



# *Spirals of Change*

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23



*Visthar*

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Annual Report 2022-23

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## PREFACE

'Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of women and men upon their world in order to transform it' (Paulo Freire). Visthar follows an action-reflection-action model to reach its goal of social transformation. Analysis of self and the structures and cultures we are a part of is the foundation of our work. Our involvement in transformative learning and community advocacy is inspired by this model.

The year 2022 – '23 was a very active year for Visthar. Projects and trainings picked up steam, after the slowdown during the pandemic. The KKS project strengthened its presence in the community with campaigns on menstrual health, and on nutrition. They also began promoting active sports among adolescent girls, as part of their remit to address gender inequality.

The Bandhavi project in the Visthar campus continued its strong run. This year, girls from the Bandhavi project participated in the Cluster Level Youth Festival and swept the awards across different categories. Samagra Shikshana Shaale, the primary school on campus, has been exploring ways to strengthen its teaching methods.

The inequalities of gender, caste, and class result in the systematic denial of rights and the consequent disempowerment of children. Hence our community projects work to strategically transform those inequalities by consciousness-raising of the children, their mothers, and other stakeholders. The intense focus of Bandhavi, SSS, CREA, and KKS to raise the critical consciousness of children on different injustices is founded on this analysis. Children and mothers participate in collective action to transform these inequalities.

Visthar facilitated training programs for several NGOs and academic institutions including the Timbaktu Collective, CIVIDEP, EFICOR, ADD India, Anawim Satsang, Kristu Jayanti College, St. Joseph's University, and Claret College. Visthar – Koppal facilitated the field immersion programme for Azim Premji University. We have also had a fruitful engagement with Cisco through their CSR volunteering and have been able to raise funds for our educational programmes.

This report presents highlights of our involvement in transformative processes during the year 2022-23. We have been able to hold together and deepen our engagement in community advocacy and transformative education. We have set up a Feminist Resource Centre (FRC), based in Bengaluru to support field programmes. The Equality Fund selected Visthar as a partner to address issues of gender-based violence and to build feminist leadership. The programming for that is currently in the planning stages.

I acknowledge the contribution and involvement of the Board of Trustees, especially the Executive Trustee. The passionate and committed involvement of the senior management, programme teams and community facilitators has brought depth and meaning to our work. We are also grateful to our funding partners, Kerk en Actie (KiA), KNH, Global Ministries, Azim Premji Foundation and Equality Fund for their solidarity and support, without which our projects would not have been possible.

**Mercy Kappen**

Executive Director



# COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

Visthar has over 30-year experience implementing child rights projects, working with adolescent girls, women, and boys. Grassroots programs of Visthar have included residential care for girls at risk, child rights education and advocacy, theatre school for youth from marginalized communities, shelters for women survivors of violence, rural women's collectives, etc. These programs have been recognized for their effectiveness and innovations. Recent awards have included UNICEF's Award for Best NGO Working on Child Rights in Koppal, the Karnataka State Education Department's Green Campus award, and the Outstanding NGO Award from Human Rights Defenders.

## 1. Bandhavi - An Empowerment Programme for Girls at Risk

From its initiation, Bandhavi follows a multi-pronged strategy to empower girls at risk. Ensuring a safe and healthy environment for them by raising consciousness, and building leadership skills, through conducting various training and workshops, Children's parliaments, discussions, celebrations, etc. in Bandhavi as well as outside. At Bandhavi, the platform was created, enabling them to enjoy their rights. They enhanced their social analysis skills, decision-making skills, questioning, and articulation skills, and were able to see the injustices in society. Enabling them to identify the denial of their rights and its implications. This enables them to bring about changes in their villages.

We also create awareness among mothers on gender discrimination, gender-based violence, and other injustices in our society so that they will support their daughters. Discussions during meetings and training with mothers and parents, bring about attitudinal changes among them. We also work with a network of Civil society organizations, School Development Management Committee (SDMC) members, Teachers, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), DCPO, Child Welfare Committee (CWC), women and child development department, District Legal Service Authority, UNICEF and Hospitals. As per JJACT, 2015 and Rules, 2016 formed Management Committee with representatives from different fields. Bandhavi has registered under JJACT, in 2015 as a Child Care Institution (CCI) and got renewed its' registration for 5 years (2019 - 2024). The renewal process was delayed due to Covid and the lockdown.

Quarterly visits by CWC members and Management Committee meetings were great support for improving the functioning skills of staff. It also helps to know about new schemes for children and update our knowledge. Three SSLC-passed children, who are 18 years old, are receiving support from the State under the Upakar scheme. Every year new children will be identified for this scheme. This scheme helps girls to continue their higher studies, vocational training/ courses etc.

At present, there are 100 children who are protected and nourished with opportunities and resources for a better future ahead. Presently the Bandhavi program works with 110 families who are still stigmatized and marginalized. Though the government is the primary duty bearer responsible for the protection of their rights, Bandhavi addresses the loopholes to ensure the safety of these children enabling them to enjoy their childhood and rights.

The overall project objective is the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of the rights of girl children at risk from Devadasi families and Dalit communities in Koppal, Bagalkot, Bidar, Raichur, Chitradurga and Bellari towns of North Karnataka. This report focuses on the three (sub)-objectives of the project as follows:

**To ensure the right to grow up healthy in a safe environment of 80 girls at risk from Devadasi families and Dalit communities.**

During the reporting period, 79 girls received nutritious food and a clean and safe environment in the Bandhavi residential programme. Children do regular yoga, meditation, and organic farming together. They grow vegetables and fruits. During harvest, they enjoy sharing the products. They play games like kho-kho, kabaddi, shuttle cock, and skipping in the evenings. Later they participate and lead an interfaith prayer. Daily yoga keeps them mentally and physically healthy. We continued to follow a menu with a balanced diet; each season, it is revised by the Children's Food Committee in consultation with staff.

We conducted training on Visthar's Child Protection Policy (VCPC) for all newly enrolled children and did a review for the older children. Conducted quizzes on VCPC, to deepen their understanding of the subject. They were encouraged to speak up about their opinions and exercise their rights. The Government procedures for Child Care Institutions (CCIs) like, Child helpline numbers, Notices to Visitors, Food menus, precautionary measures, etc. were displayed everywhere.

Children receive nutritious food and 80% of them are healthy. Special attention was given to the sick children. Health checkups were conducted for them and ensured a special diet as per Doctor's advice. Regular health awareness activities are conducted to raise their health consciousness. Health visitors from nearby Public Health Centre (PHC), visited Bandhavi and facilitated sessions on health and hygiene. Besides, blood checkups were conducted for all children. 10% of children were found to be anaemic. They were given a special diet and iron tablets. Children were regularly counselled for coping with the situation.

Celebration of festivals and national and state holidays are an integral part of Bandhavi. We celebrated Nagara Panchami, Deepavali, Dussera, Sankranthi, New Year, Christmas, and Bakrid. Each festival was celebrated with traditional food and eating together. We also discuss and analyse the mythological and scientific reasons behind these celebrations. That enhanced children's understanding of the celebrations and increased their analytical skills.



We celebrated Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Jayanthi on 14th April 2022. That was an opportunity to better understand Dr. Ambedkar and his principles. As part of the celebration, we organized different activities in Bandhavi – songs, speeches, and cultural programmes. Children discussed the issues and problems in their communities. Besides this, other National days like Savithribai Phule Jayanthi, Children's Day, Independence Day, Constitution Dedication Day, National Girl Child Day on 24th January 2023, and Republic Day were observed.

Bandhavi Day celebration on 10th December is a special occasion every year. Bandhavi Day 2022 was celebrated as "Child Rights Day". The event included speeches, essay writing, and quiz competitions for children. Prizes were distributed. Children took the lead in organizing the celebration. The theme of the Bandhavi Day celebration for the year was "We & You are for Peace". The highlights of the celebration were cultural procession, awareness songs, cultural activities like Kolatta, dances, honoring, and sharing experiences of persons journeying with Visthar. "Hejjegalu", the handwritten magazine prepared by children from Bandhavi and SSS was released on that day. Children performed cultural programmes; mothers and children shared their experiences.

The birthdays of children were celebrated once a month. Many of them had not celebrated their birthdays back in their homes. They shared their feelings of happiness during the celebration. They also performed cultural activities. These celebrations contribute to increasing their participation and organizing skills.

Two meetings with the mothers were conducted during December 2022 and February 2023. A total of 28 members participated in the meeting. The following points were taken up for discussion.

- » Progress of their children in education.
- » The small changes they could observe like, performances, courage, etc. among the children.
- » Parents' contributions to Bandhavi
- » The JJ Act 2016.
- » Performance of children in SSLC children and carrier guidance, the continuation of their education, etc.
- » About the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).

#### **To ensure 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 79 girls accessed regular schooling from 1st class to 10th class. 18 children appeared for SSLC examination during the month of June 2022. Except for one, all children passed the 10th class. Out of 18 children, 2 got distinction, 12 got 1st class, and the remaining 3 children scored above 50% and 1 girl couldn't complete 10th class. Current academic year, there are 12 children in the 10th class. Children were given additional tuition classes at Bandhavi.

The following educational activities were organized during 2022-23.

- » 4 girls from the 8th class attended National Means Cum Merit Scholarships (NMMS) Examination. It is implemented by the Department of School Education & Literacy under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The objective of the scheme is to award scholarships to meritorious students of economically weaker sections to arrest their dropouts at class VIII and encourage them to continue their studies at the secondary stage. A scholarship of Rs. 12000/- per annum (Rs.1000/- per month) per student is awarded to selected students every year for study in classes from IX to XII in State Government, Government aided, and local body schools. The results of these exams have not come out yet.
- » 59 children participated in 3 days of creative writing training during summer camp. Through this training, they were able to recognize their creativity and skills. During the training, they learned to write articles,



## Education details of children at Bandhavi:

Sl. No	Class	No of Children	Schools where the children are studying
1	Class 2	03	SSS, Bandhavi campus
2	Class 3	02	SSS, Bandhavi campus
3	Class 4	06	SSS, Bandhavi campus
4	Class 5	10	SSS, Bandhavi campus
5	Class 6	13	Govt. HPS, Chikkabidnal
6	Class 7	09	Govt. HPS, Chikkabidnal
7	Class 8	11	Govt. HS, Hirebidnal
8	Class 9	13	Govt. HS, Hirebidnal
9	Class 10	12	Govt. HS, Hirebidnal
<b>Total</b>		<b>79</b>	

stories, poetry, dramas, etc. About 10 dramas/ play writings, 30 poems, and 5 stories were written by them. Children enjoyed the training and brought out handwritten magazine.

- » 11 Bandhavi children received 7 days of theatre training during summer camp. It was an opportunity for them to enhance their talent in acting, singing, and body control. They also learned how to create a play based on a true story/incident.
- » Facilitated gender training for children in Bandhavi to raise their consciousness. Children shared about the discrimination they experienced at home, school, and other spaces..
- » 5 days of Child rights training during summer camp, facilitated by Dr. Antony, a former CWC member from Bagalkot district. This enhanced their understanding of their rights and duties and increased their participation in activities organized in schools. They also became aware of the procedures to get justice and expressed that they will try to prevent such rights violations in their villages.
- » 5 children from Bandhavi participated in the district children's parliament meeting held in Koppal. It was organized by the Department of Women and Child Development in collaboration with UNICEF.
- » Training on Visthar Child Protection Policy (VCP) for the 20 newly enrolled
- » A theatre team from Bandhavi, comprising 12 children participated in 16 days campaign against Gender-based Violence in 5 villages. This was organized by Visthar in November 2022. The children performed a play on discrimination experienced by a girl child, starting at home, school, and in society at large.
- » Bandhavi children participated in the celebration of Constitution dedication day on 26th November 2022 at Tankankal School. Children performed awareness songs against girl-child discrimination and Constitutional rights.
- » To raise awareness about the environment and climate justice, we celebrated Environment Day on campus on 27th June 2022. Children had discussions on the importance of protecting trees and plants. The newly joined children planted saplings. In the same spirit, during birthday celebrations, children are encouraged to plant saplings and protect them. Continuous efforts were being done for maintaining a plastic-free, green, and clean campus at Bandhavi.
- » A Summer camp was organized from 12th to 26th April-2022 with a focus on Child rights
- » Dussera camp in Bandhavi, from 10th to 15th October 2022. The children learned through games; they developed in writing stories, poems, drawing, and theatre. They painted a banner which has been used to create awareness of child rights.

- » Children above 6th class attend an ongoing weekly Computer classes. They were enthusiastic and learned computers very fast. They browse for their syllabus matters, model questions, etc.



## Samagra Shikshana Shale (SSS)

52 children from neighbouring villages and 21 from Bandhavi were enrolled in SSS.

### Details of children enrolled in SSS:

Sl no	Level	Girls	Boys	Total	From Bandhavi	From community
1	Level I	05	04	09	00	09
2	Level II	10	07	17	03	14
3	Level III	06	03	09	02	07
4	Level IV	08	03	11	06	05
5	Level V	11	02	13	10	03
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>-</b>

Besides, the above, 14 children have been regularly coming to SSS along with their siblings.

*Field visits:* The SSS teachers made visits to 4 neighbouring villages for school enrollment. They visited the Anganawadi schools (Pre-schools) in these villages and collected the list of children who are going to enroll in 1st standard.

*Painting Workshop:* Organized 3 days painting workshop with 26 children.

*Community visit:* As part of their syllabus and creative way of learning children visited the community. They were divided into five groups and different groups visited different places in the village like Anganwadi Centre, Grama Panchayat office, a Home, a Nomadic community, and a shop in the village.

*Field visit for observation of handicrafts:* 30 students and teachers visited the Vocational Crafts Handloom, Doll making, Basket weaving, broom stick making, quilt making, Blacksmithing, and Community Health Centers to learn about the curriculum-based crafts

**Mobile Library:** This is a creative way of learning. Children have written stories, poems, plays on a theme, songs, etc. as per their syllabus. This was an assignment to them, and they created posters. These posters were displayed during the Bandhavi Day celebration..

Besides these, activities were organized for maintaining Kitchen Garden, and waste management. They grew vegetables and greens in their kitchen garden at SSS. They share the produce with Bandhavi and feel proud that they grew those vegetables. This activity increased their interest in organic farming.

Also, Children themselves created, directed, and performed short plays on child labour, child marriage, and other child rights violations. They performed this play on Bandhavi Day and Constitution Dedication Day and won everyone's appreciation.

5th class children received tuition classes to appear for Morarji Residential School admission. Different methodologies were used during special classes like watching videos on different subjects relating to exams, focused on grammar and the English language. This academic year 11 children appeared for a competitive exam for admission to Morarji Desai Residential School and the result is yet to be announced.

"Kalarava", a 3-day skill development workshop for children was organized from 27th Feb to 1st Mar-2023. The workshop covered the subjects of Environment studies, Solar systems in science, Trade system, and Mathematics.

## School Arts Festival



*After weeks of preparation, children from Bandhavi won a ton of prizes in the cluster level school arts festival in Chandinal village of Kukanuru Taluk on ... . Samagra Shikshana Shaale (SSS) came out as the school winning most prizes at the Lower Primary level. SSS is the Lower Primary school we run in our Bandhavi campus at Koppal.*

*"From storytelling to folk dance, and speech to debate, our children have been working hard to improve their skills. We are all excited at the recognition*

*from the arts festival", says Mariyamma. Mariyamma and Dheemanth from Visthar Ranga Shaale (VRS) coach all the students at Bandhavi in a variety of arts and activities throughout the year.*

*Older Bandhavi children who go to the neighbouring Higher Primary and High schools also brought home prizes for their schools. "We won 18 prizes in this year's Arts festival, the most we have won in a year. More importantly, our children participated in almost every event in the Arts Festival ", shares Nazar.*

### To equip 130 children with leadership, entrepreneurial and vocational skills.

All the six children's committees (Food, Cleaning, Health, Education, Planning, and Community life) in Bandhavi are functioning effectively. Once a month they 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 1-10th classes. The state has also mandated the same. Children represent the Management Committee of Child Care Institution (CCI), which is also mandated. The members of this

Committee include the Chairperson of the District Child Welfare Committee (CWC), a member of district JJB, a District Child Protection Officer (DCPO), and representatives from Hospitals, NGOs, and schools. Once a month this committee meets and discusses the functions of Bandhavi- CCI. They also give suggestions to improve the services. The officers have discussions with children during the meeting and monitor the functioning of the Suggestion Box for children.



During the summer camp, children received training in theatre, Warli art, paper bag making, and music. In this reporting period, 11 children received theatre training for 7 days and performed plays on the prevention of child marriage, the Devadasi system, and gender-based violence. This academic year children also learned Kalari, a martial art of Kerala. All children actively participated in Kalari, during the month of February. It also helped to strengthen them.

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. This academic year we also started organic compost by using dry leaves. 30% of vegetables grown were given to Bandhavi. About Rs. 27,365 income was generated from our farm.

8 children have undergone tailoring training during weekends. A training curriculum has also been prepared by the facilitators. Now they do straight stitching. 20 children received training on handicrafts and prepared products. 10 children received training in knitting and woolen work. They were interested and actively participated in these trainings. High school children received basic computer training in the last 3 months. We also screened documentary films and feature films and then discussed them together. We observed that these discussions improved their critical thinking. They also received life skill training, which is ongoing.



## Project Management

The Bandhavi project staff at present includes one Project Co-Ordinator, two House parents, three Teachers, two Cooks, one Accountant, one agriculture helper, one driver cum campus maintenance person, and Security staff. These staffs give continuous support to the children in their day-to-day life in Bandhavi.

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 if required.

Bandhavi staff participated in various trainings, including monthly capacity-building training. They attended one-day training on Counselling organized by the Women and Child Development Department (WCD) in collaboration with UNICEF. It enhanced their understanding of Counselling skills.

Members of the District Child Welfare Committee visited Bandhavi and checked the documents and gave suggestions. They issued placement orders for 79 girls in Bandhavi. 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 quarterly; monthly meetings of all Visthar staff were also conducted as the Bandhavi team coordinates 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 the 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 two meetings of the Bandhavi Management Committee and discussed Bandhavi activities. Though this meeting should be held monthly, due to the unavailability of DCPO, we had to postpone the meeting. This committee made more transparency in running the project.



## 2. Child Rights Education and Action (CREA)

### Introduction

Child Rights Education and Action (CREA) is a project initiated by Visthar. The goal of the project is that “Girls and boys enjoy a greater sense of well-being with food security, equality and inclusive education in a safe and secure environment.” The CREA project is funded by KIA. This is the first year of CREA's fifth phase. The specific objectives of the 5th phase are:

1. 5000 girls and boys become conscious of child rights and take action to safeguard the rights of all children in project villages.
2. Girls and boys in the project villages enjoy better outcomes in food and nutrition.
3. All girls and boys in the project villages are able to access regular schooling.
4. Girls and boys in the project villages experience less gender discrimination and gender-based violence.

The CREA project covered 147 villages of 35 panchayats of Koppal district during the reporting period. The project area was distributed between three teams for the smooth functioning of the project. That is summarised below:

Sl no	Name of the team	Total no of panchayats	Total no of villages
1	Task Force	13	48
2	Payana (Journey)	09	47
3	Hosa Belaku (new light)	13	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>-143</b>	

### Highlights

- » We selected 3 coordinators, 16 community facilitators, one document officer, and one project assistant through structured recruitment interviews. The interview for Coordinators was completed by the end of February 2022 itself and that of community facilitators at the beginning of April.
- » The new team attended a 30-day training. There was a gap of two weeks after the first 15 days. During that time, the team went into the villages to become familiar with the community. They said that increased their confidence in their ability to organise children.
- » A baseline survey was conducted in 75 villages. 1160 respondents were surveyed. A team of 10 youth volunteers identified from the project area conducted the baseline survey.
- » The door-to-door survey was done by the coordinators and the community facilitators themselves. That enabled them to visit all the households in the project area and become familiar. That was completed by July 12, 2023.

Sanghas have been formed in 202 government schools. 6070 children - 3070 girls and 3042 boys - are members of these 202 sanghas. Following the demands of the sangha members, each sangha was inaugurated with a small function in the presence of all the school children, teachers, SDMC and PRI members, etc. The community facilitators are responsible for facilitating sessions in the sanghas; they visit each sangha at least once in 15 days.

- » Children have become more conscious and are showing courage to speak up about gender discrimination in schools, families, and villages. This was made possible through a series of sessions and discussions in the sanghas on Gender, Child Rights and Life Skills. Across the 202 Sanghas, the community facilitators



led 673 sessions on gender, 183 sessions on life skills and 359 sessions on child rights for the children in the sanghas.

- » The CREA team enrolled 197 children who had been identified as school dropouts. They were identified from either the door-to-door survey, or in the regular interactions facilitators had with the children and the community.
- » Further, the CREA team identified 461 girls who were not going to school regularly due to a variety of reasons - poverty, forced child labour, child marriage, disabilities, ill-health, responsibilities to look after the sick and the young in the family etc. This was discovered through a detailed survey focussing on adolescent girls as part of the campaign against child marriage funded by CREA. That enabled the project team to focus on these girls.
- » Over 15 girls were enrolled in tailoring classes, while being guided to re-enroll for the exams they had earlier failed under NIOS.
- » During the Independence Day celebration, memoranda were submitted to SDMC and grama panchayats on the lack of basic facilities in schools. Those memoranda led to change. Immediately after the SDMC and PRI addressed many of the demands in the memoranda. The data presented in the memoranda came from a survey we conducted in schools on the challenges children face to attend regular schooling.
- » The theatre campaign was successful in raising awareness of women, men, girls, and boys on how child marriage and child labour violate the right to education of children. The cultural troupe with 12 members reached more than 14,000 people in 44 villages with their performances.
- » In Putagamari, a new village for CREA, a group of adults came together after one of our theatre performances. They decided to monitor all activities related to children in the village, especially those that violate children's rights. They are very supportive of all activities related to children there. The committee can be evolved to be a child protection committee in the future. This was a direct result of our campaign.
- » Children shared their experiences, pain, and thoughts on child rights violations on Constitution Day. It was a series of competitions organised in government schools as part of Constitution Day that enabled the children to share their experiences with facts and figures. More than 80 children from Kukanuru, Koppal and Yalaburga taluks participated in this event.

- » 5 CREA team members deepened their knowledge of the Indian Constitution by attending a workshop on Indian Constitution organised by Azim Premji Foundation in Hospet in October 2022; they learned how to apply it for child protection. That helped in planning the Constitutional Day celebration.
- » The CREA team is actively participating in other projects of Visthar - conducting studies, festival celebrations, training for children etc. Such mutual sharing and support have strengthened CREA as well as the other projects.
- » We filed eight Request for Information (RTI) petitions on Children's Gram Sabha conducted in the last five years - this is to hold the local government accountable for Children's Grama Sabha. One Panchayat responded with the information.
- » Marleen and Joseph from KIA visited Koppal and met the CREA team in November 2022. The team found it affirming and encouraging. They also gained more clarity on the project and funding. This is the first time a representative from Netherlands has visited the project in 13 years.



## Activities and Outcome

#	Activity	Status
<b>Outcome 1: 5000 girls and boys become conscious of child rights and take action to safeguard the rights of all children in project villages.</b>		
1	Conduct a baseline survey	10 youths from the project area conducted the baseline survey in May 2022. The Kobo platform was used to conduct the survey.
2	Recruit and train Community Facilitators	A 30-day training for the team was facilitated at the start of the project. The team gained in perspectives and training skills. They also learnt how to engage with the community.
3	Conduct a door-to-door survey	The door-to-door survey was conducted by the CREA team. The team got to know the project area better through this. The Kobo platform was used to conduct the survey.
4	Collectivize children and form Child Rights Sanghas in schools	CREA formed 202 children sanghas in 202 government schools. There are 6070 (3070 girls and 3042 boys) children participating these sanghas.
5	Train Sangha members on child rights and child protection	This is ongoing in the schools. Every fortnight the facilitators lead sessions on child rights, gender equality or life skills. 258 hours of child rights sessions were taken in the first year.
6	Life skills training for all Sangha members	Life skills training is ongoing in the schools. Every fortnight the facilitators lead sessions on child rights, gender equality or life skills. 183 hours of life skills sessions were taken in the first year.
7	Organize public event for Constitutional Day	The event was organised as part of celebrating Human Rights Day along with Bandhavi Day on 11th December 2022. A series of competitions were organised for children of 6-8 standard on child protection concepts.



<b>Outcome 2: Girls and boys in the project villages enjoy better outcomes in food and nutrition</b>		
1	Children's Sanghas monitor and report on the Mid Day Meal Scheme in schools to ensure regular and quality nutrition for all girls and boys in the schools	We could monitor MDMS only in two schools. The children monitoring MDMS in schools created a tension with some of the teachers. It threatened to affect relationships with the school; we are reformulating this activity for the next year.
<b>Outcome 3: All girls and boys in the project villages are able to access regular schooling</b>		
1	Children's Sanghas identify children who are out of school	With the help of children, Anganwadi workers and schoolteachers CREA was able to bring back 197 children to school from different situations during the year.
2	An annual school enrolment campaign	<p>CREA team identified 461 girls who are not going to schools in 75 villages for several reasons - not enough money for educational purposes, forced child labour and child marriage, disabilities, ill-health of the girl, responsible for looking after the sick and younger ones in the family etc.</p> <p>A survey was carried out in selected government school on available basic facilities in schools. During the Independence Day celebration we used the data to submit memoranda to SDMC and grama panchayats to take immediate actions.</p> <p>Street plays were a key activity organised under this campaign. Celebration of National Days, bringing back children to schools using the data available in door-to-door survey, submission of memoranda to bus depot and taluk offices for sanctioning bus routes to villages for children to attend school were some of the activities organised.</p> <p>A Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) focusing on children was conducted in Putagamari village. The lack of interest on child right matters was one among that. The discussion with the community led to the initiation of an adult's committee for children in this village.</p>
3	Children's Sanghas monitor and report on teacher absenteeism, corporal punishment, and other child rights violations	We could not do this in the first year. We plan to take this up in the next year.
4	Form a cultural troupe of Youth	A cultural troupe with 8 young women and 2 young men was formed. They created street plays on how child rights are violated with focus on child labour and child marriages. The troupe gave 46 performances in 44 villages, reaching more than 14,000 people.
<b>Outcome 4: Girls and boys in the project villages experience less gender discrimination and gender-based violence</b>		
1	Sensitize all Community Facilitators on gender equality	Periodic gender sensitisation trainings were organised for the community facilitators and for the newly joined staff. We organised 6 trainings for the staff. The duration of the trainings varied from 1 day to 7 days.
2	Gender sensitization of all Sangha members	This is ongoing in the schools. Every fortnight the facilitators lead sessions on child rights, gender equality or life skills. 673 hours of gender sessions were taken in the first year.
3	Organize a campaign against child marriage and early marriage in the villages	The campaign was very active. It included theatre campaign, celebration of girl child day, women's day, Savitri Bhai Phule Jayanthi, poster exhibition, documentary screening, formation of adult committees for children and participating in campaign on violence against girl children and women.

## Additional Activities Implemented

- » Fifteen girls were enrolled in tailoring training as they were not interested in academic studies.
- » Twenty children were supported to write an entrance exam for the Morarji Desai Residential School; they are awaiting the result.
- » In Karmudi village, the community facilitator influenced the SDMC and grama panchayat of the village to use the NREGA fund and create a playground for children by clearing the open drainage.
- » In Malakasamdura village, the community applied to a Solar Power Plant that had initiated solar energy projects, for basic school facilities. The company has promised to provide teaching materials to the local schools. This was organised by the CREA community facilitators and coordinator working in the village.
- » Due to heavy rainfall last year, 6 people died in Karmudi panchayat. CREA facilitators organised the community to demand new bridges. They organised a rally and submitted a memorandum to the MLA. The government sanctioned two bridges; the bridges were inaugurated recently by the local MLA.
- » CREA team members are active in the campaign advocating land for nomadic community, raising pension, and sanctioning housing facilities for Devadasi women.
- » CREA team submitted an application for getting land for Devadasi women in Hitnal village. The decision is still pending.
- » CREA team member guided and enabled two newly married people from Devadasi families to get the honorarium of Rs. 3,00,000 under an amendment of the Devadasi Dedication Prohibition and Rehabilitation Act 2016.
- » Two Self Help Groups were formed in Malakasamudra village under National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) which will indirectly help the children of those are out of school.
- » CREA was very active in the international 16 days of activism campaign against gender- based violence. We organised 'Women in Black' protests in 3 villages.



## Challenges

Getting permission from the department to work in schools and the panchayats took a long time. Our request was seen as unusual in the department and there was a negligent attitude towards the work of NGOs. Headmasters of some schools demanded a letter from the BEO even after the DDPI gave us permission.

There was attrition in the team; a few trained staff left us after a few months, and that affected the children in the Sanghas and the project.

Many in the community are not interested in children's education and protection. The panchayat is also not responsive to peoples' needs and demands. They do not take their responsibility towards children seriously. For example, organising children's grama sabha is only for namesake. The team tried to build community support for the protection of children. It did not succeed as planned. There were failures from both the community, as well as Visthar. Many in the community were not interested; at the same time, many Visthar staff also did not have the skills for community organising and community advocacy.

We could not achieve some of the targets as we had underestimated the travel distance to some of the villages; most of those villages also lack local transportation facilities.

Though we tried to recruit more women staff, that was not always possible – the travel distances discouraged some women from applying, and we received fewer educated women candidates in all our recruitments for CREA. A few of our early women recruits resigned after a few months on the job.

The online reporting system was new in the 5th Phase of CREA. It took quite some time for the staff to recognise its importance and adopt the system fully.

Over 60% of the project's work is with the government schools. Therefore, the project is also depended on school, school timings and school system.

#### Details of Children's Sanghas

#	Name of the team	# Children in Sanghas		
		Girls	Boys	Total
1	Task Force	1065	1065	2130
2	Payana	1065	1065	2130
3	Hosa Belaku	898	912	1805
<b>Total</b>		<b>3028</b>	<b>3042</b>	<b>6070</b>

#### Reaching direct and indirect beneficiaries

Sl. No.	Stakeholders	Description
1	Children in sanghas	We were able to reach 6070 (3070 girls and 3042 boys) children through children's sanghas.
2	Children in Project Area	CREA reached 53,790 children (30,915 girls and 22,875 girls) through different events and activities organised in the villages.
3	Adults in Project Area	We are reaching adults through street theatre initiatives as part of the enrolment campaign and campaign against child marriage.
4	Teachers	The teachers in the 202 government schools are part of the activities done in schools.
5	SDMC members	We have not yet significantly engaged with the SDMC members in our project activities except for ensuring their participation in preplanning meetings organised in some schools. We have engaged with about 200 SDMC members so far.
6	PRI members	We met with and gave several memoranda to the panchayat members; different meetings were held with them to plan for the activities/ celebrations.
7	Anganwadi workers and ASHA workers	Anganwadi and ASHA workers are closely involved in the project. They are the primary data source for us and help us directly for the success of the project.
9	CBOs (youth groups, SHGs etc.)	We do not organise any activities for CBO members. But they are very much involved in the project activities.

## A Reflective Analysis

- » We need to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities we have conducted with the children in the Sanghas and in the campaigns. We sense there is more we can do to make our training more effective.
- » In the past many NGOs have worked in schools. A few of them had negative impacts on the school and affected the teachers badly. The initial noncorporation towards CREA's activities stemmed from those experiences.
- » CREA's focus is in the school, forming and facilitating children's sanghas. However, the local community is often detached from the school system. Hence, in the first year, CREA did not have many community-based activities. We need to increase that in the second year.
- » We had to revise the focus in the first few quarters. Initially, the facilitators focused on getting a base in the village. Then, it shifted to the formation of Sanghas in the schools. During this time, we also experienced turnover among staff. That led to difficulties in coordinating the project effectively. We should have foreseen this better.
- » After COVID-19, the school system is also under pressure due to the long gap they had experienced. That also led to CREA activities not getting adequate support from the school.
- » The Resilience Project and CREA's past efforts helped our relationships with the community.
- » Though the community facilitators visit the village only once in 15 days, the children are slowly coming up to claim their rights - like the facilities in school, corporal punishment, violations of rights in schools and in the community including family, etc. Some of them started to report these incidents to community facilitators. Through community organising, CREA is able to prevent violations like child marriage, corporal punishment, and child labour.

## Lessons Learned

- » Duty bearers, including the parents, who are supposed to protect the rights of children are themselves violating children's rights or are silent towards the violations. That is a sad situation and needs to be challenged.
- » Persistent efforts are the only way to reach our goal. Thinking out of the box will help us to find alternatives when we are stuck.
- » Proper analysis and planning help to reduce the risks. Managing village-based activities, continuous pressure to reach targets, and developing our computer skills - all of them help to bridge our gaps. We gain the courage to take on more responsibilities for the protection of children's rights.
- » Proper bills, vouchers, and supporting documents for all expenses are an important part of any work. We need to be diligent about it.
- » The residential staff training created lots of opportunities to share and learn internally which. It encouraged people to think clearly and articulate their thoughts in any situation. It also helped us to manage difficult situations. Gradually, the dependency on each other reduces.

## Cooperation with local stakeholders

- » The community is slowly accepting us and is ready to participate in the protection of children.
- » Anganwadi and ASHA workers are the primary data sources for our work in the villages. The teachers in school are cooperative and participate actively in the activities we organise in villages and schools. The PRI & CBOs are also supportive of CREA.
- » Health, education, and child protection departments support us by providing information, materials like posters, information about the training and workshops organised by the government etc. In several

places, the community facilitators became volunteers for government activities such as health camps and medical check-ups.

- » The district UNICEF unit is helping Visthar from time to time, to increase our involvement with children across the district.
- » Likeminded individuals, organisations and media are standing with us.
- » The CREA alumni help out a lot to strengthen CREA activities in their villages.
- » CREA network partners from earlier phases serve as resource persons to support CREA activities in the 5th phase.



# Campaigns Against Child Marriage

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

## The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act

The legal age for marriage in India is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys.

Child marriages are illegal according to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

Child marriages conducted after the law came into force will be declared null and void.

UNICEF logo and text: **unicef** unite for children

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

Denial of right to childhood, play and leisure

Sexual abuse

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE ?

Physical violence

Denial of right to education

Child labour

Denial of right to health and safety

UNICEF logo and text: **unicef** unite for children

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

Parents of both bride and the groom

Priests who conduct the wedding

WHO WILL BE PUNISHED?

The groom, If he is over 18 years old

Relatives, friends and neighbours who participate in the wedding.

Any person helping in the marriage

UNICEF logo and text: **unicef** unite for children

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

## Where should I report child marriage?

You can report a child marriage anonymously to the following places:

1. Child Helpline 1098
2. District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) 08539225030
3. Child Welfare Committee (CWC) 08539220773
4. Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) 112
5. UNICEF Child Protection Program 08539225006
6. District DC office 08539220844

UNICEF logo and text: **unicef** unite for children

### 3. Kanasu Kishori Sanghatana (KKS)

We completed the first year of the Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane (KKS) initiative in June 2022. This has been a year of learning and growth for our community-based programs in Koppal, North-Karnataka.

KKS is a program for the empowerment of adolescent girls, initiated by Visthar in partnership with APPI. The program addresses issues of violence, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition and education from a rights and justice perspective.

“We have been collectivising all the adolescent girls in Kukkanoor Taluk through this initiative”, says Asha Shirady. “Over 5000 girls from 15 Panchayats are members of KKS Sanghas in their villages. Last year they became more conscious of gender inequality and violence. They are learning how to resist violence collectively.”

Neha, a member of the Sanghatane sums up the spirit nicely: “I love the discussions we have every week. I have become more confident and speak up more against injustice”. “Our Sanghas work with different stakeholders to protect the rights of girls”, adds Nazar PS. “The KKS campaign against Gender-Based Violence used street theatre to engage with parents in the community.”

#### Leadership Summer Camp

“I couldn’t sleep last night with all the excitement”, laughs Pavithra. “I should have been tired after all the yoga, and farming and dancing and everything. But we were all talking non-stop even after we went to our rooms. I can’t wait for today.”

Pavithra and friends are part of the Leadership Summer Camp that has kicked off in our Koppal campus. 25 girls from Kukanoor taluk of Koppal district participated in the camp organized by Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane (KKS).



At the camp, the girls deepen their understanding of social issues and develop their skills to advocate for justice. The camp combines games, theatre, art and agriculture to increase the confidence and skills of the girls. The girls also get an opportunity to interact with a wide range of people who are already working for justice.

“We see tremendous leadership potential among the girls in our Sanghas.

For this camp, we could only enrol 25 girls. There are so many more girls who could benefit from camps like this”, says Asha Shirady who leads the KKS project.

## A database of all children in Kukanoor Taluk

During ... girls from the KKS Sanghas visited each household in their village to create a database of all children in Kukanoor Taluk of Koppal district. The girls are part of Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane, a network of 250 sanghas of adolescent girls in the taluk.

The purpose of this door-to-door survey was to ensure that all children of school-going age are enrolled in school. Once this list of all children in the taluk is ready, the sanghas plan to track and periodically verify that all of the children in their database are actually going to school. If they find children who are not going to school, the sanghas will meet with the child and parents to find out what is preventing the child from attending school. They will persuade the parents and other stakeholders to ensure the child's right to education can be met.

It takes me 5-7 minutes to get the details of each child", says Lakshmi. "Sometimes, I request to see the child's Aadhaar card, as parents might not be sure of the child's exact age. That's when it takes more time." Based on government records, the KKS sanghas estimate there are about 30,000 children in Kukanoor taluk. All 250 sanghas were out in the villages to make sure they get details of every child.

"Why don't you let children enjoy their childhood? Why do you force young girls to wear sarees and get married?", sings the performers holding hands as the impromptu audience under the banyan tree breaks into an applause. This is the troupe's 16th performance, and they have been attracting crowds everywhere they perform.

"I never thought I would be acting in plays across our villages", says Bhumika. "I signed up for the KKS theatre workshop because I liked to act and sing - at home. Three weeks later, we are travelling from village to village performing in public spaces."

Bhumika and friends are part of the Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane (KKS).. "I can speak out against child marriage better now, and it's not easy!", says Rashmi. "Yes, it's a lot more difficult than we thought. But we are developing ourselves to resist it.", adds her friend Gouri.

Rashmi and Gouri have just completed a 3-day residential training on child rights for leaders of the KKS sanghas. KKS (Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane) is a network of 250 sanghas of adolescent girls in Kukanoor Taluk of Koppal district.

The child rights training was led by veteran child rights activist, Antony Chinnappa from Anthyodaya, Mudhol. "Children becoming conscious of their rights and working together to claim the rights for all children is the way forward", he says. "That's why these trainings become important."



The training enables participants to connect the principles of the UNCRC with their daily lives. They learn the institutional mechanisms available to protect those rights and how to access those mechanisms.

As part of the training, the facilitator role played a father who is planning to get his 14-year old daughter married off. The participants had to convince him why he should not. The arguments flowed back and forth.



“We struggled to convince him why he shouldn’t marry his daughter. Finally, we threatened as a group to get the CWC and police involved, that’s when he began to agree”, explains Gouri. “We learnt that we need to use reason and collective action to protect our rights. We are not alone.”

## Stories of Change

*“No more illegal sale of liquor in the village. This is my final warning”- Police Officer at G. Veerapur village. This is an outcome of efforts made by Yamanoorappa, a member of the Children’s Club. 13-year-old Yamanoorappa is studying in 7th standard. He is also a student at the Transformative Learning Centre initiated by the Resilience Project at G. Veerapur village of Yelburga taluk of Koppal district. Yamanoorappa.*

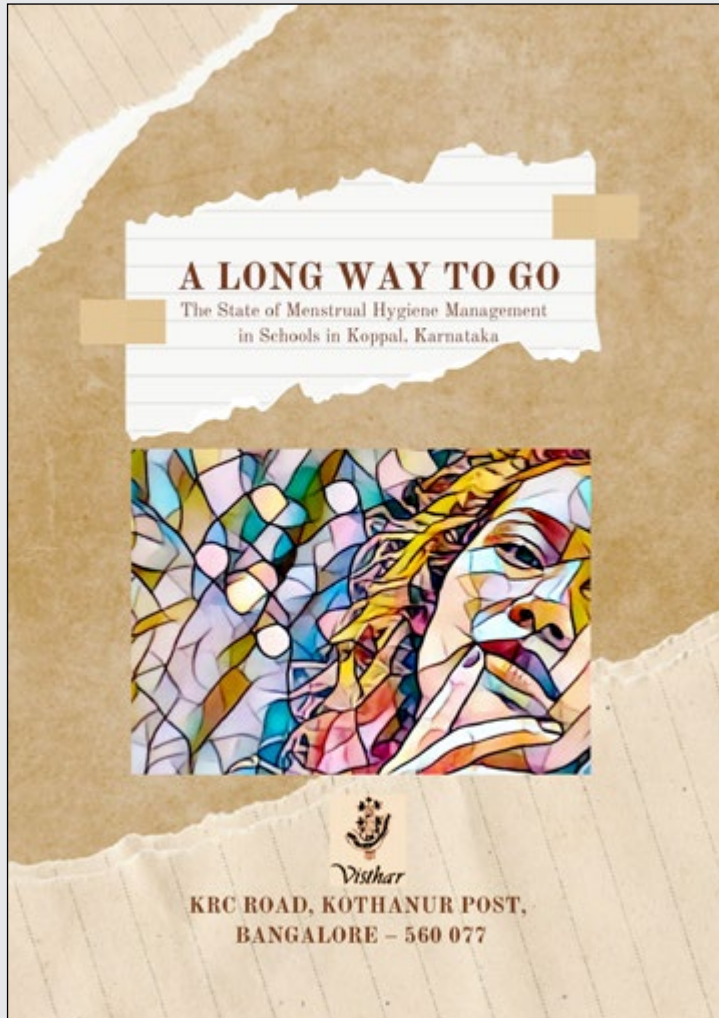
*Due to Covid 19, there has been a reverse migration to the villages in the Koppal district. G. Veerapur has the highest number of migrant returnees from the cities. This village witnessed a severe unemployment situation. No alternative jobs were available for the returnees. There was also no proper implementation of MNREGA (Rural Employment Guarantee Act) in the village. This forced them to find petty jobs in nearby towns which fetched only a meagre income. Many of them consume alcohol on a regular basis. The small shop owners found the demand for liquor and started buying in the town and selling in their villages illegally. The school premises turned into a Bar from evening till midnight.*

*Yamanoorappa from the beginning was interested in keeping the school premises clean and green. Every alternate day he along with other students used to clean the school premises. He used to get annoyed seeing empty liquor packets/bottles on the school premises. He was also upset about the behaviour of the alcoholics. Though there was no licensed liquor shop in his village, liquor was sold illegally in petty shops. His attempt to discuss this nuisance with teachers did not yield any results. Yamanoorappa’s father himself is an alcoholic. Many times he questioned his father about consuming alcohol and using the school premises. One of the trainings on child rights organized by Visthar inspired him to take some action on this issue. Yamanoorappa, in one of the children’s club meetings, planned for action along with his fellow members. He contacted the resource person for guidance and approached the Visthar coordinator who helped him to arrange for a telephonic conversation with the Police to explain the issue. The same evening a police team entered the village, searched all the petty shops and seized the liquor.*

*Shocked by the police actions entire village gathered along with their panchayath members. Police explained the legal consequences of the illegal sale of liquor. The village elders also felt that the issue besides being illegal has moral and ethical consequences. Finally, after two hours of meeting, it was resolved that no liquor will be sold in the village. Even bringing the liquor from outside and drinking on the school campus was prohibited. This decision brought a tremendous attitudinal change in the village. Today sale of liquor has stopped, and School premises are free from alcohol packets and garbage. Teachers are happy and very appreciative of Yamanoorappa and his team’s effort. SDMC called for an urgent meeting to appreciate the initiative. Even Yamanoorappa’s father feels proud of his son’s actions. Availability and consumption of alcohol reduced, including that of his father. Yamanoorappa sees the change in his family and is happy about it.*

## **‘A long way to go’: Research report on the state of menstrual hygiene management in schools in Koppal, Karnataka.**

*Based on an assessment of 171 government schools in Koppal district of Karnataka, the research reveals that there is indeed a long way to go for menstrual hygiene management.*



*The Indian government issued the National Guidelines on Menstrual Hygiene Management in 2015. The guidelines required the governments and all stakeholders to ensure 4 aspects around menstrual hygiene for adolescent girls, women, and their families. Building awareness, knowledge, and information to manage menstruation with dignity is the first among four aspects. The second is that there should be easy access to sufficient, affordable, and hygienic menstrual absorbents during menstruation. The third aspect calls for separate toilet with private space for cleaning, washing with water supply and soap. The last one is about ensuring infrastructure for disposal of used menstrual pads and clothes.*

*The Guidelines clearly explain how the lack of toilet facilities affect the education of students and their overall development. It says the dirty restrooms can cause*

*students to be absent from school due to transmitted diarrhoeal diseases. Girls have to miss school during menstruation if the restrooms at the school are inadequate. Many children with disabilities might avoid drinking or eating throughout the day so they don't have to use the toilet, and that can lead to serious health issues. The guidelines also point out that poor school toilet facilities affect personal hygiene of the students.*

*This research is done as part of strengthening Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane (KKS), an empowerment program for adolescent girls in Kukanoor Taluk of Koppal district. 5000 girls between the ages 13-18 are part of 250 sanghas in 53 villages and 19 wards of Kukanoor taluk. This research looks closely at the schools these girls study in.*

*In the last 17 years Visthar has been dealing with the issues of children from a rights perspective. This report outlines the steps the government, the community, and other NGOs need to take for ensuring the rights of adolescent girls.*

## 4. Visthar Ranga Shale (VRS)

VRS has successfully completed a four-month course on theatre for 12 youth (9 women and 3 men) from Koppal and Chitradurga districts. The short-term course ended on 31st January, 2023.

VRS developed a street play to raise awareness on Child Marriage and Child Labour. The street play is named "Makkala Rakshane Nammellara Hone" ("Protection of children is our duty"). The troupe performed in 44 villages of Yelburga and Koppal taluks. There were 4 to 5 performances daily. These performances were done in October and November 2022. Additionally, the troupe performed in forty villages of the KKS project in November.

- » We demonstrated one of the two street theatre productions to the Department of Information and Broadcasting, as part of a selection process they initiated for performing in many villages. Ours was one of the twelve troupes from Koppal district they evaluated. We were not selected, though.
- » The street play was also performed in Chitradurga as part of the 'Beedi Nataka Utsava'
- » We conducted a three-day workshop for all the children in SSS; they produced a play at the end of the workshop. The workshop's theme was selected from the school textbooks of standards 1-5.
- » The VRS team also created a 1-hour play on the Matha culture of North Karnataka. The play is named 'Jangamade'. It was performed in the Sanehalli theatre school during the annual theatre celebration.
- » A play on the story of Kadlimatti Kasibhai was created for Bandhavi girls; it was performed in Sahityabhavana in Koppal as part of the Teachers' Day celebration.
- » The team also participated in WIB events as part of the 16-day campaign organised by Visthar.
- » The Kannada & Culture Department organised a children's art event called 'Chinnara Chilume' in Koppal campus in collaboration with VRS project.
- » The VRS team took an active role in Dussehra camp and taught theatre and dance performances to Bandhavi children.
- » The troupe actively participated in the celebrations of National days, local festivals, Bandhavi Day etc.
- » Apart from the above performances the troupe received the theory and practical classes. In play reading, story-making, kalari payattu, yoga, thaichi, mask-making, kamsale, folk dance and acting.



Though we couldn't run the fifth batch of the one-year diploma under the Kannada University, Hampi, we could complete a set of transformative activities by restarting VRS. I expect that we will get the permission to run the course next year. That will enable more meaningful involvement in the community through transformative theatre next year as well.



*Jangamadadege Grand Show in VRS*



*Meeting with DD for Drama Diploma course. Prof. Madevahaia*



*Participating in 16 days activism*



*Theatre workshop for SSS children*



*Theatre performance*



*Theatre performance*

# TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



## 1. Leadership for Social Transformation (LST)

LST includes training youth in rural and semi-rural areas to be socially active and engaged in local community issues. Simultaneously to see the engagement as a period of discernment. The training was titled Leadership for Social Transformation (LST) and participants were those actively involved in serving vulnerable groups during the pandemic.

This report covers the work of training and the grass roots engagement of LST participants post the training. Highlights:

- » Initiated a campaign on TB Prevention & Early Detection in their respective field areas covering over 500 families from 8 mandals of Chittoor district in partnership with PHC's & Govt Primary Schools
- » Campaign on World Mines Day in their respective field areas reaching 350 Children from 8 mandals of Chittoor district in partnership with Government Primary Schools pledging to envision "World With NO War"
- » A campaign on World Health Day covering over 200 families & 300 Children from 8 mandals of Chittoor district in partnership with Government Primary Schools & Govt. Health Centers for a safe and healthy world emphasizing not only on physical health but also on mental health.
- » Celebrated Ambedkar Jayanti along with Women's Groups & Local Ambedkar Youth Associations in 8 mandals of Chittoor district and also in various churches.
- » The graduates of LST celebrated International Labour Day in 12 churches and celebrated the labour of Agricultural & Factory Workers / Auto Drivers who are the church members.
- » LST along with their cadre have reached 900 Students from first generation learning community to make them aware to care for creation by planting each sapling. Likewise 900 saplings were planted in their communities to carry forward "Children Initiatives for Global Change" movement both at Sunday & Academic School levels. During these sessions, Students had an opportunity to discuss various concepts like Gender, Constitution, Social Discrimination, Digital divide, Community Mental Health & Post Covid issues etc., through art and other creative methods.
- » Celebrated Widows day and raised awareness to offer dignity and safety to 70 families of widows in their respective field areas from 8 mandals of Chittoor district
- » Conducted rights awareness to nearly 70 PWD persons and PWD family visitations and cadre of 40 pastors are formed for Disability Ministry along with LST graduates
- » LST graduates are pioneers in formation of Ikya Vedika which now has an informal membership of 500 Anawim members

- » They also did pioneering work among PWD's and networked nearly 100 PWD's offering leadership.
- » Networked with 400 Young people from Colleges, Community and in Churches
- » LST Graduates have pioneered to network 500 Adivasi Women as an informal Federation in Chittoor Dist.
- » The outcome of LST-2 is the LST -3 where the animators are working towards an inclusive society to build two platforms: Anawim Sign Language Fellowship and Abhayam Center for Women's Leadership (Anawim Interfaith Groups)
- » LST graduates are also getting trained in Sign Language to reach out to 1000 plus Speech & Hearing Impaired People in Chittoor dist.
- » Today we have a cadre of 3500 people in Chittoor district and the statistics are given below.

People of Concern	PWD's	Youth	Mothers	Adivasi Women	Anawim Pastors	Children	Core Group	Rural Women	Total
LST Cadre in Numbers	100	400	400	500	500	1000	100	500	3500 NOS

## Youth Leadership for Social Transformation (YLST)

The purpose of the YLST is four fold.

- » Ensure continuity with the earlier (pre Covid) programmes.
- » Build capacities among Christian youth for multiple interventions but more specifically, the building up of the Anawim Satsang as a faith movement.
- » Enable participants to go through a phase of discernment; applying a framework of action- reflection- action.

The curriculum and pedagogy for YLST was culled out from the lessons learned in the LST. The YLST was participatory in nature and interdisciplinary in approach. The pedagogy provided for interaction and exploration of thought and ideas beyond the boundaries of orthodoxy. Underlying pedagogy was the frame of praxis: an action - reflection - action process, a continuum.

The notable outcome of the YLST is as follows:

- » Formation of the Ikya Vedike (unity forum).
- » Work among the mothers of the PWD children and a formation of a support group for women.
- » Work among and formation of a sign language group to aid the speech and hearing challenged.
- » Work among and formation of students union in colleges.



## 2. Workshop on Financial Management and Social Accountability

The course on Financial Management and Social Accountability is designed in such a way that the project staff as well as the finance team of any organization can attend the course. The path of the less explored bridge is seen and understood over 5 days. This year the 12th edition of the course was conducted between October 17 to October 21 at Visthar Campus, Bengaluru.

The content comprises of key concepts of financial management, planning and budgeting (short term to long term), gender budgeting, legal requirements, ethics, social accountability, internal audits, project-oriented control systems, income tax and FCRA. All these topics were covered in game, activities-based sessions. The course is mainly facilitated by Francis Salvadore along with Biju John, Roshen Chandran, David Selvaraj and M. Sivakumar, a professional auditor.

12 participants from 5 different organization attended the course from 4 states. The highlight of the course is the shared learning. Our faculty members have learnt new strategies that participants use in their work as well. The interactive and shared learning was indeed very insightful for us, as it was for the participants. We bid adieu with hope and happiness.



*Without restoring an ethos of social responsibility,  
there can be no meaningful and sustained economic recovery.*

- Jeffrey Sachs



# MAINSTREAMING GENDER AND DIVERSITY

## 1. The LCN Network

LCN (Lam-lynti Chittara Neralu) is a national network working towards improved and rights-based shelter homes for women, queer women, and trans persons who are survivors of gender-based violence. The network was formed in 2016 by women's rights, human rights, and feminist organizations across India. Our aim is to reimagine shelter homes as transformational and survivor-centric spaces with an enabling ecosystem.

Between 2017 and 2019, eight member organisations of LCN (Action India, Jagori and Nazariya Delhi, Ekta Madurai, North East Network, Sangama, Vimochana, and Visthar (Bengaluru) conducted state-specific research studies titled Women's Experiences of Shelter Homes and published a national report titled Survivor Speak. The findings revealed that shelters were the last resort for women and LGBT+ survivors. Reluctance to approach shelters was linked with concerns over living conditions, mobility, lack of autonomy, the stigma of living in shelters, and discrimination during admission as well as residence in shelters.

In 2020, in the COVID context, LCN conducted a rapid survey to assess the impact of the pandemic on services for survivors of domestic violence in seven Indian states. The findings of the study *At Home. At Risk* were disseminated widely via social media and webinars. They have also been integrated into inputs around gender-based violence (GBV), at various policy fora. Findings and recommendations were also captured in five state-level reports in 2019; infographics on the survey are available at <https://visthar.org/lam-lynti-chittara-neralu-lcn/>

The research also highlighted the need to strengthen the perspectives and capacities of shelter management and staff, as well as those of NGOs that run shelters and other institutions/ departments that work with survivors of GBV.

With these objectives in mind, a toolkit was developed, during 2022 -'23 comprising the following:

- » a trainer's manual
- » a workbook for participants to write in/journal
- » booklets on the rights of survivors of GBV, and
- » informational posters on the DV Act

Visthar undertook the responsibility of the above on behalf of the network. The toolkit has been sourced from LCN's research findings and developed collaboratively with members of the LCN network through a process that included online and offline discussions, reviews at every stage, and a Training of Trainers.



## 2. Gender-Responsive Shelter Homes: A Trainers' Manual



The purpose of this manual is to develop a rights-based, intersectional perspective among the staff of shelter homes. We hope this will enable shelter homes to adopt a survivor-centric, rights-based, feminist approach so that their relationship with survivors of violence - including queer women and transgender persons - will be more sensitive and inclusive.

The training manual follows feminist critical pedagogy, with each session building on the lived experiences of participants. It uses a combination of methods, group activities, role plays, reflective exercises, case studies, artwork, and so on. These lesson plans will draw on other elements from the toolkit to facilitate easy understanding and recall.

Gender-based violence often takes a toll on the mental and physical health of survivors. While professional expertise is essential to address mental health issues, and is usually provided by experts outside the shelter home, the staff of shelter homes must be aware of the basics

of mental health so that they create a sensitive environment that does not stigmatise survivors.


As products of the same social world, participants may themselves be impacted by GBV in different ways. As GBV practitioners, they are often overworked and stressed. So, self-care becomes important for their own physical and mental well-being, along with that of survivors. This training manual will also attempt to sensitise participants to their self-care.

Each session will take around 1 hour to facilitate. Ideally, all sessions should be conducted in the given sequence. However, facilitators may pick and choose sessions, depending on their assessment of the training need, the time available, and other factors.



# Posters on Domestic Violence Act


Domestic Violence Act - 2005



## The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence

- DV Act 2005

The DV ACT aims to protect women living in a shared household from a wide range of abuses. It also provides several redressal mechanisms for survivors of domestic violence.



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Domestic Violence Act - 2005

### What constitutes Domestic Violence?



Physical Violence



Sexual Violence



Emotional Violence



Economic Violence

**Any action that violates a woman's dignity and basic human rights is violence.**



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Domestic Violence Act - 2005

### Whom does the law give protection to?

Any woman living or sharing a domestic relationship with the perpetrator in a shared household.





Custody orders



Financial Assistance



Protection of woman's property



Legal assistance



Right to reside in a shared household / safe space



Family Counselling



Temporary Shelter



Medical Assistance



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Domestic Violence Act - 2005

### What kind of protection does the law provide to the woman?



Custody orders



Financial Assistance



Protection of woman's property



Legal assistance



Right to reside in a shared household / safe space



Family Counselling



Temporary Shelter



Medical Assistance



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### 3. An Intersectional Approach to Emergency Response

#### Training for KiA Partners

A 3-day training program, structured in two parts: the first part looked at analytical tools to understand different peoples' experiences during disasters inter-sectionally; the second part looked at how to weave that understanding while designing programs for disaster response.

Natural disasters affect different peoples differently based on their gender, caste, class, ability, location and religion. The impacts of disasters are socially conditioned, even though the disaster might have natural causes. Hence, humanitarian responses to disasters need to factor in the role of social inequalities in peoples' experience of disasters and their ability to bounce back from a disaster. This training enabled facilitators to approach disaster response from an intersectional perspective, looking at multiple social inequalities.

The training program began with an introduction to basic concepts of gender – sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc. Using various interactive and creative methods, participant were enabled to see clearly how people with different identities experience the same disaster differently. There are some inequalities we need to understand deeper in today's context – Disability, Gender identity and Sexual orientation. Participants also learned the analytical frameworks to understand these inequalities better. They learnt the issues people with disabilities, and sexual and gender minorities have faced during recent disasters.

The course then zoomed out to understand the different needs of peoples. It laid out the conceptual framework of practical and strategic needs and why it is important to address both simultaneously. Intersectionality also plays a role in peoples' experience of violence during disasters. So we looked closer at the violence experienced by different peoples during and after disasters. Participants learnt that violence and the threat of violence also needs to be understood from an intersectional lens.

The course moved from "analysis" towards "response" by looking at the standards, guidelines and tools promoted by SPHERE and IASC to respond to humanitarian emergencies. The workshop approached these too from an intersectional perspective. The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), the non-technical component of the SPHERE standard provides a shared set of principles that all humanitarian actors commit to. The Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC) that SPHERE and IASC follow to conceptualize and frame humanitarian responses were introduced. The session on standards is followed by the different approaches to disaster programming. They recognised how different approaches prioritizes different needs of people, and how a rights and justice approach calls for addressing strategic needs along with practical needs. This session thus laid the foundation for Needs Assessment, the first step in the HPC.



In Strategic Planning, participants applied the empowerment approach to plan and design activities. The session also introduced indicators that are gender and diversity sensitive. During the strategic planning exercise, participants realize that building community resilience against disasters starts well before the disaster strikes. That means organizations need to integrate disaster response thinking in all their ongoing projects today – even when there is no imminent disaster. Participants identified the opportunities to build local resilience against disasters using a sample project of Visthar. They saw that there are many small, low-cost and effective local interventions that can be done today to prepare the community against disasters. Participants then review their own organizations responsiveness to disasters with a self-assessment checklist.



They reflected on how intersectional the organization’s responsiveness is and what more needs to be done. Participants also worked on an action plan to integrate disaster programming into their organization’s work more strongly to build community resilience locally. They identified 5 things they would like to change at the organizational level, and 5 things they would like to change in a specific project to build the community’s resilience. They share their plans with the larger group as a motivation for others and to get their support.

## Training Manual

This training manual was piloted at the above 3-day workshop for partners of Kerk In Actie in August 2022 at Visthar, Bengaluru. Inputs and feedback from the workshop have been used to revise and finalize the manual. We thank the participants for their whole-hearted participation in the workshop. We thank Kerk in Actie for the support and direction throughout the process.

1. Basic concepts of gender and intersectionality
2. Core Humanitarian Standard
3. Practical and Strategic Needs in a Disaster Context
4. Impact of disasters from an intersectionality lens
5. Disability Justice and Disasters
6. LGBTQI Rights during Disasters
7. Gender Needs Assessment and Analysis
8. Engendering Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
9. Engendering Resource Mobilization
10. GBV and Disasters from an intersectional lens
11. How responsive are our programs?
12. How gender transformative is our organization?
13. Putting Intersectionality into practice: Ten things to do back home



## 4. Capacity Building / Consultancies

### 1. Gender training for Women's Cooperatives of Timbaktu Collective

Four 3-day trainings for directors of women's cooperatives, Timbaktu Collective (TC) covering 120 participants. TC started gender training for its employees in 2020, with the aim of increasing gender awareness and sensitization amongst each individual. Following this, gender trainings are being given at the programme levels. "So far, we have seen a lot of growth and change through these trainings, and have found gender sensitization to be an important step in working with rural and marginalized communities", says Sukanya, Programme Manager of Timbaktu Collective.



A Gender Training was organized for the Directors of Kalpavalli (Natural Regeneration Programme), Maashakthi (Women's Programme), and Dharani (Organic Programme) at the Timbaktu Campus, in collaboration with Visthar. Asha facilitated the sessions. Asha also participated in and addressed the Women's Day celebrations at Timbaktu.

### 2. Gender Workshop for Action on Disability and Development (ADD) India

ADD India works with persons with disabilities in rural areas with a community-based rehabilitation approach. The aim of this workshop was to develop gender sensitivity of ADD India staff Asha and Raaj from Visthar facilitated the day-long workshop in Kannada. "We used a simple activity to learn the difference between



sex and gender", shares Asha. "Once all of us became clear of that difference, we then went deeper into how gender is socially constituted and why it is so unjust."

The highlight of the workshop were the role plays participants enacted to show how we learn gender in the family, in our schools, in religion and media. There was much laughter and learning, as participants "acted out" the various denials and discrimination girls and women experience.

### 3. Gender sensitization Workshop for Eficor

Nestled amidst the North Eastern Himalayas, beside the Barapani lake in Shillong, the Bethel Training center was the venue of the gender sensitization workshop held in .Twenty five participants from Eficor, a large faith based organisation, joined the workshop. They included program managers, implementers and trainers from the North East, Jharkhand, Bihar and Delhi.

Raaj and Roshen from Visthar facilitated the training. "I loved how engaged the participants were", says Roshen. "They let themselves be challenged and so we also could gently push them further."

The workshop started with gender sensitization on the first day. Building on that, we introduced different methods of gender analysis. Participants then learnt to apply these tools in their project design and implementation. "This is a process, we can't make all the changes after one training" shared Raaj as the workshop concluded.

"There was no dull moment in the entire workshop. The facilitators kept us engaged throughout" says Jumaila, a project coordinator. The session on proverbs was her favourite.

The lead organizer said she would have welcomed the facilitators to challenge the patriarchy within the faith tradition even further. That feedback inspires us further as we return back to Bangalore.

### 4. Mainstreaming Gender in Social Work

Workshops and orientation sessions for St. Joseph's University, Kristu Jayanthi and Claret Colleges were facilitated during the year. The sessions explored participants' perceptions of women and men and introduced the basic concepts related to gender. The role of social institutions in producing and reinforcing unequal power relations were analysed through role plays and group discussions. We also analysed how patriarchy manifests itself in these institutions and the various forms of violence against women. Using Theatre of the oppressed, participants were enabled to rehearse responses that women and men can engage in to counteract violence. The role of social workers in addressing gender and social inequalities were also taken up for discussion.





## 1. Bhoomi Habba - The Earth Festival

The 14th edition of Bhoomi Habba, the annual earth festival, was celebrated from 10 am – 7 pm on Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup> 2022.. Each year the Habba brings together people who care about the earth - artists, activists, students, and peoples from all walks of life. #OnlyOneEarth was the theme of this year’s Bhoomi Habba. “Only One Earth” was the motto of the original Stockholm Conference in 1972. After 50 years, it is again the theme of World Environment Day.

In that spirit, the Bhoomi Habba featured artists, artisans and social entrepreneurs who promote ecological ways of living. They engaged with the citizens of Bengaluru through performances, workshops, exhibitions, and stalls with organic and eco- friendly products.

Children and adults participated in a series of workshops that ran throughout the day. These included workshops on regenerating soils, cartooning, recycling trash to toys, handmade paper, theatre, folk music, storytelling and more.



Bhoomi Habba provided a space for artisans and ecologically-minded social entrepreneurs to showcase their products. The festival featured a wide range of ecologically sensitive businesses. That included a collective of women handloom weavers from Andhra with a refreshing take on Khadi; organic produce, herbs, spices, coffee, and aromatic oils, from across south India; recycled paper products, and many more. Each year we are able to connect new producers to the citizens of Bengaluru.



## No to destructive development

'Let us say "no" to destructive development, and let us learn to say "yes" to alternatives', spoke Dr. Niranjana, the Vice Chancellor of Bangalore North University, as the day long festivities of the Bhoomi Habba 2022 concluded. His message that we need to protect nature, not for the sake of others, but for our own sake, resonated with the theme of the festival, "Only One Earth".

Over 3000 participants from different walks and stages of life joined Bhoomi Habba 2022 celebrations from 10 in the morning till 7 in the evening. The festival featured music, dance, theatre, paintings, films, and workshops, in addition to stalls selling environmentally sustainable products. Students from six neighbouring schools arrived early for the inauguration. As they danced to the beats of Djambe music, the tone was set for a day of fun and

learning. Over 10 workshops awaited children – on how to convert trash into toys, on cartooning, on traditional games, and others. "The programs were beautifully organised, we enjoyed it a lot", says Rajesh, a teacher from Veerabhadra School.

A wide range of artists engaged visitors with paintings, theatre and music. Across the campus, artists and visitors were making live paintings. Three large paintings adorned the only open field in the eco-

sanctuary. Bhoomi Thayi Belage, the Bengaluru based music group and Djambe artists kept the campus alive with their music. The theatre artist Anish Victor offered a preview of a new performance he is working on.

At the entrance, the visitor was greeted with stalls related to soil and growth. "Soil Vasu", the well-known educator and team introduced participants to the diversity of soils and why we need to protect soils. They facilitated a workshop on gardening and soil composting. Across them, The Daily Dump, offered composting bins ideal for homes in Bengaluru. The cool and shady Manoranjitham nursery made available a wide range of plants from the Visthar Eco-Sanctuary.

From buttermilk to vegan smoothies, and millet pakodas to jackfruit meals, the food court of the Bhoomi Habba featured an eclectic array of food stalls. Visitors enjoyed freshly cooked, hot food from across the country. The Timbaktu Collective from Andhra Pradesh were promoting millets, a crop that requires less water, is more resilient to climate changes and provides excellent nutrition.

As the day's programs flowed to an end, theatre artists from the Visthar Ranga Shaale highlighted the urgency of environmental issues. And as the audience listened enthralled to the concluding Djambe rhythms, Dr. Niranjana's poem on the need to say no, and the need to say yes stayed with participants.







“Bhoomi Habba is truly a people’s festival, organised and hosted by Visthar, Bangalore. It is my honour and privilege to serve as Chairperson. Every year Visthar draws together an eclectic and super diverse group of artists, activists, farmers, labourers, Civil Society Organizations and

others in a day long festival of the Earth i.e. sustainability ideas and performances, poetry, theatre, music, organic farming methods and produce, traditional food, exhibits, films, recycled products, eco-friendly craft and great amounts of camaraderie. There are always chances of bumping into someone very interesting and having a conversation beneath a tree with them.

*After the beating of the past two pandemic years, it was doubly hard work to IMAGINE such an event. The odds were stacked against an event of this nature. One where migrant labourers can visit and enjoy themselves as much as anyone else. One where pluralism and inclusion is key.” Kirtana Kumar, Chairperson, Visthar*



## 2. CSR Volunteering

The CSR volunteer program is part of a larger corporate social responsibility strategy. It encourages employees to volunteer their time and give back to their community. It is about finding joy and meaning in making a difference in other people's lives and one's own.

As part of their CSR activities, corporate teams have been volunteering at Visthar. We are thus far impanelled with Cisco, Dell, Intel, and Thomson Reuters. Our most successful volunteering engagement so far has been with Cisco. Pre-Covid we have had 800 Cisco employees as volunteers. After the pandemic break, Cisco has resumed volunteering at Visthar and we have had 350 volunteers from December 2022 till April 2023.

The volunteering events held at Visthar offer employees opportunities to engage in meaningful eco-friendly, sustainability initiatives. The activities include hands-on work in farming, waste management, composting, recycling paper, pottery, and gardening. The volunteers are engaged in regular garden and farming work including clearing the land, preparing vegetable beds, planting, composting, weeding, harvesting, etc. The Srujana recycled is another important and favoured work area for the volunteers. They also enjoy working with papier mache and other paper products, which we use to generate income.

The program offers us access to committed and passionate volunteers for a full day. They come in batches ranging from 30 – 100. It offers a meaningful win-win scenario for all the stakeholders involved. Volunteers have reported how working on the land has contributed to developing their eco-consciousness and sense of well-being. And, working in groups from different departments has strengthened their team spirit.

Over the years we have gained experience in offering several impactful volunteer opportunities for corporate employees. These activities help leverage the volunteers' passions and skills. The conversations facilitated during the volunteering day helped in building awareness about community issues and improved understanding between sectors within the corporates.

The funds raised through the CSR volunteering go to support our educational initiatives for children and youth from marginalized and underserved communities in Karnataka.



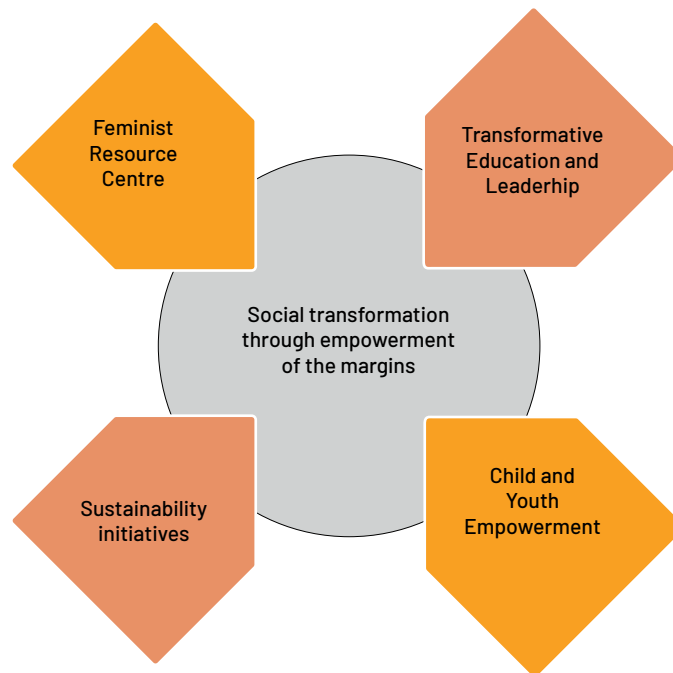


## LOOKING AHEAD

In the coming year, we will be focussing on consolidation and will work towards strengthening the following four pillars of our work:

1. Feminist Resource Centre
2. Transformative Education and Leadership
3. Child and Youth Empowerment
4. Sustainability Initiatives

The diagram below reflects the key programmatic areas, with a central hub of social transformation. This will be carried out through projects, stemming from our campus in Bangalore and Koppal.



While the process of consolidation has already begun, it is to be taken to its logical conclusion and embedded in our vision and mission statement. Towards this, we plan to undertake the following:

1. Strategic planning
2. Project evaluations
3. Campus development
4. Creating a scholarship fund
5. Setting up vocational /livelihood development centres
6. Enhancing courses in formal tertiary-level education
7. Establishing policies and core support for the organisation

The above processes will lead to:

- Enhanced management systems and practice
- Improved financial system and practice
- Vibrant campus with multi-layered education and sustainability models.
- Authentic collaborative spaces and networking with civil society organisations on issues of common concern.
- Enhanced opportunities for tertiary-level education for youth from marginalised communities.
- Autonomous ancillary units functioning on their own steam.





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