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Top: Sita treating a patient with herbal medicine.

Below: Sita training women in Yogasana.



Sakhis- A New Ray of Hope

A change in infant and maternal mortality, better functioning of *anganwadis*, 24X7 health services for villages and a positive push to government institutions have been a few accolades of the health interventions at ACF. The programme aims to promote healthy behaviour, prevent diseases and provide cures. ACF trains women functionaries from the villages to provide basic health services. These women, known as *Sakhis*, provide quick medical supervision to their community members. This newsletter covers some inspirational stories of our *Sakhis*.

SITA NEGI, aged 47 years, lives with her family in Navgaon village of Darlaghat. Villages and hamlets in the hilly areas are scattered and most of them are situated on hilltops or in deep valleys. The connectivity to these small hamlets is very poor, public transport is limited and access to health services is extremely challenging. During emergency, the patient has to be carried in a “Doli” or “Palkhi” to reach the roads.

Being selected in the *Sakhi* training programme, Sita received training on various health aspects pertaining to preventive, curative and promotive measures. She is now capable of

handling basic medical equipment.

Sita has been closely coordinating health activities with Government Health Department like conducting awareness programme, health camps and vaccination campaigns. She is also working as *Yuvacharya* (YOGA teacher) to teach yoga and create awareness on its benefits.

Despite being unschooled, with the help of ACF, Sita successfully cleared the *Gram Sakhi* exam conducted by National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for health workers. She is a true champion and an icon of hope and change in her own far off village.

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Top: Sakhu tai

Below: Sakhi discussing Ante Natal Care



Improve Maternal Health

Megha Boir had almost given up on her dreams of motherhood after seven miscarriages. The mishaps led her to a terrible mental and physical state. Belonging to a poor family, her nutritional status wasn't good and the onslaught of successive failed pregnancies only made it worse. When there was little to eat, it was hard for the family to spare money for her medical expenses.

When Megha was expecting for the 8th time, she rushed to **SAKHUTAI** – the *sakhi* of her village with the hope that she would be able to do something to help her. To begin with, Shakutai took Megha to one of the ACF's health camps conducted for pregnant women and got her examined by the doctor there. The doctor prescribed her some tonics and supplements to improve her health. Shakutai monitored her progress thereafter.

Sakhutai explained to Megha and her family about the importance of nutritious diet during pregnancy. She also advised Megha not to get involved in rigorous physical activity. Shakutai closely monitored Megha's health during the entire pregnancy. To help Megha financially, Shakutai approached the village health and sanitation committee, who in turn discussed Megha's case with the villagers. The villagers unanimously agreed to help her. They decided that a token amount will be given to her by the Committee from its common pool of funds. The amount were to be used for purchasing nutritious food and the recommended supplements. With the villagers' help and Shakutai's selfless support, Megha is today blessed with a baby. This was a huge encouragement for Shakutai who wants to save many other children and mothers seeking her assistance.
