

TRIBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Sittilingi, Tamil Nadu 636906

Hello, dear friends. Warm greetings as we see another wonderful year go by.

Newsletter
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Tha dances the kummi with HAs in the Kalrayans

Healthy year it has been!

A hospital was not enough to fulfill the vision of livelihood promotion and community development that we had in mind for the Sittilingi Valley. Over the last few months, we have been limiting our hospital time to look into other projects. The out-patient days are fuller every passing week. Some tribals, who had come from interior villages, even waited for over 6 hours to see the doctors! We crossed 200 out-patients in one day recently.

Over the hills, in the interiors of the Kalvarayan hills, the training of health auxiliaries is going great. Susheela, from Melmundiyoor, is heavily pregnant, but that hasn't stopped the 23-year old from attending the training sessions and learning to check patients, take notes, prescribe medicine and learn how she can improve her community. The monsoon did slow down the training a little, but by Pongal, we hope to start field work in villages there.

"It's paining here" says Jumma to Dhanam. She seeks treatment as soon as she is ill.



The Happy, Healthy Old

The last time around, our team had told you about a health care scheme that we had been mulling over for tribals in the senior citizen group. That scheme has taken off and has become a stupendous success. Just after we announced the scheme, over 500 aged tribals got themselves registered after paying Rs 30 per year. Some of them had never before visited us. Now, most come by every month religiously for a check up and continue to get free treatment. Needless to say their health has improved greatly as they seek treatment as soon as they are ill and not wait for their children to find money for it. [Helpage India](#) has stepped in to help us improve our work here.

Free in-patient treatment now on.....

Theerthi complained of body ache and fever. The V.Kombai resident was advised to get admitted. She has thus become the first tribal to get treatment for free under a new scheme.

We are now collaborating under the Tamil Nadu Health Systems Project (TNHSP), under which every tribal is entitled to free treatment as an in-patient. The Government will pay us the expenses of treating the tribals when they are admitted to the hospital



All surgeries for tribals are now free



An official tag soon

This is the third and final year that the Sittilingi farmers have opened their farms for inspection. The Tamil Nadu Organic Certification Department is impressed with the records we have been maintaining. The official organic farming tag is expected soon. That will qualify 68 farmers in the area to get a better deal for their products. One of the farmer groups has also started making organic pesticides and selling to the rest of their fellow farmers.

The 'domba' is a traditional rat proof grain storage bin

Recently, someone unexpected peeped into the operation theatre, when a surgery was going on. Through the side of the AC, a snake crawled in slowly when G was operating on a patient. Most of the health workers had run out in panic by then, except for one who was assisting. What do you do when there is a snake while surgery is going on? G, held his cool, let it sniff around a little after which it promptly crawled back out. The surgery then went on unhindered!

Spreading some colour in the cities

The tribal craft team has been going places, quite literally, we must say. There were two exhibitions in October, one in Goa and the other in Chennai. The Porgai products almost flew off the shelves and the team made a nice business of nearly Rs 2 lakh. The myriad, bright colours of the traditional Lambadi embroidery have spread to several cities now. Some more in-roads into a wider market through the retail way and through exhibitions are what we have lined up.



Designer Nishy with artisans. Porgai is now helped by designers to make dresses in the latest designs

Technology centre

The technology centre building has been completed thanks to the many contributions from 'Friends of Sittilingi'. All machinery has been bought and a stand-by generator is at hand in case the power fails (which is often). We hope to start training activities soon. Notices have gone around the villages for a 3 month welding course and young boys have started applying.



Soap making and manufacturing organic pesticides are two new activities that the women Farmers Groups are involved in. They hope to start a bakery too very soon !!

We work online too

We at THI have been making plans to connect with you all on the web. Do join our *Friends of Sittilingi* page on Facebook. Check on www.tribalhealth.org soon for a new blog with many new stories. Meanwhile, we would love to hear from you.

Talk to us at office@tribalhealth.org

We manage to do all this because you are there, always supportive, forever encouraging. Many thanks.

Here is hoping the New Year brings you much happiness and peace.

The THI Team

Tribal Health Initiative
Sittilingi, Dharmapuri Dist.
Tamil Nadu 636906
Ph: 04346 299061/ 299025