

Key Achievements

Naseem Shaikh selected as a member of the 2024-25 Women Leaders India Fellow for Pioneering Social Impact

Naseem Shaikh, Associate Director of Programs at Swayam Shikshan Prayog, has been selected as one of 50 exceptional women for the 2024-25 Women Leaders India Fellowship, powered by Reliance Foundation and Vital Voices. This fellowship supports women leaders in climate resilience, education, livelihoods, and sports for development. The program, which began with a gathering in Mumbai on September 13-14, offers a 10-month curriculum with personalized projects, leadership training, and mentorship. Fellows also gain access to a global network, promoting collaboration and skill enhancement in advancing the SDGs.

For more information, visit:

<https://reliancefoundation.org/wli-2024-25-fellow-announcement?>



Sadhana Deshmukh Honored as 1st Runner-Up in Vijayalakshmi Das Entrepreneurship Awards 2024

Sadhana Deshmukh, a grassroots woman leader and entrepreneur from Maharashtra, has been awarded 1st runner-up in the Micro Enterprise category, receiving a cash prize of Rs 50,000 at the SATYA Micro Capital Vijayalakshmi Das Entrepreneurship Awards 2024.

An inspiring entrepreneur from Latur, Maharashtra, Sadhana motivates many grassroots women to start small enterprises. SSP is thrilled to see our efforts and strategies driving the empowerment of women across India as leaders, entrepreneurs, and changemakers.

Sakhi's: Women for Action, Change, Growth

SSP is happy to announce the release of our latest publication, "Sakhi's: Women for Action, Change, Growth". This inspiring book highlights the incredible journeys of 25 women who have shattered the constraints of patriarchy to become empowered entrepreneurs and leaders. Their stories are a testament to the monumental impact they have had in areas such as Climate-resilient agriculture, Water management, Sustainable farming, Clean energy, Cooperative farming societies, and Leadership and Entrepreneurship. These grassroots women are not only transforming their communities but also paving the way for other rural women to engage, educate, and empower themselves. Dive into their stories and be inspired by their resilience and innovation.

Link to publication: <https://swayamshikshanprayog.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Book-of-25-Sakhis-Success-Stories-by-SSP-released-on-1st-February-2024.pdf>





Key Achievements



Women Farmers Plant Seeds of Change in Kerala, India.

This inspiring case study from Wayanad, Kerala, has been spotlighted in Oxfam Novib's Fair for All 2023-24 Annual Report. It showcases the transformative impact of Swayam Shikshan Prayog's (SSP) work in empowering women farmers to overcome climate challenges and societal barriers. With stories of grassroots leaders like Yashoda Raman and Suja Balan, who champion climate-resilient farming and economic independence, the newsletter celebrates their success in breaking gender norms and building sustainable livelihoods. The feature highlights how SSP's support has enabled these women to lead community-driven initiatives like the Sakhi Farmers Group and the Keravriksha FPO, driving change for a more equitable and resilient future in rural India.

[Link to publication:](https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Downloads/Engl ish/publications/FAIR%20for%20ALL%20Annual%20Re port%20Year%2023%202023-24.pdf)

<https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Downloads/Engl ish/publications/FAIR%20for%20ALL%20Annual%20Re port%20Year%2023%202023-24.pdf>



SSP Hosts ATMA Officials to Strengthen Partnerships for Empowering Women Farmers in Maharashtra

On August 19, 2024, Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) successfully hosted senior officials from Maharashtra's Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) to showcase its impactful work in empowering marginal women farmers. SSP's grassroots leaders and FPO Directors highlighted their achievements in sustainable farming and value chain development, aligning with the goals of the state's State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART) program, supported by the World Bank. This visit underscored SSP's commitment to enhancing women farmers' income, climate resilience, and community strength through potential collaboration with government initiatives.





HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER



WOMEN-LED CLIMATE RESILIENT FARMING



Overall, the initiatives by Sakhis have supported sustainable agriculture across these villages, helping farmers adopt environmentally friendly techniques, access vital resources, and engage in diversified income-generating activities through horticulture.

Awareness Raising and Sensitisation

In Kerala, in the last quarter, SSP expanded its reach in Padijartahara Gram Panchayath, adding three new wards (4th, 5th, and 10th) to the existing wards (7th and 8th). In these areas, SSP conducted awareness meetings on climate-resilient farming, engaging 200 women farmers.

Additionally, SSP organized 24 Awareness Training sessions for 480 women, focusing on women-led climate-resilient farming, agri-allied business opportunities, and fostering women's leadership in sustainable business. The training emphasized eco-friendly practices and the development of value-added products. Furthermore, SSP held Farmer Literacy Meetings across 10 villages, educating 505 women farmers on nutrition gardens, food security, and sustainable resource management.

WCRF Training

In Wayanad, Kerala in the last quarter, SSP's leaders empowered over 1800 women farmers through comprehensive training in the Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) model. The sessions focused on equipping participants with sustainable agricultural practices such as soil health management, water conservation, vermicomposting, pest management, and chemical-free kitchen gardening. 30 women from the marginalised Paniya tribal community developed kitchen gardens using the WCRF model in five colonies to increase self-sufficiency through local vegetable and fruit cultivation.



WOMEN-LED CLIMATE RESILIENT FARMING

Establishment of Demonstration Plots

In the last quarter, SSP empowered women leaders to establish demonstration plots and farm schools to promote sustainable farming practices. This initiative established hands-on learning environments, helping women farmers test and implement best practices for sustainable agriculture.

- **Establishment of New Demonstration Plots for WCRF Model:** Five plots were set up as on-farm training sites to showcase the Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) approach, enabling women to adopt climate-resilient practices.
- **Collective Land Leasing for Vegetable Cultivation:** A group of 12 women collectively leased land to start vegetable farming, a pioneering move toward financial independence and sustainability, inspiring others to follow.
- **Large-scale Demonstration by Trained Sakhis:** Across 1,000 demonstration farms in 400 villages, 400 trained Sakhis led eco-friendly farming initiatives, producing six lakh liters of bio-pesticide and conducting 3,200 specific interventions. These demo farms engaged over 32,706 farmers in learning and adopting sustainable farming techniques.

Collaborations and Partnerships

In the last quarter, SSP strengthened partnerships with local government and private agencies to offer training, exposure, and opportunities for women farmers. These collaborations provided women farmers with essential skills, resources, and exposure to improve productivity and adopt climate-resilient practices.

- **Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS), Ambalavayal:** 375 women farmers from Wayanad were trained in water conservation and precision farming, learning about low-cost drip irrigation, water-saving tillage, and accessing government support for sustainable farming technologies.
- **SAI Agro Innovations Peer Learning Exchange:** A peer exchange program enabled 30 women farmers to learn various climate-smart farming methods directly from industry experts.
- **Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Latur Exposure Visit:** 175 participants took part in a visit to learn about innovative agricultural practices and sustainable farming techniques, gaining hands-on insights from technical staff of the Department of Agriculture.

Government Scheme Convergence

In the last quarter, SSP empowered women leaders (Sakhi's) to help their communities access essential farming resources, loans, and government support. By promoting SSP's initiatives, these women leaders have strengthened connections with government agencies, fostering greater resource access and support for sustainable farming.

- **Horticulture Development through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS):** SSP's leaders mobilized 1,000 farmers to engage in horticulture under MGNREGS, with 670 applications submitted, covering a potential 331 hectares in Maharashtra. This initiative supports crop diversification for improved income stability.
- **Facilitating Access to Farming Equipment:** Sakhis assisted farmers with 5,000 applications for spray pumps, resulting in 1,000 spray pumps being distributed in villages. These resources, paired with training, empowered farmers to implement sustainable crop management practices.
- **Cattle Insurance Campaign and Weather Advisory Services:** SSP collaborated with the government-owned Agriculture Insurance Company of India to provide cattle insurance for 15 women farmers. Additionally, a weather-based advisory service was launched, offering weekly updates to help farmers optimize cultivation practices based on forecasted conditions.

Baselining, Monitoring and Evaluation

In this quarter, SSP continued its focus on effective monitoring by systematically recording and analyzing data to inform program decisions. Using the mGrant app, SSP captured comprehensive information on 1,152 mobilized farmers. This data includes household demographics, agricultural practices, inputs (such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides), farm by-products, assets, equipment, and insights into farmers' decision-making processes and training received. By leveraging this detailed, data-driven approach, SSP can better track progress and refine strategies to meet women farmers' evolving needs effectively.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER



CLEAN ENERGY

Awareness Raising and Sensitisation

In the last quarter, SSP advanced its clean energy initiatives, focusing on bio digesters and raising awareness on clean energy:

- **Promotion and Installation of Bio Digesters:** SSP facilitated the installation of 389 bio digesters in Maharashtra, with 510 villages reached through last-mile promotion efforts led by women micro-entrepreneurs, empowering them as clean energy advocates.
- **Development of Energy Hubs:** SSP initiated the establishment of Energy Hubs in Bihar and Maharashtra to further sustainable energy adoption. A baseline household survey was conducted across 100 villages to assess current energy practices and energy efficiency.
- **Subsidized Biogas Plant Distribution:** Through carbon credit support, SSP offered biogas plants at subsidized rates in Bihar, selling 30 units to farmers as a clean and cost-effective alternative to LPG and firewood for cooking.

These efforts collectively promote clean energy use, empower women leaders, and support sustainable practices across rural communities.





Training Sakhis on Clean Energy

In the last quarter, SSP trained 150 newly selected women leaders, or "Sakhis," to become clean energy entrepreneurs across previously unreached villages of Bihar. These Sakhis received orientation on SSP's mission, clean energy solutions, and entrepreneurship skills, equipping them to promote and sell affordable solar and other clean energy products within their communities. Through community meetings and village outreach, these women began their entrepreneurial journeys, building financial independence while promoting environmentally friendly technologies. SSP also strengthened 62 Sakhis' entrepreneurial capacity with training on biogas benefits, particularly the use of biogas slurry to enhance soil productivity, reduce farming costs, and support organic farming for family health. This focus has led to an increase in farmers using biogas slurry on their fields, rising from 25% to nearly 60% in Nalanda and Gaya Districts. Additionally, SSP hosted a workshop in Rajgir, Bihar, as part of the SAREEP Project for 25 Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) representatives. The session addressed climate change and the drawbacks of chemical farming, introducing biogas as a sustainable solution that lowers health risks, reduces carbon emissions, and offers economic benefits. The FPO leaders committed to advocating biogas as a key solution to improve community health, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience.

Collaborations and Partnerships

In the last quarter, SSP strengthened partnerships and collaborated with local government and private agencies to enhance environmental and energy initiatives:

- **Tree Plantation Campaign:** On Indian Renewable Energy Day, five Sakhis approached the Block Agriculture and Horticulture Officers in Bihar to seek support for a large-scale tree planting initiative. In response, 1,000 saplings were provided and distributed across five villages. These saplings, focusing on fruit-bearing and plantation trees, were given to rural women, along with information on their environmental and economic benefits. The initiative emphasized the importance of tree care, sustainability, and ecological balance.
- **Partnership with Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL):** SSP formed a partnership with the power-company EESL to bring energy-efficient products to rural communities in Maharashtra and Bihar. A two-day training session for 62 women micro-entrepreneurs focused on energy conservation and the benefits of energy-efficient devices. These entrepreneurs are now equipped to promote and sell energy-saving products, while also contributing to national conservation efforts and gaining income and respect within their communities.

Through these collaborations, SSP continues to foster sustainable practices and economic empowerment at the grassroots level, building valuable relationships with both government and private sector partners.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER



WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT



Awareness Raising and Sensitisation

In the last quarter, SSP focused on raising awareness about women's entrepreneurship, livelihoods diversification, and economic empowerment across various communities:

- **Community Awareness and Mobilization:** SSP organized interactive sessions and local community events, reaching 3,173 women in 88 villages in Maharashtra. These events, led by Community Resource Persons (CRPs), encouraged women to explore entrepreneurship, emphasizing financial independence and the importance of diversifying livelihoods, and introduced them to entrepreneurship opportunities, financial literacy, and the role of farmer-producer organizations, thereby laying the foundation for deeper engagement in self-reliance and business development.
- **Targeted Awareness in Challenging Areas:** In the Udgir block, known for its hilly terrains and lower household densities, CRPs conducted awareness sessions that received an encouraging response from Banjara families, despite the unique challenges.

- **Midline Survey and Collaboration:** The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) planned an end-line evaluation of the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), conducted by DRS India. In the Bhokardan block of Jalna district, where SVEP is at the midline stage, a midline evaluation was conducted. A meeting with BRC members was held at the BRC Bhokardan office on August 31, 2024, followed by a sample survey in five villages from September 1-5, 2024. This provided valuable insights into community needs and the progress of SSP's initiatives.

These efforts are instrumental in encouraging women to take steps toward economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and livelihood diversification.

Entrepreneurship Development Training and Mentorship

SSP made significant strides in empowering women entrepreneurs and promoting livelihood diversification during the last quarter:



WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

• Training Programs and Outreach:

- Conducted basic business training for 580 women across multiple regions, equipping them with skills in business planning, market analysis, financial management, and legal compliance. Organized advanced EDP sessions for 370 women to scale existing businesses, focusing on advanced financial strategies, value addition, and supply chain management. Delivered agri-allied training to 222 participants, covering livestock activities like dairy, goatery, and poultry to diversify incomes and strengthen rural livelihoods.

• Entrepreneurial Achievements:

- 218 new enterprises launched in Bhokardan and Jalna, with 46 allied businesses initiated by existing entrepreneurs. In Wayanad, Kerala, 24 participants trained in marigold cultivation earned Rs. 6,000 in two months after linking with the women-led Keravriksha FPO, demonstrating quick returns through innovative livelihood projects.

• Capacity Building and Support:

- Two-day refresher training for trainers and CRPs in Bhokardan and two orientation sessions in Udgir equipped field facilitators to better serve communities. Mentorship and support for business formalities, credit linkages, and licensing were provided to 65 women entrepreneurs, fostering financial independence.

• Community Impact:

- Completed 13 training batches across 31 villages, engaging 377 women and introducing climate-resilient farming practices. Promoted economic empowerment by focusing on value-added production, attractive packaging, and retail marketing to boost product visibility and sales.

SSP's efforts underscore the importance of financial independence and livelihood diversification in fostering long-term economic empowerment for women in rural communities.

Peer Learning Exchanges

Keravriksha Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) organized a learning exchange with Kudumbashree Home Shop in Perambra on July 16, 2024, to explore home marketing and entrepreneurship models. Inspired by this visit, Keravriksha is adopting the Home Shop model in Kottathara, Wayanad district. Six women were trained as business promoters in marketing strategies, followed by a household survey to understand community needs. Through household visits and order collection, four business promoters earned an additional income of ₹5,000 each, showcasing the model's potential for enhancing local livelihoods.

Women-led Farmer Producer Organisations

- **Formation of FPOs:** SSP initiated the formation of two women-led Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in Jalna District - Utkarsh Mahila Farmers Producer Organization in Bhokardan and Unique Sashakt Mahila Shetkari Utpadan Sanghatana in Jalna, fostering women's leadership in agriculture.
- **Value Chain Development:** In Osmanabad district, SSP conducted two Value Chain Promotional Meetings in the leet cluster, engaging 95 women from six villages. These meetings emphasized collective efforts in production, processing, and marketing to strengthen women's roles in the agricultural value chain.
- **Collective Action:** In Osmanabad District, women entrepreneurs established three producer groups to streamline production and marketing, enabling resource pooling, cost reduction, and enhanced market bargaining power. They focused on identifying high-demand products and creating efficient supply chains to maximize profitability for women farmers.

Collaborations and Partnerships

• Skill Development and Training:

- SSP conducted a milk processing training for paneer production in collaboration with KVK, Badnapur, Jalna, benefiting women in Bhokardan and enhancing dairy livelihoods. SSP partnered with MITCON Engineering and Consultancy Services and the District Industries Center (DIC) to provide free training in the ready-made garment sector to 60 women from special categories in Dongav and Hattur, South Solapur. Participants received government-recognized certificates, boosting their confidence and employability. SSP collaborated with the Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) to deliver an Entrepreneurship Development Program and dairy training for 30 women, supporting them in accessing government schemes and bank loans.



WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

- **Strategic Collaborations:** The Sarayi Sakhi Farmers Producer Organisation in Maharashtra partnered with DeHaat to improve the procurement of seeds, fertilizers, and organic inputs, ensuring high-quality resources for women farmers and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Local to Local Dialogues

SSP fostered open communication between women leaders, entrepreneurs, and local authorities, enabling women to share achievements, address challenges, and negotiate for greater benefits. This collaborative approach enhances support networks and encourages proactive participation in economic development.

- **Block-Level Dialogue Workshops:** SSP conducted three workshops in Bhoom, engaging 280 women and key stakeholders, including local government representatives and business experts. These workshops focused on challenges in rural entrepreneurship, sharing experiences, and exploring government schemes to support women entrepreneurs.
- **Village-Level Dialogues:** Organized dialogue workshops in 31 villages, engaging 760 stakeholders, including Gram Panchayat members, Sarpanchs, Gram Sevaks, and Sakhis. These sessions aimed to raise awareness about SSP's entrepreneurship programs, facilitate access to government schemes, and promote credit linkages.

Resource Mobilisation

- **Community Enterprise Fund (CEF):** Through the CEF, the Block Resource Center (BRC), Bhokardan distributed INR 89 lakh to 254 women entrepreneurs, supporting their business growth and sustainability. They also approved 132 business plans, amounting to INR 59 lakh, to strengthen local enterprises.
- **Sarayi Sakhi FPO Partnership with Samhita Foundation:** The Maharashtra-based Sarayi Sakhi FPO partnered leveraged innovative CSR-compliant financial tools, including Returnable Grants and Credit Guarantees, to make capital and credit accessible to underserved women entrepreneurs and collectives. They Provided INR 5 lakh in Returnable Grants (RG) to 50 women farmers as seed capital, enabling them to start or sustain businesses year-round.

Distribution of Inputs

These initiatives contribute to enhancing productivity, improving the quality of agricultural produce, and reducing costs, thereby empowering women-led agricultural collectives.

- **Agricultural Machinery Distribution:** As part of the SBI Foundation project, SSP provided agricultural machinery (tractor, trolley, tiller, and sowing machine) to Swayam Sakhi Shetmaal Producer Organisation in Ausa, Latur, and Manjiri Sakhi Producer Organisation in Dharashiv. This equipment aims to reduce cultivation costs for farmers and benefit the FPO shareholders.
- **Cleaning and Sorting Machines:** Distributed cleaning and sorting machines to Vijayalakshmi Sakhi FPO in Tuljapur and Prema Gopalan FPO in Kalamb, Dharashiv. These machines ensure high-quality produce by removing impurities like dust, dirt, and damaged grains, reducing spoilage and waste. Standardized sorting improves the quality and marketability of the products, benefiting both local and export markets.

Government Scheme Convergence

In the last quarter, SSP's women leaders worked with local government departments and communities, to ensure that beneficial government schemes and opportunities reached grassroots women.

- A total of 120 women benefited from various entrepreneurship-related government schemes, improving their skills and promoting financial independence.
- Three spice production units operated by women in Kottathara received FSSAI licenses to produce different masala powders, enabling them to meet food safety standards and expand their businesses.

Baselining, Monitoring and Evaluation

To track the economic impact of SSP's entrepreneurship initiatives, income data for approximately 1,300 entrepreneurs has been updated in hard-copy registers across Jalna and Bhokardan blocks as of September 2024. This data collection will help monitor income growth and assess the success of these enterprises.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER



WATER CONSERVATION

Through the hard work of the Sakhis and the active participation of the community, SSP's Marathwada District Transformation Model is building a strong foundation for sustainable water management in Dharashiv. By encouraging women to take on leadership roles, the project supports a community-based approach to solve water challenges, ensuring a better future for rural areas.

Awareness Raising and Sensitisation

In the last quarter, SSP has made significant progress in promoting water conservation and watershed management through community-based awareness and capacity-building initiatives.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA):

SSP's Sakhis led water awareness and PRA activities across 77 villages in Dharashiv district, engaging women farmers in understanding the importance of water for both daily use and farming. These sessions included practical tips on water conservation, discussions on challenges, and site visits to existing water conservation structures like check dams, recharge pits, and wells. The participants identified potential locations for new structures, contributing to informed water management planning for their villages.

Capacity Building Workshops: SSP organised five capacity-building workshops for Gram Panchayat (GP) members, focusing on water planning and budgeting to enhance their resource management skills.

Training: Sakhis Watershed Management Training: SSP organized a significant Sakhis Training on Watershed Management in Osmanabad. Held from September 18 to 20, 2024, this training engaged 50 women leaders (Sakhis) from five blocks—Dharashiv, Kallam, Washi, Tuljapur, and Lohara—and focused on enhancing their skills in water conservation, watershed management, and utilizing government schemes. The aim was to empower these women to lead sustainable water practices within their communities.

Training FPOs on Water Conservation: Two bi-annual training sessions were conducted for Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) members, providing them with essential knowledge and skills to improve their agricultural practices and manage water resources effectively.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER

Local to Local Dialogues

SSP organized a district-level dialogue workshop in Osmanabad, bringing together government officials to address challenges faced by villages in accessing government schemes. The workshop facilitated collaboration between local communities and government representatives. In addition, six advocacy workshops were held to improve access to government schemes, connecting Gram Panchayat (GP) members with block officials, including the Taluka Agriculture Officer and Block Development Officer. Key issues discussed included difficulties in implementing horticulture crop plantations under the MGNREGS and Bhusaheb Fundkar Falbag Lagvad scheme, with farmers reporting a lack of support from local officials. In response, district officials committed to taking action against those hindering plantation estimates and water conservation efforts.



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



In the last quarter, SSP facilitated significant progress in promoting women's empowerment through leadership development by organizing two Women Initiative to Learn and Lead (WILL) network meetings in the leet and Pathrud clusters of the Bhoom region. These meetings engaged 182 women from 10 villages and served as a platform for rural women entrepreneurs to collaborate, share success stories, and discuss the challenges they face in their entrepreneurial journeys.

The WILL network meetings not only fostered peer learning and mutual support but also strengthened connections between women entrepreneurs and key external stakeholders, including government bodies and financial institutions. This networking provided participants with access to valuable resources and support, further empowering them to scale their businesses and lead social change in their communities.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER

Strategic MIS Enhancements

SSP has made significant strides in improving data management and project monitoring through the implementation of Management Information Systems (MIS). A training session was conducted for 45 participants including Sakhis, Super Sakhis, Block Coordinators, and Livelihood Coordinators, focusing on the basics of MIS, the use of the MGrant app for field data collection, and accurate form completion within the platform. Led by the MIS Director and Manager, the training emphasized the importance of MIS data in tracking project progress.

In collaboration with Fidelity Asia Pacific Foundation and Dhwan RIS, SSP is developing a Central Management Information System (MIS) and Donor Management System, utilizing Superset software for data visualization. Field teams from nine projects have been trained on using the MGrant App for effective project tracking, baseline surveys, and data management. Program Managers are also being trained on the MGrant Portal to improve project monitoring and decision-making. This system aims to strengthen SSP's ability to track progress, assess impacts, and enhance decision-making for sustainable community development.



GENDER TRANSFORMATION



SSP has made significant strides in promoting gender equality in Osmanabad District through education and community development initiatives. Key activities include:

1. Meena Raju Manch (MRM) Program: Supported by UNICEF, the MRM program reached 10 schools across Dharashiv district, fostering discussions and activities aimed at breaking traditional gender norms. 314 children participated in these sessions, with 46 villages and 50 schools impacted.
2. Training and Capacity Building: A four-day training session for 22 community facilitators was conducted in August 2024, focused on promoting gender-transformative approaches. The training included expert sessions by CORO India, UNICEF, and MAVA.

3. Community and Educational Engagement:

- 25 community facilitators were trained to support teachers in implementing gender equality activities.
- 50 School Management Committee (SMC) members were oriented on advocating for gender equality within schools.
- 100 Gram Panchayat members were sensitized to gender issues, empowering them to drive local change.
- 10 teachers received specialized training on fostering an inclusive school environment.

These efforts aim to challenge gender stereotypes, build a supportive network for gender equality, and create lasting social change within rural communities of Osmanabad.



MAJOR EVENTS

SSP's Leader Speaks at the Event on 'Empowering Grassroots Leadership for Transformative Change'

On June 26, 2024, the Huairou Commission, in partnership with Oxfam Novib, hosted the first of three FairForAll Peer Learning Sessions on Women's Economic Empowerment. This virtual session focused on "How grassroots organizing and leadership contribute to transformative and systems change in value chains." It brought together over 50 participants from Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America to exchange insights and strategies on fostering community leadership and promoting fair, just value chains.

Dilshad Tamboli from Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), India was a panelist at the event, sharing her perspectives on women's economic empowerment and leadership. She spoke about the formation of women-led Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in India, which are integrating women farmers into rural value chains. She underscored the significance of grassroots women's increasing collaboration with local governments to improve access to technical knowledge, inputs, and schemes that support entrepreneurship development.

Through the powerful contributions of the speakers, the session illustrated how organizing women into collectives is a crucial strategy for long-term economic empowerment and sustainable value chain development.

Distribution of Agricultural Machinery



On July 25, 2024, as part of the SBI Foundation's LEAP project, SSP distributed agricultural machinery to the Swayam Sakhi Shetmaal FPO in Ausa, Latur, and the Manjiri Sakhi Producer FPO in Dharashiv. The initiative aimed to enhance the livelihoods of women farmers in Dharashiv and Latur by developing four women-led farmer producer organizations.

The event was attended by 39 shareholders and directors from the Swayam Sakhi Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), along with representatives from ATMA and the Agriculture Department. The equipment will benefit nine farmer producer groups and 1,514 shareholders focused on the dairy value chain, providing access to affordable machinery that saves time, reduces fodder cultivation costs, and improves livestock health and nutrition. The machinery provided - tractor, trolley, tiller, and sowing machine - is intended to help reduce cultivation costs for shareholders and other farmers in a cost-effective way.

MAJOR EVENTS

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples celebrated by SSP



On the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, SSP hosted a special celebration at Kottathara Gram Panchayat, Wayanad, Kerala, on August 9, 2024. The event brought together 50 grassroots women leaders from indigenous communities from various wards of Kottathara Gram Panchayat.

As part of the initiative, SSP also mobilized over 250 grassroots women farmers to start implementing chemical-free vegetable gardens near their homes. To support this, Sakhi leaders organized seed collection and exchange programs. The collected seeds were distributed to these women farmers with the condition that after harvesting, they must preserve a portion of the seeds for their own cultivation and exchange them with other women farmers in future cycles. This initiative is aimed at strengthening local agricultural practices and promoting self-sustainability.

SSP Celebrates National Farmers' Day



On August 17th, a Farmers Day celebration was conducted across 10 villages, where the concepts of Women-Centered Resilient Farming (WCRF) were shared with women farmers in Wayanad, Kerala. The event highlighted the significance of the day and the importance of agriculture in their lives. A seed exchange initiative was also held, allowing women to share seeds they had collected among themselves, promoting biodiversity and community collaboration.



MAJOR EVENTS

Empowering Women and the Environment: SSP's Tree Plantation Campaign in Gaya District



SSP, in collaboration with its dedicated Sakhis, successfully implemented a tree plantation campaign across five villages in Gaya district, Bihar, from August to September. The campaign was launched on August 20th, in observance of Akshay Urja Diwas, with the primary aim of raising awareness about climate change, clean energy, and environmental conservation. In preparation for the campaign, SSP's Sakhis engaged in important discussions with the Mohara Block Agriculture and Horticulture Officers. As a result of these discussions, 1,000 fruit tree saplings were provided free of charge. These saplings were then distributed to women farmers, who also took part in educational sessions on climate change and environmental protection. This tree plantation initiative was part of SSP's broader efforts under the Misereor-supported "Clean Energy Project, Bihar," which focuses on improving access to clean energy and promoting nature-based solutions through women entrepreneurs in underserved villages in Bihar.

SSP Hosts TISS Students for a Learning Exchange on Women's Empowerment and Grassroots Leadership

SSP had the pleasure of hosting students and a professor from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) - Tuljapur at our Osmanabad office on August 29, 2024. As a leading Civil Society Organisation (CSO) in the region, the students learnt about SSP's history and inspiring work in women's empowerment and leadership to bring about positive change in the community.

Naseem Shaikh and Godavari Dange shared their experiences and knowledge, gained from decades of work, with the students. Following the discussion, the students also visited villages in Tuljapur Block and interacted with women leaders and Gram Panchayat members to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that SSP's work has had over the years.

Through these interactions, students gained valuable insights into the power of grassroots movements and the critical role that women's leadership plays in driving sustainable change. SSP remains committed to fostering such exchanges, as they not only inspire the next generation of social change-makers but also strengthen our collective efforts toward building resilient and empowered communities.

Poshan Rakhi Campaign: Empowering Women for Health & Nutrition





MAJOR EVENTS

This Raksha Bandhan, SSP's incredible women leaders in Washim District, Maharashtra, led the way in promoting health and nutrition through a unique 'Poshan Rakhi' campaign. Across 34 villages and 6 Blocks, they inspired and engaged with teachers, anganwadi workers, and adolescent girls to create eco-friendly rakhis using healthy pulses and grains. These special rakhis can be planted afterward, turning a beautiful tradition into a sustainable act!

The campaign aimed to raise awareness about the importance of a balanced diet and how kitchen gardens can be a vital source of nutritious food for families. We're proud to share that 357 adolescent girls participated in this campaign, creating a total of 435 'poshan rakhis.' SSP continues to empower communities with the knowledge and tools to lead healthier, more sustainable lives. By fostering awareness and encouraging innovative practices, we are building a future where health and nutrition are at the forefront of every household in Washim District.

Empowering Women Farmers: SSP's FPOs Showcase Traditional Wild Vegetables at Ranbhaji Mahotsav



Three women-led Farmer Producer Organisations from Dharashiv - Manjiri Sakhi FPO, Vijayalakshmi Sakhi FPO, and Prema Gopalan Sakhi FPO - participated in the Ranbhaji Mahotsav in Dharashiv, organized by the ATMA department on 28th August 2024. The purpose of this exhibition was to showcase and promote the diverse and nutritious wild vegetables (Ranbhaji) traditionally found and consumed in rural and tribal areas of Maharashtra. It also provided a platform for local farmers to sell Ranbhaji directly to consumers, supporting their livelihoods and preserving traditional practices. Outcome/achievement- One of our FPOs, Manjiri Sakhi Producer FPO in Dharashiv, won 1st prize at the Ranbhaji Mahotsav. A total of 35 women participated across three FPOs, with 7 producer groups setting up food and vegetable stalls. Through this Ranbhaji Mahotsav, all participants collectively earned around ₹6,000.

SSP Celebrates National Nutrition Week



SSP's Sakhis organised National Nutrition Week celebrations on September 7, 2024, in collaboration with the Primary Health Center (PHC) Valal and the health inspector from Kottathara, Wayanad. This celebration aimed to raise awareness about nutrition and health, further emphasizing the connection between sustainable farming practices and improved dietary habits within the community.

From Struggles to Success: Mamta Dalvi's Journey as a Grassroots Entrepreneur and Empowerment Leader

Mamta Dalvi, a grassroots leader and entrepreneur from Viregaon village in Maharashtra's Jalna District, faced significant challenges early in life. Financial hardships compelled her to work as a maid in Mumbai after marriage. Tragically, in 2021, Mamta lost her husband, leaving her as the sole provider for her family at just 27 years old. Determined to make a better life, she used her savings to purchase a small plot of land in Viregaon and launched a tailoring business.

Initially, Mamta struggled to make ends meet, and her income from tailoring was insufficient for her family's basic needs. In 2023, she attended a village meeting where she learned about Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) and the Startup Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP). Through SVEP, she received training in advanced tailoring techniques, financial management, and marketing strategies. She also secured a loan of Rs. 20,000, which she invested back into her business. With new skills and financial support, Mamta diversified her services, expanding to various garment types and offering tailoring classes to other women in her village. Her improved craftsmanship and reliable service earned her a monthly income of around Rs. 12,000. This success not only enhanced her family's quality of life but also inspired other women in Viregaon to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities, sparking a wave of small businesses in the village. Now, as a mentor, Mamta aims to expand her business by establishing a boutique and a training center to teach modern tailoring techniques to women in her community.



Akanksha Mahanavar's Journey to Empowerment and Sustainable Farming

Akanksha Mahanavar, a 25-year-old from Dudhodi village in Maharashtra, returned home during the Covid pandemic, facing financial struggles due to unproductive farmland and lack of irrigation. In 2022, she joined SSP's Entrepreneurship Development Program, which helped her diversify into the dairy business. With a loan from her Self Help Group, she purchased her first cow and gradually expanded her herd to five cows and two goats, generating a monthly income of Rs. 20,000 from milk production. In 2023, Akanksha participated in SSP's Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) training, which inspired her to adopt sustainable organic farming practices. She convinced her husband to grow nutritious vegetables and established two vermicompost beds for organic fertilizer production. Additionally, she began cultivating animal fodder to improve livestock feed and cut costs. Through SSP's network, Akanksha accessed government schemes, allowing her to dig a well on their farm via the MGNREGS scheme. Her journey exemplifies how empowering grassroots women through entrepreneurship can transform their households and communities.



Rohini Pawar: Transforming from Homemaker to Entrepreneur and Community Leader in Tandulwadi

Rohini Pawar, a resident of Tandulwadi village in Latur District, Maharashtra, underwent a remarkable transformation from homemaker to farmer and entrepreneur after joining Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP). In 2023, she learned about SSP during a village meeting and engaged in training on climate-resilient farming, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. Inspired by a visit to a model farm in Nagarsoga village, Rohini convinced her family to support her decision to practice organic farming on 1.5 acres of their land. She began cultivating vegetables, grains, and pulses using sustainable techniques taught by SSP. Additionally, Rohini secured a loan from her Self Help Group (SHG) to diversify her ventures into milk production by purchasing a cow and a buffalo. Now running a successful small-scale milk business that earns her an average of Rs. 8,000 per month, she plans to expand her cultivation to include vegetables, fruits, and flowers for market sale. As a community leader, Rohini has shared her knowledge with over 50 women farmers, organizing training sessions on climate-resilient farming and entrepreneurship. Her initiatives have inspired 27 women to adopt the one-acre farming model, and several have installed biogas units and vermicompost beds. Additionally, she provided soil testing services to nine women farmers, empowering them to make informed decisions about their farming practices. Today, Rohini stands out as a leader and changemaker in her community, actively supporting other women in their entrepreneurial journeys.





Empowering Communities through Water Conservation

In a remarkable display of leadership, SSP's grassroots women from Ansurda village have set a new standard for water conservation. Their efforts were recognised during a visit by Central Nodal Officer of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan, Mr. Ashok Rao, and Scientist Sayali Temburne from the Central Ground Water Board who visited this model village to view firsthand how women's leadership transformed Ansurda, located in the prone Osmanabad District to a water secure village. From desilting rivers to creating farm ponds, constructing continuous contour trenches (CCT), and farm bunding over 50 hectares, these women demonstrated the true power of community action!

As part of this visit, SSP also collaborated with the local Soil and Water Conservation Department to organize a tree plantation drive, attended by over 70 women leaders and community members. Mr. Ashok Rao offered valuable guidance and pledged ongoing support for their initiatives, reaffirming the importance of local leadership in sustainable water management.

The event also saw participation from key officials, including the District Soil and Water Conservation Officer, District Forest Officer, and others, highlighting the collective commitment to a sustainable future.



Laxmi Birajdar: A Pioneer of Change in Nimbargi Village

Laxmi Birajdar is a resilient woman leader, entrepreneur, and farmer from Nimbargi village, Solapur District, Maharashtra. Despite the challenges posed by her conservative background, Laxmi joined her village Self-Help Group (SHG) and rose to become its President. In 2022, she joined SSP as a Swayam Sakhi, promoting the Women-led Climate Resilient Farming model and clean energy solutions.

On her 3.5-acre farm, Laxmi has embraced organic farming, dedicating 50% of her land to organic vegetables and pulses, improving both her crop yield and her family's health. But her impact doesn't stop there - Laxmi is also inspiring change in five nearby villages, advocating for organic farming and biogas technology. Thanks to her relentless efforts, 25 farmers have installed biogas units, and 6 have fully transitioned to organic farming. She has also empowered women farmers to access loans worth Rs.75 lakh, fueling their entrepreneurial dreams.

Laxmi's journey is a testament to the power of determination and community leadership. Today, she is not only a contributor to her household's income but also a vital voice in local village development, ensuring that women farmers are heard and respected.



Empowering Women in Padharewadi: Aparna Humbe and the Village Action Group's Fight for Community Change

In the village of Padharewadi, located in Bhoom Block of Osmanabad District, Maharashtra, a remarkable journey of women's empowerment began in 2021. Aparna Humbe, supported by SSP and driven by her passion for community development and leadership, facilitated the formation of the Village Action Group (VAG). The group started with 10 women from different communities, all committed to creating positive change.

One of the VAG's first steps was linking their efforts to the Gram Panchayat to ensure that every woman was connected to local governance. Their unity quickly proved effective. In 2022, when the village went without electricity for two months, the VAG took action. They lobbied at the Gram Panchayat and the Electricity Board, successfully restoring power to their homes.

As the group gained recognition, they were invited to participate in community meetings, offering the perspectives of women who had often been left unheard. In August 2024, Aparna led 20 women to a critical Gram Sabha meeting to address issues like poor road conditions, blocked drains, the non-functioning anganwadi, and the lack of clean water. Thanks to their relentless advocacy, these problems are now being addressed: road repairs and drain cleaning have been approved, and a water filtration plant will be installed.





Inspiring Change through Clean Energy: Kamala Devi's Journey

Kamala Devi, from Khaira village in Nalanda District of Bihar, is an entrepreneur and leader who is transforming her community with innovative clean energy solutions! Faced with high LPG costs and financial struggles, Kamala used cow dung for cooking, despite its health risks. In 2022, she discovered the benefits of biogas through Swayam Shikshan Prayog and convinced her family to install a unit on their farm. Thanks to training from SSP and technical partner Sistema.bio, Kamala now enjoys better health and saves money each month.

Kamala also uses the biogas slurry as biofertilizer, transitioning to organic farming. Inspired by her success, she promotes biogas in her village, hosting meetings and farm visits. In 2023, she hosted an exposure visit for the NABARD-supported Silao FPO, inspiring more women to embrace clean energy. Today, 16 farmers from 6 villages have installed biogas units, creating 500,000 litres of organic slurry annually, reducing chemical dependence on their farms. Kamala Devi's journey highlights the power of affordable clean energy in rural India and the incredible impact of grassroots women leaders. Kamala Devi's inspiring work is being carried out with the ongoing support of SSP through USAID's South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP) Partnership Fund, which aims to empower women leaders in Bihar and Maharashtra, India by scaling up access to innovative energy efficient solutions for rural populations through a women led micro-entrepreneurship model.





Innovative Solutions Offer Hope Amidst Water Scarcity

During World Water Week 2024, SSP's work was featured in an article by Outlook Planet. "Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) collaborates with women farmers of the Osmanabad (Dharashiv) district in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra to facilitate the implementation of a pioneering approach known as one-acre farming. Aimed to encourage farmers to embrace water-efficient crops and techniques on one-acre plots, the model involves utilising a part of their ancestral property to cultivate food crops, including vegetables, millets, and pulses. This agricultural practice is crucial for guaranteeing food security to families in drought-prone areas. The efficacy of this method has resulted in its widespread acceptance among numerous women, who have showcased the advantages of this model to their families and have begun implementing it on more expansive tracts of land. SSP has assisted women farmers in expanding their market reach by establishing farmer-producer groups." Read the full article here:

<https://www.outlookbusiness.com/planet/opinions/innovative-solutions-offer-hope-amidst-water-scarcity?>

Recognition and Awards

In the last quarter, SSP was widely recognized for its impactful work in watershed management approaches that integrate and promote rural development, receiving commendations from esteemed officials such as the District Magistrate, District Agriculture Officer, Soil and Water Conservation Office, and the District Superintendent of Police. These appreciation letters acknowledge SSP's effective implementation of government schemes, its dedication to promoting organic farming, and its role in empowering women in rural communities.



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