

SOCIETY FOR POOR PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT (SPPD)



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2024



Secretary's Note

It gives me immense pleasure to present the Annual Report for the year 2023-2024, highlighting the strides we have made in empowering communities through education, health, livelihood development, and environmental sustainability. This past year has been one of reflection, resilience, and renewal as we adapted our programs to address evolving needs while staying true to our core mission.

The challenges brought forth by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to affect marginalized communities, especially women, children, and people with chronic health conditions. In response, our programs, such as the Mission - No Hungry Child, have ensured that the most vulnerable receive essential nutritional support. This initiative has reached over 1,100 children and families, providing them with much-needed food security during these difficult times.

Our focus on education continues to remain at the heart of our efforts. The Educational Materials for Middle School Children initiative, supported by Give India, has enabled us to equip students with essential learning resources, ensuring that no child is left behind due to financial barriers. As we continue to expand the reach of these programs, it is gratifying to see the positive impact on school attendance and academic performance among the beneficiaries.

The empowerment of women remains a cornerstone of our work. Through the SHG-Women Empowerment Program, we have been able to support women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in developing their skills, gaining financial independence, and becoming active participants in their communities. The success stories of women starting their small enterprises, accessing microloans, and becoming leaders in their communities are a testament to the power of collective action and self-reliance.

The success of our initiatives would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our donors, partners, and well-wishers. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Give India and other supporters for their continuous trust in our work. Their generosity has empowered us to create lasting change in the lives of those we serve.

Looking ahead, we are more committed than ever to expanding our programs and reaching even more communities. The coming year will see a stronger focus on enhancing livelihood opportunities, improving educational infrastructure, environment, and climate change, animal welfare, and building sustainable community-based solutions that address the pressing needs of today while preparing for a better tomorrow.

On behalf of SPPD, I extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and community members who have worked tirelessly to bring these programs to life. Your passion, commitment, and belief in our shared vision are what drive us forward.

Together, we will continue to build a future where every child, woman, and family has the opportunity to thrive with dignity and hope.

Warm regards,

Raju Joseph
Secretary, SPPD
Musiri, Tiruchirappalli District

Mission - No Hungry Child Program

Mission - No Hungry Child, supported by Give India, is a critical initiative designed to combat malnutrition among the most vulnerable sections of society, including children, destitute women, widows, sick individuals, and families affected by HIV. The program serves 1,100 beneficiaries in the villages of Musiri block, Tiruchirappalli City Corporation, Keeranur, and Poonkodi in Pudukkottai district.

This program was launched in response to the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, those employed in the unorganized sector, especially women and individuals with long-term health conditions, lost their livelihoods. The most affected were children who no longer had access to midday meals due to school closures, resulting in widespread malnutrition and physical weakness.

Since its inception, the Mission - No Hungry Child program has provided vital nutritional support to combat these challenges. By addressing malnutrition and its associated health risks, the program has had a lasting positive impact on the physical and mental well-being of its beneficiaries. The initiative has run successfully for the past four years, funded by the generous contributions of Give India.

Achievements and Expansion:

During the April 2023 to March 2024 period, the program saw continued success. Over 80% of the children who benefitted from the program over the years have now completed higher secondary education and are pursuing college studies. This remarkable achievement underscores the program's effectiveness, not only in improving nutrition but also in enabling long-term educational outcomes.

In response to this success, and to continue addressing the needs of a new generation, the program is expanding its scope. In the coming year, we plan to support a new group of beneficiaries, aged 3 to 15 years, ensuring that they receive essential nutritional support. Additionally, the program will extend its reach to elderly individuals from marginalized communities, furthering our mission to alleviate hunger and improve the quality of life for all.

Distribution and Impact:

The nutrition kits, carefully designed to provide balanced and essential nutrients, have been distributed monthly. These kits include items like nutritional mixes, grains, and energy-dense foods, such as date fruits, chickpeas, green gram, finger millet flour, etc., which also help satisfy children's cravings for sweets and other tastes. The distribution process is well-organized, with families being notified of the dates and distributed at their doorsteps.

The beneficiaries are primarily located in Musiri block, Tiruchirappalli City Corporation, Keeranur, and Poonkodi, where access to adequate nutrition remains a significant challenge. By targeting these areas, the Mission - No Hungry Child program ensures that no child or vulnerable person is left behind.

Future Directions:

As we move into the next phase of the program, our focus remains steadfast on fighting hunger and malnutrition. We will continue working closely with local communities to ensure that the most vulnerable populations receive the support they need to thrive. Our commitment to providing nutritional kits and our goal of improving both physical and mental health outcomes remain at the heart of our mission.

We express our deepest gratitude to Give India and our donors for their unwavering support, which has made this life-changing program possible. Together, we are creating a healthier, more resilient future for children, women, and elderly people in our communities.

Educational Materials for Middle School Children

The Educational Materials for Middle School Children program, funded by Give India, has been instrumental in supporting the academic journey of children from underprivileged backgrounds in the Musiri block of Tiruchirappalli district and surrounding areas. This initiative is part of a broader effort by SPPD to ensure equitable access to quality education for economically disadvantaged children.

The program was established in response to the growing need for educational resources among children in middle school, many of whom lack basic learning materials due to financial constraints. By providing essential educational supplies, the program aims to reduce the educational gap between children from marginalized communities and their peers. The availability of these materials has had a significant impact on school attendance, academic performance, and overall morale among the students.

Beneficiaries and Distribution:

In the period from April 2023 to March 2024, SPPD distributed educational kits to over 700 middle school children. These kits included notebooks, pens, pencils, geometry sets, and other necessary school supplies. For many of these children, the kits represent not just material support but also a sense of encouragement to pursue their studies with renewed motivation.

The distribution was organized in collaboration with local schools and community centres in the villages of Musiri block and nearby areas. Teachers played a vital role in identifying students most in need, ensuring that the program reached the most vulnerable. Regular follow-ups with the children and their families have highlighted the positive effects of this intervention on both academic achievement and school retention rates.

Achievements and Impact:

Throughout the year, the Educational Materials for Middle School Children program achieved notable successes:

- **Increased School Attendance:** By alleviating the financial burden of purchasing school supplies, the program contributed to improved school attendance. Parents reported that their children were more eager to attend school, and equipped with the necessary tools for learning.
- **Improved Academic Performance:** Teachers observed significant improvements in students' academic performance, particularly in subjects like mathematics and science, where the provision of geometry sets and other materials made a tangible difference in classroom participation.
- **Community Engagement:** The program also fostered a sense of community involvement, with local volunteers and teachers actively participating in the distribution process and monitoring the academic progress of the beneficiaries.

Expanding Support:

In response to the program's success, SPPD plans to expand the reach of the Educational Materials for Middle School Children initiative in the coming years. Given that many families continue to struggle with post-pandemic financial hardships, this support remains vital. SPPD will continue to work closely with Give India and other partners to ensure that more children from rural and underserved communities have access to the educational tools they need to succeed.

Future Directions:

Looking ahead, SPPD aims to:

- **Increase the Number of Beneficiaries:** By expanding the program to additional villages and schools, we plan to reach more children in need, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn without barriers.
- **Integrate Digital Learning Tools:** Recognizing the importance of digital literacy, we also aim to incorporate basic digital learning materials for middle school students, preparing them for a future that increasingly relies on technology.
- **Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation:** To ensure that the program remains effective and impactful, SPPD will continue to monitor students' academic progress, regularly assessing how the provision of educational materials contributes to their overall development.

We express our sincere gratitude to Give India for their continued support of this initiative. Together, we are making a meaningful difference in the lives of children, helping them build a brighter and more secure future.

SHG-Women Empowerment Program

The SHG-Women Empowerment Program initiated by SPPD continues to play a transformative role in empowering women from marginalized communities. Through the formation, support, and training of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), this program aims to build economic resilience, promote entrepreneurship, and improve the socio-economic conditions of women across rural and semi-urban areas in the Musiri block of Tiruchirappalli district, as well as in neighboring villages.

Objectives:

The core objectives of the program during the April 2023 to March 2024 period were:

1. **Promoting Financial Independence:** Empower women through skill development and micro-enterprise initiatives, enabling them to generate sustainable income and become financially independent.
2. **Fostering Social Empowerment:** Create a platform for women to come together, share experiences, and advocate for their rights, thereby fostering solidarity and collective bargaining power.
3. **Enhancing Access to Credit:** Facilitate access to microcredit and financial services through SHGs, enabling women to take loans for entrepreneurial ventures, education, healthcare, and household needs.

Key Activities and Achievements:

During this period, the program made significant progress in several key areas:

1. Formation and Strengthening of SHGs:

SPPD worked closely with women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to form and strengthen 65 new SHGs in Musiri block and nearby areas. Each SHG consists of 10-20 women who pool their savings, providing members with access to low-interest loans. The collective savings model has helped women secure financial resources for household expenses, agricultural investments, and small business ventures.

2. Capacity-Building and Skill Development:

A series of training sessions were conducted to enhance the skillsets of SHG members. These sessions included:

- **Entrepreneurship training:** Women were trained in business management, marketing, and financial literacy, enabling them to manage small enterprises such as tailoring, handicrafts, and agro-based industries.
- **Technical training:** Specific vocational skills such as organic farming, dairy farming, and food processing were imparted to SHG members, empowering them to take on income-generating activities.
- **Leadership training:** Women were trained in leadership and decision-making skills, enabling them to actively participate in community development activities and become role models for other women.

3. Micro-Enterprise Development:

With the support of micro-loans and training, many SHG members successfully launched small-scale businesses during the year. Some notable ventures include:

- **Dairy farming:** Several women ventured into dairy farming, collectively purchasing cows and goats through SHG funds. The income generated from the sale of milk products has contributed significantly to household income.
- **Tailoring units:** Women skilled in tailoring were able to start small units producing clothing items for local markets. This has not only provided a source of steady income but also employment for other women in the community.
- **Handicrafts and Food Processing:** Some SHGs specialized in making traditional handicrafts and processed food items, which were sold at local markets and fairs, adding to the economic diversity of the SHGs.

4. Access to Credit and Financial Inclusion:

Throughout the year, SPPD facilitated SHGs' access to formal financial institutions. Nearly 80% of the SHGs were linked with local banks and financial cooperatives, allowing women to take loans at lower interest rates. This has helped members invest in small-scale agricultural activities, micro-enterprises, and essential family needs such as education and healthcare.

5. Women's Empowerment and Social Impact:

The SHG-Women Empowerment Program has fostered significant social change in the communities served. By giving women a voice in household and community decision-making, the program has improved gender equity and enhanced the social status of women. Through the SHGs, women have taken on leadership roles in community organizations, advocating for issues such as education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability.

The program has also facilitated awareness workshops on key social issues, including women's rights, gender equality, and the importance of girl-child education. This has empowered women to be more active in addressing societal challenges and improving their confidence and self-esteem.

Impact on Beneficiaries:

The program's success can be seen in the improved socio-economic conditions of participating women:

- **Income Generation:** On average, women participating in the program have reported an increase in their monthly household income by 20-30%, thanks to the economic activities promoted by SHGs.
- **Reduction in Debt Dependency:** By providing access to SHG loans, women have significantly reduced their reliance on high-interest informal money lenders.
- **Increased Educational Investment:** Many SHG members have been able to use their earnings to invest in their children's education, particularly for girls, ensuring the next generation has better opportunities for growth and development.

- **Improved Social Status:** Women report feeling more respected and valued in their households and communities, with a growing sense of empowerment to make decisions that affect their lives.

Future Directions:

In the coming year, SPPD aims to:

1. **Expand SHG Networks:** Form new SHGs in more underserved villages to reach an additional 500 women.
2. **Integrate Digital Literacy:** Introduce digital literacy programs for SHG members to help them access online banking services and expand their market reach through digital platforms.
3. **Strengthen Linkages with Government Schemes:** Facilitate stronger connections between SHGs and government welfare programs to enhance the benefits available to women.
4. **Create Market Linkages:** Further support SHG-led businesses by creating sustainable market linkages for the sale of their products, both locally and nationally.

Environment and Climate Change

In our ongoing commitment to protecting the environment and addressing the challenges posed by climate change, we have actively promoted sustainable agricultural practices for over 27 years. Recognizing the critical importance of environmentally sound farming, we have facilitated the establishment of a Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), comprised of small and marginal farmers. This FPO empowers farmers as both shareholders and directors, granting them agency over their agricultural decisions.

The farmers involved cultivate rain-fed lands using organic methods, eschewing harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides in favour of natural alternatives. We provide extensive training on the production of organic inputs, including pest repellents, allowing these farmers to improve soil health and contribute to climate resilience. The harvested organic produce is marketed through the FPO at fair prices, ensuring that these poor farmers can enjoy improved incomes. Through this initiative, we not only support sustainable agriculture but also help uplift the economic status of farming communities, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

Animal Welfare

We are deeply committed to the welfare of animals, particularly donkeys, which are on the verge of extinction due to their diminished utility in traditional income-generating activities. To safeguard these animals and promote their valuable contributions, we have embarked on a mission to protect donkeys and explore the potential of their dung and milk as value-added products.

Our efforts include both online and offline training sessions aimed at educating individuals interested in donkey welfare. These sessions provide guidance on proper care, including ensuring adequate food and water, providing shelter, and maintaining clean resting spaces to prevent diseases like glanders. We also emphasize humane handling and limiting their load-bearing tasks, ensuring donkeys are not overworked.

Through our workshops and other capacity-building resources, we address various issues affecting donkey welfare, such as improper housing, overuse, harsh environmental conditions, and limited access to veterinary care. Our comprehensive approach seeks to change the perception of donkeys, highlighting their historical importance and encouraging more sustainable and respectful treatment of these animals. By doing so, we not only protect donkeys but also contribute to biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

These activities reflect our organization's dedication to fostering environmental stewardship, sustainable agriculture, and animal welfare, aligning with our broader mission to promote community well-being and resilience.

Conclusion

The year 2023-2024 has been a period of significant progress and profound impact for the Society for Poor People Development (SPPD). Our ongoing commitment to empowering communities through education, health, livelihood development, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare continues to bring transformative changes to the most marginalized populations in our region.

Our focus on sustainable agricultural practices and environmental stewardship has enabled small and marginal farmers to improve their livelihoods while contributing to climate resilience. By equipping these farmers with knowledge of organic farming and supporting them through the Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), we are not only enhancing their income but also fostering a more sustainable and ecologically balanced future.

In the realm of animal welfare, our efforts to protect and rehabilitate donkeys, a species often overlooked and undervalued, have gained traction. Through capacity-building programs, both online and offline, we have raised awareness of the importance of donkey welfare and introduced the use of their dung and milk as value-added products, offering a new perspective on their significance to human civilization.

One of the most impactful aspects of our work this year has been the empowerment of women through Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The SHGs have not only provided women with opportunities for financial independence and entrepreneurship but have also played a pivotal role in the distribution of nutrition kits to vulnerable children and other targeted beneficiaries, such as elderly individuals from marginalized communities. These nutrition kits, carefully designed to meet essential dietary needs, have been crucial in addressing malnutrition and improving the overall health of children who are at risk of falling behind due to inadequate nutrition. The SHGs' involvement in this distribution has ensured that the process is efficient, community-driven, and reaches those in greatest need.

By leveraging the grassroots network of SHGs, we have been able to expand our reach into rural areas, ensuring that essential nutritional support reaches the homes of the most vulnerable. This collaboration has empowered women to take ownership of community welfare and has further strengthened the social fabric by fostering solidarity, collective action, and a sense of shared responsibility. In doing so, the SHGs have demonstrated that empowering women is not only key to improving livelihoods but also to enhancing the well-being of the entire community.

As we look toward the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to building a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable society. The successes of this year—whether through education, environmental initiatives, health interventions, or economic empowerment—are a testament to the power of collective action and the importance of grassroots leadership. Together, with the support of our donors, partners, and the dedication of our staff and volunteers, we will continue to create lasting change in the lives of those we serve, paving the way for a future where every individual can thrive with dignity and hope.