



Stories of Success

LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS MORBIDITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME ODISHA

TAMING THE ATTACKS



Mahara Bawa showing us the ointment she uses for her leg

One of the biggest difficulties a Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) patient faces is the occasional acute attacks that can literally cripple the person for a few days. CASA staff visited patients to discuss these acute attacks and the impact on their lives living with LF.

'Whenever I do laborious work, and exert myself I am likely to fall sick,' said one patient.

'When I do some work,' said Mahara Bawa of Sarapari village under Sarapari panchayat (Tangi Block) *'I feel if I did not have this disease, I could give my 100 percent.'* Mahara Bawa a lady in her fifties regrets not being able to give her full energy. Some 10 years back Mahara suddenly had a fever; there was pain in her legs followed by swelling. The neighbours suspected it was Lymphatic Filariasis, the doctor confirmed it.

'No, I didn't feel bad,' she replied when we asked what her initial reaction was, *'but yes, I was a little down,*

after all this could happen to anyone.' Mahara's father too had Lymphatic Filariasis.

Mahara's both legs are swollen due to the infection, she however can manage to live with it, but she dreads the acute attacks.

'During the acute attacks, there is tremendous shivering and high fever,' she literally demonstrated it as she spoke, ***'for 3-4 days I cannot do anything.'*** But even after her fever subsides the following 2 weeks she finds it extremely difficult to walk around. ***'It's very painful,'*** she explained.

But after CASA initiated work in this area, things began to look better. ***'I didn't know that we have to take special care of our legs.'***

'How did CASA's health workers ask you to take care of your foot?' we asked her.

'They showed me how to wash the legs with soap in cold water and then carefully dry it,' she replied adding that she does this regularly.

'And what about ointment?' we questioned back.

'Oh yes!' she nodded her head saying, ***'I apply that too.'***

Mahara said she used to have frequent acute attacks but for the last year or so she didn't have a single acute attack ***'Yes I still have some pain in my legs and back sometimes,'*** she admitted, ***'but after 2-3 days it goes away.'***

This patient story was particularly encouraging to CASA because few patients report such remarkable success after starting home based care.

Suka Martha is another such example. Suka lives in Khudupur village under Jatni Block. This frail elderly lady in her seventies has a vibrant personality.

'I had a very fat leg and it was very difficult to walk,' her voice dropped to a softer tone, ***'I even had fungal infections in my right foot,'*** she continued.



Suka Martha showing us how she used to have fungal infections in her feet. (Right) Satyabhama Bariarsing looks on.



Satyabhama Bariarsing showing us how thick her leg was earlier

'Did you regularly wash your feet before CASA began its work here?' we inquired.

'Nothing, never' she said indicating nothingness with her right hand. But after Casa's health worker Dipti Ranjan Martha showed them how to do foot care, ***'I now wash it regularly, dry it with towel.'***

'And do you put ointment?' we asked

'Oh yes!' she went back to her soft expressive tone, ***'I put it.'*** She also told us about the exercises she does as advised by CASA. She admitted to having a little pain in her feet

but she could feel the difference after having followed the Home based Foot Care Management diligently.

'When was the last time you had acute attack?' we asked her.

Suka went blank for a moment, and then she began shaking her head indicating she does not remember the last acute attack.

Satyabhama Bariarsing of the same village has had LF for the last 35 years. One day she fell from her bike and hurt her hip and right leg. There was blood clot in her leg and swelling. It was during the treatment she discovered that she is infected with Lymphatic Filariasis.



Pushapanjali Panigrahi is now better with fewer attacks

'I have been following all the advice CASA has given,' she confirmed, ***'washing, drying, putting ointment and exercise, I have been doing all, and my swelling has also reduced,'*** she said bending down to show how much it has reduced.

Satyabhama acknowledges that following CASA's advice has really helped. ***'I also use pillow under my leg when I sleep and it is really comfortable.'*** The last time she had an acute attack was nearly 10 months back and she attributes this success to honestly following the advice.

Arjun Sethi of this village also reported incidence of less acute attacks. ***'Even though my [hygiene] kit is exhausted, I wash my feet regularly with clean water, do exercise and use a pillow under my leg when I go to sleep,'*** he said, ***'my swelling has also reduced.'***

Pushapanjali Panigrahi was not in her house when we reached. We heard that this 70 year old lady of Talaram Palli village under Naikani Palli panchayat (Khallikote Block) was suffering with Lymphatic Filariasis for the last 20 years. Seeing us her granddaughter Sharmistha ran to call her from the neighbour's house. Pushpanjali had gone for her usual evening stroll. That was good news, meaning she was well enough to walk around.

When she arrived she said, ***'Yes I attended the training given by the Task Force on foot care,'*** After the training she too followed the guideline. ***'I wash my feet three times a day; morning, afternoon and evening,'*** she said with victorious smile, ***'do exercise twice a day; morning and evening and use pillow under the leg during sleep.'***

Earlier she used to have acute attacks almost every month, but now she feels better. ***'The last time I had acute attack was around 6 months back.'***

It was evident that the Home based Foot Care Management along with other precautions promoted by CASA was working well to help these patients. Patients who had diligently followed the guidelines reaped the benefits with fewer and fewer acute attacks.

*Technical training on home based care was provided to CASA by CDC.