

## **SAJANI - A Village Health Worker - A Success story**

**“There is no greater joy or greater reward than to make a fundamental difference in someone’s life,” – Mary Rose McGeady**

Sajani, the President of Notre Dame Self Help Group Federation of Dharare is a born leader and a known traditional healer of the area. She is an illiterate woman, born in a low caste family living below poverty line. She struggled to sustain her family by cutting fire wood from forest and working as an agricultural labourer. She was married to a man who had two children and four more were added to the family. Her husband was and still is a drunkard. Often she was the victim of domestic violence and used to run away to her parental home. Her mother told her that it is her fate and she had to put up with her husband. As a true Hindu woman, she suffered violence and injustice. Since she earns an income now as Village Health Worker, he no more abuses her but started to respect and love her. She gives him some money to buy his daily liquor.

She was leading a miserable life when her sister in law, one of our animators asked her to organise a Self Help Group in her village in 2005. She was well respected in her village for her hard work. She never fought with others. She was a people builder from the beginning though she had to go through hard sufferings of life. So the women chose her as the president. She got many chances to attend various trainings and became a good trainer to grass root people. She has good communicating skills and women listen to her patiently. Though illiterate she is able to compose songs and sing well. Before we finish the topic she will come up with a song including all the causes, signs and symptoms of sicknesses and treatment. This helped other illiterate women also to remember what we taught them in their own local dialect. She attended many herbal trainings offered by our centre and became very popular. Many come to her village from faraway places to get herbal medicine. She claims that she had cured many who were not cured by doctors! She gives her mobile number to them and when the medicine is over they inform her and she makes medicines for them.

Sajani was invited to a neighbouring district where many tribal people were affected with malaria. No government medical facilities were available in this village as the people were very poor. She stayed there two days, made herbal medicines for the sick and taught them how to prevent malaria by using certain herbs. They were very happy and send her some pulses when they harvested their field.

**In another occasion one village on hill top got affected with Malaria. There were no transportation facilities. She walked four hours to get to the hill forest. No one dared to go there because of extremists’ presence. She stayed with them and taught them how to treat malaria with the herbs available there. She came back joyfully after three days when they were better. She told us some of the extremists also were sick and took treatment from her. She was little scared in the beginning but she thought they are also human beings who needed her care. When all of them were well they sent her some money which she said was big help to pay tuition fees of her children. Now she tells “I am going to keep a board at my house where people can read and contact me when I am**

away for field visit.” she wants to send her children for higher studies especially for medicine. She wishes a bright future for her daughter too.

Sr. Mary Jessy Jacob

Sajani is the one in red saree

