Greetings again from “Jan Chetna Manch, Bokaro”! This comes with our best wishes for the year ahead, and hoping that all the upheaval, strife, illness and sadness of the last couple of years of this pandemic are behind us. Here at JCMB we are managing, and with the support of the community around us, friends and well wishers, are welcoming the New Year of 2022 with optimism and hope. This newsletter gives you a glimpse of the some of the activities we have been involved in the last few months.
Every year, from June to December our villages witness an upsurge in agricultural activities. In the absence of irrigation facilities farmers eagerly await the monsoon rains, which generally arrive by July. The parched and dry land absorbs the rains, the paddy fields and saplings are prepared, and transplanting takes place. Vagaries of the weather are the farmers’ constant worry: rains that are too much, too little, or too ill-timed can cause their crop to fail. This is one of the reasons behind the huge out-migration of village youths to cities and towns far afield, where wages are not dependant on the monsoon rains. It was considered more reliable than incomes from farming, until the pandemic and the lockdown during the last two years. Nowadays both farming and migration are considered equally capricious.

We have been recovering from the hard hitting second wave of the corona virus by the middle of the year. By November we felt confident enough to restart the most difficult to organise socially-distanced activities – training activities and health outreach clinics.

By the end of December 2021 many of our programmes that had been re-introduced in the last few weeks were again under threat. A third wave of the corona virus, identified as being driven mainly by the Omicron variant, had swept through neighbouring countries, and it was only a matter of time before India would be affected. Again we are on alert. We have learnt many things from the last two waves of the pandemic; we hope this experience and preparedness helps us overcome the hurdles in the future.

### Health statistics at a glance: June to December 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultations for women in clinic</td>
<td>3942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New registrations for ante natal care</td>
<td>787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra sonograms</td>
<td>733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health consultations</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women giving birth</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small babies cared for in baby room</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women visited in the community after childbirth</td>
<td>1189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malnourished children provided food supplements</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reaching out to the community

A helpful hand to those in need: Shivani Mahato - Community Health Worker, JCMB

Shivani Mahato, sets out with Swasthya Sakhi, Savitri Devi, for home visits in Birkham. Protected from the rains and COVID-19! Shivani spends 20 days a month visiting families of pregnant and recently delivered women, malnourished children and mental health patients, cycling up to 30 kms each day. Rain or shine.

JCMB’s eight CHWs reach out to a population of nearly 100,000 people each month in around a 100 villages in the Chas and Chandankiari blocks – mostly by cycle. They provide ante & post natal care and counseling, nutritional support and meet the families of over a thousand women each month.

Baramasia outreach clinic

The last outreach clinic was held in Baramasia village in March 2020, just before the national lockdown was declared. We knew about the corona virus and tried to maintain social distancing, but it was hot and sunny outside. The women obviously wanted to wait inside, in the cool, shaded building. The local bank manager, whose office is inside the building, advised us to keep women outside, in the unsheltered sunshine, saying this would kill off the virus! What wishful thinking!

Almost two years later, in December, we organised our next outreach clinic in Baramasia, due to the demand of the women in the villages nearby, all more than 20 kms away from the Women’s Health Centre in Koromtanr. Around 25 women came, mostly for ante natal care. Dr Surabhi, Community Health Workers, Menoka and Uttara, nurse assistant Sunita, along with the Swasthya Sakhis Alomoni, Namita, Memjan and Budhi all helped to make the programme a success.
Mental Health Programme: From telemedicine to in-person care

Our telemedicine programme in partnership with the Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi, ended in September 2021. For 18 months JCMB organised weekly clinics for patients with mental health problems. This was a life saving activity for many, adversely impacted by the lockdown and pandemic. Still everyone was relieved when in-person clinics were restarted. Fortunately the subsidy provided by SAVE-UK ensured continuity of treatment for around 60 patients.

An online meeting with both JCMB and SHG field workers with Dr Mehta of the CIP, Ranchi, in progress. The discussion was on the issue of suicide, a huge problem during the last two years.

The first mental health, in-person clinic in Koromtanj! Team leader from CIP, Dr Mehta planted a sapling on the occasion. We are hoping the partnership continues to bloom!

In spite of the short notice – just 3 days – our first in-person mental health clinic was as crowded as we could manage in these socially distanced times! Around 50 patients came for consulting the team.

Rakhohari Turi

Rakhohari Turi is from a poor, landless family. His father caught and sold fish, earned well, and drank heavily. Due to alcoholism none of his four children were educated. Rakhohari’s elder brother started to live separately after marriage and the household’s condition deteriorated. Rakhohari decided to leave home with a group of friends to try their luck in the big city: Bangalore. There he met with an accident on the building site where he was working. First aid was managed by his employer, and he was sent home.

Soon his family realised all was not well with him. He would wander around, forget to wear clothes, and refused to work. His mother, now a widow, somehow managed the household by working in other people’s houses. She was lamenting her lot to one of our Swasthya Sakhis, Gita. The lockdown and the pandemic had added to her woes. Rakhohari was brought to the WHC in October 2021, and with the combined support of the CIP, Ranchi; SAVE-UK; Gita and Rakhohari’s mother he has now much improved and has started to do some agricultural work.
Maternal Health and Wellbeing: A continuing concern for JCMB

The new Women’s Health Centre, now called the ‘Chetna Mahila Swasthya Kendra’ (health centre for women’s awareness) located in Koromtanr continues to provide quality care to women during pregnancy and childbirth. It has become known not only as a women-friendly health centre, but where ‘normal deliveries’ are the norm, and quality antenatal care is available. Quality care – even in our centre where we minimise costs by providing rational treatment, use generic medicines, and employ local women to provide services – still costs. Corners are not cut due to the ability of a family’s to pay. Since most women are from poor families, their care is highly subsidised by donations from friends and well wishers. During the last few months such women were helped by many individual donations, and from a timely grant from ‘The Impact Foundation’ (DASRA) in India. In December we received a donation from ‘The Suzy Fund’ (from the ‘St Peter and St Paul’s Church’ in the UK) which will help us continue to subsidise maternal health care for poor women.

From June to December 2021 451 women gave birth in the women’s health centre. Out of these 428 were normal births, and only 23 (5.4%) women had cesarean sections.

Urmilla Devi: Nutrition, pregnancy and childbirth in COVID times

Urmilla had been coming for antenatal care from July 2021. She was already into her 6th month of pregnancy, and had received no antenatal care until then. She was anaemic and malnourished. This was her second pregnancy, and her first baby was born in our health centre 6 years ago. Her husband had been working as a labourer in Mumbai until last year. He struggled to reach home during lockdown and vowed never to go back there.

However with every passing month his resolve weakened. There was no work available locally, and his wife became pregnant again. Reluctantly he returned to Mumbai in August 2021, and had no plans to return in the near future, even for the birth of his child. In spite of her precarious financial situation, Urmilla still strived for quality antenatal care and childbirth. She received both. We provided her chana sattu (roasted gram flour) every month during her last trimester of pregnancy.

In October 2021 Urmilla gave birth to a healthy 3.2kg baby.
Quality care for newborn babies

One of the major achievements of the Women’s Health Centre’s neonatal unit was the introduction and implementation of our paediatric / neonatal telemedicine programme. With the help of Dr Rhea Eapan from Kerala, and Dr Aditi Tiwari from Seattle (USA) – both friends and colleagues – our nurses were supported 24/7. Dr Rhea advised our nurses during the day and Dr Aditi during the night (since it was daytime in the USA). From June 2021 38 babies have been cared for in the special baby care room, and many more have been attended to in the outdoor clinic. This activity was supported by the timely donation from DASRA, which helped subsidise the cost of care.

‘Hi Aditi!’: Video calls from the baby room

One of our small preterm babies happily connects with Dr Aditi

Dr Rhea on video call from Kerala

Rekha planning care for a baby who may need treatment for thalassemia with Dr Rhea

Choti Devi and her ‘chota’ baby

Choti (choti = small one) was pregnant with her 2nd baby after 6 years. In spite of antenatal care she ran into problems. At 29 weeks of gestation – just over 7 months – her membranes ruptured. We told the family that the baby would probably not survive, and advised them to go to a bigger hospital, where NICU facilities were available. Her husband – though educated and worked as a teacher in a private school pre-pandemic times – was now unemployed. His school had closed and he had not had any income for over a year. He was currently working as a daily labourer – earning much less than he used to. He pleaded that he could not take Choti to a bigger hospital, so she stayed in the WHC.

She soon gave birth to a baby boy weighing only 1.1 kg. Again we told the family to take the baby to a ‘higher centre’, and again they refused. In spite of our fears, the baby survived, with help from JCMB, neonatal advice from Dr Rhea and Dr Aditi, and subsidised treatment, Choti went home after 6 weeks, with her baby weighing 1.9 kg.
Training at JCMB.....at long last

After nearly 2 years, JCMB restarted various health training programmes at long last. Although health services had continued, it became difficult to conduct training programmes of new health workers and *Swasthya Sakhis*, who are all local women, let alone trainees from other places. Since the beginning of the lockdown in 2020 most training programmes of JCMB had to be indefinitely postponed. The training of a new group of health worker trainees was abandoned in March 2020. The *Swasthya Sakhis*, the backbone of JCMB’s community outreach activities were called for 3 days of training and meetings every 2 months prior to the lockdown.

During the last few months we have restarted the training of new health workers. Six local women who are keen to become health workers enrolled in the programme in September 2021. We also conducted 3-day training programmes for two groups of the *Swasthya Sakhis* in November. We even felt confident enough to welcome a group of six women from another Ranchi-based organisation, BIRSA, for training in home-based health care, in December.

From July we held programmes to upgrade the skills of our health workers, to help them in the community and the health centre. Videos of them giving baby baths for small babies; demonstrating exercises for backache or turning a breech baby; and diet advice for anaemic women were prepared.

*Classroom training for 6 women from BIRSA (Ranchi) along with 6 women from nearby villages.*

*JCMB nurse provide practical training for trainees. Yamuna demonstrating how to give a bed pan.*

*New skills: Huge Challenge*

*Dr Surabhi, with her experience of emergency care taught all our health team resuscitation skills - with difficulty at times. Here she is attempting to teach CPR to one of our Swasthya Sakhis, Sanjyoti Devi.*

*Learning by doing: Bathing small and preterm babies*

*A clip from the video of Menoka demonstrating how to bath a small newborn, without exposing the baby to the cold.*
Help comes in many ways

*From beautifully made woollies for tiny babies...*

Our preterm neonates are kept snug and warm by a regular supply of beautifully handmade caps, sweaters and booties. This year was no different. Thanks to **Sandhya Srinivasan** and her group of women in Bangalore – **Nool Koota**, and – nearer to home – **Rupa Sahay** in Ranchi, our small babies are much benefitted by this thoughtful initiative.

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**...to donations of surgical equipment...**

Our health centre received a huge boost with the thoughtful and much appreciated donation of useful equipment and surgical items from a maternity home in Kolkota, courtesy Dr Sanjoy Sen’s family.

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**......helping us to breathe**

Our growing need for oxygen in the WHC was mostly unrelated to the corona virus. Though we kept an oxygen concentrator in the newly set-up COVID labour room, we also needed them in the Small Baby Room immediately. Since shifting to our new centre, increasing both space and infrastructure in the baby room, and having paediatricians on call virtually 24/7, our need for oxygen for neonates increased enormously.

This problem was solved by the timely donation of an oxygen concentrator from our well-wisher and supporter, Dr Sunil Anand, ensuring that babies in need are provided oxygen continuously. We are planning to purchase another oxygen concentrator courtesy a donation from Charities Aid Foundation (UK) through the support of our friend Dr John Kirkland.

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*Sunita gets the oxygen concentrator ready for use in the baby room*
And helping us to grow!

When we shifted into the ‘Chetna Mahila Swasthya Kendra’ in Koromtanr in March 2021 we thought (or hoped!) that our building days were over. When we designed the health centre it was much before the pandemic and the need for social distancing. These recent developments forced us to rethink. We needed a separate room for symptomatic or COVID-positive women during childbirth; we needed space for our nurses to change PPEs, scrubs, and bathe in order to ensure infections from hospital to home does not take place; we needed more space between beds. So we converted one ward into a labour room suite for women with infections – COVID or otherwise; and one into a nurses’ changing room. Expansion was the need of the hour and timely donations, particularly from The East-West Foundation (USA), and our well wisher, Susan Chatlos-Susor, provided this support. Construction work is now underway for two more rooms, a veranda and an expanded washroom on the top floor.

Recognition for the Women’s Cooperative

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is a Government of India undertaking, under the Ministry of Cooperatives. The Jharkhand regional office of the NCDC awarded the JCMB-facilitated ‘Chetna SHG Mahila Swabalambi Sahkari Samiti Ltd.’ as the best Women’s Cooperative in Jharkhand. The award which contained a cheque of Rs 25000/- along with a certificate was handed over to the President, Srimati Mala Devi by Mr Badal Patralekh, honorable minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperatives on 9th December 2021 at a function at the office of the Registrar Cooperative Societies, Jharkhand, Ranchi.
HOW TO GET IN TOUCH?

You can get in touch via email on:

janchetnamanch@rediffmail.com

Or by phone:

+919431128882

+918084791472

It’s always better to send an email though, since the phones do not work too well here!

Details of ways to donate to help us are available on our website

www.janchetnamanch.org

An important note:
We would like to request all our friends and well wishers to contact us before making any financial donation.

THANKS AGAIN TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS!

Thanks again to all our friends and well wishers in supporting our endeavors. Without such support JCMB could not have survived these difficult pandemic times.

During the last 7 months (June to December 2021) the following organizations have supported our activities in various ways:

SAVE-UK; The East-West Foundation (USA); St Peter and St Paul’s Church (The Suzy Fund); the Charities Aid Foundation; Healthy Hands Initiative; Impact Foundation (DASRA); Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi; Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Jharkhand.

The donations and support (in very many different ways) from individual friends and well wishers have ensured our activities not only continued, but expanded.

In the last 7 months the following individuals (listed here without honorifics, apologies to all, in alphabetical order) helped financially and in other ways:

Aditi Tiwari
Anand Bharathan
Anusha Agarwal
Ashok Kumar Sen
Bala Sheshank
Balika Devi
Beverley Anne Nelmes
G Chandra Shekhar
Ishan Jeetendra Bhatt
John Kirkland
Jyothi Unni
Jyotsna & Jayanta Basu
Kanwarjit & Janet Chawla
Manoharan Padinjarathra
Mary & Ashok Shroff
Mike Galvin
Murali Sivarajan
Nagesh Seth
Nilesh Shah
Nina Mansukhani

Niraj R Sharma
Olivia Kerrigan
Pandurang Giri
Pravin Singarayar
Punam Dixit
R Nagaraj
Rabindranath Chakraborty
Ram Pyari Gupta
Rhea Eapan
Ritvij Basant
Rupa Sahay
Sandhya Srinivasan
Sanjay Vidyarthi
Sunil Anand
Surabhi Sanjoy
Suresh Anthony Joseph
Susan Chatlos-Susor
Swapan Bhattacharya
Uta Landwehr
Vasundhara Rangaswamy