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## SHGs enhance quality of life in Vangad

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Jaipur:** Three tribal-dominated districts of Banswara, Dungarpur and Pratapnagar in Vangad, Rajasthan are witnessing an increase in the human life index, thanks to UN-sponsored self-help groups (SHGs).

In collaboration with the two-year UN Food Programme, these SHGs have set up delivery centres, which distribute food among poor tribesmen. They also conduct awareness campaigns about education, health and hygiene.

A two-year pilot project, food for human development, sponsored by the UN Food Programme and supported by the state government, is being implemented through a Banswara-based NGO, Voluntary Association of Agricultural General Development Health and Reconstruction Alliance (VAAGDHARA). Nearly 237 SHGs have been set up in 350 villages. These SHGs reached 2,702 beneficiaries and distributed 958 MT grains between

**Nearly 237 self-help groups (SHGs) have been set up in 350 villages. These SHGs reached 2,702 beneficiaries and distributed 958 metric tonne grains between May 2006 and March 2008**

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The project focuses on using food as a resource for human development and building a replicable model of human security. It also aims at creating meaningful work that builds on human capacity.

Jayesh Joshi, secretary of VAAGDHARA, said that SHGs have brought major changes in the life of rural tribes, who earn their living through primitive agriculture and minor forest produce.

Such tribes are deprived of human development possibilities. He said that

the following two instances are reflective of the project's progress. "Kameela, a class X pass-out from Wadi village is an SHG member and Mani Nimana, a class V pass-out, was selected as the village animator. Now they manage the awareness campaign," he added.

Similarly, Heer, a handicapped girl was appointed the "path guru" of the project. She started teaching in the village school, thus motivating women. She spoke to them about de-addiction as alcoholism is a major problem in the village. Due to her efforts, there has been a major change in drinking habits. Women have emerged as the messengers of de-addiction, cleanliness and education.

Joshi said that among the tribal and backward communities, special emphasis was laid on farmers, women and the disabled. The focus was on education, health and hygiene. However, he added that women participation was being constantly ignored.