



# Jan Chetna Manch, Bokaro

Newsletter February 2021



*The Women's Health Centre in Chamrabad*

Greetings to all our friends and well wishers for the New Year! Along with the rest of the world we are hoping that 2021 is better than 2020. By January 2021 it seems like we are getting back to normal. In the villages and towns it seems that the corona virus is all but over! Hardly anyone can be seen wearing a mask, or adhering to social distancing protocols.

Fortunately cases of the virus have drastically fallen. At the time of our previous newsletter, in September, cases in Bokaro and Jharkhand were peaking. Cases and deaths have fallen each month since then. By the end of January the number of cases detected in our district was a mere handful – less than 10 per day. Covid wards in the hospitals are empty. We hope this trend continues.

## Vaccination of JCMB's health team at the Community Health Centre, Chandankiari



*Though our head nurse-midwife Dayabati has given thousands of women injections can't bear to watch herself being injected!*



*Queuing up for registration in the hospital*



*Waiting in the observation room post-vaccination*

On 27<sup>th</sup> January all the health workers at JCMB were given the Covid vaccine in the government health centre in Chandankiari. Fortunately few experienced any side effects. It would have been difficult for us to run the health centre if there was! All the main nurse midwives, ambulance drivers, laboratory technicians were immunised on the same day in several batches being taken up and down.

None of the registered health workers from JCMB refused to take the vaccine, though they were clearly informed that it was voluntary. But in Jharkhand – and indeed India as a whole – many have refused. Only 60% of those targeted in this round of vaccination showed up, probably due to the fear of possible side effects. Around two hundred people complained of adverse effects in Jharkhand.

### **At last – Public for Republic Day!**

The last function held in our courtyard, on 15<sup>th</sup> August – Independence Day – was at the height of the pandemic here in Jharkhand. No one attended. By 26<sup>th</sup> January – Republic Day – with the numbers of the corona virus numbers falling and the rules getting relaxed, the atmosphere was palpably different. This time all the health workers gathered in the courtyard to celebrate, hoist the flag, listen to stirring national songs – and hope for a better year ahead.



## Health care and JCMB

In spite of the continuing impact of the pandemic, health needs for non-Covid issues remains. For us, one of the main concerns was women's health – especially during pregnancy and childbirth. We also have programmes to care for villagers with mental health problems, children with malnutrition, and for women with gynaecological problems and infertility. In order to follow all the protocols of social distancing, both in the clinic and the ward, we have had to reduce the numbers. Consultations were by appointment only, except in emergencies; and admissions for childbirth only for women registered here. By January 2021 we were relaxing these protocols somewhat, whilst still ensuring social distancing. The table below gives an idea of the number of people accessing our services during these 4 months.

### ***Some Health Statistics: September 2020 to January 2021***

Number of consultations for women	1852
New registrations for ante natal care	419
Number of ultra sonograms	420
Number of mental health consultations	186
Number of women giving birth	250
Number of small & preterm babies cared for	14
Number of post natal visits in the community	694
Number of malnourished children cared for in the WHC	120



### **A Double Christmas Present for JCMB: And Twins for Chinu!**



Chinu Devi was a diminutive, slightly built mother. She already had one daughter, and came to know that she was carrying twins soon in her pregnancy. She came regularly for antenatal care, but she did not grow much. As expected she went into labour one month early. It was Christmas Day – 25<sup>th</sup> December. The first baby was small – 1.5 kg, but the second baby was even smaller – 1.1 kgs.

Before the delivery Chinu's husband told us that if there was any problem then they would go to Bokaro General Hospital (BGH). Soon after the birth we advised him to take the babies to BGH. He asked us to wait a while until he talked to his friend who worked there. Within an hour he told our nurse: "My friend told me not to go there, stay where you are...."

Chinu and her babies stayed with us for 7 weeks. The first baby grew quickly and was 2.8 kg on discharge. The second one grew slowly and was 1.9 kg. A happy, healthy outcome for all three.

### **Sterilisation operations for women – Covid-style**



*Women waiting for their turn*



*Our OT Team*

There has always been a significant demand for sterilisation operations at JCMB. This year, due to the pandemic we have not been able to organise operations in large numbers. However, with the arrival of Dr. Pravin and Dr. Sangeetha from Tamil Nadu, we decided to initiate such operations carefully. With the help of Dr. Alok Jha, and our OT team Yogesh, Sunita, Champa and Rekha eight women were successfully operated upon in January, with more planned for the future.

### **Happy being appreciated – and keeping warm**

Almost all the health workers – in the health centre and in the community – work long hours, mostly appreciated (and sometimes not), in difficult situations, in scorching heat and biting cold. When they leave their homes early morning in winter, it is barely light. Their packed lunches are cold and barely palatable by the time they get to eat them. The Community Health Workers struggle to keep warm cycling 15 to 20 kms to visit their allotted villages. None of these women, though, had ever complained – of their cold or rotten food, of lack of warm clothes, of distances cycled, or of extra hours of work.

This year, in appreciation of all of this we had a well wisher who wanted to give them a gift that they would like, in recognition of their contribution to women's and babies health and well being. Since it was mid winter we gifted all our health workers products to keep their stomachs and heads warm – thermal tiffin boxes and wooly hats!



### Warm heads for wee babies too!



With the help of our many well wishers we continue to ensure that babies delivered at the Women's Health Centre are welcomed into a warm world. This year in addition to Sandhya's group in Bangalore, we received the much appreciated – and well timed – batch of woolly caps, from Smt. Namita Guharoy of Kolkota. Thanks again for all your support!

### Farewell and thanks to Dr Shila Narain

Dr. Shila Narain has been our consultant paediatrician, well wisher and friend of JCMB for many years. From 2014 she came every week for seeing sick and malnourished children, overseeing the care of preterm and small babies that we had admitted in our health centre, and – most important – training and teaching our team of health workers. Our small baby room, the protocols we put in place, and her emphasis on the small, basic – but too often ignored – essentials of neonatal care, are now well established. We are much indebted to her for her mentorship and support. We wish her well for her future and we will sadly miss her.



*Dr Shila examining our small babies, with always a kind word for mothers too.*



*Leaving Bokaro, but still thinking of us: Donating furniture to help us on our way*

### Reaching out: Community Health Workers and Health Guides (*Swasthya Sakhis*)



*Swasthya sakhi Hasmun Bibi, ensures women continue to get antenatal care in her village, Kanchanpur.*

Our Community Health Workers continue to reach out to pregnant and recently delivered women; families of malnourished children and mental health patients in almost 100 villages. Each month the CHWs visit the homes of around 750 pregnant women and 170 recently delivered women.

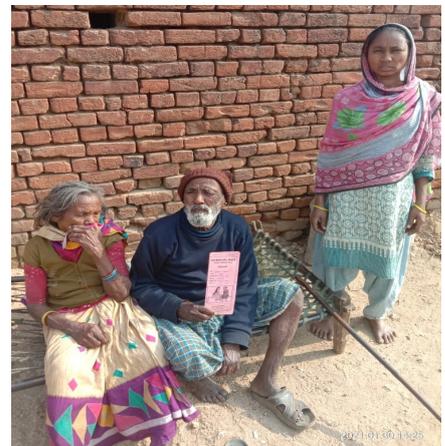
Soon after lockdown we decided to equip our Community Health Workers with iron and calcium tablets for two reasons: pregnant women found it difficult to travel due to the various restrictions and could not come for antenatal care to our health centre & the government run village health centres were closed. It was supposed to be a temporary measure. However, 10 months later the demand and the need still exist. Each month the CHWs provide these mineral supplements to nearly a hundred women.

### Mental health care in Covid times: Telemedicine and community outreach continues



*Telemedicine clinic underway*

JCMB's mental health programme continues in spite of all the hurdles caused by the lockdown. The **Central Institute of Psychiatry** in Ranchi is still supporting our mental health programme through telemedicine. Each Wednesday around 15 patients are seen by the psychiatrist in Ranchi and our doctor in JCMB. Around a hundred patients are being treated, with many of them – 60 – receiving free or subsidised medication courtesy a donation from **SAVE-UK**.



*Counselling mental health patients in the community*

### Making a difference to a young woman's life: Sajan Kumari

Sajan Kumari is a young tribal woman from a village in Chandankiari. She has been receiving treatment from JCMB since 2016, when she was only 15 years old. She has had epilepsy from childhood, and her family had earlier tried various traditional methods of treatment – but all had failed. Initially she was brought regularly by her father, and her condition significantly improved. Then 3 years ago, her father died. Her mother started to work as a manual labourer to feed the family. With 3 sisters there was no male earning member of the household. Sajan's treatment was intermittent, and her illness returned.

With the help of JCMB's Community Health Worker – Thandu Devi, the mental health clinic supported by the **Central Institute of Psychiatry**, and free medicines courtesy **SAVE-UK**, Sajan is now well again and is a valuable member of her household.



*Sajan with her mother in the clinic*

### Lingering hunger: Still dealing with malnutrition

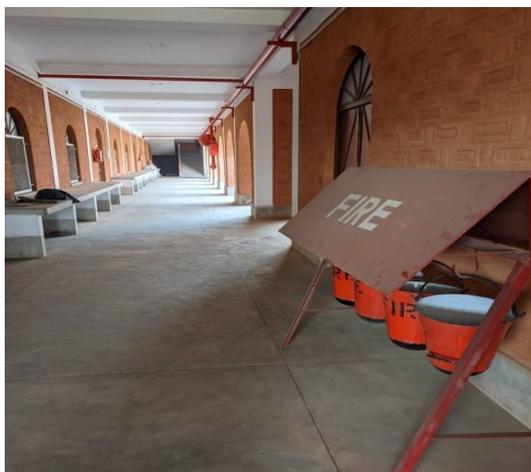
Although the nutrition programme supported by the **Tata Trusts** had ended in July 2020, and the COVID response support for children of vulnerable families (courtesy a grant from the **Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives**) ended in September, there were still many children who were in need of nutritional help. The economic situation for some families is still precarious, and small children – particularly between the ages of 6 months to 3 years – become malnourished. JCMB took the decision to continue to support some of these children until the families economic condition improved, they improved enough so that they did not need our support, or the village crèches (*anganwadis*) began fully functioning and provided adequate nutritional help. We are still providing for 120 such children.

### A helping hand for Pihu



Pihu Kumari is one such child. She is the only child of her parents. Her father is a daily labourer, who goes to Chas each day in search of manual work. During the last couple of months he is getting work on most days, but sometimes comes home empty handed. During the lockdown he could not even go out in search of work. His daughter quickly became severely malnourished. At one year of age she weighed only 6 kilos! Now, after 8 months she weighs 9 kilos, and her mother is happy with her progress.

### Getting ready for fires – hoping for none!



The final touches for the new building – to be called the '**Chetna Mahila Swasthya Kendra**' (literally translates as Aware/Conscious Women's Health Centre) – seem to go on and on. But these touches are extremely important. One such is the firefighting equipment. We have had to construct a massive water tank on the roof, sprinklers, smoke detectors, extinguishers, alarms.... All these additions have cost JCMB a significant amount, but we sincerely hope that none of it will be needed to put out any fire. For the last 20 years we have experienced no such incident.

Our health workers and drivers are happy with piped water supply, since they can hose down the walls of the health centre and wash the vehicles easily!

### Farewell to one of our most dedicated & energetic *swasthya sakhi*: Subejan Bibi



*Subejan inaugurating the annual women's day celebration*



Subejan Bibi sadly left us during these difficult times. She was almost a permanent presence in the Women's Health Centre. Living in the nearby village of Korkotta, she would energetically march up and down from home to health centre many times each week. She was selected as a *swasthya sakhi* over 20 years ago, and never failed to participate in meetings and trainings. Families from far off villages would call on her and bring her with them for childbirth, such was her reputation. For mothers of such women she would often bring food from her own home – none of the women she cared for went hungry, whatever the time of day. She is dearly missed!

## A word about our financial situation ....

No newsletter would be complete without an update about our financial situation! 2020 has been one of the most challenging years for many, including JCMB. Not only has the lockdown and the virus hit us severely, but this year saw the withdrawal of the financial support of one of our most significant donors – the **Tata Trusts**. Their support had been crucial and significant, and sadly came to an end during this pandemic.

We were fortunate to have the support of the **Azim Premiji Philanthropic Initiatives** to continue to provide health care to pregnant women during the pandemic, until September 2020, and to **SAVE-UK** for subsidising the cost of mental health treatment. We are also greatly indebted to **Mr Ashok Kumar Sen**, the brother of our much valued and sadly missed well wisher, **Dr Sanjoy Sen**, whose donation in his memory has enabled us to invest in much needed equipment for our operation theatre and baby room in the new health centre in Koromtanj.

Though the community around us supports by contributing towards the cost of services, it is still insufficient if we are to continue to provide quality care to poor people. Fortunately we have received the support of many friends who have sent donations in cash and kind to subsidise the cost of care to poor people. Still we need your support! Here are a few suggestions of ways to help:

- Spread the word. Send this newsletter to your friends and family who you think might want to help.
- Contact medical professionals who might want to help us here by volunteering their time.
- Donate in kind. We are always in need of baby clothes, linen, surgical and medical equipment.

### HOW TO GET IN TOUCH?

Get in touch via email

[janchetnamanch@rediffmail.com](mailto:janchetnamanch@rediffmail.com)

Or phone

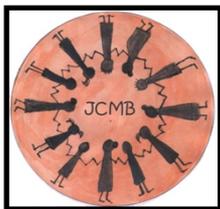
+919431128882

+918084791472

It's 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](http://www.janchetnamanch.org)



### THANKS AGAIN TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS!

Thanks again to all our friends and well wishers in supporting our endeavors. This includes the following organisations: SAVE-UK; Azim Premiji Philanthropic Initiatives; East West Foundation; Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi; Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Jharkhand.

Again it has been the donations and support (in many different ways) from individual friends and well wishers that have kept us afloat in these difficult times. Without this support our activities could not have continued. In the last 4 months (October 2020 to January 2021) we would like to thank:

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