

AWAKENING

SREE SAKTHI



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1. THE INVISIBLE SAKTHI

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women”


- Kofi Annan, *Former UN Secretary General*



Empowering rural women is considered as an important aspect in the development sector. The indispensable contribution of the women in prospering their family welfare, production in agriculture and livestock rearing, preserving the traditional culture and ethnicity have been acknowledged and recognized by a large section of the people.

Yet, women remain suppressed in the male dominated societies. Constraints such as limited access to resources and control over assets and restricted participation in social life make women depend on men in every stage of their life. Thus, women feel insecure and are prone to exploitation. There is a necessity to emancipate women from the clutches that poses serious challenges which lead to condemnable exploitation of women.

ASSEFA, a pioneering rural development organization, has been working for the development of the rural women for more than four decades. Being a grassroots



Organization, ASSEFA works closely with rural women, which help us to understand their needs and design welfare programs accordingly.

ASSEFA has developed programs such that it addresses the weakness of women that make them vulnerable. Thousands of women self help groups have been formed since late 1970's to provide opportunities for the women to overcome restricted movement and participate in social action.

At the block level, these women SHGs are federated and registered under Mutual Benefit Trust Act. ASSEFA works with these Mutual Benefit Trusts in identifying the needs of the local women, designing socio-economic welfare programs and in their implementation. As on date, 92 MBTs have been promoted in Tamil Nadu alone.

Socio-welfare programs such as promoting livelihoods, access to credit services, systematic savings for investment, health care services and social security for vulnerable women are implemented with the purpose of empowering women.

The intervention of ASSEFA in the last four decades has started to yield positive impacts among the targeted women. These include

- They started supporting their families in children education, economic activities, medical emergency, asset creation, etc., due to easy access to financial services.
- The family members also started to realize the contribution of the women and increasingly considering their opinions in decision making.
- Women participate actively in social actions. Some got elected to the local bodies and serve communities at larger level.
- There is for increase in enrolment of girl children in schools and in higher studies.
- Women seek timely health care as and when needed. This is due to creation of better health awareness and easy access to health care facilities. Hence there is a dip in percentage of MMR, IMR and under-weight new born.

This report narrates the various initiatives of ASSEFA towards emancipation of the rural women and also other on-going programs undertaken during the reporting period.

2. THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

The women in the rural areas participate in agriculture and allied activities, as it forms the primary source for their livelihoods. Major portion of these activities are carried out by the women that contribute to significant growth in rural economy. However, these women are faced with the challenges that hinder them from enjoying equal benefits as men.



Some of the challenges include:

- Access to the inputs credit is limited. Since women are not land owners, the credit flow generally goes in the name of male from mainstream financial institutions.
- Inadequate technical competency in agricultural operations, due to limited exposure. They follow the age old practices which in turn result in poor work efficiency and drudgery.
- Similarly, women headed families have limited to access to direct market for the sale. They solely depended upon middlemen. Hence they earn less income.
- As per the prevailing situation, women labourers get low wage than men.

ASSEFA has been addressing these challenges by promoting self employment among women, providing opportunities to have access to credit, training and exposure visit in advanced farming practices and supporting them with alternative market linkages.

2.1 Milch Animals for Rural Folks:

Dairying is an integral and interwoven part of the diversified system of agriculture practiced by small and marginal farmers. Besides its high labour intensity, it provides tremendous animal power for agricultural operations, fertilizer value to land, fuel value to the rural family requirements and essential nutritional value in the form of milk and milk products.

ASSEFA continued to support the rural folks with the dairy enterprise with the objective of promoting self employment. Accordingly, the interested women are formed into dairy groups. Depending upon the needs, the following assistances were provided through the groups.

- ✓ **Training & Exposure visits** are organized on good animal husbandry practices, feed management and clean milk production. During the reporting period, five such trainings were organized to benefit 120 farmers.
- ✓ **Financial Services** are arranged to buy new animals as well as to maintain existing animals. During the reporting period, seven hundred and twenty seven producers were facilitated to access financial assistances worth Rs. 11.2 millions.
- ✓ **Extension services:** Veterinary Camps are organized to provide Artificial Insemination, vaccination and treatment for any disease of the animals. This is arranged with the support of local veterinary doctors. During the reporting period, seventeen veterinary camps were organized covering five thousand nine hundred and seventy eight animals.
- ✓ **Linkages for Marketing:** The producers are encouraged to consume milk, as it would address the nutritional problems among children, pregnant and lactating mothers. For disposing the marketable surplus of milk, they are linked with nearby dairy factories such as Shantigram Dairy Promotion, ASSEFA Dairy Development Federations, and other corporate companies like Vijay Dairy and KC Milk.

2.2 Goat Rearing:

Goatery is a profitable venture for the poorer households. It contributes to the livelihood of the poor in many ways – income from products, insurance against drought, emergency cash requirements, household nutrition, manure for crops, etc.

ASSEFA has been promoting goateries in dry belt areas particularly in Virudhunagar, Sivagangai and Madurai districts. It has also promoted goatery farms at Puliur, Pooriyampakkam and Thonugal with better breeds having local market demand. In each location, more than fifty goats are reared under “Goat housing”.

These farms act as a demonstration cum goat supply centers. Women farmers from the surrounding villages visit the farms and buy the breeds for rearing. During the reporting period, two thousand five hundred and seventy eight families were supported under in goat rearing program.

2.3 Farmers Development Centers:

In the last couple of years, ASSEFA has been involved in promoting Farmers Development Centers. The purpose is to work closely with the farmers, including women headed families, to understand their problems and mitigate the same by offering needs-based services such as:

- Handholding training in productivity enhancement of major crops.
- Demonstration center for cultivating major crops such as paddy, groundnut, minor millets, pulses, etc.
- Guidance and support to horticulture farming.
- Demonstration units for model goat farming, rearing of heifer calves & milch animal and country chicken.

The farmers’ centers are, at present, being developed at Pooriyampakkam, Puliur, Mudukankulam, Alagianallur, Kilavaneri, Thonugal, Avarampatti, Sivakasi, Sethur, Thandikudi, Vagulathupatti and Kandani villages.

In Pooriyampakkam, ASSEFA in collaboration with Samunnati Financial Intermediation and Service Pvt Ltd established, “**Sarva Seva Samunnati Farms**”. The farm is being developed as a Research and Development Centre for introducing new crops and technology for improved farming practices. It has also established COLD PRESS to extract oil from coconut, groundnut and sesame seeds, which help farmers to market value added products.

2.4 Credit for Agriculture Inputs:

ASSEFA has entered into an agreement with **Samunnati Financial Intermediation and Service Pvt Ltd**, to provide credit support for the women SHGs via Mutual Benefit Trusts to buy inputs for agriculture farming.

Samunnati Financial Intermediation and Service Pvt Ltd is a specialized Organization in “Agro Value Chain Sector”. It is working with farmers and intermediaries to enhance production as well as in marketing the produces in India as well as in other countries.

During the reporting period, six thousand seven hundred and fifty women farmers were arranged credit worth Rs. 126.9 millions for agriculture purposes.

2.5 Value Added Products:

In order to promote alternative market, ASSEFA encouraged going for value addition of the agriculture produce. These enable the producers to fetch additional income than selling raw produce, where in middlemen will get maximum share in gross margin earning.

Piloting of value addition of the following produces have been carried out this year. This includes

- Rice : 35.225 *tones* in Pooriyampakkam, Puliur & Mallankinaru
- Coconut Oil : 125 *litres* in Sethur and Pooriyampakkam areas
- Pepper : 1000 *kgs* in Thandikudi area
- Dhoor Dhal : 9,766 *kgs* in Kallakurchi area

Value adding of mango to Mango soft drinks is being carried out in Natham area. In addition, conversion of milk into milk by-products such as curd, butter milk, ghee, butter, etc., is being done in dairy factories at Uchapatti, Shanthigram and Pooriyampakkam.

Besides the above, there is a demand for cultivating essential plants such as Palm Rosa, lemon grass, vetiver and Aloe vera among farmers. These plants grow under less water conditions and the oil from these plants has demand in the local and international markets.

2.6 Tailoring for Adult Girls:

Each year, we promote self employment to nearly two thousands adult girls and ladies through tailoring program. This is being done in collaboration with USHA International, a well known Company in India for its dealing with new age home appliance.

During the reporting period, two hundred and fifty nine girls were given training in garment stitching under the guidance of the trained teachers and supported one thousand five hundred and twenty nine girls with the supply of sewing machines for self employment

2.7 Access to micro credit.

Rural families need finance not only for economical activities but also for other purposes. Generally, men mobilize resource for such family needs from their wide spread social contacts. This also helps men to get due respect and command from their family members. If similar such opportunities are provided to women, they would also get due respect and opportunity to participate in decision making in their families.

ASSEFA has promoted a micro finance company, “Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd (SNFL)” exclusively to provide micro-credit to the women via SHGs. The shareholders of this company are the Mutual Benefit Trusts, the federated body of the women SHGs, formed at the block level.

This Company raises loans from the mainstream financial institutions to onlend to the SHGs members. The women get loans as and when required. Generally, women use such loans for their children education, economical activities, social function and for emergency purposes.

During the reporting period, nearly one lakh twenty five thousand women had availed credit from Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd, worth Rs. 1,923 millions.



3. THE WELL BEING



The average female life expectancy, today, in India is low compared to many countries, but it has shown gradual improvement over the years. In many families, especially rural ones, girls and women face nutritional discrimination within the family, and are anaemic and malnourished.

Poor nutrition during pregnancy often leads to birth complications. The maternal mortality in India is the 56th highest in the world. Only 42% of births in the country are supervised in Medical Institution.

Lack of toilet facilities often forces women to wait for the night to relieve themselves. This kind of practice is dangerous, as women might be subject to sexual exploitation. Further, the lack of access to clean drinking water brings in burden on women and also family members with the possible infection with water-borne diseases.

ASSEFA has been addressing these issues systematically with professional team under community health. The main purpose is to improve the health conscious behavior of women and children, the socially vulnerable section in the society.

3.1 Maternal Child Health Services:

Since the tragedy of Tsunami in 2004, ASSEFA has been providing holistic Mother and Child Health (MCH) services to the fishermen communities. Due to poor knowledge on health care and inadequate hospital facilities, severe anemia among pregnant ladies, new mothers and adult girls are observed.

Comprehensive MCH services are provided in the coastal areas of Marakanam, Pondicherry, Cuddalore & Karaikal and in Gingee area. A team of 106 members including volunteers headed by an experienced lady physician had provided the following services during the reporting period.

- Ante Natal Care services were offered to 598 pregnant ladies and Post Natal Care services to 474 young mothers. 474 new born for hygienic maintenance.
- Supplied nutritive mix to 2500 pregnant ladies, young mother & school children and their parents.
- Awareness camps conducted to benefit 320 adolescent girls about personal hygiene, Human anatomy, anemia, food and nutrition, child rights and physiology
- Attendance of 1700 out patience in our mini clinic at Gingee and Marakanam.



3.2 Total health care services:

ASSEFA in collaboration with **TAGORE MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL** has been involved in promoting healthy communities, especially women and children, in the villages surrounding Chithamur area. A mini hospital has been opened at ASSEFA Campus at Pooriyampakkam for screening and minor ailments. In case of necessity, the persons will be shifted to Tagore Hospital for further treatment.

During the reporting period, 5,251 persons were benefited under the total health care services, of which 919 patients underwent treatment at mini clinic and 253 patients at Tagore Hospital, Chennai.

In other project areas, ASSEFA organized health camps in collaboration with like minded hospitals such as Meenakshi Mission, Aravind Eye, SKG, Sandhya Hospitals, etc.,. During the reporting period, organized

- Camps : 75
- Coverage : 14,008
- Referral for treatment : 856

The treatments were done at fee of cost by linking under State Government Health Insurance policy.

3.3 Energy efficient biomass cook stoves:

People still use traditional biomass stove for cooking purposes. This low efficient stove consumes not only more biomass fuels but also causes health problems such as respiratory, eye irritation, etc., due to indoor air pollution.

To overcome this, ASSEFA in collaboration with “**GREENWAYS GRAMEEN INFRA PVT LTD**”, is involved in supporting such families with energy efficient Biomass cooking stoves. This stove not only reduces 70% of emission of fumes, but also consumes less biomass fuel and cook quickly.



During the reporting period, 666 families were supported under this program.

4. THE LIBERATION


ASSEFA has been addressing the core social issues such as dowry, high maternal mortality rate, prejudice to girl child, etc., to liberate women from the traditional social stigma. Suitable programs have been implemented to create positive impacts among the targeted female members.



4.1 Community marriages:

Community marriage is introduced to address the social problems of dowry and lavish spending, which put them life-long debt burden. The simple and inexpensive, but a dignified marriage brings the blessings and goodwill of the whole community.

Thus, ASSEFA encourages women self help groups to organize Community Marriages to promote communal harmony and inter-religious amity in rural areas. Community marriages are organized in such a manner that the marriages of different religious faiths take place simultaneously – embodies mutual respect for other religion and to ensure inter-religious amity and communal harmony.



This year also, community marriages were received special significance with women groups in various projects which had successfully conducted community marriages earlier. As on March 31, 2017, a total 2,464 couples from different religion and social status got married. During the reporting period alone, 165 couples were covered.

4.2 Wage Loss Compensation:

This is provided to the pregnant ladies during their last trimester of delivery. The doctors also advise them to take healthy foods during these periods.

In addition, they are advised to take regular Ante Natal Care services and delivery at the hospitals. This helps to reduce morbidity and mortality of both mother and young ones.

As on March 31, 2017, three hundred and ninety women were provided with wage loss compensation worth Rs. 984,000. This fund was collected as donation from the public, specifying the purpose, during the eve of Gandhi Jayanthi.

4.3 Seethanam, a security for Girl child:

This program has been implemented for the last couple of years to support the poor farmers having girl children preferably aged less than 16 years old with HEIFER CALF.

This idea was evolved so as to elevate the value and importance of girls in the eyes of the families and overcome the existing belief that the girl children are financial burden.

By developing a bond between the girl and the calf, the animal could become friend and pet that she learns to care for. This will also help to prevent the families from selling the animal due to sentimental attachment between the girl and the animal. When the animal is ready for milk production, the girl will also be a grown up girl.

The girl will keep the animal and take it with her into adult life. The income from the animals by way of selling milk will be useful for the girls in terms of continuing higher education, savings for her marriage investment, etc.

As on 31st March 2017, nine hundred and one families having girl children were assisted under this program.

4.4 Savings for Asset Creations:

Another initiative implemented to help women in creating assets was linking them with 'CHIT COMPANY.' This scheme is primarily aimed at helping the women SHG members to create productive assets out of their monthly saving.

Three schemes are offered mainly to benefit the SHGs. These include Rs 25,000/- , Rs 50,000 and Rs 100,000. In each scheme, about 25 SHGs are enrolled. Each SHG subscribes the saving amount every month, as per the chit scheme, for 25 months. Every month, one SHG who required fund for investment, would receive the savings of all other SHGs on auction basis.

The SHG, who quotes the lowest bid, will get the chit money. The members, who receive the chit money, will be guided properly to invest in gold, productive assets as well as immovable assets such as purchase of housing plots.

The ownership of the immovable assets such as housing plots, constructed houses, etc., generally, helps any woman to build up confidence and feel secured. Using the Chits Program, ASSEFA was able to support one hundred and ten women to buy housing plots with title in their name.

As on March 31, 2017, three thousand nine hundred and sixty members had been covered under this program.



5. THE DIGNITY



The lack of toilet facilities in the villages is a major setback for women, as they are compelled to fulfill the nature call before dawn. There is high risk in such practices like high probability to snake / poisonous insects' bites, sexual exploitation, etc. The situation of this section of the people becomes more vulnerable during rainy season.

The Government of India, under "Swachh Bharat Mission", is involved in constructing toilet facilities. However, certain section of the people could not use this scheme, as the government releases the allocated funds only after construction of the toilets. Moreover, due to limited allocation of funds, not all the people are availing these services.

Thus, ASSEFA has been continuing program under, "Rural Toilet Program" addressing the problem of rural sanitation as well as providing safety and sense of dignity for the rural women.

Initially, awareness is created among the women self help groups on the importance of having toilets. Subsequently, the interested families are assisted in constructing low cost toilets.

During the reporting period, 880 families were supported with construction of toilets in collaboration with Sarva Seva Habitat Company.

In addition, supports were also extended for the improvement of dwelling places such as replacement of roofing, flooring, cross ventilation facility, electrification, etc. 2,130 families were covered under this program with the support of Seva Habitat Company.

6. THE BOON AGAINST DRUDGERY



Access to safe drinking water is one of the basic needs of the human beings. At present, getting safe drinking water is becoming a challenge in many villages. Women, in such situation, are burdened additionally to fetch drinking water for their families.

ASSEFA in collaboration with TATA has been involved in addressing these challenges by implementing, “Community Water Project”. RO water plants are installed and commissioned to process and supply safe drinking water.

The mission of the project is to supply safe and affordable drinking water to 250,000 families by installing RO plants in 500 locations in rural Tamil Nadu as social enterprises and reduce water borne diseases and drudgery of women in fetching safe water.

In the first phase, 20 plants have been commissioned and are functional supplying safe drinking water. All these Plants are managed with locally trained persons by the Mutual

benefit Trusts. The local people, especially SHG members collect the water from the plant at nominal fee, which is being used to meet the operating cost of the plants.

This pilot, being a successful and sustainable model, it was decided to promote this model with social entrepreneurs among women SHGs to manage the plants. With the presence of large number of women SHGs through the operational areas, identifying social entrepreneurs have become relatively easy.

The total budget for one unit works out to Rs 750,000. This includes the cost of plant and machinery, construction of shed and borewell with motors. Social entrepreneurs are encouraged to use existing infrastructure and borewell. ASSEFA and TATA have been exploring to support the entrepreneurs for the plant and machinery from mainstream financial institutions such as State Bank of India.

As on date, a total of forty one RO plants have been installed across eight districts in Tamil Nadu, each supplying drinking water to 250 to 400 families.



7. THE SAVIOUR




There is an increasing awareness among people to protect our nature. The continuous drought in Tamil Nadu, made people to use the water consciously and urge to save rainwater. The farmers are also exploring to cultivate alternative crops such as Irrigated dry crops suited to the changing climatic conditions.

ASSEFA has involved women in protecting the nature as women naturally being suited to take care of and safeguarding the kith and kin. Based on the needs, the following programs have been implemented by involving rural women.

7.1 Development of barren and waste lands:

ASSEFA has been involved in development of barren and waste lands since the beginning. In the last three decades, watershed development projects have been undertaken in collaboration with NABARD. Three projects implemented in Sivagangai were completed successfully. In those areas, Farmers Renaissance Programs have been implemented as the second phase, supporting farmers in cultivation and livestock rearing.



Subsequently, three watershed projects are being implemented in Madurai district covering Chithalai in Thirumangalam, Peikulam in Kalligudi and Chinnapoolampatti in T Kallupatti areas. Under these watershed projects, treatment of 3,069 ha of lands, mainly of unused, barren and waste lands have been undertaken to bring them under cultivation practices.

7.2 Climate Proofing Project:

ASSEFA in collaboration with NABARD and Adaption Fund Board has initiated the three year project, “Climate Proofing Project”. The main objective is to guide and support the local farmers to change their cropping pattern in accordance with the recent happening in climate changes.

It also involves developing strategies to harvest and store rainwater for both farming and livestock rearing.

ASSEFA has launched this project in three on-going watershed areas in Thirumangalam, Kalligudi and T Kallupatti involving rural women.

7.3 Promotion of Tree Crop cultivation:

As part of bringing unused lands under cultivation, plantation of timber valued tree saplings were planted. As on date, 10,036 saplings were planted under agro forestry program with local resources. Similarly, farmers were also supported to plant horticulture saplings such as mango, guava, etc.

About 6,325 horticulture saplings were distributed to the farmers under agro horticulture plantation. ASSEFA has promoted two more community nurseries, this year, at Kalligudi and T Kallupatti to strengthen this on-going initiative.

7.4 Organic Farming:

Awareness on the impacts of using chemicals for agriculture purposes has been created among the farmers. The myth in respect of production using organic inputs was clarified by allowing the organic farmers to share their experiences. Subsequently, interested farmers were arranged exposure visit to organic farms and training given in manufacturing of organic manure, insect/pest repellent, health tonics, etc.

During the reporting period, 112 had been benefited under this organic farming program,.

7.5 Promoting Renewal Energy for Domestic Purpose:

ASSEFA in collaboration with ECOLIFE Company launched a new program to bring in the application of renewable energy in the rural areas. In the first phase, awareness was created on the importance of using solar based home appliances. This was done with the support of professional team from Ecolife. Subsequently, training on operating solar lanterns were given to the interest women. At the end of the training, these women were distributed with Solar Lanterns.

During the reporting period, 131 families had been benefited under this program.



8. THE DREAM



Educating the children is one of the main dreams of every woman. The awareness generated on the importance of the child education has made women to spend more money on their children's education. An analysis of post utilization of the funds availed by the women under our micro-credit has shown that many had spent for children education.

ASSEFA has been involved in promoting rural education for the last thirty nine years. Based on the demand, ASSEFA has been offering wide range of services including regular education – *primary, middle & high school education*, Sarvodaya Pailagam for slow learners and other school children and higher education for youths.

ASSEFA, with the motive of "School as Second Home" provides holistic and joyful education. It has established child friendly infrastructure with all facilities to make the children learn joyfully. Teachers are also trained to act as a mentor, philosopher and guide to the students, providing necessary services for the development of the children.

8.1 Regular Education:

At present, education is offered to the children of all age groups irrespective of caste, religion and gender. The services include primary education, middle school education, high school education and higher secondary education. English medium is also offered in some schools based on the demand from the locals.

The coaching of the students has been focused on the three aspects

- Development of skills and knowledge
- Healthy body and sound mind and
- Love and caring for others.

The syllabus are developed and taught to the children accordingly. In order to keep these children under mainstream education, syllabus prescribed by the government of Tamil Nadu are also taught as per their guidance.

As on March 31, 2017, 11,747 children are benefited with the support of 505 teachers.

ASSEFA senior operational team for Education has decided to enroll to the optimum level of children that will enable us to give quality services.

8.2 Higher Education:

Two higher education institutions have been promoted by ASSEFA so as to strengthen the on-going education program. These include

- **College of Education at Silarpatti:**

It is a two years regular course. Students with any bachelor degree are eligible to get admission. The successfully completed students will be eligible to teach in any school. The special training offered helps these teachers to be a mentor, philosopher and guide. ASSEFA recruit teachers for their schools from this college. Presently, a total of 86 students are studying.

- **Teachers Education Institute.**

It is also a two years regular course. Students with school completion are eligible to study. The successfully completed students will be eligible to teach in the primary schools. Presently, a total of 35 students are studying.

Both these institutions are recognized by the National Council of Teacher Education, Bangalore and are part of mainstream institutions.

8.3 Sarvodaya Pailagam:

The concept of Sarvodaya Pailagam was introduced with the purpose of providing special coaching to the slow learners and to teach other school going students. These Pailagams are promoted not only in ASSEFA schools catchment villages, but also in villages where women SHGs are actively engaged.

The teachers are selected from the local villages. This is done with the support of women self help groups. Initial training and guidance on teaching materials are provided by ASSEFA. Subsequently, Pailagam is managed by the respective women SHG.

As on date, 28 Sarvodaya Pailagam is functioning supporting 1,232 other school going children.



9. THE MAGICAL WAND



Internet is considered as one of the remarkable inventions in the human history. The application of information technology is increasing everyday. Access to information, which is considered an important tool in management, has been made easy. The usage of internet has increased many folds after the introduction of smart phone.

However, the usage of smart phone and the application of internet services among the rural women are very limited. Various reasons have been cited for this status, but one of the major reasons being lack of awareness on the benefits of using internet.

In order to address this, ASSEFA in collaboration with Tata Trusts and Google India, proposed to introduce, “Internet Saathi Program”. The main purpose is to create awareness about internet and its benefits among women SHGs and also develop apps to strengthen the on-going welfare programs using the technology.

An enterprising woman among the women SHGs will be identified in a cluster of 3 to 4 villages. She will be called “Internet Saathis”. The Saathis will be trained on Internet and digital tools and provided with internet enabled devices.

These Saathis will then be made responsible for training other 1,000 women, from their cluster of villages, on how to use internet for bettering their lives such as...

- Access to several internet based information including welfare schemes offered by the government,
- This will also increase awareness on various important issues like education and health
- Information on agriculture and livestock related information offered by the government as well as experts will be helpful to increase their production.
- Market related information will enable them to sell as well as buy goods

The “Internet Saathis”, is also expected to provide these services to the respective women covered by them and also digital based services to strengthen the on-going socio-economic welfare programs of ASSEFA such as micro-credit, livelihoods activities, community marriages, community health, social security, etc., „



10. ASSEFA 50, AN OCCASION FOR CELEBRATION



ASSEFA has completed forty nine years of services to the poor and vulnerable families in rural India. Started in 1968 with the noble mission of developing barren and waste lands distributed under, “Bhoodan Movement”. However, ASSEFA has gradually changed its approach and diversified its interventions and supported wider communities with multi faceted socio-economic welfare programs to realize the Gandhian philosophy of “Gram Swaraj”.

'To improve the economic, social and cultural status of the rural communities and enhance their skills and self-management capacity. ASSEFA also aims at uniting the rural communities without any kind of discrimination and work for the up-liftment of the social, cultural and economic life of all and to establish self-sufficient, self-reliant and self-managed communities based on the principles of freedom, economic equality and social justice'

- Mission of ASSEFA

In the last five decades, ASSEFA has reached out to hundreds of thousand families in the rural areas with suitable innovative socio-economic welfare programs. The lives of these families have changed positively over the years. The education program, initiated in the remote villages, has enabled thousands of first generation learners to attend schools and move up the ladder to have quality lives with better employment in other sectors.

Promotion of women self help groups in the late 1970's to enable the women to have their own forums to express their feelings, ideas, discuss common problems and design programs, have become a large scale initiative in the last four decades. This has helped hundreds of thousand women to participate and contribute in social action and take up economic programs.

Sarva Jana Seva Kosh, a pioneering Non Banking Financial Company with community ownership, has not only enabled to pool resources locally for providing financial services but also inspired other NBFCs to emerge to serve rural communities.

Similarly, the promotion of dairy companies in Tamil Nadu has enabled other private firms to start dairy companies. This initiative broke the monopoly of govt promoted Aavin cooperatives and enabled many dairy farmers to benefit with higher price for the supply of milk and timely payment.

The promotion of Farmers market yards in the 1980's to benefit the producers by linking them directly with the consumers, has inspired government to launch it at a large scale under the scheme, "Ulavar Shandai".

Many such other interventions of ASSEFA has created positive impacts among the rural communities and inspired others including Government and private organizations to take up these initiatives to created large scale impacts.

Of course, the journey of ASSEFA as on date has been due to the support and blessing of stake holders and well wishers. Without them, ASSEFA could not have achieved what it stands today.

- Rural Development initiated : 8 *states*
- Community Organizations with suitable legal Entity promoted to continue welfare programs : 159 *organizations*
- Families under ASSEFA Family fold : 1.0 *million*
- Human resource (full / part time, volunteers) : 3,124 *persons*

The completion of the FIFTIETH year of ASSEFA services, which also coincides with eve of 150th Mahatma Gandhi Jayanthi and 125th J C Kumarappa, the Gandhian Economist, is planned to be celebrated year round in 2018-19.

A week long celebration is planned for each sector/theme, which will include seminar, workshop, exhibition, action plan for the next five years and “Pathaiyatra”. All stakeholders including beneficiaries, supporters, workers, etc., will be invited and their contribution will be acknowledged. Broadly, it is planned to celebrate around 1. Children education 2. Land, water and livestock and 3) **Sree sakthi**, the women empowerment.

ASSEFA SPREAD

In TAMILNADU

