

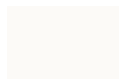


**Looking Back, Looking Ahead
Towards Social Transformation:
Evaluation of Visthar**



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Looking Back, Looking Ahead Towards Social Transformation: Evaluation of Visthar¹

1. Background to the Evaluation

1.1 Country Context

Like the world, India is going through one of the most challenging times since independence. As per the Rule of Law Index, India scores a dismal 0.49 (on a scale of 0 to 1), which has declined as per the 2023 report (World Justice Project, 2023). It performs worse than Nepal on this score. The index explores constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regular law enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice. The higher the score the better the Rule of Law India scores particularly poorly on criminal justice (World Justice Project, 2023).

A study on caste, ethnic and minority religious inequalities in India, notes the pervasiveness in development outcomes across caste and ethnicity in education and livelihood (most Dalits are labourers). In multi-caste villages, the distribution of agricultural land is skewed, as a small proportion of the population controls large areas of land. Asset inequality and income inequality are related. Inequalities based on caste, ethnicity and religion also persist like houses, and the number of rooms in houses. The inequalities are higher in mixed community villages when compared to Dalit/Adivasi/minority exclusive village where the average income, land, and education itself is low (Sengupta, S., & Guchhait, S. K. (2021)). These inequalities have been accentuated by privatisation, liberalization and globalisation, whose benefits have gone to the better off, and the brunt being faced by Dalits, and Adivasis in the sense of loss of land, forests, and common property resources. Industries, infrastructure projects and unfettered consumption by the elite have also led to enhanced carbon emissions. The adherence to social and environmental safeguards has been weakest in areas of Adivasis, Dalits and Minorities.

Equally, there is a communal polarization gradually since 1992, when the Babri Masjid was demolished, followed by the Godhra riots in Gujarat against Muslims in 2002. The ruling party at the national level has been right-wing since 2014. The right-wing party passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) and provided an accelerated pathway to Indian citizenship for non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. In 2024, with pomp and show, a Ram Temple was built on the demolished Babri Masjid structure, making Muslim

1. The evaluation team is grateful to girls and boys, women and men and staff of Koppal who made time for the evaluation and shared valuable insights. They are grateful to participants and partners of various programmes for sharing their views. The core team of Visthar gave direction to the evaluation, and egged us to be more candid. Kudos to all, in the end the learning has been ours

minorities further insecure. Such exclusionary politics can now be seen in many parts of the world today. Article 370 which gave autonomy to Kashmir on residency, ownership of property and fundamental rights, was stripped in 2019 after seven decades by the Indian government. Indians from outside can now purchase or sell property in Kashmir

All these developments have a bearing on gender equality. While there are several progressive legislations around gender, the rule of law is not enforced on sex selection, inheritance rights, equal wages, reproductive rights, or gender-based violence, and is partially enforced on girl-child marriage. Caste and gender interlock and caste-based sexual harassment in the workplace persists and is greater than sexual harassment against women workers from dominant caste. While the devadasi system (dedication to goddess, and exploitation caste) has reduced it has not been eliminated. Same-sex marriage is yet to be legalised, and decriminalisation is yet to be operationalised. Further, while poverty is reported to have declined, it has also pushed women out of the workforce with norms on "shame" associated with working outside the home/family enterprise still prevailing. Communal violence has been played out on the bodies of women, like the gang-rape of five-month pregnant Bilkis Banu during Godhra riots or not permitting Muslim girls to attend school with headscarf in Karnataka under the -previous government

India ranks 127 out of 141 countries in the Global Gender Gap index. The gender gap is highest in the political sphere (0.253 on a scale of 0 to 1), then economic sphere (0.367 on a scale of 0 to 1) and almost equal in education (1 on 1) and health (0.95 on 1) as the Global Gender Report, 2023 (World Economic Forum 2023). The education indicator looks only at parity in education enrolment and does not look at breaking of stereotypes in higher education or freedom from harassment. The health indicator looks at the sex ratio at birth (which is good) and parity in healthy life expectancy. It does not look at sexual and reproductive rights, the incidence of breast and cervical cancer or the incidence of gender violence. A high 28.7% have experienced gender-based violence as per the Global Gender Gap Index. On the other hand, the performance on gender equality in political participation may look poor, as gender parity in local government is not considered by the Index. The report believes that development and gender indices took a backseat during COVID-19, including gender-based violence against children and women, and drop out of girls and boys after COVID-19. At the same time, the concept of human rights/CEDAW has been replaced by Sustainable Development Goals globally, leading to a de-politicisation of development and gender equality.

1.2 Context of Visthar

In 1987, Hillswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz (HEKS), a relief and development agency appointed a full-time national coordinator to oversee the projects funded by HEKS and build the capacity of its partners. This was a precursor to the formation of Visthar in 1989, by this coordinator and two other team members (including a woman). While maintaining its role in capacity building for projects of HEKS, Visthar stayed true to its name and spread its wings. It looked at the connections between the work and struggles of several small NGOs (not necessarily part of HEKS) and recognized larger problems and power structures that impeded their work. Visthar felt that political and social transformation was essential.

In response to the unipolar world order, demolition of Babri Masjid and communal violence, Visthar facilitated dialogue between activists, students/youth and academics on the connections between ecology, culture and spirituality, and possible development models which were indigenous while questioning the socio-political-economic-communal situation. In 1991, with Ambedkar Centenary, Visthar focused on Dalit liberation, and understanding how the negative forces specifically affected the intersection of caste, class, and gender.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Visthar also reflected on what kind of socialism could work. The Future of Socialism and Socialism of the Future by Kappen published by Visthar set the tenor. During the

Iraq war in 2003, Visthar joined anti-war campaigns in the city, produced posters and hosted discussions on the economy of war. The right to life was the slogan used for harnessing support for Narmada Bachao Andolan. Posters, theatre, wall paintings and postcard campaigns were used to raise awareness in urban and rural areas on these issues.

In 1997, Visthar was invited to coordinate the semester-long study abroad programme, Social Justice, Peace, and Development (SJPD). Under the SJPD, every fall, 15-20 students from two U.S. colleges came to Visthar for a four-month study-abroad course on SJPD. The course had four modules, namely i) Globalisation and Ethics of Development, ii) Identity, Resistance, and Liberation, iii) Religions and Cultures of India and iv) Ecology, Environment, and Development. The course was designed to provoke analytical thought processes about justice, peace, and development both in their home country and in India. During this period, participants travelled to different states visiting formal and non-formal centres of learning on bonded labour (Koppal, Karnataka), Adivasis (Wayanad, Kerala), Dalit women farmers (Telangana), survivors of the Bhopal tragedy (Madhya Pradesh) and slums in Bangalore. Through field and classroom discussion, they encountered Indian culture and the global/Indian situation. 250 students have passed through the programme. However, due to a shortage of funding in American colleges, the program has been on a hiatus since 2018.

In 1991, Visthar began its work in the field of gender with an introductory workshop on 'Understanding Feminism'. This enabled Visthar to see development with new eyes. Further, Visthar was extensively involved in the pre- and post-Beijing efforts. By 1995, Visthar was convinced about and committed to evolving gender perspectives in development and has been offering regular gender workshops and trainings. Social activists, students, academicians, and various professionals have all benefited from these gender training workshops over the years. In 2005 these experiences led to Visthar offering a month-long certificate course titled Gender, Diversity and Social Transformation (GDST). This course has continued ever since, and shorter courses have been offered on gender and disability and gender, monitoring, and evaluation. Visthar has trained approximately six hundred participants from over 20 countries in gender and social inclusion and related topics and produced training manuals to support these.

Visthar moved to its campus of six acres in 1997. The campus is sensitive to ecology, indigenous culture and peace. Buildings made of compressed mud blocks, water bodies, plants/trees, nurseries, medicinal plants, and a paper-making unit thrive on the campus, though the campus is yet to be viable. Birds, insects, reptiles, and butterflies thrive as well. Water is harvested, and organic waste is converted to manure.

Bhoomi Habba was organised as part of an international School of Peace, a semester-long justice and peace education jointly offered by Visthar and Interfaith Cooperation Forum during 2007-2012 (which moved to Hong Kong in 2012). The event continues to be celebrated, now in June to be in tune with World Environment Day. June is also more convenient for students to come.

Building on its work on gender and caste, Visthar began engaging with the issues faced by Devadasi women in North Karnataka. Recognizing the Devadasi system as being at the intersection of gender, caste and class politics, Visthar networked with partners in North Karnataka and initiated Bandhavi – an empowerment program for girls affected by the Devadasi system. Bandhavi began as a residential program at the Visthar campus in Bangalore in 2005. The program then moved to Visthar's new campus in Koppal in 2010 – '11. Over 150 girls have graduated from the Bandhavi program since then. Seventy-one girls are enrolled in Bandhavi presently. The program follows a holistic approach addressing nutrition, health, and education of girls while developing their confidence and raising their consciousness of social and ecological injustices. The Samagra Shikshana Shaale (SSS) is a primary school situated on the Bandhavi campus. Both girls from Bandhavi, as well as children from neighbouring villages study in SSS. The Bandhavi program is supported by Kindernotheilfe.

In 2010, Visthar initiated a Child Rights Education and Action (CREA) program with 4 partners in five districts of North Karnataka. Following the amendment to the FCRA, Visthar could not support CREA partners from 2022. Today, the program is focused on 35 Panchayaths in Koppal district. The CREA program facilitates 200 children's sanghas in government schools. Children are sensitized on child rights; they take up initiatives to address child rights /girl child rights violations in schools. They monitor the Midday Meal Scheme (MDMS) in their schools, and advocate for their rights. The CREA program is supported by Kerk in Actie.

Learning from the CREA experience, Visthar initiated adolescent girls' sanghas in Kukanur Taluk of Koppal district. 5000 girls meet in their small sanghas every fortnight as part of the Kanasu Kishori Sanghatane (KKS) initiative. They become conscious of gender and other social injustices. They learn gender equality, life skills, legal rights, and computers in their sanghas and Kishori Resource Centers. The sanghas are federated at the Panchayath and Taluk levels into parliaments that meet periodically. The sanghas and the parliaments take up issues that emerge from the girls in the Taluk. The KKS program is supported by the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives.

The Visthar Ranga Shaale (VRS) is a social justice theatre school for youth from marginalised communities, based in the Bandhavi campus in Koppal. The VRS offers a 1-year Diploma in Theatre. 10 – 15 youth graduate each year from the VRS. Due to accreditation issues, the VRS offered only a certificate course in 2023-24. The VRS students are actively engaged in the campaigns of CREA and KKS. They stage street plays and various theatre performances to raise awareness about the issues taken up by CREA and KKS.

In 2023, Visthar also began working with women migrant workers in 11 villages. That work is still in its initial stages and is supported by the Equality Fund.

Keeping in mind its previous experiences, the vision of Visthar was defined in 2014 as follows; "Democratic, Just and sustainable communities with gender and social equity". Its mission was defined as "To respond to issues of poverty, environmental destruction, gender discrimination and social exclusion, by promoting Transformative Learning, community-based Initiatives, and Eco-justice/ enterprises in collaboration with educational institutions, civil society, faith-based organizations and social movements". The present programmes towards this mission are as follows

1.3 Context of Evaluation

While Visthar had carried out internal self-evaluations, an external evaluation was not held in the past. The evaluation team and Visthar brainstormed on the purpose of the evaluation, and collectively it was decided that the **aim** of the evaluation was to.

"Give strategic direction to Visthar for the next five years in the context of neoliberal development, communalism, patriarchy, and Kyriarchy²"

The objective of the evaluation is to develop a comprehensive understanding of Visthar's relevance, coherence, effectiveness (particular focus)/impact, sustainability, uniqueness and knowledge management systems to provide recommendations for its future strategic plan in the context of neo-liberal development, communalisms, and patriarchy, casteism, homophobia and other hierarchies. The following **questions** were identified across each evaluation criteria.

2. Kyriarchy refers to all forms of oppression (patriarchy, capitalism, casteism, heterosexism etc) and how they intersect with each other. Kyriarchy takes into account multiple hierarchies and forms of subordination (Kyriarchy Definition: How a Kyriarchy Describes Social Systems - 2024 - MasterClass)

- » Relevance: How relevant are Visthar's programs to the needs and priorities of its target audiences (including marginalised participants) and the broader development context,
- » Effectiveness/impact: To what extent are Visthar's programs achieving their intended outcomes for different participants/intersecting identity groups, and beyond their immediate objectives?
- » Coherence: How well are Visthar's programs interlinking with each other and contributing to the organization's vision and mission?
- » Uniqueness: What are the distinctive characteristics of Visthar's work compared to that of other organizations working in similar areas?
- » Knowledge management: What are the existing mechanisms for capturing and sharing learnings from Visthar's programs, and how effective are they?
- » Sustainability: How sustainable are Visthar's programs financially, socially (including the sustainability of the Kishori Sanghas), and environmentally?
- » Strategic direction: What recommendations can be made for Visthar's strategic direction for the next five years,

2. The Evaluation Approach and Method

The evaluation adopted a participatory and intersectional feminist approach, meaning it involved Visthar team in framing evaluation criteria and questions, these questions were intersectional and socialist feminist in orientation. Issues of power and intersecting inequalities and marginalisation were placed at the centre. The primary users of the evaluation will be Visthar, including the Board of Trustees, management team, and program staff. The evaluation will also be relevant to Visthar's federations (Koppal) and partners, funders, and other stakeholders.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and a few quantitative data collection methods. Key data collection methods included:

- » Desk review: Review of documents such as the strategic plan, annual reports, monitoring data, and meeting minutes.
- » Meetings and focus group discussions (FGDs): Key informant interviews and FGDs were conducted with participants in Visthar's programs, rights holders (adolescents and children, from marginalised groups), parents, duty bearers and program staff and other NGOs/organizations working in similar areas
- » Workshops: Half-day workshops were conducted with Visthar core team management, and the Board to discuss evaluation criteria and findings.
- » Feedback sessions: Program staff (Koppal) and senior management of Visthar provided feedback on preliminary findings and recommendations.
- » Finalization: This report was drafted based on the feedback from the Bangalore and Koppal teams of Visthar to the summary report.

The evaluation drew on a range of frameworks and methods, including: Outcome harvesting, gender at work, focus group discussion, timelines, choose the spot, happiness mapping (see Photo 1) and semi structured interviews with alumni (See Annex 1) . Some of the challenges faced by the evaluation were constraints of time, due to which the sample of rights holders was small (40 children from CREA, 21 children from Bandhavi and 18 children from KKS.) In regards to meeting children who have dropped out from Visthar's programs, only

nine dropouts/non-participants from the KKS adolescent girls programme could be met. The evaluation was conducted by a team of two evaluators. See Annex 2 for the programme itinerary.

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance

The Visthar initiatives are largely relevant to the vision and mission of Visthar spelt out in the introduction. The vision to recall “is a democratic, just and sustainable communities with gender and equity.” This vision is promoted through the courses offered under the gender and diversity stream, past social justice peace and development and child rights interventions in Koppal with children, young girls and adolescent girls. The monitoring of midday meal scheme and the Public Distribution System by the children as part of CREA contributes to strengthening democracy. Environmental sustainability is emphasised through eco sanctuaries, campaigns on environment and focus on disasters; yet focused work could be done on climate change. Further, justice and democracy need to be defined constitutionally, and the present context of communalism and neo-liberal politics could be challenged as cross cutting issue in capacity building, dialogues, knowledge management, campaigns, and the Earth Festival.

The programmes are also largely relevant to the mission of the organisation (see 2.3)³ The current mission statement combines mission and strategies, and perhaps could be separated. The present programmes contribute to the mission of the organisation, but for the coming years, Visthar could publish, and integrate its alternative to neoliberal development, intersectional exclusion, liberal feminism, and communal harmony. Communal harmony may or may not be furthered through dialogue with faith-based organisations. It may be useful to engage with youth. Eco enterprises of Visthar raise awareness amongst the public on environment and eco enterprises and can be considered a public good. In the coming years, it is crucial to make it viable. In the past Visthar has worked with social movements and supported them in their outreach; this needs to be continued, though the size and vibrancy of social movements has shrunk due to rise in right wing groups/ perspectives.

The Visthar programmes (Bangalore and Koppal) are indeed relevant to the needs of children (girls and boys), NGOs, students, academics, and planners/policymakers in India, and across the globe. What makes them distinct is the transformative content and the pedagogy. An adult learning methodology-including theatre- is adopted in all its programmes, unlike many which are ‘top down.’ Further, participants come from different levels (policy makers to community coordinators), making learning across levels. Attention is paid to social inclusion and diversity, though this could be strengthened further (e.g. people with disability, LGBTIQ+)

The above observations are true of all the gender related programs (GDST, Gender Responsive Planning and Monitoring, and the one-off course on Gender, Disability, and Inclusive Development), the programmes which are ongoing, as well as Social Justice Peace and Development (part of study abroad program from American colleges and School of Peace – programmes of the past. The last two, which focus on larger development issues and included field placements. Due to the change in policies and shortage of funds in American Universities, the India/Visthar placement of students stopped in 2017. This is a vacuum as the former students consider this an extremely valuable learning ground to critique neoliberal development, environmental destruction and patriarchy/casteism/minoritism. (see 3.2 on effectiveness)

3. “To respond to issues of poverty, environmental destruction, gender discrimination and social exclusion, by promoting transformative learning, community-based Initiatives, and eco-justice/ enterprises in collaboration with educational institutions, civil society, and faith-based organizations and social movements.”

Some of the areas for strengthening relevance

- » Creating spaces for development debates in the context of globalisation, communalism, and climate change
- » Greater work with youth- male and female- on above issues, and kyriarchy
- » Strengthening democracy through citizen-accountability measures, like facilitating citizen inputs into development policies, monitoring functioning of government policies (like has been done in Koppal on PDS and MDMS) or monitoring implementation of legislation on domestic violence.
- » Strengthening (marginalised) women in middle level of NGOs to assume leadership positions. This will entail management development program, spoken English and computer literacy programme
- » Integrate queer perspective, disability perspectives and mental health perspective more strongly.

3.2 Effectiveness

As mentioned, the mission of Visthar is “To respond to issues of poverty, environmental destruction, gender discrimination and social exclusion”. Visthar effective in addressing some elements of human poverty, gender discrimination.

Visthar has had a good impact on **human poverty** in its field area in Koppal. Its experience in, and hence focus on, reducing income poverty in Koppal has been limited. Human poverty aims to offer a more holistic perspective on poverty by highlighting the overall well-being and quality of life of individuals and communities. Some may have income, but due to caste or other barriers may not be able to access basic needs. In terms of human poverty, it has strengthened the confidence and awareness (on social and environmental issues) of children, reduced drop out from schools (girls and boys), prevented child marriages, and formed collectives of children/adolescents for making claims on government, monitoring midday meals and public distribution system, and reporting violations. Further, adverse norms on girl children’s education, child labour, early marriage are changing, but not eliminated. Not all these changes are due to intervention of Visthar alone; other NGOs and government have had a role to play too. The focus of Koppal programmes has been on Dalits and Adivasi children, and orphans/semi orphans. The Koppal team observed that progress on some of these indicators (e.g. education) varied with the duration in programme, attitudes of parents and elderly, caste background of the children, access to transport, access to online platforms, presence of women’s SHGs, access to funds and continuity/competency of staff, Linkages with organisations working on income poverty was limited.

Gender discrimination: Apart from gender dimensions of human poverty discussed above, Visthar during the last five years, has carved itself as an important institution to build capacity of NGOs, government officials, policy makers, media, and academia to address gender and intersectional discrimination, monitoring, and evaluation. It has begun to work on gender and disability. This has happened through the courses, manuals, theatre, and IEC materials, as well as tailor made support to government and NGO programmes. Some of the young Dalit/Adivasi women who took part in the capacity building program of Visthar also report that they became more confident through attending the course. The gender, diversity and transformation courses offered by Visthar are based on adult learning methods and weave in an intersectional perspective. They cover gender and intersectionality concepts, gender perspectives on issues, and skills in gender planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Visthar is also active in public campaigns in Bangalore with other groups on gender-based atrocities and rights of LGBTIQ+. Some felt that a separate session on gender and queer politics is not enough, but consistently gender must be looked beyond binary.

At the field level- in Koppal- gender disparities in access to education, food, and rest are coming down, but not eliminated. Girl child marriage is higher than boy child marriage, though incidence is reducing. A constraint is that girls' parents get false age certificates from school. Boys from CREA report helping mother in housework after attending the program. At times their sisters who have also attended the Visthar programme demand the same. An attempt has been made by Visthar to create an eco-system of support for child/girl child rights through the school development management committee, local government, child protection committees and adolescent girls' justice committees. This eco system is in a nascent stage and needs strengthening. Further, the School Development Management Committee should be monitored so that they do not allocate work to children, like washing vessels (girls) and serving tea (boys). A positive development is the local governments' support to the initiatives with children. Yet changes in policies and rules of government have been limited like Amendment to the Child Labour Prohibition Act which allow adolescents to work in non-hazardous work.

Table 1: Effectiveness of Visthar's intervention - Gender@Work Framework

Informal-individual	Formal-individual
Awareness of child rights	Child Education
Greater confidence -children & GDST participants	Menstrual health
Ability to speak out on discrimination	Nutrition (Bandhavi)
Greater mobility	Child protection
Boys helping in housework	Reduced child labour
Knowledge on gender and intersectionality in sectors and issues(GDST)	Reduced child marriage
Skills on gender and diversity planning, monitoring, evaluation, budgeting (GDST)	Work Participation of women
Exposure to other countries (GDST)	*Exercise of leadership of marginalised
Outreach to LGBTQI+ and those with disability	*Post high school education support
*Support from parents/elderly not always forthcoming	*English and computer support
Informal-systemic	Formal Systemic
Norms on devadasi system decreasing	Making local government accountable- environment, child marriage
Norms on child marriage decreasing	One participant from Maldives endeavouring to bring in changes in rules on GBV
Girls/women of marginalised identities represented in leadership	Holding government accountable on midday meal and public distribution system
*Persistent norm of making children work in government school	Government top down school pedagogy
*Ecosystem of support for children in nascent stage	

*** Things to be improved**

Social Exclusion: On the issue of addressing social exclusion, the devadasi system has reduced, in Koppal during the last five years, due to collective efforts of NGOs, women's federations and child rights groups. Koppal interventions have reached Dalit, Adivasi, and Muslim girls, and they occupy leadership position of institutions. Bandhavi has created space for children from the above communities (including devadasi), semi orphans and orphans to be in a safe environment and study. Till five they study in Bandhavi, and then go to government schools. Post passing out of high school, majority of students have pursued higher studies and found employment. A few are nurses and software programmers. Some have joined Bandhavi as house parents after passing out from high schools. More training on computers, spoken English, and tuition support for slow learners was considered essential. Post programme support to girls from marginalised identities is required.

There is a need for advocacy to change the teaching methods in government school, which are top down, when compared to participatory learning facilitated in Bandhavi up to primary level.

Most participants of Bandhavi and four alumni of Bandhavi reported they were happier now than before joining Bandhavi due to non-discrimination, freedom from child labour, access to play, health care, education and awareness of their rights. They confront inequalities/social norms when they go home for holidays, and adopt/disseminate menstrual hygiene practices. Some shared that they would be nothing if not for Bandhavi. Some who were sad came from very poor households, and had to go back to single parents, alcoholic fathers, or a kutcha house after completing 12th class. Their mobility was restricted at home, and majority used unhygienic cloth during menstruation. They also did not have the wherewithal to pursue higher education. Efforts in Koppal to reach people with disability and LGBTIQ+ has been limited.

Bangalore based interventions - be it training, publications, theatre-on gender have woven in social exclusion. As mentioned, the trainings related to gender have been intersectional, focusing on marginalised women in different countries and contexts. The selection of participants and resource persons has also promoted such intersectionality, though more attention could be paid to this aspect. Nevertheless, some participants expressed that LGBTIQ lens was concentrated in one day, and not cross cutting. One felt that there should be a collective synthesis in the end, and a note on take-aways. A few wanted a process document with them. Similarly, disability. Some wanted training of trainers, so that a critical mass could be reached when they return home. Publications have reached a wide audience, and a recent national study on shelter homes was translated into a manual by Visthar.

Justice⁴ underlies all programmes of Visthar- in Koppal and in Bangalore. The Social Justice, Peace, and Development program, which was operational between 1997 and 2017 explores these three concepts together. The programmes under the theme of gender, explored gender and social equality. Visthar has also stood up when injustice - against constitution occurred like in release of perpetrators of violence against Bilkis Banu. It is time that SJPD and public campaigns as a strategy was revitalised as a course, as well as seminars were organised on constitutionalism and rule of law.

In Koppal, the team (as mentioned) has monitored the functioning of the public distribution system, midday scheme, and identified girls at risk. The recommendations have been submitted to government, and their action plan is being monitored by child parliaments. This is a step in the direction of promoting accountability and rule of law. Studies on nutrition have also been undertaken and follow up actions conducted.

It was observed that the more years into the programme, the more the children/girls were able to demand justice. In the case of CREA, the children who were 5th to 8th class were less assertive in claiming their rights, when compared to children who were part of 9th to 10th class, and who had graduated from the 5-8th batch. Similarly, the Panchayat level adolescent girl parliament who were part of KKS were less aware and assertive than the members of Taluk level adolescent girl parliaments who have completed more years in the programme or were of ages of greater maturity. The Taluk level Parliament leaders wanted to attend the Legislative Assembly and understand the Legislative process. There was also a difference between girls who had taken part in KKS and those who had dropped out from the programme (marginalised), as the venue had shifted to the main village. This points to the need for holding Sangha meetings and Panchayat Parliaments in the habitats of most marginalised castes and ethnic groups or in a place acceptable to all stakeholders

4. **Justice**, in its broadest sense, is the concept that individuals are to be treated in a manner that is equitable and fair, and that the outcomes are equitable. **Justice is closely related to rule of law.** The **rule of law** is a political ideal that all citizens and institutions within a country, state, or community are accountable to the same laws, including lawmakers and leaders. It is sometimes stated simply as "no one is above the law." The term rule of law is closely related to constitutionalism. One must remember that one is referring to fair aspects of law/constitution.

FGD participants were asked to respond to four statements reflective of their attitudes towards gender equality. Their answers confirm the above observations. Table 2 below summarizes those results.

Table 2: Gender Attitudes by Participants/Non participants/Age

Statement	Bandhavi alumni	Non-Sangha members KKS Panchayath Leaders		KKS Panchayath Leaders		KKS Taluk Leaders		
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Boys should be given more nutritious food as they do hard work	0	4	3	6	7	0	1	4
It is okay for a family with 3 girls to do a pre-natal sex scan on the 4th pregnancy	0	4	5	4	1	6	0	5
As dowry has been given for the daughter, the rest of the property should go to the boy	0	4	4	5	0	7	0	5
It is okay for the family/girl to withdraw a rape case if the rapist agrees to marry the girl.	2	2	2	7	3	4	1	4

Related to **Peace** the School of Peace programme was designed by YMCA, Asia and Visthar together, and was offered to young participants (Muslims, Christians and Hindus), from Asia. Five iterations were held between 2005 and 2012, by which time funding was not available for this programme. The coordinator of the programme observed that Visthar’s contribution included bringing development and gender concepts into the programme, including caste and gender and the devadasi system which was new to many participants from the region. Visthar also played a role in arranging logistics and providing its training centre. Further, the coordinator highlighted the need for home stays with people of other religions, to develop inter faith respect.

Visthar addresses **environmental destruction** in several ways. The campus in both Bangalore and Koppal are eco-sanctuaries and help promote awareness on environment and coexistence with different life forms. Increasingly, these intensively managed sites are being embedded in landscapes with no/low levels of pest control. These eco sanctuaries also yield wild berries, fruits, honey, and vegetables for human consumption. In addition to promoting eco-sanctuaries, programmes like CREA promote school and kitchen gardens, including of land which was not cultivated in the past. A few children have replicated the same in their homestead. Through kitchen gardening, the participants learn about nature, organic cultivation and consumption, and the importance of greening.

Visthar integrates discussion on human made disasters in most of its capacity building programmes. The Social Justice, Peace, and Development program offered students exposure to Bhopal to understand impact of industrial chemical disasters. This exposure to neo liberal politics, environment, and human disaster was an eye opener for participants interviewed by the evaluation team. The trainings around the theme of gender, diversity and social transformation are reported to have helped develop clarity on impact of human (and natural) disasters on women and men of different identities. In Koppal, discussions with children are facilitated on environment protection as part of both KKS and CREA, with some even approaching the local government regarding misuse of plastic and the disposal of waste and sewage. Protecting the environment is part of the songs and plays of the Visthar theatre group too. Given that environment destruction is one part of climate change, and greenhouse emissions due to industrial pollution and unfettered consumption the other, it may be necessary to link the two themes, and provide clarity on social exclusion, climate change, Climate Change plans and climate/disaster resilience. Visthar has also promoted eco enterprises like nursery, and a handmade

paper unit. These are indeed important to promote climate resilience; their marketing and design may be strengthened.

3.3 Larger Impacts: Family, Market, Community, and the State

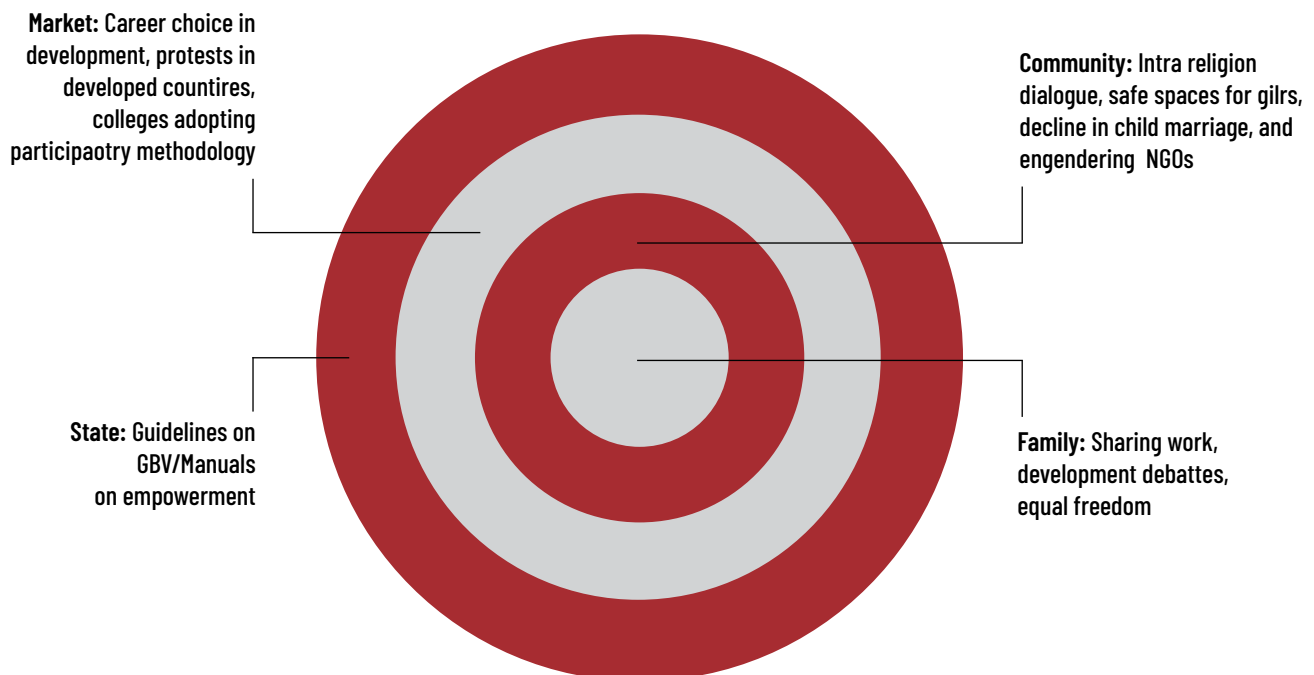
The participants and faculty from SJPD who were interviewed pointed that the foremost change was in the participants' personal attitudes on environment and social justice. This change was perceptible by family members, and at times there were clashes in values and attitudes on US contribution to environment destruction and neoliberal agenda. Some of the participants interviewed from gender related programmes reported changes at intra-household level like male participants helping in housework and child care and participants ensuring equal freedom to daughters.

One participant returned from GDST and spoke on gender equality in a religious forum. Some had modified and replicated the gender and diversity related programmes in their organisations/countries when they returned. Learning from the gender thematic interventions, new community level interventions were introduced. Organisational processes like autonomy of women staff and affirmative action in recruitment and promotion have been initiated.

At another level, some participants (though still a minority) in SJPD chose their career in the field of development and took part in protests initiated by social movements around environment and social justice. When two participants worked in the same development organisation the impact was more. Two participants from an academic institute in the private sector used lessons on Paulo Freire learning pedagogy to develop methodology.

At a larger level, policies/guidelines on gender-based violence had been influenced in one country. In India and in at least one country outside, government curriculums have been developed on different issues like gender and cooperatives, gender-based violence and women's empowerment.

Figure 1: Impact -Social Relations Framework



The programmes under child rights/child development have created safe spaces for girls and boys from Dalit and ethnic minorities, in particular adolescent girls. As pointed, child labour and child marriage have reduced. Sangha members have prevented child marriages of both sangha members and non-members when they heard about it. Girl and boy child education has improved, and so have career aspirations

3.4 Coherence

Visthar's Social Justice, Peace and Development program, and Gender, Diversity, and Social Transformation Program (and its variants) largely speak to each other. Gender and intersectionality are an integral part of SJPD when it was being offered. The GDST course also included discussions on gender, conflict, and peace, which is one of the themes of SJPD.

There is some synergy between Visthar's projects in Koppal and Visthar's programmes in Bangalore. Outcomes and challenges faced in Bandhavi, CREA and KKS are shared by facilitators of the GDST course. During summer, girls, and boys from Koppal come to Visthar, Bangalore for play based learning on child rights, environment, and social relations. However, there is scope for further systematizing the coherence between field and Bangalore through developing field-based case studies, drawing resource persons from Koppal team and leaders from adolescent groups or local government for other programmes. There is also scope to develop a programme on gender, social relations, and transformation.

Koppal programmes working with children – Bandhavi, CREA, and KKS- are coherent with each other, but not with much overlap geographically. Lessons from one do feed into another. . At the same time the new programme with women and men migrants, including helping them to acquire identity card to avail benefit from migrant labour protection Act and other social protection measures is an area where Visthar has to gain more expertise.

3.5 Uniqueness

Uniqueness of Visthar is that it has acted as think tank (more so in the past) and had its feet on the ground (through field action and capacity building of activists/NGOs). Public Lectures around thinking of Justice Krishna Iyer, CT Kurien, and Sebastian Kappen amongst others have been organised in the past. This multiple pronged approach is considered unique by some.

Further, its courses on Social Justice, Peace and Development and Gender, Diversity, and Social Transformation, have consistently upheld rights-based approaches and used critical pedagogy to promote adult learning. Participants in GDST coming from different countries have facilitated cross learning at minimal cost, attracting people from countries/people who cannot afford such training when offered by academic institutions in the west and in India. The eco sanctuary in which Visthar is located is also unique and ideal for learning.

At the field level, Visthar has stood by the most marginalised, like by devadasis during COVID-19 or floods to get relief, and during normal times to enrol their children in schools. They are called "partners" and not "beneficiaries". Visthar has been bold enough to stand by Bilkis Bano when the sentence of perpetrators was reduced, and they were released. This bold support to violation of rights of minorities can be considered unique.

At the institutional level, a unique aspect is affirmative recruitment of Muslims in the core team of Visthar as a whole, and in Koppal team. At times, this attracted the ire of government (in Koppal) when under BJP rule, but

allegations were proved false. A non-hierarchical space has been created by Visthar (Bangalore and Koppal), where there is a space for dissent. It does not work 9–5 which typical development organisations do.

In Koppal, Bandhavi residence and school are well known, including from local government. This is unique and a recognition.

3.6 Sustainability

Visthar as an institution is partly sustainable due to the establishment of an institutional corpus. Further, the eco-sanctuary campus generates funds through hosting training programmes and is partially sustainable. It is suggested that GDST/its' variants and other capacity building programmes at Bangalore level be selectively subsidised, instead of a subsidy for all. At present two full time staff supporting Visthar in its Bangalore based programmes. The eco sanctuary is partly viable, and in the past a few enterprises have been attempted which have not always been successful. However, the campus with its eco-enterprise is the reason why the training centre attracts participants and can be viable.

On the programme front – which is the focus of the evaluation– sustainability of Bandhavi hinges on further funding. The present funding ends in two years. Further, the administrative procedures and records that need to be maintained are many. Yet when the staff of Koppal and Bandhavi children were asked whether Bandhavi in its present form should continue almost all said that it should continue, for reasons discussed under relevance, effectiveness, and uniqueness. It is hence suggested that there be an effort to raise funds from donors, public, and CSR initiatives. Visthar should lobby along with other NGOs running shelter home for simplification of rules about the same. The CREA programme and KKS programme are dependent on availability of funds. As of now the AG groups conduct meetings only when Community Facilitators are there. However, CREA groups are constrained by the geographical spread of the programme, and not having adequate number of Community Facilitators to cover that large a geography. CREA is managed by male staff at the top, though women are found in equal number at the lower rungs. A more balanced gender composition may strengthen sustainability. Clarity on vision and mission of Visthar is more at the leadership and middle level of Koppal and must be strengthened at the field coordinator levels

3.7 Knowledge Management

Visthar has brought out several publications related to Development, Justice, and peace, like Future of Socialism and Socialism of Future by S Kappen, Understanding Communalism by Muralidharan, Tharakan and Kappen and Rethinking Gandhi in the context of Globalisation. A quarterly titled "Stories, and Documents: People's Struggles" was brought out in the 1990s. Several posters were designed to support campaigns like Narmada Bachao Andolan. A publication on Bandhavi has also been brought out. These are just a few examples.

The work on the gender, diversity and transformation stream has been backed by several. gender training manuals – some on a particular gender issue (gender, poverty, food security, disasters and SDGs), and some others on functions (gender, planning, monitoring, evaluation). The layout and attractive indigenous design, apart from being unique, are the hallmark of Visthar's manuals. Visthar has also been commissioned by a national level network working on shelter homes for women survivors of violence, Industree, Kudumbasree, and Timbaktu Collective to produce manuals for staff, shelter managers, and the community. Industree notes the usefulness of the grassroots manual with audios and animation in communicating about menstruation, SRH and GBV to adolescent girls, women and men. However, the marketing of these manuals could be strengthened further.

A challenge in the past has been to translate these publications into other languages to reach a wide audience. With the advancement in information technology this may be possible more easily now. Another challenge is process documentation, of process and challenges in working towards children and adolescent girls' empowerment, as well as learning methodology and insights from gender, diversity, and social transformation stream.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This evaluation is set in a context which is similar yet different from the situation in 1989 when Visthar was formed: neoliberalism (now deeply entrenched), communalism (now more entrenched), environment destruction and structures of kyriarchy. The present context heralds global pandemics and disasters, the emergency of SDGs which have replaced the concept of rights and justice and climate change due to environment destruction as well unfettered consumption and carbon emissions. Bearing the brunt are indigenous people, Dalits, minorities, migrants, people with disability and women, girls and sexual/gender minorities amongst them. Yet progress is seen in access to formal education, even though it does not always lead to employment. Rules around FCRA have become more restrictive.

Visthar has made a good dent through its (girl) child rights initiatives in the field and the diversity of GDST programmes it has offered. Bhoomi Habbas have fostered a public celebration of earth and alternative development. However, the non-availability of funds for SJPD and the shift of School of Peace to Hong Kong have impaired its progress towards building capacities around justice, peace and development in a broad sense. Public lectures on these themes have been less frequent in the last five years than in the past.

In this context the following recommendations are made:

- » Sharpen the mission statement to the following: "To respond to issues of human poverty, communal violence, climate change, gender and intersectional discrimination through:
 - a. promoting human rights and constitutional values,
 - b. promoting transformative learning and practice, and
 - c. strengthening/using accountability mechanisms"

Focus Groups: Civil society, youth/adolescent/children's groups, Dalit groups, women's groups, groups working with minorities, social movements, media groups, lawyers, local governments, academic institutions, government officials

- » Spreading constitutional Values: Promote constitutional values in all its strategies and activities as a way to combat communalisation of politics/society, homophobia, shrinking democratic space and neoliberal politics. Visthar can build on its experience of training teachers in Karnataka on this and the sensitization of constitutional values can be integrated into all its programme. This will be a powerful investment in a more inclusive and just society. A training manual on constitutional values, their importance and how to promote may be evolved.
- » Spreading human rights values: Likewise, national, and international participants of Visthar programmes may be sensitised on human rights, and how the war on Palestine, the repeal of article 370 or the forced occupation by Taliban are violations of human rights. Capacity building by Visthar should highlight human rights treaties like The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, The Child Rights Convention, the International Covenant on Economic and Social Cultural Rights, International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Universal Progress Reviews. Visthar may apply for ECOSOC status with UN and submit lessons from Koppal or its partners to inform human rights accountability process.

- » Integrating climate change and resilience: Climate change and resilience may be integrated into all awareness activities, and training provided to stakeholders. In the case of field-based interventions, the village disaster and climate protection committees may be strengthened through participation of youth, women's groups, and local government. Work with or initiate community-based disaster planning and risk reduction programs in the field base in Koppal. It is also suggested that Visthar and its partners/ stakeholders influence Climate Change Adaptation plans in Karnataka from a Justice and intersectional lens and initiate youth monitoring of the same
- » Create three schools within Visthar: i) development, constitution, and rights and ii) gender, intersectionality, and transformation iii) child rights and development : Visthar should position itself as a centre of excellence on these three issues giving equal visibility to all three of the issues.

The development, constitution, and rights school could include a short course on development studies with affiliation, internships on development, public lectures or panel discussion by eminent people or shadow reports. Campaigns, publications. and manuals on development, constitution and rights could be initiated. Youth led shadow reports (Karnataka) on ICESCR or ICCPR is another possibility. Visthar's one-month short course on development studies, will be distinct from other such courses offered in India in the transformative content (rights and constitutional values, alternative development models) and learning methodology it uses, including one field visit. Interns interested in development may either attend this course, or one module, or be exposed to development outside this. SJPD may be revitalised as is presently being explored by Visthar, as it created alliances between 'developed' and 'developing' countries. Visiting fellows may be hosted by Visthar to focus on alternative development paradigms.

The gender, intersectionality and transformation school may offer courses/short workshops on gender and development, gender, and theatre workshops, invite visiting fellows (including vernacular), launch campaigns on emerging gender issues and produce manuals. It may hold face to face/online GDST/related alumni conferences every two years for participants to learn from each other and discuss challenges. Further on a trial basis, this School could initiate/support regional GDSTs in remote areas facilitated by senior alumni (e.g. in Kashmir, North-East). Visthar could consider, organising management development programmes for women staff from marginalised identities, to help them to move up the ladder, as well as learn computer and spoken English.

Children/Adolescents 'rights and development school could consider harnessing its experience in Bangalore and Koppal to offer workshops on theatre, campaigns, IEC materials on child and adolescent rights and development, with a focus on gender and intersectionality. These interventions could draw on Koppal experience, as well as the experiences of other organisations.

At Koppal, Visthar may organise spoken English and computer education, and higher education scholarships for girls in Bandhavi, KKS and high school girls of CREA. Increase active sports and games, especially for girls in the village. Visthar should identify and strengthen girls who are quieter and from marginalized backgrounds in all levels of programming, including in the Girls'/Children's Parliaments. Visthar should consider strengthening local child protection systems of the government, which may be more sustainable. The Bandhavi program should continue, and new sources of funding need to be explored. Visthar may consider applying for Bandhavi as a girl's hostel, instead of as a Child Care Institution for Girls at Risk, the latter being a category that involves significantly more scrutiny and regulation.

- » Strengthening Accountability: Visthar with its feet on the ground with networks in the state and internationally is uniquely placed to demand accountability. At the local level, it should explore strengthening the committees of local government: development committees, disaster and climate resilience committees and child protection committees/child marriage prohibition committees. Further studies on MDMS and PDS could be initiated on the functioning of these committees. At Bangalore, a network may be created with civil society organisations for state-level shadow reports for CEDAW, CRC or SDGs. Any new policy documents at the national or state level could be debated, and comments given.
- » Visthar internal organisation: Visthar must enhance staff strength to meet new demands, and strengthen staff capacity on issues such as climate change and resilience, safe migration and including quitter children in its programs. It must strengthen the gender and intersectionality of its monitoring system, with monitoring intersectionality going beyond just the numbers. The monitoring system should have a greater focus on outcomes. Visthar also has to evolve a leadership transition plan, with modalities.

**As Rumi said, "Stop acting so small. You are the universe in ecstatic motion."
Visthar should think big, remember and build on its past experiences
and foster a universe of justice and peace.**

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Sengupta, S., & Guchhait, S. K. (2021). Inequality in Contemporary India: Does Caste Still Matter? *Journal of Developing Societies*, 37(1), 57-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X21998387>

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Annex 1: Online Cuidelines to Assess Training O)utcomes

1. Name (optional):

2. Workshop Title and year of Visthar training programmes you have attended.

Title of workshop	Year	Duration	Location

3. Your overall feedback on content, duration and methodology of each programme you attended

	Rate content (1-4)	Rate methodology (1-4)	Rate duration (1-4)	Rate venue (1-4)
Training on				
Training on				
Training on				

Rating scale

- Not good:1
- Fair: 2
- Good: 3
- Excellent:4

If your rating is 1 or 2, what could have been done differently in the workshop?

4. List three important lessons workshop of Visthar that you have attended

	Learning 1	Learning 2	Learning 3
Workshop 1			
Workshop 2			
Workshop 3			

5. Kindly share if you applied these lessons

	Application Y/N	Describe application at work(if any)	Describe application in personal (if any)	Describe application in community (if any)
Lesson 1				
Lessons 2				
Lesson 3				
Lesson 4				

6. Please share some outcomes of your application

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome
Workshop 1			
Workshop 2			
Workshop 3			

7. When you compare with training from other agencies on development, what is unique about Visthar workshops?

8 Are there areas in which other training agencies are better? In which?


9. What are your recommendations for Visthar in terms of capacity building

Annex 2: Evaluation Field Visit Schedule (Koppal)

Day/Date	Time	Activity
Tuesday, 13th Feb	8:30am	Evaluation team arrives at Bandhavi campus
	10 - 11.30am	Preliminary meeting with Koppal Leadership team: their reflections on programs, strengths, areas for strengthening, recommendations
	12 - 1pm	Meet with a CREA sangha in school
	1 - 2pm	Meet with SMC, school teachers and school principal (where SC, and ST and minority students are more)
	2 - 5pm	Lunch, return to campus, rest for an hour
	5 - 7pm	Meet with Bandhavi girls and a few alumni
	7:30 - 9pm	Join Bandhavi girls for Prayer meeting and dinner (I need mental space to unwind, perhaps just dinner) -
Wednesday, 14th Feb	9 - 10am	Debriefing of Day 1 and Briefing for Day 2 with leadership team
	11am - 12:30pm	Meet with community leaders/local government officials, followed by lunch
	2:00 - 3:00pm	Meet with parents of children/adolescents of all programmes- girls (you facilitate fathers and mothers)
	3:30 - 4:30pm	Meet with girls who are not part of our programs Meeting with CREA boys who are not part of our programs Orphans/semi orphans who are not in Bhandavi, or their guardians
	5:30 - 6:30pm	Meet with KKS parliament leaders
Thursday, 15th Feb	9 - 10am	Meeting with AWW, ANM, DoE, CDPO, Child help line am
	10am - 1:00pm	Half-day workshop with 12 field staff from across projects, followed by lunch
	2 - 5pm	Meeting with children of migrant workers- who are participating in programme, and who are not
	5 - 6pm	Closing debrief with Koppal leadership team
	7pm	Leave from Koppal campus to railway station



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