



TRIBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

NEWS LETTER - 2015

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!



Rajendran was worried with what future there was for Parimala, his bright young daughter who had finished 12th Std from Mannur, a remote village in the Kalrayan Hills where electricity is yet to reach and there is no road connectivity. There were still 2 more children to bring up and find a future, but he was just a poor tribal farmer with 1.5 acres of dry land, doing farming only when the rain Gods blessed the land. That was when someone told him about the “nurse training” in Sittilingi, and with much anxiety he applied. So much has changed now, Parimala is a confident nurse with a Diploma in Practical Nursing, earning money he couldn’t earn and looking after her home and siblings as well.

There are now 13 tribal girls in training, coming from a similar situation from the surrounding area. When we started training tribal girls 20 years ago, we had to literally beg the parents to send their girls for training because girls either tended cattle or helped in the fields and nobody thought that they could take a

professional job. Gradually, as the people saw them learn nursing and work confidently, the mood changed. Now every year we have many applications and some are ready to even pay the nominal fees that we charge – to be upwardly mobile and carve a career for themselves.



Village clinics and village meetings are still one of the mainstays for connecting with the community. In the recent meeting in Nammangadu village more than 300 villagers were present. They were first entertained by skits and dances by the Health Worker students, followed by awareness talks on the issues of mental health. Mental illness is a “silent illness” present in every population, but often masked or unrecognised. With help from the Tata Trust and guidance from psychiatrists, we have been able to partially lift this mask and to our surprise, find many cases. Put on treatment, it is a joy to see them back on

their feet and be a productive member of the community.

The field clinics also look after the elder citizens of the community. The **Old Age Insurance** is one of our most successful interventions in the villages. Along with this, we are on the threshold of starting the new project in partnership with UCSF [University of California in San Fransisco] which aims at **delivering village level care for non communicable diseases**. Our Health Auxiliaries are already familiar with taking BP in the field, recording it and follow protocols which we have developed, so that medicines can be supplied by them in the village. If we are successful in this, it will be a good model that can be replicated in remote areas in the country.



In the Kalrayans, we have shifted our **focus to school health**. We go to six schools now – from classes 5rd Std to 10th Std. We do health education with the help of stories, flash cards, role plays and video shows. Our desire is that these future citizens, will have a good knowledge of health issues by the time they pass out.

In the Base Hospital, work is still heavy. We had more than **30,000 patients** accessing Out Patient care. Of the more than **1500 inpatients**, we had **668 surgeries** and **366 deliveries**. There has been a temporary set back in providing the free in-patient care to tribal patients as there was large non-payment of bills by the Government and so we were forced to temporarily stop the program due to financial necessity.

With the **200 farmers** we are earnestly exploring the possibility of forming a **Tribal Farmers Company**. The advantages are many; tribal farmers become shareholders with the right to share profits and also bring in a lot more transparency and accountability. Women have also stepped forward to form a **Women Entrepreneur Society**; which has **166 members**. The idea is that this fellowship will help access more financial capital as loans, to improve existing ventures and start new ones.

It was a great privilege and honour to be asked to exhibit our **Porgai products** in **NIFT, Chennai** (National Institute of Fashion Technology). They have been sending their students regularly to see how a dying craft can be revived and now make a decent livelihood for more than 60 women, whose incomes have empowered them to now use money for what is most needed at home.



The Medical Elective program last year saw much more students coming for their learning experiences at the hospital. The German students have now formed a 'Friends of Sittilingi' in Germany for co-ordinating the students come from there. It was great learning experience for them and also our Staff, who got along very well with all the students, leaving fond memories all around.

We welcome Sethulakshmi and Thambidurai in Porgai. Govindraj and Neela are now part of the Admin team as also Sathya, Vijaylakshmi in the lab and Kumudavalli, Kasi, Mythili and Mala in the Nursing team. The community development team has been made stronger with Durai and Munusamy. Swagath has helped us in the lab and will soon leave shortly. Dr Nikhil finished his bond with us and Dr. Pravin will be finishing soon. Kutty Vijaya and Senior Dhanam were blessed with babies..

We thank all of you who have helped us this past year and always and hope that you are always with us in our endeavour to provide a better life to the tribals here.

Thank you.

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Update yourself at www.tribalhealth.org.

Join our '**Friends of Sittilingi**' group in Facebook



The building for the **new Ward and ICU** has started and the walls are coming up fast. We have raised about 30% of the funds, but there's still a long way to go. For those of you who would like to chip in – either send us a cheque – head of account '**Tribal Health Initiative**' .Or transfer electronically to **ICICI Bank Salem** [a/c no. 611901076914 IFS code ICIC0006119] or **State Bank of India** [a/c no 11689302723 IFS code SBIN0006244]

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