



Breaking **Barriers** Building **Communities**

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Breaking Barriers, Building Communities

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



Breaking Barriers, Building Communities

Annual Report 2021-22

Compiled and Edited by
Mercy Kappen with inputs from Asha V
Nazar P S and Roshen Chandran.

Copyright @ Visthar 2022



📍 KRC Road, Kothanur Post

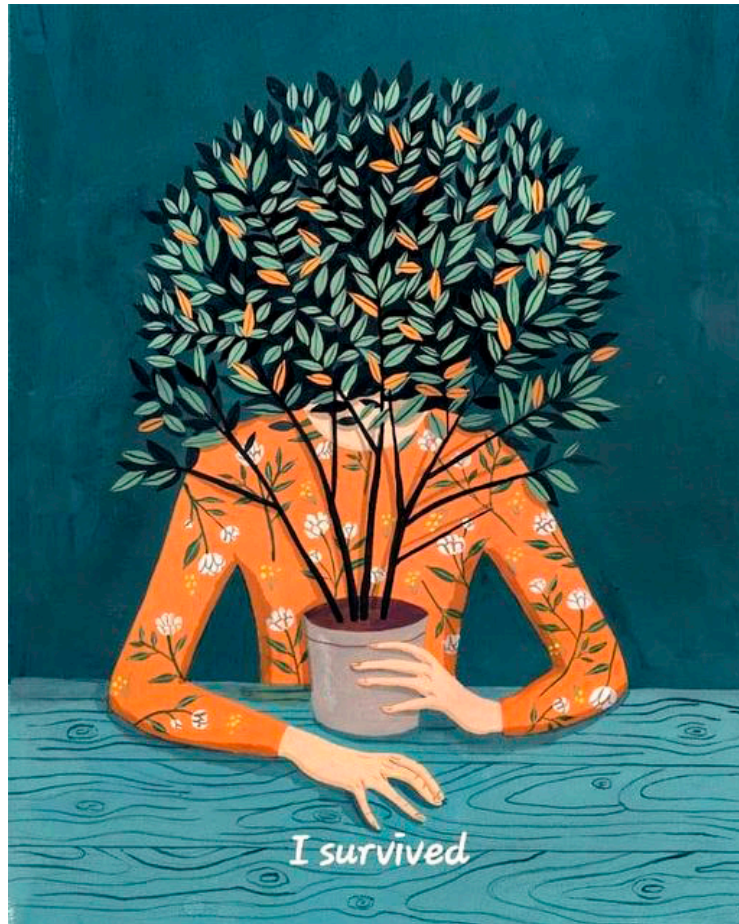
Bengaluru – 560 077. INDIA

☎ Tel. : +91 80 28465294 / 28465295

✉ mail@visthar.org 🌐 www.visthar.org

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Social Democracy – Cherishing a Delusion - <i>Musings by the Executive Trustee</i> | 01 |
| <i>Abbreviations</i> | 04 |
| Breaking Barriers, Building Communities - <i>Preface from the Director</i> | 05 |
| I. Community Based Initiatives | |
| ● Bandhavi – Empowerment of Girls at Risk | 07 |
| ● Child Rights Education and Advocacy | 17 |
| ● Resilience – A Covid Response Project | 23 |
| ● Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane | 29 |
| II. Capacity Building and Consultancies | |
| ● Gender Mainstreaming in POWER | 33 |
| ● Trainers’ Guidance Manual for Workplace Education Programme | 34 |
| ● Lam-Lynti Chittara Neralu (LCN) | 35 |
| ● Gender, Intersectionality and Social Inclusion for Children Believe | 36 |
| ● Leadership for Social Transformation- Anawim Satsang | 37 |
| III. Visthar Eco Sanctuary | 39 |
| <i>Board of Trustees, Visthar</i> | 40 |



“Some people survive and talk about it. Some people survive and go silent. Some people survive and create. Everyone deals with unimaginable pain in their own way, and everyone is entitled to that, without judgement. So the next time you look at someone’s life covetously, remember...you may not want to endure what they are enduring right now, at this moment, whilst they sit so quietly before you, looking like a calm ocean on a sunny day. Remember how vast the ocean’s boundaries are. Whilst somewhere the water is calm, in another place in the very same ocean, there is a colossal storm.”

~Nikita Gill, People Survive in Different Ways

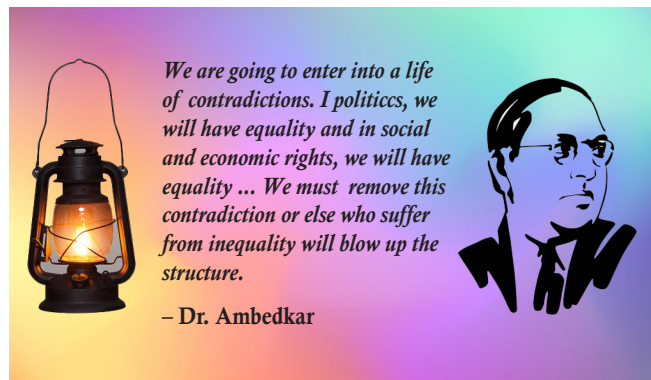
SOCIAL DEMOCRACY... CHERISHING A DELUSION

MUSINGS BY THE EXECUTIVE TRUSTEE

My musings will be in two parts. The first is a reading of our times. The second is examining the nature of our social engagement. For the first part, I draw from Ambedkar and his speech at the last Constituent Assembly and from martyrs who have gone ahead in recent times.

Contradictions and prophetic traditions

I am very conscious that I am addressing an enlightened audience, colleagues, and fellow Trustees. Nevertheless, as James Carroll the American author, historian, and journalist reminded us, “Forgetfulness is the handmaid of tyranny.” In his speech, Dr. Ambedkar is forthright and insightful, to say the least. Much of what he said is relevant today. This is scary and laudable at the same time. This prophet of social justice debunks the notion that India is/was a nation. While affirming the need for India to be a nation and to prosper, he argues that ‘currently’, we are not. He goes as far as to call it a ‘great delusion’. His argument is based on the existence of thousands of castes and sub-castes. He refers to castes as ‘anti-national’. He suggests that there is a “complete absence of two things in the Indian society”, equality and fraternity. The Constitution for Ambedkar was not merely a document for lawyers but “a vehicle of life” and “its spirit is always the spirit of the age”. He points to three things that were /are barriers to a vibrant democracy and hence to be avoided: the grammar of anarchy, hero-worship, and lack of social democracy. He was categorical in his prophetic statement; “political democracy cannot last unless there lies at its base a social democracy.” His conviction about the values and principles of the Constitution was supreme. Prophets for me, are individuals, women and men rooted in the vision of an alternative world. It is this conviction that compels them to embody acts of social justice. Their life becomes their message, and it is marked by an authentic act of denouncing and simultaneously announcing. How do we fare, as an organisation? Does caution based on fear hinder our political imagination and social engagements?



However, despite or because of the incredulous times, we must recognise and give thanks to our prophets and do our utmost to protect this precious and powerful document for it points to a ‘way of life’ studded with freedoms and dignity. Perhaps then we can debunk the idea that social democracy is a delusion. To quote Carroll again, “Memory” is indeed “a political act”. While not a pundit in Latin, I was reminded that the term Republic was from the Latin *res publica*, emphasizing that the State gets its legitimacy only from the public or the people.

Memorials and Martyrs: We have begun the year 2022 with the passing on many due to age and illness. Over the last two years, we have lost, artists and religious whose contributions we must remember, and their memories should continue to inspire. I highlight three from an extensive list. The Bahamian American actor Sir Sidney Poitier, a pioneer in enabling the recognition of ‘Black’ actors, in the US and world over is one

Memorials and Martyrs: We have begun the year 2022 with the passing on many due to age and illness. Over the last two years, we have lost, artists and religious whose contributions we must remember, and their memories should continue to inspire. I highlight three from an extensive list. The Bahamian American actor Sir Sidney Poitier, a pioneer in enabling the recognition of ‘Black’ actors, in the US and world over is one

such example. Archbishop Desmond Tutu is another, a global icon for truth and reconciliation coming out of a harsh apartheid regime and Thich Nhat Hanh the wise, Vietnamese, Buddhist monk.

We live in a time when memorials of various hues, shapes and sizes are taking prominence. Memorials themselves are not new. From the Greco-Roman, Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian and Mughul times, memorials have been a part of the landscape. More often than not the memorials are to 'heroes' and the heroes identified were for their valour in the battleground and conquest. The construction of memorials, always carries with it a politics of power and self-aggrandisement. Accompanying this is the din of hero worship. In our times and our country this process goes hand in hand with dismantling existing memorials, with the intention of rewriting history. If martyrs are those that live and die for a cause, more specifically, prepared to lay down their life, such that others might live, then we must lift the following. Topping the list, by any stretch of the imagination is the close to 700 farmers who lost their lives during the yearlong agitation against farm laws.

Sowing Seeds of Activism: As a Founder and Executive Trustee, I would like to posit that Civil Society Organisations are needed today, more than ever before. We must reclaim the essence of what it means to be res publica, an act of the public providing legitimacy to the State. Seventy-plus years, since "we the people" solemnly resolved "to secure to its entire citizen: justice, liberty, equality and fraternity." Time to take the legacy forward.

Drawing from the reflections on the republic and Constitution what should be the contours of our Oactivism? What follows is not new but can serve as a reality check and hopefully a prudent way forward. At the very outset let us affirm social change (as opposed to social work) as our focus. This conceptual framework is /should be embodied in our programs, and projects determined by 'social democracy as reflected in the Constitution and thoughts of Ambedkar. This position was central to our reflection when we met for the staff retreat in December 2021. Towards this end we made 'a pledge' that we should take seriously Ambedkar's words, that the Constitution, become a 'way of life:

Update and Scope of Programmes

- » In October 2021 we took a leap of faith and initiated a programme under the title 'Visthar Lalitha Kala Kendra'. The VLKK has twin foci. The first is promoting community and public art. The second is to develop and offer University-affiliated courses at the undergraduate level (BVA).
- » Attempts are being made to have us registered with the Pre University Board and thereby start a Pre University College. This will meet a significant need for quality education, especially for students passing out of public institutions. A quality level of Pre-University education can, on one hand, equip young people for the possible pursuit of tertiary education and offer Visthar a possibility of influencing and forming young minds in authentic citizenship engagement.

Towards this end, the following steps have been initiated.

- « Registration of a new Trust under the name of Visthar Academy
- « Established an art studio on campus.
- « Appointed, on probation, a formally trained (MFA) artist as coordinator.
- « "Appointed" Architect, "little river architects" who is awaiting formal confirmation.
- « Negotiations with fundraisers and preparing promotional material.
- « Negotiations with persons who have the potential to serve as Academic Dean of the programme and founding members of the Board.
- « Secured the first financial contribution (6 lakhs) towards the scholarship fund.

Besides the above, the way forward includes:

- » Consolidating the process of establishing Bandhavi Trust.
- » Withdrawing from our attempts to be social entrepreneurs.
- » Establishing two new centres
 - « Feminist Resource Centre (Bangalore)
 - « Child & Youth Resource Centre (Koppal)
- » Establish 'Bangalore centred' grass-root initiatives/projects.

Leadership: Any process of initiating sustaining, and reinventing calls for leadership. This dimension determines all else. As Founders, Mercy and I have neither trivialised nor ritualised the process of governance. Convinced of its value and potential, we have attempted to ensure an authentic democratic process at multiple levels. The Board of Trustees is key to proposing and confirming policies. We must signal the way forward for the next phase. To enable the way forward, I propose the following.

- « Request the present Director to serve in this capacity, for the next two years.
- « Based on the development of projects appoint an Assistant Director.
- « Major programme shift towards formal education and
- « Create a new formal body to take the formal education.
- « Far more effective use of the campus.

As per my calculation, the average age of our Board is 57. Certainly not old. Not young either. Besides, age we need to think through on recruitment of Trustees, based on the tasks ahead. For your services in the past year, I say, thank you.

Conclusion

As members of the Board of Trustees, we are ambassadors of social justice; restorative and redistributive justice. We stand in a legacy of people, who stood tall in their commitment and action: former members of the Board and colleagues. With their spiritual presence and inspiration, we will be sustained. We must always give thanks and not just for the past but for all who accompany us in the present. While not an occasion for this, I single out and express thanks to each member on the board, the director and members of the directorate and our funding partners: Kinder not Hilfe, Germany, Kerk in Actie Netherland, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and Global Mission in the USA and Azim Premji Foundation- Philanthropy.

David Selvaraj

Executive Trustee



ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| BAA | - | Bandhavi Alumni Association |
| CREA | - | Child Rights Education and Advocacy |
| CWC | - | Child Welfare Committee |
| DCPO | - | District Child Protection Officer |
| JJ B | - | Juvenile Justice Board |
| NGO | - | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PRI | - | Panchayati Raj Institutions |
| SSS | - | Samagra Shikshana Shale |
| SDMC | - | School Development Monitoring Committee |
| CLFZ | - | Child Labour Free Zones |
| CBO | - | Community Based Organisation |
| CSO | - | Civil Society Organisation |
| TLC | - | Transformative Learning Centre |
| CWD | - | Children with Disabilities |
| RTE | - | Right to Education |
| CPC | - | Child Protection Committees |
| DC | - | District Commissioner |
| CEO | - | Chief Executive Officer |
| SC | - | Scheduled Caste |
| ST | - | Scheduled Tribe |
| KKS | - | Kanasu Kishori Sanghatana |
| KRC | - | Kishori Resource Centre |

Breaking Barriers, Building Communities

*One of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves
is by building communities of resistance,
places where we know we are not alone.*

~ bell hooks

Ever since its inception, Visthar has been committed to breaking barriers and building communities of resistance and hope. We are influenced by an intersectional feminist perspective. Inequalities of gender, class, caste, sexuality, disability, and location are important in our analysis and response to social injustice. Our community advocacy and capacity-building programmes attempt to identify the sources of inequities and focus on the income-poor and the socially marginalised sections in our society. Eliminating the barriers to building just and inclusive communities needs a multidimensional and intersectional approach. The covid-19 pandemic brought into focus the need for an intersectional approach to emergency response.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic we were able to carry out our work in community advocacy and transformative learning, besides taking up and completing several consultancy projects. As part of the Lam Lynti Chittara Neralu Collective (LCN), a national network of shelter homes, we conducted a rapid survey series across 7 states by 8 member organizations. The study titled “At Home, At Risk” revealed increasing rates of violence experienced by all women, especially women migrant workers who returned home. Through Resilience – the Covid Response project, Visthar worked to restore livelihoods and claim the rights of women and men from marginalised communities.

Over the last year, through the Kanasu Kishori Sanghatana (KKS) Visthar built a strong network of 250 adolescent girls’ Sanghas (collectives) and 200 children’s Sanghas of girls and boys. This network comprises 8,000 adolescent girls and 3,000 adolescent boys in Koppal district. The collectives also provide a venue to sensitize girls and boys on gender and raise their consciousness. In the next two years, we will be able to raise consciousness on a matrix of rights relevant to girls, women migrant workers, and their families. These include their right to livelihood, right to food, right to safety, right to sexual and reproductive health, and the right to education of girls. We have also succeeded to a great extent in building the capacities of staff to sensitize multiple stakeholders and to network with movements and campaigns. We have published research reports to support advocacy and campaigns and developed training manuals, booklets, and posters to support consciousness-raising programs.

In the last 6 months, we facilitated 1100 hours of gender sensitization classes, 950 hours of life skills training, 620 hours of training on SRHR, 510 hours of computer classes, and 16 parliaments for 5000 adolescent girls. Most of these girls live in families where women and men participate in circular migration. We are raising awareness of the girls on the rights of women and girls to be free from violence, their right to equality, and to be free from discrimination. We are reaching out to women migrant workers in the community to sensitize them on their rights and to document the vulnerabilities, abuse, and exploitation they experience.

Through KKS and CREA projects, we currently have an active presence in 50 Panchayaths spread across 3 Taluks of the Koppal district. These include children’s Sanghas in every village in these Panchayaths; 15 Resource Centers for adolescent girls with computers, a reading room, film screenings, etc. We have also been training girls and young women to use computers and digital technology for advocacy. Our 5-acre green campus in Chikbidnal (Koppal) is the hub for all the field-based programs and activities.

Our capacity-building and consultancies are based out of the Feminist Resource Centre at our campus in Bangalore. The Centre focuses on developing feminist leadership through courses and outreach programs. We offer workshops on gender and its intersections with poverty, caste, disability, sexuality, etc. The participants of Visthar's training programs come from across South Asia and Africa. The month-long training program on Gender, Diversity, and Social Transformation, for instance, usually attracts participants from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, etc. This course could not be held during 2020-22 due to the Covid-related travel restrictions and financial constraints. We could not also hold Bhoomi Habba, the annual earth festival on campus which attracts 3000 – 4000 citizens of Bengaluru.

This report covers our activities for 2021-22 in two parts; Community Advocacy, and Capacity Building and Consultancies. Each section gives details of the activities, inspiring stories from the field challenges faced and lessons learned in carrying out the projects and programmes towards ensuring a life with dignity for children and women from marginalised communities.

We thank the board members for the inspiration and encouragement and our team for their passion and commitment to making it happen in the face of adversities. We gratefully acknowledge our funding partners; KindernotHilfe (KNH), Kerk in Actie (KiA), American Jewish World Service (AJWS), and Azim Premji Foundation- Philanthropy for their solidarity and support.

Mercy Kappen
Executive Director



Introduction

The goal of Bandhavi project is to enable girl children from Koppal, Bagalkot, Bidar, Raichur, Chitradurga and Bellari districts of North Karnataka to lead meaningful lives with dignity and self-respect. From the initiation of the Bandhavi project, their families were counseled to protect children, specifically girls from the risk of being dedicated to devadasi system, child labour, and child marriage and to enroll them in schools and to encourage them to attend school regularly. Over the last 15 years, this had led to reduced school dropouts, reduced child labour and far less child marriage. But many of these gains faced setbacks in the past year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children stayed back at home till the schools were re-opened. 25% of the children witnessed the death of family members. This created a situation where children lost interest in schooling and other activities.

The project team contacted the children regularly about their health and the situation in their villages. We contacted members of Navajeevana Mahila Okkutta, a partner organization, in Raichur district and we could track the situation there. We regularly shared updated Information from the State on preventive measures for pandemics. Children were counseled over the phone to attend online classes. The oldest children (10th class) attended online classes. They were motivated to support peer groups by including them in the class. When children returned to Bandhavi, they received extra care for building their immunity (medicinal juice, hot water etc). They also followed the SOP of Visthar for pandemics. This helped to reduce their fear of pandemics.



Over the past 15 years, Bandhavi has been working in Koppal; the mothers of our children helped us identify the children in vulnerable situations including Devadasi system, child labour, children of poor migrant families, and girls neglected by their parents, etc. Hence, during this reporting period, 136 children enrolled in Bandhavi and Samagra Shikshana Shale (SSS). During this reporting period, 80 children from Koppal, Bellary, Gadag, and Raichur districts were admitted to Bandhavi from September onwards when regular schooling started. Children from 4 neighboring villages were enrolled in SSS.

We ensured that all children are safe and protected by contacting the network organizations 'Navajeeva Mahila Okkutta' in Raichur and 'Sakhi' in Bellary Districts. They made regular visits to the families of Bandhavi children. A theatre Team from Bandhavi, comprising 12 children participated in 16 days campaign against Gender-based Violence, in 4 villages organized by Visthar during Nov-2021. They performed a play on Girl child discrimination, starting at home and in society at large, reaching about 500 people.

Objectives and Targets

Schools reopened in the month of September 2021. Until then we distributed food material kits, and house parents and SSS staff made home visits as children stayed in their villages. That was a support for their families, most of whom were migrant workers who had returned home without employment during the pandemic. Back in our campus, we ensured that all the facilities are safe including the spaces for accommodation and provisions. We kept the campus ready for receiving children.

At Bandhavi 80 girls received nutritious food, clean and safe environment. Children do regular yoga, meditation and organic farming together. They grow vegetables and fruits. During harvest, they enjoy sharing the products. Daily evening, they play games like kho-kho, kabaddi and skipping. Later they participate and lead an interfaith prayer. This keeps them mentally and physically healthy. We continued to follow a menu with balanced diet; each season, it is revised by the children's Food Committee in consultation with staff. We also provided a traditional home-made decoction to improve the health and immunity of children.

This year also, we conducted COVID-19 tests for all children. Precautionary measures were taken. This included fumigation of campus and ensuring that children are maintaining distance, wearing masks etc. Everyone continued to follow the Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) of Visthar for the COVID-19 pandemic in line with Government regulations and recommendations. Updated circulars and COVID-19 precautionary measures were displayed. A sick room was maintained.

10 children tested COVID-19 positive during this academic year. They stayed separately for the prescribed period. Special attention was given to them, including regular counseling. It helped them to overcome the fear of the pandemic; they recovered fast. Besides this, a blood checkup was conducted for all the children when they came to Bandhavi. 5 children exhibited haemoglobin deficiency. They were given extra care and a special diet was provided. A one-day health camp was conducted by the national Ayushman Abhiyan. Iron tablets

and vitamin supplements were given. 16 children were referred to the hospital for an eye checkup. They were taken to the hospital; after the checkup, 12 children were given spectacles for short sight.

The right to grow up healthy in a safe environment for 80 girls at risk from Devadasi families and Dalit communities.



Regular health awareness sessions are being facilitated for the children. Doctors from National Ayushman Abhiyan facilitated a session on menstrual and personal hygiene this year.

Celebration of festivals, and national and state holidays are an integral part of Bandhavi. Children had missed these celebrations for a year. We jointly celebrated Nagara Panchami, Deepavali, Dussera, Sankranti, New year, Christmas, and Bakrid. Each festival was celebrated with traditional food and eating together. We also discussed and analyzed the mythological and scientific reasons behind these celebrations. That enhanced children's understanding of the celebrations.

We also celebrated Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Jayanthi on 14th April 2021. That was an opportunity to better understand Dr. Ambedkar and his principles. As part of the celebration, we organized different activities in Bandhavi - Reciting Poem, Reading of Indian Constitution, Quiz, Pick & Speak and cultural programmes. Children discussed the situation of oppressed communities. Besides Ambedkar Jayanthi, we also celebrated Children's Day, Independence Day, Constitution Dedication Day, and Republic Day.

Bandhavi Day celebration is a special occasion every year. On 11th December 2021, Bandhavi Day was celebrated as Child Rights Day. Children took the lead role in the celebration. The highlights of the celebration were a rally with children dancing Kolatta (a traditional folk dance), exhibitions of posters, craftwork by children, and books. The redesigned SSS classroom with wall art by artist Archa was inaugurated on Bandhavi Day. "Hejjegalu", the handwritten magazine prepared by children from Bandhavi and SSS was released on that day. Children performed cultural programmes; mother and children shared their experiences.



We conducted mother's meetings at Bandhavi and in their villages. We shared our observations of the changes we see in the children. Parents/mothers shared their thought and expressed their appreciation for Bandhavi. We

discussed what all support should be given to the children once they returned to their villages.

The right to education and development of at least 130 children, including 80 girls at risk from Devadasi families and Dalit communities.

This Academic year all 80 girls accessed regular schooling from 1st class to 10th class. 21 children appeared SSLC examination during the month of June 2021. All children passed 10th class. Marks obtained -out of 21 children, 3 got distinction, 15 got 1st class, and the remaining 3 children scored above 50%. Current academic year, there are 18 children in the 10th class. All of them have appeared for public examinations and are waiting for their results. Children were given additional tuition classes at Bandhavi. The following activities were organized in Bandhavi.

- » 12 girls from the 8th class attended National Talent Search Examination (NTSE). This exam is conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for identifying talented students who want to pursue higher education in Science and Social Studies stream.
- » Facilitated gender training for children in Bandhavi to raise their consciousness. Children shared about the discrimination they experienced at home, school and other spaces. The gender analysis tools were very good to understand their situation and to deal with issues.

- » Children received 3 days Child rights training. This enhanced their understanding of their rights and duties. Increased their participation in activities organized in schools.
- » 4 children from Bandhavi participated in the district children's parliament meeting held in Koppal. It was organized by Department of Women and Child Development in collaboration with UNICEF. This is a regular process.
- » Bandhavi children participated in competitions organized by District Child Protection Office (DCPO), Koppal. Huligemma won 1st place in essay writing. They also participated in a drama competition, organized by DCPO, Koppal. They took the issue of discrimination against girl children.
- » Training in Visthar Child Protection Policy (VCP) was organized. 20 children who were newly enrolled in Bandhavi, became thorough about the functions of Committees. We formed 6 committees in Bandhavi. These committees meet once in 15 days and discuss the issues raised and try to find solutions.
- » A theatre team from Bandhavi, comprising 12 children participated in 16 days campaign against Gender-based Violence in 4 villages. This was organized by Visthar in November 2021. The children performed a play on discrimination experienced by a girl child, starting at home and in society at large.
- » Bandhavi children participated in the celebration of Constitution dedication day on 26th November 2021 at Kukanoor. Sajeena from the 9th class presented a paper on child rights during the seminar held on the day. Kalavathi from the 9th class spoke about the discrimination of girl children. All appreciated their confidence and the courage to speak publicly from a stage.
- » To raise awareness about the environment and climate justice, we celebrated Environment Day on the campus. In the same spirit, during birthday celebrations, children are encouraged to plant saplings and protect them. They maintain a plastic-free, green and clean campus at Bandhavi.
- » Summer camp was organized from 6th to 20th April-2021. Emphasis was on developing different skills of the children. It also focused on the healing process, as children were living through the pandemic, often with fear and grief.
- » From 10th to 20th October 2021, we organized Dussera camp in Bandhavi. This was to create a space for children to recollect and share their experiences from the COVID-19 & coping with lockdowns and with the time lost in terms of education. The children learnt through games; they developed their skills through writing stories, poems, drawing and theatre.
- » Children were enthusiastic and during the feedback, they expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic was a tough time in their lives. They saw how families like theirs struggled during the pandemic. This camp was an unforgettable opportunity to process and overcome that experience. They were able to express their pain, and sorrows during the camp. They felt it was a healing process.

Equip 130 children with leadership, entrepreneurial and vocational skills

Till October, there were no regular schools for children up to 5th Std. Hence, the Government started "Vatara shale" and later "Vidyagama", where the teacher had to go to the child and teach the child. Our SSS teachers made visits to 4 villages and conducted classes and activities for children in one place with maintaining COVID-19 precautionary measures like distancing, wearing masks, etc. This was regular activity till the schools opened. Children attended online classes from Bandhavi, till regular schools have started.

Besides, the above, 16 children have been regularly coming to SSS along with their sisters and brothers.

The following activities were conducted during this reporting period:

Studies: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a delay in opening primary schools. Three studies were conducted by SSS teachers on different subjects. These will be used as teaching aids in SSS. 1). 4 different traditional crafts around our villages and their utilization, marketing, raw materials and present situation of

Details of children enrolled in SSS:

| Sl. no | Level | Girls | Boys | Total | From Bandhavi | From community |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | Level I | 7 | 11 | 18 | 1 | 17 |
| 2 | Level II | 6 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 7 |
| 3 | Level III | 7 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 4 |
| 4 | Level IV | 4 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| 5 | Level V | 10 | 6 | 16 | 8 | 8 |
| Total | | 34 | 25 | 59 | 19 | 40 |

these crafts. 2). Different native games, methods to play, rules etc., and 3). Festivals connected to different seasons and heir features. Data was collected and the study released as a book.

Activities were organized for maintaining Kitchen Garden, waste management and model classroom. This year, a classroom was redesigned by budding artist Archa. The pictures are drawn on the walls of the classroom to enhance children’s learning and are attractive to children. Children are comfortable and happy to learn in that classroom.

We also distributed uniforms for children. Four children from the 5th class appeared in the competitive exam for Morarji Residential school admission. Online attendances were updated in the Government portal. Children have been doing exercises on Saturdays.

We formed six committees (Food, Cleaning, Health, Education, Planning and Community life) in Bandhavi. With the active participation of children, these committees are functioning effectively. Once in 15 days these committees meet and discuss the issues and review the effectiveness. Once a month all committees come together along with staff and listen to suggestions from each other. Besides this, we have also formed an All Children’s Committee, which represents children from all 1-10th classes. The state has also mandated the same.



During the summer camp, children received training in art & theatre, Warli art, paper cover making and music. In this reporting period, 16 children received theatre training for 7 days and performed plays on the prevention of child marriage, the Devadasi system and gender-based violence. During camp, the older children who knew warli art taught younger children in a group. Children participated in creative writing training during summer camp. They wrote stories, poems and drama. This training builds self-confidence and increases a sense of self-worth among children. All the poems were typed and released during the conclusion of the camp.

Children receive regular training on organic farming and animal husbandry – both in theory and practice. They grow an organic kitchen garden and tend to the cows. They grow vegetables, fruits, and greens in the Bandhavi land.

16 children have undergone tailoring training during weekends. A training curriculum has also been prepared by the facilitators. Now they do straight stitching.

25 children received training in running small businesses. This included training on marketing, finance, accounting etc. They made field visits to different shops and met with the shopkeepers. This was a new experience for them. Half the children expressed interest in starting small businesses like rotti making when they go back to their homes.

High school children received basic computer training in the last 3 months. We also screened documentary films and features and then discussed them together. We observed that these discussions improved their critical thinking.

Two things we could not do were an exposure visit and training on self-defense. Travel restrictions limited our ability to do the exposure visit. An already full schedule required us to postpone the self-defense training.

Project Strategies

A multi-pronged strategy

From its initiation, Bandhavi has been following a multi-pronged strategy to empower girls at risk. Ensuring a safe and healthy environment to them by raising consciousness, building leadership skills, through conducting various training and workshops. They enhanced their social analysis skills and were able to see the injustices in society. Enabling them to identify denial of their rights and its implications. This enables them to bring about changes in their villages.



We also create awareness among mothers about gender discrimination, gender-based violence and other injustices in our society so that they will support their daughters. We also work with a network of Civil society organizations, School Development Management Committee (SDMC) members, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), DCPO, Child Welfare Committee (CWC), women and child development department, District Legal Service Authority, and Hospitals. As per Juvenile Justice

Act (JJ Act) 2015 and Rules, 2016 formed Management Committee with representatives from different fields. Bandhavi is registered under JJ ACT, 2015 as a Child Care Institution (CCI) and submitted documents for renewal.

In August 2021, the District Collector of Koppal visited Bandhavi as part of the registration renewal of Bandhavi registration. After the review, the Collector was very appreciative of the work done in Bandhavi.

Project management

The Bandhavi project staff at present include one Project Co-Ordinator, two House parents, three Teachers, two Cooks, one Accountant, and one Helper and Security staff. These staff give continuous support to the children in their day-to-day life in Bandhavi. During this academic year, both the house parents have been newly appointed. We also appointed a new staff member as an assistant cook.

The Project Co-Ordinator manages the day-to-day running of the project with the support of other staff. As in previous years, she has been the face of the project to external stakeholders – the CWC, DCPO, teachers, parents, etc. She submits the reports to the Government, submitted documents for renewal, reports, and

information about CCI then and there it required.

Bandhavi staff participated in various trainings, including monthly capacity-building trainings. They attended one-day training on JJ Act 2015 and Rules 2016, organized by DCPO in collaboration with UNICEF. It enhanced their understanding of JJAct.



Members of the District Child Welfare Committee had visited Bandhavi and checked the documents and gave suggestions. The Directors made periodic visits. Their continuous guidance aids the staff in the smooth and effective functioning of the project. Bandhavi staff participated in the Annual Strategic Workshop also.

Team meetings were conducted once in 15 days; monthly meetings of all Visthar staff were also conducted as the Bandhavi team co-ordinates with other Visthar staff too. In these meetings, we reviewed the challenges of running the project. This is a regular process in Bandhavi. The meetings of the Children's Committees also played a major role in monitoring the function of the Bandhavi programme.

During these meetings, monthly reports, targets, planning and monthly budget were shared. If the target was not reached, we reviewed it and followed up on it. Monthly plans and reports are being submitted and maintained. Besides these, annual reports and an annual plan along with the annual budget were prepared. Quarterly plans and reports were prepared, which helped to work with the goals and targets in mind. We also facilitate the self-assessment of staff. That helps them to recognize how they have grown in capabilities; it also enables them to identify the areas that need to be strengthened.

The Bandhavi Management Committee was formed this year, as per JJ Act. This committee is comprised of the Project Coordinator, house parent, Teachers, a Doctor, a Member of CWC, one person from an NGO, and two representatives of children. We conducted one meeting of the Bandhavi Management Committee – that was more about introducing Bandhavi activities. In the future, this Committee will meet once a month and discuss challenges and other concerned matters. We feel this committee further increases the transparency in running the project.

Looking Ahead

In the next year, we will ensure that 130 children from Devadasi families and poor Dalit communities are enrolled in Bandhavi and SSS. We plan to visit the homes of all Bandhavi children; we could not do that in the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to completing all the planned activities in Bandhavi, we shall regularise activities like Gender training, health rights training, vocational training, and training on entrepreneurial / trade, marketing, accounting, etc.

Bandhavi continues to be a model program that is studied and written about, and its key features are replicated in various parts of the world. 75% of our alumni have taken control of their lives. They stand up against injustice in their families and communities; they support their sisters also to pursue education. They speak out against child marriage and child labor; The achievements of children from Bandhavi are a testament to the Bandhavi model. It is one of the reasons why Bandhavi is recognized and held up by fellow practitioners, activists, and academics from around the world.

1. Seeds of Hope

“Why are you talking to me in a loud voice? You are the daughter of a devadasi. One day you too will become a Devadasi. Then why do you pretend to be a good girl? My uncle always used to scold me that way whenever I questioned him about his bad habits”, 16-year-old Jyothi recalls with tears in her eyes. Jyothi was enrolled in Bandhavi, when she was studying in the 5th class.

Jyothi has three sisters and a brother. When Jyothi’s mother was young, she was pushed into the devadasi system. At her home, Jyothi’s grandmother and aunt are also devadasis. Jyothi’s mother does not own a house. They live with their grandmother. Jyothi’s mother does daily wage work that earns her minimal income. With that, she has to maintain her family. “In my family, 3 women are devadasis. Because of that, we face stigma wherever we go. And we are blamed for the evil system in this society. I can’t take any more discrimination”, says Jyothi with sorrow and anger.

Jyothi’s aunt is living with HIV/AIDS. She feels that it is the Devadasi system that caused the illness. Her aunt and her 6 years old child have been isolated by society; and nobody is giving them a house to stay. Jyothi is worried she is unable to help her aunt. The family is going through a painful situation. Another aunt got married. But her in-laws blamed her for the smallest of things, always calling her “the daughter of a Devadasi”.

When Jyothi was a small child, her mother migrated to Bangalore in search of employment. Her mother decided to take her children with her. But Jyothi’s uncle took Jyothi, admitted her in a hostel at Sindhur taluk and enrolled her a school there. She studied there till the 3rd standard. She returned home because there were no familiar people and no friends. Instead of enrolling her in a school, her mother took her to Bangalore. She dropped out of the school for two years. When she returned home after two years, her neighbour told her about Bandhavi. A few children from the village had been enrolled in Bandhavi. Jyothi was now keen to study and persuaded her mother to enrol her in Bandhavi.

At Bandhavi, she was very stubborn in the beginning. Slowly, she started mingling with other children. She began participating in all the activities and slowly became a member of different committees. During the pandemic lockdown, all schools were closed. Jyothi went back to her village.

During the pandemic, her mother took her to Bangalore for work. For the last two years, she worked in a cement factory, a coco-cola factory, and also worked as a housemaid in Bangalore. She used to earn Rs. 300/- per day. Then her mother became very sick, and they returned to Gangavathy. There they took her to the hospital. Her mother was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Jyothi spent her earnings to buy medicines for her mother. But she decided to continue her studies when the lockdown would be lifted.

Jyothi took an important decision to continue her study. She returned to Bandhavi when schools reopened. In Bandhavi she received full support for her study and extracurricular activities. Earlier she was a shy girl and hesitated to participate in some activities. With counselling and her own efforts to find the strength within her, Jyothi became more involved. She became the leader of the Community Life committee last year. She and her team members took the Initiative to organize various activities. They organized birthday celebrations and anchored different events in Bandhavi. Jyothi has been developing her leadership skills. Now she has appeared for the SSLC examination and is waiting for the result. “I want to become a lawyer. Also, I should take care of my mother and aunt by giving them good treatment in hospital” she expresses her dreams. At that moment we could sense the strength of her decision and see rays of hope in her eyes.

2. My Life, My Decision

I'm Manjula, a Dalit girl from Gangavathy Taluk in Koppal district. I am studying in the 9th standard now. My mother Gauramma is a devadasi woman, a daily wage earner who works in the fields. We are 4 children to my mother. My elder sister is studying for B.Com, and another sister is awaiting results for the 10th class exam. My younger brother is studying in the 6th standard. I was enrolled in Bandhavi 3 years ago when I reached the 6th standard.

I was attending school in my village till fifth grade. We do not own a house or land. We live with our grandmother. Though my mother earns for the family, my uncle used to quarrel with her and abuse her. Even now he is continuing the same behavior. It was very hard to see that my mother alone is working for all of us. Sometimes I used to think that if my mother were not a Devadasi woman, then my father would also be there as an earning member of our family.

At Bandhavi, I did not feel homesick, because my sister was already there. In the beginning, it was difficult to adjust to other girls at Bandhavi. Later I joined in the activities and even gained the courage to give a speech from the stage. I like Bandhavi because we get various opportunities to be free and move around. Here staff are very caring. We do not call them Madam/Miss. We call them Amma, Akka, etc. In Bandhavi, I learned discipline - waking up early in the morning and participating in Yoga and meditation. Now I'm a member of the Food Committee. That has helped me recognize my qualities.

Now I also participate in different activities in school - essay writing competitions, singing competitions, etc. When the Teacher asked about my father's name, I had no answer. In school, it hurts a lot, and sometimes I cried. In all my documents, the column of the father's name is left blank. Sometimes, I asked myself why the Government has laid such rules asking for both parents' names in all the documents! The government should change its policies.

I would like to become a teacher. I will continue my studies. I will work for total prohibition of this Devadasi system. In Bandhavi I have received all kinds of support and I got the courage to move forward. I decide, how my life should be.

3. Samagra Shikshana Shale (SSS)

We chose the 1st standard classroom of Samagra Shikshana Shale (SSS) to be redesigned as a child-friendly learning room. Each wall was painted with the different seasons and the environment in mind. We hope to remodel all classrooms in this way.

The primary objectives of the redesigned classroom are:

- » Connecting children's life situations to the paintings in the classroom.
- » Upholding the importance of alternative education beyond the mainstream.
- » Increasing interest in learning and motivating self-learning
- » Presentation through activity, mutual conversation

The SSS classroom has been redesigned into what we hope will be a model classroom. The classroom contains content on subjects like Kannada, English, Mathematics and Environmental Studies. The classroom has been designed as a space for children's activities. The classroom is intended to shape children's personalities. When children perform activities based on what they see, use, and see in their daily lives, children will be able to remember and incorporate them into life.

This type of education enables children to feel their right to listen, speak, read, write. We hope that this type of classroom develops a friendly attitude among children and strengthens their communication skills through

discussion in groups. For children, the art of learning and the power of what they have learned can be enhanced. Immediately after the child enters the classroom, the learner's interest is fostered and motivated for self-learning. That also influences children's attention to continuous learning.

Features of the Classroom

On the east side of the classroom, there is wallpaper with wood leaf letters. Numbers and English letters are pasted on that wall. Essentials that the child needs to learn are seen here. On the western side, we see peaks, with rainfall over the summit. Stickers of activities for agriculture are pasted. Rain and agriculture are depicted on this wall as monsoon winds blow from this direction. Birds are also seen in this direction, and they are all attractive to children. Himalayan peaks on the northern wall, snowy rivers, tourist attractions, winters, and spectacular forests are lined up in the snow. The rivers of the Himalayas can be seen. The northern wall shows the winter season. On the southern wall is an interplay of sun and shadow, with depictions of the village and rural community. The four walls feature a variety of illustrations, making them fascinating to look at.

This classroom was inaugurated by the Block Education Officer on Bandhavi day. He said, "I have never seen such a classroom in the entire taluk. This is a model classroom. I shall advise all the teachers of our taluk to visit your school". He also appreciated that this is a learning-friendly classroom. Children from 2nd grade to 5th grade get to learn for an hour every day in this redesigned classroom used by 1st standard. It improves their critical thinking and increases their concentration. After the painting of this classroom children are more interested to come to school.

The paintings in the classroom have been done by the budding artist Archa, with the support of SSS teachers



2

CHILD RIGHTS EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY (CREA)

Introduction

Child Rights Education and Advocacy (CREA) is a network project initiated by Visthar. The network includes five districts of North Karnataka. The goal of the project is to ensure 'relevant and equitable education for children and decent employment of youth'. The CREA network is funded by KIA. This is the last year of CREA's fourth phase. In 2020-21, the network focused on establishing relevant and equitable education for children and decent employment for youth in its target areas. The objectives were:

1. Establish CLFZs in twenty-five panchayats in 5 Districts of North Karnataka
2. Ensure formal, full time and quality education for girls and boys, including children with disabilities, up to the age of 14 years
3. Provide access to continued education, vocational training, and decent employment for youth (boys and girls) including children with disabilities
4. Create community-based rehabilitation of boy and girl children with disabilities (all forms) below 18 years

The project also responded to the Covid 19 pandemic during the third wave. During the reporting period, 118 villages were covered by the CREA programme. Though it was not severe as the first and second waves, Covid 19 pandemic created fear, and uncertainties among people. The schools were closed and the temperature was too high making the situation worse. In response to the situation, a part of the budget was kept aside for dry ration supply and support for the infected and affected families. Partners were also requested to suggest changes in the interventions in the context of Covid. The uncertainties related to the third wave of Covid 19 created delays in implementing the planned activities. However, the CREA network could reach most of its targets.

- » Enrolment campaigns
- » Sports and cultural events
- » Capacity building for children
- » Celebration of international/ national/ State Days
- » Transformative Learning Centres (TLC)
- » Training, workshops and camps for community people
- » Orientation to parents and community on inclusive education.
- » Advocacy: Rescue and rehabilitation of child labourers and survivors of child marriages, advocating for entitlements for CWD, and rescue and rehabilitation
- » Formation and strengthening of Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in all 5 districts both at the Panchayat and taluk levels.

- » Strengthening Makkala Grama Sabhas
- » Digital Learning Platforms set up
- » Theatre campaigns and productions: 5 skits, 2 Kolatta and two short movies, and many short videos were produced during this period. This is available on the website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel.

Direct and indirect beneficiaries

| Sl. no | Questions | Chitra- durga | Koppal | Bidar | Bagalkot | Raichur | Total |
|--------|---|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | Total Number of beneficiaries | 545 | 3449 | 1495 | 16000 | 1700 | 23189 |
| 2 | Total Number of Men/boys reached | 401 | 1832 | 245 | 8200 | 800 | 11478 |
| 3 | Total number of Women/girls reached | 196 | 1617 | 371 | 7800 | 850 | 10834 |
| 4 | Total Number of Transgender reached | 76 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 10 | 98 |
| 5 | The number of differently-abled persons reached | 32 | 102 | 31 | 109 | 30 | 304 |
| 6 | The number of Children (below 18 years) reached | 401 | 930 | 601 | 8000 | 1000 | 10932 |
| 7 | The number of boys (below 18 years) reached | 281 | 465 | | 3400 | 450 | 4596 |
| 8 | The number of girls (below 18 years) reached | 264 | 465 | 375 | 4600 | 550 | 6254 |
| 9 | Number of youth (18-30) using improved skills for their employability and/or standing up for their rights | 35 | 620 | 17 | 45 | 15 | 732 |
| 10 | Number of children withdrawn from labour into education | 21 | 192 | 82 | 85 | 103 | 483 |
| | Total | 2252 | 9672 | 3221 | 48247 | 5508 | 68900 |

CREA - A Reflective Analysis

- » CREA has been providing a strong platform for children to express their views and perspectives on their rights with clarity. Creative expressions like, art, theatre, songs, writing stories, and sports activities helped them in this. Ex-members of CREA Sanghas are leading a respectful life and they are inspiring their younger ones.
- » Though Children's Sanghas is a government programme with a different name (children's parliament), which remained just a list became active in the CREA target villages.
- » CREA was able to transform the Covid crisis into an opportunity to respond to the risks to children and their communities in the working areas.
- » CREA has generated a deep commitment toward social change through the different activities on child protection and analysis of the current context.
- » The struggle to address their immediate needs for food, medicine etc. prevented people from participating fully in CREA programmes.
- » CREA target families, PRI's and government officials, SDMC members faced difficulties in allowing our volunteers for the programmes.

Lessons Learned

- » It was great learning for all of us that even in pandemics and natural calamities we could work in communities if commitment and concern are there. Though some of the NGOs and government officials were worried about their life due to Covid, Visthar team was able to commit themselves to the cause of the children and instill confidence among stakeholders, and engage in relief and rehabilitation. Awareness building and empowerment are important, especially in times of pandemics. However, material helps like food grains, medicines and other immediate relief becomes essential. Funding partners like KIA took initiatives in extending support for CREA partners.
- » People continue to face difficulties caused by Covid and lockdowns. We failed in some respects due to the disruptions in community life during Covid and lockdowns. But we succeed in many ways by replanning and redesigning the activities according to the needs of the context. It has compelled the CREA team to become a resource team.
- » CREA needs to focus more on children with disabilities.
- » The multi-stakeholder approach of including the local government has helped in fostering a child-friendly environment. The PDS study and campaigns and pressuring the panchayats for conducting Children's Grama Sabha are good examples of this.
- » Social media is a powerful medium that we used a lot during the Covid context in all aspects of our work.
- » Ongoing interactions with the stakeholders through meetings, training, workshops and discussions with SDMC, PRI members, school, and Anganwadi teachers changed their view on child protection and strengthened their sensitivity toward their responsibilities.
- » Stakeholders, especially SDMC members, teachers, and CBOs are taking CREA activities very seriously and have their appreciation in public.
- » CREA network has good cooperation from the District Administration, Education Department, Department of the Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens and Department for Prevention, Rescue and Rehabilitation of Women and Children etc.
- » The support of NGOs, Media, and the general public helped in accomplishing our goals.
- » PRIs and Anganwadi teachers supported us in distributing dry ration kits and sewing machines.



1. Story of Sreedhar and Shashikala

Sreedhar and Shashikala are nomadic children. They are school dropouts and bonded child labourers along with a close relative. Their case was referred to Vimukthi/Vsithar in 2018-19 by Kamala and Thippeswamy, volunteers from Devarahalli village. Both were rescued and sheltered at Dhamma for two years and they were enrolled for 4th and 2nd standard respectively at Government Higher Primary School, M.R. Nagara, MK Hatti, Chitradurga. While they were getting formal education at school, they were also exposed to informal education like music, drama, dance, painting, eco-sanctuary, yoga, meditation, and all other creative learning.

Both were promoted for 5th and 3rd standard respectively in 2019-20. But due to the Covid-19 pandemic schools were uncertain and irregular. Schools were closed down both in 2019-20 and 2020-21. We had no choice but to send the kids to the care of parents in 2020-21.

On the suggestions of their parents, Shashikala continued her education at her home village, Devarahalli 2021-22 and Sreedhar preferred to study out of the district in some good school/hostel. As per his and his parents' desire, we spoke to the management of Tumkur Siddaganga Mata and mobilized the required school and other records. Through a volunteer in Tumkur, we succeeded in getting a temporary admission with Siddaganga Mata school for 6th standard, with the condition that the previous school provides proper TC and marks card in 5th standard. We were assured by the MR Nagara government school and BRC that they will get the 5th pass TC and marks card.

When Sreedhar and his father went to Siddaganga for the second time with luggage for admission to the hostel, the boy was rejected by both the school and hostel authorities on the ground that he has 4th standard TC and marks card and his records are not updated online. Vimukthi spoke to the Siddaganga school authority and insisted that the school authority cannot deny the admission on the ground of not having proper 5th pass TC. However, the boy was rejected and sent back to his village for no reason.

Vimukthi/Visthar took this as a serious issue and wrote a complaint letter to the Education Minister, Chairman of KSCPCR, and DDPI demanding immediate action in this regard (attached is the complaint letter) After a series of meetings and exchange of letters, The CRPC wrote a strong letter to Tumkur DDPI, with copies to DDPI Chitradurga and Visthar/Vimukthi. The DDPI Chitradurga directed the concerned BRC for further action. The BRC took a personal interest in updating the school records of Sreedhar and got him the admission for 6th standard in aided school, Murugarajendra Mutt, Chitradurga. The boy is happy and is continuing his education in the above school and he is residing in the hostel run by the Mutt.

*Education is a human right with immense power to transform.
On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom,
democracy and sustainable human development.*

~ Kofi Annan

2. PDS Study and Response from Construction Workers Union

“Right to food is a right of the poor, not charity” Mr. Gaffar, Construction Workers Union

Visthar conducted a study to assess the implementation of the Public Distribution System (PDS) and its monitoring mechanisms in Koppal district. The study also aimed at looking at the distribution from a rights perspective and exploring people-centered solutions to deal with grievances. The report was placed before various stakeholders including people's movement both in Koppal and other parts of Karnataka. PDS is a central Government Act way back introduced soon after the second world war to ensure that no one starves and the meanwhile ensures the poor get essential rations at subsidized cost or free.

It is mainly rainfed cultivation in Koppal district. In the absence of industries, many agricultural labourers have taken up construction work as their primary occupation. Hence it is covered by the Construction Workers' Welfare Fund. Several welfare schemes are guaranteed under this. However, construction workers have been cheated by middlemen in getting their entitlements. Crores of money available but not properly utilized.

Construction Workers Union has been involved organizing the workers and fighting for them to avail various benefits. Mr. Gaffar is the Koppal district convenor of the Union. He is also involved in various progressive people's movements and is a press reporter. Report on PDS was shared with Mr. Gaffar for his reflection and feedback. He discussed the report in the Union and they unanimously resolved to take up the findings and recommendations. This resulted in the Construction union taking a lead role in mobilizing like-minded groups to take up the issue as a follow-up of the Visthar report. Gaffar along with his union members endorsed the report and recommendation and came up with a few more recommendations from the perspective of construction workers, Mr. Gaffar was one among the delegates who met the district administration with the report and initiated dialogue with the concerned district officials for the PDS. The nonfunctioning of vigilance committees and lack of coordination among different departments were some of the issues Mr.Gaffr presented to the government. He was also able to present the difficulties faced by construction workers after the introduction of the biometric system and problems arising out of linking ADHAR with welfare schemes'. The barriers included registration, obtaining a ration card, income certificate, etc.

Mr. Gaffar is also a long-standing associate of Visthar and collaborates with Visthar's initiatives At present he is leading the issue of the Public Distribution System at Koppal and he is also one of the core team members taking up the study to the logical end. His union is also strategizing to continue with actions in the long run. The action research on PDS by Vithar f the Visthar on PDS is now taken up by the people's movement including that of the Construction workers union. Visthar is now playing a low profile in taking up the issues but is playing an advisory role in sharpening their conceptual clarity.





GIRLS AND WOMEN
HAVE A RIGHT TO

FEEL SAFE
EVERYWHERE.

unicef
for every child

3

RESILIENCE A COVID RESPONSE PROJECT

Introduction

RESILIENCE is a Covid response project of Kerk in Actie (KiA), ICCO, and Partners in India. The aim is to reach out to people affected by Covid 19 pandemic and support them in preventing, addressing, and mitigating risks and vulnerabilities. Long-term recovery and resilience building of the communities involves addressing both the immediate and long-term needs of people. The programme follows a multipronged and human rights-based approach.

Learnings from the pilot phase of the project are being shared with other KIA partners in India to facilitate the exchange of information. This helps the partners gain insights and evolve guidelines and standard operating procedures for working in the time of a pandemic.

Resilience was a 12 months project, which started in November 2020 and was expected to conclude in October 2021. However, the project continued for five more months from 1st November 2021 to 31st March 2022.

The project covered 18 villages of 7 panchayats of 3 taluks in the Koppal district.

Highlights

1. Transformative Learning Centres (TLC)

TLC was organised in 15 villages for 2 months with 450 children (245 girls and 205 boys). Snacks were provided for children regularly in TLCs. This served as a bridge school and a platform for children to attend regular classes and complete their educational needs. A selected group of 24 children (13 girls and 11 boys) wrote the entrance exam for Government Residential Schools.

2. PDS report release and state-level campaign

Report of the study on the effectiveness of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Koppal District, was released on 18th January in Koppal District and on 11th March 2022 in Bangalore.

The Koppal event included a seminar on food security and the right to food. Many prominent writers, thinkers, and campaign leaders participated in it. A district-level committee was formed towards the end of it. Girls from Bandhavi performed a play based on their experience with PDS which was greatly appreciated. 2 meetings were also organized



after the 18th event. The committee met the District Commissioner (DC) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the district and submitted the report as a memorandum. This helped to create two new openings: (a) Visthar was recommended to be part of an assessment body for the PDS in the district. (b) the Committee recommended a state-level campaign on the topic.

The Bangalore event was organised at the Gandhi Bhavan. The district-level committee was the facilitator of the event. A group of professional artists from Bangalore city painted on canvas visualising issues of food security and the right to food. This event was a success as it helped participants to join the state-level campaign.

3. 'Women in Black' against gender-based violence

Women in Black is a silent protest against gender-based violence. It was organised as part of a global 16 days campaign against gender-based violence. Visthar organised this in Koppal district every year. Though the Hunisehala village was not part of the Resilience Project, the event was organized there to support a woman and her family who were subjected to abuse. After the event, the culprit was arrested and legal procedures are undergoing.

4. Sakhi one-stop crisis centre

More than 1000 people were part of this awareness event including students, SDMC and PRI members, ASHA, and Anganavadi workers. This was organised with the involvement of the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, CDPO, and Sakhi One Stop Centre. Many girls and women came forward to share with the resource people about the discrimination they face in their villages.



5. Constitution day celebration

Constitution Day was celebrated in Kukanuru Town with the support of local youth groups and protest groups. This was greatly appreciated by the media and the common public. This was useful for clarifying to the public, government, and media Visthar's rootedness in Constitutional values. The event generated strong support for all our projects which are based on human rights.

6. Children's grama sabha

The children from the Sanghas and TLCs were guided and encouraged to list the violations of their rights and these were submitted to the respective panchayats and later to the district administration. The DDP took it seriously and a circular was issued to all taluk and grama panchayats to take action immediately. The follow-up on this is going on.

7. Skill training

10 women are undergoing tailoring and computer training under the District Skill Development Department. It is a 3-month course. 8 men completed 10 days of training on entrepreneurship organised in two batches by Disha, Koppal unit. Visthar organised and partly facilitated the workshop with Mass Media Foundation and encouraged 20 youth to be part of getting news for the online media.

8. Exhibition of Koudi

The products made as the output of the Koudi training were exhibited in two places and Rs. 11500/- worth of sales were also done.

9. Multi-skilled committee formed

With the continuous effort of the team, a multi-skilled artisans committee was formed. There are 12 members on the committee. The committee is active and basic materials have been purchased.

10. Capacity building for children

A series of workshops on Child Rights was conducted for children in the Bandhavi campus. This was facilitated by Dr. Anthony from Bagalkot District. The children who returned to villages after the training was formed into collectives and questioned the violations in their villages. The illegal sale of liquor was banned in one village because of the continuous protest of children.



Reflections and Lessons Learned

- » The situation is slowly getting back to normal over the last five months. This created more support from the department and community. The school was opened, the transportation was normal and all other usual social events became common. This also helped the execution of the activities of the project. So, we feel that Resilience in its current form is not needed for the community.
- » The livelihood activities were timely, helpful and crucial for the people in the community. Visthar has the satisfaction of being a part of the struggles of the communities in the Covid context. By the end of the five months, common people are moved to a position of raising their voices for their rights.
- » As usual, the covid context was mostly affected by the people who are in the margin. Visthar has also the satisfaction that we stood with people who are in this category.
- » The 17 months is a new lesson for Visthar, in terms of standing with people when they are in struggle and helping the people in struggle from a right-based concept.
- » Visthar learned how to respond in an emergency while the lives of the staff also were in a critical situation. It is a skill to manage risks.
- » Covid context was an emergency even for the governments. Visthar started to respond even government was planning projects for the people. So, Visthar's Covid Response project was an emergency support and it is widely appreciated.
- » Though study and survey were part of Visthar's journey, we learned how to document the process of the rights violations of people through scientific studies, FGDs, interviews, etc. even during emergencies.



1. Direct Support for Livelihood Activities

"I saved money and can ensure the future of my grandchild" - Pakeeramma

The Resilience project of Visthar was aimed at supporting select petty traders during Covid 19 pandemic to regain their livelihood activities. Most of the petty traders, street vendors and their families were virtually on the roads. Government schemes and packages never reached them.

The Resilience project came into action with the broader objective of responding to the Covid 19 situation in select villages of Koppal district with the specific objective of directly supporting beneficiaries to restore their livelihood through their occupation and gradually increase their income level. Pakeeramma was one among them.

Pakeeramma, aged about 50 years, lost her husband after a few years of marriage. She is taking care of her granddaughter and is the head of the family. Pakeeramma is a vegetable vendor. The pandemic hit the livelihood of many including Pakeeramma in Koppal district. Pakeeramma a vegetable vendor buys vegetables from farmers and sells them on shandy days in nearby villages and small towns. She earned an average of two hundred to three hundred rupees as profit. While investing in the vegetables, many vendors borrow money from petty money lenders on interest or purchase the vegetable from farmers where there is the likelihood of not getting fresh vegetables. Therefore, the profit earned may not have sufficed for the interest nor catered to the family needs of the vendors.

Pakeeramma was supported by the project team with a weighing machine and little capital to carry on her business. This support was not preconditional, unlike money lenders she had no obligation to repay the interest and had sufficient capital for the next market day gradually improved her financial status. Since she purchased the vegetables from the farmers by paying cash she also demanded fresh vegetables, thereby there was no wastage, and also demand increased. Pakeeramma was able to fix a reasonable price which fetched her more profits.

Pakeeramma repaid all her debts. Gave good education to her grandchild and also saved money for the future of her grandchild.

2. Kaudi Making - Rejuvenation of Traditional Skills and Employment Generation

Kaudi making is a traditional craft practised by certain Dalit communities for decades. Old clothes like sarees are used as raw material to make bed spreads and bed sheets by the poor and lower middle class. Visthar, as a response to Covid 19, designed a training program to re-introduce and upgrade Kaudi making skills among women in the project area.

Gowamma, aged about 44 years, is from Honunsi village of Kukanoor taluk of Koppal district. She is one among the 15 who underwent the Kaudi making training. This 10-day training was facilitated by experienced trainers at Bandhavi campus. Gowamma, who had no experience in Kaudi making, learnt the skills very fast. Support of the trainers and the enabling environment helped her to complete her course successfully. Gowamma was also interested in learning different designs. She was fortunate to have the support and encouragement of her family members. After completion of the training Gowamma continued to stitch Kaudi. She is looking forward to marketing and financial support for her business venture. Gowamma is also organising other fellow trainees in order to access the market. She is looking for support from Visthar and the government for her endeavour. A recent visit to Visthar by the Deputy Commissioner of Koppal who is keen to support this traditional skill has raised the expectations of Gowamma and other fellow trainees.

3. Manavva - Survivor, Not a Victim

30-year-old Manavva belongs to the Banjara community. She resides at Marnala village of Yelburga taluk. Manavva was born and brought up in neighbouring taluk in Gadag district. Manavva is a graduate and is interested in writing. Her ambition is to become Librarian and also a writer.

Manavva from her college days used to actively participate in student struggles. One of her brothers is an advocate. Manavva did not receive any support to nurture her dreams. She was forced to get married to Durgappa Rathod of Marnal village. He was semi-literate and was running a small business.

On the day of her marriage itself, Manavva realised that her husband had extra marital relationships with many women. He was a chronic alcoholic and never responded to her desires and needs. On the other hand he was doubting her chastity. His parents did not extend any support to her. Manavva, though not used to manual work, was forced to work in the field. She was subjected to physical assault and mental torture.

Visthar, while looking for suitable TLC facilitators at Marnal, came across and considered her for the job. Though this was opposed by her husband and parents initially. Later they relented as the job brings in income for the family. Manavva used this opportunity devoting herself to the job and to the growth of the children specifically adolescent girls. Manavva was able to succeed in convincing many families to send their girl children to school and was successful in stopping child marriages.

4. From Employment to Entrepreneurship

Gudadesh, aged about 24 years, is a resident of Benkal village of Kukanoor taluk of Koppal district. Gudadesh secured second class in SSLC. He could not go for higher education due to financial constraints. Nor did he succeed in getting a job. Gudadesh was forced to take up seasonal agricultural labour. The wages from this were not enough to meet his needs.

In response to Covid 19, Visthar started Transformative Learning Centres (TLC) at Benakal. Gudadesh who was part of the youth club in Benkal participated in all the activities of TLC. He was inspired by some of the interventions of the Ministry of Rural Development through DISHA on employment and entrepreneurship.

Before this to this initiative, Gudadesh participated in Toy making training organised as part the Covid response project of Visthar. He very quickly learned the skill and even new designs. Designs made by Gudadesh were well appreciated by his own trainers. Kinnal toy making has a historical background and has a national name and fame.

After completion of his toy-making course, Gudadesh was looking forward to his future career in this vocation. In the meanwhile, DISHA, a training program of the Department of Industrial Training and Employment offered 10 days entrepreneurship training for unemployed youth. Visthar being one of the partners of DISHA introduced a few candidates including Gudadesh. He completed the training and secured the certificate. This certificate enabled him to secure a Bank loan for his proposed enterprise. This will enable him to become self-sufficient and take up a profession of his own.

GENDER SENSITISATION OF ADOLESCENTS

A HANDBOOK FOR COMMUNITY FACILITATORS



This handbook is specifically tailored for the Community Facilitators of Kanasu Kishori Sanghatana (KKS). KKS). The handbook aims at raising consciousness on gender justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and developing perspectives through social and gender analysis. Adolescent girls, who are conscious of their rights, will claim their rights individually in their homes and collectively in their communities. They will develop leadership skills and participate in campaigns. In the process, they will gain a sense of self, bodily integrity and greater confidence. This is our hope. If we believe in our dream (kanasu) and are passionate about it, sooner or later it will become a reality.

KANASU KISHORI SANGHATANE (KKS)

Introduction

Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane (KKS) is an empowerment program for adolescent girls in Kukanoor Taluk of Koppal district in North Karnataka. In addition to organizing all the adolescent girls in the taluk into Kishori Sanghas, the program also works with boys, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in the community to create a supportive environment for the girls. 15 panchayath level Kishori Resource Centers provide a safe space where girls can learn computers, access books and further develop their skills.

Presently, 5000 girls between the ages of 13-18 are part of 250 sanghas in the 53 villages and 19 wards of Kukanoor taluk. A team of 30 community facilitators animates the sanghas. These facilitators also come from Kukanoor taluk.

The KKS sanghas meet each week in the village. Sangha meetings include songs, games and dance in addition to learning about gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender based violence, constitutional rights, etc. There is also a strong emphasis on developing life skills.

The Kishori Resource Centers in each Panchayath hosts computer classes on weekends. At Kishori Resource Centers adolescent girls receive group as well as individual counselling sessions. The Reading Room at the Center stocks a small collection of books – short stories, poetry, self help books, health etc. – all promoting a gender equality perspective. The space also hosts regular activities for adolescent girls: discussions, debates, film screenings, workshops for public speaking, story-telling, writing, poetry, etc.

The program also engages with multiple stakeholders in diverse ways:

- » Grassroots campaigns on gender-based violence, menstrual health, nutrition, etc.
- » Engaging with boys, parents, teachers, community leaders, etc.
- » Half-yearly Kishori parliaments
- » Village level Nyaya Samitis to intervene on behalf of the girls
- » Legal literacy training for parents and other stakeholders

Opportunities and Challenges

The first year of the project has gone well. With every adolescent girl in the Taluk becoming a member of a KKS sangha, almost every household in the Taluk has a family member part of our sangha network. That has brought us goodwill and support from the community. It has also opened new opportunities:

- a. There is strong support from teachers, PRI members and other stakeholders in the community for the formation of the sanghas. We can leverage that for community-centred actions. We are in early talks with

the CEO of Koppal for the sanghas playing an active role in community-based monitoring of PDS shops in the Taluk.

- b. There are opportunities to subtly address caste-based prejudices alongside gender, as Sangha members from different castes do activities together in their sanghas. A later section outlines the unforeseen changes we have already seen. We can build on that carefully.
- c. The 30 team members facilitating the KKS project are young women (and two men) from the community – they are committed, open-minded and excited to be engaged in the intervention. Though they faced hesitation and reluctance from their families initially, they now have strong support from their families for the work they are doing. Their enthusiasm and involvement present an opportunity to deepen our engagement. We have a detailed case study on one team member to illustrate this point.

We are excited to see that the young KKS team is engaged in live community issues already. They participated in a successful Women in Black protest for a domestic violence issue in neighbouring Yelburga Taluk. We expect that these engagements will translate to leadership for similar engagements with the sanghas too.

Planned outputs and activities carried out during 2021-2022

| | Planned Activity | Output |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | Conduct baseline survey | Baseline survey report |
| 2 | Develop Kishori facilitators' training manual | Facilitator's handbooks |
| 3 | Recruit and train 27 village level facilitators and project staff | Facilitators and project staff recruited and trained |
| 4 | Collectivize 5000 girls in 57 villages in Kishori Sanghas | Kishori Sanghas are formed |
| 5 | Life skills training for all Kishori Sangha members | Girls trained in life skills |
| 6 | Computer skills training for girls at the Kishori Resource Center | Girls develop basic computer skills |
| 7 | Month-long residential summer camp for 25 adolescent girls | Girls trained in leadership skills |
| 8 | Counselling for all Kishori Sangha members on safe and healthy relationships | Girls access counselling |
| 9 | Gender sensitization of all Kishori Sangha members | Girls sensitized on gender justice |
| 10 | Week-long residential camp for theatre and arts for 25 adolescent girls | Street theatre troupes are formed and sustained |
| 11 | Quarterly Panchayath level parliament | Girls organized at the Panchayath and Taluk level |
| 12 | Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights training | Girls aware of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights |
| 13 | Campaign on Gender-Based Violence | Multiple stakeholders become aware of GBV and their consequence |
| 14 | Campaign for School and College enrolment | Multiple stakeholders become conscious of the need for girls to be enrolled and retained in schools/colleges. |
| 15 | Training on legal literacy for 20 stakeholders | Multiple stakeholders become aware of the laws/schemes relevant to adolescent girls |
| 16 | Set up 15 Kishori Resource Centers | Kishori Resource Centers are set up and active |
| 17 | Scholarship for 10 girls | Scholarship worth INR 3 lakhs to be disbursed. |

Scholarship for 10 girls as an incentive for pursuing higher education: A Needs Assessment with young scholars showed that the scholarship program should be re-designed and spread over 3 years, instead of a one-time scholarship. Students requested sustained support over 3 years, rather than a one-time higher amount. Hence the 3 lakhs scholarship was divided into 3 parts with 1 lakh disbursement planned for each year. Accordingly, 1 lakh has been disbursed from that annual budget in year 1.



Upgrading our Monitoring Systems

The KKS project has brought a significant change in Visthar's management processes, especially the monitoring system. This was triggered by APPI's grant application guidelines, the Results Framework in particular. We document the change briefly here.

Previously, Visthar's project monitoring systems relied primarily on monthly face-to-face reviews. We had physical registers that recorded activities; however, they were not used in the routine reviews. The targets were fairly high level and our annual reports mostly narrative.

APPI's Results Framework Template committed us to detailed targets we would be monitoring over the project. The grant application also invited us to describe how we would monitor progress on those indicators. That sounded quite intimidating, but also became an opportunity for us to develop new methods and systems.

In the last 9 months, we have experimented with developed a more data-driven system internally. Community Facilitators report their activities every day through a Google Form. That includes details of the sessions they led at their Sangha that day. A back-end Google spreadsheet presents summary statistics and charts that supervisors need. This is still quite a basic system and will improve further. But it has already brought near real-time data about what's happening in the field to Coordinators and the Project Manager.

Supervisors are using this data to track the progress of their teams daily. The data is also used in the weekly and fortnightly reviews to identify gaps and make course corrections. Yesterday, for instance, the Project Manager saw that Facilitators need to shift from Gender to Life Skills sessions in the next two weeks to ensure we reach the HY-2 targets for the number of Life Skills sessions. She plans to communicate that shift in emphasis in tomorrow's review meeting with the team. That would not have been possible with the earlier system. We would have overshoot on one target and under-performed on another.

Adopting a new system had its fair share of challenges. There were bugs that had to be spotted and fixed. There was initially some reluctance to submit daily reports online, as everyone was used to pen-and-paper methods. Even supervisors were not used to reviewing data so frequently. The project leadership team spends in educating the team and getting buy-in for the changes. Adoption rates have improved, but there are still challenges.

The monitoring system we are using in the KKS project is now being adopted by a sister project within Visthar. That project is 12 years old, and the project team is convinced that this is a better way to manage that project too.

CASE STUDY

1. Encountering Caste and Untouchability

We faced challenges in setting up the Kishori Resource Centers in Kukanoor Taluk. This is the first time Visthar is setting up a network of “physical” centers like this.

The project envisages one Kishori Resource Center (KRC) in each of the 15 Panchayaths. The KRC will be a safe space for adolescent girls to learn and share. It will host computer classes, a reading room, movie screenings, etc. We planned to have the KRCs setup and running by December 2021. Each KRC had a monthly budget of Rs 4000 for rent and utilities.

In September, the project team defined the specifications for the KRCs. Safe, accessible, secure, clean toilets and good ventilation featured at the top of their list. The three Project Coordinators led the search for the spaces to host the KRCs in each Panchayath, with the Community Facilitators supporting them.

All through October and November, the team tried to find spaces that met the specifications. It soon became evident that we had under-estimated the rental cost of safe and secure spaces in the villages. There were very few houses that met the criteria, and they were usually just outside our budget.

By December, we did not have any rental agreements signed for a KRC yet. So, we decided to increase the budget slightly and widen the search. That brought us better results. We noticed that almost every house on our shortlist was in the dominant caste side of the villages. That was not surprising.

However, we soon realized a new set of challenges as we tried to conclude agreements with house owners. Many house owners insisted that Dalit girls must not enter the space they rent to us. That contradicted the spirit of equality and inclusiveness we are trying to promote. We could not accept that.

We tried to reason with and persuade the house owners first. A few relented and we signed rental agreements with them. If they didn't, we looked for other houses in the village where the house owner would not discriminate. Where we found those, we signed rental agreements with them. If neither of the above worked, we decided to locate the KRC in a different village.

We also got help from an unexpected source. Some house owners were open to us because one of their family members - their daughter, or a niece, or a grandchild - had become a KKS Sangha member.

But the whole process took longer than originally planned. It was February by the time we had agreements for all the KRCs. The process also took time away from the coordinators as the search and negotiation process extended.

We are finally happy with the spaces we have taken for the KRCs. Computer classes have begun in all of them.

We have learned we need to plan well in advance where the risk of caste-based discrimination could slow down our activities.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND CONSULTANCIES

Gender Mainstreaming in POWER

The Indian government, under the National Rural Livelihood Mission, has encouraged the formation of producer companies - some women exclusive and some mixed. Producer Owned Women Enterprises (POWER) promoted by Industree Foundation aim to give economic, decision-making, and social power to marginalised women in four states of India. POWER promotes producer companies around banana fibre products, bamboo products, and non-timber forest produce products.

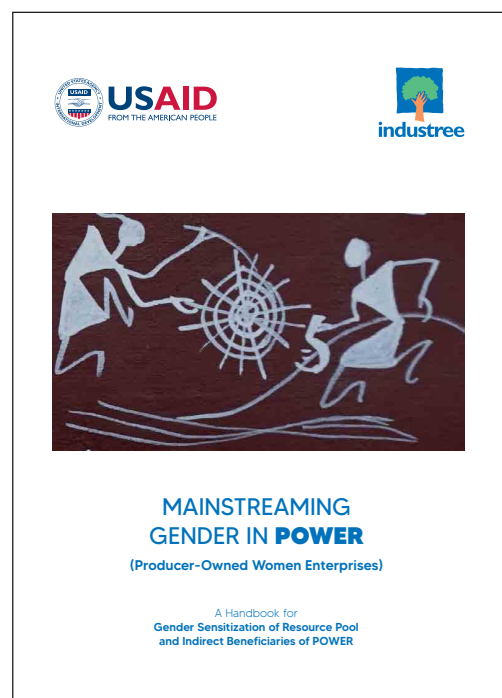
There are several barriers to forming and strengthening women's producer companies. Women require permission from spouses or parents to join these companies. Supervisory roles demand longer working hours, and in some instances, women are not able to take it up due to domestic responsibilities and the need to look after children. Bringing women into leadership poses a challenge, not just numerically but in terms of their decision-making. The challenge is more in the case of women from marginalised communities and backward areas in terms of human development etc

This handbook has been created to support those sensitizing resource pool members and indirect stakeholders with methodology and tools.

Modules for indirect beneficiaries are self-explanatory videos, animations, and pictorials. These could also be used for gender sensitization of women producers. We have included guidance notes for in-person/onsite facilitated sessions using the digital tools. The modules in Part 2 are designed for resource pool members who in turn will train the producers.

“Mainstreaming Gender in POWER”, the gender sensitization curriculum was developed by Mercy Kappen and Ranjani K. Murthy. The manual is accompanied by digital tools that will be used to create awareness of the issues of gender among women producers. The digital tools will also enable the project to raise awareness among the community at large by disseminating the same using smartphones. Both the handbook and the accompanying digital tools will significantly support the gender sensitization of the women producers under the POWER project. We acknowledge the contribution of the following artists

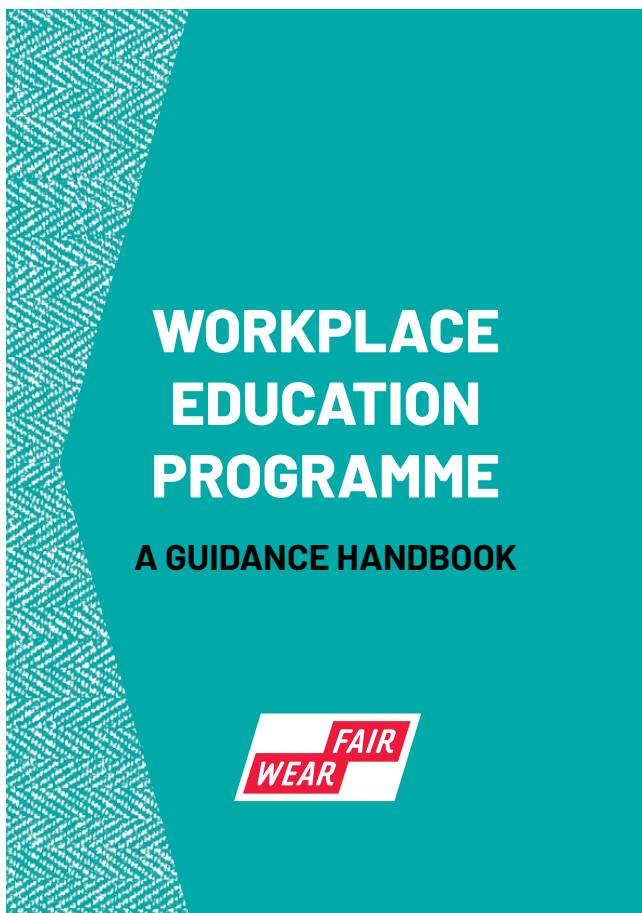
in producing the supportive digital tools: Manush John – Videos, Siddarth Selvaraj – Animated Videos, Din Toons – Pictorials and Posters and M V Rajeevan for the design of the Handbook.



Trainers' Guidance Manual for Workplace Education Programme

This training manual presents activities, methods, and case studies that facilitators can use in Fair Wear's Workplace Education Programme. It is designed to support Fair Wear facilitators who are training workers, supervisors, and management in Fair Wear's workplace education curricula. Most activities and methods in this training manual can also be easily adapted for training workers in other industries. This Introduction is followed by a brief Guideline for Facilitators. That highlights good practices facilitators can adopt while leading these sessions. The manual covers five broad areas that are central to Fair Wear's Workplace Education Programme:

- 1 Code of Labour Practices
- 2 Gender and Gender-Based Violence
- 3 Internal Communication
- 4 Worker-Management Dialogue
- 5 Grievance Redressal



Each of these areas is structured as a section in this manual. Each section includes six activities of 15 – 30 minutes duration. Facilitators may choose which activities they would like to use in particular training. They can also adapt the activity depending on the location, the number of participants, and the time available. Each activity is described in 1 – 2 pages. That includes the objective of the activity, the suggested time to facilitate it, the preparation and materials required, the actual steps for the activity, tips for facilitators, and any handouts that will be needed for the activity. The activities follow different methods: games, group exercises, discussions, quizzes, role-plays, image theatre, debates, etc. The manual also includes two sections titled Case Studies, and Handouts. The Case Studies section contains 14 short caselets on the lives and experiences of workers in the garment sector. All these caselets are referenced in the activities presented in this manual. However, these case studies can also be used as stand-alone stories for discussion and analysis. The Handouts section comprises of the handouts that are required to facilitate some of the sessions in this manual. Facilitators can print adequate copies

of the handouts as may be necessary for each session. The topics this manual covers in each section and the activity/method used

Lam-Lynti Chittara Neralu (LCN)

(To lead the way to a shelter under the vista of stars)

LCN is a national network working towards improved and rights-based shelter homes for women and transgender survivors of violence. LCN was formed in 2016 by women's rights, human rights, and feminist organizations from 7 states in India. The members include Action India, Jagori, Nazariya, North East Network (NEN), Sangama, Vimochana, and Visthar (as the lead organization).

Between 2017 and 2019, LCN conducted research on 'Women's experiences of shelter homes' and published a national report titled 'Survivor Speak'. In the Covid context, LCN conducted a rapid survey to assess the impact of the pandemic on services for survivors of domestic violence. Findings of the study "At Home. At Risk" was disseminated widely.

LCN members as part of their ongoing work, continue to engage with adolescent and young women, as well as older women, to raise rights awareness and build their capacities on one hand, while engaging with other stakeholders to ensure an enabling environment on the other.



A meeting on collaborations for transforming shelters into empowering spaces was co-organised by Jagori, Action India, and Nazariya at the India International Centre in Delhi on 17th December 2021, with the participation of 13 government-funded and supported shelter homes and 5 privately funded shelter homes. The Department of Women and Child Development Government of Delhi expressed its commitment to collaborate. Participants came away with a list of actionable for 2022, including awareness-raising and capacity building of shelter home staff and residents on their rights and entitlements and seeking synergies across different stakeholders for more effective responses to survivors.

Training toolkit for LCN

The purpose of the toolkit is to develop a rights-based intersectional perspective among the staff of shelter homes. The hope is that when the staff of shelter homes develops such a perspective, they will adopt a rights-based, queer-sensitive feminist approach, that their relationships with survivors of violence and their children would be more gender sensitive and inclusive.



Leadership for Social Transformation (LST)



LST 2 was conducted in a context of continuing economic and political uncertainties caused by Covid and other factors. The training was designed based on the feedback from the evaluation of LST phase I. This included: deepening of perspectives for social engagement, nuanced ways of facilitating social analysis, understanding principles and practice of community organisation, and understanding of inter-faith engagement. Besides the thematic input, there was also a strong desire to expand the scope to include youth from other parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. LST phase 2 had 17 participants from the Chittoor and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh. They represented a broad spectrum of educational formation and experience.

The training focused on the formation, rather than mere content delivery. Alongside this, the emphasis was on building a 'living-learning community' with the learners and facilitators being together, sharing

food and life as fellow learners. Learning then becomes experiential. The feedback from the evaluation and the participants' profiles posed a challenge in designing the pedagogy. The range in age of participants was between 20 and 40 years, the range in age was between 20 to 40. While all were from Andhra Pradesh, some were still students, some in ministry and professions, and some others unemployed. Their expectations of the program were shaped by their location in life. The facilitators responded by applying the well-tested pedagogy of praxis – an action-reflection leading to fresh and renewed action. The application of this pedagogy ensured all participants learned from each other, thereby creating a community of learners and sensitivity on the part of the facilitators to determine the pace and flow of content.

The facilitating team comprised Pastor Theo and Anand Ravalas as residential coordinators, Rev. Dr. Daniel Premkumar, Rev. D. Selvaraj, Mercy Kappen and Ms. Asha Shirady. Dr. Manchala, Bishop P. J. Lawrence, The Visthar Lalitha Kala Kendra (Fine Arts Centre), situated on the same campus facilitated sessions on art and social transformation.



Participants at an exhibition on "Dolls Speak"



LCN members at the Advocacy workshop in Gauhati

Visthar Eco Sanctuary

Visthar Eco Sanctuary is a conscious effort to nurture and protect all life on our campus. The Sanctuary transcends being a mere physical space to represent an enlightened program reflecting inclusion and sustainability. It serves the dual purpose of being an earth-based learning centre and a development locus for ecological farming and biodiversity conservation. The Sanctuary features an herbal garden and nursery, organic farming, a paper recycling unit, a butterfly garden, and an iconic step well.



To raise a nature-bonded child is to raise a rebel, a dreamer, an innovator...someone who will walk their own verdant, winding path.
~Nicolette Sowder

We believe that caring for the earth and nurturing biodiversity should become integral to all education. The Eco Sanctuary provides scope for children to enhance their imagination and commitment to the earth and environment. This is achieved by hands-on experience working on the farm, making recycled handmade paper and paper products, taking nature walks, and learning about bio-diversity.

Manoranjitham, our in-house nursery offers a versatile selection of ornamental and fruiting plants, organic, herbal, air-purifying & decor saplings in pots and designer terracotta planters. These are sold for home gardening, landscaping, and gifting purposes. Organic fertilizers, potting mixes, and garden decor are also available for retail and bulk purchase. Manoranjitham houses an exotic range of water lilies, flowering creepers, herbs, and unique planters with various materials (bamboo, grass, rope, coir) created by Shekar who nurtures the nursery.

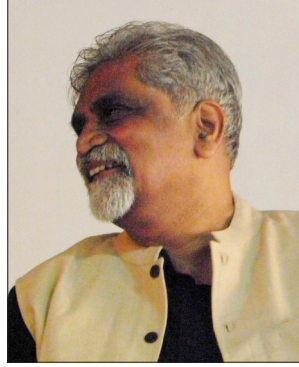
The Eco Sanctuary also offers CSR Volunteering and spaces for outdoor training and events. The most successful volunteering engagement so far has been with Cisco which has sent us more than 800 employees as volunteers in the past. Due to Covid 19 pandemic, we could not hold eco camps for children or CSR programmes during 2021. However, we were able to nurture and maintain the organic farm and Manoranjitham Nursery and cater to those individuals and groups who dared to venture out. We hope to revive the eco-education and CSR volunteering in 2022.



Board of Trustees, Visthar



Kirtana Kumar
Chairperson



David Selvaraj
Executive Trustee



Mercy Kappen
Member



Muzafar Assadi
Member



Asma Nazeer
Member



Akhila Vidyasagar
Member



Manohar Chandra Prasad
Member

“Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes,
and discrimination. A world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive.
A world where difference is valued and celebrated.
Together we can forge women’s equality.
Collectively we can all break the bias **#BreakTheBias.**”

<https://www.internationalwomensday.com/theme>



📍 KRC Road, Kothanur Post

Bengaluru – 560 077. INDIA

☎ Tel. : +91 80 28465294 / 28465295

✉ mail@visthar.org 🌐 www.visthar.org