not only resolve the issue of water scarcity at a sustainable pace but it will also generate a much-needed livelihood in the village itself.

The SHG plays a vital role in this for being the guiding force to bring the project to the village and contribute the most in shramdaan while the federation consists exclusively of SHG members due to their understanding of finances.



Leadership training under NABARD programme at Lalkheda

4.4 Digital Literacy

Literacy has gained new meanings in today's world and without digital competence, it is quite a difficult task to navigate through life. However, at first, what is important is to make digital access a reality. The SPS has been working with the marginalized populace in and around 15 locations and has felt the urgent need to make our stakeholders digitally aware. Digital Literacy is not just about basic know-how rather it goes far and beyond and refers to an individual's ability to navigate through the digital world with ease



Training on digital education of SHG members in Maheshwar location

and is more of a necessity today. In October and November, an extensive survey involving over 16,000 participants across various locations was conducted to assess the training needs of Self-Help Group (SHG) members. The results indicate a pressing need for digital literacy training. Furthermore, the survey revealed a low ownership of smartphones among the members, but a strong willingness to become digitally literate

SPS is currently prioritizing the digital literacy of women, ensuring they have access to smartphones. Training starts from the basics, aiming to introduce members to the digital world and boost their self-confidence in using smartphones. To address digital exclusion and smartphone accessibility issues, SPS has initiated a program to provide smartphones at minimal cost. This is just the beginning of SPS's journey towards creating an equitable world where members can become self-reliant and empowered in various aspects of their lives, step by step.

Digital Literacy Centers Considering the digital literacy program, the organization works with deprived, vulnerable, and underprivileged women who are not literate enough to understand the technological setup on their own; this is where formal training and a digital literacy program are required to keep up with technology. Two locations have already established a classrooms while nine computer centers are currently targeted. The process of the project at Hatpipliya Nari Pragati Samiti started before November when the surveys for both students and teachers were conducted regularly. The social fund money was used to establish the class while the HNPS



Computer class inauguration (HNPS)

and other members were high-spirited to use the social fund on such a thoughtful initiative; they also showed their active interest in learning computers and bringing their children to the center.



Computer classes at Khategaon Pragati Samiti

The computers are set currently at the center with one female teacher. The best thing about this computer class is that it is self-sustaining and begins with a SHG social fund. It is the long-term goal of Samaj Pragati Sahayog, to use funds for the greater good, empowering members to be self-sufficient and self-sustaining.

4.5 Bank linkage

The attempt to link our SHGs to CC accounts has been a long-standing endeavor. As of this financial year, 84% of total SHGs are linked with banks under the SHG-Bank Linkage program, and 10% of the SHGs are linked with Pragati Sahyog Development Services (PSDS). This program aims to enhance financial inclusion and access to financial services for SHG members.

4.6 Kirana Distribution



Following the Kirana distribution efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, there emerged a significant demand among our members for grocery kits. This demand arose because the distribution of essential groceries at highly competitive rates, often below prevailing market prices, proved to be highly advantageous and convenient for our members. The Federation shouldered the responsibilities of transportation and negotiation with suppliers, alleviating the burden on our members.

In response to this demand, our teams began collecting the names of members who expressed interest in participating in this initiative. Selection criteria included factors such as attendance, punctual loan repayment, regular savings, and overall member performance. The project's advantages are manifold. Firstly, the Federation facilitated the provision of quality groceries at affordable market prices. Secondly, the bulk order enables convenient transportation, ensuring that groceries are delivered directly to the members' doorsteps. Most importantly, this approach allows members to repay their loans in installments at their own pace, eliminating the need for rushed repayments.

4.7 E-rickshaw

The SHG program achieves its full potential when it is integrated with income-generating activities, and women are particularly adept at safeguarding the resulting savings. They play a crucial role in ensuring that these savings are reinvested wisely in activities that boost family income, health, and education. This, in turn, initiates a positive cycle of economic security.

When introduced in a systematic manner, electric rickshaws have the potential to serve as a low-emission transportation solution for individuals with limited access to transportation services, especially those with lower incomes.

With a primary focus on ensuring stable livelihoods for our members and their families, SPS made the decision to introduce the E-rickshaw model to our members this year. The process of acquiring these income-generating vehicles proved to be more challenging than anticipated and extended throughout the entire quarter. The organization team, responsible for tasks such as securing loans from the bank and arranging the rickshaws, as well as handling licensing requirements, faced significant pressure and exhaustion. However, their efforts have opened up a new avenue for many families to explore the possibility of obtaining their own E-rickshaws.

4.8 The SHG program started in Melghat

In Melghat, our approach to implementing the Self-Help Group (SHG) program is uniquely tailored to address the challenges posed by limited access to banking services in the region. Instead of replicating our existing SHG program, we are focused on instilling a culture of regular saving and responsible loan repayment among the local communities. In Melghat, the absence of skilled personnel poses a significant hurdle in facilitating skill development and fostering new proficiencies among community members. The lack of institutional support for capacity building and skill training exacerbates this challenge. Furthermore, certain groups within the State Rural Livelihood Mission, focusing solely on loan distribution, have contributed to the erosion of financial discipline due to inadequate accounting practices and instances of fund misappropriation, significantly impacting overall financial management within these groups.

Amid the increased focus from the state government on Melghat, our objective is to bridge the gap between these Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and various government schemes and initiatives. These SHGs will be oriented toward specific activities, aiming to foster sustainable livelihoods within the region.

As the banking infrastructure in Melghat matures over time, our vision is for these SHGs to operate as effectively and independently as our established groups in other locations. Furthermore, we aspire to create larger institutions such as clusters and federations, composed of selected representatives from these SHGs, to take on the responsibility of driving comprehensive development in the area. This strategic approach in Melghat represents a significant milestone for our organization, SPS, as it is our pioneering location in Maharashtra. Our dedicated Mitaan team and professional staff have undergone rigorous training to ensure that they are well-prepared to make a meaningful impact in this region.



Melghat team visit Bhikangaon for exposure

Through our concerted efforts and unwavering commitment, we have successfully established 47 SHGs, encompassing 530 members, spread across 27 villages in Melghat. These numbers underscore our dedication to enhancing the livelihoods of local communities and our determination to leave a lasting positive imprint in this dynamic and evolving region.

4.9 General Body Meeting

The general body meetings are the meetings that serve the purpose of conveying the progress and plans of the federation while also celebrating noteworthy achievements. The quarter witnessed two General Body meetings (GBM) organized by and for the federations of Kantaphod and Khategaon locations where the response of the members was noteworthy.

The GBM makes a point to let women prepare for a program on such a large platform. This enables them to put in their agendas and take charge of everyone present there.

On the 15th of October, Khategaon Pragati Samiti held a General Body meeting where along with professionals from SPS, the GBM also had guests present from the panchayat body as well as principals from the schools nearby. The program was led by the leaders of the federation where the agendas that were focused upon were bank linkage, introduction and finances of the federation, leader talk about the bank linkages. Watershed, SHG, smart school, livestock, and agriculture projects were extensively talked about. The panchayat body present at the GBM appreciated the organization and promised to act as a helping hand whenever needed.

Kantaphod Pragati Samiti held a GBM in October. Similar to the khategaon one, this one too was led by the leaders of the federation. The GBM focused on the topic of patriarchy, women's empowerment, and the need for Android phones. The information about other programs at the location was orated. The GBM involved the surplus distribution along with the presentation of the success stories.

The meeting also involved the celebration of Jowar Utsav (Sorghum festival) and the performance of street play and folk dance. Guests and the federation leaders were felicitated during the meeting. The GBMs had stalls of Kumbaya, Non-Pesticide Management in agriculture and livestock.



It also results in a very productive exposure visit to members, leaders, and mitaans of other locations. It also entails the leader of women from other locations visiting the GBM, which hence enables them to be exposed to the phenomenal leadership and representation of the women who belong to the same socio-cultural group as their own. It hence results in women staying impressed and being motivated to see themselves convey their thoughts to such

a large number of people. A noticeable amount of SHGs across the locations landed on the surplus amount, hence an array of activities were conducted at different locations. Kantaphod and Satwas locations made good use of the platform of the (GBM) General Body Meeting to conduct an event to distribute the surplus amount. While Bhikangaon location through everybody's consent, distributed furniture mandir in one group.



4.10 Special Loans

The Federation at Maheshwar devised a special loan that could help the women engage in income-generation activities. The women were also assisted in procuring essential household appliances in bulk and hence at a discounted cost. 80 women from 32 SHGs were eligible for this offer and sewing machines were distributed hoping they would be able to learn/enhance a skill. These women practice sewing at individual levels at homes or take commissions but are not associated with larger producer groups like Kumbaya as it is outside the geographical ambit of the social enterprise.

Special loans are devised based on women's demands received for certain commodities on a bulk scale to ensure they are procured at lower costs. The cost is booked as a loan for each member who benefits from it which is paid off slowly at the stipulated interest rates. Usually, in procurement, funds are mobilized from respective SHG's funds or else through PSDS funds which are then repaid regularly.

4.11 Capacity Building

Internal Capacity Building

To get the most out of the work that the organization does, it is necessary to focus on constantly building the capacity of the organization itself. For this, internal capacity building is consciously focused upon. the internal capacity building starts from the office and mitaan staff itself. Hence, trainings on topics like CIBIL, SHG grading, Constitution, gender training, menstrual health management, performance reviews, and external as well as internal audits are regularly held.

4.11 Case Study

Driving through the stereotypes

Pushpabai, a resident of Gwadi village and a member of Radha Krishna Pragati Samuh at the Bagli location, has turned out to be the brave-hearted woman that we hoped her to be. The women from the society who have recently started going out of the house to financially support the household and be financially independent, one out of these is Pushpabai. Pushpabai has been a part of Radha Krishna Pragati Samuh. Staying in Chardabadi villages, she belongs to Rampura Pragati Sankul. Her husband Srawan, works on agricultural land and the family owns 6 bigha of land. Pushpa bai initially used to work in their agricultural land as well as used to go for dhadki now and then.

The federation has always believed in the financial empowerment of women and hence building livelihoods. As mentioned, Pushpa Didi was working on daily wages and realized the need to have a source of income to support the family financially. The organization recently came up with the plan of providing E- E-rickshaws to support the livelihood, hence it was emphasized when she started looking for a source of income.



Pushpa Didi driving a rickshaw in Bagli city

So through plenty of discussions, motivation, and challenging all the societal stereotypes that came her way during the procedure, ultimately resulted in Pushpa Didi decided to get an E-rickshaw as a source of livelihood for herself.

Initially thinking about getting an E-rickshaw for her husband, she then decided to get it for herself instead.

After many discussions with her family, she showed zeal to learn to drive.

Applying for a loan and E-Rickshaw took a lot of effort from the team. Starting from applying for the loan and working on the license generation, every small detail has been given attention. It is a story of not only financial empowerment but of bravery. The case of Pushpabai has set an exceptional example for women all around the villages and all the other locations as well. This has led to other locations talking to their members about this source of income while supporting and collecting demands as well as quotations for the same.

Sometimes while working on a project it is quite easily overlooked that these small steps are going to work as role models for some people.

5. COMMODITY AGGREGATION

RamRahim Pragati Producer Company Limited (RRPPCL) operates under Part IXA of the Companies Act, 1956 (No. 1 of 1956) and is collectively owned and managed by more than 5800 small and marginal tribal women farmers who are members of 390 Self Help Groups promoted by SPS. RRPPCL is dedicated to promoting the adoption of Non-pesticide Management of Agriculture (NPM) and exclusively trades in pesticide-free commodities. Our core mission is to establish a resilient supply chain for pesticide-free agricultural products. The NPM movement aims to foster sustainable agricultural practices while also creating a distinct identity for our produce and connecting small-scale farmers with organized markets.

5.1 Major Activities Undertaken By RRPPCL

5.1.1 Seed Sale

Seed is the most vital input in augmenting agricultural production. It becomes all the more prominent in the context of the small and marginal farmers who have almost zero possibility of expanding of area to increase production. Therefore, it became imperative for RRPPCL to provide farmers access to good quality certified seeds at low cost on time.

5.1.2 Aggregation in Rabi season 2022-23

RRPPCL has procured **638.7 tons** of Wheat and **302 tons** of Bengal Gram from over **900 farmers**. Our initial target was to procure **1246 tons** of wheat in 2022-23 but due to unseasonal rain at the time of harvesting damaged the quality of wheat.

(Rest was procured during the next financial year- wheat always gets procured during two financial years as half of procurement happens in Feb- march and rest in april)

RRPPCL has offered 5- 15% higher than the prevailing market price. **92 tons** of red gram was also procured in this season. RRPPCL also aggregated **140 tons** of Green Gram (moong) at **Rs. 7400/quintal** along with **350 tons** of maize



After harvesting, grading and selling the crop to RRPPCL company



farmers cleaning their crops before selling to RRPPCL



RRPPCL members visit the farmer houses to inspect and check the moisture of the crop

5.1.3 Retail Packing RRPPCL

does retail packing for SHPL. There are 25 items that we do retail packing for the SHPL. All the packing, cleaning and sorting is done by local women. The Retail Packing hub at Bagli has employed 15 women and 5 men. RRPPCL is looking to scale up its operation did they scale up the operations



RRPPCL warehouse at Bagli



Storing pulses and flour bags in cocoons to avoid insects



Cleaning pulses before packing



Packaging red toor dal at RRPPCL hub

5.1.4 Kirana Item Sale

RRPPCL is looking forward to expanding its scope of work and engaging in businesses which are in alignment with our mission of providing benefits to our women shareholders. we started delivering kirana items (grocery) to members of the SPSs SHG programme at wholesale rates. Our mission is to supply quality products at cheaper rates to women SHG members on time and we expect this to lead to a positive impact on the health and nutrition of their entire family RRPPCL sold kirana items to Samaj Pragati Sahayog, Bagli SHGs members, Udainagar Pragati Samiti and Kantaphod Pragati Samiti SHGs members



5.1.5 General Body Meeting

RRPPCL conducted its AGM and became the first FPC to give patronage bonuses and dividends to its members. Approximately 20 lakh rupees were distributed among the farmers under this component. The AGM was organised in Punjabura village (the seat of one of the 5 SHG clusters that SPS has promoted). This was the first time in the last two years that a physical meeting of members and the Board of Directors with several important guests was taking place in this region. Hundreds of women came from far and wide to attend this annual mela of sorts. It was their leaders who were to be on the stage, discussing the performance and experiences of their own enterprise, the Ram Rahim.



President of Udayanagar and Punjabura Pragati Samiti giving a speech in RRPPCL general meeting

Several interesting things were on display, but the most interesting was a banner displaying the balance sheet and the profit and loss statement in the open, for everyone to look at, even before any formal revelations were made! The program was yet to begin and the SHG members as well as guests thronged the stalls put up by SPS extension teams exhibiting the various bio inputs as well as other farming and composting techniques that were promoted by SPS in the region. Another stall displayed the processed and packaged pulses, dalia and flour that Ram Rahim prepared for Safe Harvest.

Women and their accompanying family members went around looking at these stalls, asking about bio inputs and seeds, even looking at Safe Harvest packets that contained their farm produce, in the form in which it makes its way to the consumers' food basket.



Bonus distributed by RRPPCL to the groups which did good work in crop collection



Welcoming NABARD CGM at the RRPPCL general meeting



Sorghum dish along with local wild greens at general meeting



Women farmers narrating their experience of crop aggregation



6. LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Livestock has traditionally played a vital role in the farming system of Madhya Pradesh, contributing to the rural economy and household income. However, livestock rearing practices in rural areas face challenges such as high mortality rates, lack of veterinary care, and limited awareness. To address these issues, Samaj Pragati Sahayog initiated the Livestock Program in Dewas & Khargone districts of Madhya Pradesh and Amravati district of Maharashtra. The program aims to reduce mortality rates and improve management practices among livestock in the region. One of the key challenges in livestock rearing was the lack of proper and timely health support for animals.

Farmers relied on traditional methods and had limited access to veterinary services, resulting in high mortality rates. Samaj Pragati Sahayog intervention introduced a well-structured para veterinary system, providing doorstep services to marginalized livestock rearers. To combat diseases prevalent during the monsoon season, the Livestock Program initiated a village-level vaccination drive. Vaccinations for diseases such as Enterotoxaemia and HS-BQ disease were administered to protect small ruminants and large animals. Additionally, deworming medicines were provided to prevent illness caused by stomach worms and bacteria.

The Livestock Development Program's journey in the fiscal year 2022-2023 has been marked by remarkable growth, expanding its reach and impact across diverse rural landscapes. The program's commitment to fostering sustainable livelihoods, improving animal welfare, and empowering communities has led to significant achievements and positive outcomes.

The program's coverage has extended to a total of 403 villages, indicating a substantial increase from the initial 148 villages. Within this expansion, the Goat and Poultry Programs have played pivotal roles. The Goat Program has been implemented in 149 villages, while the Poultry Program has reached 69 villages. Moreover, the intersection of these programs, represented by 158 common villages, demonstrates a holistic approach to livestock management.



6.1 Livestock Program Outreach

S.No.	Particulars	Till Previous Year	Added	Total
01	Total Villages	148	255	403
02	Total Goat Program Villages	90	149	239
03	Total Poultry Program Villages	43	69	112
04	Goat Program + Poultry Program (Common Villages)	113	158	271
05	Total Goat Producer members	3124	3979	7103
06	Total Poultry Producer members	937	2238	3175
07	Goat Program + Poultry Program (Common Members)	2312	3566	5878
08	Total Livestock Producers beneficiaries	4097	6625	10722
09	Goat Producer Groups	177	220	397
10	Poultry Producer Groups	47	84	131
11	Goat + Poultry Producer Groups	179	219	398
12	Total Livestock Producer Groups	226	305	531

6.2 Member and Beneficiary Engagement

The Livestock Development Program's success lies in its ability to engage and empower rural members. A total of 3979 and 2238 members have been involved in the Goat and Poultry rearing respectively. The convergence of these activities is evident in the 3566 common members, indicating a shared interest in both. This dual engagement approach has significantly contributed to the enhancement of rural livelihoods and the integration of diverse practices. The impact of the program extends



Livestock team discussing with SHG members about goat farming

beyond the immediate members, touching the lives of 10722 livestock producer beneficiaries. This underscores the program's holistic approach to community development, recognizing the interconnectedness of livestock well-being, livelihoods, and overall socio-economic growth.

6.3 Producer Groups and Community Cohesion

An integral aspect of the Livestock Development Program is the formation of Producer Groups that facilitate knowledge dissemination, skill-building, and collective decision-making. These groups have strengthened community bonds while promoting sustainable practices. The Goat Producer Groups, numbering 397, and Poultry Producer Groups, totaling 131, have emerged as centers of innovation and learning.

The convergence of the Goat and Poultry Programs in 398 producer groups symbolizes the program's strategic alignment, fostering holistic development through multi-dimensional interventions. The overall number of Livestock Producer Groups, reaching 531, reflects the program's commitment to establishing robust local structures for sustained impact.

6.4 Member Engagement and Empowerment

The Livestock Development Program has invested in the empowerment of its members through capacity-building initiatives and financial engagement. The total number of members has reached 10722, with 6625 new members joining the program in this year, contributing to its continued growth. These new entrants signify the program's attractiveness and the tangible benefits it offers to rural communities.

6.5 Meeting and Trainings

A core aspect of the Livestock Development Program is its emphasis on member empowerment and capacity-building. In the fiscal year 2022-2023, the program achieved significant strides in this domain, fostering knowledge dissemination and skill enhancement. The Total Livestock Producer Group Members has witnessed a growth from 164 to 1756, indicating the increasing interest and participation in the training program.



Training SHG members on livestock rearing

This rise reflects the program's ability to engage rural communities effectively, providing them with a platform for collective growth and learning. In line with its commitment to continuous learning, the program organized a notable number of Capacity Building trainings, totalling 261 in the reported period. These training sessions served as avenues for knowledge enrichment, skill development, and the exchange of best practices among members.

A noteworthy achievement has been the increase in the Total number of members present in the group meetings from 1040 to 18530. This rise underscores the growing engagement of program beneficiaries, demonstrating their active involvement in the decision-making processes of the program.

The commitment to enhancing knowledge and expertise was further evident in the Total members trained, which increased from 465 to 5841. These training initiatives encompassed a wide array of topics, from livestock management to financial literacy, equipping members with the tools needed to make informed decisions for their livestock and livelihoods.

Para-vet Training, an integral part of the program's capacity-building efforts, reached 195 participants this year. The training of para-vets is instrumental in building local expertise and ensuring the well-being of the livestock community.

Furthermore, the Number of training days of para-vets and members combined increased from 7 to 803. This reflects the dedication of both program beneficiaries and experts in coming together for extensive learning sessions that contribute to enhanced livestock care and management.

As the Livestock Development Program progresses, its commitment to member empowerment and training remains steadfast. The program's efforts to cultivate knowledgeable, skilled, and engaged members are evident in the growth of Livestock Producer Group Members, the active participation in group meetings, and the expansion of training opportunities. Through these initiatives, the program continues to create a resilient and empowered rural community that is well-equipped to manage its livestock resources and improve livelihoods.

S.No.	Particulars	March 2022	Added	March 2023
01	Total Livestock Producer Group Members	161	1595	1756
02	Total number of members present in the group meetings	1040	17490	18530
03	Capacity Building trainings	30	261	291
04	Total members trained	465	5376	5841
05	Para-vet Training	7	188	195
06	Number of training days of para-vets and members combined	7	796	803

6.6 Goatary

This report provides an extensive analysis of the goat farming activities and statistical trends spanning from April 2022 to March 2023. The data encompasses developments, challenges, and key achievements within goat farming during this period.

Starting with 2021 and extending through 2022, the Programs reach 6,780 adult male goats (bucks) and 15,022 adult female goats. By the period from March,2022 to March,2023, these numbers experienced substantial growth, with adult male goats increasing to 49,819 and adult female goats reaching 113,936. Similarly, programs reached 1,216 male kids and 1,225 female kids till March,2022, and by March,2023, these numbers grew to 13892 male kids and 14511 female kids. Similarly, there was also a notable decrease in kids Mortality, from 16% to 7%, during the later period. Additionally, castration procedures also witnessed an increase, from 356 in 2021 to 1,132 by the end of March 2023, indicating the programs focus on herd composition and individual animal growth.



6.6.1 Treatment Activities

The number of members involved in treatment activities increased from 888 to 8330. Treatment activities expanded from 1,808 animals till March,2022 to 11,370 animals till March,2023, and this growth continued through the following year. The total number of treatments administered also saw significant expansion, increasing from 2,549 in 2021 to 13500 by March 2023.

6.6.3 Deworming

Deworming activities were performed on a total of 8,289 goats in 2021 and continued to increase until reaching 39,246 goats by March 2023.

6.6.2 Vaccination Activities

Vaccination efforts against specific diseases increased substantially during the studied period. Enterotoxaemia (E.T.) vaccinations surged from 5,793 in 2021 to 34,542 in 2022, and the trend continued until March 2023. P.P.R. vaccinations also saw remarkable growth, rising from 6,706 in 2021 to 23,663 in 2022.

6.6.4 Sale & Purchase

Trading activities Noted by the livestock programme demonstrated substantial growth. The number of goats bought surged from 250 in 2021 to 11,718 in 2022, and further increased by the end of March 2023. The amount spent on goats also experienced a significant increase, from 1,212,400 in 2021 to 6,505,013 in 2022, and this trend persisted. On the selling side, the Members sold 634 goats in 2021 and 69,071 goats in 2022, with sales increasing until March 2023.

6.6.5 Housing Structure

The programme helps in infrastructure expansion, with the goatshed count growing from 262 in 2021 to 751 in 2022.



Construction of 751 goatsheds at Khategaon

6.6.6 Feed & Nutrition

Mineral brick consumption increased from 1,337 kg in 2021 to 3,604 kg in 2022. Liver tonic usage also surged from 692 liters in 2021 to 13,198 liters in 2022. Goat feed consumption increased from 7,345 kg in 2021 to 15,966 kg in 2022, This will lead to effective Weight Gain, increase in reproductive Efficiency, Immunity and overall Market value of animals.

During the period spanning from 2021 to March 2023, the goat farming operation demonstrated remarkable growth across various key indicators. The numbers of adult male and female goats experienced an exponential surge, increasing from 6,780 and 15,022 respectively in 2021 to an impressive 56,599 males and 128,958 females by March 2023.

Similarly, the kid population exhibited an extraordinary leap, with male kids rising from 1,216 to 12,676 and female kids escalating from 1,225 to 13,286 within the same timeframe. The noteworthy expansion observed in various numerical aspects underscores the Samaj Pragati Sahayog's commitment to sustainable development.

GOATARY DATA TABLE

S.No.	Category	Particulars	Measurement	March 2022	Added	March 2023
01	Adult Buck Goat Information	Goat/Male	Number	6780	49819	56599
02		Goat/Female	Number	15022	113936	128958
03		Total Death	Number	668 (3%)	-	2628 (1.4%)
04	Kid Information	Male Kid	Number	1216	12676	13892
05		Female Kid	Number	1225	13286	14511
06		Total Death	Number	391 (16%)	-	2000 (7%)
07		Castration	Number	356	1132	1488
08	Treatment Activities	Number of Members	Number	888	7442	8330
09		Number of Animals	Number	1808	11370	13178
10		Total Treatment	Number	2549	10951	13500
11	Vaccination Activities	Enterotoxaemia (E.T.)	Number	5793	34542	40335
12		P.P.R.	Number	6706	23663	30369
13	Deworming	Total Goats	Number	8289	39246	47535
14	Sale & buy	Number of Goats Bought	Number	250	11718	11968
15		Amount of Goat Bought	Rupees	1212400	6505013	7717413
16		Total Goats Sold	Number	634	69071	69705
17		Total Amount of Goats Sold	Rupees	4025200	30047179	34072379
18	Housing Structure	Goat Shed	Number	262	751	1013
19	Feed, Nutrition & Fodder	Mineral Bricks	KG	1337	3604	4941
20		Liver Tonics	Litre	692	13198	13890
21		Goat Feed	KG	7345	15966	23311

6.7 Poultry

An in-depth analysis of the poultry rearing performance and statistical trends over a two-year period, from 2021 to March 2023. The data provides insights into the growth, challenges, and notable achievements within the poultry program during this timeframe.

Poultry Information:

Between 2021-22 and 2022-23, the poultry program witnessed impressive growth across various poultry categories. The number of Desi chicks increased from 8,279 to 50,177, Satpuda chicks from 5,272 to 17,062, Kadaknath chicks from 927 to 3,034, and Other chicks from 163 to 5,022. Furthermore, the population of Desi Cock/Hen increased from 17,850 to 123,139, Satpuda Cock/Hen from 15,114 to 31,741, and Kadaknath Cock/Hen from 1,262 to 3,280. This resulted in a substantial rise in the total Cock/Hen population, increasing from 31,743 to 109,869. The overall growth in poultry numbers reflects Expansion of the Livestock Programme in the financial year.



6.7.1 Housing Structure

Infrastructure expansion was observed during the two-year period. New Poultry Sheds increased from 51 to 560, and New Free-Range Sheds/Garden Poultry Farming structures grew from 19 to 67. These expansions demonstrate the Samaj Pragati Sahayog commitment to providing suitable housing with the help of Various projects to the growing poultry population.

6.7.2 Vaccination Activities



Peravet training members about vaccination in chicks

Vaccination efforts also witnessed significant growth. Ranikhet (7 days) vaccinations increased from 4,500 to 11,634, Gambaro (14 days) vaccinations from 8,000 to 14,700, Gambaro booster (21 days) vaccinations from 5,000 to 5,500, and Ranikhet booster (28 days) vaccinations from 5,950 to 7,750. Furthermore, Ranikhet vaccinations for Desi poultry increased from 2,750 to 3,380. The total number of vaccinations administered expanded from 10,200 to 19,836, demonstrating the program's commitment to safeguarding poultry health.

6.7.3 Deworming

Deworming activities were performed to ensure the health of the poultry. The number of Deworming activities increased from 9,466 to 30,504, indicating a focused effort on parasite control and herd health management.



6.7.4 Feed & Nutrition

Poultry Feed consumption increased from 3,121 to 9,304, showcasing the program's emphasis on providing proper nutrition to the poultry.

6.7.5 Sale & Purchase



Rukma Bai with her husband while going to sell chicken in the market

Trading activities of members connected with the livestock program exhibited notable changes. The number of Chicks Bought increased from 2,876 to 6,570, while the amount spent on Chicks Bought surged from 66,520 to 416,279. On the sales side, the number of Chicks Sold grew from 4,964 to 12,519, and the revenue generated from Chicks Sold increased from 1,353,220 to 4,433,670.

Additionally, the members sold 1,086 eggs in 2021 and experienced growth, selling 9,577 eggs by March 2023. The income of members from Egg Sales increased from 15,015 to 136,304.

The data presented vividly illustrates the remarkable growth achieved in the poultry by Livestock program over the period from 2021 to March 2023. Across various categories, the numbers have surged exponentially, showcasing the program's dedicated efforts towards breed Selection, health management, and infrastructure development. The robust increase in Desi, Satpuda, and Kadaknath chicks, as well as the Cock/Hen populations, signifies a thriving poultry ecosystem nurtured by effective management practices. This growth is further mirrored in the expansion of housing structures and the administration of vaccinations, underlining the program's commitment to providing suitable conditions and proactive health measures. The livestock program's impressive performance highlights its proactive approach and strategic initiatives in steering this endeavor towards sustainable success.

Poultry DATA TABLE

S.No.	Category	Particulars	Measurement	March 2022	Added	March 2023
01	Poultry Information	Desi Chicks	Number	8279	50177	58456
02		Satpuda Chicks	Number	5272	17062	22334
03		Kadaknath Chicks	Number	927	3034	3961
04		Other Chicks	Number	163	5022	5185
05		Desi Cock/Hen	Number	17850	123139	140989
06		Satpuda Cock/Hen	Number	15114	31741	46855
07		Kadaknath Cock/Hen	Number	1262	3280	4542
08		Total Cock/Hen	Number	31743	109869	141612
09	Housing Structure	New Poultry Sheds	Number	51	560	611
10		New Free-Range Sheds/Garden poultry farming	Number	19	67	86
11	Mortality Rate	Chicks	Number	1345	4385	5730
12		Cock	Number	496	1648	2144
13		Hen	Number	294	1498	1792
14	Vaccination Activities	Ranikhet (7 days)	Number	4500	11634	16134
15		Gambaro (14 days)	Number	8000	14700	22700
16		Gambaro booster (21 days)	Number	5000	5500	10500
17		Ranikhet booster (28 days)	Number	5950	7750	13700
18		Ranikhet in Desi	Number	2750	3380	6130
19		Total Vaccination	Number	10200	19836	30036
20	Deworming	Deworming (35-40 days)	Number	9466	30504	39970
21	Feed & Nutrition	Poultry Feed	Kgs	3121	9304	12425
22	Sale & buy information	Number of Chicks Bought	Number	2876	6570	9446
23		Amount in rupees of Chicks Bought	Rupees	66520	416279	482799
24		Number of Chicks sold	Number	4964	12519	17483
25		Amount in rupees of chicks sold	Rupees	1353220	4433670	5786890
26		Number of Eggs Sold	Number	1086	9577	10663
27		Amount in rupees of eggs sold	Rupees	15015	136304	151319

6.8 Conclusion of the Livestock Program

In culmination, the livestock program has exhibited commendable progress and impact, guided by its overarching objective of delivering timely and effective services. The program's primary focus on reducing mortality rates and fostering substantial growth in the beneficiaries' income has yielded tangible results. The data presented throughout this period underscores the program's success in achieving these goals.

The concerted efforts towards minimizing mortality rates, evidenced by the meticulous vaccination schedules, treatment activities, and deworming initiatives, have played a pivotal role in enhancing the overall health and well-being of the livestock. The program's commitment to addressing health challenges has been instrumental in mitigating losses and securing the livelihoods of the beneficiaries.

Equally noteworthy is the significant growth observed in the beneficiaries' income. The increase in poultry and goat populations, coupled with strategic trading activities, has led to a substantial rise in income generation. The poultry and goat farming sectors have flourished, not only contributing to the financial stability of the beneficiaries but also augmenting the overall economic growth of the members.

As the program moves forward, it is crucial to sustain these positive trends by continuing to prioritize timely interventions, vigilant health management practices, and informed decision-making. The data reflects the impact of these efforts and underscores the program's role in fostering a resilient and prosperous livestock community. With a steadfast commitment to its core objectives, the livestock program stands as a beacon of success, positively impacting both the livelihoods of beneficiaries and the broader agricultural landscape.

7. ENTITLEMENTS HEALTH and NUTRITION

The health and nutritional well-being of mothers and children are crucial indicators of societal development. Samaj Pragati Sahayog's Entitlement, Health, and Nutrition (E-H&N) program primarily targets tribal communities, operating across 9 locations in Khargone, Dewas, and Amravati districts, encompassing 282 villages within 146 gram-panchayats. This initiative focuses on improving the health and nutritional status of women and children, with the ultimate goal of reducing malnutrition and anemia through community engagement and the strengthening of local institutions.

The program strategically engages with 415 Anganwadi centers, 181 Public Distribution System (PDS) shops, and 503 primary and secondary government schools. A core aspect of the program involves raising awareness about various government schemes and ensuring their effective implementation by building community capacities and fostering empowerment. Specifically, the program emphasizes the enhancement of the health and nutrition of pregnant women and children through education on anemia, proper dieting, malnutrition, and hygiene. It also aims to increase institutional deliveries and vaccination rates, as well as improve accessibility to government schemes for the program beneficiaries. Additionally, the initiative strives to create employment opportunities, develop social infrastructure, reduce migration, and promote the active participation of women in local democratic decision-making processes.



Making sure all pregnant women get Vaccinated

7.1 ICDS

The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) is a critical program aimed at ensuring the holistic development of children and improving their nutritional status in India. Within this scheme, the focus is on pregnant women and infants, and the primary aim is to reduce malnutrition in children, increase institutional deliveries, ensure timely vaccination, and provide adequate Poshan Aahar (nutritious food) for pregnant women and children.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Entitlement, Health, and Nutrition (E-H&N) program of Samaj Pragati Sahayog is working with pregnant women and infants in 9 locations across Khargone, Dewas, and Amravati districts. The program has established 415 Anganwadi centers, 181 Public Distribution System (PDS) shops, and 503 primary and secondary government schools to facilitate community participation and strengthen people's institutions.

One of the key strategies of the program is to conduct home visits to pregnant women and perform health check-ups on children. In this regard, the program has successfully conducted home visits to 3458 pregnant women and performed health check-ups on 56 children to reduce malnutrition. Additionally, home visits were conducted for 634 children who were diagnosed with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and referred 56 of them to nutrition rehabilitation centers. Another important aspect of the program is to ensure that children receive timely vaccination to prevent diseases. The program has successfully assisted 342 children in completing their 18-month vaccination cycle. This is an essential step in preventing diseases and promoting the overall health and wellbeing of children.



H&N Team monitoring malnourished children



Vaccinating children in Anganwadi

Overall, the Entitlement, Health, and Nutrition program of Samaj Pragati Sahayog is playing a crucial role in improving the health and nutritional status of women and children in India. The program is working tirelessly to ensure that pregnant women and children receive adequate nutrition, timely vaccinations, and access to necessary healthcare services to reduce the incidence of malnutrition and anemia.

7.2 Pregnant women

The EHN team of Samaj Pragati Sahayog conducted visits to 310 Anganwadi centers and performed home visits on 3458 pregnant women in their working area. These visits aimed to raise awareness and provide training to pregnant women on anemia, proper dieting, malnutrition, and hygiene. The team emphasized the importance of consuming green vegetables, receiving institutional deliveries, undergoing health check-ups, getting vaccinated, maintaining a healthy diet, and utilizing Anganwadi services. In addition, the team provided information on nutritional supplements to pregnant women. During the last three quarters, there were a total of 791 deliveries in the working area, out of which 642 were institutional deliveries. This means that through the team's constant efforts, they were able to achieve 81% institutional deliveries, which is a significant achievement in reducing maternal and infant mortality rates.

Moreover, the team assisted 113 pregnant women in setting up an iron sucrose unit. This is a crucial step in addressing anemia, which is prevalent among pregnant women in India. By providing these units, the team is ensuring that pregnant women have access to iron supplements, which can help prevent anemia and improve maternal and child health outcomes. Overall, the HN team's efforts in raising awareness, providing training, and assisting pregnant women have contributed to reducing malnutrition in children, increasing institutional deliveries, ensuring timely vaccination, and providing adequate nutrition to pregnant women and children in their working area.



7.3 Ayushman Bharat Yojna

Ayushman Bharat is a government-sponsored health insurance scheme launched in India in 2018, to provide financial protection and health care to the underprivileged sections of society. The scheme aims to provide cashless health care benefits of up to Rs. 5 lakh per family per year to more than 100 million vulnerable families across the country. However, despite the scheme's benefits, there are still families who are excluded from it, either due to a lack of awareness or other reasons. To address this issue, a survey was conducted by SPS to identify families who were excluded from the Ayushman Bharat scheme. The survey helped to create a dashboard of such families, enabling SPS to reach out to them and provide assistance in obtaining Ayushman cards. To get the cards made for the members who did not have the Ayushman cards, discussions were held with the group members. SPS organized camps in the villages with the help of the Common Service Center (CSC) center, which is a government-initiated scheme to provide digital services to rural and remote areas. The camps provided a platform for families to obtain their Ayushman cards, which is a crucial step towards availing the benefits of the Ayushman Bharat scheme.



Organized camps in the village for making Ayushman cards

The camp organized by SPS was a massive success, as 32,484 members were able to get their Ayushman cards made. This achievement is significant as it means that these families are now entitled to the benefits of the Ayushman Bharat scheme and can avail themselves of the financial protection and health care benefits that it provides. Furthermore, an even bigger success was that about 84 people received free treatment of up to Rs. 73,54,000 for different and serious diseases through Ayushman cards. This indicates that the Ayushman Bharat scheme is not only providing financial protection but also access to quality health care for those who need it the most.

In conclusion, the efforts of SPS to create a dashboard of families excluded from the Ayushman Bharat scheme, organize camps, and facilitate the creation of Ayushman cards have helped to provide financial protection and health care benefits to vulnerable families. The success of the initiative is evident from the large number of families who have obtained their Ayushman cards and the individuals who have received free treatment through the scheme.

7.4 Gram Sabha



The Gram Sabha is a crucial platform for democratic decision-making at the village level in India. However, the lack of women's participation in this forum has been a major issue in empowering them. To address this challenge, program staff and CRPs have provided training to increase women's participation in the Gram Sabha. One effective strategy that has been implemented is the use of Hissedari Sabha, organized by Bachat Samuh members. These sabhas cover various issues such as access to drinking water, PDS shops, toilets, pension schemes, and PM Aawas Yojana. Women have actively participated in these discussions and raised these issues in the Gram Sabha meetings. As a result, some issues have been resolved immediately at the Gram Sabha meetings, while others have been discussed deliberately and with a plan to resolve them. The efforts of the program staff and CRPs have resulted in a promising outcome, with women's participation in the Gram Sabha increasing to over 35%. This increase in women's participation is a significant step towards empowering them and promoting gender equality. It also shows that effective strategies, such as the use of Hissedari Sabha and training programs, can have a positive impact on increasing women's participation in democratic decision-making at the village level.



Solving the water problem by women raising issues at the Gram Sabha

7.5 Pension Schemes

The Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme, Widow Pension Scheme, and Pension Scheme for Disabled Persons are important social welfare schemes in India aimed at providing financial assistance to vulnerable groups. However, despite the availability of these schemes, many eligible individuals are often excluded due to a lack of awareness and documentation. To address this issue, your team has been working to increase awareness about these schemes and their eligibility criteria. Your team has also been providing support to individuals in obtaining the necessary documentation to apply for these schemes. As a result of these efforts, 768 beneficiaries have been able to access these pension schemes. This is a significant achievement as it means that more vulnerable individuals are receiving the financial support they need to live a dignified life. It is important to continue spreading awareness about these schemes and ensuring that eligible individuals have access to them. This will help to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for vulnerable groups in India.



Manisha didi with her SSM ID



Shyani's widow pension approval letter

7.6 Patrata Parchi

Patrata Parchi is an essential document required to avail adequate rations from the Public Distribution System (PDS) shop in India. Unfortunately, many eligible households have been excluded from the ration system due to the unavailability of this document. To address this issue, your team has conducted surveys to identify households without Patrata Parchi and is now helping them to obtain it from the Panchayat. In the second quarter, your team was able to create 792 new Patrata Parchis for eligible households, which enabled them to access rations on time. This is an important initiative that ensures that vulnerable households receive their entitlements and reduces their dependence on irregular sources of food. It is essential to continue identifying households in need of Patrata Parchi and providing assistance to them. This will help to ensure that the benefits of the PDS reach the intended beneficiaries and contribute to poverty reduction and food security in the region.

7.7 Hissedari Sabha

The Hissedari Sabha is an institution that aims to empower members of self-help groups to take advantage of government schemes and facilities and to advocate for their rights. One of its main goals is to increase participation among people, particularly women, in the implementation of government schemes and ensure that they receive their fair share of benefits. Through its meetings, the organization provides training and education to members to help them fully understand how the government plans work and how they are funded. This not only empowers members to advocate for their rights but also enables them to become more aware of the opportunities available to them through government schemes. Since its inception, the Hissedari Sabha has successfully held 98 meetings, where members have discussed issues, shared knowledge, and learned about government schemes.

These meetings have proven to be a model of women's empowerment in the region, as they have enabled women to come together and raise their voices for their rights. Moreover, the Hissedari Sabha has organized 14 Amukh Shivir interface meetings, where PRI (Panchayati Raj Institutions) and other panchayat officials were present. During these meetings, many of the issues faced by the members were resolved, showing the effectiveness of the organization in advocating for the needs and concerns of its members. Overall, the Hissedari Sabha has proven to be an effective institution in empowering women and promoting their participation in government schemes and governance facilities.



7.8 Dudh Kela Karyakram

Lack of nutrition is a major concern among the tribal communities. This is badly affecting women and children in the community. This nutrition deficiency became a serious problem in the long term and increased the financial pressure on the poor. Families of Women, children, aged people, and the disabled are then trapped in the cycle of debt and distress. With the continuous efforts of various governments and non-governmental agencies, the problem of malnutrition has been reduced significantly, but it has not ended yet. The health of a child mainly depends on the health of the mother.



Dudh-kela activity in 10 villages to raise awareness about the importance of curbing malnutrition. This initiative involves providing milk and a banana to the 52 SAM children regularly for the next three months. By involving the community in this initiative, you are promoting a sense of ownership and responsibility towards addressing malnutrition. Our team is collaborating with Rashi Mahila Bachat Samuh and the Gram Panchayat to implement this program.

This is a positive development as it ensures that the program is implemented effectively and efficiently. The expected outcome of the Dudh-Kela Program is that the 52 SAM children will see an improvement in their height and weight and will come to normal levels. By keeping in touch with these children in the future regarding health-related concerns, you are also ensuring that their nutritional needs are met in the long term. Overall, this is an important initiative that addresses the issue of malnutrition in the community. It is essential to continue such efforts to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable children in the region.

8. KUMBAYA

8.1 Rebuilding

The essence of 2022-23 lay in rebuilding and regaining strength after the hits that Kumbaya took during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the attempt to recover from losses, both financial and workforce, and to stand back strong on its feet, Kumbaya began its work by focusing on its strengths and building back up, one stitch at a time. Through the process, Kumbaya was supported immensely by Samaj Pragati Sahayog and a series of creative partners. What lacked in funds, was never low in morale and in friends who believed in Kumbaya.

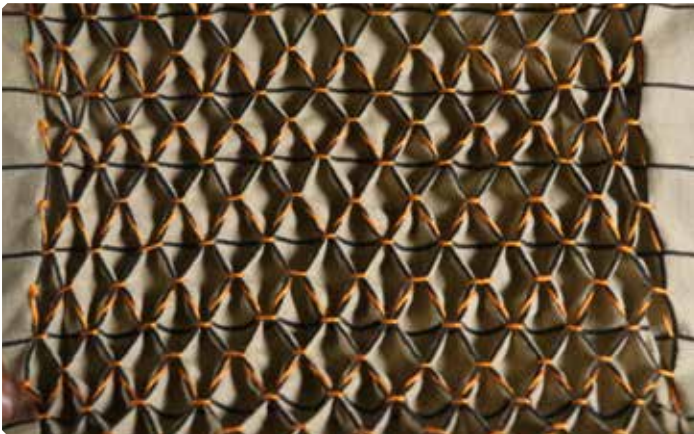
8.2 Capacity Building

8.2.1 Embroidery and Natural Dyeing Workshop

In September, over the course of a week, two workshops were held at the Baba Amte Lok Sashaktikaran Kendra, Neemkheda, training the Kumbaya producers in the art of embroidery and natural dyeing. The workshops were curated and taught by Ramona, the founder of Little Stitches by Ramona and Ravinder, the founder of Rangmalang Studio. While many producers explored the new and intricate world of natural dyes with Ravinder ji, some of the producers who had already learnt the basics of embroidery learnt more of the knots and stitches with smocking, crochet and advanced embroidery techniques.



Ravinder ji teaching the properties of natural dyes and how to use them



Under the guidance of Ramona ji, the team does embroidery and crochet, after which some samples are also prepared

8.2.2 Menstrual Health Workshops

SBI YFI fellow, Kiran Dayal, had joined the Kumbaya team to work on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Throughout the course of eleven months, she worked with Kumbaya producers addressing various issues of menstrual health and focused on ensuring safe menstrual hygiene practices for the producers of Kumbaya. A partnership with Sirona Hygiene - a brand that manufactures menstrual cups led to the distribution of 100 such cups to the producers with proper demonstration done by experts and doctors over virtual and physical sessions. The project culminated with an event distributing certificates to the participants as well as providing Menstrupedia's informative comic books to the producers. The event also served as a recap of the learnings on SRHR through the months and the producers demonstrated their information on various issues and the use of menstrual cups.



Kumbaya producer, Basu, demonstrates how to use a menstrual cup on a plastic model of the female reproductive system, and how to safely place and remove a cup in/from the vagina



8.2.3 Digital Literacy at Kumbaya

A long standing dream actualized in Kumbaya when 10 producers started their journey of learning the computer in October 2022. Both young producers and older ones learnt the basics of the computer - its history, its parts and mechanisms, MS office, internet and emails with excitement. MS Excel, a tool used extensively in Kumbaya to maintain records and for financial calculations was



emphasised as it would come in handy. The producers wrote their first emails with much joy and have started sharing Kumbaya's records as attachments. Sajni and Puja, who underwent this training, have also started taking active roles in keeping a digital inventory and updating it and have started working from the Jatashankar centre on inventory management and packing consignments for retail stores, exhibitions and our online store.



Explaining computers to a Kumbaya producer

8.3 Support Networks

8.3.1 Women on Wings

Women on Wings is a team of experts who provide pro bono business knowledge and mentoring to both Indian social enterprises and Indian government institutions that create employment for women in rural India.

Social Impact Summit - Kumbaya founder, Nivedita Banerji was invited to attend the Summit held in New Delhi on the 8th of November. Key discussions of this Summit were around the future of consumer's behaviour, funding models and co-creating ecosystems. Consumer behaviour in terms of the dramatic reshaping of attitudes into an increasing focus on health, a rise in conscious consumption and growing desire to shop local and adopting ethical behaviours was a part of the discussion. The main challenge for social enterprises to keep the social character of the enterprise intact while also addressing growth aspirations was also brought up in this event.

Following the Summit, on the 23rd and 24th November, 2022, Ronald van Hof, Joint Managing Director of Women on Wings, and Anita Joosten, one of their financial experts with experience in assessing financial situation in SMEs, visited Kumbaya to analyse its financial and commercial standpoint and suggest course corrections and paths ahead. The team at Women on Wings were appreciative of the designs, systems, operations and management involved in setting up an export compliant enterprise in a remote, predominantly agricultural area, which has had no history of manufacturing.

8.3.2 Creative Dignity

Creative Dignity is a collective of diverse creative producers, practitioners, and professionals who came together during the COVID-19 pandemic to energise the ecosystem that Indian artisans need to thrive. With a spirit of collaborative resource-sharing, Creative Dignity stands as a network supporting artisans and enterprises like Kumbaya to connect to various companies and enterprises looking for specific crafts and expertise within the handmade sector. It is through their support in rebuilding Kumbaya after the onslaught of COVID-19 that some partnerships materialised.

8.3.3 Two Hundred Million Artisans

Two Hundred Million Artisans is a research organisation that fills knowledge, resource, and partnership shortages to promote independence and creativity in India's artisan sector. They interviewed Nivedita as a part of their Business of Handmade Report of 2022, focussing on Kumbaya as a women-led enterprise and gathering information on the ease of accessing finances, the growing potential for tapping newer markets and the need to balance people, planet and profits. The report was path-breaking in its finding that women-led Handmade and Craft-led MSMEs (HCM's) are more likely to achieve optimal investor engagement, with serious money-making potential.

8.4 Emerging Partnerships

8.4.1 Zazi Vintage

Zazi Vintage is a Dutch luxury fashion brand which works on creating global networks with indigenous artisans and celebrates women's collectives and artisanal craft. It encourages community development through creativity. It facilitates women's economic and social rural independence. Zazi Vintage and Kumbaya were introduced through Creative Dignity. In February 2023, Anne-Lieke van Leeuwen, Head of production & business development at Zazi Vintage visited Kumbaya's Design Unit and Production Centre with Shailja Sachan, the Sustainability and Communications Lead at Creative Dignity.

This visit, following multiple virtual meetings, led to the development of co-creating Zazi's Spring-Summer collection. During the two days of their visit, the designs for the collection were discussed, fabrics explored and the skills of the Kumbaya producers honed further to create a few signature denim-embroidery pieces for their upcoming shoot in March. Producers from all three production centres met with Anne-Lieke and Shailja and had important conversations on how meaningful their work is and how it could be further



Discussions with Kumbaya team at the start of the Zazi x Kumbaya partnership

enhanced through ownership and an excitement to learn through work.

Following this visit, after back-and-forth calls with their in-house designer in Amsterdam, Durgesh Dodiya, Kumbaya's Master Pattern Maker along with the Kumbaya team chalked out the plan to meet a very short deadline to deliver the first samples. The team worked day and night with fabrics and designs that they weren't very familiar with and braced through this Herculean task to deliver samples in less than two weeks in Bhuj, Gujarat. Zazi Vintage founder, Jeanne de Kroon, along with their photoshoot team received these samples with much appreciation for the finesse of work that Kumbaaya had delivered and verbally finalised on spot to move ahead with Kumbaya as their stitching partner for other designs of the collections as well as future collections too, in addition to the denim and embroidery designs that were earlier decided in February.



Zazi x Kumbaya samples' photoshoot at the Rann of Kutch, Gujarat with Jeanne, Founder, Zazi Vintage

8.4.2 Reliance Swadesh

Reliance Retail is launching stores that curate handmade products by India's artisans using long-forgotten techniques and local materials under the name Swadesh. As a part of this venture, Kumbaya has partnered with Reliance to create doll sets that are relatable to an Indian audience in terms of breaking away from Eurocentric standards of beauty projected on dolls and creating ones that have varied features of learning to it. The partnership materialised through Anandhi Dasaraj, Head COE, Project India at Reliance Retail and her continued support to Kumbaya. In July 2022, the initial works of creating samples, and securing approvals began. Laveena Singawat, the designer overlooking the project, visited the production centres multiple times and guided the producers through the sample making process.



Kumbaya producers with the samples of the Reliance Swadesh dolls

8.5 Orders and Exports

8.5.1 Client Orders- Woven London, Rani & Reine, Labvisby TRIFED Bulk Order

The months from April to August were spent in fulfilling orders for Kumbaya's clients within India and across the world. The team put together a vast collection of well-constructed garments for Laura Miles' Woven London, made from exquisite khadi fabric, handwoven in Maheshwar. A line of effortlessly flowing and comfortable dresses, blouses and trousers were also made for Sarah Dunn's plus-size positive clothing brand, Rani & Reine in Germany. Functional, minimal and aesthetic aprons, bags, skirts, trousers, jackets and shirts were produced, to be sold adjacent to Camilla and Stefan's pottery studio at Labvisby local global in Havdhem, Sweden. Bulk orders placed by Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED), Bhopal also boosted Kumbaya's sales in the financial year.

8.5.2 Order for Kufri Life - Mili Suleman

An order was placed by the US-based brand for Kumbaya's patchwork team to create a quilt inspired from a signature piece from Gee's Bend- a fact the client was unaware of at the time they shared the image. The result was a stunning quilt, with a close likeness to the original piece, made with surplus fabric from Kumbaya's repository as well as surplus handwoven fabric from Women Weave, Maheshwar. It was an interesting project exploring varying fabric weights, mixes and bleeds to ensure the longevity of the quilt. This project also brought an important realisation through its cost-benefit analysis, that creating large patchwork pieces commissioned by others takes much longer and many more people than Kumbaya's in-house way of doing patchwork designs. Across several client orders, the appreciation expressed for the finished product and each buyer sending across more prospects for work have been very encouraging and reaffirmed the skills of the producers.



8.6 Exhibitions



Through the year, Kumbaya also attended various exhibitions, carrying a wide array of well-loved stock to be sold to customers across the country. The Swadeshi Haat and Fashionista Exhibitions in Mumbai, the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board exhibitions in Indore and Bhopal, as well as the TRIFED exhibitions conducted in Delhi, Indore and Bhopal- were all helpful in selling Kumbaya products and getting our story across to more customers. Kumbaya also made a comeback at the Annual Hundred Hands exhibition in Bangalore.



The exhibition was a great success as Kumbaya patrons - new and old, dropped by at the stall, appreciated the work of the brilliant Kumbaya producers and made purchases. The Kumbaya stall had an active foot fall across all days of this Annual Handmade Collective.

8.7 Reaching out to New Stores

In the year 2022, Kumbaya began to exhibit products at Ambara, Bangalore for the very first time. In Nivedita's own words, Kumbaya being at Ambara was always a dream, right from the first day she walked into the heritage house, lovingly restored, surrounded by flowering plants and overlooking the Ulsoor Lake. Over the years, thanks to the encouragement and good wishes of close friends, she left a few Kumbaya postcards at the store and got the warmest email from Jaya within a few hours. Meeting Jaya and Neva with a bag full of samples at Ambara was one of the most affirming experiences, where Kumbaya's journey was understood- why we do what we do. In August 2023, Kumbaya created a unique collection of pieces to exhibit at Ambara.

This was born out of an interest to express Kumbaya's beliefs in anti-fit clothing, circular design, craftsmanship and fair pay. Bees and birds, fish and flowers, intricately embroidered by the skilled hands of brave women who want to change their destiny. After a long time, the team had such fun working on these designs.

8.8 Visits and Knowledge Sharing

8.8.1 Visit from Axis Bank Foundation appointed third party for documentation



Axis Bank Foundation, as an initiative to document the work and impact of community collectives and the positive changes that it has brought for communities, appointed Footprint Global Communication who specialises in development communication work to visit and interact with the collectives formed through Samaj Pragati Sahayog to form case studies. Their CEO, Ms. Bhavani Giddu visited Kumbaya on October 17th, 2022, and gained insights at the inception point of SPS's proliferate SHG programme, understood the layout of these structures and went through Kumbaya's successes, trials and tribulations through the years.

8.8.2 New York University - Abu Dhabi students visit

Students from New York University - Abu Dhabi, in an attempt to document and understand grassroots development work through Samaj Pragati Sahayog and its supported companies, visited Bagli from January 13th to 17th. This was the field component of their Film and New Media minor program. The cohort, taught by Professor Surabhi Sharma spent a day with Kumbaya founder and Samaj Pragati Sahayog co-founder, Nivedita Banerji, and understood the intricate linkages of design, environments, livelihoods and ecosystems of rural development and change.



The students spent an evening with the Kumbaya producers at the Neemkheda bhavan on January 15th, learning patchwork and embroidery from the artisans, building a deep appreciation for the art of stitching and the beauty of creating with scraps, as they mentioned. The session was wrapped up beautifully with a flash ramp walk with each student's patchwork piece, hand in hand with their teacher for the evening - Kumbaya producers !

8.8.3 Exposure Visit from Eicher Group Foundation's supported organisation

On March 24, a group of around 30 women from Sambhav Social Service Organisation, an NGO based in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh visited Kumbaya's Neemkheda Production Centre as a part of their exposure visit. This program was funded by Eicher Group Foundation's e-community project. The motive of the visit was to showcase the strength in collectivising to create livelihood opportunities. The Kumbaya team recounted the history of its formation, the support from founder, Nivedita Banerji and Samaj Pragati Sahayog as well as the challenges that Kumbaya has encountered in the past three decades. The women from Sambhav were also shown some of the products that has been designed with the limited resources available in the drylands remote landscape where Kumbaya is situated, particularly the Patchwork products. The women left with a newfound zeal to innovate and create similar environments to create livelihoods in their villages.



8.8.4 Visits from GreenHub, Jamia Millia Islamia and Sahyadri School

Visits also took place with Green Hub Fellows from various locations across the country, students of Jamia Millia Islamia, as well as young students from Sahyadri School, Pune. Each of them went through a practice session in stitching. At Kumbaya, stitching is believed to be an important skill that connects the head and the hand. It is a skill that involves fine craftsmanship and the exercise of stillness. It is only after sitting on a machine that every individual learns the true value of what is done here at Kumbaya. It is only then, that one truly appreciates the art in the hands of Kumbaya's women and disabled producers.

8.9 Sales Data for the Financial Year 2022-23

The total number of producers working at 3 production centres and the design and sampling centre at Jatashankar were 53, with 2 new producers who joined in the new financial year. There were 45

Table No. 1 Number of Producers and Trainees

S.No.	Training and Production Data	
01	Pieces Produced at 3 Production Centres	6065
02	Number of Patches from fabric waste produced at 3 Production Centers	1589
03	Value of Patchwork Products Sold this Financial Year	Rs. 321960 Lakhs
04	Value of Fabric Purchased this Financial Year	Rs. 1637990 Lakhs
05	Value of Honey Purchased this Financial Year	Rs. 140994 Lakhs
06	Total Wages Paid to Producers this Financial Year	Rs. 2977690 Lakhs

trainees across 3 production centres who received Kumbaya's training.

The total sales in the Financial Year 2022-23 valued Rs. 67,52,392 lakhs. The list of sales through retail shops and orders are as follows:

Table No. 2 Sales through Retail Shops and Orders

S.No.	Sales from Retail Stores	Sales Amount	Percentage of Total Sales
01	SPS Jatashankar Campus, Madhya Pradesh	Rs. 8.50 Lakhs	12.59%
02	SPS Neemkheda Campus, Madhya Pradesh	Rs. 1.52 Lakhs	2.25%
03	Online Store Sales	Rs. 0.91 Lakhs	1.35%
04	Kriti Eco Boutique, Pondicherry	Rs. 3.30 Lakhs	4.89%
05	Maya Lifestyle (Kraft work), Mysore	Rs. 0.023 Lakhs	0.03%
06	Mesh, Local Shopping Centre, New Delhi	Rs. 0.16 Lakhs	0.25%
07	Craft Circle, Mumbai	Rs. 0.21 Lakhs	0.31%
08	Barakat Bundle, Ratlam	Rs. 0.83 Lakhs	1.24%
09	Serenity, Bangalore	Rs. 0.55 Lakhs	0.82%
10	Shreelata Krishnan	Rs. 0.17 Lakhs	0.25%
11	Studio Uga, Bengaluru	Rs. 0.49 Lakhs	0.07%
12	Ambara, Bangalore	Rs. 0.49 Lakhs	0.73%
13	Ikikai Lifestyle	Rs. 0.31 Lakhs	0.46%
14	Jhappi Store	Rs. 0.20 Lakhs	0.30%
15	Ram Rahim Pragati Producer Company, Bagli	Rs. 0.46 Lakhs	0.69%
16	Rangсутra Craft India Pvt Ltd	Rs. 0.38 Lakhs	0.57%
17	Twelve By Two, Lifestyle Store, Bengaluru	Rs. 0.50 Lakhs	0.74%
18	Safe Harvest Private Limited, Bengaluru	Rs. 0.17 Lakhs	0.26%
19	Samaj Pragati Sahayog	Rs. 3.78 Lakhs	5.60%
20	Neemkheda Bhawan	Rs. 0.69 Lakhs	1.02%
21	Shreya Sekhri, Mumbai	Rs. 0.26 Lakhs	0.38%
22	Sasha Association Kolkata	Rs. 0.20 Lakhs	0.31%
Total		Rs. 23.71 Lakhs	35.12%

Table No. 3 Sales of Honey through Retail Shops and Orders

S.No.	Retail Shops	Sales Amount	Percentage of Total Sales
01	SPS JS Campus, Madhya Pradesh	Rs. 0.95 Lakhs	1.41%
02	SPS Neemkheda Campus, Madhya Pradesh	Rs. 1.04 Lakhs	1.55%
Total		Rs. 2.02 Lakhs	2.97%

Table No. 4 Sales through Export and Client Orders

S.No.	Client	Sales Amount	Percentage of Total Sales
01	Labvisby, Sweden- Maria Camila Jensen	Rs. 5.62 Lakhs	8.33%
02	Rani & Reine, Germany- Sarah Dunn	Rs. 2.83 Lakhs	4.20%
03	Woven Studio, United Kingdom- Laura Miles	Rs. 12.54 Lakhs	18.57%
Total		Rs. 21 Lakhs	31.10%

Table No. 5 Sales through Bulk Orders

S.No.	Client	Sales Amount	Percentage of Total Sales
01	TRIFED, Bhopal	Rs. 10.50 Lakhs	14.89%
	Total	Rs. 10.50 Lakhs	14.89%

Table No. 6 Sales through Exhibitions

S.No.	Name and Location	Dates	Sales Amount	Percentage of Total Sales
01	Bhopal Exhibition	16th to 17th July 2022	Rs. 0.65 Lakhs	0.97%
02	Fashionista Exhibition, Mumbai	20th to 24th July & 27th to 30th July 2022	Rs. 4.83 Lakhs	7.17%
03	M.P. Tourism, Bhopal Exhibition	6th to 10th September 2022	Rs. 0.72 Lakhs	1.06%
04	Trifed Indore Haat Exhibition	25th to 31st May 2022	Rs. 1.4 Lakhs	1.54%
05	MPTB Exhibition Indore	7th-to 12th January 2023	Rs. 0.35 Lakhs	0.52%
06	Trifed Delhi Exhibition	16th to 27th February 2023	Rs. 3.14 Lakhs	4.65%
Total			Rs. 10.75 Lakhs	15.92%

9. SPS COMMUNITY MEDIA



SPS Community Media is a fulltime in-house professional audio visual production unit, articulating all SPS endeavours, translating ideas, practices and knowledge into films in a dynamic, interactive process in partnership with the community. SPS Community Media has produced more than 250 films on subjects concerning water management, sustainable agriculture, participatory groundwater management, best practices and success stories of community run People's institutions etc.

SPS Community Media helps the organisation to connect with the people through films, facilitating screenings regularly in village homes through handset pocket projectors in interactive sessions. Currently, we are conducting around 200 screenings every month across 600 villages. Many of the households in these villages get exposed to a new idea every month, engaging in discussions about livelihoods, soil fertility, government entitlements, climate uncertainties, commodity marketing, loans and bank linkages and much more.

Our films are also screened through the People's Mobile Cinema in open-air venues on a big screen, bringing the experience of cinema alive in remote tribal villages. Once the monsoon recedes and the grounds are dry enough to sit, the mobile cinema travels from village to village, screening films in as many as 100 venues every season. More than 30,000 people become a part of these screenings every year.

9.1 SPS Community Media (2022-23)

Media Dissemination (2022-23)		
S.No.	Particulars	Total
01	Film Screenings	1758
	• Interactive film screenings in small groups	1543
	• People's Mobile Cinema – open-air film screening	136
	• No. of school session	05
	• Films screened in classroom sessions	74
02	Audio story listening in small groups	305
03	No. of films screened	118
04	No. of podcast audio stories	15
05	No. of village where films and Stories are screened	391
06	No. People's Groups [Dissemination outreach]	774
07	No. of SHG Cluster [Dissemination outreach]	30
08	No. of Anganwadi [Dissemination outreach]	10
09	No. People's Groups [Dissemination outreach]	774
10	No. of films Produced	12
11	Food Diaries Melghat Location	02
12	No. of audio stories Produced (TERRA TALES बदलती जमीन पलटते पन्ने)	00
13	No. audience (approximately)	25000

9.2 Media Production

Though the film dissemination was put on hold, our team continued with media production.

Media Production		
S.No.	Particulars	Total
01	Films Produced	12

1. Flower of Mother Earth (16 Min)



Natthu kaka waits for the rains with much hope each year, hoping to find the wild mushrooms (jameen maa ka phool) which spring out when the rains hit the ground. He finds them when he goes to graze his goats in the forests. He specially mentions the taste of these mushrooms, and talks of its nutrition too. He reminisces the times from his childhood when they were abundant and the taste he would enjoy thoroughly as a boy. With receding forests and erratic rains, it is hard to find these edible mushrooms. Natthu kaka disseminates the knowledge he has- of wild plants and their medicinal values with the new generation. This film is a story of his relationship with the forests and the times he has spent in its lap.



2. Zinda Kiya Jangal (05 Min 37 Sec)



Since 2020, Samaj Pragati Sahayog, with the community and the government bodies in Melghat, Maharashtra, began work on Community Forest Rights (CFR). Sosokheda, a village where 110 Adivasi families live, earned the rights to 405 hectares of forest lands as a part of CFR in 2012 but until 2020, there have been no changes in the conditions of the community utilizing what these lands have to offer. SPS has been regularly working on supporting the community by offering information and through initiatives. In 2020, 75 hectares of forest land was chosen by the community to avoid grazing completely and the Forest Department planned a plantation drive. This proposal was put forward in the Gram Sabha and a decision to implement it was taken on this platform. Through community contribution, 5000 saplings were planted and in four days, this humongous yet ecologically crucial task was undertaken. The community was supported in this initiative by representatives of the Forest Department, the Adivasi Vikas Vibhag, SDO-Dharni, Tahsildar-Dharni, and other government departments in this region.

3. Loo Se Kaki Bimar Kaka Kare Desi Upchaar (04 Min 52 Sec)



This film highlights the fruit billa (bel fruit) which is collected from the forests and juice is prepared of it to beat the heat. The film covers the benefits and the memories and experiences of an elderly man in Laxmi Nagar village.

4. समूह समूह की बात नियम - 1

(02 Min 48 Sec)

This animation film describes an important rule of obtaining the receipt that should be provided instead of the money that is deposited by group members. The film depicts the difficulties and conflict that may arise if the receipt is not provided by the group leader and not requested by the person depositing the money. Obtaining a receipt is of the utmost importance if the group is to operate smoothly.



5. Girwala Ke Anokhe Rang Kaka Kaki Ke Sang

(04 Min 11 Sec)

Indian Laburnum (Amaltas), flowers are not only beautiful but have properties that make it beneficial to people. A sautéed vegetable dish made of flowers is considered a very nutritious meal. Shankar Kaka of Mansinghpura and his wife Shobha Kaki demonstrate their experience in gathering them and making a delicious vegetable curry out of them. They also describe the many medicinal benefits of this plant and its flowers in this film.



6. Nahar Ka Pani Akhiri Khet Tak

(13 Min 14 Sec)

The government maybe building big dams to provide water to agricultural land but various issues crop up and prevent the water from reaching the farmers for whom the dam was originally intended. This film tells the story of one such village, Semlikheda, and its determined farmers who came up with a plan of action by working together and were able to bring water to their dry lands after years of struggle. This inspirational film is the story of grit and perseverance.



7. Ambadi in my Basket (Mhari Topli Ma: Ambadi)

(06 Min 14 Sec)



Ambadi in my Basket (Mhari Topli Ma: Ambadi) is part of the series on local food. Hari bai from Potla, a remote tribal village in the Narmada Valley loves 'ambadi' (English name Roselle), a seasonal tangy vegetable. She vouches on the nutrition values of 'ambadi' for her incomparable energy and good health even in her old age. The film follows one season of Hari bai sowing, harvesting and relishing the tangy dish along with the process of storing its magenta petals to enjoy it through the year.

8. Fasal Beema

(30 Min 01 Sec)



The film depicts the benefits and pitfalls of the crop insurance scheme introduced by the Prime Minister. It takes us through the process that farmers must follow to join this program and the problems they encounter on the way with insurance companies and government offices. It raises pertinent questions about the scheme's operation and the need to help make the process easier for farmers and receive adequate compensation in time.

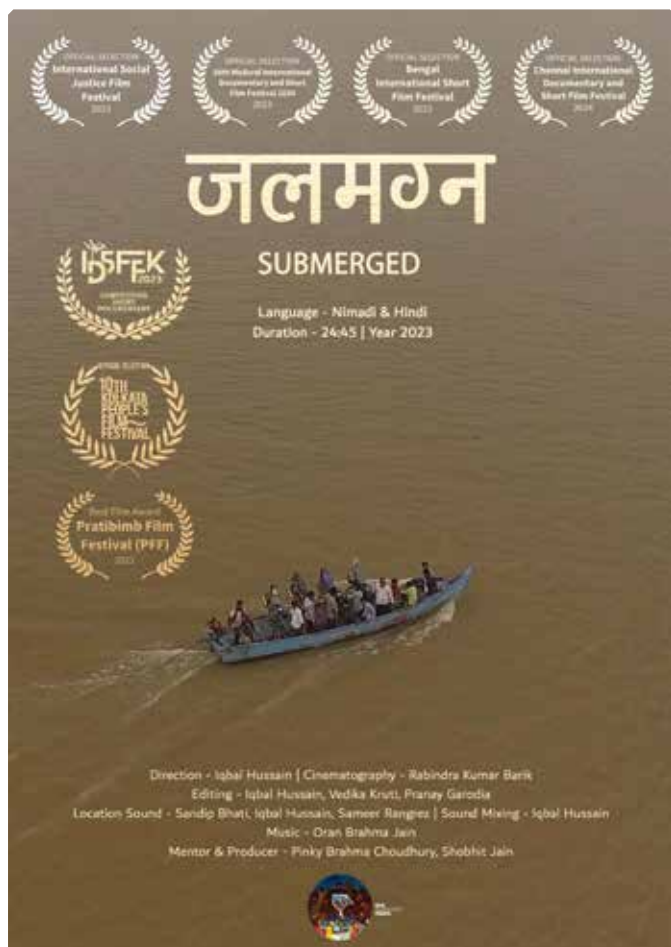
9. Taking Water Upstream

(17 Min 09 Sec)



This film depicts a coming together of farmers in installing a collectively managed lift irrigation system highlighting the resilience of the water-deprived residents of Devaliya Village. Anything can be achieved when people come together so what if the task is to take water upstream?

10. Submerged (24 Min 45 Sec)



Kotmir, a village in the Dharaji Panchayat, was under the submergence area of the Omkareswar Dam built in the Narmada River. But many of the people from Kotmir had refused to leave the village due to unsettled compensation packages and they lived a subsistence life as migrant labourers in the cities. When they were forced to return home during the country wide lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these migrant labourers faced a unique situation. They too had no work but the home-returned villagers also were left without any village body to address their issue as Dharaji Panchayat was dissolved as the villages were officially ‘under the submergence area’ They could not even avail the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a social scheme which helped secure the lost income of millions

of home-returned migrant workers at that time. The film follows their saga and the struggle to avail the benefits of the MGNREGA.

11. Pushpa’s Rickshaw (14 Min 02 Sec)



Initiated by Bagli Pragati Samiti, Puspha Didi of Charbardi Village brought a positive change in her village by becoming the first women rickshaw driver in the area. It’s a great relief for the commuters in her village but more importantly, it gives Pushpa a new identity.



12. Oyster Mushrooms

Mhari Topli Ma: Bans Bhamori

(13 Min 22 Sec)



Foraging into the forest, hunting for the exotic wild edible greens is an art that comes with experience and the passion for the seasonal wild food which is inherent in most of the older generation people from the Ratanpur village, situated by the banks of the Narmada river. Part of a series called Mhari Topli Ma (What's in My Basket), this film gives a glimpse of that passion and love as they go looking for the oyster mushrooms in the forest of Jayanti Mata in central India.



9.3 Report on Mobile Cinema Screening

Introduction

In April and May, the mobile cinema screening initiative of the Community Media program extended its reach to 27 villages within the region where the Social Progress Society (SPS) operates. This report outlines the key activities, films screened, and the impact of these mobile cinema screenings.

Film Screenings

Highlighted Issues

The mobile cinema screening initiative aimed to shed light on several critical issues in the region. The following films were screened to address these concerns:

MGNREGA and “Khanti ki Roti”: In villages where MGNREGA work opportunities were limited, the film **“Khanti ki Roti”** was showcased to provide insights into the scheme’s benefits and application processes. The Health & Nutrition and Entitlements Team addressed questions and concerns.

Malnutrition and “Buniyad”: Films like “Buniyad” were instrumental in visually demonstrating the positive changes in children’s health when severe acute malnourished children are taken to Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs).

Depleting Groundwater and “P se Pyaaz, P se Paisa, P se Paani”: This film addressed the pressing issue of depleting groundwater due to large-scale cultivation of water-intensive crops like onions. It triggered discussions on water management, costs, monocropping, and cultural losses.

9.3.1 Impact on the Community



Discussion about ground water exploitation with village people

The screenings of “P se Pyaaz, P se Paisa, P se Paani” sparked a range of emotional reactions, including tears, anger, self-realization, and commitments to reconsider the practice of onion cultivation. The film made clear the challenges faced by smallholders who lacked storage facilities for their onion harvest, leading to significant water wastage.

9.3.2 Engagement with Youth

To engage with the younger generation, the films were shown in higher secondary schools. These screenings encouraged meaningful conversations about agroecology and water conservation. Discussions included topics like historical crops, water usage, and groundwater management. The students actively participated, often leading to commitments to ration water usage within their families and work towards groundwater revitalization.



To take forward understanding of ground water to school children through screening of films about the crops grown in the area

9.3.3 Collaborations

The mobile cinema screenings were conducted in collaboration with the Health and Nutrition programs and Agriculture programs. Films related to MNREGA were screened in partnership with the Panchayat, providing insights into changes in the wage process. The screenings also emphasized the importance of not accepting meager wages for MNREGA work and encouraged collaboration with the Panchayat.

For farmers struggling with financial challenges, films like “NPM Chana” and “Mantra of five leaves” were shown to demonstrate how the Non-Pesticidal Management (NPM) method could reduce farming costs.

Discussion and Education

The mobile cinema initiative has been extended to the Melghat location, where films related to community concerns, including agriculture, livestock, and forest conservation, are being shown. Group programs have been initiated to facilitate discussions and gather the experiences and insights of community members.



9.4 Photographic Documentation in Project Work

Photography plays an integral role within the operations of the Community Media team, serving as a vital component for both the ABF Project and the HDFC Project in Khategaon. The application of still photography for documentation purposes offers numerous advantages, and here, we elaborate on its importance within these projects.

9.4.1 ABF Project

The ABF Project extends its footprint across multiple locations, encompassing all areas except for the specific 15 villages covered under the HDFC project. Within the ABF Project, photography has proven to be a valuable asset in several ways:

9.4.2 Visual Documentation

Photography serves as an indispensable tool for visually documenting project activities, milestones, and outcomes. It captures the essence of the work being carried out, providing a comprehensive visual record.

9.4.3 Communication and Reporting

Photographic documentation aids in effective communication, enabling the team to convey the project's progress and impact to stakeholders, partners, and the wider community. The saying, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” aptly applies in this context.

9.4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular photographic records facilitate ongoing monitoring and evaluation of project activities. They help in assessing the effectiveness of interventions and making informed decisions for project improvement.

9.4.5 Awareness and Advocacy

Visual evidence obtained through photography can be a powerful advocacy tool. It can be used to raise awareness about project objectives, attract support, and advocate for change within the community or at higher levels of governance.

9.4.6 Documentation for Historical Reference

Over time, these photographic records become a valuable historical reference for the project. They preserve the project's journey and achievements, providing context for future initiatives.

9.5 HDFC Project

Within the HDFC Project in Khategaon, where the Community Media team dedicates four days each month to project activities, the significance of photographic documentation is equally pronounced:



Intensive photo documentation of HDFC Project in Khategaon by SPS Community Media Team

9.5.1 Focused Documentation

Given the time constraints, photographic documentation within the HDFC Project is particularly essential. It allows for the precise capture of activities within the short window of engagement.

9.5.2 Performance Evaluation

Photographs provide a tangible means of evaluating the progress of the project in these specific villages. They assist in tracking changes and improvements over time.

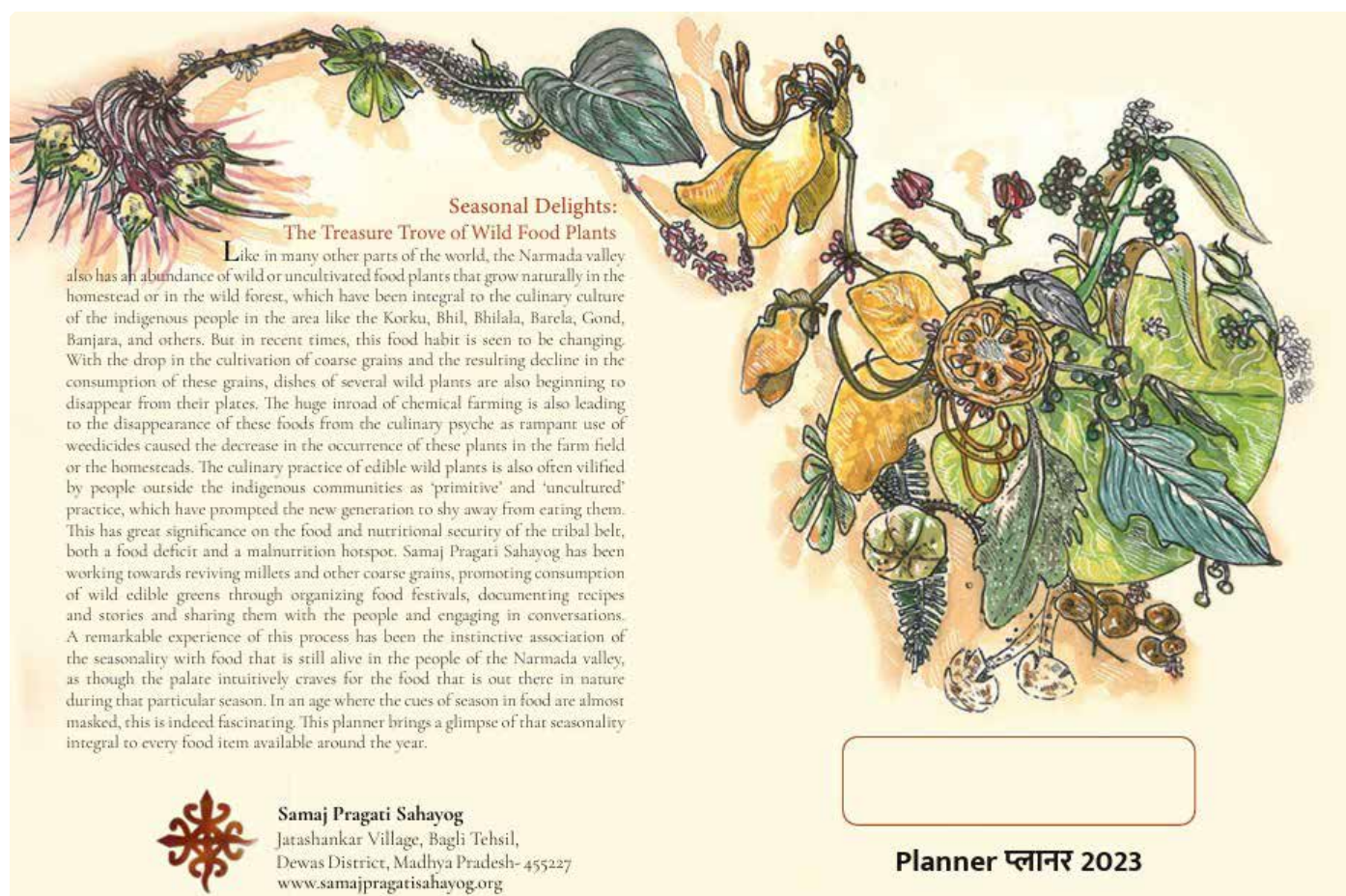
9.5.3 Communication with Stakeholders

Photographs act as a bridge between the project team and stakeholders. They enable transparent communication and ensure that the work undertaken is well-documented and shared with those involved.

9.5.4 Community Engagement

Photography engages the local community by involving them in the documentation process. It empowers community members to actively participate in showcasing their project's achievements.

9.6 SPS Planner 2023



The Community Media team has introduced a Planner for 2023, focusing on the theme of “Seasonal Treasure.” This planner has been distributed to every member of the organization, serving as a valuable resource for planning and documenting the year’s activities. In addition to offering a calendar of events and activities, the planner also provides information about the natural treasures that grow each month, highlighting their nutritional value.

9.6.1 The Planner for 2023 serves multiple purposes within the organization

Yearly Planning: The planner assists organization members in mapping out their future plans and schedules according to the organization’s annual proceedings and events calendar.

Documentation: It serves as a documentation tool, enabling members to record and preserve essential information about their work and projects throughout the year.

Seasonal Treasure Insights: The planner provides valuable insights into the seasonal treasures that naturally occur each month, emphasizing the nutritional value of these resources. This information is essential for promoting sustainable and healthy living.



9.7 Green Hub (Central India) Film Festival

On the 16th and 17th July, 2022, the Green Hub Film Festival for its Central Indiana chapter was held at Rabindra Bhawan, Bhopal. SPS Community Media film, **“P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani”** was selected for a special screening at the festival. It led to several discussions during post-screening conversation with the filmmakers. The film was lauded especially by wildlife filmmaker, Krishnendu Bose, who commented how the film holds up a mirror to the society and its workings.

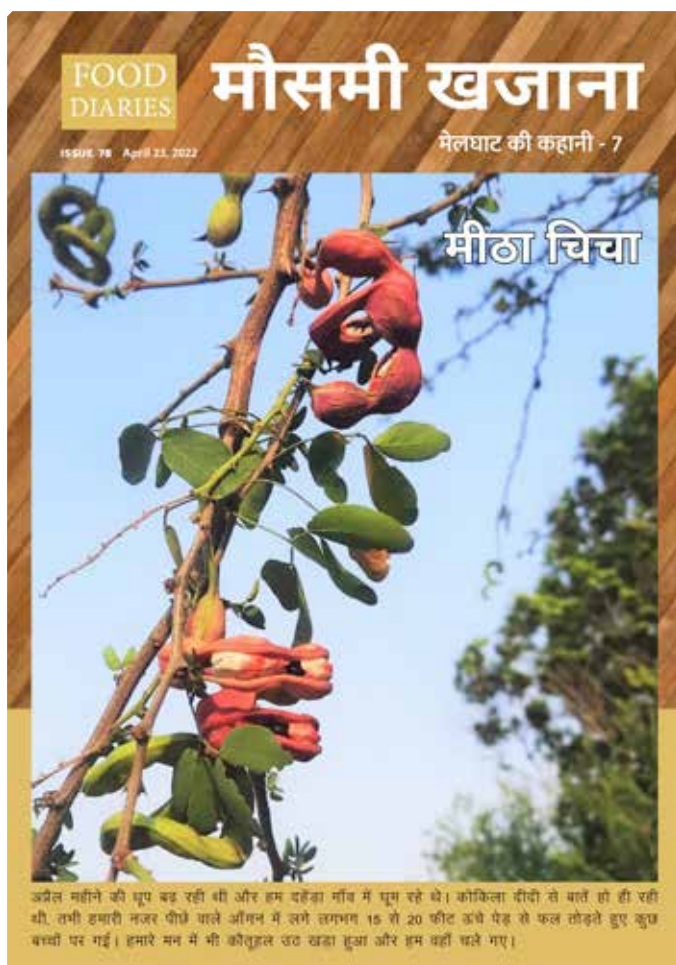
The Central Indian chapter, supported by Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF), had representation in the festival as its director Mr. Pramathesh Ambasta was present who highlighted Green Hub’s work and future. The Festival was attended by ex-CM of Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Digvijay Singh, as well as the youngest Sarpanch of India, Ms. Bhakti Sharma who brought out various insights of the rural and the development initiatives and the power of rural youth. It was widely attended by scholars and filmmakers of repute from across the country.



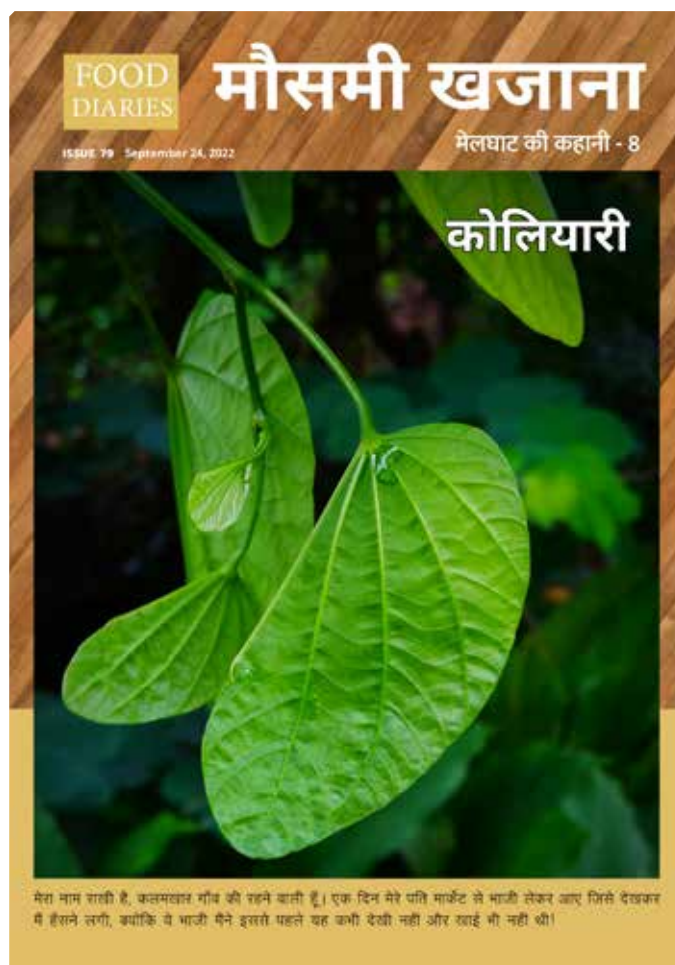
SPS Community Media Team answering audience questions after presenting their film

9.8 Food Diaries

Melghat falls under Dharani village, situated on the border of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. This location is rich in uncultivated or wild food. As a continuation of our e-magazine series Mausami Khazana Food Diary, the media team initiated the Melghat team to photo document and write about these wild edible foods. The e-magazine is circulated internally within the organization and read out in people's groups to aid in their discussions about nutrition with the people from this area. With the changing times our food is rapidly changing as well. The Melghat team wants to document these nutritious edible wild foods before they become extinct due to the onslaught of chemical agricultural practices. So far 2 new food diaries from Melghat region have been published and shared.



1 - Mitha Chicha



2 - Koliyari

9.9 The Ant Organization's Exposure Visit

5 companions from Ant Sanstha, North East India (Assam) had come to visit the SPS. Out of which four had exposure with fellow media programs. Community media team has recently been formed in Ant organization and they are still in the initial stage. They are here to understand the nuances of making films and what is the relation of films with the community. How the SPS community media team along with making the film takes it to the people of the community and motivates them to talk about their rights.

What role can the film play on a serious topic? Discussed with. What is the process of shooting with the character in the film, how to translate the idea of the film into the script, how the sound is recorded and other details. Questions were answered. Along with the Agriculture Program and Watershed Development Program team, I went to the village and discussed with the farmers and our workers. They also understood the role of the community in this work.



SPS Community Media team discussing all aspects of film production with colleagues from The Ant organization

9.10 Accolade



- The announcement of the The National Film Awards gave much reason for joy to the SPS Community Media programme as well as for SPS, as the production, **“Jaadui Jangal”** won the **National Film Award for Best On-Location Sound Recording**. This award was presented to Sandip Bhati and Pradeep Lekhwar of the SPS Community Media team.

- **The Bird, The Priest and The Sixteen Millet Thieves** and **P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani** were selected for the 14th International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala. The film **P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani** won the award for Best Editing (Long Documentary) in this prestigious film festival. The festival was held in Trivandrum, Kerala from the 26th to the 31st of August. Milind Chhabra, the associate director of the first film and the director of the latter film got the opportunity to attend the festival. As many as 261 national and international films were screened at the festival, with eminent filmmakers acting as the jury and the selection committee members. The festival was organized by the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy, and the chief minister of Kerala, Pinarayi Vijayan, along with his ministers presided over the opening and award ceremonies. The festival was hosted at the Kairali - Sree – Nila theater complex, with the 6-day schedule filled with film screenings, talks with jury members and music and dance performances. Veteran documentary filmmaker Reena Mohan was presented the lifetime achievement award at the festival, and due to her long-standing relationship with SPS, Milind had the great chance to interact with her on multiple occasions throughout the festival. SPS's two films were among the thirteen long documentaries selected in the competition category, which were shown in the Kairali theater screen, scheduled across the six days. SPS's films were shown on the last day, the 31st, and although because of the festival fatigue only a few audience members turned up to watch the films, the ones who did watch them gave their reviews and appreciation. Later in the day, at the award ceremony, **'P se Pyaaz, P se Paisa, P se Paani'** won the **Kumar Talkies award for Best Editing**, received by the co-editors of the film- **Shobhit Jain, Jyoti Garhewal Lassar and Milind Chhabra**, adding another award to the growing list of awards won by SPS Community Media. Milind was presented the award on behalf of his co-editors of the film. With this, the six-day festival came to an end, with many filmmakers meeting and congratulating each other for the films screened at the festival.



Milind Chhabra receiving award on behalf of SPS Community Media
at 14th Kerala Film Festival



- Our film **“Submerged”** was awarded the **Best Documentary Film Award** at the **16th Pratibimb Film Festival, Ahmednagar Film Festival**.
- In the 11th Chennai International Documentary and Short Film Festival, our film **“Pa Se Pyaaz, Pa Se Paisa, Pa Se Paani”** was awarded the **Best Indian Long Documentary Film Award**.
- SPS Community Media film **“Bandhuwa” (Bonded)** has been selected at **Philadelphia’s BlackStar Film Festival**. Of 1200 films submitted, 76 films have been chosen from 27 countries, of which one is Bandhua.
- Three of SPS Community Media films were selected at the Society for Visual Anthropology Film and Media Festival (SVA FMF). These are **Pathshala, Mhari Topli mein Basta, Mai aur Meri Bakri**.
- At the All Living Things Environmental Film Festival (ALT EFF), the film **“The Bird, The Priest and The Sixteen Millet Thieves”** was selected.
- 20th Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF) – Our film **“Bandhua”** is one of the two Indian films that have been officially selected in the international competition department at the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival.
- 16th Signs Film Festival, Kerala Two of our films were selected in
 1. **P for Pyaaz (Onion), P for Paisa (Money), P for Paani (Water)**
 2. **The Bird, The Priest and The Sixteen Millet Thieves**
- Urban Climate Film Festival 2023 our film **“Hailstorm”** was selected



- Our film **“P se Pyaaz, P se Paisa, P se Paani ”** was selected in the 9th KOLKATA PEOPLE’S FILM FESTIVAL.
- 11th Chennai International Documentary and Short Film Festival Five of our films were selected.
 1. **P for Pyaaz (Onion), P for Paisa (Money), P for Paani (Water)**
 2. **The Bird, The Priest and The Sixteen Millet Thieves**
 3. **Hailstorm**
 4. **Bonded**
 5. **Entrance Exam**
- 11th edition of Liberation Docfest Bangladesh Three of our films were selected.
 1. **P for Pyaaz (Onion), P for Paisa (Money), P for Paani (Water)**
 2. **The Bird, The Priest and The Sixteen Millet Thieves**
 3. **Bonded**

9.11 Capacity Building Workshops organized by SPS Community Media

On 30th April 2022, an open session and training were held at Baba Amte Lok Sashaktikaran Kendra, Neemkheda, which was attended by around 80 mitans and professionals from across locations. In this capacity-building session, Mr. Sidharth Patil from the Advanced Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (ACWADAM), discussed interesting insights with the team and prodded them to think further on the lines of crisis, groundwater, and so on. He brought up the need for discussion on crop budgeting with farmers in the villages and crop selection. SPS founders Dr. Debashish Banerji, Dr. Mridula Banerji, PS Vijayshankar, Pinky Brahma Chaudhury, Nivedita Banerji, and Shobhit Jain as well as noted Conservation filmmaker, Rita Banerji, were also present in this session who further led the conversation. . Mitans and professionals from different locations also brought in their observations and commented on the film P se Pyaaz, P se Paisa, P se Paani which premiered at this session.

A strategy was also devised on how to take the message of groundwater conservation to the community through this film.

As the issue of undocumented/incorrectly documented citizens took center stage a couple of years ago during the CAA/NRC debate that took the country by storm, here is a story of improper documentation of self and family which leads to dejections after a catastrophe. The film Gaar (Hailstorm) follows the loss people went through after a sudden calamity, the State's promises, and the irregularities in documentation from almost a decade ago.

This film which has gained acclaim in both national and international circles was finally premiered for the SPS team in order to set the stage for a capacity-building session on ensuring correct information on documents relating to one's identity. An endeavor that the Health & Nutrition and Entitlements team has been working on. This session also allowed space for planning for a future when such situations might arise again and the preparedness that needs to be set in motion. This session was attended by 60 Mitaan and professionals from the H&N and Entitlements as well as the Hissedari Sabha teams.



Discussing with SPS Team how to present the film among the people

9.12 Green Hub (Central India) Script and Story Telling Class

SPS Community Media was invited by Green Hub (Central India) to train its second batch of fellows in Bhopal on storytelling and research. To this end, team members Azad Singh, Iqbal Hussain, and Sandip Bhati took these sessions, covering visual and audio storytelling. This workshop took the fellows through the importance and techniques of research, particularly marking out how to start and end a story, what interesting points to pick on, how to develop a story around a chosen topic, etc. Films and audio stories made by SPS Community Media were used as tools to deliver this three-day-long workshop.



How to tell stories through films being discussed with Green Hub fellows

9.13 Hatpipliya Mahila Pragati Samiti Training

A training session was held at the HMPS office on 29th August 2022, at the Federation Office, where through the screening of “P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani”. This led to discussions on cash cropping of onions in the region without concern for the natural resources that it depletes severely in the process. The Malwa region, where Hatpipliya is located, was once an area with a rich groundwater supply but it is radically different now. This session helps to discuss this in villages.

9.14 Training SPS Staff on Photographic Documentation

In Udaynagar, Khategaon, and Maheshwar, photography capacity-building exercises were carried out to build a team in respective locations where they could document their work effectively. These workshops walk the participants through lighting, sunlight, object placement, and common mistakes of blurred or out-of-focus images, closed eyes of the person clicked, etc. which should be avoided.

Following a theoretical understanding, a practical exercise is carried out to understand grid lines and aspect ratios, etc. in practice. This also helps them understand their previous mistakes hands-on and correct them. The objective of this workshop is to enable the location functionaries to continuously take suitable photographs for reporting and documentation of program activities.

Hatpipliya Location - A photography workshop was organized by SPS Community Media with the workers at Hatpipliya Location. In the photography workshop, how better and better photos can be taken in sunlight, its methods were explained. Along with this, the common mistakes made while taking photographs such as closing of eyes, cutting off hands and feet, being out of focus, blurring and secing etc. were also explained. After the theory class, everyone got a photo shoot done to do the practical. It was also told about photo storage that whether the method is right, such as keeping the photos in different folders with the name information like topic, location, program, activity etc. in a better way so that the photo can be easily found when needed.



10. NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

10.1 National Consortium of CSOs on NREGA

Backdrop

The National Consortium of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on NREGA is a collaborative network of diverse civil society groups united in their efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Established in 2008 through the leadership of Samaj Pragati Sahayog, currently active in 11 central Indian states, the consortium operates alongside 104 partners across 87 disadvantaged districts. Its primary goal is to bolster rural livelihoods, with a particular focus on empowering marginalized groups such as women, indigenous peoples, Dalits, and small-scale farmers. Central to its mission is the creation of sustainable livelihood assets, including land and water, by maximizing NREGA resources.

Embracing participatory principles, the consortium prioritizes community engagement in both planning and execution, fostering partnerships with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and other relevant government bodies.

The consortium's on-the-ground efforts are concentrated in three key areas pivotal to addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by rural populations: mitigating drought through effective land and water management, alleviating poverty by imparting livelihood skills, and curbing distress migration by offering viable alternative livelihood opportunities.

In essence, the consortium strives to combat drought, poverty, and distress migration through targeted interventions aimed at enhancing rural resilience and fostering sustainable development.

10.2 CSO Partner Network in Three Districts of Maharashtra

The essence of fostering a robust civil society and ensuring government accountability lies in cultivating and sustaining community capacity. The CSO partner network serves as a vital instrument in this endeavor, facilitating the creation of resilient civil societies that pool knowledge and skills for collective progress. Within this initiative, a platform has been established for partners operating in various vulnerable and disadvantaged districts like Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, and Yavatmal to unite in advancing the shared objective of enhancing the income levels of tribal and marginalized communities.

Collaborating entities such as Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS), Gramin Samasya Mukti Trust (GSMT), Gramarogya, REWARD, and Dharamitra work in tandem to realize the project's outcomes.

Central to their efforts is the formation, reinforcement, and capacity building of vulnerable communities, nurturing community leaders and institutions to foster robust civil societies empowered to hold the state accountable and bolster state investment in community income augmentation. The collaboration spans four CSO partners operating across Amravati, Yavatmal, and Wardha districts, leveraging expertise in watershed management, agriculture, livestock, community forest rights (CFR), and ecological services, among other areas. Knowledge exchange and alignment of goals are facilitated through regular meetings and training sessions.



Shashi Bhushan from SATHI giving training to SPS EH&N Team on Panchayati Raj

10.3 Capacity Building of CSO Partners

Each CSO partner brings unique expertise to the table, which is harnessed for the collective capacity building of all involved. Training sessions primarily conducted at the Baba Amte People's Empowerment Center in Neemkheda serve to broaden perspectives on various issues, integrating theoretical discussions with practical strategies and field exposure. However, the emergence of pandemic conditions nationwide may have necessitated the cancellation or postponement of several capacity-building activities and training programs. This could potentially impede the overall progress of the project and hinder the CSO partners' ability to effectively share expertise and enhance capacity within the project framework.

10.4 Agriculture and RRPPCL

SPS stands as a trailblazing organization advocating for the adoption of non-pesticide techniques and low-input sustainable agriculture to reduce reliance on synthetic chemical fertilizers and pesticides in farming practices. Recognizing the challenge of reaching the entire country, we prioritize training our partner organizations in various sustainable agricultural methods. One such initiative is RRPPCL (Ram Rahim Pragati Producer Company), a producer company sponsored by SPS that sources commodities from smallholder farmers affiliated with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the region.

In the fiscal year 2022-23, the Baba Amte Centre for People's Empowerment hosted training sessions for NCNF (National Coalition for Natural Farming), Sahyadri School, Prayag Samriddhi Producer Company, Shiv Nadar University, NPFwFF (N+3F), and GGGI. The training focused on sustainable practices including soil health enhancement, intercropping, non-pesticide agriculture, bio repellent use, commodity aggregation, and market linkages. These sessions featured a blend of classroom lectures and hands-on field experiences to deepen understanding and application of livelihood activities.

10.5 Watershed

Integrated watershed management stands as a cornerstone program of SPS, drawing from over 30 years of expertise in the field. We extend training to partner organizations on various watershed management and conservation methods. Topics covered include the ridge-to-valley process, measurement of watershed structures, planning and implementation strategies, different types of watershed structures, and alignment with MGNREGA initiatives.

Participants from organizations such as IIFM, Synergy Sansthan, GGGI Nepal, Jamia Milia Islamia, and other partner institutions engaged in these training sessions.





10.6 Water Practitioners' Network

The Water Practitioners Network (WPN) is a grassroots initiative aimed at catalyzing a shift in water management practices among various stakeholders, including water users, civil society organizations, researchers, institutions, and policymakers. It serves as a platform for sharing knowledge, highlighting best practices, and showcasing proofs of concepts to facilitate a transformative approach to water resource management in India. The vision of WPN is to harness the collective wisdom of water practitioners nationwide, focusing on critical issues such as demand management, water quality, and groundwater preservation. By tapping into the vast reservoir of experiences within the network, there is significant potential for cross-learning and collaboration among water practitioners, fostering expansion and scaling up of efforts both individually and collectively.

10.7 Objectives

1. Identify priorities concerning immediate relief, recovery, and rural economic rebuilding, enhancing resilience to external shocks like COVID-19 or natural disasters.
2. Streamline existing MGNREGA works to address emerging challenges such as those posed by COVID-19 and other natural calamities, evaluating successful implementation factors.
3. Identify new works aligned with current priorities under MGNREGA, adhering to the Act's core principles. Explore potential MGNREGA activities for coastal regions and suitable employment opportunities for the local populace.

