

Work For Equality

Annual Report 2023-2024

Work For Equality is a social organization that has been working since 2010 to develop leadership among marginalized communities, especially girls. The aim is to empower these girls to raise their voices for their rights and integrate into the mainstream society.

The organization's vision is to create a society where there is no discrimination based on caste, religion, or gender, and where everyone has equal opportunities.

To achieve this vision, we are working through various initiatives with the support of various CSR's like Cummins India Foundation, Terre Des Hommes, Kirloskar Oil Engines, Schindler India Pvt. Ltd, Praj Industries, Knorr Bremse TCI, FM Foundation, Juris Corp etc..

"Mi Shakti" - Girls' Empowerment Program

We strongly believe that when girls receive proper education, healthcare, and have a strong support network, they can contribute to building a gender-equitable society. Keeping this vision in mind, we have established 30 Girls' Clubs at the village level in Khed and Maval Talukas of Pune district and in Phaltan Taluka. These clubs collectively engage more than 2,000 girls in various initiatives related to their rights and empowerment.

This year, 42 Girls' Leaders from 13 villages participated in a four-day **Girls' Leadership Training** program. These young leaders are actively working on critical issues such as **public** transportation facilities, menstrual hygiene management in schools, and child marriage prevention.

- **Key achievements this year include:**
 - Installation of **8 vending machines** and **14 disposable machines** in schools for menstrual hygiene management.
 - Establishment of **child protection committees in 14 villages**, with 28 boys and girls elected as representatives.
 - Prevention of **5 child marriages** through collective efforts.
 - 9 Girls' Clubs successfully secured community spaces** in their villages for their meetings and activities.

Through these efforts, the **"Mi Shakti"** program continues to strengthen girls' voices, enabling them to take leadership roles and drive change in their communities.



District-Level Girls Leadership Program:

Expanding the "Mi Shakti" Girls' Leadership Program across Maharashtra is crucial to ensuring that girls develop awareness about health, gender equality, and legal rights, enabling them to protect their own rights.

With this objective in mind, this year we trained representatives from four organizations across Parbhani, Nanded, Nagpur, and Satara districts. These trained representatives, in turn, conducted leadership training sessions for over 100 adolescent girls from 20 villages in their respective regions.

Through this initiative, we are strengthening grassroots leadership among girls and empowering them to take charge of their rights and futures.





Through this entire process, **96 youth leaders** were appointed from the Pune division. They took on responsibilities such as **guiding other young people in their villages** and actively participating in **village development initiatives**.

Additionally, **Cummins Global CSR Head, Mr. Jim Schacht**, personally met with the **girls' leaders** and appreciated their efforts and contributions.



Programs Led by Youth and Young Girls:

Global Action Month:

In the month of **November**, **Global Action Month** was celebrated, focusing on **environmental awareness and individual responsibilities**. Training sessions were conducted on topics like **climate change** and **eco-friendly celebrations**.

As an outcome of these sessions, youth took proactive steps such as:

- **Celebrating a firecracker-free Diwali**

- Using natural colors for Holi

Through these initiatives, they set an example for others and contributed towards environmental conservation.



Awareness Campaign for Women's Participation in Mahila Gram Sabha:

Although women have been granted **33% reservation**, their **active participation in development** remains minimal, especially in **rural areas**. Many women do not attend **Gram Sabhas (village meetings)** and **Mahila Sabhas (women's meetings)**.

To address this issue, **adolescent girls** from various villages conducted **awareness campaigns through street plays**, encouraging women to actively **participate in these meetings**. Their efforts successfully motivated many women to **attend and engage** in discussions about local governance and development.



Friendship Day: Expanding the Meaning of Friendship

Friendship Day is often viewed **narrowly**, focusing only on **human relationships**. However, through our organization's efforts, children were encouraged to understand a **much broader perspective of friendship**.

Instead of limiting the meaning to a **bond between two individuals**, the girls learned to **establish a friendship with the entire ecosystem—nature, society, and trust**. This special day became an opportunity to **redefine friendship as a connection based on trust, respect, and harmony with all living beings**.



The meaning of **Friendship** is not only limited to **people**, It's beyond that...



Friendship with Nature and Needy



March 8 - International Women's Day

On the occasion of **International Women's Day**, the **Girls' Clubs** organized various **entertainment programs** for the women in their villages. In some villages, this was the **first time Women's Day** was celebrated.

Ketaki, a group leader, shared her experience:

"Women in our village didn't even know what Women's Day was. When we invited them to the program, they thought we were calling them for work, so they didn't come. Realizing this, we went to the fields where they were working and explained the significance of Women's Day to them. They felt very happy and appreciated it. Now, they say that whenever the girls invite them, they will definitely come."

Sports Festival:

A **Sports Festival** was organized in Pune through the **ARC Network**. Youth associated with the organization participated enthusiastically and showcased excellence in various sports. 🚀 🏆



"Nayi Asha Nayi Disha" - Out-of-School Youth Project:

There are various reasons why children from marginalized communities drop out of the education system. First-generation learners, in particular, face significant challenges in continuing their education. This is especially true for children from tribal communities, who struggle to understand school subjects, leading to high dropout rates.

In and around **Talegaon Dabhade**, we identified over **150 children under the age of 18** from approximately **40 small and large settlements** who had dropped out of school for various reasons. To bring them back into the education system, we explored alternative schooling options, such as **open schooling**, which allows students to appear for the **10th-grade exam without subjects like English and Mathematics**. Out of these **150 children, we successfully prepared 42 students**, with **60% of them being girls**, to continue their education. This initiative was supported by **Ek M Foundation**.

Additionally, with the support of **Juris Corp and KBGC-TCI**, we successfully reintegrated **98 out-of-school children** into the education system. 🎓 ✨



The project was inaugurated by **Oliver Motte**, a delegate from **FM Foundation**.

Through this initiative, not only did the children **gain self-confidence**, but their **interest and emotional connection with education** also **grew significantly**. As a result, some of the girls even gave interviews on **radio**, appealing to other out-of-school children to **return to education**.

Omkar, one of the young participants, says, "**I will always strive to ensure that no one drops out of their educational journey.**"

Several distinguished guests from **FM Foundation** have visited this project so far, encouraging and motivating the children.



Prerana Support Class:

To provide educational support to children from the **Adivasi community**, this year, we selected **25 students** who are currently studying in the **8th grade**. These children come from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, making them highly vulnerable to dropping out of school. To prevent this, we focused on **basic academic support** and **educational assistance**.

As a result, **24 students successfully progressed to the 9th grade**, while **one student was unable to pass this year**. We will continue supporting these students in the **9th grade** as well. **Deshmukh Sir and Anjali**, two dedicated volunteers, provided special guidance in **English and Mathematics**.



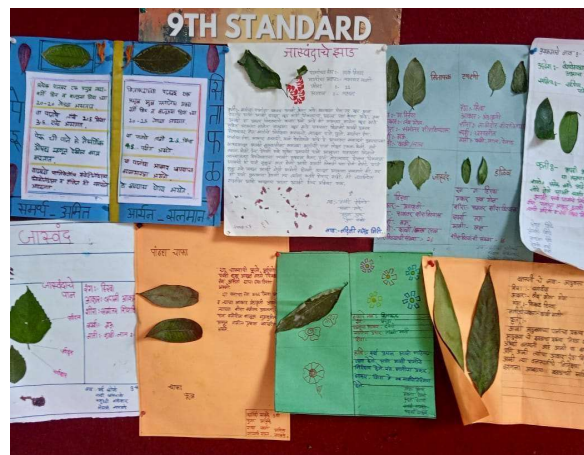


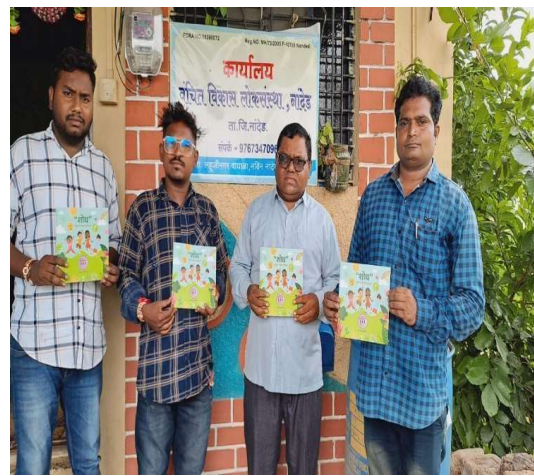
"Shodh" Booklet:

To highlight the **traditional knowledge of Adivasi children** and ensure that their deep understanding of nature is valued, we compiled their research and insights into a **published booklet**.

The objective of this initiative was to **spread awareness about their indigenous wisdom** and help society recognize and respect their **unwritten knowledge**. This booklet has been distributed to various **schools, organizations, and institutions working with children across Maharashtra**. It aims to emphasize that **the best way to learn science is by staying connected with nature**.

So far, this booklet has **reached over 700 children**, helping them gain a new perspective on learning through nature. 🌿 📖 ✨





Organization Development Process:

To strengthen the organization, we are constantly striving to learn new things. Through the **Tarachand Ramnath Seva Trust** in Pune, our organization was selected for the **Organization Development Process** program.

With their support, we created a **documentary** showcasing the **14-year journey** of our organization. Additionally, the "**Mi Shakti**" project was launched in **20 villages** across **four talukas** in **Nagpur, Parbhani, and Nanded districts**.

To enhance the effectiveness of our programs, we developed a **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tool** that allows us to assess and present the **impact and quality** of our initiatives more systematically.

A total of **seven organizations from Pune** were selected for this program.

Due to participation in this training, the organization has gained **internal strength**, and it is important for everyone to understand this growth. To highlight the significance of the **Organization Development Program** for grassroots organizations, **ATMA** invited **Prabha Vilas**, the founder of **Work for Equality**, to share her experiences.

Several distinguished personalities and experts participated in this event, where they discussed the importance of **institutional strengthening** in ensuring impactful work at the ground level.

Leading the Charge: Influential Voices in Advancing Capacity Building Efforts

Session 1: Evolution of Capacity Building Funding- A Journey of Learning and Impact

Moderator



Naghma Mulla

CEO
Edelgive
Foundation



Rati Forbes

Director
Forbes Foundation



Saumya Aggarwal

Co-founder & Director
Barefoot Edu
Foundation



Sneha Arora

CEO
Atma

Session 2: The Power of Evidence- Role of Impact in an Intermediary's Journey

Moderator



Vernon Dsouza

CPO
Atma



Abhishek Thakore

Co-Founder
Wisdom Tree



Prabha Vilas

Founder and CEO
Work for Equality



Shashank Rastogi

Principal
The Bridgespan Group

"Food as Medicine" Project:

Under this program, we have been working for the past year to improve the health of **women and adolescent girls** in the **remote Savala-Andar Maval region** through **kitchen gardens**.

A total of **169 women** have participated in this initiative, overcoming numerous challenges such as **lack of space, water scarcity, cattle, and wild animals destroying the gardens**. Despite these difficulties, these **women and adolescent girls have successfully maintained their kitchen gardens across all three seasons**.

To support them, we have implemented **various interventions**, ensuring that their efforts lead to **better nutrition and improved health**. This project has made a **significant positive impact** on the **health and well-being of women in the region**.

Nutritious Food Competition: More than **70 women** participated in this competition, preparing dishes using **traditional methods** and **locally available vegetables and fruits**. The winners were awarded **iron skillets**, while all participants received **lemons as a token of appreciation**.

Nutrition Week:

To raise awareness about **health and nutrition** among women, **Nutrition Week** was celebrated with various activities, including:

Cooking competitions

Rangoli designs based on nutrition themes

Experience sharing by women who created kitchen gardens

Awareness sessions on wild edible plants

These initiatives **sparked enthusiasm** among women and encouraged them to focus on **better nutrition and well-being**.



Cooking Competition

Distribution of Lemon Saplings

Reproductive Health

Anaemia



Educational Tour

Although the people of Savala village have agricultural land, they rely heavily on chemical fertilizers and practice monocropping on a large scale. To bring about a change in this mindset, an educational tour was organized to Aafreen Kale's organic farm in Ghodegaon.

Aafreen Kale is well-known for organic farming and for promoting collective farming among farmers.

For this tour, 21 women who had cultivated various types of vegetables in their kitchen gardens were selected. The visit proved to be highly inspiring for the women, as they learned how to effectively utilize their available land for farming.

In Savala, women used cow dung to make manure, but they were unaware of the scientific method of composting. They would pile up cow dung near their houses, but the decomposition process was very slow. During this educational tour, they learned that mixing jaggery with cow dung speeds up the decomposition process and helps produce high-quality organic manure.

Another major issue was the excessive use of urea fertilizer in their fields. The women did not know the exact amount of urea required per acre, and upon reviewing the information, they realized that they were using twice the recommended quantity, which was degrading the soil quality at a rapid rate. Through discussions, they understood that organic farming is essential for both human health and soil fertility in the long run.

The tour was also crucial in another way—it made the women realize that they had little to no awareness of government schemes related to farming. Through this visit, they received information about schemes such as farm ponds, goat farming, and well construction. Additionally, they recognized that the lack of women's collective organization in their village was a major barrier to solving fundamental issues like water availability.

The women also discovered that some fellow villagers were aware of these government schemes, but due to a lack of communication and networking, they had never shared this information with each other. As a solution, they decided to create a WhatsApp group to share updates about various schemes introduced by the Gram Panchayat.

After this educational tour, there has been a significant shift in the women's perspective towards farming. They have improved their compost-making techniques and have started coming together as a collective force to work on agricultural and community issues.



Pathway to Livelihood Opportunities

While the primary goal of kitchen gardening was to improve the health of women and their families, it has also led to some unexpected yet positive outcomes. As the yield from these gardens increased, some women began using the surplus produce as a source of income.

Now, many women have started selling vegetables like cabbage, tomatoes, and chilies in the local market. When the tomato yield was particularly high, they came together and received training in making tomato sauce. At present, they are producing sauce for household use, but they are also preparing to scale up production for commercial sale in the near future.

Key Changes Brought by the Project

- 1. Increase in Kitchen Gardens – The number of women regularly maintaining kitchen gardens has increased from 50 in the first year to 113.**
- 2. Improvement in Hemoglobin Levels (Hb)**
 - **Initially, only 21% of women had Hb levels above 10, which has now increased to 45% in the second phase.**
 - **The percentage of women with Hb levels above 12% was only 10% initially, but it has now risen to 45%.**
 - **Women with Hb levels below 10% were at 65% initially, but this number has now reduced to 44%.**
- 3. Increase in Cooking with Iron Utensils – Earlier, very few women cooked food in iron utensils, but now over 90% have started using them regularly. This has been observed through regular monitoring and experience sharing.**

4. **Economic Benefits for Women** – Women like Sunita Rohidas Gonte, Jijabai Somnath Adhari, Jyoti Mahadu Ghoirat, Usha Sunil Kadam, and Renuka Dattatray Shinde have started selling vegetables from their kitchen gardens, earning at least ₹1,000 per month for their families.
5. **Household Savings** – Women are saving ₹800 to ₹1,000 per month by growing their own vegetables, reducing their household expenses. Additionally, medical expenses have decreased due to better nutrition.

Indirect Changes Observed Due to the Project

- **Food Exchange System** – Women now exchange surplus vegetables from their gardens with each other, promoting mutual support.
- **Increased Social Interaction** – Women, who were previously confined to household chores, are now actively participating in competitions, programs, and social activities, enhancing their enthusiasm and confidence.
- **Strengthening of Women's Organizations** – Women have realized the importance of collective action and are making efforts to come together and work as a community.
- **Men's Participation in Household Gardening** – Male family members are now actively participating in maintaining the gardens, taking responsibility for watering and caring for the plants.
- **Preservation of Traditional Knowledge** – The importance of wild vegetables has been recognized, and documentation of these plants has been carried out, ensuring that future generations benefit from this knowledge.

Work for Equality's 13th Anniversary Celebration

Work for Equality celebrated its 13th anniversary on May 15 with great enthusiasm. On this occasion, a "Samata Melava" (Equality Gathering) was organized.

Objective of the Samata Melava:

The event aimed to:

Promote gender equality among children

Encourage scientific thinking

Raise awareness about how to resist violence

Chief Guests:

The event was graced by:

- ◆ Prof. Ujwala Majdekar, Social Work Professor at Karve Stree Shikshan Sanstha
- ◆ Milind Chavan, a dedicated activist from the women's rights movement

Interactive Learning Through Stalls:

Various organizations set up educational stalls to provide engaging learning experiences for children:

- ◆ Connecting NGO – Raised awareness about suicide prevention
- ◆ Anti-Superstition Committee – Guided children on developing a scientific mindset
- ◆ Work for Equality – Created awareness on:
 - How to resist violence
 - Scientific information about menstruation
 - The importance of shared household responsibilities

The event successfully instilled constitutional values in children and encouraged them to think critically about equality, rationality, and social justice. 🌈

Recognition and Awards

On the occasion of **International Women's Day**, the organization's work was acknowledged and honored by **Hotel Suryamangal** and **Dhyas Cares Foundation** for its significant contribution to social causes.

Additionally, **CYDA (Centre for Youth Development and Activities)** recognized **Prabha Vilas, the founder of Work for Equality**, with an award for her impactful work in **Gender Equality** during CYDA's **25th anniversary celebration**.

The organization was also honored with the **Pune NGO Leadership Award**, which was presented by **Dr. Bhatia's World CSR Day and World Sustainability organization**.



