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### What's in the Name?

The newsletter's name was chosen from over 60 suggestions by RajPusht team members. The winning entry **RajPushtika**, chosen by a special jury, was suggested by Rupakshi Mathur, Associate - Documentation.



## Vision 2024: Towards a Healthy Rajasthan

The year is 2024, and we are in Aadarsh Gram in southern Rajasthan. Kokila Bai beckons children into her Anganwadi with her usual wide smile. On the first day of the month, she measures their growth. As the children queue up, from Sangeeta, living at the village centre, to Kailash, from a far-flung dhani, Kokila exchanges a nod of satisfaction with Tabassum, the Anganwadi helper. "Champions, each of them!" she grins. Their village has not seen a sick child in ages. They received their vaccinations on time. After all, Durga Devi, the ANM, ensured that she and Phoolwanti, the ASHA, got in touch with parents before each immunization drive.

Kokila and Tabassum go on house visits routinely to each expecting and new mother. Leela, pregnant with her second child, remembers their advice and cooks green leafy vegetables every other day. She also snacks on jaggery and chana or fruits like ber, chikoo, and timru, the tendu tree's fruit. Meera Devi, her mother-in-law, was the village's envy when Rinky was born a healthy 3 kg. She makes sure that Leela meets the ANM Durga each trimester and ensures that her son Harendra buys plenty of vegetables and fruits. The season has been hard on them; their crops failed after a drought. But the family feels secure knowing that there will be money for food in Leela's account, thanks to the government cash transfer schemes working seamlessly in the backdrop.

After dropping off Rinky at the Anganwadi and collecting Leela's share of chana dal, Leela and Meera Devi join their friends to attend POSHAN Varta, their monthly nutrition meeting. Aadarsh Gram—the ideal village—is thriving. While Aadarsh Gram might not be a reality yet, RajPusht is striving to create similar villages across the State. Villages where children grow up healthy, mothers get timely government benefits, families use maternity benefits to prioritize mothers' health and nutrition, and frontline workers make sure that no child is malnourished.

The Government provides cash benefit through schemes like Indira Gandhi Matritva Poshan Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana for mothers up to the second child. A targeted, action-oriented, 360-degree communication campaign—implemented by the State and supported by programs like RajPusht—continuously mobilizes households and communities to take responsibility for women and children's care. Poshan Champions deployed by RajPusht in these villages work with frontline workers and deliver on-the-job training on nutrition counselling. Backed by robust digital solutions, RajPusht is a catalyst creating many such Aadarsh Grams for a healthier Rajasthan.

# Voices from the Field

Yogita Pandya, a 35-year-old mother of two, lives in Bodigama Chota village, Dungarpur district. A Bachelors in Education with two Master degrees, she used to work as a school teacher but quit to take care of her children and in-laws. Now that her children have grown up, she has joined RajPusht as a Poshan Champion (PC).

In a turn of events, the teacher has now become a student. "After my training as a PC," says Yogita, "I realised I had made many mistakes when I was pregnant. I learnt that I should have eaten green leafy vegetables, fruits and protein-rich foods like dal more often. Now, I am using the things I learnt to improve my family and community's health."



Yogita Pandya (right) with an Anganwadi Worker

On the day we meet Yogita, she is counselling Manisha Mehta, an expecting mother in her second trimester, about the importance of weight gain during pregnancy: "You need to eat multiple meals and put on weight so that your child is born healthy. Go to the Anganwadi for at least four ANC's (Ante-natal Check-ups). I want to see you gain 1.5-2 kg a month from now onwards."

Yogita is one of RajPusht's nearly 180 PCs, whom it has placed, in four districts – Banswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh and Udaipur – in partnership with civil society organisations. They are reaching out to every household and sharing advice on nutrition, pregnancy and childcare, and helping mothers avail of government schemes' cash benefits. Like Yogita, they are embodying the change they want to see in their communities.



Yogita Pandya counselling mothers at the school in Bodigama Bada Village, Dungarpur

कौन है असली बाहुबली?



A poster for RajPusht's *Main Bhi Baahubali* campaign. Read more about the campaign in our next issue



Interpersonal counselling by a Poshan Champion in Veer Dholia, Udaipur



Block Program Manager (BPM) counselling beneficiaries during a Community-Based Event (CBE), Banswara



Capacity Building of an Anganwadi Worker by training her in Infantometer measurement techniques



# Nutritious Nuggets from the Desert

Lakshmi, a resident of Khabra Khurd village near Osian, had her second child a few months ago. As a young mother, she requires a nutritious diet with plenty of veggies. But her village in western Rajasthan has some of the lowest rainfall in India. The green leafy vegetables common in other parts of the country do not grow as easily here.

That, however, does not stop Lakshmi from enjoying a nourishing, delicious diet. Basanti, her mother-in-law, preserves local fruits and vegetables by boiling and sun-drying them. The dry foods, known as *Sukha Saag*, are useful for lean months and allow people in the arid tracts of Rajasthan to eat vegetables and fruits throughout the year.

The book *Healthy Cooking: Best of Rajasthan* by the Department of Home Science, University of Rajasthan, lists some of these foods and their nutritional benefits.



*Basanti and her grandson, residents of Khabra Khurd village near Osian, show the preserved local produce they eat in winter*



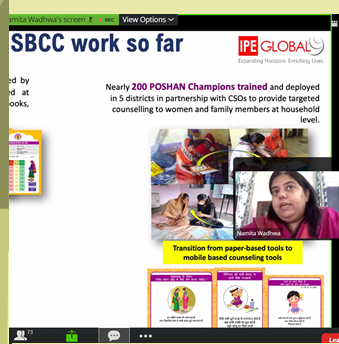
RajPusht has painted walls of around 1,000 AWCs and 2,000 posters on maternal nutrition in four blocks of Udaipur



Interaction with frontline workers for COVID-19 Qualitative Study, Jhunjunu



Data collection for RajPusht's Concurrent Monitoring - Quarter 1



Insights from RajPusht shared in a National Consultation Meeting on Optimal Maternal Weight Gain during Pregnancy

# Of Identity and Visibility



CmF camp in Udaipur



These camps are helping women rectify errors in their documents

Government schemes in India benefit hundreds of millions of people. But for many eligible beneficiaries, the first stumbling block is a lack of documents and identity cards. This turns them invisible before massive digital solutions that the Government increasingly deploys to deliver schemes and entitlements. Besides, the details in different documents must match, so spelling or clerical errors can render potential beneficiaries ineligible. Sometimes, they have to travel far from their home to get these corrected.

To ensure maximum reach of maternity schemes, RajPusht partnered with the Centre for micro Finance (CmF) to help women get their identity papers in order. The team has reached out to 373 women in Gogunda, Kherwara, Sayra, and Rishabhdev blocks of the Udaipur district. They reported inaccuracies in their name, date of birth, husband's name and problems in linking Aadhaar/Jan-Aadhaar with their bank account.

The team has begun organising 'correction camps' in Sayra and Gogunda. In places where there are too few beneficiaries to hold a camp, they are mobilising 'e-mitras', whom the Government has deputed to help citizens obtain and correct errors in their Jan-Aadhaar card.

The team found that many women don't have even the basic residence proofs to get their Aadhaar/Jan-Aadhaar corrected. In such cases, they are working with the village sarpanch (elected local government representative). The Government has authorised sarpanches to issue bona fide letters with names and verified details, which the beneficiaries can use to rectify their Aadhaar/Jan-Aadhaar in the absence of other documents.

So far, they have processed more than 160 applications for correction. Lack of documents should not be a hindrance to accessing entitlements. Administrations should conduct such camps often so that people can easily access the government benefits due to them.

## Legend of the Milk-Coated Child

Have you heard of a milk-coated child? We came across one, Deeksha, in Khabra Khurd Village of Jodhpur District. She has dry, white spots on her scalp, which her grandmother Basanti claims is a "layer of solidified milk". "When Deeksha's mother was pregnant, she had milk and curd that solidified on the child's head," says Basanti. The dandruff-like patch leads to queries about the child's health, much to the new parents' distress. As a result, many pregnant women in Rajasthan avoid dairy products. That is unfortunate as milk is a good source of protein.

### Myth Busted!

We digest food through our intestines; in the mother's body, the nutrients reach the infant through the placenta. It is impossible for the food to directly fall on the infant and 'solidify' on their skin. The white patch, known as **Vernix caseosa**, is harmless. It is a natural, protective layer on a newborn's skin, but people remove it when cleaning the baby after birth. However, this deposit is essential as it:

1. Protects the foetus in the womb while it floats in the amniotic fluid
2. Lubricates to make birth easy
3. Stabilises body temperature at birth and acts as a shield to protect the child from pathogens
4. Keeps infants' skin moisturised, so the longer it stays on their body (except for specific contraindications), particularly on their scalp, the better it is

Dairy is good for pregnant women, so we must bust these myths. And the supposed coating of milk? It is helping infants like Deeksha stay healthy.

