



Aatapi Seva Foundation



“Aatapi”- a Pali word derived from Buddhist’s teachings, meaning ‘ diligent hard work’!!

Aatapi Seva Foundation is a Social Developmental Institution, striving to facilitate holistic and sustainable development of the community. It works through nurturing strong and resilient Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and steering them towards ownership of Sustainable Community Development.

The Foundation works on four pillars of holistic development – Livelihoods Enhancement and Economic Development (focus on Women’s Empowerment), Inclusive and Holistic Education, Health and Well Being, and Water & Environment. All our programs are based on extensive discussion with the CBOs. The major constituencies include – Women, Children, Adolescents, Small and Marginal Farmers, and Persons with Disability. Women’s empowerment and working with the most marginalized are the key focus areas, cutting across all the programs.

Empowerment – Productivity – Equity – Sustainability are the guiding tenets of each of our community intervention program designs.

From Aatapi Team...

**Wishing all a
Happy Uttarayan
and Makar Sankranti!**



Extremely delighted and excited to share the First Quarterly Newsletter – SAMVAD - with our well-wishers. We release it on the auspicious occasion of "Makar Sankranti" - symbolic of community festivities.

We at Aatapi firmly believe in the values of "co-creation" and "growing together", which is possible through continuous learning and sharing. We make this humble attempt to share our work and stories of change... being brought in lives of communities where we work.

Wishing our readers, a Joyous and Compassionate 2020!

Collectivizing to Empower - Federation of Persons with Disability

Aatapi firmly believes that there needs to be a shift from a charity-based approach to a rights-based approach in work with Persons with Disability. Thus, our program aims to empower PwDs to lead a life of inclusion and dignity in the society. Harnessing Aatapi’s skills in Collectivizing, Capacity Building and Strengthening of community-based organizations, the program’s objectives include the following:

To create local leadership to access their rights as well as dignified space in society

To create Role models in health, education, social and economic empowerment through community-based rehabilitation.

To facilitate sensitizing and creating inclusive environment in community, government and Corporate

As part of this program, Aatapi encouraged the formation of small groups of Persons with Disability at the village level. While the initial activities, beginning 2011, focused on aligning entitlements such as disability certificates, identity cards, aids and appliances, pensions, social security schemes, school scholarships, they slowly became tools to reach the unreached PwDs. The ripple effect of this was the emergence of more than 40 community leaders in 20 villages who strove to bring persons with disabilities under one umbrella. Aatapi nurtured the emerging leadership and facilitated the shift from Beneficiary to Right holders, and from individual to collective rights. This led to the formation of the Viklang Parivartan Sangathan (VPS), a block level advocacy group of disabled persons for the rights of disabled persons.

The VPS today has now more than 1200 members, and is active in organizing PwDs, skilling them,

advocating, and making its presence felt in forums on inclusion, sports, accessibility, and other public domains. The sangathan was successful in transforming an incident of discrimination and denial of rights to a strong ratification of their rights. It is slowly emerging as a voice of PwDs and gaining a State wide stature.



Child Rights Awareness Rally

The Convention on the Rights of the Child protects the right of all children, everywhere, to be free from discrimination, violence and neglect. The Children Rights Group Gujarat (CRGG) supported by UNICEF, organized a Child Rights Rally, marking the 150th birth year of Mahatma Gandhi and completion 30 years of Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The rally focused on sharing information on Child Rights Convention and sensitize community on the children rights.

An interesting aspect of the rally was that it followed the Dandi Path of the famous Salt Satyagrah, and was planned in such a way that it touched all the location of Gandhiji's stay during their Dandi march. The rally was initiated from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad on Children's Day i.e. November 14, and culminated at Dandi on November 19, 2019.

Aatapi Seva Foundation participated in the rally and organized its program in Kareli on 16th November 2019. Kareli village has the significance of being a touch point of Gandhiji's Daandi Yatra. Nearly 200 children, adolescents, their parents and teachers, stakeholders of Aatapi's Tejasvi Bal Vikas Program and Adolescent Health Program, participated in the event. Dramas and Bhavai tactfully conveyed messages on Child Rights and kept the children and their parents mesmerized. Informative posters, dialogue delivery and question answer round were also organized. The program created a momentum for the community to step up its efforts to make children thrive, and to renew their commitment to protect and promote all their human rights.



Sam Pahal

Sam Pahal was a unique inclusive sports event organized in Gandhi Ashram, Kareli (Jambusar) with the objective of sensitizing communities towards principles of inclusion in various facets of life including sports. It created an inclusive platform for the community, persons with disability, urban and rural youth to interact, play together as a team and understand each other sensitively. More than 30 Person with Disability participated in the event, supported by students of Faculty of Social work, MS University as part of their Rural Camp at Aatapi, from 16th to 23rd December, 2019. The sports event channelized the energies of PwDs, and encouraged them. The program also generated interest and spark in the community to develop sensitivity towards inclusion of PwDs in every possible platform.

Visioning for Impact

Aatapi Seva Foundation was set up in November 2009, to meet the felt and unmet needs of community that emerged from the baseline surveys, corroborated by discussion with the communities. All programs were designed and planned, in consonance with these needs, supported by Aatapi's core values, vision and mission. "The visioning exercise serves to motivate and energize stakeholder, gain commitment and provide direction"

After 10 years of working with the communities, strengthening CBOs and introducing several models of community development, it was felt that the Foundation needed to take stock, revisit the vision, and strategically lay goals for the next decade keeping in view the experiences garnered, achievements, and changing milieu of the communities. A visioning exercise was therefore taken up with stakeholders – community partners, CBOs, experts, and the team of Aatapi. Two such two-day workshops were organized to arrive at visioning for 2030 – one for CBOs and one for the Team. During the



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exercise external subject experts validated the process and distilled the results with their insights. All the participants focused on their achievement as a group so far, where they wish to see the community in next decade considering the opportunities and role of stakeholders in the journey through group activities, role play and inspiring games. These exercises helped Aatapi to come up with Vision for 2030, re-focus on impacts and realign the team, gearing up to meet the challenges!!

Sahiyaru Prayan: Agriculture Tool Bank – Sustainable Solution for Farm Mechanization



Aatapi's engagement with farmers has included facilitation and capacity building for sustainable agriculture practices, knowledge management and innovations. At the same time, its core strategy of institution building, leadership strengthening and collaborations has led to the formation of a registered Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) - "Vivekanand Khedut Sangathan"(VKS) - with a membership of nearly 400 small and marginal farmers, in Jambusar. The FPO, now nearly 2 years old, supports the farmers in accessing subsidized agricultural inputs and technical knowledge, and addresses issues impacting their productivity and income.

One of the major inputs of the FPO since its inception is the Agriculture Tool Bank, established in partnership with Aatapi and our corporate partner – ECCL Company Ltd. It aims to address one of the major issues facing the small and marginal farmers in improving productivity i.e. lack Farm Mechanization. The size of land holdings and investment capacity of farmers both curtailed farmer's capacity to invest in farm mechanization tools like tractors and other machines. At the same time, women farmers' gap in knowledge and technical know-how and inaccessibility of farm machinery hampered in realigning their identity as farmers.

The tool bank, in phase one, with seventeen large and small tools and machines, caters to the needs of more than 500 small and marginal farmers in around 16 villages in Jambusar. We plan to further increase its reach and scope by adding more need-based equipment as well as registering more farmers. Another tool bank, designed specially to reduce drudgery of farm work by women farmers as well as agriculture laborers is in the offing. We hope, with continued efforts of the CBOs and Foundation, the productivity will go up with simultaneous reduction in drudgery.

Health Camps

As part of Health and Well Being program, Specialized health camps were conducted for Women members of Self-Help Groups, Adolescent girls and Pregnant and Nursing women in 22 villages of Jambusar. The camps were conducted with the support of the Mobile Health Van of PI foundation, wherein the general medical checkup, anthropometry, blood Pressure and Hb levels of women were assessed. The camps were organized with the aim of sensitizing women on their own health, improving their health conditions and linking them to government schemes. A total of 1050 women were covered. During the camps, medical advice, medicines to identified patients and refer to the specialized treatment was provided by health professionals of the Van.



The Change - Jamnaben Jadav

Jamnaben's Bhuri and Kalee (the buffalos) yield 16-18 litres of milk a day, translating to an income of almost twenty five thousand rupees a month. Something she did not dream of before Bhuri and Kalee came into her life. The seeds of prosperity were sown in 2010 when Aatapi suggested formation of self help group in their village. With constant encouragement and guidance, 20 women from their village, including Jamnaben, formed the Jay Ambe Swa Sahay Jooth. In 2010 Jamnaben took a bold step forward, when she procured a loan of 25,000 rupees to buy two buffaloes, again with Aatapi's guidance as SHGs such as hers were eligible for the Joint Liability Group Loans. Procuring the loan and buying the buffaloes was the first step. Aatapi insisted she attend the training programmes. Though sceptical, she put the simple tips she had learnt during the training programmes into practice, she saw the milk production soar.

With regular earnings from milk production, her debts were cleared, household expenses were manageable and her savings began to grow. Her earnings enabled her to enrol her daughter in a private school, she built a pucca house and repaid a long standing debt to the money lender and regained the rights to their mortgaged farm land. "I have prospered because of my buffaloes. And learnt from them. Whenever I'm confronted with a tough challenge, like the buffalo, I charge towards the storm."



The Change Maker - Asmitaben Shah

"I am alive because of the blessings of the women of our Ujaas Sahkari Mandali. They came in tractor loads, 400 and more hundreds of them, to see me when I was lying in hospital, my face smashed to bits." This is the story of our star performer Asmitaben Shah who handles our projects on women empowerment. Our projects on women empowerment have been named after her - Asmita.

"I was thirty-two and my son nine years, when my world crumbled. If Aatapi had not given me a job after my husband's sudden death in 2008, I would have been a discarded piece of furniture in a corner of the house."

"What is an NGO? I was reluctant, anxious, unsure if I could deliver.' You will learn on the job' everyone reassured me. I hated the slush and mud in the village. I came home and cried

for the first fifteen days, cursing my fate. Then I made up my mind, I had to do it, I would it for my son and myself. My family supported me. And I have never looked back. I am paying for my son's studies. He is studying BE Computer Science."

She sharpened her skills by doing post graduate studies in Social Work and taking a distance learning course in NGO Management. Working as a community mobiliser and now as a Senior Coordinator, she learnt the importance of women's empowerment and power of gainful livelihood, the subtleties of group formation and the power of the collective voice.

She mastered the art of drawing out the hidden potential of the women members of self help groups.

"I tell the women you have to take the driver's seat. I am behind you. Always there. That is the way the Aatapi trained me, allowing me to find my way, make my mistakes, stumble and get up again. Today I am not afraid of any challenge."

Women's empowerment is not a concept for Asmitaben, it is her journey from the solitude of her shell to embrace the multitude of the women at the heart of Aatapi's community work.



Vision

We envision an inclusive, empowered and just society, enabling equitable opportunities and a life of dignity of the most marginalized

Mission

To facilitate and empower local communities, especially the most marginalized, in realizing their latent potential, and to be active participants and owners of their Inclusive and Sustainable Development

Outreach

Starting with activities in four villages covering 300 families in 2008-09, the Foundation today reaches out to more than 2500 small and marginal farmers, >3000 socially-economically marginalized and single women, more than 1000 persons with disabilities, and >1500 adolescent and children in 53 villages in Jambusar and Ankleshwar blocks of Bharuch District, Gujarat.

The Way We Work

Aatapi strives to maximize a community's potential to leverage change by catalyzing their movement from self (swa)- to group (samuh) to collective (samuday)



Pillars of Development

