

COVER



Preface

The distinctive beauty of People Led Empowerment (PLE) initiative is that it brings people together. PLE, as a philosophy of working with the community, creates space for traditional or locally acceptable and sustainable peoples' institutions to be an integral part of the development agenda. PLE generates solutions in a different way – it enables people to make use of their skills, knowledge and practices for solving their problems. Caritas India is convinced that PLE strengthens local knowledge and it leads to greater self-reliance of communities. More importantly, PLE has contributed to increasing the self esteem of communities which is reflected in the greater confidence of communities to launch grassroots-level movements.

Caritas India pursues PLE as an initiative for the transformation of society and bringing the community to the centre of empowerment process. PLE is also envisaged to culminate into people's development actions that will lead to the transformation of society leading to greater liberation and humanization. The JEEVAN programme in Maharashtra has been able to initiate several self-propelling, self-directing, continuous and collective social actions. This collection of impact stories is a good narrative of the progressive empowerment of communities.

Fr. Frederick D'Souza
Executive Director, Caritas India





Foreword

Interventions of Caritas India have their underpinnings on the conviction that communities are subjects of change and they should be respected for their resourcefulness. Caritas India endeavours to make communities owners of change rather than mere recipients or beneficiaries. This is why Caritas India speaks powerfully in favour of empowering communities.

The JEEVAN programme in Maharashtra, in many ways, represents Caritas India's beliefs and perspectives on development and empowerment. JEEVAN is implemented in consonance with People-Led Empowerment (PLE) which is founded on the conviction that empowerment of community is possible only when transformation happens at organisation and community levels. Caritas India believes that NGOs need to become facilitating organisations rather than implementing organisations. This way, community becomes owners of the change and its processes. Similarly, Caritas India also believes strongly that transformation in community will help them free themselves from dependencies.

I am glad to present this compendium of impact stories which are the results of the positive and affirmative actions of organised communities.

Fr. Paul Moonjeley
Asst. Executive Director, Caritas India



CONTENTS

- 4** Resolute Collective Action Defeats Fiery Drought
- 8** Empowered Women's Collective Convenes Special Gram Sabha
- 10** Backward Community gets Water Supply with Collective Action
- 11** Villagers Claim Their Rights and Good Road
- 12** Community Action Improves Anganwadi Functioning
- 13** Women Demand Special Gram Sabha for Them
- 14** Farmers Collective Embraces Organic Farming
- 15** Community Action Removes Menacing Electricity Pole
- 16** Community Solidarity Brings Solution to Water Scarcity
- 17** Community Action Wakes Up Animal Husbandry Department
- 18** Community Action Wins Land Rights
- 19** Tribal Community Claims Food Rights after Campaign

Resolute Collective Action Defeats Fiery Drought

The villagers of drought-affected Bharanpur is now in a festival mood as they pump out fresh water from their wells and bore wells which have been dry for the last 12 months. With a long struggle and perseverance they realized a perma-

nent solution for the water crisis in their village. The rain-water conservation initiative of the villagers now irrigates 228 hectors of land of the village. The village, which used to rely on water tankers for drinking water has sufficient water for its 1000-

strong population and nearly 1000 cattle.

Bharanpur village falls under the Padalsinghi Panchayat of Beed District which has been badly hit by drought this year as well. Most of the population belongs to poor households and 46 households figure in Below Poverty Line (BPL). 70 households usually migrate every year in search of work during sugarcane harvest season. The other villagers earn their livelihood by working at construction sites and other manual jobs. One of the strengths of the village was its unity and mutual support in the times of adversities.

Over the past 3 years the drought had persisted in this village thereby seriously challenging local livelihoods. Majority of farmers cultivated cotton, black gram, pearl millet, groundnut and sorghum. These crops were irrigated with water drawn from the 65 open wells and 125 bore wells, which were also source of drinking water for the villagers. Due to the severity of drought, none of these open wells or tube wells had water. Yet, when the first rain came, the farmers sowed their land but the crop was ravaged because there were no more rains. People had no work from August 2015 to June 2016. Due to severe livelihood distress, 70 households migrated to nearby cities of Beed, Aurangabad, Mumbai and Pune.

Balasaheb Jadav the Sarpanch of the village was like a prophet of the old. He joined the JEEVAN-PLE movement along with out JEVAN-PLE team. After picking up important learning on water conservation from an exposure and interaction with Krishi Vigyan Kendra team, Balasaheb decided to construct rainwater harvesting structures in the village. The village has several natural slopes,

One of the strengths of the village was its unity and mutual support in the times of adversities



due to which the rain water never remained in the village but drained into a rivulet.

Balasaheb started discussion within the community on the lack of water harvesting structures. The discussions led to finalisation of plans for constructing a few trenches on rivulet to collect the rainwater in trenches and thus increase the ground water level. The proposal of Balasaheb was appreciated by the villagers and they decided to support Balasaheb in digging the trenches. A Village Development Committee (VDC) was formed on 7 February 2016 to coordinate the work of the water harvesting structures. This day turned out to be a landmark for Bharanpur. Balasaheb convened the meeting of the Gram Sabha on 26 January and a decision was taken to dig at least 6 trenches to stop the water in the village itself. The villagers contributed Rs 50,000 for employing an earthmover for digging the trenches. The villagers knew that the funds that they had was insufficient and continued their efforts to identify other sources of support.

Aurangabad Diocesan Social Service Society (ADSSS) which has been implementing JEEVAN PLE project had developed good rapport with the community and panchayat members. With the information received from the JEEVAN PLE team, community approached district collector and block agriculture department and submitted proposals to them

Aurangabad Diocesan Social Service Society (ADSSS) which has been implementing JEEVAN PLE project had developed good rapport with the community and panchayat members

seeking fund support for digging the trenches. The VDC members were disappointed by the indifference of government departments and approached St. Ann's School and sought support. After seeing the enthusiasm of people, the management of St. Ann's School offered to give Rs. 1,00,000 for the people's water conservation initiative.

The water conservation works started on 10 February with Rs. 1,50,000 that community had collected. The community dug 12 trenches on the rivulet. "It was a difficult task to ask the villagers to contribute to water conservation works. If we had asked for contribute to Sapha (a religious ceremony of providing free food for a week), communities would have happily given money", said Shivanath Kundalikrao Yadav, a VDC member. However, community demonstrated their unity



and goodness by voluntarily giving small amounts of money and offering their farm land to dump the earth excavated from the trenches. The community collected more funds, a major part from St. Ann's School, for digging 37 trenches, which was completed in May 2016.

The heavy rain in the intervening night of 7-8 June brought great happiness to the villagers. All trenches were filled with water. The happiness of community had no bounds when they found the next day that their hand-pumps and open wells were getting filled. They were pleasantly surprised to see that water

was coming out with great force from their hand pumps. There was a great joy and rejoicing among the people. People of the village garlanded the Sarpanch and felicitated the VDC members. The community then marched to Beed to thank the Manger of St. Ann's School. The very next day they asked the government to discontinue supply of drinking water supply to the village. In the same week, they also discovered that their wells had sufficient water for irrigating their crops. It was a great surprise for the adjoining villages because they were still dependent on water tankers. □

Empowered Women's Collective Convenes Special Gram Sabha

It was a day of victory for the women of Bahirwadi village because their determination to attend the Gram Sabha compelled the Sarpanch to arrange a special Gram Sabha in the village on 15 August 2016.

Bahirwadi panchayat, with a population 5667, is a vast panchayat with small hamlets Bahirwadi, Ayodhya Nagar, Bhiravnadh Nagar – all spread out. Majority of the villagers are very poor and earn their livelihood from wage labour. Despite being proximate to Aurangabad city, the village is under-developed and people have not been getting essential services of food supply, road, light, toilet, housing etc. Names of only 200 households were listed in Public Distribution System (PDS) and no other government schemes were being implemented in the village. Ever since Aurangabad Diocesan Social Service Society (ADSSS) launched JEEVAN PLE in the village with Caritas India support, women groups became very active.

"We will be able to ask for ration, toilet, road and electricity only when we attend the Gram Sabha meeting", said Ms Rukmin Tokal, in one of the SHG meetings. That simple statement, arising out of conviction, brought remarkable amount of



confidence to the SHG. On 1 May, members of Gyaneswar Mauli SHG went to attend the Gram Sabha, but the Sarpanch did not turn up. The villagers knew that the Sarpanch Bajirao Bobde will not be interested in organising Gram Sabha on 15 August as well. The women SHG members waited for a few days to get details about the Gram Sabha, but no information came their way.

When they realised that they will get no information, women collectively decided to give a written application to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mr. Nanvane asking for Gram Sabha in Bahirwadi village on 15

August 2016. Eight women under the leadership of Vyshali Ubale prepared an application with the signature of 40 women and approached the CEO on 12 August 2016. In the application letter, they sought the participation of all concerned officers in the Gram Sabha meeting. Women also

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asked for police protection since they had the apprehension that their complaints may have backlash from the politically powerful Sarpanch. The CEO assured police protection for the women and encouraged them to attend the Gram Sabha meeting. The CEO also sent a notice to the Sarpanch and Gram Sevak and asked them to organise the Gram Sabha on 15 August. Announcement on Gram Sabha meeting was released in local newspaper Parshwa Bhumi so that more people could attend the Gram Sabha meeting.

Under pressure from CEO, Sarpanch and Up-sarpanch organised the Gram Sabha meeting on 15 August 2016. Sarpanch Bajirao Bobade, Up-sarpanch Ratod and Panchs Vishal Bobade and Dale Arjun and Mr. Nagasen Maske had to attend the meeting. Police force from Pet



Bid police station provided protection to the meeting. The Gram Sabha meeting was attended by 40 men and 20 women and 35 youth. Initially, SHG women had refused to attend the Gram Sabha meeting because Grasevak Jagdap had not come for the Gram Sabha. Later, the SHG women were assured that the local school headmaster will represent Mr. Jagtap at the instruction of the Block Development Officer (BDO) because Mr. Jagdap had to attend Gram Sabha meeting of another village. Women agreed to attend the Gram Sabha meeting.

Women submitted raised many issues and submitted applications in the Gram Sabha meeting. Men of the village, who have so far been inactive, were inspired by the courage of the women and they also raised their demands in the meeting. Sarpanch



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Bajirao Bobade had to answer all questions and had to assure the women about the early-completion of the toilet scheme implementation. The Sarpanch also distributed forms for seeking the benefits of various schemes and explained procedures to avail the benefits of various schemes. Women demanded construction of

roads, electricity poles, fencing, drainages and setting a new PDS shop in the village. The women said that their SHG will operate the new PDS shop. Women of the village are confident that they will be able to get the benefits of government schemes with their participation in Gram Sabha meetings. "We will fight till we get our rights" said Chamba Pandurang a woman who is emboldened by the success of her SHG. □

Backward Community gets Water Supply with Collective Action

Communities of Umri-Umaradkhalsa village of drought-hit Aurangabad have been facing severe water crisis for several years due to drought. Village women had to walk more than six kilometres for fetching water for household uses. Tired of the struggles, women decided to find a solution by forcing the administration to supply water. They took a rally to district headquarters and forced the Panchayat Samiti to start water supply in the village with tankers.

Major population of Umri Umaradkhalsa belongs to Scheduled Caste (SC). "Our community has several tube-wells but none of them have water for meeting the household needs" said Ms. Jayasri Gokul a woman of the village. Sarpanch of the village Ms. Shakuntala Bai had requested Block Panchayat officials to start water tanker service to the village which was hit hard by the drought. Instead of sending water to Umri hamlet, water tankers were diverted to other hamlets of the panchayat. Communities did not

get water for 2 months since the Sarpanch did not take much interest for getting water in Umri. Field workers of Aurangabad Diocesan Social Service Society (ADSSS) which has been implementing JEEVAN PLE helped communities to start community meetings for addressing the water shortage. "We are ready to go to any place or offices for the water", Ms. Jayasri Gokul told in one of the meetings. The meeting also decided take a rally to government offices demanding water supply.

On 19 March 2016, 40 women and 10 men from Umri village under the leadership of Ms. Jayasri Gokul took a rally to district collector's office and gave an application to the deputy collector Mr. Suryavashi seeking immediate supply of drinking water. The women also demanded opening job under MGNREGA. They also went to Panchayat Samiti and met block development officer (BDO) Mr. Suhas Taregavne and met Tehsildar Mr. Tandale seeking drinking water and job cards under MGNREGA. After hearing the sad stories of the women,



By coming together we can overcome our limitations. We are now very confident to work together to claim our rights

the BDO assured to supply drinking water to Umri village.

When the women returned to Umri after meeting the deputy collector and BDO, they got to know the much-awaited happy news. Drinking water supply was started to Umri. The deputy collector also gave assurance to distribute MGNREGA job-cards to all deserving families with immediate effect.

The women of the village did not stop there. Since Umri hamlet did not have proper road, women under

the leadership of Ms. Shila Shinde prepared an application and submitted it to District Panchayat. The district panchayat responded to the application and sanctioned funds for the construction of cement-concrete road from the main road to the colony of Scheduled Caste households. While detailing the benefits of coming together Ms Shila Shinde said "By coming together we can overcome our limitations. We are now very confident to work together to claim our rights". □

Villagers Claim their Rights and Good Road

Yerami Yesaur is a small tribal village consisting of 68 household at Jiwati Block which lies 4 kilometres away from Chandrapur district headquarters. Jiwati block, afflicted by frequent droughts, is one of the most backward and underdeveloped areas in the entire Maharashtra.

Loksamgraha Social Service Society (LSSS) with support from Caritas India has been implementing People Lead Empowerment (PLE) in Yerami

Yesaur village for promoting good governance and sustainable agriculture. JEEVAN PLE helped the community to know their rights and entitlements under various government programmes and schemes. Since the community did not have dependable livelihoods, they were earning their incomes largely from wage labour. Landlords and construction contractors exploited these hapless people by paying them much less than what they should legitimately get. The

exploitation was further worsened by the ignorance of the backward community.

As a part of JEEVAN, communities held several discussions. Since the community was not united, several consultations were needed for helping communities become united. The community then formed a Village Action Team (VAT) to identify local problems and work on these issues. Through continuous meetings and discussion with the village leaders and elderly members of the villages, PLE team motivated the people and made them aware of their rights. One of the main issues that people faced was the low wage paid to the workers under MGNREGA and the low quality of materials used for road construction. "We were working employed in the road construction works but we never got wages in full", said Mr. Shantaram Kodape a daily wage labourer.

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The Sarpanch of Yerami Yesapur Mr. Maru Latu Madavi submitted application to Public Works Department (PWD) and road construction work started. When the community realised that not only they are getting underpaid for the work but the contractor was using sub-standard materials, they informed Mr. E. Sahare, construction supervisor but he did not take it seriously. The villagers then submitted a written application regarding the low wage of MGNREGA and the low quality materials used for the road construction on 2 February 2016.

When Mr. Sahare learned that the community had filed a written complaint, he threatened the community saying that he will further cut the wages to punish the community. Since the community was united, they were not frightened by the threats of Mr. Sahare. For the third time community members submitted a written application, now to a higher PWD authority on 22 February 16. As a result, PWD officers inspected the spot on 25 February and held discussions with the community. The community informed the officers about the low wages and the use of low quality materials for road construction. The officers swung into action and instructed Mr. Sahare to pay correct wages and use good materials for road. Thus with the collective action, communities not only got proper wages, they also got a good road. □

Community Action Improves Anganwadi Functioning

Anganwadis of Gondguda and Kollamguda villages were of no use to the villagers. Both Anganwadis have not been functioning well for several years since the anganwadi workers were not visiting the villages regularly. People of the village had complained about the irregularity of the staff but the anganwadi teachers continued to ignore people's requests.

The 41 households of Gondguda and Kollamguda villages belong to backward communities of Schedule Caste, Schedule tribe, Banjara and Labani. The two villages belong to Jiwati block of Chandrapur district. The largely-uneducated community of these two villages depend mainly on agriculture and daily wage labour for their livelihood.

In one of the community consultations held as part of JEEVAN PLE programme, the community shared about the absenteeism of Anganwadi teachers. The villagers also shared that the Anganwadi teachers were not coming to the centre and children, pregnant and breast-feeding moth-

ers are affected by their absence. Women and children were not getting the nutritious food for the last four months in spite of the fact that the teachers continue to receive their salaries without doing their duty.

The villagers then came together and decided to report the absenteeism of Anganwadi teachers to higher authorities. Villagers submitted an application seeking action against the Anganwadi teachers to Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) officer, Block Development Officer (BDO) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) on 12 February 2016. Within three days of submitting the complaint, ICDS supervisor visited the village and held meetings with the

community. He also held meetings with the Anganwadi teachers. In a common meeting, the anganwadi teachers gave a written undertaking to both the community and the ICDS supervisor that they will henceforth be visiting the Anganwadi regularly.

Latha Kushal Rao Kudsanke, one of the breast-feeding mothers expressed the happiness of the community that is more united after the success of the collective effort of villagers. "Now teachers come to Anganwadi more regularly. Our children are getting better education and regular food. Similarly pregnant women and lactating women are receiving nutritious food". □

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Women Demand Special Gram Sabha for Them

Women of Jambhlapani are elated now because their demand for special gram Sabha meeting for women was approved. They had appealed for a special Gram Sabha meeting for women in their own village. Jambhlapani, with a population of 316, is a village of Deoli Gat panchayat of Umred block of Nagpur.

"The women of our village do not have representation in Gram Sabha. We could never attend the Gram Sabha meetings because the meetings were held 15 kilometres away from our village. Since there is no transportation link, we have not been able to attend the Gram Sabha meeting" said Ms. Nalu Kangale.

Nagpur Multipurpose Social Service Society (NMSSS) had organised several community consultations in Jambhlapani under the ongoing JEEVAN PLE project for identifying issues of communities and help them identify solutions. NMSSS realised that the villagers have become highly critical of Gram Panchayat and decided to hold discussions with the community. NMSSS started spreading awareness about the importance of Gram Sabha. NMSSS also organised

moot gram sabha meetings to inform the community about the clear picture of Gram Sabha. "We neither knew about the special Gram Sabha meeting nor did we attend regular Gram Sabha meetings. This was the reason why our village was neglected by the panchayat. NMSSS informed us about special Gram Sabha, rights and duties of PRI members" said Ms. Rakhi Neware, leader of an SHG supported by NMSSS.

Though the women of the village became aware about the special Gram Sabha meetings with the help of NMSSS, no woman took interest in Gram Sabha until they faced severe water shortage. The community members requested the Sarpanch to start water supply with tankers but he didn't pay any attention to people's demands. The water shortage worsened so much that the women had no option but to hold a special Gram Sabha meeting to solve the crisis. The realisation on the need of special Gram Sabha meeting united the women like never before. Women gathered together to write an application to Sarpanch and Gramsevak demanding convening of special Gram Sabha.



The water shortage worsened so much that the women had no option but to hold a special Gram Sabha meeting to solve the crisis

Panchayat officials gave several excuses not to conduct the special Gram Sabha meeting but the community persisted with their demands. The women had decided that they will not buy any excuse.

They kept demanding for the special Gram Sabha meeting until the Sarpanch and Gramsevak agreed to hold the special Gram Sabha meeting in Jambhlapani village.

"Most of Gram Sabha meetings become male-dominated, so we hardly got any chance to speak out. But now we have got a good opportunity to raise our voices and put forward our demands", said Ms. Neware a woman who had attended the special Gram Sabha. □

Farmers Collective Embraces Organic Farming

They came together, put their efforts, worked hard and they won. A group of five farmers belonging to Bendoli Village has successfully reduced the input cost of the farming and significantly increased returns – all with environment-friendly farming methods.

Bendoli is a small village with the population of 124 is situated in Umred Block in the Nagpur District. The villagers were facing a chronic financial crisis as they had to invest too much of cost in their field. The profit margin in farming was very low. Migration was on its peak because of the poor circumstances. "We are living on agriculture. We don't have any other means of livelihood. Day by day the situation was becoming worse. Our investment was very high as compared to the profit that we earned" said Mr. Bhagwan Khandate, who is leading the group.

"I knew about the organic farming but could not show the courage to take the risk. The ray of hope arrived when Nagpur Multipurpose Social Service Society (NMSSS) lend its

support. They linked us with the right person, Mr. Dhawle who enriched us with technical information. He guided us a lot. He taught us how to prepare the organic manure, how to use it, when to use it etc" he continued.

They came together after PLE team intervened. They prepared Beejamrut, Jeevamrut, culture-S9

and Nimboli arka which are totally made of organic solutions. "We can use this for our 10 acres of land. This required very minimal investment and we could save at least one lakh rupees for cultivating 10 acre land. Now we are not using chemical fertilizers, pesticides and we are happy with the results. Our fields look more fertile than the other fields" said Mr. Masram, one of the five farmers.

"We are growing black gram and cotton. We didn't use phosphate and potash this time. Earlier it used to cost us Rs. 20,000/- to cultivate one acre of land. Now we have saved Rs. 10,000 on one acre land. And we are cultivating 10 acres of land without any chemical fertilizers. We will get

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more profits this time. We had to put lot of efforts but the result is worth cherishing" Mr. Khandate shared his experience. □



Community Action Removes Menacing Electricity Pole

Khapri residents breathed a sigh of relief when the broken electricity pole was replaced by the Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB). It almost took one year for the community to get it done! Khapri - a peaceful, splendid and striking hamlet situated in Umred Block of Nagpur district. There was a time when everything was running smoothly; People were living a serene life. But, now the time has changed. Now worries are reflected on their face instead of smile. They are living under life threatening situation.

It is the story of a small hamlet that fought for their right to live. There was an electric pole along the road precariously bent as though reading itself for a collapse. The pole posed a threat to life of children because many houses and a school were near the pole.

"It's not that we didn't do anything before the NMSSS intervention but they gave the correct directions to our efforts. We used to tell the line-man but he asked us to go to Gram Panchayat with a complaint. We also

approached Sarpanch and narrated the entire matter. She had assured us of action but nothing happened even after several months. We didn't know the way out for resolving the issue", said Mr. Prahlad who led the initiative. He also informed that the JEEVAN team had suggested to the community to approach the MSEB office. "Finally, we decided to write an application to MSEB. WE had the confidence to face the authorities. Since we needed people to continuously pressurise the administration, we formed a committee consisting of eleven community members", Mr. Prahlad narrated the experience.

The committee put in their efforts. They went to Gramsevak, took the copy of resolution prepared by the village community and prepared another application. They met Mr. Machle, Chief Engineer, MSEB, Umred and submitted the complaint. The large mob which came to submit the application surprised the officer. Mr. Machle immediately ordered the removal of the electricity pole. MSEB immediately erected a stronger and

We realize that there is strength in unity. We also feel proud that we could do something for the village

safer pole in place of the ominously bent electricity pole.

"We are so happy that we can live a tension free life now. It is hard to believe that the work which was pending for more than a year was completed within a month after our village came together" said Ms. Bebibai Joge, one of the villagers who joined the campaign.

"We realize that there is strength in unity. We also feel proud that we could do something for the village", Mr. Khadke, one of the villagers said. □



Community Solidarity Brings Solution to Water Scarcity



Communities of Padekarwadi and Doni villages have long been experiencing severe water distress that made it difficult for them to meet their household and irrigation needs. The enterprising villagers, united by the urge to find a solution, worked hard collectively and contributed with money and labour for building water structures. The newly-developed water distribution system now supplies sufficient water to households irrigates 150 hectare of land!

Water is a rare commodity in Padekarwadi and Doni villages that are located on a mountainous region. Entire Patan block of Satara district, in which both villages fall, were recently declared as drought-affected area by Maharashtra government. The 200-odd households of both villages belong to various groups of Marathas, Scheduled Caste (SC), and Other Backward Caste (OBC). They earn their food and livelihood from the cultivation of paddy, wheat,

nachani (finger millet) and ground nut. A part of their income also comes from livestock, primarily cattle and goats.

In the last five years, agriculture and livestock-based livelihoods of community came under severe stress because of repeated droughts. "The villages get sufficient rains in monsoon season but because of steep slope, all water flow out. Since water does not stay in this hilly area, we always have water shortage", said Kisan Pawar the Sarpanch of both Padekarwadi and Doni villages. The villages neither have natural water storages nor water conservation structures for harvesting and storing rain water. Due to sloppy feature of the land, farmers cultivate just one crop and migrate in search of wage labour.

Mr. Sahebrao Pawar a farmer of the village says about the nature of water problem of the village, "in the rainy season, rain falls heavily but the water flows out due to the geographical features, and the village faces water problem for agriculture and drinking purposes". Villagers of both Padekarwadi and Doni organized an annual festival with the help of Poona Diocesan Social Service Society (PDSSS) which has been organizing and empowering marginalized communities for the last 20 years. In the festival, communities discussed the water problem and came up with a solution.



Several more meetings were organized to finalize an action plan. After discussions, the village community decided to contribute, both money and labour, for deepening the tank and linking villages with a 900ft-long pipeline. The community, without exception, demonstrated solidarity and raised Rs. 300,000. Apart from this, 100 people worked voluntarily and without taking any payment, for 15 days for deepening the pond and digging trenches for laying pipeline.

After 30 day's continuous work, villagers completed the 900-foot-long pipeline and connected the water tank with both villages. "The pipeline now provides sufficient water to both villages for meeting domestic needs. Once the tank gets filled in the rainy season, it will supply water to villages for at least six months and help us cultivate a second crop", said Mr. Dhondiram Pawar a marginal farmer. "Kelyane hot aahe re adhi kelechi pahije" (If there is a will, there is a way), he said with a broad smile. □

Community Action Wakes Up Animal Husbandry Department

The farming community of Kalambist village depended on cattle for its livelihood. Since last six years no veterinary doctor ever visited the village. This is in spite of the fact that the village had a infrastructure for a veterinary clinic. The villagers came together and launched a successful campaign for bringing the doctor to the village.

Therefore, under the guidance of village leaders and Sarpanch, villagers came together and discussed about the problem and came to the conclusion to start animal husbandry dispensary at the village level. For this, the community presented

an application in the Gram Sabha meeting to get a veterinary doctor from Animal Husbandry Department. Under the leadership of sarpanch Mr. Krishna Sawant, the community wrote an application to request the veterinary department for the services of a veterinary doctor in the village. The Sarpanch along with a few selected members from the village submitted the application to the Department of Animal Husbandry.

After submitting the application, the villagers continuously followed up the application by visiting the district headquarters. Pressurised by the community, the Animal Husbandry department wrote a letter to Gram Panchayat informing the decision to

The resumption of veterinary services to Kalambist village helped community realise the power of their unity. It also secured their livelihoods

allot a veterinary doctor to Kalambist. The visit of the veterinary doctor started immediately and now the doctor visits the village twice in a week. The resumption of veterinary services to Kalambist village helped community realise the power of their unity. It also secured their livelihoods. □



Community Action Wins Land Rights

It was great news for the landless Thakar community because they just received ownership title which was not given to them for more than thirty years! The landless tribal community of Pachwa hamlet of Kamba panchayat have 45 households, all belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL), have been living for

decades on the land that they never owned. Pachwa falls in the Kalyan block of Thane district. Maharashtra government had designated Thakar as one of the 'most-backward' communities of the state.

"We have been staying here for so many years. My grandfather was born here and died here", said Sanju

Waghe, one of the villagers. "It is very difficult for us to leave this land because this is the land that my father and grandfather had cultivated for a long time", said Ganpat Waghe a villager who in spite of his physical disabilities joined the campaign to win land ownership.

Karunya Trust, under the Caritas India supported JEEVAN project, organised communities and helped them to raise their voice for demanding land ownership. The community collected all documents to prove their long stay on the land which included 7/12 Utara (a government document

The community urged the Gram Panchayat to step in to protect the land rights. After a prolonged legal war, the court gave the verdict in favour of the community

on land holding), taxes paid to Gram Panchayat, electricity bills etc.

When the land records were scrutinised, it was found that most of the land belonged to someone else on the record. The community conducted several meetings again and tried to identify a solution. Since they have been occupying the land for many years and they had basic documents, they approached the 'owners' seeking transfer of land. The legal holders did not respond and they also objected to land survey conducted by the land record officer. To make things worse, the land holder went to court and filed a case against the villagers for squatting on the land.

The community urged the Gram Panchayat to step in to protect the land rights. After a prolonged legal war, the court gave the verdict in favour of the community. Expressing happiness Ganpat Waghe said "Amcha adhikar amhala milala mhanun amhi khup anadi ahot" (we got our and we are very happy now). □



Tribal Community Claims Food Rights after Campaign

It was a day of celebration for the Kathkari community because their campaign had compelled the administration to release the quota of food grain that was not given for three months.

The landless tribal community of Khardi village, a hamlet of 35 Kathkari households, has always been dependent on Public Distribution System (PDS) for food grain. All these households belong to Antyodaya, the category for the poorest of the poor made in PDS, which entitled them a monthly quota of 35 kilograms of food grain. "We are landless. We have no source of income other than wage labour. If we do not get the monthly supply of food grain, we will starve", said Mr. Ganpat Waghmare, a head of family of five. Similar is the case of other 35 households of Khardi village which falls in Kathkari dominated Mangaon block of Raigad district.

Mr. Ganpat said that the shopkeeper of PDS outlet in Khardi had refused to give food grain to villagers on the ground that they could not

produce Adhar card. "We did not know that we could get our quota of food grain with Antyodaya card alone. We learnt that Adhar card was not necessary in a meeting organized by Center for Social Action", said Ganpat. Centre for Social Action (CSA) has been organizing Kathkari communities into 'Gavki' – a traditional community structure of Kathkaris– for empowering them and making them self-reliant.

"Since we are illiterate, we didn't know about our rights and entitlements. The PDS shopkeeper exploited our illiteracy by manipulating records and not releasing the quota of food grain to us", said Lata Gangurde, a Kathkari woman who took food from the PDS for her four children. She said that no tribal dared to challenge the PDS shopkeeper because he was politically powerful.

In one of the 'Gavki' meetings, one community member informed that he was not given food grain because he could not produce Adhar card. Several other community members also shared that they were also not



given food grain because of the same reason. "When we learned from CSA that Adhar card is not necessary for obtaining food grain supply, we decided to approach Mr. Ramesh Dhondu Hilam, the Sarpanch or village headman, and inform him of the malpractice in PDS", said Ganpat. At the complaint of villagers, the Sarpanch called the PDS supply officer and asked him to release the food grain to the villagers. But nothing happened.

"We realized after a few days' wait that the officer was not responding to the demand of our Sarpanch. So we decided to take a rally to ration shopkeeper and demand our entitlement", said Ganpat narrating people's decision to work collectively. As per the decision of the community, 11 tribals went to the PDS shop and demanded their food grain supply on 14 January 2016. Seeing the unity of tribals and their anger, the PDS shopkeeper immediately distributed the food grain that was not released for three months, that too without asking for Adhar card!

"We experienced the power of unity which increased our self confidence. We realized that we can get our rights only when we come together and fight" said Sita Sapt. □

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