

# Aarohan

AVANTHA FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

## Geo Informatics Aid Urban Planning

### Avantha Foundation supports Rapar Municipality to develop GIS-enabled urban planning systems

Accomplishing a major milestone in promoting inclusive and citizen-centric development, Avantha Foundation and Rapar Municipality jointly launched a GIS (Geographic Information System) based database development process covering the entire 25,000 population of the town. A customized software – Urban Planning Support System – was developed to institutionalize this futuristic planning model. The software contains household information of the town that can be accessed to facilitate both macro and micro level town and ward planning.

The system was launched on 26th January 2016 and was made accessible to citizens on the same day.

UPSS software provides 22 data variables that can be used by the Municipality, CSOs or citizen groups for participating in the planning process. Citizens have since begun using the database to identify and analyze gaps in ward planning and to address them suitably. Soon after launch of the system, areas in the town without water pipelines, sewage, drainage and road networks were identified and decisions were taken in respective Ward Committees to address them on priority. The UPSS can be accessed at <http://upssnagarpalika.in>.



Shri Pankaj Mehta, MLA launching UPSS in Rapar

## A Winning Partnership

### Avantha Foundation joins hands with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to address child malnutrition in Maharashtra

‘Saksham’ as this new initiative is called, will focus on improving child nutrition indicators by promoting critical nutrition service delivery. Education and empowerment of mothers, strengthening capabilities of frontline nutrition workers, engaging local communities, and promoting convergence in services are key project approaches.

Maharashtra has significant indigenous population with widespread child undernutrition reported amongst them. Geographic inaccessibility, lack of knowledge among mothers and care givers and seasonal migration contribute to high levels of undernutrition among native children. Partnership with Gates Foundation will strengthen the work of State Nutrition Mission in 19 administrative blocks across four districts, Amravati, Gadchiroli, Nashik and Palghar. Through this path breaking initiative, Avantha Foundation prepares to scale innovations to impact larger areas and to disseminate learnings to global audience.

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## Building Social Accountability in Urban Service Delivery

**Citizen Report Cards provide Urban Local Governments opportunities to bring in greater community engagement and accountability for services**

It is well known that urban service delivery in Indian towns leaves much to be desired. One key component lacking in many towns is the absence of social accountability within the urban local body resulting from its below-par engagement with citizens.

Citizen Report Card is a survey that quantitatively estimates the actual user experience of civic services delivered by the urban local body with specific focus on attributes relating to access, usage, quality, reliability, responsiveness, hidden costs and the level of overall

user satisfaction. It can be used as a tool to measure the level of social accountability institutionalized within the urban local body.

Assessing the current situation in a town and defining the scope of action, collection of feedback from citizens, rating of services, dialogue with and response of service delivery agencies, citizen engagement in reform, periodic benchmarking of service delivery and public review are part of this innovative toolkit.

In March 2016, Avantha Foundation trained a batch of post-graduate student volunteers in Chhattisgarh, who conducted a sample survey as part of their training. Subsequently, they rolled out the Citizen Report Cards in all wards of Kumhari town.

## Supporting ULBs for Revenue Enhancement

**Avantha Foundation assists the Municipal Council of Kullu to improve key revenue generation processes**

Most urban local governments in India struggle to optimize revenue from own sources, making them significantly dependent on state and central grants. They are thus unable to adequately respond to local developmental needs and aspirations of citizens. The problem is more often systemic and gets little attention by way of improved processes or innovations at the local level.

Avantha Foundation is working with Kullu Municipal Council to institutionalize

improved processes with the primary objective of increasing revenue from rent and *Tehbazari* (daily collections from street vendors). This initiative is expected to improve the fiscal situation of the Municipal Council, making it more responsive to the developmental needs of its citizens. Assisting the Foundation in this process is LM Thapar School of Management, Punjab.

A tripartite agreement has been signed with the Department of Urban Development, Himachal Pradesh and the Municipal Council of Kullu, as part of which the Foundation will provide training and capacity building to the Council staff. Digitization of rent records will be undertaken by the Council and staff responsible for collection of *Tehbazari* will be provided with handheld devices to enhance efficiency of the collection system and reduce manual workload. These measures are expected to increase the collection efficiency of the system from its current 49% to nearly 80% in the current fiscal.

*Meeting with the Municipal Council of Kullu and Stakeholders*



## A New Vision for Konark

### The visioning event in Konark emphasized on evolving a definite path for the town's progress through greater citizen engagement

A gap analysis survey conducted in Konark in 2015 led to the convening of a larger gathering of stakeholders to draw-up a broad vision for the town's progress vis-à-vis its present challenges. The primary objective of the event was to understand the ground realities in terms of policies and public service delivery. The objective was also to give the process of citizen engagement by the Notified Area Council a shot in the arm through formation of a core group of stakeholders to drive the change.

Representatives from elected bodies, civil society and government officials including senior bureaucrats of the state attended the event. It helped to build consensus among stakeholders and to recognize areas of improvement for the town, including identification of key information gaps.

Participants deliberated on the scope, need and challenges of the Notified Area Council and recommendations were made to address them through an enhanced process of citizen engagement by the Council. A vision statement for the town was drafted and approved by participants; and potential stakeholders to lead further proceedings were identified.

An important outcome of the visioning process has been the inception of a core group of stakeholders who would work with the Council to take the citizen engagement agenda forward. The core group comprises of 20 members with the Executive Officer as the Convener and 13 Councilors and six civil society representatives as members. The group will be a major element in the implementation of Avantha Foundation's Urban Innovation Project in Konark.

The vision statement of Konark reads "Konark 2020 and Beyond – Zero Litter, Pollution Restraint, Eco-Sensible, Tourist-Friendly City."



*Vision Konark workshop as part of Avantha Urban Innovation Project*

## Improving Data Efficiency in Urban Governance

### Digitization paved way for institutionalizing an Excel-based record keeping system in Kullu Municipality

Municipal Councils more often use traditional ways of maintaining records in paper files and registers through a labour-intensive process. Such a system also takes days, sometimes weeks, to provide an analysis or compilation of specific data required for planning or review purposes.

Institutionalizing an Excel-based record keeping system, ward-wise data on house tax collection and shop rent details for all 11 Wards in Kullu have now been fully digitized, improving data efficiency and saving costs. Similarly, the entire employee database of the Kullu Municipal Council has also been digitized, enabling improved human resources management functions.

Roping in locally available IT expertise, efforts are currently on to create a web-based shop rent collection system to reduce the workload of the Municipality through a cashless facility. Once established, a similar initiative will also be undertaken for house tax collection.

*A municipal employee at work in Kullu*



## Adding Value to Child Nutrition Interventions

### Working with native and tribal communities in remote villages, Avantha Foundation proposes an evidence-informed model to support government initiatives in fighting child malnutrition

Combating child malnutrition continues to be a high priority in India. In spite of the country's remarkable economic growth in recent years, many children struggle to meet their most basic needs for nutritious food and healthcare. Numerous measures are implemented by government to address the multi-dimensional needs of mitigating child malnutrition.

Since 2012 Avantha Foundation has been at the forefront of addressing child malnutrition in high-burden states like Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. It adopted an advocacy-led, evidence driven approach and implemented large scale field interventions with indigenous and tribal communities.

The Foundation worked with the government to improve quality of counseling and growth monitoring; to enhance mothers' knowledge on child care, health and nutrition; and to strengthen technical capacities of frontline workers from government programs.

Key interventions comprised of involving mothers and family members in child growth monitoring, home based counseling for child-specific attention, creating value and demand for growth monitoring services, individualized child growth status tracking, handholding frontline service providers like Anganwadi workers and ASHAs, and supporting Supervisors for monitoring malnutrition control.

These initiatives have fetched positive results. The project reported 7 to 12% reduction in underweight children. The proportion of mothers who are aware of the weight and nutrition status of their children increased from 15% to more than 80%.



*A mother with her child in Chhoti Sarwan, Rajasthan*

## Mobile Technology Supports Frontline Nutrition Workers

### Generating child-specific longitudinal nutrition status, a key tool to effectively manage nutrition service delivery, is enabled by the *Jatak* mobile application

Technology is often the answer to some of the complex problems we face in today's world. Early capture of child's nutrition status and timely follow-up are vital for malnutrition mitigation.

Monitoring of movement of nutrition status (upward or downward) becomes critical, as slip-off in nutrition status of infants and young children is the ground reality. This brings forth the critical need for monitoring of nutrition status movement on a regular basis.

A mechanism to understand the nutrition status movement of children

through longitudinal data results in the nutrition programs' ability to provide focused and child-specific attention.

*Jatak* is a mobile application utilized by Avantha Foundation in its nutrition programs in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan that work with more than 20,000 children in remote tribal areas. This simple mobile tool helps nutrition field workers to capture data during their field visits.

The data is sent to the server through a voice file. Child specific data is stored in database on a longitudinal basis. The database is used to generate reports, trends and analysis for monthly growth monitoring. Frequent, accurate and real-time data capture as well as immediate analysis has a definite potential of improving the malnutrition control program.



*Jatak captures vital information, enabling delivery of specific nutrition services to those children who need special attention*

## Engaging Communities in Child Growth Monitoring



*Outreach services have spurred demand for growth monitoring of children*

### Outreach counseling and growth monitoring services resulted in enhanced demand and participation from families and communities

Long-term sustainability of any service depends upon realization of value of service and demand by users. Public health delivery system and Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) has Anganwadi centers that provide support and specific attention to women and child development. These centers provide a number of services. Major effort and thrust have always been on reaching the services. However, there is a need for creating value for services provided through these centers.

Institutional service model needs to take roots by creating demand for services. Avantha Foundation has been successful in demonstrating this effectively through its nutrition initiatives in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan that reached out to more than 20,000 children. It was achieved through awareness creation and capacity development, especially of mothers and community members to understand the need and importance of child care services.

Community members now realize that growth monitoring of their children is essential and are keen to understand the nutritional status of children. At the household level, discussions on health of the child take place and an increased number of mothers access Anganwadi centres for various services.

## Demonstrations for Skill Development

### Demonstrations in the field are key to Avantha Foundation's approach to building skills of community members

The Foundation has integrated field demonstrations as an important constituent of counseling for growth monitoring. This is planned to educate mothers and family members and to build their skills for adopting effective child care practices. Demonstrations form an important element of monthly field plan and more than 700 Anganwadi workers have been trained by the Foundation to conduct them. They are conducted every month in a minimum of 50% Anganwadi areas.

Demonstrations are held on hand washing practices, breastfeeding, cooking low cost high nutrition recipes using locally available resources, making oral rehydration solution to address diarrhoea in children, and on proper use of nutrition supplements distributed through Anganwadi centres.

Field demonstrations are held based on the need of the community, giving special attention to children who are in

low nutrition categories. However, all mothers and care givers of children in the age group of 0-3 years are invited for demonstrations. Hand wash is an integral part of all demonstrations. Breastfeeding demonstrations are held for all mothers having children in the age group of 0-2 years.



*A breastfeeding demonstration with mothers*



*A demonstration of ORS preparation in the community*

## Integrating Continuum of Care with Antiretroviral Therapy

**A holistic package of care provision, integrating antiretroviral therapy and diagnostic services with home based continuum of care proved effective in addressing some of the most pressing needs of people living with HIV in resource-limited and remote settings**

People infected and affected by HIV/AIDS not only bear a heavy financial burden, but also face stigma and social isolation attached to the disease. Very often, they have to cope with poverty, discrimination, loss of employment, neglect and abandonment making them one of the most vulnerable sections of the society.

The antiretroviral therapy and continuum of care project by Avantha Foundation has successfully reached out to more than 3,300 people living with HIV in Odisha and Maharashtra.

This integrated model of intervention places people living with HIV at the centre of a wide range of actors who are dynamically linked. The entry point to the continuum is integrated counseling and testing for HIV. Home based care is an important element of this broad system of care provision.

Results from the clinical intervention show consistent weight gain among patients. An average weight gain of 2.6 Kg. has been observed. Less than 5% people living with HIV remained away from their work due to ill health.

There has been an average 20% increase in the CD4 count of patients. While about 95% adherence to drug regimen was reported, less than 1% cases were lost to follow up. Less than 2% patients suffered from Tuberculosis, one of the common opportunistic infections found in HIV positive people. An average 3.3% increase in the Haemoglobin level of patients was also seen.



*Home based care – an integral part of the Care Continuum*

## Reaching the Unreached

**The 'Buddy' initiative reached out to people living with HIV who would otherwise have never been reached**

A buddy is someone who is a confidante of the patient; he or she may be spouse, sister, brother, friend, mother or any one with whom the patient is comfortable.

These volunteers are selected by patients and trained by the project on various aspects of positive living, including ART adherence, nutrition and prevention of opportunistic infections.

The project today has more than 300 Buddies who take care of patients. They are trained regularly and have direct access to the medical officer and counselor of the project team.

**“Avantha Foundation endeavours to work closely on issues of critical importance to the country to achieve sustainable developmental outcomes.”**

*- Yashashree Gurjar, CEO*

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