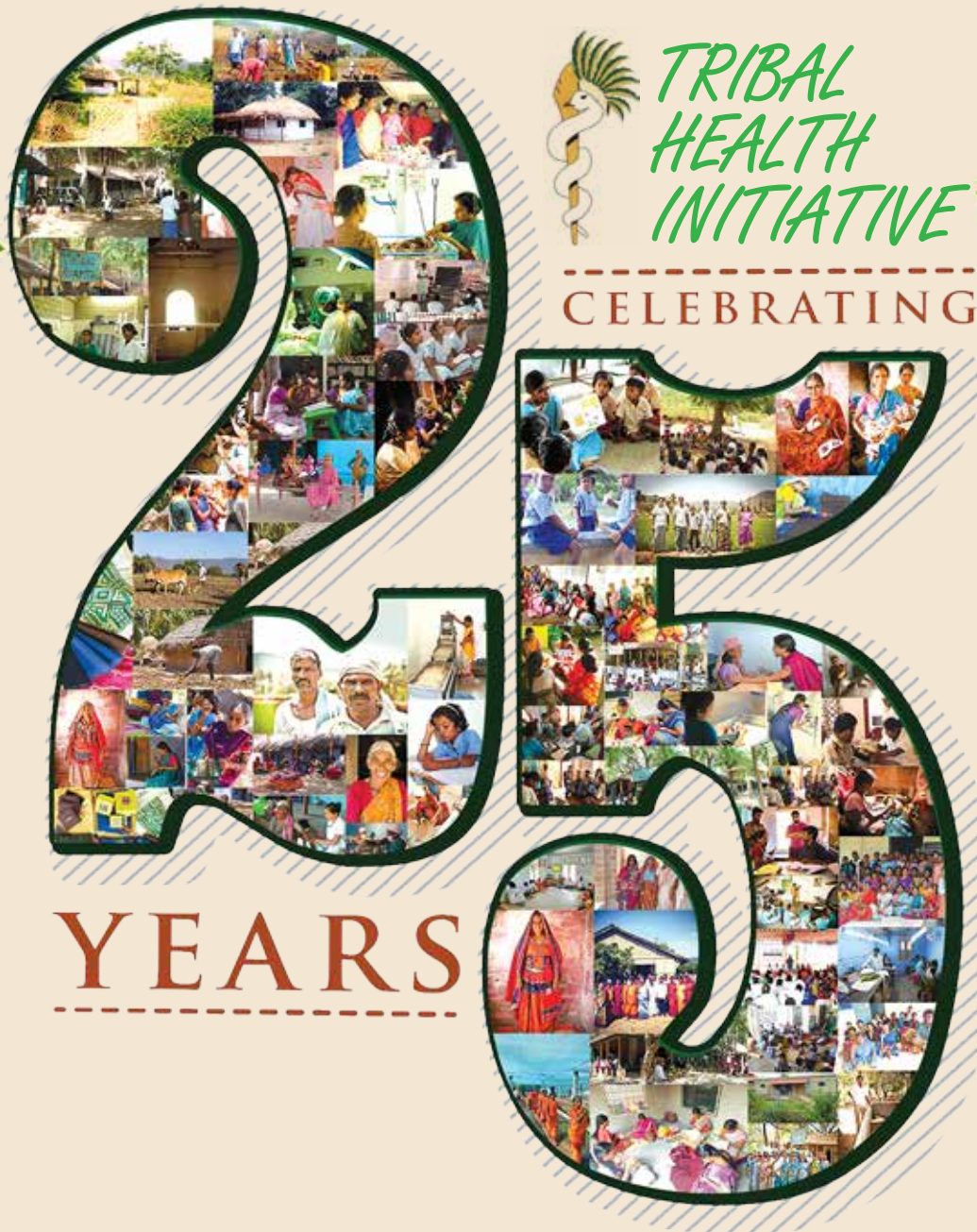


*Wishing all our friends a HAPPY NEW YEAR 2018.*

*May you all have a great year ahead.*



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News updates at [www.tribalhealth.org](http://www.tribalhealth.org)



**Tribal Health Initiative**

Sittilingi, Dharmapuri Dist. Tamil Nadu 636906

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**ISO certification:** We got a really great New Year gift – Tribal Hospital was certified by ISO 9000-2015 as a quality hospital for medical care. It has long been our grouse that when people hear the name Tribal Hospital – they think it is some second-class hospital offering sub-standard care for the tribals. Our Staff knew it was otherwise and after a hectic quality control exercise we applied for the certification – which they approved, and we substantiated our claim to giving the best care to the under privileged population here.

**Silver jubilee year:** 25years ago we walked into the Sittilingi forest area with a 3 year old son and 2 other friends. With near empty pockets, but with a bag full of dreams and convictions, we opened a small OP in a thatched hut the tribals built for us in some waste land. Over the years we have grown and built a motivated team which now take the work forward without losing momentum or the principles we stood for. No, we are not having a “grand function” to celebrate; instead, as a team we will have village meetings to thank the people here for adopting us and also plan with them how to take the work forward. **See a short film on our 25 years.**

**Rural Challenge camp:** Perhaps the most exciting event this year was the Rural Challenge Camp held in Sittilingi for medical students and young doctors. It was with great apprehension that we sent out the email invitations, wondering how many budding docs would be interested in rural India. But, what a surprise we got – 33 budding docs from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra applied and attended. It was 2 days of intense discussions and field work and all of us thoroughly enjoyed it. We trust that we have sown some seeds in these young minds and hope some will blossom.



**Mottaiyan's Story:** Sleeping on the veranda of his hut, Mottaiyan was rudely awoken by the sharp bite of a viper on his forehead. They rushed to the hospital with the snake in hand - and by that time he was unconscious with shock. 22 vials of anti-snake venom later - and battling acute kidney shut down, Mottaiyan was in our ICU for 10 days, before he was ready to go back. But now he is up and moving, some kidney problems still persisting.” Thanks too to the Friends of Sittilingi, whose regular support helps to write off bills for people like Mottaiyan.



**Tomorrows care givers:** Vidhya, Sasikala and Aravind have joined soon for the Govt certified Diploma courses in Lab Tech, Pharmacist and X-ray courses in Nagercoil and Trivandrum. This is the first time youth are being sponsored – by friends to study far away from their homes and two years later come back to work in our hospital. They are all children of small farmers and couldn't have dreamt of this future without angels helping them.

**Cancer screening:** Dr. Erin and Dr. Sangeetha for long had planned a cancer screening for women. This was because with changing life styles, we were observing that the tribal population too started getting these more often. A well-planned campaign has started of going to the villages, educating women on breast and cervical



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cancer and doing the initial screening in the village itself. The treatment and follow up for the suspicious cases are done in the hospital – all free of charge.



**Swachh Sittilingi:** is the new buzz word for the newly constructed toilets. As a health centered organisation we had never promoted toilets for the past 24 years – we never felt a need to. The people used the far-off fields and the forests to relieve themselves and there was never a cognizable water borne disease. Then why now? The demand came from the people and strangely it was not for health reasons. As farmers prosperity grew, they started sending their girls to the colleges who got used to going to toilets in their hostels and now hesitated to go to the forests to relieve themselves. The second most interesting reason was that with increasing profits, the farmers started to farm the fallow far flung portions of their land also – so now how can you soil it? Very interesting.... and sociologists and public health professionals – are you listening?

**Organic Farming Immersion camp:** A new concept of people discovering the reality of a tribal farmers life has been introduced by SOFA - our farmers association. This is a 2 day trip to Sittilingi to learn how to plough, take part in planting, trek through the untouched forests, learn how to make organic pesticides and most of all enjoy millet food cooked the tribal way. We have had some groups come in and they really enjoyed it and found this as an opportunity to understand a farmers life better.



**Forward steps on Entrepreneurship:** This year we completed the cattle Project with FWWB [Friends of Women's World Bank]. Our women's group took Rs 20 lakhs loan and bought 80 cows, repaid the loan and are yearning for more. To cover the risk, SOFA itself introduced a "Cattle Insurance". A Nursery for vegetable saplings, a unit for producing organic pesticides and vermicomposting too were added. One group also opted to buy goats for rearing.

**A village awakens:** The villagers of Moolasittilingi village along with some THI staff (some 50 in all) have been desilting and shoring up the walls of a crucial check dam, which in a good rain will provide them with the most vital resource for farming - WATER. This is not a public or private sector enterprise – this is the "people's sector" enthusiasm, of taking development into their own hands. It is the most powerful tool we have in the present day... after all, it won us our independence.

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

**Team THI**



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