Empowering grassroots women’s collectives to create sustainable livelihoods and communities that work in harmony with nature realizes our vision of a resilient future.

- Prema Gopalan, Founder

**ABOUT US**

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) is a mission-driven, women-led non-profit organization working towards creating inclusive, sustainable livelihoods and communities across India. Founded by Prema Gopalan, SSP’s mission is to empower women to take up new roles as decision makers in agriculture, enterprise, and community leadership, thereby enhancing their economic and social resilience.

**CHALLENGES**

SSP works with the landless and marginalized farmer households, among these women, who face the most challenging social and economic inequalities. Despite their best efforts, to earn and sustain livelihoods, women face enormous problems in accessing resources, skills, and finance and market opportunities.

**SOLUTIONS**

A collaborative effort is needed to unlock the true potential of a model. SSP’s model is founded in a two-tiered approach wherein women’s capacities and access to health and nutrition are realized, while simultaneously building a self-sustaining ecosystem to leverage partnerships. The multiplier effect of SSP’s approach means that grassroots women within SSP’s networks go beyond achieving entrepreneurship to embracing community leadership roles.

**KEY PROGRAM AREAS**

- **Water**
- **Sanitation**
- **Health & Nutrition**
- **Agriculture**
- **Access to partnership for scaling up enterprises**
- **Seedling leaders in women-led enterprises**
- **Business model support network**

**RECENT AWARDS & RECOGNITION**

- **2021** - Roddenberry Foundation’s +1 Global Fund in recognition of the impactful work during COVID pandemic across adversely affected communities in India
- **2019** - Schwab Foundation’s “Outstanding Social Entrepreneur of the Year” (WEF)
- **2018** - Schwab Foundation’s “Social Entrepreneur of the Year India”
- **2017** - UNDP’s “Equator Prize”
- **2016** - UNFCCC’s “Momentum for Change Lighthouse”

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HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION


Three learning’s stood out for SSP and modeled its core organization strategy.

1. **Build Back Better**: Women’s collectives once supported led “build back better” approach in their communities and built sustained resilience by restoring water, basic services, agriculture

2. **Scaling Up**: Women leaders formed Mobile Resource Teams to transfer their knowhow to new climate areas.

3. **Replicable model**: Leveraging the insights gained during the quake, SSP developed a replicable model for building community resilience models that SSP & leaders transferred in India as well as in other countries.

By 2003, SSP developed a widespread network of 150,000 women in Self Help Groups and Sakhi Federations. From 2004 – 2009, SSP went beyond savings and credit groups to creating large scale livelihood opportunities in key impact sectors such as agriculture & nutrition, water & clean energy, to build capacities around women’s participation and leadership to address these issues.

The turning point was in 2009, when SSP shifted the paradigm to a market based approach, and SSP created independent institutions for skills, finance and markets for its women entrepreneurs. SSP’s ecosystem offered platforms for rural women to build products that benefited the community, and assisted these businesses to grow.

The opportunity to scale up the entrepreneurship model in non-traditional sectors arrived with SSP being selected as the single applicant from over 100 agencies in 2012. The four year global wPOWER program – was supported by USAID India with 1000 rural women as clean energy entrepreneurs and energy leaders impacted the lives of over one million people across Maharashtra and Bihar, and transferred lessons to Africa.

Three straight years of drought 2012 to 2015 and SSP focused on climate resilient approaches for farming and livelihoods and repositioning women as farmers. The climate resilient agriculture model aimed to reduce the impact of drought and address food and income security for small farmers in the Marathwada districts.

SSP’s above efforts were supported by Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI) (2017-2020) to reach out to 20,000 small and marginal women farmers across 2 districts. Scaled up by handholding 780 community resource persons (CRPs) of Government cadre to reach additional 25,000 farmers households supported NRLM’s Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana – MKSP.

Highlighting its national role, National Rural Livelihood Mission, appointed SSP as the Resource Organisation to lead the Start Up Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP) further support to launch 4200 women as entrepreneurs tripling their incomes and business skills (2016 to 2020).

In 2019, Across Latur and Osmanabad districts, partnering with the district administration, Sakhi leaders reached out to 250,000 families on COVID education, ensured PDS reach to over 30,000 families and assisted over 23,050 persons to secure jobs through MNREGS. SSP organised women farmer groups to sell in local markets, start enterprises. Overall 80,000 rural women across 15 districts in 4 states were supported by agile teams to navigate digital platforms, rebuild agriculture and enterprise systems to regenerate rural economies.

Encouraged by visible women’s leadership efforts, SSP was mandated by the Govt of Maharashtra and supported by UNICEF (July to Dec 2020) to work on a mass time sensitive scaled up effort to empower Sakhi Task Forces to be at the centre of creating COVID free villages with Panchayats in 2700 villages impacting over 10 lakhs people across the 3 districts in Maharashtra.

In 2021, over 700 women leaders are transforming communities to fully vaccinated status with over 1 lakh COVID 19 vaccinations till date and SSP is engaged with the Osmanabad district administration.

Website: swayamshikshanprayog.org