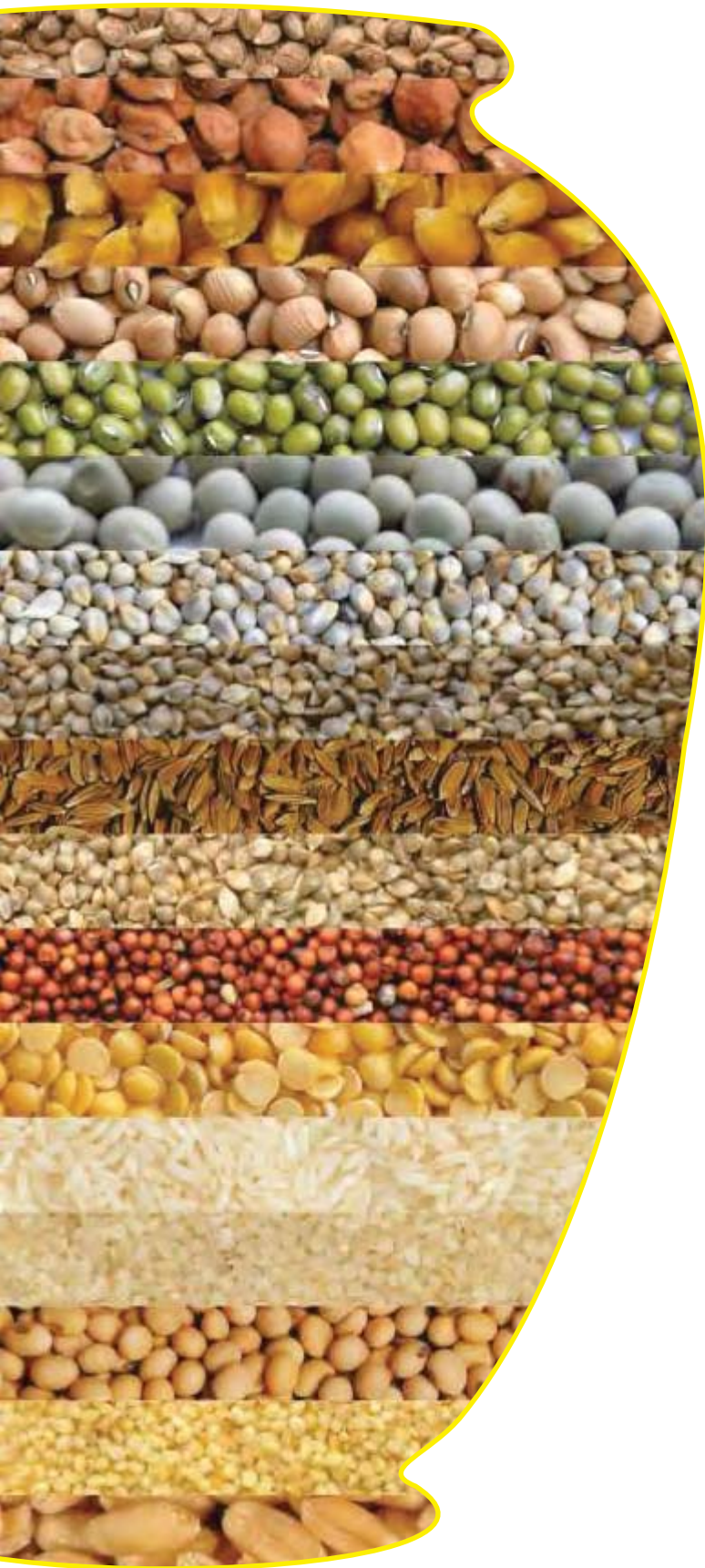
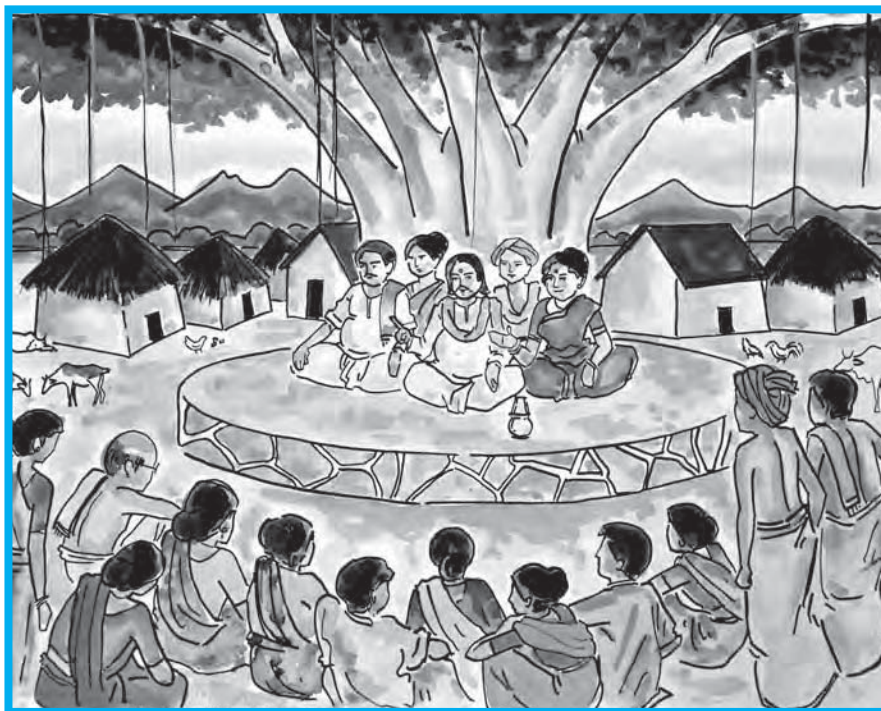


Food & Nutrition Security Matters



**Theme :
Working with Panchayats**

Annual Report 2014
DHAN Foundation



Working with Panchayats

The 'working with Panchayats' programme focused on expanding its reach to more Panchayats this year. Promoting exclusive institutions for advancing democratic practices at the grassroots and building capacity of women Panchayat leaders and representatives was prioritized. Presently the programme is being implemented in 61 blocks in Madurai, Theni, Dindugal, Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts of Tamil Nadu, covering around 675 Panchayats and 3,510 hamlets. The programme works directly with 52,400 poor families in the working Panchayats.

Building Capacity of Elected Representatives

Structured training programmes were organized for women presidents, women ward members and women SHG leaders in the working panchayats. A total of 68 trainings were imparted to over 600 women presidents on the basics of Panchayat functions, roles and responsibilities of presidents. Subsequently 11 advanced levels of trainings were imparted to 268 women presidents on panchayat matters, strategies for effective management and infusing democratic practices in Panchayat administration. About 50 women presidents and staff were taken to Panchayats in Kerala for an exposure visit.

Secondly, the elected women ward members were given similar type of training programmes. Over 1,620 women ward members were given basic training on the roles and responsibilities of ward members, understanding the structure and functions of the panchayats and gender rights. Advanced trainings were conducted on these aspects for 574 ward members. All these trainings were organized in the offices of Block Development Officers to provide connectivity with the formal system.

To integrate the women SHGs functioning with the working Panchayats, around 49 training sessions were organised for SHGs, benefiting 3,404 women members. They were oriented on the importance of the village panchayat systems, their basic rights and responsibilities and Gramasabha structure and how to participate in Gramasabha meetings and other panchayat activities.

Promotion of Networks

To create a platform for continuous interaction, exchange of experiences and facilitate cross learning, networks of women presidents at the block as well as district levels were promoted. They meet once in



a quarter, share their experiences, best practices and issues and challenges they face(d). A similar forum at the district level is organized with representatives from block networks. They meet once in two months; take up policy issues and operational issues at district level. Currently 54 block level networks have been promoted and 627 presidents were enrolled in these networks.

Linking with Panchayats and Legal Services

Similar to the SHG Bank Linkage, which facilitates creating a sustainable financial linkages between SHGs and Banks, the programme promotes the concept of linking SHGs with the Panchayat system. These linkages are envisaged to leverage various development services and entitlements for the SHG members. Legal aid clinics supported by the District Legal Authority has been initiated in seven SHG Federations including one Panchayat at Vellayampatti, Madurai District. Currently there are 22 Panchayats that offer legal aid clinic services to the families. There were 678 cases filed during this year, out of which 98 cases were resolved through the legal aid clinics. This initiative has the potential to save time and the cost involved in accessing legal services.

Panchayat Education

To supplement the capacity building of women panchayat presidents in the working districts, the Panchayat programme offers a Diploma in Panchayat Management (DPM) in association with DHAN People Academy. This year, along with DPM course, the programme has also introduced a course material on 'Human Rights and Women Rights'. In the last two years, 567 women presidents have enrolled in these courses. A lucid manual on Panchayat Administration developed by the

programme with the support of subject matter experts was distributed to all the women presidents.

Services at Panchayat Level

Social Security Initiative

The programme promotes life insurance programme among the poor households in the working Panchayats. This year 9,583 members were enrolled in Aam Aatmi Bima Yojana scheme and facilitated claims for 43 deaths. As an additional benefit to the enrolled families 584 students got scholarship benefit out of this programme.

Micro Planning for Panchayats

Preparation of micro plan at panchayat level is considered a good practice which inculcates the habit of participation among people in planning exercise. Implemented for the past eight years in 25 working Panchayats, the micro planning exercise was extended to nine more Panchayats this year.

Updating of voter list

Updating of voter list is done every year, which will help in keeping active voters in the list. In addition to creating awareness on voting, this process helps in avoiding electoral malpractices and increase the percentage of polling during election. This year, 48 Panchayats carried out this updating exercise.

Social audit

Social audit is a participatory process for assessing the quality of work undertaken at the Panchayat level. It is a mandatory process in many of the government schemes. The programme introduced social audit process in 24 Panchayats experimentally. It was carried out for the Greenhouse project of the state government and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) initiatives.

Documentary Film

A short documentary film on the impact of mainstreaming gender in Panchayats was produced. It captured the issues and challenges faced by the women in governing Panchayats, which are dominated by men, and the success stories of a few Panchayats, where women presidents handled those challenges successfully.

Food & Nutrition Security

"Will that hunger return?
Which nearly killed me yesterday?" - *Kural: 1048*

One may sleep even in the midst of fire,
But by no means in the midst of poverty. - *Kural: 1049*

Though written 2000 years ago, the views expressed in these couplets by Thiruvalluvar, a Tamil sage poet are still relevant today. The revelations of Thirukkural on poverty and suffering of poor holds true even at this age of rapid growth and advancement in all spheres of life. United Nations estimate reveals that 870 million people do not have enough to eat and 98 per cent of them live in developing countries. Under-nutrition contributes to the deaths of about 5.6 million children under five in the developing world each year. It can lead to poor school performance and dropout, it threatens girls' future ability to bear healthy children and it perpetuates a generational cycle of poverty.

Thiruvalluvar does not stop with portraying only the issues of poverty and hunger, he writes on what is to be done to alleviate poverty and hunger.

Strong is the strength of enduring hunger,
But stronger still is the strength of relieving it. – *Kural: 225*

Wiping out the hunger of the have-nots,
Is the treasury the haves have deposited their wealth. – *Kural: 226*

The growing hunger and malnutrition is a single major challenge for the entire humanity. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that every nation has committed to achieve by 2015 call for halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. It also calls for partnership and shared responsibility among all the stakeholders including governments, donors, NGOs, civil societies and corporate to share knowledge, resources, expertise to tackle the issues of hunger and malnutrition.

DHAN Foundation's overarching goal of poverty reduction lays high emphasis on enabling the poor and vulnerable communities to enhance their social capital. With the strength acquired from their institutions, the poor households gain visibility in the larger society, earn control and ownership over the processes and outcomes of various development interventions around which they were organised. The interventions such as microfinance, water, and rainfed farming development are seen as means of building sustainable livelihoods, which would in turn eliminate the hunger and mal-nutrition.

DHAN Foundation observed 2013 and 2014 as the Years of Food and Nutrition Security. All the programmes and interventions of DHAN intend to further deepen their work to address the issues of food and nutrition security in the poor households. This annual report tries to capture the current perspectives and practices on various dimensions of Food and Nutrition Security being addressed by DHAN Foundation.



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