

# Annual Report

## Living Farms



Plot No- 836/2654, Ratnakar Bag-2, Tankapani Road, Bhubaneswar - 751018

## About Living Farms:

Living Farms, a non Government organization, has been partnering with Kondh communities since 2002 on reviving their traditional mixed cropping, and forest foods, asserting rights over their resources and improve their food and nutrition. The wise women and men from the community guided the revival process and contributed to widen and deepen the underlying ethos of their food system. Their food system reflects their social meanings, ecological realities, identity, their knowledge system, health and nutrition. It provides them varieties of safe and nutritious foods. Living Farms facilitated dialogue and critical reflection within community members on why and how of the revival of their food and agriculture system including asserting their rights over their habitat, initiation of a horizontal network amongst them and building up a strategic partnership with external resource persons and similar platforms.

The organisation does not limit its efforts to address immediate problems, but also has been accompanying the communities to respond to the challenges and help create linkages and solidarities between different local grassroots initiatives, academia, researchers, media, and the government, by fostering innovative dialogues in meaningful ways, valuing local and traditional knowledge and stimulate ethical action for the wellbeing of marginalized communities, and address ecological crisis.

One of our core strategies focuses on re-localized production and consumption, reviving and promoting poly-cultural farming; encouraging mixed cropping as necessary to improve household food and nutrition security. While it ensures location specific knowledge sharing, it facilitates peer networking among and between them, enhancing collective wisdom and actualizing community food sovereignty.



**Vision:**

We envisage a value system of responsible living /or living with ecological consciousness, considering oneself as part of the web of nature, harmony with all others, actively promoting respect and tolerance, building strong resistance to lust for wealth and power, active non-violent opposition to all kinds of inequity and injustice producing systems and processes, and local socialism.

Living Farms contributes to nurture a common space involving Adivasi and dalit women farmers, youth and small and marginal farmers from other communities along with co-strugglers/co-creators to build and strengthen solidarity with one another for a common vision of food sovereignty, in defence of our sovereign rights to food and the rights of mother earth.

**Mission:**

- i. Is to move towards localization of food system (re-localizing production, distribution, consumption, storage and shorter food miles), various kinds of “solidarity economy” through local production, sharing, exchange, and barter etc.
- ii. Is to ensure gender equity, youth participation and to contribute emergence of spaces of caring and sharing beyond the existing societal institutions based on patriarchy culture and paradigm of industrial society .
- iii. Also involves working towards ensuring that every person’s basic material requirements are taken care of by village-cluster forums and collectively define the, idea of enough and not indulge in continuous growth/increase.
- iv. Reviving of local health traditions as a strategy to relocate the power over the community’s health within the community itself where they understand their body through their knowledge systems and have access to multiple health care based on their needs as decided by them and not feel dependent on a given system. However, this does not mean that the biomedical health care is not required, as it is may be more effective and useful for the community for ailments that require urgent medical attention.
- v. Reviving vernacular architecture practiced by appropriate integration of local science and technology and external expertise as strategy towards the construction of habitations that would strengthen communal autonomy, internal solidarity and resilience.
- vi. Co-creating spaces to enable cross learning amongst the entire community and not just children, focusing on themes linked to their community life such as agro-ecology, health, nutrition, vernacular architecture, forests etc. The vision is to enable and strengthen self sufficient and resilient rural communities.

**Our Presence:**

246 villages of Bissam Cuttack, Muniguda, Chandrapur, Kashipur in Rayagada District and Nuagarh, R.Udayagiri, Mohana and Rayagarh of Gajapati District.

## Strengthening Local Food System:

Community members of 66 villages in Kashipur Block of Rayagada have identified food stress period and planned to have food during the stress period in the crop planning exercise. The strategies like continuing & adopting mix cropping, reviving back the disappeared millet varieties, application of organic manure to increase soil fertility were taken to reduce hunger period by increasing production and expanding sowing and harvest period.



Generally, the food stress period in the project area starts from month of June (when seed sowing starts) and continue till October, when new harvest comes. In this Kharif season barnyard millet, one variety of foxtail millet, one variety of finger millet, proso millet and one variety of little millet have been revived back by community members. The barnyard millet will be sown by early June and harvest will be started from the last week of August onwards. The finger millet will be harvested in the month of October. If all the crops will be damaged due to erratic rain, then little millet will be sown in the month of August onwards and will be harvested in the month of November.

2128 numbers of community members have collected these seed varieties from the seed bank and cultivated in this Kharif season. After harvest they will conserve these seeds for the next year and provide to more farmers. These farmers are continuing mix farming of millets, maize, pigeon pea and tubers in this kharif season on their dangar (hill) land. At the time of erratic rain fall or less rain fall, crops have not been damaged in the mix cropping field. Dietary diversity has been ensured through mix farming of cereals, pulses, oil seeds, tubers and vegetables. 543 farmers have started for relay cropping of maize and mustard, as Mahua tree is not available in their villages. Due to unavailability of Mahua trees, they don't get Tola oil, so depend upon market to meet their oil need. By cultivating mustard after harvest of maize, they have mustard oil to consume without going to the market.

2838 farmers (1178 male, 1660 female) were trained on the process of preparing organic manure by using locally available bio resources to increase their harvest. They have prepared and applied the organic manure in their main crop field in this kharif season.

3000 farmers were provided with 14 varieties of vegetable seeds and required training to prepare nutrition garden at their backyard to ensure availability of sufficient quantity of vegetables to increase dietary diversity. 33 numbers of Farmer groups have been formed involving 432 male and 381 female farmers. Community mobilisers are regularly organizing monthly meetings with farmer groups and helping them to adopt agro-ecological practices.

### Activities under taken:

- 33 numbers of community resource persons are trained on components of agro-ecological practices such as mixed farming, inter cropping, preparation & application of organic manure by using bio resources for soil fertility improvement, seed treatment, seed conservation, soil moisture maintain etc. in 3 rounds of training program.

- Community resource persons have organized training programs for farmers at village level. 1284 men and 1805 women are trained on agro-ecological practices.
- Crop planning is prepared in 66 villages involving 3089 farmers and as per the crop plan community members have revived back seeds which were disappeared from the villages.
- Organic manure training is organized for 1178 men and 1660 women farmers.
- 3000 farmers were supported with 14 varieties of vegetable seeds in this kharif season. 1400 farmers were supported with drumstick, papaya and lemon saplings (2 numbers each) for their nutrition garden.



- Two rounds of training program were organized for staff members and 33 CRPs on preparing land use plan.

- Land use plan is prepared in 38 villages and in this kharif season community members have started implementing the plan.

- 20 numbers of village level training programs were organized for 562 farmers (400 women and 162 men) on seed conservation and

establishment of seed bank. 33 numbers of seed banks are established for both vegetable and millet seeds.

- Two numbers of forest food festivals were organized involving 300 community members. Experienced community members shared their experience and importance of their food system with younger generation. Community members saw more than 200 varieties of food at a time in the festival and reflected over their rich and diverse food system.
- 12 numbers of water structures have been repaired for drinking water facilities and irrigation purposes. After repair, drinking water points have come closer to the village, as a result travel distance of women to fetch drinking water have been reduced.

## Youths for Environment:

33 No of Eco clubs are formed in different schools and villages including 346 boys and 333 girls. 33 no of Youth groups have been formed including 333 male and 272 female members.

Regular monthly meetings are being convened with the eco clubs and youth groups on the issues of health, hygiene, balanced diet, cleanliness and environment protection. 98 boys and 133 girls have been trained on the hygienic practices, hand washing, role of clean drinking water for good health, safe environment in 3 training programs. The trained children have shared their experience with other children during eco-club meetings.



Children have reflected and realized the importance of hand washing, hygiene, clean drinking water, clean surrounding, dietary diversity for good health. They are also sharing their learning with their parents. 376 boys and 339 girls from 16 Eco clubs have been counseled by professional doctors in 3 phases on post covid management, hygiene, health & well-being in different schools and villages. The children got a new experience by discussing with doctors. They shared their questions, assumptions with doctor and get clarified.

Youths of 39 villages of Kashipur Block have organized cleanness drive by cleaning their village surroundings and water bodies, youths of 6 villages have organized rally on environment protection, youths of 31 villages have collected seeds to carry out plantation drive. Youths of 5 villages have decided to stop using plastic in marriage ceremonies and other festivals of the village. Youths of 11 villages have discussed with their community members to prepare earth bond on the hills to check soil erosion.

A state level youth workshop of 55 youths (32 male, 23 female) from 7 districts was organized in this reporting period. Adivasi youths shared their existing sustainable practices of environment protection with other youths of the state. Along with the experience sharing, ecological scientist Dr. Devel Dev (resource person) shared about various sustainable practices of environment protection by different indigenous communities. At the end of the workshop youth leaders took oath to continue with various local level actions for environment protection. Youth leadership on environment protection and ecological rights is emerging. Much more can be expected in the near future.

A district level workshop was organized on food security in the month of March at Rayagada, where government officials, NGO personnel and PRI members participated. Right to food activist Mr. Sameet Panda facilitated the workshop. Total 61 participants from different sector shared their views in the workshop.

## Ensuring Nutrition Security:

More than 1700 women participated in the PLA sessions, learned and reflected the issues around health, nutrition and WASH. In the PLA meetings, community members have identified and prioritized their problems around malnutrition. Cause and effect analysis of the problems was done by the community members through story telling in the meeting number 4. Now community members have realized the significance of malnutrition cycle in their life and have decided to break the malnutrition cycle by changing their practice and behavior, accessing services and ensuring dietary diversity at household level.



135 men and 135 women are trained on different government schemes related to food security, health and nutrition. Four rounds of health camps are organized in 34 villages. 1174 community member's (550 men, 624 women) health is checked by professional doctors. Community members were counselled on malaria, diarrhea and other hygienic practices. After JANCH committee and mothers committee training, women members of 11 villages have been engaged with Anganwadi worker to make their center functional. They have discussed with the worker to regularize VHND.



## Adolescent girls: The change agent

Total 7 numbers of PLA meetings have been completed with 160 adolescent groups in 160 villages of Rayagada and Gajapati. Adolescent girls have identified & prioritised their problems around health, nutrition, gender discrimination, prepared strategy to address the problems and started taking action to address the problems at their level.



### Key Results:

Adolescent girls of 109 villages out of 160 villages have started consuming IFA tablets regularly. After realising the importance of regularly consumption of IFA tablets, now adolescent girls are consuming IFA tablets by seating together in the meeting. As a result, there is no chance lefts for throwing the tablets and consumption is being monitored by each other.

Girls of 94 villages are using sanitary napkin during their menstruation period. Earlier using of sanitary napkin was not a regular practice of the girls and availability of subsidised sanitary napkin with ASHA was not regular.

The PLA meeting helped girls to realise the importance of uses of sanitary napkin during their menstrual period. As per the decision taken by girls in the PLA meeting, they engaged with ASHA and AWW and asked for availability of the sanitary napkin. After frequent follow up, in many villages availability issue of sanitary napkin has been addressed and adolescent girls are procuring the sanitary napkin with a subsidised price and using.



VHND is a major platform for adolescent girls to be counselled on their health issues. But unfortunately, attending VHND was not a common practice for adolescent girls in the project area of Rayagada and Gajapati. They used to think that, VHND is meant for only pregnant women, lactating mother and children. This idea got changed after regularly attending PLA meeting and girls group meeting. As of now VHNDs have been strengthened in 38 villages. Adolescent girls are attending VHND, being counselled on health issues,

checking their haemoglobin level and taking corrective measures as suggested by AWW, ANM and ASHA. In 48 villages, girls are regularly cleaning their villages either weekly or monthly. Community members are showing very positive to these actions taken by girls. Even young boys of the villages are also taking part in the village cleaning activity with girls.

Girl groups in the Block Kashipur, Chandrapur, Muniguda, R.Udayagiri, Nuagada have organised rallies on the issues of stop early marriage, stop dropout of girl students, stop heavy labour for adolescent girls. The girls with placards written messages on the above issues, shouting slogans visited the entire villages and drew the attention of community members. In some cases, AWW, ASHA and PRI members have attended the rally.

Adolescent girls have been establishing nutrition garden since last two seasons. Block coordinator and Kishori Sathis demonstrate preparation of nutrition garden in a field, then girls are preparing at their own. This has been noticed that, adolescent girls are cooperating each other to prepare garden. Parents are also helping them to plough the land and fencing. In the last 2 seasons, adolescent girls have consumed vegetables from their garden. This has given them a good experience.



One of the adolescent girls of R.Udaygiri Block, Sujata says that, we are consuming vegetables from the garden prepared me. Even not only me, my family also consuming vegetables from my garden. This is really a great experience for me.

Dietary diversity score of adolescent girls has been collected for consecutive 3<sup>rd</sup> times of last 3 seasons. The analysis of dietary diversity score has been shared with girls in group meetings. This exercise has helped adolescent girls to reflect the cause of their poor dietary diversity score and motivated them to prepare nutrition garden at their backyard.

PLA meeting is playing a major role to aware adolescent girls on the importance of menstrual hygiene. AWW and ASHA are also counselling girls on the menstrual hygiene. Unhygienic practices during menstrual period have been identified as a major problem in the PLA meetings. So, girls had decided to take actions to ensure uses of sanitary napkin. As per our action tracker, in 94 villages, girls are using sanitary napkin regularly, either purchasing it from ASHA or open market.



Slowly adolescent girls have been able to realise the existing gender discrimination at their household level. Earlier they thought this was normal. Now adolescent girls are discussing with their parents to

continue their study. Gita Tuika of Bissam Cuttack struggled hard to convince her brother and mother to stop her marriage. At last, she became success and her marriage postponed. Now her mother and brother realised that the life of a girl is not for the kitchen only. Mamata of Mohana Block strongly denied to get marry at the age of 16. Initially her family members did not listen

to her, but Mamata was stubborn on her point. At last, her marriage stopped after the intervention of adolescent group, AWW and CDPO. These types of action are coming more and more from the field. At least now girls are being able to put their wishes before their parents. Adolescent group is playing a vital role for this transformation.

Adolescent girls have been engaged with frontline workers like AWW, ASHA and ANM to avail iron tablets and sanitary napkin. In 109 villages adolescent girls are receiving iron tablets and consuming regularly. Due to continuous follow up and engagement with frontline workers girls have been able to avail subsidised sanitary napkin.



In the Chandrapur, R.Udaygiri, Kashipur, Bissam Cuttack and Muniguda Block, adolescent girls met with BDO and CDPO and demanded for service delivery. Girls of Nuagada Block, R.Udaygiri Block demanded with AWW for better functional of ADWIKIA scheme. Now AWW is conducting ADWIKIA meeting regularly and girls are attending. Adolescent girls have understood the importance of attending VHND for their health and nutrition security. In the Bissam Cuttack and Chandrapur Block, adolescent girls met with Anganwadi worker and told them about their interest to attend VHND. AWW invited them happily. Now they are attending VHND regularly. Adolescent girls of Kashipur, R.udaygiri, Chandrpaur, Nuagarh have visited to Block office and CDPO office. They met with Block Development Officer and Child Development Program Officer, shared about their adolescent group and raise the issue of non-functioning of services meant for adolescent girls and VHND. After meeting with BDO and CDPO, girls felt very confident and now they are ready to take up any issue to any authority. Adolescent girls of Rayagarh and Kashipur have taken the issue of VHND and early marriage to the G.P. level nodal meeting.

### Activities undertaken:

- Training of adolescent girls on PLA
- Training on Nutrition garden and establishment of nutrition garden
- Facilitating parents meeting
- Publication of quarterly newsletter
- Facilitating discussion among adolescent girls and frontline workers
- Facilitating adolescent girl's visit to the Block office



## Kuhoo: Of and for adolescent girls:

A quarterly newsletter named as KUHOO has been published to capture and disseminate the challenges and success stories of adolescent girls. The newsletter has been distributed among Block and District level officials, frontline workers and adolescent girls. Through the KUHOO adolescent girls are knowing each other's challenge and success stories and getting inspiration.

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