

TRIBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Sittilingi, Dharmapuri Dist, Tamil Nadu 636906

Newsletter

Issue Feb - 2008 -'09



Warmest greetings from all of us at Sittilingi!



Dr. Reeta Thukral inaugurates the new OP block donated by MMKCT

News from the hospital

We had the inauguration of the new OP Block donated by **MMKCT** where we now conduct the thrice weekly outpatient clinic. It has allowed us to cope with the increasing number of patients coming from the Kalrayan hills due the construction of new roads. **IIT Chennai** is working with us to make the whole hospital run on solar powered lighting. We also installed a biogas unit which helps convert hospital waste into free energy.

We have also been recognised as an official Integrated Testing and Counseling Centre by the government run Tamil Nadu AIDS Control Society and received an award from them for good work.

News from the organic farming initiative

This year saw the blossoming of our fledgling organic farming initiative. We currently have 15 organic farmer groups and around 80 farmers who practice organic agriculture. The women farmer groups have started processing locally grown food with the machines they had bought earlier and 'SVAD' product sales continue to grow. Last year's entire organic cotton crop was sold at premium prices. We are trying to get certification for all our organic farmers. Most of them have already registered with the recognised government agency and we should soon see the formation of SOFA, the Sittilingi Organic Farmers Association.

News from the craft initiative

This year we have confidently exhibited and sold products at a number of exhibitions in South India. The number of members has increased to 35 and the variety of products has doubled. We welcome Swetha & Smitha, designers from Bangalore who are working with the craft team to develop a new range of items for the urban market.

A new batch of health worker trainees

In July 2008 we welcomed a new batch of health worker trainees predominantly from villages in the Kalrayan hills where we hope to extend our field programme in the near future. **Ambika, Devaki, Daivanai, Durga, Sulochana, Umayavathi, Unnamalai and Vijaya** are learning fast and are already making themselves useful by helping out in the wards and the OP clinic.



In 2008 our health team managed to help about 16500 patients seek health care. Our health auxiliaries continue to be active within the community and in addition to their health related work, they have been involved in conducting a number of anti-alcohol meetings and two rallies to raise awareness about the use and misuse of plastics.



Vijaya's Organic Rice

This year, Health Auxiliary Vijaya [Avalur Village] was one of the few farmers who dared to start growing organic rice by the new SRI method. Here she used just 1/2 kg of seed for her 1/2 acre instead of the 15 kgs normally needed. Her harvest was almost equal to the fertiliser/ pesticide intensive methods. She used much less water and only cowdung and cow's urine as manure. She expects a much better yield next time as this was the first time she tried it. Many more farmers are shifting to this method after seeing Vijaya's healthy paddy plants.

The THI family grows bigger

This year saw many new additions to the THI family. **Baby Gokulakrishna** was born to Jaya and Mani in March 2008 and **Baby Siddharth** was born to Sangeetha and Govindhan in August 2008. **Priya** and **Gandhimathi** joined us as health workers and **Jayalakshmi** joined as a pharmacy assistant. The organic farming and craft initiatives were greatly strengthened by the arrival of **Murugan**, a postgraduate in development management from the Tata Dhan Academy in Madurai. **Annamalai** and **Jayalakshmi** have also joined the farming team. Office **Madheswaran** married Health Worker **Annakodi** adding to number of couples in the THI family. Old timers driver **Senrayan** and Health worker **Backialakshmi** have gone back to Gandhigram for

their childrens education and Health Workers **Jayashree** and **Anbarasi** left.

Regi's quick visit to FOS-UK

Last November Regi was fortunate to be invited for the conference of the Global Alliance against TB organized in Toronto, Canada. On the way back , a much anticipated meeting with the FOS-UK was also possible. A brief presentation to our friends in UK was done at Sleights near Whitby, where most of our friends live. It was a good opportunity to meet so many FOS who have been supporting Sittilingi without even seeing us!



Another Award!!

'Vanitha', India's most-read womens magazine, selected Lalitha as their '**Woman of the Year 2008**'. It was a recognition of our team's effort for the past 15 years. The cash award of Rs 1 lakh will be used as a corpus for our future activities.

Partners in progress

BCF has generously agreed to help us with the large Kalrayan Hills project while **SKI** is stepping in to help continue our work in the Sittilingi Valley. **AID** chips in with support in various fields and groups like **FIF** help in the most unexpected ways. However our backbone is still the **FOS** who are "always there" in word and spirit. Thank you all for being part of our family.

Get involved

THI invites you to get involved in our work of improving health and wellbeing of the tribal community here.

- Experience Sittilingi by visiting us
- Help farmers and craft persons by buying products [**SVAD** and **Porgai**] marketed by THI. Visit our website for details regarding retail outlets.
- Donate money and resources. All donations benefit from IT exemption u/s 80G of the IT Act. Donations can be accepted in the form of cheque/DD made out to Tribal Health Initiative

www.tribalhealth.org;
office@tribalhealth.org

Ph: 04346 299061;
09488344325

The THI team