

Annual Report

2022-2023



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PRAKRITI ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

1. MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY –

Since the beginning of 2023, the whole world slowly returning to pre-covid status and there is a sense of relief that the pandemic is over. At Prakriti we started residential training programs, regular field visits, field based activities after a gap of three years, and soon realised that without the connect with the people or community with whom we work, our objective is not fulfilled.

The Panchayat Sakhi program which is one of the pioneering program to build the capacities of elected women and develop their leadership, has attracted attention of a huge number of elected women , those who were just members of gram panchayat are now holding position at block or district level, give credit to Panchayat Sakhi program, that their leadership journey was possible due to Panchayat Sakhi program. Many of the elected women members of PRIs from Nagpur district identify Prakriti with Panchayat Sakhi and this validate the program.

Women land rights awareness program is implemented to create awareness among women from farming households, their succession rights and to increase their participation in the decision making process. As an extension to this program, farm widows of Nagpur rural were added so that they can advocate their rights and save their livelihood –the Land.

Observing 15 days of activism, celebrating Women’s day, Women farmers’ day, Human rights day are part of the regular programs of Prakriti for last 32 years. This year collaboration with colleges and police department in organising events was useful as it gave a platform to share , to ask questions and to continue our efforts to create awareness .

Understanding Climate change and its impact on Women was the theme for this year” annual conference and the theme was well received by women from our field areas, which was evident from their sharing and presentation. Three women sarpanch from Gadchiroli, Chandrapur and Wardha districts were conferred **Vasudha Smriti Award in February 2023**. With this little appreciation of women sarpanch through felicitation and award many other women are inspired to work fearlessly in their panchayats.

All these programs and activities are possible due to the support from the Governing Board, Advisors, donors and most importantly the staff members and field workers of Prakriti. I look forward to draw same strength and support from all members to help Prakriti achieve its objectives.

2. NAGPUR DISTRICT CENTRE:

Programs under the project Nagpur district center are organized in Rural areas of Nagpur. The ongoing activities like counselling center for women affected by violence and injustice, surveys, training for women farmers, celebration of international women's day, Annual conference and distribution of Vasudha Smriti Award etc are some of the activities which continued this year also. Following major activities were carried during the reporting period –

2.1 PROGRAM TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

Under Nagpur District Center, Prakriti addresses cases of violence against women. This service is provided by Prakriti for the past 20 years and even after the police have Bharosa cell and counselling center, many cases approach Prakriti for counselling and guidance. During the reporting period cases of spousal conflict, harassment by husband and in laws, desertion and non-cooperation by husband were reported in the center. Most cases reach directly, while some cases are referred by the police also. Besides women, Men are also approaching counselling center with their complaints of marital disputes.



Awareness program for victims of violence and their family members held at Prakriti

This year more cases of child rape and sexual abuse were reported.

In village Gumthi, case of child rape was reported. The victim girl was daughter of a Community Resource Person (CRP) and was raped by a man of 26 years who lived in the neighbourhood. FIR was registered in the police station and the convict was charge sheeted and has been sent to imprisonment. This incident was reported in a local newspaper. The community people made any voice against this incidence. The parents of adolescent girls and the girls themselves are in a state of fear and they also fear that such incidences will impose restrictions on them. Prakriti

A case of rape of minor girl is being handled by the counselling center. for the last one year and the victim also got the first instalment of cash relief under Manodhairya scheme. The parents of this victim girls were so fearful after the incident that they married off their another daughter at a very young age of 16 years, and they did hide this fact from the organization and later this daughter too cameback to parents house because of family dispute. When this daughter returned to her parents house, then only the fact of her marriage came to light.

team made special visit to the victim and her parents and have offered counselling and any such support service.

Another significant observation is about the marital disputes among the husband–wife and their families, whose marriages were solemnised during the Covid pandemic. In pandemic, parents want to save marriage related expenses, So without scrutiny of proposal marriages were undertaken, resulting in early disputes among the newly-wed couple and they want divorce. Keeping this situation in mind, an awareness program for the women victims of violence and injustice and their family members. was held in the month of **September**, School teachers were also invited to this program, The program gave details of operating procedures of the counselling center and this was followed by session by Ad. Borkute on domestic violence. Police officer Ketaki Jagtap addressed the queries of the participants.

Ms. Ketaki said that cases of sexual abuse and rape in minor girls were on rise. and as teachers they were requested to take help of police or NGOs in case of sexual abuse or rape. Keeping the anonymity some cases of child rape victims were discussed by NGO representatives and school teachers during the program

2.2 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & VASUDHA SMRITI AWARD:

This year Prakriti's Annual Conference was organized on **15th-16th February 2023** at **Prakriti Campus, Lonara**. Theme of the Annual Conference was **“Understanding Climate Change And Its Impact On Women”** Magsaysay Award Winner **Shri Rajendra Singh, Dy. Commissioner (Devt.), Zila Parishad, Nagpur** **Shr. Kamalkishor Futane** were the chief guests of this conference.



Annual conference & Vasudha Smriti Award function at Prakriti campus



Distribution of Vasudha Smriti Award

Year 2023 has been declared as “International Year of Millets” by United Nations. Millets contribute to food nutritional security and strengthen climate-resilient agricultural practices. For the purpose of promoting millets, this year all the dignitaries were welcomed by giving them millets. An exhibition was organized for the production and promotion of millets

obtained from the experiment of agro bio-diverse farming.

Three women sarpanch, **Ms. Bhagyashree Lekami**, **Smt. Sharmila Ramteke** and **Smt. Surekha Pandhare** were awarded with **Vasudha Smriti Award** during the conference. Vasudha Smriti Award is given every year in the memory of Prakriti's Late Chairperson **Dr. Vasudha Dhagamwar** to three women sarpanch for their work in the field of village development and women empowerment.

***Bhagyashree Lekami** is a sports-loving girl from Kota village of Gadchiroli district. She dreamed of becoming a sports star, but due to reservation, Bhagyashree rose to the highest position in the village. After becoming Sarpanch, she worked to improve menstrual health and hygiene among teenage girls in her village. It was not easy for her to work as a sarpanch in a poor, naxal infested and remote village. But she faced all the difficulties. Bhagyashree is doing her best for her village and is also studying journalism.*

***Mrs. Sharmila Ramteke, Nagbhid, Chandrapur:** A law graduate, Sharmila wanted to serve the villagers and got the right opportunity when she became Sarpanch. She faced severe backlash and opposition while doing public service. She faced adversity with the help of her family members as well as other organizations. On every Republic Day and Independence Day, Sharmila chose a woman, preferably from a backward community, to hoist the flag.*

***Mrs. Surekha Pandey, Mandwa Arvi, Wardha:** Middle-aged Surekha never thought she would become a sarpanch. After being elected as Sarpanch, he simultaneously worked on various topics like water conservation, livelihood protection, employment generation, environment protection. Being a member of a savings group, he availed facilities and loans under various schemes. Surekhatai provided employment to many women in her village through a self-help group. Surekhatai also started environmental friendly activities. Plastic plates and glasses used in wedding ceremonies were banned and a set of stainless steel plates and other essential items were purchased and made available to the public, helping to control waste and create a pollution-free environment.*

After the award distribution, the chief guest **Dr. Rajendra Singh** shares his journey from homeopath doctor to water conservationist. He spent his life in revitalizing water resources, conserving water resources and encouraging community management of water resources. He spread the message of saving water bodies and spreading aquaculture in all over the world. He appealed to all participate in this movement and emphasized the need to train women and panchayat members to



Shri. Rajendra Singh addressing the participants

deal with drought and floods considering the changing environment.

Following the inaugural session and award ceremony, sessions on **Understanding of Climate Change, and Its Impact On Women** were conducted for the participants. **Mr. Jaydeep Hardikar, PARI– People’s Archive of Rural India, Ms. Sunita Bagal, Mr. Manish Rajankar, FEED, Gondia, Mr. Kaustubh Pandharipande, Washim, Ms. Prachi Mahurkar, Punarnava, Nagpur** presented their experience and provided guidance on the issues related to climate change by participatory method, group discussion and paper presentation. Women farmers from Nagpur, Balaghat and Akola district were shared their experience, challenges faced by them while doing agro bio diverse farming. The conference was attended by 120 women from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

2.3 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY:

Women's Day program was organized by Prakriti on **March 14** in **Kusumbi** village of **Saoner** block. The village has a history of serious cases of crime against women and girls and in many cases justice has been denied to the victims due to lack of evidence and complaints. Therefore, on the occasion of Women's Day program, with the aim of drawing attention to the increasing cases of violence in Kusumbi village, **Nagpur Zilla Parishad Vice President Ms. Kunda Raut** and **CBI's senior lady police officer Ms. Varsha Verma** were invited. Both the guests shared their personal life experiences.



At Dahegaon village with members of SHGs



At Prakriti office, where all senior women associated with Prakriti were invited



At Kusumbi village, Dy. Chairperson ZP, Nagpur, Ms. Kunda Raut & ASP (CBI) Ms. Varsha Verma & Ms. Suvarna Damle, Executive Director Prakriti



Women participated in International Women’s Day Program

They told that every woman needs to understand what is going wrong with her and everyone in the society should counter violence and injustice.

International women's day was celebrated in all 30 villages of Prakriti's field area.

2.4 FORTNIGHT CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (25TH NOVEMBER – 10TH DECEMBER):

Campaign to end violence against women and girls! is celebrated worldwide from 25th November to 10th December. Prakriti also tries to involve women and girls in the campaign by organizing events during this fortnight.

A survey conducted by Prakriti during the Covid lockdown has revealed many cases of sexual violence and abuse against young girls. In many cases the victims did not report the incident to family members or the police. Keeping this in mind, a program was organized on 25th December 2022 at Prakriti Campus. The women police officers addressed the young women and urged them not to hesitate to approach the police for help. They also informed about the **Police Didi** initiative to curb the incidents of torture and abuse of minor girls.

Dr. Anagha Moghe from **One Stop Crisis Center** shared some of the cases reported at One Stop Crisis centre, through which she informed the participants that timely reporting of incidents of violence and abuse can prevent further risk/harm. The program was attended by the students of social work and pharmacy college along with young women in the field Prakriti



Fortnight campaign on violence against women

A poster exhibition along with a play was presented in the program.

2.5 PROGRAM WITH ADOLESCENT GIRLS:

Prakriti conducted a survey of 230 adolescent school going girls from rural and semi urban areas of Nagpur district of Maharashtra. Through this survey Prakriti tried to find out the thoughts of young girls about increasing the legal age of marriage of boys and girls

The findings of the study pointed out that girls did not had basic information about legal age of marriage for boys and girls. The survey highlighted many weak areas where the adolescent girls need proper information. Prakriti undertook in person contact with adolescent girls, teachers, parents and anganwadi workers. After this round of interaction following need was highlighted:

- To provide information about child marriage prohibition act and Protection of children from sexual offenses (POCSO) act
- Involvement of School teachers, Asha workers, Anganwadi workers to report cases of child marriage or sexual abuse.
- Display of Helpline numbers in schools, bus stops, in buses and other prominent places.
- Counselling sessions with girls affected with violence and abuse should be regularly conducted by teachers, NGO etc.
- Personality development program should be organized



Adolescent girls sharing their problems during the program

Considering these needs, Prakriti organized workshop in the month of August, in which 42 adolescent girls from Prakriti's field area participated. What is considered as Sexual abuse, and why it is necessary to raise an alarm in case of such incidence was explained to the participants. Similarly, other aspect of personality development was also dealt by a Trainer.

3. PANCHAYAT SAKHI PROGRAM:

Currently this program is implemented in **20 Gram Panchayats** of Nagpur district in which TWO team members and **15 Panchayat Sakhi** are working for leadership development and capacity building of the elected women, so that their participation in governance is improved.

Work Done For Panchayat Sakhi :

The team of Panchayat Sakhi is a diverse team, though all the Sakhis are elected members of Panchayat, but in terms of age, experience and skills they vary. It is observed that motivation to work is important, age or experience is not matter As the Sakhis with little experience and less support in the village can take up many issues and sakhis with less motivation but with good

experience cannot make use of the support available in the village. Therefore following skills were given to the Sakhis during these meetings. -

- Communication skills
- Analytical skills
- Planning skills
- Resource mobilization and problem solving skills
- Handling conflict situation
- Soft skills such as report writing, attending virtual meetings



Panchayat Sakhi participated in monthly meeting

Besides the above skills, the Panchayat Sakhi are also given all related information about functioning of panchayats, different schemes, policies of the government etc. Here are examples of TWO Sakhis which shows as how the training help them:

Monthly Review Meetings:

Monthly meetings are held in every month to review the work done and to plan further action in the panchayat. The review meetings provide opportunity to each Sakhi to present her work, to share her challenges and achievement. The meetings also help in building solidarity among the group of Panchayat Sakhis and they often learn from each other and also extend support to each other.



***Chhaya** is a Panchayat Sakhi of Sillewada Gram Panchayat. Her gram panchayat area has coal mine and there is colony for mine workers, which houses regular and contractual employees working in coal mines. Chhaya noticed that there are many widows whose husband were contractual employees and after their death the wife and children are not entitled for any pension, gratuity ex-gratia etc. So many widows are under severe financial stress. After the death of their husband they do not have any security. Chhaya with the help of ward member is trying to provide documents which are necessary for pension and other scheme for these widows*

In the month of April workshops on following aspects were organized –

- ❖ What is the motivation for the sakhis to become elected member of gram panchayat and what is their political career path?
- ❖ What is their understanding about village development planning?
- ❖ How the development programs and schemes by government are framed and implemented?

Dr. Sooryanarayan Reddy, an ex-faculty of National Institute Of Rural Development (NIRD) was the resource person. Mr. Reddy provided guidance about objectives of schemes and programs which are for welfare of people. He

said that these schemes and programs are not properly implemented because of lack of coordination between the functionaries and elected representatives. He also highlighted the fact that the local bodies are empowered to make their own development plans and prepare budget, however the local bodies are dependent on the government machinery and their directives.



Mr. Suryanarayan Reddy providing guidance to Panchayat Sakhi

During the reporting period the Panchayat Sakhi focussed on the following issues :

- Understanding funds availability in panchayats and seeking the income expenditure and spreading awareness among women about the large amount of funds that reach to panchayats.
- Awareness about utilization of 10% WCD funds.
- In 11 Gram Panchayats of Nagpur district Prakriti team was worked on on Voters' awareness about election, reservation, how wards are defined and how reservation are announced. Through this program team highlighted the fact that women can contest from any seat, however men cannot contest from seats reserved for women.
- In Gumgaon Gram Panchayat due to Manganese mining, rainwater gets accumulated and roads get blocked. Therefore, there was a demand for a bridge from the villagers. Panchayat Sakhi from gumgaon tried for this with the help of the Gram Panchayat members and they found that 70 lakhs was sanctioned for this purpose from CER fund of Manganese Ore India Limited (MOIL).

Work With Elected Women Members Of Gram Panchayat

Trainings and workshops for elected women representatives is a regular activity under this program. The trainings/workshops organized for them are very helpful in updating their knowledge, address their problems in gram panchayats and strengthening their leadership. During the reporting period following workshops were organized for Panchayat Sakhi –

- Workshops for elected members of Gram Panchayat were organised in the month of June, August, September, November and March. at Prakriti campus. Updates and work done on following issues was taken in the beginning of the workshop:
 - ❖ Utilization of 10% WCD funds
 - ❖ Participation of women in gramsabha
 - ❖ Women's empowerment related work in the gram panchayat
 - ❖ Issuing Tax receipt in the names of husband and wives as per the ruling of Maharashtra Government

From these workshops, Gramsabha members learnt that how gramsabha can help in resolving local problems and as voter and member of gramsabha they have right to ask questions and table their demand. Such actions are done by constitutionally approved institution like gramsabha then it makes lot of difference. During these workshops Sarpanch and Members shared such workshop help them to build their perspective, and enhance their skills which are useful for them while discharging their duty as elected representative.



Elected representative of gram panchayat presenting their work

- 37 newly elected women members and sarpanches who were elected in the Gram Panchayat elections held in the month of October were felicitated in the month of December by Prakriti. During this, **Mr. Jayant Pathak**, All India Institute for Local Self Government, Nagpur informed all the elected members about the 7-point program to be implemented by them during their five-year term. These points are - health, education, sanitation, water provision, livelihood and strengthening of Gramsabha etc. Executive Director of Prakriti assured that the Panchayat Sakhi and Prakriti team will be there to help them



Mr. Jayant Pathak Addressing The Newly Elected Women Of Panchayat

In Nimtalai Gram Panchayat, the panchayat organised a unique program, where ONE woman from the village was given the status of Sarpanch for ONE day. This activity was enjoyed by the women of the village and at they also learnt the role of Sarpanch, and they realised it is not easy to lead the village with lot of diversity with respect to caste, political ideology, economic status etc. Panchayat Sakhi of Nimtalai Panchayat had important role in this activity

At Patansavangi Gram Panchayat, TWO toddler sisters aged 3 and 5 years from a very poor family suddenly died because of which their mother went into trauma. This family belonged to Rajasthan but were staying with their maternal grand-mother for last few months.

Prakriti team read about this incident in a news paper and thus decided to find out the facts. Prakriti team visited the victim family and realised that the surviving daughter aged 10 years, her mother and grandmother were in a bad situation, they had nobody to help nor anything to eat. So Prakriti first arranged for their food and clothing and reported the incident to Panchayat officials and Sarpanch and requested their support for the survivors. The officials and Sarpanch hardly paid any attention, so Panchayat Sakhi and Team then approached the local government school and requested them to allow the surviving sister to sit in the school. To our proposal, the school authorities reacted in a negative manner.

Prakriti team is still in contact with the surviving family, police, school authority and panchayat members and trying to get the documents of the girl, her mother and grandmother. Extreme neglect by panchayat and officials in this sensitive case has made the team to realize that only those voices are heard who have the capacity to shout and seek justice. Despite enough resources, machinery directives from the government in place, it was the sheer neglect by Panchayat members that Prakriti team need to take a very strong stand to advocate the rights and justice to the family of three women.



Panchayat Sakhi While Providing Help To The affected Families

4. LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN FARMERS:

This program aims at encouraging the practice of agro-bio diverse farming among small and marginalised women farmers in **Nagpur and Akola districts**. **13 villages in these two districts have covered a group of 65 women farmers who are practicing agro- bio diverse farming in one acre of land.** Except TWO women, other women farmers are farming in their own land. This is the consecutive third year, where the same women farmers are cultivating **millets, pulses and vegetables** based on bio- diverse model and they are using. These women are cultivating on one acre plot. Seeds of 16 variety including vegetables, drum-stick, turmeric, suran etc were given to all the participating women farmers. In Nagpur district the farming was TUR based while in Akola district it was Soyabean based. Organic manure was given and each farm was visited by Prakriti staff at regular intervals. This time non-BT variety of cotton

seed was given for this experiment as non-BT seeds are very cheap, can be preserved by the farmers and are resilient to pest attack and do not need much manure. Chetana Vikas is the technical partner in this program and provide, seeds, training and exposure to the participants

Meetings, Programs, Trainings were organized for women farmers through which technical and practical knowledge were provided to the women farmers.



Distribution of seeds to women farmers from Nagpur & Akola district



Meeting of women farmers in Nagpur & Akola District

- In both districts, monthly review meetings of women farmers who are part of this project has been organized. During these meetings women farmers reported about their crop status. Information about various schemes related to agriculture, guidance on how to balance the expenses and income related to agriculture were given to women farmers. Similarly various issues like Food Security, Nutritional Security, Health Security, Safety of Animal Feed, Livelihood Security of Farmers, Environmental Security were discussed in these meetings.
- Training and workshops for women farmers was organized in the month of September, November and February. Technical and practical knowledge was provided by the resource persons, government officials and NGO representatives to the women farmers which includes -and trainings –
 - Meaning of Bio-diverse farming/ organic farming
 - Information of kitchen garden and terrace garden
 - Usefulness of bio-diverse farming.
 - Climate change and its impact on farming and women

- Preservation of seeds
- Use of cow dung, green manure
- To draw map of their farm so that they can understand the directions, the measurement, the contours etc
- How to take care of the soil health, seed selection, use of fertilizers and pesticides with caution.
- Preparation of Jeevamrut
- Preparation of nimboli, dasaparni extract to reduce pest infestation.
- Information of zero budget product like Anbadi, Heti (Hadga) and information about products made with ambadi (Jute, paper, net etc.)
- Recipe of Pickle and Jam made from Anbadi, het, lal anbadi.
- Procedure of making agarbatti and incense burner with the use of withered flowers and leaves.

Shri Tapeswar Vaidya, Chairperson, Agriculture Committee, Nagpur District Council (Zilla Parishad), **Shri Mahendra Gajbhiye**, Assistant Agriculture Officer, **Shri Kishor Jagtap**, Mission Samruddhi, **Ms. Shweta Bhattal**, **Mr. Tanmay Joshi**, **Usha Bhattal**, **Shri Neelsagar Katre** and **Ms. Sapna Dongre** were the resource persons.



Exhibition of various products from organic farming

- Women farmers were participated in Mahila Kisan Diwas (Women farmers Day) celebrated jointly by Agriculture department and Prakriti The Chairperson of Agriculture Committee of Nagpur District Council took special interest and on his advice the agriculture department collaborated with Prakriti and they were impressed to see the mobilisation of women farmers by Prakriti.
- In the month of December, group of women farmers from Akola and Nagpur districts participated in a consultation at Pune organized by SOPPECOM on Livelihood of women in different parts of Maharashtra. Both the districts presented their charts of cropping and production.

Field Visits :

Prakriti staff from Akola and Nagpur alongwith the Technical advisor visited the field of women farmers from both district. They also hold dialogue with women in villages. Women farmers get the experts advice right in their field, which is very unique and important. The expert also get to know the first hand information and can provide better advice. This year due to excessive rainfall, though there is lot of harm to the crop, many women have lost their entire crop including cotton. However in the times, when the impact of climate change is so evident and agro-bio diverse kind of farming is the best adaptation for climate change. Observations Regarding Bio-diverse farming -:



- For the farm widows this experiment of agro-bio diverse farming is proving a boon as it has not only helped to revive their livelihood and confidence but has given them a status in the family and community.
- Other women farmers who are not associated with this experiment are also showing their interest in this type of farming and growing millets and vegetables in their farms in organic way.
- The recognition of being a Farmer is the most important take away point for all the 32 women farmers



Field visit by Prakriti staff and technical assistant

Shelu Bazar is one remotely located village in **Murtizpaur** block of Akola district. The village is not connected with any government transport facility. Except on weekly market day, there is no private travel facility. Almost each household of this village is engaged in farming. Seven women farmers including three women from suicide affected households have been associated with agro- bio diverse farming and this year they are growing soyabean, tur, udid, moong , vegetables, turmeric, yam etc. Last year's yield was not good due to delayed rains. However this year they are expecting good harvest. Sagar Pore is one such farmer associated with this farming project. Considering the knowledge about farming, Sagaris selected as KRISHI SAKHI of Shelu Bazar (KrishiSakhi is identified in each village as part of UMED –State Livelihood mission) The group of women from Shelu Bazar is very popular in the village, and there is mixed reaction from the villagers, some villagers support them, while most others criticize them.



A story of women farmers from sawarmendha village has appeared in Dainik Bhaskar

5. WOMEN AND LAND RIGHTS PROGRAM –

Land is a resource which is most scarce and most valuable, however women who spend their life working in the farms do not get access and ownership over land. This program aims to create awareness among women about their relationship with the land, provisions under different acts for women, succession rights of women and also promote land based livelihood among women. This program is implemented in 30 villages of Nagpur district of Maharashtra. There is a program team and team of women leaders/field workers in villages. Following activities were held under this program during the reporting period:

5.1 Awareness Programs:

- Awareness programmes were held at Prakriti office and also in the villages including **Tighai, Isapur, Wakodi, Neemtalai and Kusumbi**. It is important to create awareness among women that the inheritance law has given them right in the family's property, while as daughter they are coparcenary in the property of their father.
- Awareness program on MNREGS was organised. In this programs, block level officers explained the features and Working of MNREGS scheme and how we can propose work under this scheme.
- **Legal Aid For Women:** In September an awareness meeting for women leaders was organised with Secretary of DLSA (District Legal Services Agency) Nagpur. In this meeting Participating women were familiarised with the services provided by the agency, its structure at block and district level. Participating women were not aware of this agency and thus for the multiple marginalised women identified as part of this project can reach out to this agency for seeking help.
- **Ms. Pradnya Mandpe and Ms. Ujwala Shinde** attended a training on women land rights was organized by WGWLO. This training has helped the team to build understanding on Women and land rights as a concept and how to start conversation on this issue.



Workshop with government officials- DLSA

In Maharashtra state, there is one scheme titles as Lakshmi Mukti Yojna, which encourage men land owner to give part of his land to his wife in a very simple and non-expensive manner.



Prakriti Team Presenting The Findings Of Study

Monthly Review Meeting of Women leaders:

Every month the meeting of women leaders was organized which helps the women leaders in different aspects related to women's access and control over land, how women's decision making regarding land based livelihood can affect their well-being and socio-economic status.



Training Session On Land Rights



Legal Awareness Workshop With Women Leaders

- Partners workshop was organised in Mumbai in the month of July, where the team members participated. The workshop provided opportunity to understand the work done on land rights of forest dwellers, of tribal in remote areas. The workshop also helped in building a common understanding of the team on women and land rights and helped the team to strike a dialogue with women in the community.

WORK WITH MMW:

This program focus on women from agrarian households, women engaged as farm labourers and **Multiple marginalized women (MMW)** .800 MMWs identified and reached by the project team The project team conducted meetings, workshops, one to one conversations with the MMWs. Village level workshops were conducted for the



Project team members during field visit



Project team addressing problems of MMWs in Nimtalai Village

MMWs in the villages namely **Kodegaon, Nimtalai and Lonara** in which the causes of their vulnerability were discussed and what are the available support systems in the form of laws, policy, government schemes etc. These awareness meetings and workshops help the MMW to move ahead to demand their rights and entitlements. In many cases procuring documents is a challenge as they are not aware about requirement of documents These documents help them to apply for pension scheme, for property entitlements and gives them the courage and strength. The project

team make use of songs, games, case studies, short videos etc to create awareness.

Work With Women Farmers And Farm Labourers:

This program is implemented in 30 villages and each village has average 70% households engaged in farming. Women's work in agriculture is restricted to weeding, sowing, putting manure, plucking and post-harvest cleaning etc. All these jobs are done manually and they do not have any decision making or any say in the income fetched from the crops yield. Similarly the benefit of the government schemes also goes to the male member, women are not even aware of what all the schemes are? The interaction of project team revealed that women who used wages in the farm for about 180 to 200 days in a year, has reduced to 150 or even 120 this year due to continuous heavy rains, another alarming fact was noticed was that women from agrarian households are being pressurised to seek credit from SHGs/ JLG or from private Micro Finance Companies. Women succumb to these pressures and they also think that for better yield they need more fertilizer and will also need better pesticide and weedicides. During the reporting period following were the main activities for women farmers:

- Group meetings with women farmers to discuss their concept of farmer, their work in farming and the finances involved in farming
- Celebration of **Mahila Kisan Diwas (Women Farmers' day)** and passing of resolution to give identity to women farmers
- Participation in **Maharashtra State Level Conference in December at Pune** Livelihoods, like fisheries, forest collection farming, kitchen garden etc
- Training for women farmers engaged in agro-bio diverse farming
- Meeting with officials from district agriculture department for procuring Rabi seeds for women farmers and for organizing awareness program jointly.
- Discussion about survey on women land holders
- Visit to distressed farming households and widows from suicide affected farming households and listed their problems

Work By Women Leaders:

The women leaders are slowly building their knowledge base and enhancing their leadership to create a conducive environment at village level where women can discuss, demand and argue for land rights. For this the project team organise monthly review meetings, communicate and converse on relationship of women with the land, gives them tasks to be done at village level and also makes field visits.

6. WORK FOR SUICIDE AFFECTED FARMER'S FAMILIES

6.1 NAGPUR DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA :

Prakriti recently started working in **Narkhed** block of Nagpur district with suicide affected farmers' families. In Narkhed about **72 (eligible and non-eligible for ex-gratia)** cases of farmers' suicides have been reported as per the data made available from the RDC office. Total **45 villages** have at least one case of farmer suicide since 2017 and 16 villages have multiple cases of farmers' suicides. Looking at the number of villages and their spread, it can be

commented that the whole block is in agrarian distress. **Narkhed, Belona, Jamgaon, Yenikoni, Madna** are the villages, where **3 to 4 cases of farmers' suicide** have been registered.

Prakriti team located the families village by village, some families were found while some were not available, The team decided to visit each of the family mention in the list irrespective of their eligibility criteria for receiving ex-gratia. Here are our observations:

- Many young and unmarried youth (as young as 19 years) have committed suicide and now their aged parents are finding it difficult to work and survive. **Jay Govardhan and Rameshwar Khandate** aged 19 and 25 years from **Madna village** have committed suicide and have left their parents behind.
- The widows of suicide affected farmers are living in utter poverty and neglect. They do not have sustainable source of livelihood and their awareness to seek benefit of the scheme is also very low. Like in case of **Khairgaon village**, the widow is not aware as how much pending debt is, she neither has the courage to visit to nearby block office as after sudden death of her husband she is in utter shock and depression and need to feed her school going kids, of which the daughter is physically challenged.
- In case of **Ravindra Satpute of Wadhona village**, his widow Madhuri has to leave her two children with in laws and go for wage earning. She too has pending debt and has neither plan nor capacity to repay.
- We observed that the widows after the death of the farmer is not treated with respect by the family members, like in case of **Jagdish Rajguru of Mowad**, his widow was asked to stay in a single room in the courtyard , she feels extremely scary to in that room , as her husband hanged himself in the same room. She has two children of which the son aged about 9 years is blind and has mental disabilities. However she is not ready to put him in a residential school meant for such children.
- In some cases after the suicide of the husband, the wife too has left the children behind and is staying with her parents, in such cases the children are emotionally very weak and the extended family members finding it difficult to take care of them.



Farm widow expressing her concern with Prakriti team



Shobha Rajguru with her blind son Khushal Rajguru in Wadhona village

- Awareness about government schemes like Pension, UMED, MNREGS is very low. We did not come across anyone who has got decent days of employment under MNREGS.
- Seeking debt from private sources, including Micro finance companies is highly prevalent. This means high input cost and low returns may have put extra debt burden on the farmer.
- In the lean season (April to June) there is no employment available at the village level, and the distress is prevalent in almost each farming household.

6.2 ANNAMAYYA DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH:

Andhra Pradesh is one of the farmers' suicide affected state in India. Though compared to Maharashtra, the number of farmers' suicides is less in Andhra Pradesh, however the suicides are mostly recorded in cotton producing districts and where there is farming is the only means of livelihood. Considering this Prakriti initiated a small program to help women and children from the affected households in Annamayya district (earlier this district was part of Chittoor district) . Small monetary help is given on monthly basis to the children and women are helped in ensuring their rights and entitlements and coverage of government schemes.

Suicide affected families in Thamballaplle mandal of Annamayya district are being helped currently. At Avulasetty palli most of the young widows are either engaged in weaving cloths or mats and also work as daily wagers. Many of the farmers who committed suicide were tenent farmers and they do not own land, so after their death the widows work as farm labourers or was weavers, which is traditional occupation. Since they do not have enough money to seek land for farming under tenancy, they try to take up all possible opportunities which will fetch them some income.



**Meeting With Farm Widows From Avulasetty palli,
Andhra Pradesh**

7. ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT:

Prakriti was founded in 1990 with the core objective of empowerment of rural women by following Gandhian principles of Self-reliance, Organization and Empowerment. To strengthen Prakriti as organization, it is important to develop robust understanding about organization's objectives and values among Prakriti staff members. With the help of representatives of Social Synergy Foundation (SSF) this process has begun in the month of May 2022 and it includes discussions, workshops, preparation of modules etc.

In the OD process discussion with Senior team members and staff of Prakriti was hold. The objectives values of the organization and how the members of Prakriti consider their role to fulfil the objective of the organization was discussed.

A Workshop with old and new field workers was held where field workers, who joined Prakriti 15-20 years ago and still are associated and continued their work shared their experience. Work done by other organization on similar issues were explored.

As part of the OD process, TWO senior most field workers were given ONE YEAR Fellowship to expand and strengthen Prakriti's work. Both these



Mr. Abhishek Kadam of SSF during OD session in November

Fellows have identified one village each, and they are currently understanding the village socio-economic profile and later will work on creating awareness about MNREGS and generating employment under MNREGS. Fellows organised program of International Women's day at Bhadangi and Neelgaon village. This was for the first time that women assembled in such big numbers, and looking at this mobilisation, the Sarpanch expressed their cooperation in Gramsabhas too.

It is discussed in the OD workshop that besides project objectives and deliverables, Prakriti team should also discuss organization values in the various activities conducted as part of the project. Prakriti team should also develop material to discuss the organizational values of equality, collectives and empowerment.

8. PARTICIPATION IN OTHER EVENT & ACTIVITIES

- Ms. Pratibha Ukey and Ms. Monika Gadve participated in a state level meeting which was organized by MNREGS consortium in association with Pragati Abhiyan. Study on MNREGS was presented and discussion about effective implementation of MNREGS was discussed in this meeting.
- In the month of April, Ms .Vaishali Haste and Panchayat Sakhis participated in state level consultation organized by MAKAM and AFARM in Pune, where women farmers who have done exemplary work were felicitated and sessions on climate resilient farming, provision of water for farm irrigation etc were held.
- **Ms. Suvarna Damle and Ms. Shalini Wankhade** participated in the meeting organized by MAKAM. Problems of farm widows were discussed in this meeting. Ms. Shalini Wankhade and farm widows of Akola share their problems. faced by farm widows

- Ms. Shilpa Namjoshi and Ms. Puja Ledange participated in a program organised by MASUM, based on 50 years of journey of women's movement. The program also discussed the change in legal age of marriage for boys and girls.
- Ms. Suvarna Damle was invited to conduct orientation meeting of program staff of Multiple Action Research Group (MARG) at their Delhi office.
- Maharashtra Aarogya Hakka Parishad was convened at **Tuljapur** in **Osmanabad** district from 2nd-4th February 2023. THREE field workers from Nagpur district and one coordinator from Akola district were participated in this parishad. **Smt. Kusum Bais**, Panchayat Sakhi from Nagpur presented her experience of how violence on minor girls and child marriage impacts their health and what should the machinery do in such incidences. **Mr. Upendra Gawande**, from Akola presented the health concerns of widows from suicide affected farmers' families.



Smt. Kusum Bais Presenting her work to protest child marriage and child sexual abuse during the conference

- **Maharashtra Aarogya Hakka Parishad** is convened every four years and this time it was convened at **Tuljapur** in **Osmanabad** district from 2nd - 4th **February 2023**. On Behalf of Prakriti, THREE field workers from Nagpur district and one coordinator from Akola district participated. **Smt. Kusum Bais**, Panchayat Sakhi from Nagpur presented her experience of how violence on small girls and child marriage impacts their health and what should the machinery do in such incidences. **Mr. Upendra Gawande**, from Akola presented the health concerns of widows from suicide affected farmers' families.
- Prakriti team alongwith women leaders participated in **Conference on Community Stewardship** organized by FES. This online discussion was based on natural resource, governance and management. Various issues like Community life and water, Land as Collective Wealth, Biodiversity, Food Security, Livelihood, Gender Discrimination and Culture were discussed in this virtual conference.
- Ms. Suvarna Damle participated in the state consultation at Pune organised by MAKAAAM. She presented the status of farm widows in the state and the efforts taken by MAKAAAM

9. STUDY AND RESEARCH :

- Three students from TISS, Mumbai were placed for their field work segment at Prakriti to conduct a study of debt burden and distress among land holder families in Bailwada village. Report prepared by them highlighted the facts that most agrarian families are in dire need of cash, and agriculture income is received only after harvest and sale of the crop yield. So to take care of their expenses on education, health and other household work, they need cash for which they either take loan or sell piece of their land or even entire land holding. The young generation is not considering farming as their livelihood option, they want salaried jobs.
- Another student from TISS had come for Internship. He was given a task to interact with male and female gram panchayat members of three villages, who have low response and participation in Panchayat Sakhi program. He spoken with about 45 elected members in three panchayats, namely Pota, Rohana and Sillewada. Following are some observations based on his interaction with members:



Intern while interacting with elected members of gram panchayat

- A) The lady sarpanch of Sillewada belongs to SC. She always revealed her fear that being SC, she will be overpowered by other caste candidate. Thus to maintain her supremacy, she never consult her members.
- B) Male members and male sarpanch of Pota gram panchayat shared that their deputy sarpanch has completed three terms in the panchayat and is very experienced and powerful and other members are new and have no experience they feel safe to say YES to the deputy sarpanch
- C) Some members from Maratha community feel that being elected they are powerful and they feel that they have the Maratha legacy of leadership in their DNA and thus will have their own style of leadership.

These revelations helped Prakriti team to talk to woman Sarpanch of Sillewada and reduce the fear from her mind.

10. FUTURE PLAN :

The organization development process is helping the staff members to understand the objectives and values of the organization and is also helping to develop their capacities and skills. For more experience and exposure some exchange and learning visits will be organised for the staff members.

TWO senior field workers have been given Fellowship of One year as part of reviving the most influential and successful program of Prakriti. Mobilising resources for such Fellowship, in different forms will also be explored.

Advocating rights and entitlements of farm widows and strengthening their livelihood in Nagpur and Akola district is will be part of our agenda and the work in this direction is already being done. From last year similar work has started in Annamayya district of Andhra Pradesh, this will be further extended.

Women's reservation in local self-government will complete 30 years and thus to celebrate three decades of women's reservation, consultations will be planned with local bodies. Testimonies of Successful women Sarpanch will be collected and documented and it is also planned to document the stories of women sarpanch who have been given Vasudha Smriti Award since 2015.

Promoting agro-ecology program through the group of women farmers engaged in Swavalambi (self-sustainable) practice of farming, addressing impact of climate change on farming , collection and exchange of seeds will be part of next year's activities.

In the recent years, complaints of sexual abuse of young girls have been reported in Prakriti's field area. Through college students and **Police Didi** program of Nagpur Police, it is planned to take note of such incidences in the field and create awareness among young girls that if such incidences are reported in time further harm can be avoided.

We look forward to support from our members, well-wishers, and donors in the coming year to help us in fulfilling our objectives and also reaching out to women and build solidarity.

11. Annexure :

A. LIST OF DONORS

- R.G. Manudhane Foundation For Excellence
- Womanity Foundation
- Schlumberger India Technology Center Private Limited
- Urmi Pandit Charitable Trust, Nagpur
- Shri. Sunil Chavan, Mumbai
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