



Poshan Pakhawada From Andhra Pradesh

Story



नए समाज की ओर
Towards a new dawn

Ministry of Women and Child Development

Contents

Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work	5
Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh	5
Poshan Mela.....	8
Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh	8
Anemia screening camp for school going adolescent girls in ZPHS.....	10
Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh	10
West Godavari	11
Rampachodavaram Tribal area	14
East Godavari, Andhra Pradesh	14

Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work

Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh

Kannamala Santhakumari, a graduate, has been an anganwadi worker (AWW) in Rajiv Gandhi Anganwadi Centre (AWC), Kondapally village, Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh, since 2009. She earned the job on compassionate grounds, when her husband was diagnosed with HIV. Coming from a Scheduled Caste (SC) community, her initial days were not easy. It was very hard to make upper caste women

accept and understand the importance of accessing nutritious meal provided at AWC for children, pregnant and lactating mothers.

Poshan Abhiyaan has raised her confidence. Santha, through constant interaction and dedication, successfully brought about a positive change in behaviour, more importantly in handwashing and hygiene habits during feeding among preschool children and mothers.

After actively participating in Poshana Abhiyaan, Santha realised how important the 1000 days for reducing malnutrition in newborn are! She learned that she could bring a change in mothers' dietary practices through her Home Visits (HVs).



K Santha at the Rajiv Gandhi AWC, Kondapally village, Krishna district



A preschooler demonstrating handwashing, Rajiv Gandhi AWC, Kondapally village, Krishna district



Children at the Rajiv Gandhi Anganwadi Centre, Kondapally village, Krishna district

Now she follows the Central Alerting System (CAS) mobile alerts; she visits mothers and advises them at crucial stages during 1000 days window from conception till the child becomes two years old.



Saritha at the AWC during Poshana Sambaralu with her children

Saritha, a child bride herself, says, ***“I owe a lot to Santha. But for her, I would not have sailed through my second pregnancy as I was anemic at 7gm and malnourished, when I registered at the AWC. Santha fed me eggs, milk and ragi laddu every day apart from a hot meal in the afternoon. My baby boy was healthy at birth as my Haemoglobin (Hb) levels improved to 9gm by the time of delivery”.***

For Santha, helping pregnant women through safe pregnancy has become her mission in life. Saritha says, ***“She not only won the confidence of her community, but now commands lot of respect. She guides pregnant and lactating mothers on sensitive issues during her house visits”.***

Triveni, 21-years-old, 9 months pregnant, says, ***“Santha advised me to keep increasing my weight up to 10-12 kg, lest I will deliver a low birth weight child. I am following the diet suggested by Santha, consume lots of greens, and wash vegetables before cutting and cooking without losing vitamins and minerals. Initially I was so scared because I weighed only 36 kg. Thankfully, I have gained 10 kg as one date and now I am sure, I will reach 48 kg by the time of delivery”.***

As part of *Poshana Sambaralu* (Poshan Pakhwada), Santha organised Swacchata Day in Rajiv Gandhi AWC on March 19. With lot of exuberance, preschool children who came dressed for the occasion demonstrated in front of the community members on when and how to wash hands with soap and water. Her unique way of handling kids with so much warmth and affection made their learning happen in a more systematic way, as demonstrated by the confidence shown by the kids. While interacting with visitors and community elders, the kids gave answers without fear, showing the freedom they enjoyed in their centre. After having their meal, children on their own went and stood in a row and washed their hands one by one while Santha poured water.



Children answering questions confidently

With the help of Tata Trust grants, she gave a face-lift to the centre with pictures painted on the walls, and a good fencing that has made a world of difference to the centre. Now the kids are loving their school; it is like a home away from home. With improved facilities like spacious kitchen, clean toilets and sinks for hand wash, the Rajiv Gandhi AWC is on par with any private preschool in the city.



The Rajiv Gandhi Anganwadi centre, Kondapally village, Krishna district

Santha works hard every day to ensure all are fed properly; she not only took up the responsibility of her family but also all the mothers of the village.

Poshan Mela

Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh



Poshan Mela, Pinapaka village, E Godavari

Poshan Mela, a community based event organised in March 2019 in Pinapaka village, highlighted the importance of *Balamrutham* – fortified and caloric dense weaning food for children. The complete sectoral team under the guidance of Lalitha Kumari, Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), participated in the programme and provided information on *Balamrutham* – a government scheme implemented through anganwadi centres (AWCs) in Andhra Pradesh. *Balamrutham* is weaning food to provide improved supplementary nutrition to children between 7 months and 3 years. Mothers were made to understand, through live demonstration, the importance of giving supplementary nutrition to children after six months while continuing to breastfeed them. Workers explained preparations with *Balamrutham*, a ready and easy to cook mix, and also the quantity and consistency for each age group when preparing complementary food. For children below one year, porridge mixed with hot water can be served and for older children, the mix can be made into *laddu*. There is no need to add any sugar as the instant mix has wheat, *chana dal*, milk powder, oil and sugar. The recommended quantity is 100 gms which is to be given to children 3-5 times every day. All mothers having children 7 months to 3 years get a 2.5 kg packet for each child every month.



Functionaries at the Poshan Mela, Pinapaka village, E Godavari

Followed by a demo, Lalitha Kumari explained the importance of introducing timely complementary feeding among young mothers, and what pregnant woman should eat daily during pregnancy to avoid low birth weight and premature babies. All anganwadi workers (AWWs) with lot of enthusiasm presented some more recipes with millets, jaggery, ground nuts, that are supplied by the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) under *Balasanjeevani* for anemic mothers. Lalitha Kumari said her team has introduced millet diet for all pregnant and lactating mothers. They are also **spreading nutrition literacy through series of poshan melas** at centre, mandal and sector levels.



Beneficiary at the AWC, Pinapaka village, E Godavari

Lalitha highlighted the importance of the first 1000 days of a child's life and how to take care of a child during this crucial period. She also emphasised on *Balamrutham* special weaning food for children 7 months to 3 years and hot meal for children 3 to 6 years, supervised feeding for malnourished children, one full meal for pregnant and lactating women in addition to egg and milk daily.

After the food demonstrations, AWW distributed all the food items prepared to the participants which were well received.

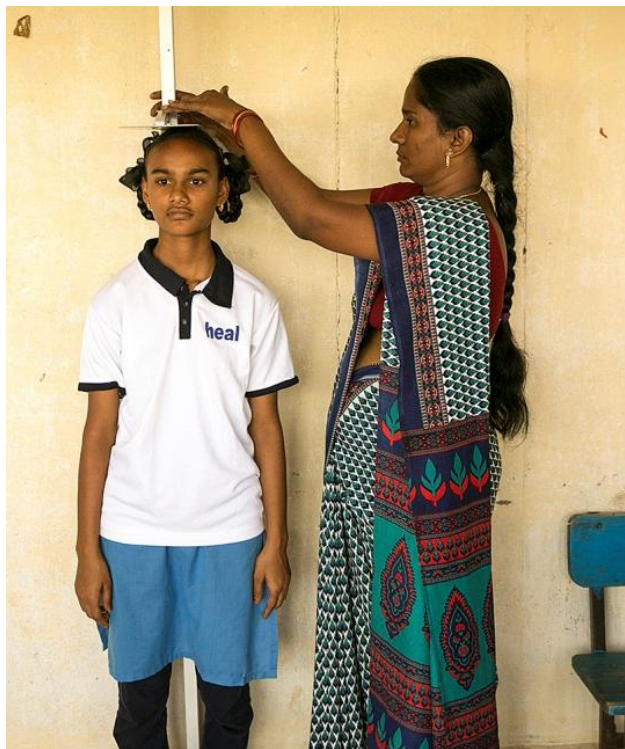


Beneficiary at the Poshan mela, Pinapaka village, E Godavari

Anemia screening camp for school going adolescent girls in ZPHS

Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh

Around 150 girls attended the Anemia Screening camp to check their haemoglobin (Hb) levels. Umadevi, Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), who organised the event in convergence with Health and Education departments, said that **“the purpose is to teach young girls about anemia and personal hygiene instead of waiting until they get married and become pregnant.”** So, under *Poshana Sambaralu* (Poshan Pakhwada), the auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) team conducted blood tests of over 150 girls in Government High School. Health issues like anemia and menstrual hygiene were made open discussion points on the day. She said these issues are read about in textbooks but they are seldom personal talking points. **“Our aim is to make it a discussion point among the adolescent groups so that they take it as a personal issue.”**



Height measurement at Anemia Screening camp

The programme saw a significant number of adolescent girls participating in the event. Counselling sessions for the girls on the importance of an iron-rich diet, proper way to take iron and folic acid (IFA) tablets, and the importance of menstrual hygiene and environmental sanitation were conducted. Umadevi added that under *Poshan Abhiyaan*, students from seven engineering and management colleges in her project area were selected for *Kishori Vikasa* trainings.



Blood test at the Anemia Screening camp



Blood test at the Anemia Screening camp

West Godavari

The Mother and Child Care project was launched as a pilot in West Godavari in Andhra Pradesh. Vijaya Kumari, Project Director (PD), said that this was an eye opener for her team to shift their focus to results monitoring. She further stated that each anganwadi worker (AWW) was given a smart phone with the Common Application Software (ICDS-CAS) pertaining to 14 official duties including attendance of children, registration of pregnant and lactating mothers, weight monitoring, the food being provided to them, weight of the newborn babies, anemia, alerts for house visit to ensure care at critical stages, etc. Each one of them received continuous trainings on use of mobile application, and capturing and uploading real time data from their respective place of work.



Now with relentless efforts, real time data was generated from 98% of centres.

“I am able to monitor the weight and anemia levels of all registered beneficiaries from my dashboard. This has brought greater transparency in the system, as it ensures assigned service delivery and prompts for intervention, wherever required.”

“Our journey was not an easy one”, says Vijaya. “Motivating our workers to adapt to ICDS-CAS took nearly six months, as we had to start from training them on weighing correctly to capturing the figures in CAS. After overcoming initial hiccups of uncertainty, our work got streamlined into addressing malnutrition. Now, we strongly feel that it is our responsibility to regularly monitor weight/haemoglobin (Hb) levels to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight in children, as also among adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers, thus holistically addressing malnutrition.

A variety of activities were carried out during *Poshana Sambaralu* in West Godavari to reach essential services of anganwadi to all the beneficiaries. With special concentration to convert regular food supplying anganwadi centres (AWCs) into child-centred classrooms, where children learn to speak English and recite rhymes, three-four AWCs located within one kilometre radius were clubbed in urban areas. In Eluru urban, Pateh Banda ZPHS houses three AWCs, all clubbed in one, and three workers handle Nursery, LKG and UKG classes independently.



Group Counselling by CDPO, Eluru



A session at the AWC



Poshan rally in Pateh Banda, ZPHS School premises, in convergence with Health and Family Welfare Department

The CDPO of the area has planned rallies and nutrition literacy sessions, especially for all those pregnant and lactating mothers who discontinued availing important services from AWC due to distance from their houses. There was overwhelming participation in the rally with orientation sessions on immunisation, nutritious diet, and care during 1000 days using Incremental Learning Approach (ILA) takeaways. A pregnant mother said, ***“I did not come to AWC to eat meals before as I get to eat non-vegetarian diet and green leafy vegetables more at home”***. Most of the participants said they are coming to AWC for the first time and are interested to learn about 1000 days care. Those families in the affordable bracket are not availing spot feeding service, but attend special events to get information on care during pregnancy.

Balasanjeevani is additional nutritious food and special diet for pregnant women, and children below six years. While *Balasanjeevani* is given as Take Home Ration in other districts, West Godavari district project is serving in cooked form at the centre on six days a week. **Ahmed Unnisa**, mother of a five-month-old girl, said, ***“If not for Balasanjeevini, my child would have been orphaned”***. At 8th month of pregnancy, Ahmed Unnisa had suffered with typhoid fever, was hospitalised and underwent treatment. Her Hb level suddenly fell to 7 gms from 9+ gms. Sasikala (AWW) not only advised her properly on nutritious diet, she fed her with *Balasanjeevani* apart from eggs and milk daily, which immensely helped Unnisa to recover. Her Hb levels have improved to 11 gms now. During mother’s meet



Ahmed Unnisa at the AWC

now, Ahmed Unnisa takes the lead to explain the importance of *Balasanjeevani* in reducing anemia among pregnant and lactating women in Muslim Bazar.

Typical *Balasanjeevani* menu includes:

- Day 1: Foxtail millet khichdi with Moringa or any green leaf
- Day 2: Jowari Pulihara
- Day 3: Finger millet with jaggery, Groundnut laddu
- Day 4: Pearl millet with jaggery and coconut burelu
- Day 5: Jowari pulihora
- Day 6: Finger millet with chapathi

Tammelaxmi Durga is a mother of six-month-old boy now and a regular attendee for midday meal at AWC. She says, ***“I did not like to miss a day, because I like eating meal at the centre, it is so filling.”***

AWW Sasikala gave her *Balasanjeevani* as Laxmi Durga was anemic and underweight. Sasikala tells the mothers every day to eat well

and advises them about the diet they should take to improve their Hb levels. Sasikala says, ***“My***

conversations do not just revolve around issues of maternal and child health, but I also talk to them about family issues like

sanitation facilities, support she receives from the family, family dietary practices and that’s how

I break the ice and understand the problems at home”.

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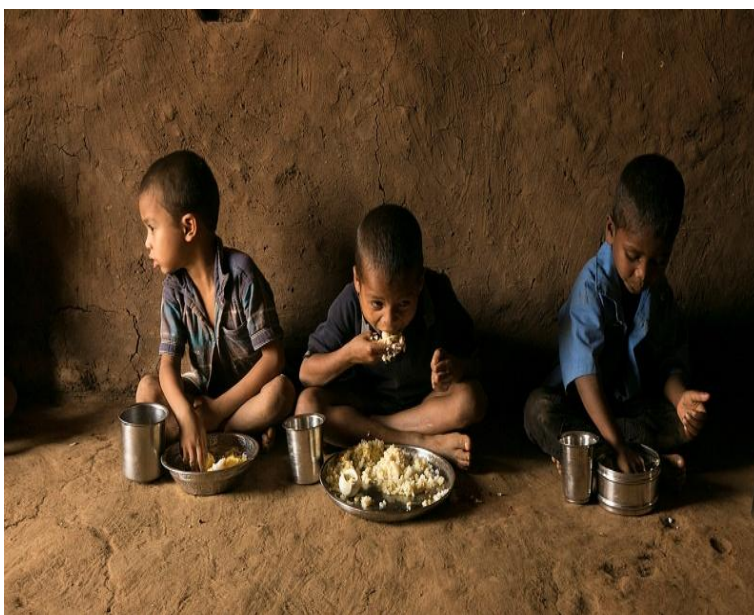
Pregnant and lactating women at the AWC

Laxmi Durga says, ***“I used to go to bed hungry as food served by my mother-in-law was not sufficient for me and she would not allow me into the kitchen”.*** But her family situation has not improved even after she delivered a baby. The AWW during her house visits counselled the mother-in-law and husband on the nutrition requirements of lactating mother and baby and ensured the mother gets sufficient food at home also. Sasikala says, ***“Her family is very receptive to my advice. Now her Hb level has increased by two points to 9 gms”.*** Since then, Sasikala has been visiting the houses of anemic mothers to personally observe their diet and young child care.

Rampachodavaram Tribal area

East Godavari, Andhra Pradesh

A skit on preventing child marriages was performed by Irlapalli Tribal Welfare Adolescent Girls High School (TWAGHS) under the Kishori Vikas Scheme in convergence with tribal welfare schools and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). With Andhra Pradesh standing second in the list of states with highest child marriages, the skit highlights the role of child helpline and anganwadi workers (AWWs) in stopping child marriages in the villages. A Class IX student was forcibly stopped from going to school a month prior to be married off to a man much older



Nandu, Class VIII, TWAGHS, Irlapalli

than her. Not knowing how to get out of the situation, the girl asked her friend for help. The girls' classmate called the child helpline number (1098) and informed them about the matter. Childline volunteer immediately intervened and stopped the marriage amid stiff resistance from parents and relatives on both sides, giving a tough time to the police, helpline volunteer, AWW and Mandal Revenue Officer. However, after counselling and warning that they would face legal action, the parents relented and signed an agreement against performing child marriage. The child helpline volunteer questioned the parents, MRO, elders including the AWW for their apathy towards the girl and not averting the marriage at proposal stage itself. The play was well received by the audience and the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) involved the participants by raising discussion on the ill effects of early marriage and early pregnancies.

Adolescent girls played the skit and spread the message that marriage of minors is forced marriage, violation of child rights, and amounts to abuse of the girl child. The skit ended with a pledge for a healthy future.

Students at TWAGHS Irlapalli said they were all anemic when they joined the school, but with regular monitoring of Haemoglobin (Hb) levels and monthly blood tests, they are able to monitor their health themselves. ***"We are not anemic anymore as we get to eat eggs, milk and ragi daily along with good amount of green leafy vegetables and dal."*** Our teachers, ICDS and health staff together have built awareness on anemia and nutritious diet, and we feel it is our responsibility now to take this awareness to each and every one in our area.

Turra Nandu, a Class VIII student of TWAGHS Irlapalli, played the MRO in the skit and tells the audience very proudly that her Hb level has improved from 8 gms when she joined to 12.1 gms now. Sakshi, a Class VI student who played a bride in the skit, says she joined TWAGHS this year and her Hb levels are being regularly monitored and improving steadily from 7.11 gms.



Sakshi, Class VI, TWAGHS, Irlapalli

Giri Poshana Centre, Aanampalli village

“One of the main challenges in maternal child health care is understanding the local community, and it takes at least five years to get a sense of that. For the new CDPO recruitees in tribal areas, it is a huge challenge to crack in five years”, said Mr. Sukhjeevan Babu, Project Director (PD), Women and Child Development (WCD), East Godavari. The CDPO, Nagalakshmi called for a Mothers Meet on care of Severe Acute Malnutrition/Moderate Acute Malnutrition (SAM/MAM) children in Aanampalli Giri Poshana, a six month old centre, as children are suffering from severe anemia and malnutrition.

Women in these areas are also suffering from anemia because of severe malnutrition. A tribal youth working in a resort told that they stopped the cultivation of traditional crops because of monkey menace in the area, **“Monkeys captured in urban areas are let loose here in our tribal area”**. Women work in their fields and on other days, they work for NREGA. Men mostly work as casual labour in civil works. Since the attendance of Aanampalli women in Daragudem Anganwadi Centre (AWC) was steadily falling, the CDPO initiated Giri Poshana Centre in Aanampalli itself. Now, at the Giri Poshana Centre, children are waiting for their meal and the ayah commands them to get their plates and wash their hands. They obey her and when food is served, they are happy to get at least one full meal a day.

Devika’s child looked emaciated and severely malnourished. CDPO Nagalakshmi told the parents that the boy should immediately be taken to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) in Rampachodavaram. **“Initially they were not willing to listen to me. They told me the boys play outside in the sun and an oil bath would do, and later they said the father-in-law is on the sick bed and hence not possible to leave him at home. But I insisted and they finally gave in,”** she said.



Devika with her two-year-old son in front of Giri Poshana Centre

Vallala Roja and Devika both bring their children to the Giri Poshana Centre every day for lunch where rice, dal, milk and egg are served daily. Both of them spent 15 days in NRC with their children for treatment of acute malnourishment.

“Nagalakshmi madam drew my attention to malnutrition in my children. My two-year-old son was underweight and I did not know about it. In an AWC meeting, she told me about nutritious food and about feeding practices. I also realised how important it was to feed the child at regular intervals. She informed me about facilities at NRC and also about regular follow-up. I followed her advice and now my son is out of danger and gaining weight”, remembered Devika. “Thanks to Nagalakshmi, children are on the path to recovery”.

Sanskruthi Divya Jyothi, a Konda Reddy girl, dropped out of school in Class IX after she fell in love with a Koya Dora boy. Since inter-tribe marriages have no acceptance, they both eloped and stayed together in different places, only to come back to her natal house to deliver a baby. She is now a mother of a two-month-old girl. With no place to stay, she came looking for temporary shelter at her aunt’s place in Aanampalli. Looking at her plight, the Giri Poshana Centre registered her name and provided her one time feeding along with egg and milk.



Sanskruthi, a mother of two month old girl

“After the introduction of Giri Poshana initiative, many serious cases have been detected early and children’s lives have been saved”, the PD elaborated.

Site 4 – Nutri garden demonstration in Atavipakala AWC, Maredumilli

The mini centre worker said that they are fighting malnutrition through nutri gardens, where plenty of land is available in every house in the tribal hamlet of Maredumilli. Vegetables and fruits from the garden are sufficient for their household throughout the year. They grow seasonal as well as perennial varieties, thus creating a reliable source of fresh and nutritious food at their homes.

Local youth are trained as *Balabadi* teachers. She introduced letters and numbers through play method. Many flash cards are displayed on the class room walls for recognising and memorising letters and numbers. The *Balabadi* teacher said she prepares her Teaching Learning Material (TLM) with the local resources, such as tamarind seeds, small stones, foodgrains and clay, and used plastic waste etc. for activities. Students have adopted a plant and grow them in plastic bottles which encourages them to participate in kitchen gardening and farming.



Preschool children, Atavipakala mini centre

