

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



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

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Mission and Vision Statement

SPS envisions a gender just, equitable and self-reliant society where women have access to and control over financial and other resources. The mission is to build and strengthen people's institutions led by women to support participatory, transparent, and decentralized governance.

Along with that, also building capacities of rural poor especially women and youth by promoting and strengthening self-reliant and sustainable institutions to enable them to lead the process of development for better quality of life.

1. Introduction

Over the past three decades, Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) has emerged as one of India's most prominent grassroots organizations, dedicated to addressing critical challenges related to water security and sustainable livelihoods. Operating primarily in the central Indian Adivasi belt, SPS has established a strong presence in some of the country's most marginalized and resource-deprived regions.

Through a comprehensive and community-driven approach, SPS collaborates with a wide network of partners to improve the lives of vulnerable populations. Our initiatives span over one million acres of land, impacting 72 of India's most impoverished districts. These areas, characterized by entrenched poverty, ecological fragility, and systemic exclusion, have greatly benefited from SPS's efforts to enhance water conservation, agricultural productivity, and access to livelihood opportunities.

‘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.

Overview of the Year

The year 2023-24 has been a period of growth, resilience, and impactful change for Samaj Pragati Sahayog. Driven by our commitment to empowering marginalized communities, we have made significant strides in areas such as agriculture, livelihoods, health, and social development.

For Watershed Development the successful completion of the Capacity Building Phase (CBP) under the NABARD Project marks a milestone in our watershed development journey. Complementing this, other significant efforts supported by ABF and APF have played a pivotal role in empowering local communities by conserving soil and water, ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

The Narmada Landscape Restoration Project (NLRP) in Maheshwar is nearing completion, showcasing exemplary demonstration models to enhance water availability in streams. Structures such as stop dams, check dams, farm ponds, gabions, loose boulder structures (LBS), and farm bunding have been established as part of this effort.

The Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) initiative has made remarkable progress across three areas in Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh, and one area in Melghat, Maharashtra. New water user groups are being formed, and the capacities of existing groups are being strengthened. Despite challenges in empowering these institutions, strategic planning and robust community engagement are helping address these obstacles effectively.

Additionally, new initiatives, such as the Support for Voluntary Organizations and watershed development projects in Bhagawanpura, continue to extend the impact of our interventions. These efforts highlight our commitment to sustainable water resource management and community-driven development.

In the financial year 2023-2024, a total of 2,339 **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** were successfully linked to banks, collectively **achieving savings of ₹63.76 crores** and **enabling loans worth ₹116.21 crores** to support their members' economic growth.

This year also witnessed a significant focus on digital literacy, including the establishment of computer centers, training on Android mobile usage, capacity building, bank linkages, and kirana distribution, empowering communities with essential digital and financial skills.

Several new initiatives were introduced to address diverse community needs, such as fisheries training, awareness camps on mental health and gender-based violence, and spoken English classes. In addition, livelihood creation was supported through the distribution of sewing machines, while digital smart initiatives and school bench distributions through social funds further strengthened community development.

During the September 2023 floods in Madhya Pradesh, SPS mobilized Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to deliver essential groceries and clothing to affected families as part of our **Emergency Relief and Resilience Initiative**. This swift, community-driven response showcased SPS's unwavering commitment to fostering disaster resilience and supporting recovery efforts in times of crisis.

The **Sustainable Agriculture program** has made significant strides this year, catering to a total of 15,308 farmers across an expansive **10,711.83 hectares of land in 273 villages**. Through the formation of **1,039 farmer groups**, the program has fostered collaboration and collective action, enabling farmers to enhance their agricultural practices and outcomes. The program emphasizes the adoption of nature-positive management practices, crop diversification, crop varietal trials, and the promotion of kitchen gardening. Additionally, training and capacity-building initiatives have played a pivotal role in empowering farmers with the knowledge and skills required for sustainable farming.

Several new initiatives were introduced this year to further strengthen the program's impact. These include the launch of a mobile application to provide farmers with real-time information and resources, and the establishment of Basic Resource Centres (BRCs) and Modern BRCs to improve access to quality inputs and technical expertise. Outreach efforts, such as wall painting campaigns and crop water budgeting, have also been instrumental in raising awareness and encouraging resource optimization at the community level.

Among the year's major highlights are action research on various crops, which generated valuable insights into sustainable practices, and successful demonstrations of Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) chili farming and dollar chickpea cultivation. These efforts have showcased the potential of innovative and sustainable approaches to agriculture, inspiring farmers to adopt practices that are both productive and climate-resilient.

The **Livestock Development Program** is a cornerstone of rural empowerment, rooted in its ability to actively engage and uplift communities through sustainable livestock management practices. This year, the program has successfully involved **11,330 members** in goat rearing and **5,165 members** in poultry farming, providing them with viable livelihood opportunities and contributing to their economic resilience.

The program focuses on a comprehensive approach to livestock care, including **treatment, vaccination, and deworming** services to ensure the health and productivity of the animals. Alongside this, significant strides have been made in **infrastructure expansion**, particularly through the construction and improvement of **goat sheds**, which enhance the overall living conditions for livestock and reduce the risks associated with poor housing.

Through continuous engagement, training, and capacity-building initiatives, the Livestock Development Program not only improves livestock management but also strengthens the knowledge base of rural communities. By equipping them with the tools and skills needed for efficient and sustainable practices, the program empowers individuals to achieve greater self-reliance and secure their livelihoods.

The **Entitlement, Health, and Nutrition** Team facilitated access to critical rights and entitlements such as pensions, Ayushman Bharat, and the Public Distribution System (PDS). The program also conducted health awareness camps, focusing on improving the health and nutrition of children, adolescent girls, and pregnant women, thereby addressing issues such as malnutrition and anemia, which are prevalent in the region. Additionally, the program promotes institutional deliveries and works toward advancing overall health and nutrition outcomes.

The **Community Media** Team produced films and podcasts for education and awareness. Digital literacy efforts equipped women with smartphone usage skills for financial inclusion, reducing the digital divide, and facilitating access to resources.

To **support Voluntary Organizations (SVO)**, SPS conducted capacity-building training sessions for partner NGOs, government employees, and students on watershed management, sustainable farming, and women's empowerment. These sessions fostered cross-learning and facilitated the scaling of SPS's models across diverse geographies.

2. Water Management

2.1 Introduction

The watershed programme of Samaj Pragati Sahayog was designed to deal with the issues emanating from lack of water availability. The tribal belt in Madhya Pradesh is prone to drought which presents some of the most pressing issues for the marginal farmers in those regions. The aim of the watershed programme has been to ensure that proper irrigation facilities are provided to marginal farmers, and that their livelihood options are secured. There is a lot of distress migration in some of the areas due to these reasons. The watershed programme of SPS began against this backdrop.

Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) has been actively engaged in watershed development across various locations in Central India, including Bhagwanpura, Maheshwar, Bhikangaon, Udainagar, Punjapura, Khategaon, and Melghat. These efforts aim to enhance water management, soil conservation, and livelihood opportunities in rural communities. SPS's holistic approach to watershed development encompasses community engagement, capacity building, and sustainable practices. This annual report highlights the overall progress of watershed development for the year 2023-24.

The watershed development and drinking water initiatives began last year in Bhagwanpura and are progressing well. Despite initial challenges in the field, the team successfully managed them. In Bhikangaon, the watershed works are also progressing smoothly. The completion of the CBP phase under the NABARD Project is a significant achievement including other watershed development works. Other watershed development efforts supported by ABF and APF are helping local communities sustain their livelihoods by conserving soil and water. The NLRP project in Maheshwar is nearing successful completion.

Excellent demonstration models have been set up to enhance water quantity in streams, with structures like stop dams, check dams, farm ponds, gabions, LBS, and farm bunding. However, the project faced issues with slow fund flow throughout its implementation phase, which slowed down watershed development efforts. In Khategaon, a substantial number of farm ponds (36) have been built across seven villages, significantly improving irrigation potential for farmers and groundwater levels in the area. The team overcame numerous challenges to achieve this success through effective planning and by building strong relationships with local communities.

The Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) initiative is making excellent progress in three areas in Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh and one area in Melghat, Maharashtra. New water user groups are being formed and capacity of established groups is being built effectively, although there are challenges in empowering these institutions. Strong planning and community communication are helping to address this issues.



With financial support from ABF and contributions from the community, the team have successfully constructed watercourses and underground pipelines. This has improved irrigation capabilities in the project villages and resolved waterlogging issues for numerous farmers. Additionally, the team successfully utilized the MGNREGA scheme to construct watercourses in the Paras Irrigation project (Punjabura), a first of its kind in the area.



Additionally, supporting voluntary organizations (SVO)' initiatives is an excellent effort aimed at transferring the leanings and experiences to other partner organizations working with similar objectives. SPS has organized numerous training sessions to impart knowledge on watershed development and facilitate learning transfer effectively.

2.2 Major Activities

2.2.1 Watershed Development Works

There are several locations across Madhya Pradesh in which SPS has intervened through its watershed programme. The major activities of the programme in these locations are listed below.

1. Bhagwanpura - The team is currently engaged in development activities across 28 villages within the Bhagwanpura area, located approximately 40 kilometers away from Khargone district. Recently, watershed development initiatives have been initiated here with a primary focus on soil and water conservation, improving drinking water access, and enhancing livelihood opportunities in remote areas.

In the initial phase, efforts were made to establish strong community relationships by organizing 12 meetings across different villages, with approximately 700 participants. These meetings were crucial in understanding the specific needs of the communities regarding watershed development. Additionally, transaction walks were conducted in villages Mohanpura, Dautkhedi, Guljhiri, Kherkundi, and Vishali, involving villagers and Gram Panchayat representatives to further comprehend local perspectives.

To assess the drinking water situation, visits were made to water sources in 10 villages within the project area, and water quality testing was conducted. Ensuring high standards in drinking water, the team focused on capacity building of team by organizing a four-day training session on water quality testing and arranging an exposure visit to Odisha state. The team organized PICO film screenings in four villages to help villagers learn about water and soil conservation. Additionally, the team completed a participatory rural appraisal to better understand the needs of the villages.





Farm bunding work was completed by the team in 08 villages (Lalpura, Hirapur, Mohanpura, Bhatud, Dautkhedi, Guljhiri, Kherkundi and Vaishali), in which 15774 running meters of farm bunding was developed generating 8114 person days of employment and spending Rs 19.70 lakh. Apart from this, Shramdan equal to Rs 41 thousand was done by the villagers.



17 Boulder Checks were constructed by the watershed team in collaboration with the community, in which 3 villages were constructed in Hirapur, Mohanpura and Guljhiri, in which Rs 70 thousand were spent. It is very important to carry out these activities in sloping hilly areas where the rate of soil erosion is very high.

Gabion construction work was completed by Watershed team in which

01 gabion has been completed and one is ongoing. The above gabion has been constructed in villages Hirapur and Mohanpura, in which 8 villagers will benefit.

The watershed team, in collaboration with the community, constructed a stop dam for creating the availability of water in the water-affected area in Bhagawanpura location, in which a stop dam was constructed near Kansingh Bhai's farm in village Hirapur, in which 08 farmers were directly benefited and 04 farms were indirectly benefited from the above work. Those who have been benefited will be able to get water for their Rabi crops. Rs 19.72 lakh was spent on the above work generating 667 Person Days of employment and generating 3600 Cubic meter Water Storage. A farm pond was being constructed in the farm field of Shankar Chhagan in village Mohanpura, which is currently in progress, the main objective of which is to provide protective irrigation in the winter session.

Bhagwanpura location was a new area for the SPS, whose environment none of the partners were familiar with. In such a situation, establishing relations with the villagers and gaining their trust in a short time was a big challenge for the team. Lack of support from the Panchayat and creating hurdles in watershed development work was a big challenge. However, the team is moving forward successfully with careful planning and hard work.

Watershed Development work in Bhagawanpura, Khargone

S.No.	Name of Project	Name of Activity	No. of Work (No. and running meter)	Storage of Water (In Cum)	Community Contribution (In Lakh)	Expenditure (In Lakh)	Generated Person Day
01	SCB	Stop Dam	1	3600	0.41	19.72	667
02		Farm Pond	1	3217		2.21	926
03		Gabion	1	-		1.89	136
04		Boulder Check	17	-		0.70	62
05		Farm Bunding	15774	-		19.70	8114
Total					0.41	44.24	9905





2. Maheshwar - Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) is working to improve the quantity and quality of water of selected tributaries of Narmada through inclusive and sustainable landscape management interventions in Maheshwar location supported by Indian Institute of Forest Management. The intervention area is in the catchment of the river Narmada between Omkareshwar and Maheshwar Dams (in a stretch of 55 kilometres) under Barwaha block (south bank) in Khargone district, Madhya Pradesh, India. The implementation of a landscaper treatment plan for 12000 ha area is under progress in the project area.

The project saw the construction of around 20 NRM structures, including stop dams, check dams, renovations of these dams, gabions, farm ponds, and loose boulder checks. These efforts have greatly enhanced water quantity and quality in the area. Significant farm bunding was also developed to improve soil moisture and control erosion. The project cost approximately Rs 1.88 cr and generated around 1,000 person-days of employment. These achievements have substantially increased water storage capacity, benefiting both surface and groundwater resources in the project area.

During this first quarter, the implementation of the landscape treatment plan progressed significantly in the project area. The watershed team constructed 16 Natural Resource Management (NRM) structures, including stop dams; check dams, gabions, loose boulder checks, farm ponds, and farm bunding. In the North Bank area, two stop dams were constructed in the villages of Aarsi and Lachora, one check dam was renovated, and three gabion structures were constructed in Lachora. Additionally, a farm pond for Devsingh Bhia and 198 running meters of loose boulder structures were completed in Lachora. In the South Bank area, the team worked on constructing three stop dams in the villages of Gulawad and Bagdara, one check dam, and farm bunding in Bagdara. The team also focused on nala training for stop dam renovation in Tarachand – Aarsi and farm bunding work.



Due to the rainy season, the progress of the landscape treatment plan slowed down. However, the watershed team managed to finalize the construction of farm bunding and install signage boards for 18

NRM structures. The procurement of stop dam gates was also completed during this period. Post-rainy season, the implementation of the landscape treatment plan gained momentum. The watershed team completed various NRM tasks, including the construction of stop dams, farm ponds, farm bunding, and gabion structures. Significant progress was made in farm bunding in the villages of Lachora and Nalwat, achieving 387.85 running meters by the end of the third quarter. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) for 10,000 hectares was prepared, reviewed by the Project Management Unit (PMU), and submitted for printing. In the North Bank area, two farm ponds were constructed in the village of Bagdara, which transformed the beneficiaries' agricultural land into irrigation land, improving their economic condition. Additionally, work began on two stop dams in the village of Gulavad. In the South Bank area, the construction of two gabions in the village of Kanapur was 95% complete.



The implementation of the landscape treatment plan continued to gain momentum after the rainy season. The watershed team completed various NRM tasks, including the construction of stop dams, farm bunding, loose boulder structures, and gabion structures. In the South Bank area, farm bunding

construction continued, achieving 258.85 running meters in the village of Lachora and 3168 running meters in the village of Nalwat.

This work cost Rs 3.82 lakh and generated 1243 person-days of labor. Four watershed structures were under construction in the North and South Bank areas, with an expenditure of Rs 46.59 lakh and the generation of 3587.5 person-days. The construction of two stop dams (Tara and Rajvadhanbhai) in the North Bank area was underway, with an expenditure of Rs 26.44 lakh and the generation of 1182 person-days. The construction of a stop dam in the village of Gulawad was 92% complete, costing Rs 14.60 lakh and generating 700.5 person-days.

The construction of gabion structures in the village of Kanapur was 95% complete, generating 77 person-days. In the South Bank area, the construction of loose boulder structures progressed well, with 93.70 running meters completed in the village of Lachora and 220.55 running meters completed in the village of Kanapur, costing Rs 1.2 lakh and generating 385 person-days. Additionally, monthly well monitoring of 36 wells in the North and South Bank areas was progressing well for monitoring purposes.

3. Bhikangaon - The watershed programme in Bhikangaon block, district Khargone, was started in 2014 by the organization, whose aim is to make efforts to improve livelihood, counter soil erosion, and improve water availability. Recently, watershed development works are being implemented with financial support from the APPI (APF), ABF, and NABARD.

Under the ABF-03 Project, a total expenditure of ₹6637600 has been incurred, with ₹181,008 coming from community contributions. This funding was used to construct farm bunding (27784 running meter), farm ponds (5 units), stop dam (2 unit) and stop dams renovation (2 units). Of the total amount, ₹2,723,932 was paid to laborers as wages, which generated 11,839 person- days of employment.



This demonstrates the project's substantial role in providing livelihood opportunities in remote rural areas and a significant success showcasing the community's active involvement and commitment. The total water storage capacity created through the ABF support is 29867 CUM providing irrigation potential to 113 hectare area.

Under the APF-03 Project, the team has spent a total of ₹1,859,023. Out of this, ₹284,898 was paid as wages to laborers, generating 1,153 person-days of employment. Through these efforts, the project successfully achieved the renovation of earthen dams (3 units) and stop dam (2 units). This initiative not only improved local infrastructure for water management but also provided significant livelihood opportunities to the community. Overall, 29575 CUM water storage capacity is generated through this work which provides 30 ha irrigation potential.

In Banjher village, Bhikangaon block, the watershed development project, supported by NABARD, is in progress through the capacity-building phase (CBP). A total of ₹675602 has been invested in implementing farm bunding (837 running meter), contour bands (551 running meter), gabions (2 units), and one farm ponds. The community's significant contribution of ₹58,509 demonstrates their active involvement and commitment to the project. This initiative has generated 1,503 person-days of employment, making it a model for creating ideal working opportunities in the village.

Two capacity-building training sessions were organized for the Village Watershed Committee and members of the Water User Groups. The purpose of these trainings was to enhance their understanding of soil and water management. These training sessions were part of the CBP Project (NABARD) and included both classroom sessions and field visits to model watershed works in Paladi village. Additionally, as part of the same project, data recording and keeping training was provided to members of the Village Watershed Committee to improve their data management skills.





Starting the CBP phase in Banajar village is a significant achievement for the team. As this village was new to the team, gaining community support and securing their contribution to the project was challenging. However, the team successfully initiated the CBP phase in Banajar village, which is now completed successfully. In Banjhar village, under the NABARD project, gaining the community's trust and securing a significant contribution toward the construction of NRM structures demonstrates their commitment to water management and village development.

4. Udainagar - In Udainagar, Dewas district, a watershed development project is underway across an area of 1442 hectares in the village of Gurarad. This project is in its Full Implementation Phase (FIP) with financial support from NABARD. Progress has been slow due to delays in government funding. Despite this, the team has been actively engaged in soil conservation efforts in the project area. They have implemented measures like stone bunding, four boulder checks, and one gabion, and have started constructing farm ponds.

These efforts aim to control soil erosion and create livelihood opportunities for local tribal communities. However, the project faces challenges such as hiring labor at government rates and managing digital payment transfers. Additionally, adhering to the predefined Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for project implementation poses difficulties for the field team due to the lengthy process involved in making changes.



5. Khategaon - In the Khategone block, specifically in the villages of Bangarda, Richhi, Sukardi, Tiwadiya, and Sannod, farm bunding has been carried out on agricultural land. The main goals are to stop soil erosion and improve the soil's ability to retain moisture. A total of 8,629.7 running meters of farm bunding has been constructed, costing 953,010 rupees. This work has treated approximately 112.5 hectares of land. In the project villages, 36 farm ponds were constructed, which is a significant accomplishment for the team. These farm ponds help store water for agricultural use. In addition to the farm ponds, five earthen dams were renovated in the same villages.

These renovations improve the dams' ability to store and manage water. Together, the farm ponds and renovated earthen dams have created a substantial water storage capacity of 124,240 cubic meters. This stored water is crucial for irrigating 120 hectares of farmland, which helps ensure crops receive sufficient water, especially during dry periods. Moreover, the construction and renovation work for these structures generated 4,395 person-days of employment, providing much-needed job opportunities for the local community and contributing to the area's economic development. Two women leadership training sessions were organized for water user group beneficiaries in the villages of Richhi (85 participants), Tiwadiya (62 participants), Tikwada (56 participants), and Sannod (42 participants).



In addition, the team also worked on securing drinking water for the project villages including Richhi, Sukardi, Sannod and Tikwada. They renovated five drinking water wells, which cost around 780,000 rupees. These renovations help ensure that the wells provide a reliable source of clean water for the community. Furthermore, the team installed four units of Reverse Osmosis (RO) systems for safe drinking water. This installation cost 1,440,000 rupees. RO systems are important because they filter out contaminants and provide clean and safe drinking water.

Together, these efforts ensure that 142 beneficiaries in the villages now have access to safe drinking water. The combination of well renovations and RO installations addresses both the availability and quality of drinking water for the community. The project staffs were trained to test drinking water and shared the information with the community. Two training on the awareness of safe drinking water for the women were conducted in village Bangarda and Bhukiya. Team conducted a drinking water assessment survey across four villages—Kumangaon, Chandlakheda, Puroni, and Tikwada—covering 270 households.





6. Melghat - In Melghat, SPS is actively working on watershed development, participatory irrigation management, and improving livelihoods with the support of the MNREGA scheme, Axis Bank Foundation, and Tata Trust. The team is engaged in 15 Panchayats of Melghat, implementing soil and water conservation efforts to control soil erosion, improve water availability, and reduce migration in these villages.

Through the MNREGA scheme and support from the Axis Bank Foundation, intensive implementation work has been achieved in 13 Panchayats, involving the construction of Continuous Contour Trenches (CCT), stone bunding, and farm bunding. A total of 2.23 crore INR was spent on these projects, generating approximately 75,281 person-days of employment at a labor rate of 297 INR per day. This extensive work is crucial for providing livelihood opportunities to villagers where migration is a serious issue. Additionally, these efforts are significant in controlling soil erosion and improving soil moisture in the area. During this work, the team faced various challenges, including delays in the timely payment of labor wages. At one point, payments were delayed by 4-5 months, which significantly demotivated local people for participating in the MNREGA scheme, forcing them to migrate elsewhere for livelihood. However, the team actively worked with government officials to ensure timely payment, ultimately achieving success in resolving this issue.



With the support of the government and co-support from Tata Trust, SPS successfully constructed four gabion structures in the villages of Dingariya and Patherpur, and one stop dam in the village of Heratiya. The construction of the stop dam has benefited around 20 farm fields in the surrounding area by increasing the water level.



This improvement ensures year-round water availability in the wells, allowing farmers to grow 2-3 crops annually. Consequently, the stop dam has enhanced the area's irrigation potential, resulting in increased farmer incomes and greater water storage capacity. However, the team faced several challenges during the construction of the stop dam. Initially, government officials denied the

construction due to the presence of hard rock in the area. The team successfully convinced them by arranging visits to similar sites in nearby areas, ultimately overcoming the obstacles and completing the construction of stop dam.



2.3 Programme Highlights

2.3.1 Participatory irrigation management

In the year 2017, SPS started the Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) program with 12 farmers in Mahigaon, a village in Udainagar block of Dewas district. Following this, recently, the SPS is actively working with PIM in the Mahigaon Irrigation Project, Paras Irrigation Project Area and Chandrakeshwar Irrigation Project Area in Dewas district, as well as in Naduri Irrigation Project Area in Maharashtra.

The organization's rationale for starting the PIM program was based on the observation that many small and medium irrigation projects across the country have often failed. One major reason for this is that they only manage to provide irrigation facilities in 50-60% of their command areas. Around 18-20 irrigation projects in Dewas district are examples of this. The government has formed Water User Committees with farmers to ensure proper management of these project areas. However, many of these committees are either not active or exist only on paper. To revitalize these committees and ensure their active participation in irrigation management, the PIM program was initiated by SPS.

The Mahigaon Participatory Irrigation Project faces challenges with inadequate water supply for irrigation in the ridge area and seepage issues affecting nearby fields from the canal.

In the year 2023-24, five water user groups were formed. Four of these groups were assisted in setting up new bank accounts for better financial management. In Semalikheda village of Mhigaon Irrigation project, we've built an underground pipeline connecting to the canal. This benefits 11.73 hectares of farmland owned by 16 farmers. The construction cost Rs. 320,532, with Rs. 118,947 contributed by the farmers and the rest covered by financial support from ABF. In constructing this pipeline, the farmers of the water user group themselves took charge of the work. Any issues that arose during construction were resolved through water user groups. This approach ensured the work's successful completion.



In the Paras Irrigation Project area, four new water user groups have been established, and they include only women members. These groups meet regularly once in a month to discuss and save money for paying water taxes. Similarly, In the Chandrkeshwar irrigation project, team has formed eight water user groups consisting entirely of women members. Each group manages its finances through a dedicated bank account, where they save money on a monthly basis. These water user groups convene regularly for monthly meetings to discuss and plan the efficient use of irrigation water and saving. As part of improving canal infrastructure, team has constructed a watercourse that spans 1675 meters this year. The total cost was Rs. 1708011, with Rs. 1,536,011 funded by ABF and the community contributing Rs. 169,667. This will provide better irrigation for members of water user groups in villages Koliyapura and Khardipura, addressing issues like seepage and insufficient water in ridge areas. Community support is crucial for the success of this work.



After the construction of this watercourse, an area of 8 bighas which previously suffered from severe waterlogging has been completely resolved. Currently, water reaches the fields of farmers in 3 days compared to the previous 12 to 15 days in the middle and lower sections. Before the watercourse was built, there was seepage in the upper section and water did not reach the lower sections. According to an assessment, after the watercourse was built, wheat production increased by 2 quintals per bigha annually, resulting in an annual benefit of Rs. 572,000 for these farmers.

Previously, farmers used to take water as per their convenience, but now water distribution is managed by a Chokidar (caretaker), ensuring all farmers receive sufficient water.

Currently, there are nine proposed watercourses planned to be constructed across three panchayats in paras irrigation project. The total estimated cost for these projects is Rs. 90.92 lakhs. Approval has been obtained at the panchayat level, and the request has been submitted to the district panchayat for further approvals.

The Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) program is in its initial phase and was recently introduced in Naduri village under the Naduri Irrigation Project, Maharashtra. This year, the team successfully formed four Water User Groups (WUGs) and constructed one watercourse. This achievement is significant for the team, as it was challenging to convince farmers to adopt the PIM concept. Initially, many farmers were reluctant to adopt the common sharing system and refused to join the WUGs. However, through continuous dialogue and efforts to improve their understanding of PIM, the farmers eventually agreed to participate in the program.



In the Paras irrigation project, farmers deal with seepage issues due to unpaved watercourses. Getting approval for constructing these watercourses at the district level involves facing numerous challenges. Similarly, in the Chandkeshwar irrigation project, the absence of watercourses results in delays in water reaching the tail-end areas. In Paras, Mahigaon, and Chandkeshwar irrigation projects, connecting women from large farming families poses difficulties as they often find it hard to attend monthly meetings. Gathering all farmers for project meetings is also a tough task. Constructing watercourses approved by the Panchayat is very challenging because the Panchayat delays payments for materials by 4 to 5 months. This reluctance makes it difficult for suppliers to provide materials to the Panchayat, creating a significant challenge



for the field team. Integrating farmers in the irrigation project areas with Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) principles is tough. Farmers who have struggled with irrigation issues for 40 years see solving these problems as very difficult or nearly impossible.

2.4 Case studies

From Migration to Sustainability The Impact of Water Conservation in Pattharwada

Pattharwada village, located about 12 kilometers from Bhikangaon block, is significantly deprived in terms of socio-economic development. Although there have been efforts for development here, they are much less compared to the village's needs. There is a need for various soil and water conservation measures such as bunding, check dams, and ponds. The main issue in this village is unemployment. The primary source of income for the people here is agriculture, but due to a lack of water, adequate crop production is not possible, which prevents farming families from meeting their economic needs.

Raising Faliya is a part of this village where about 50 families reside. Approximately 50% of these families migrate seasonally every year to nearby cities (such as Indore) or states (Gujarat, Maharashtra) in search of employment. Additionally, there are several families in the village who have been temporarily or seasonally migrating for livelihood for the past 10 to 12 years. Most of these families are small farmers with no irrigation facilities on their lands. Kishan, son of Bhuvan, is a farmer from this village who migrated with his entire family to the nearby village of Badgaon 10 years ago. Similarly, Amarsingh Bhai also migrated with his family to the nearby village of Mohammadpur. Many other families have permanently migrated from the village in a similar manner.

The farmers who remain in the village struggle to find employment. For instance, large-scale chili farming takes place in the nearby village of Boruth, where people from Pattharwada go to work, including children and the elderly, traveling by loading vehicles. With the assistance of the Azim Premji Foundation, efforts have been made by the organization to promote water conservation and livelihood enhancement in this village.



The organization has already been active in this area. Discussions with the villagers revealed that there is an old stop dam in the village that could be renovated. This project could address the water issues faced by some farmers and also create employment opportunities in the village. Without wasting any time, the watershed team inspected the stop dam site. During the site visit, it was found that the dam was completely damaged, with no wing walls, apron, or gates, making it incapable of retaining even a drop of water. The team discussed with the nearby stakeholders and decided to undertake the renovation of this structure with financial support from the Azim Premji Foundation. With the cooperation of the villagers and approval from the Gram Panchayat, the renovation work on the stop dam commenced.

Initially, the team faced the challenge of a large number of villagers being eager to work, but only 25 to 30 laborers could be employed daily during the construction. After discussions with the villagers, it was decided that only one or two members from each family would be employed to ensure that most families in the village could benefit from the employment opportunities. Through mutual understanding and cooperation among the villagers, the renovation of the stop dam was successfully completed.

This project provided a total of 423 person-days of employment to the people of Pattharwada, enabling them to find work within the village itself and preventing the need to seek employment elsewhere. The renovation of the stop dam resulted in the creation of 3459.60 cubic meters of water storage capacity, converting 9.62 hectares of agricultural land from unirrigated to irrigated. This improvement led to an increase in agricultural production for the beneficiary farmers.

For instance, where farmers previously struggled to grow wheat during the Rabi season due to water shortages, this year, they were able to produce a bountiful wheat harvest. One such farmer, Kishan Bhai, produced 15 quintals of wheat. Similarly, Bahadur Bhai, whose well previously provided only one or two irrigations for the wheat crop, was able to increase the water level in his well and produce both wheat and moong beans during the Zaid season.

Over all, the project not only provided immediate employment but also significantly improved the agricultural output and livelihoods of the village farmers.

2.5 Impact of farm pond-based watershed development in Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh

2.5.1 Introduction

The goal of the Narmada Landscape Restoration Project is to use inclusive and sustainable landscape management practices to enhance the quantity and quality of water in certain selected tributaries of the Narmada. The intervention area is extended over the Narmada catchment in the Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh, India, between the Omkareshwar and Maheshwar dams (12000 acres). In the project area, efforts have been made to save soil and moisture, improve drainage lines, manage runoff, collect rainwater and measure groundwater.

One of the crucial methods for collecting rainwater that offers numerous advantages is building a farm pond. It is a structure built on a farmer's land to harvest rainwater, which would otherwise flow out of the field. The main purpose of creating a pond in the field is to collect rainwater, which would otherwise flow away from the field. There are many consecutive days in monsoon when there is no rain. Such prolonged dry spells can actually ruin the kharif crop. The farm pond prevents wastage of such crops. Farm ponds also play an important role in recharging groundwater and reducing sediment load in downstream.

Three farm ponds have been built in the project area as part of the Narmada Landscape Restoration Project. The principal aim of constructing these ponds is to increase the quantity of water in the selected tributary river of Narmada. Additionally, ponds give farmers an additional irrigation option, which reduces their dependence on groundwater. The objective of this case study is to assess farm ponds' environmental impacts as well as their socioeconomic benefits for farmers.

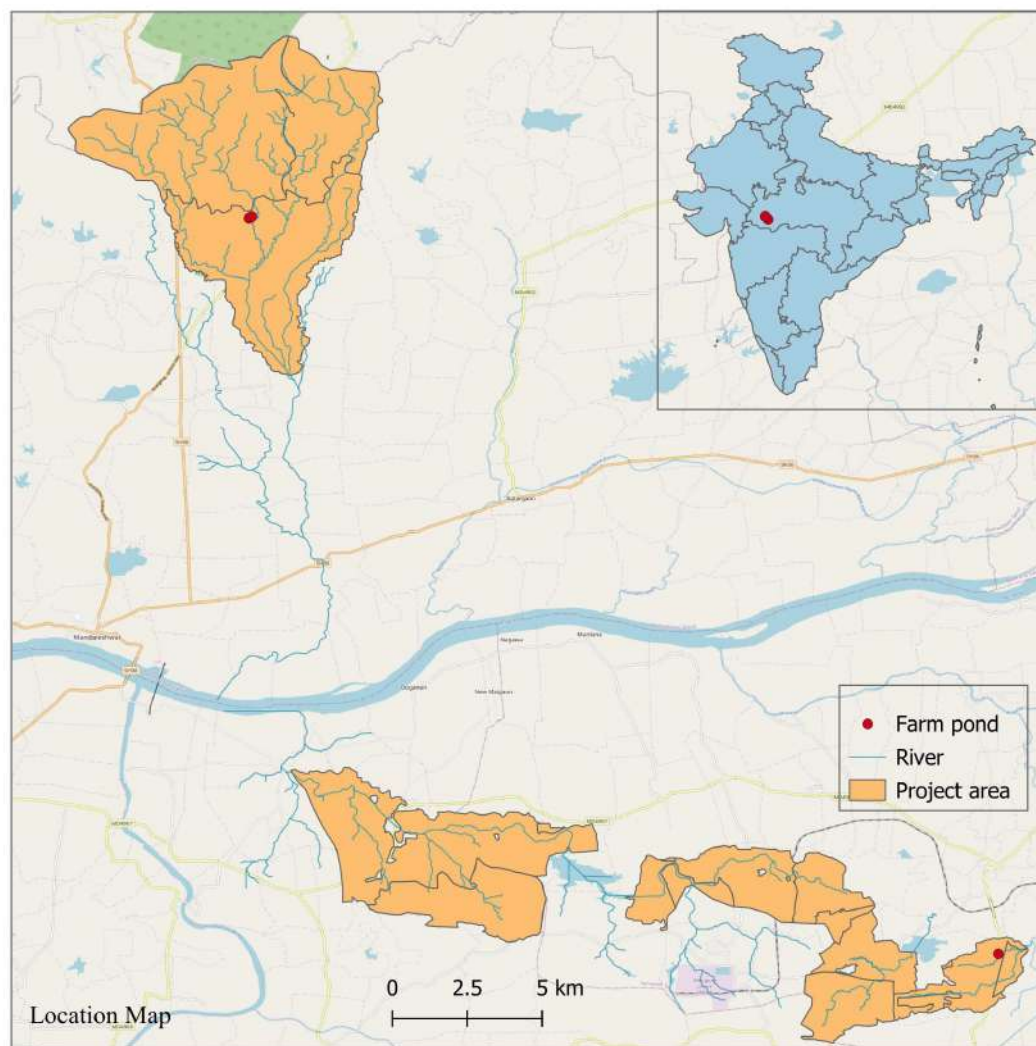
Objectives

- ☞ To assess the increase capacity of retain water after the rainy season
- ☞ To estimate the ability to diversify cropping patterns
- ☞ To assess the crop productivity
- ☞ To assess the surface water availability
- ☞ To assess the impact on the crop health using remote sensing data
- ☞ To assess the status of soil moisture in the field using remote sensing technology
- ☞ To assess the groundwater dependence

2.5.2 Study area

Three farm ponds that were built as part of the Narmada Landscape Restoration Project have been chosen in order to evaluate the effects of farm ponds. On the north bank, in the village of Bagdara, two farm ponds have been constructed; on the south bank, in the village of Lachora, another pond. The table below provides an explanation of the farm pond's technical details.

Name of Structure	Farm Pond -1	Farm Pond -2	Farm pond -3
Beneficiary	Devesing Bhai	Mangilal Jagan	Yashwant Gola
Village	Lachora	Bagdara	Bagdara
Latitude	22.072769	22.310713	22.31071
Longitude	75.951881	75.71064	75.710641
Khasra No.	135/2	9/2/2,9/1	11/2
Cost	453770	592562	649459
Size L*W*H (m)	60x18x3.2	30x30x3.2	30x30x3.2
Storage Capacity (In Cum)	3065	2581	2581
Area (ha)	1.619	2.291	1.48



Map-Farm pond-location

2.5.3 Methodology

Data on the overall impact of the farm pond will be gathered using focus group discussions (FGD), the Household Questionnaire (HHQ), and remote sensing technology. Focus group discussions and household surveys will focus on assessing the capacity of the farm pond to retain water after the rainy season, the potential to diversify cropping patterns, and crop productivity. Sentinel-2 satellite images (Level-1 CS2) dated pre and post of interventions are obtained from the European Space Agency (ESA).

Blue, green, red, and near-infrared are the four bands with a resolution of 10 m that are utilised to estimate the surface water availability, crop health and soil moisture. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), Normalized Difference Moisture Index (NDMI) and Normalized Difference Water Index (NDWI) were used to assess the impact of farm ponds on various factors such as soil moisture, water availability and crop health etc.

Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) was applied to understand vegetation health. NDVI was first formally proposed by Rouse (1973). The use of NDVI to measure ecological phenomena associated with vegetation was introduced in later years by Rouse et al. (1975) and Tucker (1979). Since then, NDVI has become one of the important tools for mapping and monitoring vegetation (Running, 1990). Values typically range between -1 and 1. For example, a value of 0.5 indicates dense vegetation, while a value less than zero indicates no vegetation.

The water content of vegetation/ crop is calculated using the Normalised Difference Moisture Index (NDMI) (Geo., 1996). It is computed in the conventional manner as a ratio between the NIR and SWIR values. The NDMI is used to determine vegetation water content and monitor droughts. The value range of the NDMI is -1 to 1. Negative values of NDMI (values approaching -1) correspond to barren soil. Values around zero (-0.2 to 0.4) generally correspond to water stress. High, positive values represent high canopy without water stress (approximately 0.4 to 1).

2.5.4 The increased capacity to retain water after the rainy season

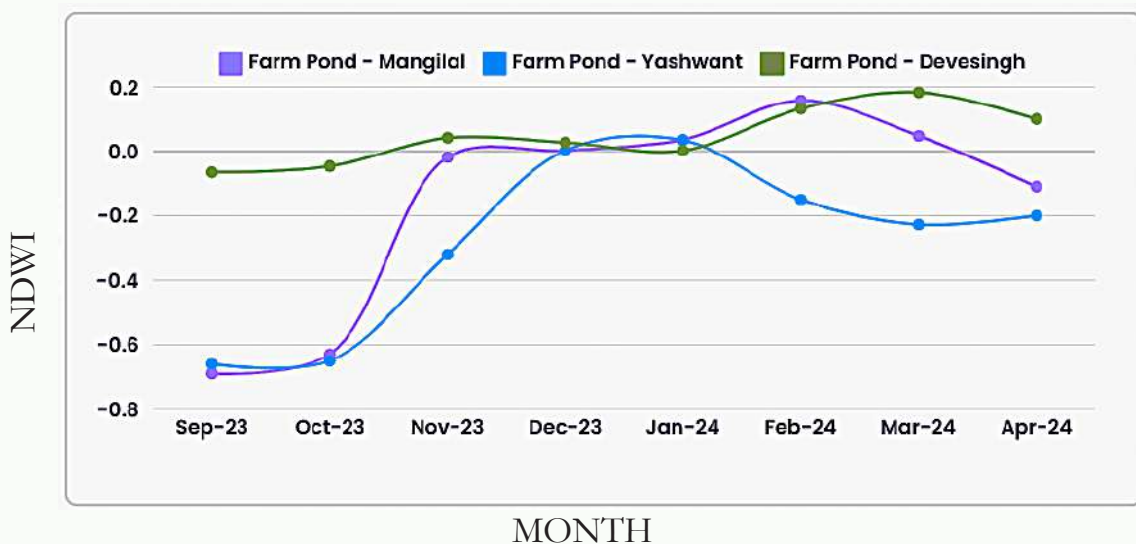
Due to NRM interventions, the water retention capacity of farm ponds has increased after the rainy season. When the beneficiary was asked how many months the farm ponds are capable of retaining water after the last rain, they revealed that the farm ponds are capable of retaining water for 4-8 months after the last rain. Beneficiaries Mangilal Bhai and Yashwant Bhai said that their farm ponds are capable of retaining water for more than 4 months, while Devsingh Bhai said that after the last rains, their farm ponds are capable of retaining water for more than 8 months. These farmers depend only on rainwater to irrigate their crops. They are now able to irrigate their crops for more months than before.

The Normalised Difference Water Index (NDWI) has been used to examine the increased capacity for water retention after the rainy season. The NDWI makes it simple to measure how much water is available in the farm pond. There is water in the pond if the NDWI index value is greater than zero. However, a negative score indicates that the pond is empty of water.

According to the analysis of the index's average monthly value, Mangilal Bhaiya Farm Pond had a value of 0.048 through the month of March. This indicates that water was present in this pond through the month of March. Similarly, the farm pond of Yashwant Bhaiya only had a positive number (0.034) till the month of January, indicating that there was water in the pond up to that point. Additionally, Dewesingh Bhai's farm pond has the highest capacity to hold water after the rainy season, with a positive value (0.1) through April 2024.

Month	Farm Pond - Mangilal	Farm Pond - Yashwant	Farm Pond - Devesingh
Sep-23	-0.69	-0.66	-0.065
Oct-23	-0.63	-0.65	-0.046
Nov-23	-0.018	-0.32	0.042
Dec-23	0.0025	0.0025	0.0275
Jan-24	0.036	0.034	0.002
Feb-24	0.1575	-0.15	0.1325
Mar-24	0.048	-0.228	0.183
Apr-24	-0.11	-0.2	0.1

The Increased Capacity of retain Water after the rainy season



2.5.5 Diversifying cropping patterns and increasing crop productivity

Farm ponds are crucial for increasing crop productivity because they allow farmers to switch from low-yielding to high-yielding cropping practices. Mangilal Bhai's farm pond serves as an excellent example of this. Mangilal Bhai had farming land that was not irrigated. He used to only be able to grow one crop a year since water was so hard to get by, but once the farm pond was built, he had full of access to water.

Mangilal Bhai took complete production of the wheat crop this year during the Rabi season. Likewise, this year Yashwant Bhai received irrigation facilities for his land. On his farm, a farm pond was constructed during the current Rabi season. The pond will be utilised for irrigation in the agricultural field the following year, boosting crop output and switching from gram to wheat crops. Dev Singh Bhai's construction of a farm pond in the village of Lachora is another successful attempt to turn agricultural land that isn't irrigated into one, which will benefit in crop diversification.

2.5.6 Surface Water Availability

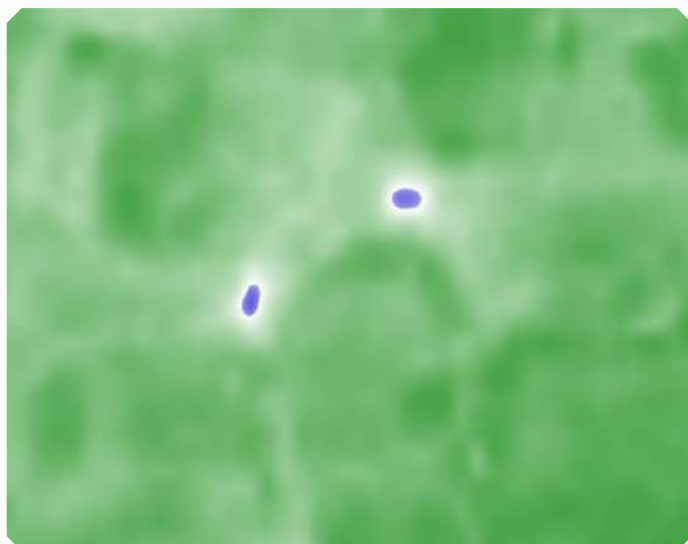
Two distinct methods have been used to evaluate the availability of surface water in the selected area of farm ponds. Field estimates indicate that the area of the three farm ponds has contributed to the creation of an 8227 cubic metre water storage capacity. With a capacity of roughly 3065 cubic metres, Farm Pond - Devesingh Bhai (Lachora) can store more water than the stored by other structures. For mapping water bodies, the normalised difference water index is the most suitable measure. By comparing pre- and post-Sentinel-2 imagery, NDWI has been utilised to demonstrate proof that surface water storage has been created.

A quantitative shift in surface water availability has also been observed by comparing the NDWI value before and after the construction of the farm pond. Comparing the NDWI imagery from two different times shows that there were no water bodies at the said location in the year 2022, whereas the NDWI imagery in the year 2023 clearly shows that water bodies are available. This is a clear indication that these water bodies were constructed between the years 2022 and 2023. For comparison, imagery taken after the rainy season has been used when all water bodies are filled with rainwater. Similarly, by comparing the NDWI value, it shows that water bodies are created between the year 2022 and 2023. On November 15, 2022, the mean NDWI values of farm ponds Devesingh Bhai, Yashwant Bhai, and Mangilal Bhai were -0.43, -0.63, and -0.56, respectively.

These negative numbers show that there is no surface water present in the selected location. On November 15, 2023, however, the average NDWI value for Farm Pond Devesingh Bhai, Yashwant Bhai, and Mangilal Bhai is 0.10, 0.11, and 0.08, respectively. This indicates surface water is present in the selected area.



Green Map 1



Green Map 2

Improving crop health

The crop health assessment using NDVI shows that the crop health with all three-farm field is under the good condition. well, there is no significant improvement in the crop health after the construction of farm ponds however, the overall value of NDVI is satisfactory. During the rabi season, the crop health indicates a healthy sign.

Farm field – Yashwant Bhai (Bagdara)				Farm field – Mangilal Bhai (Bagdara)			
Date	NDVI Mean	Date	NDVI Mean	Date	NDVI Mean	Date	NDVI Mean
16 Oct 2022	0.55	16 Oct 2023	0.54	16 Oct 2022	0.46	16 Oct 2023	0.29
15 Nov 2022	0.31	15 Nov 2023	0.25	15 Nov 2022	0.29	15 Nov 2023	0.28
15 Dec 2022	0.32	15 Dec 2023	0.55	15 Dec 2022	0.60	15 Dec 2023	0.52
14 Jan 2023	0.51	14 Jan 2024	0.71	14 Jan 2023	0.65	14 Jan 2024	0.63
13 Feb 2023	0.59	18 Feb 2024	0.47	13 Feb 2023	0.41	18 Feb 2024	0.40
10 Mar 2023	0.25	14 Mar 2024	0.26	10 Mar 2023	0.22	14 Mar 2024	0.19

Farm field – Devesingh Bhai (Lachora)			
Date	NDVI Mean	Date	NDVI Mean
16 Oct 2022	0.44	16 Oct 2023	0.34
15 Nov 2022	0.35	15 Nov 2023	0.28
15 Dec 2022	0.36	15 Dec 2023	0.34
14 Jan 2023	0.40	14 Jan 2024	0.40
13 Feb 2023	0.39	18 Feb 2024	0.30
10 Mar 2023	0.34	14 Mar 2024	0.25

2.5.7 Surface Soil Moisture

Farm Pond's effect on surface soil moisture has been evaluated using the Normalised Difference Moisture Index (NDMI). Therefore, farm plots of the beneficiaries have been selected for assessment as irrigation water from the farm pond is used by the farmers in these farm plots. Which has a direct impact on the moisture of the soil in the field. Overall, three farm plot have been selected for evaluation, which are mainly associates to farm ponds. Since the Rabi season and beyond is the best time to assess soil moisture, that is when the evaluation period has been determined. Farmers irrigate with pond water during this time.

Thus, from October to March, the NDMI value was examined. The results indicate that during the study period, there was a notable improvement in the surface soil moisture of the fields of Devi Singh Bhai (Lahchora) and Mangilal Bhai (Bagdara). In both fields, surface soil moisture has increased, clearly demonstrating the impact of farm pond.

On the other hand, the Yashwant Bhai (Bagdara) farm pond's soil moisture has been shown to be negatively altered. There are a number of possible explanations for this, including the fact that the pond was formed after the rains and that the water from it was not utilised to irrigate the fields this year. Next year, its impact will be evidently felt.

Farm Field – Mangilal Bhai (Bagdara)				
Date	NDMI Mean	Date	NDMI Mean	Difference
16 Oct 2022	0.07	16 Oct 2023	0.12	0.05
15 Nov 2022	-0.08	15 Nov 2023	0.07	0.15
15 Dec 2022	-0.01	15 Dec 2023	0.15	0.16
14 Jan 2023	0.11	14 Jan 2024	0.26	0.15
13 Feb 2023	0.19	18 Feb 2024	0.07	-0.12
10 Mar 2023	-0.03	14 Mar 2024	0.04	0.07

Farm Field - Yashwant Bhai (Bagdara)				
Date	NDMI Mean	Date	NDMI Mean	Difference
16 Oct 2022	0.07	16 Oct 2023	0.05	-0.02
15 Nov 2022	0.02	15 Nov 2023	-0.00	-0.02
15 Dec 2022	0.24	15 Dec 2023	0.15	-0.09
14 Jan 2023	0.27	14 Jan 2024	0.21	-0.06
13 Feb 2023	0.13	18 Feb 2024	0.07	-0.06
10 Mar 2023	-0.03	14 Mar 2024	0.07	0.1

Farm Field – Devesingh Bhai (Lachora)				
Date	NDMI Mean	Date	NDMI Mean	Difference
16 Oct 2022	0.06	16 Oct 2023	0.07	0.01
15 Nov 2022	-0.03	15 Nov 2023	0.03	0.06
15 Dec 2022	-0.01	15 Dec 2023	0.07	0.08
14 Jan 2023	-0.00	14 Jan 2024	0.08	0.08
13 Feb 2023	-0.01	18 Feb 2024	-0.02	-0.01
10 Mar 2023	-0.03	14 Mar 2024	-0.03	0

2.5.8 Deduction in groundwater dependence

A farm pond's main purpose is to collect and hold rainfall during the monsoon season. By using this stored water for irrigation during dry seasons, farmers can reduce their dependence on groundwater. Similarly, the impact of the construction of farm ponds in the project area can also be seen. Previously, all three farmers depended on groundwater for their irrigation needs. They used to take groundwater from dug wells and tube wells. Now, after the construction of the farm pond, their dependence on groundwater has ended 100 percent. This can be seen as one of the important impacts of farm ponds on groundwater.

2.5.9 Conclusion

Farm ponds are significant for a variety of reasons depending on where they are located within the context of the watershed, even though their size and water capacity are limited. Farm ponds have a dual benefit: they lower downstream sediment loads and boost crop yields during both rainy and dry seasons. Farm ponds are crucial for recharging groundwater in addition to this. This case study is an attempt to assess the impact of farm pond in improving water availability, providing stability in crop yields, increasing soil moisture and other benefits in the context of watershed development. The results of this analysis will provide quantitative data that will highlight the importance of farm ponds in terms of quantitative water improvement in the project area.

References

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3. Nature Positive Management of Agriculture

3.1 Introduction

The widespread use of chemical pesticides in agriculture has severe consequences, including human health, soil its health and fertility, water, and disrupting ecosystems. The loss of biodiversity is another consequence, as pesticides harm beneficial insects, birds, other wildlife, and disrupt food chains. Nature Positive Management (NPM) techniques offer a sustainable solution, utilizing natural methods such as crop rotation, biological pest control, and cultural practices like tillage, weed control, and maintaining crop diversity.

By promoting a healthy and diverse ecosystem, NPM reduces the reliance on chemical pesticides and supports a more sustainable agricultural approach. NPM 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.

Samaj Pragati Sahyog's initiative to promote NPM and sustainable agriculture practices is timely and significant. Our program aims to equip farmers with knowledge, resources, and networking opportunities, empowering them to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to a more environmentally conscious and economically viable agricultural practices.



3.2 Expansion of Nature Positive Management of Agriculture

Over the past year, Sustainable Agriculture program has made significant changes in engaging farmers in nature-positive farming practices, with a notable achievement of enrolling a substantial number of farmers to date. These farmers are now actively adopting soil health management practices and nature-positive agriculture methods, due to regular trainings and capacity-building initiatives.

By empowering farmers with knowledge and skills, the program is fostering a community of practitioners committed to sustainable agriculture, leading to improved soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem services. This grassroots engagement is crucial for scaling up nature-positive farming practices and creating a lasting impact on the environment and local communities.

The agriculture program is currently catering to a total of 15308 Farmers, across an acreage of 10711.83 hectares of land in 10 location which includes Bagli, Bhikangaon, Barwaha, Khategaon, Kannod, Punjapura, Kantaphod, Melghat, Udaynagar and a new location Bhagwanpura, Khargone district, is the latest expansion of the program. Expanding the program to new locations is also a positive step toward promoting sustainable agriculture practices and improving rural livelihood. Additionally, program covers 273 villages and 1039 farmer groups have been formed till now.

Farmers are moving towards agriculture for a variety of reason including,

Lower input cost: A key factor driving adoption is the substantially lower input costs associated with our NPM approaches, compared to conventional farming methods. By reducing input costs, farmers can enhance their profitability while minimizing their cost of cultivation and increase the efficiency of input use.

Improved soil health: Adopting soil health management practices, such as the use of Farm Yard Manure (FYM), vermicompost, Sanjeevak, and Ghanjeevamrut etc, leading to the significant improvements in soil health. These practices not only reduce the reliance on chemical inputs but increases the numbers of beneficial soil microbes and ultimately it enhances the soil fertility and structure.

High yield: NPM practices benefits soil health, leading to improved crop yields, better drought resilience, and reduced erosion, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and regenerative agricultural system.

Improved biodiversity: Promoting sustainable practices that prioritize crop diversification, leading to a significant improvement in biodiversity. By cultivating a diverse range of crops, farmers can create a more resilient and dynamic ecosystem. This approach not only enhances the overall health and productivity of the soil but also reduces the reliance on monocultures, and fosters a more balanced agricultural ecosystem.

Better food quality and increased food security: By adopting sustainable agriculture practices, farmers are not only improving the health of their land but also cultivating better quality food for their communities. The focus on crop diversification, reduced chemical use, and improved soil health leads to more nutritious and flavourful produce, enhancing food quality and safety. Additionally, increased crop yields and improved resilience to climate change contribute to increased food security, ensuring that more families have access to a stable and reliable source of fresh, wholesome food.

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.

3.3 Major Activities

3.3.1 Support to farmers groups for nature positive management practices

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.



3.3.2 Support to farmers for soil health improvement activities

To enhance soil health and quality, the program promotes various soil health management practices, including the adoption of Bhu NADEP and Pucca NADEP, Vermi compost, Sanjeevak, and other soil health management techniques. These methods enable 12398 farmers to prepare high-quality compost, enriching the soil with organic matter and gradually increasing its organic carbon content. By incorporating these practices, farmers can improve soil structure, fertility, and overall health, leading to enhanced water retention, aeration, and nutrient cycling.

This, in turn, supports healthy plant growth, boosts crop yields, and promotes sustainable agricultural productivity. In addition to that, silt application which is a proven way to improve soil health has also been done for farmers with poor soil condition.



3.3.4 Support to farmers for Seed germination and Seed treatment activities

During the pre-sowing season, seed germination tests were conducted, a significant number of 7164 farmers were engaged in seed germination tests with the help of these test farmers can determine the seed germination percentage, make informed decisions about seed selection, and avoid unnecessary costs. This simple yet effective practice ensures successful germination, reduces crop failure risks, and contributes to increased agricultural productivity. By promoting seed germination tests, we aim to enhance farmers' self-sufficiency and confidence in their seed selection, ultimately leading to improved crop yields and reduced financial losses.



In addition to that we focused on seed treatment, benefiting 8916 farmers. We provided cultures like Rhizobium and Trichoderma, which serve as biofertilizers and bio fungicides, enhancing crop health and resilience. Additionally, we guided farmers in preparing Beejamrut, a natural seed treatment that improves the quality and potential of the seeds being sown. By subjecting seeds to appropriate treatments farmers can reduce the risk of soil-borne diseases, boost plant resilience, and minimize the need for re-sowing, resulting in cost savings.



3.3.5 Crops covered under crop diversification

Under crop diversification, we made significant strides in promoting crop diversification in both Kharif and Rabi seasons. Through concerted efforts, farmers successfully cultivated a diverse range of crops, including Kharif crops like red gram, black gram, green gram, sorghum, bajra, chilli and sesamum, and Rabi crops like wheat, chickpea, mustard, and groundnut.

This diversification not only enhances soil health and reduces dependence on a single crop but also provides farmers with a more resilient and adaptable agricultural system. By growing multiple crops and adopting crop rotation farmers can spread risk, and increase overall yield.

3.3.6 Crop varietal trials

Varietal trials are a vital component of agricultural research and development, offering valuable insights into the performance of diverse crop varieties under different agro-climatic conditions. By conducting these trials, farmers and researchers can identify the most suitable and high-yielding varieties for specific regions, making informed decisions on crop selection and cultivation practices. Through the evaluation of adaptability, disease resistance, and productivity, varietal trials significantly enhance agricultural productivity, ensure food security, and promote sustainable farming practices. These trials empower farmers to optimize their crop choices.

Varietal trials were conducted across locations with a total of 693 trials evaluating the yield potential and feasibility of select crop varieties. These trials focused on Sesamum, Urad, Sunflower, groundnut, gram, maize and Wheat, assessing their adaptability to diverse environmental conditions and suitability for successful cultivation in various regions. By conducting these trials, researchers aimed to identify resilient and high-performing crop varieties that can thrive in different agro-climatic contexts, ultimately informing data-driven decisions for farmers.



3.3.7 Supporting families undertaking kitchen garden practices (HH)

Promoting self-sufficiency and nutrition, program encouraged farmers to establish personal kitchen gardens, providing a steady supply of diverse vegetables throughout the year. Utilizing Natural Plant Management (NPM) techniques, 6202 farmers were given kitchen garden kits throughout the year, enabling them to enrich their daily diets with fresh, nutritious produce. This initiative not only enhances food security but also empowers farmers to take control of their nutritional needs, fostering healthier communities and improving their economic well-being.



3.3.8 Nature positive pest management

To mitigate pest issues, farmers successfully adopted nature-positive pest management techniques. These eco-friendly methods included the use of bio-fertilizers, bio pest repellents and various types of traps, such as pheromone traps, yellow blue sticky traps which play a crucial role in identifying and managing infestation risks proactively. By adopting these nature-positive approaches, farmers can effectively prevent pest and disease problems and reducing the dependency on chemical pesticides and maintaining a balanced ecosystem.



3.4 Training and Capacity Building

With the aim to enhance the skill and knowledge, various training sessions and capacity-building initiatives for farmers, mitans, field supervisors and professional were organised throughout the year including.



3.4.1 Capacity Building for farmers, primary producer, and community leaders

Under the program, a total of 11683 farmers (person days) got trained throughout the year, focusing on various aspects of Sustainable agriculture practices like crop diversification through village level trainings, cluster level trainings, demonstrations and exposure visits. Farmers received technical guidance on producing bio-products, enhancing their understanding and adoption of NPM practices. These training sessions empowered farmers with the knowledge to transition to sustainable and eco-friendly farming methods, and promoting a holistic approach.

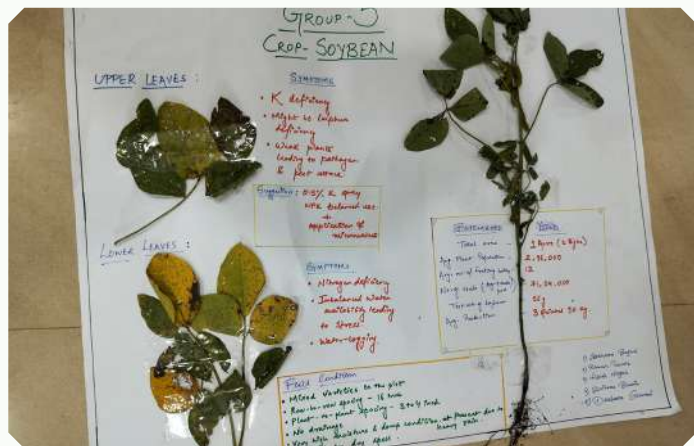
3.4.2 Capacity Building for Mitans, Senior Mitans, Professionals and field supervisors

To enhance the capacity of field staff and professionals, comprehensive training programs were conducted on various topics, including Farmer Field School methodology, Soil Health Management practices, Nutrient Management techniques, and Post-Harvest Management strategies. These training initiatives aimed to equip mitans, senior mitans, field supervisors and professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively support farmers in adopting sustainable agricultural practices. By improving their knowledge and skills, they can better facilitate the adoption of best practices among farmers. Under the program, a total of 664 different training cum exposure visits, training, and orientation programs were organized.

3.4.3 Establishing Farmer Field Schools

FFS is a group-based learning session in order to build the decision-making ability of a farmer, Farmer field school is designed to address the lack of knowledge among farmers relating to agroecology and the cycle of nature. FFS is about farmers' development and empowerment, it helps farmers to learn and develop skills required for informed decision-making in complex domains, based on local knowledge, problem analysis, existing capacities, and understanding of the local agro-ecosystem/ agro-ecology.

During the year, more than 50 farmer field school's groups have been established in the 9 locations in which more than 609 farmers received the training on FFS.



3.4.4 Champion farmers training

The Champion Farmers Training program is an initiative that aims to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices, such as Non-Pesticide Management at the grassroots level. By training and empowering local farmers who have demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainable agriculture, the program creates master trainers at the village level, tapping into their local presence and potential to enhance the adoption of NPM practices.

This approach builds trust and credibility within the community, and facilitates peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing.

3.5 New Initiatives

3.5.1 Peer learning event

To amplify the impact of the nature positive Management program, peer learning events were organized, bringing together over 500 farmers from various villages. These events fostered collaborative learning, allowing farmers to share experiences, challenges, and best practices in adopting NPM. External resource persons led sessions on NPM and sustainable agriculture, highlighting the dangers of chemical use on the ecosystem. The events sparked experience sharing sessions, enabling farmers to exchange ideas and views on current farming practices, making them a resounding success.

By facilitating peer-to-peer learning, these events accelerated the spread of awareness and knowledge on sustainable agriculture, driving the adoption of NPM practices among the farming community.

3.5.2 External Audit

An external audit was conducted by N+3F auditors in 7 locations across both Kharif and Rabi seasons to verify the authenticity of Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) produce. The audit aimed to ensure compliance with certification standards, assessing production practices, including NPM techniques, pest and disease management, and input usage. Additionally, the auditors evaluated the traceability system for monitoring NPM produce from farm to destination.

Following the implementation of recommended improvements, all 7 locations received approval and certification for cultivating Wheat, Gram, and Red Gram crops, demonstrating adherence to rigorous NPM standards.



3.5.3 Launch of Mobile application

As a proud and positive step, the agriculture software of SPS has now been brought into a mobile application that now improves and increases the accessibility, efficiency and accuracy of the data being collected from fields with real time insights and streamlined processes.

3.5.4 Establishment of BRCs and Modern BRCs



BRC or Bio resource units are the units where the bio pesticides are prepared at the local level so as to ensure availability to the NPM practicing farmers. These units supply formulations like Panch patti kadha, Chaar chatni, Neemboli ark etc, on demand basis during the season. Keeping in mind that the area and farmers taking up NPM is gradually increasing, 8 new BRCs were established so that the supply of bio formulations is maintained properly in the upcoming crop season.

In a rather new initiative, learning from the exposure visit we had to Bhuj under the guidance of Mr. Shailesh, we have been introduced the soil and foliar application named Pragati-BHU and Pragati-X that have biological and organic cultures including bio-pesticides, bio-fungicides and organic sources of nutrients including macro and micro nutrients. Through the mixture of these products, soil application and foliar application are being prepared in new modern BRCs which have been established to prepare these formulations.



Prior to establishing these BRCs, a trial was also taken in the block of Bhikangaon under Chilli crop to monitor its efficacy which proved to be quite efficient and useful. Therefore, 1 BRC per location has been established and soil application and foliar application is being prepared and distributed amongst the selected farmers to use and see the results for their own and then move towards adoption and promotion.

3.5.5 Interactive film Screenings

Film screenings proved to be an engaging and effective way to showcase the benefits of NPM farming to farmers. Through mobile screenings, informative movies highlighting the NPM process, crop management, use of bio-pest repellents etc were displayed to spread awareness and educate farmers on sustainable agricultural practices. This innovative approach captured farmers' attention, making complex concepts more accessible and memorable. 12 mobile screenings were done in this year with respect to NPM farming.



3.5.6 Wall painting & Crop water Budgeting

As an initiative to save groundwater and manage it judiciously, crop water budgeting has been taken up for which introductory trainings were done, well inventory, well monitoring, rainfall data was collected alongside assessing rock type to understand the infiltration rate of rainwater to estimate the ground water recharge was done in order to prepare crop water budget.

The major aim for crop water budget was to help farmers determine the ideal crop area based on the crop's water requirements and the available water resources in their village. This activity enables farmers to make informed decisions about crop selection and area allocation, ensuring optimal water use and reducing the risk of water scarcity.



In order to increase the awareness for NPM and the importance of saving water so that it can be judiciously used in the cropping season, wall paintings have been done in Barwaha, Bagli and Bhikangaon locations so that the outcome of crop water budget and the need for pesticide free farming can be communicated to the maximum number of people.



3.6 Programme Highlights

3.6.1 Action research on different crops

1. NPM Chili Demonstration

Chilli is known to be a crop which is very pest prone and poses difficulty to be grown otherwise without the use of pesticides/chemicals. A new initiative has been taken where chili is being cultivated as a demonstration cum trial without the use of any pesticides and chemicals altogether. The trial was done with the 15 farmers, in the Bhikangaon location. Cultivating chili, a crop notorious for its high pest intensity and higher cultivation costs, posed a significant challenge for our team.

Adverse weather conditions further complicated the trials, as red spider mite and whitefly infestations attacked the chili fields. Our team made continuous efforts to control it by employing neem oil for the mite, but struggled to contain the whitefly due to unfavourable weather conditions. A prolonged dry spell and limited efficacy of control measures led to one farmer's withdrawal. Nevertheless, other farmers remained committed, ultimately achieving success after continued efforts.

Notably, our farmers faced pressure from neighbouring farmers to abandon NPM practices and adopt chemical pesticides, but our farmers' showed resilience and emerged victorious. Through the dedication, we successfully established NPM chili plots with 12 determined farmers, and are planning for expansion to 150 farmers next year.



2. Research on dollar chickpea

This study conducts a cost benefit analysis (CBA) of dollar chickpea cultivation in Barwaha location, aiming to assess its economic viability and potential for farmers in addition to that study conducts crop health and Grain quality parameters. Dollar chickpea, known for its resilience and nutritional value, has garnered increasing attention among agricultural communities. Utilizing primary data collected from a demonstration in three plots with different agronomic practices, the study examines the costs associated with cultivation, including inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, labour, and machinery, as well as operational expenses.

Concurrently, the benefits derived from chickpea production are evaluated, encompassing market prices, yield levels, and potential income generation. The analysis integrates both direct and indirect costs and benefits, incorporating factors such as yield variability, market fluctuations, Agro ecosystem analysis and environmental externalities. Findings reveal a favourable cost-benefit ratio for dollar chickpea cultivation across various contexts, indicating its potential as a profitable crop option for farmers.

The study further highlights the importance of adopting sustainable practices and technological innovations to optimize production efficiency and mitigate risks. Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of the economic and ecological dynamics surrounding dollar chickpea cultivation, offering insights to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development.

3.7 Case study

Enhancing savings and generating new ways of livelihood through NPM

Background - Duwarkim bai Singh, who is a resident of Borpadawa village of Punjapura lives with husband Chander Singh and their 2 children. She possesses an agricultural land of 1 hectare. The main occupation of the family is farming and to engage as farm labour during the season. This barely earned them a household income of Rs 45000 in the entire year.

Duwarkim bai has been a member of the Sudama farmer group since the last 5 years. Her sister-in-law was the one to introduce her to the group where she was introduced to the concept of NPM.

The story of change - Prior to joining the farmer group, Duwarkim bai and her family practiced conventional farming which increased their cost of cultivation and thus reduced the income that she could generate from farming. But soon after joining the group she slowly started adopting the practices of NPM which led her to reduce her cost of cultivation substantially. This included preparing bio repellents like Panch Patti and Neem kadha on her own and using compost and FYM to fulfill the nutrients needed by the crops.

This led her to believe in the NPM way of farming and she adopted it entirely for her land as well as became an ambassador to promote NPM amongst other women in the villages.

As she had become an expert in practicing NPM, she urged to prepare the bio repellents on her own which was seen as a promising opportunity to set a BRC in the village to further the reach of NPM in the area. Hence, she was supported by the federation to set up a BRC unit which would open ways for her family to increase their income and nurture it as a means of livelihood.



Benefits reaped - After the setting up of BRC, it enabled her to generate an extra income of Rs 15000- Rs 20000 from the farmers of her village and nearby villages who paid for the half share of the price of the bio-preparations and the other half share for all the farmers practicing NPM was given by SPS, as a subsidy to promote adoption. Other than the increase in income from the BRC, practicing farming as NPM also helped her to increase her savings as the expenditure was less and the income was more.

Challenges - The road to succeeding in her venture was not easy or without hurdles as the business did not flourish from day one as farmers have always had their reservations about using these bio-preparations as they do not have faith in their efficacy and rather prefer the overpriced chemicals that claim to kill their pests effectively. It took time for them to see the results and believe in its efficiency but once they did the adoption was quick and that resulted in the rise of the business for Duwarkim bai prospering her BRC enterprise.

Conclusion - Thus, it can be concluded that if practiced over time and with all faith, NPM can bring about a change in the way of the farming making it safe, pesticide free as well as reduce the cost of cultivation and increase the farmer's income. In Duwarkim bai's story it can be seen that due to her commitment and conviction towards NPM, not only did her farm and family prosper but also, she served as an example to all other farmers of the region to resort to NPM.

4. Self-Help Group and Livelihoods Programme

4.1 Introduction



Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are financial intermediary committees consisting of ten to twenty local women, aged eighteen to fifty-five, who voluntarily contribute their time. The concept of SHGs emerged to promote the socioeconomic empowerment of women and vulnerable groups through government-supported social and financial institutionalization.

Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) implements programs in agriculture, livestock, health and nutrition, entitlements, watershed management, aggregation, and community media, all of which are supported by Women's Self-Help Groups. This pioneering initiative by SPS has been instrumental in fostering women's socioeconomic empowerment and livelihood creation. To date, SPS has established **2,889 women's self-help groups** in **15 towns and 566 villages**, encompassing a total of **38,604 members** across **14 locations**. Most SHG members belong to marginalized groups, including the poor, Adivasis, Dalits, landless individuals, and those displaced by social and economic challenges.

The persistence of endemic poverty and hunger, even seven decades after independence, highlights the glaring inadequacies of governance in rural areas. SPS envisions federations of women's SHGs as a critical building block for empowering the poor in the tribal drylands of India, ensuring these communities have a meaningful voice in the development process. Through a robust savings program, SHG members can break free from the grip of exploitative moneylenders.

These federations act as community institutions that amplify the voices of marginalized groups while working in close partnership with the government, other federations, and civil society organizations (CSOs).

The SHG initiative goes beyond financial services; it represents a pivotal step toward women's empowerment and independence. The program promotes financial inclusion, savings, and access to formal institutional credit among women. However, its success is closely tied to livelihood programs such as improved agriculture, dairying, and marketing, which complement the SHG initiative. The simultaneous implementation of SHG and livelihood programs is key to sustainable poverty alleviation.

The SHGs offer members a range of financial products, including interest on savings, recurring deposits, fixed deposits, loans against fixed deposits, and emergency loans—each carefully assessed by the members themselves. Other benefits include collective purchasing of basic necessities, loans for cattle and well construction, cattle insurance, life insurance, and more.

To streamline and enhance operations, SPS uses **Pragati Mitra**, an accounting-cum-MIS software, and **Pragati Vistaar**, a field-level software. These tools ensure SHG operations are organized, transparent, and efficient. The SHG program is unique in sharing **CIBIL data** with financial institutions, which helps maintain safe borrowing practices among marginalized members.

In an era of increasing digitization, SPS is committed to digitizing its entire SHG process, promoting digital literacy among members, and linking financial institutions to members' mobile numbers to strengthen bank linkages. These efforts not only ensure operational efficiency but also prepare SHG members for a digital future, fostering greater financial independence and resilience.



4.2 Major Activities

In the year 2023-2024, 2,339 SHGs were linked to banks, with total savings of **Rs.63.76 crores**, and provided loans worth **Rs.116.21** crores to their members.

4.2.1 Overview

Macro Key Performance Indicators of SHGs for the Year 2023-24		
S.No.	Indicators	Figures
1	Total number of districts	3
2	Total number of blocks	9
3	Total number of towns	15
4	Total number of villages	566
5	Total number of SHGs	2889
6	Total number of clusters	170
7	Total number of federations	10
8	Total number of SHG members	38604
9	Percentage of SHGs linked with banks/financial institutions	85%
10	Total amount of bank/FI loan disbursed (in crores)	630
11	Total savings (in crores)	63.76
12	Average savings per member (in Rs.)	16519
13	Total loan outstanding (in crores)	116.21
14	The average size of loans per SHG	442265
15	Loan recovery ratio	95%
16	Total number of individual savings bank accounts opened	34178
17	Total number of members insured	30421
18	Total number of bank linkages	2339

4.2.2 Location-Wise Performance 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	187	2909	4.98	10.07	28.17
02	Kantaphod	37	233	3450	6.82	14.32	44.30
03	Bagli	51	264	4109	7.16	14.62	34.50
04	Barwah	52	219	3111	5.57	9.70	30.53
05	Dewas	1	229	883	0.15	0.67	0
06	Khategaon	38	243	3377	5.36	13.09	27.48
07	Hatpipliya	39	158	2228	4.51	10.69	28.90
08	Maheshwar	30	192	2574	5.39	10.25	26.36
09	Kannod	47	205	3037	5.06	10.09	30.03
10	Bhikangaon	48	199	2670	4.37	5.97	21.51
11	Punjabura	26	143	1903	3.43	6.68	17.32
12	Satwas	38	179	2340	3.27	5.54	17.16
13	Sanawad	30	164	2398	4.08	7.17	21.13
14	Lalkheda	38	173	2431	3.47	5.09	10.89
15	Dharni	35	101	1184	0.16	0.24	0
Total		566	2889	38604	63.77	124.18	338.28

4.3 Programme Highlights

4.3.1 New/Significant initiatives

1. Flood relief

On the 15th and 16th of September, the majority of the villages witnessed severe rainfall and major floods in many parts of Madhya Pradesh.

As the floods were not predicted and neither the villages nor the blocks were prepared to fight them, most of our members had to face challenges and losses during these 2 days. While the houses and furniture were flooded, it also caused major damages when it came to the livelihood-related activities consisting of handloom and agriculture, along with making it difficult to transport considering both Mandleshwar and Maheshwar were heavily flooded.

Understanding this disaster, the Maheshwar Mahila Pragati Samiti could not just sit idly through all of it. The federation initiated a relief in the localities of Mandleshwar and Maheshwar. The help was provided in terms of groceries and clothes. The clothes were provided by the Kumbaya Producer company free of cost to women and children. 180 SHGs of Maheshwar Mahila Pragati Samiti came together to contribute Rs.2000 each from their social fund. From the collective fund, a grocery was bought from RRPPCL of nearly Rs.3,81,000, helping 370 flood-affected families.

After extensive surveys for damage assessment, the Ram Rahim Pragati Producer Company helped the federation get groceries at subsidized prices; while Kumbaya helped with clothes for women and children. Other than this, as flood relief, Udainagar Pragati Samiti decided to utilize the emergency fund, where the affected members were given Rs.1500 each.



2. Fishery training to fight against hunger

Collaborating with the Fight Against Hunger Organisation, SPS at Melghat addressed hunger and malnutrition in the region by involving Self-Help Group (SHG) members in fishery setups, providing financial support, and promoting community best practices. SHG members also committed to selling fish at half price to malnourished children ('sam mam kids') in the village as part of the nutrition model, while the team conducted fishery training, emphasizing pond management and water quality parameters like oxygen levels, pH, and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS).

This is a community initiative where the Fight Against Hunger is providing technical and financial support to the SHG members, to maintain the existing fishery units. SHG mainly works on monitoring and maintaining these units and getting the most profits out of it. To get profit, the SHG members themselves will be selling fish while the same product will be sold at a 40% lower price to the children fighting malnourishment.

3. Awareness Camp on Mental Health and Gender-Based Violence

Samaj Pragati Sahyog and the Federation of Maheshwar conducted an awareness camp on gender-based violence and mental health, emphasizing the importance of partnership. The team discussed how GBV can lead to mental health issues and challenged societal rumors. Attendees expressed the need for further sessions to raise awareness and reach the last mile.

4. Saturday activities and Frisbee

As the HNPS team is successfully running the computer classes, to move ahead with the same, the team organizes Saturday activities for computer class students to boost self-confidence and enhance learning and thinking skills. These engaging events include quizzes, tests, motivational videos, and Zumba sessions. Students appreciate the initiative for its motivation and increased confidence. The students eagerly look forward to these activities as they provide opportunities to acquire new knowledge and foster a sense of regular attendance.

Many of these students have also been part of the ultimate Frisbee workshop, and grabbing the opportunity of the same, the team has started playing Frisbee with these students on Saturdays.

4.4 New Initiatives

4.4.1 Philanthropic activities undertaken this year

1. Spoken English Class

Utilization of social funds could not have been better; at one of our locations, Satwas, SPS began offering English-speaking sessions to its members and adolescent females. Six SHGs significantly donated around 40 thousand rupees to the Federation intending to provide a brighter future for their children. The course began on December 20, 2023, and will continue until March 20, 2024. This three-month course encouraged 40 students and two SHG members to learn English. The primary goal of launching this course was to create a desk for female students so that they are comfortable with English speaking and adapt themselves to running job demands in the market. After successful completion of the course, certificates are distributed.



2. Distribution of Sewing machines for livelihood creation

The creation of livelihood opportunities among the communities provides an essence of perpetual growth among the community related to their living standard and social standards. The sewing machine training is designed to offer a means of livelihood and support to widows, abandoned women, and Financially or Socially Vulnerable women who are heading households alone.

Our Bagli location has Completed two batches (15-15 members) of Sewing machine training in May and December. The December month training was completed on the 21st of December. After the completion of the batch, we distributed Sewing machines to 1st batch members on 26th May 2023 and 2nd batch members on 15th of March in an event organized at Bagli. The event cherished the presence of SPS founding member and Kumbaya founding member Dr. Nivedita Banerjee.

Moving forward, the project will continue its efforts and provide a training program for the upcoming new batch of members.



The training at these sewing centers is conducted regularly, now at three newly established centers. The sewing machine training is designed to offer a means of livelihood and support to widows, abandoned women, and individuals who have experienced divorce within the community. Moving forward, the project will continue its efforts and provide a training program for the upcoming batches of members. The identified participants will receive the necessary training to enhance their sewing skills and empower them for better livelihood opportunities.

3. School bench distributed through social fund

In the year Punjabura Pragati Samiti made remarkable efforts to promote education and learning. From the collective fund of organizations supported by Samaj Pragati Sahayog,

30 table sets were provided to students in the first to eighth grades at the government school in the village Mansinghpura by Punjabura Location in January month. This effort was done in order to foster the overall development of children in the community.

This endeavor was inaugurated during a community event attended by Samiti members and Leaders, school principal and staff, Jan Shikshak Adhikari, ASHA workers and villagers. We got the impression from the community's viewpoint that they preferred village children to sit on benches much like children at private schools. The event concluded with a strong message of collective responsibility for the protection and optimal utilization of public resources, with a collective resolve to empower the community's youth and create a positive impact on society.



4. Digital smart board through social fund

In recent years, there has been a significant shift in educational methodologies, with technology playing a pivotal role in transforming traditional classroom settings into dynamic learning environments. One such technological innovation that has gained prominence is the digital smart board. The Kannod Mahila Pragati Samiti, which is one of the federations that are operational under SPS, inaugurated a digital classroom worth rupee 1,87,000 rupees at Nanasa High School on December 29th, funded by 14 SHG groups. The digital classroom includes a Samsung digital study board and necessary amenities, aiming to enhance education delivery and inspire positive change in the community.



5. Swingset through social fund



The Bagli Pragati Samiti and Hatpipliya Pragati Samiti made some admirable efforts and put in commendable efforts to education and learning. The SHGs of the Bagli location have installed two swing sets in the local school of Islamnagar, Badiyamandu village, to foster the overall development of children in the community. The SHGs of the Hatpipliya location have installed two swing sets in the local Anganwadi, in village Arlavada, to foster the overall development of children in the community.

This initiative was launched in a community event attended by Samiti members, Anganwadi staff, and villagers. The program has received widespread appreciation from the community for its selfless dedication to the community's growth, which represents a substantial divergence from personal interests. The event concluded with a strong message of collective responsibility for the protection and optimal utilization of public resources, with a collective resolve to empower the community's children and create a positive impact on society.

6. Water plant in a village

As part of a co-funding Project, two Drinking Water RO units were successfully installed in the villages of Bangarda and Bhukya. A meeting was held in Bhukya to discuss the commencement of the RO unit and the distribution of drinking water to the villagers.

To ensure the sustainability and maintenance of the RO unit, each household will be required to pay a monthly fee of Rs 50. However, for this current month, there will be no charge, and all villagers can freely use the facility. Starting in June, the monthly fees will apply to each household.

भूमिका भास्कर
www.bhumikabhaskar.com

E-Paper
गुरुवार, 11 मई 2023

आरो का लगाया फिल्टर प्लांट ग्रामीणों को मिलेगा शुद्ध ठंडा जल

अनिल उपाध्याय, खातेगांव
जनपद पंचायत खातेगांव की ग्राम पंचायत पुरोनी के ग्राम भुक्या में शत प्रतिशत आरो का फिल्टर प्लांट लगाकर विकास खंड का प्रथम गांव बन गया है। सरपंच श्री संतोष पटेल ने आरो फिल्टर प्लांट का फीता काटकर विधिवत रहे, गांव में आरो का फिल्टर प्लांट लगने से ग्रामीणों में बेहद खुशी देखी जा रही है।
गर्मी के दिनों में ग्रामीणों को शुद्ध और ठंडा पेयजल उपलब्ध होगा यह प्लांट एक समूह के माध्यम से एक निजी बैंक द्वारा ग्रामीणों को प्रदान किया गया जनपद पंचायत क्षेत्र के गांव में यह

To manage the operations effectively, three individuals were elected from the village. They will collectively handle the overall management responsibilities, including fee collection, mobilizing members, and overseeing the functioning of the RO unit. This division of roles will help ensure smooth operations and continued access to clean drinking water for the villagers.



7. Smart TV in a school

Ten self-help groups (SHGs) from the Devgad cluster decided to allocate their social funds towards societal development projects, including installing Smart TVs in government schools. Despite challenges in reaching a consensus, the SHGs agreed to install the devices, leading to a grand inauguration program on April 20th. The installation not only demonstrated unity and commitment but also provided a sense of identity within the village.

The initiative symbolized the SHGs' empowerment and role in shaping a better future by ensuring access to quality education and opening new opportunities for the younger generation. The event was a testament to the collective efforts of the SHGs in making a tangible difference in their village and fostering pride and belonging among its members.



8. Surplus distribution

The surplus is allocated to the SHG members based on their prior records and individual performances, as well as how they have contributed to the growth of the SHG in the five years since its inception or from the last distributed surplus date. In the year all SPS locations distributed surplus funds totalling 4,01,92,769 rupees among its 6671 members of 612 SHG groups. Surplus distribution results in the members staying motivated and trusting the SHGs more.



4.5 Achievements and Recognition of the SHG Program

1. Digital Literacy- Computer centers

Recognizing the deprivation and vulnerability of the families that SPS works with, it goes without saying that the education level and literacy rate are very low in the intervening area. Those who go to school may not have access, and most of the time, they lack motivation and support to move forward in their careers. With the thought of building support systems and helping with the technology-related aspect of education, computer literacy centers are set up at six different locations under our ABF project.

The computer literacy centers are giving priority to school-going girls. This involves prioritizing the children of members, female students of government schools, and other children in need. **Because our**



Mitaan also belong to the same of community that they work in, the children Mitan are also involved in this training. Teaching computers not only benefits their confidence and capacity towards digitization, but the certification provided and the knowledge gained will help their careers in the future.

While the centers have a formal teacher and a formal syllabus of study, they also provide certification to the students. The students are enrolled by considering the level of their knowledge of the topic. This enables it to have level-wise batches, hence working on different modules ranging from basic to advanced batches. The students are enrolled by considering the level of their knowledge of the topic. This enables them to have level-wise batches, hence working on different modules ranging from basic to advanced batches. More than 571 students have received computer literacy training this Year



One of the SPS locations, i.e. Punjabpura, shifted their whole computer class setup in the village, Ratatalai to make the accessibility of computers among the participants much easier.

This step not only increased the attendance of students but also saved transportation costs for students.

2. Digital literacy (with Android mobile phones)

SPS made 6,500 Android phones accessible to our SHG members in the Financial year, on top of that 3,000 mobile phones were also bought by members on their own through surplus amount making altogether a total of roughly around 9,500 marking a major accomplishment for us. Smartphones will inevitably be seen as a driving force behind change in an ever-changing world, where the digital divide is palpable.

During the year, around 400 digital literacy trainings were conducted, offering roughly 10000 members comprehensive training during the fiscal year.

The goal was to give women more confidence when it comes to utilizing personal, smartphones. The primary topics covered in the training included using basic mobile usage, Google, Google voice search methods, linking mobile numbers to banks to maintain account secrecy, online payment methods, idea sharing to launch new livelihood-related projects, and Pragati Mitra, an Android application for all our SHG members.



Before distribution, SPS also concentrated on digital literacy training that included digital fraud awareness, cybercrime awareness, online gambling, and blackmailing; in addition, training on personal information, password protection, digital myths, and confidence building was provided. The usage and learning of ATMs and UPIs were also discussed.

It is noteworthy that women who struggled to write their names can now utilize the voice search tool, call numbers, watch movies, and confidently employ digital media for the advancement and strengthening of their livelihoods is particularly evident. Overall, leveraging smartphones for financial inclusion and empowerment can significantly improve the lives of these women, enabling them to participate more actively in economic activities and society at large.

4.6 Capacity building

Because the capacity building was primarily split into three sections—members, leaders, and Mitans—the subjects covered in each section differed according to the intended audience of the program. Since SPS has been emphasizing digital literacy for almost a year, a range of issues on the subject were also covered.

SPS Community Media generated films and other audio-visual aids to supplement the training and make it more interesting and gripping.

4.7 Leadership pieces of training



Since the SHG program is focused on empowering women, it is crucial to make sure that a small number of people do not hold all the leadership positions. The purpose of keeping the leadership roles in the SHGs and federations rotating is to encourage a more inclusive and participatory attitude. As a result, a wider range of members can assume leadership roles due to the regular transition of these posts.

Several training sessions are actively planned to provide members with the abilities and information necessary for effective leadership, as it is recognized how important it is to develop competent leaders. These training courses concentrate on imparting a clear knowledge of the qualities of a good leader, including their duties, perspective, and goals for the advancement of the team.

The SHG program uses this strategy to develop a group of qualified leaders who can make valuable contributions to the community. It makes sure that a varied range of women hold leadership positions, rather than a small number of them, which promotes a more dynamic and inclusive leadership structure. This strategy boosts the program's overall efficacy while also empowering individual participants. During the year we have trained a total of 1525 members to inbuilt and enhance their leadership Quality, so they can lead the women and community to claim their rights.

4.8 Members training

In this Year, there was a notable emphasis on introducing a variety of engaging and enriching training sessions. While a significant portion of these trainings centered on enhancing digital literacy skills, there was also a parallel focus on optimizing the performance of women within the SHGs. To make the learning experience more hands-on and practical, numerous activities and interactive games were thoughtfully designed and implemented in real-life scenarios, providing members with valuable practical insights. More than 1200 members were actively trained in nearly 55 training days.

Furthermore, certain locations introduced a token of appreciation system to acknowledge and motivate the active participation and outstanding performance of members within the SHGs. This initiative aimed to recognize and reward members who demonstrated exceptional commitment and



dedication to the group's activities. Through this system, members who excelled in various aspects of their SHG involvement were incentivized with small gifts, reinforcing their sense of belonging and encouraging sustained enthusiasm for the betterment of the group.

These training sessions not only enhance their performance, but also help women go beyond their regular life activities, help them open up and express themselves more than they usually do, and also help them connect more effectively. During the year we have trained more than 2000 members to make them aware of many areas like Finance, SHG Rules, Women Empowerment, and other social matters.

4.9 Exposure visits

The women we deal with frequently lead lives that keep them confined to their towns or homes, with their only real options for travel being to see family or for work. We routinely arrange exposure tours because we understand how important it is for these diligent SHG members to take a break and because we also know how important exposure and knowledge are to building trust inside the organizations.

This year witnessed some exposure visits, focusing on a variety of topics. Ranging from cross-learning with various locations, programs, federations, and organizations.

Some leaders of Barwah Mahila Pragati Samiti had an exposure visit to the federation office of Kantaphod. They discussed the progress and a way to independence for a federation and its leaders. It focused on motivating the new leaders and forming stronger leadership through experience sharing. Other than that, active members from the Khategaon federation were hosted by Barwaha Mahila Pragati Samiti, where they discussed and visited the EH&N participants, and other rural livelihood-related activities consisting of livestock development.

This results in the betterment of not only the group that visits but also the one that hosts. These visits have two functions. First of all, they enable members to see the organization from a wider angle by enabling them to observe firsthand the numerous programs and activities in places they may not have previously visited.

Second, these exchanges greatly aid in the development of confidence and trust, especially when paired with the adventure of discovering new locations. They are also better equipped to comprehend their future initiatives and programs as a result. These visits not only strengthen members' faith in the organization but also give them more confidence and provide them the strength to seize new chances and challenges with a renewed feeling of competency and will. Our goal with exposure visits is to improve these women's lives and foster a closer relationship between them, the organization, and their growth potential.

We target ongoing internal capacity building, with a particular focus on our office and Mitaan, in order to optimize the effectiveness of our organization. This entails regular monthly performance reviews, one-on-one assessments, and financial analyses tailored to each location. The Year witnessed a few interesting pieces of training on various topics like data management, sexual harassment policy, health, gender parity, and nutrition along with some test papers, etc.

These efforts boost efficiency and empower us to create lasting community impacts. Through these initiatives, the team is equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for success, enhancing our ability to make a meaningful and sustainable difference in the communities we serve.

4.10 Participation in Gram Sabha

In our pursuit of empowerment through SHGs, we recognize the need for empowerment to encompass not only financial aspects but also social and political dimensions. To achieve this multifaceted empowerment, the women in the villages must advocate for their rights. The Gram Sabha serves as the ideal platform for this purpose.



On Independence Day, Gram Sabhas are arranged in all the panchayats, providing an excellent opportunity for women to voice their concerns and engage in public discourse. To facilitate this process, mitans were actively trained to empower and motivate SHG members to actively participate in the Gram Sabha meetings across all the panchayats. This proactive approach resulted in a significant increase in the number of female members taking part in Gram Sabha discussions, ensuring that their voices were heard and contributing to a more inclusive and participatory decision-making process within the community.

To prepare the members to be able to not only attend the gram sabha but also to raise their voices in the same, many efforts were actively put in. It was not only about boosting confidence but also about keeping the women aware and informed.

From villages regularly and conducting a social meeting on the agenda of understanding the need and theory of panchayat and gram sabha, to recognizing a problem, writing applications for the same, and preparing the members to talk about it, the team actively worked towards having the women participate in gram sabha

4.11 Social meeting

The program believes not only in financial empowerment but also that people must meet their entitlements as well. The social meetings believe in discussing and acknowledging the problems that are faced by the members and finding a solution that is not financial. This enables the members to recognize the issue while empowering them throughout the process to solve it on their own. This makes it necessary for the members to stay connected to the organization beyond just financial relations.

4.12 Bank linkages

The attempt to link our SHGs to CC accounts has been a long-standing endeavor. As of this financial year, 86.9% of total SHGs are linked with banks under the SHG-Bank Linkage program. This program aims to enhance financial inclusion and access to financial services for SHG members.

4.13 Internal and external audit

For better monitoring and evaluation, all of the locations and federations are audited thoroughly once a year. In 2023-24 also witnessed extensive external as well as internal audits to ensure that the financial statements are presented properly and that there are no frauds or backdrops taking place. These also ensure the work details and the bookkeeping are up to a certain standard.

4.14 GBM Meetings

General Body Meetings (GBM) are one of the gatherings at which all the federation's members are present. The event consists of enthralling moments that captivate the attention. Some important events include speeches by federation leaders, accomplishments in the current fiscal year, New problematic agenda to be undertaken at the federation level, the annual budget for the following year, and current year expenditures.

At the beginning of the year, the General Body Meeting (GBM) was organized by and for the federations of Bagli, 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 their agendas on the table and take charge of everyone present there. This Year's GBM is at Bagli Pragati Samiti, with the main agenda being surplus distribution. SHG generates money through savings and interest to cover expenses, resulting in a surplus amount. This surplus is distributed to financially well-performing members, with the surplus criteria set by bylaws.

The first surplus distribution occurs every five years. The GBM had ABF representatives, BOI branch managers, and SBI branch managers as guests. The federation leaders were felicitated by the guests themselves, while the surplus check distribution was conducted by the Branch managers of BOI and SBI, Bagli.

The program had more than 650 SHG members, with an aggregate of Rs. 26.42 lakh Surplus money among 33 SHGs.

This year Barwaha Mahila Pragati Samiti, also organized GBM in January 2024. The event recorded the presence of Founding Members, Program In-charges, Samiti Leaders, and Barwaha Staff Members.





4.15 Kirana distribution

The grocery distribution project is effective, especially because the majority of members could hardly afford to buy high-quality groceries all at once. Through this program, SHG members were guaranteed access to premium groceries at reasonable prices, along with the extra convenience of doorstep delivery and the choice of installment payments.

Recognizing the significance of offering subsidized groceries, particularly as the holiday season drew near, the federations took the initiative to plan and grow these initiatives. In the end, this proactive reaction fostered resilience and support among the members by demonstrating the commitment to address the basic needs of their members and the larger community during difficult times.

4.16 Strengthening the Programme

Given that the SHG program serves as the foundation for all other programs and is one of the most important components in forming and structuring the community, it must be improved constantly. Certain theories are applied to real-world situations for the same reason.

A very notable project has started to improve the program by strengthening it through the monitoring and evaluation point of view. A software named (DBMS) Data Based Management System is developed internally and currently is being used across the program, which evaluates data better, along with easier. Considering SHG needs continuous strategy building and evaluation, this software may help the program, along with helping the team to make their performances even better.

4.17 Challenges

The challenge of the existing MFI structure is still prevalent, which is being carefully tackled through strategic assessment of the needs of the villagers.

The participants of SHG have their livelihoods mainly depending on agriculture and other agriculture-related activities. Hence, due to climate change, near to no rains along with high heat and harsh sunlight, the members did not get any profit in their farms and/or daily wages. Due to initially low rainfall and then a flood, many of the members have migrated to other states in search of livelihoods. All these factors have highly affected the inflow of finances and loan repayments.

4.18 Case study

1. Breaking the shackles through the SHG program

Salitabai, an active SHG member who resides in Loharada village with her husband and children, runs a prosperous grocery shop. Her children are studying in good schools, her husband has been freed from bonded servitude, and this is the life she had always envisaged for herself and her family. But was everything as simple as it seems? No, Salita Bai, a marginalized worker who used to spend long hours in the fields of others, has achieved some significant improvements in her life via the SHG program, freeing herself and her husband from the shackles of bonded labor.

Salitabai's husband, Omprakash, used to work in a grocery shop at Seth Shop near Loharda, Kantaphod city has bonded



labor for several years, earning 2500 per month after devoting 14-15 hours per day. Salita Bai, on the other hand, spent the entire week working as a laborer in other people's fields. Even after all of this, they struggled to make ends meet, and it became apparent that they required external financial assistance. It was around mid-year, 2005 when Salita Bai, discovered the Samuh program, run in her village by Samaj Pragati Sahayog. She decided to join it so that she could save some pennies for times of trouble and in times of trouble, loans can also be taken from the group.

She had taken the first loan of Rs 2,000 for household expenses. As the group grew, the Demand for loans also increased. Later, she took the first big loan of 25,000 for the construction of her house which was repaid through installments every month in the group meeting. After a period, after fully repaying the previous loan, she took out another loan of 30,000 and persuaded her husband to quit working at Seth's shop, letting him establish a venture of selling goods at small stores in villages on his motorcycle.

The small venture turned out to be successful, from the generated profit she repaid the whole loan in installments which reflected and increased her CIBIL scores. As the venture was growing, the amount of loan that she used to take from SHG increased, ultimately increasing the loan amount and in no time the small venture turned into a big scaling venture.

From the profit made in the business, Salita Bai's husband, who had been a servant at a set shop for years, is now the owner of the shop. In this way, Salita Bai would take loans from the group to buy groceries and sell them from village to village and from her shop. Earlier, both of them had to work for many hours, and even after that, they faced unprecedented challenges.

At that time there was no money, today even after all the expenses and group installment, there is a profit of Rs 5,000 per month. Now, after all this, she is planning to scale up her Kirana business, and let her husband stop traveling from village to village to sell goods, she is even planning to buy a Car, which can also escalate her business.

2. The story of Ahilya Bai- Holkar Mahila Sanman Puraskar



The SHG Melghat team is thrilled to share the extraordinary success story of Mangala Didi, a devoted SHG Mitan associated with Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS). Her unwavering dedication and exceptional work within the SHGs have led to her being honored with the prestigious **Ahilya Bai Holkar Mahila Sanman Puraskar 2023**.

transformed the lives of SHG members.

Recognizing her exceptional work, the Gram Panchayat bestowed upon Mangala Didi the Ahilya Bai Holkar Mahila Sanman Puraskar. This prestigious award is a testament to her remarkable efforts in empowering women and driving sustainable change

within the SHGs. The Gram Panchayat's recognition serves as a powerful validation of the transformative impact she has had on the communities she serves.



Mangala Didi's dedication and guidance have enabled SHG members to engage in income-generating activities, access financial services, and elevate their socio-economic well-being. Working in collaboration with the Agriculture, Livestock, Health, and Nutrition Field Team, her tireless efforts have created an enabling environment within the SHGs, fostering the growth and empowerment of women.

Her story is a living testament to the power of community-driven initiatives, demonstrating how individuals can transform lives and bring about lasting change through the platform of Self-Help Groups. It reminds us all that every small step taken with dedication and compassion can create a ripple effect of positive transformation in society.

5. COMMODITY AGGREGATION

5.1 Origin of Ram Rahim Pragati Producer Company Limited

To overcome some of these challenges, Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) facilitated the formation of Ram Rahim Pragati Producer Company Limited (RRPPCL) in 2012. It was first incorporated under Part IXA of the Companies Act, 1956 (No. 1 of 1956) and later under chapter XXI of Companies act 2013. The company is owned and run by **5850** small and marginal tribal women farmers belonging to **390 SPS-promoted Self Help Groups**. The authorized capital of **RRPPCL is 1 crore and the paid-up capital of the company is 70.5 lakhs.**

The company promotes Non-Pesticide Management of Agriculture (NPM) and markets pesticide free Agri commodities. The NPM movement encourages farmers to grow crops without the use of synthetic chemical pesticides, using natural pest control techniques which helps them to create an identity for their produce by linking the NPM farmers to organised markets.

RRPPCL shareholder farmers are regularly trained in NPM practices by in house professionals and by agriculture experts from across the country. Every batch of commodity procured by RRPPCL is tested for pesticide residues as per FSSAI recommendations in the Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017 (Jaivik Bharat Standards) in FSSAI accredited laboratories”.

In the rabi season last year, 2 varieties of wheat were distributed along with 2 varieties of Chickpea that are suited and in demand for this region. A total of 31.25 tonnes seeds were distributed of both wheat and gram, in the rabi season which was the best performance in the last few years. The details for the seed distribution for the rabi season is as presented below:

Seed distribution in the rabi season

Blocks	Wheat (Seed in Quintals)		Gram (Seed in Quintals)	
	HI-1544 (Purna)	Lokwan	Vishal	Daftari
Bagli	110	-	42	5
Barwaha	52.80	-	22.20	-
Bhikangaon	60	-	25.50	-
Total	222.8	-	89.7	5

Similarly, seeds were also distributed focusing on the agenda of seed diversification, in the kharif season which has been a joint area of work for agriculture program and commodity aggregation program in order to reduce risk of farmers and increase their production and income by promoting the farmers to move ahead and include high value crops in their farming to enhance their cash-inflow. Being mindful of that, seeds for maize, sesamum, sorghum and different types of pulses were distributed amongst the members making up for a total of 8.99 tonnes of seed distributed in the kharif season. The details of the seed distribution done for kharif season is as under:

Seed distribution in the kharif season

S.No	Seed (in Quintals)	Bagli	Barwaha	Bhikangaon	Total (in Quintals)
01	Maize	36.51	24.94	17.31	78.76
02	Red Gram	4.70	2.75	1.48	8.93
03	Black Gram	0	0.35	0.75	1.1
04	Green Gram	0.03	0	0.08	0.11
05	Sesamum	0.25	0	0.25	0.5
06	Sorghum	0.18	0	0.39	0.57

The successful seed distribution in bulk quantities provided for convenient opportunities for the aggregation of commodities later in the season, for the entirety of the last year which in itself was an achievement for the program.

5.2 Commodity Aggregation

While aggregating the produce from the fields, several challenges are faced that can be weather based or situation based. Certain challenges that were faced last year in aggregating the NPM produce of our farmers were as under-

Unseasonal rainfall presented a huge challenge during last year's aggregation. Most of the crop productivity along with the quality of the crop. During Red Gram aggregation moisture was very high while wheat was affected by black spots. Lack of proper compliance to quality parameters is the major challenge for our aggregation team. Quality of the produce being sold is of prime importance for obtaining higher and desired prices which is lacking at the farmer's end as they are not very aware and do not practice post-harvest management practices like cleaning, grading and drying as well as they should.

This leads to moisture percent being high for the grains at times and high dockage which yields the farmer lower prices. The unavailability of a greater number of well-maintained collection centers is another hurdle we face which creates problems of space to keep and safely store the crops bought in bulk quantities.



In the last year, the commodity aggregation reached new heights and aggregated huge amounts of surplus in both rabi and kharif seasons. A total of 7 crops were purchased including grains and pulses from its members round the year. The table shown below presents in a concise manner the crops and the quantities they were aggregated in.

Aggregation of crops in the last year

S.No	Crops	Quantity in (q)	Total amount	No. of farmers
01	Wheat	3917.535	9562743.225	190
02	Bengal Gram	1070.95	5763033.31	99
03	Red gram	988.2	9002502	315
04	Green gram	1041.04	8048394.000	191
05	Red Chilly	16	381870	12
06	Dollar Chana	723.28	7312551.3	56
07	Maize	1729.88	3489953.750	79

Adding on to the exceptional performance in aggregation, in a historic move and as an incredible win, RRPPCL received a cash credit limit of ₹ 5 crore which was provided by the Bank of India to help in the purchase of wheat and gram in the last rabi season. This was done as an aid so that payments could be made to the farmers while aggregation without any delay and for the development of the business and infrastructure of the FPO.

One additional venture that our commodity aggregation team took up last year was the distribution of Grocery worth 13058856 catering to 3708 members. The details of the activity done is elaborated below in the table shown.



Grocery distribution details

S.no.	Date	No. of members	Per member amount	Total amount
01	01/07/2023	733	3456	2533248
02	29/07/2023	718	3512	2521616
03	14/08/2023	571	3422	1953962
04	29/09/2023	516	4130	2131080
05	10/12/2024	370	1035	382950
06	10/01/2024	800	4420	3536000

Overall, around 126.5 tons (maize, red gram, sorghum, black gram, green gram, sesame, wheat, Bengal Gram) of seeds were provided to 3622 members in both the cropping seasons throughout the year. Seed distribution is done in bulk along with the SHG team so that timely and improved varieties of seeds can be made available to the farmers during the season. The details of the distribution for seeds done overall is presented as below.

Overall seed distribution data

S.no.	Seed	Sale in (quintals)
01	Maize	272.19
02	Wheat	503.2
03	Bengal gram	313.7
04	Sorghum	1.50
05	Red gram	15.12
06	Sesame	0.95
07	Black gram	1.43

The turnover of the organization in 23-24 was Rs16.6crore. During last year we also saw some diversification in the business of RRPPCL. RRPPCL onboarded ITC and Dehaat for selling its commodities. Apart from this RRPPCL also plans to set up a value chain of NPM produce for its own members as well. NPM tur dal has been sold to its own members and in future NPM chilly will be made available to its members as well.

5.3 Challenges in this Region

- ⇒ Low fertility of land.
- ⇒ Zero or low access to sources of irrigation.
- ⇒ Reduced productivity due to high chemical and pesticide usage.
- ⇒ Lack of quality Agri inputs and inaccessible affordable credit.
- ⇒ Organised commodity markets are too distant from the region and this coupled with low holding capacity of the farmers forces them to be dependent on local traders for sale of their produce at very low prices.

6. LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

6.1 Introduction

Livestock has long been integral to the farming systems of Madhya Pradesh, significantly contributing to the rural economy and household income. However, livestock rearing in rural areas faces persistent challenges, including high mortality rates, inadequate veterinary care, and limited awareness among farmers. To address these issues, Samaj Pragati Sahayog launched the Livestock Program in the Dewas and Khargone districts of Madhya Pradesh and the Amravati district of Maharashtra. The program's primary goal is to reduce mortality rates and improve livestock management practices in these regions.

One of the most pressing challenges in livestock rearing was the absence of timely and adequate health support for animals. Farmers, relying heavily on traditional methods, had limited access to veterinary services, resulting in alarmingly high mortality rates. In response, Samaj Pragati Sahayog introduced a well-structured para-veterinary system, offering doorstep services to marginalized livestock rearers. This intervention has been crucial in bridging the gap in veterinary care.

To combat diseases that are particularly prevalent during the monsoon season, the Livestock Program initiated a village-level vaccination drive. Vaccines were administered for diseases such as Enterotoxaemia and HS-BQ, providing essential protection to both small ruminants and large animals. Additionally, deworming medicines were distributed to prevent illnesses caused by stomach worms and bacteria, further improving animal health.

The Livestock Development Program has experienced remarkable growth and impact during the fiscal year 2022-2023, expanding its reach across diverse rural landscapes. The program's unwavering commitment to fostering sustainable livelihoods, enhancing animal welfare, and empowering communities has resulted in significant achievements.

The program's coverage has expanded to 588 villages, a substantial increase from its initial reach of 333 villages. Within this expansion, the Goat and Poultry Programs have been particularly impactful. The Goat Program has been implemented in 358 villages, while the Poultry Program has reached 162 villages. Notably, 348 villages benefit from the intersection of both programs, highlighting a holistic and integrated approach to livestock management.

6.2 Livestock Program Outreach

S.No.	Particulars	Till Previous Year	Added	Total
01	Total Villages	255	333	588
02	Total Goat Program Villages	149	209	358
03	Total Poultry Program Villages	69	93	162
04	Goat Program+Poultry Program (Common Villages)	158	190	348
05	Total Goat Producer members	3979	7351	11330
06	Total Poultry Producer members	2238	2927	5165
07	Goat Program+Poultry Program (Common Members)	3566	6457	10023
08	Total Livestock Producers beneficiaries	6625	13885	20510
09	Goat Producer Groups	220	438	658
10	Poultry Producer Groups	84	114	198
11	Goat+Poultry Producer Groups	219	445	664
12	Total Livestock Producer Groups	305	571	876

6.3 Major Activities

6.3.1 Member and Beneficiary Engagement

The success of the Livestock Development Program is rooted in its ability to engage and empower rural communities. The program has actively involved 11330 members in goat rearing and 5165 members in poultry farming. Notably, 3,566 members participate in both activities, demonstrating a shared commitment to diversifying their livelihoods. This dual engagement strategy has played a crucial role in enhancing rural livelihoods and promoting the integration of various livestock practices.

The program's impact extends well beyond its immediate participants, benefiting a total of 20,510 livestock producer beneficiaries. This broad reach highlights the program's holistic approach to community development, acknowledging the vital connections between livestock well-being, sustainable livelihoods, and overall socio-economic progress. A cornerstone of the Livestock Development Program is the formation of Producer Groups, which serve as vital platforms for knowledge dissemination, skill development, and collective decision-making.

These groups have not only bolstered community bonds but also promoted sustainable practices within the livestock sector. The program has successfully established 397 Goat Producer Groups and 131 Poultry Producer Groups, which have become hubs of innovation and learning.

The strategic convergence of Goat and Poultry Programs within 398 producer groups exemplifies the program's holistic approach to development, fostering multi-dimensional interventions that address the diverse needs of rural communities. With a total of 531 Livestock Producer Groups, the program demonstrates its commitment to building strong local structures that ensure sustained impact.

6.3.2 Member Engagement and Empowerment

The Livestock Development Program places a strong emphasis on the empowerment of its members through comprehensive capacity-building initiatives and active financial participation. The program has seen significant growth, with a total membership of 10,722, including 6,625 new members who have joined this year alone. This influx of new members highlights the program's appeal and the tangible benefits it delivers to rural communities, contributing to its ongoing success and expansion.



6.3.3 Meetings and Trainings

A pivotal aspect of the Livestock Development Program is its strong focus on member empowerment and capacity-building. In the fiscal year 2023-2024, the program made substantial progress in these areas, significantly enhancing knowledge dissemination and skill development among its members. The number of Livestock Producer Group meetings has seen remarkable growth, increasing from 1595 to 5329 highlighting the rising interest and participation in the program's training initiatives.

This growth reflects the program's effectiveness in engaging rural communities and providing a platform for collective learning and development. In alignment with its commitment to continuous learning, the program organized an impressive 987 capacity-building training sessions during the reporting period. These sessions served as critical opportunities for members to enrich their knowledge, develop new skills, and exchange best practices.



A significant achievement during this period was the increase in attendance at group meetings, with participation rising from 17490 to 65637 members. This surge in engagement underscores the growing involvement of beneficiaries in the program's decision-making processes, reflecting their active participation and vested interest in the program's success.

The commitment to enhancing knowledge and expertise is further evidenced by the rise in the number of trained members, which grew from 5376 to 19,765. These training programs covered a wide range of topics, including livestock management and financial literacy, equipping members with the tools they need to make informed decisions that positively impact their livestock and livelihoods.



Para-vet training, a critical component of the program's capacity-building efforts, reached 664 participants this year. The training of para-vets plays a crucial role in building local expertise and ensuring the well-being of the livestock community.

Moreover, the total number of training days for para-vets and members combined saw a significant increase from 796 to 1701.

This growth reflects the dedication of both program beneficiaries and experts, who have come together for extensive learning sessions aimed at improving livestock care and management.

As the Livestock Development Program continues to advance, its unwavering commitment to member empowerment and training remains evident.

The program's efforts to cultivate knowledgeable, skilled, and engaged members are clearly demonstrated in the growth of Livestock Producer Group membership, the active participation in group meetings, and the expansion of training opportunities. Through these initiatives, the program continues to build a resilient and empowered rural community, well-equipped to manage livestock resources and enhance livelihoods.

S.No.	Particulars	March 2023	Added	March 2024
01	Total Livestock Producer Group Meetings	1595	5329	6924
02	Total number of members present in the group meetings	17490	65637	83127
03	Capacity Building trainings	261	987	1248
04	Total members trained	5376	19765	25141
05	Para-vet Training	188	476	664
06	Number of training days of Para-vets and members combined	796	1701	2497

6.4 Programme Highlights

6.4.1 Goatary

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of goat farming activities and statistical trends from April 2023 to March 2024, highlighting key developments, challenges, and achievements in the sector during this period.

By March 2024, these numbers had seen substantial growth, with the population of adult male goats rising to 212389 and adult female goats to 478983. Similarly, the program initially reached 52,848 male kids and 53901 female kids by March 2024.

A significant achievement during this period was the notable reduction in kid mortality rates, which dropped from 6.19% to 5.7%. This improvement underscores the effectiveness of the program's interventions in enhancing the health and survival rates of young goats. Additionally, there was a marked increase in castration procedures, rising from 1132 in 2023 to 4125 by the end of March 2024, reflecting the program's focus on improving herd composition and promoting individual animal growth.

These trends indicate the program's successful expansion and its positive impact on goat farming practices, contributing to the overall sustainability and productivity of the sector.

6.4.2 Treatment Activities

The number of members involved in treatment activities increased from 7442 to 30230. Treatment activities expanded from 11370 animals to 45,865 animals till March, 2024; and this growth continued through the following year. The total number of treatments administered saw significant expansion.



6.4.3 Vaccination Activities

Vaccination efforts against specific diseases increased substantially during the studied period. Enterotoxaemia (E.T.) vaccinations surged from 34542 in 2023 to 11767 in 2024, and the trend continued until March 2023. P.P.R. vaccinations also saw remarkable growth, rising from 23,663 in 2023 to 61,288 in 2024.



6.4.4 Deworming

Deworming activities were performed on a total of 39,246 goats in 2023 and continued to increase until reaching 1,32,131 goats by March 2024.

6.5 Sale & Purchase

The livestock program's trading activities have shown remarkable growth over the reporting period. The number of goats purchased surged from 2727 in 2023 to 7513 in 2024, with continued growth by the end of March 2024. Correspondingly, the amount spent on purchasing goats saw a substantial increase, rising from Rs. 65,05,010 in 2021 to Rs. 2,73,66,774 in 2022, with this upward trend persisting into 2024.

On the selling side, members sold 3573 goats in 2023, and this number skyrocketed to 213348 in 2024, with sales continuing to increase through March 2024. These figures reflect the program's expanding scale and its successful facilitation of increased trading activities among its members.

6.6 Housing Structure

The program helps in infrastructure expansion, with the goat-shed count growing from 751 in 2023 to 2217 in 2024



6.7 Feed & Nutrition

The period from 2023 to March 2024 saw significant growth in the goat farming operations under the Samaj Pragati Sahayog program, reflected in several key indicators.

Mineral brick consumption rose from 3604 kg in 2023 to 12548 kg in 2024, while liver tonic usage saw an even more dramatic increase, from 12,652 liters in 2023 to 27,334 liters in 2024. These increases are expected to contribute to effective weight gain, improved reproductive efficiency, enhanced immunity, and a higher market value for the animals.

The goat population experienced exponential growth during this period. The number of adult male goats surged from 49,819 in 2023 to 2,12,389 by March 2024, while adult female goats increased from 1,13,936 to 4,78,983. The kid population also saw extraordinary growth, with male kids rising from 12676 to 52848 and female kids increasing from 13286 to 53,901 within the same timeframe.

These impressive gains across various metrics underscore the program's commitment to sustainable development and its effectiveness in promoting the health, productivity, and market value of livestock.



Goatary Data Table

S.No.	Category	Particulars	Measurement	March 2023	Added	March 2024
01	Adult Buck Goat Information	Goat/Male	Number	49819	162570	212389
02		Goat/Female	Number	113936	365047	478983
03		Total Death	Number	1960	4601	6561
04	Kid Information	Male Kid	Number	12676	40172	52848
05		Female Kid	Number	13286	40615	53901
06		Total Death	Number	1609	4512	6121
07		Total Birth	Number	13504	40756	54260
08		Castration	Number	1132	3083	4215
09	Treatment Activities	Number of Members	Number	7442	22788	30230
10		Number of Animals	Number	11370	34495	45865
11		Total Treatment	Number	10951	29989	40940
12	Vaccination Activities	Enterotoxaemia (E.T.)	Number	34542	83105	117647
13		P.P.R.	Number	23663	37625	61288
14	Deworming	Total Goats	Number	39246	92885	132131
15	Sale & buy	Number of Goats Bought	Number	2727	4786	7513
16		Amount of Goat Bought	Rupees	6505010	20861764	27366774
17		Total Goats Sold	Number	3573	209775	213348
18		Total Amount of Goats Sold	Rupees	30047179	8,37,13,049	11,37,60,228
19	Housing Structure	Goat Shed	Number	751	1466	2217
20	Feed, Nutrition & Fodder	Mineral Bricks	KG	3604	8944	12548
21		Liver Tonics	Litre	12652	14682	27334

6.8 Poultry

The Poultry Rearing Performance Analysis from 2023 to March 2024 reveals a substantial growth trajectory within the poultry program, reflecting its success in expanding production and overcoming challenges. Over the fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24, the program recorded a marked increase in various poultry categories. The number of Desi chicks surged from 50,177 to 1,71,039, Satpuda chicks rose from 17,062 to 62,981 and Kadaknath chicks expanded from 3,034 to 9,724.

Additionally, other chicks grew from 5,022 to 17,718. In the adult poultry segment, the population of Desi Cock/Hen increased significantly from 123,139 to 4,34,418, while Satpuda Cock/Hen grew from 31,741 to 73,161, and Kadaknath Cock/Hen expanded from 3,280 to 10410. Overall, the total Cock/Hen population experienced a remarkable rise from 109,869 to 3,65,698. This impressive growth underscores the program's effectiveness in enhancing poultry production, contributing significantly to the overall success of the livestock program.

6.8.1 Housing Structure

Infrastructure expansion was observed during the two-year period. New Poultry Sheds increased from 560 to 1230, and New Free-Range Sheds/ Garden Poultry Farming structures grew from 67 to 178. These expansions demonstrate the Samaj Pragati Sahayog commitment to providing suitable housing with the help of various projects to the growing poultry population.



6.8.2 Vaccination Activities

Vaccination efforts also saw substantial growth during this period. Ranikhet (7-day) vaccinations increased significantly from 11,634 to 76158, while Gambaro (14-day) vaccinations rose from 14,700 to 46,570. The Gambaro booster (21-day) vaccinations grew from 5,000 to 5,500, and the Ranikhet booster (28-day) vaccinations increased from 7,750 to 19994. Additionally, Ranikhet vaccinations for Desi poultry saw an uptick from 3,380 to 7560. Overall, the total number of vaccinations administered expanded from 19,836 to 65,572, underscoring the program's strong commitment to safeguarding poultry health.

6.8.3 Deworming

Deworming activities were performed to ensure the health of the poultry. The number of Deworming activities increased from 30,504 to 94,595, indicating a focused effort on parasite control and herd health management.

6.8.4 Feed & Nutrition

Poultry Feed consumption increased from 9,304 to 20,380, showcasing the program's emphasis on providing proper nutrition to the poultry.

6.8.5 Sale & Purchase

Trading activities among members connected to the livestock program demonstrated significant changes. The number of chicks purchased increased from 6,570 to 20,900, with the amount spent on these purchases rising sharply from Rs. 416,279 to Rs. 15,65,208. On the sales front, the number of chicks sold grew from 12,519 to 34,978, resulting in a substantial increase in revenue, from Rs. 4,433,670 to 1,27,90,460. Furthermore, egg sales also saw notable growth, with members selling 9577 eggs in 2023 and expanding their sales to 26165 eggs by March 2024, contributing to increased income for the members.



Poultry Data Table

S.No.	Category	Particulars	Measurement	March 2023	Added	March 2024
01	Poultry Information	Desi Chicks	Number	50177	120862	171039
02		Satpuda Chicks	Number	17062	45919	62981
03		Kadaknath Chicks	Number	3034	6690	9724
04		Other Chicks	Number	5022	12696	17718
05		Desi Cock/Hen	Number	123139	311279	434418
06		Satpuda Cock/Hen	Number	31741	41420	73161
07		Kadaknath Cock/Hen	Number	3280	7130	10410
08		Total Cock/Hen	Number	109869	255829	365698
09	Housing Structure	New Poultry Sheds	Number	560	670	1230
10		New Free-Range Sheds/Garden Poultry farming	Number	67	111	178
11	Mortality Rate	Chicks	Number	4385	8245	12630
12		Cock	Number	1648	3658	5306
13		Hen	Number	1498	3519	5017
14	Vaccination Activities	Ranikhet(7days)	Number	11634	64524	76158
15		Gambaro(14days)	Number	14700	31870	46570
16		Gambaro booster (21days)	Number	5500	9700	15200
17		Ranikhet booster (28days)	Number	7750	12244	19994
18		Ranikhet in Desi	Number	3380	4180	7560
19		Total Vaccination	Number	19836	45736	65572
20	Deworming	Deworming (35-40days)	Number	30504	64091	94595
21	Feed and Nutrition	Poultry Feed	Kgs	9304	11076	20380
22	Sale and Buy information	Number of Chicks Bought	Number	6570	14330	20900
23		Amount in rupees of Chicks Bought	Rupees	416279	1148929	1565208
24		Number of Chicks sold	Number	12519	22459	34978
25		Amount in rupees of Chicks sold	Rupees	4433670	8356790	12790460
26		Number of Eggs Sold	Number	9577	16588	26165
27		Amount in rupees of eggs sold	Rupees	136304	283038	419342

6.9 Cattle

6.9.1 Total Villages

In March 2023, the program expanded to cover 1,955 villages, a significant increase from 1,414 villages in March 2022. This represents a growth of 541 villages, highlighting the program's expanding reach across rural areas.

6.9.2 Total Beneficiaries

By March 2023, the program had successfully served 39,153 beneficiaries, an addition of 26,603 beneficiaries from March 2022. The increase of 12,550 beneficiaries reflects the program's effectiveness in engaging the community and supporting livestock owners.

6.9.3 New Member's Survey

The survey for new members in the program recorded 3,078 participants in March 2023, an increase of 2,529 from the previous year. This growth demonstrates the program's ability to attract and involve more livestock owners.

6.9.4 Health Card Distribution

A total of 7,942 health cards were distributed by March 2023, an increase of 5,740 cards from the previous year. This increase of 2,202 cards indicates enhanced efforts to document and monitor animal health across the villages.

6.9.5 Number of Animals Registered

By March 2023, the program had registered 47,400 animals, an increase of 30,373 animals from the previous year. This substantial growth in registered animals reflects the program's success in encouraging livestock owners to participate in health management initiatives.

6.9.6 Deworming

In the financial year 2023-24, 18,254 animals were dewormed, an increase of 13,275 from the previous year. The significant rise of 4,979 dewormed cattle indicates the program's ongoing commitment to improving animal health and reducing parasitic infections.

6.9.7 Vaccination

The HS-BQ vaccination drive reached 50,818 animals by March 2023, an increase of 34,514 animals from March 2022. The rise of 16,304 vaccinations reflects the program's focus on preventing common diseases and enhancing herd immunity.

The Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccination campaign covered 65,572 animals by March 2023, marking an increase of 37,361 animals from the previous year. The increase of 28,211 vaccinations highlights the program's success in mitigating the risks of this highly contagious disease.

Cattle Data Table

Category	Particulars	Measurement	March 2023	Added	March 2024
General information	Total villages (Program)	Number	541	1414	1955
	Total beneficiaries (Program)	Number	12550	26603	39153
	New member's survey	Number	549	2529	3078
Health Card	No. of health card distributed	Number	2202	5740	7942
	No. of Animals	Number	17027	30373	47400
Deworming	Deworming in cattle	Number of animals	4979	13275	18254
Vaccination	HS-BQ	Number of animals	16304	34514	50818
	FMD	Number of animals	28211	37361	65572

6.10 Conclusion of the Livestock Program

In summary, the livestock program has demonstrated remarkable progress and impact, driven by its core objective of providing timely and effective services. The program's focused efforts to reduce mortality rates and significantly increase beneficiaries' income have yielded impressive results, as highlighted by the data from this period.

Key to this success has been the program's rigorous approach to minimizing mortality rates. Through meticulous vaccination schedules, targeted treatment activities, and comprehensive deworming initiatives, the program has substantially improved livestock health and well-being. These health management strategies have been crucial in reducing losses and securing the livelihoods of the beneficiaries.

Additionally, the program has fostered notable growth in beneficiaries' income. The increase in poultry and goat populations, coupled with strategic trading activities, has led to a significant rise in income generation. Both sectors have thrived, enhancing financial stability for beneficiaries and contributing to broader economic growth within the community.

As the program advances, it is essential to maintain these positive trends by continuing to prioritize timely interventions, vigilant health management, and informed decision-making. The data underscores the effectiveness of these efforts and the program's role in building a resilient and prosperous livestock community. With a steadfast commitment to its objectives, the livestock program stands as a beacon of success, positively impacting both the livelihoods of its beneficiaries and the agricultural landscape at large.

Moreover, the program has played a crucial role in empowering beneficiaries and promoting gender equality. The implementation of strategies such as the Hissedari Sabha and targeted training programs has effectively increased women's participation in democratic decision-making at the village level, demonstrating the program's commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable community development.

6.11 Case study

Kripa Didi's Journey to Empowerment



Kripa Didi resides in the serene village of Khiroda of Dewas district with her husband Shyam and two sons. Their livelihood depends solely on Shyam's daily wages as they do not possess any land for cultivation.

Kripa didi is member of Sitara Pragati Samuh of Satwas location, despite their modest means, Kripa Didi is actively engaged in self-help groups and microfinance companies. She adeptly manages financial transfers between these groups, underscoring the critical importance of punctuality in payments.

Recently, Kripa Didi was fortunate to receive two goats from Samaj Pragati Sahayog with

the help of Axis Bank foundation. She promptly needs to forward it by gifting two of the female goats to another member in need, thereby perpetuating a cycle of mutual aid and support.

Undeterred by financial constraints, Kripa Didi invested Rs. 9,000 from her household savings. This strategic move resulted in the growth of her goat herd from two to four, demonstrating her resilience and determination.

Despite her best efforts, one of her goats succumbed to illness despite receiving treatment from the para-vet of the Satwas location. However, Kripa Didi remains optimistic about the future, eagerly anticipating the birth of more offspring.

With the support of Samaj Pragati Sahayog and her self-help group, Kripa Didi ventured into poultry farming. She acquired 20 chicks and one feed bag valued at Rs. 3,270. Over four months, while facing challenges like the mortality of two birds, she persevered.



Kripa Didi's diligence bore fruit when she successfully sold the roosters for Rs. 5,000 and hens for Rs. 3,200. Her profitability and satisfaction have fuelled her ambition to further expand her poultry enterprise.

Encouraged by her recent successes, Kripa Didi is determined to enhance her flock of poultry birds. Her vision for the future is to continue building on her entrepreneurial journey, contributing positively to her family's financial stability and the community's welfare.

Kripa Didi's story exemplifies the transformative power of perseverance, community support, and strategic decision-making in overcoming adversity and achieving sustainable livelihoods in rural India.

7. ENTITLEMENTS HEALTH and NUTRITION

7.1 Introduction

The Entitlements, Health, and Nutrition Program aims to improve the health and nutrition of children, adolescent girls, and pregnant women, addressing critical issues like malnutrition and anemia prevalent in the area. The program also promotes institutional deliveries and advances overall health and nutrition. To achieve these objectives, it collaborates with 603 primary and secondary schools, 539 Anganwadi centers, and 246 ration shops across 378 villages in 209 panchayats across 10 locations. Recognizing the importance of community participation in implementing government schemes, the program empowers communities to be active stakeholders. It encourages community monitoring and trains self-help group members to connect local communities with government schemes. Additionally, it strives to generate employment opportunities and enhance community participation in scheme implementation, recognizing the critical role of monitoring and involvement in these efforts.



Village Health Sanitation & Nutrition Committee Meeting

7.2 Entitlements

In April and May, a survey of 35,000 households was conducted, which helped build household profiles and create a village-wise dashboard, revealing the number of families deprived of various government schemes.

A total of 18,000 families have been connected to various government schemes, including Ayushman Bharat, Pension, Janani Suraksha Yojana, Eligibility Slips, Samagra ID, Aadhar Card, and MGNREGA, among others. The program has provided 24,752 person-days of training to Hissedari Sabha leaders, MGNREGA laborers, pregnant women, and mothers of malnourished children. New Ayushman cards were created for 19,576 members, and 113 members received treatment benefits worth ₹10,884,000 for specific diseases.

Under Ujjwala Yojana, SPS organized camps in villages in collaboration with gas agencies, resulting in 550 women applying online. So far, 150 women have received gas cylinders and stoves. Through the Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, 1,302 farmers were enrolled and have begun receiving scheme benefits. To promote better health, seeds for kitchen gardens were provided to 4,000 women, enabling them to grow and consume pesticide-free vegetables.

More than 40,000 families benefited from free food grains under the Garib Kalyan Yojana. Initially, 4,313 members were unable to access food due to their names not being listed on eligibility cards, which has since been corrected. Additionally, 1,105 new families who were not receiving food grains were issued new eligibility cards, ensuring food support. Four new ration shops were also approved. A total of 33,395 members have been connected to schemes such as PMLBY, JSY, LLY, Sambal, and the National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS).





7.3 Detailed Project Reports (DPRs)

were prepared for 50 panchayats in Bagli, Udaynagar, and Punjapura. This initiative involved focused group discussions (FGDs), transect walks, and resource mapping, aiming to ensure eligible beneficiaries receive their entitlements and to support panchayat development work. The DPRs, presented to service providers and villagers, lay out a developmental framework for these panchayats. Through the Hissedari Sabha, drinking water issues in 68 villages were resolved. Previously, villagers fetched water from fields, but now, due to the tap water scheme, each household has access to drinking water.



7.4 Garib Kalyan Yojana

More than 4000 families have benefited from free grains under the Garib Kalyan Yojana. Among these families, 4,313 members were unable to receive grains due to their names not being included in the eligibility list. Efforts were made to add their names to the eligibility list. Additionally, 1,105 new families, who were not receiving grains, were issued new eligibility cards to help them access grains. Furthermore, four new ration shops have been approved.

7.5 Maternal and Child Health

At Anganwadi Centers, six essential services (Supplementary Nutrition, Health Check-ups, Referral Services, Immunization, Nutrition and Health Education, and Pre-school Non-formal Education) are provided to beneficiaries, and these centers operate regularly and punctually. Of the 952 severely malnourished children, 637 (67%) have shown health improvement. Activities for malnourished children include training for their mothers, admissions to the Nutritional Rehabilitation Center (NRC) for critical cases, a Milk-Banana activity for those unable to attend the NRC, immunization, regular health check-ups, and deworming. A film created by SPS (Pico Screening) has been instrumental in raising community awareness.



For pregnant women - Activities for pregnant women include enrollment at Anganwadi Centers, training, awareness on the benefits of institutional delivery, information on the Janani Suraksha Yojana, assistance with immunizations and health check-ups, and the provision of iron sucrose units to anemic pregnant women. The Pico Screening film by SPS also plays a significant role in community awareness around these activities.



7.6 Hypertension Initiative

As part of the Entitlements, Health, and Nutrition program, blood pressure screening was introduced. The screening of 2,339 members revealed that 315 had systolic blood pressure above 130, and 54 had diastolic blood pressure above 100. Additionally, 80 members were already on blood pressure medication, and 7 new cases were started on medication. Plans are underway to provide medication to the remaining members as well.



7.7 Milk and Egg Initiative

Samaj Pragati Sahayog's initiative to combat malnutrition across 82 villages began in September with 316 children. The program's objectives include raising community awareness about malnutrition prevention and encouraging families to incorporate milk and eggs into daily diets. Hissedari Sabha leaders played a crucial role in educating the community about the nutritional benefits of eggs, emphasizing protein intake.



To address severe malnutrition among children, a series of targeted activities are being implemented to improve their health and well-being. These activities include training mothers of malnourished children, admitting critically malnourished cases to Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs), and integrating children who cannot access NRCs into the Milk-Banana initiative. Additionally, the community is actively encouraged to vaccinate their children, routine health check-ups are conducted, and deworming tablets are administered to affected children.



A significant contribution to raising community awareness about these efforts has been made through the SPS-produced film, Pico Screening.

These initiatives have yielded notable results, as evidenced by the improvement in the health of 637 children, representing 67% of the 952 identified as severely malnourished. This improvement is reflected in their overall health and a positive shift in their grades. Such efforts continue to strengthen the fight against malnutrition within the community.



7.8 Hissedari Sabha

The Hissedari Sabha aims to raise awareness among self-help group women supported by the organization, ensuring access to government schemes and community involvement in implementation. During meetings, members receive training on understanding government plans and funding sources to advocate for their entitlements effectively. A total of 740 Hissedari Sabha meetings were held across 318 villages. Additionally, Samadhan Shivir events were held in 184 panchayats to connect marginalized people with beneficiary-oriented schemes in collaboration with panchayats.

In the area of infrastructure, road issues were resolved in 63 villages, including a rainy season road issue in Dawatpur village. Following letters by 40 Hissedari Sabha leaders to the Sub-Divisional Officer and local MLA, a farm-to-road project from Ambad to Dawatpura was initiated.





7.8.1 Changes in the village due to Hissedari Sabha meeting



7.9 Jowar Utsav and Local Food Festival

Four Local Food Festivals and a Jowar Utsav were organized in Satwas, Sanawad, Barwaha, and Melghat locations. These events highlighted the importance of diverse, nutritious diets, advocating for the inclusion of forest vegetables and coarse grains for improved community health and nutrition.



7.10 Kathal (Jackfruit) Food Festival

The Udayanagar Pragati Samiti's Entitlement Health & Nutrition (EH&N) program organized a Jackfruit Festival at the Radha Krishna Mandir premises in Dad Mohalla, Village Devanaliya. The objective of the event was to spread awareness about jackfruit. A large number of raw jackfruits are commonly used as vegetables in low-lying areas. The event aimed to showcase its quality and promote the use of ripe jackfruit and its seeds in food, along with its pickles and sweet fritters.

The program began with Babita Kushwaha, who addressed everyone about the Jackfruit Festival. She explained that we typically use jackfruit only as a vegetable and throw it away once it ripens. However, in other states, people cook and eat jackfruit, something we were not familiar with. Babita also highlighted that jackfruit has many health benefits that we are unaware of.

Additionally, Pinky Didi explained the properties of jackfruit and shared various ways it can be consumed. Ansuyaa Didi also elaborated on the benefits of jackfruit.

The program included bhajans along with jackfruit. The leaders of the participation assembly sang bhajans with their respective groups. Pinky Didi also performed a bhajan in her regional language, which was warmly received by all. Everyone listened to her bhajans attentively and deeply enjoyed them. The combination of devotional music and discussions about jackfruit made the event even more special, bringing everyone together in a peaceful and spiritual atmosphere.



7.11 Case Study

Women of Mehandikheda village win over the struggle for drinking water

In the Hirapur Panchayat of Udaynagar, the struggle for drinking water under the Jal Jeevan Mission began in earnest back in August 2023. For the residents of Mehandi Kheda, access to clean drinking water had become a daily battle. The Hissedari Sabha members, mostly women, took this challenge as their own and stepped up to fight for their basic right to water.



The stories of their struggle are not just about pipes and tanks—they're stories of persistence, determination, and unwavering hope for a better future.

In Mehandi Kheda, water scarcity had reached a crisis point. Day after day, the women of the Hissedari Sabha watched their children suffer, women struggled with household chores, and the elderly waited in silence, hoping for a solution. The pain of not having enough water for daily needs—be it drinking, cooking, or even basic hygiene—was unbearable. These women, though, did not accept this reality as inevitable. They began holding meetings, speaking to the sarpanch of their own village, and even reaching out to neighboring panchayats for help.

Their journey was filled with setbacks and frustrations. Despite repeated meetings and requests, progress seemed slow, and the promised water tank work remained incomplete. The Hissedari Sabha members didn't give up. They reached out to the PHE department, to their MLA, and finally to the



Chief Minister's Helpline, detailing their struggles. It wasn't just a fight for water; it was a fight for dignity and respect—acknowledgment of their basic rights as women and as members of the community.

One vivid memory that remains is of a women's leader named Sunita, who became a driving force in the struggle. Sunita, with tears in her eyes, shared how she had spent sleepless nights worrying about how to fetch water for her family, often relying on neighbors, but with each passing day, the problem seemed to grow worse. Yet, through all this, she remained steadfast, not just for her own family but for every woman in Mehandi Kheda who shared her pain.



When they learned that the work had stopped once again, the women of Hissedari Sabha didn't let despair take over.

Instead, they wrote to their MLA, who initially promised action within 15 days but failed to deliver. That's when they turned to the Chief Minister's Helpline, filling in the complaint with a deep sense of urgency and hope. Eight days later, the water tank was finally completed, thanks to their relentless efforts.

Another inspiring figure, Rani, who had faced the brunt of this crisis daily, recalled how she felt a deep sense of empowerment when she saw the tank being built. "It wasn't just about the water," she said. "It was about knowing that we could stand up for ourselves, that our voices mattered." For Rani, this wasn't just about accessing water—it was about reclaiming their place in the decision-making process, about being heard and respected.

The contractor who had initially failed to complete the work was held accountable by the sarpanch, who issued a public memorandum. This act of accountability was key in pushing the contractor to resume the work. The Hissedari Sabha leaders, led by women like Meena and Priya, continued to work closely with the sarpanch and the contractor to ensure the completion of the tap water scheme.

Throughout this struggle, the leaders didn't just focus on the task at hand—they fostered a sense of community, encouraging other women to take ownership of the Jal Jeevan Mission. In a meeting, women like Sudha and Laxmi spoke about how the Jal Jeevan Committee could empower women further, not just to seek water but to ensure it was sustained for the long term. By 7 PM on that day, the pipe connections were completed, and when they asked the contractor about when water would flow into every household, he assured them that by 11 AM the next day, clean water would reach all homes. The women, though, didn't stop there. They made it clear to the contractor that if the water didn't arrive on time, they would not hesitate to take further action.

For these women, this fight wasn't just about accessing water—it was a fight for their dignity, their rights, and their futures. The struggle, while challenging, became a source of strength, community, and hope. Today, thanks to their relentless efforts, water flows in Mehandi Kheda, transforming not just the daily lives of these women, but the lives of their families and their entire community.

7.12 Challenges

- ↪ Limited Aadhaar centers providing new cards; most only update existing ones.
- ↪ Beneficiaries often lack necessary documents, such as income, caste, or residence certificates.
- ↪ Errors in official documents and age corrections.
- ↪ Lack of cooperation from panchayat service providers.
- ↪ Network issues in many villages.
- ↪ Frequent migration of some families.
- ↪ Anganwadi workers face challenges balancing services with Booth Level Officer responsibilities.
- ↪ The Women and Child Development Department has not approved eggs as nutritional support for malnourished children.

8. Kumbaya

8.1 2023-2024 at Kumbaya: An Overview

Summer begins sharp under the Tropic of Cancer. In the scorching heat, everyone is dancing, kicking up dust and rocking to the beat of wedding disco. Giant speakers mounted on trucks are now the new technology at village weddings, blaring at ear-shattering volume. The months of April and May swirl past in bhootaalas, swirling funnels of dust flurrying across the landscape. There are only a few weeks after the rabi harvest and before the monsoon.

This is the time - to get married, celebrate, attend wedding feasts. Afterwards, it will be time to collect minor forest produce like tendu patta and prepare the land for the kharif crop. At Kumbaya, there is a race to finish manufacturing Spring Summer collections for our design partners in Europe and make time to enjoy wedding festivities. The production team becomes one, like a symphony of sewing machines reaching a crescendo, to get things done before the monsoon sets in disrupting our process. As we battle the summer heat with coolers blasting everywhere, the Kumbaya Bhavan tile roofs are repaired before the rains.

For Kumbaya, the year 2023-2024, like every other year, went flying by in making orders, meeting deadlines, attending exhibitions, building partnerships and creating new designs. However, there was one extraordinary achievement that marked this year differently for us. Kumbaya Producer Company Limited won the “Best Women Entrepreneurs-Leading Sustainability and Social Impact” award from the CITI Textile Sustainability Awards 2024. The award ceremony was held in New Delhi in February 2024, where our founder, Nivedita Banerji received the award on behalf of Kumbaya’s producers from & the Union Minister of Textiles, Commerce Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food & Public Distribution.



This year also featured many skill development trainings on stitching organised by the women-led Federations of Khategaon, Maheshwar, Bagli and Barwah. The aim of these dedicated primary-level training sessions is to enable women to use a sewing machine to stitch local garments and get a supplementary income doing custom tailoring from their homes.

Master trainers Rubina Ali, Rubina Sheikh and Usha travelled from Satwas to Khategaon in a bus for almost an hour, followed by another hour of motorcycle rides on rough dirt tracks to remote villages to reach different training centres. These training centres were located at a central place every time so that a new batch of trainees could reach them easily.

The four-hour commute to and fro every single day for the duration of each training cycle lasts for almost a month.

Training centres at Barwah and Maheshwar were set up at the Federation offices. Better public transport made it possible for women to arrive every day from nearby neighbourhoods and villages. From Kumbaya, Kamla and Banno stayed at the training centre and led the trainings in Barwah, while our veteran master trainers Dhanna Lal, and Urmila conducted the trainings in Maheshwar. Additionally, Sangita and Rekha led the two trainings held in Bagli. Overall, in all three Federations, a total of 159 women were trained over the year.





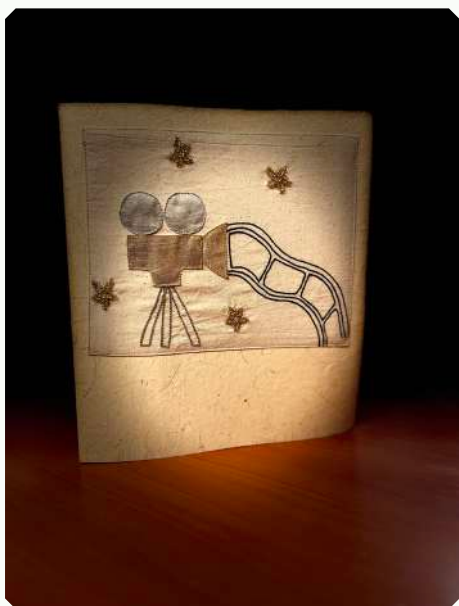
Maheshwar saw unprecedented flash floods this year during the monsoon in September. The floods were caused by sudden water released from six dams along the river Narmada. The river raged and swelled, tearing into many villages, mohallas, and neighbourhoods that had never seen flooding before. Many homes were destroyed and people fled for their lives. Maheshwar is a weaver's town. The muddy waters destroyed their homes, yarn, fabric and looms. As a small part of the disaster relief, all the clothes made in Kumbaya's training programmes were donated to the Maheshwar Mahila Samiti Federation to help people affected by floods.

While Kumbaya grew in impact, skill, design and retail partnerships, it also continued to face financial challenges this year. A sudden influx of an unusually large amount of wild honey was a huge expense that blocked cash flows. The company also struggled with delayed payments from international clients and ran out of funds to make payments to fabric suppliers and producers. However, like the light at the end of the tunnel, the women SHGs stepped up to help us sustain through this financially turbulent period. Against all odds, Kumbaya endures with resilience into the next year.

8.2 New Productions

Kumbaya's new designs this year consisted of a top with the Boujee Bee embroidery, Jaya Kaftan and Jacket, Dula Top, Ravi Cowl Neck top, Flying Fox shirt, Neva kurta, Collared Overlap blouse and Phiran, Tissue Ruffle shirt, Tissue Kimono Jackets and Anasuya Overlap dress.

We also introduced embroidered and applique greeting cards designed by Anasuya and Dhanya along with some hand-embroidered Christmas toys suggested by Pukhraj.



8.3 Design Collaborations

Export orders and design collaborations help us enhance our skills and abilities. The team learns more about design, quality, timelines and discovers their capabilities through this journey of co-creating garments and products with different designers across the world that approach Kumbaya.

Annie G: Annie G is an alliteration with energy and a brand that works with activewear and performance apparel, prioritising support and comfort. Their focus is on curating limited edition classic products with a focus on simple comfort and relaxed elegance.

Our pattern master and producers skilfully created patterns and samples of new styles based on photos. Unlike the usual middle size that is made as a prototype, Annie G wanted a small size to be done in all styles. This, along with the fact that we had to work out the measurements, and specifications created a challenge that led to multiple gradings and corrections through the year.

Labvisby: A brand that highlights quiet simplicity and small sustainable productions sourced locally and globally. From 300gsm canvas to fine handloom silks and cottons, Labvisby orders allow Kumbaya to work with a range of fabrics and unusual styles. Our producers have now become familiar with the process of setting and stitching the thick canvas fabric owing to the regular orders of classic Labvisby styles.



Rani & W Reine: A brand based in Germany, that creates clothes and accessories from natural fibres sourced, spun, knit and created ethically by Indian artisans. Rani & Reine's designs seek to bring the wearer comfort, freedom of movement and a chance to experience thoughtfully crafted textiles and inclusive sizing. The Kumbaya team looks forward to the process of collaborating with Sarah Dunn, the founder of Rani & Reine. Like other international clients, she flies down and stays at the Jatashankar campus to work on the designs with the team that streamlines the entire process. This year we worked on repeat styles of dresses, jackets, tops and pants that the team is now familiar with. We also added patchwork to her designs.

Sarah and her business partner Seatile, have opened a store in Tübingen, in a heritage building. The store is called Botho – a Tswana word embodying respect, oneness and interbeing. It is a unique boutique offering sustainable and artisanal clothing, jewellery, art and décor. We are thrilled that a single 60” x 40” Kumbaya signature Rainbow Patchwork throw sold for 225 euros here. Sarah will be showcasing Kumbaya products at Botho regularly.





Woven: Inspired by the need to create designs exclusively from handloom cloth in natural fibres, the founder of Woven, Laura Miles, creates graceful collections whilst designing and sourcing from Women Weave and Karghewale in Maheshwar. This year, Kumbaya produced new styles of blouses, shirts, skirts and pyjamas for Laura in beautiful colours and plaid patterns. We receive orders from Woven three to four times a year.

Pita Oskam: We worked on a collection of customisable jackets with Pita Oskam, a seasoned Product Manager and UX Designer. He visited Jatashankar in November and stayed for a week designing the jackets.



Zazi: 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 and facilitates women's economic and social rural independence.

For Zazi Vintage, Kumbaya producers worked with naturally dyed silks and heavy embroidery on denim for the first time. This was a crucial learning experience in haute couture given the challenge of working on silks and embroidered khadi denim. One of the styles was designed with naturally dyed and eco-printed silk by Akane Studio. Another style was an intricate bandini or tie and dye dress by Zakia Khatri.

The dresses were stitched with skill and care to create beautiful silhouettes in silk. However, some of the silk was so delicate that it would split at the seams under stress.

Hence an almost invisible interlining was used at the seams to keep the fabric in place. We also learnt that twills like denim stretched on large frames for embroidery never come back to their original measurement. Therefore, even though we made beautiful jackets and flared trousers, the production had to be stopped midway. The artisans also made stylish jackets and mini skirts from heritage woven shawls

sourced from Kutch by team Zazi. Creating these new samples and reworking the patterns turned out to be an important learning experience for everyone at Kumbaya.



Reliance Retail Limited: The order for 3,000 Swadeshi Dolls with dark skin tones for Reliance Retail was a welcome project as a part of decolonising design and beauty standards. The work involved a lot of intricate stitching where the hair, eyes, lips, arms and legs of the dolls were individually and carefully hand stitched by our producers. The partnership materialised through Anandhi Dasaraj, Head COE, Project India at Reliance Retail.



The initial work of creating samples and securing approvals began in July 2022. Laveena Singawat, the designer overlooking the project, visited the production centres multiple times and guided the producers through the sample making process. During the final production our master pattern maker, Durgesh Dodiya and our producers worked closely with Laveena, a diligent and compassionate individual to complete the designing, labelling and packaging for these dolls. Working with external supervisors and evaluators was a new learning experience for Kumbaya.





Rangasutra: In a meeting with Sumita Ghose, one of the pioneers working with crafts people in India, Nivedita sought advice on how to lead Kumbaya post the Covid economic collapse. To help Kumbaya, Sumita through Rangasutra gave an order of Mens Kurtas to Kumbaya. It was a wonderful experience to have a master like Bhanwarlalji visit and mentor our team on stitching methods, quality and Rangasutra's requirements.

Project Croak|Monticola: Kumbaya Wild quietly came into being through a small launch for Monticola, a project started by Arjun Kamdar - a wildlife conservation scientist. His products combine behavioural science, ecology, design, and on-ground experience to create tools for conservation. We created a small batch of snake catching hooks and bags for this range.

Naushad Ali:
Kumbaya did a collection of shirts for Naushad Ali and unfortunately, we are still pursuing the payment for this production.





Safe Harvest & RRPPCL: Kumbaya made coats and caps as a part of protective gear for Safe Harvest and RamRahim Pragati Producer Company Limited.

8.4 Retail Partnerships

Ambara: At Kumbaya we value design that challenges existing narratives and stereotypes. We created a unique collection of kaftans, tunics, tissue silk kimonos, patchwork kimonos, trousers with learning stitch patches and embroidery patches to exhibit at Ambara, an iconic high-end boutique in Bangalore. The theme of this collection was anti-fit, and used a lot of Kora cotton fabric with black stitches creating an appealing monochromatic palette for styles.

This was born out of Jaya's visit to Jatashankar and Kumbaya's principles of circular design, craftsmanship and fair pay. Bees and birds, fish and flowers, beaded potli buttons on the clothing range were co-designed by Anasuya along with the embroidery team. Anasuya also designed a blouse with a dressing gown collar and a sleeveless top with embroidered bee for this particular collection.



Jhappi: Jhappi is a collective retail space for products sourced from NGOs, SHGs and Trusts. Their team member- Harsha Malhotra researched about Kumbaya and reached out to Nivedita to be their supplying partner. We started off by providing the first consignment to their Thane store in January 2023. Their plans of expansion into luxury hotel chains will hopefully prove to be beneficial to Kumbaya. However, the difficult negotiation regarding changing our MRP and claiming higher margins on our products is ongoing.



8.5 Exhibitions

Throughout the year, the team attended various exhibitions with a mix of old Kumbaya classics and designs fresh off the machine for people. We attended:

1. The Green Hub festival at Bhopal
2. The Crafts Council of India in Chennai
3. Flourish Hearth in Bangalore
4. Kala Ghoda Arts Festival in Mumbai

One of the most successful and prestigious exhibitions for us was the Kala Ghoda Art Festival in Mumbai wherein a considerable revenue was generated over four days. It was also a heartwarming reminder of the love and support that exists for Kumbaya in Mumbai as customers flocked to our stall through the day and late into the night. It took a large team of 7 people from Kumbaya to manage the sales. The fee for the stall was donated by our well-wishers. A major contribution was made by Ramesh Kacholia, Kanika Satyanand and Bharti Dalal to cover the costs.



8.6 Kumbaya Visits & Representation

On 19th June, Kumbaya was featured in Your Story, a platform that documents stories of people leading change, entrepreneurship and innovation in India.

YOURSTORY LOGIN

ISS

A stitch in time: How Kumbaya has changed the lives of tribal women in rural Madhya...

REKHA BALAKRISHNAN | 7 MIN READ

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE >

A STITCH IN TIME: HOW KUMBAYA HAS CHANGED THE LIVES OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN RURAL MADHYA PRADESH

In 1994, Nivedita Banerji started Kumbaya as a stitching centre in a remote village in Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh. Today, over 100 women from marginalised communities work in Kumbaya Producer Company Ltd, where employment is guaranteed for 300 days a year.

D. Lakshmi Balakrishnan • 1466 Stories

samajpragatisahayog

In July, Dhanya, Anasuya and Nivedita visited Karghewale- a community of exceptional young weavers from various weaving clusters of India in Maheshwar. This visit was done to meet the founders of Karghewale, Nivedita and Sourodip to source fabrics for the Ambara collection.



Nivedita attended the Kula Conclave held in Bangalore, an initiative that made an extraordinary and important effort to bring together creative, cultural and craft led enterprises. It held a vision to equip these MSMEs with access to right finance, right support and right networks to build future-ready solutions that benefit our planet and people.

The conclave was further crucial in the launch of the book *Business of Handmade* (2023) by Two Hundred Million Artisans (a research organisation that fills knowledge, resource, and partnership shortages to promote independence and creativity in India's artisan sector). The book features an excerpt from their interview with Nivedita as a part of their Business of Handmade Report of 2022, focusing 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.

Pukhraj Ranjan, the founder of Moi Namaste visited Kumbaya and co-designed a patchwork jacket with us. Moi Namaste is an online, fashion & lifestyle marketplace for the global conscious consumer, bringing authentic ethically created designs and experiences rooted in Indian culture and craftsmanship.

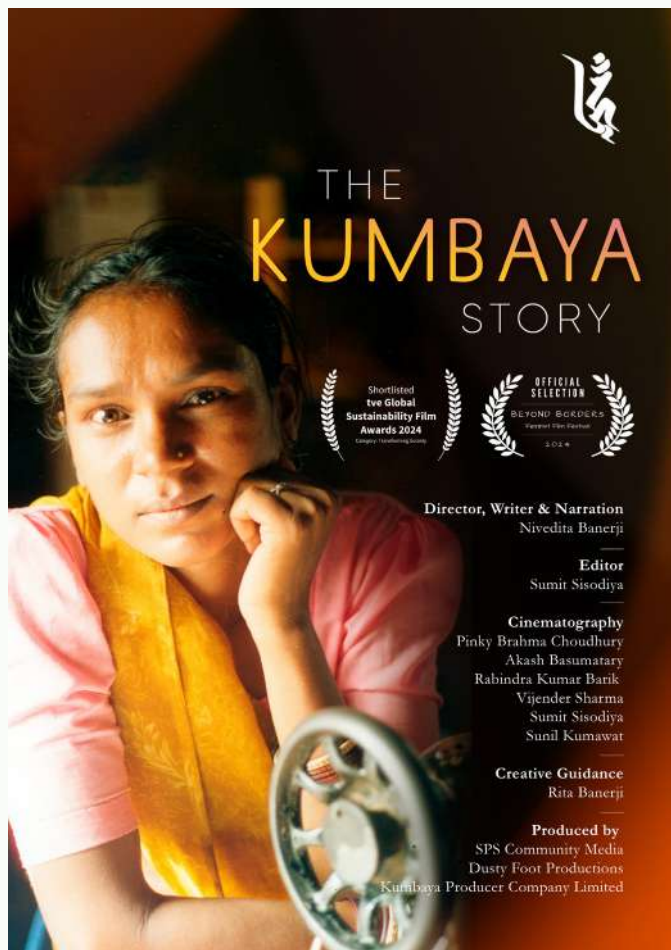


Tanja and Giulia, from the UK and Italy visited Kumbaya and its centres to understand our principles and production process.



Urvashi Kumar, the founder of The Handmade Edit, visited Kumbaya to know more about us with a collaboration possibility. The Handmade Edit is a Japan based bi-lingual curated marketplace that showcases select ethical fashion brands from South Asia. They collaborate primarily with women-led businesses that are trying to revive, preserve and promote the use of natural and sustainable materials, handwoven and hand dyed fabrics, hand embroidery, and other traditional crafts and techniques.

The Kumbaya Story - a short film on Kumbaya was completed this year and screened for the first time at Ambara, Bangalore in August.



Kumbaya introduced Indigo cultivation at SPS by sowing the seeds for a trial run in January. Our women farmers had the privilege of learning about Indigo farming from our knowledge partner Avani Handicraft who have perfected the art of indigo and other colours from nature over many years in Uttarakhand. Founded by Rashmi and Rajnish, a couple who moved to Uttarakhand, Avani Earthcraft works with local artisans and farmers, ensuring fair trade and dignified living. The Kumaon Earthcraft Self-Reliant Cooperative, founded through their efforts, is owned and managed by its members, focusing on sustainable living in harmony with nature. They also sent their team to Kumbaya and its bhavans for an exposure visit.





8.7 Impact for FY 2023-24

- ⇒ Employment provided for: **53** producers and **10** salaried staff
- ⇒ Collective wages earned by producers: **Rs. 41.56 lakhs**
- ⇒ Women newly trained under the stitching programme: **159**
- ⇒ Total pieces produced: **8,832**
- ⇒ New patches created from fabric waste: **1,207**
- ⇒ Value of Patchwork products sold: **Rs. 3.05 lakhs**
- ⇒ International design collaborations: **6**
- ⇒ Cities reached:**13** (Mumbai, Pondicherry, Bangalore, Mysore, Indore, Bhopal, New Delhi, Chennai, London, Tübingen, Havdhem, Amsterdam, Perth)

8.8 Financial Report for FY 2023-24

The total sales for the financial year 2023-24 were valued at **Rs. 81.13 lakhs**. The breakup of the same is as follows:

Organisation	Sales Amount INR In Lakhs	Percentage of Total Sales
Sales from Retail Stores		
SPS JS Campus, Madhya Pradesh	5.25	6.47%
SPS Neemkheda Campus, Madhya Pradesh	2.33	2.87%
Online Stores Sales	.74	0.92%
Kriti Eco Boutique, Pondicherry	3.09	3.79%
Mesh, Local Shopping Centre, New Delhi	.09	0.11%
Serenity, Bangalore	.46	0.57%
Ambara, Bangalore	4.66	5.74%
Ikikai Lifestyle	.02	0.03%
Jhappi Store	2.66	3.27%
Twelve By Two, Lifestyle Store, Bengaluru (Sonali Singh)	.53	0.65%
Chim Shop, Goa	.70	0.87%
Total	20.52	25.29%

8.8.1 Sales Through Institutions

Organisation	Sales Amount INR In Lakhs	Percentage of Total Sales
Safe Harvest Private Limited, Bengaluru	1.43	1.77%
Samaj Pragati Sahayog	4.22	5.20%
AFS Intercultural Programs India School	.85	1.05%
Pondicherry Design Co.	.75	0.92%
The Emerald Heights International School, Indore	.72	0.88%
Trifed Bhopal	3.07	3.78%
Reliance Retail Limited	3.60	4.44%
Barkat Bundle	1.93	2.37%
Total	16.56	20.41%

8.8.2 Sales Through Exports

Organisation	Sales Amount INR In Lakhs	Percentage of Total Sales
Labvisby, Sweden - 62156 (Maria Camila Jensen)	3.67	4.52%
Sarah Dunn, Rani & Reine, Germany	6.89	8.49%
Woven Studio, (Laura Miles) United Kingdom	9.42	11.62%
Zazi Vintage	13.13	16.18%
Annie G	.32	0.40%
Total	33.43	41.20%

8.8.3 Sales Through Exhibitions

Name and Location	Dates	Sales Amount INR In Lakhs	Percentage of Total Sales
Bhopal Exhibition	16th & 17th July 2023	.46	0.57%
The Crafts Council of India (Chennai Exhibition)	30th September to 7th October 2023	1.60	1.96%
Flourish Planet Private Ltd (Bangalore Exhibition)	27th to 29th October 2023	.94	1.16%
Kala Ghoda Arts Festival Exhibition (Mumbai)	25th to 28th January 2024	5.62	6.93%
Total		8.61	10.61%

8.8.4 Sales Through Honey

Organisation	Sales Amount INR In Lakhs	Percentage of Total Sales
SPS JS Campus, Madhya Pradesh	1.01	1.25%
SPS Neemkheda Campus, Madhya Pradesh	1.01	1.24%
Total	2.02	2.49%

8.8.5 Expenditures

Value of Fabric Purchased this Financial Year	Rs. 3979897
Value of Honey Purchased this Financial Year	Rs. 894275
Total Wages Paid to Producers this Financial Year	Rs. 4156600

8.9 Producer Reflections

- ⇒ This year saw increments in producer wages and salaries based on their skill, expertise and time taken for job work.
- ⇒ Working on silk for Zazi and new embroidery designs was a fruitful learning curve for the team.
- ⇒ Sajni and Pooja who used to work at Bagli Bhavan moved to Jatashankar this year and took on new roles and responsibilities in inventory management and packing consignments after the digital literacy training they had in the previous year.
- ⇒ Resham started working on making samples at Jatashankar. Earlier she was working at the Bagli Bhavan.
- ⇒ Jitendra who used to operate a flour mill at home, now works as a supervisor and assistant pattern maker at Kumbaya. He is learning pattern making, grading, quality checking, supervision and audit from Durgesh ji.
- ⇒ Naren, a producer with speech and hearing impairment, has been honing his smocking skills at Kumbaya.
- ⇒ The embroidery team travels for over an hour from Kantaphod to Jatashankar by bus. They prefer to travel these long distances rather than working from home as they have to constantly attend to housework and family. This way they get more work done and earn more in a day.
- ⇒ The embroidery team would like to have more members to be able to take on more work and deliver on time.
- ⇒ The women coming back to Bagli from work at Neemkheda late in the evening often encounter unpleasant behaviour and brawls between drunk men on the bus.
- ⇒ To make more storage space available for Kumbaya, the team feels that textile offcuts leftover from international orders need to be either returned, reused or reclaimed by us.
- ⇒ Kumbaya's own designs and samples should be made quickly so that work is always available for the producers and they do not ever have periods where there is no work.



8.10 Organisational Challenges

- ⇒ The assurance of year-round job security has led to an underlying sense of complacency among some of Kumbaya's employees. As a result, maintaining the necessary urgency and enthusiasm to meet daily tasks in a timely manner has become increasingly difficult, hindering the overall productivity and efficiency required to run the company effectively.
- ⇒ Kumbaya's aspiration has always been to strengthen the local cadre. However, the absence of an educational space that would train them for a professional ecosystem creates limitations that have to be overcome by intense and repeated capacity building. This translates into an additional investment of time and resources for the company.
- ⇒ Working with a fewer number of people calls for multitasking, as also a lack of hierarchy. Sometimes this blurs the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities within the management team. The overlap then invariably becomes a source of confusion and unaccountability for the rest of the team.
- ⇒ Despite years of handling the same areas of work, our team tends to fall short of using their prior experience and knowledge in order to get things done. They are always hesitant to take charge, thus limiting themselves and their value addition to the company.

↪ Apart from these internal challenges, external factors have also created a range of hurdles for Kumbaya. Post covid, the four production centres existing at Satwas, Bagli, Jatashankar and Neemkheda had to be consolidated to two. One at Jatashankar and the other at Neemkheda. Therefore producers from Satwas and Bagli now have to travel to either Jatashankar or Neemkheda. This has led to an increase in commute time for the producers and travel expenses in terms of bus fares and vehicle charges borne by Kumbaya. Given the lack of public transport in Bagli, producers are picked up from and dropped to their houses by vehicles.

↪ Dealing with expensive silks and embellishment for international clients on tight deadlines, made it critical for stitching and embroidery to be supervised primarily at Jatashankar. The rest of the production now remains concentrated at the Neemkheda Bhavan.

Every year Kumbaya grows with the people we work with; people who we come across and people who come looking for us. We look back at this year with admiration of having pulled off this feat of working with women and people with disabilities in a small rural area, while bundling up our learnings, challenges and bittersweet encounters along the way. Enduring is hard work, but it is what one must do to unbuild walls.

8.11 Kumbaya Wild Honey

Kumbaya and SPS have invested many years and resources in promoting the sustainable harvesting of wild honey. Kumbaya pure wild honey is from the last few deciduous forests of the Valley and is collected from single large combs of the Giant Rock Bee, *Apis dorsata*, which nests on high cliffs and tall tropical trees. With global consensus on bees' importance as one of the world's most important pollinators, their significance is undeniable in maintaining an ecosystem-level equilibrium. Kumbaya's small yet resolute attempt is to save as many colonies and incentivize others to save them too. Indigenous honey gatherers of the Bhilala and Barela tribal communities harvest this honey without causing injury to either the bees or their combs. The honey is collected from hives that nest on various native trees, including Mahua, Arjun, Neem, Jamun, etc.

The journey began almost twenty years ago when Animesh and Nina, young professionals who had just joined SPS, decided to drive their motorcycle from Udainagar, through the forest to the SPS campus at Neemkheda village. On the way, they discovered Juladhad, a village of hamlets and honey gatherers hidden amidst the trees.

In those days, bees were smoked out from their hives at night by burning dry leaves. Often, they used torches made of cloth dipped in kerosene to chase bees away. Whole hives were cut off and taken back to the village where honey was squeezed out, larvae and all.

This wild honey was sold by them for forty rupees in used liquor bottles, sitting on the roadside in the weekly haats, local village markets held throughout the area. We were told that the beeswax was bought by a few traders in Pipri.

When a whole hive is cut, a colony of nearly 3000 *Apis dorsata* bees is killed. *Apis dorsata* fly in a radius of 12 kilometres gathering nectar and are crucial as pollinators.

With the help of our friends, Keystone Foundation, an organisation working with honey-gathering tribes of the Shola forests in the Nilgiris, we learned how to harvest honey sustainably.

Bees store honey in a separate part of the hive. After the bees are smoked away, this part is cut carefully, leaving the rest of the hive intact for the bees to return to. Instead of squeezing out honey, the honeycomb is slit to break the surface tension in the capillary-like cells so that honey pours out. This process is slower but the honey is not contaminated with larvae or wax.

To save wild bees, SPS offered a higher price and an assured market. This is how Kumbaya Wild Honey started. Over the years it has been tried and tested, bottled and sold, and celebrated as gourmet honey by connoisseurs all over the world. Kumbaya Wild Honey has been tested several times in NABL laboratories for over 231 pesticides and has been found pesticide-free.

Even today, honey gatherers bring their honey straight to the Neemkheda SPS campus, after walking nights in the forest. They deposit their honey, have a meal and rest before going home.

Each batch of honey is given a unique number. This batch number is there on every label and can tell us who collected the honey when, from which forest and which tree. The honey is then tested for clarity, moisture content and taste. There are distinct kinds of sweetness and subtle flavours from different combs; and sometimes something special – degrees of bitterness along with the sweetness.

Kumbaya is stored in the Honey House, a building made of stone and brick with a pyramid for a roof. It is filtered once through a fine sieve, poured into glass mason jars and labelled, ready for sale.

The idea behind working with the honey-gatherers of Juladhad was to save bees and protect forests. We also imagined that like Keystone, we would work on increasing populations of the indigenous *Apis cerana*, a smaller bee that is found in caverns and hollows of trees. *Apis cerana* can be domesticated and reared in bee boxes on farms to augment incomes, from the collection and sale of honey, and the subsequent increase of crop yield by 20 - 25%. Rearing bees at home is a traditional practice in many tribal areas of the country where their significance as pollinators is well understood and respected.

However, we could not keep pace with the massive changes sweeping across our area. The "Nalkoop Khanan Yojana" had already been launched in 2001 by the Government of Madhya Pradesh to increase the irrigation area by harnessing underground water. Under this scheme, farmers from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories are eligible for a subsidy covering 75% of the unit cost (up to ₹25,000/-) for digging a tube well and 75% of the unit cost (up to ₹15,000/-) for the successful installation of a tube well submersible pump.

This led to rapid deforestation by culling out more and more land for agriculture in secluded villages like Juladhad; followed by hybrid seeds, an increased use of pesticides, and finally the widespread introduction of Bt cotton in our area. Over the years, we have witnessed a steady decline in quantities of honey coming in. There used to be two seasons for collecting honey, summer and winter. Suddenly winter honey stopped. In hindsight, we realise that this coincided with the increased acreage under Bt cotton during the kharif season. Early research papers in the U.S. strongly suggested that pollen from Bt cotton could be a cause of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) in bee populations, along with heavy pesticide use in other crops. Recent research papers however refute this and state that the cause for CCD could be many other factors like loss of habitat etc.

Juladhar village has become unrecognizable by early 2023. What used to be a long motorcycle ride on narrow dirt tracks through a deciduous forest full of trees, has become a dusty drive on rough road, winding for miles over barren landscape – brown and desolate as far as the eye can see. Like every year, we held a meeting and talked about the need to harvest honey sustainably with the few men who collect honey.

But in the same summer, we were suddenly flooded with much more honey than we expected. Instead of one or two tonnes, the honey gatherers brought in almost 4 tonnes. After a gap of 3 years during Covid, this was the second time they were bringing in honey. We discovered that since forests near Juladhar have disappeared over the years, groups of honey gatherers have been going further afield on motorcycles to harvest honey from the forests almost 30 to 40 kilometres away – forests that stretch from Joshi Baba to Pipri, Ratanpur and Dharaji; or near the Kanad river, and even towards Devnaliya and Indore.


Honey is perennial if collected and preserved carefully. It is well known that archaeologists have found honey thousands of years old in ancient Egyptian tombs, still intact. We have some honey from over ten years ago that tastes wonderful even today. It has even acquired a rich dark colour. This imperishable quality of honey makes it possible for us to store and market it patiently. Instead of scaling up the collection of wild honey which could adversely affect forests, we want to promote a more sustainable approach by rearing and regenerating *Apis cerana* colonies. However, for the recent influx of honey we have approached a few companies like Safe Harvest who could be interested in buying honey in bulk.

Against all odds, we nurture this small flame of hope that if we continue to work with honey gatherers then someday we may be able to start bee-keeping with farmers to restore bee populations and forests on a larger scale. Murtiram, Manish and Gopiram and Nivedita are the Kumbaya Wild Honey team; along with Imran who helps us source bottles and drums, does the packaging for online shipments and handles the bulk transport of honey. Tarun keeps track of accounts. During conversations with the honey gatherers of Juladhar, Sukhram's presence has always been there to help us.

RAW.WILD.HONEY.
From the last Deciduous Forests of the Narmada Valley.

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9. Community Forest Rights

9.1 Introduction

Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) initiated the implementation of Community Forest Rights (CFR) under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 in the Melghat region. Initially, SPS identified 3 villages named Sosokheda, Rangubeli and Chethar for further conservation and management efforts and began raising awareness. They organised Gramsabha's (village assembly), focus group discussions (FGD), meetings with villagers, and showcased success stories from other villages like Mendha (Lekha), Rahu, and Payvihir.

A Community Forest Right Management Committee (CFRMC) was formed under rule 4(1)e, and organised capacity development training and exposure visits were conducted to other successful villages. Further process prepared CFR conservation and management plan involved CFR area demarcation, area resource mapping, stock mapping of forest resources, household surveys, and Shivarpheri (Transact Walk) etc. and plan submitted to line departments for its implementation.

9.2 Objectives of the program

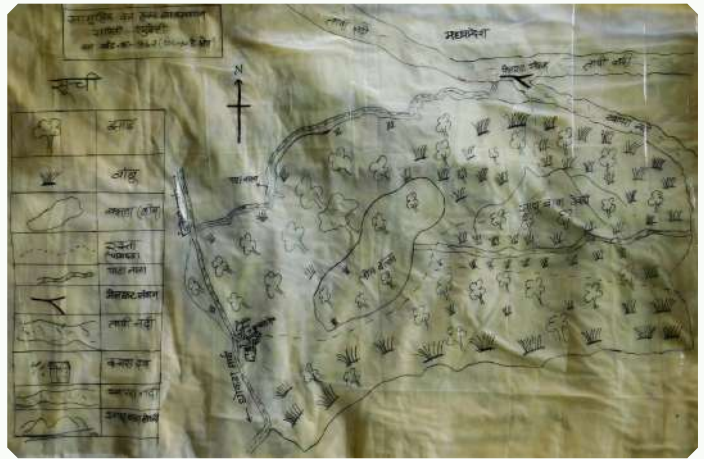
- ⇒ Empower local communities with legal rights to govern and manage forests, promoting sustainable resource use and conservation.
- ⇒ Enhance livelihoods and alleviate poverty by granting access to forest resources and income-generating opportunities for local communities.
- ⇒ Promote participatory decision-making, ensuring inclusive governance and equitable distribution of forest benefits among the community.
- ⇒ Foster biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services preservation through community-led forest management initiatives.

9.3 Major Activities

9.3.1 Training & Capacity Building

A. PRI members training cum exposure

Training cum Exposure visit for PRI members to Mendha (Lekha), Gadchiroli on Capacity Building of PRI members on April 15, 2023. Mendha-Lekha is a village located in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra state, known for its biodiversity, dry deciduous forests, and tribal communities. It is the first village in India to have been granted Community Forest Rights (CFR) entitlement. The visit included PRI members from 9 Gram Panchayats of Dharni block, totalling 29 members, along with the Block Development Officer of Dharni.



B. Biodiversity Management

On November 5th and 6th, 2023, I organised a two-day Expert training on Biodiversity Management and Sustainable Livelihoods in Sosokheda and Rangubeli villages, attended by 58 CFRMC/Community members. The objectives included assessing local biodiversity, understanding management principles, and exploring livelihood diversification through conservation. Dr. Amit Vijay Setiya, a renowned expert with a Ph.D. in Botany and extensive experience in Ethnobotany and Ecology, served as the resource person. Dr. Setiya's tenure on the Maharashtra State Biodiversity Board further enriched the training, providing valuable insights for sustainable practices and community empowerment.

C. FRA & PESA

A one-day capacity-building training on The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, and The Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996, was successfully organized at Montford Social Center, Kusumkot, Dharni.

The training aimed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of both acts, empower participants with knowledge about Gram Sabha Empowerment under PESA, and enhance livelihood options while safeguarding tribal and forest dwellers' rights. Advocate Mr. Brother Jose and his team, with extensive experience in law practice, facilitated the training. Attended by 50 participants, including members of CFRMC from Sosokheda, Rangubeli, and Chethar villages, along with the SPS Team, the session fostered crucial insights and discussions for community empowerment.

D. The training cum exposure visit to Pachgaon

The training cum exposure visit to Pachgaon aimed to provide comprehensive insights into Community Forest Rights (CFR), Gram Sabha Empowerment, Sustainable Natural Resource Management, Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) collection, and effective Forest Rights Act (FRA) implementation. From November 18th to 20th, 2023, 42 participants engaged in discussions and experiences to gain a deeper understanding of these crucial aspects. The visit emphasized the importance of balancing livelihood options for tribal and forest dwellers while preserving the ecosystem. This report encapsulates the rich experiences and valuable learnings gathered during the visit, contributing to the empowerment and sustainable development of the communities involved.

9.4 Exposure Visit to Mendha (Lekha) Gadchiroli

Two batches from **Udaynagar** and **Dharni** on a study tour to Mendha (Lekha) Gadchiroli. Such exposure visits serve as crucial learning opportunities, allowing participants to witness successful models of community-driven conservation and management practices firsthand. The insights gleaned from this excursion can inform and inspire local initiatives back home.

9.5 Prepared of Forest Right Act Resource Material

The preparation of resource material elucidates the intricacies of the Forest Rights Act (FRA). This comprehensive guide serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders, facilitating a deeper understanding of the legal framework and procedural intricacies surrounding forest rights, thereby empowering communities to assert their rights effectively.

9.6 Meeting with Government Agencies

9.6.1 Block & District level convergence committee meeting

During the period the 4-block level convergence committee Organized with all the line departments to approve the Conservation and Management Plan for Community Forest Rights (CFR) and its subsequent implementation.

The District level convergence committee orchestrated a pivotal meeting involving all line departments. The primary agenda was to ratify the Conservation and Management Plan for Community Forest Rights (CFR) and initiate its implementation. This collaborative effort underscores the importance of interdepartmental coordination in sustainable resource management.

9.7 Convergence with line departments

9.7.1 Plantation through MGNREGA Convergence

As decided by CFR Gramsabha, Gram Panchayat became the nodal agency for the Plantation instead of the Forest department. A total of 4000 saplings have been planted across the degraded forest land of 37.5 acres and 20 people are engaged on a regular basis in this important eco-restoration effort. In the 3 villages estimated worth of Rs. 65.56 lakh has been leveraged for the purpose of Plantation. This approach not only provides employment to the local community but also strengthens the local ecology and sustainable forest management practices.

The collaboration between the Gram Sabhas, SPS, and local administration has led to a positive impact on the community, the environment and ecology. It set an example of effective and inclusive governance, where local communities actively participate in decision-making and take charge of their own development and conservation efforts.





9.7.2 Nucleus budget Scheme - *Mandap Sanch*

Three of our CFRMCs have submitted proposals to the integrated tribal development project (ITDP) Dharni for Mandap Sanch under the Nucleus budget Scheme. The scheme has been approved with a grant of Rs. 3 lakhs allocated for each CFRMC totalling Rs.9 lakhs. Under the Mandap Sanch, they purchased different required instruments for functions/ events like Marriage, Engagement and traditional events etc. The CFRMCs have been charged a nominal fee for each event which is helping to increase the livelihood opportunities of the community.

(Actually, this scheme was not for the CFRMC, this was eligible for the Men groups but the SPS team is liaising with the Project officer on how the CFRMC functions in the holistic approach of development of the village.)

9.8 Caste Certificate

Tribes Claimed Identity and 196 people of Sosokheda villages got historical justice due to caste certificates! Many government development schemes require authentic documents to verify the tribal identity of individuals. Unfortunately, without the caste certificate, the villagers were unable to avail themselves of these schemes and benefits. Recognizing the importance of obtaining the caste certificate, CFRMC and SPS jointly initiated the process in September 2022, with the valuable support of the block administration and Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) office in Dharni.

The efforts put forth by all involved parties have resulted in a successful outcome, with a total of 196 caste certificates being released and handed over to the community members. This accomplishment represents a significant step towards rectifying the historic deprivation faced by the villagers and ensuring that they can rightfully claim their identity as tribal members.



The event was graced by the presence of Mr Rajesh Mali, Nayab Tahsildar, Dharni, and Mr Shirish Vasave, Nayab Tahsildar, Dharni dated on 3rd May 2023.

Furthermore, In the years 2022 & 2023, in Chethar and Sosokheda, 520 Caste Certificates were handed over to stakeholders. Which has been helping with educational Scholarships, Housing schemes and other government schemes.



9.9 NTFP Harvesting

Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Harvesting: This year Sosokheda, Rangubeli and Chethar villagers worked for a total of 18 days from 9th May to 25th May 2023. **They collected 1,89,489 TenduPattaPude. A sum of Rs. 5.54 Lac** was earned by villagers. After that **Rs. 1.89 Lac.** was gained as a bonus and management of Gramsabha respectively, making the total earning **Rs 7.47 Lac.**



10. SPS COMMUNITY MEDIA

10.1 2023-2024 at SPS Community Media Overview

Media Dissemination (2023-24)		
S.No.	Particulars	Total
01	Film Screenings	1655
	• Interactive film screenings in small groups	1379
	• People's Mobile Cinema – open-air film screening	203
	• Films screened in classroom sessions	73
02	Audio story listening in small groups	790
03	No. of films screened	126
04	No. of podcast audio stories	16
05	No. of village where films and Stories are screened	437
06	No. People's Groups [Dissemination outreach]	891
07	No.of SHG Cluster [Dissemination outreach]	30
08	No.of Anganwadi [Dissemination outreach]	23
09	No. of films Produced	12
10	Animation Film Produced	02
11	Food Diaries	02
12	No. of audio stories Produced (TERRA TALES बदलती जमीन पलटते पल्ले)	02
13	No. audience reached (Approximately)	30000

10.2 Media Production

As for each year our team continued with media production.

Media Production		
S.No.	Particulars	Total
01	Films Produced	12
02	Animation Film Produced	02
03	Audio Story	02

10.2.1 Film Produced

1. Pariwar 17 Min 54 Sec

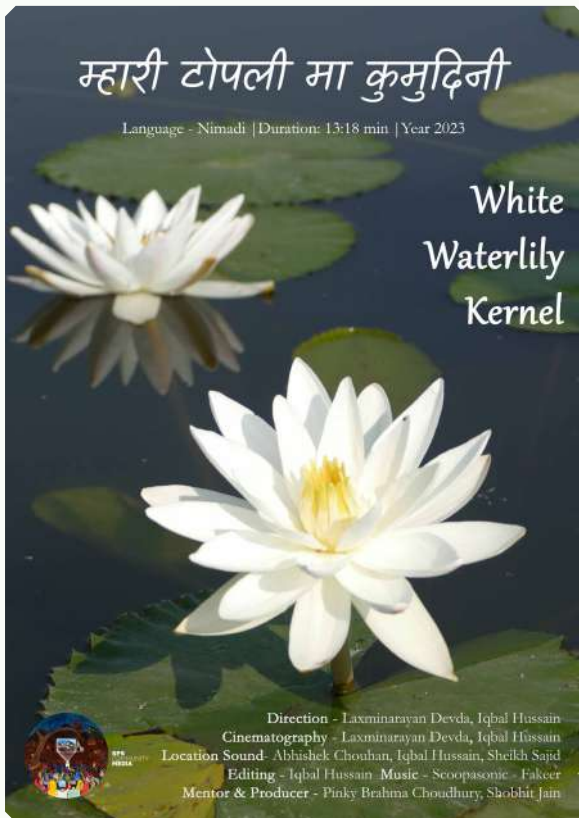


Malnourishment, illiteracy, addiction and lack of medical facilities are some of the problems among others, gripping the neglected Sahariya community of Karhal area in Sheopur district. Parivar has been working hard to resolve these, providing the much-needed love and care to bring a positive change in the community.



2. White Waterlily Kernel

11 Min 27 Sec



One has to dive in the water if one wants pearls and Fearless Savitri Bai from Pandu Talab dives in for the same. A new addition to What's in my Basket series, this film set in a haunted pond will take you on a water ride in search of these edible nutritious pearls.



3. Green Amaranth

07 Min 10 Sec

Weeds are a nuisance when it comes to farming and we want to get rid of it by all means. However in the process we end up losing some traditional wild edible herbs full of nutrition which grow effortlessly. These need to be saved, before we lose them forever.



4. Home Made Granola

06 Min 29 Sec

Good food is essential for all, be it human or animal. This film educates farmers to make economical and nutritious feed for their goats. It also informs how goat farming can earn good rewards if the goats are healthy.



5. Chinta ka Safar

06 Min 06 Sec

Chinta Bai, a woman who defied convention and adversity to transform the lives of farmers in her community. From a tumultuous personal life to pioneering a Farmer's Producer Company called Ram Rahim Pragati owned by the farmers themselves, Chinta Bai's journey is a powerful tale of resilience and determination. With unwavering courage, she challenges patriarchal norms and exploitative systems, empowering marginal farmers to organise themselves and tweak markets in their favour through collective sale of aggregated commodities. Witness her remarkable story of triumph and transformation, as she breaks stereotypes and forges a new path towards a more equitable future.



6. Hum Sab Ek Hai

06 Min 06 Sec



A good example of an old folk tale, *The Bundle of Sticks*, the film re-emphasizes the *Unity is Strength*. The women supported by the SHG group, use this traditional wisdom to get their Food Ration problem fixed while preparing to resolve other issues lurking in the village.



7. Poultry & Goat shed

09 Min 49 Sec

In Charbardi village, with the help of the organization's livestock program and a fellowship from Youth for India, eco-friendly two-storey houses made of bask have been built for both goats and chickens. In this two-storey house, goats live on the upper floor and poultry can be easily reared below. The film depicts people's experiences with this new initiative.



8. Monkey Story

08 Min 47 Sec



This film focuses on the problems faced by monkeys, a wild animals, in Barzhai Ghat. The film highlights the serious issue of how humans have spoiled the monkeys' habits by giving them food and how they have gradually become dependent on the human race.



9. Niche Pani Ki Dikkat Upar Galtan Se Musibat

11 Min 41 Sec



One of the biggest minor irrigation structures in the drought-prone region of Bagli Block is the Paras Dam, which provides a significant amount of irrigation for the local farmers. The dam was meant to provide irrigation and potable water for 12 panchayats with 23 villages but unfortunately it could provide water only to a few villages. The movie tells the coordinated efforts of small farmers who joined the government's MGNREGA program and constructed a permanent sub canal to transport water to their fields, which has allowed them to grow wheat successfully.

10. What's in my basket: Chhiri

09 Min 16 Sec



Due to the construction of Omkareshwar Dam on the Narmada River, villages like Chandayari, Bakhatgarh, Mataghat and Dabri got submerged along with the surrounding forest areas. These forests were the collection grounds of essential items such as herbs, nutritious wild greens and vegetables. Chhiri is one of those vegetables whose existence is now in danger at that submerged place. In the film, Takal Singh's family is seen in search of Chhiri. While roaming in the forest they are also sharing their experiences.

11. Antardrishti

25 Min 55 Sec

The area around Bhikangaon in West Nimar region of Madhya Pradesh is one of the most drought-affected areas. A marginalized farming family, whose land has recently seen the construction of a farm pond.



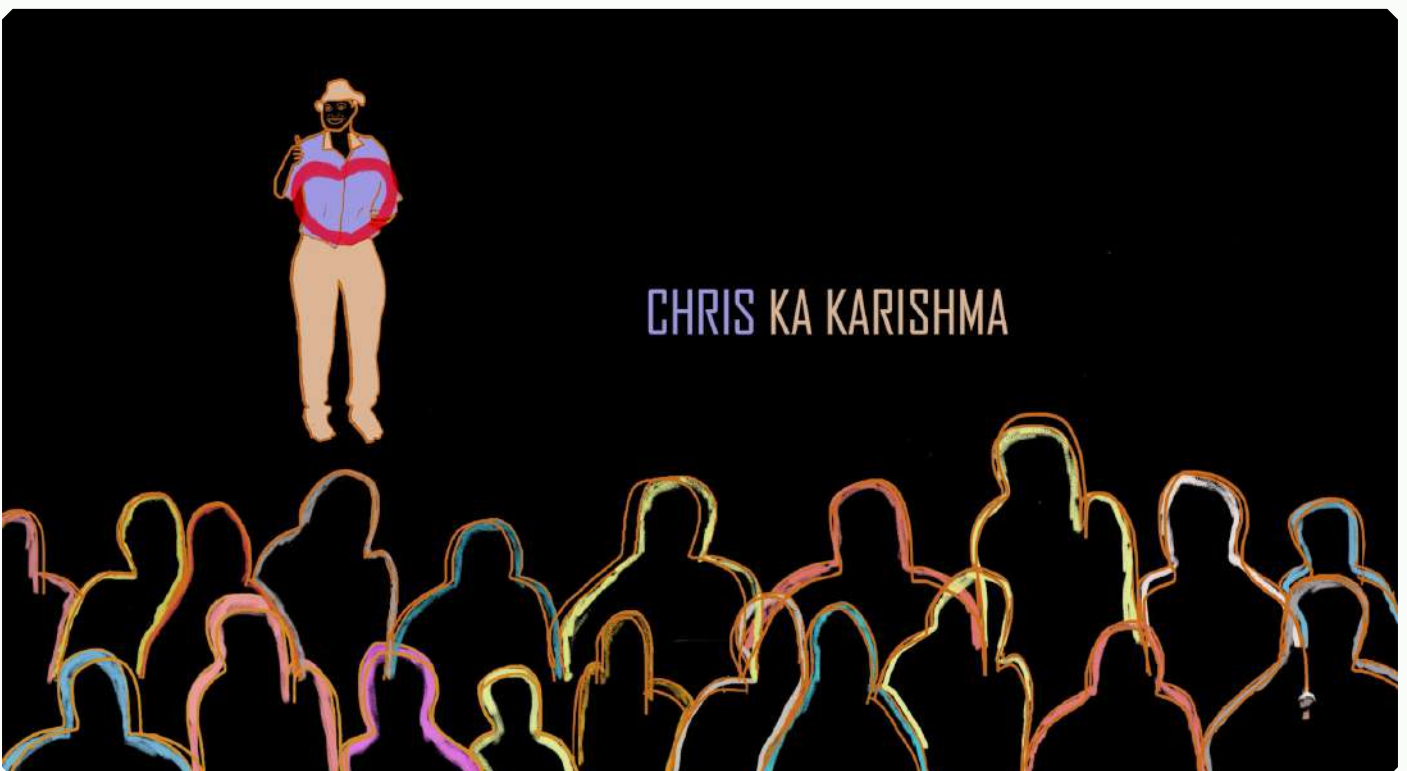
This new water body will it really provide the promised relief, in anotherwise harsh and unforgiving environment. With a stark and realistic portrayal, the minimalist documentary lays bare the realities faced by those who survive on the margins.

12. Chris ka Karishma

09 Min 37 Sec



MagicianS Without Borders uses the art of magic to entertain, educate and empower vulnerable children around the world. They have traveled to 47 countries to make “the impossible possible” for many orphan, refugee and underserved children. Chris is a professional magician who is associated with the organization and has performed his magic shows in more than 30 countries. With the help of Mumbai-based organization “Caring Friends”, Chris had visited Samaj Pragati Sahayog to perform his magic shows. This movie presents the glimpses of his visit to the villages of Dewas.



10.2.2 Animation Film Produced



01. Nagad Nahi Mobile Hai

06 Min 42 Sec

In today's digital era, this training film has been made with the idea that the women of our savings group can also deposit their savings and loan installments online in the group account. This film will especially make a special contribution in digital literacy.



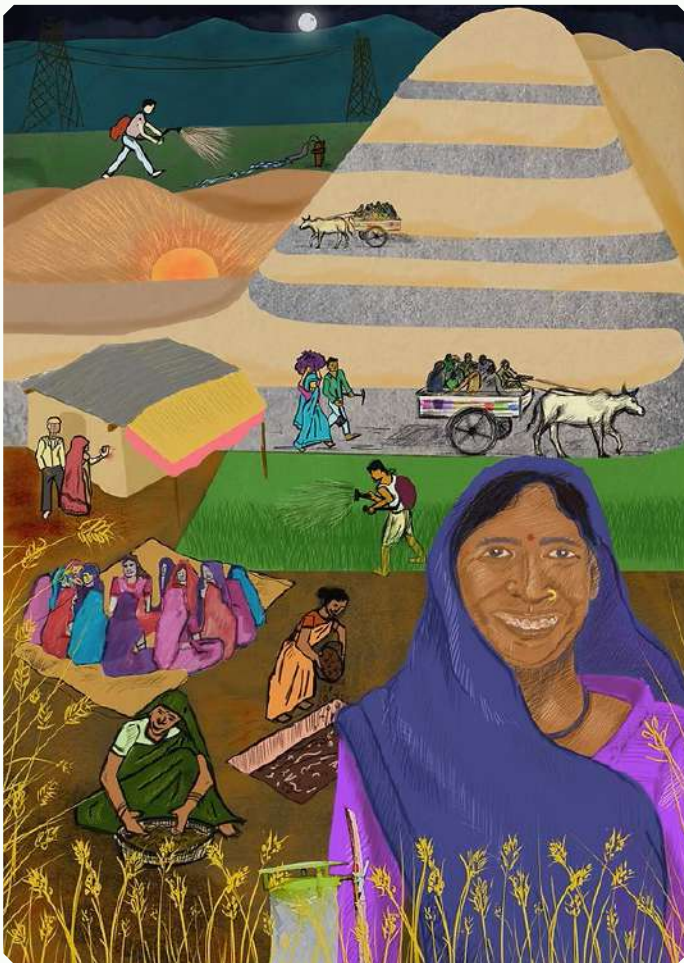
02. Say no Pesticides

07 Min 32 Sec

With the increasing use of the chemical pesticides in the farming, the soil fertility is constantly depleting. This film "Say no Pesticides" shows how this can be tackled by accepting biodiversity.

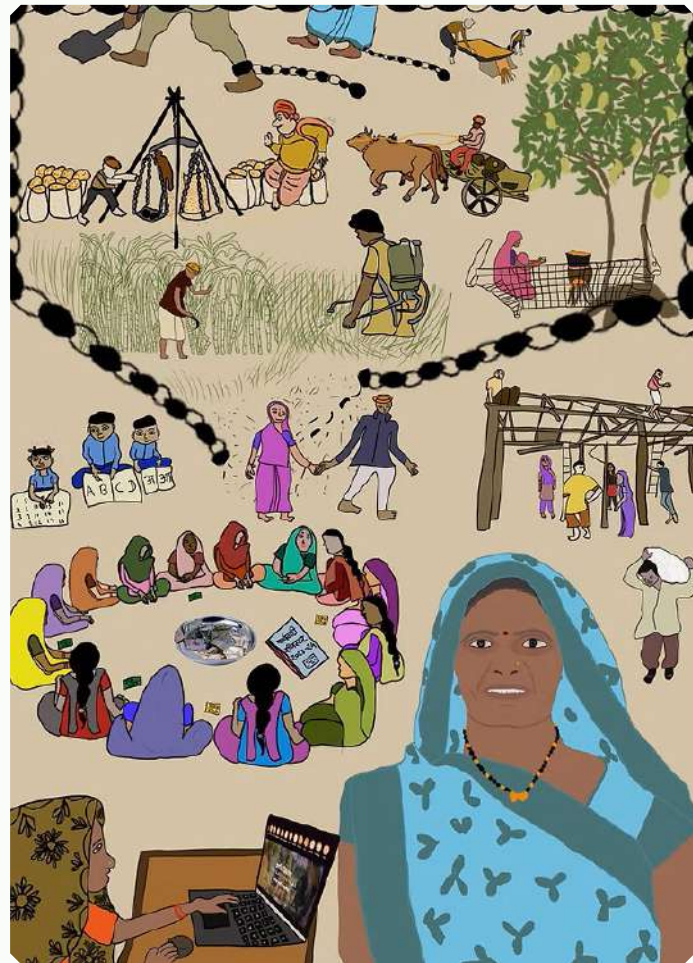


10.2.3 Audio Story



01. Sukhma
16 Min 39 Sec

We bring to you the gritty story of Sukhma Bai and her inspirational journey of returning to her village and freedom from the clutches of bonded labor after 12 long years. She makes a fresh start practicing organic farming improving her and her family's life.



02. Kamlapur Ki Kamla Didi
14 Min 08 Sec

Listen to Kamala Didi narrate her story of persistent efforts to fight for the basic rights for herself and her family against acute poverty and adverse odds.

10.3 Planner 2024



For all the partners, funders and employees of Samaj Pragati Sahayog, the SPS community media team has prepared the planner 2024 on the theme- “Understanding Groundwater”. Along with serving as a planner its pages also contains information on groundwater and its current global condition of depletion due to rapid extraction. It is an initiative to spread detailed knowledge on aquifers which are the finite and one of the most important common property resources.

10.4 SPS Weekly News Magazine

SPS Weekly The series presents some of the experiences of this journey, documenting the challenges and possibilities for positive change, where these courageous and persevering struggles can be a great source of inspiration and learning for many.

During the months of April to June, news was prepared of the women who have been successful in working together and struggling through participation meetings or through unity of groups in the programs being run by the organization at different locations and was shared with Team SPS and Parmenter. Their details are given below. News has been prepared on 43 different topics.



10.5 Accolades and Screening of SPS Films

10.5.1 Screening at FTII



Screening at FTII: On the 21st of September 2023, 'Chidiya, Pujara aur Solah Rala Chor' (The Bird, the Priest, and the Sixteen Millet Thieves) was screened in the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune in the coveted General Screening Section at 6:30 PM. The screening took place in the 'Renu Saluja New Classroom Theatre', which is a small, intimate space with limited seating capacity but has very good projection and sound.

The director of the film, Milind Chhabra, who is currently pursuing the Screenwriting course in the institute, was also present in the screening. The theater was full, and few students were even sitting on the steps on the side. The audience chuckled and laughed in various moments in the film, and there was a general sense of engagement throughout the film's duration. After the screening was over and lights came on, a resounding applause was heard in the theatre. After that, there was a small Q&A session in which Milind Chhabra told everyone about SPS Community Media, their work and the making process of the film.

10.5.2 The Congress CIMA 2023 in India

20th Triennial Congress of International Association of Agricultural Museums (AIMA) was held in India, for the first time in India from 13 – 18 October 2023 hosted by Shoolinin University, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. The effort of CIMA 23 was to scale up the documentation and communication of the rich tradition and living adaptations of Agriculture in India, and facilitate this process by seeking synergies with organizations and institutions that share a common mandate. In such a milieu, the significance of agriculture to society needs to be represented to the public. From universities to museums, farm organizations to collectives, to institutions connected with farming and agriculture from the non-profit to the commercial sector, we hope to facilitate an eco-system of information sharing about agricultural topics, heritage, tradition, adaptation and discoveries.

As many as 17 films on farming and food was selected to be screened in the event and Pinky Brahma Choudhury, co-founder of SPS Community Media was invited to present the work of SPS Community Media under the title “People's Empowerment through Embedded Cinema: A Case Study of Samaj Pragati Sahayog”

S.No.	Film Name
01	P for Pyaaz (Onion), P for Paisa (Money), P for Paani (Water)
02	The Bird, The Priest and The Sixteen Millet Thieves
03	The Magic of Five Leaves
04	Mishrit Fasal
05	Mhari Topli Ma: Baans Bhamori
06	Flower Of Mother Earth
07	Mahri Topli Ma Basta
08	Mahri Topli Ma Phang
09	NPM Chana (Pesticide Free Chickpea)
10	Sona Mati Nature's Bounty
11	Ghol Anmol
12	Mhari Topli Ma: Kumudini
13	Mhari Topli Ma: Chauhi
14	Mhari Topli Ma: Ambadi
15	Girwala Ke Anokhe Rang Kaka aur Kaki Ke Sang
16	Loo se Kaki Beemaar, Kare Kaka Desi Upchaar
17	Mhari Topli Ma: Ber

10.5.3 The Serendipity Arts Festival

The Locavore invited SPS Community Media present a series of 13 films (10 short films and 3 Long films) at the Serendipity Arts Festival (SAF) 2023 at Panjim, Goa. These are films on farming practices and culinary tapestry that has been documented lived in, authentic stories, emphasizing sustainable farming practices and culinary tales.

At SAF, SPS Community Media presented a curated selection of short films, offering insight into topics like sustainable farming, edible wild foods, and rural life. These films, 3 long films of about an hour and 10 short films with an average duration of around 3 minutes, have been chosen for their potential to reshape perceptions and present an authentic portrayal of rural life. These films bring insight into topics like sustainable farming, edible wild foods, and rural life.

The screening and food tasting created a huge buzz on the importance of sustainable farming, edible wild foods through lively conversations in the screening sessions.

S.No.	Film Name
01	P for Pyaaz (Onion), P for Paisa (Money), P for Paani (Water)
02	The Bird, The Priest and The Sixteen Millet Thieves
03	Jowar Gatha
04	Mhari Topli Ma: Kumudini
05	Loo se Kaki Beemaar, Kare Kaka Desi Upchaar
06	Mahri Topli Ma Basta
07	Mhari Topli Ma: Ambadi Roselle in My Basket
08	Flower Of Mother Earth
09	Mhari Topli Ma: Ber
10	Mahri Topli Ma Phang
11	Mhari Topli Ma: Chauhi
12	Mhari Topli Ma: Baans Bhamori
13	Girwala Ke Anokhe Rang Kaka aur Kaki Ke Sang

The Serendipity Arts Festival Photo Gallery

SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2023



FILM SCREENINGS:
CULINARY NARRATIVES FROM THE HEARTLAND: THE VOICE AND VISION OF SPS COMMUNITY MEDIA



18-21 DEC 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM
ESG AUDITORIUM

SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2023



FILM SCREENING:
CHIDIYA, PUJARA AUR SOLAH RALA CHOR (THE BIRD, THE PRIEST AND THE SIXTEEN MILLET THIEVES)



16 DEC 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM
ESG AUDITORIUM

SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2023



FILM SCREENING:
P FOR PYAAZ, P FOR PAISA, P FOR PAANI



17 DEC 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM
ESG AUDITORIUM

SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2023



FILM SCREENING:
JOWAR GATHA (THE JOWAR BALLAD)



18 DEC 6:30 PM - 7:00 PM
ESG AUDITORIUM





Cinema Paradiso Presents
ECO-FILM FEST Vol.18
 On Sunday, 16 April 2023 @ 8pm @ Cinema Paradiso, Auroville

The UN has declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. Millets represent the diversity we need in our lives - in our habitat, agriculture, forest, gut, creatures that live around us - for our health and that of this planet. We start our fest honoring the theme - millet.

चिडिया, पुजारा और सोलह राला चोर
The Bird, the Priest and the sixteen millet thieves

India, 2022, Dir. Millind Chhabra, Documentary, 58mins, Nimadi- Bheeli-Hindi w/ English subtitles, Rated: G

Rala seeds (Foxtail millets, locally called Thinnai in Tamil) are an integral part of the lives, rituals, myths, and legends of central Indian natives. Shifting between the ballads and the present times, the film follows the life cycle of Rala to tell the story of grains, fields, rains, pests, market, diet, and the dwindling cultivation of this indigenous crop. This film w/ such a fascinating name and tale to share, is brought to us by the SPS Community.

The director will be present online for an engaging interaction after screening. Don't miss!

The film “**P for Pyaaz (Onion), P for Paisa (Money), P for Paani (Water)**” has been selected for presentation in film festivals-

- * Eco-Film Fest-Cinema Paradiso in Auroville.
- * 17th Social Justice Film Festival 2023
- * 25th Madurai International Documentary and Short Film Festival 2023

The film **“The Bird, The Priest and The Sixteen Millet Thieves”** has been selected for presentation in film festivals-

- * Eco-Film Fest-Cinema Paradiso in Auroville.
- * 25th Madurai International Documentary and Short Film Festival 2023
- * "Vizantrop" November 2023 Belgrade. Out of 24 films selected from all over the world 3 were from SPS Community Media

The film **“Bonded”** has been selected for presentation in film festivals

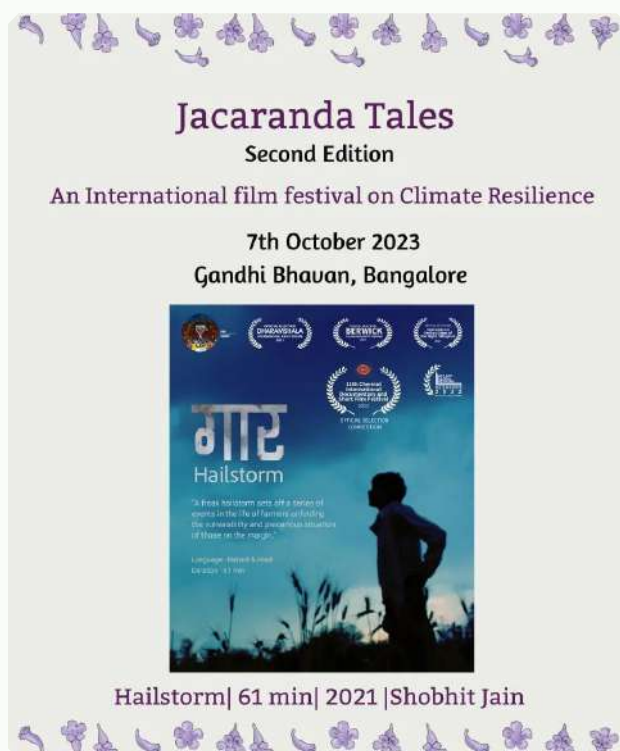
- * 17th Social Justice Film Festival 2023
- * 25th Madurai International Documentary and Short Film Festival 2023
- * "Vizantrop" November 2023 Belgrade. Out of 24 films selected from all over the world 3 were from SPS Community Media

The film **“Flower of Mother Earth”** has been selected for presentation in film festivals-

- * 8th Bengal International Short Film Festival 2023
- * Digital Disruptions Film Festival organized by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)-

The film **“Hailstorm”** has been selected for presentation in film festivals-

- * 20th Social Justice Film Festival 2023
- * Digital Disruptions Film Festival organized by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)-
- * 25th Madurai International Documentary and Short Film Festival 2023
- * Bangalore Film Society (JACARANDA TALES 2ND EDITION)



JACARANDA TALES: International Film Festival on Climate Resilience Jacaranda Tales a Film Festival on Climate Resilience screened Hailstorm a film produced by SPS Community Media in Bengaluru in October 2023. Shobhit Jain Director of the film was invited to present the film and talk about the issues of farmers who are facing the brunt of rapid changes in the rainfall patterns because of climate changes. The festival was organized by Bangalore Film Society in collaboration with Bengaluru Sustainability Forum, Kriti Film Club, Gamana Women's Collective, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Environment Support Group with venue partners, Gandhi Bhawan and Mount Carmel College.



The film **“Mhari Topli Ma: Baans Bhamori”** has been selected for presentation in film festivals-

- * The All Living Things Environmental Film Festival 2023

The film **“Malipura Dam”** has been selected for presentation in film festivals-

- * 20th Social Justice Film Festival 2023

The film **“Entrance Exam”** has been selected for presentation in film festivals -

- * "Vizantrop" November 2023 Belgrade.

The film **“Mahri Topli Ma: Phang”** has been selected for presentation in film festivals –

- * International Film Festival The Hague

The film “Submerged” has been selected for presentation in film festivals-

- * 10th Kolkata People's Film Festival
- * 12th Chennai International Documentary and Short Film festival
- * 15th International Documentary Short Film Festival Kerala
- * 8th Bengal International Short Film Festival 2023
- * 25th Madurai International Documentary and Short Film Festival 2023
- * 20th Social Justice Film Festival 2023



10.6 Plastic-Free Kanvad Yatra Cleanliness Campaign

Barzhai Ghat serves as a vital water catchment area for the Narmada River, making its preservation crucial. As the month of Shravan arrives, the largest Bol Bam Kavad Yatra Mandal in Dewas district collects water from the Narmada River at Dharaji Ghat and proceeds to Ujjain to offer it to Mahankal. This pilgrimage passes through numerous forests, including Barzhai Ghat, and consists of around 1200 Kavad pilgrims. These pilgrims are served by approximately 30 to 40 service committees along the way, traditionally using plastic cups and glasses for meals and tea.

Recognizing the need for a plastic-free environment during this Yatra, an eight-year-long cleanliness campaign has been ongoing in collaboration with the pilgrimage. To ensure a zero-plastic Yatra and promote cleanliness, the organizing committees have shifted from plastic disposables to using paper cups, steel glasses, and leaf-based containers.

Waste disposal arrangements have been made at various locations, and passengers are encouraged to utilize these bins for proper disposal.

Awareness about this issue has been raised by showcasing films produced by the community media team of Samaj Pragati Sahayog and initiating discussions with the Yatris (pilgrims) and Sevadar (service) Committees. This campaign also extends to the women Kavad Yatris, with around 500 women participating in the pilgrimage. The journey concludes by collecting water from the Narmada River at Dharaji Ghat and offering it at the Shiv Temple in Chapra, symbolizing the commitment to preserving the environment and promoting cleanliness.



10.7 हरा भरा जंगल हो हमारा Campaign Theme Based Documentation

10.7.1 Monkey Concerns - Connecting with People and Support for Public Participation

In recent times, the intrusion of forest-dwelling monkeys into villages and fields has become a prevalent issue. These monkeys have established their presence near the Bheru Baba temple in Barjhai Ghat. Whether it's temple devotees or passersby, people offer them food in the name of virtue. Even bus drivers bring food from local hotels, fruit stands, and vegetable shops to feed these monkeys. However, their dependence on humans for sustenance has grown to the extent that they resort to attacking someone if they are not provided with food daily. Their reign of terror has extended to the villages surrounding Barjhai and as far as Bagli town, approximately 6 kilometers away. People are unable to sun-dry their crops or food items on their rooftops due to the constant threat. Numerous children and women have fallen victim to these attacks.

In recent years, the practice of continuously feeding monkeys in the ghat has gained popularity, leading to a significant rise in their aggressive and harmful behavior. The issue of monkey terror has plagued Ayodhya and many other religious places, to the extent that in Himachal Pradesh, legal permission has been granted to shoot monkeys.

To prevent such a dire situation from unfolding in the Bagli area, an initiative was launched on July 9th and 13th by Barjhai and Soblyapura Gram Panchayats. Collaborating with organizations like Samaj Pragati Sahayog Sanstha and Bagli Pragati Samiti, Punjapura Pragati Samiti, a seed planting program was executed in the forest with the aim of revitalizing it. The objective is to ensure that monkeys and other forest animals find sufficient natural food sources in the forest, reducing their dependence on humans for sustenance, while also enhancing the overall health of the forest ecosystem.



Our initiative strives to transform our surroundings into a verdant forest. On July 9th and 13th, we planted approximately 20 thousand fruit plant seeds in Barjhai Ghat. The objective behind this effort is to reduce the dependence of wild animals, especially monkeys, on human-provided food. In recent years, humans have disrupted their natural habits by offering various treats like samosas, plums, and kachoris, leading to increased aggression when these animals don't receive food.

To address these challenges, members of the savings group (SHGs) raised concerns during the Gram Sabha meeting, highlighting the

need to protect the newly planted saplings from cattle and discouraging the feeding of wild animals. Consequently, grazing was prohibited in the ghat, and sign boards were installed to raise awareness about the campaign. Mobile cinema screenings were organised in four villages to engage the community and encourage discussions.



During these screenings, villagers shared their experiences, revealing the increasing threat of monkeys damaging crops when natural resources in the forest are scarce. The dependence created by well-intentioned food donations has intensified this issue over the years. As the saplings grew, a collaborative effort emerged within the village.



10.7.2 Urgent Appeal to Vegetable Vendors in the Weekly Market

To all the vendors selling vegetables and fruits at the weekly market (Haat Bazar) of Punjapura, a sincere request was made to refrain from discarding leftover vegetables and plastic bags on the roadside of Barjhai Ghat while returning. This practice poses a dual risk—firstly, it attracts monkeys who consume these leftovers, leading to potential accidents and detrimental changes in their behaviour. Additionally, the discarded vegetable and plastic waste lingers on the roadside for an extended period, polluting the ghat and posing a threat to cattle.

In collaboration with the Punjapura Pragati Samiti, women leaders took a proactive step on the market day in Punjapura village. They approached vegetable sellers and urged them not to dispose of leftover vegetables on the path leading to Barjhai forest. Feeding wild monkeys at Barjhai Ghat has inadvertently made them reliant on human-provided food, resulting in escalated aggression. The increasing monkey attacks on humans in the ghat have led to accidents.

To address and raise awareness about this issue, SPS Community Media Team organised a photo exhibition at Haat Bazar of Punjapura. The aim was to discourage the practice of disposing of vegetable waste in a manner that not only ensures the safety of the community but also preserves the ecological balance of Barjhai Ghat.





10.7.3 The campaign to rejuvenate lush green glory of the Barjhai Forest

Reforestation Efforts: Planting 20,000 Fruit Trees in the Forest

The engagement of SPS Community Media towards the conservation of the natural biosphere of the Barjhai Ghat dates back to 2015, with our involvement with the Kavad Yatra in developing 100 kilometres seva without plastic in five years. According to the Global Forest Watch report, Madhya Pradesh has lost around 8.9 ha of relative tree cover from 2001 to 2022. Barjhai Ghaat, one of the Vindhyan ranges covering the rich biosphere of central India has also witnessed the effects of rampant deforestation in recent years. Thus, on the 9th and 13th of July around twenty thousands of fruit bearing trees were planted in the Barjhai Ghat to bring back its lush green glory. The main intention behind this plantation process was the protection of the forest and its wildlife by reducing their dependency on human beings for their food and sustenance.

Human beings, in the name of devotion have destroyed the natural lifestyle of the monkeys of the Barjhai Ghat in the last few years, by feeding them leftover foods like biscuits, samosa, aloo vada etc. without giving any thought of its ill impacts on these animals. Feeding of wild animals negatively affects their behaviour and natural diet, making them dependent on human provided food that disrupts their natural foraging and hunting system.

This selective range of food items that are being fed to the monkeys does not have the capacity to provide them with the necessary nutrients for their health and wellbeing. Now, this new habit of dependency has turned the monkeys, who once used to live far away from human existence, ferocious and aggressive, raising their conflicts with humans as they have now started to venture close to human settlements.



They wait there on the roadside for the bus to carry them leftover food from the hotels and bazaars, they also attack the devotees who come to pray in the Bhairav temple, standing in the heart of Barjhai Ghat. Thus, the SPS Community Media has been engaged in campaigns to stop wildlife feeding so that they can fall back to the jungle, their natural habitat for food and simultaneously they are also trying to restore the food items of the animals in the forest by planting fruit bearing trees. Based on the topographic demand of the geographical location and keeping the cause of increasing the food source of the animals in mind, custard apple, guava and Mahua seeds were planted in the Barjhai forest with the help of the engagement of local communities.



After planting the trees, the next step was to save them from cattle grazing. Thus the people of the committee raised this issue in the gram sabha meetings, along with the claim to stop feeding the wild animals. After that signboards on these two topics were installed in multiple spots in the ghat. To raise awareness films were screened in the villages of Barjhai, Sablyapura, Panjria, Salkhetia which led to discussions where the people expressed how due to the lack of proper food and water sources inside the forest the monkeys disturb the village dwellers by bringing destructions in their farms.

It was also said that the practice of giving food to them by individuals in the name of devotion has further increased this dependence of the monkey on humans for their sustenance.



10.7.4 To protect the plants, fencing was done with the help of village savings group, Hissedari Sabha members and children

On December 5th, around 20 women and some children constructed wooden fences to protect the saplings. Following this, Murli and Sukhran, our senior watershed experts at SPS, conducted a meeting to identify lakes in Barghai Ghat. The group members provided detailed information, leading to the creation of a map which would identify the available natural resources of Barjhai Ghat which in turn will bring out the reasons of scarcity within the region. The Bagli, Punjapura Pragati Samiti, Barjhai, and Soblyapura Gram Panchayat are actively collaborating in this comprehensive campaign.





10.8 Barjhai Pariyavaran Chetna

10.8.1 Temple Painting

The Bhairu Baba temple located in the heart of the forest is a public site of attraction for tourists and devotees. Thus it has been selected as the spot for public art display echoing the themes of conservation and protection of forest and its wildlife. Children of Barjhai and Soblyapura forest schools have been made involved in this project to enforce a sense of belonging along with the feeling of responsibility towards the forest. They have actively participated in the guidance and presence of eminent Gond artists who were invited to join them from Patangar near Dindori. In five days (from 1st till 5th January) the whole temple got painted with beautiful imageries portraying the stories of the connections of the children to the forest. Before the temple painting, a three-day's workshop was organized at the Neemkheda Training Centre where the children received

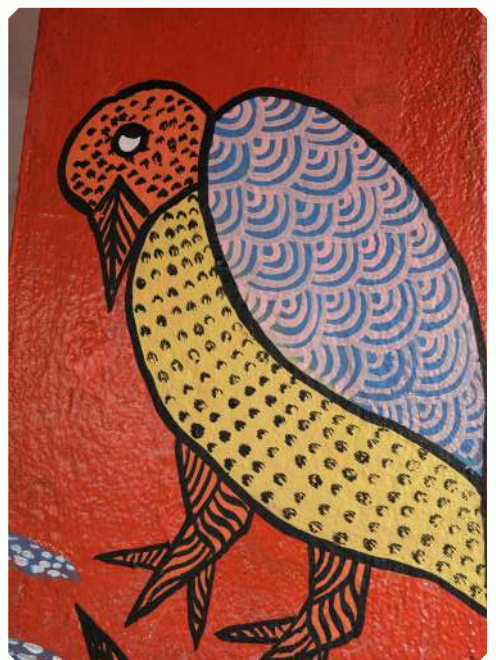
hand-on trainings and guidance from the Gond artists. In these three days of joy, laughter and colours the children adopted the new skill and also engaged in discussions on the forest and its trees, fruits, flowers and animals.











10.8.2 Photo Exhibition

All of the initiatives and campaigns of SPS Community Media with the motive of rejuvenating Barjhai Ghat got manifested together in the photo exhibition organized by the team in collaboration with Bagli Pragati Samiti and Punjabura Pragati Samiti on 7th January, 2024. The exhibition, on the site of Futa Naka, near Barjhai village was an effort to trigger the minds through interactions and participations. It was an attempt to bring awareness on the importance of the forest and initiate discussions on its current condition through the projection of Community Media's interventions. The complete event was divided into two parts- temple painting and photo exhibition.





Photographs, due to its unique restoring capacity in brain have been selected as the primary medium of the exhibition. Images depicting the beauty of Barjhai Ghat, its conservation, juxtaposed to its destruction by human interference through littering of garbage and forest fire, were selected. The conflicts between human life and its interaction with the nature were resonated through them. It also included images of the different endeavours of Community Media in collaboration with the local inhabitants towards forest rejuvenation. Other mediums such as paintings drawn by the children (during the Gond art workshop), slogans (on the protection and conservation of nature), poems (on nature, its beauty and its destruction in the hands if humans) and video clips (from the Community Media’s archive on plantation, fencing, monkey menace and forest fire) were also used for the complete engagement of eyes, body and mind.



There were also arrangements for interactive programs inviting people's active participation and interaction. "Chitra Shala" or Art Lab, "Lekhan Adda" or Zine Zone, Video point, "Photo/Video Dan Peti", and "Barjhai Talkies" were the different interactive sites organized by the team member to initiate thoughts on forest and its preservation through active participation. The main motive behind the whole event was sensitizing the local community along with awareness building for the preservation of local species with their engagement.





10.9 Forest-fire mitigation Campaign

Forest fires are currently one of the main environmental threats that are increasing in frequency, intensity, and extent. Its destruction is not only in terms of the volume of forest cover destroyed each year but is also understood in terms of the disruption of social stability and routine and the damage caused to infrastructure, crops, and animals. The frequency of forest fires is increasing rapidly in India and Madhya Pradesh is one of the states with the highest count of large wildfires. A total of 28,000 such incidents have been reported across 77,000 sq. km of forests in MP in March 2021 (6 April, India Today). Addressing this increasing issue with far-reaching global impacts was the motive of SPS Community Media in collaboration with the location teams of Bagli, Punjapura and Udaynagar as a part of the Barjhai Ghat rejuvenation campaign.

The campaign has been articulated by screening Community Media's film "**Magical Forest**" (जादुई जंगल) in the forest villages, along with photo exhibition on forest fire and forest conservation.



Mobile cinema has put up these screenings in the forest villages of Sovalyapura, Barjhai, Salkhetya, Bidgaon, Panjriya, Pankua, Agra and Patpari throughout the month of February intending to bring together the forest department and the village people in order to initiate conversations on forest fire and work out a solution together.

The officials of the forest department were invited to the event, where the Sub Division Forest Officer (SDFO) (Bagli), Rangers and Deputy Rangers (Bagli and Punjapura), and forest guards of the respective villages had attended. Sarpanch and panchayat office members and the secretaries of Van Suraksha Samiti were also present.







10.10 Forest Traverse: engagement with the local people

As a part of participatory engagement with the local community which previously involved sowing of seeds and fencing the saplings, this time the children of Barjhai, Panjriya and Sovalyapura forest schools were taken to a traverse inside the forest to see the saplings on 12th and 15th March. The members of the Community Media team explored the forest with the children who were given small note-pads to point out all the trees they spotted on their way. Then at the end of the trip they had made a map of their route and also spoke about the different objects they have noticed on their way. They had also discussed on forest-fire and the harms it may cause to their trees (the trees they had planted).





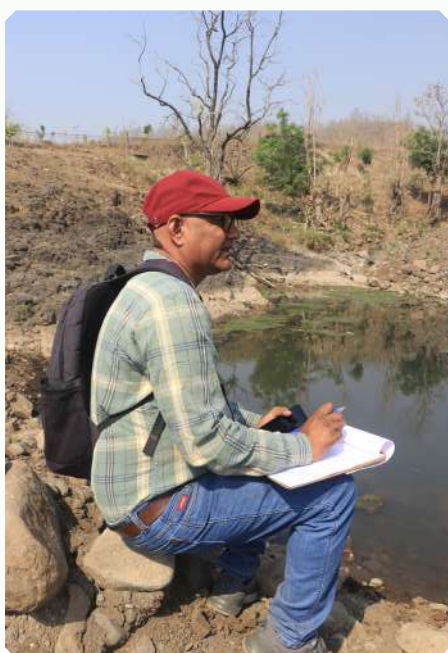
10.11 Spring-shed Development

On 28th February, 2024 survey of the existing springs of the Barjhai region has been conducted as part of forest rejuvenation campaign. It was a collaborative effort involving SPS Community Media, Bagli Pragati Samiti, Barjhai Panchayat, and the Forest Department. Under the guidance of Murli Bhaiya and Shukhram Bhaiya, the team embarked on the mission to identify and assess local springs with the aim of initiating dialogues with ACWADAM (A not-for-profit organisation that aims at establishing a groundwater management agenda in India, through action research programmes, trainings and policy advocacy) for sustainable water management practices.



In the last November the women of Barjhai and Soblyapura villages had prepared a DPR on all the springs of the forest as a part of PRA. The road map produced at that time was followed during the survey, which helped the team to identify the existing forest springs and measure their water flow along with collecting water samples for laboratory analysis. Additionally, survey forms were filled out, detailing the geographical locations, types, uses, and the number of households dependent on each spring, with the help of the women from the Barjhai forest village (members of the Bagli Pragati Samiti).

The insights gathered from this survey will serve as a foundation for further actions on spring-shed management.



11. NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Support voluntary organization initiative

Under the Support Voluntary Organization initiative, SPS is intensively working to support partner organizations in various states of India. These efforts aim to enhance their skills and knowledge in the areas such as watershed development, sustainable agriculture, and women's empowerment etc. To achieve these objectives, SPS conducts various skill developments training sessions and provides handholding support by visiting their operational areas. Numerous activities have been organized under this initiative throughout the year.

Approximately 12 capacity-building training sessions were held at the Baba Amte Center for People Empowerment, Neemkheda with participation from 373 individuals including NGO professionals, Government employees and students across various states, organizations and institutes. These sessions collectively provided 2,991 person-days of training on key themes such as watershed development, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO), community forest rights, and holistic organizational approaches.

Two training programs focused on watershed development were conducted specifically for government employees involved in IWMP and MGNREGA schemes in Chhattisgarh. A dedicated training session on Community Forest Rights (CFR) was organized for six NGOs working in Maharashtra. A comprehensive seven-day training on sustainable farming practices and FPO management was also held for partner organizations under the APF project, encompassing participants from Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal. To ensure the training's effectiveness, the SPS team conducted follow-up support visits to evaluate the field impact.

Under the NCNP project, a four-day training session was provided on sustainable farming practices and FPO management for NGOs working in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. Additionally, a series of training sessions on holistic development approaches were conducted for students and interns from educational institutions such as Green Hub, Sahyadri School, and Jamia Millia Islamia.

Under the external exposure visit activity, a total of eight visits were conducted at SPS, showcasing various sustainable models such as watershed development, sustainable agriculture, FPO, livestock management, and community media. These visits were attended by 194 participants. Additionally, 70 internal training sessions and 14 exposure visits were conducted this year.

These training sessions and exposure visits are crucial for enhancing the skills and knowledge of participants, fostering the adoption of sustainable practices, and promoting effective organizational strategies. By providing hands-on experience and practical insights, these initiatives empower individuals and organizations to drive positive change in their communities and contribute to sustainable development.







Get In Touch

We are always welcoming of anyone who wants to come down to our office and have a first-hand understanding of the work we do at SPS. Here is how you can reach out to us.

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