

## Understanding the Many Attributes of Good Leadership

In February 2007, founder member of ASHWINI, Dr Shylaja Devi participated Skillshare International's leadership development programme in India. Skillshare International has been running leadership development workshops in Southern Africa since 1998-9. In February 2007, we held our first ever workshop in Asia with 16 participants from 12 of our partner organisations.

ASHWINI works for the health welfare of the tribals of the Gudalur valley of the Nilgiri mountain ranges in southern India. Its vision is to set up a community owned health programme which will meet the changing needs of the people. Health care is provided by a community programme covering a population of 14,000 and a base hospital. Dr Shylaja Devi explains, *"Over the last 17 years there has been a dramatic improvement in the health status of the community. Equally significant is the number of tribals who have been trained as health animators, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory technicians and support staff."* There are approximately 40 people on the team now and most are tribals.



ASHWINI's immunisation programme, © Skillshare

Dr Shylaja Devi recognises that ASHWINI has reached *"a critical juncture where the tribal team needs to take over management and governance issues. This is one of the main areas of focus now."* Skillshare International's Leadership Development Consultant, David Harries, agrees *"the programme couldn't have come at a better time for ASHWINI as it addresses many of the key issues faced by leaders during times of change"*. Participating in Skillshare International's leadership development programme helped Shylaja to understand the need for critical analysis, *"it taught me tools to do this and helped me to see my role as a leader in the development process"* she explains. *"Whenever I see a problem or try to plan a change I am able to use the structured approach in my thinking. I'm sure I will be able to put my learning into practice in the near future."*

The workshop enabled participants to use systems thinking to make their organisations more effective. They worked on the personal leadership skills needed for leading change and the tools and techniques for continual process improvement. They also developed their understanding of key concepts of effective change management.

Shylaja recalls, *"There were detailed discussions on looking at the work critically, maintaining an aerial view at all times. We were taught tools that could be used in analysing processes, bringing about process improvement and in bringing about transformation with the participation of the entire team. The whole process was made systematic and my role in each stage was clarified."*

Shylaja (right) at the LDP workshop, © Skillshare/Julie George



*"The LDP helped me to visualise myself as a leader; it helped me to understand the various ways in which a leader could take the work forward. I have a new, more encouraging role in the organisation today and I know that I can use this learning to encourage many more leaders in the team."*

*"The training workshop is very much in keeping with Skillshare International's approach of working for sustainable development. I firmly believe that creating good leadership is critical for the good functioning of all organisations."*

Shylaja with honey produced to generate an income for ASHWINI, © Skillshare/Jessica Lowe