



Handout

Case Study: Using SHGs to improve health, hygiene and nutrition

WOTR created SHGs in 219 villages in Maharashtra, and conducted activities through them – the entry point being child care, growth monitoring for children from 2-5 years; and then also targeting youth, adolescents for health and sex education.

This was organized through the creation of Arogya Samitis (Health Committees) for men, women, youth, newly married. Two ladies from each village (anganwadi workers AWW) were nominated as coordinators who took care of the training. They monitored children's growth – height, weight, milestones, etc. charts, talked to mothers on nutrition and child care. Their key functions were to pick women from every village who are minimum 7th grade pass, or sometimes those who can read-write, but are enthusiastic and quick learners. The group soon were able to sort out problems in the village, all through women's empowerment.

- Through the SHGs they organized eye camps, medical camps, and also conducted activities – both awareness and entrepreneurship development programs. Among the enterprise development activities were:
 - Training to make organic handwash, dishwash, shampoo and other healthcare products – this also helps in healthcare and entrepreneurship development.
 - Kitchen garden according to the space available – to grow vegetables for self and others. In case of lack of space, suggestions for growing creepers/climbers such as bitter melon, pumpkin, etc. that could trail on the roof, were given. The introduction of competitions here to reward those whose kitchen garden was sustained, variety of plants grown, amount of money saved, etc., helped build excitement among the ladies.
 - 50-60 kitchen gardens in each village – prize for ideal garden (“saras baug”) as motivation for sustainability – gifts/rewards in the form of useful healthy products such as iron tava/kadhai to ensure iron in diet supplement – The NGO WOTR is not directly involved in the selection process and gets villagers to select category award winning entries.





- Seeds are made available at Rs10 by WOTR through the Arogya Samiti or Health Committee for their sale/distribution.
- Food demos on what kind of foods to feed children, pregnant or lactating ladies are organized. Good local foods such as '*pausthik laadoo*' (nutritious sweet), '*dhapate*' (dal/sorghum rotis), '*soyabean bhaaji*' (soya vege stew), and other such recipes, are introduced, and a booklet prepared that lists the nutritious recipes. Competitions for best recipes are held and selection and awarding is organized by the Arogya Samiti.
- As the sex ratio was poor, family planning, couple counseling was conducted for all target groups, and the results were monitoring. A meditation session was introduced for pregnant women. Monitoring of pregnant women – a check on who has not done family planning, and if the monthly period has been missed, check her health and monitor her diet and healthcare
- Menstrual health – programme for women, adolescent girls on care for the self, hygiene during menstruation, wash and reuse of handmade sanitary pads. The seventh to tenth graders of all schools in the villages were part of the adolescent programme.
- Healthy baby competitions were conducted, where not naturally chubby/healthy babies, but those who show remarkable change in weight were awarded prizes.
- Training to build soak pits were also given for habitants of 219 villages as part of the public/social hygiene programme.

