

Annual Report
2024-25



Expanding Horizons
Deepening Roots

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Compiled and edited by Mercy Kappen,
with reports from Asha V, Nazar P.S.
and Roshen Chandran




Visthar

 KRC Road, Kothanur Post, Bengaluru – 560 077. India

 +91 80 28465294 / 28465295

 @visthar.org

 visthar.org

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*My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those
who, age after age, perversely,
With no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.*

~ Adrienne Rich



Preface

"To be politically conscious is to be conscious of the world around us, to recognize the connections between our individual lives and the larger social, economic, and political context." ~ bell hooks

This philosophy profoundly underpins Visthar's vision and mission. As advocates for social change, we recognize the power dynamics that shape our society. Our work aims to challenge and transform existing structures and cultures that perpetuate inequality.

Our Vision: To establish democratic, just, and sustainable communities with gender and social equity.

Our Mission: To empower communities and institutions to actively challenge gender discrimination, social exclusion, and ecological crises through transformative education and advocacy.

Strategic Interventions: Visthar employs a multi-faceted approach to achieve its mission, focusing on four key strategic interventions:

- 1. Transformative Education/Capacity Building:** Fostering critical thinking and equipping individuals and communities with the knowledge and skills to understand and address social issues.
- 2. Community-based Projects:** Empowering communities to voice their concerns and advocate for their rights, promoting collective action for social change.
- 3. Sustainability Initiatives:** Promoting eco-consciousness and environmentally sound practices and fostering resilient and sustainable communities.

4. Partnerships and Collaborations: Actively seeking to collaborate with like-minded organizations and institutions, and supporting community-based organizations, recognizing the power of collective effort.

2024–25 was a period of both significant growth and profound self-reflection for Visthar. We expanded our program offerings, increased support to small organizations, and strengthened internal capacities, while also undertaking a critical internal examination of our work. An independent evaluation and an honest internal gap assessment provided valuable insights, particularly concerning our collectives of adolescent girls and boys. Key challenges identified included fluctuating participation in collectives, low parental awareness of collective activities, and insufficient engagement with intersectional issues. This critical self-reflection is leading to a shift towards simpler, clearer systems, greater caution in interpreting successes, and valuing smaller, steady steps over large leaps, aiming for more sustainable and impactful change.

Despite these critical insights and internal adjustments, our programmatic priorities remained consistent with initial proposals, and we have made substantial progress across all key areas.

Program Highlights

- » **Feminist Leadership Development:** The Feminist Resource Center expanded its offerings with new, fully subscribed training programs on “Gender and Climate Change” and “Gender, Health, and Well-being”. The program also launched “Sensitizing Youth on Constitutional Values” for partner organizations. The flagship international course, “Gender, Diversity and Social Transformation,” successfully completed its 16th edition, attracting diverse participants. The popular “Gender Responsive Planning and Monitoring” workshop was re-offered, equipping development professionals with essential feminist analysis tools.
- » **Counter-Cultural Movements in India:** Kappen Centenary Seminar held on January 3rd and 4th, 2025. The seminar featured a range of engaging sessions and presentations, exploring various facets of counterculture in India. The discussions underscored the ongoing need for critical engagement with dominant narratives and the fostering of spaces for alternative thought and action.
- » **Re-enchancing Democracy, Reclaiming the Republic:** Complementing the seminar, Visthar hosted a Public Lecture by Prof. Yogendra Yadav on January 4th, 2025. The lecture examined the state of democracy in India, emphasizing the need to re-evaluate democratic mechanisms and strengthen constitutional constraints to reclaim the democratic process.
- » **Constitutional Values:** As part of our commitment to deepen democracy, Visthar offered several workshops and trainings focusing on Constitutional Values. The sessions covered core constitutional principles, including the Preamble,

Fundamental Rights, Duties, and Directive Principles, alongside in-depth discussions on equality, liberty, fraternity, secularism, and justice.

- » **Deepening Our Work Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** A significant initiative was the rollout of participatory Discriminatory Mapping in adolescent collectives across the Koppal district. This exercise enabled girls and boys to reflect on and discuss their experiences with gender and caste-based discrimination. The maps were presented to community members, fostering dialogue and solidarity, and have been completed in 17 villages, laying the groundwork for community-led action plans.
- » **Organizing Women Migrant Workers (WMW):** Efforts with women migrant workers were re-energized, sustaining 11 collectives and addressing systemic barriers to their rights. Collaboration with government departments facilitated access to vital entitlements, including labour cards, Aadhaar cards, ration cards, and scholarships for 58 WMW, and a health camp was organized. Strategies are explored to better meet the needs of WMW at migration sources, as seasonal migration remains a challenge.
- » **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Support for women-led and Dalit-led organizations continued, with funding secured for three new small Dalit-led organizations focused on collectivizing adolescent girls, including a Community-Based Organization of female sex workers. Critical capacity building, including gender sensitization, exposure visits and fundraising training provided.
- » **Training Manuals:** "Deepening Democracy: A Handbook on Constitutional Values" was developed, based on work with over 800 teachers and youth, to promote constitutional values nationwide.
- » **Bhoomi Habba – The Earth Festival:** Bhoomi Habba 2024, Visthar's annual Earth Festival, took place in the first week of June in Bangalore, aligning with World Environment Day (June 5th). Bhoomi Habba continues to serve as a vital platform for celebrating the Earth, raising environmental awareness, and showcasing solutions for a greener future.

In Gratitude

We extend our sincere gratitude to our funding partners, whose invaluable support is instrumental in enabling us to pursue our mission. Thank you KinderNotHilfe (KNH), Kerk in Acte (KiA), Azim Premji Foundation and Equality Fund. We are grateful for your belief in our vision and mission to foster democratic, just, and sustainable communities, even amidst challenging socio-political landscapes. To our dedicated team, your passion and relentless pursuit of our shared goals are the bedrock of Visthar. And to the communities we work with, it is your dreams that inspire us. Your trust and the strong relationships we have built, particularly in Koppal, offer a solid foundation for deeper interventions and empower us to continue working towards justice, equity, and sustainability as lived realities.

The Journey Continues

Our journey, encapsulated in this report's title "Expanding Horizons, Deepening Roots," reflects a worldview that true development demands. We believe that expanding our horizons into new possibilities and initiatives must always be firmly grounded in a strong understanding of our history, values, and identity. This ensures that our work is driven by purpose and integrity, allowing us to cultivate sustainable impact that benefits the future.

This dual focus also underscores our commitment to both resilience and adaptability. Just as a tree extends its branches while strengthening its roots, we strive to be dynamic enough to seize new opportunities and embrace change. Our work is deeply interconnected—it's woven into the health of our internal culture, the strength of our foundational values, and the vibrant relationships we foster with the communities we serve.

Mercy Kappen
Executive Director





1. Transformative Education / Capacity Building

"Education is the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world." ~ Paulo Freire

Visthar's Transformative Education programs go beyond imparting knowledge; they empower individuals with critical thinking skills to analyze and challenge societal inequities. We focus on building capacity within communities to drive their own social change.

1.1. Gender, Diversity, and Social Transformation (GDST)

Visthar's annual certificate course, "Gender, Diversity, and Social Transformation (GDST)," continued its tradition of fostering critical thinking and equipping change-makers in 2024. The 15th edition of this intensive, month-long program was held at Visthar, Bengaluru, from July 1st to July 26th.

GDST 2024 attracted a diverse group of 25 participants from Civil Society and Human Rights Organizations, Educational Institutions, and Community-Based Organizations. These participants represented 10 states across India and 5 countries internationally.

Objectives and Core Content

The 2024 GDST course was meticulously designed to empower participants with an intersectional lens to understand and respond to complex social issues. Key objectives included:

- » Deep Reflection on Self and Identity: Encouraging participants to critically examine how socio-economic forces shape their own identities.
- » Developing an Intersectional Perspective: Equipping individuals to analyze and address contemporary issues by recognizing the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression, including gender, sexuality, caste, class, and disability.
- » Leadership for Transformation: Nurturing leadership skills essential for facilitating meaningful change within their organizations and communities.
- » Engaging with Contemporary Debates: Providing insights into recent discussions on gender justice, masculinities, LGBTQ+ rights, disability, and empowerment.
- » Understanding Global Impacts: Analyzing how global phenomena like globalization, pandemics, and other disasters influence gender and social relations.
- » Policy Analysis: Critically examining the policies of government and UN agencies from a gender and diversity perspective.

The curriculum delved into comprehensive themes such as gender and social relations, intersectionality and social transformation, gender equality and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an intersectional approach to disasters, and gender mainstreaming.

Methodology and Facilitation

True to Visthar's pedagogical philosophy, the GDST 2024 course employed feminist pedagogical principles and an action-reflection-action model, inspired by the work of Paulo Freire. The methodology was highly participatory and interactive, incorporating:

- » Group discussions
- » Case studies
- » Role plays
- » Audio-visuals
- » Input sessions
- » Opportunities for participants to share best practices and develop strategies for mainstreaming gender and social equity in their work.

The course benefited from the expertise of Visthar faculty, including Mercy Kappen, Rajkumari Nimbale, and Roshen Chandran. Additionally, a distinguished panel of guest facilitators, such as Ms. Ranjani K Murthy, Dr. Sekhar Seshadri, Dr. David Selvaraj, Ms. Madhu Bhushan, Rajesh Srinivas, and Akkai Padmashali, shared their invaluable insights and experiences.

Impact and Participant Testimonials

GDST consistently aims to foster a transformative journey for its participants, equipping them with new perspectives and analytical tools applicable to their social transformation work. Feedback from participants consistently highlights the program's profound impact, with many noting how it reshaped their understanding of human diversity and empowered them to work towards a more just and equitable world. Participants often describe the learning experience as deeply reflective, participatory, compassionate, and effective in building an intersectional perspective. The 2024 edition continued to build on this strong foundation, preparing a new generation of leaders to champion gender justice and social equity in their respective fields.

As Neeta Jain, Independent Consultant – Impact & MEL, GDST 2024, noted, the course was “meticulously crafted by Visthar” and brought together people from diverse backgrounds to reflect deeply on their experiences and identities. Aman Mukhiya from Prayasam, GDST 2024, described the course as “an enriching experience that was both educational and enjoyable,” providing valuable insights into critical issues such as gender, caste, religion, disaster management, climate change.



1.2. Gender and Climate Change

Visthar, in collaboration with Koushik Yanamandram of Climate Asia, successfully hosted a two-day residential workshop on Gender & Climate Change: Exploring Linkages and Strategies for Enhanced Resilience. The workshop, held from October 5-6, 2024. Feminist Resource Centre in Bengaluru, aimed to foster a deeper understanding of the critical intersections between gender and climate action.

The program welcomed a diverse group of 21 participants, including students and professionals actively engaged in gender and climate action spaces. This diverse audience contributed significantly to enriching discussions, allowing for the exchange of valuable insights, experiences, and ideas from unique perspectives.

The workshop enabled participants to:

- » Understand the core concepts of gender and climate change.
- » Learn why the intersection is critical for effective climate adaptation and resilience.
- » Explore practical tools to apply gender and climate considerations in program design, career development, and organization building.
- » Participate in individual and collective activities to create roadmaps for personal and professional growth and design ideas for building communities or organizations in the gender-climate space.
- » Network with experts and like-minded individuals working on gender and climate.

Besides Kaushik and the Visthar team, inputs were provided by expert and insights were provided by guest facilitators, including: Neha Saigal (Director-Gender & Climate Change-Asar), Dr. Harshita Umesh (Founder, Vaada Hope Foundation), and Anu Sridharan (Climate Expert).

This collaborative effort underscored the importance of integrating gender-responsive climate action into development initiatives. We look forward to continuing these vital collaborations that address the intersections of gender justice and other critical social issues.



1.3. Gender-Responsive Planning and Monitoring

From December 9-13, 2024, we hosted an intensive five-day course on Gender-Responsive Planning and Monitoring (GRPM). This program was designed to equip participants with the skills to effectively integrate gender justice concerns into their program planning and monitoring frameworks. The course drew senior and middle management professionals from various organizations across the development sector.

Participants' Feedback: Participants shared their experience, highlighting the workshop as "one of the most enlightening milestones" in their professional journey. They emphasized how the program significantly enhanced their understanding of gender-related issues and their implications for program design and implementation. The participant also noted that the workshop provided "practical tools, methodologies, and techniques" for deeper comprehension of gender analysis, along with "actionable strategies to create inclusive and equitable programs." These insights, they added, "reaffirmed the importance of integrating gender-responsive approaches across every level of planning and execution in development programs."



1.4. Gender, Health and Wellbeing

Visthar successfully hosted a three-day course on Gender, Health, and Wellbeing. Held from November 4th to 6th, 2024, this immersive program convened 15 health professionals, social sector leaders, and project managers from diverse institutions, including CMC Vellore, St. John's Medical College, Karnataka Health Promotion Trust, Student Christian Movement, Sama Foundation, and Voice That Cares.

The course emphasized the critical role of dialogue and collaborative learning in understanding the complex intersections of gender and health. By integrating these often-siloed subjects, participants explored how social norms, systemic inequalities, and intersecting identities profoundly shape health outcomes and access to care.

Key Learning and Discussions

- » **Defining Wellbeing:** Participants engaged in a foundational discussion on wellbeing, recognizing it as more than just physical fitness. They explored its psychological and emotional dimensions, highlighting how peaceful coexistence, context, and time influence individual and community wellbeing.
- » **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR):** A dedicated session delved into the concept of **bodily autonomy**. Participants reflected on how decision-making power over one's body varies across genders and its direct impact on overall health.
- » **Addressing Inequities:** The course critically examined gender-based violence across different life stages of women and highlighted pervasive disparities within the healthcare system. A significant emphasis was placed on how caste, class, and gender intersect to exacerbate inequities, particularly for women, girls, and sexual minorities.
- » **Tools for Gender Analysis:** Participants gained practical skills in using gender analysis frameworks to assess disparities in access, control, needs, and decision-making within healthcare. Discussions on concepts like the division of labor and patriarchy shed light on systemic challenges impacting diverse genders.
- » **Broadening Mental Health Understanding:** The program expanded participants' understanding of mental health, focusing on the unique needs of different genders. Practical assessments and case studies provided actionable insights for fostering psychological wellbeing within marginalized communities.



1.5. Financial Management and Social Accountability (FMSA)

The FMSA workshop series continues to be a flagship program, empowering Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) with essential skills in financial management and social accountability. This year, we successfully conducted three workshops, catering to the diverse needs of NPO professionals. These workshops were facilitated by our Finance Director, Mr. Francis M, and the team.

Held from October 21-25, 2024, this 5-day workshop brought together 21 participants from across India. The comprehensive program covered critical topics such as:

- » Financial Management
- » Governance
- » Accounting Systems
- » Social Accountability
- » Internal Control Systems
- » Compliance with Legal Requirements

This workshop equipped participants with a deep understanding of financial management principles, enabling them to effectively manage resources and ensure transparency in their organizations.



FMSA: Customized Workshop for SCMI

On February 6, 2025, a one-day workshop exclusively for Students of Christian Movement of India (SCMI). The program was tailored to meet the specific needs of SCMI's Program Managers, focusing on:

- » Financial Management
- » Budgeting for Programs
- » Integrating Financial Management with Programs
- » Social Accountability Aspects

17 Program Managers participated in the workshop, gaining valuable insights and practical knowledge to enhance their financial management skills.

FMSA for Hasiru Dala

From February 12-14, 2025, we conducted a customized workshop for Managers from Hasiru Dala, an NGO. The 3-day program was designed to address the specific needs of their Program, HR, and Governance departments. 31 participants attended the workshop, which covered topics relevant to their programs and areas of operations

1.6. Sensitizing Youth on Constitutional Values

As part of its Capacity Building project for Kerk In Actie (KIA) partners in India, Visthar hosted a 3-day workshop from August 12-14, 2024, focusing on "Sensitizing Youth on Constitutional Values". This thematic area was identified through a needs assessment conducted in November 2023²⁹. Thirty-two representatives from KIA partners participated.

Objectives and Outcomes

The workshop aimed to:

- » Enhance understanding of the Indian Constitution and its historical context.
- » Analyze key constitutional values: equality, liberty, fraternity, secularism, and justice, and their practical application.
- » Equip participants with strategies and tools to effectively sensitize youth on these values.

Participants gained a deeper appreciation for the Constitution's relevance, developed confidence to champion these values among youth, and crafted action plans to integrate them into their community work, fostering active and responsible citizens³⁴.

Content & Methodology

The workshop covered core constitutional principles, including the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Duties, and Directive Principles, alongside in-depth discussions on equality, liberty, fraternity, secularism, and justice. A significant portion was dedicated to developing strategies for youth sensitization and creating action

plans. A blended learning approach was employed, featuring:

- » Interactive Sessions: Discussions, case studies, and group activities.
- » Reflective Exercises: Guided discussions for deeper understanding and application.
- » Role-Plays: To apply values in real-world scenarios.
- » Action Planning: Participants developed concrete plans for their communities.

Impact and Participant Feedback

Facilitated by Visthar, the workshop successfully equipped KIA Partners to become effective change-makers. Participants reported a significant increase in their skills and confidence to facilitate training on the constitutional values with youth. They also valued the diverse backgrounds of attendees, the use of real-life scenarios, and the engaging facilitation, concluding that “understanding and upholding these values are crucial for a just and equitable society”.



1.7. Summer Intensive Programme

The Summer Intensive Programme (SIP) was designed to bridge academic gaps and foster the holistic development of students from marginalised communities in Koppal and Bangalore. The SIP extended beyond core academic subjects like English, Math, and Science to include vital training in arts, vocational, and life skills. This 45-day intensive program was conducted as part of Samagra Shikshana Shale – Bangalore, from April 8th to May 25th, 2024.

The program welcomed 43 girl students: 30 from Visthar’s Bhandavi project at Koppal and 13 local students from Bangalore, predominantly children of migrant workers. The SIP ran Monday to Friday, with three hours dedicated to academics (English, Math, and Science) and two hours to vocational (Computers and Woodworking) or life skills sessions. Saturdays were reserved exclusively for life skills training.

The SIP's success was driven by several key elements:

- » Small Class Sizes: With only 15 students per class, the environment was highly interactive and participatory, ensuring individual attention for every student.
- » Multimedia Integration: Computers and videos were extensively used to enhance learning and make complex concepts more accessible.
- » Application-Oriented Learning: The program prioritized practical application over rote memorization from textbooks, fostering deeper understanding and critical thinking.
- » Emphasis on Self-Learning: Students were actively encouraged to self-learn English, Math, and Science in the computer lab through dedicated materials and interactive quizzes.
- » Expert-Led Life Skills: External professionals facilitated engaging and impactful life skills sessions, providing valuable guidance.
- » Hands-on Vocational Training: Students gained practical, marketable skills through hands-on experience in woodworking and computer applications (Kannada typing, MS Word, MS PowerPoint).
- » Exposure Trips: Educational and recreational trips to the Tech Museum, Planetarium, and Cubbon Park provided valuable real-world learning experiences and broadened horizons.
- » Holistic Well-being: The program also addressed students' overall well-being by providing mental and psychological assessments and ENT check-ups.

An extended program was implemented specifically for 10th-grade students, featuring pre-program (8-9 am) and post-program (3:30-5:30 pm) sessions. They received specialized English, Math, and Science activity books and textbooks, and all computers were equipped with 10th-standard textbooks to support their advanced learning needs.

A post-SIP assessment, utilizing the same papers as the pre-assessment to maintain consistency, was conducted to accurately measure learning outcomes and assess the program's impact.



1.8. Countercultural Movements in Contemporary India

"Countercultural Movements in Contemporary India", The Kappen Centenary Seminar, was held on January 3rd and 4th, 2025, at Visthar. The event celebrated the centenary of the renowned philosopher and liberation theologian, Sebastian Kappen. The Seminar drew a large and diverse group of participants, including scholars, activists, and writers, reflecting the broad impact of Kappen's work for contemporary times.

The seminar featured a range of engaging sessions and presentations, exploring various facets of counterculture in India. Key highlights included:



- » Remembering Kappen: The seminar opened with an inaugural session and introduction of "Kappen: The Person and His Perspectives" by David Selvaraj and Mercy Kappen.
- » Theory, Culture, and History: T.T. Sreekumar engaged with Sebastian Kappen's philosophical legacy in a session titled "Theory, Culture, and History: Engaging with Sebastian Kappen's Philosophical Legacy".
- » Rethinking the Sacred: Bishop Geevarghese Coorilos explored "Rethinking the Sacred: Countercultural Perspectives on Spirituality".
- » Counterculture in Arts and Media: The role of various art forms as countercultural forces was a significant theme. Theodore Baskaran presented on "Cinema as Counterculture: The Origin and Evolution of Star Politicians". C.F. John contributed with a session on "The Art of Counterculture". And Du Saraswathi presented on "Dalit Feminism and Buddhist Challenges to Dominant Discourse".
- » Ecology and Climate Change: The seminar also addressed contemporary environmental concerns. Bhargavi Rao discussed "Countering Climate Crisis: Alternative Narratives for a Resilient Future". Bablu Ganguly and Mary Vattamattam spoke on "Culture, Ecology, and Sustainable Living", with Timbaktu Collective as a case study.
- » Resistance and Hope through Poetry: Mercy Margaret contributed to the seminar with "Verses of Resistance and Hope".
- » Rhythms of Resistance and Hope: A session titled "Rhythms of Resistance and Hope" featured songs and music by Balu Jambe, Santhi Priya, Santhosh George, Mariyamma Chudi, and Teams.
- » Public Lecture: The centenary celebrations concluded with a Public Lecture by Yogendra Yadav, titled "Re-Enchanting Democracy, Reclaiming the Republic".

The seminar served as a significant platform for intellectual discourse and reflection on countercultural movements in contemporary India, honouring Sebastian Kappen's enduring legacy and his contributions to philosophical and theological thought. The discussions underscored the ongoing need for critical engagement with dominant narratives and the fostering of spaces for alternative thought and action.

"A whole day of listening to thought-provoking presentations on culture and history; the sacred and the spiritual; culture and counter culture; Dalit feminism and art as community commons, poetry and pakshi purana. From speakers as disparate as Prof TT Sreekumar, Bishop Geevarghese Coorilos, C.F John, Mercy Margaret, and Du Saraswathi. All that was heard in the morning, it seems, came alive in the evening at the Rhythms of Resistance and Hope, where there were some spellbinding performances by Santhosh George and team, Mariamma Chudi and team, Santhi Priya and Jembe Balu and team. Santhi Priya, the exceptionally gifted Baul singer from Kerala, sang her heart out in Bengali, Hindi, and Kannada...singing songs of Fakir Lalon, Kabir, and Basavanna, embodying the best of culture and resistance that draws its meaning from nature, which sustains only because she is plural and diverse.

Thank you all at Visthar for organising these most meaningful centenary celebrations of your mentor, Prof Sebastian Kappen, and on your beautiful campus. It is not for nothing that he said "We meet the divine in the soothing, enlivening, sustaining ambience of Mother Earth in the myriad ways in which she becomes word."

~ Madhu Bhushan

1.9. Reenchanted Democracy, Reclaiming the Republic: Kappen Centenary Public Lecture

Prof. Yogendra Yadav delivered a public lecture titled 'Re-enchanted Democracy, Reclaiming the Republic' as part of the Kappen Centenary celebrations. He attributed democracy's current shortcomings partly to secular liberals' abandonment of nationalism, civilizational pride, and religion, which he believes allowed these concepts to be manipulated by others. He stated, "Our national movement picked up the best from our past and discarded what was not acceptable. Our liberal, educated, modern elite simply turned their back on our past". This, in his view, led to a post-independence loss of "the ability to sift the good from the bad, and with it our credibility".

To reclaim democracy, Prof. Yadav proposed maintaining the ideal of democracy while critically examining its actual mechanisms. He asserted, "Any mechanism that claims to be democratic must show me that it actually gives me equal power to control any significant decision. If it doesn't, then we are in a pretend democracy, not a democracy".



2. Community-based Projects

Our commitment to community empowerment is demonstrated through the following targeted projects:

1. **Bandhavi** – Empowerment of Girls at Risk: A program dedicated to supporting and empowering vulnerable girls.
2. **Child Rights Education and Action (CREA)**: Focused on educating individuals and communities about child rights and facilitating action to uphold them.
3. **Kanasu Kishori Sanghatana (KKS)**: An initiative specifically designed for adolescent girls, fostering their development and agency.
4. **Visthar Ranga Shale (VRS)**: Involves cultural and artistic interventions to promote community engagement and expression.
5. **Migrant Women's Collective**: Provides essential support and resources to migrant women, addressing their unique challenges.

2.1. Bandhavi



The period from April 2024 to March 2025 presented significant challenges for vulnerable families in northern Karnataka due to severe drought conditions, intensifying economic hardships, and migration. In this demanding environment, Bandhavi served as a critical beacon of hope, dedicated to ensuring comprehensive support in education, health, nutrition, and protection for vulnerable children, especially girls at high risk of dropping out, child marriage, and child labor. The project successfully facilitated re-enrollment, provided essential

academic and vocational training, significantly improved well-being through health and nutrition initiatives, and maintained a safe, nurturing environment. Child participation was actively fostered, and stringent child protection policies were upheld. Directly reaching approximately 200 children. Bandhavi remains committed to transforming lives. This report highlights progress, impact, and steps being taken to build a sustainable future for the children of Karnataka.

Achievements

- » Educational Re-engagement: Extensive home visits and counselling sessions successfully convinced parents to re-enroll children in school and fostered an environment that sustains their interest in learning.
- » Holistic Development: Essential tuition classes, computer training, and life skills development were provided, ensuring children have access to quality education and future-oriented skills.
- » Improved Well-being: Health check-ups, promoted hygiene practices, and supported nutritional improvements through kitchen gardens, directly enhanced the physical health of children and their families.
- » Safe and Nurturing Environment: A secure and supportive campus was maintained, prioritizing child protection through robust policies and continuous staff training.
- » Community Empowerment: Parents and community members were engaged in the children's development, promoting collective responsibility and local ownership of the project's goals.

- » Bandhavi's project targets the most vulnerable children and their families in rural Karnataka, particularly focusing on girl children at high risk of dropping out of school, child marriage, child labor, and malnutrition.

These children primarily come from migrant families, daily wage earners, or

those affected by severe drought conditions in the Koppal, Raichur, Gadag, and Bellary districts.



A Holistic Approach to Child Development

Strategies are designed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by target groups, ensuring a holistic approach to child development.



Ensuring Educational Continuity and Excellence

» Re-enrollment &

Retention:

The ongoing drought led to significant migration and parental reluctance to send children back to school. Bandhavi conducted intensive home visits, counselling parents on the long-term benefits of education, and these consistent efforts were crucial in convincing families to re-enroll their children and maintain attendance. A welcoming and stimulating learning environment was created to ensure children stayed engaged.

» Academic Support

» **Daily Tuition Classes:** Regular evening tuition classes were provided for children from standards 1 to 10, covering core subjects like Mathematics, Science, Kannada, and English, helping children catch up and perform better in school.

» **Computer Education:** Computer classes were offered to children in standards 6 to 10, introducing them to basic computer operations, MS Office, and internet usage, equipping them with essential future skills.

» **Summer Camps & Remedial Classes:** Special classes during summer vacations focused on improving English and Mathematics skills, ensuring continuous learning, and preventing academic backsliding.

» **Learning Materials:** Children were provided with notebooks, pens, and other necessary stationery, removing a common barrier to effective learning.

Promoting Health, Hygiene, and Nutrition

» **Regular Health Check-ups:** All children received annual health check-ups by a medical officer, identifying and addressing health issues early, with follow-up treatments for common ailments.

» **Hygiene Education:** Regular sessions on personal hygiene (e.g., handwashing, oral care) were conducted, reinforcing healthy habits that reduce illness.

» **Nutritional Support:**

- » **Balanced Meals:** Children on campus received three nutritious meals daily, ensuring dietary requirements were met.
- » **Kitchen Gardens:** Families, including those on campus, were supported in establishing kitchen gardens, promoting access to fresh, healthy vegetables, enhancing family nutrition and food security, and serving as a practical learning experience for children.
- » **Physical Activity:** Daily yoga and regular sports activities were encouraged, contributing to physical fitness and overall well-being.

Enhancing Life Skills and Vocational Training

- » **Vocational Training:** Older girls received training in practical skills such as stitching, block printing, and embroidery, providing potential income-generating opportunities, fostering self-reliance and economic empowerment.
- » **Life Skills Education:** Sessions on decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and critical thinking were integrated into daily activities, preparing children to navigate life's challenges effectively.
- » **Cultural Activities:** Drawing, singing, dancing, storytelling, and celebrating festivals were integral parts of the children's routine, fostering creativity, self-expression, and a sense of community belonging, contributing to emotional and social development.

Child Participation

Children are actively encouraged to participate in planning, implementation, and monitoring of activities that directly affect their lives, fostering a sense of ownership, responsibility, and confidence.

- » **Children's Parliament:** A "Children's Parliament" is supported where children regularly meet, discuss issues relevant to their lives, share concerns, and propose solutions, empowering them to express opinions freely and learn about democratic processes.
- » **Activity Planning:** Children are involved in selecting and planning extra-curricular activities, celebrations, and even aspects of their daily routine, for example, actively participating in organizing events during festival preparations.
- » **Feedback Mechanisms:** Open channels are maintained for children to provide feedback on programs and services, with suggestions taken seriously and integrated into operational plans where feasible, ensuring the project remains relevant and beneficial from their perspective.
- » **Learning and Engagement:** Participation in various cultural and educational activities fosters confidence, teamwork, and leadership skills. Children take turns leading activities, sharing knowledge, and supporting peers, creating a vibrant and interactive learning environment.

Child Protection

The safety and well-being of every child are paramount at Bandhavi. Stringent child protection policies and practices are adhered to, ensuring a secure and nurturing environment for all children under care.

- » **Zero Tolerance Policy:** Bandhavi maintains a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination.
- » **Child Protection Policy:** A comprehensive Child Protection Policy outlines clear guidelines for staff conduct, reporting procedures for concerns, and safeguarding measures. All staff members are thoroughly trained on this policy upon joining and through regular refreshers.
- » **Safe Environment:** The Bandhavi campus and all activity spaces are physically safe and free from hazards. Access to the campus is controlled, and visitors are always supervised.
- » **Staff Screening and Training:** All Bandhavi staff undergo rigorous background checks. Continuous training is provided on child safeguarding, ethical conduct, and recognizing and responding to signs of abuse or neglect.
- » **Reporting Mechanisms:** Clear and accessible reporting mechanisms are in place for children, staff, and community members to raise any child protection concerns confidentially. All reports are taken seriously and investigated promptly and appropriately.
- » **Awareness Programs:** Regular awareness sessions are conducted with children, empowering them to understand their rights, identify unsafe situations, and know whom to approach for help. Parents and community members are also sensitized to child protection issues.

By fostering both active participation and robust protection, Bandhavi aims to create an environment where children feel safe, valued, and empowered to grow into confident and resilient individuals.

Building Sustainability

Bandhavi is deeply committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of its impact, extending beyond the duration of donor funding. Strategies focus on building local capacity, fostering community ownership, and empowering families for self-reliance.

- » **Community Ownership:** Parents, community leaders, and local institutions are actively involved in the planning and implementation of project activities. By empowering them to take responsibility for children's education and well-being, the project's values are aimed to be embedded within the community itself.
- » **Skill Building for Livelihoods:** Vocational training programs for older girls are designed to equip them with marketable skills, enabling them to pursue income-generating activities. This financial independence empowers them and strengthens their families' economic stability, reducing their vulnerability.

- » **Promoting Income Generation:** Encouraging activities like kitchen gardening within families not only improves nutrition but also provides a sustainable source of food and potential for small-scale income generation from surplus produce.
- » **Parental Engagement:** Continuous engagement with parents through counselling and awareness programs builds their capacity to support their children's education and protection independently.
- » **Networking and Partnerships:** Relationships with local government bodies, other NGOs, and community-based organizations are continually sought to be built and strengthened to create a broader support network that can sustain efforts beyond direct intervention.

Looking Ahead

Looking forward, Bandhavi aims to:

- » **Expand Outreach:** Reach more vulnerable children and families in underserved areas, particularly those most affected by climate-induced migration.
- » **Enhance Vocational Training:** Diversify and deepen vocational training programs to align with emerging market demands, offering even greater opportunities for economic empowerment.
- » **Strengthen Community Structures:** Further empower local children's groups and community committees to lead and advocate for child rights and education.
- » **Advocate for Policy Change:** Continue to advocate at local levels for improved access to education, health services, and protective measures for children.

Bandhavi's journey is a testament to the power of collective effort and sustained support. By investing in the education, health, and protection of children today, a stronger, more resilient community for tomorrow is being built.



A Path Forward – Basalingamma’s Resilience

In the quiet village of Pamanakalluru, nestled in the heart of Raichur district, lives Basalingamma, a young girl. A student of Class 7 at the Government Higher Primary School in Chikkabeedanal, Basalingamma’s journey is one of resilience and the pursuit of education against formidable odds.

Born into a family burdened by poverty and domestic hardship, Basalingamma is the elder of two daughters. Her mother, Ambamma, a daily wage laborer, works tirelessly under the scorching sun, driven by a fierce determination to ensure that both her daughters—Basalingamma and her younger sister Amrutha—receive the education she herself never had. Amrutha is currently studying in the 6th standard in the village school at Pamanakalluru.

Life at home had been anything but easy. Basalingamma’s father, Kanakappa, fell into the grip of addiction. His dependence on alcohol and tobacco frequently led to violence and disruption within the home. Eventually, to escape the emotional turmoil and seek some peace, Ambamma moved back to her parental home with her daughters. Despite the physical separation, the scars of those early years lingered.

Yet, hope arrived in the form of a helping hand. Amaresh, Basalingamma’s maternal uncle, recognized her potential and stepped in to support her education. It was through his guidance that Basalingamma was admitted to the Bandhavi hostel, a safe and nurturing space where she could focus entirely on learning and personal growth.

In this supportive environment, away from the instability of her former home, Basalingamma began to blossom. The consistent care, structured routine, and educational opportunities at Bandhavi provided her not only with a place to stay but also a profound sense of belonging and encouragement. Today, she continues her studies with renewed motivation, attending school regularly and participating actively in all learning activities.

2.2. Child Rights Education and Action (CREA)



The Child Rights Education and Action (CREA) project, initiated by Visthar in partnership with KIA, concluded its fifth phase during the reporting period of April 2024 to March 2025. Rooted in the overarching goal of fostering well-being, food security, equality, and inclusive education within a safe and secure environment for girls and boys, CREA has diligently worked

towards empowering children and transforming communities in North Karnataka. The fifth phase of the CREA project was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To enable 5,000 girls and boys to become conscious of child rights and take action to safeguard the rights of all children in project villages.
2. To ensure girls and boys in the project villages enjoy better outcomes in food and nutrition.
3. To ensure all girls and boys in the project villages have access to regular schooling.
4. To ensure girls and boys in the project villages experience less gender discrimination and gender-based violence.

Geographical Coverage and Team Structure

During the reporting period, the CREA project covered 147 villages across 35 Panchayats in the Yelburga and Koppal taluks of Koppal district, North Karnataka. To ensure smooth and effective functioning, the project area was strategically divided among three dedicated teams. This localized approach allowed for deeper engagement and more targeted interventions within each cluster of villages.

Progress Summary and Key Highlights

The 2024–2025 period was marked by significant progress across all CREA objectives, demonstrating the project's impact on child well-being, education, and protection. This multi-faceted approach, combining direct interventions with community mobilization and advocacy, yielded encouraging results even amidst prevailing challenges.

» Key achievements include:

- » **Re-enrollment of Children:** Supported 495 girls and 281 boys to re-enroll in school, addressing barriers such as a lack of sanitation facilities for girls and engagement in child labour for boys.

- » **Formation and Strengthening of Child Rights Sanghas:** Facilitated the establishment and active functioning of 127 Child Rights Sanghas, involving 3,000 girls and 2,000 boys. These Sanghas became vibrant platforms for children to understand their rights, raise awareness, and advocate for change.
- » **Improved Health and Hygiene Practices:** Conducted extensive awareness campaigns and practical demonstrations on personal hygiene, menstruation, and sanitation, reaching thousands of children and community members.
- » **Enhanced Food Security and Nutrition:** Promoted the establishment of kitchen gardens in homes and schools, benefiting 5,200 children and 6,000 families, thereby improving access to nutritious food and fostering sustainable agricultural practices.
- » **Combating Child Marriage and Gender-Based Violence:** Actively intervened in and prevented 6 child marriages in collaboration with Childline and local authorities. Numerous sessions were conducted to raise awareness on child marriage, gender discrimination, and gender-based violence, reaching a wide audience.
- » **Capacity Building:** Trained 2,200 girls and 1,800 boys on various aspects of child rights, leadership, and life skills, empowering them to become change agents.
- » **Community Mobilization:** Engaged parents, community leaders, and local government bodies (Gram Panchayats) in discussions and actions related to child rights, fostering a collective responsibility for children's welfare.

School Enrollment and Retention

One of CREA's most critical initiatives is addressing school dropout rates and facilitating re-enrollment, particularly in a region prone to economic hardship and migration. The project successfully supported 495 girls and 281 boys in returning to formal education.

- » **Addressing Barriers:** Girls often drop out due to a lack of proper toilet facilities in schools and the unavailability of sanitary pads, while boys are frequently pulled out to engage in cattle grazing or manual labor to supplement family income.
- » **Awareness and Counselling:** CREA's teams conducted extensive home visits and community meetings, engaging parents and children in discussions about the long-term benefits of education. Training programs raised awareness about the importance of consistent schooling, encouraging children and their families to prioritize formal learning.
- » **School Environment:** Efforts were made to liaise with schools to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment, indirectly supporting retention by addressing some of the structural issues contributing to dropouts.

These dedicated efforts have been instrumental in reversing the trend of children disengaging from formal education, providing them with a renewed opportunity for a brighter future.

Child Rights Sanghas

A cornerstone of the CREA project is the establishment and nurturing of Child Rights Sanghas (Children's Forums). During the reporting period, 127 active Sanghas were operational, involving an impressive 3,000 girls and 2,000 boys. These Sanghas serve as dynamic platforms where children learn about their rights, identify local issues affecting them, and collectively devise solutions.

- » **Learning and Awareness:** Regular meetings, workshops, and interactive sessions within the Sanghas focused on various dimensions of child rights, including the right to education, protection, participation, and health.
- » **Local Advocacy:** Children in these Sanghas actively engaged in advocating for their rights within their communities. For instance, they:
 - » Successfully convinced 18 parents to re-enroll their children in school.
 - » Addressed issues like the lack of basic facilities (e.g., streetlights, proper roads), substance abuse among youth, and discrimination against children.
 - » Organized awareness campaigns on issues like child marriage, education, and hygiene.
- » **Community Engagement:** The Sanghas became a voice for children, raising concerns with parents, teachers, and local Gram Panchayat members, fostering a sense of collective responsibility for child welfare.

The active participation of children in these Sanghas not only empowers them individually but also builds a cadre of young leaders capable of driving positive change within their communities.

Health and Hygiene Promotion

Recognizing that health and hygiene are fundamental to a child's ability to learn and thrive, CREA implemented robust programs focused on improving well-being.

- » **Hygiene Awareness:** Sensitization sessions on personal hygiene, proper handwashing techniques, and oral care were regularly conducted in schools and communities, reaching 2,100 girls and 1,800 boys. These sessions used engaging methods like demonstrations and interactive discussions.
- » **Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM):** For adolescent girls, detailed sessions on MHM were conducted, reaching 1,800 girls. These sessions provided crucial information, dispelled myths, and promoted healthy practices. Girls were also educated on the safe disposal of sanitary pads and the importance of using toilets.

- » **Access to Sanitation:** The project advocated for and supported initiatives that improved access to functional toilets in schools and homes, a critical factor in girl child retention in school.

These efforts have contributed to a noticeable improvement in hygiene practices and reduced instances of hygiene-related illnesses among the target population.

Food Security and Nutrition Initiatives

CREA understands that adequate nutrition is crucial for children's cognitive and physical development. The project implemented strategies to enhance food security and nutritional intake at the household level.

- » **Kitchen Gardens:** A significant initiative involved promoting and supporting the establishment of kitchen gardens in both individual homes and schools. This led to 5,200 children and 6,000 families benefiting from direct access to fresh, nutritious vegetables. This not only improved dietary diversity but also served as a practical learning experience for children in sustainable agriculture.
- » **Nutritional Awareness:** Sessions on balanced diets, the importance of locally grown nutritious foods, and safe food preparation practices were conducted for children and parents, contributing to increased awareness regarding healthy eating habits.
- » **Water Safety:** Awareness was also raised on safe drinking water practices, emphasizing the boiling of water to prevent waterborne diseases.

These initiatives are aimed at empowering families to improve their food security and ensure better nutritional outcomes for their children.

Combating Child Marriage and Gender-Based Violence

One of CREA's most critical interventions lies in its unwavering commitment to combating child marriage and addressing gender-based violence (GBV). The project actively works to protect children from these harmful practices through awareness, intervention, and collaboration.

- » **Direct Interventions:** In collaboration with Childline (1098) and local authorities, CREA teams successfully intervened in and prevented 6 child marriages during the reporting period. These timely actions saved young girls from losing their childhoods and futures.
- » **Awareness Campaigns:** Extensive awareness campaigns were conducted in villages and schools, reaching 5,000 girls, 2,000 boys, and 3,000 parents. These sessions focused on:
 - » The legal implications and severe health, educational, and social consequences of child marriage.

- » The importance of girls' education and their right to choose their future.
- » Identifying and addressing different forms of gender discrimination and GBV.
- » **Role of Child Rights Sanghas:** The Child Rights Sanghas played a vital role in identifying potential child marriage cases and reporting them, demonstrating the effectiveness of empowering children as protectors of their peers' rights.

These efforts are gradually shifting community mindsets, reinforcing the importance of education and protecting children from exploitation.

Capacity Building and Training Programs:

Empowering children and communities with knowledge is central to CREA's strategy. During the reporting period, extensive capacity-building initiatives were undertaken.

- » **Training for Children:** A total of 2,200 girls and 1,800 boys received training on various critical topics, including:
 - » Child Rights (including the four core rights: survival, development, protection, and participation).
 - » Leadership and communication skills.
 - » Life skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking.
 - » Gender equality and understanding gender-based violence.
 - » Awareness of government schemes and support systems for children.
- » **Training for Community Members:** Parents, community leaders, and local government representatives also participated in awareness sessions on child protection, the importance of education, and promoting a safe environment for children.

These training programs equipped participants with the knowledge and confidence to advocate for their rights and contribute to the well-being of their communities.

Community Mobilization and Advocacy

CREA's success is deeply rooted in its ability to mobilize communities and advocate for child-centric policies and practices at the grassroots level.

- » **Parents' Groups:** The project actively engaged with parents, forming groups for regular discussions on their children's education, health, and protection. These groups served as platforms for sharing experiences, mutual support, and collective action.
- » **Gram Panchayat Engagement:** CREA consistently engaged with Gram Panchayat (local self-governance) members, sensitizing them to child rights issues and encouraging them to integrate child welfare into local development

plans. This included advocating for better school infrastructure, sanitation facilities, and child protection mechanisms.

- » **Awareness Campaigns:** Major awareness campaigns and events were organized on significant dates to highlight specific child rights issues:
 - » Children's Day (November 14): Celebrated across project villages with active participation from children and community members, reinforcing the importance of children's rights.
 - » World Day Against Child Labour (June 12): Focused on raising awareness about the harms of child labor and promoting schooling as an alternative.
 - » World Menstrual Hygiene Day (May 28): Dedicated to breaking taboos around menstruation and promoting healthy hygiene practices.

These sustained efforts foster a supportive environment where child rights are understood, respected, and upheld by the entire community.

Stories of Change

Reshma's Story - A Victory Against Child Marriage

Reshma, a 15-year-old from Dammur village, Koppal Taluk, was a bright and promising student, actively involved in the local Child Rights Sangha (CRS), eagerly participating in discussions on child rights and gender equality. Her dream was to complete her education and become independent. However, her aspirations were threatened when her parents, facing economic hardship and societal pressure, decided to arrange her marriage, set for February 4, 2025, during her school holidays.

Devastated, Reshma confided in her friend, also a CRS member. Together, they courageously approached CREA project staff, specifically Manjula, just days before the wedding. Realizing the urgency, the CREA team immediately contacted Childline (1098) on January 30, 2025, at 5:48 PM, to report the case. Childline officials responded swiftly, and on February 3, 2025, along with local authorities, they reached Dammur village. Their timely intervention successfully stopped the marriage hours before it was to take place. After a day, ensuring the marriage was definitively prevented, the CREA team visited Reshma's school and was relieved to see her regularly attending classes again, her smile a testament to renewed hope.

The intervention not only saved Reshma from an early marriage but also profoundly changed her parents' perspective. They recognized their mistake and promised not to marry her off until she completed her education. Today, Reshma is free from child marriage pressures and continues her studies with renewed vigor. She now has the invaluable opportunity to pursue her dreams of a future where she can be independent and build a life of her own choice.

Reshma's case vividly illustrates how timely action, coupled with community awareness and empowering children through platforms like Child Rights Sanghas, can effectively prevent child marriage. By working together, a world where every girl has the right to study, grow, and choose her future, free from forced responsibilities at a young age, can be created.

Challenges Encountered

Despite significant achievements, the CREA project operated amidst several persistent challenges during the reporting period:

- » **Severe Drought and Migration:** The ongoing severe drought in northern Karnataka remained a primary challenge. This environmental crisis directly impacted the livelihoods of poor families, leading to increased seasonal and permanent migration. This made it difficult to ensure consistent school attendance and follow-up with children whose families frequently moved.
- » **Parental Reluctance:** While progress was made, a continued reluctance among some parents, particularly those who migrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, to re-enroll their children in formal education persisted. This often stemmed from immediate economic pressures outweighing the perceived long-term benefits of schooling.
- » **Deep-Rooted Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Addressing deep-rooted socio-cultural norms, such as preferences for early marriage for girls or engaging children in labour, required sustained and intensive counselling efforts, as mindsets are slow to change.
- » **Limited Resources for Comprehensive Support:** While the project provided significant support, the vastness of the need for comprehensive healthcare, diversified vocational training, and sustained nutritional support often stretched available resources.

Key Learnings

The challenges faced provided valuable learnings that will inform CREA's future strategies:

- » **Adaptive Strategies are Crucial:** The fluctuating migration patterns necessitated flexible and adaptive strategies, including intensified home visits and community follow-ups, to track and re-engage children.
- » **Importance of Consistent Follow-up:** Sustained and consistent follow-up with children and their families is paramount to ensure retention in school and continued engagement in project activities. One-time interventions are often insufficient.
- » **Community Engagement as a Cornerstone:** Deep and continuous engagement with parents, community leaders, and local governing bodies is vital for creating an enabling environment where child rights are collectively owned and protected.
- » **Empowering Children Amplifies Impact:** The active involvement of children through Child Rights Sanghas has proven to be an incredibly effective strategy, as children themselves become powerful advocates and change agents.

Way Forward

Looking ahead, the CREA project will build upon the strong foundations laid and the learnings gathered during this phase. Future aspirations include:

- » **Deepening Engagement in Existing Villages:** While maintaining current outreach, the aim is to deepen engagement within existing project villages, focusing on strengthening the sustainability of local structures like the Child Rights Sanghas and Parent Groups.
- » **Enhanced Vocational Pathways:** Explore opportunities to diversify and enhance vocational training programs for older children, aligning skills with emerging local economic opportunities to foster greater self-reliance.
- » **Strengthening Partnerships:** Continue to strengthen collaborations with Childline, local government bodies, schools, and other community-based organizations to create a more robust ecosystem of support for child rights.
- » **Targeted Advocacy:** Intensify advocacy efforts at the Gram Panchayat level to ensure the effective implementation of child-friendly policies and increased allocation of resources for child welfare.
- » **Addressing Intersectional Issues:** Continue to integrate the intersectional issue of caste more deeply into awareness and intervention strategies, recognizing its impact on children's vulnerabilities.

The CREA project's journey is a testament to the power of collective effort in safeguarding children's rights and building a more equitable future. By nurturing young minds, fostering community responsibility, and advocating for a protective environment, CREA continues to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and youth.



Stories of Change

1. Using Childline to Stop Child Marriage: Reshma's Rescue

I Hanumapura is a small village where most residents rely on farming and livestock. Many families rear sheep, cows, and buffalo for their livelihood. Due to financial difficulties and a lack of awareness about the importance of education, many parents do not prioritize their children's schooling, leading to common instances of child labor and child marriage in the village.

Reshma is the eldest daughter of Lakshnavva and Mariyappa, a couple from the Kuri Kuruba community. She has two younger siblings and was studying in the 8th grade at G. Jarakunti HPS School. Her parents, influenced by long-standing customs and traditions, decided to arrange her marriage at a young age, believing it to be the right course of action, as was common for many girls in their community.

One day, a child from the village, who was part of a local children's group, informed a CREA team member about Reshma's upcoming marriage. The timing was critical, with only four days left before the wedding. Recognizing the urgency, the CREA team immediately discussed the situation and decided to act.

On January 30, 2025, at 5:48 PM, the team called Childline (1098)—a helpline for children in distress—to report the case. Childline officials responded swiftly, and on February 3, 2025, they reached Dammur village, where the wedding was scheduled to take place. With the help of local authorities, they successfully stopped the marriage just hours before it was to occur.

After a day's gap, ensuring that the marriage had been definitively prevented, the CREA team visited Reshma's school to check on her well-being. They were relieved and happy to see her regularly attending classes again.

This timely intervention not only saved Reshma from an early marriage but also significantly changed her parents' perspective. They realized their mistake and promised not to marry her off until she completed her education.

Today, Reshma is free from the pressures of child marriage and is continuing her studies. She now has the invaluable opportunity to pursue her dreams of a future where she can be independent and build a life of her own choice.

Timely action, coupled with community awareness and empowering children through platforms like children's groups, can effectively prevent child marriage. With more awareness and education, many more girls like Reshma can be saved from losing their childhood and future. By working together, we can create a world where every girl has the right to study, grow, and choose her future, free from forced responsibilities at a young age.

2. Soundarya's Struggle for Education: Battling Systemic Barriers

In Hulegudda, a remote village in Yalaburga Taluk, deep-rooted inequalities persist. Caste discrimination, gender bias, and male domination shape everyday life.

Amidst these harsh realities lived Soundarya Sharanappa Kallur, a young girl from the Valmiki community. Her father, Sharanappa, was an alcoholic with two wives. Soundarya's mother, Holeyavva, his second wife, lived without freedom – she was not allowed to speak to men, leave the village, or make any decisions. Crucially, Soundarya's education was never a priority for her father, who saw no value in sending her to school. The household was strictly controlled by him, and no one dared to question his authority.

One fateful night, tragedy struck. In a drunken rage, Soundarya's father set their house on fire. The flames consumed not just their home, but every important document they possessed—ration cards, identity proofs, and school records. Without these, their survival was precarious.

Left without any documents, Soundarya and her mother faced immense hardship. They could not access essential government benefits, including ration rice. More devastatingly, Soundarya could not re-enroll in school, as official records were required, creating an insurmountable barrier to her education.

When Shobha Sahuakar, a CREA Community Facilitator, learned about Soundarya's situation, she knew immediate intervention was vital. No child should be denied education due to circumstances beyond their control.

Shobha began working tirelessly to secure Soundarya's right to education by facilitating her admission to the 8th grade. The absence of documents, however, created bureaucratic hurdles, delaying the process and violating Soundarya's entitlement to a seamless education. Despite these obstacles, Shobha persisted, driven by the conviction that access to education is not a privilege but a fundamental right. This effort was not merely about one girl's schooling; it was about challenging systemic neglect and demanding Soundarya's rightful opportunity for a better future.

Even today, the complete documentation process remains unfinished, yet Shobha's determination remains unwavering. Soundarya must go to school, and Shobha is committed to doing everything possible to make it happen.

2.3. Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane (KKS)



During the reporting period, the project focused on strengthening KKS foundations and building new structures to sustain the collectives, aiming to achieve three goals: empowering adolescent girls (AG) collectives to resist gender injustice and

claim their rights, increasing engagement and support from sensitized stakeholders, and developing organizational capacity to sustain and build the work of the Sanghas.

Key Activities Undertaken

Empowering AG Collectives

- » **Discrimination Mapping:** Initiated as a participatory exercise in 9 villages, enabling girls to identify and visualize discrimination. This tool has raised consciousness about gender and caste-based discrimination, serving as a springboard for research on discrimination against girls in schools. The plan is to scale this to all villages in years 2 and 3.
- » **Kishori Parliaments:** Sustained federated structures at Panchayat and Taluk levels. 22 Panchayat Parliaments met quarterly, and the Taluk Parliament met half-yearly, addressing issues affecting adolescent girls in Kukanoor. They also began publishing "Maathadre!", a quarterly (now bi-monthly) newsletter to amplify girls' voices.
- » **Peer Leadership Program:** Piloted in 20 Sanghas, setting up 3-member Sanchaalana (Convening) Samitis to lead weekly Sangha meetings and 3-member Kreedha (Sports) Samitis to organize games. A Taluk-level Editorial committee publishes the KKS newsletter. Initial results are promising, with plans to refine and scale across all Sanghas.
- » **Systematized Sangha Meetings:** The structure and flow of Sangha meetings were systematized, starting with games and songs before discussions. This increased meeting quality and facilitated training peer leaders.
- » **Strengthened Computer Classes:** The curriculum for weekend computer classes was revised, and 60 refurbished Ubuntu laptops were procured from NavGurukul at a modest cost, now active in Kishori Resource Centers. Girls use computers to prepare petitions and write letters to PRI and SDMC.

Increasing Engagement and Support from Sensitized Stakeholders

- » **Deepened Community Relationships:** Community Facilitators are conducting home visits to all girls in their Sanghas, meeting parents, sharing updates, and listening to their needs. Mothers Meetings have also begun, providing a platform for mothers of AG to voice concerns and share support. Two small Alumni Meetups were hosted, revealing enthusiasm and clarity from alumni.
- » **Street Theatre Campaign:** A campaign on Menstrual Stigma as a form of violence against girls and women engaged 3475 community members in 55 villages of Kukanur Taluk in January–February 2025. Young women and men from marginalized communities, studying at the Visthar Ranga Shaale, performed the street theatre.

Developing Organizational Capacity

- » **Team Capacity Building:** Two Mondays every month are designated for team capacity building, with recent trainings focusing on “Strengthening relationships with parents,” “Overcoming barriers in Home Visits,” and “Peer Leadership Strategy”. These trainings also aided in rolling out Discrimination Mapping, systematizing Sangha meetings, and channeling learning from a UP field visit.
- » **Developed Resource Materials:** A new KKS Songs Booklet with 20 songs was published and distributed to every girl in the Sanghas. A Games Training Manual with 50 games was developed, strengthening the ability to facilitate games and shared with DMA partners.
- » **Trained Staff in Play for Peace Methods:** All staff were trained in Play for Peace methods, followed by rehearsal trainings. The Games Training Manual is being revised for inclusivity and cooperation. 30 peer leaders were also trained to facilitate PfP games.



Summary of key effects

| # | Key Effects Summary | Planned for Year 1 | Achieved in Year 1 | Target for Year 5 |
|----|--|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 6000 adolescent girls become conscious of gender justice, and take actions to promote gender equality in their home/school/ community. | 3000 | 3300 | 6000 |
| 2 | 2600 girls gain skills and confidence to use computers for word processing and presentations | 500 | 329 | 2600 |
| 3 | 250 peer leaders gain skills to sustain the activities of their Sanghas and to initiate regular actions with their groups | 250 | 120 | 250 |
| 4 | The parliaments take up and follow up on 22 issues relevant for adolescent girls each year (one each). And the taluk parliament takes up 9 issues over the grant period. | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| 5 | 600 girls gain skills and confidence to play active sports | 0 | 60 | 600 |
| 6 | KKS alumni sustain their enthusiasm and make progress to claim their rights | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 7 | 600 Kishori Nyaya Samiti members gain the knowledge and capacities to support and accompany girls claim their rights | 300 | 310 | 600 |
| 8 | 25000 people increase their knowledge and understanding of diverse gender issues affecting adolescent girls | 5000 | 4806 | 25000 |
| 9 | 5 research reports used for advocacy at district and state levels | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 10 | 35 Facilitators and Co-ordinators trained and equipped to facilitate the sanghas | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| 11 | Publish 4 Training Manuals in Kannada that benefit Visthar's Community Facilitators in Koppal, and can be shared with civil society organisations working in Karnataka | 0 | 1 | 4 |

A Journey to the Nationals – How Kabbadi Transformed Girls and a Community

“Three years ago, we would never go out alone. We were afraid to talk in front of the boys, let alone play sports. All that has changed now,” says Kalpana with a bright smile. “That was when Lakshmi Devi sister came to form sanghas (collectives) in our village. She formed seven sanghas in our Balegeri village, and all of us girls joined.”

“We chose the name PT Usha Sangha for our collective because we are inspired by the story of PT Usha reaching the Olympics finals,” adds Vijayalakshmi, the collective’s leader.

“I have changed a lot after joining the Sangha. I have learned to speak boldly, learned new songs, and learned about my rights. I try to adopt many of them in my life,” continues Kalpana. “Lakshmi Devi sister supported us when we wanted to play in the village, and that’s how we started playing Kabbadi in the evenings. Some people said Kabbadi is a boys’ game, but we didn’t listen to them.”

“During the summer holidays, some of us girls decided to start running. Every morning, we got up early at 5 and would go for a jog on the road away from our village. People looked at us strangely, as if they had never seen girls running!” laughs Vijayalakshmi. “Soon some of the boys would encourage us too.”

“Every year during the Dussehra festival, the youth in our village organize a Kabbadi tournament. So last year we also wanted to participate. But they shut us out, saying the tournament is only for boys,” says Kalpana. “We were all angry. Then Vijayalakshmi asked us, ‘Why don’t we organize our own girls’ tournament?’ That’s how the idea started.”

“We talked to Lakshmi Devi sister and started planning. We went to all the nearby villages and invited the girls to come for our tournament. Everyone was excited. Twelve teams registered. But on the day of the tournament, only eight teams could come. There was a good crowd as we invited everyone in the village to come watch us,” the excitement in Vijayalakshmi’s voice rising. “That was the first tournament our team won!”

“We were all encouraged by that win,” beams Kalpana. “Next month we registered to play in the Taluk-level tournament. We won that. So we were selected for the district levels, and we won that too. Next, we went to Bangalore to compete in the state-level tournament. Until then, many of us had not even stepped out of Koppal district. Our team from Balegeri village won the state-level too!” “We represented Karnataka in the National championships. That was in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, last month,” recalls Vijayalakshmi with pride in her voice. “There were teams from all 29 states. We played our best, but there were better teams. We will also get better next year.” “Nobody in Balegeri says Kabbadi is a boys’ sport anymore. There is more support for us

2.4. Visthar Ranga Shale (VRS)



This section highlights the impactful theatre and community engagement activities undertaken, focusing on their role in raising awareness and fostering social change.

Field Training Workshops for Community Facilitators

A 45-day field training workshop was prioritized for participants

under the CREA and KKS schemes, selecting 15 trainees (4 female, 11 male). This intensive program covered various aspects of theatre, including traditional art forms like Kolata, struggle songs, social and gender analysis, performance of Navarasa (nine emotions), drama and cinema studies, and practical street drama training conducted in villages. Upon completion, participants received a certificate.

Thematic Street Play Campaigns

Trainees from the 45-day stage training program actively led several street play campaigns focused on critical social issues:

Food Security Awareness Campaign

Street drama performances and awareness marches on food security were conducted in villages covered by the CREA scheme. A total of 42 performances were delivered across 24 villages and 18 government schools. These plays reached approximately 3,000 children (1,800 girls and 1,200 boys) and 7,000 adults (4,300 women and 2,700 men).

Campaign to Ban Child Marriage

Street drama awareness jathas (rallies) and performances advocating against child marriage were conducted in 46 villages covered by the KKS scheme. These powerful dramas reached an estimated 5,000 adolescent girls (Kishori children) and 8,000 adults (5,000 women and 3,000 men).

Empowerment of Women Migrant Workers:

Six trained students conducted 16 street play performances across 10 villages to raise awareness about the empowerment of women migrant workers. These performances reached over 6,000 people, with a notably higher attendance of women.

Theatre Activities in Educational Settings

20-Hour Theatre Activity for Government Schools (Rangada Rangu)

The Rangada Rangu program selected two government schools (Honnunsi and Hirebidinala). A total of 20 hours of stage activities training was provided to 4th and 5th-grade children at Honnunsi School and 6th and 7th-grade children at Hirebidinala.

Theatre for Mobile Museum Program

As part of the comprehensive education school's Mobile Museum program, drama training on concepts of safety and equality was provided. These performances were subsequently staged in various government schools by the comprehensive education school, reaching over 3,000 children.

20-Hour Theatre Activities for Comprehensive Education and Bonded Children

Under the Rangada Rangu program, children from the integrated education school and Bandhavi (targeting bonded children) were selected. Sixty children (3rd and 4th grade from SSS, and 6th to 9th grade from Bandhavi) received 20 hours of theatre activities training. This training utilized children's text-based topics and culminated in the staging of three dramas, which were performed at the tenth anniversary of the comprehensive education school.

Special Camps and Trainings

Dussehra Stage Camp Training (Bandhavi)

Stage training was provided during the Dussehra camp held in October, with 70 children from Bandhavi participating. They were trained in theatre songs, performance techniques, Kolata, and a short play on environmental conservation, including a bird conservation skit titled "Surakki Katha."

Street Drama Training for KKS Children (Kanasu Kishori Sangathan)

Street drama training was also conducted during the Dussehra camp in October, specifically for the Kanasu Kishori Sangathan project. Thirty young participants received training. A play focusing on the safety and equality of the girl child, incorporating stage songs, performance, and Kolata, was subsequently performed in Shiruru village.

Repertory Drama and Performance

Ten apprentices were selected for a three-month intensive theatre training, covering various aspects of the performing arts. This training included stage song, acting, Kolata, mask making, make-up, stage set design, and costume design. The program also focused on children's theatre and prepared a repertory team.

A significant outcome was the staging of a play celebrating the dignity of education, women's lives, and the struggles for organization and equality led by Mother Savitri Bai Phule and Mahatma Jyoti Bhai Phule. This value-based thought and the relevance of their historical movement were brought to the stage.



Additionally, the experimental play "Kaggattala Dariya Maha Chetana" was merged into the repertoire and performed in 13 villages across the CREA and KKS project areas. Through these performances, approximately 15,000 people, including women, children, and men, were made aware of the importance of education.

Key Learnings and Reflections

- » Inconveniences encountered during initial theatrical performances were identified and rectified in subsequent shows, leading to smoother executions.
- » Initial reluctance observed in students during the first two performances was overcome by providing them with encouragement and building rapport as fellow participants.
- » The engagement provided valuable insights into the specific problems faced by women and children in rural areas.
- » The initiative proved the effectiveness of conducting children's curriculum-based activities through children's theatre.
- » By engaging with children at their level, a deeper understanding of societal development was gained.

Challenges

- » It was challenging to bring learners, especially girls, to these training programs due to prevailing social norms and other commitments.
- » There was a general lack of information and interest in field land activities in rural areas, making initial engagement difficult.
- » Coordinating with community members for street drama performances was challenging due to their varying availability.
- » Lack of adequate publicity and information about Visthar Theatre School during competitions with other established theatre teams in Karnataka.
- » Juggling multiple responsibilities concurrently proved to be demanding for the team.

Outcomes and Impact

- » Following the initial training, the number of girls participating in subsequent training programs significantly increased.
- » The performances led to increased recognition of the organization in the areas where plays were staged, garnering positive opinions about Visthar.
- » Kishoris (adolescent girls) in the villages where the child marriage drama was performed demonstrated increased vigilance against early marriage.
- » Mothers who witnessed the dramas expressed their commitment to ensuring their daughters receive a good education.
- » It is a matter of pride that the trained students are continuing to advocate and perform, carrying forward the message of social change.



2.5. Women Migrant Workers' Collectives

The period from April 2024 to March 2025 has seen significant strides in our efforts to enhance the socio-economic well-being, health, and rights of Women Migrant Workers.

Our initiatives began with a comprehensive Kobo survey conducted across 11 target villages. This crucial baseline assessment provided insights into the living conditions, challenges, and specific needs of women migrant workers in these areas, guiding our subsequent interventions. Staff members participated in various training programs, enhancing their capacity to engage with the community effectively. A cornerstone of our community-led approach was the successful formation of Women Migrant Workers' Sanghas (associations) in all 11 villages, fostering collective action and mutual support among the women.

Facilitating Access to Entitlements and Documentation:

A primary focus was to ensure that women migrant workers could access their rightful government entitlements. We provided direct support to 21 women migrant workers in obtaining new Labor Cards, essential for formalizing their employment and accessing welfare schemes. Furthermore, assistance was extended to 7 women for the renewal of their existing Labor Cards. Recognizing the critical role of identity and welfare documentation, 15 information camps were organized across villages, specifically on Ration Card updates, benefiting 38 women migrant workers who received direct support in updating their cards.

Extensive information camps were also conducted in all 11 villages, educating women on the necessary documentation and processes to access a wide array of government schemes, including:

- » andhya Suraksha Yojana
- » Senior Citizen Card
- » Kisan Scheme
- » Provident Fund
- » New Ration Cards (APL and BPL)
- » Ayushman Bharat Health Card
- » Registration and renewal of Construction Workers' Labor Cards
- » Subsidy and home loans for house construction
- » Self-employment schemes
- » Shramashakti scheme
- » Small loan scheme
- » Ganga Kalyan scheme, among others

Health and Education Initiatives:

Understanding the critical importance of health, three health camps were conducted in Chikkamyageri Tanda, Hulegudda, and Tallur Tanda, providing essential medical check-ups and health awareness to the migrant community. In a significant step towards ensuring the educational continuity of children from migrant families, five children from Kolihal and Kudremothu villages were successfully admitted to a girls' residential hostel and high school in Mangalore, offering them a stable environment for their studies.

Capacity Building and Awareness Programs:

To address critical social issues, gender training sessions were organized for women in 5 villages, promoting awareness of gender equality and women's rights. Additionally, training on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) was conducted in 4 women's Sanghas, equipping women with vital information to

make informed decisions about their health. Posters on child marriage issues and preventive measures were widely distributed to raise awareness and encourage community action against this harmful practice. Regular Sangha meetings continued to be held in all 11 villages, serving as platforms for discussions, problem-solving, and collective decision-making.

Advocacy and Community Participation:

Our team actively engaged with local governance structures, including visiting concerned Panchayats and Nada Kacheri offices, to advocate for the rights and needs of women migrant workers and facilitate their access to services.

Key Learnings

The past year provided crucial insights, shaping our future strategies. We gained a deep understanding of migrant women workers' vulnerabilities and needs through the Kobo survey. We also significantly enhanced our community engagement strategies, learning to build trust and mobilize communities. Organizing entitlement information camps provided comprehensive knowledge of government schemes, enabling us to better guide beneficiaries.

This period also reinforced the importance of resilience and decisiveness in challenging situations and refined our problem-solving approaches for women migrant workers. Despite ongoing challenges, these learnings will strengthen our resolve and refine our approaches for greater impact



Staff Team, Communiy-based projects, Koppal with Harish Yogi of UNICEF



3. Sustainability Initiatives

3.1. Srujana Recycled

The Srujana Recycling Unit at Visthar has been making efforts in promoting environmental sustainability and community engagement. Established with the primary objective of fostering a culture of recycling and waste management, the unit has evolved into a multifaceted initiative that not only produces recycled paper products and utility items but also serves as a training hub for schools and CSR volunteers.

Training and Capacity Building

One of the unit's key focus areas has been training and capacity building. By collaborating with schools and CSR initiatives, Srujana Recycling Unit has been able to educate and empower a wide range of stakeholders on the importance of recycling and sustainable waste management practices. Through hands-on training sessions and workshops, participants gain practical knowledge on recycling techniques, waste segregation, and the art of transforming waste into valuable products.

Recycled Paper Products and Utility Items

In addition to its training programs, the unit has been actively engaged in producing a variety of recycled paper products and utility items. From handmade paper products to creative utility items, the unit's output showcases the potential for waste materials to be transformed into innovative and useful products. These products not only demonstrate the unit's commitment to sustainability but also provide a tangible example of the possibilities for waste reduction and resource conservation.

By combining education, training, and production, the Srujana Recycling Unit at Visthar serves as a model for community-based initiatives that can drive meaningful change. As we look to the future, it is clear that the unit's work will remain crucial in promoting sustainability and empowering communities to take action.

3.2. Organic Farming and ManoranJitham Nursery

The organic farming and Manoranitham Nursery initiatives at Visthar promote eco-friendly practices but also serve as a platform for knowledge sharing and skill development.

Organic Farming: Our organic farming practices focus on cultivating vegetables and tubers without chemical fertilizers or pesticides, ensuring a healthier ecosystem and produce. By adopting natural methods, we:

- » Enhance soil fertility and biodiversity
- » Conserve water and reduce waste
- » Produce chemical-free crops, promoting consumer health

The Manoranitham nursery:

- » Propagates diverse plant species, including native and medicinal plants
- » Provides seedlings and saplings for sale
- » Serves as a demonstration site for sustainable nursery practices

These initiatives contribute to:

- » Environmental conservation and sustainability
- » Community engagement and capacity building
- » Promotion of organic gardening.

By integrating organic farming and nursery practices, Visthar fosters a holistic approach to sustainability, empowering individuals and communities to adopt eco-friendly practices.



3.3. CSR Volunteering at Visthar

At Visthar, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) volunteering continues to be a cornerstone of our sustainability initiatives on campus. The support from our corporate partners has significantly contributed to these efforts. Our volunteers have been instrumental in supporting our sustainability initiatives, working on projects such as organic farming, recycling, gardening, and developing creative eco-paths. Their dedication directly contributes to a greener, more sustainable environment at Visthar and serves as an inspiration beyond our campus.

Sustained Partnerships: Cisco's Enduring Commitment

We are grateful for the continued partnership with Cisco, whose employees have consistently dedicated their time, skills, and resources to our sustainability and educational initiatives. Their sustained volunteering efforts have brought invaluable expertise and enthusiasm.

New Collaborations through Goodera

This year, we were able to forge new partnerships through Goodera, welcoming volunteers from Titan and Flipkart. Visthar organized a day of engaging, farm-based activities titled 'Rural Routes – A Day in the Farm.' The event brought together 34 enthusiastic volunteers from Titan Bangalore, who actively explored and contributed to sustainable practices. The activities ranged from coconut harvesting, mulching, and vegetable farming to recycled handmade paper bag making. Each group actively participated, showcasing teamwork and a shared commitment to connecting with nature and promoting eco-friendly initiatives.

SmartBear

SmartBear volunteers participated as part of their Earth Day Celebrations. These collaborations underscore the growing interest among corporate entities to contribute meaningfully to social causes, and we look forward to nurturing these relationships in the years to come.

Cognizant's Regular Engagement

Cognizant has established a sustained collaboration with Visthar. Their volunteers have been a constant presence, offering their time and labour every Saturday. They contributed to our organic farming and recycling initiatives. Cognizant volunteers also provided



crucial outreach and support for our annual flagship event, Bhoomi Habba. Their dedication was invaluable, ensuring its smooth running and widespread positive impact.

The collective efforts of our CSR volunteering partners have significantly enriched Visthar's work. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Cisco, SmartBear, Goodera, and Cognizant for their invaluable contributions. Their commitment not only helps us achieve our programmatic goals but also inspires our beneficiaries and staff alike, fostering a stronger, more connected community.

3.4. Bhoomi Habba 2024: Towards Sustainable Futures

Bhoomi Habba, Visthar's annual Earth Festival, took place in the first week of June in Bangalore, aligning with World Environment Day (June 5th). The event gathered thousands of individuals dedicated to fostering sustainable relationships with both the Earth and each other. Bhoomi Habba serves as a vital platform for celebrating the Earth, raising environmental awareness, and showcasing solutions for a greener future. The festival is a vibrant showcase of music, films, exhibitions, art and theatre workshops, traditional cuisine, eco-friendly crafts, and organic farm products. Bhoomi Habba 2024 was inaugurated by Dr. Jija Harisingh, Managing Trustee of Art Mantram and former Director General of Police, Government of Karnataka.



Highlights

The eco-friendly campus of Visthar buzzed with activity, all centered around celebrating the Earth and promoting sustainable living.

- » Exhibitions and Stalls: Visitors explored numerous stalls featuring eco-friendly crafts, organic produce, and informational displays from various individuals and NGOs committed to environmental causes.
- » Workshops and Demonstrations: Workshops, installations, and poster exhibitions offered valuable insights into critical topics such as rainwater harvesting and alternative energy sources.

- » Artistic Expressions: The festival served as a platform for artistic expression, with local artists showcasing eco-themed works created from recycled materials, highlighting the planet's beauty and fragility. Traditional dance performances and music further enriched the cultural celebration.
- » Sustainable Solutions: A key aspect of Bhoomi Habba was its emphasis on practical solutions for a sustainable future. Attendees interacted with entrepreneurs and organizations providing eco-friendly products and services, ranging from organic clothing to green cleaning solutions. This exchange of ideas and innovations is crucial for advancing a sustainable future for Bangalore and beyond.

Legacy and Future Outlook

Bhoomi Habba has established itself as a significant event in Bangalore's cultural calendar. Over the years, it has consistently raised awareness about environmental issues, promoted sustainable practices, and fostered a strong sense of community among those dedicated to protecting our planet.

While Bhoomi Habba 2024 has concluded, the spirit of environmental consciousness it ignited continues. Visthar's long-term vision for Bhoomi Habba is to see it grow into a significant annual event that not only raises environmental awareness in Bengaluru but also serves as a model for similar festivals across the country. We also hope to foster collaborations with other environmental organizations and initiatives to amplify our impact. The festival's spirit should be carried forward to create a more sustainable future for everyone.





4. Looking Back, Looking Ahead

We live in a context of neoliberal development, rising communalism, patriarchy, and other intersecting power structures, in India and globally. Despite these challenges, our commitment to fostering democratic, just, and sustainable communities with gender and social equity remains steadfast. This section outlines our strategic priorities, key initiatives, and the opportunities and challenges we anticipate in the coming years. The external evaluation by Rajnani Krishnamurthy, and the strategic plan and OD process facilitated by Peter Yorke form the basis of section

4.1. Visthar Evaluation: Key Recommendations

This section provides an overview of the key recommendations of the evaluation of Visthar, facilitated by Ranjani K. Murthy and Roshen Chandran. Summary of Key Recommendations from the Annual Evaluation.

1. Spread Constitutional Values: A primary recommendation emphasizes the continued and intensified effort to disseminate constitutional values. This involves fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the principles enshrined in the constitution among all stakeholders and beneficiaries. By reinforcing these foundational values, the aim is to promote informed citizenship and strengthen democratic participation within the communities served.

2. Strengthen Existing Systems Locally: The evaluation highlighted the importance of fortifying existing systems at the local level. This involves a critical assessment of current operational frameworks and identifying areas for enhancement to ensure greater efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of initiatives. Strengthening local systems will empower communities and build robust, self-reliant structures.

3. Integrate Climate Change: Recognizing the escalating impact of climate change, a significant recommendation is to integrate a climate change lens across all operations and programs. This comprehensive approach will involve several key actions:

- » **Mainstream Climate Change in Training:** A climate change perspective will be integrated into all existing training modules, ensuring climate considerations are interwoven into every aspect of capacity-building efforts.
- » **Offer Specialized Trainings:** New and specialized training programs will be developed and offered, specifically focusing on the intersection of gender and climate change¹⁵². This will equip individuals with the knowledge and tools to address the unique challenges faced by different demographics in the context of climate change.
- » **Integrate Disaster Response in Koppal:** In the Koppal region, Disaster Response mechanisms will be integrated within the frameworks of KKS and CREA. This proactive step aims to build resilience and preparedness against climate-related disasters in this specific area.
- » **Strengthen Disaster Risk Reduction Committees:** A crucial step will be to strengthen existing Disaster Risk Reduction Committees. This involves enhancing their capacity, resources, and operational effectiveness to better anticipate, mitigate, and respond to environmental risks.

4. Deepen Work on Gender and Child Rights: The evaluation underscored the necessity to deepen engagement and work in the critical areas of gender equality and child rights. This involves expanding existing initiatives, developing more targeted interventions, and advocating more robustly for the protection and promotion of rights for women, girls, and children. Efforts will focus on addressing systemic inequalities and creating environments where all individuals can thrive.

5. Strengthen the Organisation: Finally, a fundamental recommendation is to strengthen the organization itself. This encompasses various aspects, including enhancing internal capacities, improving governance structures, optimizing resource allocation, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation. A stronger organizational foundation will enable Visthar to deliver on its mission more effectively and sustainably in the long term.

Recommendations added Post-Counterculture Seminar

Following the Counter-Culture Seminar in January 2025, several key recommendations emerged, aiming to deepen and broaden the understanding and application of counter-cultural principles:

- » Rethink development from a world systems and spiritual lens.
- » Strengthen perspective on justice-based spirituality amongst youth, NGOs, and spiritual institutions.

- » Organise site-specific workshops on counterculture and the arts.
- » Perspectives on deliberative democracy.
- » Creating safe spaces for dissent.

4.2. Strategic Priorities

Our strategic direction for the next five years has been determined by the evaluation and strategic planning processes initiated in 2024. We will be guided by the following core pillars, aimed at strengthening our relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability:

- » **Deepening Transformative Learning and Dialogue:**

We will revitalize platforms for critical development debates, explicitly addressing the intersections of globalization, communalism, and climate change. This includes strengthening our courses like Gender, Diversity, and Social Transformation (GDST), and exploring the re-establishment of Social Justice, Peace, and Development (SJPD) programs, particularly for youth. We aim to integrate queer, disability, and mental health perspectives more strongly across all our training and dialogue initiatives, moving beyond binary understandings of gender.

- » **Strengthening Grassroots Democracy and Accountability:**

Building on the success of the CREA and KKS programs in Koppal, we will amplify citizen-accountability measures. This involves facilitating citizen inputs into development policies, rigorously monitoring government schemes like the Midday Meal Scheme (MDMS) and Public Distribution System (PDS), and advocating for the effective implementation of legislation on domestic violence and child protection. Our goal is to empower marginalized communities, especially children and adolescent girls, to demand justice and hold duty bearers accountable.

- » **Empowering Marginalized Women in Leadership:**

Recognizing the critical need for diverse leadership, we will launch targeted management development programs, including spoken English and computer literacy, for marginalized women in middle-level NGO positions. This initiative aims to foster a new generation of leaders who can drive change within their organizations and communities.

- » **Promoting Eco-Justice and Sustainable Livelihoods:**

While our campuses serve as eco-sanctuaries promoting environmental awareness, we will strengthen our focused work on climate change, integrating its dimensions across our programs. We will also work towards making our eco-enterprises viable, raising public awareness on environmental sustainability, and promoting alternative, indigenous development models that challenge neoliberal paradigms.

- » **Revitalizing Engagement with Social Movements and Constitutionalism:**

We recognize the shrinking space for social movements and will actively seek renewed engagement and support for groups working on issues of justice and

equity. We will organize seminars and campaigns focusing on constitutionalism and the rule of law, serving as a critical voice against exclusionary politics and injustices.

4.3. Future Plans: Key Initiatives

To actualize our strategic priorities, Visthar will embark on several key initiatives:

- » **Curriculum Development and Outreach:**
Develop new modules and refine existing ones to comprehensively integrate queer, disability, and mental health perspectives into all gender-related trainings. We will also create training-of-trainers (ToT) programs to expand the reach and impact of our transformative learning.
- » **Community-Led Accountability Mechanisms:**
Support and strengthen child and adolescent parliaments (KKS, CREA) by ensuring meetings are held in the habitats of the most marginalized caste and ethnic groups, improving accessibility and representation. We will provide additional tuition support and computer training for slow learners and those requiring post-high school education support.
- » **Advocacy for Participatory Education:**
Engage with government and educational institutions to advocate for changes in teaching methodologies, promoting participatory learning approaches in government schools, similar to the model implemented in Bandhavi.
- » **Strategic Partnerships**
Forge new collaborations with educational institutions, civil society organizations, and social movements that share our vision, enhancing our collective impact in addressing poverty, environmental destruction, gender discrimination, and social exclusion.
- » **Financial Viability of Eco-Enterprises:**
Develop a comprehensive plan to enhance the financial sustainability of Visthar's eco-enterprises, exploring new markets and partnerships to ensure their long-term viability.
- » **Documentation and Dissemination** Invest in robust knowledge management systems to capture and widely disseminate learnings from our programs, including process documents and manuals, to inform broader policy and practice.

4.4. Conclusion

Visthar reaffirms its unwavering commitment to all its stakeholders. We commit to empowering marginalized children, adolescents, and women, fostering their confidence, promoting their rights, and ensuring their access to quality education, health, and dignified lives. Our work will continue to be participatory, responsive to their needs, and driven by an intersectional feminist approach.

We pledge transparent communication, responsible stewardship of resources, and collaborative efforts to achieve shared goals of social transformation.


We are deeply grateful for the continued trust and support of our stakeholders. We commit to fostering a supportive, inclusive, and empowering work environment, providing opportunities for continuous learning and professional growth.


By strategically navigating the opportunities and challenges ahead, Visthar is poised to continue its impactful journey towards a future where justice, equity, and sustainability are not just aspirations but lived realities.





Visthar

 KRC Road, Kothanur Post, Bengaluru – 560 077. India

 +91 80 28465294 / 28465295

 @visthar.org

 visthar.org