

# You Gave ME a Chance



*In Gratitude to Becker/Cordes Stiftung and Rotary Clubs of Hagen-Lenne & Lippetal*

**Becker/Cordes Stiftung, Rotary Clubs of Hagen-Lenne & Lippetal and Watershed Organisation Trust 2018**

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***A health promoter explaining the female reproductive system at an adolescents' training programme***

## FOREWORD

There is an old adage: “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world”!

Yet, nothing could be farther from the truth for most women in rural India. Their status in society and experience of being a “woman” is anything but empowering and liberating. Discrimination against them and the girl child which often includes fatal violence is millennia old, endemic and well entrenched in Indian society. The unabated decline in the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) from 945 in 1991 to 918 in 2011 highlights how widely and systemically women have been disempowered by a misogynistic patriarchy.

The economic, social, moral and developmental costs suffered by India, as a result, have indeed been humongous. The ‘State of the World Population Report, 2016’ (UNFPA) estimates the economic loss alone to run in the tens of billions of dollars. Alarmed by this situation, the Government of India in 2015 launched a nation-wide campaign to arrest this calamitous decline called, “Save the Girl Child; Educate the Girl Child”.

However, way back in the year 2001, aware of this crisis and its commitment to empowering women, WOTR decided to do something about it. Dr. Werner Cordes and his wife, Roswitha lent their enthusiastic and unwavering support through their own Becker-Cordes Stiftung. They reached out to the Rotary Club of Hagen-Lenne who joined this effort. And the rest, as they say, is history.

What began initially as a family planning initiative quickly expanded into “giving girls a chance”, not only to be born, but also to bring about a change in the mind set, beliefs and behaviour of society to support and empower them along life’s journey. To make this happen, the initiative has deployed innovative mechanisms that engage not only women but also their menfolk and families and works with them to uncover and address the unconscious biases and beliefs that sustain misogyny and gender discrimination. For, only if these deep rooted adverse values are changed, can desired systemic behavioural change be realised.

Thousands of girls who may never have seen the light of day now have a chance to live and grow; bloom and wonder; and celebrate the joys and mysteries the world around us offers. And this is the legacy of Werner and Roswitha Cordes. Through their Becker-Cordes Stiftung and the Rotary Club of Hagen-Lenne & Lippetal they helped WOTR to develop an effective approach and methodology that nudges and facilitates patriarchal communities to recognize and unlock the immense value that women and girls bring to their lives, well-being and future.

This booklet chronicles that journey and is a tribute of our gratitude to the Cordes.  
Thank You Werner and Roswitha!



Marcella D' Souza  
Executive Director



Crispino Lobo  
Managing Trustee

## **A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

'You Gave ME a Chance', is the voice of thousands of lives that have been transformed through the support of the Becker/Cordes Stiftung and the Rotary Clubs of Hagen-Lenne & Lippetal. The Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR), India took up the challenge of discrimination that rural women face and its consequences on their role as mothers, on health, nutrition, gender roles, discrimination against the girl child and social stigmas.

Initiated in 2002, the 'Responsible Parenthood and Action for Positive Change' looked at a dream of smaller rural families and parents equipped to care for the health of their children. Women's health became the focus for healthy children. To voice their opinion both in the family and in village decision making, required empowering women while garnering support of the men folk. She faced frequent pregnancies or repeated selective abortions in pursuit of a son, which itself challenged the existence of girls. Attention to boys diminished her identity, and this called for 'Giving the Girls a Chance'.

However, changing this deeply embedded societal mind-set requires a different approach. Considering both women and men as victims of culture, Team WOTR includes both women and men and across ages in this endeavour.

In the rural set-up, the bullock-cart provides an apt analogy. Visualizing a cart with two wheels having unequal sizes, brings out laughter, however the deeper message is also understood: A family and society cannot progress unless women and men are considered equal.

Yet, this logical understanding cannot overcome social barriers. Hence Team WOTR adopts an 'Inner Life Integration and Healing' approach. Through the 'awareness-meditative relaxation process' individuals in a group exercise get connected with their 'Deep Within'.

Keeping rational thinking aside helps one make sound choices in life. This is the keystone of WOTR's approach where interventions aim at behavioral change. Today, all activities are initiated with a meditative-relaxation exercise.

The sensitive subject of Responsible Parenthood and the Girl Child is taken up with people of all ages and both sexes: adults, adolescents, young couples, the elderly and children. It is taken up through needs as expressed by women: health and nutrition of children and that of the adults; hygiene, particularly menstrual hygiene; addressing drinking water needs; sex education and respect for oneself and the other. The Self-Help Group (SHG) has become a forum for women to meet, address their needs, be capacitated and empowered. The Village Health Committee (VHC) brings both men and women to work concretely to improving their health. Women Promoters play a crucial role and work together with the community as well as local government institutions. Through all this, people's capacities are enhanced and leadership in women is given an opportunity to bloom.

The 'Responsible Parenthood' Project, initiated in the year 2002, expanded to include community health in the year 2008, and then 'A Chance for Girls' since the year 2012. Through these years, a total of 85 villages have benefitted directly from the Becker/Cordes Stiftung and Rotary Clubs of Hagen-Lenne & Lippetal. Triggered by the tangible achievements in the 'Chance for Girls' projects and desiring to contribute to the 'girl child', other Indian funding sources have stepped in. Together with the support from Indian partners, the project 'A Chance for Girls' today reaches out to 344 villages.

***THANK YOU ROSWITHA AND WERNER. YOU HAVE MADE  
A DIFFERENCE!***



**Women taking out a rally on environment conservation**

## Women Health Promoters



**Anita Vijay Chandwade:** “The Becker/Cordes Foundation gave me a chance to be a Woman Health Promoter as well as earn an income!”



**Nanda Kale:** “Before the Health Project was implemented in 2008, we had no health facilities in our village Mhaswandi. WOTR’s Health Officer trained us to be Health Promoters with basic medical care skills. The realisation of the importance of cleanliness and hygiene led the community to construct family toilets. In 2009, we won a state-level “Clean Village” award and a prize of Rs. 1,00,000 (€1,250). We thank the Becker/Cordes Foundation for initiating this health project in our village”.



**Yogesh Nanasaheb Sukase**, “The first training program by WOTR I attended, made me understand the importance of training programs and health camps. I started creating awareness about them among the people. After a few days, I was appointed as the president of the health committee. There has been no looking back since”.



**Vandana Sundarrao Mhaske**: “I see myself as a change maker and in my own little way I am trying to bring about a positive change in society and myself”.



**Mohini Sanjay Maind**: “My life has turned a new leaf since I became a part of this project. I feel extremely proud when my husband consults me on different matters of health and finance of the family”.

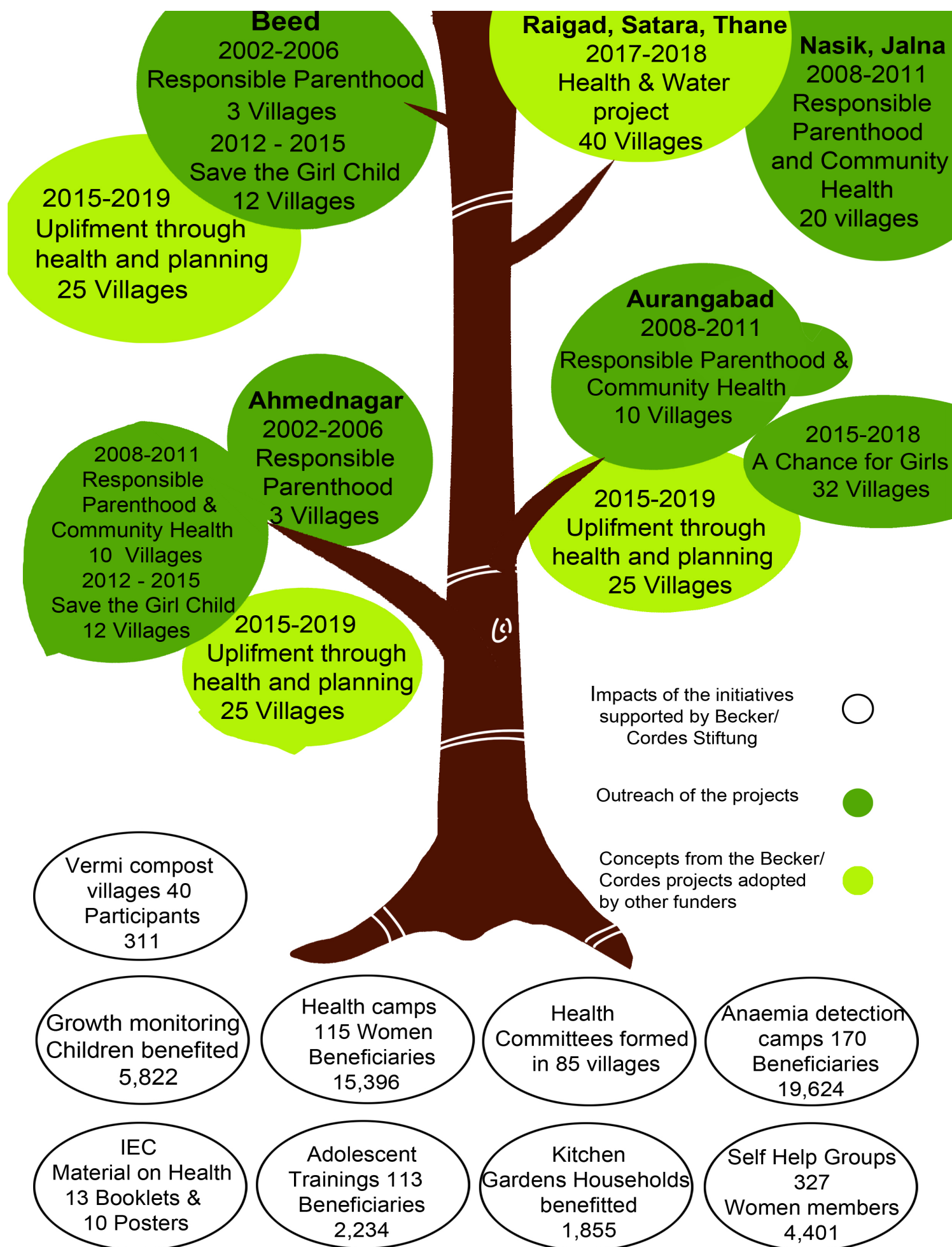
## HYGIENE



**Pushpa Pandurang Kakde**: “When the health workers introduced me to ‘Safkins’, reusable sanitary pads, I along with women of all ages adopted this hygienic practice immediately. There is significant reduction in waste and women feel confident”.



# At a Glance The Becker/Cordes Stiftung & Rotary Clubs of Hagen-Lenne & Lippetal





**Rukmini Mhaske using the thresher**

## Building Entrepreneurs

**Rukmini Vithal Mhaske:** “The representatives from WOTR approached the villagers and explained the importance of collective savings. We formed our Self-Help Group (SHG) called Saraswati with 10 women as members and each member contributed her savings of Rs.100 every month. I was able to take a loan of Rs. 24,000 (€ 300) in addition to my daughter in-law’s loan amount and we purchased a thresher. We now have a small business and from the income obtained we are able to meet our family needs better. I am happy now as my financial condition has improved”.

## Gender Sensitisation



**Sopan Jadhav:** “At a training for newly weds, I got my wife along with me for the first time, as I had never allowed her to step out of the house before. She was very happy to go out of the house to attend the training program. We learned the fact that a man is responsible for the sex of the child and that the menstrual cycle is the sign of motherhood. I grew out of my misconceptions about women and now let my wife take decisions”.





## Growth Monitoring



**Sonali Dehade:** “Due to regular growth monitoring, my son’s health has improved. His poor nutrition was addressed through nutritious food intake, that was based on advice given to me during the health camps”.



**Varsha Saadhya:** “I learnt about the human anatomy and biological functions and now have a clearer concept of health and hygiene, thanks to the training for adolescents conducted by WOTR in my village”.



**Vittal:** “My daughter is married and has four girls and no boy child. She decided to go for a tubectomy. One day she asked me, ‘You have two sons. What is it that they can do for you, that we your daughters cannot?’ My daughter loves and takes care of me more than my sons do”.



**Jadhao:** “I have a son and a daughter. Last month, I was hospitalised due to diabetes. My daughter spent 17 days in the hospital taking care of me, leaving her family duties aside, while my son only visited me once in four days. That’s when I realized how loving and caring a daughter can be. She was by my side all the time, she struggled and arranged to get money for my treatment. I am alive only because of her. Just like a mother, she has given me a second life”.



**Vijay Khamkar:** “I have 1.5 acres of land, on which I grow wheat, jowar (Sorghum) and various crops. To give you an idea of the impact of vermicomposting beds, on 0.5 acres of land one generally gets 8-9 jute bags (1 jute bag=100 kg) of wheat in the winter season. But in the winter of 2017, I got 10 or 11 such jute bags. Farmers generally get Rs. 2,500 per bag. So vermicompost has given us financial benefits. My wife introduced me to the concept of vermicomposting, after she attended a demonstration session on organic farming organised by WOTR”.



**Madhukar Bharad:** “I sell earthworms at the rate of Rs. 150 per kg and I could sell 75 kg of worms last year. Vermicompost has thus made me an entrepreneur as well. Organic farming practices like vermicompost are cost effective relative to chemical based fertilisers, are eco-friendly and good for soil health”.

## FILMS



Save The Girl Child is a short film that brings women together to speak about the discrimination they face within their own communities. Through WOTR's workshops, they challenge the conventional way of thinking about gender, creating space for dialogue.



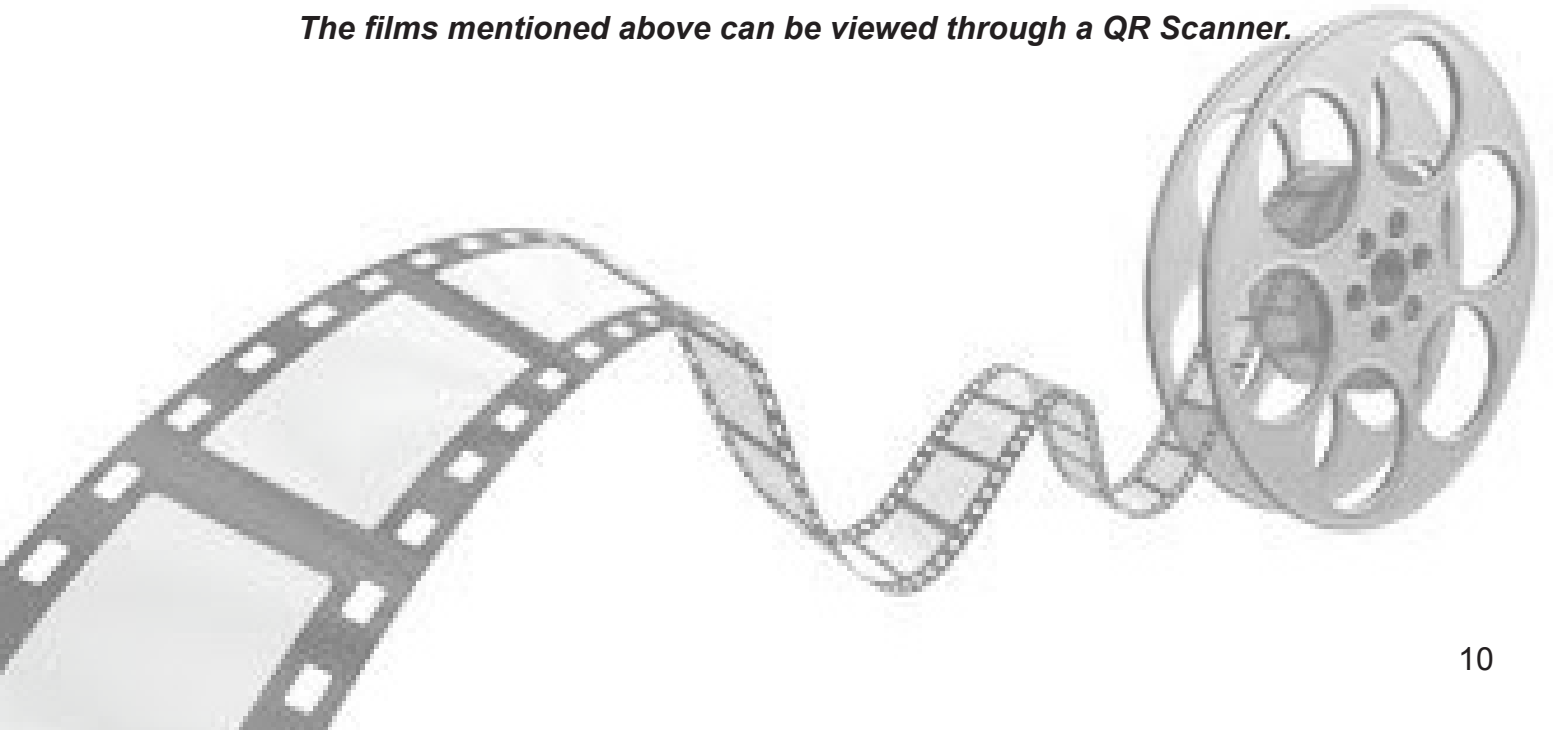
Save the Girl Child-II, highlights instances of female foeticide in Beed and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra. The film showcases changes and dialogues brought in through WOTR's interventions. It also talks about the importance of the father-daughter relationship.



*Swagat Aahe* (You are Welcome) a short film, is the story of a village called Bhalgaon, where girls were 'unwelcome'. But this scenario has now become a thing of the past, as WOTR has worked to change the mindset of the people towards women, using the metaphor of the wheels of a bullock cart to explain the need for equality of the sexes.



***The films mentioned above can be viewed through a QR Scanner.***



## WOTR Staff : Testimonials



**Preetilata Gaikwad:** “I have been working with WOTR since June 1998. Under the guidance of Dr. Marcella D’Souza, the health project was initiated in 9 villages in 2002. By God’s grace, the work succeeded, as a result of which the same activities were replicated in the other districts. Regular child care and growth monitoring have helped in reducing malnourishment and infant mortality rate, as mothers were given proper guidelines. I am very happy that God chose me to do this work. Save the girl child- A Chance for girls started in 2012; today the project is a success”.



**Chhaya Nikrad:** “The project funded by Becker/ Cordes Foundation since 2002 has reached over 80 villages and benefitted 2,500 children from 5 drought prone districts. This project has helped rural children eat healthy food, receive timely immunisation and created awareness among women on the importance of children’s health when in the age group of 0 to 5 years. I found positive impacts in the project villages. The malnutrition among the children has reduced and the sex ratio has also improved”.





**Sushama Bhingardive:** “I have seen a transformation take place in the people, especially women of our project villages. The women who were initially timid, shy, and insecure, are now more self-confident. They have a positive attitude, want to learn new things, and share what they learn with others in their village. The women have learnt to provide immediate health care to the community. This commendable change has been possible due to the special efforts, guidance and financial support provided by the Becker/ Cordes Foundation and its founder Dr. Werner Cordes and Roswitha Ma’am. We are grateful and honoured to be associated with this Foundation”.



**Aparna Kavthekar:** “I am a registered nurse and mid-wife. I have been working with the WOTR Health Project since 2002 as a Health Officer. I started a remarkable journey with the ‘Responsible Parenthood’ project which was implemented in 9 villages of the Aurangabad district. The happiness and joy seen in the people, because of the project activities, give me great satisfaction”.

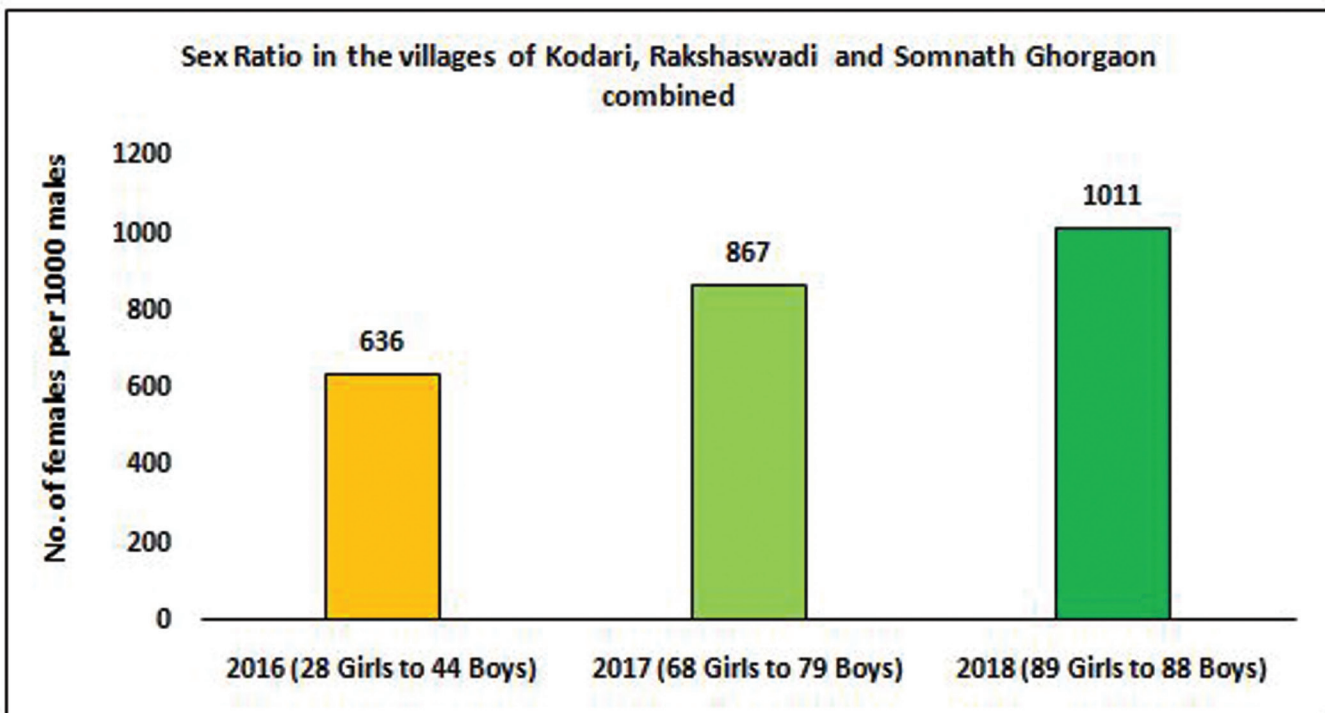
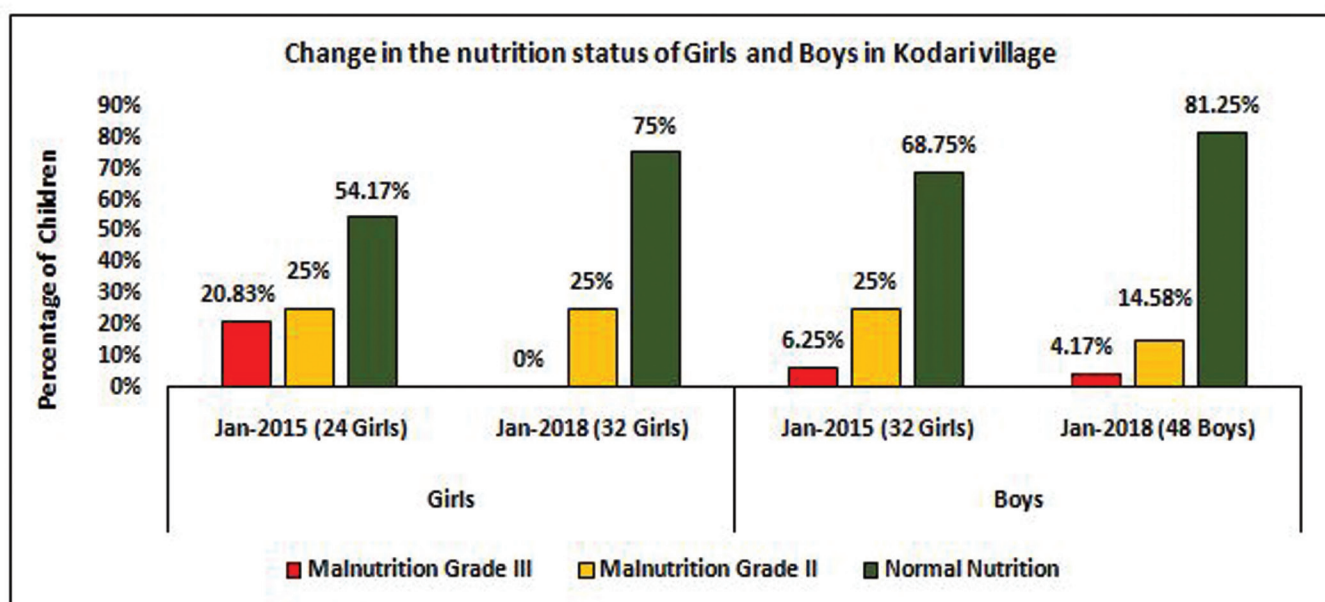
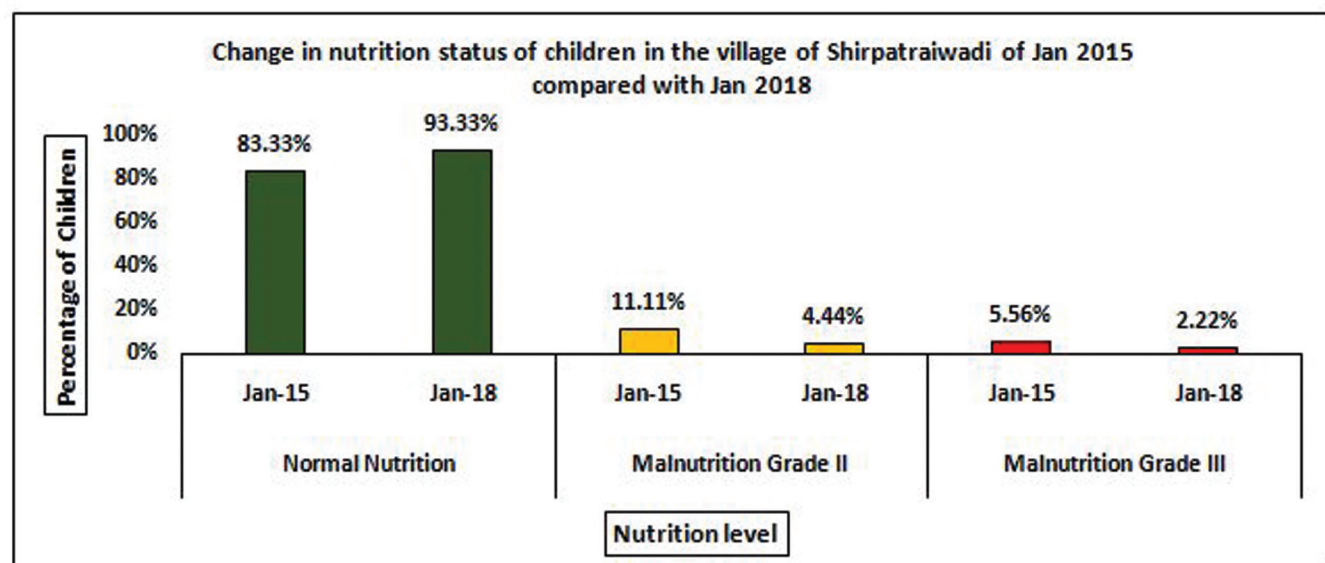




**Gopal Thakur:** “I have been associated with the Women Promotion Unit of the Sampada Trust since October 2011. One of the key components of the health projects funded by Becker/Cordes Foundation is to train local village women to become ‘Health Promoters’ and provide basic medical care at the village level. WOTR provides capacity building to the women to facilitate this. This is a boon for the rural women, who otherwise struggle to access medical facilities. I am thankful to WOTR and Becker/Cordes Stiftung for giving me this opportunity and making me a part of this project”.



Becker/Cordes Stiftung & Rotary Clubs of Hagen–Lenne & Lippetal Project's  
Growth Monitoring Charts





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