



WOMEN LED WATER, SANITATION, HYGIENE AND RESILIENT PRACTICES

W-SHARP Project Report



**Risk informed Approach for
WASH and Climate Resilient
Nutritional Farming in
Marathwada
region**

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List of Abbreviations

AATMA	Agriculture Technology Management Agency
GP	Gram Panchayat
HH	Household
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
KVK	Krishi Vigyan Kendra
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MNP	Minimum Nutrition Packets
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
NRDWP	National Rural Drinking Water Programme
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institutions
SBM-G	Swacch Bharat Mission (Gramin)
SBCC	Social and Behavioral Change Communication
SHG	Self Help Groups
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SSP	Swayam Shikshan Prayog
THR	Take Home Rations
TOC	Theory of Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WCRF	Women-Led Climate Resilient Farming

List of Case Studies:

1. Building Social Capital: Investing in Individuals to Build Stronger Communities
2. Stirring Conversations Across Generations
3. Kitchen Gardening Taking Strong Roots
4. Spreading Nutritional Awareness through Peer Learning
5. How Well Do You Know Your Water Source?
6. One-Acre Mix Crop Model: Crop Diversity Leading to Nutritional and Financial Security
7. Women Leadership: Working Together to Bring Change
8. Power of Positive Influence

Introduction

'Women-led Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Resilient Practices Project' also referred to as the w-SHARP Project, was designed to increase the resilience of communities threatened by hydrological drought risk in the Marathwada region. The region has experienced the highest rainfall deficit in the past 10 years and multiple years of drought and unsustainable agricultural practices have completely impaired the agriculture and water sector. This has had a negative impact on sanitation, hygiene, and nutrition of the communities. This is further exacerbated by the element of climate variability; for instance, the El Nino effect has had a major role in impacting drought situation in India especially in regions like Marathwada, which have borne the brunt of the hazard

To mitigate the impact, Risk informed programmatic approach towards WASH and Food sustainability was undertaken in two districts of Marathwada - Osmanabad and Latur.. The two districts have similar climatic conditions and were the worst hit during the last long spell of drought between 2012-2015. A coordinated, multi-sectoral approach was envisaged through the w-SHARP project that combines climate-resilient farming practices for produce with high nutrient content along with sustenance of hygiene

and sanitation practices through integrated water resource management focusing on drinking water and water for sanitation and hygiene practices.



Map of Marathwada Region in Maharashtra

This project relies heavily on participation of the women from the Marathwada region. They are singularly the most important facet of this project. Among the small and marginal farmers, women are the worst affected by repercussion of climate variability. Barely recognized as farmers, women are nonetheless involved in all aspects of the activity as part of the family unit. The double burden of risks due to climate change resulting in food and income insecurity and their limited decision making has also leads to a negative impact on women and their personal and family's health. The w-SHARP Project redefines resilience for small and marginal farming households by addressing complex issues of climate change, gender roles and its impact on health, nutrition, sanitation and, hygiene.

w-SHARP Project Approach

W-SHARP project undertakes an innovative approach by positioning women as key change agents while engaging with communities, local bodies and government institutions. The project targeted two blocks – Kalamb in Osmanabd district and Deoni Block in Latur District; collectively reaching out to 10,000 households in 100 villages. The focus was primarily on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and food security for the vulnerable families including families with children below 5 years; particularly focusing on the lean period of the year i.e. from March to June every year when the highest levels water scarcity is faced by this region. The overall time period for this project was 18 months, divided into three phases.



w-SHARP Project Cycle

Baseline Survey and Analysis:

A Baseline Survey was conducted in order to capture the on-ground situation in the villages. The total sample for the baseline was 1883 families, 95 villages and 200 farmers. Based on the findings from the analysis, project activities were designed and the implementation strategy was tailored.

The data collected from the community, Gram panchayats and farmers highlighted the linkages between the various parameters of water, sanitation and hygiene and its associated risks with increased climate variability. This reinforced the need to design interventions that addressed all these components together to strengthen the adaptive capacity and resilience of the community.

Summary of Findings from the Baseline Survey:

Water Availability

- While normal rainfall (above 600mm) was recorded in the last year, lack of water conservation and management practices had overall aggravated the scarcity for water for drinking and household purposes
- During the lean period (around 3 months), more than 25% of the villages did not have a regular source of water supply, while 84% faced challenges in irrigating their fields
- Only 19.82% of HHs reported more than one source of drinking water throughout the year
- 47% of villages practice water budgeting in some form, but none of the Gram Panchayats confirmed the practice was continued beyond 4 months

Water for Health, Sanitation, and Hygiene

- Unsafe water usage practices resulting in water borne diseases with 30 % reported cases of diarrhea. Out of these, 13% were children below 5 years of age.
- 82 % of HHs have access to individual toilets, out of which 15% are unable to use the toilets throughout the year due to lack of water availability and awareness
- 19% of respondents skip regular bathing due to lack of water
- 50% of female respondents do not use sanitary napkins. Usage is more common among young girls
- Low awareness on wastewater usage, only 17% of respondents were re-using water for kitchen gardens, toilet usage or cleaning

Food and Nutrition Security

- Drop in the cultivation of vegetables during lean period, 60% of HHs purchase vegetables from market. Only 7% farmers practice cultivating vegetables during the lean period
- 39% of HHs are unable to afford 3 meals in a day; out of which 20% do not have access to vegetables during the lean period
- 78.6% cultivating cereals and pulses while only 0.5% reported availability for consumption during the lean period
- 91% of adolescent girls were reported with low hemoglobin levels – below 12.5 g/dl
- 57 % of HH reported inadequate water for livestock, out of which 1% reported distress sale of livestock due to lack of water and fodder

Community Awareness Levels

- 90% HHs reported knowledge about importance of hand-wash, usage of toilets and hygienic practices
- 73 % HHs understood relationship between water quality and illness
- Negligible (~ 5 %) women participation in local governance, decision making and, water allocation-related issues

Integrating Risk Informed Planning to achieve WASH, Food and Nutrition Sustainability



Risk Informed planning allows for sustainable development to become a vehicle to reduce risk and build resilience. In the case of w-SHARP, Risk Informed planning entails managing disaster risks, climate impacts and, protecting development gains through an integrated approach to achieve:

✓ **Household drinking water safety and security along with sustained sanitation & hygiene in lean period**

✓ **Improved community resilience towards food security and productive use of water through better allocation**

✓ **Improved Water security through convergence of various development schemes at the Gram Panchayat, block and district level**

✓ **Emergence of trained women community leaders providing last mile access to WASH products and services**

Risk Informed Theory of Change: Planning Towards a Common Goal

Purpose of Theory of Change: The most critical aspect of the strategic planning process is the development of a Theory of Change (ToC) that articulates a collective vision for reaching the desired impact with a targeted approach and makes explicit how one level of change leads to another. The theory of change for the W-SHARP Project highlights the contributions of Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) and UNICEF, working in partnership with Government, community leaders, and development partners, to make tangible, measurable contributions to the community, national priorities, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

“It is required to first identify the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions that must be in place for the goals to occur.”

Pathways of change: Awareness campaigns, meetings with stakeholders, capacity building, behavior change, demonstrations, setting up WASH value and supply chain protocol and advocacy. All these activities are conducted at the household level, community level, village level which includes institutions such as schools, village committees, PRI structures, SHG's, Front line workers, etc.

Impact: The ToC articulates the desired impact in the WASH, food security and nutrition patterns in the vulnerable sections, enabling resilience in the community.

Outcome Level Change: The ToC addresses the need for behavior change that directly looks at reducing risks due to drought and climate variability in the selected region. It also addresses if the enabling environment is equipped to facilitate these changes.

Output Level Change: The ToC articulates an output that reflects a change in the performance, capacities, skills, and tools of the target community toward drought resilience; in this case the identified vulnerable groups in the drought prone region of Marathwada.

Inputs: Enabling support structures in the form of organizational support, technical inputs, and collaborative partnerships to help meet the overarching goal.

Goal: “A gender responsive and resilient community with food and water security in drought prone areas”



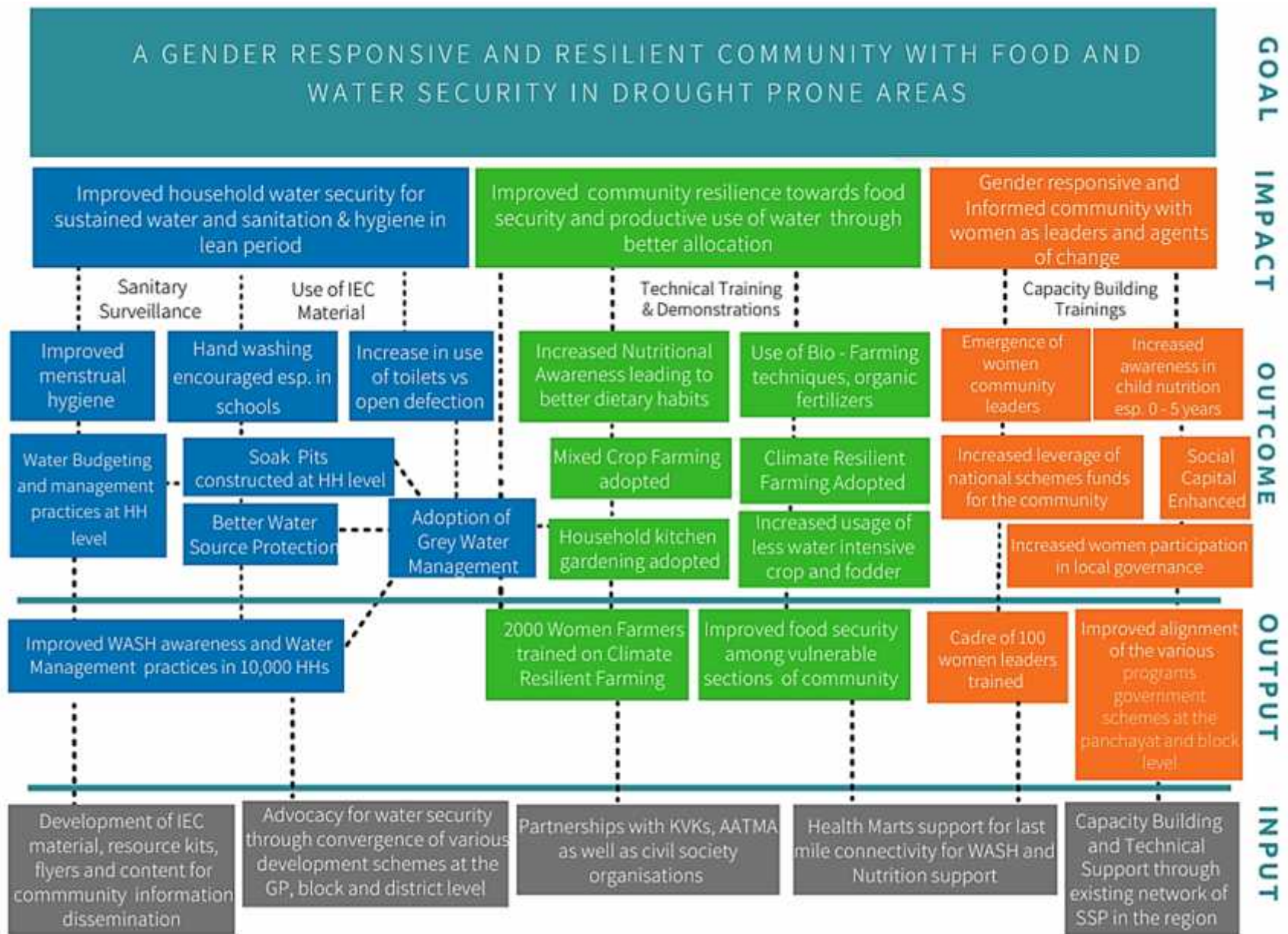
W-SHARP project contributes towards meeting the following Sustainable Development Goals

Project Design of w-SHARP

The project activities were designed in a manner that reached out to all the vulnerable groups across the themes of health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and food security. Especially families with children under 5, focusing on the lean period of the year. At the same time, the project emphasizes strongly on behaviour change communication for improved WASH practices, community integration and leveraging funds through convergence with other state and national flagships programs such as SBM-G, MGNREGA, and NRDWP.

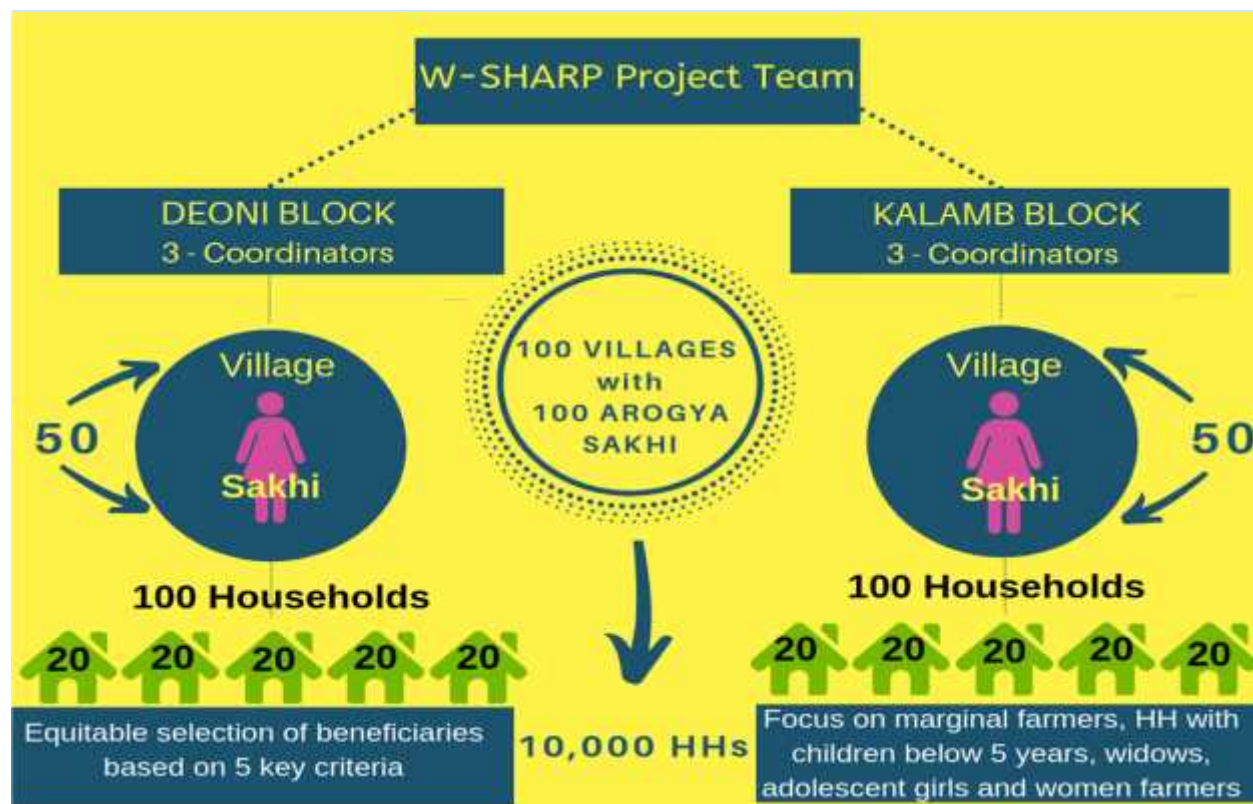
The following interventions were designed to achieve the goal of a gender responsive and resilient community with food and water security in drought-prone areas.

Adressing household water security for sustained water and sanitation & hygiene in lean period	Community Awareness Building around Water Collection, Storage & Handling At Household Level
	Water Source Protection through Sanitary Surveillance
	Promoting good menstrual hygiene practices in adolscent girls
	Water Budgeting Exercise at HH and Community Level
	Training on Grey Water Management
Adressing Water security through convergence of various development schemes at the Gram Panchayat, block and district level	Facilitate leverage of funds through national flagship schemes
	Facilitate increase in toilet usage and overall community hygiene. Installation of handwashing stations in School
	Construction of Toilets and Soak Pits through convergence under SBM - G
	Facilitate informed participation of women in Gram Sabha
Improving community resilience towards food security and productive use of water through better allocation	Training of women farmers on Climate Resilient Farming using less water intensive crops
	Adoption of Bio-Farming methods; use vermi - compost, organic fertilisers
	Improved nutritional intake through kitchen gardens and good practices; esp. in HHs with children below 5 years
	Monitoring and incentivisng HHs through 7 star system
Emergence of trained women community leaders; providing last mile access to WASH products and services	Cadre of trained community leaders developed
	Establishment of Health Marts to achieve last mile connectivity
	Facilitate partneships with government and civil society stakeholders for capacity building and networking



Risk Informed Theory of Change for the w-SHARP Project

Implementation Structure of w-SHARP:



Selection of villages: From each of the two blocks, 50 villages were selected based on their existing vulnerabilities and involvement of women in their local governance. Each village has a 100 HHs chosen for implementation, totaling the outreach to 10,000 HHs

Selection of women villages leader 'Arogya Sakhis': Each village has one Arogya Sakhi trained to facilitate knowledge transfer for WASH, and Nutrition along with improving participation in local governance. The project draws strength on the existing cadre of Arogya Sakhis and coordinators of Swayam Shiksha Prayog (SSP) who mentor Sakhis along with monitoring the activities

Equitable Selection of Households: The primary criteria for selection 100 household were to reach out to HHs will marginal or no landholdings. There were 5 key HH selection criterion:

- **HHs with children below 5 years**
- **HHs with adolescent girls**
- **HHs with no landholdings (landless labour)**
- **HHs having less than 2.5 hectares of land**
- **Women Headed HHs**

Arogya Sakhis: Pillars of the Project

Why: 'Arogya Sakhi' translates as a 'well-being facilitator and friend', and this perfectly encapsulates the role which each Arogya Sakhi essays in her village. She serves as the nodal point in each village and connects it to the larger network of the W-SHARP project umbrella. Each of the 100 Sakhis works towards disseminating knowledge and awareness related to WASH, nutrition security and climate – resilient agricultural practices. Apart from being the carrier of information, she is also expected to bring a positive change in the outlook of her village. The primary motive of placing the responsibilities on the shoulder of Arogya Sakhis is to encourage change from within each community.

How: A total of 100 Arogya Sakhis were selected through a consultative process to spearhead the project for their village. The Sakhi is chosen after meeting a few basic criteria required for the success of the Project. Candidates having an amicable personality, holding apolitical views along with being comfortable working with the local communities were given preference. Women candidates demonstrating community leadership qualities were approached to be part of the project as well. Names of women with the potential to take the role of Arogya Sakhis were selected through recommendation of village stakeholders and mutual agreement with SSP.

The selection of the Sakhis further builds the support structure of the Project. Along with the 100 Sakhi for each block, there are block-level coordinators who have been appointed from SPP to handhold and provide guidance to the newly – inducted Sakhis. The Coordinators were involved in the selection of Sakhis and to oversee the project to ensure the project objectives are met and also guide the Sakhis to efficiently integrate themselves into the community. The Coordinators also play the role of Master Trainers and are deployed to the field where they facilitate meetings with Self-help Groups, Village leaders (Sarpanchs) and PRI Representatives to explain the planned project activities.

“We worked hard to find the right women to lead each village. I have been a Sakhi before and this helped guide them towards working efficiently with their community. Apart from this, we also provided them trainings on leadership development, WASH, nutrition and bio - farming techniques which are critical for working in drought prone areas.

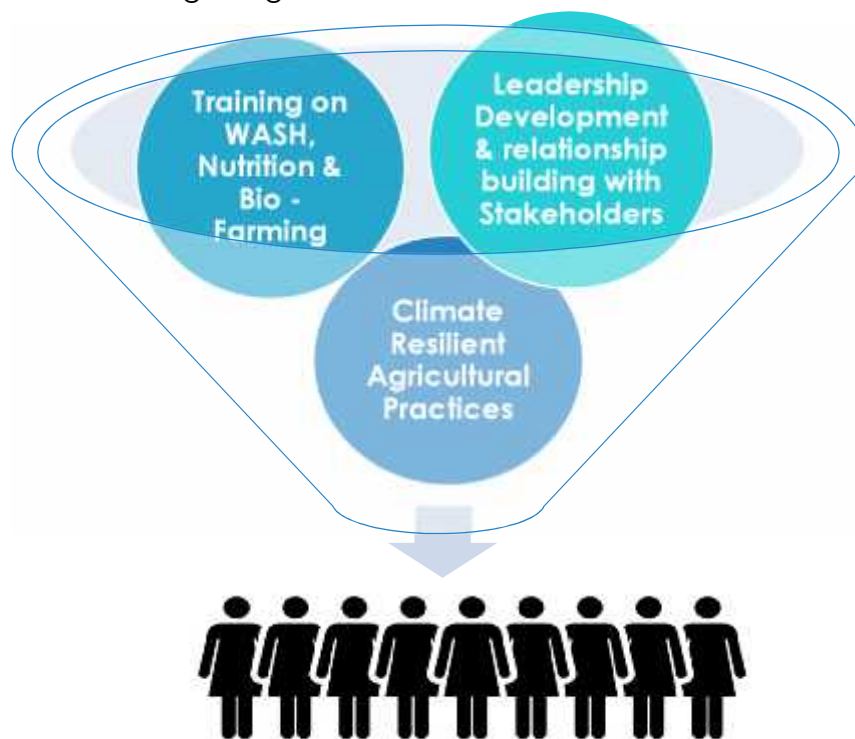
Development of their capacities further trickles down to the households they are directly working with. This model works well to help build social capital in the community, reaping benefits in the long term.”

- Seema, SSP Master Trainer and Coordinator



Induction Process of Arogya Sakhis

The training and onboarding of the selected Arogya Sakhis was the next step in their induction into the W-SHARP project. A detailed plan was prepared for capacity building of the Sakhis, from covering the essentials of being a community worker to facilitating the desired changes in their village. A rigorous induction schedule was designed by SSP and facilitated by the support staff. The Sakhis undertook a variety of trainings to build their capacities towards integrating Risk Informed WASH and Nutrition Sustainable Practices.



“Cadre of Trained Arogya Sakhis”

Multiple trainings were undertaken at Block and Village level to equip each Arogya Sakhi with the necessary skills and expertise to perform their roles and responsibilities. The trainings were on the following topics:

- Leadership development and responsibilities of 'Arogya Sakhi'
- Orientation on the Importance of Water Supply Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
- Water Budgeting, Handling and Storage and Sanitary Surveillance
- Training on Nutrition Awareness and Practices
- Climate Resilient Agricultural Practices
- Grey Water Management
- One Acre Mixed Cropping Method

Role and Responsibilities of Arogya Sakhis

- a. **Mobilizing village groups:** Each Sakhi begins her first step by building an understanding of the local issues, threats, and risks to gain awareness on issues pertaining to her own village. These primarily include water scarcity, open defecation, cleanliness, and health-related issues, especially during times of drought. As a woman-led initiative, it was pivotal for each Sakhi to have an anchor in her village through integrating into existing village level institutions and most importantly, to select the right households for the project. This was done through formation of women groups, monthly meetings and eventual development of women leaders who could assist in planning and coordination of village level activities.
- b. **Building WASH and Nutrition Awareness:** In a drought-hit region, it is normal for people to compromise on personal hygiene and sanitation – this includes a reduction in usage of toilets, rise in diseases caused by contamination due to lack of hygiene and an overall decrease in community and HH hygiene practices. One of the foremost role of the Sakhi is to ensure the basic standard of hygiene and sanitation are maintained along with a rise in awareness amongst school children, young women and at a HH level. This is achieved through several activities along with awareness meetings, sanitary surveillance, and usage of IEC material for promotion. The selected region of Marathwada is a victim of food insecurity among households due to the cultivation of cash crops instead of food crops and high incidence of malnutrition and anemia among women and children. The Sakhi is responsible to re – introduce healthy and nutritious eating habits along with enabling the village to reach a state of nutrition security. The dissemination is done from HH level to block level, through working with Anganwadi workers, awareness meetings as well as peer-peer learning and sharing of good practices.
- c. **Increasing Participation in Local Governance:** The involvement of the village members as well as the Sakhi into the village level meetings and decision-making process is pivotal to the success of this project. Empowering women by increasing representation, bringing up critical issues for the local leaders and Sarpanch and, helping the process of convergence at a HH as well as village level is one of the core mandates of the Sakhi. With assistance from cluster coordinators and the Gram Sabha members, the Sakhi can help her village and its members be aware of their rights.
- d. **Building Crucial Relationships:** It is important for the Sakhi to maintain a responsible and long lasting relationship within the village community as well as with the local governing bodies. This is critical for the success of the project as local leaders, Grama Panchayat officials and other relevant stakeholders play a key role in the overall development of the village.

Building Social Capital: Investing in Individuals to Build Stronger Communities

“I gained a lot of self – confidence and support after becoming a Arogya Sakhi. I attended almost 10 training over the course of the year, and now I am helping other people become aware of the important aspects of nutrition and hygiene.

Initially, it was difficult to generate a response as only 7 – 8 women came forward to be part of the village level activities. I went door to door, asking women to attend village level meetings and we now have regular meetings with 25 – 30 women. We plan for the coming months ahead and we have a lot of goals to achieve!

- Asha, Arogya Sakhi, Satefal Village, Osamanabad District



A young widow with two children and no land holdings, Asha could easily have been one of the community members reached through the w-SHARP project; on the other hand, she has facilitated this outreach by taking up the role of Arogya Sakhi. Her story is one of positive determination – bringing a personal change which further escalated to household, village and community level transformation.

Along with being a Sakhi, she still continues to work as a daily wage labourer. Her husband passed away due to addiction problems and since then she has been supporting her family single handedly. She has shown remarkable results in community mobilisation bringing people together to work towards a better village. Her efforts have been rewarded and recognized across her village and the w- SHARP community. She is currently planning for future interventions using the cash of almost 8000 USD; this was awarded to her village due to the community's contributions towards improving water security.

Her achievements include:

- Challenging and raising questions in Grama Sabha meetings to bring change in water allocation to village
- Setting up Health Mart to ensure accessibility to village members
- Facilitated construction of 150 Soak Pits in Satefal village
- Single handedly mobilizing 300 women to work for village development activities
- Village awarded 3rd best village by Paani Foundation for its achievements in Sanitation and Hygiene through water budgeting and constructing soak pits



Arogya Sakhis: Building Sustainable Relationships

Padmini Tai is an Arogya Sakhi from Bolegaon village in Deoni Block. She was **one of the thirteen Arogya Sakhis** who was appointed by the Block Development Office to conduct a social audit of the national flagship programme - MGNREGA. This involved auditing the various developmental activities which were undertaken in the various villages under the programme.

As the Arogya Sakhis have a strong grasp within the community and are well aware of the activities happening in their respective villages, they were a natural choice to conduct this audit.

This points towards acceptance of the skills and contribution of the Arogya Sakhi by the local governing bodies; forging a partnership that will last beyond the scope of the project.



Ensuring an Inclusive Approach

Kalawati Tai, Arogya Sakhi of Mahadevwadi and Sangita (in yellow) stand next to Sangita's toilet that was built through convergence with the SBM-G scheme. Through this scheme, the applicant is required to make a nominal contribution to the construction cost of their toilet.

Sangita is a migrant from Karnataka and was not an active participant in the meetings due to the cultural and language barriers. They did not have a toilet in their five-member household and were unable to afford construction on their own. Suman Tai helped her with the entire application process and ensured all the due processes were completed. Having their own toilet is a major step towards

living a life of dignity as well as reducing health risks.

Achievements of w-SHARP Project:

Household water security for sustained water and sanitation & hygiene in lean period

- Water Budgeting practiced in 10,000 households
- 1392 Soak Pits constructed in 100 villages
- 28 Hand Wash Station set up in various schools across the two Blocks
- 172 community water sources cleaned and purified through regular Sanitary Surveillance
- 102 community water sources marked as safe water sources
- 80% increase in toilet usage

Water security through convergence of various development schemes at the Gram Panchayat, block and district level

- USD 89,61,32 (INR 6,35,00,000) has been converged under the National Flagship Programmes such as SBM(G), MGNREGA and via ATMA linkages
- 62 village groups linked under ATMA agricultural initiatives

Community resilience towards food security and productive use of water through better allocation

- 2000 Women farmers trained on Climate Resilient Farming
- 1735 Women farmers practicing mixed crop farming
- 124 Vermi-compost beds installed
- 2650 families cultivating less water-intensive fodder and practice water allocation for livestock
- 1470 families cultivated kitchen garden for self – consumption

Trained women community leaders; providing last mile access to WASH products and services

- Cadre of 100 Arogya Sakhis developed
- 500 women leaders emerged under the leadership of Arogy Sakhis
- 400 Community Awareness meetings held
- 112 Village Advocacy Meetings held
- 89 Health Marts set – up across 100 villages
- Products worth USD 1,76,40 sold through Health Marts



"Improved household water security for sustained Water, Sanitation & Hygiene "

Water Management Practices around Water Collection, Storage & Handling At Household Level

Improved Hygiene and Sanitation practices at the Household level

Improved awareness of households and community on water source protection

Training on Grey Water Management

Improves Household drinking water security for sustained Water, Sanitation & Hygiene practices in lean period

The Baseline Survey revealed a high percentage of water borne diseases that were caused due to a lack of awareness of hygiene and sanitation. Apart from this, water scarcity leads to an expected decline in personal hygiene during the lean period. This highlighted the need to strengthen awareness regarding household level WASH practices. Several measures were taken to improve hygiene, sanitation practices, nutrition and health awareness among the households in the 100 villages.

Awareness meetings were undertaken by the Sakhis in schools, temples and other public places with the aim of imparting knowledge & spread awareness on safe WASH practices. The main focus was on the use of hand wash/soap, encourage toilet usage, Waste Management, and safe menstrual hygiene practices.



Hygiene Awareness: One Family at a Time

Urmila is the sole earning member of her family. Her husband suffers from a medical ailment, which prevents him from working, bringing the responsibility of managing the house and two kids on Urmila.

She was introduced to the w-SHARP project by attending one of the monthly meetings held by the Arogya Sakhi.

"Initially I was not sure if I should devote time to these meetings as I was already hard-pressed with my own work. After I realized that they are spreading information regarding hygiene, nutritious eating habits, and bio-farming techniques – I was immediately interested. All these things are relevant to me and my family. Simple things such as water budgeting, water handling are easy to practice. My 5-year-old daughter learns from school that washing hands is important, and I am happy to see her following this diligently."

Urmila now has a small patch in her backyard where she grows vegetables and waters it using waste water from her house. While she does not have a personal toilet, she ensures her family only uses the public toilet available and encourages others to do the same as well.

Water Management Practices around Water Collection, Storage & Handling at Household Level

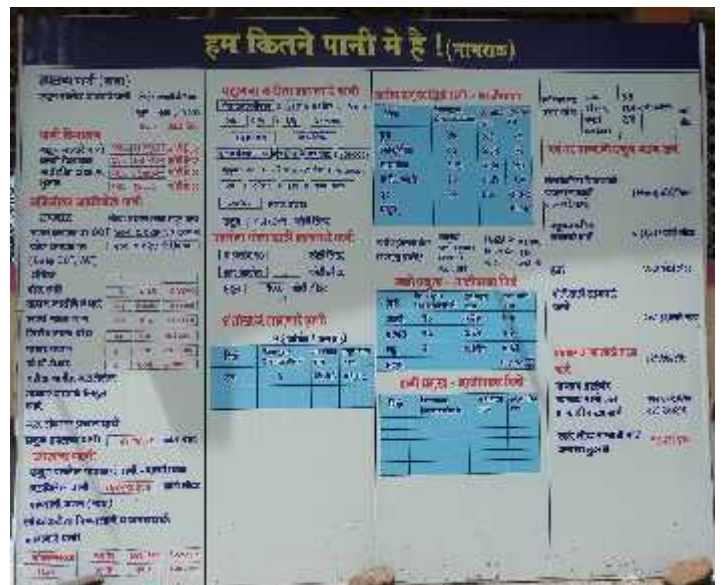
Sakhis mobilized women's groups in their villages and conducted group discussion to disseminate information on good practices which can be implemented at the HH level. As the Sakhis had undertaken intensive training on water management, they were able to explain the importance of safe and hygienic good practices especially on drinking water storage and handling. These include:

- List of Dos and Don'ts for handling of drinking water
- Use of proper utensils for handling water; using a ladle, covered jug
- Water purification at the Household level. Use of chlorination tablets for purification
- Identifying visible particles in drinking water
- Hygienic storage of drinking water

This was the first step towards building drinking water safety. Products sold at the Health Mart played a key role towards promotion of good practices around drinking water treatment and storage.



Demonstrations on good water handling practices at HH level. This helps curb the spread of diseases and maintain drinking water hygiene



Most villages have water allocation and budgeting plans placed in community centers to spread awareness about efficient use of water

Water Budgeting Exercise

Water Budgeting as a concept was introduced to adopt an efficient practice of water management for HHs facing acute water shortage, especially in the lean period. This was introduced in the community via a simple exercise, conducted by the Arogya Sakhi in each of the 100 HHs. In essence, it is the task of understanding a household's overall water requirement based upon the number of family members, major areas of consumption and identifying areas where they can re-use to ensure optimum utilisation. Based on this review, the Sakhi along with the members of the household (usually women) work towards charting a plan to re-allocate and use water for essential practices. This was identified as one of the most – widely adopted techniques and generated positive responses amongst the women's groups in both the Blocks.



"I sat with each one of the women from selected HHs and understood how they use their water for each activity like cooking, washing, toilet usage etc. It is an essential exercise as we only get a limited amount of water in this village. A lot of HHs were throwing away waste water after a single use. The exercise provides them a perspective on their own usage, helping them allocate it better. While some used the water for kitchen garden leading to additional nutrient, for some it was simply more availability of water for a longer period of time.

Swapnali, from our village has a 9-member household, with water budgeting she was able to allocate more water for essential tasks and cut down on wastage. On an average in this village, each member consumes around 30 - 35 litres* of water per day. Managing in such low quantities is a tough but necessary task.


- Arogya Sakhi, Bhatshirpura Village,
Kalamb Block, Osmanabad

*Pune city stands at 352 liters per person for one day

Social and Behavioural Changes for Improved Hygiene and Sanitation

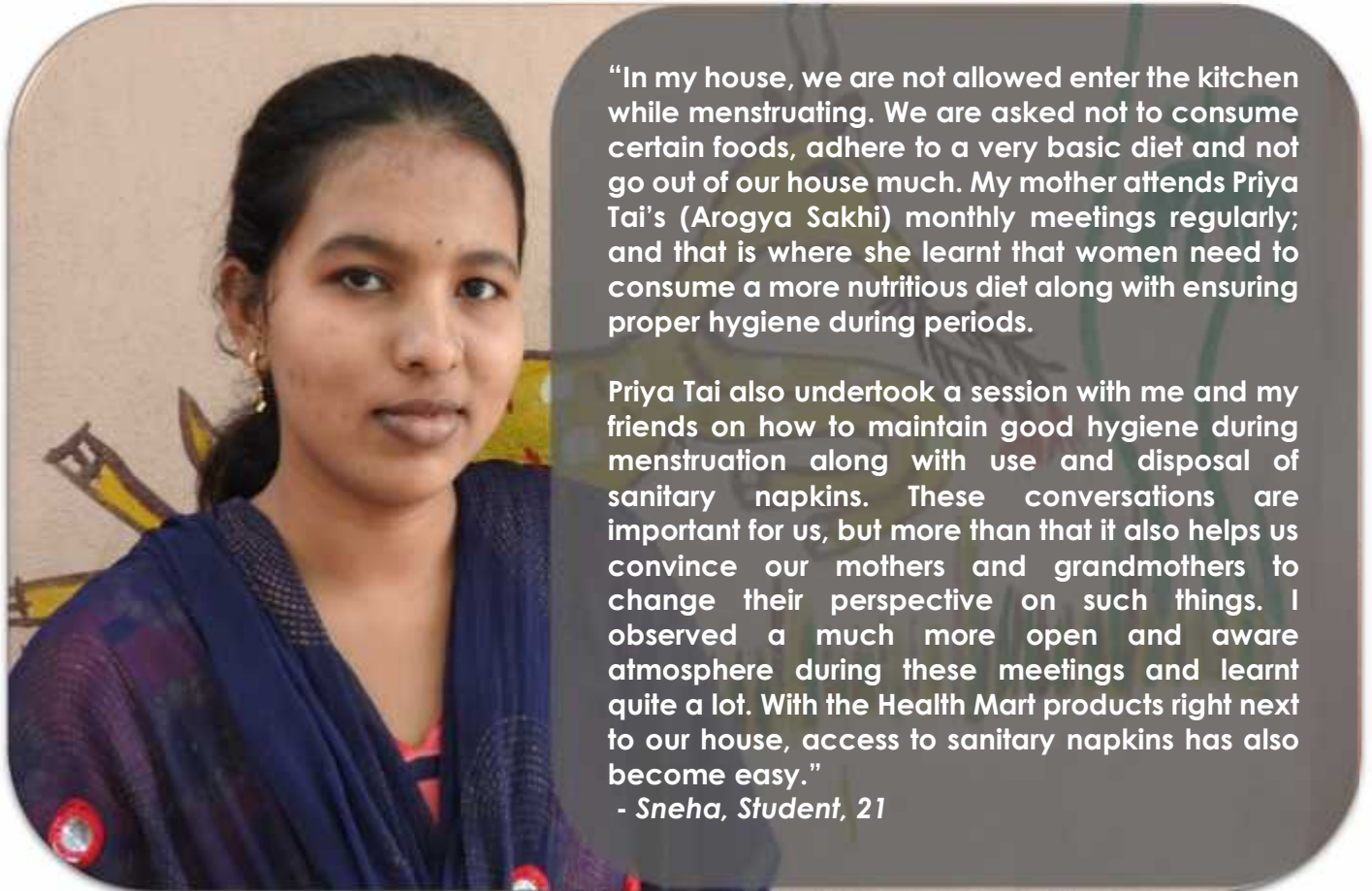
To promote better WASH practices, the Sakhis were provided with Information Education and Communication (IEC) and Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) materials during their induction training and these were used by them in their community interactions. Use of pamphlets on Government schemes for water management, building blocks kits for generating hand wash awareness, six box puzzles – for hand washing and Menstrual Hygiene Management Booklets were the commonly used tools. These IEC and SBCC materials were utilized to generate awareness and impart knowledge on project related objectives to the Arogya sakhis, and then through them to the 10,000 families, and their schools and Anganwadis.

- **Household Level:** Through monthly meetings, and partnership with ASHA and Anganwadi workers, regular use of Hand wash was promoted in all the villages. Usage of toilet and the disadvantages of open defecation were advocated using the IEC materials provided in all the HHs. Prevalence of Health Marts also helps in improving accessibility towards necessary WASH products.
- **Schools and Anganwadis:** Each Sakhi invested time to build a rapport with the school children from her village school and inculcate good practices. Under this initiative, 28 hand wash stations were installed in schools through convergence under the SBM (G) Scheme.

A photograph showing several children in a primary school using a handwash station. The station is made of white PVC pipes and has a blue water container at the top. The children are standing in a line, and one child is actively washing their hands. The background shows a simple outdoor setting.

Children in a Primary School in Ambanagar in Deoni Block use the handwash station installed in the school. The Sakhi engages with the children using IEC tools and games to promote importance of hygiene. Liquid handwash has been observed as having a high rate of adoption amongst kids, encouraging good practice.

Stirring Conversations Across Generations



Menstrual hygiene awareness was one of the focal responsibilities of the Arogya Sakhi. In a community facing acute water shortage, menstrual hygiene takes a low priority. This poses a threat to the health of women as well as young girls. The Sakhi visited school girls as well as adolescent girls in the village to encourage dialogue and discussion on what is considered 'safe menstrual practices'.

These discussions revolved around stressing the importance of having a nutritious diet, breaking myths around menstruation and also addressing the issue of hygienic disposal of waste. These are small conversations have a long-lasting impact, once the word travels and good practices become the norm. This has a considerable social impact as culturally this is a taboo topic involving orthodox views and practices.



Woman displaying a flash card used to spread awareness about the side-effects of open defecation. Many of these games were used in the meetings to encourage discussion on good hygiene practices



IEC materials provided to the Sakhis help in pictorially depicting the spread of diseases. This helps women identify and avoid the spread of communicable and water-borne diseases in their household and village

Use of IEC Material for Hygiene Promotion

Improved awareness of households and community on water source protection

Regular Sanitary Surveillance in Villages

“Prevention is better than cure” is the principle behind conducting regular Sanitary Surveillance Exercises. Ensuring that water sources are well maintained and free from contamination is an effective step towards sustaining good health and hygiene. The Sanitary Surveillance exercise involves periodic monitoring of communal water sources along with maintenance of overall hygiene in the village. The process is headed by Arogya Sakhi along with other women in the village, in which they clean the source area or storage spaces from inside, to ensure water safety at the preliminary level. The Arogya Sakhis and the supervisors played a crucial role in conducting the process of the sanitary surveillance along with 5-10 women leaders and the “*Jal Doot*” who is the Panchayat appointed responsible person for water source maintenance and upkeep.

Through Sanitary Surveillance, 172 sources have been cleaned and 102 community water sources have been verified as safe water sources. This awareness and vigilance with regards to sanitation and water quality translates to lower risk of water-borne diseases and improved hygiene standards.



Women from Karanjalla village in Kalamb Block stand in front of the water tank, which they collectively cleaned and purified from inside with support from their village Arogya Sakhi (far right). Their next aim is to construct a Soak Pit near the water tank to capture run-off water,

How Well Do You Know Your Water Source?

Sanitary Surveillance also allows for innovative solutions to common everyday problems. It ensures there is an informal monitoring mechanism in place, which is later adopted and continued by the community.



Women from Shelkadhanora village stand in front of the water tank to fill water for domestic use. Previously, this water was used for consumption and cooking by the villagers. It was observed that the colour of the water was visibly different. It was also resulting in food discoloration and minor digestion related issues.

The Arogya Sakhi along with the Panchayat members sent the water for quality testing. The water tested positive for impurities and was deemed unfit for drinking and cooking purpose. The Arogya Sakhi took the onus of spreading the message to not use the water for consumption through meetings, and posting signage on

the tank, marking it unsafe for drinking. The villagers now consciously use this water only for non – consumption purposes and have got the other sources in the village tested as a precautionary measure.

Health Marts: Bringing Last Mile Connectivity of WASH and Health-related Products

'Health Marts' were introduced as a medium for improving access to necessary health and sanitation products in the villages. The Arogya Sakhi becomes a point of contact for all the basic health and nutritional necessities to families. Sold at the village level, the health mart kits include products such as antiseptic baby soap and lotions, plastic vermi beds, sanitary napkins, solution for chlorination, hand wash and other necessities. Minimum Nutrition Packets (MNPs) are also included in the kits.

Outreach Model: The Sakhis were supported in setting up Health Mart either in their homes or any place of convenience in the village. One of the major drivers behind establishing Health Marts in each village was to provide the basic necessities in the village itself, removing dependency the women need not be dependent on the market. This improves accessibility of basic products, develops of entrepreneurial skills of the Sakhi along with leading to more awareness in the village. It also helps the Sakhi achieve her goal of reaching out to more members from the community.

Impact: The establishment of Health Marts has had a positive impact on the hygiene practices esp. with regards to menstruation. It has been observed that more women and girls choosing sanitary napkins over cloth usage.

Output: 89 Health Mart were set up across the different villages and 5380 products worth USD 17,640 have been sold since the project inception. The maximum demand was for Minimum Nutrition Packets (1,560 units sold) and sanitary napkins (1,050 packets sold).



This is what a basic Health Mart kit looks like. The most common items include sanitary napkins, "Medichlor" for water purification, hand-wash, and care products for children below 5 years. Interviews revealed women now reach out to the Sakhi for buying sanitary napkins as they are easily accessible.

Also seen in the picture is the UNICEF WASH IEC/SBCC Kit Bag used by the Arogya Sakhi.

Greywater Management

Reusing of waste water was identified to be very rare by the households with only 17% households responding positively for reusing water for domestic purposes such as kitchen gardens, toilet flushing or cleaning backyards.

Greywater or waste water refers to the non-fecal waste water originating from kitchens, bathrooms, and cleaning processes. This water is expected to be recycled and reused. Due to inefficient management, this water when stagnated can lead to numerous health issues. Hence, to minimize or avoid health complications it is necessary to treat this water before letting it out into the surrounding. Waste water can be managed at the household level itself by soaking it into the ground. It can also be treated at a distance from the settlement. Soak Pits, recharge pits, kitchen garden were all different means of greywater management. The villages were provided information on effective greywater management through their respective Arogya Sakhis.

Kitchen Gardens were also supported by the excess runoff from washing utensils and clothes. Households with enough space for a small garden adopted this activity, and additionally, households that lack sufficient space were provided with small plastic containers to grow vegetables or utilize community public spaces like in Anganwadi and Schools. In this technique, productive use of water assists building



Run - off from waste water is being utilised directly for plants and kitchen garden



Simple pipe takes waste water from kitchen and provides water for small plants instead of being wasted

Construction of Soak Pits at Household and Community Level

Construction of Soak Pits at household level was encouraged to manage waste water at the household level and ensure hygiene is maintained by capturing the runoff waste water.

Soak pit is a covered, porous-walled chamber that allows water to slowly soak into the ground; it is appropriate for rural and suburban settlements. It is filled from top to bottom with stones of various sizes, which help in distributing the water throughout the pit evenly. The waste water let into the pot is filtered and passes underground through the perforated pot surface. This is useful mainly for personal/family at household level; on a community level, such soak pits can be installed in the vicinity of wells, hand pumps, etc. to soak up the stagnated water around them.

This activity proved to be highly successful as it allowed convergence of funds from the government flagship programme of Swacch Bharat Mission (Gramin) and MGNREGA which encourages cost effective and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation solutions.

In total, 1392 Soak Pits were constructed under w-SHARP. The long-term benefits of soak pits are visible through a reported increase in the groundwater levels along with prevention of water borne diseases by soaking up stagnant water.



Soak Pit constructed at community water source to avoid stagnation of water around the source

Leaving Positive Imprints on the Community



Top: Bhatshirpura Village in Kalamb Block faces acute water shortage. The women have now come up with a system to allocate 75 litres of water per HH from the tanker. This budgeting helped the whole village and ensure a fair and equitable system is in place. 300 Soak Pits were constructed in the village, facilitated by the Arogya Sakhi. This reflects the changes that can emerge in a community once every member gets involved, aware and proactively engaged in decision making.

Left: Soak Pit outside a house in Nagral, Deoni Block. Apart from proper waste water disposal, this ensures hygiene is maintained by capturing excess run – off water, keeping the village streets clean.

Project Monitoring and Promotion Tools: The Seven Star Model

The "Seven Star Model" was developed as a monitoring and promotion tool focusing on positive deviance to be used by the Arogya Sakhi. It helps to measure the impact of the project at the household level, and it is derived from the concept of inculcating good practices through reward and recognition. It is a unique concept designed to promote water, sanitation and hygiene practices amongst the community. The stars are indicative of all the measurable outcomes of the project. Each star in the 7 stars stands for the achievement of the project objectives, or a step towards meeting these objectives.

The Arogya Sakhi hands out a star to the household once it achieves any of the goals listed out. The star is given in a small local ceremony where neighboring women are called and the star is conferred to the particular HH. This motivates the other women to have more and more stars and also motivates the receiver of the star to maintain the existing stars and achieve more. This brings motivation amongst the other households to work towards attaining the remaining stars, thereby helping them achieve a certain level of health, sanitation, and hygiene. The women place their stars in the doors outside their homes and the goal for all households to be "7-star households" eventually leading to a 7-star village.



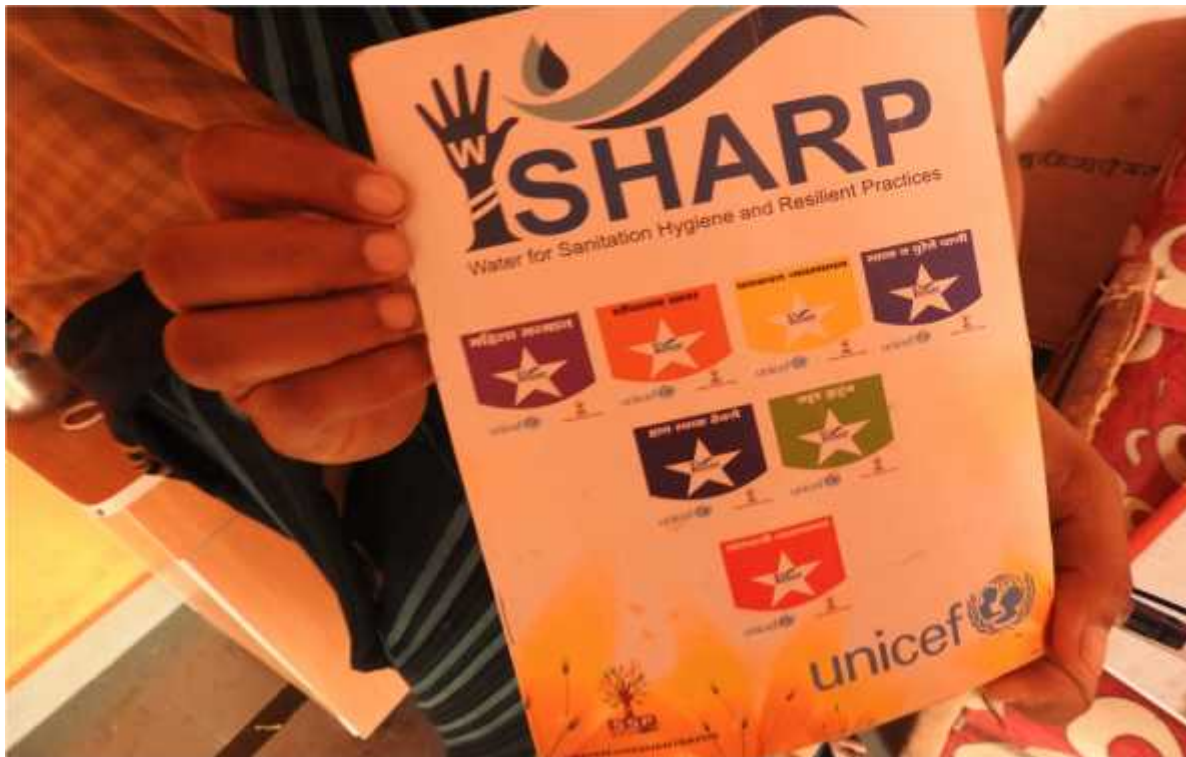
Prajakta proudly displays the seven stars she has earned for her HH



Monthly register maintained by Arogya Sakhi to ensure regular monitoring

Seven Star Household Parameters

- ★ **Hand Wash:** HH which demonstrate regular handwashing, safe cooking practices and hygiene maintenance
- ★ **Drinking Water Safety:** HH which use clean, boiled drinking water, proper storage and handling of drinking water
- ★ **Grey Water Management:** HH which Demonstrate proper management of grey water using soak pits and kitchen gardens
- ★ **Women health and Hygiene:** HH which demonstrate good practices regarding women health and menstrual hygiene.
- ★ **Waste Disposal:** Proper segregation and disposal for HH waste
- ★ **Toilet Usage:** HH which use toilets and do not practice open defecation
- ★ **Nutrition Awareness:** HH which follow healthy and nutritious good dietary habits, use of kitchen garden, regular vegetables in diet





"Improved community resilience towards food security and productive use of water through better allocation"

Sustained water for productive use in animal husbandry and kitchen gardening during lean period

2000 Women farmers trained on Climate Resilient farming

Promotion of Climate resilience farming

Improving Community Resilience through Productive Use of Water for Animal Husbandry and Kitchen Gardening

Kitchen Gardening: To reduce dependency on purchasing vegetables, especially during this lean period, there has been a strong emphasis given to the promotion of kitchen gardens and of growing fruit and vegetable crops in the farms. It targets the two major objectives of utilizing waste water in the households along with increasing the nutritional intake of families. A small kitchen garden in each household, introduces nutritional diversity in the daily food intake. This also helps in increasing the nutritional diversity in the daily food intake of families. To address nutritional needs and promote easier access to fresh vegetables – one to one interactions, workshops and meetings have created an impact of approximately 1200 kitchen gardens across Deoni and Kalamb. Almost twenty of which are created in public spaces such as schools, Anganwadis and other public spaces in the village & at least seven of which are terraced kitchen gardens.

Fodder Plantation: Promotion of Azola fodder and hydroponic farming has been promoted through the climate resilience farming model to prevent distress livestock selling during drought conditions. Azola is promoted as it has medicinal properties and replenishes the livestock's need for excess water. It also has high protein content and allows for better and improved quality of milk in cattles.

12 Azola fodder plantations and 37 hydroponic installations have been set-up across the two blocks.



Small backyard kitchen garden developed like these are common sites along the villages



Protein rich Azola fodder plantation in Deoni Block

Kitchen Gardening Taking Strong Roots

It was observed during the project's awareness and activities that most women were keen to establish kitchen garden, but faced an issue of not having adequate seed available for the kitchen garden. Upon observing the benefits from their first kitchen garden, the women reached out to the Arogya Sakhis of Deoni Block for assistance. They asked for the necessary seeds and fertilizers to practice organic kitchen gardening in their homes. Since many women had the same issue of availability and access, the Arogya Sakhis came up with the idea of developing a kitchen garden kit. This was developed to encouraged them to continue the practice.

The kitchen garden kit was inclusive of all the nutritious local seeds with organic fertilizer and was developed at the cost of 50 rs. per kit. It consisted of 12 varieties of seeds along with 3 kg vermi-compost fertilizers. A total of 300 kitchen garden kits have been distributed in Deoni Block. The procurement of seeds and vermi-compost fertilizer was done from an SSP trainer, Mrs. Vaishali Ghuge. Women who received these kitchen garden kits now store the seeds themselves and acquire vermi-compost from their own beds or from nearby practicing women farmers.

In 50 rs/- the women sustained the drive to maintain a healthy, organic and nutritious diet for their household along with avoiding the need to buy vegetable from the market.



1470 Kitchen Gardens have been set-up by individual households for self – consumption. Apart from this, community kitchen gardens have been established in Anganwadi, school compound etc. to raise encourage consumption of vegetables.

Spreading Nutritional Awareness through Peer Learning

'Poshan Melava' or a nutrition fair is an opportunity for women to meet, socialize and learn about nutritious food and healthy eating habits through information exchange. Under the W-SHARP project, the Arogya Sakhis were provided training on the importance of nutrition and how to disseminate nutritional awareness in their villages. After attending block level trainings provided by SSP Master trainer and Nutrition Specialists, the Arogya Sakhis conducted a 'Poshan Melava' in their respective Anganwadis. Anganwadi was chosen as the venue, as this targeted one of the five criteria of beneficiaries i.e. households with children below 5 years of age. Along with the Anganwadi Sevika (worker), all the mothers were part of this event as well. The nutritious value and multiple uses of grains, benefits of Take Home Rations (THR). Women came with various food preparations, all made using the THR provided in the Anganwadi.

This is an example of successful adoption of good practice through peer learning and sharing. Sunita, one of the young mother who was present, mentions the impact of such events: *"Initially, nobody would consume the Take Home Rations (THR) grains and would feed them to the livestock or give them away. During the 'Poshan Melava' we learnt their numerous nutritional benefits along with the different ways we can cook them. This way, we are able to provide nutritious food and tasty food for our kids as well"*.



Different recipes shared after the session on Nutritional Awareness in Khurda Village Anganwadi



Women during the 'Poshan Melava' event in Nagtirthwadi Village Anganwadi

Women-Led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF)

Climate Variability and Food Insecurity: Climate change has adversely affected the food security of the region which is deficit in crop production. The Economic Survey Report projected a 22 per cent drop in food grain production with diminishing rains and drought anticipations that will impact both kharif and rabi crops. However, the concern is regarding the decreasing area under food crop cultivation which states that cash crops are preferred to food crops by farmers. Food insecurity among households due to cultivation of cash crops instead of food crops and high incidence of malnutrition and anemia among women and children is affecting their health. Through the Climate Resilient Farming Model, less water-intensive food crops and vegetables are being promoted. By providing climate resilient training to the women farmers, the W-SHARP Project builds their capacities as decision makers in their households.

Characteristics of Climate Resilient Farming: Based on approaches that sustain farming under adverse climatic conditions and provide sustainable livelihood solution to small and marginal farmers, the following farming practices are promoted:

1. Use of bio-pesticides over chemical pesticides such as dasparni ark, neem ark, use of traps, etc.
2. Use of bio-fertilizers like cow dung, slurry, NADEP, vermi-compost
3. Use of local/traditional seeds (germination test and use)
4. Diversification of food crops to five to seven varieties (pulses, cereals, vegetables, oilseeds)
5. Water management systems through the use of drip, sprinklers and drain pipes as well as conservation structures such as farm ponds, farm bunds/trenches, rainwater harvesting, well recharge.



Women undergoing training on Seed Fertilisation Process



Vermi-Compost rapidly replacing chemical fertilizers

Food Security and Nutritional Enhancement through Mixed Crop Farming

Women farmers are encouraged to gain cultivation rights to grow food crops. This usually begins with the women initially cultivating on a small piece of land. On the given piece of land, the women lead the complete decision making around what to cultivate, what to sell, what to keep and eat, and where to sell. On the acquired piece of land, usually to start with half or one acre, women practice water-efficient, bio - farming cultivation of vegetables, millets, cereals and pulses through mixed cropping, diversifying to 5-7 food crops and by increasing crop cycles. Crop diversification increases household food security levels and reduces risk considerably in the short term. Access to targeted credit and diversification of livelihoods includes livestock, agri-allied enterprises and small trades/businesses contribute to more sustainable incomes.

Additionally, special efforts to promote livelihoods/ventures around agriculture, land, water, energy protection of natural resources affected by climate change such as community/group enterprises around bio inputs (vermi-compost, bio pesticides etc), goat rearing, seed banks, vegetable selling groups, dairy, and poultry diversify income sources and again reduce risks of the farmers. Over a given period of time, it is expected that family members realize the benefit of cultivation of food crops vis a vis cultivation of "only cash crops", which have high input cost as well as are highly dependent on external volatile markets

2000 women farmers have been trained till date on mixed crop farming, and 1735 farmers are practicing on their one - acre land; yielding different varieties of vegetables for self – consumption as well as for the local markets.



Sulbha Bhalchandra uses her own organic compost in her one – acre field. The land generated her a yield of 7 different varieties of vegetables – most of which is sold at the market. She also provides vermi - compost to nearby farmers, providing support to other women farmer

One-Acre Mix Crop Model: Crop Diversity Leading to Nutritional and Financial Security

Sunita Jadhav, 45 was a regular member the village meeting held by Prajakta, Arogya Sakhi of Kherda Village in Osmanabad district. She attended the village level training on bio - farming and one-acre model. After undertaking the training, she along with her son and husband, implemented mixed cropping in 1 – acre land in May 2018.

While they have their own borewell, the water level is relatively low and is not sufficient especially during the lean period. To cope with this scarcity, the bore is operated four times a day for fifteen minutes, and water usage is optimised through drip irrigation across the field. This provides the crops enough water for survival along with effective water conservation.

Following the one- acre model, their farm land is a mix of a large variety of vegetables and pulses. They presently cultivate chillies, tomatoes, brinjals, ridge gourd and coriander as intercrop, which made them considerable profits during the recent price surge for coriander. The family initially brought seeds and saplings from a nearby nursery and now store seeds from each harvest for the next planting season. They also cultivate jowar mainly for animal fodder. With training provided through the W-SHARP project, now they use only organic manure produced at home.

The family begets an average of 15 kg chillies, 2 crates of brinjals, 1 crate tomatoes, and 2 crates of ridge gourd at each harvest. While some is kept aside for HH consumption - rest is sold off. Their son, Ajit Jadhav sells the produce directly at district market. Prior to implementing one-acre model, the Jadhav family members worked as farm laborers for a monthly income of ₹5000. Since, the inception of their one acre model the family earns an average of ₹8000 per week. Ajit goes to sell the produce to the market 4 times in in a week. They were also able to diversify their income sources as now they purchased 2 more cows which yield 25-26 litres of milk daily.

“Adoption of the one – acre model along with organic practices has brought an improvement in our standard of living and, at the same time we are eating nutritious and pesticide – free food”.



Sunita, with her son who has left his daily wage job to assist her and her husband following the positive results of the one acre model



Tomatoes and Chilli in their One-acre mix crop farm

स्वच्छता राखा.



Mrs. Survase, 35 from Deoni Block stands in front of a sign which translates to "Maintain Cleanliness". A graduate, she was able to work for the first time in her life after marriage when she became an Arogya Sakhi.

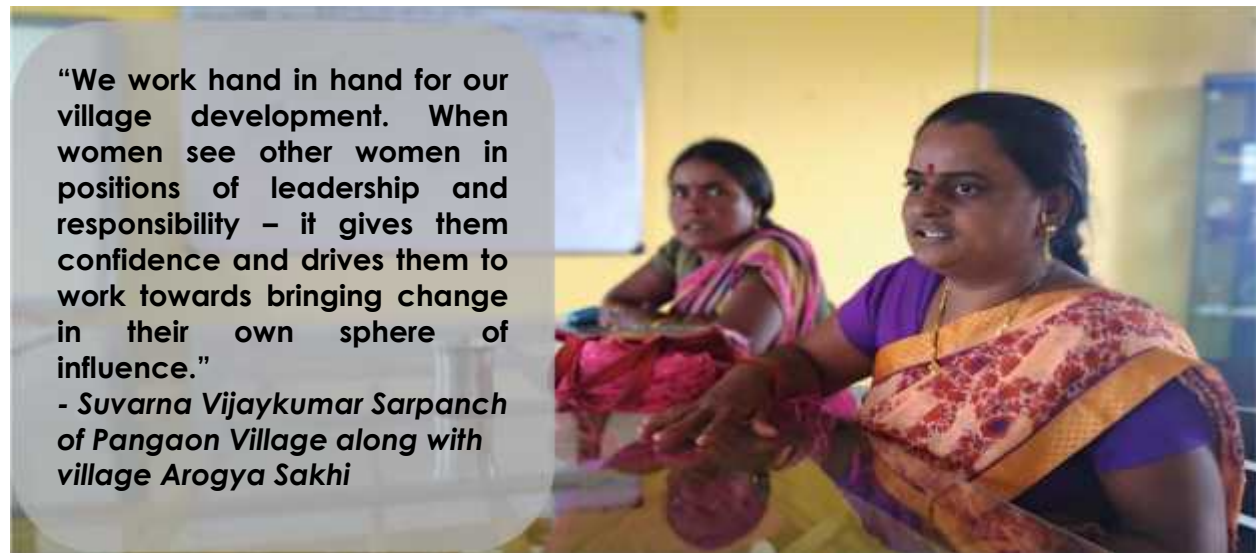
"Bringing Change Through Participation, Networking And Convergence"

Empowering Women Leaders

Increased Participation and Networking In Local Governance

Integration With Various Government Schemes

Bringing Change Through Participation, Networking And Convergence



Women Leadership: Working Together to Bring Change

“I have been serving as the Sarpanch of Pangaon since 2015, while Mangal has been working as Arogya Sakhi in our village since January, 2019. She has worked towards the progress of sanitation, menstrual hygiene, and bio - farming practices in the village. So far, 20 soak pits and 5 kitchen gardens have been added to our village under the W-SHARP Project. We have worked collectively to increase women participation in Gram Panchayat by encouraging them to get out of their homes and participate in the village affairs. This was a big step towards increasing the participation of women in local governance matters”.

The Sakhi also conducts sanitary surveillance in our village once a month which further strengthens our water safety by inspecting all water sources for plausible contamination. We have also appointed two village workers to clean the water tanks once a month. The health mart has increased access to us villagers to various health products at affordable rates. The ‘Seven Star’ campaign is another novel idea that has led increased awareness among people regarding various health and sanitation issues. Today, there are 25 households with seven stars in our village.

The Sakhi relieves some of my work by looking after affairs of village sanitation, menstrual hygiene, and waste water management practices. I am grateful to her for that. The most important achievement for us has been when women of our village came together to change the direction of the water supply pipe to roadside which was originally planned to go through a nullah (drain carrying waste water). It was the true demonstration of women's power in our village and it further bolstered the will power of our women to participate in the day to day affairs of the village.” – **Suvarna Vijaykumar Chauhan, Pangaon Sarpanch, Kalamb Block, Osmanabad District**

Increased Participation and Networking in Local Governance

Power of Positive Influence

At 26 years of age, Vishal is one of the youngest Sarpanchs (elected village leaders) in Kalamb Block. He has been a strong advocate and supporter of the work being done around risk informed programming and activities around building community resilience.



Vishal was invited by SSP to speak with other Sarpanch about the adoption of activities done in his village, Karakjakalla and their positive impact on the community.

He is viewed as a true influencer for the community, as his contributions have encouraged other Sarpanchs to also address issues regarding water scarcity and adopt climate-resilient farming. This is a strong reminder that the success of any project is directly linked to support it receives from the local governance structure.

Stronger Together

Women from Hasegaon (K) village have become regular visitors to the monthly Grama Sabha village meetings. They began participating upon insistence from their Arogya Sakhi. Urmila, from the village states:

"We participated in the Grama Sabha meeting for the first time in 2018. We have a supportive Sarpanch, but none of us ever thought of going together to voice our opinions. Our Arogya Sakhis encouraged us to start attending the meetings.

Now, we prepare our agendas and points of concern beforehand. This has helped us gain access to clean water for schools, repair public toilets and establish an R.O. (Reverse Osmosis) water filter. All this would not have been possible had we not gone and participated in the meetings!"



Convergence of Funds through National and State Flagship Schemes

Building linkages with stakeholders in the village, block and district level is important for aspect for the success of the project. All the activities are conducted with support from local stakeholders, government as well as private bodies. An existing support system is established through SSP's relationship with government officials, apart from this active involvement in the various village and block level meetings This brings awareness regarding upcoming schemes and programs as well as assistance in leveraging funds.

National and State Flagship schemes focus on meeting national targets. They provide subsidiaries for certain services to encourage village upliftment. Often due to lack of awareness regarding processes and procedures, people are deterred from availing these schemes. The w-SHARP project builds bridges between the existing schemes and the community members which are eligible, helping meet national targets and village goals.

Under the w-SHARP Project, a total of USD 8,97,539 (INR 6,35,00,000) has been converged under the SBM(G), MGNREGA and via ATMA linkages. These were mainly used for constructing soak pits, individual toilets, and repair existing water sources.

“We are in regular contact with Coordinators and Arogya Sakhis from the w-SHARP Project. We assist them in information regarding govt. schemes and procedures for their villages. Many times, there are eligible people who are not able to avail any of the benefits, the Arogya Sakhi help us in reaching out to all those people.

In turn, we also utilize their last mile outreach and knowledge of each and every village.



There was a social audit regarding all the developmental activities in the villages and we invited 13 Arogya Sakhis to be part of the activity. Presently we are also planning for the next phase of SBM (G) phase II and we envision their cooperation to meet the necessary targets for the villages”.

– **Mr. Manoj Raut, Block Development Officer (Deoni Block), Govt. of Maharashtra**

Fostering Crucial Partnerships to Work Towards a Resilient Community



"Here, at the Agricultural Technology and Management Agency (ATMA) we are responsible for agriculture-related technology dissemination at the district level. It also includes integrating research along with assistance in marketing of products.

We have held multiple demonstrations and training for women farmers from SSP projects along with meeting agricultural experts for problem solving. They provide us with the platform to disseminate newer methodologies and techniques faster. Our collaboration is unique and allows us the space to reach out to HHs directly.

– Mr. J.V. Shinde, Joint Director, AATMA (Kalamb Block), Govt. of Maharashtra

KVK, is an integral part of the National Agricultural Research System (NARS). It aims at assessment of location-specific technology modules in agriculture and allied enterprises, through technology assessment, refinement, and demonstrations. KVKs have been functioning as Knowledge and Resource Centre of agricultural. KVK assisted the W-SHARP project objectives through demonstrations and training on organic farming, Azola plantation, seed cultivation and vermi compost bed preparation.

"We have been working with SSP since 2007, and we have a robust partnership with regards to building food security and encouraging the use of new technologies for farming. KVK works in collaboration with SSP for better implementation of their activities on ground through the medium of Arogya Sakhi network. A recent example of it being horticulture seeds distributed to women for their kitchen gardens. This also helps us work towards our common goal of Nutrition Security".

- Mrs. V. K Marvalikar, Home Science Expert at KVK, Tuljapur office



Lessons Learnt Through w-SHARP

The integral processes and model of the w-SHARP project offers important lessons for other programmes and practitioners.

- **Use of formative research to inform programme design:** Understanding the context, knowledge, attitudes and practices around enabling the provision of WASH services is critical. This includes assessing the acceptability of programmatic activities and considering how to best integrate their use. The more contextually appropriate the messaging, the higher the compliance with community guidelines.
- **Integrate community participation platforms into a wider approach on leadership among community groups:** Female community leaders can convene, monitor and be representative of marginalized societal groups.
- **Develop strong communication/awareness messages and use multiple complementary channels:** A communication strategy based on formative research should be developed and implemented to achieve wider recognition and better understanding of the programme and its benefits for health and development. Community members must see the use of programme activities as an intervention supported by the government and health professionals, not only community facilitators.
- **Embed community participation:** Involvement and leadership of women's leadership is crucial for programme uptake. Community facilitators should actively inform village members about the desirable effects of the programme. Awareness raising in the community and testimony from beneficiaries about improvements to health and nutrition can be beneficial.
- **Invest in district level capacity:** Strengthening district-level capacities of leaders of SHGs, other collectives, village frontline workers and members of panchayats to implement district plans will help translate state policy goals into tangible actions.
- **Monitor and follow up regularly:** Routine analysis of monthly data and supportive supervision visits are important to assess the quality of the data and identify reporting errors. Localized climate resilient indicators should be included in local and national management information systems to track progress more effectively.
- **Promoting sustainable Menstrual Hygiene Management:** The promotion of better menstrual hygiene practices also encapsulates the issues of responsible waste disposal. With an increasing number of women and adolescent girls making the shift to sanitary napkins, it is essential that the issues of hygienic as well as ecologically safe disposal is also addressed. Traditional practices of burning might not be sustainable in the longer run and alternatives such as incinerators or deep burials should be further explored.

Clearing The Path for Quality Scale-Up

The scale up journey of w-SHARP has revealed several important opportunities and impediments for sustainable scaling up options. The current model of social mobilisation is the result of nearly two decades of engagement in the region, through several projects (cost intensive) with community equipping women with information and skills that build their confidence to be leaders to catalyse development. Any attempt at replication should primarily focus on the process rather than product. It is about how women acquire the ability to make strategic choices in a context where it was previously denied or was available to them due to socio-economic systems within the society.

A few significant points emerge from the one – year journey undertaken by w-SHARP

- **Greater WASH integration into overall programming** – Water features centrally across many facets of community resilience in terms of the need for increasing water availability, reducing demand, or increasing water use efficiency. Water insecurity is often the main bottleneck in the WELF nexus. Thus, the focus should be centralized around Creating more with less and allocating scarce resources where they add the highest value to communities.
- **Contribution to behavior change** – Utilizing and promoting the experiences of success stories and best practice will create a demand from other farmers. Seeing a system working on neighboring farm/s remains very convincing, highlighting the need for demo projects, study tours and other forms of knowledge transfer for farmers, local stakeholders and policy makers, where these forms of knowledge transfer are facilitated at the local level. Integrated solutions and lessons learned are showcased to farmers, entrepreneurs and policy makers by actively facilitating visits and study tours.
- **Economic growth of the most marginalized farmers** – Utilize economic opportunities for the most marginalized female members in the communities. Common land divided to 'landless' female agricultural workers for cultivation and increased individual and economic prosperity if long term viable payment models are in place.
- **Equitable distribution of water across at the community level** – Over exploitation of water for agricultural purposes and practices will continue to be detrimental to securing household water security without equitable distribution channels.
- **Leadership Capacities** – Up-scaling depends further on knowledge transfer skills development and increasingly embedding female farmers into leadership roles. Economic viability and accessibility could have a remarkable impact on knowledge transfer and uptake: pioneering farmers financed and successfully operated will be a vision for future capacity building and community resilience.

- **Equity issues related to the allocation of risk and opportunities** - Continuing to address equity issues and integrating knowledge across multiple levels pose opportunities and new additional challenges in scaling up. In principle, additional co-benefits might be realized, but this depends on higher water and energy efficiencies resulting in reduced overall consumption
- **Integrating the Water, Energy Land Food Nexus into respective government schemes** – Feedback loops between local on the ground experience (solutions operated at the scale of individual farms or communities), synergies with respective policies and funding schemes at government levels must be increasingly integrated. Often the concern raised that hinders scale up is the monitoring of success being limited to the local level but not addressing the overall outcomes at national level. Transfer and upscaling depend on the capability of farmers or communities to invest in socio-economic capital. However, the top-down approach by the government (to save water, improve sanitation) and the bottom up approach by farmers (searching for increased financial security) are not well aligned, and hence farmers don't always use the technology efficiently or in the way anticipated by policymakers/stakeholders. As a consequence, water insecurity may increase.
- **Coordinate and nurture diversified partnerships to support scale up:** Mobilize donors to address funding gaps and coordinated different civil society groups and non-governmental organizations to support implementation at district level. This coordinating role is demanding, requiring skills and resources, and should be planned and supported throughout the process.

Building a Culture of Sustainable Practices

“My son now asks me if I have washed my hands before eating” - Ashwini, Hasegaon (K) village

“I have helped 24 families build toilets in my village, I did not know I had the potential to help so many people through sheer knowledge and awareness of our rights” – Survase, Ambanagar

“Having a kitchen garden in my backyard helps me provide nutritious food to my family. I now know it is important to diversify meal for good health.” – Hirabai Yadav

“We wanted to establish a coordinated system of water collection and allow equal distribution of water, we have now decided to allocate 75 liters of water to each household. This allows better management and relations within the community” – Women group in Bhatshirpura village

“Our tongues would go black from this water, even the vegetables were dark colored. We got the water tested and the result showed it was unfit for drinking. It was a matter of taking things in our hands” - Women from Shelka Dhanora village

These are all voices from women facing climate change, drought and water scarcity at the forefront. Their lives are intertwined with the changing socio – political environment and it is important for them to be conscious decision makers in their own communities. Women are a critical link in bringing risk – informed planning to their communities through sustainable practices and awareness, and that encapsulated the goal that w-SHARP sets out to achieve.



100 Resilient Villages = One Step Closer To Resilience

The w-SHARP Project was envisioned as a pilot to understand the effectiveness of Risk Informed planning in the context of a region like Marathwada. Plagued with the burden of climate variability, these communities have been facing unique challenges on a regular basis. Communities that have been experiencing long – term water scarcity develop informal mechanisms to cope with the lack of basic services. This also leads to an alarming decline in hygiene, sanitation, and nutritional intake of the communities esp. the vulnerable groups like young children and adolescent girls.

Understanding this context, and designing a multi-faceted project of this nature requires a holistic support; Internally from the community, families, and children as well as externally from the local governing bodies, civil society organisations and technical institutions. Each activity has been designed keeping in mind the challenges, existing dynamics as well as the sustainability of each of the activities.

It is with this knowledge, that women were chosen to be at the forefront of this project. Be it the community leader, Arogya Sakhis, SSP coordinators and master trainers or the women farmers who were willing to learn new techniques or young women who came forward and listened with an open mind. These women learned and then demonstrated that there is strength in number and that small steps can yield bigger results.

At the moment 100 villages have been introduced to these risk informed practices, techniques, and skills which equip them to handle their present situation much better. At the same time, they have also provided solutions and challenges which allow one to redesign and reinvent what sustainable practices mean and how long do they last.

The goal of this project clearly states the aim is to establish “A gender responsive and resilient community with food and water security in drought prone areas”. With the w-SHARP project, it has been proven that a small step has been taken towards this goal, and these steps taken together lead to a healthier, stronger and more resilient community.

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