



# STRIDES

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Action Related to the Organisation of  
Education, Health And Nutrition





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AROEHAN's Monthly Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 5

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### REGISTERED OFFICE

1305 Landmark Towers, Opp. Wadala Telephone Exchange, Dadar East, Mumbai 400014. [contact@aroehan.org](mailto:contact@aroehan.org)

### JAWHAR OFFICE

Maa Manzil Building, Silvassa Road, Near Synthiko Foils co. Ltd, Jambhulviher (East), Jawhar, Dist. Palghar 401603. Phone: 2520 295013

### MOKHADA OFFICE

1st Floor, Anurag Niwas, Telipada, Jawhar fata, At post/ Tal Mokhada, Dist. Palghar 401604. Phone: 2529 295046

### PALGHAR OFFICE

Flat No. 08, B Wing, 1st floor, Giriraj Apartment, Kacheri Road, Palghar(W) – 401404.

### DAHANU OFFICE

Bungalow No 7, Suriya Nagri Society, House No: 933, Kankradi Road, Dahanu Road – 401602

Visit to Palghar Zilla Parishad

# Tribal girls voice their community concerns





**AROEHAN** organised an exposure visit for the adolescent girls (kishoris) of Mokhada to the Zilla Parishad CEO's Office in Palghar. Such visits are instrumental in the growth of tribals as it gives them a chance to connect and learn about environments that are different from their own. Such trips also help them build a platform to voice their concerns about their communities in front of federal government employees in hopes of remedying their overlooked issues. 27 out of 37 girls were visiting Palghar City for the first time.

These girls were greeted by Extension Officer Mr. Govind Dhanga who gave them brief information about different departments in the building. The girls visited the Education Department where the officials of the department addressed the group. They informed about initiatives like Manav Vikas Mission through which girls are eligible to get free bicycles in case they don't have transportation means to schools, free bus services, etc.







The girls raised a question about the unavailability of Zilla Parishad schools beyond Class 7th in their areas. They also spoke about the unavailability of high schools, transportation facilities to the closest schools with higher education. Certain scholarships are limited to Zilla Parishad schools for students after Class 10th and not for the students from Ashram Schools. The lack of schooling and opportunities has led several students to drop out and some of them, especially girls, are being pushed into early child marriages. The official retorted that they had been given the go-ahead to open high schools in a few tribal villages and that operations would begin gradually.

The girls also visited the Women and Child Welfare Office, where the Extension Officer, Anganwadi Chief along with the District Programme Officer Mr. Praveen Bhusare were present. The activists and attendees voiced their concerns which have



been affecting their communities. They brought to the attention of the officials grievances like child marriages in the district, unavailability of Amrut Aahar in many Anganwadis, lack of access to government programmes and the problem of school closures. The girls requested the officials to personally visit isolated hamlets in the district and review the situation.

The girls then met the Palghar Zilla Parishad President Mr. Prakash Krushna Nikam and CEO Mr. Bhanudas Palve who themselves come from the tribal areas of Mokhada. Lastly, the group visited the AROEHAN's Palghar Project Office for a session by Aakruti Kendra from Boisar. The girls were taught about the importance and scope of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), especially in tribal areas. A variety of organic goods that have made their way from tribal communities to big markets through SHGs was a major part of their discussion.







## Cheery faces and gleeful smiles at Summer Camps

Cheery faces and gleeful smiles could be seen aplenty at the Summer Camps organised by **AROEHAN** at various tribal villages in Palghar district this year. Upon noticing that the children in the tribal areas were not exposed to any engaging activities or recreational outlets to spend their summer vacation, **AROEHAN** team brainstormed a way to curb their boredom by helping them build invaluable skills.

That was how the idea of a creative Summer Camp came up, with an emphasis on the theme of 'play-based education'. Over 70 children - ranging from Classes 1st to 7th and spanning across 4 villages - were taught the art of Origami at the camp. They were





guided through the process of crafting intricate paper hats, boats and planes with the purpose of igniting their creative spark.

In addition, confidence-boosting exercises were also carried out here by encouraging the kids to narrate local fables and sing regional songs before their peers. Finally, to promote physical enrichment and well-being, a sleuth of fun-filled, traditional games were played with an effort to prove that sports form an integral part of education.

**AROEHAN**'s community mobilisers were tasked with ensuring





the success of this Summer Camp, which was also attended by members of the School Management Committee (SMC).

An eco-friendly element was added to these activities through the usage of recycled paper for crafting. Our unique approach of teaching through theatrics and music ensured that the kids could imbibe each other's strengths by observing their friends perform. By the end of the three-hour session, the kids involved were refreshed by this novel experience and parted with laughter and pleasant memories. By May 2023, a total of 9 summer camps were held with a total participation of 218 students.



# **World Environment Day:**

## **AROEHAN's emphasis on eco-friendly farm practices**





**W**orld Environment Day 2023 aimed at catalysing governments, industry, communities and individuals to come together to combat plastic pollution and explore sustainable alternatives. While plastic takes years and years to decompose, biodegradable products can decompose within months of their disposal. These products are fully compostable and turn into manure for the soil. Wadi Project in association with **AROEHAN** has been supporting and protecting the environment alongside such eco-friendly alternatives.

**AROEHAN** facilitates orchard plantations annually as a livelihood programme for farmers besides traditional crop plantations. In order to ensure a sustainable growth for the plants, farmers are provided with organic fertilizers, fungicides, pesticides and water-soluble fertilizers.





They are made aware of the environmental importance of horticulture during the training programmes prior to tree sapling distribution. Farmers are also provided with recyclable HDPE sheets, for the farm ponds, which are the most environmentally stable of all plastics and give off no harmful fumes into the environment.

*140 farmers benefitted from the plantation of 11,000 saplings under social forestry last year.*

*An area of 145-acre was drawn under cultivation in social forestry and vegetable production.*

*HDPE sheets, organic and water-soluble fertilizers, fungicides and pesticides were provided to 140 farmers.*

Overall, we have successfully created more than 81,929 fruit plantations with 1,197 farmers through the Wadi Project. This provided them with livelihood which assisted them in fulfilling their basic needs and now the once barren lands are fertile enough for better agricultural opportunities.

Besides this, AROEHAN encourages the production and usage of biodegradable methods like vermicomposting and vermiwash to increase soil fertility. Vermicomposting is a process in which earthworms convert organic materials into humus-like materials that are nutrient-rich fertilizers and soil conditioners. It suppresses key pests and diseases that affect horticulture plants in the greenhouse and in field soils, thus eliminating the usage of chemical fungicides and pesticides.



During the training on good agricultural practices this year, 82 farmers visited the vermicomposting unit at AROEHAN's Resource Centre in Mokhada. A Self-Help Group in Dholara called Bhimai Mahila Bachat Gat produced 400 Kg of vermicompost using cow dung and generated an income of Rs. 4000.

AROEHAN ensures the sustainability and usage of organic products in most of our initiatives. A training on natural Holi colour production was organised by AROEHAN for a Self-Help Group in Mokhada. The SHG members of Durga Mata Mahila Bachat Gat were able to produce 100 KG of organic colours before Holi. These colours were sold at a wholesale price of Rs 250/KG and the SHGs collectively generated an income of Rs. 25,000.





# A journey of lost letters and rejuvenated confidence

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India Post

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Even though the exchange of letters has fallen out as a necessary means of communication in today's Internet age, people in remote areas still largely rely on the postal service for receiving important documents, like government ID cards and several other crucial documents necessary to qualify for government schemes that are still sent by post. However, what if these priceless documents never reached us? What if they disappeared along the route? Just the thought is enough to make one's heart skip a beat.




If there is a possibility of that happening to the well-educated or urban population, it's unimaginable what the tribal population will go through, a person who works as a daily wager and is largely affected by it! Losing an important identity document affects these tribals at multiple levels. They pay the transportation fares to visit the government office and miss out on their wage for that particular day. Further, the chances of them receiving their documents in a single trip are woefully low, leading to the rightful fear of losing daily wages for each subsequent visit. The process of applying for a new document is a tedious task for tribals. Due to a lower literacy level in the tribal areas, they often have to search for someone literate to fill out the forms for them. This is followed by assembling the required documents, which are often unavailable due to the same negligence from the postal service. At last, they have to wait restlessly for months for their documents to arrive and still there is a fear of never receiving them.

Chari-Kotbi in Dahanu Taluka is a village which is far from the main road. However, it has a decent route that connects it to the main road.







Along the interior of this route lies a tribal settlement. Since last year, AROEHAN has been working on health and local governance in this village through public participation. In each hamlet, AROEHAN has formed committees, called Pada Samiti, consisting of selected locals in an effort to solve hamlet-level problems via the Gram Sabhas and bring in local governance.

During a training session for the Pada Samiti members, villagers made a shocking revelation that they don't receive their letters. The postman responsible for the same dropped off all the letters to a villager named Kuna and asked him to distribute them in the village. Some of the testimonials spoke that despite applying for Aadhar Card months ago, they have not received them yet. Not only did some important documents not reach them but some were deemed to have been lost on the way. This not only made them regret about being assumed to





be uneducated, but also enraged them that the fundamental right of having their letters delivered to their home was being denied.

Since this problem was prolific in not just one, but in multiple hamlets of the village, all the Pada Samitis made a unanimous decision to write a letter to the postmaster informing him about the same. During the late evening hours when everyone returned from their daily wage work, Pada Samiti members held a formal meeting. Since the current postman was a resident of the village and could lose his job if a formal complaint was lodged, all the Pada Samiti representatives decided to solve the issue by talking to him. This sensible decision was accepted by all with no objections. The Pada Samiti members informed the postman of their troubles and suggested he deliver the letters directly to each recipient's home. In the meantime, the postman, who worked on a contract basis, left his job due to personal reasons. The very next month, a new postwoman took up this post and now the letters are finally being delivered to the recipient's doors.

As people believed that not receiving their letters was a personal problem, they did not take any initiative to fix it, being afraid that their voices wouldn't be heard. However, seeing it as a community problem, they concluded that the governmental systems won't notice them unless they come together and speak against this injustice as one. Only then could they deal with this vexing trouble by themselves. Even though this issue and the consequent change brought may seem minuscule to some, it helped ignite the confidence among the villagers of being able to overcome their own struggles in an organised manner by coming together as one.



# Training camp for ASHA workers

## The pillars of rural health initiatives



**AROEHAN** conducts action-oriented training workshops for frontline health workers on better health practices and sustainable community development. A two-day workshop on 'Health and Nutrition Communication Workshop' was conducted by AROEHAN on May 19-20 for Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers in Jawhar taluka. This workshop was facilitated by Mr. Shailesh Dikhale from SAATHII Organisation.

AROEHAN's Activist Mr. Pradeep Khairkar held a brief discussion on the importance and necessity of the role of ASHAs in rural health



programmes by stating the outline and purpose of AROEHAN's work. Our Activist Ms. Madhuri Mukane and Mr. Krishna Bajare welcomed the ASHA workers and moderated the programme respectively. JSW Foundation's Mr. Santosh Mahajan, along with AROEHAN field workers and more than 100 ASHA workers participated in the workshop.



The facilitator discussed the 1000-day tracking of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and monitoring the health of mother and child. This tracking is important so that every infant can be monitored and cared for during the first two years of its life from conception. This period represents a unicameral chance to lay the groundwork for lifetime of optimum health, growth and neurodevelopment. They addressed the importance of exclusively breastfeeding infants for the first six months in order to achieve optimal growth, development and health.



A demonstration of how to use a growth chart was shown along with capturing the height and weight of each infant into the registers. The ideal height and weight requirements for children between the ages of 0 and 5 years were explained to them. The pressing problems of pneumonia and malnutrition were made known to ASHA workers. Through hands-on activities, they learned how to recognise/diagnose the symptoms of any disease or illness in infants as well as in adults. They were informed about their responsibilities as community educators with respect to the public health system and the social determinants of health.







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1305 Landmark Towers, Opp. Wadala Telephone Exchange, Dadar East, Mumbai 400014.  
contact@aroehan.org

#### **JAWHAR OFFICE**

Maa Manzil Building, Silvassa Road, Near Synthiko Foils co. Ltd, Jambhulvihiir (East), Jawhar, Dist. Palghar 401603. Phone: 2520 295013

#### **MOKHADA OFFICE**

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