



Ek Pahal : Sehat Ki Or



Ek Pahal : Sehat Ki Or



PUBLISHER

State Resource Centre, M.P. Indore
Mahalaxmi Nagar, Sector-R
Indore - 452 010 (MP)
Tel: 2551917, 2574104
Fax: 0731-2551573

MPTAST
9C, 9D Paramount Villa
Shyamla Hills
Bhopal - 462 013 (MP)
Tel: 0755-4039999
Fax: 0755-4039900

INDEX

● Quick decision, courage...	2
● Chandrawati regains her ...	4
● Sakshi regains her health	6
● The three colors of nutrition	8
● Ramkali: Change in food habits...	10
● Deepa: A Hygiene Ambassador	12
● Say No to 'Ghutti'	14
● Rani becomes immunization...	16
● A change in Pooja	18
● Clean village, healthy village	20
● Sheela shows the way to ...	22
● Sewage system, proper roads...	24
● Harsh Kumari's inspired ...	26
● Sheela on way to better ...	28
● Use of sanitary pads: Mini...	30
● A war against Anaemia	31
● Sangeeta fights for her ...	33
● Saroj fights against child...	35
● Kamla says no to open ...	37
● A New life for Namisha	39

FOREWORD

Health is an important component of our development. All sections of society need to join hands to promote healthy practices and behaviours. “Sanjhi Sehat” is an intervention project to bring about this change. This project was implemented by Panchayat and Rural Development department and MPTAST in eight districts of the state with support of DFID.

Information on health, nutrition and WASH issues were disseminated and community meetings conducted through participatory learning and action process. The positive results started coming out very soon. It led to improvement in various health indicators such as increase in institutional deliveries, adoption of breast feeding practices, reduction in malnutrition, increased enrolment of children in Aaganwadi centres etc. Besides the nine Indicators of “Sanjhi Sehat”, positive change was also seen in community thinking and behaviour. For example malaria control in community, increase in demand for Janani Express, increase in demand of nutritious food in Aaganwadis, and increase in awareness about cleanliness leading to demand for community support in building toilets.

To capture and document the gains and positive experiences, “Sanjhi Sehat, Hamari Kahaniyaan” was initiated. The success stories about positive behaviour changes were documented in a creative manner by way of “Wall Newspapers” developed by women themselves and thereafter displayed at public places in the community. These innovative efforts led to an outpour of success stories from all eight districts. Out of all the success stories, 20 selected stories are being shared through this booklet “Striding towards better health”. However, this is just the beginning of a self-sustaining process in which the women themselves are spear heading the positive behaviour changes and narrating their success stories in their own words.

We are thankful to **Dr. S. Krishnaswami**, Team Leader – MPTAST for guiding us in this endeavour to capture the success stories in the form of this booklet. We are also thankful to the project team: District & block officials, PLA facilitators, CRPs, SHG women and SRC, Indore team. The stories have been presented in simplified manner by Ms. Sujata N. Sharma. The centre is thankful to all those who directly and indirectly contributed in development of this booklet.

We hope that you would like “Striding towards better health”.

Anjali Agarwal

Director

State Resource Centre, Indore

Quick decision, courage paves the way



Where there is a will, there is a way. Women can achieve anything if they want to do so. Rambai and the women of the village proved it through their daring decisions and action. In Kachhar village of Panna district there was no tradition of institutional delivery. Although delivery at home is a life threatening risk for pregnant women and the newborn, the village women had to face this risk because of traditional beliefs.

In this situation, the 11th meeting of Sanjhi Sehat held in Kachhar village paved the way for a new precedent. In this meeting the villagers were told about importance of institutional delivery and newborn care following which helped a change was seen in the mind-set of the villagers.

Rambai had decided that she would get herself admitted to the hospital. When the time for delivery came, however, they had to face a serious problem. The main road to the hospital was about 6 km far away from village and there was no transport facility. Due to bad road condition the Janani Express was unable to reach the village. In this situation it was a great task for the women to take Rambai to the hospital.

But they did not give up. When they did not get any transportation to reach the connecting road they put Rambai in a charpoy (wooden bed) and lifting it on their shoulders began walking towards the main road. Seeing women carrying Rambai, the villagers also rushed out and

lent a helping hand. In this way the women finally succeeded in taking Rambai to the connecting road from where the Janani express took her to the district hospital. There, Rambai delivered a beautiful girl child in the hospital. Both mother and the infant are doing fine. ■

This way the women of kachar village have set an example which has given a boost to institutional deliveries. Women have made a decision that whatever problems may come but they will not put the lives of pregnant women and the newborn at risk by having deliveries at home.



Chandrawati regains her health



Sarei village is situated in Samnapur block of Dindori district, approximately 28 kilometers away in a forest area. Chandrawati lives in Sarie village with her husband, in-laws and a two year old child. Farming is the main source of livelihood for the family, with Chandrawati and her husband both working as agricultural labourers. With household chores and a full time job to take care of, Chandrawati could barely manage to find some time for her small child, but with a second pregnancy on the way, she felt completely overwhelmed. And it was her own health which bore the brunt. She could not keep track of her health and eating habits and due to lack of proper diet and adequate rest, she started losing weight and becoming frailer. From a respectable 55 kgs, her weight fell to a fragile 35kgs. Due to weakness, Chandrawati would always feel tired and dizzy. Her neglect of her own health was compounded by her husband's and in-laws' inattention to her health, resulting in Chandrawati becoming weaker day by day as her pregnancy grew.

It was Sanjhi Sehat PLA Facilitator, Bhajan, who first noticed Chandrawati's drastic weight loss. He was making a round of the houses to call the women for a Sanjhi Sehat meeting. Concerned and worried for her ill health, he took her to the Anganwadi Centre for getting her weighed. There the anganwadi worker weighed Chandrawati and it was revealed that her weight was just 35 kgs. The Anganwadi worker remarked that this low weight was

dangerous for her and her baby's health and would cause a big problem during delivery. She recommended Chandrawati to meet the ASHA of the village. The ASHA worker explained that she should also eat green vegetables and salad in her meal. Additionally, she advised to rest and gave her iron tablets to take daily with her meals.

15 days later PLA Facilitator Bhajan visited Chandrawati's home and found that there was no improvement in her health. Bhajan concealed his disappointment and sat down to explain to Chandrawati's husband and mother in law that if they didn't take care of her diet, she would be at life risk during the time of delivery. Hearing the serious tone of Bhajan, her husband and mother in law finally woke up to the impending danger of Chandrawati's health and started paying attention. Chandrawati's mother in law would ensure that she ate a proper meal and took adequate rest. The results started showing. Within a short span of time, she gained weight and her weight increased to 44 kgs from 35 kgs.

Chandrawati is now out of danger. Chandrawati says that 'everyone tried to help me get out of the danger zone. Bhajan sent me to Anganwadi centre and ASHA worker and the Anganwadi worker advised me about antenatal care, medicines and advice about nutritious diet. The ASHA worker gave me IFA pills. I have not faced any of the difficulties which I encountered in my first pregnancy. Now I would suggest the same to all other pregnant women that they should take care of their diet, take advantage of anganwadi and ASHA workers' services and take good care of their health. ■



Sakshi regains her health



Shanti was very concerned about the health of her five-month-old daughter, Sakshi. Sakshi had diarrhea and due to loose motions, she was becoming weaker day by day. Shanti had taken her to an Ojha (traditional healer), where he performed some incantations. But there was no change for the betterment, instead Sakshi's health was steadily worsening and she was becoming weaker day by day.

Shanti belongs to a tribal community of Ghusgaon village in Rajpur block of Barwani district. Her family includes her husband and her daughter. To boost the family income, Shanti works as an agricultural labour. Due to her busy routine, Shanti could not make time to attend the Sanjhi Sehat meetings on health, nutrition, sanitation & hygiene, which were being conducted in the village every month. But the vigilant Community Resource Person (CRP), Sajan Mohobbat noticed Shanti's ailing daughter and enquired. He found out that Sakshi had diarrhea and on probing further found that the infant was not being exclusively breastfed. Rather she was being given pre-lacteals, which had caused the loose motions, resulting in weakness. Shanti had no information about the services available in Anganwadi Centre and so she was not able to get information about health and nutritional requirements of her daughter. As a last resort, she took her daughter to a traditional healer, who instead of healing the child, worsened her condition.

The CRP asked Shanti to attend at least one meeting of Sanjhi Sehat. On his insistence, Shanti attended a meeting, in which they talked about the health of children, facilities provided through anganwadi etc. In the discussion on health of the children Shanti asked several questions about the health of her daughter Sakshi; like why she looks so weak? Why she gets ill frequently, etc. Shanti's questions were discussed in the meeting by all the women attending the PLA cycle. The PLA Facilitator of Sanjhi Sehat, Usha Sahu told her that it is necessary for the health of her daughter to attend anganwadi programs and take advantage of facilities made available from time to time as well as consult a doctor if Sakshi does not get well. She asked the CRP to accompany Shanti and Sakshi to the doctor. With proper treatment, in due course of time, Sakshi's diarrhea, which happened at frequent intervals, was cured, though she was still weak.

Shanti heaved a sigh of relief when she saw her daughter recovering. She also realized the importance of taking her child to the anganwadi regularly. According to her, "I realise that every mother should go to anganwadi and get the children regularly weighed. After the meeting, I and my husband took my daughter to the Anganwadi and got her weighed. The Anganwadi worker explained the growth chart and said that Sakshi's health status is in red circle and she is severely malnourished. It is a life threatening risk for her. The Anganwadi worker suggested to get Sakshi admitted in the NRC. I told her that I did not know about NRC. I was afraid of the procedures and expenses of NRC but the CRP and Anganwadi did reassure me that all services, including medicines and food are free of cost, including my stay in the NRC with my child."

After the anganwadi worker's advice and CRP's inspiration Shanti admitted her daughter in NRC. There the health staff took care of Sakshi's health and fed her properly for 14 days of her admission. On admission, Sakshi's weight was 3 kg 640 grams and after the 14th day her weight was 4 kg 186 grams. Before leaving the NRC, the doctor advised them about the diet of their daughter and asked them to bring Sakshi to NRC for regular check up.

Shanti says that 'had I not gone to the Sanjhi Sehat meeting, I would not have come to know about Sakshi's ailment, nor the services available at Anganwadi and NRC. Now I regularly visit anganwadi to receive nutritious food in the form of Take Home Ration from the anganwadi and get her weighed every month. Today, due to timely intervention and Shanti's vigilance, her daughter, Sakshi has reached the Green patch, from the red, in the growth monitoring chart. She is a healthy, fit and a playful child. ■

The three colors of nutrition



The 14th Sanjhi Sehat meeting held in Shivrajpur village of Rajnagar block Chatarpur district brought a turning point in the lives of the villagers. The women were told about the importance of 'three colours on your plate'. Once they became convinced about the three-colour concept in meals, this concept was introduced into the mid day meal of the schools also in the village.

Various issues of health, hygiene and nutrition are shared and discussed in the Sanjhi Sehat meetings organised once every fifteen days at the village level. In the beginning, Shivrajpur village women did not attend the Sanjhi Sehat meetings because they were busy in domestic and field work and they believed that there is no use of attending such meetings. The PLA Facilitator had to put in extra efforts to convince the women about the utility of the meetings. She regularly contacted village women and told them about nutrition, health and hygiene related problems and discussed about the importance of attending the meetings. As a result, the women's participation in the meetings slowly increased.

The 14th meeting focused on 'Preparing Nutritious Food' became a very popular session in the village. Almost all the women in the village attended the meeting. The Mid day meal worker of schools, Shanti Devi, also participated. In the meeting the PLA Facilitator discussed about the importance of nutritious food. It was discussed that women

and children were undernourished due to insufficient intake of nutritious diet. Shanti Devi asked about the ingredients of a healthy diet. She was told that a meal which included ingredients of three colours, yellow, red and green, was a complete meal. Curious participants wondered how this could be done. The PLA Facilitator explained that there are so many yellow things which can be added in our food like dal or some yellow vegetables as pumpkin etc. Dal is rich in proteins and pumpkin and vegetables have several vitamins. Similarly green vegetables and red vegetables and salad like carrot and tomato can be included to complete tri-colour in their diet. After discussion Shanti Devi asked if she could add these three colours in mid day meal of the school to make nutritious food for all the students and on being assured that this formula would work, she resolved to conform to this formula to make all the meals she served in the schools. All participants clapped for Shanti Devi's resolve.

After the meeting, Shanti Devi focused on including tri colour food in the mid-day meals prepared by her. In a few days she applied this rule in the school meals. It is the impact of this meeting that today children of Shivrajpur are having tri-colour food, full of protein and vitamin. Village women are also using this method in their food. The villagers have started using green vegetables, dal and milk as their regular diet. In this way the 14th meeting became a milestone in changing the food habits of the villagers. ■



Ramkali: Change in food habits for better health



Ramkali is a changed woman ever since she changed her food habits. She goes to the anganwadi and takes suggestions on health and food habits from the anganwadi worker. She takes iron tablets and tries to get at least three colour food included in her regular diet, which includes green vegetables, red salad and yellow lentils (Dal).

33-year- old Ramkali belongs to a tribal community of Jharkuan village in Bijavar block of Chhatarpur district. She bears the responsibility of six family members including two sons, two daughters and her husband. Unfortunately Ramkali gets no support from her husband who is not only unemployed but also spends his time gambling.

Ramkali begins her day at 4 'o' clock in the morning, cleaning the cow shed, collecting fire wood from the jungle, cooking for the whole family and then leaving for Kishanganj, about 4 km away from her village, to sell the wood. This is the only source of income for her and her family, with which she meets her family's daily requirements.

Ramkali had almost forgotten herself in the busy schedule and neglected her own health and food intake. Gradually she became weak and anaemic and fell ill. The Sanjhi Sehat Community Resource Person Shyamrani took notice of this and advised her to come to the meetings of Sanjhi Sehat, where she would be able to meet other women and gain information given on health and nutrition.

In this way Ramkali started taking out time and going to Sanjhi Sehat's meetings. During the meetings she was informed about the issues of women's health, nutrition and sanitation and hygiene. Ramkali says -'In the meetings I came to know that for good health tri-colour food must be a part of our meals, so I started having green vegetables, yellow dal and tomato and carrot as red salad, whenever I could afford it. Otherwise I would depend on economical and locally grown food in these color groups. The ASHA worker also gave me iron tablets to take daily.'

Ramkali's made small changes in the food habits of her family and this was evident in the improvement in her and her family's health. She regained her health. Earlier she would get tired very soon but now after the change in her diet, she can walk 4 km easily. Issues like dizziness and breathlessness no longer plague her. Ramkali has succeeded in making small changes in her food habits and has become healthy. This change not only shows in the improvement of her health but in the health of her children also. Ramkali says, "Around us we have so many things in our farms on which we do not pay attention. If we take care and use all nutritional ingredients in our food like green leafy vegetables, fibrous vegetables and sprouts, we can surely improve our family health. ■



Deepa: A Hygiene Ambassador



Women in Jakhraunkala village of Bijavar block in Chhatarpur district were not aware of the importance of menstrual hygiene. Young girls who started their menstrual cycle were subjected to unhealthy practices in the name of beliefs and traditions which adversely affected their health. They were made to use unwashed clothes during menstrual periods resulting in several diseases. 15-year old Deepa played the main role in changing this unhealthy tradition in her village.

Deepa only knew that during periods one should not do hard work and could use any kind of cloth. Deepa would also use old cotton cloth during her periods, which she would wash and hide in a dark corner for reuse during her next monthly cycle. Due to shame and embarrassment, she did not wash the cloth properly or dry it in sunshine. In this condition re-use of this cloth was harmful for her.

Her beliefs changed after the Sanjhi Sehat Community Resource Person Neena Sen invited her to participate in the meetings. In this meeting she was told that one must use clean and dry cotton cloth during menstrual cycle. After first use, the cloth should be washed with soap or Neem water and dried in sunlight. Failure to do so, could risk her health and life. During meeting she was also told about sanitary napkins made by DPIP.

Once she understood the harmful effects, Deepa now uses clean cloth and dries it in the sun after washing

with soap. She stopped reusing old clothes and she started buying sanitary napkins for use. She has become a regular user of these napkins and disposes them by setting them on fire after use. Deepa purchases these napkins for Rs. 30 from the Gram Utthan Samiti.

This change in hygiene behaviour was not confined to Deepa alone. She spoke with her school friends about the importance of hygiene and cleanliness. Now Deepa has become an ambassador of hygiene in her village. She has inspired many girls and now her classmates including Pooja and Rani have also started using sanitary napkins. ■



Say No to 'Ghutti'



Poonam was very happy when she gave birth to a baby boy. But very soon, her son, now two months old started catching cold and cough easily. He would often throw up his mother's milk. Once her baby caught severe cold and faced difficulty in breathing. Following her mother-in-law's advice, she gave him ghutti (pre lacteal) with goat milk twice a day for two days. But after that her baby started suffering from loose motions and his cold and cough did not abate. Her mother-in-law said it was quite normal for small babies to suffer from diarrhoea and that he would be fine in a day or two. But the baby's loose motions continued. It was only after the baby was taken to a doctor, that the loose motions stopped.

Poonam belongs to Vairvar village of Jatara block in Tikamgarh district. In her family she has eight members including her husband and in laws. Her family is totally dependent on agriculture for making their ends meet. They work as agricultural labour to fulfil their day to day needs. When Sanjhi Sehat meetings started in the village and she was invited to attend the meetings, her husband and in laws discouraged her saying, attending meetings was useless and sheer wastage of time. She should go for work rather than attending meeting.' But Sanjhi Sehat program CRP always invited her for meetings following which Poonam began attending the village meetings. During the sixth meeting women were told that the mother should feed her baby with breast milk exclusively for six months. During this period no

other food should be given be it water or honey. During this discussion when Poonam asked about ghutti, the Sanjhi Sehat PLA Facilitator told her that ghutti should not be given in any condition during the first six months of the baby. Poonam again wanted to know then why did her in laws and other elders of the village recommend giving ghutti if it was harmful for a child.' The PLA Facilitator explained that ghutti is often given as it is a traditional practice but it can cause diarrhoea and infection in the infant.

When Poonam and the other women present in the meeting heard this, they realized that giving ghutti could be dangerous for their children. Since then, Poonam decided not to give any type of pre lacteals to her child, not even water till her son completed six months of age. She said that she will convince other women also to not give ghutti or any other liquid to their children.

After returning from the meeting Poonam first told her sister in law that she should not give ghutti to her child. Poonam now has made it her mission to sensitize every woman in her village about the importance of exclusive breast feeding and not giving any pre lacteals to infants. Due to Poonam's efforts women of Vairvar village are slowly understanding the importance of breast feeding exclusively in first six months. ■



Rani becomes immunization ambassador



Rani Bai, of Baraho village of Pavai block in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh was not aware about immunization and its benefits. She always thought injections were harmful and believed that after immunization one gets sick. But now the situation has changed. Rani Bai has not only got herself immunized but she has turned an ambassador for immunization in her village. Having overcome all her fears, today Rani Bai encourages women of her village to get themselves immunized.

This transformation in Rani Bai came after she started attending village meetings organised by PLA Facilitators every fortnight at the village level under the Sanjhi Sehat programme. PLA Facilitators always try to gather maximum women in this meeting to spread the message far and wide. Rani Bai was also invited. Because of the PLA Facilitator's efforts, many women, including Rani Bai, attended the meeting in which they discussed health, nutrition and hygiene issues.

As Rani says, “During my first pregnancy, I had not got myself immunized. The village Anganwadi worker had told me about immunization but I ignored all her advice. When the Sanjhi Sehat meetings were being organized, I could attend the 13th village meeting in which they discussed health and immunization issues.”

The PLA Facilitator told the women why immunization was essential for pregnant woman and which

'teeka' a pregnant woman has to get administered. Rani Bai, until then, had been wondering whether immunization would make her ill so she asked the PLA Facilitator to clarify. The PLA Facilitator explained to her that immunization was neither harmful nor caused any illness. But if one ignores immunization he/she can be in danger zone.

This discussion left a deep impact on Rani Bai and she reached the sub health Centre in her village to get her shots the very next day. Says Rani Bai, 'After immunization I neither felt any pain nor became ill. Now I ask every pregnant woman to get immunized.'

In this way, Rani Bai who had fears about immunization now has become an ambassador of immunization and her ultimate goal is to encourage pregnant women to get immunized. She has taken up the responsibility to advocate for immunization not only for pregnant women but infants and children also.

In her daily conversation with village women she does not forget to ask about their immunization status. Rani Bai says: 'I am trying to ensure that all pregnant women and children should get immunized in my village.' ■



A change in Pooja



Pooja is a health conscious girl, who is very concerned about her personal health and hygiene habits. She is fully aware of the need to maintain hygiene particularly during periods and therefore, she uses sanitary napkins instead of cloth.

This change in Pooja became possible only after the 17th meeting of Sanjhi Sehat during which all women of the village who attended the meet were explained in detail the importance of maintaining hygiene during the menstrual period.

17-year old Pooja is a resident of Chanuaa village of Rehli block in Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh. She is a student of 10th standard and has four siblings. Her periods started a few years ago. Initially she would use any old unused cloth as advised by her mother and sister.

Pooja says, 'Use of cloth in menstrual periods is very risky because after use, we wash and dry this cloth and reuse it. We wash and dry this cloth in a secluded place in our homes where there is no sunlight mostly to avoid anyone in the family particularly men noticing it. Thus the cloth remains dirty and unhygienic and full of germs, but still we reuse it.'

Pooja did not know about sanitary napkins until she attended the 17th meeting of Sanjhi Sehat. She says 'In this meeting they told about hygiene during menstrual periods. They explained why one should take special care during

periods and how hygienic habits were important and also how ignoring hygiene can cause infections. It was then that she realised hygiene was essential and using old cloth was unhygienic. She decided to switch over to sanitary napkins which was available in anganwadis.

After this meeting Pooja told her sister about sanitary pads. Her sister was a little hesitant at first and said, 'we have to pay for pads but we find cloth easily in our homes.' But Pooja argued that if we use cloth to avoid extra money we will have to spend more money on treatment of diseases caused by use of dirty cloth. Hence it is a wise decision to use pads instead of cloth.'

Pooja says, 'In this meeting they also described about safe disposal of used pads. I did not throw used pads. I burn them with other waste.' ■



Clean village, healthy village



Villagers in Deorikala village of Sagar district suffered from several health related ailments, which included vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach problems. The victims mostly comprised women and children and due to lack of any government health facility, they had to travel a long distance to go to block headquarters Kesli to get themselves treated by a private doctor, in the process, losing time, energy and money.

When Sanjhi Sehat meetings started in the village, the main challenge was to free people of illnesses. The first meeting was organized for the women of the village.

The PLA Facilitators and coordinators went door to door to talk to the women urging them to attend the meetings. PLA Facilitators Ranu Rai says, “Women were hesitant at first but we patiently answered their queries like what was the meeting about and how it would benefit them.” The PLA Facilitators told them about the diseases that could spread due to unclean surroundings. Their dialogues and discussions bore fruit and gradually the villagers opened up to the meetings. They were now ready to come to the meetings and start the discussion on women and children's health and nutrition issues.

The Sanjhi Sehat team toured the village to take stock of the situation and spotted garbage heaps, filth, potholes flooded with muddy water all over, people were consuming water from the hand pumps without filtering it and without washing their hands.

These unclean habits had resulted in spread of germs and water borne diseases. When women started attending the Sanjhi Sehat meetings, they were briefed on its benefits and very soon, the villagers of Deorikala realized how important cleanliness was. They began a drive by burning garbage heaps, filling potholes with soil etc. The next step was the volunteers explaining to the villagers how unclean, polluted water was making them ill.

For filtering water they were shown how to use cloth to filter the water and keeping the storage utensils clean. Today, most of the households filter and store water in clean 'matkas' (earthen pots)

Similarly, they were also told how keeping their hands clean by washing them with soap before cooking and consuming food and after defecation could prevent so many stomach ailments. Women, in particular, vowed to adopt this practice thus leading to the healthy families. ■

Sheela shows the way to cleanliness



Siyarmau, a small village situated 18 km away from Silvani block of Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh is, today free of open defecation system, thanks to Sheela. Having no toilets in their houses, many villagers of Siyarmau had to use open spaces as toilet. After attending Sanjhi Sehat meeting Sheela realized that open defecation was not only unhygienic but also a slur on women's dignity.

Despite the poor economic condition of her family, Sheela decided to get a toilet constructed in her house and became a role model for others. After seeing a toilet made in her house other women too started demanding construction of toilets in their houses.

With a population of 2,800, Siyarmau has people from different communities staying here. 21-year old Sheela Bai Thakoor came to the village after her marriage two years ago. Her family comprising her husband Santosh Thakur and in-laws totally depends on agriculture. Sanjhi Sehat meetings in the village brought a change in her life as she attended all the meetings and listened to every discussion carefully and followed it.

Says Sheela, 'it was in the 7th meeting of Sanjhi Sehat that we discussed about the disadvantages of open defecation. In this meeting I understood how dirty our residential area was and how much discomfort and disease prone we were due to open defecation.' In the 8th meeting of Sanjhi Sehat they again discussed on sanitation and after

this, as a group exercise, all the women walked through the village and saw for themselves how the entire village and its surrounding area was turning into an open latrine.

These meetings left a great impact on Sheela's mind. She spoke about this issue with her mother-in-law, Premrani, who suggested that the PLA Facilitator should also counsel Sheela's father-in-law and husband. Sheela asked PLA Facilitator to talk to her in laws and husband about the benefits of toilet and disadvantages of open defecation. The PLA Facilitator agreed and went to Sheela's home and spoke with her family members, She said, 'open defecation is shameful and a blot on our society. It deprives our womenfolk of their dignity. It can cause infections and diseases. The best solution to avoid spending money on diseases and treatment is to construct toilets in your house.'

Sheela's husband agreed with the Facilitator but the major stumbling block was finance. But he had to bow down before Sheela's persistence. They somehow managed to gather the funds for the construction and now she has a toilet in her house. ■



Sewage system, proper roads: Savitri, Vinita take the lead



Tola is a village, about one km away from Chhind village of Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh. Chhind is again 30 kms away from block head office Silvani. People belonging to different communities live there. The tribals of Tola village were facing several problems due to lack of sewage system and proper road facility. Due to this, rain water collected in roads and made transit difficult. This also became a source of diseases like malaria, dengue and cholera.

Savitri Bai and her family stay in Tola village and every year in the rainy season faced many health problems, but whenever she raised her voice, nobody listened to her. She felt alone and helpless.

When Sanjhi Sehat project began in the village and meetings started, the first meeting was on community partnership. Savitri Bai had found a way out. Savitri told about the problem of her village to the PLA Facilitator, who in turn explained how keeping the first meeting in mind, they could find their own solution. Savitri shared this with her friend, Vinita, who showed keen interest in cleaning up the area.

Now Savitri was not alone. She had a friend Vinita and both tried to get support of other village people but no one came forward. But they did not lose their confidence and started working to solve the problem of water deposit and mud on road. They got soil from near the village and

started dumping it on the road to fill the puddles and smoothen the roads. Looking at their persistence, gradually the villagers also started joining in their endeavour.

Now all roads of Tola village are puddle free and there is no water deposit in the lanes. This also checked the breeding of mosquitoes in the village. Everyone in the village started appreciating Savitri and Vinita's efforts and teamwork. They proved that where there is a will, there is a way. ■



Harsh Kumari's inspired initiative - 'Drinking water for all'



18 year old Harsh Kumari of Basaa village in Kesli block of Sagar District in happy. Says a beaming Harsh Kumari, "Now I filter water and keep my house clean." Now my family does not fear illness and we no longer have to pay regular visits to the doctors. Harsh's drinking water drive, and cleanliness at home began after her meeting with the Sanjhi Sehat workers.

She helps her mother in all household chores like, filling water cleaning utensils, cooking etc. This took much of her time but when a health worker told her to attend the Sanjhi Sehat meeting, she became curious and excited as she wanted to know what new things she could learn. So, after taking due permission from her mother, she started attending the health meetings. Harsh says, "It was not easy to convince mother, but ultimately she had to give in looking at my insistence."

The discussion and demonstration by the PLA Facilitator on pure drinking water at the meeting left an indelible impact on Harsh. She became convinced that illnesses like vomiting, diarrhea and other stomach related disease resulted due to unclean drinking water. "We do not filter water and take out water dunking our hands in the water utensil. Most often, we don't wash and clean our hands before using this water. This results in the germs being transferred from our hands to our stomach, via water, resulting in all kinds of stomach ailments.

She went home and first of all asked her father to purchase 'danka' a utensil to take water out of pots etc. Then she cleaned the pots and filled water after thoroughly washing her hands and filtering it using a thick clean piece of cloth. Now she laid emphasis on all the family members using the danka for taking water out of the pot for drinking. Harsh's initiative has convinced her mother also who now attends the Sanjhi Sehat meetings and has vowed to adopt cleaner and healthy practices for herself and her family. ■



Sheela on way to better health



Sheelabai of Rampura village in Pawai block in Panna district now takes complete care of herself and her one year old child.

She is a migrant agricultural labour and has to go to different cities in search of work. This is why she was unable to take care of her own and her child's health. Her ignorance added to her woes as she was not aware of the services provided in the anganwadi centre.

About a year back, she gave birth to a son. Immediately after the birth, she started working again. Thus she could neither take proper nutrition nor breastfeed her son. She would leave for work very early in the day because of which she could not visit the anganwadi.

When PLA Facilitator went from door to door to inform villagers about the Sanjhi Sehat meetings, she noticed a frail and weak Sheelabai and her malnourished looking son.

Sheelabai informed her how she would often feel dizzy, weak and suffered from breathlessness after doing small chores. PLA Facilitator advised her to see a doctor immediately and asked her to attend the meetings where she would get information on health and nutrition for both herself and her son.

She started attending the meetings where she came to know that she should get her child weighed at regular intervals. She also came to know that she would get nutritious food packets every Tuesday from the anganwadi.

She had never visited the anganwadi earlier, so she started visiting it every Tuesday. She got her child weighed

and came to know that he was underweight. Soon she started taking the nutrition packets from the anganwadi.

She was advised by PLA Facilitator to give dal water, rice, salad tomatoes, greens etc. to her son and also consume it herself. Very soon, she became healthier and her son also gained weight after she changed their food habits thanks to the efforts of Sanjhi Sehat and PLA Facilitator. ■



Use of sanitary pads: Mini sets an example



Sanjhi Sehat programme organised regular meetings in Simariya village of Silvani block in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh. These meetings focused on health, nutrition and sanitation related issues.

The 17th meeting at Simariya left a deep impact on 14-year old Mini. Mini like many other girls and women in her village was not aware of the use of sanitary pads and would use old cloth during her periods as per family tradition.

It all changed after she became a regular attendee at the Sanjhi Sehat meetings. After the 17th meeting in which menstrual hygiene and women's health issues was discussed, Mini started taking care of her personal hygiene during her periods. She realised how using dirty cloth could cause serious infections.

Mini was hesitant to use napkins as she thought napkins were costly and use of it during periods will be an extra burden on her family. This thought stopped Mini from using the sanitary pads. One day she asked the PLA Facilitator Archana Pandey about the cost of pads. The PLA Facilitator told her that a packet of sanitary pads was available at the cost of Rs. 40 and the ASHA worker would make it available to her. When Mini met the ASHA worker she explained how to use and dispose it, she felt relieved and bought a packet of sanitary pads from her. Mini says, "when I used the pads for the first time it was a new experience for me and I felt comfortable and at ease during those difficult days. That motivated me to use the napkins regularly, instead of old cloth that we used earlier.'

Now Mini has become an ardent convert of sanitary pads usage. She has started propagating its use and importance to other women of the village. Her advice has helped her change the unhygienic practice of using old cloths among many of her friends. They too have started using sanitary napkins during their menstrual periods. ■

A war against Anaemia



Anaemia is a common problem among most of the women and young girls of Silpuri - an adiwasi dominated village in Karahal block of Sheopur district, confirm the aanganwadi workers and ANM of the Sub - health center in the village.

The PLA Facilitator and the CRP tried to dig out the reasons behind this health issue during the Sanjhi Sehat meetings. They spoke at length with the ANM, ASHA and the aanganwadi workers, as also the villagers. A discussion with them and the women of the village revealed that the diet of the villagers was not balanced. They had potatoes and dal regularly but did there was no intake of vegetables or fruits in their diet. Moreover, women and girls did not consume the iron tablets provided by the ANM, ASHA and the aanganwadi worker at their centers. They simply threw them away. This resulted in low haemoglobin count and weakness in the women and girls. Once the Sanjhi Sehat project started in the village, the volunteers decided to take up the cudgels and start a war against anemia in the village. They decided to support the women to improve their eating habits and remove myths and misconceptions about consuming iron tablets prevalent in the village.

Women were urged to attend the meetings where they were given information on health, nutrition and hygiene. Thus began the PLA cycles on nutrition, health and hygiene. In a discussion on myths and misconceptions related to consumption of iron tablets, women said they would felt giddy and nauseated so they avoided it. The PLA

Facilitator patiently explained how it helped the body regain health and to set an example, consumed the tablet herself to prove her point. This came as a turning point and removed all doubts in the minds of the women.

The meeting proved successful with 13 women vowing to consume IFA tablets daily and made small changes in their eating habits by including vegetables and greens in their diet. Today, at least half of the women of the village have become free of anemia. ■



Sangeeta fights for her children's health



Sangeeta Devi, belonging to a backward community, works in a farm. Her family comprising of her husband Manvendra, daughters Pragya (2), Ayushi (3), Sakshi (5) and son (7) depend on agriculture for livelihood. A resident of Shivpura, village of Jatara block in Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh, Sangeeta's ever busy schedule included daily household chores besides working as an agricultural labour. Her busy schedule left her so exhausted that she completely neglected her own health and diet.

Sangeeta says, 'I did not know what malnutrition was and what I should be doing for the good health of my children. Many a times, I would have to leave my children alone at home to go to work. I could hardly take care of my children's health.' She was also completely unaware of the facilities being provided through the anganwadi centre in her village.

After the Sanjhi Sehat programme started in the village, the PLA Facilitator, Meena Ahirvar, called her to a meeting. In the beginning she refused to go due to her unending work but on constant urging by Meena, she agreed to attend one meeting where the session on children's health was being discussed.

Sangeeta's perception changed after attending the meeting. She says, 'earlier I thought it was useless to attend the meeting but I was wrong. When I attended this meeting I found it very useful.' It was the fourth meeting of Sanjhi

Sehat in which they discussed hygiene and related diseases. They gave us information about child growth chart and signs of malnutrition. After listening to the discussion Sangeeta realised that her children were weak and narrated the symptoms of her children. She asked the PLA Facilitator what she should give her children to improve their health. Meena said that she should include vegetables in her children's diet like green leafy vegetables freely available in our farms like methi, bathua, rajgeera's bhaji, spinach, cucumber and other things easily available. Alongside, all the children should be sent to the anganwadi centre for regular weighing and growth monitoring.' Moreover, anganwadi centres also served nutritious food, she was informed.

Acting on Meena's advice, Sangeeta started visiting the anganwadi with all her children. There she got them weighed. She came to know that her 2-year old daughter belonged to the yellow circle group. The Anganwadi worker told her that she should come every Tuesday and get nutritious food (Take Home Ration) for her daughter. She told her to send her children to the anganwadi daily for cooked breakfast and lunch.

Sangeeta started sending her children to anganwadi regularly and now she has become more aware about giving her children green vegetables, salad and dal as complete meals. After one month her daughter has come out of yellow circle and is now in green curve. She and her other brothers and sisters are slowly becoming healthy now. ■



Saroj fights against child marriage



Saroj felt as if she was in a nightmare. Her father was insistent upon getting her married at the tender age of 15, while she wanted to study further. Second among three brothers in her family, Saroj belongs to a backward community residing in Baisangarh of Baldeogarh Development block in Tikamgarh district.

Her parents are agriculture labours and work hard for a living. Conforming to cultural practices in the region, where early marriages are a social norm, Saroj's father wanted her to get her married. But Saroj was in no mood. She was studying in class 10th and wanted to study further. This resistance led to daily quarrels in the family. But Saroj refused to budge. She expressed her desire to complete her graduation before settling down.

Saroj attributes this courage and understanding to her discussions with the Sanjhi Sehat PLA Facilitator and the meetings held every fortnight in the village. In one of the meetings, Ramrati, the PLA Facilitator explained the cycle (chakra) of malnutrition through picture cards. She informed the villagers about malnutrition cycle resulting out of early marriage and conceived conception and childbirth. It had generally been seen that early marriages also resulted in multiple births, leading to the woman becoming weaker and malnourished. Saroj was greatly influenced by this information. She decided there and then that she would break this malnutrition cycle and opt for marriage only after completing her B.A, when she was 20 years old.

Kannulal, Saroj's father on the other hand started looking for a groom for her as he wanted her to get married the same year. When Saroj saw that her words fell on deaf ears, she asked for Ramrati's help in this regard and asked her to convince her father otherwise.

Ramrati came to her rescue and visited Kannulal at his house where she sat down with him and Saroj's mother and told them about the ill effects of child marriage and cited examples from the village. She also told them how their daughter wished to study further.

Finally Kannulal gave in to his daughter's wishes, though reluctantly and allowed her to study further.

Saroj has set an example in her village. Other girls in the village are now following suit and quoting Saroj's example to delay their early marriages and study further. ■



Kamla says no to open defecation



Kamla and her family members were habitual to defecating in the open. They never thought or knew about the harmful effects of open defecation. But after attending Sanjhi Sehat meetings, Kamla realized how harmful open defecation is for their health. After realizing this she decided to get a toilet built in her house.

36 year old Kamla lives in Rajnagar village of Baldevgarh block in Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh. There are five members in her family including her husband and three children. Though the family owns agricultural land, yet it is not sufficient for maintaining their family. So Kamla and her husband Janki Kushwah work as agricultural labour in other people's lands. Though she is herself unlettered, Kamla and her husband are very concerned about the education of their children and that is why all her three children are enrolled in the school and she ensures that they attend school daily.

It is this love for learning new things which motivated Kamla to start attending the Sanjhi Sehat meetings. Even after a hard day's work in the field and attending the household chores, she would be prompt in attending the meetings. It was in the PLA session on hygiene and use of toilets that Kamla came to know about the harmful effects of open defecation and the importance of using toilets.

Sanjhi Sehat PLA Facilitator's, words about avoiding open defecation made a deep impression on

Kamla. She invited the facilitator to come and speak with her husband on this issue. The facilitator took out time and went to meet Kamla and her husband, Janki. She discussed with them about the use of toilet and they said that, 'their family members were used to open defecation, although they faced many problems. They had to wait for it to become dark at night so that Kamla and her daughter could relieve themselves. This practice had bred a feeling of shame and insecurity in them, which they wanted to get rid off.

The Sanjhi Sehat PLA Facilitator explained to them and the villagers about hygiene, sanitation and ills of open defecation. After listening to her they felt that it was essential to build a toilet in their house. Kamla and her husband decided to take the initiative and construct a toilet in their house. For the construction of toilet they arranged the materials themselves. They both started building the toilet, brick by brick. With persistence and hard work, they finished building the toilet in a week. They also made a hand washing unit with toilet.

As Kamla and Janki narrate in one voice, 'Finally we have our own toilet in our house and every family member uses it. After using the toilet, we wash our hands with soap in the hand washing unit. This is also a new practice for us.' Kamla is thankful that she does not have to go out in the open at night. Her family is free from open defecation, dirt and disease. ■



A New life for Namisha



For Choti Bai and her family of four which included her husband and her three children, life was not a bed of roses. Living in a small village, Kaldgaon, located 80 kms from Panna district headquarters, Choti Bai and her husband are agricultural labour by profession. The couple work hard all day and managed to survive somehow. Sheer poverty was making it very difficult for the family to make both ends meet. Choti Bai, could not bear to see her children suffer. Her sons were grown up but Nimisha, her one and a half year old daughter was the worst affected as her mother could not take care of her. But when she came to know about the NRC and the services it offered, she was prompt to avail of its services and get her daughter admitted for 14 days in it.

Choti Bai came to know about the Sanjhi Sehat meetings in the village from her neighbours. These meetings for women focused on health nutrition sanitation and hygiene issues for women and children. Curiosity and the desire to seek better health for her children drove Choti Bai to start attending the meetings regularly. In the fourth meeting, the villagers were given information about getting their children's weight measured and how proper intake of food and nutrition was important to maintain a healthy life and keep malnourishment at bay.

The PLA Facilitator and the Community Resource Person also helped her understand how her infant daughter weighed just six kgs and was malnourished. She was guided to the anganwadi centre, where help was at hand for her

small daughter. The aanganwadi worker took the weight of her child and explained how malnourished her child was with the help of charts. She counselled Choti Bai to tell her husband and decided to take Namisha to the Nutrition Resource Centre for treatment and management of malnourishment.

Very soon, her treatment at the NRC began. Proper medicines and food were given to Choti Bai's daughter for 14 days in the NRC and she was counselled on how to take care of her daughter's meals after she went home. Slowly her daughter started regaining her weight and health. A visibly happy and satisfied mother, Choti Bai says, she is happy to see her daughter healthy and free of malnourishment and thanks the Sanjhi Sehat Facilitator who showed her the way to anganwadi centre where she found the solution to her daughter's ailment. ■



Ek Pahal : Sehat Ki Or



Acknowledgements

- Rachna Singh
- Suparna Sarkar
- Anjali Agarwal
- Sunita N. Sharma
- Seema Vyas
- Richa Agrawal
- All District Coordinators



Printed by : Goenka Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. Indore. Ph.: 2412800