



helping tribals
heal themselves

TRIBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Sittilingi, Tamil Nadu 636906

Newsletter

Issue - Dec 2011

We would like to share with you all the good things that happened this year. But before that –

WISHING YOU ALL A WONDERFULL YEAR AHEAD.



Murugan explains the principle of the stabilized mud block to Skillshare partners who had come to Sittilingi for their annual meet.

Modernizing our services....

The hospital was busy as ever. With the new **TNHSP** scheme and free treatment for tribals, we are seeing tribal patients even from villages far away. Being at the junction of four districts, the news has spread and there is very good utilization of the facilities. The normal deliveries have however dropped because of the scheme where the Government pays a substantial amount for anyone who delivers in the Primary Health Center. We are now more of a referral center for all the complications from there. Several new equipment has come in to help us give better care. The **World Bank** has donated us intravenous infusion pumps, pulse oximeters and maternal Dopplers. **ATMA** [American Tamil Medical Assn] has donated us a maternal and fetal monitor to help us make deliveries safer. Our **FOS** [Friends of Sittilingi] in Salem through the **Lodge Montford** once again came forward to donate the latest ultrasound scan machine with Doppler facilities. They also helped us revamp our whole power supply by donating large batteries and an inverter so that now the whole hospital can run

on solar power – even the Xray! The **IMA** [Indian Medical Assn] in Athur gave us the costly suture materials for operations. We have an oxygen concentrator donated too, so that we never run out of this precious gas. Our clinical laboratory is now in a quality assessment program with **CMC, Vellore**. We have started a new batch of 5 Health Worker trainees.

Rethinking priorities....

We are in a crucial stage with our community health program. We started off in an era where villages were inaccessible, the Government system never worked, people had very little knowledge about basic health practices and a soaring infant mortality. All these have changed over the years, mostly our team's work and partly that the Government now has really started giving a good look at health care. But there are new threats to health with the increasing migration and the world at their feet through TV's in every hut. To restructure our work, we have paused our Health Auxiliary and field clinic programs in the Sittilingi valley. The team is giving shape to a more community development model where health is but part of a larger plan for the future of the community.

There is a new extension to the Office building which now houses the spacious pharmacy, counseling and treatment rooms. The Staff have got together and are running a small canteen in front of the OPD serving tea and snacks

Getting down to basics

The Kalrayan Hills program is surging ahead, though we had some set backs. Training got over by March, but of the 25 health Auxiliaries who started, we have only 14 left. Drop outs were due to many reasons – inability to grasp what is taught, roads getting washed away and so accessibility cut off and the proverbial migration due to poverty. But the field clinics in the 13 villages are going on like clockwork and have a very good attendance of expecting mothers and small children



"This is how TB spreads" explains Kannagi as she learns how to tell stories to communicate health messages in the Kalrayan villages

Better health through insurance

The Old Age health Scheme saw a slight dip in registration – 476 registered. This is offset with a much better utilization and with **Helpage India** stepping in this year, we don't feel the crunch so much. The average costs per patient now works to about Rs 360 yearly and average visits about 6 per year. The farmers groups too are now insured, with a small increased premium. The HIV detection is going on well with a new counseling room, and more than 1200 patients were screened of which 3 cases were detected.

Upwardly mobile – organically..

SOFA, the farmers co-operative is now being expanded, with **50 more** farmers joining. We are just a small step from complete certification. This has attracted much more farmers, as this year we



Organic farmers get repeated exposure visits and training to improve their skills and knowledge

were able to sell even the last gram of turmeric in bulk, to good buyers, who paid them a much better price than the market. As for **SVAD**, the demand is more than the supply, and because of the small team we are not able to expand, either the range of our organic products nor the quantity we could have sold. We are close to the **Rs. 20 lakh** mark in sales. 4 trainings were held as well as an exposure visit. Some have started using the cono weeder. Power sprays were given to 2 groups.

At **Porgai**, we do not have very good news. With some exhibitions falling through, our window for sales became much less, though our artisans are getting faster and better. We have newer patterns and designs, but are yet to find good retailers. Those of you who have contacts with fashion or retail – do try and help out.

Picking up steam....

On the engineering front, work has started earnestly. The local villagers are bringing in their repair work and a lot of manufacturing for the hospital is also being done. The team has expanded to 5 persons now. and they are keeping busy. We are planning to make and sell steel furniture soon.

Accolades for the team...

Luck favored our team again. 2011 saw us get quite a few awards – THI got the **Swami Vivekananda award** (*we were inspired by him and so it was a special honor*) given by the **Ramakrishna Mutt**, New Delhi. Regi and Lalitha were selected as one of the **'Real Heroes'** by **CNN-IBN** (*a short show was on TV*) for this year and **Gandhigram** honored us with the **Dr. Tharian award** for community development. Lalitha was also included in the Planning Commission Steering Committee for Health at the Center.

Thank you all for trusting us and being with us. **Friends of Sittilingi** and the **Donor Partners** are the pillars which support our endeavor. May the New Year bring fun and joy to and your dear ones.

Team THI

Connect to us online too...

Talk to us through office@tribalhealth.org
Update yourself at www.tribalhealth.org
Join our **Friends of Sittilingi** group in Facebook

*The new project we are thinking of is the 'Reviving traditional cattle' project. Ask any organic farmer whether he wants a milch cow or a traditional cow – zap comes the answer "naattu maadu, ayya" (traditional cow, sir). This is because even though the milk yield is less, the quality of the dung and urine far surpasses that of the cross-bred cows. This is what is most important for the organic farmer. Right now we are supported by the **FOS** [Friends of Sittilingi] and have collected money for one group which we will be giving soon.*



We have restarted the medical elective program in partnership with Skillshare International for medical students in the UK.

Tribal Health Initiative

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