



DHAATRI

A Resource Centre for Women and Children

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23



Restoring and Re-rooting - a year's journey of the uprooted

The year 2022-23 was a journey of recovery from the Covid impacts and a collective re-negotiation for entitlements and identities sidelined by the discourse of development. The year was a witness to the many explorations by the communities to piece together the shreds of life for resilience in the face of incremental losses to their livelihoods. The previous year's baseline assessment of the many complex socio-economic challenges faced by Adivasi communities in our field areas had prepared us for a roadmap for the year. We focussed on engagement with governance institutions for citizenship and social security entitlements that adivasi communities find most difficult to address. Particularly for women the challenges of negotiating with statutory bodies is an alien space and, as the communities we work with are predominantly widow headed, the emphasis was on strengthening empowering spaces for women to negotiate for their entitlements. The focus was also on exploring women's traditional spaces of knowledge and to build upon this knowledge for asserting the sustainability discourse on climate and nature from this grounded wisdom of Adivasi women and for amplifying the self-representational dialogues of their experiential realities.

Children face the most severe consequences in any community that has been disturbed by loss of access to resources. It directly impacts their food security, right to education, health and a secure life. Our work this year to restore dignity and security to children has been both joyful and frustrating, with the many challenges of forced migration, starvation, and the pressure of taking adult responsibilities, making childhood a distant dream. Yet, we made some progress in bringing back pieces of their childhood to some of the most vulnerable children in Panna and Vidisha. We wish to thank all our donors, fellow networks, supportive and sensitive officials and many well wishers who helped us make these efforts of local women and youth in our communities become positive tools for transformative hopes.



SEARCH FOR RESTORATION AND ALTERNATIVES

-- A FEW SMALL STEPS AT A TIME IN THE FOREST

Barefoot Community Health Programme and Women's Leadership:

Adivasi communities in Panna and Ganj Basoda depend on mine labour and migrant work in the construction and agricultural sectors. A majority of them are suffering from Tuberculosis with children also affected by malnutrition and substance abuse. This year, we initiated a Community Health Programme through a team of Barefoot Health Volunteers who are youth from these villages. We undertook household surveys for identifying TB, Silicosis and malnutrition and created the last mile linkage between the PHCs and the community. The volunteers were trained in conducting household surveys, taking patient histories, understanding the process of tuberculosis eradication intervention and facilitating medical outreach for the patients. In coordination with the health personnel in the PHCs we have facilitated the DOTS programme implementation by taking patients to the PHCs for diagnosis and treatment. We also assisted in documentation support for patients to get their social security and identity cards like Aadhar and Voter cards in order to link with the banks and the TB pension programme. With the help of PATH, Mumbai, we conducted medical camps, health awareness programmes and training of volunteers. A training was conducted by PATH to the barefoot health volunteers and educators. We have also started identifying and getting diagnosis for Silicosis suspected patients and making representations to the Ministry of Mines and Labour for rehabilitation.

As the TB and Silicosis affected patients are in a critical and highly malnourished condition, we initiated a supplementary nutrition support programme for these families with the help of donations from well-wishers. This helped the patients cope with the heavy dosage of medicines, as most of them have MDR (multiple drug resistance) and with their hunger. We also helped patients with follow up during their migration as most families migrate seasonally and discontinue the medication during this period.

Training of health volunteers in collaboration with PATH.





Assisting patients with their treatment at the local PHCs.



Health surveys in Panna and Vidisha.

Health volunteers distributing nutrition kits to patients.



Social Security and Entitlements for All:

With the help of student interns, we conducted a study on the status of adivasi women in Panna whose families are affected by TB. The report was submitted to all the ministries and departments concerned. Based on the findings, we are working closely with the community to engage with the governance institutions on social security entitlements. A household survey of social security schemes was conducted and our field team has been trained in filing applications for pensions, aadhar cards, voter cards, birth certificates, death certificates and disability certificates.



Applying for documentation for TB pensions.



TB and silicosis surveys in Panna and Vidisha.



Our field team at a physical consultation on FRA.

Forest Rights Claims for Adivasi Women:

Despite the FRA Act being enacted in the year 2005, awareness of the law and knowledge of the process of filing claims is negligent in adivasi areas. We have conducted a series of trainings at the community level and worked with field teams in filing claims for individual and collective forest rights claims in Panna, Ganj Basoda and Betul districts of Madhya Pradesh, in Chatra district of Jharkhand, in Dahod district of Gujarat and in Udaipur district of Rajasthan.

We collaborated with other civil society groups and networks in online and physical consultations on the FRA process and challenges for women in different states. In collaboration with Kalpavriksh, we organised a three day workshop in Bhorgiri, Maharashtra and this was followed up by field visits to some of the tribal areas in Telangana and Jharkhand. In collaboration with Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch, we participated in online consultations on women farmers' entitlements under the FRA.

Helping the community file their forest rights claims





Field training on resource mapping and biodiversity monitoring.

Biodiversity Mapping and Monitoring:

Our work to promote women's entitlements to forest lands and to exchange cross community knowledge practices of women vis-a-vis their natural resources, we initiated a biodiversity mapping and monitoring programme. A field training was conducted in Udaipur for communities to map their resources and knowledge practices and for monitoring the changes in their eco-systems. Barefoot ecologists from the communities were identified for documenting their resources and stories. One of the main challenges we encountered in Panna and Udaipur is the risk of wild-life attacks. In Panna, the tiger population has multiplied to very dangerous proportions for the local communities to venture out of their villages. In Udaipur, cheetahs are now prowling close to the villages, lifting cattle and attacking humans. Women are finding it extremely risky even to collect firewood or fetch water from their streams. In the resource critical area of Ganj Basoda, there are few forest resources left for sustenance. Yet, they continue to document their resources of the past and present and their stories of co-existence with nature and coping with wildlife attacks. The documents and stories are being used as education material for children in our community centres and in the high schools. They are also being used as supporting documentation for the CFR claims and for livelihood and health interventions.



Women documenting their biodiversity in our field areas.



Women making nutritional ladoos.

Livelihood support and the search for alternative incomes:

With distress migration high, particularly in Panna and Ganj Basoda, the community consultations are mainly centred around exploring local livelihoods and harnessing their knowledge and resources for improving their economic situation. As a priority, this year we initiated nursery raising as a support to the widows in Panna and they distributed the saplings in surrounding villages for restoring their tree cover. Supplementary income and nutrition activities like making nutritional ladoos were taken up. A major challenge is to bring youth out of the web of bonded labour and build their skills in other vocations, as well as help them get into higher education. We initiated community level youth activities like small scale vocational skills through workshops and field trainings. Youth awareness camps were conducted to motivate them for alternate skills and awareness on substance addiction problems. These have helped kickstart youth involvement in some of our community initiatives like the barefoot health and education programmes, while some have returned to high school and college.

Women tending to the nurseries and distributing saplings.





Children at the after school centres.

Community Education Centres for children:

Due to the high vulnerability of children to child labour, substance abuse and dropping out of school, we have initiated Education Centres for children in Panna and Ganj Basoda, during the Covid pandemic. These are now regularly functioning as After School Evening Centres with library facility and for community and institutional engagement in order to address child labour and school retention concerns.



Children with books from the community library.



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