

# Dishayen

A Compendium of Development Initiatives taken by  
the Alumni of Delhi School of Social Work  
University of Delhi



Delhi School of Social Work Alumni Association

December 2023

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**Disclaimer:**

This Compendium is a compilation of articles written by some of our alumni to share their experiences of setting up their agencies in the social sector. The content, information and views expressed are entirely those of the individual authors. The Alumni Association is not in anyway liable for the same.

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## Foreword

*Dishayen* is our modest attempt to present to you a collection of write-ups on the development initiatives taken by some of our alumni across six decades. While working in their respective areas, most of the times the focus is – as it should be – in fulfilling the purpose for which the initiative was taken. Documentation of the work done often takes a back seat. As the Alumni Association, we wanted to bring out these stories and share with everyone because these stories have a lot of wisdom to offer, from which we all can learn. These are a reflection of the hard work done by individuals who wanted to make a difference to the lives of people who are at a disadvantage because of their social and economic status and prevailing stigmas in the society.

The initiatives taken by our esteemed alumni are in the form of NGOs, *Sangathans*, Civil Society Organisations set up in different terrains and to work on diverse thematic areas. When started, some of these areas were very new for the development sector. For instance, Mental health in the 1970s was not very well understood. In the 1980s, working with the survivors of sexual abuse was very uncommon. Education of individuals with autism still remains an areas in which very little work has been done. Social work education teaches us to identify and understand issues from the perspective of people and find solutions along with them so that they become participants in this journey. That is what some of our alumni did. They stood with the community, understood their concerns and tried to find solutions along with them using different approaches.

So, what propelled them to start an organisation or a collective? Social Work education they received was one of the obvious reasons because it is here that the foundation is laid for deeper work. In addition to this, it was exposure to programmes like the NSS, Unnat Bharat; interaction with experts working in the field and their own life experiences which further provided the impetus. Many ideas were also developed through discussions with friends or batchmates and given shape in the form of an organisation. One thing is common among all those who have shared their experiences in this compendium; that was the passion to make a difference to the lives of people.

Some organisations were founded soon after graduating from the Department while others evolved over a period of time. It is heartening to see that initiatives which started as small projects have grown into programmes that are considered landmark initiatives. The guidance provided by the faculty members to the students is invaluable. Some faculty members like Prof. Veeraraghavan took it further by providing the required skills to the alumni in her spare time – as you will read in the case study of *Sanjivini*. It highlights the importance of adding academic rigour to develop fresh ideas. The Alumni Association of the Department of Social Work (registered as Delhi School of Social Work Alumni Association) intends to play the role of enabling a flow of ideas among the students, faculty and the alumni.

The achievements of most of the alumni who have been working in these areas, are not known to us. For example, it was a revelation for us that Ms Malika Virdi who has been working in the remote area of Munsiri was one of the 1000 women across the globe who were nominated for the Nobel Prize. As you

will read in the document, all of them have received accolades and awards in their respective fields. We are proud of them.

The landscape for the civil society organisations has undergone a change over the years. Many factors have led to this change. One of the main reasons is a change in the donor profile. As a result of policy changes, the corporate sector has gained prominence in extending support to the development initiatives. It becomes all the more important to provide visibility to the development initiatives taken by organisations. This compendium is a small step in that direction. We hope this becomes a learning document for students, alumni and other stakeholders involved in the social development sector.

We decided to bring out this compendium in May 2023 and it has taken us over 6 months of concerted efforts to finalise it. Bringing out this document would not have been possible without the support of some alumni. We thank Mr. Chiranjeev Singh for his unstinted support to the Alumni Association, Mr. KK Seth for editing the document, Mr. Gulpinder Singh for sponsoring the printing of this compendium and Mr. Tarun Sagar for helping us with the design. We hope you find reading this document an enriching experience.

Dr Niraj Seth  
Secretary,  
Delhi School of Social Work Alumni Association

## Working together with our Alumni



Dear Valued Alumni Members,

I hope this message finds you well. As Patrons of our esteemed Association, we have an important role to play in addressing the various social problems, academic challenges that our students & society face. Together, we can make a positive impact and strive for effective solutions whether it is social issues or academic endeavours. By addressing these issues from a social work perspective, we can work collectively towards finding effective solutions. The role of alumni association is vital in this journey.

I always believe that the Alumni Association plays an effectual role in supporting academic endeavours. They provide various forms of assistance to students, faculty, and the institution as a whole, such as:

**Scholarships and Grants:** Alumni Associations often establish funds to provide scholarships and grants to deserving students. These financial aids help students pursue their educational goals and contribute to academic excellence;

**Mentoring, Career Guidance & Networking:** Alumni can provide priceless insights and advice to current students, helping them make informed decisions regarding their academic and career paths. They can share their experiences, provide guidance, and offer support in various fields;

**Alumni Lectures and Workshops:** Alumni often deliver lectures or conduct workshops to share their experiences and expertise. These events provide supplementary learning opportunities and expose students to real-world scenarios;

**Networking Events:** Alumni Associations organise networking events, reunions, and alumni gatherings. These events foster connections among graduates and create platforms for sharing knowledge, exchanging ideas, and forging professional relationships;

**Internship and Job Placement Assistance:** Alumni Associations can facilitate internship opportunities and help students find employment after graduation. They often maintain close ties with organisations, industries and employers, providing students with valuable job placement guidance and resources;

**Collaborative Research and Projects:** Alumni Associations can support research initiatives and collaborative projects between alumni, faculty, and current students. This encourages academic innovation, fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, and enhances the institution's reputation;

**Fundraising and Advocacy:** Alumni associations actively participate in fundraising efforts to support academic programmes, infrastructure development, and other institutional needs. They also serve as advocates for the institution, promoting its values, achievements, and contributions;

**Professional Development Programmes:** Alumni Associations may offer workshops, seminars, or training sessions to help students enhance their skills and knowledge. These programmes may cover topics like resume writing, interview preparation, leadership development, and industry-specific insights etc;

**Documenting Alumni Success:** Alumni Associations often keep records of former students' achievements, documenting their academic, career, and personal successes. These records can inspire current students and serve as a testament to the institution's quality education.

Regarding documentation for further research and development, the alumni association can contribute by *Alumni Surveys and Interviews* where they can provide valuable data and insights for research purposes. This information can help in understanding the impact of academic programmes and identify areas for improvement, *Alumni Research Collaboration* where alumni collaborate with faculty and current students on research projects which can lead to new discoveries and advancements, *Alumni Contributions to Journals and Publications* where alumni who are actively engaged in research or have expertise in a specific field can contribute their findings to academic journals or publications. This knowledge-sharing benefits the broader academic community and provides a platform for further research. By actively involving alumni in these ways, the alumni association can significantly contribute to the academic achievements of students, faculty and support further research and development. And I am happy that our alumni association is continuously working in this direction.

So, overall, the alumni association acts as a bridge between the past and present, leveraging the knowledge, resources, and achievements of graduates to support the academic endeavours of current students and the institution as a whole and your continuous involvement will create a supportive community that contributes to students' growth and future success.

I believe that we have the opportunity to make an optimistic impact by collaborating, advocating, and supporting initiatives that promote social change. Let us come together, utilise our resources, and inspire those around us to join our cause. Remember, small steps can lead to big changes. Thank you for your continued support and dedication. Together, we can create a better society.

With appreciation.

Prof. Sanjoy Roy  
Head  
Department of Social Work  
University of Delhi  
Patron of the Delhi School of Social Work Alumni Association

December 2023.

## Message from President



Dear Esteemed Alumni, Faculty and Students

It is our privilege to present you a Compendium of Case Studies from our own distinguished DSSW Alumni who have contributed the essence of their lifetime while engaged in various welfare activities. This handbook is a testimony of professional commitment of our alumni from different batches. Coverage of range of subjects, activities, disciplines, fields, and projects will keep you glued from cover age to last page. Topics reveal so many fields in which our expert authors not only made their careers but also significant impact on the targeted people, some of them were unknown so far. Studies are result of their extensive field experience in diverse areas like Rural Development, Drug Abuse, Mental Health, Sustainability, Slum Development and Disability etc.

In coming years this will act as a reference book for teachers to inspire students to make their own path (start-ups) and students themselves will identify with few of insiders account that will convince them that “they can do it “. New areas may provide opportunities for further growth and development in the field of social welfare.

We take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to all the Authors for their valuable time which they devoted to pen their experiences for their colleagues, faculty, and students.

You may recall that earlier DSSW Alumni Association has published a booklet “We Support” covering the activities carried out by our Alumni during Covid-19 and which inspired us to bring out this Compendium.

Do write to us. Your feedback is most welcome to keep us focussed.

With best wishes

Yogesh Chandra  
President  
Delhi School of Social Work Alumni Association

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## Villages in Partnership

Dr. T. Nagender Swamy (Batch 1970-72)

My mother wanted me to be an IAS civil servant. Destiny took me where I am today.

When in class IX, I went on a tour of the country with a friend. Visiting a village we found a very feeble malnourished man toiling in the fields. I stopped by to ask him a few questions. To my query 'why does he work so hard', his reply was "*hum mehnat nabin Karengi to aap kya khaoge*"? His reply made me think of reciprocal social responsibility.

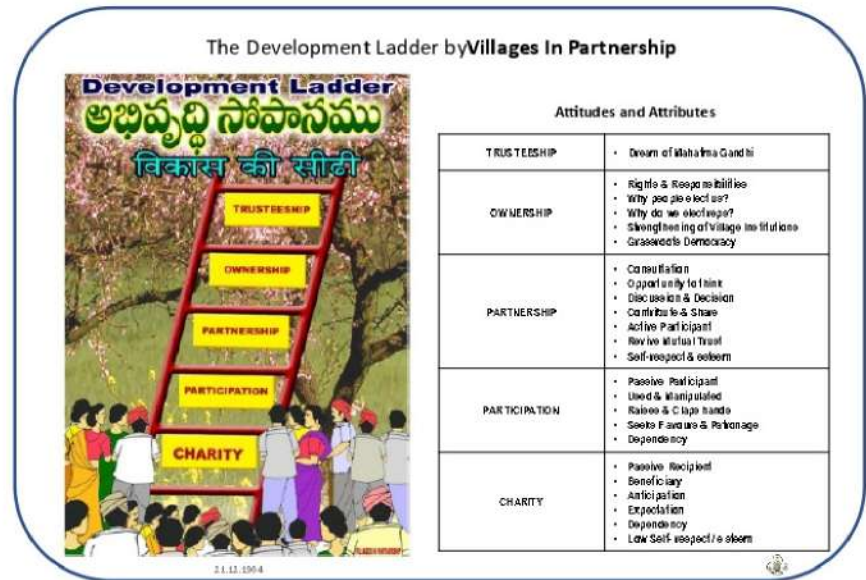
This awakening and the social involvement of my parents, nurtured my sense of reciprocal responsibility. During my final year of graduation, I had the opportunity to be with Baba Amte as participant in his camp for youth, held in Chandrapur, where I spent 4 months (since the University was closed due to Telangana agitation). The Tidal wave that struck coastal Andhra Pradesh, in November 1969, introduced me to a Belgian Jesuit, Michael Windey, with whom I worked and co-founded Village Reconstruction Organisation, in Guntur, in 1971, which pioneered the concept of 'Participation' of people in Development. 15 years later and with a Ph.D from Madison, Wisconsin, I founded Villages in Partnership (VIP) in 1984, to move on from 'Participation' to 'Partnership' of people in their village development. I wrote a paper "Consultation for Development Partnership" which linked me with a German Donor wanting to support the **idea of Partnership**, to be experimented as DEVELOPMENT FACILITATOR and NO PROJECT PEDDLING. Following our founding principles, our effort has moved on to the concept of 'Ownership' of development. By design, VIP is a core group of 8-10 persons since 2010. We continue our efforts with an income from investment of our Corpus accumulated over the years.

**Gram Swaraj for Sustainable Development** (Renewing Trust, Confidence, Concern & Hope). Traditionally, the Indian village was more independent than what it is today. It even formulated and implemented its own laws. Post-independence and modernisation, coupled with urbanisation, have impacted the 'independent village', in ways detrimental to *Gram Swaraj*. India, the largest democracy, can be proud of being a successful democracy in terms of holding regular elections to the houses of people's representatives, [even if the elections to the local (district, block, village and Municipal level) bodies are off and on delayed]. The quality of persons we elect is a different story. Nevertheless, periodic, and regular elections are indeed the strength of our representative democracy as a political system.

A nation of over 1.4 billion population cannot be effectively or efficiently managed by any centralised system, be it at the central, state or district level. The wisdom of Gandhiji is evident in his call for *Gram Swaraj*. While the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments were intended to facilitate democratic decentralisation, there is little evidence of change in this direction. The village has been orphaned requiring government departments, civil society organisations to **adopt** villages. All efforts have been top-down. What is required is a bottom-up approach. Unless representative democracy blossoms into a participatory democracy, grassroots democracy will continue to be a dream. While Legislative Assemblies and Councils at the state level and houses of Parliament at the Centre, are critical for democracy to be alive and functioning, the Gram Sabha at the village is just as critical. The fate of *Gram Sabha* is well known.

Villages in Partnership (VIP), a Civil Society organisation, has been instrumental in promoting intra and inter village partnership in Mahabubnagar district. People's partnership in development is now an accepted and oft repeated concept. After having experimented and successfully demonstrated the contribution of people's partnership, VIP has, since 2006, been working on facilitating "A vibrant grassroots participatory and responsible democracy, for enhancing people's self-respect, mutual trust, love and concern for the village through just and judicious use of public funds, local resources and people's contribution."

*Gram Swaraj* is possible only when a vibrant grass root democracy built on a rejuvenated and dynamic *Gram Sabha* is in place. To realise the dream of Gandhi ji it is important to strengthen and expedite movement on the VIP Development Ladder. Charity – Participation – Partnership – Ownership – Trusteeship. In eight villages the recently elected *Gram Panchayats* are being facilitated to be informed, interested, and involved in making the Village *Panchayat*, the village government with focus on renewing **Trust, Confidence, Concern, and hope.**



If *Gram Swaraj* is to be established and democratic decentralisation is to happen this will be possible only with pressures from the village and not the benevolence of the Parliament and Assemblies. The current experiment, it is hoped will make *Gram Panchayats* realise the opportunity and to unite for the fulfilment of Gandhiji's dream.

Originally, Villages in Partnership was an idea without an organisation. The idea behind VIP was to create a model for participation of people in development, in the spirit of Gandhi ji. After more than 15 years of effort and struggle that began in 1984, VIP has flourished as an idea and presently has 15 grass root organisations (9 *Mandal Societies* and 6 *Mandal Mahila Samikyas*) in the Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh. These groups are pursuing the idea of partnership and responsible participation in development.

Villages In Partnership (VIP) is the culmination of 3 great qualities:

- V** – Vision of the Great Mahatma Gandhi.
- I** – Inspiration of Jawaharlal Nehru.
- P** – Perfection of Rabindranath Tagore.

- We believe that there should be Provision for Vision, Aspiration for Inspiration and Correction with Reflection to attain Perfection.
- The roadmap for VIP has been developed after a lot of reflection on our experience at the ground level.

**Vision:** Facilitate and promote Peoples’ organisations and build their capacities, to be able to address problems in their respective areas by accessing public funds and resources available through government sponsored programmes and locally mobilised resources.

**Mission:** To Facilitate Villagers’ own understanding of their problems, through consultation and assist them in formulating programmes through village planning and help them increase their participation and responsibility as partners in achieving their village development.

#### **Development Process followed at VIP**

People Decide	We Support
People Implement	We Facilitate
People Stay on	We Move on

**Strengthening of Gram Panchayats (GPs):** In 2006, the need was felt to sensitise the ward members and make them aware of their roles. Workshops were held in 6 mandals, during that period to make them aware of their responsibilities. The follow-up was not easy, even though the idea was upscaled by the government. In 2014, we decided to experiment with a few villages and the challenge was thrown open to 22 villages of 1 mandal. Only 2 of these 22 villages took up the challenge and agreed to participate in the experiment. The experience provided a road map for how the GPs could be facilitated to work as a team. Several teams of the government institutions, CSOs, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) visited these villages for exposure on this experiment.

In 2019, when this experience was shared with more panchayats, during workshops organised for the elected members, more than 20 GPs resolved to try the experiment. While 12 of them initiated action, only 6 could go through the process from village surveys by the ward members, till the preparation of the village plans. Additionally, the situation arising because of Covid became a big hurdle. But the exercises that went in the processes of strengthening the team, did help a lot in the successful handling of the situations by the GPs during the Pandemic.

#### **Working with Senior Citizens** in Devarkadra and Chinna Chintla Kunta Mandals (Mahbubnagar district):

The growing concerns of this section of the population and the alarming reports of the western countries kindled the organisation to focus on this community. The current plight of senior citizens in society is a sad commentary on the traditional Indian family, particularly in the urban areas and increasingly in the rural areas as well. The increasing numbers of senior citizens and the increase in life expectancy tend to contribute to the complexity of the issues related to senior citizens. The absence of primary data of senior citizens and their status poses a serious challenge to any effort aimed at mitigating the plight of senior citizens or planning meaningful and viable alternatives to keep them engaged or exploring opportunities to draw upon their vast experience and wisdom for benefit of the society.

Villages in Partnership promoting the concept of ‘ownership’ of development, addressed the Gram Panchayats to own the responsibility of senior citizens, in their villages. A meeting of senior citizens was called and after discussions a committee was formed in 17 villages of Chinna Chintla Kunta mandal. The meeting resulted in a decision to undertake a survey of senior citizens in the villages by the Gram Panchayat. Since majority of the Gram

*Panchayat* members are illiterate, VIP took the initiative to link the village coordinators of *Saaksbar Bharat* to assist the *Gram Panchayat* in the survey. A second outcome was a resolve to set up a Senior Citizens Day activity centre in each village. The Senior Citizens' committees were facilitated to make an application to the *Gram Panchayat* to allocate a government building for establishing these Centres.



Senior Citizens engaged at the Day Activity Centres –  
Chinna Chintha Kunta

The third outcome was the decision by the senior citizens to undertake tree plantation and maintenance in the village. Applications have been made to the *Gram Panchayats* for the variety and number of trees to be planted. In the process of the consultations, various thoughts came up, which the senior citizens came forward to do themselves. A complete survey of senior citizens was done in 35/40 GPs, Day activity centres were opened in 15 of these villages. The GPs had provided buildings for these centres. VIP provided them with furniture, books, indoor games on a contribution of 10%, which they willingly paid. It is hoped that the *Gram Panchayats* will be encouraged to take this effort further and that the Government will extend all possible assistance and support in this regard to realise the objective that the Senior Citizens can be a useful community resource and not a burden. Some GPs also invite these seniors for consultations on issues, for their advice.

### **Promotion of girl child education**

The girl child in India is besieged by problems. Among many, the education of the girl child began to get attention since the early 90s. The drop out syndrome was marked after primary school (5<sup>th</sup> class) which shifted to after high school (10<sup>th</sup> class). In both cases the issue was proximity of access to further education.

In the above background and context VIP embarked in 2017, on the idea of “Promotion of Girl Child Education” and instituted awards for Mandal Toppers (girls) from Government High Schools with Telugu as the medium of instruction. Government institutions and schools with medium of instruction as Telugu were the criteria for selecting the awardees since children from these institutions are deprived of opportunities as compared to Private Institutions with English as medium of instruction. VIP has mandated a 5-year period for the programme to encourage girl children and their parents to be part of this endeavour wherein girls set a goal for themselves to acquire a degree. Girls who are part of the programme are followed through the 5-year period and invited to workshops and other opportunities for exposure and learning that is aimed at contributing to their all-round personality development with a social perspective. In everything that VIP does, in or outside the village, it is ensured that the *Gram Panchayat* is involved / recognised. Under this programme the Parents, *Sarpanch* of the *Gram Panchayat*, the Chairperson of the School Management Committee, and the Head of the School are also invited and felicitated at the function where girls receive their awards.

A cash award of Rs.5000 is given to each topper along with a gift certificate or a bank fixed deposit of Rs. 20,000. If there is more than one topper in a mandal the gift amount is divided. Parents are encouraged to add to the gift certificate / deposit to which VIP contributes up to Rs.1000 per annum for a period of 5 years. Further, if the girl continues to excel in her class, she is rewarded with a cash prize of Rs.1,116 and a contribution of Rs.5,000 into the certificate / deposit.

In the first year (2016-17), 40 girls from Mahbubnagar District (26 Mandals) won the awards and gift Certificates. In the second year (2017-18), 50 girls were awarded which increased to 59 in the third year (2018-19). The programme was planned for a 5-year phase but the progress was impacted because of Covid. Workshops were organised for these toppers during vacations to develop their soft skills. Spoken English classes were organised online, on the request of the students. With the help of a local college, mock tests were conducted for those preparing for competitive exams. The girls were linked with the *Gram Panchayat* to carry out surveys, help during the pandemic, participate in online discussions, and events like elocution, quiz etc., to keep them active and socially responsible.

5 girls of the 2016-17 batch, who not only performed well in their intermediate and under graduation but got themselves into good courses on merit, were presented with Laptops for better access to information. The whole idea is to build a resource team with social concern. VIP was also instrumental in getting some institutions to provide concessions in fee for the economically deserving girls among these toppers. This year it will be extended forward, for the Intermediate students.



Internal reflections on the ongoing activities is a regular feature at VIP. We undertake external evaluations once every three years, 1986 – 1995. This helps in getting a third-party view of the programmes we plan at VIP. As mentioned, every Village / Community that we partner with for their development, is a direct partner of this Society. The programmes are carried out using the returns from investment of corpus in permitted shares and Mutual funds. This is the only source of funding for VIP.

**Organisation details**

Registered as a Society in 1984, Tax exemptions 80G 12A and FCRA

**Geographic Area of work** - Mahabubnagar, Narayanpet & Wanaparthy Districts of Telangana State.

**Thematic areas**

- Strengthening of *Gram Panchayats* (Grassroot Democracy)
- Promotion of Girl Child Education PGCE
- Senior Citizens
- Community Development Facilitation

**Contact Details**

Dr. T. Nagender Swamy  
 Founder Chief Co-ordinating Partner  
 Mobile: 9440295712  
[nagendervip@gmail.com](mailto:nagendervip@gmail.com)

T.K.S. Sarma  
 Founder Associate Coordinator Partner  
 Mobile: 9849277729  
[tk.sarma@gmail.com](mailto:tk.sarma@gmail.com)

## **PRERANA: *Inspiring People***

**Geeta Verma (Batch 1972-74)**

**Vinita Nathani (Batch 1983-85)**

**Zubair Hussain Qureshi (Batch 1977-79)**

'PRERANA', is a grassroots not-for profit organisation founded by a group of post graduate DSSW students volunteering their time and resources. Dreamed of and conceptualised by a handful of enthusiastic and friendly Alumni with little means or resources, 'PRERANA' has indeed covered miles, since its inception in 1974. The motivation was to demonstrate professional social work practices for development and social change through voluntary action. Its founder members, all of whom grew to become accomplished professionals in their own fields, continued to devote personal time to the organisation throughout its journey towards sustainable and integrated development through community action/participation.

### **Founding Members**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. Anuradha (Sen) Prem Kumar | <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. Geeta Verma      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. Aarti Singh               | <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. Rajkumari Safaya |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. Arun B. Sood              | <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Razi R. Kidwai   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Ashraf Ali Khan           | <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Shailendra Mehra |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Arun Arora                |   |

PRERANA's programmes primarily focussed on generating awareness, creating demand, building capacities and linking communities to the existing support systems - both governmental and non-governmental - to achieve change and access to basic services. Withstanding all odds and constraints, the organisation emerged very strong, widely acknowledged for its multi-sector approach, and strong emphasis on the principles of transparency, accountability and professional volunteerism.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

PRERANA's guiding philosophy was to promote development through self-help and communities' need for desired change. It, therefore, focussed on programmes rooted in participation, ownership and empowerment. Its core guiding principles included:

- Non-Charity
- Community Ownership
- Professional Volunteerism
- Sustainability

In keeping with its philosophy, PRERANA approached community development as an ongoing learning and evolving process and focussed on facilitating communities and individuals to identify and recognise felt needs, explore development opportunities and take assertive action for change. Beginning as a small grassroots organisation, PRERANA's activities were always coordinated, designed and implemented with the help and support of the local communities.

## THE JOURNEY

PRERANA began its activities much before it was formally registered in 1976, from Anant Ram Dairy, a small slum community in R.K. Puram and expanded its interventions to village Sarai Sohal (Palam), Nai Basti (Palam) and Nai Basti (Okhla) in Delhi, with a total population of about 900 people. Located under the heart of Delhi airport, Sarai Sohal was a lost, forgotten village with almost NIL social services in terms of health, sanitation and education facilities. *Balmadi* was the first activity which was initiated followed by construction of drainage system, scabies eradication programme, preventive and curative health check-ups, income generation for women and girls (carpet weaving and spices grinding), and women's literacy. Family Planning component was integrated in programmes and it included door step contraceptive delivery and referral services for Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUDs) and sterilisation. Check up and treatment of pregnant and lactating mothers was also added subsequently.

Over the next four decades, PRERANA built its reputation for setting up Service Delivery Models in core areas of Community Based Distribution for Family Planning, Health & Nutrition, Life Skills and Family Life Education for Adolescent Girls and Boys and Community/Women's Empowerment through employability and livelihood training along with its role as an agency for resource support, training and capacity building. Broadly, PRERANA's initiative could be described in terms of Direct Service Interventions, Technical Support and Training, Advocacy and, Research/Documentation.

The above were addressed through Direct Service Interventions, Technical Support and Training, Advocacy and, Research/Documentation

### DIRECT SERVICE INTERVENTIONS

#### Family Planning Service Delivery Programme

Following the successful implementation of the model of integrated community-based family planning services on a small scale for about a decade, the programme was scaled up in 1987, in six peri urban villages of Delhi with a combined population of 67,000 approximately. Experiences of these villages was shared with other NGOs in low demographic indicators states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh 1993 onwards. This was done through capacity building and proposal development workshops, seed money grants and technical assistance. While implementing the family planning service delivery programmes in the villages in Delhi (1987 onwards), many adolescent girls keenly participated in the sessions on reproductive health organised for married women. This led to the evolution of a programme specifically designed for adolescent girls in the area of reproductive health and Better Life Options greatly expanding PRERANA's portfolio to include a sharp focus on adolescents.

#### Adolescent Development Programme

PRERANA was a national pioneer in programming for adolescents in an era and an eco-system, which did not consider adolescents as an important group with its own very specific concerns and needs. Beginning 1987, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), an international NGO based in USA, initiated collaboration with PRERANA as a partner, to provide seed money grants for "**Better Life Options Programme**" (BLOP) for adolescents in India. The programme focussed on empowering adolescent girls with essential Life Skills, enabling



them to take informed decisions and creating a conducive environment of dignity and better opportunities/options.



In 1996, to strengthen the sustainability of the project, PRERANA encouraged alumni of the programme to initiate their own vocational training centres in the same villages in which it had initiated the BLOP. A similar programme for boys was also started in 1994 in the same areas with the objective of reaching them with enhanced knowledge, improved Life skills and careers counselling for personal development.

The programme model covered information, education and services in the area of Personality Development & Gender Awareness, Non-Formal Education, Health & Reproductive Health and Rights, Life Skills, Marketable Vocational Skills Training and, Legal, Social and Environmental Awareness.

PRERANA, with active support of CEDPA, expanded its role as a Technical Resource Centre on adolescent issues by up-scaling the adolescent programme in 10 States of India through network partners in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam. These partners adapted PRERANA's BLOP model as a franchise reaching over one-lakh adolescents through direct services.

### **Non-Formal Education**

Recognising the low literacy rates and a high rate of school drop outs among the girls in the target areas, efforts were made to give inputs in the area of education through NFE classes as well as remedial coaching for young children. PRERANA also created awareness and motivated families and young girls/boys to join schools and prevent dropping out of school.

### **Integrated Community-based Maternal and Child Health programme**

Mobile Health Clinic project was initiated in early 90's in the form of fully equipped clinics reaching pregnant and lactating mothers and children. It effectively used a multipronged IEC approach such as Street plays, Magic/puppet shows, Film/slide shows, Flash cards & Song and Dance sequences to create awareness on Health and Reproductive Health issues, Ante and Post Natal Care, Early Childhood Care and Development. Project also forged effective linkages and referrals with the Public Health Systems, encouraged adoption of Family Planning Methods and increasing their access; and Trained Community members as 'Depot Holders' for social marketing of Contraceptives.

### **Family Counselling Centre**

PRERANA started a Family Counselling Centre, in Jaitpur village on the outskirts of Delhi, in the year 2007, with support from the Central Social Welfare Board. It handled cases ranging from dowry demands to marital

maladjustments etc. where women could share their concerns and get legal guidance on issues related to abuse and violence.

### **District Resource Centre (DRC)**

The Government of NCT of Delhi (GNCTD) in an effort to improve the quality of life of vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of the society initiated a project titled “*Samajik Suvidha Sangam*”, to converge various welfare entitlement schemes and services and improve access of the eligible poor to services through a single window system. As a District Resource Centre for Central and New Delhi Districts and based at the office of the Deputy Commissioners (DC) as 'front office', PRERANA acted as the single window providing the beneficiaries a platform to discuss their grievances and seek immediate redressal.

### **PRERANA Extension Centre**

As an expansion of the Mission Convergence Project, PRERANA also initiated an Extension Centre in the Central District as a community outreach initiative. This Centre enabled and empowered the vulnerable families to access entitlements of social sector schemes of nine government departments.

### **TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND TRAINING**

PRERANA has had over a decade long experience in managing the Apex Resource Centre, PRERANA Population Resource Centre (PPRC) established in the year of 1994 in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, for the USAID funded Government of Uttar Pradesh Project, ‘State Innovations in Family Planning Services Action’- SIFPSA. PPRC was the designated Training Centre for SIFPSA and was solely responsible for:

- Development of technical, managerial, supervisory and service delivery capabilities of NGOs for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating effective Integrated Community Based Service Delivery programme.
- Training and enhancing the capacities of different levels of project functionaries and health service providers including Traditional birth attendants (TBAs), to function as effective community-based distribution channel.
- Training of Community Based Workers to provide counselling services and referrals for family planning, ANC checkups, TT, IFA, Safe and Clean Delivery and Child Immunisation reaching out to nearly 250 projects spread out in 38 Districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- Development of Manuals for Modular Training (about 22 publications)
- Designing of Record System and Tools for Monitoring
- Providing technical assistance to NGOs for development of project proposals

During the course of the project, PPRC trained over 50,000 NGO Managers, Functionaries and TBAs.

### **National Technical Resource Centre on Adolescents**

PRERANA also took on the role of a National level resource agency on adolescent issues and was actively involved in training and providing technical assistance to other agencies in different states of India for designing and implementing programmes for adolescents by providing Mentoring and on-site technical support to other agencies in programme implementation, management and evaluation. PRERANA was also actively involved in the development of locally adaptable training materials addressing adolescent issues.

## **ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH**

Complementary to its role as training as well as a field-based implementing agency, PRERANA also undertook advocacy on Adolescent issues with national and international agencies. It designed and developed manuals, literature and advocacy material on Behavior Change Communication for NGOs, Bilateral, agencies and Corporates under their CSR initiatives and undertook Research and Evaluation of innovative approaches and replicable models.

## **FUNDING and NON-FUNDING PARTNERS**

PRERANA has a large list of funding and non-funding partners. Beginning with implementing programmes through personal contributions and small donations, PRERANA realised that to expand its reach it would have to look for support from local as well as international donors. Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), an international 'not for profit' based out of Washington DC, became a long-term partner and donor for some of PRERANA's programmes. This led to the formation of a very fruitful relationship with CEDPA whereafter PRERANA expanded its title as 'PRERANA Associate CEDPA'.

Apart from CEDPA, PRERANA developed a large network of partners which included many National and International donors, private trusts and foundations, bilateral agencies, Government Ministries and Departments, Universities and Educational institutions and development organisations.

## **TRANSITION**

By mid 90's, PRERANA was able to take on a much larger and challenging role of a technical resource agency, providing training and technical assistance to other organisations and taking on new responsibilities as a Donor and Facilitator, identifying fledgling organisations who could be supported. Effectively, managing start-ups, taking successful pilots to scale, consolidating impacts and achieving sustainability to serve the Family Planning, Maternal Health and Empowerment needs of rural and urban poor and young people.

Despite its best efforts, however and in spite of a very successful journey of over four decades, PRERANA has gone into Hibernation over the past years. The founders, previous dedicated staff and volunteers, friends and well-wishers of PRERANA have come together several times to critically reflect on why the organisation has reached its present stage and have tried quite a few self-renewing measures including:

- Reassessing honestly and critically, what worked and what did not work for PRERANA
- Understanding the changing donor scenario with its new foci and priorities
- Understanding the importance of creating a much wider multi donor base
- Accepting the criticality of increasing and widening the volunteer force/base through strategic engagement with potential partners and actively creating and implementing a succession plan.
- Recognising that the initial very active day to day engagement of PRERANA's board members needed a radical change given their increasing age, transfers/movements and professional/ personal commitments with passage of time

What has clearly emerged from these discussions is that PRERANA must expand and increase its reach to

additional geographic areas, its areas of programming and, MOST critically, to change/adapt the management structure from a very active “working Board members-based model” to one where a second layer of Young Board could take PRERANA forward on its new journey with solid engagement of full-time professional staff. The need of the hour is to rejuvenate and re-energise the organisation with fresh new committed leadership while keeping its core initial founding principles intact. This is a huge challenge, which has yet to be met. The dream is for PRERANA to come alive again in an even more robust and meaningful Avatar .... SOON!!

**About the Organisation**

PRERANA was founded in 1974 but was formally registered as a Society in 1976 under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860; 80G, 12A Tax Exemptions; Has FCRA Registration

**Geographic Outreach**

In Delhi, PRERANA worked in six peri urban clusters in outer Delhi. Through NGO partnerships, PRERANA worked in 11 states of India namely, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Assam, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Bihar.

**Thematic Areas:** Health & Nutrition with a focus on Reproductive & Child Health, Gender Sensitisation and Women’s Empowerment, Education & Literacy, Vocational Skills and Livelihoods Training and Life Skills Education.

**Contact Address:**

B – 4/3174, Vasant Kunj

New Delhi - 110070

E mail ID: [preranadelhi@gmail.com](mailto:preranadelhi@gmail.com)

**Contact Persons:**

Ms. Geeta Verma – + 919818061235

Mr. Ashraf Ali Khan- +919810974922

Mr. Zubair Hussain Qureshi- +919868244427

Ms. Vinita Nathani-+91 9810127557

## Sanjivini - The first steps of a pioneering journey

Kiran Bhatia (Batch 1973-75)

It was November 1975. India was shrouded in a dark blanket of emergency rule, with deserted streets, the media shackled and thousands of dissenters in jail. Our batch of 1975, had just graduated from the Delhi School of Social Work (DSSW) concluding two intense years of classes and fieldwork. I spent two months at Bengaluru's National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), where I worked in the closed wards with people suffering from chronic mental illness. A deeply disturbing experience that made me question the paucity of our mental health services and what we could do to reform them.

One of those days, I was gifted a book, *The Samaritans in the 70s*, an autobiography of Chad Varah, the founder of the Samaritan movement in the UK. By coincidence, the author was visiting Delhi, and our Professor, Dr. Veera Raghavan arranged a meeting with him for a few of us DSSW alumni. That meeting changed my life profoundly, but that was only the beginning. I was 21 years old; it was a time of karmic connections and inspiring change!

Samaritans Worldwide is one of the world's first volunteer-based crisis support organisations for the suicidal and the emotionally distressed. Chad told us how, as a young priest and counsellor, he had conducted the burial ceremony of a 14-year-old girl who had committed suicide, feeling emotionally isolated while coping with trauma. Deeply shaken, he had opened the doors of his parish to support others in similar circumstances. The response was overwhelming. Clearly, there was an enormous unmet need for empathetic listeners who could befriend the emotionally disturbed and offer them support. The first Samaritans 24/7 helpline centre, was established in London in 1953 and grew rapidly into a national and global movement. Chads story of why he started the Samaritans and discovered the magic of *befriending* moved us all deeply and remains in our hearts even today.

Chad encouraged us to consider the needs of the emotionally disturbed and promised guidance should we decide to set up a branch of the Samaritans in Delhi. We were fascinated by the concept and believed we could try to create such a service; a belief so strong that I decided to cancel my scholarship for further studies and somehow contribute to make this happen!

### Finding the way

Over the next four months, our small group of DSSW graduates explored options, knocking on doors for advice and support. We began by tracing medico-legal cases registered at Delhi's Lok Nayak Hospital. Suicide was then a criminal offence under Section 309, of the Indian Penal Code. Attempted suicide cases admitted in various wards, often in a serious condition, awoke to the painful reality of their emotional trauma and legal jeopardy. What they needed most was support, emotional, social, legal and others. We would be there to befriend them.

We also began searching for a safe, accessible space to set up a modest centre to receive clients. The Gandhi Peace Foundation was sympathetic and to our surprise and relief allowed us a free working area within their premises.

Our founding values were deeply influenced by the Samaritans' ethics and global experience. We believed in the power of free and confidential 'befriending' by volunteers as a first contact for the depressed or suicidal. We understood that carefully selected volunteers could be trained, mentored and supervised to provide emotional support to clients seeking help but would also know when to refer the client to other professional services.

By then, it had become clear that we needed to be more than an extension of the Samaritans. Notwithstanding their profound influence on our approach and principles, India's culture and mental health environment called for essential adaptations in our approach and response. Mental health services in India were negligible, and there was a huge deficit of qualified psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and mental health inpatient facilities. We realised that we would need to respond to a broader range of emotional and mental health needs beyond suicide and depression.

To complicate matters, the Indian understanding of mental illness was limited and biased, with attitudes of shame, guilt and family dishonour dominating the responses. Emotional problems were considered to be private family matters, not for discussion with strangers. Patriarchal structures and deep-rooted gender inequality sanctioned cultural practices that disempowered women, girls and youth and robbed them of the choice of seeking help for toxic interpersonal experiences, psychological trauma due to violence, abuse, addiction and unwanted pregnancies amongst others. Professional help was often not sought until a person had suffered a complete breakdown or became unmanageable.

In this environment, Sanjivini was born on 15 March 1976, in the house once reserved for freedom fighter and reformer Jai Prakash Narayan. The name, referring to the life-giving herb from the *Ramayana*, was suggested by a volunteer and immediately captured everyone's imagination. Sanjivini started with seven volunteers, and blessings from some of our DSSW faculty and our families. We lit a candle and stood together in silence for two minutes filled with hope and aspiration.

Our friends and family spread the word about Sanjivini's services by distributing a single 'cyclostyled' page to their network. We had no telephone; the Gandhi Peace Foundation, in their kindness provided vital referral to callers from their reception. With poor phone services, walk-in clients soon became the norm at Sanjivini.

Within two weeks, we were also receiving visits from professionals, students and journalists, all curious to learn more about these young men and women who wanted to 'befriend' those in emotional distress. Prabha Dutt, a senior Delhi journalist, published a two-column, front-page article about Sanjivini in *The Statesman*. By afternoon that day, over 40 men, women and youths in need of our support had lined up outside the centre. We were overwhelmed! It was a sharp reminder of the enormity of the task ahead of us.

We realized we urgently needed more volunteers. Dr. Veera Raghavan, Sanjivini's staunch supporter and mentor since its very beginnings, helped us train newly recruited volunteers on evenings and weekends. Psychiatrists, psychologists and other professionals helped re-conceptualise and redesign training materials to make them more relevant for lay volunteers and culturally sensitive to the Indian context.

No one had anticipated the magnitude of the response. Volunteers came from all walks of life, ages and backgrounds - students, teachers, doctors, lawyers, corporates, homemakers, retired government and

armed forces officials, bankers and artists, among others. Curiosity brought them to our door, but also a deep desire to give back to society and an eagerness to learn the *how and what* of befriending. Our terms were tough; participate in the interview process and if selected attend the training sessions and commit time at least twice a week on the roster. Those not selected were equally valued and joined to assist with correspondence, community outreach initiatives, and even making tea and keeping the premises clean. We worked endless hours and we worked everywhere — in our homes, *chai dhabas* and even bus stops on cold, windy winter nights. The collective spirit and energy was infectious. As professional social workers we learned to respect the skills and ability of the many volunteers in their innate excellent listening and responding skills, sharp insight in the callers' analysis and their own behaviour and biases. A precious reward for every one of us in addition to the joy of helping others was the invaluable opportunity of gaining deeper insight into ourselves and the personal growth with every client we worked with and through the mentoring process and discussions.



### **A bigger space**

Within a few months, Sanjivini acquired its constitution and bylaws and became a registered entity under the Society Registration Act, in 1976. We moved to larger premises thanks to the generosity of the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan. We had to rapidly learn to respond to the growing and complex needs of our clients. Since we provided no service or financial support besides 'befriending' and listening, we began setting up referral links to other social services such as hospitals, police, shelters and legal aid.

Documentation and management structures were established for ensuring clients confidentiality and our protection.

Wide coverage of Sanjivini's work and goals on print media and TV led to many more clients and more offers of support. A young man travelled across the country by train to seek our help after reading about us in a popular Hindi magazine. One person showed up at our premises holding cyanide, ready to consume it and end everything. It took many hours of empathetic conversation to slowly walk them back to giving life a second chance.

Young students reached out from hostels, depressed, lonely and unable to cope with competitiveness, bullying or addiction. Women struggling within violent relationships and exhausted families coping with a mentally ill relative are just a few other examples of the many clients who found us daily.

Support for our cause grew in response to our expanding needs. Celebrity artists empathetic to our efforts such as Kumar Gandharva and Pt. Jasraj helped us raise funds through charity performances. Film premieres; talk shows and debates helped us broadcast our services and needs and brought in a steady stream of every kind of assistance and encouragement.

## Defining our identity and role

With more experience and confidence, Sanjivini's need to create a sustainable volunteer force also increased. Training became comprehensive, experiential and dynamic, combining solid theoretical grounding with practical sessions where role play and simulations helped preview and rehearse complex situations for volunteers to learn. Refresher training was compulsory for everyone to sharpen and update their existing skills. A strong mentoring structure was created with the recognition that all of us as volunteers would need a safe space to reflect, share and learn and the humility to be aware of vulnerabilities and take a break if needed, due to personal life issues. No one worked alone; empathy was a for us volunteers as for clients.

As founders, we often faced questions, especially from professional counsellors, about the risks of placing lay volunteers as the first line support for clients in deep emotional distress. But befriending is not counselling; clarifying this to counsellors and other mental health professionals became essential to our communication. Our training and outreach made it clear that when a case required professional counselling, volunteers would make a referral to a counsellor.

The initial tide of skepticism began to turn as clients and their families spoke out about how *Sanjivini* had helped them, and agencies described how their clients had improved through our services.

Volunteers shared their first-hand experiences of how Sanjivini's befriending had made a difference to their own lives and those of clients they had befriended.

Within a year, Sanjivini's stature and credibility were such that mental health professionals in hospitals and private practice were confidently referring some of their cases to us. The best acknowledgement came from DSSW, as some of their graduates chose to work with us as volunteers.

Sanjivini was unique in its time. No similar service existed for India's vast and hidden population of emotionally troubled people, isolated by their families and societies and with nowhere else to turn for help. Looking back, we realise we chalked up a creditable list of firsts:

- 1978. Delhi's Lieutenant Governor Jagmohan allocated Delhi Development Authority premises under the Defense Colony Flyover, to Sanjivini, at a rent of Rs 1 a month. This was the first time the government had ever supported an NGO, with government infrastructure. With larger premises, we doubled our working hours to receive more clients and introduce new services. It also meant raising more funds and hiring some full-time staff to manage the growing services.
- 1979: The Ministry of Women and Child Development made an exceptional first-ever grant to Sanjivini for training volunteers to address the needs of the depressed and suicidal.
- 1979: We launched our first-ever community outreach to spread the word about basic mental health needs and the value of seeking early help to resolve emotional issues. An outreach to school-going adolescents resulted in many students and teachers reaching out for help. Our audiences soon included healthcare providers, police, lawyers and social welfare groups. We began putting out simple user-friendly material on myths and facts about suicide, mental illness, addiction, violence and so on. Our flyers appeared on office bulletin boards, cafeterias, bus stops and phone booths. Each event resulted in more clients reaching out for help.



- 1980: Sanjivini conducted a year-long research project funded by the Ford Foundation to develop Delhi's first *Referral Directory of Social Services*, covering medical and social services by government and civil society. This contributed to building strong networks and safety nets for clients to receive comprehensive and timely support.
- 1980: Sanjivini inaugurated the first-ever day-care centre, for the mentally ill, particularly schizophrenia patients under treatment who required rehabilitation. Additional funds were raised to recruit full-time professionals to offer therapy included yoga, art, drama and music. It was a big step into a new arena following our principle of responding to the most urgent needs in the mental health domain. The centre flourished as a parallel programme with the crisis centre and worked closely with mental health experts in India and globally to source updated cutting edge methodologies and build the competence of the staff and volunteers.
- 1982: Delhi Lieutenant Governor Jag Mohan allocated DDA land in the Qutub Institutional area for Sanjivini, to build a full-fledged centre. Finally, Sanjivini had a permanent home for its crisis centre, day-care programme and training. More funds were raised, construction began, and four years later 1986, Sanjivini's brand-new building was inaugurated.
- 1987: Sanjivini launched its second crisis centre in the new premises and began operating two crisis centres.

### The way forward

Sanjivini was now running two centres managed by volunteers and full time staff in addition to the day centre and community outreach programmes. Funding was well secured. We had our own premises, staff and volunteers functioning within well-defined norms and systems to manage the Crisis Centre and Day Centre. The selection, orientation and training programme for volunteers was well documented in manuals and a core team facilitated the process seamlessly. Community outreach demands were growing as was our media coverage and referral network. It took a decade of tireless effort by an extended team of devoted volunteers to bring us here.



With Sanjivini well established I was confident what we had started would stand strong and firm. I decided to move on to support initiation of other similar centres and pursue working on women's rights and protection; an aspiration emerging from supporting the many disturbed women reaching out for help at Sanjivini. My decade with Sanjivini shaped my life; all through my professional career, whether as a UN Gender Advisor or mentoring NGOs, empathy remained at my core; a guiding light and source of strength through many difficult personal and work situations.

Today, four decades later, Sanjivini is well recognised as a leading NGO in India working for making a meaningful contribution to meeting the mental health needs of the community. Sanjivini continues to serve Delhi from the two centres established in 1976 and 1987.

As a dynamic institution there have been many changes in leadership, management and development of diverse activities responding to the emerging needs and best feasible way forward. However, the spirit remains strong and unchanged.

The Crisis Centre continues to be in high demand and now offers in-depth counselling with professional counsellors as well as volunteers. Training programmes have evolved into comprehensive certified Basic Counselling Skills Training Course for volunteers. The day centre has grown into a well-recognised Rehabilitation Centre with holistic therapeutic services for the mentally ill managed by a Mental Health Professional team. The Community Outreach Programme has expanded to address a rich range of institutions for both awareness building on Mental Health and need based thematic workshops. Social media content and communications are regularly created and disseminated across networks.

Each one of us as volunteers feel deeply privileged to have learnt one of the most valuable lessons in life from being a part of the Sanjivini journey; that empathy always works to open minds and hearts and can save lives.

As a client wrote in her book recounting her visit to Sanjivini on her journey of transformation; *“the volunteer was kind, compassionate and experienced and a great listener. I was vulnerable. I shared my story and as I unveiled each scene, my tears flowed endlessly.... she held my hands and hugged me each time I howled. She was my angel in distress.....The hurt was still etched deep in my heart, but I came out of the counselling session lighthearted, even hopeful of my future”*

What remains at the core since inception is the deep abiding commitment to being ever present for those who need emotional support and having every person who reaches out have that reassuring voice say: *“Sanjivini Namaskar can I help you....”*

*Note: This is a personal reflection by Kiran Bhatia as Founder Director of Sanjivini 1976-1987. Appreciation to Yogesh Mathur and Suman Chandra, founding volunteers, for their comments.*

### ***From Darkness to Light***

In our busy lives from day to day  
We face challenges of joy and sorrow  
Have we time to pause along the way  
To brighten someone's dark tomorrow?  
To give in thought and kind to share  
Our time and take a stand  
Be there for those in need with loving care  
Extend a helping hand?  
Empower others with strength bestow  
To carry on the fight  
Together we can win, we know  
From darkness turn to light

*-Manorama Sharma, Sanjivini volunteer (Also Mother of the Founder Member Ms. Kiran Bhatia)*

## RUCHI (Rural Centre for Human Interests)

Dharamvir Singh (Batch 1974-76)

I belong to a family with army background. My education was affected due to my father's frequent postings. The family's army background however, made my life highly disciplined with emphasis on moral values. My father took his final posting of his choice before retirement to his home town, Delhi. I graduated in science from Shivaji College, DU and then joined Faculty of Law, Delhi University because of my interest in criminal law. After graduating in Law, I started practising law but soon realised this profession is not for me and decided to get justice for poor people through social work rather than through enforcement of law. I joined Delhi School of Social Work and completed my Masters Degree in 1976.

To be honest, since I hail from a rural area, I had no idea about community development and the NGOs sector. Though I wanted to work for welfare of labour in the corporate sector and wanted to further pursue my specialised course, fate had something else in store for me. My supervisor, Prof KD Gangrade insisted that I do my Block Field Work in a community and gain practical grassroots experience. Therefore, I was persuaded to do my placement with SWRC (Social Work and Research Centre) in *Tilonia*, Ajmer District, Rajasthan. Those two months changed my life.

Bunker (Sanjit Roy) and Aruna Roy (founders of SWRC and my mentors) inspired me a lot and post completion of my internship asked me to join them as a team and lead their newly opened branch of SWRC in Punjab, where I worked for two and half years in collaboration with Department of Youth Affairs, Punjab Government. We had to wind up the project during mid-1979, as post emergency, the Department of Youth Affairs was scrapped. That was the time when Hindustan Lever was quite keen that we start some work near their branch in Etah, U.P. However, that did not materialise as they wanted us to work under their umbrella. We did not want to lose our identity.

I was then, given the responsibility to revive Haryana branch of SWRC near Rewari, where I worked for more than six months. Since my heart was somewhere else, I decided to quit and work on my own in Himachal Pradesh. Right from my childhood, I had a strong liking for mountains and wanted to live there. After working informally with the support of SWRC in a very remote area of Chopal in Shimla district for more than two years, I decided to legally register the organisation. Thus, was born RUCHI (Rural Centre for Human Interests) which was legally registered as a not-for-profit society under Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860 on 16th February, 1983.

**Vision: A society which believes in and practices peace, good governance, equality and respect for each other.**

**Mission Statement: Integrated rural development through people-centred, environmentally sustainable action.**

Working in Chopal area was very challenging because of its remoteness and poor accessibility. Though Chopal is only 100 kms from Shimla, public buses used to take 6-9 hours to cover that distance. Come winter, the roads are closed due to heavy snow, about 25 kms before Chopal. I remember I would walk in snow that distance, many times during 1983-1987 to go to my office. When roads were closed due to landslides, a few times I had to walk 48 kms to go to office, with an overnight stay at a small tea shop

whose owner had become very friendly with me. There were no hotels or restaurants on that route at that time.

RUCHI was established keeping in mind the problems and restrictions that a remote community faces on day-to-day basis. These could be due to poverty, lack of knowledge, poor infrastructure or at times difficult terrain. As a result, RUCHI has always implemented its projects with people centred approach and gave priority to community development. With 40 years in this field, RUCHI has accumulated extensive knowledge in community development with projects in areas ranging from semi-urban background to extremely remote communities, requiring two days of walk at certain times of the year.

RUCHI, has incessantly worked towards improving the living conditions of the underprivileged section in some regions of Himachal Pradesh, India. RUCHI through active grassroots participation and empowerment of the communities in all aspects of their development strives to minimise their dependence on external agencies. RUCHI's focus on promoting **sustainable anthropocentric development through environmentally, socially and economically integrated activities** ensures improvement and sustainability of rural communities and their environment.

We at RUCHI lay great emphasis on 'people's power'. The consequence can be noticed in the environment of team spirit, collective experience, hard work and commitment on the basis of which the whole organisation runs. Very essentially this is manifested through the 12 full-time staff who proficiently strive to achieve the objectives mentioned above. We have long and short-term volunteers participating in the project activities, injecting fresh ideas and knowledge into the strong RUCHI team.

The northern Indian states, including Himachal Pradesh, have no significant history of social action and hence the local communities as well as State bureaucracy had no idea of NGOs culture and contribution in areas of community development at the time when RUCHI was set up. Accordingly, our working approach was designed to take up activities which directly benefitted rural people to win over their confidence and establish our credibility. Gradually, we could transform ourselves from a welfare to a development oriented, socio-economic, technical agency.

RUCHI is a community development organisation with ever increasing focus on youth development and intercultural learning through voluntary service.

The first few years for us were full of struggle because of resource crunch and our resolve not to compromise on the quality of activities to establish our credibility. The major breakthrough came in 1986, when Foster Parents Plan International, probably the world's largest international donor, contacted us to explore possibilities of collaboration. However, they ruled out Chopal area because of remoteness but agreed for the adjoining area of Rajgarh in Sirmour district. Therefore, we initiated our work in Rajgarh area during 1987, to assist communities through child sponsorship.



This was also the time when local people had no idea about the NGO sector. They knew only about Government and Corporate sectors. On numerous occasions we ended up explaining about the voluntary sector not only to rural communities but even to the government officials but mostly not fully succeeding. We were persistently asked if we come from State or Central cadre. Local communities in both Chopal and Rajgarh welcomed us with a broad smile when we established there. However, local political interference also started when project funding increased and new activities were initiated. Everyone wanted his/her kin employed in the so called new “RUCHI Office”. Even the local political leaders recommended their cases to us. The more we explained to people about voluntary work the more they got suspicious of our intentions and thought we must be having some hidden agenda to come to those interior areas. It took 4-5 years for them to understand our work and extend their support.

Soon RUCHI realised the need to bring voluntary organisations working in the state to a common platform for recognition of their contribution and seek support to influence policies and programmes. To our surprise, we found that there were more than 7000 groups registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860, but majority of them were inoperative. The ones which were operative were involved in executing petty readymade schemes of the Social Welfare Board. Since there have been no significant social movements in the entire northern region of the country, we saw the need for further strengthening the voluntary action so that freedom to plan and work with short and long-term perspectives is there without political and bureaucratic constraints. This is possible when people enjoy economic independence to a significant extent and are not dependent on donations/subsidies for survival.

**Networking:** Therefore, in 1987, RUCHI decided to identify and support potential groups as change agents besides encouraging young people to join as volunteers. These volunteers and other interested people were subsequently provided with back-up support to start their own NGOs.

**Health Care:** Health care was the primary need so a community health care programme was designed and established with a focus on education. Because of remoteness of project areas, health facilities were not available in villages.

**Natural Resource Management:** RUCHI kept receiving feedback, reviewing their work and moving to become more of a socio-technical agency. In 1992, we pioneered roof-top rain water harvesting in Rajgarh area and became the first organisation not only in the state but other northern states as well to specialise in rain water harvesting. The technology was well accepted and promoted on a large scale. Seeing the achievements of RUCHI, in 1994, we were recognised as a Technology Resource Centre by the Council for Advancement of People Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) of the Ministry of Rural Development. RUCHI has been involved in watershed projects since 1992. As a replicable model of achieving self-sustainable development, RUCHI established an example of people's participation in managing their own natural resources in Chambidhar area. Our major contribution was in areas of rain water harvesting from roof tops, watershed management, appropriate technologies promotion, micro-credit through women SHGs for economic empowerment and capacity building of local communities for self-reliance.

**Income Generation:** During the course of its operations, RUCHI tried many activities to generate income for self-reliance ranging from handloom weaving units, Angora rabbit farming, floriculture and off-season vegetables, etc. However, we had to stop these activities after 3-4 years due to piling losses mainly because

neither did we have a business acumen nor marketing skills. Moreover, the mindset of communities towards us was different. They looked at RUCHI as an organisation that did not charge anything! We realised Change is a gradual process, not easy to accomplish in a short period.

**Volunteers:** Ordinary people living in remote hilly areas have no access to opportunities to learn and broaden their horizons. This was made possible by bringing in volunteers from developed countries. It helped to initiate a two-way communication channel where they learn from each other, share their views, culture and concerns and make contributions in their areas of specialisation. To promote transparency, we encourage university students to join us as interns or volunteers. OXFAM, New Zealand



and UK helped us a lot for 5 years in promoting our projects on their website. Subsequently, International volunteers started joining us, for a period ranging from 15 days to one year. The interns/volunteers paid for their own food, accommodation and our time to guide them. This helped us meet part of our administrative expenses (50-60%) and made us achieve partial self-reliance. RUCHI has been actively involved in International Voluntary Service sector since 2000 and has been offering short and long-term volunteer placement projects with an aim to provide visiting volunteers a grass root experiential learning opportunity, fostering personal and community development.

**Disaster Management:** Soon after the Uttarkashi Earthquake in October 1991, we were specially invited by the Government of India to adopt five of the affected villages near Uttarkashi district headquarter and help in rehabilitation of affected communities. Using low-cost construction techniques paired with capacity building trainings over a period of three years we expedited rehabilitation process of earthquake victims in Uttarkashi.

**Resource Agency:** The new campus of RUCHI established as a Technology Resource Centre (TRC) started developing in a small village of Bandh in Solan district, Himachal Pradesh during 1995 and became operational from 1996. This also currently serves as our headquarters. As a TRC, RUCHI, demonstrated few sustainable building methods amongst other appropriate technologies and got recognised by Ministry of Urban Affairs as one of their Building Centres to promote construction techniques and upgrade the skills of concrete construction masons. With this in mind (and a view towards social and economic independence), RUCHI introduces technologies deemed appropriate to the conditions. It also uses health and resource management education to socially empower and uplift rural communities. RUCHI was



recognised as a nodal agency by other Ministries and also as a Technology Resource Centre by the Ministry of Rural Development.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, requested RUCHI to function as their District Resource Unit to promote non-formal education and promote micro credit through the resources. During the 8th Five Year Plan, when a separate chapter and fund allocation was made for NGOs, RUCHI was also one of the organisations consulted by the Planning Commission of India.

**Partnership:** Following major partners have supported RUCHI from time to time:

- MISEREOR, Germany
- NORAD of Norwegian Embassy
- OXFAM UK and New Zealand
- Water for Survival, New Zealand
- RNZWCS, New Zealand
- Embassies of Sweden, Canada, New Zealand, Japan
- Water Aid, UK
- Corporate sector: Cadbury India Ltd, Johnson & Johnson, Baggry's, Zomato, Dabur India, HRI, Tata Trust, Shamdasani Foundation, etc;
- Government: Ministries of HRD, Environment & Forests, S&T, RD, Agriculture
- Central Universities of Delhi, Kurukshetra, Kerala, YS Parmar University of Horticulture & Forestry, ICAR, CSIR, XISS, TISS, IIFM, IRMA, DA-IICT, SPJMR...

RUCHI is affiliated with international and national voluntary service networks. We are an EC member of Network of Voluntary Development in Asia (NVDA), full time member of Coordinating Committee of International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) and a candidate member of Alliance of European Voluntary service Organisation (ALLIANCE). Besides international networks, RUCHI also cooperates with national organisations like Institute of Rural Management (IRMA), Delhi School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Science, Xavier Institute of Social Science (XISS). We are also associated with Universities of Delhi, Kurukshetra, Allahabad, Kerala, Shimla, etc. RUCHI hosts students from these institutes and facilitates their experiential learning.

**Awards:** Best community Development Organisation in Himachal from Himotkarsh Trust, Tong Len Award for Promoting the Values of Peace, Good Governance, Equality and Respect for each other by Tong-Len Charitable Trust, Dharamshala

**RUCHI believes;**

- In people's power and their inherent capacity to grow and blossom even in adverse circumstances, when they are given a helping hand.
- In sharing its resources, goods, information, technology and services with the community.
- In the immense strength residing in women, the nucleus of the family to function as a strong catalytic agent in any development activity.
- In participatory development functioning through participatory management.

- Economic change is vital to every social change
- Optimal steady development through utilisation of local resources to ensure economic self-reliance.

Today, RUCHI is what it is, only because of the sincerity and commitment of its team which took a long time to build. Though, the staff strength of 163 at the peak has been reduced to 13 in post Covid-19 era, my focus had all along been on recruiting local youth and build their capacities so that the expertise remains within the local area for long term community self-sustenance. A few of our colleagues who do not even hold technical degrees are recognised and consulted for their expertise in civil works, more so in areas of soil and water conservation.

#### **About the Organisation**

Registered as a not-for-profit society under Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860, since 16th February, 1983. RUCHI has the 80G, 12A exemptions and FCRA registration.

**Geographic coverage:** Solan, Sirmour and Shimla districts of Himachal Pradesh

**Thematic Areas:** Awareness building and empowerment; Environment; Natural Resource Management; Community Health Care; Women Power: Self-help Groups and microcredit; Peace and human rights; Agriculture Extension; Adaptive Research & Technology Promotion

#### **Contact details**

Dharamvir Singh

Village Bandh, P.O. Bhaguri 173233

District. Solan, H.P.

E-mail: [virjids@ruchi.org.in](mailto:virjids@ruchi.org.in)/ Email: [info@ruchi.org.in](mailto:info@ruchi.org.in)

Web: [www.ruchi.org.in](http://www.ruchi.org.in)



# NIRVAIR

Brinda Singh (Batch 1973-75)

## NIRVAIR: TILAK VIHAR COMMUNITY CENTRE

On 1st Nov 2014, at a meeting in Delhi marking 30 years to the genocide against the Sikhs in 1984, a few of the widows and their families talked about their lives and the trauma that they continue to endure. After the initial support from government agencies and NGOs, they felt completely abandoned. They had been assured that they would be supported until they developed the skill set to stand on their feet. That their children would be supported financially and psychologically to pursue their education and access appropriate vocational training skills, to name a few. But none of this happened. As a response to their bitter disappointment and sense of feeling abandoned the Tejeshwar Singh Memorial Trust, a Trust that was set up in my husband's name by his family, friends and colleagues, to pursue and support the diverse interests and activities that Tejeshwar engaged in, resolved to partner with members of the community. The Trust took on the responsibility to address the challenges and to help build a better and more secure future for the families. The NIRVAIR Community Centre was set up in a rented flat in February 2015.. The word NIRVAIR is a Punjabi word meaning 'without hatred, enmity or vindictiveness' a name so appropriate for the women who live in this neighbourhood ...women who have been through the most unimaginable situations ... and yet have a spirit which is indomitable.

Tilak Vihar as per Google Maps is the only **Widows' Colony** in the world. It is home to three generations of survivors of the 1984 anti-Sikh violence in Delhi. The 880 families relocated to this area are still recovering from the trauma they endured. Sporadic government compensation has failed to adequately assist the families to rebuild their lives. They struggle to escape an atmosphere of collective loss. Their living conditions are not conducive for them to move on with their lives.

- 50% of households are women-headed; raising children, fighting addictions and domestic violence, caring for ageing parents while trying to earn a livelihood.
- The families lack access to income-generating opportunities to supplement meagre family resources.
- They lack access to quality education.
- There are no resources for exposure to liberal arts and experiential learning beyond academics.
- The riot survivors still suffer from psychological trauma.
- There is no provision of basic civic services; no public toilets, no garbage collection, open overflowing drains, no public parks

NIRVAIR decided to focus on 5 areas while designing the programme

1. Building a sense of self worth
2. Confidence through experiential learning
3. Safe shared learning space
4. Strengthening the sense of community
5. Creating opportunities for livelihood through skill development

The activities to meet the objectives are:

1. Tailoring Course: Basic (DAV Certified) + Advanced
2. Beautician Course: Basic (DAV Certified) + Advanced
3. Computer Training: Basic and Advanced Modules
4. Learning Centre: Academic support for 3 age groups of children
5. Creative modules
6. Workshops: Building self-worth: Enabling Workshops with partner organisations • Art • Story telling • Puppetry • Hospitality
7. Community Events: Around civic responsibilities: Park clean up; Garbage collection; Open drains to be covered; Street theatre with social messages

The programme was running for about 5 years when Covid-19 hit and like other programmes impacted NIRVAIR too. But this also provided an opportunity to try new approaches, especially the use of technology. Our first priority was to keep the community safe and healthy which was done by installing CCTV Camera system, distribution of free masks and sanitisers to everyone. The challenge was to continue with in-person sessions where the numbers reduced to 5-6 people to a room. The sessions were made shorter to accommodate all students. Most importantly online world was introduced to all NIRVAIR students. WiFi set up in all classes and computer programme started with 8 computers.

Volunteers and collaborators made the online workshops and classes happen

- Art workshops by ART REACH
- Story telling workshops by Storee ki Boree
- Puppetry and performances with KALABAAZ
- The Shop: Income generation with a Women's self-help tailoring group
- Integrated Skill Development Programme (ICPD) in collaboration with SAATHIYA and Women's Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (WICCI)

One of the strengths of the NIRVAIR programme has been continuous reflection, networking and evaluation of the activities to gauge the impact.

*Harleen, joined NIRVAIR in 2020. A young girl who didn't believe in herself and would often refrain from participating and communicating in a group, is able to support her family by earning about 20,000/- a month. She believes the encouragement and patience from her teachers at NIRVAIR is what helped her blossom and gain higher levels of confidence. She was one of the pioneering students from NIRVAIR who willingly stepped forward to seize an opportunity provided by Integrated Skill Development Programme. She was encouraged to enrol herself into a Hotel Management programme. Today, not only has she completed the programme but is also interning with Le Meridian Hotel, New Delhi. She is glad that she made the choice to set out on this journey that has changed her life completely.*

### Tailoring Course

NIRVAIR strives to equip women to find their way to becoming self-reliant. One of the initiatives started this year was to form groups among our tailoring students and to make operating groups that

handle tailoring contractual work. These trail-blazing ladies with the support and guidance of our talented tailoring teacher were the first to seize the moment and take this on. They currently handle contractual stitching work from 'The Shop' and receive remuneration based on the amount of work they get done from the four walls of their home. Their next stepping stone is to achieve larger quantities and form a self-help group and set up a self-sustainable tailoring unit.

The Tailoring Course is a six-month training course Accredited with the D.A.V. Educational and Welfare Society, recognised by the Government of India. Twelve Batches, with 25 students in each batch have completed the course so far. 350 women have benefitted.

### **Impact**

- More than 300 women have completed the course.
- 30% of the women trained have started small boutiques in their homes and are also able to take on additional work from local boutiques. They earn about Rs. 6000/- to Rs. 8500/- per month
- 40% women are not able to spare time for additional work because of the demands of household responsibilities. They save about Rs 1,500 a month by not having to outsource their stitching requirements.

### **Beautician Course**

The Beautician Course is also a six-month course accredited with the D.A.V. Educational and Welfare Society. Total 200 women, 8 Batches with 25 women each have completed the course. The fourth batch of 25 students is currently undergoing training.

*"I have always wanted to be financially independent", says Shalu, a teacher at NIRVAIR. After hearing about NIRVAIR from a friend, Shalu joined as a teacher for the beautician course in 2017. She was initially skeptical, as she was scared of juggling her home and career. Also, in self-doubt about her ability to communicate she was scared to express herself. With the exposure at NIRVAIR, attending classes herself, across several areas of interests and acquiring new skills like being computer savvy and with the support of her team; she has come out as a confident teacher who is an inspiration to many young girls in the community. She stays on top of the latest fashion trends and she further shares this knowledge with her students*

### **Impact**

- 90% of the women who have finished the course are working from their homes.
- More than 225 women have completed the Course. 80% of the women who have finished the course are working from their homes and are also getting work from their neighbours. They earn about Rs 5,000 per month. During festivals and the wedding season they get more work than they can handle and earn up to Rs 10,000 – 15,000 per month.
- 20% of the women are working in Beauty Parlours and earn on an average Rs 6,000 per month

### **Learning Centre**

Unfortunately, many families have no one available to help children with their school work. Poor results meant that job prospects were compromised. For that reason, we started a Learning Centre to help students

studying from Class III -Class XII. The students who visit the Learning Centre are helped in Maths, Science, English, Environmental Studies, Computers and Hindi. So far 150 students have benefitted from this Centre.

### **Impact**

All the students did well in their exams in the last academic year and are feeling motivated to learn. Computer classes that have been introduced gives opportunity to women and children to attain new skills which promises new opportunities.

### **Computer Classes**

We run Computer Classes for students in association with NIIT Foundation for women. Besides young unmarried women, we are also encouraging older women to join the computer classes, which have been a great confidence booster for them. A few of them have got jobs as Data punchers etc and some are earning Rs 15,000 a month. Total 100 students have been trained in our Computer Classes.

### **Workshops and Short Courses**

We also have workshops in Art, conducted by ART REACH and Personality Development workshops conducted by WEBHOR in areas of building self-worth and self-development and helping the children to feel confident to be able to ask questions and clear doubts. We also work with Delhi Police and conduct Self-Defence Classes.



### **Impact**

- In areas of Personality Development, Self-Worth, Child Sexual Abuse, reproductive health, savings, accessing Government run Social Welfare schemes are held regularly with women and children.
- These have significantly helped the children and women in the community to feel confident, clear doubts and ask questions

### **The Road ahead....**

Last seven years of working with the women and children in Tilak Vihar have been very satisfying. We are happy that we have been able to bring smiles on the faces of these families in a small way. We are building strong connections within the community to help them become more self-reliant, identify the

issues that concern them and look at ways and means to address these issues. The long-term view is that one day the Community will run the NIRVAIR Community Centre on its own with support from civil society.



**About the Organisation :** Registered as Trust; 80G and 12A Tax exemptions

All donations are exempt under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act 1961, F No DIT(E)/80 - G/2011 -12/T-1436/858 Pan No. AABTT8446J

**Geographic coverage:** Tilak Vihar, New Delhi

**Partners:** Funding support from Sir Sobha Singh Trust, family and friends

**Contact Details:**

Brinda Singh

Managing Trustee

[singh.brinda@gmail.com](mailto:singh.brinda@gmail.com)

[thenirvairinitiative@gmail.com](mailto:thenirvairinitiative@gmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/thenirvairinitiative](http://www.facebook.com/thenirvairinitiative)

## VI-SH Koranne Foundation

### Heera Koranne Kulkarni (Batch 1974-76)

After getting married to Pramod Kulkarni, another DSSW graduate (1970-72 batch), I migrated to USA in 1982. At that time there was a huge recession and no job openings were available in the Social Welfare field. I decided to expand on my academic studies. I became enamoured with the teaching profession while working as a parent volunteer in my son's elementary school classroom. I enrolled in the California State University and obtained a Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential in 1996 to become a full-time California credentialed teacher. My concentration was in the Multilingual & Multicultural Studies. Later in the year 2000, I completed another Masters, this time in Education Administration, from the California State University. I was hoping to someday launch a charitable educational institute in India. While continuing to serve the local community as an educator in Sacramento, CA, I was inspired to give back to the society.

While working with students and the staff, I realised that there were many misconceptions about the Indian culture in the USA. I thought it would be good to work for promoting a better understanding of our culture. I have a Sangeet Visharad from Gandharva Mahavidyala, Delhi and am a certified Yoga Teacher. In 2003, I started conducting events to promote the traditional arts of India in the local communities. I have been teaching Indian music and Yoga in USA, for the past twenty years at my own Raga academy of Indian Music. The proceeds from the academy after paying taxes are used for charitable purposes. In 2008, I started a non-profit, named Sangeet Bharati to promote the arts & culture of India. The main goal of Sangeet Bharati was to promote communal harmony through better understanding of Indian arts and culture. This was also an attempt to dispel some of the myths and bridge the cultural gaps between the Indian and the mainstream American culture. Sangeet Bharati was functional till the year 2015; however it continued its mission within another NGO that I founded to expand the scope of the Sangeet Bharati mission to serve needy individuals and organizations in India & USA.

In 2005, I started assisting needy individuals and organisations in India with monetary help and also in-kind donations, such as computers. I started touring many non-profits in India during my annual visits. I witnessed some incredible projects during my visits to India. I stayed and volunteered in many remote areas of Maharashtra:

- Anandwan-a rehabilitation centre for leprosy patients as well as persons with disability started by my father's friend, Baba Amte;
- Lok Biradari Prakalp-a hospital & school for the Gond tribe, and a centre for abandoned animals,
- Search in Gadchiroli -provides healthcare to the rural and tribal people and a research centre.

I was also impressed by the work of Manzil, a non-profit in Khan Market, New Delhi, some non-profit centres in Himachal Pradesh and a school for young children of sex-workers run by Swadhar in Budhwar Peth, a red-light area of Pune, to name a few. I extended support to these organisations on a personal basis but wanted to do something in a more organised way in India. In 2010, I spent one month in Pune. With the help of some relatives, I tried to establish a non-profit called Disha-Darshi Foundation for the needy youth and women. However, after returning to USA I realised that a non-profit in India could not be operated with a remote control in hand, sitting in USA.

I continue to support organisations at a personal level which I started doing in 1990. I have a great sense of satisfaction for having supported Shankara Eye Foundation, when they were building a hospital in Indore, M.P.,

the birthplace of my parents; Afghan refugees; Chinmaya Mission building fund, Sacramento, Help Welfare Society in Chhattisgarh, India and Sai Kripa in Noida. During Covid-19, I started offering online music & Yoga classes in 2020, to relieve the tremendous stress faced by families when they could not even step outside of their homes.

**The current organisation VI-SH Koranne Foundation, was established in 2016.** This was done to expand the scope and reach of the non-profit activities in India and USA from personal level to an organisation level. My own, personal monetary contributions and in-kind donations thus became more structured and formal. This also ensured that the legacy will continue even after me and my personal funds allocated for this purpose would be put to good use. My parents, Vishnu & Shashikala were social workers. Vishnu Koranne was a freedom fighter and lived with Gandhi ji and his close friend Baba Amte in the Wardha Ashram in the 1930s. The Koranne foundation is dedicated to their memory & legacy.

### **Objectives: Over-reaching goals - Educate, Encourage & Empower**

1. Present classes, workshops, consultation and concerts in Music of India (includes vocal music, instrumental music & dance) to boost our culture through the traditional arts, promote alternate therapies of Yoga and Ayurveda in the community to preserve our heritage and to teach about the Whole Foods Plant Based Lifestyle to overcome chronic health conditions.
2. Provide mentoring services & programs to youth, through “Youth Engagement for Success” program or Y.E.S.
3. Award scholarships to deserving students in USA and India.
4. Run other charitable activities for the public good.

### **Charitable Work in India**

The charitable work of the Koranne Foundation started in Pune, in January 2016. Two beauty parlours self-help courses were initiated and funded by VI-SH Koranne Foundation in a low-income area of Maharashtra. These courses were designed by Jnana Prabodhini organisation of Pune, India. The Foundation also funded the low-income SDMC Government, run School in Hauz Khas, New Delhi, for the “Learning through Music,” project run by Manzil Mystics, a division of Manzil non-profit in Delhi, India.

### **Fundraising for Indian & local communities**

A fundraiser Ghazal concert for the Kerala Flood Relief victims was held on September 9, 2018 and the amount raised was donated to SEWA International Foundation. In 2019, we raised funds for Annapoorna non-profit of Sacramento through a Ghazal concert by local artists. Starting in the year 2021 the Koranne Foundation teamed up with the SEWA Diwali initiative of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh to collect food items for the local low-income families. Our foundation raised funds to purchase food for the Sacramento Kindness campaign that serves the recent refugees from Afghanistan settling in Sacramento for two years. This is our third year of involvement with this collective effort of the HSS.

In the past three years our organisation could not hold any public events due to the pandemic. But since July 2023, with the Yoga Festival event we have started to pick up where we left off. We plan to raise funds for Humanitarian Action Network non-profit that works with homeless population of Sacramento, California. Other initiatives we plan to undertake are:

- Fundraiser Ghazal Concert to benefit Humanitarian Action Network (HAN). HAN serves the homeless population of Greater Sacramento Area.
- Ongoing Plant-Based Cooking Demos in 2023, to raise funds for HAN by Wellness Coach, Heera
- Food donation drive for SEWA Diwali
- Sacramento Peace Festival.
- Grant scholarships to needy Sacramento high-schoolers entering college
- Undertake new charitable projects in India

### **Spreading the cheer of Holi, Diwali & Culture of India to bridge the cultural gaps in USA**

We present colourful dances, music & activities to non-Indian & Indian audiences to spread the cheer of popular Indian festivals of Holi and Diwali. In March 2019 we were at the Granite Bay Senior Centre to present the Holi festival. In April 2019, we did a presentation of Holi at the public library in Elk Grove, CA. Diwali festival was presented at another library in Sacramento, CA. At the B-Street Theatre a show with Indian music & dances celebrating the life of Mahatma Gandhi was presented in January 2018, to inaugurate the “Gandhi” play and B-Street Theatre’s new building.

### **Presented Indian Music Concerts in 2016, 2017 & 2018**

FREE visiting artists’ concerts were held with Gauri Pathare from Mumbai, India & Pandit Vishwajeet Ringe from Delhi, India in 2016, 2017 & 2018. VI-SH Koranne Foundation supported the International Yoga Day, organised by HSS in 2017 with a grant. We have been celebrating Yoga days on a regular basis. International Peace Festival and 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi was celebrated on October 13, 2019, at La Sierra Community Centre, Carmichael, CA.

### **International Peace Festival & 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, October 2019**

An International Peace Festival was organised by VI-SH Koranne Foundation in 2019. Our attempt is to go beyond dance, music & food at the Peace Festival.



There were panel discussions, breakout sessions, Poets for Peace, multi-cultural dances and music, yoga sessions, screening of documentaries etc. There was participation of academics, artists and other experts from different countries thus making it a truly multi-cultural event. Our aim is to demonstrate that Peace is possible by taking actions at individual and community levels.



## Wellness Programmes

While the pandemic was raging in 2021, I took courses to become a Certified Wellness Coach. I wanted to share the experience of having reversed my own Diabetes in 2015 through adopting a whole food plant based way of eating & by making lifestyle changes. Since 2021 I started a free wellness coaching program called “Heal with Heera”. This program helps the community, especially the Indian diaspora overcome chronic health conditions through whole foods plant-based diet therapy and lifestyle modifications. As part of this programme I have been conducting Whole Foods Plant Based lifestyle coaching and cooking demos. The donations received through this training during 2023 will go to the Humanitarian Action Network in Sacramento, CA.



**Funding Sources:** Our funding comes from the supporters and well-wishers from the community. The Foundation is run entirely by Volunteers. We do not have any paid staff and we have also not applied for any government funding so far.

*“I continue to support charitable causes at a personal level. I feel that I have much more freedom with my personal funds and I can support any good cause without much restriction. To launch the Koranne Foundation initiatives much more thought and planning takes place involving many other individuals. To my mind the Foundation and I are not separate entities.”*

### About the Organisation

Founder/Honorary Director: Heera Koranne Kulkarni

Date of Establishment: May 2016

IRS (Internal Revenue Service) Approved Charitable Entity

California Public Benefit Corporation based in Elk Grove, CA, USA

Tax Exemption: 501 (c) 3 Federal Tax ID: 81-3318314

Website: [www.korannefoundation.org](http://www.korannefoundation.org)

### Geographic coverage

Operates in USA but serves the communities of both USA & India.

### Contact details

Email: [info@korannefoundation.org](mailto:info@korannefoundation.org)

Landline Phone: + 1-916-686-5785

## PRAYATN: A Developmental Effort

Renu Chopra (Batch 1976-78)

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."  
—Margaret Mead

This is a modest attempt to commemorate journey of thirty years of Prayatn which started in 1992. At that time, there was a paradigm shift in the social sector approach. The Welfare Oriented approach of 60's and 70's (where communities were treated as mere recipients of benefits, in the form of delivery of services and goods) was replaced by the Development Oriented approach (where people were at the centre and their participation, an integral part of community development). NGOs came to be recognised as partners in the socio-economic development of the country, which until then had been the sole preserve of the public sector. Even the Government of India, Planning Commission's Plan Document acknowledged this growing important role that NGOs could play. This was the background in which Prayatn came into existence.

Prayatn, was set up by a group of friends (Trained social-workers) to provide continuity to community projects started by the students of social work who were placed for their field work training in the slums of Delhi. Prayatn, started with 21 children in a makeshift arrangement in a two room DDA structure in J.J cluster, at Nehru Place. At that time, I had not anticipated that this step-by-step approach would one day culminate in creation of a school building where one thousand children from disadvantaged sections of the society would be studying in two shifts.

### **Vision:**

A society where there are no weaker sections and disadvantaged and all are equal and active partners in the process of development.

### **Mission:**

To empower the marginalised by building their capacities through education and skill development and enlarging the range of their options.

In the beginning our efforts were directed at making a difference to the lives of those who were marginalised but could make a significant contribution to the development and progress of the country. We had the vision that after working for a few years in J.J. clusters, a situation would come when we would no longer be needed. It was never our aim to grow big ourselves but quietly fade away after ensuring that none lacked access to primary health, education and a decent livelihood. Though our steps were small, our aim was high; to see that the disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society become masters of their own destiny. Having plunged into the world of community development, we were deluged by myriad issues. Working at grass root level gave us a fair understanding of the issues and the needs of the community. Responding to this felt need, we have worked on the issues of healthcare, education, skill development, women development, HIV/AIDS and violence against women. Children, adolescent, youth, women and elderly were our focus in these interventions. Over the years, our efforts have resulted in

greater realisation among community members about their own potential to find solutions to their problems.

The scope of our interventions has evolved with the changing felt needs over the years, all work is integrated because life is complex with multiple influences. Today, Prayatn has 31 years of rich experience of planning, designing, implementing and managing integrated developmental projects through participatory approach involving stakeholders and networks. We work closely with allied organisations and government departments to ensure logical conclusion of work initiated. **Over 700,000 people have benefitted from Prayatn's various projects.**

Prayatn team comprises of a total staff of 55, out of which 47 work full time and 8 are engaged on a part time basis. This has been possible with the support of the Board of Trustees consisting of seven members who manage the affairs of Prayatn. They review the performance of the organisation including the role and functioning of the faculty and staff, give suggestions and monitor the progress and achievements in tune with the plan of action of each project. The Managing Trustee is responsible for implementation of the projects which are executed through qualified and trained staff. The board of trustees meets at least once in every quarter to review the work.

## EDUCATION

Providing education to the disadvantaged sections of the society is an important community-based intervention of Prayatn. Having realised that education plays a major role in the process of empowerment of the poor, not only in giving people greater choices but also voices to articulate their interests & concerns, Prayatn attempts to meet the educational needs of all age groups through its various Education projects.



Non- formal classes for 21 young girls, in the age group 8-14 years, in Dr. Ambedkar Camp, Nehru Place was the starting point of Prayatn's education programme. Catering to the growing demand from the community, Prayatn started non formal education centres for non-school going/ school drop-out children in the age group 6 to 14 years, with emphasis on functional literacy through activity-based teaching. For children between 3-6 years, 'Early Childhood Care & Development Programme' was initiated with the objective to improve young children's capacity to develop and learn. New centres were opened in Sudhar Camp, Kalkaji, Sanjay Colony, and Okhla.

In 1999, Prayatn was identified as a partner in a UNICEF Project, in association with National Institute of Urban Affairs, to implement the Primary Education Enhancement Project (PEEP) in urban poor

settlements of Delhi. During the two-year intervention, Prayatn addressed wide range of issues relating to school enrollment, school infrastructure, parent teacher interface, school community liaison aimed at building community structures, empowering people to raise issues relating to quality of education and functioning of the schools in their respective areas. The major achievement was 100% enrollment of children in the age group of 5-8 years, in and around Dr. Ambedkar Camp, Nehru Place.

In 2002, the J.J. cluster at Nehru Place was uprooted and migrant population was relocated to Madanpur Khadar resettlement colony. At that time the area lacked basic essential urban services and had poor connectivity. Prayatn rose to the challenge and set up a primary school in a hired premises in Madanpur Khadar, to ensure that children who were enrolled in schools in Nehru Place, did not drop out of school and their education was not disrupted due to relocation. Thus, was born De School (now called Seth Vidyalaya), an experiment to provide low cost, quality education.

With ever increasing admission seekers the thought was to build a proper school. This became a reality in 2007, when Prayatn acquired a piece of land with generous support from Seth Foundation, Trustees and other well-wishers. The school building was constructed under technical supervision of engineers from Larsen & Toubro Ltd; Named **Seth Vidyalaya**, after Dr. Ravi Seth, Chief Patron of Prayatn, the academic session of 2009, was started from this new school building. Seth Vidyalaya, (operative in two shifts) an innovative experiment of Prayatn aims at providing quality education to 1000 children from Madanpur Khadar J.J Cluster and mainstreaming them into the Government schools after class V. It adheres to the curriculum followed in Municipal Corporation Delhi schools. The school ensures achievement of age-appropriate levels of learning and completion of primary school cycle.

The school has its own spacious building with all the necessary facilities – Computer & Tab lab, Library, Science & Math Labs, playground, CCTV cameras etc. The school focuses on all-round development of children through participation and learning by doing. Personal monitoring is done at all levels. Development record of every child from Nursery to class V is maintained. Parent teacher meetings are conducted regularly, parents are kept informed of the child's progress and their help is elicited, as we believe parents are equal partners in the process of a child's development. Twice a year every student undergoes a health checkup. Students enjoy a host of extracurricular activities such as – Bal Sabha, sports, art and craft, music, dance, drama, declamation contests, quizzes and yoga. The school aims to realise the potential of each child, to develop leadership qualities and social finesse.

## **HEALTH**

Besides Education, Health and Women Development are the two other focus areas of Prayatn in the community. Prayatn has been providing quality health services to people living in slums, who lack easy access to government run primary health centres / dispensaries / hospitals. The first community-based health centre – Swaasthya Kendra, was initiated in 1998-99. Till date **1,71,145 cases of OPD consultations** have been provided. **School Health services is the other** major health programme of Prayatn. Under the school health Programme all children attending Seth Vidyalaya are provided comprehensive health care services, by a team consisting of a doctor, an ANM and a health worker who carry out medical examination of all children. Cumulative health records for each child are maintained.

## **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT - Changing lives Across Generations:**

Committed to improving our communities, our programmes are integrated and holistic, taking into account practical realities. It is not uncommon for our staff to work with different generations of a family, across various programmes.

*45 year old Rajwati Das has been associated with Prayatn for the last 23 years. Her association started when she came across the Prayatn Vocational training centre in Nebru Place and joined a 9 months advanced stitching course. At first her husband would not let Rajwati attend classes. But three months into the course the field coordinator convinced her husband to let her attend the classes. From then on, Rajwati was both regular and punctual in attending her classes with full support from her husband. She was provided a sewing machine under a Delbi Government programme, (Delbi Social Welfare Advisory Board) – Vocational training programme in cutting and tailoring. Subsequently, Rajwati started stitching people's clothes at her home and became a member of the Prayatn's Self Help Group (SHG). Through her earnings and savings, she was able to help her husband buy a new car in 2017 and got associated with Uber. All her children have completed their primary grades in Prayatn's school and were subsequently admitted to private and government schools. Besides being a doting grandmother, she is a fiercely independent business woman who is running 5 self- help groups, is a local community leader who helps other women in distress with their issues and still runs her boutique from her home. She has come a long way from being a shy, small-town woman behind a 'ghoonghat' to being a confident and outspoken community leader. There are many Rajwatis associated with Prayatn whose lives we have been able to touch in one way or the other.*

Women are more aware of their rights than ever before and lots of transformative changes have been accomplished. Conscious efforts at strengthening the abilities of women to participate as equals in mainstream society have been Prayatn's intention from its very inception. However, violence against women is a major area of concern. Efforts to prevent and reduce violence against women have been attempted by Prayatn through its community-based interventions. We have started a Crisis intervention Centre for Rape Survivors, Family Counselling Centre, Crisis Management Centres and Mahila Panchayats in all the communities we work with. "Addressing Gender Based Violence in Communities by Comprehensive Care and Support to Women Survivors" a project supported by Azim Premji Foundation is aimed at empowering women by promoting their access to livelihood options, gender equality and linking them to appropriate services pertaining to gender based violence through two Community Resource Centres (CRCs). A Mahila Panchayat (MP) comprises of 20-25 community women members who meet once a week to discuss VAW related issues, mediate in the cases and facilitate agreeable action plan. They facilitate survivor's access to services and referrals for police action or legal aid/assistance; oversee the investigation, case registration, arbitration, judgment, and follow-up of domestic violence cases. They also advocate for effective implementation of Protection for Women against Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA).

### **Strengthening local Community based Structures**

Prayatn is working towards developing a sustainable community development model for empowering the communities. Developmental model of Prayatn is aimed at developing **community based structures - Community Resource Centres (CRC) and Mahila Panchayats (MP)** in all its project areas on sustainable basis. The major focus in future is to strengthen the community-based structures. Community Resource Centres (CRC) and MAHILA PANCHYATS (MP) are being set up with the aim of Empowering Communities and Transforming Lives. **CRC** is a facility that has been created with an aim to enable the community to access the resources that are essential for the health, safety and security of young girls and

women, make available the information related to women and children and also provide services aimed at social, economic and legal empowerment of women. The model centres, one each in all project areas have been set up which makes available culturally relevant information about Local Police station, Court, Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLISA), hospitals and information about the rights of women. The resource centres are equipped with information and IEC material for distribution in the community, containing important telephone numbers, helpful at the time of crisis, like Crisis Management Centres, help line numbers, Police, hospital etc. Providing information to young girls and boys on gender issues, various laws, assistance, relief and aid available, through Workshops/ lectures / activity oriented participatory group discussions, is an important intervention of Prayatn.

The difference we have made and the milestones accomplished were possible only because of the whole hearted involvement and full support of the community, dedicated & hardworking staff and our partners. To them we shall remain forever indebted. Our donors and project partners - M/s Larsen & Toubro, Deloitte, United Way of Delhi, Azim Premji Foundation and Seth Foundation have been our steadfast supporters, ever egging and cheering us to the uncharted. Their financial contribution and confidence to stay invested in us over the years has given us immense courage and strength.

### **Future Plans**

While deliberating the way forward to determine the focus of work for maximum impact, education was the unanimous choice among the trustees. The board of Prayatn has set itself the task of providing inclusive and sustainable education by upgrading Seth Vidyalaya till 12<sup>th</sup> grade in a staggered manner. The model being, to provide low cost, holistic curriculum through qualified and trained teachers with learning aids and facilities and with all modern amenities.

#### **About the Organisation**

Type of Entity – Trust; Registered in 1992; Tax Exemptions – 80G, 12A. FCRA registration

#### **Thematic Areas:**

Education, Gender, Health, Community Development,

#### **Geographic Area of Operation –NCT OF DELHI**

Ashram, Nizamuddin, Sriniwaspuri, Madanpur khadhar, Harkesh Nagar, Okhla Phase 2, Gautampuri.

#### **Contact details –**

Name of Contact person: Dr. (Mrs.) Renu Chopra

Address: E -103 Kalkaji NEW –DELHI -110019.

Email - renuchopra1956@gmail.com

## Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation

Anita and Kalyan Paul (Batch 1978-80)

The Politics of Poverty and its associated impacts guided the direction of our professional choices. The holistic course that was offered guided our path as community development professionals/social entrepreneurs. Opportunity to work in India's White Revolution programme enhanced our capabilities to understand the nuances and the power of producer collectives with the correct organisational frameworks. We believed that our role was that of a catalytic agent and the form of organisation should be such that enables innovations to meet the changing needs of the society. The Pan Himalayan **Grassroots** Development Foundation was established as a non-profit voluntary organisation under the Societies Registration Act (1860) at the office of the Registrar of Societies, Delhi since November 1992. Grassroots has been involved with spearheading holistic mountain development in the Indian Himalayan Region. Since inception, Grassroots has focussed on enabling communities to plan, implement, operate, maintain and share the costs of bringing forth change and development in various cross cutting sectors which directly improve the quality of their lives.

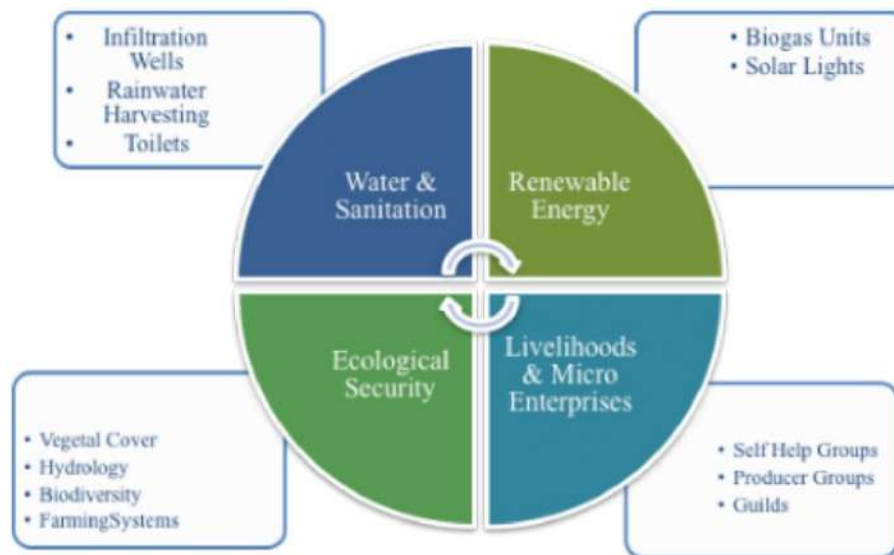


Also implied in the mandate of Grassroots and incorporated in its approach and methodology is the promotion of the 'Entrepreneurial Spirit' - the belief that people can determine their own destiny, establish goals, take risks and invest their time and energy to achieve their aspirations for a better life. Grassroots continues to be a lean organisation and has promoted producer collectives and barefoot engineers as entrepreneurs and independent organisations. These collectives have strong community and market linkages, and function

as the next generation of community based changemakers, that continue to work independently.

The Grassroots story began in Gagasriver basin, Almora District, Uttarakhand with the idea of initiating community driven programmes based on the three pillars of ecology, economy and equity. Advocating for mountain specific policies has been a continuous endeavour by engaging with relevant networks. Over the years by building collaborations, we have been able to spearhead selected programmes in Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Sikkim. **Grassroots has been engaging actively with mountains of the world through the Mountain Partnership initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to focus global attention on the importance of mountain ecosystems and its vulnerable subsistence farming communities.**

The strategy of holistic mountain development could be depicted as below:



### Ecological Security as the backbone for quality of life

The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) is spread over 13 states and union territories, stretching across 2500 kms and is home to nearly 50 million people. People of IHR (4 percent of the country population) have traditionally been custodians of 16 percent of the country’s land area with 70 percent of biodiversity hot spots and one of the world’s largest reservoirs of water resources. The IHR undoubtedly impacts the quality of life for millions living downstream in the Indo Gangetic plains.

Traditionally mountain communities have predominantly been agrarian, connected intimately with nature (adjoining village commons) for meeting its daily requirements of water, fuelwood, biomass supplies in terms of leaf fodder and litter for organic compost for farming systems. In recent times, these communities find themselves to be at the forefront of facing the consequences of climate change and impact of emergencies, the most.

Significant denudation and degradation of vegetal cover in catchment areas of river basins has resulted in poor recharge of water resources, insufficient availability of fire wood and finally has impacted negatively on sustainable mountain farming systems. This downward spiral in the quality of life has led to out migration of menfolk in search of livelihood opportunities adding to the burden of women farmers who now need to trudge longer distances in search of life essentials. Subsistence farming practices have taken a hit with aggravated man animal conflicts, uncertain climate, depleting soils leading to increase in precarity of small family farms meeting the food and nutrition security of households. The loss or lack of title to environmental assets is therefore, viewed by Grassroots, as an additional component of poverty, leading to the conclusion that environmental conservation is actually a necessary fundamental to poverty alleviation.



With sustainability at the core of all activities, communities have been galvanised to form Self Help Groups as the bedrock for all change and development. Inter and Intra basin dialogues, cross visits, capacity building has led to the creation of a dynamic three tier informal structures working in their immediate catchment areas to provide fresh green cover through establishment of village nurseries and construction of water recharge pits in order to improve the seepage of rain water and recharge their water resources. This Initiative is referred to as *Gadbera Bachao Abhijan* and the SHGs



continue to be the custodians of their village commons even after the exit of Grassroots, as conservation of ecosystems is a way of life with focus on inter- generational justice. Cumulatively, this process has led to the communities planting out and maintaining over one and a half million broad leaf fodder, timber and fruit tree saplings. **Positive narratives of enhanced availability of green fodder and improved water flows is an encouraging outcome.**

### Appropriate Technology

To find a fresh balance in the quality of life for such marginalised communities, it was apparent that some appropriate technologies had to be introduced to alleviate the crisis, here and now, and then engage communities in long term dialogues of ecological security, as the bedrock for poverty alleviation. It was also clear that the strategy for bringing forth sustainable change at the grassroots had to be vested in the hands of the communities by building on their skills and knowledge.

### SDG 6- Water & Sanitation

Grassroots has spearheaded the spread of an innovative appropriate technology intervention in the form of Infiltration Wells to tackle water shortages. A guild of local youth has been equipped with necessary skills to install, operate and maintain community managed drinking water resources, without dependence on external agencies. Communities have also been positive about contributing 10 to 20 percent of capital costs of such drinking water facilities. To date, the Outreach impact of this thematic focus area



has been 694 hamlets in 58 blocks of 12 districts of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. **On a typical day these Wells provide 3.50 million litres of safe drinking water to 20,000 households with a population of over one lakh or per capita availability of 35 litres of potable water each day. This**

has resulted in improved hygiene, reduction in water borne diseases and time saving in terms of fetching water. Women now feel that they have more time to devote to their children and in some cases also engage in kitchen gardens due to availability of water, leading to improved nutrition, and generally feel more independent with time in hand to engage in other activities as per their choice.

In addition to Infiltration Wells, Grassroots has also been promoting adoption of roof run-off rainwater harvesting in homes and government high schools which augments availability of water for various requirements, especially toilets, for improving environmental sanitation and reduction in E-coli contamination of water. **UNDP and the Government of Uttarakhand has awarded Grassroots with the SDG Goalkeeper Award 2021, in recognition of this sustainable contribution in provision of enhanced availability of safe potable water in the state.**

### **SDG7 - Clean Energy**

Grassroots has been addressing the issue of clean domestic energy through the adoption of a renewable energy option in the form of biogas units. This reduces biotic pressure on scarce forest resources and provides, clean smokeless cooking gas, impacting positively on household health. Besides cooking energy, farmers also get better digested slurry which supports their farming systems as organic manure and is a win-win situation for households adopting this renewable energy appropriate technology.

- To date, 3200 units have been installed by the youth of the region whose capacities have been built upon comprehensively as barefoot engineers. The farmers pay almost 60 percent of the capital cost for installation of such units.
- On a conservative estimate these units are leading to a saving of at least 1200 truckloads of firewood per annum. Additionally, these units are also off-setting 3.50 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per unit per year leading to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Biogas units have been constructed in three states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim. Currently, the process of technology transfer to Government of Bhutan is under discussion, after successful demonstration of this appropriate clean energy option.

### **Barefoot Engineers as Grassroots Change makers**

Grassroots strategy of selecting local youth and providing them with sufficient skills and knowledge to spread the benefits of appropriate technologies in cross cutting sectors of water, sanitation and renewable energy has been an innovative model for accelerating the spread and adoption of these technologies by communities. These local entrepreneurs are readily available to communities to provide the critical maintenance services as and when required, on the basis of payment of a small fee. Also inherent in this scheme of things is the tremendous potential of employment that has been generated by upgrading the skills of youth that has enabled them to emerge as key players in accelerating the fulfillment of SDGs. Grassroots believes in the process of technology transfer to persons or organisations in order to accelerate the pace of change through collaborative processes of knowledge exchange. These barefoot engineers continue to live and work in their respective communities independent of Grassroots and not migrate in search of livelihood opportunities.

In recognition of its contribution to science and technology, youth engagement and rural development, founders of grassroots were awarded the Jammalal Bajaj award during 2011.

### Markets that Empower

Due to lack of any formal employment opportunities, daily wage labour such as head loading materials at construction sites and other rarely available odd jobs were the only options available for women to maintain their homes and hearths. Rapid appraisals and dialogues with communities strengthened the belief that interventions based on strengths and weaknesses of the region along with market assessments was a critical need. Forming a collective was an option for women farmers, most of whom were managing their lives alone.

To find a fresh balance in the quality of lives for such marginalised farming communities, Grassroots promoted **Mahila Umang Producers Company** as an ethical producer owned organisation, with women as the primary stakeholder. Value-chains based on surplus farm produce and a skill-based initiative such as hand-knitted woollens became unanimous choice for developing producer- controlled value chains linking farm gates to distant markets. Ethical business practices based on deep respect for ecology and non-polluting production processes, focus on agro-biodiversity and seed sovereignty along with complete ownership by communities were some core values adopted right at the time of conception. **For the people, by the people based on Fair trade and not aid was the new norm guiding these actions.**

Umang is guided and governed by a Board of Directors, selected from amongst producer-members and led by a team of professionals from the region. It aims to transfer maximum share of consumer's rupee to shareholders. From subsistence mountain farmers to becoming an active player in the market economy was and still is a challenge which is further aggravated by the fact that markets don't come to the mountains. Building managerial capacities of women's collectives to strengthen market access has been a long process involving enhancement of skills and knowledge at every stage of the value chain.

Small is Beautiful with focus on economics with ethics, which puts people at the heart of things is the principle that Umang strives to adhere...to quote E.F Schumacher, *"Economics without ethics is like a body without a soul, a well without water, a flower without fragrance. Economics should be in the service of humanity, rather than humanity being in the service*



*of economics. Maintaining integrity of nature with focus on restorative ecologies, economics as if people and planet matter. Essentially such economics should be simple, harmless and to be of human scale. He believed that small scale favours simplicity, solidarity, diversity, local and the vernacular."* These sentiments have been the foundational principles guiding actions at Umang. Such examples have a role to

play in the future too, as more and more people globally are striving towards building economies based on regenerative norms with focus on vocal for local.

Umang has a stated mission of empowering mountain women through provision of sustainable livelihoods. This gender inclusive social enterprise has encouraged and enabled self-reliance, courage, and independence by aiding women to use their agency to rework power relations. As one of the members suggests that **'Dignity is everything'**. Opportunity and capability to be able to take decisions that matter in their lives is Empowerment as expressed by its shareholders ([www.umang-himalaya.com](http://www.umang-himalaya.com)). **In recognition of the work done towards building gender focussed social entrepreneurship model founders of Grassroots have been awarded with Janaki Devi Bajaj Puraskar in 2010.**

### **The Future**

As we celebrate 35 years of living and learning with communities, we are also in the process of handing over charge to Generation Next. Equipped with new skill sets it is believed that the function of initiating need - based action would continue to be the focus. Engaging in policy dialogues, mentoring interns, providing opportunities for experiential learning, knowledge sharing activities would continue on the foundations laid in the past.

#### **About the organisation**

We are registered under The Societies Registration Act (1860), Office of the Registrar of Societies, Delhi since November 1992. Also registered under FCRA, we have the 80G & 12A exemptions.

**Thematic Areas:** Skill Development; Social Entrepreneurship; Environment Conservation.

#### **Geographic coverage**

Almora district of Uttarakhand, parts of Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Sikkim

#### **Contact Details**

Anita Paul

[apaul@grassrootaindia.com](mailto:apaul@grassrootaindia.com)

+91 -9412093286; +91 9811177546

[www.grassrootsindia.com](http://www.grassrootsindia.com)

[www.umang-himalayan.com](http://www.umang-himalayan.com)

## A Reluctant Social Worker

Malika Viridi (Batch 1979-81)

Graduating from the 1981 batch, the first turning point for me as a young student at DSSW, was my encounter with the feminist slogan of '**Personal is Political**'. We spent more time performing street plays across Delhi, informing the public on issues like the Mathura rape case and the dowry deaths, than in classes. That vibrant wave of the autonomous women movement gave me a value-based grounding that put the onus of change on each of us, on our individual agency. I worked at **Ankur**, a Delhi based organisation, in collaboration with Action India, in the resettlement colonies of Delhi on alternative education, inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Also worked on community health, with **Saheli**- an autonomous women's organisation. Using an exhibition called **Aurat ka Chamatkar**, we reached out to women from all walks of life, taking each woman's struggle to reclaim our bodies and our agency, together.

But where were these migrants coming from, like water under the doormat, silently and desperately making their way into this unwelcoming city? The city scape, with all its diversity and complexity- of what it offered in opportunity and what it took away in terms of dignity- became increasingly stifling. In 1987, I moved to Ajmer, Rajasthan, to work as a consultant with the state sponsored Women's Development Programme. Working with *sathins* (village community workers) on issues of everyday struggles of village life was both energising and educative of rural realities of caste and power- of patriarchy and the state. We made the **Lal Kitab**, a highly popular graphic book that spoke of women's health, sexuality and about taking back control. Yet while we engaged with these issues in the times of famine, the women could get employment at the state-run famine relief works under the Food for Work Programme, conditional to getting themselves forcibly sterilised under the Population control programme, being run across the country. And as we 'educated' these brave rural women and advocated for greater agency to confront a repressive state policy, we ourselves were safe in our roles of 'social workers', until we challenged the policy itself. The Women's Development Programme was finally shut down and came I came to my second turning point.



If personal is political, should not an 'agent of change' make the political - personal? In 1992, I moved to Sarmoli, a village in Munsia Block of the border district of Pithoragarh, in what was then UP and now in Uttarakhand. I settled on a five-acre plot of land in Sarmoli village with my 6-month-old son and partner, also an alumnus of DSSW. I quit the NGO sector, learned farming and worked to become a member of this mountain community. The region was in the throes of the struggle for a separate mountain state and the slogan of **Jal, Jungle, Zameen** was the battle cry of rural

communities who wanted to get back control of what was theirs.

This pithy 17th Century folk poem describes the English enclosure movement—the process of fencing off common land and turning it into private property- and the same was happening in today's day and age in the name of development, with the takeover of the rivers and forests by the (then) state of UP. What started with the takeover of the Forest Commons or the Van Panchayats by the colonial rulers over a century ago, continued in a different format by the Forest Department, slowly transforming local communities from right holders to managers, and from owners to at best 'beneficiaries'. Challenging the developmental policies like the wholesale damming of Himalayan rivers that lead to displacement and disasters had deemed the mountain communities as anti-development.

The law locks up the man or woman  
Who steals the goose off the common  
But leaves the greater villain loose  
Who steals the common from the goose.

In 2003 I was first elected as the Sarpanch of the Sarmoli-Jainti *Van Panchayat*. I had already worked as a *panch*, or council member for some years and **Maati Sangathan**, a collective of mountain women in our region had gained public recognition as a women lead community organisation. Women of the valley had come together during the statehood movement and when Uttarakhand state was formed in the year 2000, we gave ourselves the identity of **Maati**. For me, it was clear choice to remain close to the ground and the local reality and chose not to form an NGO. Till date Maati remains a collective and has not been registered.



My first term as an elected representative put to test all that we as social workers were taught. Democratic functioning, inclusion of the marginalised, equitable distribution of resources and most of all- being there to face the fallout of each social and political decision and action. Despite all the challenges, it became the most affirming experience, as we galvanised not just our village community but all the *Van Panchayats* of our region. In my second term that ended this year, I was elected the Chairperson of 209 *Van Panchayats* of

Munsiari Block. Our work can broadly be described by these lines from the same poem, asserting our ownership over (and not stealing) the *Van Panchayats* and goes as follows:

The law locks up the man or woman  
Who steals the goose from off the common  
And geese will still a common lack  
Till they go and steal it back.

While **Maati** is a women's group that works on all issues that impact mountain communities, the primary mandate has been to break the complicity of silence on issues of social justice, be it violence against women and members of marginalised communities or by the state, in the name of development and now majoritarian politics. In 2006, along with a 1000 Peace Women across the world, I was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Maati continues to work on issues of food sovereignty and livelihood security that have ensured that traditional rural livelihoods of subsistence farming, livestock rearing and wool work are strengthened. During my first term as Sarpanch, we started a community owned and nature-based tourism enterprise that runs Home Stays and Natural History and Adventure activities. In 2016, I founded a firm **Himalayan Ark** that has evolved as a model enterprise to promote responsible tourism in rural India. This year, our village Sarmoli won the Gold award for the Best Tourism Village of the country given by the Government of India, in recognition of our 2 decade old model of sustainable rural tourism.

My distaste for the power wielded by institutions, especially large NGOs that tend to become handmaidens of the State or then the carriers of the agenda of multinational funding agencies remains. In 2006, I founded **Himal Prakriti- A Trust for Nature**. Himal Prakriti has been working for the past 2 decades in the upper reaches of the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand on environmental issues that impact mountain people and the landscape.



Himal Prakriti is a small

organisation (in terms of staff) that chooses to work with and through village level institutions (the *Gram Panchayats*, *Van Panchayats* and Community based enterprises), playing an enabling and catalytic role so that the 'beneficiary' community become co-owners of projects undertaken and the assets created. The primary focus area has been the strengthening the natural resource base and livelihoods, empowering the Village Republic through education, technology and capacity building that encourages self-reliance and enhanced capabilities within the rural communities of the Himalaya. These include strengthening of natural resource linked livelihoods through capacity building and advocating for the ecological restoration of the landscape through action-research projects, advocacy, outdoor education and citizen science projects.

Work is undertaken along with forest dependent, rural mountain communities (amongst them are the transhumant communities like the *Bhotiyas*) and with forest, livestock and agriculture dependent communities from the SC, ST, OBC and general castes. Our focus group are the right holders in their respective forest commons, particularly women and youth from all the sections of mountain society.

Himal Prakriti is currently running the digital portal- **Voices of Rural India** that was set up during the Covid pandemic lockdown in 2020 as part of the Himal Media Hub. Rural story tellers from 11 states across the country have contributed over 60 stories that talk about their cultural and natural heritage in their own voice and idiom. Himal Prakriti supports fellows from mountain states of Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh to tell their stories and bridge the digital divide. It is as much about taking back the narrative as a celebration of the richness of diversity that exists within Himalayan communities and an acknowledgement of their small ecological footprint that shows the way forward. The Hub also prepares the next generation of rural youth to undertake creative interventions. The aim is to deepen the connect of the youth with their rural mountain landscape and to skill and equip them for taking up green jobs. It also enables them to be the voice of the region and to challenge the present dominant ‘development’ paradigm and to control narrative.

Forging partnerships between mountain communities and our various organizational platforms- Himal Prakriti- a Trust, Maati- a *sangathan*, Himalayan Ark- an enterprise, along with many other national CSOs like Kalpavriksh and Equations, has enabled making the Village Republic stronger and more capable. While Maati works through organized people’s power, Himal Prakriti has sought funding support from various government schemes and CSR support from various companies- most recently the Eicher Group Foundation, Bajaj Auto and Bajaj Allianz for specific time-bound projects of technological innovations, creative nature-based education and capacity building project activities and for the creation and enhancement of community assets.

The journey of fighting for the individual rights of each woman and citizen, to vesting my time and energies in collectivising and organising for citizen’s right through direct democratic processes has been one that binds both- the personal and political in one indivisible continuum.

### **About the Organisations**

Type of Entities-

1. **Maati- A Women’s collective-** A *Sangathan* and business work as an SHG
2. **Himalayan Ark-** a Partnership Firm
3. **Himal Prakriti- A Trust for Nature** (Charitable Trust)

Registered in (year) 2006

Tax Exemptions 12A and 80G

**Geographic Coverage-** Indian Himalayan Region- presently in Uttarakhand (Pithoragarh District), Himachal Pradesh (Kinnaur District), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng District) and Ladakh (Zaskar region- Leh District)

**Thematic Areas:** Empowerment of the Village Republic through education, technology and training, Strengthening of natural resource base and livelihood

### **Contact Details**

Village Sarmoli, Post Munsiri, District Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand 262554,

Phone: +91-9917789950



## Association for Development

**Raaj Mangal Prasad (Batch 1980-82)**

*(With inputs from the current Secretary cum Director of AFD Yogesh Kumar)*

AFD (Association for Development) was born as a registered Society, under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, on 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1993. Its birth as a legal entity has its beginnings in the campus of Delhi University a year earlier, when a group of seven alumni of the Delhi School of Social Work bound by friendship and driven by an urge to take up the cause of the underprivileged and do something different decided to come together. After much brain storming, they decided to focus their attention on a neglected segment of society- namely the crime-survivors, children and women in distress. Drafting the aims and objectives of the said Society, framing the rules and regulations became a participatory exercise which sharpened their vision and set in motion the mission they wished to undertake.

### **List of Founder Members**

Mr. Raaj Mangal Prasad- President  
Mr. Sudheer Michigan- Secretary  
Mr. Sukumar Patjoshi- Treasurer  
Mr. Vivekananda Vivek- Member  
Mr. Gaurav Nidhi- Member  
Mr. Sanjay Bohidhar- Member  
Mr. Prema Viswanathan- Member

It was evident that in India the victims (or rather the survivors of crime), remain neglected at every stage viz- investigation, trial, prosecution and most important their rehabilitation. The criminal justice system here treats offences as acts against the State, not against individual citizens. Violators are punished by and on behalf of the state and not on behalf of the survivor. The focus is thus on the accused, with the survivor being perceived merely as an object, at best a piece of evidence in the prosecution

of the offender. This initial insight about the problem led the founding members to take an approach to empower the survivor and the family through support, information, assistance and counselling to build resilience.

**Vision:** To promote a healthy, self-sufficient, socially aware and responsible society for women, children and youth through effective implementation of community and social development programmes.

**Mission:** To create a pool of sensitised and empowered children, youth and women through the process of participation, teamwork and group action, so that the complex issues and situations are addressed through individual and collective actions.

Pained by the prevailing scenario, where survivors of crime remain just numbers in crime records, AFD went into the field in the district of East Delhi, to assess the living conditions of the crime survivors, how they coped with the system and the problems an NGO may face while providing assistance. An informal survey was conducted jointly by the Police of East Delhi and AFD in 1995, to assess the living conditions and psycho-social status of crime survivors and as expected, they remained unattended and even ignored by the system.

### **Collaboration with the Police Department**

Befriending the police became a strategy, as the police plays an intrinsic role in registering complaints, framing charge-sheets and providing evidence for the prosecution. Further, due to consistent efforts of AFD, Police expressed an interest and then “PRATIDHI” (literally meaning ‘Hope’) came into the

existence, as an off-shoot of AFD. It was meant to be an institutional mechanism to support survivors of crime and was duly registered as a legal entity (Society) in the year 1995. Four members of AFD were on the Pratidhi Governing Board, together with police officials serving in an ex-officio capacity. Pratidhi, was provided office space at Shakarpur Police Station from where it still continues to operate. Initially the services of three policemen were also deputed to work at AFD-Pratidhi.



Since its inception, the organisation has focussed primarily on gender issues mainly dealing with sexual assault cases. Being familiar and having rapport with the police department proved to be an impetus towards channelising our efforts. Focus was on trying to understand the plight of survivors of crime who remained completely neglected, ignored and exploited at every step in the Criminal Justice System and to work towards their betterment. The organisation eventually also started working on issues related to child

rights with a focus on child protection. We simultaneously started organising training programmes and mobilising community support on different issues related to women and children. Unfortunately, the founder Secretary, Dr. Sudheer Michigan, then working as a Reader and Director Field Work, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi died in a tragic accident in Uttarkashi, in the year 1997, which was a big setback for the organisation. On the other hand, the memory of Sudheer propelled the founding members to work harder towards realization of their joint vision.

### **Direct intervention with survivors of crime and children in need of care and protection**

AFD always took up the community intervention on priority basis with the strong commitment to do something different and more impactful. The organisation started working in a resettlement colony 'Mangolpuri', in North-West district, Delhi in 1997, with the focussed objective to empower the community, primarily women, to combat the menace the child sexual abuse. Referrals were given by police stations. Majority of accused in the cases of sexual assault are known to the victim and some are even the family members. A team comprising of counsellors and legal experts handled the cases. The children are easiest targets of abuse because of their physical, mental and psychological vulnerabilities. Social stigma attached with the incident of sexual assault is another important constraint to report the matter. Maximum children where AFD-Pratidhi have intervened are from the age group 12-18 years.

Through direct services to women and children, AFD has intervened in more than 10 thousand cases of sexual assault, child abuse, and provided required help to them for their rehabilitation. Also, identified trafficked children, rescued and restored them successfully and provided support services in the cases of domestic violence. Further, we also facilitated compensation to the survivors of sexual assault under the scheme of the Delhi Government, meant for their rehabilitation.

Few case studies given below provide a glimpse of the situations in which the girls were found.

*Sania (name changed) was from Bengal. She came to live with her Aunt (Bua) in New Delhi, while her parents stayed back in village. She and her aunt worked as household helps in houses. Her aunt's husband was a daily-wage labourer. He had*

*been physically exploiting her and raping her for one month. Sania reported that her uncle on the pretext of medicine used to give sleeping pills to her bua. When Sania's brother-in-law came to meet her, she told him about the incident. He helped her take action against the accused, her uncle, and then a case was registered.*

*Three-year old Fatima (name changed) and her brother Yusuf (name changed) lived with their parents. Both the children went to the third floor of their building to play in the house of a man named Abdul. Their father was a daily-wage labourer and was away at work while their mother was at home. At around 1 pm mother heard the scream of her daughter and rushed upstairs. She saw that accused (Abdul) took off Fatima's clothes and was on top of her. On seeing her, he put on his clothes and ran away; her mother could not stop him. When Fatima's father returned in the evening from work, the mother did not tell him anything about the incident because of shame. On next day evening, when her husband came back from work, he saw his daughter crying due to pain below the stomach. When he asked her, she told him about the whole incident. It was then that he reported the matter to the police and a case was registered. Fatima's mother said that she had washed her daughter's clothes as she did not know that it would be necessary for evidence. Due to lack of awareness about the procedures, this happens frequently which makes it difficult to prosecute the perpetrator.*

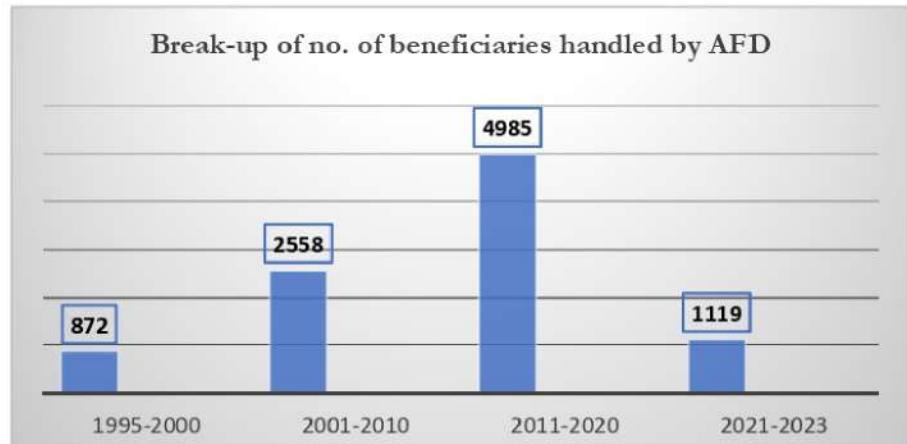
In most situations, the families of the survivors tend to not report to the police largely because lack of awareness about the procedures and law, sense of shame, helplessness and lack of hope that they will get justice. Initial interventions by AFD were geared towards guiding the survivor to access justice, get immediate support and guidance for life ahead.

#### **Nature of Intervention/Assistance**

- **Counselling** forms the foundation of all subsequent interventions. Such incidents cause a lot of emotional disturbance in the family especially when it is a case of incest. There is pressure by other family members on the survivor's family to compromise. Self-blame is common in such cases where the survivors are not able to comprehend the situation and blame themselves especially when criminal charges are levied against their own family member. It is important at this stage to make them realise that they are not responsible for what has happened. In many cases it takes a lot of convincing to make the family agree to file a case against the perpetrator. If the survivor is a child, he/she is unable to understand or articulate the problem. In such cases Counsellors make use of drawings/signs to help the child provide details about the incident, which is so important, if a case is to be registered. Counselling sessions are also held for the survivor and her family members to make them understand the legal processes.
- **Medical assistance** is extended to the survivors, who often suffer from internal injuries. They suffer from both physical and emotional pain. Liaison with the hospital is required not only to provide first aid or more but to be with the survivor to ensure that vital medical evidence is not lost because of negligence on the part of the medical staff or the family.
- **Legal support** to the survivor and the family is extremely important because they do not understand the legal provisions. AFD staff usually accompanies the survivors to the court for camera trial. In some cases, especially for minors, sometimes court orders the counsellor to ask the questions from survivor to record her statement under 164 CrPC. Liaison with the public prosecutor and police officials regarding the cases is done, as per requirement. Discussions are held with the Investigating officers along with the family members. Staff of AFD, accompany survivor to Child Welfare Committee (CWC) - a statutory body under the Juvenile Justice (care and Protection) Act, 2005 for dealing with children in need of care and protection to record their statements.

- **Financial assistance:** There are some schemes which make provision for financial assistance to the survivor and the family in need. For instance, Delhi Survivors Compensation Scheme, 2011 offers financial support. AFD helps the survivor and the family to access such schemes.

Since 1995, AFD-Pratidhi, has intervened in around ten thousand cases including the sexual assault with children and women, child labour, found children, child trafficking, ran away children etc. During the course of interventions over the years, it has been clearly observed that reporting of cases of sexual assault against children and women has increased



specially after the amendments in Indian Penal Code in the year 2012, after the incident of Nirbhaya case and enforcement of special legislation meant for children – Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. It clearly indicates that awareness among the people has increased about the issue. Also, confidence to report such incidents has increased. Despite this, it is also a fact that there are still a number of incidents which do not come on record.

### Capacity Development and Advocacy

AFD has played a significant role in providing inputs for system strengthening because of its vast experience of working with survivors of crime. Advocacy initiatives have been mainly focussed on the effective implementation of legal provisions pertaining to children and women under different legislations such as (IPC), 1860, The Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC), 1973, The POCSO Act, 2012, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000/2015, and The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, to improve the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System, which play a significant role in providing care, protection, treatment and rehabilitation to women and children are faced with difficult circumstances. Further, the Right to Information (RTI), was also used as a tool to get the information and building opinion in favour of child rights.

With approximately 30 years of experience in the field of gender justice and child rights, we have had wide and deep exposure to the functioning of criminal justice and system and juvenile justice system. This experience has also helped us acquire appropriate negotiating skills within the system. As a result, the government and the police have recognised and involved us in tasks such as developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Guidelines and Protocol for concerned authorities/agencies such as Child Welfare Committees, Police, officials of child care institutions, schools etc. Also, being a resource agency, AFD has conducted training programmes for police officials, members of Child Welfare Committees, doctors, media etc. in different states of the India and workshops on Child Sexual Abuse, Gender Sensitisation and Child Rights in Government Senior Secondary Schools of East Delhi and sensitised more than five thousand children.

AFD used Right to Information Act 2005 and Delhi Right to Information Act, 2001 effectively from the year 2006 onwards for advocacy on child protection issues. This also helped in combatting corruption in

purchase of materials in child care institutions run by Delhi Government. Also, our advocacy efforts yielded many positive results in streamlining the system and many children and women have benefited. One of the major impacts of the advocacy initiative is to successfully institutionalise a programme – Crisis Intervention Centre (CIC) to provide support to the survivors of the sexual assault. Due to the success of this initiative, the same has been replicated by Delhi Commission for Women, Govt. of NCT of Delhi in the year 1997-1998 and AFD provided all required inputs to the Commission for the same.

### Partnerships

Currently, apart from the official tie-up with Delhi Police, AFD is also a collaborative partner of Delhi Commission for Women, Govt. of Delhi to providing services to the survivors of sexual abuse of East Delhi. This programme has been institutionalised by the Delhi Government. It has been replicated in all the districts of Delhi under the aegis of Delhi Commission for Women. In each district an organisation has been selected to implement the programme. Monetary support is given to plan and execute the activities. AFD has been given charge of the programme in East Delhi.

Apart from the Support of Delhi Police, Delhi Commission for Women, Government. of NCT of Delhi, AFD also got support from the other prestigious Government., Non-Governmental agencies and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agencies such as Central Social Welfare Board, Child Rights and You (CRY), Concern India Foundation, Action Aid, Christian Aid. PTC Foundation and Hellmann Worldwide Logistics etc.

### Awards/ Recognition

1. Pratidhi has been awarded as '**Outstanding Institution for Women Welfare Award**' (All India basis) for the year 2000-2001 by the FICCI Ladies Organisation. The award was presented by Hon'ble Chief Minister of NCT Delhi, Smt. Sheila Dikshit at a function held on May 7, 2002 at Federation House, Tansen Marg, New Delhi.
2. Delhi Commission for Women, Govt. of Delhi recognised the commendable work done by Pratidhi at a function on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2001. On this occasion Hon. Shri Vijay Kapoor, Lt. Governor, NCT of Delhi honoured Pratidhi for working towards protection of rights of women of Delhi

#### Details about AFD

Registered as a Society in 1993; Tax Exemptions: 80G, 12A. FCRA Registration (Registration No.:231650992)

**Geographic Coverage:** East Delhi

**Thematic Areas:** Violence Against Women and Children

#### Contact Details

Name of Contact Person: Mr. Yogesh Kumar

Address: Room No.38, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Shakarpur Police Station Complex, Ramesh Park, Delhi-110096

Email: [afdngo@gmail.com](mailto:afdngo@gmail.com)

[www.afdindia.org](http://www.afdindia.org); [www.afdngo.blogspot.in](http://www.afdngo.blogspot.in); [www.afdngo.wordpress.com](http://www.afdngo.wordpress.com)

Facebook : [www.facebook.com/pages/AFD-Pratidhi/576069224457579](https://www.facebook.com/pages/AFD-Pratidhi/576069224457579)

## SCOPE Plus

Seema Malhotra (1980-82 Batch)

SCOPE Plus was set up in response to an adult education project which CASP PLAN wanted to implement and required a team to execute. It is an acronym for Society for Creating Opportunities for People's Empowerment. I had prior experience managing Delhi Schools Literacy Project based in Springdales School (DSLPP) which required liaison with several organisations. This common vision of continuing with Adult Education brought CASP PLAN and me together and thus was born SCOPE Plus on 15th July, 1996. It is a Delhi based NGO with most of its projects in Delhi itself. While adult education was an area with which SCOPE Plus began its activities it has worked in other areas too – remedial teaching for school going students, computer literacy, vocational training and more recently extending support wherever required through a committed set of volunteers.

### Vision of SCOPE Plus

Scope envisions a society where empowered people come forward to empower the powerless by channelising existing support.

The organisation has worked towards realisation of this vision through the following programmes.

### EDUCATION

#### Adult Education

Adult education on the pattern of Each One Teach One has been the main plank on which SCOPE Plus started working with communities and organisations. Before SCOPE Plus was formed, I was engaged by CASP PLAN to conduct one training of trainers. This one training extended to 4 more trainings with support from other co-trainers who volunteered to conduct the trainings along with me. My prior experience of working with the Directorate of Adult Education (DAE), under Ministry of HRD) helped in designing the training programme. Soon a team of master trainers were ready to work.

It was at this stage that CASP PLAN encouraged me to set up an NGO so that my experience could be put to use at the ground level and the trained individuals could continue to operate under guidance. We coordinated the adult education of CASP plan in Govind Puri, Sangam Vihar and Badarpur, Tajpur Pahar and Sapera Basti. More than 1500 women were covered by the project. All teachers were from the community and so were the supervisors. They were paid only a small honorarium but they were very enthusiastic and made sure that all the classes were held as scheduled. They felt that instead of sitting at home, they were doing something useful and felt empowered. Later the adult education project was replicated in Jharera Village, and Tihar Jail and extended to the families of staff working there.

#### Pre Schools (*Nav Aastha*) and Youth centres (*Nav Chetna*)

In response to the need of local communities to have a safe place where their children could stay while they came to the classes, we started *balwaris* or preschools. Off shoots of adult education centres were six *balwaris* or preschools in Rajouri Garden, Jharera Delhi Cantonment, Tihar Jail Staff Quarters and Brar Square. On demand youth centres were started for soft skills development and remedial centres

were set up in these communities. The students are still in touch and several of them are doing very well. Most of them are engaged in computer related jobs as they joined our computer centres too.

### **Computer Literacy (*Nav Uthan*)**

Another significant initiative by SCOPE Plus was setting up of computer centres in these communities in 1998 with support from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). It may be recalled that in mid 1990s, computer education was not as accessible as it is today. It created a digital divide among students. The centres were set up for school dropouts so that they gained some skills which could be put to use. Having only the computers at these centres was not sufficient. There was a language barrier too because all instructions at that time were in English language which students did not understand. A guidebook was prepared for the students in Hindi language which made it easier for them to understand and they could handle the computers with ease. Nav Uthan project, as it was named, aimed at bringing computers to Hindi speaking students. Scope networked from time to time with cyber media, NIIT, IBM, Rotary mid-west for computers to run two centres in Tihar and one in West Delhi.

### **VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

#### **Tihar Employee Welfare Association (TEWA)**

SCOPE became the first to work with Tihar staff and families. TEWA readily gave two halls to set up our projects for them. In addition to getting literate the inmates wanted some means of livelihood. This made us focus on various options which would help in generating income too. The waste exchange programme was started by SCOPE. As part of this programme institutions gave us their waste paper in exchange for eco-friendly products made in our income generation centres involving 100 workers (mostly inmates) at any given point.

Scope networked with schools and organisations, and many individual volunteers were a part of the project. However, our biggest success came when we attempted to make jute bags and folders to be used in meetings. Initial success led to its expansion and soon the inmates were making folders in thousands which were supplied to several organisations, including the UN organisations, Airport Authority of India and several other NGOs. The scale of this activity increased to such an extent that I found myself having little time for other activities. Therefore, I handed over the operations to a volunteer who by then had set up her own NGO.

We undertook other activities related to child safety and gender sensitisation with the Delhi Police. I decided to learn more about child safety – the good touch bad touch approach and design a preventive training workshops for children using newspaper cuttings and self-defence techniques were undertaken. To make students understand the issue better, role plays, presentations, videos are shown to young students. The idea is to help each child be safe. We networked with Sunanda Bhandare Foundation for gender sensitisation workshops. About 50



trainings were done in south Delhi Police stations covering 1500 police personnel.

SCOPE networked with the Airport Authority of India (AAI) Wives Association. Scope was able to initiate income generation projects for elderly women living in huts near INA market. With support of HelpAge India, German Embassy and AAI, a notebook making unit was initiated. At present the machinery has been shifted to Rangpuri and is being used by the AAI Wives Association.

### **Helping the service providers**

Since 2014 SCOPE involved community people around Soami Nagar and Panchsheel, where I reside, to support families of hard-working service providers like drivers, labour, gardeners, guards, local vendors and house help and their families. Our volunteers have been working in Soami Nagar Model School and carrying out many activities such as remedial education, cleanliness drive, tree plantation, no honking project, Sunday classes. The volunteers who once link up with SCOPE Plus stay with us.

*Amit Drivedi interacted with SCOPE when in class 8th and now a volunteer. There used to be many events like anti-honking, Swachh Bharat mission or cleanliness drive. Since then, Amit has been associated with Scope. Scope gives a little honorarium which he enjoyed as a teenager. Now a young man doing a job he still finds time doing computer work with scope. He supervises many events conducted by scope like yoga, self-defence classes in the nearby park. According to him he prefers to do something for the community rather than hang out with friends.*

### **Volunteerism**

Over a period of time while working on several initiatives I realised that a number of people are looking for opportunities to extend support to others. What they needed was some guidance and linkages with other organisations/individuals. Our approach in the last decade has been to be a bridge between various organisations and institutions and volunteers and donors. Individual donors (when needed), material support and our products were our funders. All our projects were managed by volunteers who were paid conveyance. Our backbone were the Indian and International students who came for field work and internships. No words can convey the gratitude I feel for each one of them. My family stood by me in all my endeavours.



The NGO's pillars are its volunteers who may belong to different age groups. The youngest volunteer is 6 years and young at heart citizens who are 80+. They give their time, commitment, skills, abilities, and passion



to the organisation. The USP of SCOPE Plus has been providing space to any citizen who wishes to engage in extending help to others but does not know how to do so. Many senior citizens have been able to support other initiatives through their relationship with SCOPE Plus.

SCOPE helps the economically deserving individuals and families by garnering support for them. For example, securing medical or financial assistance for those in need. Today the work has expanded with the participation of student volunteers too. They also do research, plan, and implement projects according to the needs of the community.

### **Disaster Relief**

SCOPE is committed to reaching out to individuals who are struck by unfortunate circumstances. Many natural calamities struck India and whenever need arose, SCOPE's youth group members volunteered to give their support. Team from Delhi School of Social work (1999) went with me to Odisha to do relief work after the 1999 cyclone.

During Kargil war, many students volunteered in managing telephone calls at the army unit. For the Bhuj earthquake, rations were collected. During the Tsunami, SCOPE networked with other Resident Welfare Associations and collected rations, utensils, old clothes, blankets. SCOPE brought together residents from many areas. Many volunteers joined hands to collect, sort, pack relief material. For Nicobar area SCOPE networked with Government officials and helped them load relief material in goods trains. In 2023, SCOPE mobilised the community to donate sanitary napkins and diapers to support the Syrian Embassy after the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake. Due to our small size and nimbleness, we were able to get materials that were needed urgently on one of the earlier flights itself.

The Covid-19 pandemic was quite a tough time for each one of us. Most were confined at home. But this calamity did not stop the activities of SCOPE, though the nature of activities changed according to the need of the hour. SCOPE was able to mobilise volunteers, neighbours and even family members to get involved. The support took the form of making donations to organisations they trusted, mobilising relief work, extending support to inmates of Tihar jail and most importantly looking after some very basic needs of people.

Some of the activities carried out during this period are as follows:

- Funds were raised and donated to NHOs - GOONJ, Earth Saviour and SOS. SCOPE joined hands with volunteers of political parties, Delhi Police, Gurudwaras, Rotary Club Faridabad Mid Town – anyone who was involved in relief work.
- A 'Chapatti Brigade' was formed with help of neighbourhood women to cook food for those walking on roads.
- Mr. Natrajan, the *Matka*<sup>1</sup> Man of Panchsheel Park, was contacted to make water arrangements for the pedestrians. *"We were in dilemma whether to keep water in pots because of Covid, but they decided to give water to the daily wagers walking in the heat. We filled empty bottles donated to SCOPE and handed them over to the migrant laborers. It was humbling to quench their thirst"*. A group of inmates of Tihar jail were given off for three months as parole. They all walked to their houses as there was no transport available after the lock down

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<sup>1</sup> He installed hundreds of pitchers (Matkas) on the roads for the people walking on roads to reach their homes. This made him popular as the Matka Man.

was announced when they were released on the evening of 30th March. SCOPE was able to help 10 inmates to their respective homes.

- SCOPE networked with Rotary Club Midwest, Faridabad mobilised their club members to collect and distribute rations to 25 families of Bharat Nagar, Faridabad
- They joined hands with a local volunteer who had taken permission from the police to feed the stray dogs living inside a DDA park. We gave rations and much needed clay pots.
- SCOPE had been instrumental in procuring and distributing 8000 masks. A volunteer designed a mask and gave work to a tailor who had lost his earning because of lock down.
- They gave sanitisers to service providers too. *"We take empty shampoo and sanitizer bottles and refill them to give to street vendors and delivery boys"*.
- Through the support of a well-wisher running EM3, an agri-services company, we were able to distribute 40 Tablets to senior school students to help them with online learning.
- A teacher from Haus Rani and a student volunteer Shabad living in Shahadra helped in identifying the needy families who were daily wagers. Money was sent to neighbouring grocery stores as most of the beneficiaries did not have any digital platform to receive any money.
- Counselling - guidance and referrals were provided to patients and their families. Students and parents were given guidance for further studies during Covid time.
- A Corona patient associated with SCOPE Plus was encouraged to donate plasma to a patient in Max Saket. The same family has started the App DHOONH to put Covid patients in touch with plasma donors.

The strength of SCOPE has been that we work on the belief that one can make a difference in society. The infrastructure support from Tihar Jail and the home-based office saw us through. In fact, SCOPE never took grants, except for e did get Remedial coaching support from Life Tree and Seagate Technology, which paid for tuition of senior students for two years. Resources are there, all that needs to be done is a link that brings haves and the have nots together. We believe that each individual and organisation has their own strengths so if all join hands it can make a lot of difference in the world. Our journey has been varied, dynamic and fruitful. At times I have been told, *"You have spread yourself too thin."* *"You have your hand in too many puddings."* Yes. That is possible. But the underlying aim has been consistent. Unwavering. To HELP. And we will continue to do that.

#### **About the Organisation**

Registered under Societies Act 1860 in 1996

Tax Exemptions : 80G, 12A

**Geographic Coverage :** Delhi

**Thematic Areas :** Education, Vocational Training, Disaster Relief

#### **Contact Details**

scopeplus@gmail.com

# Youth Enhancement Through Inspiration

Seema Taneja (Batch 1984-86)

*YETI: A story of passion, persistence, perseverance and patience.*

## The beginning

YETI - is registered under the Societies Registration Act since 2012. We have a Governing Body, members and volunteers but no staff, either part-time or full-time. Our NGO operates in New Delhi, and we primarily work in the area of Mental Health. Founded in 2012, by a team of trained social workers, classmates who met over a cup of tea at Dilli Haat; in retrospect, it seemed like the ideal way to cement a relationship, a friendship. Here I would like to mention Dr. Poonam Gulalia, Mr. JPS Negi and Mr. Gurbinder Vohra the founders and alumini who encouraged and were part of the initial board of YETI. There was no agenda, no idea, no social issue that we wanted to address or impact. Instead, it was raw idealism, a thought that now that we are settled in our professions, we could take some time to do more meaningful work for society at large.

Just after its inception, YETI faced its first roadblock. One board member got transferred out of Delhi, a second one had to relocate due to personal reasons, and a third faced issues with business which took up much of his time. Now I was left holding the baby and the bathtub. I did not have any practical experience of working in the NGO sector, just theoretical knowledge. I had no idea about documentation, funds, funding, processes, reports or reporting. I had been working professionally in the last 20 years as a Counsellor and therapist for schools, colleges and Corporates, which was my only strength and skill set.

During my stay in Delhi, my mother, who was president of the South Delhi District Lioness Club, would invite me for giving life skills training in the slum schools sponsored by them. I thought now that we have a registered NGO, let me keep it running with a few activities. Rather than being an individual trainer, why don't I represent myself as YETI- the NGO? This way, I would be able to conduct activities, programmes, and projects and people would also get to know about the existence of the NGO.

## Choosing the area of work

While interacting with the underprivileged students' one stark lacuna emerged. So many NGOs and individuals ran these urban slum centres, but most of them taught the basic three R's. Their focus was on the curriculum, remedial and marks but when the students left after the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, they left with no life-sustaining soft skills. They were not equipped for interviews, had no communication skills or grooming nor had the basic etiquette to go with confidence to college or face an interview or get a job.

YETI had found its niche, its USP. **We decided to work in the areas of life skills and counselling.**

Passion is a powerful driving force that propels individuals towards making a meaningful impact on the world. It seems my passion for spreading awareness about mental health in India just did that.

Thus began the journey of YETI, with baby steps into mental health and life skills.

My son who was a qualified CA, helped in obtaining the PAN Card, opening a bank account and filing yearly tax returns.

We began to exist!

## **Volunteer based approach**

### ***You can't do it alone.***

Two things happened simultaneously.

1. The teachers of nearby slum schools saw the difference a few sessions made. The students also asked for more such workshops. These interactive discussions and activity-based sessions were new to them and they thoroughly enjoyed them. So more and more requests poured in.
2. My neighbours' and acquaintances' children, my sons' friends, most of whom were looking at post-graduate studies abroad (where one major requirement is experience in a social sector/NGO) wanted to volunteer, so they joined in.

Now YETI had projects and volunteers. This marriage has lasted for more than a decade and is still going strong. The schools we collaborated with were demographically located in South Delhi. Some came to us through the Lioness Club, and some were recommended by our friends and associates.

### They were schools run either by religious institutions;

Don Bosco School,

NGO run – Ankur – Greater Kailash 2

Arya Samaj Mandir run school – Greater Kailash 2

Raghunath Mandir school – Kalkaji

Guru Nanak Garib Niwas school - Greater Kailash 2

Guru Granth Sabih Vidyamandir – Chattarpur

### Or run by individuals

Anubhav ek ehsaas – Khorī gaon

Udaya – Nilgiri apartments Alaknanda

The fact that we did not have any full-time volunteers worked well, as the schools could easily take time on Saturdays for activities as weekdays were already booked for academics. And our college-going or working young adults also had free time on weekends. Soon we had volunteers from all professions; we had Lawyers, IT professionals. Teachers, experts in hospitality, finance, economics, management, each one in their special way helped in enhancing the quality of the work we were doing. Some of our original volunteers are still an integral part of YETI and some are now part of the board. Other volunteers kept coming and going, they got placed in reputed colleges and jobs and kept in touch.

In the last 10 years YETI with its ever-growing volunteer force, has worked on imparting life-enhancing skills, grooming, spoken English, etiquette and mental health awareness training. Topics included self-awareness, addiction, sports activities, career, anger and aggression, conflict, peer pressure, dating, health camps, sex education, etiquette and related activities. Classes 9-12 were our primary focus in the schools, as this age group is on the verge of entering the real world.

Our group sessions work towards making youth resilient, and empowering them with skills to cope and survive life's eventualities confidently. Our team of trained psychologists assisted in making the modules, training the trainers, and providing on-camp counselling.

### **Sustenance without formal funding**

The office was in the Garage! Meetings were held in the drawing room, over chai, samosa and bread pakoras! Sessions were conducted at school locations and their premises! Our CA worked pro bono. Our website was developed by a volunteer. Our projects were designed in such a way that we could use our personal skill sets and professional competencies during the weekends.

So, we did not need external resources.

We made a considered decision not to seek funding as that would require an administrative set-up and dedicated staff. Since we were all working part-time with the NGO, nobody had the bandwidth to take on that responsibility. We were waiting till the other board members could devote more time and take YETI ahead.

Sometimes the schools we were working with came up with requirements such as school supplies, toys, books, clothes, shoes, sanitary towels, diapers, toys, computers, woollen clothing, schoolbags etc. We would then mobilise our contacts, do a small crowd funding, request for a specific item and then procure it and distribute it to the schools we are attached to. We once replaced single-use plastic with steel utensils for mid-day meals in a school. We also encourage donations in kind, by publicising our requests on Instagram and Facebook.

During Covid-19, we provided rations in a school, to families of 70 girls whose parents were daily wage earners and had lost their jobs due to the lockdown. As awareness of our work grew in the community, people connected with our goals and aims, they synergised with our cause, came forward to help, and we were offered space, resources, materials etc to aid us in our mission.

We will forever be grateful for this community involvement, which kept us going.

### **Conversation Connect – A unique concept**

YETI's urban mental health initiative.

It began with a sad incident. We lost an ex-student to suicide. While meeting and discussing with old colleagues and other students at the prayer meeting, a need was felt to form a safe space to connect, talk out, and discuss issues related to mental health. Following that, we floated a questionnaire on a Google doc and received over 850 responses. All expressed the same need – not everyone needs therapy, but we all need a safe, non-judgmental space to discuss issues related to our mental health.

This gave birth to **Conversation Connect** - a community helping to break the stigma around mental health, encourage awareness, acquire knowledge and gain acceptance of mental health issues.

Conversation Connect: *Baatcheet*, started to address concerns of depression, anxiety, stress and conflict. Through this, we attempted to help individuals identify red flags, and early detection signs of

psychological problems, and offer professional intervention (if necessary). Our core team has counsellors and psychologists equipped to help. Our approach focuses on ‘catharsis’, the process of talking and releasing, providing relief from strong and repressed emotions. Through events, activities, and group discussions, we build a safe and open environment for them to speak freely, and reflect on their emotions and behaviours.



For each session, we would decide on a topic and advertise on social media and to our contacts. There were no criteria for attending; no age, sex, or special needs were exempted. The format of the session was seating in a circle, with no hierarchy, a mediator for regulating the flow of the topic, and a few planned activities. Maximum time was given to expression and discussion.

The response has been very encouraging, we have had 18-75-year-olds, and we have autistic and visually challenged people as attendees. We shifted these sessions online during Covid-19 and got a positive response online too. Though we are now back to offline sessions, the requests from out-station people are making us ponder on options for holding online events again.

### **When actions are based on good intent, the soul has no regrets!**

Our outreach so far

Name of school and number of students impacted in each centre

- Khorī Gaon (rural area) – 150 children
- Udaya (rural area) – 70 children
- Khushi (rural area) – 60 children
- Arya Samaj Mandir (rural area) – 130 children
- Raghunath Mandir School (rural area) – 40 children
- Guru Granth Sahib Vidya Kendra (rural area) – 50 children
- Gurunanak Garib Niwas school (urban area) – 200 children
- Government boys senior secondary school Saket (urban area) -40 children
- Tihar jail – 20 under trails
- Conversation Connect – 250 + urban youth

## **Future of YETI**

We have been receiving requests for more involvement in schools to set up counselling centres, hold teacher training, and supervise social work and psychology interns. We have also been asked to conduct sessions both online and offline so that people outside Delhi can also participate and start support groups. However, we are limited by the paucity of trained mental health professionals on staff.

We have been running without funds till now but to be able to pay psychologists, we will need funding and then a fully functional administrative staff. We are in the process of putting our house in order and also getting our tax exemptions certifications in place. We are also working on constituting a new functional board which will include people who can devote more time.

A new beginning is on the horizon, a dawning sunrise. Let's see what the new day brings.

**About the Organisation:** Registered as a Society since 2012

Has 80G and 12A Tax registration

**Geographic Coverage:** National Capital Region

**Thematic Areas :** Mental health and well being

**Contact details– YETI**

Email - [yeticontact@gmail.com](mailto:yeticontact@gmail.com)

Phone - 9319327072

Seema Taneja– President

Phone - 8800835056

Email- [seematan@gmail.com](mailto:seematan@gmail.com)

Website:<https://yeti.ngo>

Insta handle: [www.instagram.com/yeti\\_ngo/](https://www.instagram.com/yeti_ngo/)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/yetingo/>

## **Vihaan: A Centre for Differently Abled**

**Shailja Sharma (Batch 1992-1994)**

I had opted for Personnel Management and Human Resource Development as my special paper while pursuing my MSW. Who knew that destiny will take me in a very different direction and I will develop expertise in an area to which I had very limited exposure. I am a mother of a 24-year-old handsome nonverbal autistic boy Tanay and a neurotypical girl Tanvi. Tanay had no delay in physical milestones and was a happy child. However, we were able to discern that he was a special child. He attended a Special School till the age of 9. Something changed at this stage. He would cry without reason and was unable to communicate what was bothering him. It was perhaps an onset of epilepsy.

A general perception about autism is that autistic individuals are high performing. It is just that they have communication problem as a result find it difficult to form relationships. Autism is a neurobiological spectrum disorder which affects communication and social behaviour. Individuals with autism tend to engage in repetitive behaviour like spinning, flapping hands etc. Autism can occur alone or can be associated with other difficulties like mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy or learning difficulties. Globally, one child among 64 suffers from autism.

Even at this point in time there is very little awareness about autism in India and there were hardly any institutions for training and development of individuals with autism. I realised that going to this school was not helping Tanay. There was sudden change in his behaviour which required a different approach. I realised that I needed to educate myself to be able to help him. I interacted with many experts throughout the country, volunteered to work at Action for Autism founded by Mary Barua. I attended various workshops, worked with Kamayani (School and sheltered workshop for mentally challenged), Pune and also got myself self-trained on the job under the guidance of Mrs. Sunita Lele (renowned special educator in Pune) to know about autism and its management. While getting trained, I also acquired license as Rehabilitation Social Worker from Rehabilitation Council of India so that I could work with differently abled as a professional.

In 2011, I established Vihaan (A Centre for Differently Abled). The core objective of Vihaan is to help individuals with special abilities, to have a happy, independent, productive and inclusive life through focussed training. Many parents joined the initiative soon to achieve similar objective for their wards. Functioning under the aegis of TALENT-PAD Trust, an organisation helping differently abled individuals in and around Pune, Vihaan has touched the lives of around 100 families through its various programmes like: Full day independent living, vocational training, weekend skill building, family counselling and online sessions for Differently Abled.

What started as a small initiative for Tanay, has gradually grown into a centre where other children (now youth) started attending. We have 11 individuals attending the centre. The need is much greater because we keep getting requests for admission from many other parents, which we are not able to cater to due to limited space and resources. Our endeavour is to create a happy and safe place for individuals where they are engaged meaningfully and helped to have a dignified existence. The staff therefore have to be compassionate who have a non-judgemental and ready to be buddies to the students. Students attend the



centre from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m where they do group exercises, calendar reading where they discuss about the date and anything significant about the day, the weather, any festival. This helps them to increase their general awareness. All the activities are carried out with the help of 5 staff members including me.



**Main focus areas of training at Vihaan are:**

- ADLS (Acquiring Daily Living Skills): Members are trained to perform routine activities independently like personal grooming, housekeeping, shopping, walking on road etc. to acquire independent daily living skills.
- Functional Education: Members are trained for functional education as per their abilities following individual IEP.'s (Individual Education Program) for Communication, Maths, Science and Music. This is accustomed to help them acquire independent level for ADLS and Vocation.
- Vocation: Differently Abled Individuals have to be trained to work in a sheltered environment according to their area of interest and ability to be meaningfully occupied and to be able to earn their living, if possible, later in life.
- Inclusive, independent living: Individuals in Vihaan learn to work in group under supervision of trainers so that they can have an independent inclusive life later. Parents support only in structuring the module for training. This is a preparation for our members to lead lives without their parents later in life.
- Public awareness about autism: In general people lack awareness about autism, therefore, are not mindful about their requirements. We conduct awareness campaigns and training programmes for different categories of people. I started by holding sessions of people living in the Housing Society where we reside. It has now been extended to other areas and institutions.



**Vocational Training**

Vocational training forms an important part of our activities. Successful training helps in minimising associated behavioural issues and boost self-esteem of these Differently Abled individuals. Training plan is formulated for each individual after assessing their strengths. Skills have to be imparted to them carefully and systematically. It is a slow process which is why we do not take bulk orders. Due to lack of space, we cannot install machines. Our priority is to make good quality products, even if these are in smaller quantities.

We train our members to create seasonal products like *Rakhis* for *Raksha Bandhan*, *Tobran*, *Rangoli's*, Floating *Diya's*, *Haldi-Kumkum* boxes etc. for *Diwali*, Hand bound diaries for *New-year* and *Organic Holi*

Colours for Holi. Envelopes. Key-chains, anklets and paper bags are produced regularly. All activities including shopping for raw material, creating products and packaging of products are carried out by members under supervision of adult trainers. Products made are then displayed and sold through exhibitions at various Schools, Institutions and Societies. These events not only showcase talent of our members but also help create awareness and garner social support. During the pandemic Vihaan team has been conducting online sessions for its members for their meaningful engagement and happiness and also helping members to sell products made by them through online portals. We make sure to party after we sell our products and make some profits.



Feedback by the parents tell us that we are making some difference to the lives of our members.

*"Vihaan means sunrise, and so was the new beginning of our association with Vihaan and Shailja since 2015. It has been an incredible journey of hope, love and care with great learning"*

*"Vihaan has provided a safe nurturing place for our children with a dedicated, sensitive and caring team of teachers under expert guidance of Shailja. It is helping develop social, vocational and life skills. It is not just a Centre but a Happy Place for our children. Do visit Vihaan page on Facebook for further insight"*

#### **Future Plans of Vihaan:**

So far, we have carried on with our activities on a small scale but the experience we have gained with this in-depth work is very valuable. However, instead of expanding ourselves we would like to extend technical support other organisations willing to work in this area. We would also like to work in partnership with other organisations

- to have a day boarding facility for training and development of differently abled individuals.
- to conduct training programs for parents and professionals in and around Pune.
- to create sheltered workshop for differently abled.
- to create respite facility for differently abled.
- to conduct various awareness programmes so that people know more about autism and other disabilities.
- to generate resources and funds for the needy.

**Type of Organisation :** Trust with 80G Tax Exemption

**Geographic Area :** Pune, Maharashtra

**Thematic Area :** Disability (Autism)

**Contact Details**

Contact Person: Mrs. Shailja Sharma

Address : B-101, DSK Janhavi CHS,  
Opposite Suryadatta College,  
Bavdhan Pune – 411021

Phone: +91-9325462852

E-Mail: [shailja.sharad@gmail.com](mailto:shailja.sharad@gmail.com)

## Youth Mobilisation for National Advancement

Kumar Deepak (Batch 1995-97)

In the year 1987-88, as a student of statistics in Patna University, I chose to select a survey topic related to drug addiction among youth. This one assignment gave direction to what I would do in future. While conducting the survey, I became aware about the problems related to drug addiction and could not turn a blind eye to it after completion of my assignment. I joined hands with a few friends to start working in this area. These friends were from different streams - Engineering (Bihar College of Engineering, Patna), Medicine (Patna Medical college) Statistics (Bihar National College, Patna University) Sociology (Patna College, Patna) and Home Science (Patna Women's College). We shared a passion to work in the area of drug addiction and continue to work in this area over three decades now although we work on other issues too.

We registered an organisation by the name -**Youth Mobilisation for National Advancement (YMNA)** under the Society Registration Act of 1860, in December 1988. There are seven executive committee members, 53 full time and 5 part-time staff working in our organisation, taking care of various activities.

The **Vision of Our Organisation** is “to help the people in distress with professional support and to empower them to help themselves, through involvement of the community “

The **Mission of the organisation** is

- To make community drug free, helping, supporting people in the trap of addiction with empathy
- To make the street free of beggary with community support
- To make children free from fear, enjoy their childhood with peer support, achieve education and skill to take care of themselves and contribute to society with their innovation and skills.
- To empower Women with their rights, skills and a secure environment

### **Disha De-addiction and Rehabilitation Centre Programme**

Our first counselling centre was set up at Patna, on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1989, with support from Central Government, for prevention of drug abuse in Bihar and Jharkhand. In due course of time the Centre was upgraded into De-addiction and Rehabilitation centre and started serving geographical areas of Bihar and Jharkhand.

The Centre has a team comprising of a Psychiatrist, a Psychologist, Professional Social Worker, Paramedical Staff. Rehabilitation team members/staffs help the substance abuser to come out of the trap of addiction. Family Counselling provided by Psychologist/Social Worker helps to understand problem of the patient and preparing the family to support the patient while under treatment and after discharge from the Centre. Follow -up by Field co-ordinator/Social Worker helps the client to understand their problems after treatment and getting support in family/society. Becoming self-reliant is very important. Therefore, the programme includes skill development, soft -skill training, referral for employment to help them earn a livelihood.

We follow the following process in our rehabilitation centres:

- Counselling/case work/ family counselling/ group counselling/ group work with the referrals
- Psychological assessment of case admitted and psychiatrist's evaluation and monitoring of medicine to take care of withdrawal and allied mental disorders.
- Proper health care with yoga, meditation and daily routines
- Regular re-education classes, role play activities
- Peer Group support when and where needed by recovering addicts
- Follow- up of patient/client after discharge
- Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholic Anonymous(AA) group support the patient /client discharged from centre through their 12 Step programme which is a standard process adopted to see that relapse does not happen.
- On call follow-up after discharge - 15 days, 1 month, 3 months, 6 months then annual basis. If there is a relapse we render services to the client/patient all over again.

Although our target group was youth but it gradually extended to individuals from all age and strata of society. We understood the needs of women and children in addiction and started a separate rehabilitation centre for them. After treatment children were enrolled for Studies under National Open Schools and Universities. Counselling and encouragement contributed a lot in mainstreaming them. Many children have grown up and are now leading a normal life. **More than 50 children were supported to come out from trap of addiction and integrated with education and skill development**

We conduct various awareness programme round the year. For example, UN Declared Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in association with Narcotic Control Bureau, Ministry of Home affairs, Govt. of India. School Awareness programmes are also organised on monthly basis.

### **My Association with the Department of Social Work**

Saddled with degrees in statistics, Mathematics and operational research and experience of working with YMNA for about 7 years I wanted to deepen my understanding about the social sector. This led me to the Department of Social Work, Delhi University where I applied for admission. The course and interaction with the faculty members helped me get a wider perspective about the work we were doing. While doing my block field work in Ranchi, I engaged with TELCO at Jamshedpur. I was offered a job by them, but I wanted to return and continue with the work we were doing. I took up individual consultancy assignments to supplement my earnings but did not give up on the work of YMNA.

### **Working with women engaged in beggary**

Working full time on the issue of drug addiction we had established our credibility and were recognised for our work by the State Government. In the year 2013, we were approached by the state administration to help them deal with the problem of beggary. The problem of beggary, as we all know is a difficult area to work in. Most individuals who beg on streets have no choice. In most cases they are pushed out of their homes to fend for themselves because of family circumstances. One finds an increase in number of beggars on the streets after some disaster situation or a natural calamity such as drought and floods. Many a times the problem is compounded by mental illness because of which family members are reluctant to support

them. Living on the streets is not safe for girls and women. They are exposed to exploitation. We decided to see how to deal with this complex problem.

There were immense challenges. Although budgetary allocation had been made there was no scheme at that point in time through which the allocated amount could be routed. As a result, we were not given any resources to plan a programme for beggars. It was not possible to sustain any programme with the available resources, so the first task at hand was to develop a scheme. In the interim, the state government provided funds to support 50 women. We prepared a scheme with support from TISS which was named Saksham, through which YMNA received funds

Shanti Kutir Mahila Punerwas Kendra supported by Department of Social welfare, SAKSHAM under *Mukhya Mantri Bhiksha Niwaran Kendra*. The programme was launched by conducting a survey in areas where there were more beggars. Female beggars were identified and informed about the Centre and the services it offered. Initially it was very difficult to convince the women but gradually they understood the benefits and were open to living at the Centre. Our approach was to make them feel at home and acquire skills to lead a life of dignity.



Currently there are 10 beggary related projects in Patna. A 50 bedded facility was added in 2019, which has helped us plan programmes for immediate relief and rehabilitation. Our staff proactively identify women engaged in beggar. These women are sent to the Kendra, where we offer the following services to them:

- Motivating such women to seek supportive services by field coordinator/ MSW/BSW along with psychologist/case Manager
- Provide shelter, food, nutrition, medical support
- Provide regular encouragement for learning skills for self- empowerment
- Encourage them to join the government social security support: The inmates are helped to get their identification proofs such as AADHAR, PAN Card etc. Bank Accounts are opened through Jan Dhan Yojana, Widow pension, Old Age pension, Differently-abled pension etc.
- Family identification and repartition with family where possible
- Skill development, education, employment support where it is possible
- Follow-up on regular basis with family if repartition done with family
- Follow-up in field level if rehabilitation has been done under the self-help programme or employment programme

*Radha Rani (name changed) lived happily with her parents and five siblings. She was the youngest amongst the children. Life changed for her when both her parents and a sibling passed away. The other siblings were married and living with their spouses. She had enrolled herself in a college to complete her graduation. She was married off before she could complete the course. Unfortunately, she was subjected to domestic violence and made to leave the home and her 10 year old child. This impacted her*

mentally and she started hallucinating. Her siblings were reluctant to support her in this condition which left her with no choice but to beg on the streets.

She was found begging on the street and convinced to go to the 'punerwas kendra' where she was given a lot of care. She got her Aadhar Card and started attending classes for skill development –she liked making snacks and embroidery, so she engaged herself in these activities especially making snacks (burgers, sandwiches, chura badam, litti chutney etc). She went out for local excursions with other friends she had made. Life is looking up again and she has started earning and saving money. She even went to cast vote.

More than 350 women in similar situations have been rehabilitated either through repatriation with their families or by offering them means of livelihood.

**Partnership:** YMNA was supported by following several Government Departments and other organisations in last 33 years.

- Ministry of Welfare, Government of India (now Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment )
- SAKSHAM (Department of Social Welfare, Government Of Bihar)
- UNODC (now UNDP), UNDP, ILO, DFID, NISD

#### **Non-Funding Support by**

- Department of Psychology, Patna University
- Department of Sociology, Patna University (MSW course students and Faculty)
- NCB, MHA, Govt. of India
- Patna women's college Student volunteers

#### **Awards**

- YMNA General Secretary, Kumar Deepak was Awarded “ Real Hero of Bihar Award”
- YMNA CEO, Mrs Rakhi Sharma was awarded with ‘Bihar Nari Shakti Award’ for her work as CEO

#### **About the organisation**

Registered under Society Registration Act ,1860 in 1988

YMNA has 80G, 12A exemption and FCRA registration

**Geographic Area of Operation** –Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh

**Thematic areas:** Drug addiction and Beggary

#### **Contact details**

Kumar Deepak , General Secretary, 604, Indraprastha Apartment, West Boring Canal Road, Patna -800001

Mobile : 9431018682/80902200222 Email –id : [kumardeepakkd@gmail.com](mailto:kumardeepakkd@gmail.com) )

## **Association for Welfare, Social Action and Research (AWSAR)**

**Tara Chand (Batch 2001-03)**

I was born in a small village of Aligarh in a family of marginal farmers and agricultural labourers and grew-up there for the first few years of my life. I migrated to Delhi at the age of five, with my father who was working in Delhi as a carpenter while my mother stayed back in the village to take care of the aged grandparents and other siblings. I spent his early years in a slum in Delhi and completed my primary and secondary education from government schools. I was an average student but was good in extracurricular activities including National Social Service Scheme (NSS), dramatics and poetry. It was at this period that I was introduced to a nonprofit organisation running early childhood education classes and engaged in other development work in my neighbourhood. I started volunteering with the nonprofit at the age of 14 and also joined NSS in school.

As an NSS volunteer, I conducted classes for many illiterate senior citizens under 'Education For All'. This developed my interest in working for the development of people coming from underprivileged communities. The National State Resource Centre for National Adult Literacy Mission at Jamia Milia Islamia, trained me in street theatre and script writing through Shri Govind Pandey, a well-known Bollywood actor. I used this skill to act in over 50 street plays over the years. My journey was riddled with challenges, stemming from my socio-economic background and the absence of career guidance. However, the head of the nonprofit, Mr. Arun Tandon, a professional social worker, played a pivotal role in my life. He persuaded his parents to grant him the freedom to pursue my aspirations.

With my mentor's encouragement, I explored my interest in social work and enrolled in a B.A. (H) Social Work programme, at a Delhi University college, where I was introduced to inspirational figures like Baba Amte and the work of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. This experience kindled my resolve to reducing inequalities and supporting the underprivileged. In 2001, I enrolled myself in the Department of Social Work to pursue my Master's degree.

AWSAR in hindi means "opportunity". I believe that getting the right opportunity at an appropriate time can go a long way to help the underprivileged. Based on this belief, along with my friends and batchmates I started the Association for Welfare, Social Action and Research, India (AWSAR) in 2002, while I was pursuing my masters.

After completing my post-graduation, I started my career with the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. My work at CAPART allowed me to collaborate with a variety of organisations, both government and non-government, across states like Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.

As per the Contract, I was eligible to apply for seed funding to start a nonprofit at the end of my contract period. I used this seed fund provided by CAPART to establish Association for Welfare, Social Action and Research India (AWSAR), a nonprofit that provided technical support to other nonprofits and conducted research in the social sector. AWSAR is one of the few voluntary organisations promoted

by the CAPART, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, under its Starter Package to Young Professional Scheme.

### **Governance**

Our Governing Body comprises of professionals from diverse background including few DSSW alumni who have worked with organisations of international repute. Additionally, activities and programmes of AWSAR are managed by a team of professionally trained and well qualified staff operated under the guidance of the Chief Functionary. Currently we have 10 full time staff members to run our programmes.

### **Our Programmes**

We started our programmes in Dankaur block (now part of Yamuna Expressway Authority) and Ashok Nagar, (an unauthorised colony in Delhi).

### **EDUCATION**

Our organisation, located in Dankaur, has always maintained a strong presence in the neighbouring villages. Our journey began with the provision of Early Childhood Education Centres and over time, we have evolved our services to encompass remedial education and vocational training aimed at enhancing individuals' employability. Our training programmes cover a diverse range of fields, including computer applications, dress designing, and beautician courses. These programmes have now become self-sustaining.

The area where we worked had many brick kilns. These kilns typically operate for just eight months each year and predominantly employ migrant workers from other states. During this period, the children accompanying these workers face difficulties in attending school regularly, which affects their education adversely. We decided to work with these children. AWSAR conducts annual enrollment campaigns in April and August, ensuring that these children do not miss out on their education. In addition, we have established remedial centres to provide academic support and pre-school education centres. Over the years, we have observed that children who attend these pre-school centres show better academic performance and adjust in regular schools more effectively.



It is noteworthy that our pre-school centres run with generous support of brick kiln owners. These owners provide us with space and essential educational materials, making them invaluable partners in our mission. AWSAR has successfully enrolled approximately 2000 children into mainstream education so far. Moreover about 1300 adolescent girls who received training in our programme are able to stitch their own clothes and earn by stitching clothes for their neighbours, as many of them are unable to work far from their homes.



## CHILD PROTECTION AND CHILD SAFETY

From 2010 until August 2023, AWSAR played a pivotal role in the operation of the renowned Childline service (1098). In August 2023, the government made the strategic decision to merge Childline with the Emergency Helpline (112) and assume direct control of its functions. Throughout this 13-year period, AWSAR made a significant impact, directly assisting more than 5,000 children and raising awareness among a staggering 60,000 individuals, including children as well as adults.

This journey was truly transformative, affording AWSAR a wealth of invaluable experiences. The organisation expanded its reach across 250 villages within the Dankaur and Jewar blocks of Gautam Budh Nagar, fostering profound connections with local communities and building vital partnerships with government departments. The Childline Initiative not only heightened AWSAR's presence within the community but also honed the skills and capabilities of its staff across diverse domains. This collaborative effort showcased the power of dedicated community engagement and the positive impact it can have on the lives of countless children and families.

## EMERGENCY RELIEF

AWSAR has played a pivotal role in actively engaging in disaster relief efforts, demonstrating a commitment to helping those in times of crisis. One notable instance was our response to the devastating Jammu and Kashmir floods, where we successfully raised 30 lakh rupees. These funds were a lifeline to over 4000 individuals, thanks to the generous support of the DLF Foundation. The impact of this initiative was immediate, providing essential aid to those affected by the calamity. In another instance, during the Chennai floods, AWSAR sprang into action. With the invaluable assistance of college volunteers and employees from donor organisations, we swiftly assembled and distributed emergency relief kits. This quick response was crucial in ensuring the well-being of the flood-affected communities, highlighting our ability to act promptly in crisis situations.



The Covid-19 pandemic posed unique challenges, impacting both people and stray animals. AWSAR demonstrated its unwavering commitment by distributing food packets to those in need. This effort underscored our dedication to supporting not only human communities but also the welfare of stray dogs during these challenging times. To mobilize the necessary financial assistance for these relief efforts, AWSAR utilised crowd funding platforms like GiveIndia and Ketto.

Through these experiences, AWSAR has honed its ability to rapidly mobilise support when it is needed. Disaster relief efforts require swift action and effective coordination and our track record demonstrates our readiness to step up and make a difference in times of crisis. As we continue with our journey, we remain dedicated to providing aid and support to those affected by disasters, ensuring a more resilient and compassionate society.

## SOCIAL RESEARCH

AWSAR has been actively involved in a multitude of research projects and surveys, contributing significantly to the formulation of policies and programmes for various institutions. In particular, our participation in Pratham's annual survey has been instrumental in shaping our educational initiatives. Additionally, we have undertaken several baseline surveys and comprehensive studies for esteemed organisations, including the Prakriti Foundation, ERM India, Institute of Reproductive Health, Georgetown University, Delhi University, and the DLF Foundation. The involvement in research has been greatly facilitated by my training in Master of Social Work (MSW), which equipped me with the skills and knowledge required to tackle these assignments effectively. The efforts in research and survey work have not only provided valuable data but have also contributed to evidence-based decision-making in various fields, ranging from education to healthcare and community development.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

AWSAR has undertaken a variety of activities throughout its journey, each serving a purpose, even if some could not be sustained over the long term. We would like to highlight two specific activities which were brief, yet pivotal in making us understand our organisational limitations. These experiences have guided us toward a more focussed and informed approach in our mission.

- 1. Manufacturing unit of low-cost sanitary pads:** Menstrual health is an area where we were keen to work and make an impact. We had been carrying out awareness programmes for girls and women through our existing programmes and decided to extend it by setting up a manufacturing unit to make sanitary napkins. We wanted to set-up a unit to provide sanitary pads at a low cost in rural areas and also provide a means of livelihood for women associated with the enterprise. The idea was to set-up this unit as an enterprise for the women and by the women. A manufacturing unit was set up in Village Badha, Manesar, Haryana with support from a corporate Foundation and also partnered with BINTI a UK based organisation working on menstrual hygiene.

We were however, not aware of was that these machines could run only on main electricity supply and not on small power generators/inverter. Power supply being very erratic in this area, this initiative could not be sustained beyond a point. Furthermore, the long-term sustainability of such enterprises requires consistent support over a period of 3 to 5 years, ongoing guidance and hand holding. The experience with the sanitary pad manufacturing unit highlighted the importance of understanding the practical challenges involved in executing initiatives and the need for comprehensive, long-term planning to ensure their success.

- 2. Tele-medicine:** This was another very useful initiative which was carried out in 10 villages of Haryana. It entailed imparting training to the frontline workers – the ASHAs and *Anganwari* workers to monitor some key vitals of people they came in contact with – mostly women and children – to identify early signs of illness. We tied up with a doctor who would interact with the patient and the frontline workers over a video call then prescribe medicines to the patients. This initiative gained significant traction, with positive outcomes. However, its sustainability became a challenge. The

service was offered free of charge, and in some instances, communities did not fully appreciate services provided without cost. Considering the increasing popularity of teleconsultation, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, introducing a nominal fee could have ensured the self-sustainability of this programme. It underscores the notion that valuing services often goes hand in hand with a reasonable cost, making them more enduring and effective in the long run.

### **Future Plans**

Reflecting on the programmes we have carried out over the years, we would now like to focus on fewer areas. We have identified two areas which we would like to develop. One is Consulting, where we will extend support to other organisations in conducting good quality research, assessments, baseline studies, social and environment impact studies. The other area which we wish to develop is a technology platform to provide mentoring support to students and assist professionals share their experience and knowledge to help students.

It is our strong belief that guidance at the right time has the power to change lives – the way it changed mine. Mentoring is even more important than giving money. Nothing is impossible in this world. If I could do it anyone can; provided they receive timely guidance and opportunities for education. All the students should follow their passion and pursue it with full commitment and perseverance. They should opt for a career close to their heart and mind. Hard work and a focussed approach could do wonders to help anyone achieve whatever they wish to do.

### **Partners – Funding as well as non-funding**

Over the last two decades, we have undertaken several projects with the backing of a diverse range of governmental and non-governmental organisations. These include the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, Childline India Foundation, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Arcelor Mittal Foundation, Jubilant Bhartia Foundation, DLF Foundation, Prakriti Foundation, ERM India Pvt. Ltd., Essel Social Welfare Foundation, and Give India, among others. These partners have played a crucial role in supporting our initiatives and contributing to our mission.

#### **About the Organisation**

Registered under the Societies Registration Act 21 of 1860, 22 May 2002.

We have 12A, 80G Tax exemptions and FCRA registration valid till 2026

#### **Geographic Coverage**

Delhi (North-East District) and Dankaur Block, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

#### **Thematic Areas**

Child Protection and Child Safety; Education; Skill training and livelihoods; Emergency Relief

#### **Contact details**

Raj Shree Singh / Vikas Kumar Joshiya

E – 353, New Ashok Nagar, Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi – 110096

Phone No. 9891625350

Email: [awsarindia@gmail.com](mailto:awsarindia@gmail.com), [support@awsarindia.org](mailto:support@awsarindia.org)

Website: [www.awsarindia.org](http://www.awsarindia.org)

## Banasree Sustainables

Preeta Chaudhuri Ghosal (Batch 2011-13)

*“For women, the underwear is not only an essential product for human dignity but also linked to menstruation.”*

In India, the social taboo of associating shame and the notion of ‘impurity’ to menstrual blood has distanced women from the concept of sanitary hygiene. It is common knowledge in the rural community, that women do not invest in either underwear or sanitary napkins to manage their periods. The lack of both the products presents a significant deterrence to safe menstruation.

As a Founder of ‘Wear Equal’ I spent a decade doing fieldwork in remote pockets of the country. I discovered the huge gap in accessing underwear for rural women, whereas for men the commercial brands had last mile market presence. Back home, I saw tonnes of premium fabric being wasted post large-scale production in my family’s garment manufacturing and export unit. I felt these scraps of textile waste could be utilised to make underwear - the smallest but most significant garment for women. I decided to utilise these fabric scraps to make underwear and launched my brand – ‘Wear Equal’ in 2020.

‘Wear Equal’ is a social & environmentally conscious intimate wear brand. Born with a vision of equality, it strives to provide access to safe and sustainable underwear to women from all walks of life. Since 2020, the brand has been using the cross-subsidisation model for distributing quality underwear to women and girls in rural India through its NGO partner and direct market channels. The brand has also carried out research in remote parts of the country to better understand the current attitudes of rural women towards menstruation management.

### **Inclusivity, Equality & Diversity**

Their understanding that, from the point of view of underwear – there aren’t enough products available in the market to cater to differential needs of women, has encouraged them to do more homework and thoughtfully design each product. *“Initially, we took steps in making our collections size and fit inclusive, and eventually, we went further to design underwear that could functionally cater to women with a variety of diverse needs. Such as we launched a special range of functional underwear for prenatal or postpartum use and later, an **adaptive underwear** for women with restricted movement especially the elderly/ bed-ridden/ wheelchair women”*

### **Circular and zero-waste production with sustainable materials**

The brand’s production is done using the circular design model which emphasises on upcycling whatever is available as surplus in the factory – textiles, trims, accessories. Further, their signature prints are screen-printed with certified organic colours which ensures that the products are both good for environment and for the skin!

### **Organic supply chain**

The GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) certification of their supply chain helps to ensure that the organic cotton products adhere to the standards all the way from the organic farms, the spinner, the knitter, the dyer, and the manufacturer of the garments.

## Reducing Carbon Footprint

Creating clothing is energy-intensive. However, an upcycled product has a very low carbon footprint! Neither are resources wasted on making virgin fibre nor is fuel utilised to transport the raw materials. Thus, from textile manufacturing all the way to the consumer phase, carbon footprint is reduced against traditional industry practices.

## Reducing Climate Change

Climate change is the biggest issue our planet faces – and the fashion industry is a big part of the problem. Production emissions release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Upcycling helps to reduce carbon emissions across the supply chain.

## Women Empowerment

Every purchase gives back to society through our NGO Partner – ‘Project Stree’. Project Stree’s mission is to empower rural Indian women and girls by increasing awareness about hygiene habits and challenging the stigma around women’s health. Through the NGO tie-ups, the brand supports workshops by not only providing subsidised underwear to distribute among rural women and girls but to also advocate and educate young girls on the importance of underwear for safe menstruation.



## Research at Grassroots

The brand’s research team carries out studies to understand the issues of physical, social, and economic access in remote and rural parts of India. With a focus on North-east India, which is closer to our headquarter in the city of Kolkata, we get to research some of the most economically backward regions that also have low road and transport connectivity and reduced level of education among the community. *“In our grass-root studies spread across multiple districts and distinct tribal groups, we find out about the underwear choices and sanitary awareness among adolescent girls and women.”*

*“Wear Equal has been socially and environmentally conscious from the start. Right from the fabric we chose to make our products, all the way to the fair practices of manufacturing. As a brand, we have endeavoured to constantly assess the progress of our mission, measure our achievements and work on solutions to improve our impact!”*

The brand has partnered with Livabl, an external audit organisation based out of Chennai, to calculate our social and environmental footprint and comparing that against traditional industry practices. In this exercise, Livabl looked across the entire supply chain, from the raw material sourcing to manufacturing, through to the product delivery and consumer phase.

Basis the data calculated by them in adherence to GHG (Greenhouse Gases) protocols, the following metrics were analysed

- Textile Waste
- Use of chemicals
- Use of water
- Use of energy
- Carbon emissions
- Benefit for women

Livabl also carried out a life-cycle analysis of our products and here is how we differ from conventional products (briefs), available in the market

A Conventional brief	A Wear Equal brief	Wear Equal Difference
0.5424Kg CO2 emissions used	0.2934Kg CO2 emissions used	46% lesser
636 mL water used	54 mL water used	91% lesser
1.248 KWh energy used	0.474 KWh energy used	62% lesser
3.89 sq meter soil sprayed with harmful pesticides, fungicides and synthetic fertilizers	3.89 sq meter soil saved from being sprayed with harmful pesticides, fungicides and synthetic fertilizers	100% lesser

The brand’s operations exhibit the benefits and environmental savings when better practices were used. And in doing so, they were aligned with the following Sustainable Development Goals.

- Decent Work
- Reduced Inequalities
- Responsible Consumption
- Climate Action
- Life on Land
- Gender Equality



With their mission to uplift in rural menstruation, they have supported 3800 girls with subsidised underwear in a span of 2 years

## Partners

Manufacturing : Deeps Textstyles Pvt. Ltd.

Social & Environmental Audit : Livabl

Social Impact : Project Stree

Environmental Impact : India Wasted

Banasree has been mentioned in the following media articles among others :-

- Feministaa Official : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjiyu9HbXRk>
- Refash India : [https://refash.in/blogs/interviews-with-brands/intimate-wear-as-a-vehicle-of-change?\\_pos=1&\\_sid=2c19e7cbc&\\_ss=r](https://refash.in/blogs/interviews-with-brands/intimate-wear-as-a-vehicle-of-change?_pos=1&_sid=2c19e7cbc&_ss=r)
- Brown Journal : <https://brownliving.in/blogs/brown-journal/empowering-women-one-underwear-at-a-time>
- Homegrown India : <https://homegrown.co.in/article/804149/indian-innerwear-brand-promotes-inclusivity-and-sustainability-with-their-unique-products>
- Breakthrough India : <https://inbreakthrough.org/instagram-body-image/>
- Pure & Eco India : <https://purecoindia.in/people-saw-piles-of-waste-she-saw-opportunity-and-underwear/>

### About the Organisation

Proprietorship Company

### Geographic Area of Operation

*Pan-India operations*

*Headquartered in Kolkata, West Bengal*

### Thematic Areas

Menstrual health and hygiene

### Contact details

Preeta Chaudhuri Ghosal

Address : 28 – A, JK Ghosal Road, Kolkata – 700057, West Bengal, India

Phone : 9990126387

Email : [preeta.dtpl@gmail.com](mailto:preeta.dtpl@gmail.com)

# Janman People's Foundation

Shourya Roy (Batch 2015-17)

My first exposure to community work was through NSS (National Service Scheme) while pursuing my graduation from the Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi. My friends and batchmates actively participated in the activities organised by the NSS wing of the college. Four of us - Shashwat, Priyam Agarwal, Rajeev Rai and I - resolved that whatever profession we pursue after graduating from college, we will continue to engage with people at the grassroots level. We graduated in 2014 and while my friends have become professionals in different fields – law, accountancy, scientific research and social work – we kept our dream alive and came together, whenever we felt help was required. I joined Department of Social Work in 2015, which further strengthened my resolve to do community work and helped in structuring my thoughts. As part of my concurrent field work, I was placed on a project 'Unnat Bharat', which proved to be my real training ground and gave me the confidence that I could take up challenges and work on social issues.

In 2019, there was an outbreak of brain encephalitis in Muzzafarpur district of Bihar. Using our meagre resources and support from few faculty members and batchmates from the Department of Social Work, we carried out an awareness campaign in the affected region and promoted the use of home remedies for prevention. It was in April 2020, when Covid-19 struck the country and the lockdown was affecting the migrant population, we knew we had to do something. We created a network of friends and well-wishers and organised relief work across 10 states and UTs which was the need of the hour. As our relief work expanded into multiple states, we gave our initiative a formal structure by registering it as a Section 8 Company. The organisation came into formal existence in August 2020, right in the middle of the Covid Pandemic.

## **Vision:**

To create a Sustainable future of empowered and inclusive communities through behaviour change, civic engagement and access to justice.

## **Mission:**

Our mission is to build a compassionate and equitable society that champions social protection, fosters positive behaviour change, and empowers individuals to actively engage in civic life. Through transformative initiatives, we strive to create sustainable pathways for an inclusive and just world.

The programmes we plan are based on our own experience of working at the grassroots level.

## **RELIEF WORK FOR MIGRANT LABOURERS DURING COVID-19**

In early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic brought the world to a standstill, leading to nationwide lockdowns and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in India. One of the most heart-wrenching aspects of this crisis was the plight of migrant labourers stranded in metro cities, including Delhi. Amidst the chaos, the Janman People's Foundation facilitated, the safe return of thousands of migrants to their hometowns. Relief work reached ten states by offering the following services :

- Travel Support to 8800 stranded migrant labourers from Delhi-NCR to their villages in UP, Bihar and West Bengal



- Dry Ration support to more than 3 Lakhs migrant labourers and cooked meal support to 10,00,000 homeless labourers.
- Free oxygen and ambulance support to Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Covid infected persons in Delhi-NCR and Purnea district of Bihar
- Milk and glucose biscuits to pregnant women and lactating mothers in two villages of Bihar and Jharkhand

*One fateful night during the early days of the lockdown, a team from the Janman People's Foundation was distributing food to the homeless and stranded migrants on the streets of Delhi. During this mission they came across the Dharamveer family, a rickshaw puller from Roorkee, Uttarakhand, who was headed to Nalanda, Bihar, with his wife and three young children. The Dharamveer family's journey was nothing short of a tragic odyssey. They were traveling on a rickshaw piled high with their meagre belongings, determined to reach their hometown in Bihar despite the adverse circumstances. However, tragedy struck when a speeding car collided with their rickshaw, leaving the entire family injured and in a state of distress. Janman Team managed to arrange a bus for the family and their rickshaw from Delhi to Nalanda, Bihar. This ensured the family's safety and provided them with a much-needed sense of security during these uncertain times.*

### **SAAHIL**

In 2020, Bihar and Assam witnessed floods due to the incessant rains. We launched Project Saahil and provided relief to flood-affected families in these two states. In 2021 and 2022, we continued with our relief work in the annual floods. We got support from Feeding India, Bisleri, and Bhabha Atomic Centre, for our relief work. While working on this project we realised that there is hesitation on the part of general populace to even discuss issues related to menstruation. When we wanted to send sanitary pads to the flood affected areas, we were advised to send soap instead. It made us realise the importance of working on this issue. We decided to work towards breaking this mindset.

### **BOOND**



On 8th March 2020, International Women's Day we launched Project Boond with a mission to educate adolescents (Boys and Girls) and end the stigma about 'Periods' in society. With our focus area in Delhi-NCR and Bihar, we are working on creating menstrual-friendly slums and menstrual-friendly panchayats in both our areas of intervention. Through Project Boond we are working on the Social and Behaviour Change model reaching out to both schools and communities and engaging with various stakeholders. As part of implementing the project, we have done Training of Trainers of school teachers, workshops with school students and community outreach programmes in Varanasi, Lucknow and Alwar. Janman initially focussed on providing sanitary napkins in relief work, but this initiative has evolved into a broader movement.



We have established successful collaborations with organisations such as Project Bala, Menstrupedia Comics Pvt. Ltd., and The Moon Catcher Project based in the USA, to implement Project Boond. Through our menstrual health and hygiene workshops, we have extended our outreach to various underserved groups, including women inmates in prisons, out-of-school adolescent girls in communities, self-help group (SHG) members from migrant communities, sex workers, and other vulnerable populations. As on date, we have reached out to over 11,000 menstruators in the community, more than 400 government school

teachers, about 7500 government school students and 100 female inmates in prison, 300 sex workers. We have worked in more than 50 schools and 300 slums and villages in 5 states/UTs. Project Boond's primary objective is to foster a menstrual-friendly environment within society.

### **Jan Nyaya Abhiyan**

Shashwat, one of the four founding members, who is an advocate by profession leads this initiative from the Patna region. Janman reaches out to rape survivors and MSMs and helps them with the legal proceedings. We are also advocating for setting up a High Court Bench in Punea district which is a very backward region with few facilities. People have to travel a distance of 310 kms just to file a case. Having a bench within the district will make it easier for them to commute. Issues are taken up as and when we realise the need to intervene and give voice to people in need. For instance, when the caste census was carried out in Bihar, Transgender population was categorised as OBCs, thus denying them their identity. Janman filed a case and this lacunae was noted with an assurance to rectify the error in the next caste census.

### **Partners:**

We have been working in collaboration with multiple organisations. Since we have not completed 3 years of our registration, we have not received any grants till now. Though, we get in kind support from various organisations.

- For Disaster Relief Work we have partnered with Zomato, Feeding India, Goonj, Bhabha Atomic Centre, *Jeevan Stambh* Foundation, Mahindra Logistics CSR, HRLN, The Bigger Picture etc.
- For Social and Behaviour Change communication interventions, we have been partnering with various organisations such as Shashi Kiran Trust, Project Baala, Habitat for Humanity, *Gyan Deesha* Foundation, Sarayu Foundation etc.
- For CSR implementation we have partnered with BATA India and Ecom Express

We at Janman recognise that communities are best placed to identify and address their unique challenges. We collaborate with local communities, government bodies, and other organisations to provide relief services during disasters, like the annual floods in Bihar and alleviate hardships faced by people. With our community-driven approach, we have been working tirelessly at the grass-root level to bring about positive change and provide support to the last person standing in the queue. We hope to

continue to strive towards creating a better future for all. Our journey has just begun. In less than five years we have been able to get some useful work started. It has largely been due collaborations and networking since we have used social media as an important tool to increase our outreach.

**About the Organisation**

The organisation is registered as a Company under Section 8 of the Company Act and the CIN number is U80100DL2020NPL368861. The organisation has 12A and 80G exemptions.

**Geographic Presence:**

Janman works in Delhi-NCR and in 8 districts of Bihar namely Purnea, Katihar, Kishanganj, Araria, Patna, Muzzafarpur, Vaishali and Bhagalpur.

**Thematic Areas :** Social and Behaviour Change, Access to Justice, Relief and Rehabilitation

**Contact details:**

B-493 Vasant Kunj Enclave

Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110070

Phone –9953591267

E.mail : [janmantrust@gmail.com](mailto:janmantrust@gmail.com)

Instagram : [www.instagram.com/janman\\_org](https://www.instagram.com/janman_org)

LinkedIn : <https://www.linkedin.com/company/janmanindia.org/>

Twitter : [www.twitter.com/janman\\_org](https://www.twitter.com/janman_org)

# Sampark Sathi Foundation

Prem Ashra (Batch 2017-19)

During my field work days while working in the slum areas of Shastri Nagar in Delhi, several people would come up to me with their different problems. These problems were varied in nature but mostly related to access to services for lack of information. Since the organisation I was placed with focussed only on the education aspect, I could not help them beyond a point even though I was aware that many of these problems could be resolved by simply linking them with the relevant organisation. This experience stayed with me and after graduating from the college I decided to work in this area. I have always been solution oriented and wanted to bridge this gap which would benefit a large number of people. The solution was simple – giving them access to information so that they could help themselves. With this vision, Sampark Sathi Foundation came into being in the year 2021, which gives voice to the underprivileged communities to express their concerns and get it resolved through a network of NGOs and government institutions offering services.

## Vision

- To make millions of individuals **aware** of and better able to **access** the resources offered by NGOs and governmental institutions.
- To lead a volunteer movement called **Sathi (Volunteer) of the Underprivileged**. The title's meaning is "friend of the underprivileged." Every beneficiary needs to be accompanied by a Sathi since doing so makes them feel empowered.

## Mission

- Our mission is to create a network through which underprivileged people can raise a concern and resolve their problem.
- Our mission is to reach out to people through our network of community volunteers. Using a collaborative approach, provide them choices and enable them to access those services.

## Problem Statement

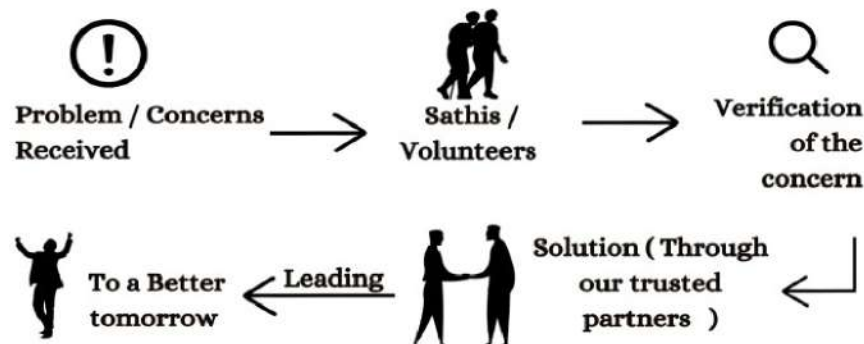
The Central Statistical Office of India states that there are around four NGOs for every 1,000 people in urban areas. There are many welfare services available for the underprivileged through various NGOs and governmental institutions but these sections of the population are not only unaware but they also do not have access to reach out and avail these resources. Simply filling up a form is a challenge for them for which they run to others and often get cheated. One of the biggest challenges in our country is lack of awareness about the services and entitlements. No matter how many products we build or how many services we create for people in the underserved communities, unless these reach the right citizen



who can actually benefit from those services in a consistent and sustainable manner, the objective of these programmes are unlikely to be met. Although Sampark Sathi is a very young organisation, experience tells us that access to information is key to many solutions.

### Solution and approach

The foundation of our organisation is to work through volunteers. Most of our volunteers are service providers who work closely with the community -ASHA workers, *Pradhans*, *Angamwari* workers. Since they touch the lives of people living in the community on a daily basis, they are aware of the problems people face and whenever they identify someone facing a problem they contact us. We also have a set of volunteers, mostly college students, who want to work in the communities. These Sathis verify the authenticity of the issue and assess its requirement. This helps in narrowing the nature of services required. We receive requests for resolution of problems/concerns across **thematic areas** of health, education, human rights, skill and livelihood, govt welfare schemes.



We then provide a resolution to the problem with the help of our partners (NGOs, govt agencies, private individuals). When we receive these cases, we collaborate with the NGOs or Government Institutions that have expertise in that particular problem and our volunteers/*sathis* take up each problem and manage the case. For instance, we noticed that we were receiving several cases where people had cataract but did not know where to find affordable treatment. Therefore, we contacted Dr. Shroff's Foundation to take up such cases. All that was required was finding a bridge between demand and supply. People faced a problem and the Foundation had a mandate to meet the target they had set for themselves. Similarly, when we get to know that sanitary pads are required for some people, we connect them with the organisation Goonj who make low cost and very affordable sanitary pads.



In this manner, we are able to resolve multiple problems across all thematic areas, and age groups in a quick manner. We at the Sampark Sathi Foundation believe that everyone should be able to voice their concerns rather than wait for NGOs to approach them. While we have a sense of satisfaction of what we have achieved till date, we are mindful that in order to increase our outreach we will need to find other innovative solutions especially those where we can make use of technology.

## Partners – Funding as well as Non-Funding

### *Funding Partners*

- India Welfare Trust
- Grant by Nasscom Foundation

### *Non-Funding Partners*

Since our work is collaborative in nature, we have over 75 partners and associations.

## Awards and recognition:

- Top 8 of Nasscom Foundation social innovation catalyst programme which included three-month mentorship and grant.
- Selected by Eivolve incubator being run by India Welfare Trust. Eivolve incubate start up ideas that aspire to bring about significant social impact driven through volunteers.
- Selected under top five of hatke volunteering opportunity at VOLCON- India's First National flagship conference around volunteering.
- Selected as one of the organisation in Dolphin Tank by Living my Promise.

### **Details about the Organisation**

Type of Entity – Society registered under societies registration act 1860 in the year 2021

Tax Exemptions – 80G, 12A.

**Geographic area of Operations :** 70 slums in Delhi (largely in North Delhi)

**Thematic Areas:** Access to services

### **Contact details**

Name of Contact person- Prem Prakash Ashra

Address- BW 47-C, Shalimar Bagh, New Delhi

Email- [prem@samparksathi.org](mailto:prem@samparksathi.org)

## Bookletpedia

**Piyush Poddar (Batch 2019-21)**

**Ayush Poddar (Batch 2019-21)**

Our journey started during the lockdown period of March 2020 when Rajasthan Mahila Kalyan Mandal (RMKM), an organisation based out of Ajmer, Rajasthan, with whom Piyush worked as an intern during his master's in social work, was assigned a task to develop and design an educational booklet on two schemes being implemented in Rajasthan. These schemes were MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005) and the Palanhar Yojana. He was asked to prepare a booklet based on the government-provided information on how to avail the benefits under the schemes and make the information available to the grassroots population innovatively.

The idea to develop the materials in the local language and context struck when Piyush found out that the workers were not aware of the number of days they had to work under MGNREGA and instead of a daily wage fixed by the government, they were given a packet of salt in return for their work under MGNREGA. Based on these observations the team developed a booklet in Marwari on important provisions of MGNREGA. The reach and impact of the booklet convinced us that there was a need to develop contextual IEC materials for the development sector organisations. The booklet was distributed to 3973 households (September 2020- March 2022) in Silora and Jawaja blocks of Ajmer. The company was born out of our experience of working with the rural community of Ajmer with *Rajasthan Mahila Kalyan Mandal*.

Bookletpedia Innovatives Private Limited is a Government of India-recognized startup under the Startup India Scheme by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). It is run by Professional Social Workers who are passionately designing contextual and interactive Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials with an understanding of the ground realities. We design contextual posters, diaries, pamphlets, booklets, brochures, flipcharts, and training modules and facilitate participatory training for diverse stakeholders on social issues.

**Vision:** To bridge the information gap that exists at the grassroots through contextual and interactive Information, Education, and Communication materials and capacity building, with the overall objective of bringing about systemic change.

### Activities

- **Developing IEC materials:** IEC is a strategy of sharing information through the broadcast or the print media, or interpersonal communication in a manner appropriate to the target group's culture and values. Bookletpedia has so far developed posters, flipcharts, training modules, booklets, and brochures on themes ranging from Gender and Menstruation, Health and Hygiene, Women entrepreneurship, Government schemes, Child Labour, Agriculture, Rural Governance, Digital Literacy for Women, Farmers, Children.

□ **Conducting Participatory Training:**

Participatory Training is a methodology wherein training is carried out to help the participants meet their objectives by enabling their active participation. It is a non-formal, ongoing process, in which both trainers and trainees learn from each other. This approach to training is intended to build the learners' confidence in their capacity to observe, criticise, analyse, and figure things out for themselves. The team has facilitated the following trainings so far:



- Bookletpedia partnered with Mount Valley Development Association in Tehri Gharwal, Uttarakhand to conduct a two-day training programme on Gender for 40 women Community Resource Persons.
- A two-day online workshop in partnership with Mount Valley Development Association on communication and soft skills with 40 youth volunteers from Tehri Gharwal, Uttarakhand.
- A two-day online workshop in partnership with Restless Development, India on communication with 30 YuWaah Changemakers from Jharkhand, India.

**Consultancy:** We offer consultancy for specific projects. Currently, we are providing end-to-end consultancy to Bihar Jeevika for a project on the manufacturing and marketing of sanitary pads in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. The Haq project, as it is called, is a collaboration between Bookletpedia, Edutopup, and Sachhi Saheli Sanitary Napkin Producer Cooperative Society Limited (SSSNPCSL) for the establishment of a sanitary pad manufacturing unit, its marketing and capacity building of the members in Sakra block of district Muzaffarpur, Bihar. The Cooperative is a women-led initiative with the support of the Bihar government to provide access to hygienic products during menstruation and create employment opportunities for people who lost their jobs due to COVID-19.

We assist members of the Cooperative in setting up the sanitary pad manufacturing unit and providing training on making sanitary pads including information sharing on the raw materials to be used. While Edutopup provides the technical training, we undertake training in marketing and capacity building of the members. This training includes branding including logo design, tagline, and design of the product package to create a distinct identity for the product. We have also conducted training on soft skills in areas such as Communication and Marketing. The women are now trained to self-produce these pads and are earning their livelihood through the sale of the sanitary pads.

Our partnership with other organisations (mentioned below) on subjects ranging from government schemes, nutrition, safety education, gender and menstruation, women entrepreneurship, local self-government, forest produce, COVID-19, and others, has created an impact in terms of ensuring access to information and creating awareness.

**Partners**



### **Kudumbashree National Resource Organisation : our partner for the 3 years**

- Developed posters on central government schemes for 23 states and UTs for preparation of the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP).
- Developed a booklet for Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (BRLPS) on the importance of Panchayats in solving social issues.
- Developed posters on the convergence project for Manipur State Rural Livelihood Mission.
- Developed two mobile application booklets for VPRP mobile app usage by the women Self Help Groups across the country.

**Mount Valley Development Association (MVDA):** Designed a training module for trainers on Gender and Menstruation under a CSR project of **LIC Housing Finance Ltd.** being implemented by MVDA in Uttarakhand. We have been associated with them for the last 2 years.

**Rajasthan Mahila Kalyan Mandal (RMKM):** Bookletpedia has been working with RMKM for the last three years.

- Developed booklets on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, and Palanhar Yojana, in Marwari for spreading awareness in Jawaja and Silora blocks of Ajmer.
- Developed a booklet detailing the achievements of Children with Special Needs (CWSN)
- Developed pamphlets on COVID-19 Appropriate Behaviour (CAB) and vaccination awareness in Marwari and Hindi.
- Developed a pamphlet on the prohibition of child marriage under the Access to Justice Project of Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation.

### **Restless Development India:**

- Designed posters, bags, badges, diaries, banners, brochures, and flyers for the YuWaah Covid Prahari project of UNICEF.
- Organised a two-day online training on communication and social media orientation for youth engaged under various programmes of UNICEF and Restless Development India.
- Developed a customised diary for children under the Pahal Programme

We have a non-funding partnership with **Pahal Ek Nayi Soch:** As the second wave hit the entire country, the organisation realised the need to spread awareness of symptoms and Covid-appropriate behaviour amongst the Musahar community of Jamui. We at Bookletpedia, designed the pamphlet keeping in mind the local context and a door-to-door approach was followed in spreading awareness.

Other organisations for whom we have developed IEC materials include:

1. **Centre for Social and Behaviour Change, Ashoka University: Developed IEC materials for increasing the uptake of Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) tablets in government-run schools of Uttar Pradesh.**
2. **PepsiCo Foundation: Designed a booklet on fighting malnutrition for children in the age group of 3-5 years in Maharashtra.**

3. **Vedanta Sterlite Copper:** Designed a safety booklet on water, sanitation and hygiene, fire safety, water safety, road safety, and first aid for government school children of Dadra and Nagar Haveli.
4. **Terviva:** Designed comic-style posters on the supply chain of Karanj, (a forest produce) for Odisha.
5. **Martha Farrell Foundation:** Designed a diary for the children associated with the Kadam Badhate Chalo Programme.
6. **DeHaat:** Designed posters and brochures for farmers cultivating tomatoes in Bihar.
7. **Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission, Chhatarpur:** Designed the Parivartan Booklet containing detailed information on 35 central and Madhya Pradesh state government's welfare schemes in a conversation format, product brochure for Self Help Groups, banners for various products, and branding for the terracotta products.
8. **EdelGive Foundation:** Developed the entrepreneurship booklet in Hindi and Marathi containing information on women entrepreneurship government schemes for Rajasthan and Maharashtra in collaboration with Haqdarshak.
9. **Punjab State Rural Livelihood Mission, Patiala:** Designed a booklet for the Deputy Commissioner, Patiala detailing the various achievements of the Self-Help Group (SHG) Women of Patiala.

#### **Publications:**

1. <https://www.civilsocietyonline.com/spotlight/how-to-bust-a-myth-with-a-good-booklet/>
2. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/07/14/bookletpedia-by-piyush-poddar-a-unique-initiative-to-empower-people-in-villages-of-india/>

#### **Future plans**

In the coming years, we are planning to strengthen our core work of developing IEC materials and become one of the companies providing consultancy on the development of the IECs to the social sector organisations.

#### **About the Organisation**

Status: Private Limited Company registered in September 2022.

#### **Geographic Coverage**

Through our materials, we have so far reached 28 States and 8 UTs.

#### **Thematic Areas**

Social and Behaviour Change Communication with a focus on developing content and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials

#### **Contact details**

Piyush Poddar +918285331654

Ayush Poddar +919015429695

Email: [team@bookletpedia.co.in](mailto:team@bookletpedia.co.in)

Website: [www.bookletpedia.co.in](http://www.bookletpedia.co.in)

*With Best Wishes from*

**Executive Committee**

1. Patron: Prof. Sanjoy Roy
2. President: Mr. Yogesh Chandra
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4. Secretary: Dr. Niraj Seth
5. Joint Secretary: Prof. Neena Pandey
6. Treasurer: Mr. OP Yadav
7. Executive Member: Prof. Neera Agnimitra

**Advisors**

1. Prof. Sushma Batra
2. Mr. KK Seth



## **Delhi School of Social Work Alumni Association**

(Registration no. S/2287/2022)

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Please contact us on [alumni.dsw@gmail.com](mailto:alumni.dsw@gmail.com)