



TRIBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Sittilingi, Tamil Nadu 636906

Newsletter - 2016

We would like to share with you all the good things that happened this year. But before that – **WISHING YOU ALL A WONDERFULL YEAR AHEAD.**

When Lalitha started working with the Lambadi women in the two Thanda villages in the Sittilingi valley in 2006, we never expected that 9 years down the line, we would actually have a spacious Craft Centre



The new Craft Centre

with production, display and administrative spaces. In 2006, only two of the senior women knew how to do the embroidery which was so common in their daily lives two generations ago. As time went by, the younger women shifted to wearing sarees and churidhars which was the local custom. There was no more need for the traditional dress in their daily lives and this exquisite craft was well on its way to extinction. But with persuasion and perseverance, slowly some women started training and after realising the economic

potential of their craft, many more joined in. They named it “**Porgai**” meaning pride in the Lambadi dialect. We now have over 50 women gainfully employed, threading magic into cloth and earning about 4000 rupees monthly. Money in the hands of women also means changed priorities in household spending, with the major portion going into good food and children’s education. The new Craft Centre, is supported by the **Titan Company**, and reveals this vibrancy in the village dynamics.

The farmers too have had a good year. From a society they have now graduated to form a **Producer Company** which has over 200 farmers as proud share holders. The Directors too are tribal men and women. The advantage now is that any profits their venture makes, can be shared in cash amongst all of them; this is over the premium prices their organically certified products bring in. To help the local marketing, they have opened a new organic shop in the Sittilingi, which is doing brisk business and sell organic products being made by our women groups. 20 new farmers groups were formed which adds to the 13 groups we



Turmeric processing done locally

already have. To help the decentralisation process, we have shifted the documentation and advisory functions to the senior farmers, who are called the Village Service Providers [VSP]. The organic vegetable project was very successful, mainly also because timely transport was available with the Bolero pickup the farmers now have. Many new trainings and exposure visits were held by VRUTTI to familiarise the farmers with the running of a company.

The new **Medical Ward** is completed and we have started admitting patients into it. A few more equipment for the new ICU is yet to arrive and so that has been delayed. The large training hall and the new office form the upper storey of the new building. Meanwhile, Kutty Madheswari and Kutty Vijaya have just finished a 2 month optometry training given by **Essilor** and will be starting a **Vision Center** soon. This will



Taking care to another level - digitising Xray

be the only vision testing centre in a radius of 50km. We aim to extend the vision testing to the tribal schools in the area, so that all students are tested and vision corrected at minimal cost. More modernisation processes are afoot – we have computerised the X-ray, have got blood gas analyses and will soon be opening a dental care centre.

The field clinics in the Sittilingi valley benefit the elderly and all hypertensive patients. We have screened all adults above 40 for hypertension and put affected people on treatment or under surveillance. In the

Kalrayan Hills the new OPD at Aruna village gives us more space to run a lab and for minor procedures. The school health program is running well and this year we are contemplating whether to bring the same project to the Sittilingi valley as well. After some inertia, we have started a new monthly **OPD in Neyyamalai** as well – a hill range where roads and electricity came just a few months back, and people are still quite untouched by the vices of civilisation.

This year too we took nursing students under the 2 year BSS program. The older batch graduated and 5 of them have joined in as Staff. We also had a record number of medical elective students, mainly from Germany and the UK; with the German students coming together to form '**Freunde von Sittilingi**', a registered charity in Germany. We also started the '**Thulir**' school which started off with 25 students last June.

Comings and Goings: Welcome to doctors Sharan and Sangeetha who replaced Pravin, now busy studying for his post graduate entrance exams. Sethulakshmi of Porgai left to pursue higher studies, replaced by Babu and Blimsha – both from the Lambadi tribe. Radiographer Praveen, and our students turned nursing staff Radhika, Anupriya, Padma, Vaideshwari and Devi have seamlessly blended with our work culture and ethos. We also bid farewell to Shivaperumal and Revathy who left for personal reasons and to the couple Ramraj & Punitha.

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 TH?



The gourd water flask, used in Neyyamalai where people are still tuned to Nature

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