



TRIBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE



Wishing you all a
Happy New Year
and a great year ahead

The New Year brought great joy to the Sittilingi Valley – our Farmers Collective put up a candidate for the Panchayat President – and she WON !!

A GIANT STEP FOR SITILINGI

For the past one year there has been a groundswell of opinion in the valley that we need a non-corrupt Panchayat. Many right-thinking people came forward to nominate Ms. Madheswari, who incidentally works as a nurse in our hospital, and wife of Mr Manjunathan, our Project Co-ordinator for the community development. For her nomination about 200 people joined, half of them women. They received no money, not a drop of alcohol was consumed, just a packed lunch. They came because they believed that a change is needed for development. Our opponents were flooding the valley with money and alcohol. We just went from house to house, held village meetings and promised them a corruption free Panchayat, where all development money will reach the people and not line somebody's pocket. The whole campaign was crowd funded – by small donations from farmer groups to larger ones from friends who believe that Sittilingi should set an example.



Last week Thirumathi Madheswari M. took oath as Sittilingi Panchayat President - more than 300 people were present. Winning this election on a platform of truth and against corruption, she re-iterated this in her acceptance speech. This is probably the first time in Tamil Nadu that a grassroots, crowdfunded farmer organization President has won - so creating a bit of history on the way. *Satyameva Jayate* is not a cliché after all ; and in these dark times of economic slowdown and protests, here's a bit of sunshine in the darkness of what the country is going through.

THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE

Two months before SBI [State Bank of India] Regional Manager visited us. He had heard a lot about the Farmers Collective and the Women Entrepreneur Groups. Seeing the work being done, the unity of the farmers, the very positive credit rating on previous loans and the overall positive vibes – his team decided to step up support for us. In a glittering function at the headquarters, our women groups were given loans for Rs 50 lakhs to continue their income generation activities and prosper. Thank you SBI – we are humbled by your trust in us. A comment from one of the women, “normally one has to wait long hours and submit so many papers to get loans from banks , we are so lucky that the bank is actually coming to us instead.” That is the power of the Collective



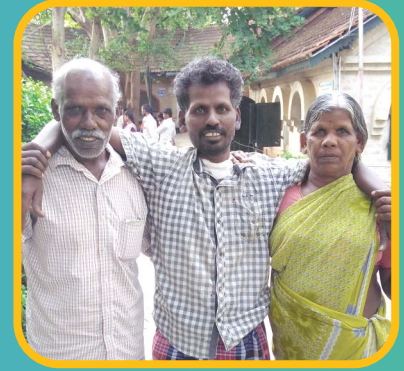
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AN EPIC BATTLE WON

Mayilsamy, from Naikuthivillage, downed a whole bottle of pesticide in a fit of depression a few months back. He was brought to the hospital unconscious, in severe respiratory depression. We put him on the ventilator – and it took 20 days for him to get out of it!! This was the longest we have done – and he walked home fine, now back to farming. No bed sores, no pneumonia – all complications of long term ventilation. Kudos to our nurses – who looked after him so well; and these are all local tribal girls, trained in house by us. Mayilsamy's smile is for them.



WANDERING ONE GATHERS HONEY

Gandhiji wandered all over India on his return from South Africa in a 3rd class compartment in trains to "know" what India was all about – its people, its problems, its poverty. On his 150th birth anniversary, a group of organizations immersed in rural health is offering another journey to all young doctors who are searching for what it means to be a health care professional and to be of use to our great country. This is called the **Travel Fellowship** – and is for doctors who want to think and work outside the box and not compete in the rat race. The Fellowship starts in May 2020 – applications available on our website.

[http://www.tribalhealth.org/?page_id=1580]

SENSITIZING AN ENTIRE GENERATION

When we mention School Health Programs, everyone presumes that we do health check ups and treatment of schoolchildren. But at THI, we approach it differently. Our School Health Program is entirely focused on health education for the children. Our nurses visit all schools of the valley and spend at least one hour in each class, every week. They follow a well thought out "syllabus", inculcating at a very early age, the necessity of a simple, healthy life – encompassing food, environment and habits. This is our long-term investment for the future of Sittilingi Valley.



WAY TO GO !!



The watershed program got an extra boost when the Dist Collector, appreciating the excellent work done by SOFA [our farmers assn] gave blanket permission to start watershed programs even on check dams in the

Revenue and Forest area – a privilege they give to very few. We inaugurated the Jal Shakthi Abhiyan of the Indian Govt in full flow – along with the Govt officials too who came for the inauguration. Further news – rains are filling up our "spring stops" – and raising the water table already. Another intervention is the raising up of all field boundaries by 1.5 ft – rainwater stays in the field – and best of all, the topsoil does not get washed away [see pic]. Way to go, as we say.



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

Team THI

Your help could mean a lot to us, [CLICK HERE](#) and donate.

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