

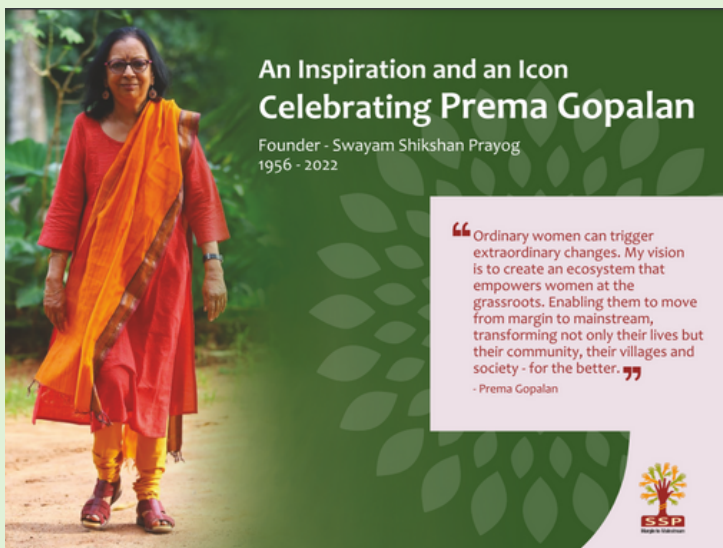


# QUARTERLY UPDATE

## Swayam Shikshan Prayog

### Highlights

#### An Inspiration and an Icon: Celebrating Prema Gopalan



As the Founder and Executive Director of Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), Ms. Prema Gopalan, a firm believer in the power of women to shift boundaries and mindsets, inspired thousands of rural women to embrace their identities as entrepreneurs, farmers and community leaders to its present form over the past 25 years. We are proud to publish a Coffee Table Book titled 'An Inspiration and an Icon: Celebrating Prema Gopalan'. The Book commemorates her life and legacy by showcasing photos, achievements and quotes by those who worked closely with her.

Prema's intrinsic belief in women's leadership garnered worldwide interest and acknowledgement. In a glittering career spanning three decades, she received several national and international awards and recognitions. Her life, achievements and dedication to women's empowerment and social change continue to inspire us and the people whose life she touched. You can view and download the book at: <https://bit.ly/3e3Xx7w>

#### Centering Women Leadership in Social Development Insight Success Magazine

SSP has been identified as one of the Leading NGOs impacting Corporate Social Responsibility in 2022 by Insight Success Magazine for its work in empowering rural women from marginalized communities as leaders and entrepreneurs.

Read the article here:  
<https://magazines.insightsuccess.in/2022/leading-ngos-impacting-corporate-social-responsibility-drive-2022-august2022/>



## Highlights

### South Asia Resilience Hub at COP27

Swayam Shikshan Prayog is proud to have been part of the South Asia Resilience Hub that took place in the lead up to COP27 that is being held from November 6 to 18, 2022 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. Resilience Hub is the official home of the Race to Resilience, the UN-backed campaign representing over 1,500 non-state actors taking actions on resilience around the world.

On September 23rd, SSP co-organised the webinar titled "Women Led Climate Resilient Initiatives: Lessons and Challenges in South Asia". The event showcased the knowledge and practices of women farmers, as well as the innovative approaches and leadership skills that they demonstrate to develop sustainable community resilient models in the context of increasing disaster risk and climate change. The event was organised in partnership with Huairou Commission, ORRISA and GPSVS and supported by ICCCAD, Bangladesh.

During the webinar, Godavari Dange, Grassroots leader from SSP and Member of Asia Coordinating Committee at Huairou Commission said that, "Grassroots women's groups and their networks must be supported by the government to build long-term resilient recovery, and their leadership integrated within climate and disaster programs".

**RESILIENCE HUB**

**"South Asia Regional Hub"**  
Women-Led Climate Resilient Initiatives  
Lessons and Challenges

23 September 2022 4:30 PM-IST [Join now](#)

**Introduction**

- Ms. Celine d'Cruz, Visiting Researcher, ICCCAD
- Ms. Ratna Mathur, Independent Consultant (Session facilitator)

**Main Speakers**

- Ms. Naseem Shaikh, Associate Director Programmes, SSP
- Ms. Laxmi Khilla, Grassroot Women Leader, ORRISA, India
- Ms. Chandrarekha Devi, Member, Women Farmers Field School, Bihar, India
- Ms. Godavari Dange, Grassroots Women Leader, SSP & Member, Asia Coordinating Committee, Huairou Commission
- Mr. Gavsane Dattatray, District Agriculture Officer, Latur, (Government of Maharashtra)
- Ms. Bindu Shreshta, Community Women Forum (CWF), Nepal & Chair, Asia Coordinating Committee, Huairou Commission
- Ms. Suranjana Gupta, Advisor on Community Resilience, Huairou Commission
- Prof. Vinod Menon, Founder Member, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), India

Logos: ICCCAD, ORRISA, HUAIROU COMMISSION Women, Homes & Community, GPSVS, and another logo.

## New Initiatives

- The USAID-funded South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP) project "Scaling up access to innovative energy efficient solutions for rural populations through women led micro-entrepreneurship model across Maharashtra and Bihar" focuses on promoting women entrepreneurs across 500 villages to perform last mile activities - adoption of clean energy solutions: pre-fabricated biogas plant & vegetable cooler by rural households. SSP is honored to start implementation of this two-year project in partnership with RTI since August 2022.
- The ADM Cares supported project is to be implemented in Osmanabad district for the Marathwada District Transformation Model on water harvesting and conservation.
- The Astanor supported project "Setting up of the Organisation level MIS system and ensure capacity of digital data capture and is built across the organization" will focus on Improved data systems and dashboard as well as improved capacities of staff on data capture.
- The NASSCOM Foundation supported project "Digital upskilling of existing Women Agri Entrepreneurs in Maharashtra" has successfully completed digital upskilling of 200+ agri and agri allied women entrepreneurs in 5 months in Osmanabad and Latur Districts. In addition to this 500 more women will be outreached through the same program in this financial year.
- The Service Learning program by the students of Third Year, Symbiosis institute of technology, Pune are with SSP for a three months internship since August 2022. They are supporting SSP with feedback and improvements in websites and social media look and feel. And they have organized weekly digital literacy online workshops for the SSP team and grassroots women leaders. The modules include: Basics of computers, and Smart-phones, E-mail, PPT, CANVA designs, PowerPoint making, MS-Word, Online platforms, Zoom, MS-meet, etc.

## Stories From the Field

### Village Action Groups

Women leaders across Latur, Osmanabad and Nanded districts of Maharashtra are coming together to form Village Action Groups to address the challenges that they face, and make their Gram Panchayats more socially inclusive and resilient.



Facilitated by SSP, VAGs typically represent socially excluded and marginalised communities of the village, whose voices are otherwise rarely heard by local decision makers. These groups of 10 to 15 members lead social change and empowerment by sharing information on government schemes and programmes and assisting in accessing social entitlements like widow pension, support for differently abled persons, houses and toilets under government schemes. They also work hand-in-hand with the Gram Panchayat (GP) to ensure the community has access to basic services like drainage, roads, waste management, drinking and irrigation water facilities.

Working with the GPs, they were able to get 50 families of widows and persons with disabilities houses under the Indira Awas Yojana, and access to agricultural inputs like seeds and machinery for value addition. Social change is visible, as women have started to visit the GP and government departments, accessing various schemes and programs and attending Gram Sabhas and development meetings to air their concerns. Women have also successfully lobbied for the construction of a meeting hall which will act as a community gathering place. "Socially excluded communities lack knowledge of government schemes and their entitlements and rights. In Indarpur, our Village Action Group (VAG) is helping them by accompanying them to government offices and online applications of necessary schemes. Our dream is to make Indarpur one of the best GPs in Osmanabad, and recognised as a model by others", says Rajeshwari Gapat, Vice President of the Indapur Gram Panchayat and member of the Village Action Group.

### Vaishali Gughe at NIRD&PR

Vaishali Ghuge, a senior SSP leader from Andur village in Osmanabad district, participated in a 3-day training organized by the government at National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Hyderabad from 21st-23rd August, 2022. The training sought to train participants on the best way to incorporate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into local and state-level development plans. Vaishali Tai was one of twelve people representing Maharashtra, with participation ranging from government officials, professors, journalists, and social workers from six states of India.

Vaishali Tai's training focused on achieving "Engendered Development in Villages" and how to incorporate women's and girl-child's agendas into local planning. Here, she was able to share her experiences working with women farmers, entrepreneurs and adolescent girls, and give her inputs on the planning process. This progressive training also recognized that there are several gender-related concerns that are cross-cutting in nature and need a multi-sectoral approach, including issues faced by the LGBTQIA community and the need for a local response strategy to crises, which is under the leadership of the Gram Panchayat. As a part of the Maharashtra team, Vaishali Tai will now be involved in the creation of the development plan at the Zilla Parishad level in different districts. She will also mentor and train over 25 village level trainers on the SDGs and how to incorporate them into their local Gram Panchayat Development Plans. The aim is to create Child and Gender Friendly Panchayats.



Vaishali Tai says proudly, "I am looking forward to the opportunity to bring the voices of marginalized women and girls to formal planning processes and hope to make a positive change by opening avenues for them to stand up on their own feet."

## Stories From the Field

### Clean Energy Awareness Drive, Bihar



SSP organised a successful awareness drive on the importance and benefits of clean energy in Gaya and Nalanda districts of Bihar. For 10 days in August, a van with clean energy products accompanied 10 Urja Sakhis as they reached out to over 1500 people in their villages and oriented them on the need to adopt renewable sources of energy like solar power, in the face of increasing climate change.

Gautam Kumar, SSP project coordinator in Bihar, says that, "Due to the success of this drive, we are planning to carry out further awareness drives involving more Sakhis and reaching out to even more villages in the future."

Take a look at the video documenting this campaign: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CrpZxrGh74>

### Chaya Kapse

Chaya Kapse hails from Halgaon Village, Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra and depends on family farming for a living. Due to economic difficulties and health issues, she also worked as a labourer in other farms.

When she joined SSP in 2021, she had the opportunity to participate in various training initiatives related to climate resilient farming. After six months of negotiation with her family, she was given a small piece of uncultivated land. SSP's training in on her families farm. PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) training on nutrition had made her aware about healthy eating habits and food security. SSP provided her with seeds and she cultivated several vegetables including using chemical-free methods. Chaya used the vegetables from her little garden to feed her family and sold the surplus in the village. She began to earn around Rs. 1500/- each week and made a profit of Rs. 55,000 within 6 months. The wholesome nutrition of organic vegetables improved the health of her entire family. Her enhanced economic status earned her respect in the village and she now has decision-making control over two acres of land where she cultivate food crops.

Chaya's journey is a perfect illustration of SSPs vision of women empowerment through leadership and learning. In Chaya's words, "Being identified as a community leader gives me immense pride and motivates me to contribute more in my village development".

### Sanjeevani Mahor



Sanjeevani Mahor is a resident of Pimpaldari village in Aurangabad district in Maharashtra which is a severely drought prone area with very scanty rainfall and few livelihood options. She was introduced to Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) and availed of their many trainings.

Sanjeevani experimented growing 8 different vegetables in a small open space before cultivating on her farm. Shifting to chemical free vegetables, has improved the health of her family members and reduced medical expenses. Sanjeevani's garden has inspired ten other village women to grow vegetables in similar manner.

Under SSP's guidance and training, Sanjeevani planted five vermi compost beds in the village and formed a producer group with 20 women farmers. They now sell organic manure, vermi wash and compost to get more income. Today she is a farmer, has her own small business and a distinct identity in the village. She has emerged as a leader promoting SSP's programs, reaching out and training other women about organic farming, vermicomposting and natural fertilizers.

## Stories From the Field

### Suja Balan

Suja Balan, from one of Wayanad, Kerala's vulnerable tribal communities, is blazing a trail for women's empowerment in Aneri village. Her family was entirely dependent on her husband's income from farming and daily-wage labour before the devastating floods of 2019 put the family in a precarious economic condition. Aware of SSP's work in the area, she immediately joined the Sakhi Farmer's Group (SFG), and she attended various trainings related to income generation, management of producer companies and farmer groups, leadership, and women's empowerment.

Suja's maternal family were strong proponents of organic farming and followed traditional methods of farming on their land. With additional knowledge gained through trainings, she began to promote traditional cultivation amongst her own Farmer's Group in the village. Together, the SFG began cultivating indigenous crops and seasonal vegetables. Starting on a collective basis, she soon gained the confidence and resources to individually lease 50 cents of land. She cultivates medicinal plants, traditional varieties of rice and vegetables on her own. Using knowledge passed down amongst Kurichiya elders, she also preserves indigenous seeds and mentors other women in her community to do the same.

With the support of SSP, Suja and her group became founding members of the Keravriksha Farmer Producer Organization (FPO). In addition to her work with the FPO, she also regularly sells her organic produce in Kudumbashree markets. In the past 3 years, Suja has increased her income to Rs. 9,000 per month on average.

With her earnings, she takes greater responsibility in managing household finances. As a result of her growth as a leader, she has also been selected as a member of the local Panchayat Village Development Committee.



### Chandrakala Shelke



Chandrakala Shelke from Shirsala village in Aurangabad district is from a vulnerable family and depends on meager income. Before joining SSP, she cultivated cash crops like maize and cotton on 1 acre of land, and also worked as a labourer on other farms to make ends meet.

Through her SHG, Chandrakala Tai learnt about SSP and was inspired to adopt the 'one-acre farming' model after attending trainings. Starting with a small section of her land, she slowly began increasing the amount of land farmed organically and reduced her cash crop cultivation.

Today, Chandrakala Tai only grows food crops like vegetables and pulses using organic methods on 1 acre of her land. Through her joint income from vegetable cultivation and animal husbandry, she does not need to work as a labourer in neighbouring farms anymore. With the recent cultivation of Azola in her farm, she has also reduced her expenditure on animal feed, and improved the health of her cows, goat and chicken and seen a marked improvement in quality and quantity of milk produced. Overall her income has doubled by switching to organic food crops and animal husbandry.

Due to Chandrakala Tai's excellent work, today her farm is recognized as a 'demo farm', and is used to showcase the success of the 'one-acre farming' model and livelihoods diversification to other farmers. Today with an increase in production, she continues to sell her vegetables in both Tanda and the weekly market of 10 combined towns.

## Events

### Launch of Krishi Netri program

The Krishi Netri program supported by the U.S. Department of State was launched with 54 women entrepreneurs by SSP as on 22nd July, 2022 at Osmanabad. A total of 110 people attended the event including Government officials from agricultural department and livelihoods department; Ms. Jaya Janardhanan and Ms. Madhura Das gupta from Aspire for her; members from SSP and Impacttree.



the launch event, training of the women entrepreneurs commenced in August 2022. Women entrepreneurs were encouraged to form a WhatsApp group and currently all the women meet once a week over a zoom call to discuss their progress in terms of business, challenges and growth areas. During the calls women are provided training to pitch their products and business and are given personal and professional support

### Building Local Partnerships

Partnerships with local government and line departments are very crucial in accessing programmes and schemes that benefit the communities.



In June 2022, SSP facilitated the community mobilization, training and linkage with government departments in Osmanabad district to register for soybean and red gram seeds from the Department of Agriculture. After registering online, a total of 124 farmers got the seeds, and 19 farmers received coupons for reduced costs for the seeds compared to non-online registered farmers. SSP has supported the registration of 4,600 women farmers. We expect these farmers will also receive the seeds or coupons. Farmers can apply for their preferred programmes on Mahadbt, an online portal created by the Maharashtra government.

### Keravriksha Farmer Producer Company

SSP facilitated a Two Days Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) on July 6-7, 2022 at Wayanad in partnership with Keravriksha Farmer Producer Company (FPO). The EDP was conducted by Mrs. Smita Biju an established entrepreneur and trainer. A total of 60 women members from Keravriksha FPO participated in this training programme. This was a useful and timely initiative as the FPO is planning to launch new products in the market soon.

August 17, was a proud day for the the FPO, as they opened their marketing centre-cum shop at Pallikkunnu. The marketing centre was inaugurated by Mr. P. P. Ranish, President, Kottathara Gram Panchayat. Over 300 people participated in the inaugural function including 168 FPO members. A speciality of this shop is that they provide pesticide-free agricultural and food products that are cultivated and produced by Sakhi Farmers Group.

**Celebrations:** On the occasion of Onam, the Keravriksha FPO organized an Onam Fair from Sept 5-7 by offering a variety of healthy food and agriculture products at the Agricultural Marketing Centre outlet at Pallikkunnu, Wayanad. Pesticide-free products like Turmeric powder, Yam, Pumpkin, Coffee powder, Kuthari Rice, Honey, Varieties of Pickles, Honey Gooseberry, Ginger, Malabar Tamarind and other varieties cultivated and processed by Sakhi Farmers Groups were available at this fair.

On World Coconut Day, September 2nd, women farmers and entrepreneurs from the FPO, celebrated the day with various programs. Awareness material on the importance and use of coconut products was displayed at the Keravriksha Shop. As part of the campaign to protect the coconut trees and plantations, women farmers cleaned and put fertilisers to the coconut trees.

## Events

### Securing Nutrition, Enhancing Resilience

To improve the health status of adolescent girls, women, and children, SSP has organised a one day workshop in Washim district in Maharashtra on July 21st, 2022. This workshop was supported by Welthungerhilfe and GIZ as part of the SENU project – Securing Nutrition, Enhancing Resilience – a part of the global special initiative ‘One World – No Hunger’. A total of 58 women participated in the programme. The main focus of the training was the nurturing skills of Anganwadi Workers (AWW) on nutrition education and application using various methods. The AWWs will conduct village-level awareness meetings with women's groups to understand the importance of nutrition in their lives using easy tools and games.

Welthungerhilfe India is supporting 9,000 frontline workers (Anganwadi workers) on quality nutrition education in more than 5,000 villages in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Anganwadi workers are primarily deployed by the Government of India to combat child hunger and malnutrition in rural India.



### Digital Literacy

SSP organised a five-day training program to empower women agri-entrepreneurs through technology which was attended by 25 women from three blocks in the Latur and Osmanabad districts of Maharashtra from July 19 to July 23, 2022.

This activity, which is part of a NASSCOM Foundation supported five-month project, focused on digitally upskilling rural women entrepreneurs from agri and agri-allied subsectors. They were being trained and given capacity-building and handholding support to improve their knowledge of digital and financial literacy as well as digital business adoption, including the use of smartphones, data usage, cyber security, digital communication, online access to government schemes, e-commerce platforms, e-accounting apps, and digital payments.

The larger goal of this training was to equip women agri-entrepreneurs to use this knowledge in the promotion of their businesses, and attract and expand the customer base for value-added products.



### Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) in Gram Panchayats

Swayam Shikshan Prayog participated in the National Workshop on 'Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Gram Panchayats through Adopting Thematic Approach' held at Pune on the 22nd of September. During this event SSP had put up an information booth showcasing our 'One-acre Farming Model' which aims at creating sustainable farms and promotes food security. We also displayed various products from the women-led FPOs in Osmanabad and Latur.

On its first day, the stall was visited by the Minister of State For Panchayat Raj - Hon' Kapil Patil, Minister of Medical Education of Maharashtra - Hon' Girish Mahajan and the Former Director of YASHADA - Hon' Mallinath Kalsheti, as well as over 1000+ visitors.

## Events

### Dialogue Workshop with Block Authorities

On 22nd August, a dialogue workshop was held at Lohara block in Osmanabad District of Maharashtra. The main focus of this workshop was to assist women farmers in accessing government programmes and schemes. 70 women farmers and leaders participated in this workshop, along with officials from the Department of Agriculture, Extension officers and ATMA officials.

The block leaders, experienced women leaders and the SSP team got the opportunity to interact directly with various line departments at the district and block levels, and gain information on accessing schemes and benefits with regards to social protection, agriculture, water, etc. Following this workshop, women leaders and members of local Village Action Groups (VAGs) work closely with the Gram Panchayat and government officials to support them in better governance and reaching underserved communities.



### Peer learning exchange

Peer learning is a powerful tool for sharing the lessons and experiences of grassroots women communities. SSP uses the peer learning strategy to share learning, innovative initiatives and scale up best practices to new communities.

A two-day peer learning exchange was organised by SSP from 27th to 28th September, 2022 between SSP's women leaders and a 30 member team from Caritas India. The group visited three villages in Osmanabad district and interacted with grassroots leaders and the SSP team, discussing women's participation in local governance, the one-acre farming model, women-led entrepreneurship initiatives, and local partnership. The visit was part of the 'JEEVAN-Women Led Empowerment Action' project supported by Caritas India.



## In the Media

### Making Agriculture Viable for small and marginal farmers

SSP was featured in an OpEd piece in the Times of India on September 21, 2022. SSP was cited as a leading social development organisation that is demonstrating how smallholder farming can be made viable through simple and consistent innovations - whether it is through women's collectives, the use of technology for irrigation, or changes in the cropping patterns. These solutions are universal in nature, making them easy to deploy and replicate.

Read the article here: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/developing-contemporary-india/making-agriculture-viable-for-small-and-marginal-farmers/>



## In the Media

### SSP Leader Shailaja Narwade received the Vasantrya Naik Vegetable Producer Award, 2022

Shaila Tai Narwade, an inspirational leader and seed mother from Masla Village, Osmanabad received the Vasantrya Naik Vegetable Producer Award on 1st July 2022 at the Yashwantrao Chavan Center, Mumbai. The award has been constituted by the Vasantrya Naik Agriculture Research and Development Institute and recognizes excellence in the fields of Agriculture, Horticulture, Vegetable Production, Animal Husbandry and Dairy, Agricultural Process Industry, Water Conservation, Agricultural Literature, Agricultural Journalism, Agricultural Produce Export and Floriculture. Shaila Tai received this award in recognition of her dedication and leadership skills in mobilizing women farmers to develop markets for vegetables and seed production, as well as her efforts in strengthening market based approaches and promoting involvement in the agricultural value chain. SSP is proud of Shaila Tai and other grassroots women leaders who are taking the lead in addressing food security, nutrition and health through climate resilient innovative practices.



### Local Adaptation Champions Award

Swayam Shikshan Prayog has been nominated as one of the 20 finalists for the Local Adaptation Champions Awards at COP27, for pioneering locally-led climate resilience and working with communities on the frontlines of #climatechange to strengthen local knowledge & skills related to climate finance and #LocallyLedAdaptation.

Highlighting the success of SSP's Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) Model, Upmanyu Patil, Director of Programs at SSP, says that "We were trying to ensure food security for the families first. But instead of focusing on just kitchen and home gardens, the women grow food on the farm, eat from there, and do it in organic, water-efficient, and low-cost ways."

For more details, visit: <https://gca.org/news/20-organizations-pioneering-locally-led-climate-resilience-announced-as-finalists-for-the-local-adaptation-champions-awards-at-cop27/>

### Our Partners:

Ashoka Innovators for the Public | ADM Cares | Avendus | Astanor | DASRA | European Union | GIZ - Welthungerhilfe | HSBC | Habitat for Humanity India | Hindustan Unilever Foundation | Huairou Commission | OXFAM Novib | Kamal Udwadia Foundation | Shapoorji Pallonji | Misereor | Nasscom Foundation | Shaikh Jaffer and Nematullah Ebrahim Family Foundation | UMED-Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission | U.S. Department of State | RTI - USAID | Womanity Foundation

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