It was at a crucial time, the women of the project villages requested WOTR to initiate health activities in their villages. Their focus was on children. That was when the fund from the Becker-Cordes Stiftung and the Rotary Club of Hagan came in. WOTR was able to initiate the project Responsible Parenthood and an Action for Positive Change’ with a focus on the mother and child. Later on the project expanded to include all in the village with a section giving attention to an often left out group – the adolescents. Health education, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene and the provision of very simple medicines (basic tablets and home remedies) for common ailments were provided following extensive training of the Woman Health Promoter.

As we reflect on the years since the initiation of the health project in 2004, we are happy to inform you of the positive changes that have taken place and results are there to see. An important impact is in the change in people’s attitude as shown by a greater concern for health specially of women and of children.

The villagers have a better understanding and have realized that health information and care is a lasting asset. Villagers, especially poor women, men and adolescents now have access to information on health issues and are taking special care of their families with respect to nutrition and hygiene. Though they have a long way to go, they have taken the first steps to adopted healthy practices in their families.

We are happy to tell you that the first health project “Responsible Parenthood and Family Planning” initiated in January 2004 gave us a better understanding of what the women needed, and in the second project ‘Community Health Program- A plan for Action for a Positive Change’ was started in 2008. This project is being implemented in 22 villages in the districts of Ahmednagar, Nashik, Aurangabad and Jalna of Maharashtra.

In the project Community Health Program for a Positive Change, various health related activities are taken up: The regular health and weight check-up, of the children of the age 0-5 years; Motivation and Training of women for providing a balance diet for their children and the family; We have trainings of the Anganwadi Sevika (the worker who is in charge of the government run Integrated Child Development Program in villages); The Mahila Pravartak (woman health promoter) is the key of the program. She is the backbone of the health work in villages. She is provided an extended training on various aspects of basic health care particularly nutrition, care of the 0-5 years old children, immunization, hygiene and sanitation. She works in close coordination with the Health Sub-center and the government departments for child care and immunization. She is also given training on how to identify mothers and children who are malnourished and
to give nutritional advice, basic medicines for simple health problems. Her confidence is built up so that she can link the patients of her village to the nearest health center. Besides this, she is given an overall idea of mother and child care, family planning, discusses the problems of women’s health issues, home remedies, HIV/AIDS. Other important aspects taken up in the village are: setting up of the Village Health Committee. This is very important so that the work of the health promoters, with the support of this committee reaches the people. Work with the Adolescent girls and boys are important, so that they can understand themselves better and can take right decisions for their lives. This work is disseminated through various trainings as well as the Melawa (annual get-together of women of villages of a cluster) so that a horizontal learning is facilitated. We hold competitions in the village to encourage healthy competition for change.

This project will continue because it works in close collaboration with the state programs – the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) and the Health Services in the local area. Besides, we have now set up the Health Committee in each village.

**Outcomes and Impacts of the Health Project**

1. Nutritional status of women and children has been improved.
   (i) Children nutritional status improved by 40%
   (ii) Reduction in anemia in women by 25%

2. Preparation of the Child Growth Monitoring Chart for display that helps in motivating the mothers and village for a common action for Child Care. The public display of the growth status of children is effective in motivating the people. We now use these charts across all projects of WOTR, SampadaTrust and Sanjeevani Institute for Empowerment and Development (SIED) in 3 states.

3. Many villagers are aware about the importance of family planning. They have more information about the family planning methods.

4. Trainings for adolescents have had a positive response in each village. Participants have requested to arrange such training regularly at least once in a year. The girls have particularly expressed need such training as they have very little knowledge about the physical change in their bodies and that of the male. They have many misconceptions about the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, delivery, sexual intercourse etc. An increased participation of adolescent boys and girls in the trainings has been noticed.
5. The HB test camps conducted has made the villagers aware about their nutritional status as well as the hemogram. They have obtained knowledge on low cost nutritious recipes. People and specially women use home remedies for common ailments and approach the Primary Health Center in case of severity of malnutrition and disease. The motivation and work has led to a reduction in anemia by 25%.

6. A Recipe Book on a Balanced Diet for the child from the age of 6 months to 5 years, “Chimman Chara” (Feed for the bird fledgling) has been prepared. It teaches women how to feed their child with tasty food prepared from local products. Many recipes can also be used for older children. We now consider translating this into Hindi so it can reach villages in the other states where WOTR works. We also plan to disseminate it to others.

7. The Mahila Pravartaks (women health promoters) take an active role in disseminating information on health and are found more confident and empowered. The medicine box provided to the health promoters has been useful in reducing unnecessary costs for health, and in addressing problems early. Many of villagers directly approach the women health workers for their health problems. She then guides them as required. This has boosted the confidence of the women health workers.

8. An increased awareness regarding various health issues – nutrition, hygiene, as also regarding HIV/AIDS, Family Planning has been noted.

9. The Health Committee members are aware about gender sensitivity as well as how to link with the various government departments.

10. Women have started kitchen gardens to provide their families with fresh vegetables. They have understood the importance of the same.

11. The villagers have understood the importance of health and hygiene and around 40% of them have constructed toilets and use them. Most villages will have health and sanitation committee.

12. Safe drinking water is now available in all villages and for all hamlets. We have reached these through the support of other projects.

But everything did not go ideally we would have liked. Sometimes there are setbacks.

a. The village (Mahadevewadi) at Sangamner block was not very interested and so we had little participation for the various activities. The people were not ready to take responsibility. Although the health team spent much time motivating the villagers, there was little response. And so, after some months we had to leave the village.
b. In some villages, when the people are too busy with their agriculture work, they do not give attention to this activity. If we do not get the men interested in the health project, they do not permit the women to participate. And so we had to leave some villages where the response was poor.

c. In some villages, the health committee had to be reformed. We need to do this if the old committee is unwilling to work as the project requires. And so with great difficulty we had to motivate the people to select new members. In Kachner Tanda (hamlet) no. 4 & 6, Aurangabad district, the process of reformation of Health committee has recently been completed. We have confidence that the new health committee is taking initiative and the participation has been good.
Woman on the Health Front

A Mission of Empowerment – Working as an ‘ASHA’ (Accredited Social Health Activist)
– Lakshmi Laxman Kale, Satechiwadi

‘Women, think about yourselves. If you take care of yourself, you will be able to take care of your children’ says Lakshmi Kale as she boldly addresses the women’s meeting in Satechiwadi village. Lakshmi a woman of the village had recently been appointed an ‘ASHA’ (Accredited Social Health Activist) of the government’s National Rural Health Mission. The women rally around Lakshmi chatting with her and discussing their health conditions.

At 30 today, Lakshmi and her husband Laxman are engaged in agriculture. They have three sons - the eldest is in the sixth class, the second is physically disabled and studies in the school for the blind at Sangamner and the youngest is in class three. Lakshmi has studied up to the ninth class. At 16 years of age she dropped schooling to get married and came to Satechiwadi village.

Satechiwadi is a tiny hamlet of 82 households and 540 inhabitants was abandoned by development. For education and health, the people had almost to fend for themselves. The land was cursed being in the rain shadow barren lands of Sangamner, in Ahmednagar district. No wonder that for transportation facilities, the people trudge 3.5 kms to the neighbouring village even to catch a bus. A primary school exists in the village, but to attend classes V to VII, the children go a distance of 7.5 kms, and for high school its 15 kms! The “Anganwadi” (an integrated child development program of the government for the under 3 years of age) too did not exist in the village. Whenever villagers fell ill, treatment was only possible 10 km away from in Hiwargaon, where a Health Centre is located.

But life in sleepy Satechiwadi began to change for the better when the watershed development program came to our village in 2007. Lakshmi recalls, “When we women were encouraged to join the women’s self-help groups (SHGs), health was one of our major demands put to WOTR. How could we take care of our children when we did not know what to do?” And therefore WOTR brought the health project into our village. I were selected and trained as Mahila Arogya Pravartaks (woman health promoter). We learnt about the growth monitoring of our children and how to provide them and mothers with a balanced diet. We learnt too that the government has an “Anganwadi” (integrated child development program of the government for the under 3 years of age) program. But this did not exist in our village. In order to bring the “anganwadi” to our village, we had to prove that we really wanted it. This was when Mrs Sonabai Kale made available a room free of cost. For almost year we would collect children every day to teach them and to check their growth. Our health project helped us to give the mothers health education. Soon, with confidence we were applied to the Zilla Parishad (district authorities) for the Anganwadi. We are happy that since 2009 the official “anganwadi” is functioning in our village. Today, Savita who has studied up to the seventh class has been appointed as the teacher. We all are involved, because this is our Anganwadi! We brought it to our village!

As a Mahila Pravartak of the WOTR health project, we participate in trainings every month. We are given information on the common health problems that we and our children face. We learn the symptoms, simple
remedies and when to take the patient to the doctor. Even the doctors on the nearby health centre now recognize me! The WOTR health project taught us how to save people from walking long distances in going to the doctor.

I am very happy to share with you that recently, I have been appointed in the Government Project as an ‘ASHA’. This is the National Rural Health Mission to provide every village in the country with a trained woman community health activist – ‘ASHA’ or Accredited Social Health Activist. (Asha also means hope. And I bring hope to our village!). Selected from the village itself and being fully accountable, the ASHA is trained to act as an interface between the community and the public health system. Thanks to the health project, my presentation skills have improved; my confidence level too has grown and now I do not struggle anymore to talk in front of people. I am able to convince my village people of the importance of taking care of their health.

To think that just three years ago I had no confidence. Now I am respected by my family as well as by my whole village. Through the little medicine box given to us, we provide timely medicines to the sick at a very nominal cost. If anybody in the village happens to fall sick – regardless of whether a child or an adult, they immediately come to my house and ask my advice. Villagers even call me “Doctor Bai” (doctor woman).

A Great Opportunity for Men

I am Suresh Tukaram Bodake of Mhaswandi village in Sangamner Block, Ahmdnagar district. Today in my village we have the ‘Annapurana Health Committee’ of which I am a member. There are men and women in the committee. We did not have a health committee earlier. In fact, we did not even think it was needed.

As part of WOTR’s health project, we began receiving health education. In my 50 years I had never had an opportunity where I learnt about my physical health and even the functioning of my body. I cannot even express my feelings in words! Before this, I was generally indifferent to trainings. People from the health department would come in and talk and we barely understood what they said. But today, WOTR has helped us understand important aspects of our life: child care, growing up (training for adolescents to understand themselves), a training on sex and gender, providing a balanced diet, especially for young children and mothers, issues such as, HIV AIDS and Family Planning. We have had competitions on preparing a balance diet (this was for women). Our village has won many awards at the state level and the health program was always put up as an activity we have done.

At first, when WOTR’s health Team gave sexual education to our wives and daughters, we men opposed it. We were afraid that our women would become promiscuous. We feared that this new knowledge gained on sexuality would make others think of our wires as promiscuous. And this would bring shame on our families. It was training on Sex Education and Gender which was given to us members of the Health Committee that made me understand the importance of the project in our village. The trainings have been very informative and helpful in improving our health. We men have now begun to understand the importance of sexual education – it helps us understand ourselves and our bodies. We did not know this before!

Thank you for providing us this opportunity.
I Found Courage to Take the Right Decision

My name is Khema Vasant Kale. I reside in Sattechiwadi which is a tribal community in Sangamner block of Ahmednagar district. I am studying in the second year of BA at the Bhausaheb Bora College at Ghargaon, around 15km from my home.

I want to give special thanks to the Becker Cordes Foundation and WOTR for having implemented this important health project in our small village.

Besides the many other aspects of the health training given to women, the project had special sessions for us adolescents (age group of 13-19). This is a very important stage in life. At this age, we cannot articulate our thoughts. We have so many queries about health and our bodies. It had been difficult for us to talk with our parents or relatives about the physical changes taking place in our bodies. Today, we are thankful. For the first time we adolescents were provided a training to understand ourselves and our growing up stage.

Initially, I was not convinced I should attend. I thought it would be boring and unnecessary. Actually I was shy and I was wondering what others would say. But when WOTR's Health Officer Mrs. Ujwala Kavthekar presented us the project’s main idea and the different aspects we would learn about, I began to attend the training. I realized that this would help for my future. The main topics were on the right age of marriage, understanding the human body and sex education, about HIV AIDS. There were other topics too, but I think these are the most important. I paid full attention to these topics very carefully and learnt many things from these trainings.

The reproductive stage in an adolescent is very complex. Adolescent pregnancy is very stressful for the bodies of the teenage girl. It affects the children that are born and their future. Adolescent pregnancy and adolescent parenthood also affects the education of the girl and their overall health. Adjusting into an extended family at a young age and into a new community is challenging. Adolescent pregnancy contributes to higher costs in emergency.

During this time, my family had planned my wedding and decided that I should get married three months later. But I learnt so many things during this training that I decided that I would get married only at the age of 21. At the time I was only 20 years old and my bride-to-be was just 15. My family tried to convince me to get married immediately, but I firmly told my parents that I would get married later. The family of my bride-to-be came to our home in order to change my mind. And when I expressed my opinion, my bride's parents broke up our marriage. They were not ready to wait.

On 1st April 2010, I finally got married to Laxmi. This marriage too was arranged by my family. But now, I was 21 years and my bride had completed 18 years.

I would like to thank you for providing this very important service at our doorstep. Basic health service is readily accessible and the trainings are comprehensive. It was especially important to us adolescents, so that we understand ourselves better and can take good care of our health and that of our children when they come. This service is the best that I’ve found in my village. It will contribute to a better future.
Thank you Health Project – We Feel Stronger Now

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the Health Project for providing us with valuable knowledge on health, our bodies and related issues. Today we appreciate health and have learnt how to take care of it. “We have also understood the importance of good education of the individuals, especially that of girls, and the state of health of the family” says Supriya Sanjay Bodkhe, a 19 years old studying in the second year of BA. Dipali Kailash Bodakhe and Supriya Balasaheb Auti both 16 years old, studying the 11th class, also share this opinion.

We reside at Mhaswandi village and have experienced that adolescents are often neglected by their families and by school. We had no one with whom we could share our fears regarding our growing up. WOTR’s Health Project recognized our concern and organized training programmes for adolescents. Through this project, WOTR provided us with various trainings on health issues, sex education, life skills and development of personality. It is very important for us to understand the human body and factors that influence growth and development. We have understood the important to improve and increase our knowledge, especially about sexual and reproductive health. It is important for healthy lives, and for positive changes that we students can take home and into our community and especially when we get married and have families of our own.

As Supriya Bodkhe relates that her haemoglobin count was only 7.5% when first tested. That was at the early days of the health project. Since then it has gone up to 10.5%. Supriya Auti’s haemoglobin improved from an alarming 6.5% to 9.5% and Dipali’s count is 11.5%. Thanks to the iron and folic acid tablets that are regularly distributed by Mahila Health Pravartaks, and the balanced diet and the green vegetables we eat. We feel stronger now.

We are thankful for insights into these important health issues.

A Healthy Clean Village

Mahila Pravartaks: Mrs. Nanda Kale & Mrs. Nakusha Pokharkar

Before the Health Project was implemented, there were no health facilities available in our village Mhaswandi. We had to walk nine kilometers to get any health treatment. Fortunately, in our village, the Health Project was initiated in Feb 2008 and we have since then taken some important steps.

We were selected as Mahila Pravartaks (Health Promoters). WOTR’s Health Officer (Ujwala) provided us with training over many months and then informed us of the health project plan and that after training we were provided with some very basic medicines that we could give the people of our village, when needed. We were also trained on when these tablets were needed and the precautions that had to be taken. From 2008 to 2010, we attended these very useful and important trainings where we learned about various diseases.
All women promoters received a small medical kit. This is very helpful. Today we can check a woman to see she has less blood. Now, many women of our villages take iron tablets to increase the hemoglobin. All this is besides the balanced diet and green vegetables that we now teach our women to cook. About 90% of women have their own kitchen gardens. We use fresh vegetables in their daily cooking, as these are easily available from the kitchen garden. This has helped to improve our health. The Health Committee of our village provides ‘mediclore’ drops to every household to purify the water. This prevents diarrhea, vomiting and other stomach infections.

Through this project, the people of our village are motivated and now have an understanding of the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. An important decision was taken to construct individual toilets. We initiated a village cleanliness drive in the village and families use toilets. One year ago, we won a state level “Clean Village” Award, and a prize of Rs 1,00,000.

The women who are pregnant register their new born within twelve weeks after birth. Women are also aware of the value of their own health and that of their babies. The status of malnutrition has been greatly reduced and mortality rate has also decreased. The children between 0-5 years are all immunized. We health workers see to this and maintain our records too. All villagers have realized the importance of immunization. Adolescent boys and girls have started taking proper care of their health. We women have a better understanding of the monthly cycle. We can talk about these problems among ourselves and can get help when we need. Before this health project, we could not even talk about it!

Our thanks to the Becker Cordes Foundation for initiating this health project in our village. This has touched many lives and is a blessing on our village.

Experiences of the Women Health Promoters (Mahila Pravartak)

Namaskar (my greetings to you)! I am Sindhutai Bhagwat. Let me share with you my story and about the changes that my village Gunjalwadi Pathar and has witnessed after the implementation of health project. The village is in Sangamner block in Ahmednagar district.

While recalling the major changes that have taken place in the village, I still remember that earlier one had to go to a far away to town, even for the simplest health problem. And that was travelling 20 kilometers to away. We would spend about Rs 20 for travelling, and half a day just to go up and down. We would lose about Rs 70 of a day’s labour, besides the travelling expenses. Often therefore we would not take care of health problems in the early stage until it became serious. When the problem became serious, we would spend a lot more of money and many more days in recovering. We wasted a lot of money on health. Today we have the basic medicines (tablets) are available at very nominal costs in the village itself. We have been taught about some of the most common health problems and what we health promoters can do. We have also been taught how to prevent health problems especially diarrheas and skin infection and malnutrition in children. We have also been taught when we should refer the patient to the doctor, and during our training we even made contacts with the primary health centers and the other doctors nearby. The doctors now know us. All this has helped all our people save money. Today whenever someone is sick they contact me immediately. According to the condition I either give them the required tablet or even a home remedy, or I refer them to the doctor.
The various activities, which were carried out under the health project, included AIDS awareness program, through which villagers now know about AIDS, its causes and the precautions we need to take. The youth were given information on the various changes that take place in their bodies. This was something very new for all of us. The importance of correct level of iron content in the blood was made known to woman and men too. The entire village understood the importance of the kitchen garden and started consuming the nutritional food. Now rarely they go to market for purchasing vegetable as fresh vegetables are available n our backyard.

An additional activity of eye check program was initialized by our health committee recently, and almost 500 persons had their eyes checked. Many then went on for the cataract operation to the hospital.

A child nutrition program for 0-5 years children takes place regularly in our village. Here we check the weight of children in the age group of 0-5 years, identify if any of them has malnutrition and if they do, we instruct the mother and also give the child nutritional diet supplement. We do this together with the Anganwadi (the Integrated Child Development Program of the government). This is an important program that makes all mothers in the village very happy.

One very heart touching experience I would like to share with you. While weighing the children in Anganwadi, one small girl was suffering with fever. All of sudden she had convulsion (fits) attack. I was not afraid. I had learnt how to take care of the child. As soon as the convulsions stopped, we immediately shifted her to the hospital. She received the required treatment and she is now doing well. Her father thanked and praised us for the timely first aid given to his child.

This health Project has benefitted us in many ways. Thank you.

My name is Nakusha Pokharkar and am working as a women health promoter in the Mhaswandi village, taluka Sangamner. I am glad to share my experience with you.

The health project was initiated in 2008 in our village. In the beginning, Nanda Kale and I were appointed as women health promoters.

In capacity of health promoter, we have many tasks to perform. Part of our duty is creating awareness about individual health and women’s health, vaccination of children in the Anganwadi (Integrated Child Development Program of the government), maintaining records of the pregnant women and malnourished children, listing of young and adolescent girls and boys and offering assistance on vaccination day.

When somebody needs urgent treatment for some minor illness, we provide them with either homemade treatments or tablets from the First Aid Box, which is made available under the health project. We are not professionally trained nurses but while serving our villagers we do feel so. Health project has really helped us a lot.
My name is Sujata Ghule. I reside in Savargaon Ghule hamlet, which is a part of village Amlewadi, of Sangamner in Ahmednagar district.

Today I am proud to mention that am a women health promoter in my village. This health project gave me this opportunity.

It took me quite a long time to reach the present condition. Before the project began, we were living in very difficult circumstances. The Health sub-center is located far away. In case of emergency, there was no easy access to medical facilities for pregnant women and children at all. Besides this, we were unaware of the basic information on nutrition, food quality and even how to take care of one’s health.

Since the implementation of the health project in our village in July 2008, there has been a tremendous change in me. It appears as a miracle has taken place in my life. I have become more confident. I have earned respect in the village. A lot has changed in our village too.

Apart from creating basic awareness about general, child and women health, we were taught about the causes of iron deficiency and about the adequate nutrition during pregnancy. Under the project, we understood the important aspect of environmental health. The medical box provided has helped us a lot especially in emergency cases and giving timely medicines to those who need.

In our village, to motivate the mothers, we have had a cooking competition. We had to cook a balanced diet using local foods. We have learnt about the nutritional value. Besides, we have learnt to cook new recipes. We have a book on recipes “Chimman Chara” (Bird feed) for our little children.

My special thanks to the Health Project for initiating these activities in our village.

My Mother-in-law now Appreciates Me

I am Fasabai Bhangare. I live with my family and in-laws in Shirasgaon village, of Sangamner. I work as a Women Health Promoter in my village and have attended the various trainings on health conducted by WOTR. We do not have any health facility available in Shirasgaon. The nearest health sub-center is about 10 kms away. The training inputs from WOTR enabled us to understand the health problems we are facing in our village. I would like to share a personal experience with you.

On 25th of May 2008, there was a wedding ceremony in the village. While the function was going on, a bull got uncontrolled and barged into the wedding hall. My mother-in-law was attacked by the raging bull. Shocked by this unexpected assault, she fell down in a shock. With the help of the people we put her into a sheet and lifted her into a vehicle. We took her immediately to the hospital. I have met the doctor before during my training. The doctor appreciated our efforts since we had observed the basic rules of primary healthcare. My mother-in-law regained consciousness after two hours and was full of appreciation for what I had done. After she recovered, we brought her home and I put her on a nutritious diet that I had been taught about during my training. Ironically, my mother-in-law had not been too happy when I had signed up for the health-training course. She thought it was an unnecessary activity. But now she realized the importance of the training and often reminded me of how I helped save her life.
Because of this experience, a lot of other women got interested in the training program. In our village we have now set up a health fund for the community. We have suggested that every home has a soak pit so that no waste water flows and there is cleanliness in the village. The people have responded well. We have taught them simple methods for water purification which they follow. I am happy that our dream of a health village is slowly taking firm roots in my village.

**Health Guidance is What We Need**

**Ms. Chhaya Narale, Naralewadi village, Jalna**

When I undertook the health training as Mahila Pravartak (woman health worker), the men and even the women would tease me and would laugh at me saying, ‘Is she is going to become a doctor?’ Will she be able to do anything in the village?’ It hurt me, but I ignored them, and continued with my training.

This training has given me helped me understand the basic health problems and how to prevent these as well as the simple remedies that we can use at home. And so, I started sharing what I learnt with the other women of the village. They began to appreciate it saying that they never ever received such useful information about health. Soon, when they had simple health problems in their homes, they approached me. They have realized too, that for simple illness they had to pay more than 100/- rupees, while when they came to me, the same problem could be solved by taking tablets that cause just Rs. 1-2. And soon their families started approaching me.

A lady from the village shared with me a gynecological problem she was suffering from. She was afraid and had not told anyone about it. She asked me to help her. I listened to her and then went along with to a gynecologist. She was admitted to the hospital and had to undergo a surgery. Today she is well and has recovered completely. She says ‘It is because of your timely help and advice I went to the hospital, otherwise I would have had faced bigger problems and other complications.’ She thanked me. But I thank WOTR and the Becker Cordes Foundation that has provided me with a training that enables me to help the people of my village. I feel proud when people say, ‘your medicines worked well.’ It makes me happy! My confidence is increasing each day!

**Effective Home Remedies**

**Sangita Satish Bodke, Mhaswandi village, Sangamner**

While the elderly people of our village had earlier used herbal medicines, we younger people only thought of medicines in tablets, and injections. This is what the people in cities use to cure themselves quickly. It was during our health training, that we health promoters learnt that we have a lot of medicines in nature and a lot of it in our kitchen too, except that we younger people were not aware of these. It was after the training that I have learned how to prevent some health problems and how to take of health by using some easily available, and cheap home remedies.

Subhash from the village came to me with a complaint of loose motions and gripes in his stomach. This was late in the evening. I gave him a tablet for the stomach pain and for the loose motions I gave him a glass of “jalsanjeevani” (water with sugar, lime and salt – all measured). I showed him how to make jalsanjeevani and told him to prepare the same at home and to drink a lot of it. I told him too that if he did not get better, or if he got worse, he should go immediately to the doctor in the nearby hospital. Next day Subhash came
to me and said that with the medicine his stomach pain had got cured and the jalsanjeevani he got back his energy. He was very grateful for the help I gave.

Mirabai, a woman from my village got burnt accidentally, when she happened to drop a hot cup of tea on her chest. As she felt shy, she did not tell anyone about the wound and soon the wound worsened and got infected. When she came to know that I have received some health training from WOTR and that I have some medicines to treat basic ailments, she approached me. I helped her and cleaned the wound using neem leaves and I applied korphad (aloe-vera) on the wound. Daily I cleaned and dressed the wound. Within 8 days the wound it healed. I was so relieved, while Mirabai was happy as her wound healed. She blessed me saying ‘may you live long’. Now women in the village call me doctor and I feel proud to be a health messenger of the village. But, more than this, we did not know that we have such good remedies right in our village and at no cost whatever!

My Life has Changed

I am Premsingh Gusinge and reside with my wife and two children at Wanjarwadi, in Aurangabad district.

I am a farmer and earn my daily living by working on a small piece of land that my family owns. However, the income from this land is not sufficient to meet our daily needs and most of the time I have to go to other villages in search of livelihood opportunities. I work on other people’s farms or at construction sites. While away from home and family, I often used to feel depressed and frustrated and so, to overcome this I gradually began drinking liquor. On weekly holidays or when there was no work on the site, I would return home. But, as I accustomed to drinking liquor, I would drink at home also. I would then often fight with my wife and even beat her for no fault of hers. My children would be afraid of me and would hide when I was in this state. They were even afraid to talk to me. Because of my irrational behavior there was no peace in my home. My wife and children were sad. At times when I beat my wife, our neighbors would come to help rescue my wife. I used to get angry with them for interfering in our personal matters. Yet, inspite of this, my wife would handle all the family responsibilities and took good care of our children when I was at home and even when I was away.

During this period, WOTR’s Wasundhara and the Health Project were initiated in our village. Health Officers from WOTR arranged various trainings and meetings on health awareness in the village. My wife participated in these meetings but I did not involve myself in any meetings. Often I did not permit my wife to attend the meetings or participate in any health activity.

Very often I wished that I could change behavior but for some reason or another I remained in the same state. During this time, the health team had arranged a one-day training on “Gender Sensitization” for health committee members. Though I am not a member of that committee, one of my friend invited me. At first I was reluctant, but my friend insisted and so I decided to attend this training.

Prior to this training, I had never heard of “Gender” and ‘Gender discrimination’. And so, when I attended the training, inputs and knowledge was given on gender aspects and from real life situations. This was done through the discussion and role-play and other audio visuals tools and posters. It was very inspiring and we were encouraged to understand what happens in our daily life. We began to observe and motivate other men and women so that all of us would better understand the social aspects, gender discrimination, and violence against women. The causes of violence and many such issues were discussed during this training.
This training opened my eyes. I have taken a decision to change my life for the better. I have decided that I will not beat my wife. I will make every effort to bring happiness and peace in family life. I have understood the importance of happiness and will readily take up my responsibilities and will make efforts to help my wife and children be happy and live healthy.

I would like to give a lot of thanks to the health team and the Becker Cordes Foundation. Through this health project initiated in our village it has shown us a new way to live a better life. Thank You!

**The Becker Cordes Stiftung Has Touched Our Lives!**

*Mrs. Ujwala Kavthekar, Health Project Officer – WOTR-Sampada*

When we were informed that it is your 80th year Dr. Werner Cordes, we all thought it the unique occasion to share with you and Mrs Roswitha Cordes the little stories of how the Becker-Cordes Stiftung has made a difference in our lives. We are happy to present this gift to you and your family.

I am **Ujwala Kavthekar**, a registered nurse and mid-wife. I have been working with the WOTR Health Project since 2002 as a Health Officer and at present, am based at WOTR’s regional office in Sangamner.

The health activities initiated in our remote project villages have proven a blessing to our villagers, specially the women and children. It and has helped to provide knowledge on basic health issues, so important for a healthy living through the training of Women Health promoters. By doing so, our villagers have been able to save much money, improve the nutritional status of the children besides enhancing the confidence of women and helping them gain recognition in the family and village.

The woman health promoters are not very educated. Some of them have completed secondary education, while the others have completed the seventh or eighth class. But, they are capable and have a deep desire to work for their village, especially for women. We provide the Mahila Pravartaks (women promoters) with training on various aspects of health. The training is both theoretical as well as practical. We accompany them in their village so as to build their as also to be assured that they are communicating the right health messages. We also link them up with the nearest health service centers so that they can refer patients to the doctors. Today, they are more aware of the basic health issues of their village. They are eager to help the villagers and work their best to address the problems encountered. Observing the sincerity, care and commitment with which they work, the women, their family and the village too have now started giving them a respect and recognition which they had never had earlier. But all this came after a lot of challenge and difficulties. The women had to prove themselves.

While gathering these little stories from our villages, the mahila pravartak (women promoters), the adolescent group and the health committee, I began to reflect what working in this health project did to me. I would like to share this with you.

Following my training as a nurse, I worked with the Nitya Seva Hospital and the Anand Rishi Hospital in Ahmednagar district. Here I attended to people who came in when they were ill. I knew my patients only as suffering from this illness or that. Now as I think of it, I had contact mainly with the illness that people suffered from. Other than this, I had no more direct contact with people. But when I joined WOTR’s health project, it was my first experience to work in villages. I had the opportunity to meet the people in their homes. I had to understand their whole life if I needed to understand their health needs. I began to get close to the women and their children. I became a welcomed person, as I was working for something that was very important for the women – their children. It gives me great joy as I work to provide the health care to
the poorest of poor. It gives me personal satisfaction when I see a smile on people’s face when their child is doing well, when the woman promoter has achieved success and when someone has recovered from an illness. For me it was a proud moment when National Geographic happened to come to one of our project villages while our women promoters were taking the monthly weight of the children.

The Becker-Cordes Foundation has given us valuable support that has made little but amazing changes in our project.

Thank you for helping us make this change!