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Tikratola village, Mandla District, Madhya Pradesh State



Traditional tribal practices in Jabhua, Madhya Pradesh

India's Scheduled Tribes

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Indigenous people are among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in India, facing disproportionately high levels of poverty, illiteracy, and poor health. These communities, referred to by the government as "Scheduled Tribes", make up more than 8% of the country's 1.2 billion inhabitants. Many have little contact with the outside world and continue to survive through hunting and gathering or farming with rudimentary agricultural techniques. It is estimated that more than half of these people live below the national poverty line.

As Save A Family Plan (SAFP) works to combat poverty in India, special assistance must be provided to tribal communities to help them address their many needs in a way that respects their unique history and way of life. The Kothamangalam Social Service Society and the Highrange Development Society (HDS) in Idukki have been working with tribal communities in the area of Marayoor, Kerala for nearly two decades. Prior to

this, the communities had no interaction with the outside world and at first, they were cautious to have contact with people from the outside. Over time, staff members were able to establish a trusting relationship with the communities and were eventually welcomed in the tribal settlements. These staff members discovered a people with a nomadic culture, their own dialect, unique cultural arts and traditions, and a custom of nature worship. They also found high rates of infant mortality, insecure temporary shelters, many cases of early marriages, and extreme poverty.

The staff began to work with the community to illustrate the importance of formal education and eventually they worked together to create a school for the children of the area. It has been developed and expanded over time and now provides education up to Grade 4 for 200 local children. In addition to housing classes, the school also acts as a community centre where many gatherings take place, including: community discussions on important issues; celebration of the local tribal festivals; medical camps; meetings with local government officials; and administration of the local Credit Union. SAFPC works in partnership with HDS to support the ongoing operation of the school and to continue addressing the needs of the children. In 2008, a midday meal program was started for the students after it was discovered many were missing class because they were hungry and spent the day searching for food in the forest instead. The following year, "an egg a week" program was started to provide additional nutrition to the children.

In early 2011, a survey of the community revealed that only 10% of the people in the tribal settlements had access to proper sanitation, while the rest were using open areas for their washroom. This practice leads to a variety of health issues and diseases that could be seen among the population. SAFPC is now partnering with Highrange Development Society with a goal of building 60 latrines in the settlements this year. This will decrease the cases of endemic diseases, prevent the contamination of drinking water, decrease the infant mortality rate, and raise awareness of the importance of hygiene throughout the community.

SAFPC is happy to support the work of the Highrange Development Society and the committed staff who spend their time working and teaching in these remote areas. In order to reduce poverty in India, it is essential that all people have the chance to take part in the country's development and to benefit from the progress that is being made. Many marginalized groups, such as the Scheduled Tribes, require a helping hand to begin identifying and addressing the problems they face and to ensure their human rights are being met. We are pleased to work together with these communities as they engage in development with dignity and become active, participating citizens within their country.



Promoting Inclusive Education

Harikuttan is a young boy living in the Koodakkattukudi tribal settlement, Kerala. Due to a physical disability that left him unable to walk, Harikuttan avoided attending school and did not go regularly. His parents did not show any interest in sending him to school because of this problem. The teachers became aware of this issue and made a regular visit to his home. They motivated his parents and gave them awareness about the importance of education. They also spoke to his friends and encouraged them to bring him along to school with them. Finally, he started coming to school, where the teachers provided him with special coaching. Harikuttan is now happily studying in Grade 2 and attending school regularly with his friends. He is very active in his involvement in cultural activities and taking on responsibilities within his class.



Medicine is provided to villagers at a health camp near Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu as part of the SPED III Community Development Program.



This beneficiary of the Family Development Program earns money to support her family through her fish vending Income Generation Project.



Community knowledge is the starting point for all development initiatives. These villagers participating in the SPED III Program in Satna, Madhya Pradesh share and build their knowledge about the situation of their community using a village mapping activity, which will help them to engage in planning to improve their lives in the future.



Community members attend a meeting with the Non-Formal Education Centre in a village near Chandpur, Haryana, which is supported through the SPED III Program. Non-Formal Education Centres give children who have dropped out of school a second chance by helping them to develop the skills they need to successfully reintegrate into the regular school system.

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM : Opportunities for families through government schemes

When impoverished families are accepted into the Family Development Program and partnered with a contributor overseas, they receive so much more than \$20 a month. Their participation provides them with training on a wide variety of topics, access to the formalized banking system, one-on-one support in planning and budgeting, and a sense of community through the relationships they develop with other families in the program. In addition to this, local staff members assist families in applying for government programs and schemes, which they may not have previously had access to as a result of illiteracy, lack of awareness, or corruption. The story of Mrs. Sheela Kurian shows the dramatic change this can have in a family's life.



Mrs. Sheela Kurian and her family come from Kottayam, Kerala in the south of India. When the family joined SAFF's Family Development Program in March 2007, they were unable to meet their daily expenses. Mr. Kurian was unable to work as he suffered from severe pain in his lower back. Their children's education was at stake, as they could not afford to send both their son and daughter to school.

At the time of selection, the family owned a small piece of land and they were able to mobilize both government and local resources with support of the local field staff to reconstruct their house. Through monitoring visits, the animators identified Mrs. Sheela's motivation and enthusiasm in starting an income generation project and they encouraged her to attend driving school. She was able to graduate from driving school and wished to start her own taxi service, but did not have the money to purchase a vehicle. With the support of SAFF staff, and through networking with other

community organizations, she was able to access a grant subsidy from the Kerala State Government of more than \$2,000 under the Women Taxi Promotion Program.

On November 17th, 2012, her taxi business was officially inaugurated by the Honorable District Collector. Through this business, she is now able to make a profit of \$104 a month. Her husband is very supportive of her and now he is also able to work by driving an auto rickshaw. Both of their children are able to study with much success. Their son, Ajmal, has completed the 12th grade and has applied to take computer technology courses in college, and their daughter, Ashna, has successfully completed the 6th Grade.

Save A Family Plan

If you have questions, would like to make a donation, or inquire about booking a presentation, please contact us!

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 wish you and your loved ones a
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 and
BLESSINGS IN THE NEW YEAR