



Tribal Health Initiative

Newsletter - 2017



Kavitha, daughter of an organic farmer in Sittilingi village was unable to continue her studies post 10th due to her father's untimely death in 2015. She (along with four other girls) received help as part of THI's scholarship programme, completed 12th standard successfully, and returned to work with us. She is now, a cashier at SOFA (Sittilingi Organic Farmers' Association), and is the breadwinner of her family, supporting her mother and younger sister. Post her recruitment with us, we realized that there may be others like her. We have been able to mobilize sufficient funds this year to support 25 children willing to pursue education after after their 10th standard up to 12th standard.



2016 has been a big year for SOFA. The office is now shifted to a new premises built a kilometre away from the hospital campus with its own resource centre for farmers

We have been able to work on many projects this year, taking up some new activities like poultry purchase and purchase of milch animals to provide to farmers, as well as the construction of a green net nursery to grow vegetable saplings. Building of this nursery is one of the many plans for the new campus. A new production unit was set up, with solar powered machinery to beat the long power cuts. Some new activities like production of masala powder and pickles were kicked off recently by our women's groups. So lots of new developments!



At the hospital, we are excited to have a wonderful new addition to the operation theatre – laparoscopy. It is a big step for us (and indeed, for the entire area) to be able to perform minimally invasive surgeries at a much lower cost than other hospitals. Dr. Gnanaraj from Coimbatore, an expert in this, has been working on spreading the same in rural areas. He visits the hospital once a month, and has been training our very own Dr. Ravi in the required techniques.

As for other happenings, a dental health facility was started in our hospital in June. We have Dr. Thillaikarasi from Harur visiting once a month for check-ups and procedures. The number of patients coming in for this has been steadily increasing.

We are glad to say that we have been able to take in many patients who were rejected at other hospitals elsewhere, due to financial reasons, or a reluctance to take risk. We have taken such cases to the best of our ability, and have managed to be successful in many cases. One of the reasons we could do this is because of the ICU unit we now have. The presence of the ventilator, and specialized care, has been a big support. We have also found it very useful for surgical patients. We are very glad to have such a unit.



The community health development has been progressing very well indeed. The hypertension programmes, wherein senior citizens' health is monitored through field visits and health auxiliaries, was recently evaluated by UCSF (University of California, San Francisco). They found the compliance rate (rate of patients regularly following their course of BP medication) to be very high. Suffice to say the evaluation went very well – we succeeded with flying colours. We only look forward to further gains.

Another aspect of field work, the school health programme, has also been continuing with students of different age groups. Over the past 3 years, they have got much more comfortable, and are able to open up and participate in the classes. We see many small but essential changes in the students following basic hygiene like nail cutting and hand washing are done much more commonly, and we see it paying off in terms of reduction of diseases like scabies. These young children have not only changed their own practices, but have also taken it to other people, spreading the awareness and helping family and friends. It is heartening to see the strong effect of being able to "catch 'em early", and it encourages us to take this further.

Porgai Artisans' Association has also had an eventful year. We inaugurated a new office and welcomed 20 new members as artisans this year. With the help of training, some women have begun to stitch kurtas themselves before embroidering rather than just embroider on pre-made clothes. Also, using the inputs of Bangalore-based designer Devika, Porgai has begun to turn the "waste" bits of cloth (that would otherwise be burnt) into small articles like soft toys for babies, key chains, earrings and necklaces – all with the trademark intricate Lambadi hand embroidery. The artisans continue to showcase and sell their handiwork at different exhibitions.



The nurse training programme at the hospital has been continuing well. We had 4 students pass the course last year – 3 in nursing, and 1 in lab training. We have the same number of students in the second year currently, as well as 6 more in their first year of training, all are working hard and learning at the hospital.

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.

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