



The Oni Gumpu Strategy

For

Mahila Samakhya
Karnataka

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	5
1.1	Objectives of Oni Gumpus.....	7
1.2	Difference between Oni Gumpu and sangha	8
2	Process of Oni Gumpus	10
1.3	Formation of Oni Gumpus	10
1.4	Structure of the Oni Gumpu.....	11
1.5	Role and responsibilities.....	12
1.6	Training.....	14
1.7	Functioning of Oni Gumpus	15
	Managing the Oni Gumpu	15
	Norms of the oni gumpu	18
	Issues discussed	19
3	Achievements and Impact.....	20
1.8	Health Problems.....	20
1.9	Education	24
1.10	Social Problems	25
1.11	Motivation for being a part of the oni gumpu.....	30
1.12	Problems faced by the oni gumpu.....	31
1.13	Changes in the village.....	31
1.14	Changes in the members	32
1.15	What would they have done without oni gumpu	33
1.16	Benefits of the Oni Gumpus to all stakeholders	33
4	Government Community Relationship	36
1.17	From the Perspective of the Community	36
1.18	From the Perspective of Government officials	36
1.19	From the Perspective of MSK Staff.....	43
5	Capacity building needs.....	49
1.20	Government Departments	49
1.21	GP members.....	49
1.22	Oni Gumpus.....	49
6	Sustainability and Replication	51
1.23	Sustainability of the Oni Gumpus.....	51
1.24	Cost effectiveness of the strategy	52
1.25	What is good and what could have been done better.....	52
1.26	Replication of the Oni Gumpu Strategy.....	53
7	Conclusions.....	53

Executive Summary

Mahila Samakhya Karnataka introduced a new strategy called Oni Gumpus (neighbourhood groups) where a village every street is mobilised into groups with about 20 households in each group. The groups meet to discuss various which would depend on the project being taken up and other issues which affect them even if it is beyond the issues tackled in the project. In this way the entire community is mobilised in the village. This way any information that needs to reach the entire community can be passed on through the oni gumpus. For the community too, they can monitor and access government programmes better if they are all mobilised together. The oni gumpu strategy was first implemented in the Community Monitoring Programme and continued into the Swasth Plus programme in Raichur. When the Gender and Health Equity project in Koppal had some problems they decided to adopt the oni gumpu strategy there. Finally it was replicated in Bellary from the beginning in the Charka project which aimed at raising awareness on HIV/AIDS.

Each oni gumpu has women who represent each of the twenty households and meet once a week. Each oni gumpu has leaders, in some places it is one leader and in others there are two leaders. These leaders are supported by kishoris or volunteers to help them organise the meetings and do the documentation. It is only the leaders who are trained by MSK who in turn have to pass on their training to the oni gumpu members. From among the oni gumpus two women are chosen to represent the entire village. This village level group are the women who interact and negotiate with the government.

The oni gumpus work on many issues. The main issues they work on are health and education. In health the main focus is on maternal and child health. The oni gumpus ensure that pregnant women get their TT injections, eat nutritious food, get checked by the doctor and go to the hospital for delivery. They also ensure that the children are immunised and underweight children get nutritious food. They also ensure that all children go to the anganwadi and to school. These issues are all part of the project aims, but the oni gumpus do not restrict themselves to these issues. They take up any issue that comes up. They also have taken up social issues and issues around the village and environment.

Initially, the government departments were not very open to the information given by the oni gumpus but slowly have become more open. The government staff at the village level, who interact regularly with the oni gumpus are open and realise the importance of the oni gumpu. But the higher level government officials are still very aware off and open to the oni gumpus.

The oni gumpu strategy is a not a very expensive strategy compared to other strategies and is very replicable. In MSK itself it has been replicated in two projects.

1 Introduction

Mahila Samakhya Karnataka introduced a new strategy called Oni Gumpus (neighbourhood groups) where a village every street is mobilised into groups with about 20 households in each group. From each household one member is chosen to attend the oni gumpu meetings. The groups meet to discuss various which would depend on the project being taken up and other issues which affect them even if it is beyond the issues tackled in the project. In this way the entire community is mobilised in the village. This way any information that needs to reach the entire community can be passed on through the oni gumpus. For the community too, they can monitor and access government programmes better if they are all mobilised together.

When there is a project that has to reach the entire community and is not focused on any one particular group the oni gumpu strategy helps cover everyone in the community. Most government programmes and therefore government departments as the entire community as a target. Therefore to bridge the gap between the community and the government the entire community needs to be covered. Oni gumpus provide a structure for complete outreach.¹ As the oni gumpus are made of neighbourhood groups and they can convince each other better than any government department can.

If the government has a project it is for the whole village. But they do not know about the issues in the streets of the village. The Oni Gompus can solve this as it has representation from twenty households in the village and thereby the Oni Gompus can ensure that everyone benefits from the government program. If there is any information to pass on it is difficult to get it across to everyone. But it is possible through the Oni Gompus and word of mouth. The Oni Gompus strategy is to ensure that the whole village is covered by making someone (as decided by the family) in every family is member of a Oni Gompus.

The Oni Gompus concept came about for the Community Monitoring Project where the focus of the project was for the community to monitor and access government programmes, especially to health facilities. The programme was for the entire community and not any particular groups within the community. Each of the groups has leaders and documenters. These leaders come together at the village level to negotiate with the government departments on behalf of the community. In the CMP project the oni gumpus were useful to be able to reach the entire community. Also there is a vast gap between the community and the government. The government used to claim that their programmes are reaching the villages but there was no one to monitor. Now through the oni gumpus the community is monitoring and they are giving feedback as to how the programmes are functioning. With the community involvement things are improving. The community too earlier used to say that this is our fate and what ever has to happen will happen they did not ask the government why they were not providing the programmes. Therefore MSK decided to form oni gumpus to act as a bridge between the community and the government. We could not use sanghas for this because they are only a small group and they are focused on a few issues. Here any issue that comes up can be taken up.² In the Swasth Plus Project the Oni Gumpus are used as a channel to disseminate information. Secondly

¹ Ms. Jagadevi, DPC, MSK, Raichur District

² Venkataratna, Bellary

it is used as a channel to collect information. This information is given to the relevant departments. Therefore the Oni Gumpu is acting as a bridge between the community and government. This process was then repeated in Koppal and Bellary.

The Gender and Health Equity (GHE) started in Koppal in 2001. The main aim of GHE is safe motherhood and raising awareness on health. Four partners are involved in the GHE project; they are MSK, the government, IIMB and the community. The GHE project works towards ensuring that the government gives good quality services for health and that the community is made aware of what services the government is offering and has access to it. It also aims to bring about accountability where the government is concerned (ensure that they do their job well) and to ensure the community accesses the services. The Project has a target of '00100' – 0% maternal deaths (from when she gets pregnant up to 42 days after she has given birth), 0% child dies in the 1st year of its life and 100% immunisation of all children. It was decided to adopt the oni gumpu strategy because the project is about health issues and cleanliness and the objective is that all women are aware about these issues. If the project had formed sanghas then they would have been only able to reach a few women. With the oni gumpus, the project is able to reach all the women, especially every mother in the village.

The Arogya Sakhi cannot collect all household information in a village as it is tedious and difficult. So the Oni Gumpus collect the household information and give it to the Sanjeevinis who give it to the Arogya Sakhi who consolidates all the information and takes it to the PHC meetings. Through this a link is formed between the Oni Gumpu and health department which is one of the objectives of the project. Oni Gumpus were formed also so that if there is a problem on a street, instead of 1-2 people going and fighting with the government department, they could do it as a group which would be more effective. Health is the main focus of the Oni Gumpu but unity is very important. Some women cannot speak in a larger forum but the Oni Gumpu gives these women a platform to speak. To reach the 00100 objective the project wants to ensure that information goes to every household so that everyone can access relevant programs and if there is a problem on any street the women should be able to solve it themselves. Also because of the Oni Gumpus there is a wider reach and the women act as a pressure group if the health department or Gram Panchayat does not provide facilities.

The Oni Gumpus are very useful because they can identify who needs these services like which woman from which family is sick or pregnant and so on. The Oni Gumpu members support them financially, with transport or with moral support. The main objective of the Oni Gumpu is to reach all the people. Other objectives are to create support groups to work towards the 00100 goal, to create a pressure group to break the superstitious beliefs (like not feeding the pregnant woman fruits and too much food because the baby will become too big and that would be a problem during delivery). And finally it is easier to access health services from the health department. If the ANM visits a village, she may not be able to visit all the houses to identify women who may need health services. The Oni Gumpu plays a vital role in identification of the needy beneficiaries. In the first year of the project there was no Oni Gumpu and when we compare our data from then to now, the percentages have gone up in the number of people vaccinated, ANCs, PNCs and pregnant women who have received their TT shots and the MMR and IMR have decreased.

In Bellary, the Charka project, launched in 2005, is about spreading information on HIV / AIDS to every household in the village. If we formed a group of only this people from this age group then it would be difficult for them to go and tell everyone else in the village. There may be age difference, class difference or even caste difference which may not allow them to share what they learn with others. In the oni gumpus, the groups are of the neighbours and they are not hesitant to meet in each others houses.³ Through the Oni Gumpu information is not only spread to every household effectively and quickly. As the target group is the population between 13-25 years this generation will grow up more informed and the communities will have this information and awareness on HIV/AIDS even after the project ends. A link between government and the community via the Village Health Committee (VHC) has been created.⁴ The project has been divided into many phases or as they are called in the project pillars.

- 1st Pillar - Awareness building
- 2nd Pillar - capacity building
- 3rd Pillar - building support structure (Village Health Committee)
- 4th Pillar - Strengthening services (Coordinating with other service agencies)
- 5th Pillar - Creating an enabling environment where everyone can access all services with no problems.

The project is currently at the forth pillar and the next year we should start the next pillar.

1.1 Objectives of Oni Gumpus

The objectives of the oni gumpu are:

- To create awareness and to make government programs accessible to every house in the village.
- To act as a bridge between the community and the government
- To monitor government facilities begin provided and question the relevant officials if there is a deficiency
- To facilitate the spread of information quickly
- To act as a platform from where people can address various issues such as
 - social issues
 - community issues
 - environmental issues
- To act as peer pressure to being about change

According to the oni gumpu members in Byallal Village, Bellary, *since you cannot go from house to house to spread information, you can give the information to a leader and it automatically reaches 20 households. If there are any problems we can solve it in the groups by talking to each other. Oni Gumpu was formed to get facilities from the government and to help improve the lives of our children. There are certain issues that men don't like to talk about in front of women and women don't like to talk about in front of men. Those issues can be openly discussed in the Oni Gumpu. Through the Oni Gumpu we can send school drop outs back to school. We prevent child marriages and stop the Devadasi system and prevent them dedicating their children to God. We also stop alcoholism and gambling as a group.* According to the oni

³ Venkataratna, Bellary

⁴ MSK Staff, Bellary

gumpus in Tippapura, *the group was formed so that a person can give and get information on various issues. It was formed so that everyone can be united. Oni Gumpu is a place where women can talk openly about their health problems. Some people don't have the courage to go to the doctor alone. If they come to the Oni Gumpu there will always be someone to accompany them. As a group we have more influence over the parents who don't send their children to school. Oni Gumpu was formed to discuss issues like child marriage, not spending too much money on traditional functions like when a girl matures cleanliness, sending children to school and about health.*

1.2 Difference between Oni Gumpu and sangha

	Oni Gumpu	Sangha
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and a few men • All households in the village • Family is a member of the group • Younger target group (13-25) • All members are from the same street • Leaders are from different castes and they have to sit together for meetings thus slowly breaking down the caste barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only women • Only lower caste • Individual is a member of the group • Older target group (18-40) • Women could be from different streets • Everyone is from the same caste
Number in a village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-20 depending on the size of the village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One maximum two per village
Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any issue relevant • Everyone in the village and relevant government officials know about the issue brought up by the oni gumpus • Only think of their street • In Raichur the oni gumpus only report out on the red alerts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific issues • Only the sangha and the relevant government department knows about the issue. The rest of the village may not know anything about it • Think of village development
Relationship with the Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built rapidly • Have an official forum/mechanism to interact with the government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is built slowly • No official forum or mechanism to interact with the government
Financial Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No money dealings of any sort • No fights about money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings and internal credit and other loans • Fights about money
Spread of Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any information given to the oni gumpus reaches everyone in the village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any information given to sanghas remains with the sanghas and may not even reach their family members
Involvement of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It takes very little time for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It takes time before

non members	people who don't attend the oni gumpu meetings to approach them for a problem because it is a neighbourhood group and they all know each other	outsiders to approach the sangha to solve their problems.
Relationship to MSK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oni gumpus are too large to have any intimacy with MSK staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an intimacy between MSK staff and the sangha members
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only the leaders are trained and if they are good then the information goes back to the rest of the group • Training at the village • No training on gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sangha members are trained • Training at cluster and taluka levels • Training on gender
Structure and functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The oni gumpus are informal groups and have no norms, rules or regulationsno hierarchy in the oni gumpu • Meet one in 15 days or even once a month • Only at the village level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanghas are formal groups with norms, rules and regulations • Hierarchy? • Meet once a week • At the village, cluster and taluka level
Ghataka level meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only four Sanjeevinis per village com for the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All committee members come for the meeting

2 Process of Oni Gumpus

1.3 Formation of Oni Gumpus

Before forming an oni gumpu there are many steps to be taken where everyone is kept informed about the project and the concept of oni gumpus and village information is collected. MSK, Bellary had meetings with the district level government officials to tell them what MSK is about, what the Charka project is about and what they are going to be doing at the village level. After this they had meetings at the Taluk and Gram Panchayat levels. It is only after this that they go to the village. If they do not do the introductions at all the three levels then when they start working at the village they will be questioned.

Village Meetings: In Raichur, MSK staff first met the Anganwadi Teacher and did a household survey. During their stay in the village, the Gram Panchayat took care of all their stay costs. After which they had a gram sabha. MSK staff in Bellary met the gram panchayat members and other village leaders and tell them about the project and asked them if they could hold a gram sabha to inform the entire village about the project. An announcement was made about the gram sabha after which a gram sabha is held. In the gram sabha, MSK staff told the community about MSK, the project and oni gumpus. They also introduce the staff who will be coming to the village. They tell the community that they will be conducting a survey and forming oni gumpus and ask if a few volunteers could be chosen to help them. The volunteers are from each street in the village who can help MSK staff identify the households and introduce them to the families. With the help of the youth MSK, Bellary drew a map of the village to understand how many families there are, the streets, facilities in the village (social map). In Koppal too, they first did a quick survey after which they held a gram sabha. In the gram sabha they asked the community to choose the Arogya Sakhis, who would be representing the community. At the Gram Sabha the community was told about the Oni Gumpu and the Arogya Sakhis were chosen. MSK decided that they wanted one Arogya Sakhi from the community and one Arogya Sakhi from the sangha health committee. MSK is working in very backward areas, therefore for all the women to be reached they wanted two Arogya sakhis, at least one who is able to read and write. In the Gram Sabha the villagers were told what the responsibilities of the Arogya Sakhi were and based on these criteria the Arogya Sakhi was chosen by the village. Another criterion for choosing Arogya Sakhi was that it must be someone who stays on after the project withdraws. MSKs intention was to create a link between the health department and the community. For the linkage they need to be able to talk with the department. We will train them for some time and then they have to do it on their own.

Surveys: After this a household survey is conducted by MSK staff with the help of the volunteers. In Bellary, the Charka project has a specific format which they follow. The main data they collect include identifying who is between the ages of 13-25, as this is the main target group, who has Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) or Reproductive Tract Infections (RTI), health issues like pregnant women, how many have taken TT shots, school drop outs, female or male headed family, and so on. In Koppal MSK staff visited each house and group them and for each house they collect details about the family name, how many children and what kind of services that family needs. In Raichur, they do a survey of 20 homes and find out information on

the head of family, ages of children in the family, if there are any pregnant women, if there are any handicapped children, and so on.

Forming the Oni Gumpu: After the survey is done, oni gumpus are formed of 15-22 households living on the same street. If it is a very big street then the group may be broken into two small groups. Area wise meeting were called for and the objectives of the project and oni gumpus were explained again to the families. It is the women in the families who are invited to become members of the oni gumpu. In each of the projects it may be women of different age groups. In Raichur it was the women head of the family, who had influence over the family. In Bellary, it is any woman from the family between the age groups of 13-25. If there is more than one woman in the family in the age group of 13-25, then the family is asked to chose who will come for the meetings. If there is a daughter and daughter-in-law, then it is preferred that the daughter-in-law comes for the meeting. If there are two daughters-in-law then the more outspoken and outgoing daughter-in-law is chosen. If there are women who are suffering from infections then they are motivated to join the oni gumpus. In Koppal it is any women in the family. MSK staff discusses the advantages of being an oni gumpu member. Sometimes women are open and it does not take long to convince them. Sometimes it takes many meetings before the group is convinced. MSK staff must know who to approach to influence the women to become members. It could either be the village head or husband, whom the staff has to meet. Initially it is very difficult to get all the women together for a meeting. It is only after the women become familiar with the staff member that they start coming to the meetings. This takes about 6 months.

Choosing a leader: After the oni gumpus are formed, each oni gumpu is asked to choose a leader. MSK staff outline the qualities of the leader which include, be young, be able to move around freely (not have any restrictions at home), should be able to manage the group and officials, be able to talk to people, know how to handle situations when people do not say nice things and should not have too many young children (as she would not have much free time then). MSK staff tells them that they cannot come all the time and that the leaders should be able to conduct the meetings and interact with officials and represent their needs. In Bellary, two leaders are chosen. A third leader who is usually a male between 13-25 years is also chosen to help in documentation and to address men's health issues if and when it arises. Then the Oni Gumpu has to be given a name, choose meeting day and location of Oni Gumpu meetings.

After the leaders are chosen another gram sabha is held where all the leaders are introduced to the community. It is at this point that the VDMC in Raichur and VHC in Bellary is chosen from among the NHLs.

1.4 Structure of the Oni Gumpu

While the structure of the oni gumpus is similar in the three districts there are slight variations between them. All the oni gumpus have representatives of family members as their members and have leaders. After that there are differences between the three districts based on the project aims and goals. (Refer to Annex 1)

In Raichur, the oni gumpu has its members and from them one leader is chosen, who is called the neighbourhood leader (NHL). To assist the NHL there is a Kishori who does the documentation

and filling out of the forms. Among all the NHLs in the village two are chosen to become the Village Development and Monitoring Committee (VDMC). Here it is the VDMC who interacts with the government at the PHC and higher levels.

In Koppal, each oni gumpu has a leader called a Sanjeevini. They also have a Kishori who helps the Sanjeevini. At the village level there are two Arogya Sakhis. These Arogya Sankhis are chosen by the village at the initial Gram Sabha and are not chosen from the Sanjeevinis. This is because initially in the GHE project they only had Arogya Sakhis and Village health committees and no oni gumpus. When they found that this did not work they shifted to forming oni gumpus.

In Bellary each oni gumpu has two NHLs who is supported by a volunteer, usually a man, who helps them document and also brings in the men's perspectives. The leaders then form a Village Health Committee.

1.5 Role and responsibilities

District Programme Coordinator: The main role of the District Programme Coordinator is to plan, coordinate, oversee implementation, handle the financial, and monitor them along with other MSK activities. This includes conducting district level meetings and staff meetings. The DPC coordinates with the government officials. The DPC also troubleshoots any problems be it project related or staff related.

District Team Leader: Only Bellary district has a District Team Leader whose job it is to implement CHARKA project, make sure money is released on time, solve problems of the team, understand where all the services are available and get this information to the Oni Gumpus, documentation, since it is a time bound project she has to ensure that everything is happening on time and guide the team and take care of administration. The team leader is responsible for the CHARCA project in all 3 taluks. She is also responsible for district level planning and visits to government departments. If there is a problem in the village and the village staff cannot solve it, she does. If the staff has a problem personally she solves it.

Taluk Coordinator: Both Raichur and Koppal have Taluk coordinators whose main job is to supervise the project, planning, organising, implementation at the taluk level and to ensure that things happen according to plan. The TCOs are in charge of the training lower level staff and keep them informed about new information. The TCOs also coordinate with government officials, for example in Koppal with the medical officers.

Cluster Coordinator: Only Koppal and Raichur have cluster coordinators. The main role of the cluster coordinator in Raichur is to monitor the staff at the field level. In Koppal the cluster coordinator acts as a support to the Arogya Sakhi. She is responsible for all the inputs needed for those villages. She is to ensure that all programs planned for that month are carried out. The Cluster Coordinator also the link between the PHC and the community that comes under that PHC. She also collects case studies. The Cluster Coordinator gives guidance to Kishoris, Arogya Sakhi and the Oni Gumpus. She builds linkages between the community and the government. She raises awareness in the community. She does the required documentation at the village and Ghataka level. She trains the Arogya Sakhi and Sanjeevinis on new issues. She plans with the

health department and goes on village visits and organises ANC clinics and immunisation camps. She gives awareness to the youth on pregnant women and gender. The Cluster Coordinator also starts sanghas. She passes on all trainings to the village level. She looks after conducting camps and giving of mass information to everyone.

Supervisor: Only in Bellary are there supervisors whose role it is to monitor the link worker and work that is happening in the field. If any training has taken place they go and speak to those trained and get feedback on how the training has impacted their lives and how many people have been trained. They visit the Oni Gumpus and advice the link workers on which areas more emphasis should be put. They check if all information collected by the link worker in relation to a case is accurate.

Master trainers: Only in Raichur are there master trainers who give feed back on who need training. They do the actual training at the taluk and village levels.

Village Level Staff: MSK has staff at the village level staff who looked after the oni gumpus and the village level. Each staff is in charge of village villages each. They have different names in each if the districts. In Raichur they are called Garm Panchayat Officers (GPOs) and their main role is to ensure that meetings are conducted, to collate information collected, meet government departments and find out about new programmes and communicate it to the oni gumpus. They act as guides to both the oni gumpus and to the VDMC. In Koppal they are the cluster coordinators and no one below them. In Bellary they are called link workers. The link worker conducts programs in these villages and to get information on the needs of these villages and pass it on to the people. The link worker's role is to get kishoris and Kishoras for training at the village and taluk level. They conduct village level trainings and ensure that the Oni Gumpus hold meetings. Coordinate and fix meetings of VHC. The link worker strengthens the Oni Gumpus and gives information on various subjects including government facilities at the Oni Gumpu meetings. If any program is to be conducted in the village the link worker writes the invitation and ensures that all the logistics are taken care of. She writes case studies. They identify any possible HIV cases and takes them for testing and treatment. She works towards dispelling superstitions and leads by example.

Village Level Bodies: In all the three districts there are village level bodies who are selected from among the oni gumpu leaders. In Raichur it is called a Village Development and Monitoring Committee (VDMC), whose role it is to collate and give all the information collected by the oni gumpu to the Panchayat or the Primary Health Centre (PHC). In Bellary, it is the Village Health Committee (VHC) whose role it is to monitor health services and the ANM and to solve issues that the Oni gumpu or their leaders cannot solve.

It is only in Koppal that there is a slightly different strategy. Here the Arogya Sakhis were chosen even before the oni gumpu strategy was formed and they coordinate at the village level. The role of the Arogya Sakhi is to conduct oni gumpu meetings, collect information from the Sanjeevini and give it to the Cluster coordinator and represents the community when dealing with the Health Department. They provide information about cleanliness, mother care child care, personal hygiene and environmental hygiene to the Oni Gumpu. They give awareness on kitchen gardens and healthy nutritious eating and various diseases including HIV/AIDS. If the women

have any other problems the Arogya Sakhi take them to the Sindhuvani. They also hold Mother's meetings. They also make sure that the women have access to relevant government programs. They also give information on TT shots, child marriage, safe pregnancy, breast feeding baby half an hour after birth, etc. They follow upon Kishoris and Kishoras. There is a notice board in the village which has the programs and meetings conducted and the Arogya Shakhi make sure that the Kishoris write up the content for the notice board. For example, a woman was taking her child for his shot to the PHC in another village. While at the bus stand, she saw the notice board which said that the doctor was visiting her village that very day. This saved her from making the long trip out of her village and she conveniently got her child's shots in her own village.

Neighbourhood Leader: The neighbourhood leaders (NHLs) are chosen from the oni gumpus and represent the oni gumpu. They conduct the meetings, collect information, ensure that information they get from MSK is passed on to the oni gumpu members and also help the oni gumpu members to access government facilities. The NHLs also help in identifying beneficiaries for various government programmes. If there is a program that needs to be conducted at the village all the NHLs have to share the responsibility and figure out who is doing what. NHLs build rapport with government departments. They keep minutes of meetings and write out applications that need to be written. They are called NHLs in both Raichur and Bellary but in Koppal they are called Sanjeevinis.

Assistants to the Neighbourhood Leaders: In Raichur and Koppal the NHLs have assistants who are usually educated adolescent girls. Their main role is to act as a support to the NHLs in all activities and also to help in the documentation when the NHLs are illiterate. As they are young they are also being trained to be future leaders.

Volunteer: Only in Bellary there are volunteers in the oni gumpu who are men. Their role is to identify health problems of the men and pass on information to the men. They support the NHL by helping in documentation. They send women to the information centre and support the volunteers who run the information centre.

1.6 Training

Training is given only to the oni gumpu leaders and to the Kishoris. They then have to come back and share their training with the oni gumpu members. There is some basic training that is given to the leaders and the Kishoris that is common to all the projects. All the NHLs are trained on the project, roles and responsibilities of the leader. The Kishoris are given training on life skills, personal development, and documentation. The other trainings are specific to the projects.

NHLs: In Bellary, get training in four stages. The first training is on how women can get infected with HIV/AIDS and its implications. The second training is on Reproductive and Child Health and safe motherhood. The third training is on Sexually Transmitted Infections and Reproductive Tract Infections. The fourth training is on HIV/AIDS and its services. All these four trainings are linked with gender. They also get training on life skills, gender, Trainings on 'how to say no', RCH, knowledge about facilities available from various departments, personal hygiene, legal training, Women's development workshop where information from various departments like

legal, police, PHC doctors, Gram Panchayat President and Secretary, Headmaster, Anganwadi Supervisor, Sindhuvani are given. In Koppal, training is on why it is important for the Sanjeevini to be aware of the facilities and why she should be helping everyone to access these facilities. What are all the facilities available from PHC? What is the Sanjeevini's role in preventing MMR and IMR and awareness on this issue so that she can ensure that the deaths don't happen? In 2004-05 there were 13 cases of MMR. In the next year there were only 5 and in the current year (2006) there was only 1. This is because of the training and awareness given to the Sanjeevini. In Raichur, training is given in all programs of the government departments. Also, legal training, Nari Adalat, Bhagyalakshmi Baramma (govt gives 1st 2 daughters Rs.10,000/-). Kitchen garden, HIV/AIDS, Leprosy and gender. Given training on how to collect and record red alerts. Training is also given on how to communicate this information with the government and follow up on solving the problem. At the PHC meeting they are given training and awareness on new issues.

Volunteers: Only in Bellary they have volunteers who are trained on gender and HIV/AIDS and their roles and responsibilities in supporting the NHLs.

Kishori: In Koppal, the Kishoris are given training on gender and health consequences of child marriage because the Kishoris are adolescents, they are given awareness on their health, when they should get married, when they should have children, their involvement in getting children for immunisation, personal hygiene and safe motherhood, importance of education and school, child marriage, nutritious food, personal development, how to fill in the 2A format, pulse polio programs. In Bellary there are Kishoris and Kishoras. The Kishoris are trained on their physical development including when she matures and on personal hygiene during menstruation and what age she can conceive at. All this is linked to HIV/AIDS. The Kishoras are given the same information except that instead of talking about menstruation they are spoken to about the changes in their bodies.

In Addition MSK, Bellary has also given trainings to men, auto drivers, youth, daily wage labourers, police, and Islamic leaders as their project is about HIV/AIDS which affects everyone in the community.

1.7 Functioning of Oni Gumpus

Managing the Oni Gumpu

Every oni gumpu has either one or two leaders who ensure that the oni gumpus conduct their meetings, collect information, pass on information and handle the day to day activities. At the next level is the village level body who manage issues at the village and PHC level. Above them are MSK staff who look after five villages each. In the beginning MSK staff goes to every meeting. This takes about one and a half to two years. In a day the staff is able to meet only one or two groups and therefore she cannot meet all the groups. The oni gumpus need training in 5 phases. There are some groups who can carry on the meetings on their own and there are some who still feel that they cannot manage without the link workers. There are some groups who do not take too much interest. For those groups we need to give more attention. The rich do not come out quickly, Muslim women and the higher caste women don't come. The women who

come easily are the SC/ST women. They also pick up quickly and come regularly for all the meetings that we call them for.

Each district has its own structure to manage the oni gumpus and the flow of information. These are outlined below for each of the three districts starting from the oni gumpus.

Raichur: In Raichur the oni gumpus are supposed to meet once a week. If people are working in the fields they meet twice a month or once a month, whenever people are available. In their meetings the oni gumpus collect information on the red alerts and other problems that they may have. From amongst the houses they identify the red alerts for each of the departments. For example, a child who is not going to school is a red alert for the education department for example. The NHLs bring the red alerts to the NHL meeting and give the information to the VDMC. Once a fortnight all the NHLs meet with the VDMC who then collates all the information for the village. Once a month there a meeting is held at the gram panchayat with members of the gram panchayat, the ANM, anganwadi teacher and school headmaster. Here the red alerts are presented. At the taluk level a meeting is held once a month for three days with all GPOs. In this meeting they discuss the previous month, problems faced and if all the relevant department officials had attended the Panchayat meeting (held on the 23rd of every month). The GPOs have a record of all the absentees. This is given to the Taluk Coordinator who then follows up with the relevant department. They also plan what is to be done in the next month.

The GPO forms a tour plan on which villages they visit. Depending on the size of the village each GPO has 5-10 oni gumpus. A date is set for each village and the GPOs go and give information on those days. Once a week or fortnight (depending on village size) the GPOs meet the NHLs and VDMC and tell them whatever they have learnt and discuss red alerts. They also tell the NHLs how to collect the red alerts and manage Oni Gumpus. The GPOs also visit the Oni Gumpus from time to time and see how the meetings are conducted.

Koppal: Once a week the oni gumpu met where information is collected at the household level. Each Oni Gumpu has a format called Form No.2 where they collect information on the health needs of the Oni Gumpu. Another form called Form 2A has 14 questions as listed below. These questions are asked by the Sanjeevinis at the Oni Gumpu meetings and every household is asked these questions.

1. How many pregnant women are there?
2. How many are risk pregnancies?
3. How many women pregnant 7 months and more and who need information and support for safe motherhood?
4. How many women who have delivered still need to access post delivery facilities (ANC facilities) from the PHC?
5. How many children are there between ages 0-4 who needs immunisation?
6. How many risk pregnancy women have delivered safely where mother and child are safe?
7. How many young girls are there between 11-18 years?
 - a. How many of these young girls are part of the Kishori sangha and attending meetings regularly?
8. How many children are there between 0-3 who needs to go to Anganwadi?

9. How many children actually go to Anganwadi?
10. How many deliveries in that month?
11. How many still births in that month?
12. How many live births in that month?
13. How many women died giving birth (MMR)?
14. How many children below the age of one year died (IMR)?
15. Total deaths in the month in the Oni Gumpu?

2nd week has preliminary (Sanjeevini) meeting where information for the village is consolidated. At the Sanjeevinin meetings, they get the help of the Cluster Coordinator on problems with Oni Gumpu that they cannot solve. The Cluster Coordinator also attends Oni Gumpu meetings. The Arogya Sakhi are also trained on managing Oni Gumpus. It is the responsibility of the Arogya Sakhi to ensure that all Oni Gumpus under them are running efficiently. At the Sanjeevini meeting it is decided who needs immunisation and it is the responsibility of Sanjeevinis to ensure that this is done. The Cluster Coordinator helps in collating information and they step in to trouble shoot. In the 3rd week there are meetings with the ANM Mahila Sanjeevini Sabha where they present their list to ANM and make sure that the women get what they need. For example, if there are 10 women who need TT shots and ANM manages to give only 8 their shots, they make a note saying the same. In week 4 there is a meeting at PHC where all the PHC staff are present and all the village information is consolidated for that PHC. At this meeting, the Sanjeevinis and Arogya Sakhi questions the PHC doctors on the various gaps that they need to address, such as if the ANM came of the date they said they would, if they looked at everyone who needed to be looked at and so on. MSK staff acts as a facilitator and is present at the PHC meetings and at meetings with ANM.

They are also present whenever there is a meeting with the PHC doctor. At the Sanjeevini meeting the Cluster Coordinator passes on new information to them and solves any problems that the Sanjeevinin brings to them. In some areas the Oni Gumpu members have shown an interest and have formed a sangha.

Then we have a meeting with the sanjeevinis once a month. This also is not regular as some of them are not very active. There maybe many reasons as to why she is not active. She may have other work to do. There are other Sanjeevinis who take part in some activities and there are other Sanjeevinis who are very active and take part in all activities. We have all three types of Sanjeevinis.

Initially we did not give any input to the Oni Gumpu members. They only used to have meetings and collect data on ANCs and so on. Those who needed the services we used to link them to the PHC. From last year we have started giving simple information at the Oni Gumpu level related to health such as why it is important to give TT injections, importance of nutritious food, safe motherhood and delivery, how to maintain children and so on.

We do have a problem with the Oni Gumpu members. Earlier we had decided to make the oldest woman in the house an Oni Gumpu member since it was presumed that the rest of the family would listen to her. But it was found that the older women were not giving back the information

to the rest of the household. Therefore we now suggest that any woman from a household can come for Oni Gumpu meeting.

Bellary: MSK asks the oni gumpus to meet once a week but most of them meet once a month. Each Oni Gumpu has two leaders above them are link workers (one for every 5 villages), supervisors, master trainers, TCOs, team leader (Rathna), DPC. Initially MSK gives the Oni Gumpu awareness on how the group should be run and gives the group capacity building. The first six months the link workers conducted the meetings themselves. Now every month they meet Oni Gumpu leaders and each leader talks about their groups and if they have a problems the link workers help them solve it. These meeting with the leaders bring in different perspectives and acknowledge everyone's work and contributions. To manage every Oni Gumpu there are three leaders. From all the leaders three are chosen from each village to be a part of the Village Health Committee (VHC) which consists of Gram Panchayat members, Anganwadi teacher, headmaster, ANM, SDMC members. VHC meetings are held once a month.

NHLs gather all information every week from the Oni Gumpu. The NHLs have a meeting once a month with the link worker where all issues are discussed. The three chosen NHL leaders go to the VHC meeting with all NHL issues. Issues are discussed here with the relevant officials and solutions are found. Also new information that may be available from each official is collected. This is taken back to the NHLs who take it to the Oni Gumpus who take it to their families

Norms of the oni gumpu

Unlike a sangha there is no fixed norm, rules or regulation for the running of the oni gumpu. There are some guideline which are given to the oni gumpu but nothing is enforced strictly. This is because these are informal groups who have come together to work towards an issue and do not deal with finances.

Bellary: Oni Gumpus have no norms because the members should feel the ownership and a sense of responsibility and ownership to attend meetings and carry out work. There are no norms in the Oni Gumpu like there are in a sangha. We only tell them that they have to decide when they are going to meet, where and what they are going to discuss. Unlike a sangha they don't have to pay a fine if they don't come for a meeting. There are no conditions for meetings put on the Oni Gumpu. All we want them to do is to meet at a convenient place after they return home from work in the evening, and talk. There are no norms as such. For every 15 to 20 houses one person has to be represented. No rotation of membership. It is flexible.

Koppal: The members have to sit at the meetings in the order of their household numbers. They have to give information on each of their individual homes. They have to have the Oni Gumpu meeting before the Sanjeevini meeting. Only representatives of that Oni Gumpu can attend that specific meeting. Another Oni Gumpu member cannot attend this meeting. Sanjeevinis have to carry their files. It is the responsibility of the Sanjeevini that the women get access to whatever facilities they need. The Sanjeevinis have to take the help of the GP member to convince the family to get their child immunised.

- Meetings are held once in 15 days
- They are seated according to their household number

- Everyone has to give information about their household for the 14 formatted questions
- Meetings have to happen only when everyone is available.

Raichur: There are a few informal rules which the oni gumpus follow which include meeting every week, all members, leaders and kishoris have to attend the meetings, and they have to give information related to the 15 red alerts to the NHLs.

Issues discussed

The issues discussed in the oni gumpu meetings vary between the projects. In all the projects there are some common area which all the oni gumpus talk about such as general health, mother and child care, school drop outs, education, child marriage, atrocities against women, the devdasi issue, personal hygiene among others.

In Bellary the oni gumpus discuss the above issues and HIV/AIDs and warn those who have husbands who travel a lot that they could be at risk. Husbands are told that if they go out with ‘others’ they should use Nirodh.⁵ They also tell the men that they should be careful and not sleep with other women. They talk about personal and family issues such as alcoholism, wife beating, and fights between husbands and wives. Personal hygiene issues such as like washing cloth during periods and drying it in the sun. *We tell the women who have this that they must see a doctor.*⁶

In Raichur the focuses on three areas namely, health, education and women and child development for which they collect red alerts. In Koppal the focus is on mother and child care and they have 14 questions they discuss which include safe pregnancy, safe motherhood and child care.

⁵ Og, Tippapura Village, Bellary

⁶ Og, Tippapura Village, Bellary

3 Achievements and Impact

The oni gumpus have managed to achieve a lot in the little time that they have been formed. They have not only achieved what the project set out to do but they have gone beyond that. They have solved many problems of the oni gumpu members' families and social issues in the village. The best way to see those achievements is to listen to the stories of the various issues the oni gumpu members have worked on.

1.8 Health Problems

In all the three projects, the focus is on health, especially women's health. Therefore the majority of the activities the oni gumpus have taken up are related to health. This focus on health, especially women's health has resulted in women now taking care of their health and going to the doctor when they have any problems.

Women's health: Shanthamma from Ballyal Village, Bellary had a lot of menstruation problems but could never tell her husband about it. But after becoming an Oni Gumpu member, she spoke about this problem in the group. In the group they also discussed about talking to their husbands about problems they have. This gave her the courage to speak to her husband and take him along to the doctor. She said that, *though we have fifty years of independence in our country but women still cannot go out alone.*

Even Basamma from Tippapura village, Bellary got a women in her village to tell her husband and take him along to the doctor with her. Basamma said that the woman was suffering from white discharge. She went to the doctor many times but she was not cured. One day when she was working in the field she told Basamma that she had this problem and did not know what to do. Basamma told her that she should take her husband along with her to the doctor and both of them should get checked up. After that she took her husband and went to the doctor. The doctor was able to diagnose and the problem is now under control. Now that woman is telling everyone that women should go to the doctors with their husbands.

Safe Motherhood: Along with

Devamma from Kurubur Oni in Kallur village, Koppal said that she was not feeling well and she had boils on her hand. She shared this at an Oni Gumpu meeting. The Arogya Sakhi took her to the hospital in Yelburga taluka and there they told her that Devamma had leprosy and that she should go to the Sanganal PHC where she would be given the appropriate medication. The doctor there examined her and did some tests and gave her medication for six months. Devamma had to go out for coolie work and therefore stopped taking the medication for 1 month. She went and told the Arogya Sakhi about this and the Arogya Sakhi took her back to the PHC. The PHC refused to give her more medication as she was not serious about getting well. The Arogya Sakhi had to promise on Devamma's behalf that she would take her medication regularly. Then the medication was administered to Devamma who then experienced depression due to her illness. But the Arogya Sakhi and other Oni Gumpu members visited her regularly and kept her spirits up. Today she is well and leprosy free.

women's health safe motherhood has been a focus in all the three projects. In Koppal, it is the main focus. The oni gumpus have done a lot of work in promoting safe motherhood. They have ensured that the pregnant woman have got their injections, eat nutritious food and deliver in the PHC or hospitals. The difficulties they face is in the response the government hospitals give them.

Akkamadevi, Irkalgada village, Koppal was 24 year old woman who was pregnant and about to deliver. She was short in stature. Girijamma, an Oni Gumpu member was her neighbour and she felt that Akkamadevi could not have a normal delivery due to her stature. So she took her to Koppal to a government hospital where doctors confirmed Girijamma's fears. Then she was taken to a private hospital where she delivered her baby by having a Caesarian. The whole group could not go with her for the delivery because the girl's family was paying the bus fare. Earlier, women would not deliver in a hospital and if there were complications both the mother and baby were at risk. But because the Oni Gumpu supported Akkamadevi and advised her on safe delivery, she had her baby daughter in a hospital. The mother and child are fine and the girl is now one year old.

In the case of Akkamadevi, the family did listen to the oni gumpu members and took her to the hospital where she delivered her baby. This was also the case for Sulochana, Kurdi village, Raichur, who was identified as a risky pregnancy. The Oni Gumpu members spoke to her and convinced her to go to the hospital. She delivered a baby boy who was very weak when born. Now they are both fine. Other women like Gavisiddamma were not so fortunate and even when they went in the last minute to the hospital, the hospital staff did not respond to them and the baby died.

Yellamma who is a Dai and Arogya Sakhi in Koppal said that there was a woman called Gavisiddamma from Labegiri Village who was pregnant with her first child went into labour. The baby was a breach case and was therefore identified as a risk pregnancy. So Yellamma along with another Dai and Gavisiddamma's mother and a man from the Health Rights Committee took Gavisiddamma to Koppal. In Koppal they said that they would perform a Caesarean and asked them to buy all the material for the operation. But the doctor who was supposed to do the operation did not arrive and the hospital authorities asked them to go to another hospital. They gave them an ambulance and they went to a hospital in Gadag where they were told that they would have to pay 15 thousand rupees for the operation. They said that they did not have that kind of money so the hospital asked them to go to KMC in Hubli. The man from the Health Rights Committee, who had accompanied them, owned a mobile phone that was worth 10 thousand rupees. He pawned his phone and with the money he bought the required medication. After all this they left Gadag for Hubli. By the time they reached Hubli the doctor said that he could either save the mother or child. Gavisiddamma was operated on and the child was still born.

The oni gumpus identify women who could have potentially risky pregnancies and convince them to get their injections as can be seen in the case of Kalavathi. Kalavathi, an Arogya Sakhi said that in Irkalgada village there was a woman who was pregnant for the fourteenth time. When she was pregnant with her thirteenth child she was living in a hut in the middle of the

fields and therefore could not be reached. She returned to the village for her fourteenth delivery. When the Oni Gumpu heard about her return they approached her and said that she was quite old now and therefore her pregnancy was risky. They also told her that it was because there were no gaps between each pregnancy. They advised her to get her TT shots. She is presently 7 months pregnant and has not yet received her supplement tablets as there is no stock with the PHC. In the next PHC meeting representatives from 45 Oni Gumpus are planning to speak to the doctor.⁷

Children's health: The awareness created in the oni gumpu about children's health include not just keeping the child clean and providing nutritious food but also ensuring that the children get immunised. Laxmi, Kurdi Village, Raichur is married to David and she had a malnourished three year old daughter when Marthomma. With the help of the Oni Gumpu, Laxmi approached Anasuya the VDMC, who took her to the doctor. The doctor told Anasuya to give the child nutritious food, which she could get from the agnawadi centre. Today Marthomma is fine healthy girl. When it came to immunisation the oni gumpus had to face many challenges. They had to fight superstitions to get the parents to immunise their children. The oni gumpu illustrated this point through two stories. One where the mother believed she had God's power to protect her child and another where the mother died and the family did not want to do anything for the child. In both cases the oni gumpu managed to convince the family and get the children immunised.

According to one Arogya Sakhi from Koppal, Hulligamma, Vadaratti village had got her first child immunised. When she had her second child she refused to get it immunised because she had become a Jogthi and felt that the God would protect the child through her and therefore did not need immunisation. The Arogya Sakhi spent a lot of time trying to convince her but every time she would go into a trance. One time they waited for her to come out of her trance and then spoke to her saying that she was right about God protecting the child but if the child was immunised it would be doubly protected. They also listed all the diseases the child would be protected from. As a result the child has been immunised.

Suvarna from Kamnur Village said that there was a 5 month old baby whose name was Errappa whose mother had died. The family did not want to immunise the child because the mother had died. The Oni Gumpu members went and spoke to them but they refused to listen. Then they got the PHC doctor to talk to them – no success. Finally, quite a few members of the village and the Oni Gumpu went together and managed to convince the family and the child was immunised. Today the child is doing very well.

⁷ Arigya Sakhis, Koppal

HVI/AIDS: In Bellary the main focus is on HIV/AIDS and the oni gumpus have not only created awareness but have also helped women get tested and have supported the women if they have been positive. Being such a sensitive issue, especially because of the myths around the disease the oni gumpu members were hesitant to talk about the issues they discuss but not about the

Gouramma an NHL leader, Byallal Village, Bellary said that after getting all the information about HIV/AIDS from the oni gumpu realised that her husband was having sex outside the marriage and suspected that she could be at risk and she got herself tested at a private hospital. She did not trust the results so she went to the Voluntary Counselling Testing Center (VCTC) and got herself tested again. When the VCTC comes to her village she will get her husband tested because it is too expensive to take him out for testing.

actual cases. Most of the stories have been told by MSK staff. In the case of Gouramma an NHL leader who suspected she might have HIV/AIDS because of her husband's behaviour, she herself went and got her self tested. But while she got herself tested she said it was too expensive to her husband tested too. There have

been many problems with the testing centres and there still is not enough support of either people to get tested or if they do find out they are HVI positive there is still very little support from the government.

Another woman, an NHL leader too, also decided to get herself tested because she felt her husband's job as a truck drive could make him a high risk person and therefore she too would be high risk. Fortunately she did not test positive but now she insists that her husband use a condom. This has brought about a change in the women who are not only more aware but are insisting on safe sex.

According to Susheela a link worker from Rampura Ghataka said that Uma Devi an NHL from Hireodarahalli village in Kudligi Taluka has a husband who works as a truck driver in Sondur Taluka and came home only once in three months. Uma Devi had received a lot of awareness and knowledge on HIV/AIDS and therefore she insisted that her husband use a condom. She also decided to get herself tested at the VCTC. She has found that she was negative but that she had a STI. She got treated for this and is cured. The reason that she got herself tested was that her husband was away from home for long periods. Also she felt that by getting herself tested she was setting an example for her Oni Gumpu.

In another village the oni gumpu members helped a woman whom the community decided was HIV positive. The woman was negative and got treated for STI.

According to Ratna, Team leader, Bellary, in Mangapur Village there was a woman who was a Jogithi (religious beggar) who was raped by some young men. Because she had matted hair everyone thought she was a Devadasi but after this incident she had begun to look unwell and the community decided that she had AIDS. Therefore they kept her at a distance. In an Oni Gumpu meeting they brought up her issue and asked the Link Worker how they could help her. They decided to go and talk to her and found that she was personally unhygienic and had a Sexually Transmitted Infection. The Link Worker told the Oni Gumpu members to take her to the doctor and get her treated and when she was physically better, to get her tested for HIV/AIDS at the

VCTC. She got herself tested and came out negative. The Oni Gumpu was very happy to have been able to help this woman.

The oni gumpu also had to deal with superstitions too. In Dahamapura village a man who was HIV positive started having sex with an adolescent in the belief that he would get cured. The oni Gumpu managed to get him to not only stop having sex with the young girl but also finally got him use use a condom during sex with his wife.

According to MSK staff, Bellary, a man called Swamy in Dashamapura Village in HB Halli Taluka tested HIV positive. He stopped having sex with his wife and went and had sex with a young girl because he believed this would cure him. The Oni Gumpu and link worker got to know about this and went and spoke to the young young girl about the repercussions if she got HIV and she broke up with Swamy. He returned to his wife but by now she too knew and refused to have sex without a condom. But he would beat her up and have sex without a condom. The Oni Gumpu and Link worker spoke to him and today they have a good relationship.

1.9 Education

The oni gumpus also focus on ensuring that children go to school and to send school dropouts back into school. The oni gumpus identify the children who have dropped out of school or are not going to school and then talk not only to the families but also to the children and get them to go to school. Sometimes it is the school head master who identifies the children and asks the help of the oni gumpus to get the children to school. In Bellary, Ballyal village the oni gumpu helped three dropout girls, Durgamma, Saraswathi and Manjula go back to school. One girl had typhoid and the other two had some family problems which is why all three did not go to school. The Oni Gumpu decided to go talk to the families of the three girls on the importance of sending them to school. But the families were reluctant and it took a lot of convincing. They finally agreed when the Oni Gumpu members told them that they would not have to spend any money as it was all free. The girls were sent to KGBV residential school which is being run by Mahila Samakhya.

In Chikkamegeri village, Koppal there was a 12 year old boy who had hair which was matted. He did not like this and kept asking his parents to cut it. But the parents refused saying that it was a blessing from the Gods and if they cut it then the Gods would be angry. But in school the other children would tease him about his hair and they would call him names other than his own name which was Ravi. In one Oni Gumpu meeting the boy came and told Devamma, an Arogya Sakhi that he wanted his hair cut. Devamma approached his parents and told them that the child was unhappy as he was being teased in school and this was coming in the way of his education and that even the headmaster had requested that his head be shaved. She said that he could continue praying to God even if his head was shaved. The father was convinced and they got his head shaved and now it is growing back.

Gopala son of Bhimmaiah was in 3rd class, but never went to school. He always said give me money and then I'll go to school. Erramma, oni gumpu member in Aaroli village, Raichur went

and spoke to Gopala's parents making them aware of the good of education. She also said that he would get free uniforms. Gopala is now going to school. Similarly, Udaya in the same village had left school and would look after the cattle. Eramma went to Udaya's parents and told them to educate the child. This way they have sent many children back to school.

The oni gumpus have had to face issues of superstition even when it comes to sending children to school. One case is that of a boy who wanted to go to school but was teased in school because of his matted hair. The oni gumpu managed to convince the boy's family to get his hair cut so that he could go to school.

Kampalappa said that in the primary school in Byallal village, Bellary the schedule caste children were being discriminated against. They would be served food separately, not be given plates and would not be given water to drink by the teachers. The children came and told their parents about this. A few Oni Gumpu members approached the headmaster and questioned him on this discrimination. They went 2-3 times but he never took any action. A month later there was a function in the school which was attended by the Cluster Resource Person (CRP). The Oni Gumpu members complained to him. A week later the situation was resolved. A while later the CRP visited the village again and spoke to the Oni Gumpu members asking them if they were happy with the present situation in the school. They said they were. The headmaster had said that everyone would have to bring their own water and plates. But everyone would be served food together.

Another issue concerned to school which the oni gumpus have taken up is that of ensure that the mid day meals are of standard and all children in the village are fed. Shivamma, Aroghya Sakhi, Koppal spoke about mid day meal which was being badly prepared. The rice was raw and had worms. Therefore the children would not eat and came home hungry. The Oni Gumpu Sanjeevinis went and confronted the cook. The cook promised that it would not happen again and that she would prepare the mid day meal more carefully and invited them to eat the food any time. In Bellary in Balyal village the school was discriminating between the SC children and the rest of the children. The oni gumpu intervened to ensure that all the children were being fed properly.

1.10 Social Problems

The oni gumpus have not only taken up issues related to the project but issues which affect their lives. These include fights between couples, child marriage, alcoholism, second marriages and so on.

Family fights: The oni gumpus are neighbourhood groups and they know all their neighbours and in the oni gumpus and problem that needs to get solved is discussed. In Tippapura village, Bellary the oni gumpu intervened when one woman was being beaten up by her husband and even threatened to file a police complaint. In another case the oni gumpus went to the help line, Sindhuvani to solve the problem but they added a threat of taking the case to the police if the husband did not listen to what the helpline told him to do.

Ratnamma, an NHL in Tippapura village, Bellary said that there was a woman who was her neighbour who was the 3rd wife of a man. He already had 3 children from his previous marriages. There used to be problems with her mother-in-law problems because she would shout at her saying that she had not looked after the children. Because of these fights the husband would also beat up his wife. Ratnamma used to hear the fights. One day she walked into their house and told them to stop fighting. She did this 3 times and finally threatened to file a police complaint. The fear of the police complaint stopped the mother-in-law and son from fighting. She did this because she is a NHL and anything that happens on her street is her problem.

According to the oni gumpu leaders, Laxmiamma's and her husband Gurappa were from Kalkeri Village. They have a 21 year old son. For the past 10 years Gurappa went around spending money by selling items from his home. If Laxmiamm questioned him he would beat her up. The same applied to anyone else who dared to talk to him. Laxmiamm decided to approach the Oni Gumpu and they took the case to the Sinduvani. They told Gurappa that if he did not listen to what the Sinduvani said they would go to the police. The Sinduvani called a public meeting and said that he should not behave in this manner. Now they are all happy.

Alcoholism: Alcoholism is a major issue in all the villages. The oni gumpus come together to fight this issue. In Nimbagera Village the oni gumpus have managed to get all the shops shut down. This had happened recently and they hoped it would continue to be shut. In Ankalli village, Bellary they not only closed down the alcohol shops but they also helped find an alternative income generating activity for the seller.

Badamma a leader from Nimbagera Village, Kudligi Taluka, Bellary said, that there were four alcohol shops in her village and the men were even selling their wives jewellery for money to drink. So all the women came together at the Gram Panchayat office to protest but it did not work. Then they got into two bus loads and headed for the DCs office and the DC sent the police to their village and stopped the sale of alcohol in the village. Police arrived and told the owners to close shop. One owner approached the Gram Panchayat and said that it was his livelihood and therefore to please allow him to continue selling liquor. The Gram Panchayat President said that this would not be possible because all the women had taken their protest up to the DC. Therefore he too would have to close shop. Badamma said that over the past one week all alcohol shops have been closed.

Hanumanthappa a leader from Ankalli village, Hadagalli Taluk said that for the past ten years alcohol was being sold in his village. Five months ago all the women came together with the link worker and said that they must shut down this arrak shop because the men were drinking away the little money they had. A Gram Sabha was held about this where everyone told the alcohol shop owner that he should close down his shop. He said that he could not because it was his livelihood. The people said that they would help him with an alternate livelihood option and gave him a Rs.5000/- loan to set up a kirni shop. Today there are no alcohol issues in Ankalli Village.

Second Marriage: There are cases where the husband marries for a second time even when the first wife is alive. For Bhagya, Nellamanglahalli village, it was fortunate that he mother was an oni gumpu member. He mother brought up her case in the oni gumpu and now the oni gumpu is in the middle of a legal battle on behalf on Bhagya.

According to Ratna, Team leader, Bellary a girl called Bhagya from Nellamanglahalli got pregnant and returned to her mother's house for her delivery. In the meanwhile, her husband married again. Bhagya gave birth to a baby boy and the boy is ten years old today. The Oni Gumpu concept came to Bhagya's village and her mother became a member. At one Oni Gumpu meeting, the Link Worker spoke about legal issues. Bhagya's mother brought up her daughter's case. She asked the group if there was something that could be done legally since Bhagya's husband had married again and had children from his second wife and therefore there was no security from him for her son. On probing further, the Link Worker found out that since Bhagya was slightly physically handicapped her mother in law ill treated her as she could not do her share of the house work. Bhagya told her that she was unwilling to go back to her husband. The Oni Gumpu filed a case on her behalf with the Sindhuwani. All the legal documents are in favour of Bhagya. They have appeared in court once and the case is still being fought out.

Child marriage: Child marriage is another major problem in the villages. Even when the oni gumpus were asked if there still was child marriage in their village they had to admit that there was. The definition of child marriage was vague. While some members did say that if a girl is below 18 and a boy below 21 then it is child marriage. Other oni gumpu members felt that if the girl is married before she matures then it is considered as child marriage. While they have managed to stop many child marriage from happening they admitted that it is still difficult. People know are aware of the age restrictions and therefore do not announce the wedding publicly. Even if the oni gumpus intervene the family may agree in front of them but later quietly conduct the wedding. For Nagamma the oni gumpu managed to convince her father and now she is studying.

Nagamma from Mangapura, Kudligi taluka. Akkamma was a NHL leader and 16 years old. After she finished her 10th standard her parents wanted to get her married. She came to the Oni Gumpu and said that her father was forcing her to get married and that she did not know what to do. A boy's family had come and seen her and agreed to a marriage. Nagamma and another NHL went to Akkamma's father and spoke to him about not getting his daughter married and allowing her to study further. The father got very angry. They also visited the boy's family and said that Akkamma wanted to study further and that she was too young so the marriage should not happen. Finally they managed to convince everyone. Today Akkamma is studying her 1st year of PUC in Kottur.⁸

For Renuka, whose marriage had been fixed when she was a baby it was a fortunate chance that her mother became an oni gumpu NHL and not only realise her mistake but also managed to take a stand and not go through with the previous arrangement.

Accordinging to MSK staff, Geetha from Hadagidi Taluk said that in Devagundannahalli village there was a NHL leader called Savithamma who had a young daughter called Renuka. When Renuka was a baby it was fixed that Renuka would marry Savithamma's brother's son. Meanwhile Savithamma joined the Oni Gumpu and got information and awareness on Child Marriage, Devadasi, HIV/AIDS, etc. So when Savithamma's brother came to fix the wedding she

⁸ MSK Staff, Bellary

said that as a leader, she could not allow her young daughter to get married till she turned 18 yrs. Her brother was very angry. But Savithramma was adamant that her daughter would marry only after she turned 18. If she still wanted to marry her cousin she could. If not she could marry anyone she wanted. In this way a child marriage was stopped.

Sometimes there are family problems which lead the family to get their daughters married off early. For one couple, who were both HIV positive, it was a question of how their daughter would manage when they died. The oni gumpu NHL managed to convince the parents and the grand mother that it would be better of they educated their daughter.

According to MSK staff, Bellary Gangamma from Byallal Village, HB halli taluka said that there was a husband and wife who were HIV positive. They had a young daughter studying in the 8th standard who they wanted to get married off because they felt that they would die soon. The child wanted to study further and told Gangamma about her parent's intentions. Gangamma spoke to the parents who explained why they were getting their daughter married. The girl's grand mother was also present. She was the one who had found the boy. Gangamma convinced the parents and the grandmother and stopped the wedding. Now the girl is in the 9th standard.

In Koppal in Talkere village the oni gumpu called in the police and intervened on the day of the mass marriage where they knew a lot of child marriages were going to take place.

According to the cluster coordinator, Koppal, in Talkere village there used to be a lot of child marriages. There was a committee which used to organise these weddings. The Cluster Coordinator and the Sanjeevinis met the committee people and talked to them and told them that they should not have child marriages when they hold community weddings. They went to the Panchayat and saw the list of the names of the people getting married and checked out the families of the couples who were going to get married. They then gave a notice to the families saying that they were not allowed to hold child marriages and if they did they would file a case against them with the police. They also complained to the panchayat and asked them to ensure that no child marriage takes place. They even got the police to come on the day that the community wedding was to take place and ensured that not child marriage took place.

Devadasi: A lot of the oni gumpu members who are devadasis themselves stopped being devadasis or the oni gumpus have helped stop young girls from becoming devadasis. In Ballyal village, Bellary, Durgamma, a devadasi and oni gumpu member was going to dedicate her daughter. The other oni gumpu members found out about it and stopped her from doing so. Finally, Durgamma took a loan because she wanted a grand wedding for her daughter who married a boy with a BA. Durgamma is sending her sons to school. The oni gumpus have helped stop young girls being dedicated as devdasis. They talk to the families and convince them why the girls should not be dedicated. Ratna, Team Leader, Bellary narrated a story where the oni gumpu had intervened and was successful.

In Gondanahalli Village, Bellary the Oni Gumpu got to know that a woman was going to dedicate her daughter to become a Devadasi. The Link Worker of the area was the daughter of a Devadasi and she knew all the customs. Some of the Oni Gumpu members were also Devadasis. They told the Link Worker that if they approached this woman she would not listen to them so to

bring up the issue of Devadasis in the next Oni Gumpu meeting and they would then talk about this woman's intentions for her daughter. In the next Oni Gumpu meeting the Link Worker spoke about HIV/AIDS and linked it to Devadasis saying that they were a high risk group because they had sexual relations with many men. The woman's daughter came to the Oni Gumpu meeting and said that her mother was planning to dedicate her and that she was unwilling but did not know what to do. All the members spoke to the mother and convinced her not to dedicate her daughter. The Oni Gumpu members also went and spoke to the girl's brother about why he was allowing his mother to dedicate his sister. He said that if she was dedicated, she would stay with the mother and take care of her. The Oni Gumpu members told him that he was the son and that he could take care of his mother. They asked him what he would do if his sister died. In this way they managed to convince both mother and son. Today the girl is married and she visited the Oni Gumpu and credited them with her happy state of affairs.

Environmental Problems: Cleanliness is an important issue discussed in the oni gumpu and they discuss both personal cleanliness and the cleanliness of the environment. The Oni gumpu has taken up many issues such as ensuring that sewage water does not flow on to the roads, and building toilets for women. In Tippapura village since the vice president of the gram panchayat was from the oni gumpu itself they were able to take up the issue of waste water flowing onto the streets. But in Mataldini village the oni gumpu approached the gram panchayat and insisted that bunds be built along all the gutters on all the streets. The gram panchayat said that they did not have the funds for it. The oni gumpus put pressure on the panchayat and got them to build all the gutters.

Girijamma, Tippapura village, Bellary said that all the waste water from all the streets would flow into their street. This was discussed at the Oni Gumpu meeting. The leader of this Oni Gumpu is also the Vice President of the Gram Panchayat. She said she would take it up in the Gram Panchayat and the moment some money comes the problem would be resolved. This has happened only because the Vice President of the Gram Panchayat is also an Oni Gumpu member. Once this was done, other Oni Gumpus approached her to get the drainage in their streets done.

In Mataldinni village, Koppal a lot of water flowed on to the roads because there were no bunds along the gutters. The Oni Gumpus approached the Gram Panchayat saying that this water would give rise to diseases like malaria and therefore they wanted the bunds built. The Gram Panchayat said that they had the funds to cover only 2-3 Oni Gumpus and they would cover the rest the following year. The Oni Gumpus insisted that they did all the streets or none at all. Due to this pressure, the Gram Panchayat delivered and built bunds on all the streets.

In Talakanakapur village, Koppal the waste water was flowing from the Sanjeevini's house and all the oni gumpu members talk to her telling her that she had to be more responsible. This resulted in her building a soak pit outside her house.

Shavanthrama from Talakankapur Village, Koppal said that there was a Sanjeevini in her village whose waste water would flow onto the road. Everyone had to wade through this dirty water. There were a few fights with her as people from her village said to her that she was a Sanjeevini

and had no business to be so irresponsible. Today she has built a soak pit outside her home due to pressure from her community.

In Sangnal village, Koppal the oni gumpu members felt that they needed a toilet for women. But the Anganwadi teacher and doctor refused to allow the toilet to be built in front of the anganwadi. The oni gumpu members put pressure on the gram panchayat and got them to build the toilet. There are two slightly different versions to the same story one told by the taluk coordinator and the other told by the cluster coordinator.

According to the taluk coordinator, Koppal, in Sanganal Village there was no privacy of toilets for the women. A community toilet was sanctioned. But its location was right in front of the Anganwadi. The Anganwadi teacher and doctor protested about this and the work stopped. The women went to the Gram Panchayat and said that if they did not start the work or relocate the toilets, they would all bring pots of water and defecate in front of the Gram Panchayat. Even the MSK staff spoke to the Gram Panchayat. Finally it was decided that the location of toilets would not change but that they would block the Anganwadi door and create a new door facing away from the toilet. In this way the Oni Gumpu applied pressure and got what they needed.

According to the taluk coordinator, Koppal, in Sanganal village there was an Oni called Girraddi Oni where all the women wanted a toilet built towards which the families had put together money and identified a place to build the toilets. But the people staying near this location objected. Nagaratna (Cluster Coordinator) went for the Oni meeting where the Sanjeevin brought up the toilet issue with her. The whole group went to the Gram Panchayat and questioned them on the toilet issue. The Gram Panchayat said that they could not help as there were people objecting. Nagaratna and her group said that they would sit in front of the Gram Panchayat till some action was taken. They suggested to the GP that they start laying the foundation for the toilets and that they would take care of any objections. The Gram Panchayat started the work but elections took place and the Gram Panchayat President changed. So again they went and spoke to the new Gram Panchayat. The Oni Gumpu was joined by the Anganwadi teacher and the Health department. Finally the Gram Panchayat built a wall that gave the women the privacy of a toilet.

1.11 Motivation for being a part of the oni gumpu

Most of the oni gumpu members said that they managed to find the time to come for the oni gumpu meetings once a week as they felt that this was a space for them to learn and change not only their lives but the village. As the oni gumpus in Byallal village, Bellary said, *We may have problems at home and we meet to find solutions in the Oni Gumpu. We also meet to be happy. Nagaraj a volunteer said that since he reads the papers and watches TV, he is motivated to come for Oni Gumpu meetings to share all he has read. At the Oni Gumpu diseases that that cannot in public are discussed. Every meeting some problem comes up. The women are motivated to attend the next Oni Gumpu meeting to find out how that problem was solved. Lingamma said that there are 15 members in a group which means that there are 15 different ideas available, which means that there are 15 new things to learn from every Oni Gumpu meetings.* For the oni gumpus in Tippapura village the motivation to attend meetings is to learn new things and to share it with each other. *We feel happy to meet. Meeting also relieves us of our burdens. This is a motivation.*

For the oni gumpus in Koppal district getting new information and learn new things was a motivation but they also were motivated to come because they got to meet each other and socialise. According to oni gumpu member in Irgalgada, Koppal, *Sitting at home is boring so atleast once a week stepping out allows us to enjoy and also get information.* One Oni Gumpu member said, Laxmawwa, Kalluru village, Koppal, *we feel happy and peaceful to meet each other and talk. We also come to learn new things.*⁹ For the Arogya Sakhis it was a responsibility for the people and a sense of ownership of the village that made them take up this position. Initially some felt that the extra work was unnecessary. But since the whole community had chosen them they feel responsible to perform.

For the oni gumpus in Raichur it was sharing of information and learning that motivated them to come for the meetings. According to the oni gumpu members of Aaroli village, Raichur, *if you stay at home you get to know nothing. But by attending meetings you get to meet each other and get to know what is happening outside your own house. We meet to know what is right and wrong. If you know what is right from wrong then you will send your children to school. Also at meetings you get lots of information.* For the oni gumpu members of Kurdi village, Raichur, *We also discuss programs available at the Gram Panchayat and how to best use it for our village.*

1.12 Problems faced by the oni gumpu

In general the oni gumpus did not face any major problems. The oni gumpu members said that they face problems from the gram panchayat who agree to the things the oni gumpus say but are not supportive. The oni gumpus in Aaroli village said that they did not face any problems but if they did then they would all come together to solve it.

MSK staff did bring out several problems that were faced at the higher level which included trying to get the government to be cooperative and as the oni gumpus said they would agree in front of them but not do anything about it later on. But the major problem was the fact that the government still does not have adequate infrastructure, man power and resources to meet the needs of the people. The shortages on ANMs, nurses, doctors, medicines were mentioned time and again. In Bellary the problems faced was the fact that awareness was being raised but there were not enough testing centres and support if the person was found to be HIV positive. In one village they even said that there was a demand for condoms but the supply was less.

1.13 Changes in the village

There are changes that can be seen in the village after the oni gumpus have started. One change that can be seen is in the attitude of the women and men of the village. According to the oni gumpus from Byallal village, Bellary, *Earlier the women in the village used to cover their heads and would not talk to the men. After the Oni Gumpu was formed the women walk around with their heads uncovered and they talk to anyone.* The oni gumpus of Tippapura, Bellary said that *The men have changed because they listen to what the women say. Men are happy because the women are getting more information. Oni Gumpus are respected and if there is a function in school, the leaders are invited.* The village has also become more united. According to oni gumpu members from Kalluru village, Koppal, *Everyone in the village was very individualistic and did things only for themselves. Today everyone wants to help each other.*

⁹ OG, Kalluru Village, Koppal

Physical changes can also be seen in the villages. There used to be waste water flowing on to the streets and now there are drains and people have started building soak pits so that the water does not flow on to the streets. According to the oni gumpu members, Kalluru village, Koppal, *Earlier dirty water used to flow on the streets and the community used to suffer from Typhoid and Malaria. Also the children used to fall into the dirty water. There was constant ill health due to the stagnant water. Now they are in the process of building a bund. There was a delay in starting this work as the Gram Panchayat was waiting for funds. Moreover it's a very big village. The Oni Gumpu members along with the Sanjeevini approached the Gram Panchayat for toilets. Also an MLA visited the village and the women spoke to him saying that the Gram Panchayat had not built toilets for them. The MLA said that it was upto them to pressurise the Gram Panchayat. Till date three toilets have been built and they are awaiting the rest.*

The oni gumpu members in Aaroli village, Raichur, felt that they have been bale to dispel superstition from the village to a large extent. They said, *Earlier everyone was very superstitious. After joining the Oni Gumpu, all superstitions have been dispelled due to awareness.*

1.14 Changes in the members

Changes have happened not only in the village but to individual members too. The first change that can be seen in the women is that they are more confident. They come out of their houses to participate in activities and help solve problems. They also have a greater awareness about a number of issues now. The issues they discuss in the oni gumpu meetings have been internalized by the members. For example, Huligamma the NHL leader, Byallal village Bellary said when she got her daughter married, her son questioned her on the character of the boy but she never listened to him. Now she feels she made a mistake. After she has got all this awareness on HIV/AIDS at Oni Gumpu she decided to get her son tested before he got married because she suspected him. Now she has two daughters-in-laws who are pregnant and she has made sure that they have got their TT shots and she will also get them tested for HIV.

The oni gumpu members also take better care of their health both their own and their daughters. The women tell their daughters about person hygiene, the importance of proper maintenance of their cloths during menstruation. They also have started bathing regularly. The women are more aware of eating nutritious food and ensure that they eat sprouted lentils and not over cook their vegetables.

Girijja said that now she tells her daughters about personal hygiene. Maheswari said that since she is educated and after her exposure to this project, she wants to work but her family will not let her. The women said that earlier they would feel shy that the men would see the cloths which would be drying after use during periods. But now they don't care. Basamma said that now she wants to send her children to school and she does not want them to be like her.¹⁰

¹⁰ Og, Tippapura Village, bellary

As Ratna, team leader. Bellary puts it, *Women now come out and attend meetings and they express themselves. NHLs are more confident. The group leaders decided to get their blood tested for AIDS before telling the rest of the community to do the same. They have also taken a decision not to allow child marriages in their homes. They tell their husbands about condoms. They have started sending their children to school and taking care of personal hygiene. Now they voluntarily send their girls for sex education.*

The women go to the doctor, take medicines, ensure that pregnant women get their injections and take them to the hospital for delivery. Even the dais have started insisting that the women, especially the women who are high risk go to the hospitals for deliveries. The women are no concerned about the whole village be it child marriage, devadasi or any other social problem.

Earlier the women would ask their husbands for permission to go out any where. Now they just inform them. They have the confidence to talk to any official, whom they not only listen to what they have to be but also question them. As on sanjeevini, kalluru village, Koppal said, *I can now talk and go out to meet people and go out on work. Now all the women have courage to ask for their rights due to the Oni Gumpu.* Ratna, a Sanjeevini, Irkalgada village Koppal said that *earlier I used to be selfish and not concerned about other people's problems. But after joining Oni Gumpu I am more conscious and aware of helping people around me.*

1.15 What would they have done without oni gumpu

All the oni gumpu members said that they would not have done anything if there had been no oni gumpu. While they acknowledged that the problems would still be there they would not have come together to solve it. They would have left it to some else to solve. As put by the members of the oni gumpu in Tippapura village, Bellary, *We had eyes but were still blind before we became members of the Oni Gumpu.* According to the oni gumpu members in Byallal village, bellary, *If there was no Oni Gumpu then we would have sat back and faced all our problems passively by saying that this is our fate.* According to the oni gumpu members in Kurdi village, Raichur *we would have been unclean, un bathed and uninformed. Now we feel lighter because we meet and talk to each other.*

1.16 Benefits of the Oni Gumpu to all stakeholders

It is not only the oni gumpu members who have benefited from the formation of oni gumpu. The members of course have benefited, as have their families, the community, the project, MSK staff and the government has benefited.

Oni gumpu members: The major benefit to the oni gumpu members is that they have a lot more information now. With information comes a lot of awareness that has been raised among the oni gumpu members. They are aware of the importance of good health, how to access government programmes and facilities. The Oni Gumpu members have developed personally and are respected by the community. Their capacity has been built and they have the confidence to solve any problems that may come their way. They can now speak to the government officials. They now have a platform to speak and fight for their rights.

Families: Whatever information, programs and facilities the Oni Gumpu accesses automatically reaches the family. For example, if there is a pregnant woman in the house, the oni gumpu members and leaders visit her together as a group and talk to her. When they go to the house and talk about safe pregnancy, the information goes out to everyone in the house, thereby spreading awareness in the woman's family. Also, the woman having been spoken to by a big group does not feel alone in any way. The families also benefit in that if they face any problem they can go to the oni gumpu who will help them solve it. This in turn ends the isolation that woman live with and creates a new space for them.

Community: Through the oni gumpus a sense of unity is being built among the community and there is a sense of belonging. The oni gumpus take up issues that affects the entire community such as alcoholism thus bring the community together. According to the taluk coordinator, Koppal, in Chickmygeri Village there is a large alcohol shop and some of the men wanted the shop removed. They approached the Oni Gumpu to do this. The Oni Gumpu members said that if they stopped drinking they would ensure that the shop is removed. The Oni Gumpus have given an application to the DC to shut the shop down. Other issues that the Oni Gumpu takes up like street lights, covering gutters, etc. benefits the whole community. Through the oni gumpus the community gets information very fast and can now access government programmes and facilities. For example according to the cluster coordinator, Koppal, in Gulladahalli village there was a PHC sub center where the ANM was supposed to stay. It was in a bad condition and she took Rs.25000/- from the government to repair it but did not repair the building. But she showed expenses to the PHC for repair. When the Oni Gumpus put pressure saying she had to stay in the building, she got herself transferred. They approached the Gram Panchayat saying that if the building was not being used then to give it to them. The Gram Panchayat put in funds and got the building repaired and it is now being used as an Anganwadi center and immunisation also takes place here.

Project: All the projects are on raising awareness and building linkages between the community and government. They have benefited from the oni gumpus as the spread of information is fast and it is easy to gather the entire community for any programmes or camps that are held in the village. Through the oni gumpus the project are able to have a wider reach and go to each and every household and every person in the village. All the oni gumpus have said that they would continue to work even after the project ends and therefore the work of the project will continue even after the project ends. In Bellary the oni gumpus are also running information centres to continue to give out information on HIV/AIDS

MSK: For MSK and their staff the oni gumpu strategy makes it easier to reach a wider audience and helps build a relationship with the entire community and not just one section of the community. It is easier to organise programmes in the village as the oni gumpus can bring everyone together and taken on a lot of the work themselves, thus reducing the work load of the staff. There is also a lot of communication and flow of information between the oni gumpus and the field level staff. The oni gumpus are aware of any problem in the village and if they do not know what to do they can just call up the field staff and ask them where to go. The staff themselves have changed as they have more knowledge about health. They also say that they too have become more confident.

Government: for the government too the burden of work has reduced. Earlier the ANM had to go house to house to keep a check on who needs to be treated or given injections or immunised. Now the oni gumpu comes to her with the list and even take her to the houses. When there is any camp held in the village such as a polio camp then the oni gumpu members ensure that all children who need the shot are there. This was the government not only meets its targets but is also assured that they have reached everyone. The oni gumpus also send patients to the PHC and accompany them if need be. The awareness on health and changes in people's attitudes also helps the government as they do not have to fight superstitions.

Finally, Renuka, Taluk Coordinator, Raichur said that one story would sum up how everyone has benefited from the oni gumpus.

Durgamma was an active Oni Gumpu member and a good leader in Navalkal Village, Raichur. Her husband was an alcoholic. He would beat her up and drag her home when she was in Oni Gumpu meetings. One day during a meeting Durgamma's husband beat her up and dragged her home. After the meeting MSK staff stayed back in the village and some Oni Gumpu members stayed with them in the same house. Late at night Durgamma managed to escape and came to where the other members and MSK staff were staying. She asked what she could do about her personal problem. She was able to solve others problems but not her own. Renuka (MSK) said that every time her husband came to beat her, not to bend and take the beating but instead grab his hand and ask him why he was doing this. Just then Durgamma's husbands came there. Durgamma was motivated by what Renuka had said and grabbed his hand and took him home. At home she lifted her hand as though to hit him and he was shocked. She then proceeded to pour water on him. He sobered up. Durgamma told him that she could not take the beatings any more and asked him why he was doing this. She said that he was drinking his money and her money away. She said that if he wanted he could leave her but the next time he hit her she would hit him back. She also said that she and her children would take poison and this would be registered as a suicide death and he was responsible for it. MSK and the community know that he is a drunk and the police would imprison.

4 Government Community Relationship

The main objective of the oni gumpu strategy is to build a link between the community and the government. While every family in the oni gumpu has been represented in the oni gumpus at the village level there is a body that represents the community and interacts with the government. This section looks at the collaboration from different points of view, the community, the government and MSK. The issues of collaboration have been mainly on health and education.

1.17 From the Perspective of the Community

The community defined their relationship with the government using terminology they are familiar with. While one oni gumpu in Koppal felt the relationship between the oni gumpus and the government was like friends another oni gumpu felt that the government was like the mother-in-law of the community. But in Bellary the government was compared to the bride's party and the oni gumpu was compared to the bridegroom's party.

The oni gumpus felt that the government treats them well when they go to meet them. In Raichur they said that the government respects and listens to them and even gives them tea when they go to meet them. In Koppal too the oni gumpu members felt that the government respected them and if they had fixed an appointment to meet anyone the person would be there at the time. They said that earlier the government officials were disrespectful and careless. Now they deal with the women as equals. They organise chairs for the women to sit and after the meeting they offer tea. They see the women as people who have information to share with them and therefore they are respected. In Bellary too they said that earlier there was no relationship between the community and the government but now at the village level the officials (ANM, Anganwadi teacher, Gram Panchayat) are easily accessible. But it was more difficult at the taluk level as there is no link with them.

The oni gumpus keep in constant touch with the government. They not only meet them when they have a problem but they also drop in on them when they are in the vicinity. As the oni gumpus in Koppal said, they may have some new information to share. Moreover, they keep meeting to keep the relationship alive.

1.18 From the Perspective of Government officials

The government officials talked about their relationship with the oni gumpus, inputs they get from the oni gumpus, and the usefulness of the oni gumpus.

Nature of relationship: At the village level, with the ANMs, Anganwadi teachers, school headmaster and the panchayat the oni gumpus have developed a close relationship. According to Husianamma, Anganwadi teacher, Raichur, *sometimes I go to the Oni Gumpu meetings. Here I get to know which children have not been immunised, malnourished and pregnant women who need their shots. In case I do not go the meeting, the Oni Gumpu women come to me with the information. Then I make sure that what ever is required is done. MSK has been very helpful to me in my work because earlier there was a high chance that women would not get their shots or*

children would not be immunised. The Anganwadi teachers have a good relationship with the oni gumpus as the oni gumpus help the anganwadi teachers identify pregnant women, mothers and children. According to the Anganwadi supervisor, Raichur, *the Oni Gumpu in turn gives us information on who needs nutritious food, how many pregnant women there are in their area. Then we act on this information.* The oni gumpus also help the anganwadi teachers hold their mothers meetings. Thus it becomes easier for the anganwadi teachers to identify the women and children who need their injections and who need nutritious food. As the Mr. S. Hanumanthappa, CDPO Bellary put it, *the Anganwadi takes help from the Oni Gumpus because they cover an intensive area where all the people can be reached.* The Oni gumpus are also a way in which the Anganwadi teacher can inform the women when TT shots will be given and so on. Maheshwari, Anganwadi Teacher, Raichur says, *I attend the monthly panchayat meetings and tell the Oni Gumpu when and where the TT shots will be given. Oni Gumpu also get children and drops them off at the Anganwadi.* Thus at the village level a good relationship is built between the oni gumpus and the Anganwadi teacher.

Similarly, a good rapport has been developed between the oni gumpus and the ANMs. On ANM in Kurdi village, Raichur said, *the Oni Gumpu tells me about women who need shots or who are resistant to taking shots. Then I go along with the Oni Gumpu member goes to the women's house and convince the family.* Shailaja Patil the ANM of Labegara village and Sidalingamma the Lady Health Visitor of Irakalgada PHC said their relationship with the Oni Gumpus was like that of a mother and child. Shailaja goes to meetings and speaks to the women about personal and environmental cleanliness. If the Oni Gumpu women have any problems they approach the AMN and she treats them. If she cannot treat them she sends them to the PHC doctor.

The PHC doctors too were happy with the oni gumpus. There are a few reasons for this. One is that the community, especially women, have become more aware of the importance of health and getting immunised and they are now coming to the PHC to get treated. The doctors were also appreciative of the help that the oni gumpus provide to the ANMs in the villages. Dr. Manjunath said, *I have a close relationship with the Oni Gumpus because they are involved in the immunisation and reproductive child health programs. Because of the government immunisation program, I meet with the Oni Gumpu leaders at least once a week either at the PHC or the Anganwadi. I also meet with them once a month and at these meeting I am updated about the pregnancies in the village. The Oni Gumpus mainly focus of maternal health. The oni gumpu members tell me about risk pregnancy cases and cases that may need medical testing, which is done at the PHC clinic. The Oni Gumpu is a great help to my department because they also keep us informed of the out break of any diseases in an area. The Oni Gumpu members come to the meetings with documentation and records of what the PHC and ANMs have done and what needs to be done. This information is correlated with the ANM's records and we have a clear picture of the health situation in a village.*

For the Mahadev, VCTC counsellor, Bellary, his relationship with the oni gumpu is minimal as he cannot go to the field very often. He only gets to meet people when they come to the centre to get themselves tested. He has been invited to a few training programmes where he has talked about the facilities available at the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Center (VCTC) and about Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission (PPTCT). When any one comes to him he counsels them as to where to go to get tested and where to go to get treated.

For the education department the link with the oni gumpus is through the schools. The oni gumpus help identify school dropouts and convince their families to send their children to school. For Mr. Laxman, CRP, Raichur, the oni gumpu has not only helped the women come out of their houses but awareness has been created on the importance of education. According to Mr. Laxman, *the Oni Gumpu checks on children who do not go to school and teachers who are absent and children who have not got scholarships and report this (red alert) at the monthly meeting. Then the Education Department follows up on this and action is taken within a month. Today women have progressed a lot and are equal to men.* One headmaster in Raichur explained the relationship with the oni gumpu through a story. He said, *a child called Taslim Begum, daughter of Kasim was a drop out due to money problems and also because she was maturing. Oni Gumpu members went and convinced the parents that the school would take care of everything and got the girl back to school. The school gave the child free uniforms and books. The Oni Gumpu members go and speak to parents whose children are not regular and convince the parents to send them to school.*

The gram panchayat works with the oni gumpu to solve village problems. Oni Gumpus discusses various issues in their meeting and whenever there is a problem they approach the Gram Panchayat. The issues discussed are drainage, street lights, family problems, health problems, child marriage, HIV/AIDS, programs available from the Gram Panchayat like community toilets among other issues. Sometimes Gram Panchayat members go to Oni Gumpu meeting and sometimes Oni Gumpus come to the Gram Panchayat. Mr. Adesh, Gram Panchayat president, Kurdi Gram panchayat said that, he would give financial help if necessary. If the Oni Gumpu comes and says that some one does not have a house he goes and inspects the situation. So far they have given six houses to Devadasi women and four houses to handicapped persons. This was based on advice give by the Oni Gumpu to the bill collector as to whom the beneficiaries should be. The bill collector then passed on the information to that Gram Panchayat ward who inspected the issue/person. Oni Gumpu approached the Gram Panchayat by giving an application for an SGSY loan. The Gram Panchayat processed the application and sent it to the taluk level. This is still in process.

While the ANMs and the Anganwadi teachers were most aware of the oni gumpus the other officials were not too clear about the oni gumpus. While the PHC doctors and gram panchayat members assumed that the leaders of the oni gumpu are the oni gumpu, the higher level government officials assumed that MSK field staff were oni gumpu members. Sometimes the higher level government officials were not even aware of the term ‘oni gumpu’. The project name and the names of specific leaders had to be mentioned before they could start talking about the oni gumpus. But all of them thought that it was a good strategy and that they would continue to work with the oni gumpus and support them.

Inputs got from the Oni Gumpu: In Raichur and Koppal the oni gumpus collect information about various issues and give that to the government departments who in turn respond. While some officials said that they do not get any inputs from the oni gumpus the other mentioned the information they get from the oni gumpus.

Department	Health	Education
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VCTC	Get cases referred	
ANM	Come for treatment Number of pregnant women who need TT injections	
PHC	Number of cases registered with the ANM Number of pregnant women who have visited the doctor Number of risk pregnancies Number of deaths	
Anganwadi		Number of children who are not going to the anganwadi
School		If midday meals are being served If the food quality is poor If the food is being cooked properly Number of school dropouts
Gram Panchayat	Where streetlights are needed Where toilets are needed Where drains are needed Monitors the activities and gives feedback to the gram panchayat	

According to Mr. S. Hanumanthappa, CDPO, Bellary, *Oni Gumpus give us awareness and information on epidemics. The immunisation programme has improved and so has the awareness on diseases because of the Oni Gumpu.* One headmaster in Raichur said, *earlier the teachers themselves along with youth club members used to go to meet parents of children who did not go to school. It has now become easier with the emergence of the Oni Gumpu because the members have precise information about which house has school drop outs or irregular school going children. Because the Oni Gumpu consists of women, it is easier to convince parents. Also Oni Gumpu women are able to speak to their neighbours in their particular language, which the teachers and Principal cannot do.*

The Kurdi gram panchayat members, Raichur said, *oni Gumpu gives the Gram Panchayat information about each street such as toilets, streetlights, drains and so on. This information comes in the form of a letter. Then the appropriate Gram Panchayat member is sent to resolve the issue. The Oni Gumpu monitors the work being done and if it is not up to the mark they question the Gram Panchayat. The Oni Gumpu approached the Gram Panchayat for 150 individual toilets for BPLs. This was approved and work started but has run into some financial difficulties because all the material has not arrived. But the president Mr Adesh is confident of completing the job. The Oni Gumpu informed the Gram Panchayat in the form of a letter that there was no electricity in ward 5 as the pole had fallen. Electricity was still running through the pole. One Gram Panchayat member went and removed the fuse to avoid any accidents. The Gram Panchayat members went to the electricity board and within 24 hour the pole and wiring was fixed. In another ward the electric wires were crumbling and in the wind they would touch and short circuit. Gram Panchayat members went to the Manvi Electricity Board and got new poles and wires and fixed the problem.*

Usefulness: Most of the government officials felt that the oni gumpu were useful to them. Some of them narrated stories to explain the usefulness of the oni gumpus. According to Mr. S. Hanumanthappa, CDPO, Bellary, *Oni Gumpus helps us in many ways. We are extending schemes to the rural people like bank linkages and income generation activities. The Oni Gumpus have more knowledge and they get more benefit from the schemes. There is scope for the relationship to become better.* But on the other hand it seemed as though he did not who were in the oni gumpus because he asked if the oni gumpus could feed the anganwadi teachers. He said, *now the anganwadi teachers are over burdened. For all the programmes they are asking for remuneration. If the Oni Gumpu gives the Anganwadi teachers a working lunch because the Anganwadi teachers are over burdened.* When it was explained to him that the oni gumpus were made of poor women he changed to saying, *it is not possible for the poor women to feed the government officials. Both the Anganwadi teachers and the Oni Gumpu members should be service minded and both should sacrifice for their village.*

For the gram panchayat the oni gumpus are useful because they get information about the various problems in the village and when they implement any activities they know that the oni gumpu is also monitoring the activity. The gram panchayat members in Kumbli village, Bellary said *each Gram Panchayat members represent 1 ward and each ward has 3-4 streets. Each Oni Gumpu presents information about their street to their ward representative who brings it to the Gram Panchayat meeting. So information reaches the Gram Panchayat very fast and this enables prompt action all due to the Oni Gumpu. If there is a problem in a street it gets solved at the street level and does not necessarily come up to the Gram Panchayat.* For the gram panchayat members in Sangnal, Koppal, *Oni Gumpu is very useful to the Gram Panchayat. If the Gram Panchayat wants to intervene with a program in a street, the presence of the Oni Gumpu members makes the job easier and smoother.* Another gram panchayat in Raichur was happy that the oni gumpu members monitored the activities of the gram panchayat they said, *it is useful because the Gram Panchayat members are kept on their toes by the Oni Gumpu because they keep them informed about each street. Also the Gram Panchayat members knowledge increases and there is more awareness.*

On the other hand for the schools the oni gumpus were useful because they not only helped in identifying school dropouts they also brought them back to school. According to the headmistress, Raichur, *there are many families that don't send their children to school due to various problems. The Oni Gumpu either gives information on these children to the headmistress or the head mistress seeks the Oni Gumpu's help. Either way they get the children back to school.* The oni gumpu members also monitor the midday meal to ensure the children get fresh, clean and nutritious food.

Basavaraj, the Assitant teacher, Raichur said that there used to be 50% attendance in the school. Now it has increased to 70% and the credit goes to the Oni Gumpus. In 1999 only two girls went to the high school which is 6 kilometers away. Today 15-20 girls go to high school. Basavaraj says he cannot say this has occurred only because of the Oni Gumpu, but he is sure it is because of a higher awareness among the community. The schools work load has reduced because of the Oni Gumpu. Today the Oni Gumpu approaches the school only if they are unable to convince a

family about sending their children to school. Earlier there used to be a high number of female drop outs. The teachers found it awkward to speak about the female child with her parents as it may be due to her maturing or some female issue. Today the Oni Gumpu (consisting of all women) are able to freely discuss why a girl child has dropped out, solve the problem at home and escort the child to school.

The oni gumpus have also helped in dispelling myths and superstitions about girls not going to school after she matures. According to Susheela, headmistress, Raichur, *earlier there were a lot of superstitions around a girl going to school after she matures. But after the Oni Gumpu was formed superstitions have been dispelled and more girl children have started going to school.* She also said that after the oni gumpus have started they now do not distinguish between government and private schools and ensure their children are sent to school clean. She said that, *parents who sent their children to private school always made sure that the children were clean and washed for school. But children going to government schools were always dirty and unclean. This changed when the Oni Gumpus came into existence.* The headmistress also talked about the role of the oni gumpus in ensuring that the midday meal was properly cooked and served. Talking about the midday meals she said, *Earlier the teachers would over see the cooks about the mid day meals which is why there was a lot of carelessness in the cooking. But after the formation of the Oni Gumpus, the Oni Gumpu members are involved in overseeing the meals and they ensure that the quality of food is good. The cooks therefore put more vegetables in the food and make sure that the rice is clean. This is because the cooks now realise that it is not only the school involved but the whole village is supervising their cooking.*

People from the Bellary CHARKA project came for an exposure visit to Manvi taluk. They met a girl called Iramma Iranna who was an SC/ST girl who was a school dropout. Her school was over a kilometer away from her house and therefore it was difficult for her to get to school. Susheela went and spoke to the child's family who always promised to send the child to school, but never did. After the Oni Gumpu was formed, Susheela told them about this case. She said that she did not know what the Oni Gumpu said to the parents but the child started coming to school.

Susheela, Headmistress, Raichur

The CRP, Raichur, also said that the education department now involves the oni gumpu members in their programmes and census. He said, *because the Oni Gumpu comes and questions us we feel that we have to do our work effectively. Also because the Oni Gumpu is involved the department programs are more successful. When the education department does the census for school kids, the Oni Gumpu is part of the census team. Sometimes if a woman is good enough she may also be the leader of the team. The Oni Gumpu tells the department who the drop outs are and consequently the children are brought to the school and the Headmaster registers them in the school.*

For the ANMs, the oni gumpus are useful because they now do not have to go house to house to find out who needs injections or if every child has been immunised or not. The ANM tells the oni gumpu leaders when she will be coming to their village and the oni gumpus either bring all the women and children to one place or they take her to the houses where she needs to provide injections or treatment. This reduces a great burden on the ANM. She not only does not have to

go house to house she is also sure that she has reached everyone she needs to reach. As Shailaja, ANM, Bellary put it, *earlier I had to go from house to house to get information on births, illnesses, deaths, etc. Sometimes I would go to one area and the women would have left for work. So I would have to return without having completed my work. Now when I enter a village the Arogya Sakhi and Sanjeevinis approach me and immediately tell me specifically who are ill and they take me to them. This makes my work easier, more efficient and less time consuming. The relationship between Oni Gumpu and AMN can improve. Presently I have contact with only the 20 women in the Oni Gumpu. I want to have meetings and reach everyone (men, women and children) in the family. It is very important that the Arogya Sakhi raises awareness about immunisation among the men as well as the women.* Another ANM, from Kurdi village, Raichur said, *there used to be a lot of superstitions earlier especially surrounding polio because they believed that their hands and feet would fall off. But today this resistance has decreased largely. Even then there are a few times where the AMN has gone along with the Oni Gumpu member to a person's home and given her the shot. Children getting immunised has increased from 24% to 84% since the existence of the Oni Gumpus. Because of the Oni Gumpu the AMN has a better reach to the community. The relationship with the Oni Gumpu can improve if lines of interaction are kept open and to meet their needs.*

The anganwadi teachers too felt that the oni gumpus were useful in that they brought children to the anganwadi, brought women who needed their TT injections and brought in children who needed to be immunised. As Husainamma, Anganwadi teacher, Raichur puts it, *the Oni Gumpus are informed about government programmes that provide pregnant women with nutritious food, who in turn takes it to the rest of the community. I make sure that these programmes reach the pregnant women. Also all Anganwadi teachers meet the PHC doctors once a month. The Anganwadi teacher and the ANM work together. I inform the ANM about how many children need immunisation and how many pregnant women need their shots. The PHC in turn informs me about cleanliness and diseases that are prevalent in the village. I take this information back to the Oni Gumpu.* Thus there is coordination between government agencies and with the oni gumpus towards ensuring safe motherhood. Husainamma narrated two stories about the oni gumpus.

Kumaramma from SC Oni was pregnant with her first child. She was very short (4 feet tall) Husseinbai told Kumaramma that she was a high risk pregnancy because of her small stature. Because her case was complicated she was taken to Raichur for her delivery and she delivered a baby girl via caesarean. Husseinbai and the Oni Gumpu members identified Kumaramma as a complicated pregnancy and warned her and her family well in advance. Therefore they were all prepared for a safe delivery. The baby had her BCG shots in the hospital and Kumaramma had her TT shots.

Kumaramma and Ashok had one child but the second and third miscarried. When she got pregnant the fourth time the VDMC, Anasuya, took her to the PHC doctor for regular check ups. Kumaramma went into labour and bled a lot which was why she was losing her babies. Anasuya went with her to Raichur where she delivered a baby boy. Then she got operated a month after the delivery and went to her mother's place where the baby died mysteriously. Because of the Oni Gumpu a lot more awareness is generated in the community. Husseinamma said that the Oni Gumpu members come to her and ask what programmes are available from the government.

Husainamma, Anganwadi Teacher, Raichur

For the PHC doctors their work load has reduced as has the work for the ANM and therefore they find it useful. Dr. Manjunath, PHC doctor, Koppal said, *when I visit a village, I may not be able to easily locate my staff members but I always am able to find an Oni Gumpu member and complete my work. There was only one ANM for 4-5 villages, covering a population of 5000 and she finds it difficult to manage. Therefore the 20 women from the Oni Gumpus or MSK can help by sharing her work load. She has to travel to various villages and she has transport problems. They cannot get more ANMs as there are problems at the government level.* But the doctor was of the opinion that his department was not dependent on the Oni Gumpus and that they could continue their work without them.

On the other hand for the VCTC counsellor in Bellary, the oni gumpus are useful because they raise awareness on HVI/AIDS and people are now coming forward to get themselves tested.

1.19 From the Perspective of MSK Staff

The staff of Mahila Samakhya Karnataka had both positive and negative things to say about the community-government relationships, especially the government's response to the oni gumpus.

In Bellary, because the project is a government project and the departments are the ones who are involved in it everyone has been proactive and supportive. There are meetings at the DC's office once in three months. There are also meetings with BDAPS (Bellary District AIDS Prevention Society). Based on the demand the government has responded, be it setting up VCTCs and providing condoms. They are open because this is an HIV/AIDS programmes and they have to reach their targets. In the beginning there were clashes between the Oni Gumpu and government officials who felt that the Oni Gumpu members were questioning them too much. The government officials were not even willing to listen to what the community had to say. They felt that they knew their targets and responsibilities and that they did not need the Oni Gumpus telling them how to do their jobs. After the village level government officials went for a training to Bellary District AIDS Prevention Society (BDAPS) and formed the Village Health Committee (VHC) and the officials were a part of that committee, they started changing their defensive attitudes. For example, if the Oni Gumpu went to the headmaster asking for a letter saying that a child is not attending his school, the headmaster would get defensive and tell the Oni Gumpu members that he would only give letters to his superiors and not to them because they were not officials. This is a small issue because the Oni Gumpu members only wanted a letter saying that the child was not attending school. Also the Oni Gumpu members did not have the knowledge and confidence to deal with the headmaster. But today it is different because the Oni Gumpu members have more awareness, confidence and trainings on how to talk to government officials and can therefore speak to the headmaster and demand their dues from him. Earlier the government officials used to look down on the Oni Gumpus style of talking and their dialect. Today, since a rapport has been built this is not an issue any more.

Now the government officials at the village level like the Anganwadi teacher, health department, school and Gram Panchayat are open to getting information from the community. The Oni Gumpus have not yet dealt with the taluk level government officials. MSK staff in Bellary gave a

few examples to show how the attitude of the government has changed. In certain case like the one below the government got their staff to do the work they were supposed to do.

A school headmaster had been given training on HIV/AIDS which he was supposed to pass on to his students which he did not. When MSK staff visited him he invited them to give the training. After the training MSK reported at their quarterly meeting with the DC that they had given training on HIV/AIDS at this school. The DC got angry saying that all headmaster had been given training in HIV/AIDS so that they could pass it on to the students. So why was MSK asked to give the training. The DC asked MSK for proof that they had given this training. MSK produced a letter from the headmaster inviting them to give training and another letter saying that they had given training and held quizzes in the school. Because of this incident the education department has told all the headmaster that the teachers have to spend one hour a week talking to their students about HIV/AIDS.

Meenaxi a Taluk Coordinator from Hadagalli Taluka said that a PHC in HB Halli taluka had told the oni gumpus that on a particular day a lady doctor would come to the village to check patients with RTI and STI. She went and informed the Gram Panchyat and got an announcement made about the visit. On the day all the women gathered together but the doctor did not arrive. Meenaxi, the Link worker and NHL leaders went and complained to the Taluk Health Officer who decided to visit the PHC and found the lady doctor absent. He scolded her and transferred her to another place. While the government did respond, it did what it does best, it transferred the doctor.

While the government likes positive feedback, it does not like to be criticised. In HB Taluk it had been one year since the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Center had been set up and there was no lab technician. There was a meeting which was attended by the DC and all government departments. The DC asked MSK whether they had any problems with any of the departments. While talking about the various departments, MSK expressed the positives and negatives about each department. When it came to the health department MSK mentioned two issues. One was that they had asked for a lady doctor at the PHC which had not happened yet. The second issue was that though the VCTC had been set up, there was no lab technician to do blood tests. MSK said that they were spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS and people were agreeing to have their blood tested but there was no technician to do the needful at the center. The people were getting angry with MSK about this. This resulted in the Taluk Health Officer getting very angry with MSK for bringing up this issue at the meeting. MSK pacified him by saying that it was nothing personal against him but just an attempt to bring certain things to the DCs attention so that he could provide more for the VCTC.

Geetha a link worker in HB Halli said that she had taken a woman who had STI to the PHC at 2 pm and the front door of the PHC was closed. At 5.30 pm the doors opened and she told the lady doctor that she had a patient who needs treatment. The doctor said that she had come too late and that she was leaving. Geetha argued with her saying that she had come on time but the door was locked and she had been waiting. The lady doctor said that she had the back door opened and that Geetha should have come round the back. Geetha said that there was no way that she knew this but this patient had to be seen. The lady doctor agreed to meet the women in her home. Geetha took her to the doctors home and after she was checked she asked for payment for

consultation as she had seen the women in her house. Geetha refused saying that this had happened because she asked them to come home and not because they had come for a private consultation. Finally, Geetha told the doctor that she was going to complain about her. The doctor relented and Geetha and the patient left without paying any money. Here the link worker insistence that the doctor treat the patient without cost which finally made the doctor relent.

Sometimes the government officials are appreciative of the oni gumpu and understand their problems. Huligamma, a Devadasi woman was asked by the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) why she did not give up being a Devadasi and settle down to lead a normal life. Huligamma retorted saying that she would if he promised to marry her. The CDPO responded to her bluntness by saying that he got her point and he agreed that it was because people like him did not come forward and understand her plight that she and others like her were in the situation they were in.

In Koppal too earlier the health officials, especially the ANMs did not like the oni gumpu giving them information and feedback. Even when the Arogya Sakhis used to take the trouble to convince the families to get their children immunised the ANMs and the PHC doctors used to ask them why they were forcing people to get immunised. They felt that if they really wanted their shots they would come themselves. MSK spent a lot of time explaining the concept of Oni Gumpu to PHC doctors and the ANMs. This convinced them a bit. Meetings used to be held at the village level and not PHC level. But they realised that there was a need to have meetings at the PHC because it was important to see the work done by the Oni Gumpu and the ANM and the level of need there was in the villages. Now there is a strong link between MSK, GHE and the health department because there were two workshops held where the Commissioner openly declared his support of the Oni Gumpu.

The PHC agreed to work with the Oni Gumpu because they recognised that all the data being collected at the village level would finally go to a higher authority. So if their data was different to the Oni Gumpu's data, they would be questioned. The PHC started accepting the Arogya Sakhi more because they were making their job easier. If there was any check ups on pregnant women, the Anganwadi teacher, or Ayah or ANM had to go physically and do the needful. But now the Arogya Sakhi were doing this job easily and more intensely. Level of support got for Oni Gumpu from the government varies depending on how many villages the Oni Gumpu is covering for any one PHC. Earlier the PHC doctor never liked the Arogya Sakhi or Sanjeevinin because they made the community question them. But in time the PHC doctors are saying that they recognise that these Oni Gumpu members are doing more work than their own ANMs.

There was an ANM called Kalavatti and she had a date to do immunisation in a village called Bukkanatti. On the same day the Arogya Sakhi had a meeting in Koppal. Kalavatti went to the village and saw that there was no Arogya Sakhi and left without doing any immunisation. In the next PHC meeting the doctor asked Kalavatti why she had not done any immunisation. She said that she had gone to the village and the Arogya Sakhi was not there so she returned. It was such a shame for the PHC doctor because his staff could not do their work without the Arogya Sakhis presence. At the PHC meeting the Arogya Sakhi put a lot of pressure on the PHC staff saying that they have to do their work properly. So now at PHC meetings, the ANM and Arogya Sakhi do the planning together. As a result now when they go into the villages it is like a whole team

going together. Earlier there never was an ANC camp in the village. If the villagers needed a check up they had to go to the PHC. Many never went to the PHC because they never had any money. Because of pressure put by the Arogya Sakhi they now have ANC camps in the villages. Earlier the PHC staff never paid too much attention to the peoples needs. But now they come and give information at the Oni Gumpu meetings. Even if there are no camps they still go to the village and do raise awareness.

Earlier the government PHC was not even willing to have a meeting with the Oni Gumpu members. But MSK went and put pressure on the District Health Officer who sent down orders to cooperate with the Oni Gumpu members. Earlier it was only the Arogya Sakhi and Cluster Coordinator who attended the PHC meetings. Then the Cluster Coordinator felt it was important to involve the Oni Gumpu and the Sanjeevinis started attending these meetings. Now the government is open to receiving information from the community. Sometimes they say they cannot take up a case because they have other commitments but they keep the Oni Gumpu informed when this happens. The government has now realised that if the Oni Gumpu members are involved they can reach their targets which they cannot do on their own. The PHC takes the data from the women and compares it to the data collected by the ANM. Today the government gets the information from the Oni Gumpus and attends to the cases proactively by either visiting a patient at her house or arranging a vehicle to take the patient to a bigger hospital. As long as the Oni Gumpu is collecting information and giving it to them the government officials are open. But if the Cluster Coordinator confronts the PHC doctor with a complaint or a criticism, they are met with defensiveness and indignation. At this time the doctors retaliate unfavourably. There are instances when the nurse has entered a patient as having been immunised even though this is not true. The doctors at this time prefer to believe the nurse rather than the Oni Gumpu members. At the PHC meetings when the Oni Gumpus bring up issues, they are met with opposition from the PHC staff because the doctor hauls them up.

At the Hirevankalakunta PHC a monthly meeting was in progress where Ramchandra Desai from the Taluka Health Office had come. All the ANMs reported on the work done but they did not mention what their target was and how much they had achieved. When it came to the turn of the Arogya Sakhis, they reported statistics on pregnant women, how many needed to be immunised and how much of this was achieved. Ramchandra Desai was very impressed with the Arogya Sakhi and he reprimanded his ANM staff saying that he wanted more information at the next meeting. He also told the Arogya Sakhi that he wanted them to take up any one topic and discuss it at the meeting. So an Arogya Sakhi – Tippannal Gagamma – is going to conduct the next meeting on nutritious foods.

In Raichur on the other hand the oni gumpus have been working for a few years now and the government are more responsive. In one taluk the number of children immunised has gone up only because of the oni gumpus and the government recognises this fact. But, even here earlier the government were not very responsive because they did not communities, through the oni gumpus questioning them. A reason while the village level government workers did not like being questioned by the oni gumpus is because it would show up as a bad mark for them. For example, the school teacher would report 100 percent attendance while that was not the case, or the ANM would report that she had immunised so many children when in reality he had not done so. Thus, when the oni gumpus started collecting data and workers did not like it. Even when

dealing with the higher level officials MSK staff has to be very careful while pointing out the mistakes of lower level staff. In the beginning when the GPOs went to the government offices they would ask for proof on the issues being presented. The GPOs took them to the village and showed them. Now they are extremely receptive. The government does respond and try to solve the issues within 8 days. In Manvi Taluk the pulse polio program was a huge success. So now the government can see the effectiveness of the Oni Gompus.

Because MSK does not believe in confrontation, this has been ingrained in the oni gumpus as well. Even if the government does not respond, they still try to solve the problem. For example, if there are school dropouts and the government refuses to acknowledge that they still go and convince the families to send their children back to school. Now, when the oni gumpus tell the headmaster that there are dropouts, he goes along with the oni gumpus to the families to convince them to send their children to school as can be seen in the case below.

Balatagi Thanda – A VDMC called Venkamma lives here. She went for many training and was told to make sure that there were no drop outs in the village. She approached the headmaster and told him that together they should make sure that the village was school dropout free. They found that there were four boys not coming to school. They went and asked the four boys families to come for a meeting about why the boys were not going to school. They did not come. So they called another meeting and they still did not come. Then they called a Gram Sabha and sure enough these families came. But they were very angry with the headmaster and VDMC because it was a personal issue and being discussed at the Gram Sabha. The headmaster said that they did not want any drop outs and wanted to know why they were not sending their children to school. The parents explained that their cattle were their livelihood and that if they were not grazed they would not give any milk and therefore they would get no income. The parents said that if they had someone to graze their cattle they would have no objection sending their children to school. So Venkamma said that since she was grazing her cattle, she would graze theirs too. But since she was not too well off, she asked them to pay her a small fee. This was agreed and each family gave her Rs.50/- month. Today all the children are rank holders today.

MSK also has other strategies to involve the government in their programmes and in the following case even change their mindset.

MSK wanted to give information on pregnant and so they held this traditional function for all pregnant women. They distributed the responsibilities of organising of this function among the VDMCs. From 118 villages all pregnant women regardless of caste or class attended. MSK used this forum to give awareness on safe delivery, safe pregnant, TT shots, child care, etc. There was a PHC doctor who never paid much importance to giving women their TT shots. It was decided to invite this doctor to give a presentation and to have all press people present. Out come of this function was that all the pregnant women who attended had their delivery in a hospital.

While overall now the government officials, at the village level at least are responsive there are still problems with the higher level government officials. Most of them did not even know what an oni gumpu was and the DHO of Raichur said that it was a bad idea to raise awareness among the community because then they would start to question the government. At the village level however due to the constant interaction the ANMs, Anganwadi teachers, gram panchayat

members, and the PHC doctors there have been links built that will last beyond any project period.

5 Capacity building needs

Everyone recognised the need for and wanted further training but defining the exact training they want was the most difficult thing. This section is sub divided to see the training needs for different people.

1.20 Government Departments

The women and child department in Raichur said that they needed training in everything.

Department	Training	For Whom	Reason
CDPO, Bellary	Capacity building to be come leaders	Anganwadi Teachers and literate women	They will know ho to talk to panchayat members and mothers
VCTC Counsellor, Bellary	More information about the oni gumpus Travel allowance	VCTC Counsellors	So that they can work better with the oni gumpus
PHC doctors, Koppal	List of all the Arogya Sakhis More staff	PHC doctors	So that they can keep a check on them To assist them
Anganwadi teacher	Women and child development and health problems from the PHC doctors	Anganwadi teachers	To work better
ANM	Documentation training and man power for documentation	ANM and oni gumpus	To work better
Education department, Raichur	Education and personal hygiene	Education department staff	To be better able to convince the women

1.21 GP members

Training in health, training on how to keep and maintain the village better, financial help on person who can coordinate between the Gram Panchayat and the Oni Gumpu.¹¹

1.22 Oni Gumpus

Oni gumpu members	Technical information on HIV/AIDs Rights
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¹¹ GP, Sanghnal, Koppal

	Leadership Sex and Sexuality Care and support for people who are HIV positive Group unity To act as a pressure group Gender issues Programmes they can access and how to access them Various committees in the gram panchayat Literacy How to access information
Kishoris	Life skill training
Men	Gender training Women's health
NHL and other leaders	To be able to take on the role of the link worker Constant update of information Life skills How to identify government programmes

While MSK staff agreed that the oni gumpus need more training the questions was how to reach all of them. One strategy that is being tried out is to link them to the sanghas and get the sanghas to do the training for the oni gumpus. They also felt that the women needed to be supported to now stand for elections for the gram panchayat.

6 Sustainability and Replication

1.23 Sustainability of the Oni Gumpus

While the oni gumpus are working well now with the support of Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (MSK) one concern was the sustainability of the strategy. MSK has provided a lot of inputs and supports for many years to the sanghas and federations to build their strength. The oni gumpus reaches a larger group, the entire village and there has been very little inputs given to the oni gumpus themselves. All the training and inputs are given to the leaders. Despite this everyone, the oni gumpus and the government felt that the oni gumpus would continue even after the project ends.

According to the oni gumpus leaders, the oni gumpus will continue even if MSK is not there. One reason stated was that there will always be problems in the villages which have to be solved. Therefore the oni gumpu will always have a role to play and will continue. The onig gumpus already have a lot of information which can help them continue and will be able to solve any problem that comes their way. In Bellary, information centres have been set up to continuously provide information.

The Angawadi teachers were not so confident that the oni gumpus would continue. They felt that the meets are being conducted by MSK staff and therefore if MSK staff were not there the meetings would not be held. One Agnawadi teacher was not too concerned if the oni gumpus continued or not as she could still pass on the information through the mother's groups. For one ANM the oni gumpus have ingrained their work and therefore even if MSK leaves they will continue because they have just developed the habit of conducting meetings and solving problems. Eshwaryamma, ANM Kurdi village, Raichur said that just as she automatically does her job, the Oni Gumpu will automatically continue to apply all they have learnt. The headmaster was a little unsure and wanted names of the owmne he would have to keep in touch with after MSK withdraws.

The gram panchayats were more confident of the oni gumpus continuing. Most of them also promised to continue to support and work with the oni gumpus. While the gram panchayat in Kombli village, Raichur said that they have built a relationship with the oni gumpu and will continue working with them. While the GP in Pamankallur village. Raichur said that they would give the oni gumpus information they have and help them solve any problem in the village.

MSK staff at all levels are very confident that the oni gumpus will continue even after they withdraw. MSK has tried to put in some systems for future sustainability. For example in Koppal MSK to trying to get the gram panchayat or the community to pay for the services of the Arogya Sakhis so that they can continue to work in the village and support the oni gumpus. MSK is also trying to link the oni gumpus and the sanghas. Thus the sanghas can monitor the work of the Arogya Sankhis. In one village in Koppal there was no Arogya Sakhi for four months and the cluster coordinator did not visit the village for four months but the oni gumpus still continued to function. The Sanjeevinis have also been told from the beginning that MSK will be leaving and that they have to continue to be good leaders and support the oni gumpus. In Koppal, they feel

that the oni gumpus have enough information and with just a little more help the oni gumpus will be able to manage very well even after MSK leaves.

In Raichur too MSK staff are very confident of the oni gumpus continuing. They feel that they women have the courage and knowledge and know that they can access government programmes through the oni gumpus. The oni gumpus also act as support groups. On the other hand by building the links and relationships between the oni gumpu and the government agencies MSK has built in their sustainability. By ensuring that all the government departments are represented at the monthly meetings at the gram panchayat level they are building in the commitment on the part of the government. MSK is also trying to bring together the sangha members and the NHLs towards future sustainability.

In Bellary MSK staff feels that the oni gumpu will continue because they have enough information now and have continuous access to information through the information centre. The aim objective of the project was to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS. Even then a little more inputs are required before they withdraw.

1.24 Cost effectiveness of the strategy

The oni gumpu strategy is a cost effective strategy. The main inputs are given only to the leaders and it is given at the village. Therefore a lot of travel allowance and daily allowance is reduced. The leaders in turn pass on the information to the other oni gumpu members, and ultimately reaching the entire village. According to Ratna, Team Leader, Bellary, this saves money while simultaneously developing the whole village. Another advantage is that because all the trainings are held in the village it can be held when the women are free. Therefore the women do not have to take time off from work to come for the trainings. Another cost benefit is that when programmes are held in the village it is the community who raises the funds for the programme.

1.25 What is good and what could have been done better

While there were not many aspects about the oni gumpu that was not good there were a few things which MSK staff could have been done better. For example in Bellary, the Charka project is a time bound project and to ensure that every thing happened on time MSK staff did everything and did not involve the community as much as they would have liked to. But they are trying to rectify it in the extension of the project and involve the community more in all the activities. That way even when MSK withdraws the leaders will be equipped to take over and continue. Another problem they felt in Bellary was the fact that they had one field level staff for 10 villages which was too much work for the staff.

In Koppal they felt that one draw back was that they have not given much information to the oni gumpu but only trained the Arogya Sakhis. But they felt that now that the Arogya Sakhis were strong they could concentrate on the Sanjeevinis and that would help strengthen the oni gumpus.

This was echoed in Raichur who felt the only draw back was that fact that they had not given inputs to the oni gumpu but only to the leaders.

1.26 Replication of the Oni Gumpu Strategy

Everyone in MSK felt that this strategy could be easily replicated. But they did put in a few cautions. They also need to plan their project very well. The agency replicating would have to go through intensive training and put in a lot of effort initially. There has to be a lot of ground work done and a solid foundation needs to be built. Because of the intensity that is required initially the staff working have to be highly motivated.

7 Conclusions

The oni gumpu strategy is one that works very well when the aim of a project is to raise awareness and help the entire community and to build linkages with the government. Through the oni gumpu every family in the village is reached and the community becomes united around an issue. For the government too it is a strategy that can benefit because their target is the entire community and they know that through the oni gumpus they can reach their targets. The government also slowly realises that a lot of their work load is reduced with the help of the oni gumpus. For the NGO implementing the strategy too, it is not only a strategy that can be easily replicated but also not a very costly one.