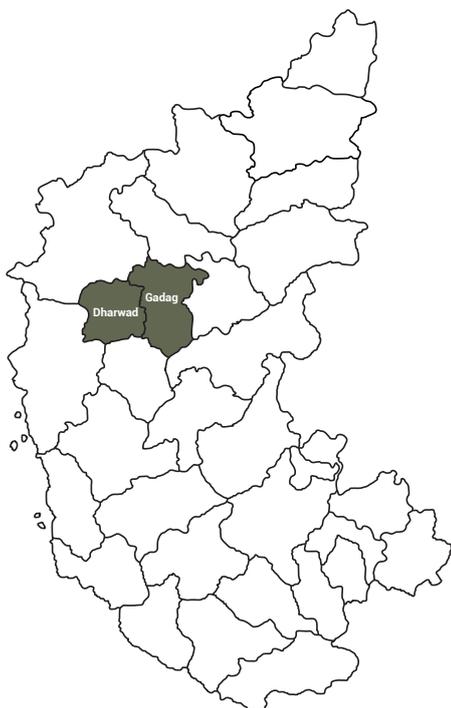




Save A Mother

Bridging the last mile in healthcare

Area of operation: Dharwad, Gadag



Name of the Organisation	Save A Mother
Type	Non-profit
In the Sandbox	Since 2012
Focus areas	Through community healthcare workers, Save A Mother educates women about pregnancy, nutrition, immunization, delivery and care of the child.

“She has to go to the hospital right now!” pleaded 17-year-old Najma. The seven-month pregnant bleeding woman was refusing to seek medical help despite repeated urging. Najma was shooed away and told that since she was unmarried, what could she possibly know about pregnancy? Najma persevered and galvanized the lady’s mother and village elders into action, transporting them to a hospital. The child died but the woman survived. That day, Najma became a local hero in Negoria village, Uttar Pradesh.

Najma is a ‘Swasthya Sakhi’ - she works tirelessly to educate the women and girls in her village about the importance of health, nutrition, hygiene, ante-natal care and immunization, trying her best to break century old superstitions about health and childbirth, all without being paid a paisa. She is part of Save A Mother, a non-profit that co-opts hundreds of voluntary community health activists like her to save lives in rural districts that see some of the worst maternal and child mortality rates.

The Genesis: Neglected Maternal Health

Started in 2008 by Dr. Shibhan Ganju, a physician with over 30 years of experience in the health industry, Save A Mother is built on the core

belief that most health problems in rural India do not need doctors – they simply need better hygiene practices, clean water, nutrition and positive health seeking behaviour. With its trained Swasthya Sakhis who establish strong relationships within the local community, Save A Mother has reached over 15 districts in Uttar Pradesh, a State with the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, and reduced maternal mortality rates by 93% and child mortality rates by 66%* in over 1000 villages (a population of approximately 3 million).

The Sandbox Story

In 2012, with a grant from the Deshpande Foundation, Save A Mother expanded its operations to Karnataka, the State with the highest IMR and MMR rates in South India. “We wanted to validate our Uttar Pradesh model by replicating it in a different location. Sandbox and Deshpande Foundation offered us an opportunity to work in Gadag with its high maternal mortality rates,” says Dr. Ganju.

1. The Arogya Sakhi: Every Woman’s Health Friend

Using the principle of ‘Effective Social Persuasion’, Save A Mother (SAM) trains community health activists, who are recruited from

among enthusiastic village women folk who speak the local language and dialect and have had experience in reaching out to the local populations. In the Sandbox, SAM was able to effectively recruit Sakhis through DF’s extensive network at the grassroots and other Sandbox partners. Master Trainers go through a rigorous three-day training course on reproductive health and sanitation in addition to SAM’s innovative behavioural change communication modules on health literacy. The master trainers in turn educate the voluntary health activists - ‘Arogya Sakhis’ - who take the message to the women in their villages and meet as a cluster once a month. SAM is aware that training and motivation need to be an on-going process - refresher courses are held eight to nine times a year in order to keep the Sakhis updated on health awareness and education.

“Health literacy is the least expensive way of reducing disease burden. Community health workers like the Arogya Sakhi provide the most sustainable way to spread literacy and maintain the health status of a community”
– Dr. Ganju



Sakhis hold regular weekly sessions in their village on preventive health, from healthy eating habits to general hygiene practices (like washing hands), child care and family planning.



SAM works on a lean model of Rs. 5 per capita per year, going on the strength of their community health activist model.

2. Tracking Women To Good Health

SAM believes that health literacy is the most economical way to reduce disease burden. The organisation trains Sakhis to hold regular weekly sessions in their village on preventive healthcare. Talks cover general healthy eating habits – the “chitrang bhojan” which means a meal containing four colours; red (apple, meat, etc.), yellow (banana, cereals), white (milk products), green (vegetables) – discussions on general hygiene practices (like washing hands), child care and the importance of family planning.

Women are encouraged to go for regular checkups at the hospital and take proper medicines. In Gadag, this is fortunately incentivized by the Janani Suraksha Yojana, a conditional cash transfer welfare scheme by the Govt. of Karnataka that offers Rs. 1,600 and a baby kit

“The Sandbox experience has proved that healthcare can be a successful entry point into a community to start any development work.” - Dr. Shiban Ganju, Founder, Save A Mother.

to every woman who goes through institutional delivery as opposed to childbirth at home. In the last year in the Sandbox, Save a Mother has tracked 5388 women so far out of which 3568 are pregnant women and 1820 have just given birth.

3. Health awareness targeting high-risk women

Each Sakhi has a diary to keep track of the pregnant women in her village and connect them to public health facilities. “In UP, we forged partnerships with established microfinance institutions and their SHGs in order to reach out to the women. In the Sandbox, the DF network was effective enough for us to implement the entire system independently and start with healthcare,” says Dr. Ganju.

DF and SAM realised that regular house visits were the most effective ways to reach out to the women, change their mindsets and introduce better care amongst family members as well. Gadag's Sakhis make house visits twice a month to keep a check on pregnant women and those who have just given birth, updating a ‘mother card’ which contains all details including age, number of children, weight, blood pressure and haemoglobin levels. While they are in the home, they also take time to talk

to other family members, especially elders, and educate them about the importance of good nutrition and healthy lifestyle practices.

“Instead of a general outreach, we decided to track high risk women and pregnancies in the Sandbox. We conducted a village level survey to ascertain which women have haemoglobin levels of less than 9 and weight below 40 kgs. We are also tracking all pregnant women under the age of 18 and over the age of 35 as at that time they can face problems related to hormonal imbalance and this can cause complications in the delivery,” says Prashant Uppar, a Deshpande Foundation Fellow who was hired to lead Save A Mother's Sandbox operations.

The Challenge

1. Fighting Culturally Biased Health Practices

“Women say that they'd rather work in the farm and help their husbands than come here to chat for a couple of hours every week. Making them aware of the importance of healthcare is a difficult task for us,” says Laxmi, an Arogya Sakhi in Gadag. Poor maternal health is the area of focus, yet SAM realised that it is often a worsening of an

existing condition where nutrition is not a priority for women and most of them end up being anaemic and malnourished throughout their life.

Laxmi regularly knocks on doors in order to educate the village women about the basics of everyday healthy living. To stress on the importance of adequate care for the mother before, during and after childbirth, Laxmi takes them through a colourful booklet with pictures that deals with useful tips – from sleeping positions to permissible work after delivery and the role of the family in ensuring a safe journey for both mother and child.

Repeated counselling of the women to attend meetings and take medicines is the first step, but it does not guarantee health access – facilitators and resource personnel need to obtain the buy-in of the family as well. “6 months into her pregnancy, one of the villagers stopped having iron pills because the elders of her house convinced her that these will adversely affect the child. It is hard to make these ladies go against the wishes of their family even if it is for their own good,” says Uppar. The SAM team also combats widespread ignorance and apathy towards healthcare: a lady missed her due date as she did not even consult a doctor. During a house visit the Arogya Sakhi got her immediately to a bigger hospital where doctors told her that even a couple of hours of delay could have costed the baby's life.

In the Sandbox, SAM has been able to reach deep into the community through a winning partnership with FPAI, another member of the Sandbox that runs reproductive healthcare clinics and weekly awareness camps in the village: FPAI had an education and awareness generation partner in SAM and SAM had a go-to place, the FPAI Rural Reproductive Healthcare Centres, that it could recommend for all the women it reached out to.

2. Increasing the Tribe of Healthcare Champions

The success of Save A Mother's fight against maternal mortality hinges on the relentless efforts and

dedication of an army of unpaid health volunteers. SAM keeps its costs to Rs. 10,000 per village per year – a mere Rs. 5 per capita which enables them to scale the model to every women in the village on an on-going basis.

How does the model scale on the basis of goodwill? “We pick women with spirit to begin with,” says Anoop Pant, Project Manager at SAM, who also refers to the organisation's model to build redundancy into its training – three to four Sakhis are recruited and trained for every one Sakhi required. SAM's Sandbox model uses Self Help Group meetings in the villages to recruit its Sakhis. “We look at the most active members and offer them the position of an Arogya Sakhi. After the training is done and they start working in the field their mindset changes, they enjoy their work and get a sense of respect in the village and community which keeps all of us going,” says Uppar. Dr. Ganju says that the Arogya Sakhis are mostly self-motivated; the health training only serves to heighten their sense of responsibility and purpose in the village.

The Impact: Women In Better Health

Through the Sandbox initiative, Save a Mother has trained 128 health activities in 103 villages who have in turn created awareness and tracked 900 pregnant mothers in the last one year across 15 districts in Gadag and Dharwad.

“Working in the Sandbox has been a great experience. SAM has learned the method of replicating and scaling up and we have found that healthcare can be a successful entry point into a community to start any development work,” says Dr. Ganju.

“Our main aim is not to bring the figures to zero because we know it is not possible; sometimes even after proper care and medicines you can't save lives. Our only focus is to bring the figures down, and spread as much awareness as possible because eventually this will automatically solve the issue,” Uppar said.

“We want to cover every village in Gadag and expand our spread in Dharwad.

We are looking to begin work on other healthcare issues like TB control and malnutrition,” says Dr. Ganju, stressing on SAM's vision of affordable healthcare for all.

“Women say that they'd rather work in the farm and help their husbands than come here to chat for a couple of hours every week. Making them aware of the importance of healthcare is a challenging task.” – Laxmi, Arogya Sakhi

In the meantime, SAM is looking to recruit more volunteers like Laxmi, who joined SAM on a temporary basis but decided to stay due to a fondness for her work, the impact she has been able to bring, the respect she has slowly gained in the eyes of the entire village community and the many mothers and daughters she has been able to save.

Save A Mother 2012-2013 snapshot

Reached **108** villages in **15** districts of Gadag and Dharwad

Trained **183** health activists

Tracked **3262** women to ensure better health and safe delivery

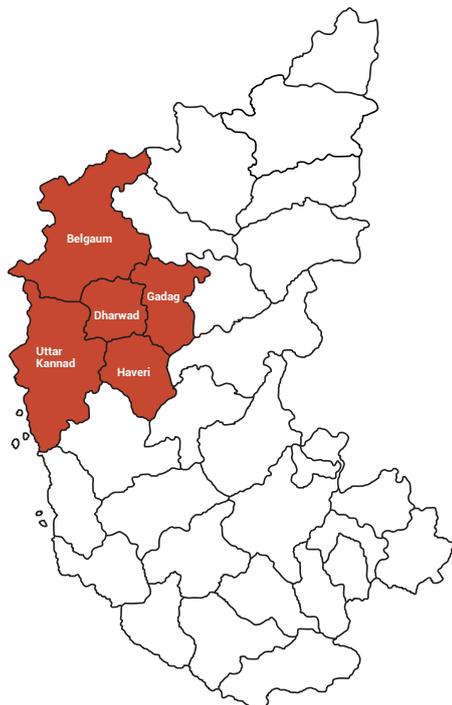




Sahaja Samruddha:

Creating fair markets for good produce

Area of operation: Dharwad, Gadag, Uttar Kannada, Haveri, Belgaum



Name of the Organisation	Sahaja Samrudha
Type	Farmer's Collective
In the Sandbox	Since 2011
Focus areas	Promoting organic farmers groups and marketing value-added organic produce



Started with an initial grant of Rs. 50,000 from Sahaja Samruddha, DKB is run by 10 senior farmers and reaches out to a network of over 300 registered farmers for both buying and selling seeds.

Three years ago, Chandrashekhar Patil, a journalist with a Kannada daily in Rannebennur, Haveri district, decided to enter farming, at a time when agriculture was going through a very rough patch. "My father was running into huge losses in our own farm. We had large debts and the situation just wasn't improving. I had to do something."

Patil's 13-acre farm growing BT Cotton had initially given him yields as high as 13 quintals per acre. But the yield gradually tapered to 3-4 quintals per acre and it also started adversely affecting other sub crops – he saw honeybees disappearing and millet crops vanishing from his farm.

Keen to find a sustainable solution, Patil approached the farmer group Desi Krushikara Balaga (DKB) and started converting his land to grow only the Organic Sahana variety of cotton - it was an indigeneous variety, gave good yields, was resistant to common pest bollworm and could thrive in all climatic conditions.

"I bought Sahana seeds for Rs.450 a kg as compared to BT seeds which costed me around Rs.1200 per kg and started saving money right at step 1," says Patil. With the help of the farmer collective DKB, Patil has taken his produce to profitable markets in mainstream cities like Bangalore and Mysore. Today, Patil

has managed to repay all his loans, obtain consistent yields from his farm and even imparts his new found learnings on cotton to those interested in the Hubli Sandbox.

DKB is one of the pioneering Sandbox initiatives launched by Sahaja Samruddha, a farmer collective established in 2001 to exchange seeds, knowledge and ideas around sustainable agriculture, in partnership with the Deshpande Foundation in the Hubli Sandbox. Realising that farmers mostly lacked the skills and wherewithal to bring their produce to the right markets, Sahaja Samruddha and DF started working on initiatives to bring farmers together around organic cultivation, revive traditional and indigeneous crop varieties and create platforms where awareness, engagement and retail could take place regularly around organic food.

Genesis: Supporting Sustainable Agriculture

When Sahaja Samruddha entered the Sandbox in 2011, it had already established considerable success across the country as far as farmer integration went. The collective had added over 786 farmers from across the country, had 1000 farmers in organic conversion status and ongoing marketing partnerships with 360 agri- organisations.

When the farmers collective was brought together in the Hubli Sandbox, agriculture in the area was going through a trough: there were continuous drought years, mono-cropping had replaced traditional multi-cropping systems and commercial crops like sunflower were fast denuding soil fertility.

Government interventions to support organic agriculture were entirely missing and crops like diabetic rice which were high value indigeneous products were being completely sidestepped – no one wanted to experiment with products that didn't have a ready market.

Taking advantage of their strong farmer network, Sahaja was keen to focus on matching demand and supply for organic food through strong consumer building activities, creating differentiated platforms for farmers to sell their quality produce and also moving to a model where they could grow organic agriculture

"We want more people to understand the value of organic farming," says Channabasappa Kombali, president of DKB. The DKB seed bank now has successfully stored and preserved 108 varieties of rice, 26 varieties of Brinjal, 45 varieties of cotton and 24 varieties of Ragi.



In addition to the seed exchange network, Sahaja Samruddha organizes annual red rice melas, seed festivals and safe food melas in cities, tier-2 and tier-3 towns, a way for the farmer to directly sell his produce to consumers at a fair price.

holistically by shifting focus from maximizing production to integrated, diversified and nutrition based farming.

The Sandbox Story

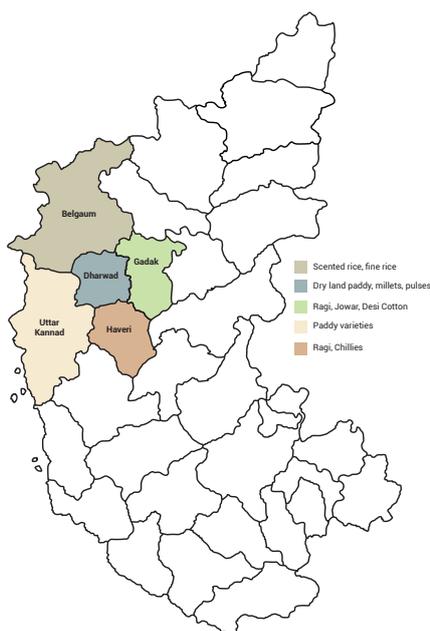
1. Crop Mapping And Selection: Reviving Native Crops

As a first step towards reviving indigenous varieties of crops that could benefit both farmer and the environment, Sahaja along with DF performed a mapping of crops according to geographical area in the Sandbox. "As opposed to other organisations that focused on capacity building with existing commercial crops and had no farmer loyalty, we decided to build our entire marketing strategy around the farmer and the crop," says Krishna Prasad, founder member and Director of Sahaja Samruddha.



Kamalamma is proud of the millet variety she is now growing with Sahaja's help.

Once crop mapping was done, Sahaja started experimenting with known and knowledgeable farmers to encourage them to grow these local crops. In the beginning, farmers were even offered better rates for these varieties by Sahaja - Paddy for instance was bought at Rs. 18 per kg (while government rate was 16), Little Millet for Rs. 18 per kg. (Sahaja offered Rs. 21). Today, thanks to strengthened supply and awareness creation, farmer groups are able to get returns of 1 lakh rupees just for red rice every month.



Traditional crops grown in the Sandbox.

2. Increasing Adoption: Farmer Groups

After fixing on crop strategy, the next step was to get farmers to adopt the model and scale production. DF provided Sahaja a grant to bring farmers together under a common 'farmer group' umbrella, resulting in formation of groups like the Desi Krushikara Balaga (DKB) working out of Hubli and the Malnad Rice Growers Association. Farmer groups helped scale production, make the supply chain predictable and also helped evangelize adoption of sustainable agriculture practices.

Two key factors helped in building successful farmer groups: leveraging the strong brand name associated with Deshpande Foundation to co-opt new farmers and bringing in well known certified organic farmers. DKB for instance is run by 10 administrative members who are farmers each with over 25-30 years of experience and reaches out to a network of 300 registered farmers. DKB Vice President and farmer Shrenik Raj has grown 110 varieties of rice on his land, President Channabasappa Kombli is a Krishi Pandit and was declared Man of the Year by Indian Express; these successful farmers went a long way in infusing new entrants with belief that their traditional crops could compete in mainstream markets.

Sahaja also invested in hiring high quality agri-professionals responsible for Quality Assurance, packaging and ensuring that quality produce reached stores in Bangalore and other cities, a move which greatly reduced costs and brought in efficiency. "We believe that the farmers are not businessmen. We aim to take care of all the complexities related to business, selling and marketing for them," says Prasad.

Once a farmer is part of the group, he gets support to convert his land to organic: farmers undergo a three month training on seed quality, organic farming, use of natural pesticides and fertilizers, water conservation, integrated farming system and seed conservation. As part of the registration process, farmer network members also make initial visits to test the land on the basis of soil quality and other factors. Informal checks are put in place to ensure that the farmer is actually serious about going organic.



Banaka and his son have managed to save many millet varieties.

Being present in the Sandbox also helped Sahaja leverage the ecosystem to establish key farmer outreach partnerships like Manuvikasa, technical help from Srijan on SRI cultivation and to hire field workers and agricultural managers from the many programs on skill development and leadership training that are run by the Deshpande Educational Trust (DET).

3. Working Capital For Scaling Production

One of the essential requirements of scaling production was working capital for operations - the model of running the organizations based on farmer contributions meant

limited surplus capital to invest and expand the marketing of organic products. However, since the focus of farmer groups was neither large scale investment nor higher margins, it was important to seek grant-based, focused-loans. "One of the key contributions of DF has been to understand that we are working on something for which the market is not yet ready and provide us funds for it. We are creating the market for organic produce in smaller cities as well as strengthening the farmer's faith in organic cultivation," says Prasad. With the help of DF, Sahaja has also been able to connect farmers to funding partners like Microgram through DF for micro-loans .

Currently, groups like DKB are looking for working capital to add processing units in order to perform polishing, restoring and flouring, operations that will fetch the farmers a lot more than they get for their raw pulses and grains.

4. Building New Channels for Organic Produce

The land under organic cultivation in India is worth Rs. 6000 crores, yet the current Indian Organic market is only Rs. 2500;crores; produce still reaches non-differentiated markets. "The biggest challenge is to swim against the current," says Prasad. "There is no special policy or special market for Organic farming. There is no Minimum Support Price."

With an aim to establish scalable markets for their indigeneous crops and special produce, DF and Sahaja launched a slew of market facing initiatives for building consumer awareness and sale for organic produce.

Good seed exchange networks

In line with their support to help farmers focus on the agriculture, groups like DKB provide a reliable wholesale market for raw farmer produce by collecting high quality organic seeds, selling them at fair prices in the open market and then distributing the profits among the farmers.

Once the farmer is part of the network, DKB buys seeds from the farmers at a 10% premium,

retains a margin of 5% and supplies seeds to another farmer, industry, producer company or local outlet at a 10-15% profit margin. DKB also lays emphasis on preserving traditional heirloom seeds and species that are fast vanishing. "We want more people to understand the value of organic farming," says Channabasappa Kombali, president of DKB. The DKB seed bank now has successfully stored and preserved 108 varieties of rice, 26 varieties of Brinjal, 45 varieties of cotton and 24 varieties of Ragi.

Good food melas

Sahaja Samruddha organizes annual red rice melas, seed festivals and safe food melas in cities, tier-2 and tier-3 towns, a way for the farmer to directly sell his produce to consumers at a fair price.

A first-of-its-kind organic mela jointly organised by Sahaja Samrudha, Deshpande Foundation and 'Save Our Rice' Campaign in May 2013 saw hordes of Hubli and Dharwad consumers line up to buy pesticide-free food. The mela witnessed footfalls of over 15,000 and sold over 40 quintals of organic produce in the first two days itself. "We had expected 10,000 consumers over a four-day-event but we have witnessed about 15,000 in first two days, itself," said Siddu Gowder, one of the organisers, talking about growing awareness among consumers to buy healthy produce. Sahaja Samrudha's annual red rice mela along with NABARD saw over a 100 different varieties of rice and sold to 6000 consumers in January 2013.

"Melas bring producers and consumers together which is

A first-of-its-kind organic mela jointly organised by Sahaja Samrudha, Deshpande Foundation and 'Save Our Rice' Campaign in May 2013 saw hordes of Hubli and Dharwad consumers line up to buy pesticide-free food. The mela witnessed footfalls over 15,000 and sold over 40 quintals of organic produce sold in the first two days itself.

beneficial to both parties – farmers get to see demand directly and consumers get better prices and assured quality produce. Melas also help us build an initial database of interested consumers who we can then follow with our ongoing social media marketing,” says Krishna Prasad. The collective decided that the melas needed to be mainstream and involve key players in the region for them to be regarded as important. With the help of DF's extensive network, Sahaja reached out to the Agriculture Dept, bankers, govt. officials and other renowned people in Hubli to endorse the initiative.

Print and local media have had a strong role to play in bringing about consumer awareness in the Sandbox, says Krishna Prasad. Building on DF's relationship and their own ongoing engagement with the press, Sahaja has been able to co-opt newspapers to carry regular stories to increase consumer recall about the benefits of organic. In their first Millet Mela, Deccan Herald carried a full page story on the market which helped gain a lot of visibility.

Branding and packaging

Catering to the “what looks good must taste good” taste of urban consumers, Sahaja spent a fair amount of effort to bring together professional branding and packaging for all its stores and products. Brands like Namma Anna, Millet Magic, Nature's Store have been created in the Sandbox and gone far in bringing about consumer awareness; the name 'Millet Magic' has even been trademarked.

Sandbox Snapshot

With the help of DF, Sahaja has been able to scale both supply and demand for organic products. Pre-Sandbox, Sahaja estimates point to about 50 - 100 Kg supply to Bangalore, which today is between 10 and 20 quintals.

DF grants provided critical working capital to enable farmers to invest in their lands. DF's name is great help among farmers, administration and other stakeholders.

Sandbox provided access to partners of varying kinds - Micro Graam that has provided upto 10 lakhs as micro-finance for farmers; BIRD-K for processing (e.g. millet processing), Srijan for SRI techniques and organisations like Manuvikasa and BAIF to bring more farmers into the fold.

“All these initiatives have helped us grow organic agriculture in the Sandbox area,” says Prasad.

Looking Forward

With the help of working capital from Deshpande Foundation, Sahaja is now looking to expand DKB's footprint by bringing more farmers under its wings, converting them to growing organic and providing them with profitable ways to reach their consumers. “We need more platforms to be built, and more institutions to join us. These farmers need more visibility in the market,” says Prasad. Rare millets, red rice

and medicinal crops in Belgaum area have been identified and plans are on to bring them to the mainstream market.

Farmers groups like DKB are looking to become formal institutions and form producer companies to get better returns for their products. The impact of the work done by DF and Sahaja Samruddha in the Sandbox area has meant confident farmers, rapidly scaling organic produce and greater awareness about the importance of seed saving, native varieties and the value of produce like red rice in mainstream markets that farmers are looking forward to cash in on.

The final objective of Sahaja's activities are to make organic agriculture viable and sustainable by helping farmers: Omkar Patil, one of DKB's farmers, has 40 acres of land where he grows various crops including, cotton, millets, chilly, pulses, jowar, wheat, red gram and groundnuts. With help from DKB, his profits have grown from Rs. 3 lakhs an annum to Rs. 8 lakhs an annum.

“Today, I just grow my crops right with the help of the collective. I don't have to worry about where am I going to sell my products, DKB has given the platform where I could get the right price,” says Patil.

