

## **The Pratichi—Ayo Aidari Health Project Jharkhand**

**NOTE:** Details of this project can be found in the Pratichi report, ‘Hormo Jeevi Bhalai Pontha’.

The members of the Pratichi Research Team have been maintaining close contact with *Hormo Jivi Bhalai Pontha*, a health project jointly initiated by the Pratichi Trust and the Ayo Aidari Trust. The latter is an NGO formed by Santhal women of Dumka district of Jharkhand. Beginning in January 28, 2004, at Kundapahari village of Gopikandar block of Dumka district (which is 20 km away from the bus stop on the main road connecting Dumka and Pakur, and 26 km away from the primary health centre of the block head quarter), the project has made several successful interventions. The major successes of the project include re-launching of some of the public healthcare programmes, e.g. immunization, anti-malarial campaign, and so on. For example, in 2003, the level of immunization in the locality was below 25 percent; in 2005 December it was 100 percent. In 2003 several people died of malaria, in 2004 and 2005 there has not been any malarial death and the number of episodes of malaria has diminished drastically.

This initiative has played a crucial role in bridging the gap between the local people and the government health system. The programme was very successful in generating health awareness among the local people. The combination of the re-launching of the public health programmes and increased health awareness has reduced the dependence of the local people on quacks.

Apart from health interventions, these initiatives played a crucial role in organizing a campaign to bring all the children (of primary-school-going age) to the primary schools. While the enrolment was less than 60 percent in 2003, it has now increased to 100 per cent. The campaign has been successful not only in enrolment, but also in substantially raising the level of attendance of both the teachers and children. This project has also played an active supervisory role in the implementation of the mid-day meal programme in the locality.

The project aims to:

- Provide therapeutic and prophylactic measures against some major diseases like malaria, diarrhea, kala-azar and other common illnesses.
- Generate awareness of children and mothers’ healthcare and other related social issues.
- Initiate a movement to make the public health-care facilities function properly.

- Bring all children into the fold of immunization on and all mothers in the family planning programme.
- Bring all children into the fold of primary education and ensure proper functioning of the primary schools including proper implementation of mid day meal programme in the surrounding areas.
- Form a healthcare co-operative.
- Fight alcoholism.

The centre is directly involved in providing therapeutic and prophylactic measures of some major diseases like malaria, kala-azar etc. and other common ailments. It is also involved in many other important activities like creating public awareness about the healthcare of mother and child, sanitation, education of the children and the ills of alcoholism. It has also worked towards forming a registered healthcare cooperative to run the centre.

#### **a. Improving health and healthcare**

The centre has made a substantial contribution in the area of professional healthcare. One of the doctors of Gopikandar PHC visits the centre once a week. Health workers have taken the responsibility of providing reliable services and medicines to the villagers. As a result, the dependence on quacks is decreasing, not only at Kundapahari but in other areas too. The cost of medical treatment has been significantly reduced, and villagers depend more on the healthcare co-operative.

Along with therapeutic measures, the project's workers also generate awareness about preventive and prophylactic measures. Preventive measures like the use of mosquito nets, drinking boiled water; keeping the surroundings clean, etc. have been adopted by the villagers on a massive scale. The increased level of health awareness is reflected in the wide spread use of oral re-hydration solutions in case of diarrhea and the increased rate of visiting the healthcare centre instead of waiting at home for a gradual and natural healing or going to a quack.

Another important achievement is that almost every household has its own kitchen garden for the cultivation of vegetables, since villagers now eat more vegetables daily for better health.

#### **b. Initiative on education**

The centre has made a substantial contribution to the primary education system through regular contact with the parents and teachers in the area. Initially teachers were frequently absent. Now all teachers of the area and almost all children between

the age of 6 and 14 are attending school regularly. Parents-teacher meetings are conducted every month. Supervision is done to ensure the proper implementation of the cooked mid-day meal programme. Enrolment and attendance of children appeared to have increased as a result of launching of the programme. The schools are also gradually improving in terms of their delivery of education.

### **c. Campaign against alcoholism**

Healthcare workers have been involved from the very beginning in creating awareness about the adverse effects of addiction to alcohol and other substances, which leads to terrible indebtedness and social ridicule. Some progress has been achieved in this domain: a few of the male villagers, though not very significant in number, have stopped drinking. However, the women SHG members have been trying very hard to eradicate this predominantly male habit.