

ANNUAL REPORT: 2024-25

LIVING FARMS



Living Farms

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Introduction:

The year 2024–25 has been a year of deepening our commitment to strengthening food sovereignty of Adivasi communities in Odisha. At Living Farms, we believe that true well-being begins with reclaiming control over food, farming, and forests. Guided by this vision, our work during the year focused on empowering communities to protect their traditional knowledge, rebuild ecological farming systems and secure nutrition for present and future generations.



Through community action, we supported families to adopt agro-ecological practices that nurture both soil and society. Our efforts in promoting nutrition gardens helped households access diverse and healthy food, while our initiatives in seed conservation enabled farmers to safeguard indigenous varieties and preserve cultural heritage. Special attention was given to the nutrition security of adolescent girls, recognizing their central role in shaping the health and resilience of families and communities.

This annual report captures our journey of collaboration, challenges and collective achievements. It reflects the strength of the communities we walk with, their vision for a self-reliant future and our shared aspiration to ensure that every family has access to nutritious food grown with dignity and care.

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 organization 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.

Geographical Coverage:

Our interventions during 2023-24 covered;

Districts- Rayagada, Gajapati

Blocks- Bissam Cuttack, Muniguda, Chandrapur, Kashipur, R.Udayagiri, Mohana, Rayagarh and Nuagarh

Villages- 246 villages of the above said Blocks

Population Covers- Around 38000 population including women, men, adolescent girls, youths and children

Food Sovereignty: Let's secure our food culture

One proverb in Odia says “Ape Ruchi Bhojana – Para Ruchi Byasana” this means that one has absolute right to choose his/her own food. In Adivasi communities, food and food sources plays a very impotent role in their daily life. Culturally food is associated with their live and livelihood and they try to preserve the food sources and their traditional recipes.



They take pride in their culture, their traditional foods, and their practices that are closely linked to their local ecosystem. They value food sovereignty — the freedom to grow, gathers, and consumes diverse local foods according to seasonal availability and community needs. They conserve and exchange the seeds and appreciate the revival of lost seeds.

In 2024–25, Living Farms work to re-establish food sovereignty through agro-ecological practices anchored in millet-based mix farming, local seed systems, forest conservation and community knowledge.

Millet based mix farming

The farmers have practiced mix farming, crop rotation, revival of climate resilient indigenous seeds and application of organic manure in their land, which has resulted in increase of production of millet and paddy. Around 2500 farmers have been adopting sustainable agriculture practice to increase the harvest and minimize their food scarcity period in Kashipur Block. In the last year crops like barnyard millet, 1 species of foxtail millet, proso millet and 1 species of little millet have been revived by the farmers. These millets are climate resilient and helped to stretch the harvest period i.e. August to January. These varieties were collected from neighbouring Bissam Cuttack and Muniguda Block through seed festival. These varieties have been conserved by farmers and next year will be multiplied by more numbers of farmers.

Crop diversity is a strategy to address hunger and encounters the climate change effects. A survey was conducted to collect harvest data of 1088 farmers selected randomly and analysed to monitor the status of production enhancement and crop diversity. As per the analysis, 50% farmers have cultivated and produced 16

to 25 varieties of crops, 22% farmers are cultivating 26 to 40 varieties of crops and 18% farmers have cultivated 9 to 15 varieties of crops in this year. Only 9% farmers have 4 to 8 varieties of crop diversity. This 9% farmer needs special focus to increase their crop diversity. Earlier maximum farmers have only 8 to 10 varieties of crops, which has been increased after our intervention. As per the harvest data, 15% of farmers produced a surplus of 301 kg to 500 kg, 31% farmers produced a surplus of 201 kg to 300 kg, 23% farmers produced a surplus of 101 kg to 200 kg and 29% farmers produced a surplus of up to 100 kg than the fast year of the program including cereals, pulses, oilseeds and tubers.

1869 farmers (791 male, 1078 female) have been trained on the process of preparing organic manure by using locally available bio resources to increase their harvest. They have prepared organic manures like liquid manure, Handikhata, Amrutapani, applied in their field and experienced a good harvest.

Before Kharif season crop planning exercise is prepared in 66 villages involving more than 3500 farmers and as per the crop plan community members have revived back climate resilient seeds which were disappeared from their villages. Land use plan is prepared in 63 villages and in this kharif season community members have started implementing the plan. As per the land use plan farmers have revived back the disappeared climate resilient millet varieties, adopted mix farming, inter cropping, relay cropping, earth bonding, stone bonding on the dangar (hill) to check the soil erosion. Community members have done plantation on the barren land, hill and avenue plantation according to the land use plan.

31 numbers of village level ethno-veterinary training program have been organized for 1578 farmers (female 836 and male 742) in different villages of Kashipur Block. 5 trained farmers have become the barefoot veterinarian in the locality. Now people started conserving medicinal plants and giving importance to biodiversity. As a result, mortality of livestock has been reduced as shared by the farmers.



Seed Bank

Conservation of seed not only ensures sustainability of a seed variety but also reduces the external dependency such as on commercial seeds and on government supply seeds. Seed as an input is very crucial for a farmer. It is often said that timely available of good quality and right quantity seed is very much essential for an agricultural session. In Adivasi community women plays the pivotal role on seed preservation and leads the seed bank established by Living Farms.



In 2024-25, 12 numbers of village level trainings were conducted at village level and 480 number of farmers (180 male and 300 female) were participated. The participants learned the seed preservation and storage processes. 10 numbers of training were conducted for adolescent girls on seed bank formation and its management. These seed banks promote seed exchange and improve crop diversity. A total 63 numbers of seed banks (both millets, pulses and vegetables) established in the project area. 28 numbers of seed banks are established and managed by the adolescent groups. LF has organized one seed festival in this year to promote seed conservation and exchange practices among the community members.

Forest: As a way of life

In Adivasi communities, the forest is not just a source of food or a home for wildlife—it is seen as breathing, living landscape. People and forest coexist, learning from and supporting each other. The identity, culture, and economy of the adivasi people have evolved in close connection with nature. They protect the forest, and in return, the forest sustains them with food, shelter, and spiritual nourishment. This relationship reflects a deep bond of respect, care, and interdependence.



However, the urbanization, industrialization and unplanned deforestation and poorly planned reforestation affect the livelihood, food security and way of life of

the adivasi community. Living Farms is consistently working with community to conserve the eco-system and promotes non cultivated forest foods.

In 2024–25, LF organised 1 Food Festival, where community members showcased recipes prepared from both cultivated and uncultivated food items. They shared their experiences and expertise in traditional recipe preparation, highlighting the high nutritional value and health benefits of these organic foods. Many expressed concern that the younger generation is gradually becoming detached from their traditional food practices. Festivals like these not only provide a platform to share cooking heritage but also serve to inspire and sensitise youth to learn, appreciate, and carry forward their rich cultural traditions. They understood that “If the forest is there, we are there; no forest implies no community.”

Living Farms team conducted FRA and forest management trainings, 122 forest protection committee members were trained. FRCs are re-formed and claim filing process has been started. After the training, 18 FPCs have exchanged 1605 forest plants among themselves, 24 FPCs protected their forest from fire during the hot summer, 42 FPCs have planned for plantation collaboration with forest department, 14 FPCs are using the forest siali leafs for livelihood activities.

28 villages have received forest land entitlement and 4 villages have claimed for entitlement, 12 villages have prepared documents for applying IFR and CFR. In a mission mode claiming of Jangal Jami patta is going on, Different NGOs and Government department collaboratively working.

2 day's block level workshop in community forest management have been organized involving 78 community members (8 females and 70 male). Community members were provided with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to manage their forest resources sustainably, promote biodiversity, and enhance livelihoods. FPC members, Forest department, block level FRA cell and civil societies members participated in the workshop. The workshops provided a platform for learning, sharing best practices, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders.



One day' district level conference has been organised on FRA at Rayagada including 53 participants (15 female and 38 male). The district-level conference on the Forest Rights Act (FRA) serves as a critical platform for dialogue, legal

framework and rights, learning and collaboration among various stakeholders involved in the recognition and implementation of forest rights.

A success story of Dumeng Majhi

An outcome of Nutri-garden intervene on food security and dietary diversity in a rural village of Odisha

Pipalpadara is a remote village located in Kashipur block of Rayagada district, Odisha. It is predominantly inhabited by tribal communities, primarily the Kondhas and Sauras. The village has approximately 40 households. The primary source of livelihood for the villagers is traditional agriculture. Most of the villagers are marginal farmers holding small patches of land using indigenous methods of agriculture by using locally available resources. The second preferred livelihood option is the forest produce which plays an important role in providing food and income as well.

The terrain in this area is hilly and non-existence of irrigation facilities making the community heavily dependent on seasonal monsoon cycles for their agricultural activities and productivity. During post monsoon period the fields are remain unused. Most of the households managed their food requirements from their limited yields of one or two crops only. The inadequate access to food and lack of dietary diversity significantly affects many of the households particularly the vulnerable members (Women & Children) impacting both on their health and nutritional well-being. In response to this scenario Living Farms initiated an intervention in this village through introducing nutri-gardens to ensure year round availability of nutrition rich food, improve dietary diversity at household level and to break the circle of malnutrition.

Dumeng Majhi, a 45 year old farmer belonging to the Kandha community lives with his wife and their four children. He is a marginal farmer and cultivates rice, millet and very occasionally vegetables in traditional practices. The family's principal diet is millet and rice. Albeit his family is surviving with their limited resources, however they are not getting enough nutritious food to lead a healthy and disease free life. His wife is anemic and children are malnourished and he often spends his hard earned money for their well-being.

Living Farms started an awareness campaign on nutri-garden in Pipalpadara village in collaboration with agriculture department. Demonstration nutri-gardens

were prepared and farmers are invited to visit the sites for their experience. Living Farms staff and agriculture extension workers interacted with farmers and encouraged them to make their own nutri-garden in their suitable land sites. Dumeng and few other farmers showed their interest and with support of Living Farms staff members the sites were finalized.

Dumeng selected around 10 decimal of homestead land for preparing his Nutrigarden. Earlier, this land was not being used and remains barren for long. He prepared the bed with the supportive supervision of field teams. He learned and adopted organic practices including composting, mulching and mixed cropping methods. He was provided with all necessary inputs such as a variety of high-quality seeds suitable to the local soil and seasonal conditions as part of the initial support. In the first season, Dumeng cultivated variety of crops including spinach, okra, brinjal, tomatoes, pumpkins, beans, and leafy greens. He also planted fruit bearing trees like banana, papaya and guava along the fence.

Last couple of season he has produced and consumed the variety of vegetables from his nutrition garden. His family is now getting good quality organic and nutrition rich diversified vegetables throughout the year. This small step ensured the food security of the family along with good health and improved nutrition status of his wife and children. His financial status is changed as the family health expenditure is reduced and his earnings are increased on selling of surplus vegetables in the local market. He and his family is maintaining the garden and fostering a sense of ownership and long term sustainability. He is no more dependent on any external support like for seeds and organic manure. Inspired by his success, many villagers started their own Nutrition garden and he has become a role model for his community.



Key Outcomes:

- Family consumes a balanced diet enriched with vitamins and minerals.
- The health and nutrition status has significantly improved, with reduced instances of deficiencies, infections and on health expenditure.
- Surplus vegetables are sold in the local market, generating additional income.

Challenges and Learning's:

- Initial reluctance due to traditional farming practices was overcome through community sensitization.
- Seasonal pest attacks were managed through natural pest repellents and companion planting techniques.
- Maintaining the garden in summer season.
- Consistent follow-ups and refresher training ensured sustained engagement in the initiative.

The case study of Dumeng Majhi's family highlights the transformative impact of nutrition gardens in ensuring food security, improving health outcomes, and fostering self-reliance among tribal communities. With continued awareness and support, such initiatives can play a crucial role in addressing malnutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture in tribal regions.

Reconstruction of damaged water structures:

In rural areas, the Water Resources Department, Government of Odisha (GoO), constructs water structures such as small check dams and water tanks to support both irrigation and drinking water needs. Check dams are built across streams and rivers to store water, which can then be used for irrigation and to recharge groundwater. The department also promotes Diversion-Based Irrigation, which channels water from storage structures to agricultural fields for crop irrigation and to villages for community use. These structures are often not being routinely maintained hence most of them are in damaged condition and doesn't serve the purpose.

LF, in collaboration with the local community and relevant line departments, identified damaged water structures and facilitated their repair. In 2024–25, LF repaired around 12 such structures, providing material support while the community contributed labour



and assisted in transporting materials. As a result of this intervention, approximately 400 acres of land gained access to irrigation, particularly benefiting farmers during the summer season. Additionally, 9 drinking water points were repaired across 9 villages, significantly reducing the drudgery of women in fetching water.



Adolescent health and nutrition:

Health and nutrition security sets a bench marks for the wellbeing of a family and in large the community. Women and adolescent girls are among the most affected and highly vulnerable to anemia and malnutrition. The cultural, social and biological factors such as gender discrimination, early marriage, poverty and insufficient food severely impact their health and nutrition status and overall well being.

Living Farms has been working closely with communities with a priority on women and adolescents to strengthen health and nutrition security with a special focus on improve dietary diversity through Nutrigarden intervention. Living Farms has tried to ensure health and nutrition security through Participatory Learning & Action, training on balanced diet, increasing dietary diversity, training on hygiene practices, establishing nutrition garden and accessing government schemes and services.

Nutrition Garden:

Nutrition Garden is a key intervention of Living Farms to promote dietary diversity and ensure yearlong food and nutrition security. A special customized model for the nutrition garden has been developed by Living Farms, and farmers have been trained and supported through field demonstrations to establish and maintain these gardens.

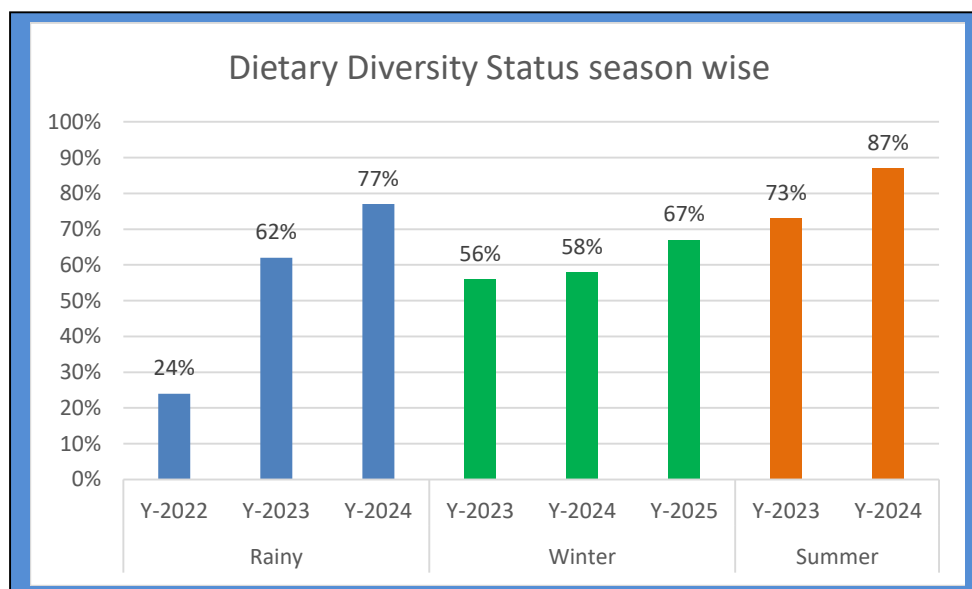
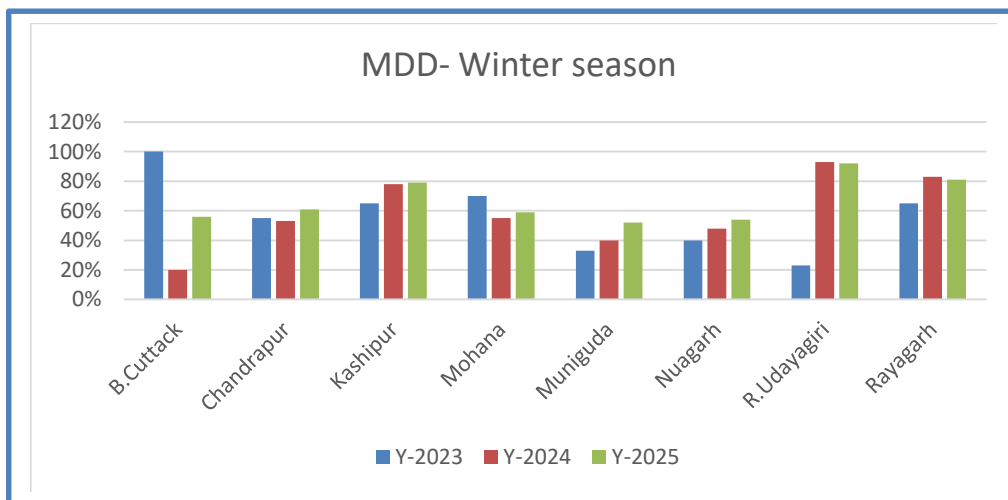
This year, 3 numbers of nutrition garden models were prepared for demonstration and adolescent groups had a hands-on-experience on setting up these nutrition gardens. In Rayagada and Gajapati districts adolescent groups lead this initiative and encourage community members to establish their own nutrition garden. In this year, during monsoon and winter season adolescent girls



facilitated around 4000 and 3000 number of nutrition gardens respectively. Around 12 varieties of vegetables were cultivated and garden products were consumed at household level. This intervention is significantly contributing on improve dietary diversity and subsequently support to reduce the incidence of anemia and help to break the cycle of malnutrition. This effort is well received in community and households voluntarily setting-up their own nutrition gardens.

Another 3000 numbers of nutrition garden was prepared by farmers in the Kashipur Block in Rayagada. 2 numbers of papaya, lemon, banana, drumstick saplings were provided to 2000 farmers in Kashipur to plant in their nutrition garden. Last year semi-perennial trees were provided to the farmers have started fruiting, which was a great experience for community members.

Living Farms conducted a rapid assessment survey with adolescent girls to measure the effectiveness of nutrition garden intervention on dietary diversity and on food security. The results indicated a positive impact and the dietary diversity score among adolescent groups have improved.



Participatory Learning & Action: I am the change

The stepping stone of our work on health and nutrition security is through PLA cycle. It is an interactive, reflection-based approach that empowers adolescent girls and women to analyze their own nutrition challenges and co-develop solutions. The well defined structured PLA meetings being conducted with women and adolescent groups focusing on malnutrition cycle, early marriage, importance of attending VHND, personal hygiene, menstrual hygiene, balanced diet, consumption of iron tablets, uses of sanitary napkins, uses of mosquito net and accessing government schemes etc. In this year, 186 numbers of villages where PLA is conducted and 2400 number of adolescent girls and 2000 number of women were participated.

According to our end line evaluation study report, 91% adolescents have awareness and knowledge on PLA; 79% households have nutrition gardens and dietary diversity score is 87% among adolescent girls; awareness on anemia among women was 70% and 93% girls were receiving IFA tablets. Early marriage is



reduced to almost nil in project villages. Adolescent groups have taken initiatives, convinced community members to prepare village level resolution to stop early marriage. In 160 numbers of villages resolution has been prepared to stop early marriage. Due to collective of girls, Advika scheme has been strengthened. Anganwadi workers shared that, attendance in Advika has been increased as compared to earlier.

An end line survey was organized in this year to assess the impact of the ACEH project. The findings are as follows.

Dietary Diversity & Nutrition Garden:

- ***Nutrition garden increased from 61% to 79% in project area.***
- ***27 numbers of seed banks established***
- ***Dietary diversity of girls has been increased from 24% to 87%***
- ***Awareness on anaemia among mother improved from 39% to 70%***

Knowledge, Attitude and Practices:

- Knowledge among mothers about schemes for adolescent girls improved from 36% to 86% on ICDS; 24% to 84% on VHND and 1% to 30% on Advika.
- 93% adolescent girl receiving IFA tablets
- Mother's knowledge about menstrual health have improved from 23% to 84%
- knowledge around Khushi schemes improved by 71% to 86%
- Girls are allowed to go out alone to market or friend's place or school has improved from 25% to 40%.
- 30% girls reported to have faced violence at home by father or brother has reduced to 5%
- Girls have organized sports activities like cricket and kabadi
- 36% girls participated in a village or GP level cultural function
- 8% girls participated in any mass campaign in their village or GP
- 10% girls participated in village level demonstration for better services
- 61% girls reported to be confident to go to a government officer or panchayat to demand their rights
- Adolescent girls going to school increased from 65% to 71%
- Adolescent girls group facilitated the readmission of 14 number of dropout girls
- Knowledge on legal age of marriage in improved from 33% to 43% among mothers
- Qualitative findings suggest that there are very less or no incidences of child marriage
- 11 numbers of possible early marriages have been either postponed or stopped by the Adolescent groups

Success Story:

Changing Mindsets, Changing Narratives

Amidst the hilly terrains of Rayagada and surrounded by dense forests, Kashipur was once considered to be one of the remotest blocks of Odisha. Its remoteness, ignorance of the community contributed to gender disparity to some extent. A girl, through-out her life remained a subject to miseries and sufferings. Male Chauvinism and the notion that males were superior existed from generation to generation. Fortunately, with some innovative and effective approaches initiated by adolescent girls, the narratives have started to change...ushering equality, parity and prospect for girls and women in the community.

Abrupt withdrawal of girl children from the schools and forcing early marriages of girls were quite common in many villages under Kashipur block. The girls were never offered an even platform to prosper like boys. By birth they were less privileged. The prejudices and myths of the community continued to harass and

haunt them. What added to the agony was the fact that there was no conscious effort made by the adolescent girls to change their life. The girls were mere and mute witness to their sufferings.

The change in the approach of girls cropped up with the formation of group (consisting of adolescent girls within the age group of 10 to 19) under ACEH Programme implemented by Living Farms and supported by Action Child Aid, Denmark. The series of meetings conducted under PLA cycle, restored faith and confidence among adolescent girls. They began to realize and recognise their roles to convert plights in to prospects.



They became efficient in identifying issues like health, hygiene, educational challenges, early marriage and of course gender discrimination. The orientations and trainings grew them as great strategists to tackle the issues and, the motivation and self-confidence they developed as a group inspired them to take necessary action to effect changes.

The groups formed in different villages displayed in-depth understanding, infallible strategy and immaculate execution as they took targeted initiatives. While organising sports events exclusively for adolescent girls carried hidden messages that “Girls too want to break-free and play”, re-admission of drop-out girl children in the schools was emblematic of emphasis on girls’ education. By attending VHND and Gramsabha, they claimed their participation in developmental activities.

One of such striking approaches was their initiative to create a gender sensitive society by sensitizing their male counterparts- the adolescent boys and youth. The groups had strongly realized the essence of making the adolescent boys and youth understand their issues and be empathetic in their approaches. The groups invited them to their group meetings and drew their attention to the issues of adolescent girls and sought their cooperation in their initiatives. The deep rooted notions and prejudices took time to melt down and the boys promised to change their mindset in their home and society.

It is a remarkable achievement that these adolescent boys and youth are not shying away any more to do the household chores to support their sisters and mothers, they are motivating parents not to stop education of their sisters and raising voices against child marriage. They are partnering with the adolescent girls in holding sports events for girls, conducting campaigns on health and hygiene.

The adolescent girls have struck the right note with such splendid initiative. The adolescent boys and youth will grow up to become gender sensitive husband, father and father-in-law in the future. Such farsighted innovative approach will see a gender sensitive society in future.

Adolescent girls are the lighthouse of change :

Adolescence is an important phase of human life. During this stage, significant physical and mental changes take place, especially in adolescent girls. Adolescents form the foundation of future generations. When their rights are protected, their voices heard, and their dreams supported, they break barriers of discrimination and light the way to a just and inclusive society for everyone. Investing in their overall well-being creates a ripple effect that benefits families, communities, and the nation as a whole. However adolescent girls face many challenges at all levels. At the community level, adolescent girls face restricted mobility, limited confidence, and a lack of supportive spaces or peer networks. Cultural norms discourage their participation in public life and decision-making, reinforcing silence around their needs and potential. Early marriage and school dropout are common and widely accepted, often leading to early pregnancy, poor health outcomes, and reduced life opportunities. These issues are compounded by widespread acceptance of gender-based discrimination and violence, both of which are seen as normal by men and women alike.

Living Farms, in collaboration with Action Child Aid (ACA), Denmark, has launched a program called “Agent of Change for Empowerment and Health” (ACEH) for the period 2022–2025 to address issues related to adolescent health, nutrition, and leadership development. This intervention is deeply integrated with the community’s social and ecological context, taking into account food systems, cultural beliefs and practices, gender dynamics, and life skills.

In 2024–25, we worked with 160 adolescent groups across 160 villages, engaging around 5000 girls in regular monthly meetings. Each month, these groups come together to discuss topics such as leadership development, knowledge building, dismantling stigma, improving dietary diversity, and strengthening the service delivery system. These groups and their emerging leaders are envisioned as agents of change, with the girls recognized as torchbearers of social transformation.

The groups have organised numerous rallies and campaigns to raise awareness about girls’ education and preventing early marriage. They have also actively participated in local governance processes, such as attending Gram Sabhas and facilitating ADVIKA sessions. Through continuous engagement with frontline workers, they have successfully strengthened service delivery in their villages and

Gram Panchayats. These adolescent groups are not just platforms for sharing information, but for building solidarity, amplifying voices, and driving meaningful change within their communities. This year boys were involved in few meetings and both gender shared issues and discussed the possible way outs.



Despite all these efforts, adolescents still face challenges such as gender discrimination, domestic violence, discontinuation of education, and the threat of early marriage. Although this has been a challenging year, the achievements have been remarkable. With continued support and encouragement, these groups have the potential to become role models for their communities — especially for women and for other villages to follow.

Seed Sovereignty

“My seed, My Right”

Losing a seed variety means losing a food group. When we lose traditional seeds, we don't just lose plants — we lose the nutrition, cultural heritage, and resilience that come with them. Protecting seed diversity means protecting food security, health, and our deep connection to the land. For a farmer, a seed is not just an input — it is an inheritance. In Adivasi tradition, seed is not merely a resource; it is a way of life. The community is aware of the importance of seed and its preservation. Since countless time Adivasi is using the local seeds and holding the knowledge on organic farming.

However, the spread of hybrid and commercial high-yield seeds threatens the survival of indigenous seeds and the climate-resilient traditional farming practices they support. These commercial seeds often bring hidden nutrition and health risks and make farmers entirely dependent on external agencies for their next crop cycle. In losing control over their seeds, farmers lose control over their food, their soil, and ultimately, their future.



At Living Farms, seed sovereignty is foundational to our vision of food and nutrition security. In the year 2024–25, we focused on restoring traditional seed systems; building women led seed banks and preserving the diversity of millets, pulses and vegetables.

We conducted 12 numbers of training with local farmer's to build capacity and skill on seed conservation and management of community seed banks. We supported the strengthening of 63 numbers of seed banks for both paddy, millet, pulses and vegetable seeds in Rayagada and Gajapati districts with an emphasis on women's participation and local custodianship.

Seed conservation has not only improved food security; it has also transformed the role of women and elders from passive recipients to active agents of biodiversity. In doing so, it has regenerated hope that resilience is already rooted in the soil.

We facilitate the identification of disappearing seeds with the support of communities and experienced farmers. So far, we have successfully revived 30 seed varieties and are continuing their multiplication to ensure wider availability. To promote seed diversification and strengthen seed sovereignty, we organized a block-level seed exchange fair, where farmers came together to share and exchange seeds, build local seed networks, and preserve traditional varieties for future generations

Youth for environment

Youth – The powerhouse to drive the change

Youth are the torchbearers of progress, bringing energy, creativity, and fresh perspectives to address community challenges. With the right guidance and opportunities, they can transform ideas into action, inspire their peers, and lead initiatives that shape a sustainable and inclusive future. Empowering young people means investing in innovation, resilience, and the collective strength needed to drive lasting change.



Like youth everywhere, young people in Adivasi villages are energetic, enthusiastic, resourceful, and eager to explore the world around them. However, modern society, with its narrow yardsticks of progress, often labels them as “backward” and underestimates their identity. As a result, many Adivasi youths today face confusion and uncertainty about their future. LF intentionally places youth at the center of its initiatives—both as recipients and as agents of change—empowering them to embrace their heritage, preserve it, and carry it forward for future generations. In the year 2024-25, LF has been continuously working with 33 numbers of youth groups involving 393 male and 321 female members to strengthen the groups by organising reflection sessions. These groups are conducting regular meetings on issues of environment protection & role of youths, conservation of forest, stop uses of plastic, reforestation, improving soil health by using organic manure, health & hygiene and preparing biodiversity register etc. They celebrate various designated days like World Earth Day (April 12), World Environment day (June 5) and World water day (March 22) etc. 41 numbers of campaign activities have been organized involving 689 youths (male- 297 and female-392). Youths observed 5 world water days, 8 red hand days, 1 world environment day, 7 international youth days, 19 global action month, 1 walkathon for environment at village and district level. On these occasions, the groups spread the messages on environment protection, climate change and generate awareness on ecological and environmental issues within the community. On account of



that they conduct village cleanliness drive and sensitized the community on issues such as safe drinking water, early marriage and school dropouts. They also organised sports events with the active participation of boys and girls. They also play a crucial role in preventing forest fires and in regenerating forests by using seed balls. These group members actively participate in the Gramsabha meetings and raise their concerns on environment protection and village development initiatives.

Youths have started taking leadership for the development of their village. Youth groups of 21 villages have participated in the Gramasabha meeting and put their demand in the Gramasabha. Youth groups are playing a major role to send the dropout students to the school again in their respective villages. 35 dropout students have been rejoined in the school after counselling of their parents by the youth groups.

Conclusion:

As we close the year 2024–25, we look back with gratitude at the determination and resilience of the Adivasi communities who continue to inspire our work. The journey towards food sovereignty is not just about farming or nutrition, it is about restoring dignity, strengthening cultural identity, and ensuring that communities have control over their resources and choices.

This year reaffirmed that change is possible when communities lead the way. Through their commitment to agro-ecological farming, seed conservation, nutrition gardens and the care of adolescent girls' health and nutrition, we have witnessed powerful examples of collective strength and self-reliance.

While many challenges remain, climate change, shrinking biodiversity and threats to traditional food systems, the path ahead is clearer. Our focus will remain on deepening community-led initiatives, amplifying indigenous knowledge and nurturing partnerships that place people and nature at the center of development.

We thank our community members, friends and supporters who have walked with us in this journey. Together, we move forward with hope and conviction to build a future where every Adivasi household has secure access to nutritious food, vibrant seeds, and a life of dignity.