



Celebrating Rashtriya Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month) in Bundelkhand

Development Alternatives celebrated the 3rd Rashtriya Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month), throughout September, by empowering communities in Bundelkhand, especially women and youth to make informed food choices. The objective of Nutrition Month is to encourage *Jan Bhagidaari* to create a *Jan Andolan* for addressing malnutrition amongst young children and women, and to ensure health and nutrition for everyone. The national targets of the mission are aimed at reducing stunting, under nutrition, anaemia (among young children, women, and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3%, and 2% per annum respectively. The nation is striving to achieve a reduction in stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022.

Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have one of the highest malnutrition rates in the country, and awareness generation becomes crucial in influencing mindsets for the consumption of a balanced diet and clean drinking water. For this, Radio Bundelkhand, the community radio by Development Alternatives that reaches 2, 00,000 people across 150 villages, broadcasted programmes on this issue, throughout the month. The radio programmes were live and interactive, where listeners could call in and their queries were answered. This initiative was in collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) funded 'Photo-irradiation and Adsorption based Novel Innovations for Water-treatment' PANIWater project.

Development Alternatives has been working with women-led Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Bundelkhand, and have enabled 3,273 SHGs in 418 villages of Bundelkhand with over 36,000 members. SHG members have increased decision-making powers and political participation; they are involved in the delivery of development programmes, and management of local resources for health, nutrition, water, energy and agriculture. On the occasion of Nutrition Month, three SHGs

came together to organise an event about the importance of health and nutrition. A rally was also organised to raise awareness on safety measures related to the spread of COVID-19.

A nutrition themed rangoli was prepared by the adolescents present in the event, this was symbolic of the different kinds of food that should be consumed to maintain a balanced diet. An important discussion was also centered on the various ways to counter the barriers to nutrition and gender equality. The participants focused on how women can often not access nutritional food and proper diets in patriarchal families.

The event was concluded with members sharing perspectives on the need for more solidarity between women to raise their voices, express their aspirations, and advance their learning for socio-economic empowerment.