

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



SAMAJ PRAGATI SAHAYOG
VILLAGE JATASHANKAR, TEHSIL BAGLI, DISTRICT DEWAS,
MADHYA PRADESH- 455227

Contents

Mission and Vision Statement	10
1. Theory of Change	11
Highlights Of The Year	13

2. Water Management

2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM)	30
2.3 Block Level Planning	36
2.4 Challenges	38
2.4.1 Challenges with Watershed development programme	38
2.4.2 Challenges in the PIM Programme	39

3. Nature Positive Management of Agriculture

3.1 Major Activities	42
3.1.1 Village/Cluster Level Training and Capacity Building	42
3.2 Training and Capacity Building of 'Mitaans' (CRPs)	43
3.3 Promoting Micro Irrigation Facilities by providing Drip Irrigation Kits and Sprinkler Irrigation Kits	46
3.4 SHMP Soil health management practices activities	46
3.5 Silt Application	48
3.6 Soil Testing	48
3.7 Varietal Trials	49
3.8 Kitchen Garden Setups	50

3.9	Champion Farmer Trainings and Exposure Visits	51
3.10	Farmer Field School	51
3.11	Bio-Resource Centres	53
3.12	Scale and Impact	54
3.13	Advanced Bio-Resource Centres	55
3.14	Other NPM/IPM Activities	55
3.15	Major Collaborations and Achievements	59
3.15.1	Collaboration with Indian Institute of Soil Science	59
3.15.2	Research Paper Published-Paper on Dollar Chickpea	60
3.15.3	Indigo Cultivation Pilot Project (Punjabura)	60
3.15.4	Awarded by NABARD for the JIVA Project (Udainagar)	61
3.15.5	Mobile Application Adoption	62
3.15.6	A Training Manual on Farmer Field School	62
3.15.7	A comprehensive training manual on	63
	NPM Chilli Production has been prepared	63
3.15.7.1	Key Components of the Manual	65
3.16	New Initiatives Undertaken during the Year	67
3.16.1	NPM Chilli Expansion	67
3.16.2	Peer Learning Event to Promote NPM Chilli	70
3.16.3	Setting up Bio Digester Units	72
3.16.4	Training of BRC Members on Entrepreneur Development	73
3.16.5	Diverse Cropping System Model	74
3.16.5.1	What Factors to be considered for designing the DCS	76
3.17	Value Addition Machinery	76
3.17.1	Spiral Grader Machine	77

3.17.2 Oil Extraction Machine (Cold Press)	77
3.17.3 Groundnut Sheller Machine	77
3.18 Introduction of Hand Seeder / Hand Weeder Machines to reduce Drugery	78
3.19 Major Challenges	79

4. Self-Help Group and Livelihoods Programme

4.1 Location-Wise Data of SHG Programme	82
4.2 Achievements and Recognition of the SHG Program	83
4.2.1 Digital Literacy- Computer centers	83
4.2.2 Digital literacy (with Android mobile phones)	86
4.3 Capacity Building	86
4.3.1 Leadership Training	87
4.3.2 Members Training	87
4.4 GBM & Mahila Diwas Celebration	89
4.5 Kirana Distribution	91
4.6 Entrepreneurship Development Programme	92
4.7 Surplus Distribution	92
4.8 Significant Initiatives	93
4.8.1 Best SHG Member Award	93
4.8.2 Stationery Distribution at Discounted Rates	94
4.9 Philanthropic Activities Undertaken This Year	96
4.10 Challenges	102

5. Commodity Aggregation

5.1 Opportunities	104
5.2 Challenges	105
5.3.1 Rabi Seed Data	105
5.3.2 Kharif Data	106
5.3.3 Aggregation Data	107
5.4 Result	108

6. Livestock Management

6.1 Introduction	109
6.2 Livestock Program Outreach	110
6.3 Major Activities	110
6.3.1 Member & Beneficiary Engagement	110
6.3.2 Meeting & Training	112
6.3.3 Health Care Service Center	112
6.4 Building animal shed for the demonstration for cattle, goat and poultry	115
6.5 Vaccination Activities	118
6.6 Support to Landless, Destitute and Most Vulnerable Families through provision of Goats	120
6.7 Capacity Building of Paravet	121
6.8 Cashless Scheme	121
6.9 Impact the Condition of Reduction Mortality Rate	122
6.10 Interventions Implemented-On time	122

6.11 Challenges of Abortion in Goats	124
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7. Entitlement, Health and Nutrition

7.1 Empowering Women's Voices from Hissedari Sabha to Gram Sabha	125
7.2 Capacity Building and Empowerment	127
7.2.1 Training of Trainers (ToT)	127
7.2.2 Developing Community Leaders	127
7.3 Building Trust and Accountability through Amukh Shivir	129
7.4 Combating Child Malnutrition with Local Solutions	130
7.5 Jowar Utsav: Celebrating Millets for Better Health	132
7.6 Home-Based Nutrition through Kitchen Gardens	133
7.7 Health Camps	135
7.8 Maternal and Child Health	135
7.8.1 The "1000 Days" Program Health	136
7.8.2 Addressing Child Malnutrition	136
7.9 Challenges	138
7.10 Menstrual and Reproductive Health Programme	139
7.10.1 Challenges	144

8. Gender

8.1 Gender Awareness and Advocacy through interactive trainings with community member	146
8.2 Gender Capacity Building within SPS	150

8.3 Playquity	153
8.4 Challenges	155

9. Kumbaya

9.1 2024-2025 at Kumbaya: An Overview	156
9.2 Indigo	157
9.3 New Productions	160
9.4 Design Collaborations	162
9.4.1 Kosala Livelihood and Social Foundation	162
9.4.2 Gumfu Textiles	163
9.4.3 Annie G	164
9.4.4 Rani & Reine	164
9.4.5 Woven	166
9.4.6 Zazi	167
9.4.7 Tanja Leta	168
9.4.8 Numa	168
9.4.9 Abhisaran 2025	170
9.4.10 International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT)	171
9.4.11 Destination Travel Management Company	172
9.4.12 Paws for a Cause	172
9.5 Retail Partnerships	172
9.6 Exhibitions	173

9.7 Impact for FY 2024-25	173
9.8 Financial Report for FY 2024-25	174
9.9 Organisational Challenges	177

10. Community Forest Rights

10.1 Introduction	179
10.2 Plantation and Conservation	180
10.2.1 Plantation Drives and Reforestation Efforts	180
10.2.2 MGNREGA Convergence	182
10.3 Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Harvesting	182
10.4 Training and Capacity Building: Strengthening Local Governance	183
10.4.1 Training on Honey Beekeeping	183
10.4.2 Training on Human-Wildlife Conflicts (April 2024)	184
10.4.3 Training on Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Harvesting	184
10.4.4 Workshops on the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and PESA Act (February 21, 2025)	184
10.5 Government Engagement and Administrative Support	185
10.5.1 Meeting with District Magistrate and Deputy Conservator of Forests (April 2024)	185
10.5.2 Workshop on CFR Implementation (March 2025)	186
10.6 Boundary Demarcation and Land Management	186

11. SPS Community Media

11.1	Introduction	189
11.2	At a Glance: Key Figures for 2024-25	190
11.2	Media Production	191
11.2.1	Documentary Films	191
11.2.2	Animation Films	198
11.2.3	Audio Stories — Terra Tales cnyrh tehu iyVrs iUus	200
11.3	Screenings and Outreach: Taking the Work to the People	202
11.3.1	Mobile Cinema: Taking the Screen to Remote Villages	202
11.3.2	Melghat: Collective Forest Rights Screenings	203
11.3.3	Melghat: Agriculture Programme Screenings	204
11.3.4	Melghat: Health, Nutrition, and Livestock Screenings	205
11.3.5	Bhikangaon Location: Screenings in Focus	207
11.4	Pico Screenings: Films in Fields, Homes, and Meeting Halls	209
11.4.1	Participatory Irrigation Management Screenings	211
11.5	Audio Story Outreach: Stories That Travel	211
11.6	Thematic Focus: The Barjhai Forest Campaign	213
11.6.1	The Plantation Festival: 'A Tree in the Name of Our Ancestors'	213
11.7	Protecting What Was Planted	217
11.8	Forest Fire Awareness	218
11.9	Children, Education, and Connection to Nature	220
11.10	Awards and Recognition	222
11.11	Capacity Building: Expanding Skills and Perspectives	224

11.11.1 VR Camera Workshop	224
11.11.2 Youth Cadre: Refresher Trainings on Forest Fire	226
11.12 SPS Weekly News Magazine	226
11.13 Challenges and Constraints	227
11.14 Looking Ahead	228

12. Network and Partnerships

Support Voluntary Organisation	230
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Mission and Vision Statement

SPS envisions a gender just, equitable and self-reliant society where women have access to and control over financial and other resources. The mission is to build and strengthen people's institutions led by women to support participatory, transparent, and decentralized governance. Along with that, also building capacities of rural poor especially women and youth by promoting and strengthening self-reliant and sustainable institutions to enable them to lead the process of development for better quality of life.

1. Theory of Change

Over the last 3 decades, Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) has grown to be one of India's largest grass-roots initiatives for water and livelihood security, working with its partners on a million acres of land across 72 of our most deprived districts, mainly in the central Indian Adivasi belt. We take inspiration from the life and work of Baba Amte (our Pramukh Sahayogi) who rejected charity and successfully empowered even the most challenged.

SPS is headquartered in a drought-prone, tribal area in the Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh, which typifies the most difficult problems facing the country. We believe that to address India's long-standing problems, we must graduate to an alternative development model based on the principles of equity, sustainability and people's empowerment. Our focus has been on finding sustainable ways of ensuring water security, which provides the foundation for livelihoods and economic growth.

We have tried to address the crisis of Indian agriculture by evolving an alternative low-risk and low-cost approach, reducing dependence on chemical inputs. We have also attempted to work out alternative livelihoods, which reduce the dependence of people on agriculture. We believe that all this work has to be based on strong institutions, led by women. In our view, persistence of poverty in India owes a great deal to the absence of powerful institutions of the poor. We also believe that these institutions have to be led by women.



Experience of development programs all over the world, as also our own work over the last 3 decades, underscores the key role played by women's leadership in their success. For it is only women who show a steadfast commitment to a sustainable path to development, with an abiding commitment of the well-being of communities, with a central focus on improving health and education outcomes. It is also women's institutions that show the requisite courage to enforce the necessary accountability on public systems.

Powerful people's institutions, led by women, help overcome each of these constraints. And we believe that only a strong set of partnerships with communities, PRIs, people's representatives, government, academic, corporates and other NGOs can make civil society action truly powerful in India. The problem has many dimensions and hence solutions have to be multi-pronged, layered on top of and complementing each other and scalable. They should have strong convergence with government programmes and should be able to leverage public investments. SPS has been working with theory of change for the last 3 decades.

We concentrate all our direct interventions in about 574 villages and towns in 8 blocks of 3 districts (Dewas, Khargone and Amravati) in the States of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. This work is not so much a model as a living laboratory of learning for others to adapt to their own areas. To facilitate this mutual learning, in 1998 we set up the Baba Amte Centre for People's Empowerment in tribal village Neemkheda, where our watershed work began in the early 1990s.

Highlights Of The Year

Water Management

- 49 water harvesting structures constructed with 211,555 cubic meters additional water storage created. 496 hectares ridge treatment and 246 drainage line structures built. 156,303 running meters of farm bunding covering 781.5 hectares.
- 74,690 person-days of employment generated with all the activities within the programme.
- 250 sources tested for drinking water source mapping and 17 household filters were distributed.
- DPR: 100 DPRs were distributed in Bagli and Bhikangaon Blocks. 389 number of works with an expenditure amount of 116.69 Lakh rupees in Bagli and 300 number of works with an expenditure amount of 369.42 Lakh rupees in Bhikangaon.
- PIM: 22 hectares brought under command area development this year.
- 20 women-led Water User Groups (WUG) formed with 327 WUG meetings and 3 Water User Association were regulated and 9 meetings were conducted.
- PIM Infrastructure: 1,967 m (Mahigaon), 1,259 m (Paras), 530 m (Chandrakeshwar) watercourses constructed.

Nature Positive Management of Agriculture

- 19,686 farmers practising Nature Positive Management of Agriculture across 297 villages in 10 locations of 3 districts. 13,294.20 hectares under NPM Agriculture with an overall programme saturation: 56.32%.
- 130 new farmers adopted NPM chilli in Bhikangaon. The programme initiated engagement with a Netherlands-based buyer, Verstegen, to explore export market opportunities for NPM chilli. With the engagement and demand buy the buyer, a strategic transition has been initiated toward less pungent varieties such as S4 and native strains.
- 3,145 farmers adopted Diverse Cropping System methods with 6,766.93 hectares under diversified cropping. Farmers integrated 4-5 crops of different families to restore soil microbiome.

Entitlement, Health and Nutrition

- Entitlement, Health and Nutrition Programme is working in 366 villages.
- 2,959 Hissedari Sabha meetings held throughout the year, women's participation in Gram Sabha increased to 44%.
- 836 out of 965 malnourished children showed improvement (88% success) and 550 SAM children referred to NRCs.
- 10 Anganwadis being transformed in Model Anganwadis.
- Menstrual & Reproductive Health: A structured 12-session school module on menstrual and reproductive health was delivered to: 700 adolescent girls in the initial phase, 854 girls in the second phase, and 374 girls during the resumption period.
- More than 2,400 menstrual cups were distributed to women and adolescent girls, promoting a sustainable and cost-effective menstrual solution.
- Over 350 calls were received through the Hello Saathi helpline (before its discontinuation), providing confidential guidance on menstrual and reproductive health concerns.
- Community engagement with mothers was conducted across phases: 420+ mothers participated in early sessions, 800+ mothers in later phases, and 577+ mothers in follow-up engagements.

Gender

- Within the Gender programme, 1,400+ person-days community trainings with 1,200+ person-days internal staff capacity building.
- Legal Preparedness Workshop covering FIR/Zero FIR, women's rights, institutional response.
- Playquity (Ultimate Frisbee initiative): 4 girls trained as Coaches in Training. 70+ adolescent girls now regularly participating.

SPS Community Media

- Community Media: Original productions created in 2024: 12 documentary films, 3 animation films and 3 audio documentaries under the Terra Tales (बदलती जमीन पलटते पन्ने) series.
- Screenings & Community Outreach: 118 films screened during the year where films reached to 35,000+ across 488 villages. 1,700+ screening events conducted. 1,560 interactive small-group screenings with PICO film projectors and 1,027 small-group audio listening sessions.
- SPS films received major recognition across India and internationally:
 1. Best Film – Water Conservation Category at CMS VATAVARAN 12th International Environment & Wildlife Film Festival (2024) for P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani
 2. 2nd Place & Popular Choice Award- Samvaad Conclave 2024 for Jadui Jungle
 3. 3rd Place – Institutional Category at Samvaad Conclave 2024 for Jameen Maa Ka Phool
 4. Official selections at:
 - a. Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF 2024)
 - b. International Documentary & Short Film Festival of Kerala
 - c. Asian Women’s Film Festival
 - d. Social Justice Film Festival
 - e. ECO REELS Climate Festival
 - f. Golden Tree International Documentary Film Festival (Paris)
 - g. Beyond Borders Feminist Film Festival
 - h. Madurai Film Festival
 - i. Indigenous Film Festivals

2. Water Management

2.1 Introduction

The Participatory Watershed Development Programme is presently being implemented across Khargone and Dewas districts in Madhya Pradesh and the Dharni block of Maharashtra. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the annual advancements in watershed development efforts conducted during the period from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. This programme is aimed at enhancing water security in tribal areas, promoting soil conservation, increasing livelihood, ensuring the safe drinking water and improving agricultural productivity in these areas.



During the reporting period, significant progress was achieved in the watershed development programme. A total of 49 water harvesting structures, including stop dams, check dams, earthen dam and farm ponds, were constructed or renovated. These interventions together created an additional 211,555 cubic metres of water harvesting capacity, which has expanded irrigation to 211.5 hectares of farmland.

The newly created structures are not only ensuring greater surface water availability in this water-scarce region but are also playing a vital role in groundwater recharge, thereby improving water security for agriculture and household use. This progress marks an important step towards building climate-resilient livelihoods for marginal indigenous communities.

A total of 496 hectares of ridge area were treated along with construction of 246 drainage line structures including construction of 214 bolder checks and 32 gabions, which played a crucial role in reducing runoff, controlling soil erosion, resulting improved soil moisture and groundwater recharge. Farm bunding interventions covered 156,303 running metres, treating 781.5 hectares of farmland.

These efforts have significantly enhanced soil moisture retention and minimised top-soil loss, thereby reducing land degradation. By holding the soil in place and improving soil moisture availability, farm bunding has led to stable crop productivity. The impact is especially visible in ridge areas of the river basin, where soil erosion had been a major cause of declining yields and farmland deterioration. The watershed development interventions also had a direct livelihood impact by generating 74,690 person days of employment, which helped provide income support to tribal families.



From a financial perspective, the watershed development programme invested a significant amount of Rs. 597.45 lakh in watershed interventions during the year. Importantly, the community itself contributed Rs.22.79 lakh, largely in the form of voluntary labour. This contribution, amounting to nearly 4% of the total investment, is particularly noteworthy given the context of poverty and high rates of rural migration in these indigenous areas.

It highlights the strong willingness and commitment of indigenous communities to manage their natural resources in a participatory manner. The substantial investment made through the programme has been channelled in a meaningful and impactful

way, ensuring that created assets not only address immediate needs but also build long-term resilience for these indigenous communities.

In Bhagwanpura block of Khargone district, Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) is implementing watershed development initiatives across 28 villages under the Standard Chartered Bank Project (SCP). The region faces severe challenges, including high rural migration caused by limited livelihood opportunities, widespread land degradation, and growing water scarcity. To address these concerns, SPS has been promoting sustainable livelihood options, restoring degraded lands through soil and water conservation practices, promoting safe drinking water initiative and strengthening community-led water management systems.

A Detailed Project Report (DPR) was prepared to guide the interventions in line with the project's goals, and significant progress has already been made in the field. In the villages of Kherkundi and Guljhiri, contour trenches were developed across 15 ha to reduce soil erosion and enhance groundwater recharge, while farm bunding covering 69,413 running meters was undertaken across 12 villages to improve in-situ moisture conservation.



In addition, 203 boulder checks and 28 gabion structures were constructed in Guljhiri, Herapur, Mohanpura, and Rasgangli to stabilise drainage lines and prevent further land degradation.



To strengthen irrigation potential, five farm ponds were created, three in Herapur and two in Mohanpura, alongside the construction of eight stop dams across project villages, which substantially increased surface water storage. Complementing these watershed measures, a drinking water initiative is also being implemented, which includes the mapping and testing of around 250 drinking water sources in project villages including dug wells , bore well and hand pumps, the renovation of water sources in 12 villages, and the distribution of household water filters to 17 families as a demonstration for safe drinking water practices.





These combined interventions have generated 45,203 person-days of employment, directly benefiting indigenous households, while the newly created water harvesting structures have added a storage capacity of 36,065 cubic meters, resulting in an increase of 36 hectares of irrigated area. Together, these measures are not only conserving natural resources and improving water availability but are also enhancing access to safe drinking water, strengthening livelihoods, and helping to reduce distress migration, thereby contributing to long-term resilience and sustainable development in Bhagwanpura.



In Bhikangaon block, Khargone district, SPS has been implementing a watershed programme since 2014. This work is currently supported by APPI, Axis Bank Foundation (ABF), and NABARD across 15 villages and continues to expand its reach in the region. During the reporting period, watershed development initiatives undertaken in Bhikangaon block



resulted in the creation of a total water storage capacity of 51,578 cubic meters, construction of 18,593 running meters of farm bunding, and generation of 14,015 person-days of employment across different villages.

Under the ABF project, 16,101 running meters of farm bunding were completed in Badiya, Lalkheda, Pipaliya Bujurg, and Shikalwad; two gabion structures were constructed in Goripura; two farm ponds were developed in Lal Kheda and Goripura; one earthen dam was constructed in Pipaliya Bujurg; one stop dam was constructed in Badiya; and one existing earthen dam was renovated in Pipaliya.



These works alone created a storage capacity of 20,394 cubic meters and generated 10,940 person-days of employment. With the support of the APPI project, four stop dams were renovated, two in Jamniya Bujurg and one each in Pokrabad and Patharwad, resulting in an additional 31,184 cubic meters of water storage capacity and 1,641 person-days of employment. Similarly, under the NABARD-supported project in Banjar village, 2,492 running meters of farm bunding were completed, along with the construction of two gabion structures and ten boulder checks, generating 1,434 person-days of employment.





SPS, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Forest Management (Bhopal) and the Global Green Growth Institute (South Korea), successfully implemented the Narmada Landscape Restoration Project in Maheshwar, Kasarwad and Barwaha Blocks.

The project aimed at improving both the quantity and quality of water in the tributaries of the Narmada River through inclusive and sustainable landscape management. The project targeted 12,000 hectares with interventions such as rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, drainage line treatment, runoff control, and soil and moisture conservation work. As part of the completed activities during the reporting period, 13,618 running meters of farm bunding were carried out in the villages of Lachora, Jamaniya, and Arsi, while two stop dams were constructed in Bagdara village. These interventions created a water storage capacity of 5,600 cubic meters and generated 2,456 person-days of employment.

In Khategaon Location, SPS is implementing the project “Towards Sustainable Livelihoods and Water Security in the Central Indian Tribal Belt” in collaboration with HDFC Bank. The initiative is designed to strengthen livelihoods while ensuring water security for some of the most vulnerable tribal communities in the region. During the reporting period, significant progress was made across the project villages. A total of 11,369 running meters of farm bunding were completed, along with the construction of 29 farm ponds and the renovation of five water harvesting structures.



These interventions collectively created a water harvesting potential of 116,312 cubic meters, generated 5,279 person-days of employment, and contributed to an increase in irrigation coverage by 116 hectares. The major villages covered under these interventions include Richhi, Sukardi, Tiwadiya, and Tikwada. In addition to physical works, the project placed a strong emphasis on community engagement. The SPS team facilitated meetings with Water User Groups (WUGs) across seven villages to share details of physical and financial progress, particularly related to farm pond development. Special sessions were also conducted with WUGs engaged in the drinking water initiative to enhance their participation and strengthen their understanding of water management practices.

In addition, in the Udainagar location of Dewas district, SPS is implementing the Gurarad Watershed Development Project with substantial support from NABARD. The project emphasises soil and water conservation, livelihood enhancement, and community participation in village Gurarada. Watershed interventions in the region are being supported through the Harit Bharat Fund (World Resources Institute), the JIVA Project of NABARD, and the Axis Bank Foundation (ABF), bringing together multiple partners to create long-term, integrated development outcomes.



Under the NABARD-supported project, 4,252 running meters of farm bunding and one farm pond were developed, alongside two capacity-building trainings for the community. These interventions generated 2,924 person-days of employment and created a water harvesting potential of 2,000 cubic meters.

Similarly, through the Harit Bharat Fund, 2,115 running meters of farm bunding were completed, generating 1,016 person-days of employment. Additionally, under the ABF project, one boulder check was constructed, contributing to soil and water conservation efforts while generating 141 person-days of employment.

2.2 Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM)

The participatory irrigation management program was started by the Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) in 2017. It was started with Mahigaon Dam (Udainagar location) and later spread towards Paras Dam (Punjabura location), the Chandrakeshwar Dam (Kantaphod location) in Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh and Nanduri Dam in Dharni location of Maharashtra. Its primary objective is the effective use of water from the already constructed dams in the region and equitable distribution of water to every farmer in the command area (from head to tail end users), solving the problem of water logging and water scarcity, and improving farm production. While doing this, the maximum participation of farmers is ensured, and ownership of this whole system is given to the users of its successful implementation.



During the reporting period, 22 hectares were brought under command area development through the construction of watercourses. This was implemented with participatory irrigation management to ensure efficient distribution and equitable use of irrigation water.



Institutional strengthening remained a key focus of the programme, with particular emphasis on women's leadership in water governance. A total of 20 women-led Water User Groups (WUGs) were formed during the year, creating strong women led community platforms for collective action. In addition, 327 regular WUG meetings and 9 Water User Association meetings were organised.

Capacity-building initiatives during the year generated 1,161 person-days of training, covering critical areas such as water governance, institutional development, and community-based water management. In addition, 12 para-workers were trained to provide ongoing technical support at the community level. These efforts have strengthened local ownership, enhanced community skills, and laid a strong foundation for sustainable watershed management.



In Mahigaon Dam Command Area (Udainagar location), significant progress has been made under the Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM). A total of 1,967 running meters of watercourses were developed in Semalikheda village, improving irrigation efficiency and water distribution. To strengthen community capacity, 10 training sessions were conducted with Water User Groups (WUGs) across Borkhedi, Semalikheda, and Kanad villages. Regular community engagement was maintained through 122 WUG meetings



while 8 PICO screenings on the theme of PIM, attended by 79 farmers, further promoted community ownership and sustainable management of irrigation resources.

In Paras Dam Command Area (Punjabura location), the PIM initiative achieved substantial progress in both capacity building and infrastructure development. A total of 12 capacity-building trainings were conducted for programme staff and Community Resource Persons (CRPs), along with 12 dedicated trainings for WUG members. Practical learning was enhanced through exposure visits, with participation from 54 members and 9 professionals to Development Support Centre (DSC), Ahmedabad. On the infrastructure front, 1,259 running meters of watercourses were constructed in Chandupura, resulting in 22 hectares of command area development. Institutional strengthening included the formation of 4 new WUGs, supported by 92 regular WUG meetings and 2 WUA meetings. Additionally, 12 PICO screenings were conducted with 127 farmers, reinforcing awareness and community participation in irrigation management.





In Chandrakeshwar Dam Command Area (Kantaphod location), notable strides were made under the PIM initiative, focusing on both infrastructure development and capacity building. A total of 530 running meters of watercourses were constructed, including cemented watercourses in Jansure village and underground pipelines in Mehandur village, improving irrigation efficiency and water distribution.

Institutional development included the formation of 8 new WUGs, supported by 113 regular WUG meetings and 2 WUA meetings, ensuring active community participation and governance. Extensive capacity-building activities were conducted, with 360 WUG members and 218 other community members trained on irrigation management and community participation practices.

In addition, 132 WUG members received specialised training to strengthen skills in managing local irrigation infrastructure. Community awareness and engagement were further reinforced through 34 PICO screenings, attended by 490 farmers, promoting understanding of participatory irrigation management and the benefits of organised water governance.



In the Melghat (Dharni) location of Maharashtra, Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) activities are progressing in Nanduri village. A technical survey of two watercourses, covering 400 running meters, was completed to assess irrigation infrastructure and identify areas for improvement. As part of the initiative in Dharni block, a three-day exposure visit was organised for farmers from Kara and Nanduri villages. Participants visited the Neemkheda Training Centre to learn about effective irrigation management practices.

They also observed water management systems at the Paras and Semlikheda Dam Irrigation Projects in Bagli, gaining practical insights into efficient use of water resources for agriculture.



To further strengthen community awareness and participation, two village meetings were held to discuss the importance of community-led irrigation management and water conservation. A mobile cinema session was conducted to visually demonstrate efficient irrigation practices, while two PICO screenings were organised to deepen farmers' understanding of participatory water resource management.

2.3 Block Level Planning

The Block-Level Planning initiative is being implemented as a structured village development approach in Bagli and Bhikangaon blocks, where community needs such as roads, drinking water, electricity, irrigation, and water harvesting structures are identified through Gram Panchayat meetings and FGDs with active participation of women and other local representatives.



Using village maps and transect walks, proposed works are validated with precise location details, and livestock-related needs such as goat, cattle, and poultry sheds are also identified for eligible families, ultimately leading to comprehensive Village Development Plans (VDPs). In Bhikangaon, DPRs were prepared for 47 Gram Panchayats and formally approved in the Gram Sabha.

During the last quarter, the programme under MGNREGA focused on livelihood enhancement and employment generation through 58 Rojgar Diwas, which resulted in 600 applications and 9,000 person-days of work. In the current year, all Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) were formally presented and handed over to concerned Panchayats and block-level officials.



This year, 389 number of works with an expenditure amount of 116.69 Lakh rupees in Bagli and 300 number of works with an expenditure amount of 369.42 Lakh rupees in Bhikangaon. To further strengthen community engagement, 17 Community Resource Persons (CRPs) were selected and 13 trained for MGNREGA implementation, while awareness sessions empowered villagers to access work opportunities, reducing migration. Additionally, natural resource management and infrastructure development activities were prioritised, contributing to sustainable rural development in both blocks.

2.4 Challenges

2.4.1 Challenges with Watershed development programme

* The watershed development work in Bhagwanpura faced several challenges as both the area and the team were new. Building trust with communities was difficult due to past negative experiences with outsiders who had cheated them in the name of community contribution. Panchayat-related issues and villagers' reluctance to contribute without monetary incentives. Additionally, sudden summer rains damaged structures and washed away construction materials, increasing costs. Despite these hurdles, the team managed to complete the planned work on time.

* In Maheshwar, the project faced major challenges due to a delay of over three to four months in fund transfers from IIFM, Bhopal. This led to financial strain, forcing SPS to shift the field team temporarily and then bring them back once funds were received, causing disruption and losses. The delay also resulted in missing the crucial summer season for watershed work, directly affecting budget utilisation and planned activities.

* In Khategaon, the watershed team faced challenges in convincing farmers to adopt the standard size of farm ponds required for efficient irrigation. Many farmers preferred smaller ponds to save agricultural land, leading to disagreements. Despite approvals and completed paperwork, some farmers backed out at the last moment, even when construction was about to begin. This created difficulties for the team, as stopping the construction process midway was not practical and placed the project in a tough position.

* The Watershed Team encounters pressure from big farmers regarding the allocation of farm ponds. Big farmers frequently express concern that most ponds are constructed on land belonging to small and marginal farmers, feeling overlooked in the selection process. The team strictly follows organisational policy, prioritising small-scale farmers and considers appropriate geographic conditions for pond placement. However, managing these expectations consistently places pressure on the team.

* In Khategaon, the watershed team faced challenges in ensuring community contribution, which is vital for building ownership and long-term sustainability of watershed structures. Many beneficiaries believed that all construction costs should be covered by project funds, resisting the idea of sharing responsibility and ownership. To overcome this, the team held meetings and workshops to educate the community on the importance of both financial and active participation, emphasising how their involvement would strengthen project outcomes and benefit everyone.

2.4.2 Challenges in the PIM Programme

* In Punjapura, watercourse construction was delayed as farmers were initially hesitant to contribute, believing such works were government funded. With awareness meetings and exposure to success stories, trust was gradually built, but progress was further hindered by delayed labour payments, which often caused absenteeism at worksites.

* In Kantaphod, lack of familiarity with the PIM approach and delays in crop procurement postponed contribution collection, while frequent shortages and restrictions on sand supply disrupted construction activities.

* In Punjapura location, community engagement remained a concern. Women's participation in WUG meetings was often low, affecting quorum and decision-making, while savings within groups fell short due to limited understanding of their purpose.

* In Udainagar, limited support under MGNREGA slowed construction of new watercourses, and the collapse of a canal bridge severely disrupted irrigation during the critical Rabi season, even though reconstruction was later completed.

3. Nature Positive Management of Agriculture



Over the past year, the NPM Agriculture Program has made significant strides in engaging farmers in nature-positive farming practices.

A substantial number of farmers have actively adopted these practices, including soil health management, the use of bio-pest repellents and herbal leaf extracts for plant protection, effective weed management techniques, and the implementation of diverse cropping systems.

These changes have been driven through regular training sessions and capacity-building initiatives. By equipping farmers with the necessary knowledge and skills, the program envisions a shift toward sustainable agricultural practices that enhance soil health, increase biodiversity, and build resilience to climate change.

The idea of the NPM approach is to encourage Women farmers to grow crops without any chemical pesticides, create an identity for their produce and link these small producers to reliable markets.

SPS has been implementing NPM agriculture to strengthen low cost, low risk and ecologically sustainable farming practices. NPM agriculture emphasises improving soil fertility through appropriate management practices (such as composting and recycling of agricultural residues, use of farmyard manure, cattle urine, green manure crops like gliricidia, and application of pond silt) with a gradual phasing out of chemical fertilisers.

The programme currently supports NPM cultivation of sorghum, maize, wheat, gram, groundnut, chickpea, pearl millet, red gram, sesame, and chilli. NPM chilli is a recent addition, and SPS is exploring the introduction of NPM cotton in the coming years. Key interventions include micro-irrigation practices (drip and sprinkler systems), changes in cropping patterns and varieties, dry sowing, and targeted soil fertility management. NPM practices are promoted through a range of extension methods, including Farmer Field Schools, diverse cropping system models, village- and cluster-level trainings, action research, field trials, and demonstrations. In addition to production, SPS facilitates third-party evaluations for compliance, provides scope certification to farmer groups, and links farmers with NPM buyers to secure better prices.

Many of the NPM protocols are process driven and therefore require constant monitoring and documentation. The program has developed a MIS software to capture data, document processes, and monitor, analyse and assess impact of the programme. This will enable the Mitaans (field CRPs) to take up an active advisory role vis-a-vis farmer.

Location-wise Outreach:

The agriculture program is currently catering to a total of 19686 farmers in the acreage of 13294.20 hectares of land with overall more 50% of saturation. The status and spread of the program in 2 states, 3 Districts, 10 program locations and 297 Villages, under current scenario, is as presented below:

S.No.	Name of location	Cluster	Group	Member	Total land (Ha)	NPM Land (Ha)	Saturation %
01	Bagli	9	158	2601	2777.56	1596.26	57.47
02	Punjabura	5	101	1327	1433.07	1265.5	88.31
03	Kantaphod	6	75	1309	1753.88	1729.32	98.6
04	Kannod	4	88	850	848.96	339.2	39.95
05	Khategaon	4	55	666	918.67	539	58.67
06	Udainagar	8	137	2230	2114.09	1967.74	93.08
07	Barwaha	9	172	3028	4173.19	1998.42	47.89
08	Bhikangaon	13	259	3870	5095.38	2641.8	51.85
09	Melghat	13	204	3458	4097.48	1078.92	26.33
10	Bhagwanpura	9	25	347	390.44	138.04	35.36
Total		80	1274	19686	23602.72	13294.2	56.32

3.1 Major Activities

3.1.1 Village/Cluster Level Training and Capacity Building

The village-level training and capacity building of farmers was a crucial activity undertaken through out the year. Through out the year, village level training sessions were conducted, engaging more than 8031 person days in interactive and hands-on learning experiences. During the training our main focus was on the diverse cropping systems, and how we can incorporate multiple crops into the existence cropping pattern.

Additionally, we covered a range of topics, including NPM farming techniques, soil conservation and management, integrated pest management, land planning, seed selection and spacing etc. Through these trainings, farmers gained practical knowledge and skills to adopt nature positive agricultural practices and economically viable methods, leading to improved farm management and sustainable practices.



This year also, we continued to implement cluster-level trainings as a key component of our program. These trainings aimed to enhance the participation of more number of farmers with a focus on promoting sustainable agricultural practices. By leveraging the expertise of external resource persons Mr. Narendra Tambe, Mr. Ajit Kelkar, Mr. Ravi Kelkar. We were able to efficiently reach many farmers, fostering a collaborative learning environment and maximizing the impact of our interventions.





S.No.	Activity	Achieved number
01	Village level trainings (Person days)	8031
02	Cluster level trainings	25
03	Farmer field schools	86

3.2 Training and Capacity Building of ‘Mitaans’ (CRPs)

Community Resource Persons, Mitaans (CRPs) serve as the essential link between farmers and organization. Their role as frontline facilitators makes their training and capacity building a key component of our intervention. By equipping CRPs with technical knowledge, we enhance their ability to guide farmers in adopting sustainable agricultural practices and relevant technologies. We conducted training sessions to strengthen CRP competencies.

The major focused topics of training was following:

*** Diverse Cropping System (DCS)**

Methods A comprehensive training was organized to help CRPs understand the principles of crop configuration, including classification based on crop families, population dynamics of area-specific crops, and the economics for diversification. The session emphasized practical application through examples and region-specific recommendations.







* **ATM Model of Kitchen Gardens** Training focused on the "ATM model" highlighting the setup and benefits of household-level kitchen gardens. CRPs were trained on layout planning, crop selection, seasonal rotation, and nutritional advantages.

* **Nutrient Management** Training on crop nutrient management was conducted to build the capacity of field staff on optimizing soil fertility through nature-positive practices. The session covered key topics including the role of macro- and micro-nutrients in crop growth, soil health indicators, and the integration of biofertilizers.



3.3 Promoting Micro Irrigation Facilities by providing Drip Irrigation Kits and Sprinkler Irrigation Kits

To enhance water use efficiency and promote climate resilient farming, we had provided 229 drip irrigation kits and sprinkler irrigation kits to the farmers, this systems offer precise water delivery directly to the crop root zone, it significantly reduces the water consumption while enhancing the soil health and productivity of crop.

To support effective implementation, farmers also received hands-on training and technical demonstrations covering installation, operation, and maintenance of the irrigation systems. Along with that 29 solar fencing systems and 106 solar pumps have been distributed to the farmers to protect the crop from the wild boar, blue bull and other animals.

3.4 SHMP Soil health management practices activities

1978 famrer were supported in the villages, to enhance the Soil health management practices like NADEP composting, liquid manuring, green manuring and vermicomposting. For vermicomposting, vermi-bags were made available along with the earth-worms required, so that the compost could be easily made. Drums were also distri -buted so that liquid manures or bio-repellents and tonics could be prepared and used by farmers to demonstrate its usefulness. As an outcome 18701 farmers used organic manures into the farm in order to enhance the soil health.





Use of Organic compost to improve soil health

Activity	Sanjeevak	FYM	Compost	Vermi-com-post	Total
No. Of Farmer	7202	10752	6320	437	18701

3.5 Silt Application

Other than this, a major activity that was done during the year was silt application to improve the poor fertility of soil. In order to support the farmers with fertile soils. Silt application is known to upgrade the fertility of soils by adding silt and clay to the soils that are loose and porous. Being mindful of that, 401 farmers were selected who had soils of poor grade and would benefit from this activity. The fields selected by these farmers were applied with silt at the rate of 10 trolleys, even if the area was small, in order to bring about substantial improvement.



3.6 Soil Testing

Soil testing as planned has been carried out, 317 samples were tested and sent for testing of major and micronutrients along with parameters like OC, EC and pH. To ensure accuracy and deepen insights, samples were sent to the Indian Institute of Soil Science for advanced analysis and some samples were sent to KVKs for the testing. The results from these tests will serve as the foundation for developing crop-specific nutrient recommendations and designing packages of practices to guide farmers in effective soil and input management.

3.7 Varietal Trials

Over the year, we conducted 138 varietal trials to introduce new crop varieties developed by research institutes to our farmers. We set up trials in all locations, with a range of crops including wheat, gram and cotton. Our team monitored the performance of the crops. This initiative aimed to enhance crop diversity, improve yields, and increase farmers' access to high-quality seeds, ultimately contributing to more resilient and productive farming systems.



3.8 Kitchen Garden Setups

Malnutrition and poor health are one of the biggest concerns in our country. To address the same concern, 4846 kitchen garden kits were made available, in the last year, to households that have malnourished children or pregnant and lactating mothers looking at their need for proper nutrition and diet. As kitchen gardening is basically the cultivation of seasonal vegetables and fruits in the backyard, it was kept in mind to give the seasonal vegetables that grow well and are full of nutritional value to supplement the nutrition and livelihoods of the needy and poor. During this kharif season ATM models of kitchen garden have also been established to ensure the availability of vegetables throughout the season.



3.9 Champion Farmer Trainings and Exposure Visits

Advanced training to champion farmers as done by all locations. The objective of this training is hands-on learning of improved methods and practices in agriculture and to increase the awareness towards the diverse cropping system. Comprehensive training on diverse cropping system was provided to the champion farmers by external resource persons in order to build capacity and enhance the overall productivity of farmers. Total 34 trainings were organized at location level and central level throughout the year.



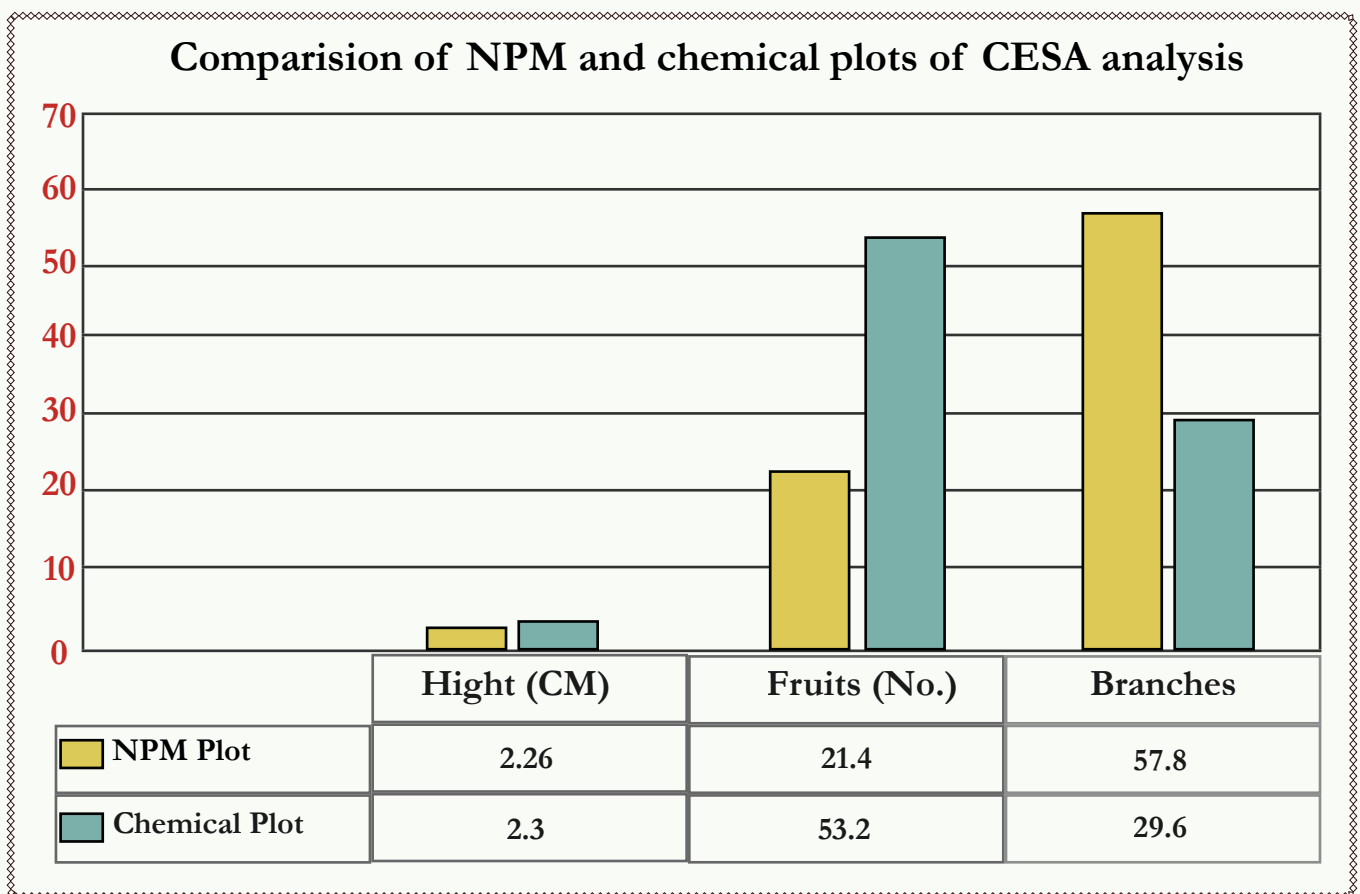
3.10 Farmer Field School

Building on our ongoing commitment to experiential learning, we successfully conducted Farmer Field School (FFS) sessions across all program locations. These sessions focused on key crops like Wheat, Maize, Redgram, bengal gram and chilli based on the need and provided farmers with hands-on, season-long training rooted in observation, experimentation, and peer exchange.

Through structured field visits, participatory demonstrations, and guided discussions, farmers deepened their understanding of crop-specific practices, pest and disease management, and nature-positive techniques tailored to local conditions. The FFS model continues to be a powerful tool for enhancing farmer capacity.

Presenting the crop eco system analysis data of chilli crop (A pilot)

CESA	Chemical farming plot of Chilli - Kusum didi										
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	Avg
Hight	2.6	2.2	1.9	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.4	1.9	2.3
fruits	58	42	45	28	62	57	63	46	55	76	53.2
Branches	26	23	30	62	28	24	36	22	17	28	29.6
CESA	NPM Chilli plot - Salu didi										
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	Avg
Hight	2.5	1.7	2.3	1.6	2.2	2.5	1.8	2.3	2.8	2.9	2.26
fruits	38	88	69	62	49	38	42	73	56	63	57.8
Branches	24	16	28	26	20	18	14	24	19	25	21.4



The data visualized above serves as a reference, capturing critical metrics from each FFS plot including CESA (Crop Ecosystem and Sustainability Assessment) data, cost of cultivation, and production outcomes.

3.11 Bio-Resource Centres

Bio-Resource Centres (BRCs) are community-based, village-level institutions established to promote sustainable agriculture through the production, demonstration, and distribution of bio-inputs and natural farming solutions. These centres function as local hubs for knowledge sharing, preparation of bio-formulations, farmer training, and capacity building in eco-friendly agricultural practices.

BRCs are specifically designed to meet the local demand for *jaivik dawai* (bio-pesticides and natural growth promoters) within the same village. Although many farmers are interested in adopting Natural Pest Management (NPM) practices, they are often hesitant to undertake the time-consuming and labor-intensive process of collecting leaves, cow urine, botanical materials, and other ingredients required to prepare bio-pesticides. Most farmers prefer readily available, easy-to-use solutions to address pest and crop health issues.

Bio-Resource Centres effectively bridge this gap by ensuring timely access to prepared bio-inputs at the village level. By doing so, they encourage wider adoption of nature-positive farming practices.





3.12 Scale and Impact

- * 51 Bio-Resource Centres are currently operational across 10 locations.
- * A total of 33,679 liters of jaivik dawai have been distributed to farmers who are willing to adopt nature-positive agricultural practices.

This large-scale distribution reflects growing farmer confidence in natural and ecological pest management systems.



3.13 Advanced Bio-Resource Centres

In addition to standard BRCs, 18 Advanced Bio-Resource Centres have been established to produce and supply microbial-rich solutions aimed at improving soil fertility and enhancing biological pest control.

These advanced centres provide entomopathogenic microbial formulations such as:

- * *Beauveria bassiana*
- * *Metarhizium* species

These beneficial microorganisms help control insect pests naturally while improving soil microbial activity. By integrating microbial solutions with botanical bio-inputs, the Advanced BRCs strengthen ecological pest management and contribute to regenerative agricultural systems.

3.14 Other NPM/IPM Activities

Apart from the above-mentioned initiatives, several other important activities have been undertaken to strengthen the implementation of NPM practices. These include conducting seed germination tests to ensure seed viability and proper crop establishment, and promoting natural seed treatment methods to protect crops from soil-borne diseases and early-stage pests while enhancing seedling vigor. In addition, pheromone traps have been established in farmers' fields for early detection and monitoring of pest populations, enabling timely and need-based interventions.





T-guards (bird perches) have also been installed to encourage natural predation by insectivorous birds, thereby maintaining ecological balance and reducing dependency on chemical pesticides. Along with these, farmers have been received fruits crop plantations such as Mango, Guava, Lemon, jackfruit, etc in order to utilize unused land and to generate additional income source. Together, these interventions empower NPM farmers to adopt preventive, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable crop management practices while improving overall productivity and farm resilience.



Sr. No.	Activity	No of farmers
1	Seed treatment & Seed germination test	22520
2	Use of pheromone traps	1575
3	Use of T-Guards	2555
4	Plantation of fruit crops	715





3.15 Major Collaborations and Achievements

3.15.1 Collaboration with Indian Institute of Soil Science

We had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Soil Science (IISS), Bhopal, establishing them as a key knowledge partner for our ongoing program. This collaboration marks a significant step toward enhancing the scientific rigor and long-term sustainability of our initiatives.

IISS will lead research and impact assessment activities, with a primary focus on soil health monitoring, analysis, and improvement. Through this partnership, we aim to generate region-specific insights, validate field-level practices, and strengthen the evidence base for nature-positive agriculture. The expertise of IISS will be instrumental in guiding adaptive strategies, refining interventions, and ensuring that soil health remains central to our NPM agriculture program.



3.15.2 Research Paper Published-Paper on Dollar Chickpea

We have successfully published our research paper on titled “Impact assessment of Bio-Pest Repellents and Bio-Fertilizers on the Production and Economics: Chickpea Field on Acta Scientific International Library, (ISSN: 2581-365X).

<https://actascientific.com/ASAG/pdf/ASAG-09-1500.pdf>

3.15.3 Indigo Cultivation Pilot Project (Punjabura)

It has been a rare privilege to learn about indigo cultivation and dye extraction from Avani Handicraft, our knowledge partner, who have perfected the art of indigo and other colours from nature over many years in Uttarakhand. Indigo at Kumbaya and SPS began by sowing the seeds for a trial run in January 2024.

Indigo Farming has recently started in our two NPM locations: Kantaphod and Punjabura. Almost 26 women farmers from 10 villages were selected for the indigo cultivation. Total 18 farmers from 6 villages of Kantaphod location namely Godna, Chorva, Beragarh, Badhawa, Bhayli and Dehri were selected. Similarly, 8 farmers from 4 villages of Punjabura were selected namely Neemkheda, Kalam Talai, Chandrapura and Mansinghpura were selected.





3.15.4 Awarded by NABARD for the JIVA Project (Udainagar)

SPS received recognition from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for outstanding performance under the at Udainagar. Awarded the Best Custom Hiring and Seed Bank Initiative and also received the Best Performer Award for effective implementation of the JIVA Project.



The JIVA Project focuses on promoting natural farming practices and encouraging the adoption of Non-Pesticidal Management (NPM) techniques among small and marginal farmers. The initiative aims to reduce chemical dependency, improve soil health, lower input costs, and enhance sustainable agricultural productivity.

3.15.5 Mobile Application Adoption

We have successfully piloted and scaled the use of our custom mobile application across all agricultural locations, marking a significant advancement in our field-level monitoring and data management systems. This digital tool has become an integral part of our Management Information System (MIS), enabling precise tracking and real-time data collection throughout the entire crop cycle from seed sowing to product marketing.

The application has streamlined field documentation, improved data accuracy, and income and expense data of an individual farmer, training and capacity building details. Looking ahead, we plan to integrate GPS-based farm mapping into the application to geographically tag and monitor plots where Nature-Positive Management (NPM) practices are being implemented.

This enhancement will support spatial analysis, impact visualization, and more targeted support for farmers adopting climate-resilient methods. The mobile application stands as a powerful example of how digital innovation can reinforce participatory agriculture and evidence-based practice.

3.15.6 A Training Manual on Farmer Field School

A comprehensive Training Manual on Farmer Field School (FFS) has been prepared to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and practical capacities of farmers through participatory and field-based learning approaches.

The manual is designed as a structured guide for facilitators, community resource persons, and farmer leaders to effectively conduct Farmer Field Schools in rural areas. It emphasizes experiential learning, group discussion, observation, and problem-solving directly in farmers' fields.

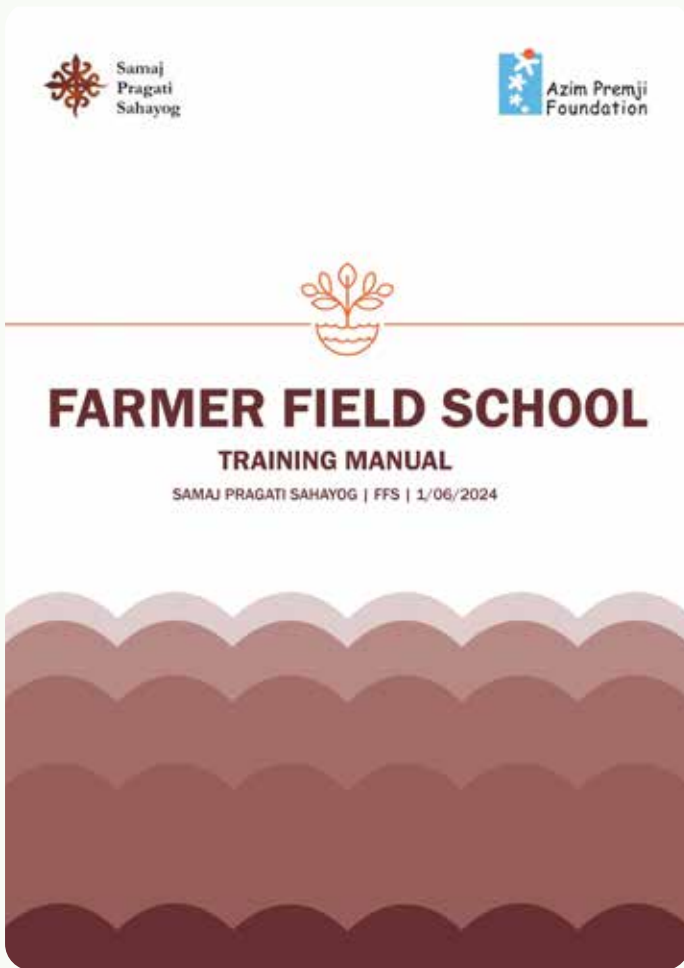


TABLE OF CONTENTS	
1. Farmers Field School	4
a. History Of Farmer Field School	
b. Goals Of Farmer Field School	
c. Objective Of Farmer Field School	
d. Principles Of Farmer Field School	
2. Farmers Field School in Samaj Pragati Sahayog	7
a. Features Of Farmer Field School In SPS	
b. Structure And Designing Of The Farmer Field School In SPS	
3. Farmers Field School Curriculum	9
4. Curriculum Based Sessions	11
a. Pre sowing sessions	
b. Post sowing sessions	
5. Agro Eco System Analysis (AES)	14
a. What is AES?	
b. Steps of conducting AES in Farmer Field School	
c. Concept of Agroecosystem	
6. Crop Eco-System Analysis (CESA)	18
a. Purpose of crop ecosystem analysis	
b. Steps of Crop Ecosystem Analysis	
c. Format for record-keeping of CESA observation	
7. Insect Zoo	22
a. Steps to set up and use the Insect Zoo	
b. Special Topics	
c. Ice-Breaking Activity	
8. Linkage With Institutional Buyers	26
9. Facts And Numbers Of SPS FFS Program	26
10. Conclusion	29
11. Acknowledgements	29

3.15.7 A comprehensive training manual on NPM Chilli Production has been prepared



3.15.7.1 Key Components of the Manual

1. Introduction to NPM in Chilli

- * Concept and principles of Non-Pesticidal Management
- * Importance of ecological balance in chilli cultivation
- * Benefits of NPM over chemical-based farming

2. Crop Planning and Land Preparation

- * Soil selection and field preparation
- * Soil health management through organic inputs
- * Crop rotation and intercropping strategies

3. Seed Selection and Treatment

- * Selection of quality and disease-free seeds
- * Indigenous seed treatment methods using natural formulations
- * Nursery management under NPM practices

4. Nutrient Management

- * Use of organic manures and compost
- * Preparation and application of bio-inputs such as Jeevamrut, Ghana Jeevamrut, and botanical extracts
- * Foliar sprays for crop growth enhancement

5. Pest and Disease Management in Chilli

- * Identification of major pests such as thrips, mites, fruit borers, and aphids
- * Life cycle and damage symptoms of common pests
- * Preparation and application of botanical extracts (Neem-based formulations, Dashparni Ark, Chilli-Garlic extract)
- * Use of pheromone traps, sticky traps, and bird perches
- * Biological control methods

6. Agro-Ecosystem Analysis (AESA)

- * Regular field observation techniques
- * Pest–predator ratio analysis
- * Decision-making based on field data

7. Water and Crop Management

- * Irrigation scheduling
- * Mulching techniques
- * Weed management through non-chemical methods

8. Harvesting and Post-Harvest Management

- * Proper harvesting stages
- * Drying and storage methods
- * Maintaining quality and reducing post-harvest losses

Two resource books titled “do it yourself bio-formulations in agriculture” & “Agro ecological Weed management” has been published with collaboration with N+3F

These publications were developed as practical reference guides for farmers, field practitioners, extension workers, and community resource persons to promote sustainable and eco-friendly agricultural practices.

1. Do It Yourself Bio-Formulations in Agriculture

This resource book focuses on the preparation and application of low-cost, farmer-friendly bio-inputs using locally available materials. It provides step-by-step guidance on:

- * Preparation of natural growth promoters
- * Botanical extracts for pest management
- * Organic nutrient formulations
- * Indigenous microbial solutions
- * Application methods and dosage guidelines

The objective of this book is to enable farmers to reduce dependency on chemical fertilizers and pesticides by empowering them to prepare their own agricultural inputs. It promotes self-reliance, cost reduction, and environmentally safe farming practices.

2. Agro-Ecological Weed Management

This book emphasizes ecological and non-chemical approaches to weed management. It includes

- * Understanding weed ecology and crop–weed competition
- * Preventive and cultural weed control methods
- * Mechanical and manual weed management techniques
- * Mulching and cover cropping strategies
- * Integrated weed management approaches
- * Case studies and field experiences

The aim of this publication is to guide farmers toward sustainable weed management solutions that maintain soil health, protect biodiversity, and reduce the need for chemical herbicides.

3.16 New Initiatives Undertaken during the Year

3.16.1 NPM Chilli Expansion

During this year 130 farmers have joined the effort to promote sustainable and Nature positive chilli cultivation in Bhikangaon location. Previously, the intercropping system included marigold, pigeon pea, and turmeric alongside chilli. These crops were selected for their ecological benefits, including pest deterrence and soil enhancement. Recently, cowpea and Tulsi (*Ocimum*) have been introduced into this diversified cropping pattern. This strategic addition is driven by the goal of improving climate resilience and enhancing the overall health of the agroecosystem.

Cowpea plays a crucial role in soil fertility by fixing atmospheric nitrogen, which reduces dependence on synthetic fertilizers and fosters long-term soil sustainability. Tulsi, renowned for its aromatic and medicinal properties, serves multiple functions. Its fragrance attracts a variety of beneficial insects such as pollinators and natural predators of crop pests, thereby reducing the need for chemical pest control. Additionally, Tulsi helps minimize the infestation of harmful insects and mites, creating a more stable and pest-resistant environment for chilli and companion crops.

The combined use of cowpea and Tulsi not only offers ecological advantages but also introduces medicinal and economic value for farmers, contributing to diversified income streams. Through this approach, farmers are not just growing crops they are cultivating resilience, biodiversity, and a holistic farming system that aligns with natural principles.



Market engagement: To explore premium market opportunities, we engaged with a Netherlands-based marketing company Verstegen (spices & sauces) for potential procurement of NPM chilli. While the field visit and sample testing demonstrated strong farmer capacity, the pungency level of 60,000 SHU exceeded the buyer's threshold of 40,000 SHU, resulting in a missed deal.



However, this experience provided critical market intelligence and informed our varietal strategy. In response, we are now transitioning toward less pungent varieties such as S4 and native chilli strains, aligning with both ecological goals and export market requirements.



3.16.2 Peer Learning Event to Promote NPM Chilli

To promote nature-positive chilli cultivation and foster peer learning, a large-scale event titled Chilli Mahotsav was organized, bringing together over 1,000 chilli-growing farmers from across the region. The event served as a vibrant platform for farmers who had successfully adopted NPM (Nature-Positive Management) practices with guidance from the NPM agriculture team to share their firsthand experiences, field-level challenges, and the innovative solutions they implemented. These farmers detailed the cropping systems they followed to cultivate NPM chilli, emphasizing how these approaches contributed to climate resilience, soil health, and reduced dependency on chemical inputs.



Their stories highlighted the transformative impact of nature-positive farming on both productivity and ecological balance. To recognize and celebrate leadership and innovation in sustainable agriculture, 14 farmers were honored across seven award categories, including Best Bio Resource Center (BRC), Champion Farmer, Best Crop Diversified Farm, Agricultural Innovation, and Best NPM CRP, Best diversified crop of CRPs.

These awards not only acknowledged individual excellence but also inspired collective action toward resilient, inclusive, and environmentally sound farming systems. The Chilli Mahotsav emerged as a powerful space for knowledge exchange, community recognition, and renewed commitment to nature-positive agriculture.



3.16.3 Setting up Bio Digester Units

During the year, 30 biodigester units were successfully established to promote the use of enriched liquid manures as part of sustainable farming practices. These biodigesters work by breaking down organic waste such as crop residues, animal dung, and kitchen waste through microbial activity in anaerobic conditions. The decomposition process takes approximately 45 to 50 days to complete. Once mature, the system produces around 50 liters of nutrient-rich liquid manure daily and its sufficient for 1 hac of agricultural land.



This bio slurry is highly beneficial for soil fertility, enhancing crop growth while reducing reliance on synthetic fertilizers. The initiative also plays a key role in climate-smart agriculture by improving waste management, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting eco-friendly practices. Notably, farmers have begun promoting the benefits of biodigesters and are generating additional income by selling the produced manure to other farmers, turning this innovation into a valuable livelihood option.



3.16.4 Training of BRC Members on Entrepreneur Development

As part of the broader capacity-building initiative under NPM program, entrepreneurship training program was organized for Bio Resource Center (BRC) owners of all program locations. The motive behind the training was to empower grassroots entrepreneurs to run their BRCs not just as input hubs, but as viable enterprises that contribute to nature positive farming and local economies. The goal was to enhance their knowledge, leadership, and business skills so they can manage operations professionally, produce quality bio-inputs, and generate consistent income through product sales and farmer outreach.

During the training, BRC members were equipped with practical tools and strategies to ensure production of high-quality organic inputs especially multiple formulations of *jaivik dawai* (organic plant protection products). They engaged in active discussions around rate lists, input cost calculations, and pricing strategies to help them determine fair and profitable price points. Additionally, participants were guided through the process of preparing individualized business plans tailored to their local markets and capacities. A core part of the workshop was the hands-on demonstration of *jaivik dawai* preparation, focusing on quality control and their basic needs.

3.16.5 Diverse Cropping System Model



Over 95% of life on land resides in soil. Microbial activities drive the process of aggregation, enhance soil structure, stability, aeration, infiltration, and water holding capacity. All living things above and below ground benefit when the plant microbe bridge is functioning effectively. Many of today's farming methods have severely compromised soil microbial communities, and soil health. This creates negative feedback all along the line. It's proven that less than 1% of the microbes are culturable and more than 95% of microbes can live only in association with the plants. Over time monocropping practices depleted specific nutrients, reducing soil fertility, and making the land reliant on synthetic fertilizers, continuous cultivation of the same crop can increase the susceptibility to pests and diseases leading to more pesticide use.



To avoid monocropping and if we want to have a well-functioning soil, it's essential to increase the diversity and abundance of microbes in the soil, so we introduced the diverse cropping system method which includes a farming practice involving growing multiple crops or varieties to the existing cropping system. A combination of crops that thrive well together and offer diverse benefits to the farmer are cultivated, by adopting intercropping, border, and mixed cropping.

It is recognized as one of the most feasible cost effective and rational ways of developing a resilient agriculture cropping system where soil functions are carried out by diverse microbes in the soil working together in a team.

How are we doing it?

By implementing a diverse cropping system: Growing diverse crops close to each other is the easiest way to ensure diverse soil microbiome & to improve soil health. Over the year 3145 farmers across locations have adopted DCS methods by incorporating 4-5 crops of different families.

Sr. No.	Location	Total farmers	Area under DCS (Ha)
1	Barwaha	89	286.87
2	Bagli	1214	2760.33
3	Kantaphod	388	1277.25
4	Khategaon	52	130.10
5	Udaynagar	148	439.70
6	Bhikangaon	211	313.37
7	Punjapura	259	618.02
8	Melghat	221	536.40
9	Bhagwanpura	563	404.90
Total		3145	6766.93

3.16.5.1 What Factors to be considered for designing the DCS

1. Farmers Requirement

- * Healthy and diverse food
- * Higher production
- * Higher and assured income
- * Income at multiple times in a year

2. Design Parameters

- * Diverse crops minimum of 4 family
- * Directly and indirectly benefiting crops
- * Combining crops which have facilitating relationship and play varied roles
- * Spacing close enough to enable root mingling or interaction
- * Ground cover for most of the year
- * Maximize photosynthesis
- * Resource use efficiency

3. Ecological Requirement

- * Restoring soil function
- * Increase in ag biodiversity
- * Pest predator balance
- * Soil organic carbon enrichment
- * Enhancement of pollinator population
- * Microbes rich soil

3.17 Value Addition Machinery

To enhance livelihoods and income opportunities for tribal women of Kot Sosokhe-da village by installing and operationalizing agro-processing machinery for value addition. The focus is on processing local produce such as groundnuts and other oilseeds to generate marketable products.

3.17.1 Spiral Grader Machine

Purpose

Used for grading and cleaning agricultural produce such as groundnuts by separating them based on size and removing dust, stones, or damaged seeds.

Impact

- * Improved quality of produce for both oil extraction and sale.
- * Reduction in manual grading efforts and time.
- * Better market price realization due to uniform grading.

Utilization

Grading of groundnut, soybean, and pulses collected by the women farmer group members.

3.17.2 Oil Extraction Machine (Cold Press)

Purpose

Extraction of edible oil from local oilseeds like groundnut, sesame, and sunflower.

Type

electric oil press to retain nutritional value.

Impact

- * Women can now extract groundnut oil locally.
- * Enables and market linkage.
- * Reduces dependency on external mills, improving profit margins.

Utilization

Operated by a trained women's farmer group, producing groundnut oil for self-use.

3.17.3 Groundnut Sheller Machine

Purpose

Mechanized shelling of groundnuts to separate kernels from shells.

Impact

- * Time-saving and less labour-intensive compared to manual shelling.
- * Increase in productivity by 3–4 times.
- * Shell waste is being used as fuel or cattle feed.

Utilization

Used post-harvest to prepare raw material for oil extraction.

3.18 Introduction of Hand Seeder / Hand Weeder Machines to reduce Drudgery

The introduction of hand seeder and hand weeder machines has been a significant initiative toward reducing drudgery among women farmers, especially small and marginal cultivators. Traditional sowing and weeding practices are highly labor-intensive, time-consuming, and physically demanding, often leading to fatigue and increased labor costs. By promoting the use of hand seeders, farmers can ensure uniform seed spacing and proper sowing depth, resulting in better germination and improved crop establishment. Similarly, the use of hand weeder machines enables efficient removal of weeds without disturbing the soil structure, reducing competition for nutrients and moisture while minimizing dependence on chemical herbicides.



These tools not only save time and labor but also reduce physical strain particularly for women farmers making farm operations more efficient and cost-effective.



3.19 Major Challenges

Silt Application: The application of silt from ponds to farms faced significant challenges this year too, due to unexpected summer rains ponds were not fully dried. The incomplete drying of ponds complicated the identification of suitable ponds for silt extraction. Furthermore, obtaining government authorization for large-scale silt application added more difficulty to the activity. Despite these hurdles, the team successfully met the target to a considerable extent.

Replication of DCS model to all enrolled farmers: During the year, efforts were made to replicate the Diverse Cropping System (DCS) model across all farmers enrolled under the Nature positive Management (NPM) program. However, implementation faced challenges. The primary hurdle was behavioural most farmers have been practicing mono-cropping for years and were initially resistant to altering their traditional methods.

Convincing them to adopt a diversified cropping approach required continuous field engagement, capacity-building sessions, and demonstrations of long-term ecological and economic benefits. However, several farmers stepped forward and implemented the DCS approach on plots ranging from 1 bigha to 1 acre. Their willingness to implement DCS model and to explore alternatives marked a positive step towards broader acceptance of the model.

4. Self-Help Group and Livelihoods Programme

The program works to promote financial inclusion, savings, and access to formal institutional credit among women.

The SHGs offer their members a range of financial products, including interest on savings, recurring deposits, fixed deposits, loans against fixed deposits, loans for emergencies (the veracity of each of which is carefully judged by the members themselves), collective purchase of basic needs of daily life, loans for cattle insurance, life insurance, etc.



It is not just a financial program but one of the most important steps toward women's empowerment, independence and increase in livelihood of households. The women's Self-Help Group (SHG) programme forms the bedrock of all of SPS' work. The SHG program can be successful only if it is tied up with livelihood programs such as improved and sustainable agriculture, livestock, agricultural marketing, etc. Thus, the SHG and livelihood programs are complementary to each other, and their simultaneous implementation is the key to poverty alleviation.

We have established 2,747 women's self-help groups (SHGs) in 594 villages, with 38,696 members in 15 locations. The majority of these SHG members are from marginalised groups. The women's federations of women's SHGs are a key building block for the effective empowerment of the poor in the tribal drylands of India and work as community institutions to voice the people, working in close partnerships with the government, federations, and other CSOs.

With the use of an accounting-cum-MIS software, Pragati Mitra, and field-level software, Pragati Vistaar, SHG operations are streamlined, organised, transparent, and more efficient. The SHG Programme is the only one of its kind that shares CIBIL data with other financial institutions while also using this information internally to promote responsible borrowing practices and prevent unsafe debt among marginalised SHG members. SPS is further strengthening its systems by working towards end-to-end digital integration supported by AI, with a strong focus on enhancing digital literacy among its members.

These efforts also facilitate the linking of members' mobile numbers with financial institutions, thereby strengthening bank linkages and improving access to formal financial services. The attempt to link our SHGs to CC accounts has been a long-standing endeavor. As of this financial year, 92% of total SHGs are linked with banks under the SHG-Bank Linkage program. In the year 2024-2025, 2,527 SHGs were linked to banks, with total savings of Rs. 73.89 crores, and provided loans worth Rs. 130.41 crores to their members.

Macro Key Performance Indicators of SHGs for the Year 2024-25		
S.No.	Indicators	Figures
1	Total number of districts	3
2	Total number of blocks	9
3	Total number of towns	15
4	Total number of villages	594
5	Total number of SHGs	2,747
6	Total number of clusters	162
7	Total number of federations	11
8	Total number of SHG members	38,696
9	Percentage of SHGs linked with banks/financial institutions	92%
10	Total amount of bank/FI loan disbursed (in crores)	668
11	Total savings (in crores)	73.89
12	Average savings per member (in Rs.)	18,163
13	Total loan outstanding (in crores)	130.41
14	The average size of loans per SHG	4,74,765
15	Loan recovery ratio	95%
16	Total number of individual savings bank accounts opened	33,068
17	Total number of members insured	30,996
18	Total number of bank linkages	2,224

4.1 Location-Wise Data of SHG Programme

S.No.	Name of location	Villages	Group	Total members	Total Savings (in Cr.)	Corpus (in Cr.)	SHG Contribution (in lakhs)
01	Udainagar	56	187	2896	5.71	11.43	20.94
02	Kantaphod	37	217	3267	7.82	15.65	34.24
03	Bagli	51	263	3983	8.16	16.86	32.70
04	Barwah	52	216	3044	6.89	10.90	29.73
05	Dewas	27	126	1519	0.43	0.46	0.00
06	Khategaon	38	241	3305	6.20	14.10	32.68
07	Hatpipliya	39	160	2309	4.82	9.17	29.23
08	Maheshwar	28	188	2534	6.27	11.47	31.65
09	Kannod	48	205	3024	5.57	11.20	27.80
10	Bhikangaon	49	201	2676	4.77	7.99	26.13
11	Punjabura	26	137	1797	3.76	7.34	22.60
12	Satwas	38	155	1990	3.62	5.86	16.94
13	Sanawad	28	165	2476	5.17	8.49	26.39
14	Lalkheda	38	172	2406	4.31	5.73	20.09
15	Dharni	39	114	1470	0.40	0.52	0.00
Total		594	2747	38696	73.89	137.17	351.13

4.2 Achievements and Recognition of the SHG Program

4.2.1 Digital Literacy- Computer centers

With the objective of building support systems and addressing the technology-related aspects of education, computer literacy centers have been set up at six locations this year, bringing the total of 12 centres.

The computer literacy centers primarily give priority to school-going girls. This includes children of SHG members, female students of government schools, and other children in need. Since our Mitaans (Community Resource Persons) belong to the same community in which they work, their children are also enrolled in the training. Each center has a qualified teacher and a structured syllabus, and students receive certification upon completion of the course.

Computer education not only enhances students' confidence and digital capacity but also equips them with certified skills and practical knowledge that can support their future career opportunities. This year, more than 786 students have received computer literacy training across 12 SPS locations.





At one SPS location, Punjapura, the entire computer class setup was shifted to Ratatalai village to improve accessibility for participants. This initiative significantly increased student attendance and reduced transportation costs, benefiting students from the village as well as nearby areas.



4.2.2 Digital literacy (with Android mobile phones)

SPS made 6,500 Android phones accessible to our SHG members in the financial year 2023-24. On top of that, 3,000 mobile phones were also bought by members on their own through surplus amounts, making a total of roughly 9,500, marking a major accomplishment for the organisation. Smartphones will inevitably be seen as a driving force behind change in an ever-changing world, where the digital divide is palpable. During 2024-25, around 163 digital literacy trainings were conducted, offering roughly 4,000 members comprehensive training during the fiscal year.

The goal was to give women more confidence when it comes to utilising personal, smartphones. The primary topics covered in the training included using basic mobile usage, Google, Google voice search methods, linking mobile numbers to banks to maintain account secrecy, online payment methods, idea sharing to launch new livelihood-related projects, and Pragati Mitra, an Android application for all our SHG members.

SPS also concentrated on digital literacy training that included digital fraud awareness, cybercrime awareness, online gambling, and blackmailing; in addition, training on personal information, password protection, digital myths, and confidence building was provided. The usage and learning of ATMs and UPIs were also discussed. It is noteworthy that women who struggled to write their names can now utilise the voice search tool, call numbers, watch movies, and confidently employ digital media for the advancement and strengthening of their livelihoods is particularly evident.

4.3 Capacity Building

Because the capacity building was primarily split into three sections, members, leaders, and Mitans, the subjects covered in each section differed according to the intended audience of the program. Since SPS has been emphasising digital literacy for almost a year, a range of issues on the subject have also been covered. SPS Community Media generated films and other audio-visual aids to supplement the training and make it more interesting and gripping.

4.3.1 Leadership Training

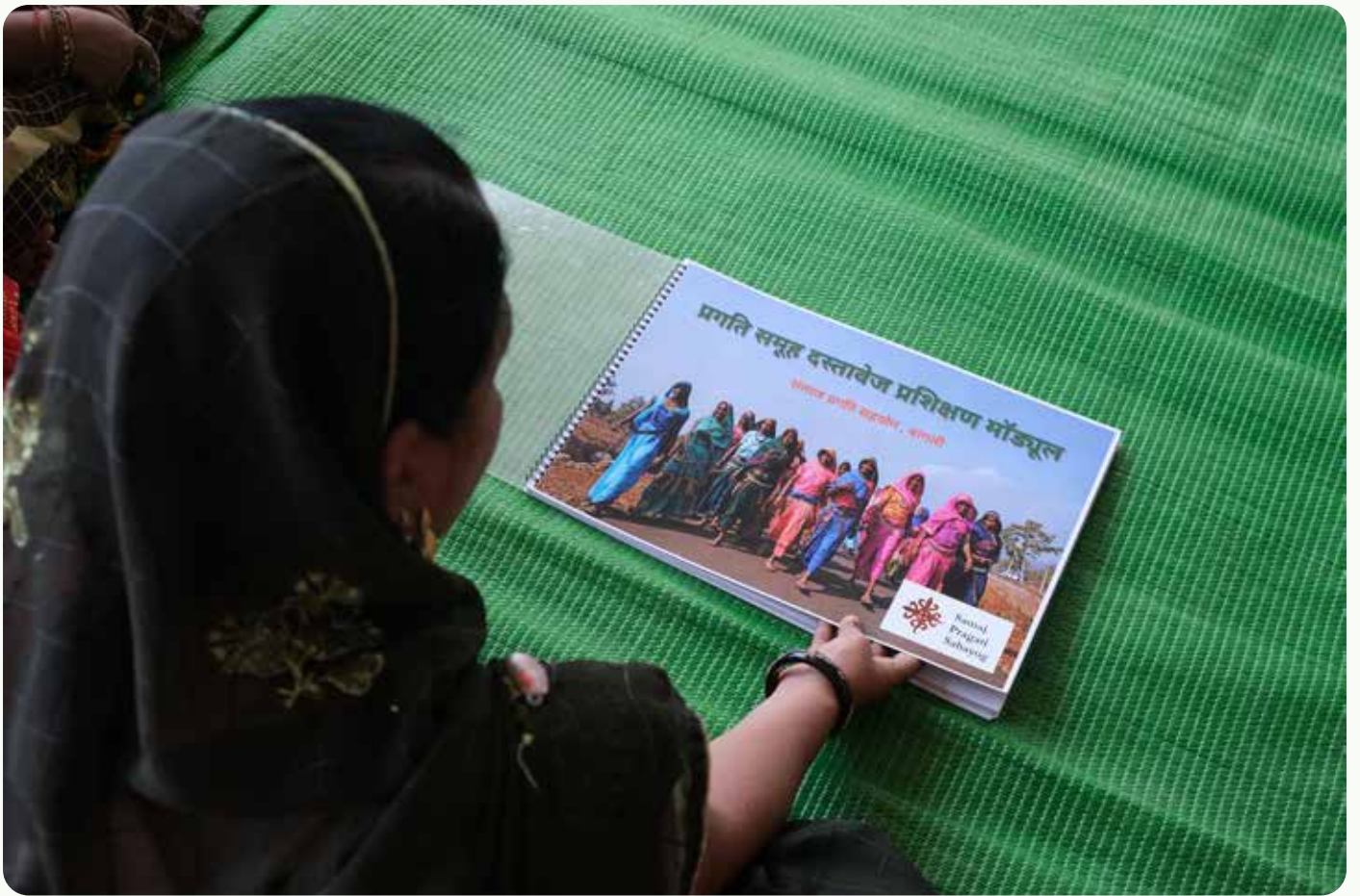
Several training sessions are being systematically planned to equip members with the skills and knowledge required for effective leadership, as the programme is progressing towards greater independence and long-term sustainability. The identified leaders within each SHG will gradually become capable of conducting meetings independently, without the support of Mitaans. These trainings will be conducted over the next two to three years, beginning with intensive handholding support and gradually transitioning towards greater autonomy. In the near future, newly developed AI-based software will also be integrated to strengthen this process. During the year, we trained a total of 1,525 members to build and enhance their leadership qualities.

4.3.2 Members Training

During the Year, there was a strong emphasis was placed on conducting engaging and enriching training sessions, with a major focus on digital literacy, while also strengthening women's performance within the SHGs. To make the learning experience more hands-on and impactful, , interactive activities and practical real-life exercises were incorporated within the time period of bi-monthly SHG meetings.

Overall, more than 10,000 members were trained on various important financial terms, revising SHG rules, revising leadership qualities, speaking and listening skills, etc.





4.4 GBM & Mahila Diwas Celebration

General Body Meetings (GBMs) serve as important gatherings where all federation members come together to review progress, discuss future plans, and strengthen collective decision-making. Key agenda items typically include speeches by federation leaders, a review of achievements during the current financial year, discussion of emerging issues at the federation level, presentation of the annual budget for the upcoming year, and approval of the current year's expenditures.

At the end of the financial year 2024–25, Maheshwar Mahila Pragati Samiti organised its GBM with an encouraging and enthusiastic response from members. The platform provides women with the opportunity to prepare, present their agendas, and confidently take leadership in front of a large audience. The event was made even more special as it coincided with the celebration of International Women's Day.

Similarly, Kannod Mahila Pragati Samiti organised its GBM on 20 November 2024. During the meeting, the federation shared how the social fund of Kusmaniya Sankul SHG groups was utilised for the installation of a smart class, and surplus funds from six SHGs were distributed among members.





4.5 Kirana Distribution

The grocery distribution project is effective, especially because most members could hardly afford to buy high-quality groceries all at once. Through this program, SHG members were guaranteed access to premium groceries at reasonable prices, along with the extra convenience of doorstep delivery and the choice of installment payments.

Recognising the significance of offering subsidised groceries, particularly as the holiday season drew near, the federations took the initiative to plan and grow these initiatives. In the end, this proactive reaction fostered resilience and support among the members by demonstrating the commitment to address the basic needs of their members and the larger community during difficult times.



4.6 Entrepreneurship Development Programme

The EDP Programme in Bagli Location from 1st June, 2024, to 31st March, 2025, successfully selected 20 micro-entrepreneurs from a pool of 150. Key activities included assessing entrepreneurs' needs, updating documentation for 19 MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) registrations, and linking several entrepreneurs to various financial schemes, totalling ₹5.45 lakhs in loans. Business model frameworks were developed for 30 entrepreneurs, and a survey of 150 micro-entrepreneurs gathered insights on business backgrounds and challenges. Additionally, training on documentation, accounting, and incubation was provided, alongside exposure visits for greater organisational understanding.

4.7 Surplus Distribution

The surplus amount is distributed among SHG members based on their past records, individual performances, and overall contributed to the growth of the SHG over five-year period since its inception or from the last distribution. In the year 2024-25, all SPS locations collectively distributed surplus funds amounting Rs. 94,02,884 among 1,467 members of 118 SHG groups.





4.8 Significant Initiatives

4.8.1 Best SHG Member Award

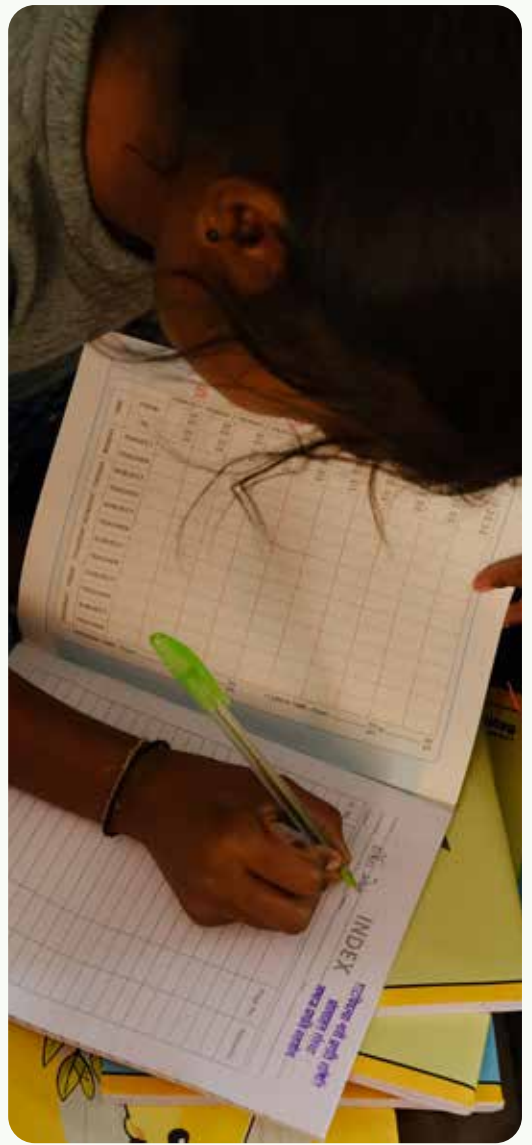
The Members Annual Award for Self-Help Groups (SHGs) was created to recognise and honour exemplary performances within each SHG. A total of 3,583 members were selected for their exceptional performance across the location during the year 2024-25. These members were chosen based on their consistent efforts, leadership qualities, and positive impact on their respective SHG groups.



4.8.2 Stationery Distribution at Discounted Rates

To ensure affordable educational materials, SPS has initiated a program to provide notebooks at a low cost for SHG members, helping them acquire stationery for their children without financial burden. Our nine locations, Bhikangaon, Sanawad, Barwaha, Maheshwar, Punjapura, Bagli, Hatpipliya, Khategaon, and Satwas, requested a total of 54,265 notebooks. Of these, seven locations distributed the notebooks directly to SHG members, while two locations opted to use social funds for purchasing notebooks.





As a result, the Hatpipliya location distributed 18,892 free notebooks, valued at ₹7,05,266, to 2,410 students, while the Punjapura location distributed 9,698 notebooks to 1,000 students, worth ₹3,50,074. Across all locations, notebooks that would have cost a total of ₹41,89,335 at market prices were acquired for just ₹20,44,177, thanks to a 40–50% discount, benefiting 5,074 families in the process.

4.9 Philanthropic Activities Undertaken This Year

This year, SPS-supported federations and SHGs across various locations utilised approx. 10,00,000 from their social fund for the betterment of society. The funds were used for various philanthropic activities, including support to hospitals, schools, orphanages, and Aganwadis helping improve their infrastructure and enabling them to function more effectively.

1.Support to Madarsa Orphan Students and Specially Abled Children through the Social Fund

During the year, the Satwas location made remarkable efforts to support orphaned children in building a better future. Through the collective social fund of the SHGs, the federation extended assistance the Madrsa students by providing blankets, pillows, mattresses, books, coolers, and other essential stationery items helping them to study in a more comfortable and supportive environment.





Similarly, Barwaha Pragati Samiti also stepped forward and helped the specially-abled students in location schools and centers by providing school bags, books, and other essential learning materials to support their education.



2. Digital Smart Board through the Social Fund

The Kannod Mahila Pragati Samiti inaugurated a digital classroom worth Rs. 1,87,000 at Kusmaniya Higher Secondary School on 29th December, collectively funded by 14 SHG groups. The digital classroom is equipped with includes a Samsung digital study board and other essential facilities, with the objective of enhancing the quality of education.



3. Anganwadi's, Schools, and Hospitals Transformation through the Social Fund

The SHGs of the Bagli Pragati Samiti, Hatpipaliya Nari Pragati Samiti, and Punjabura Pragati Samiti have installed swing sets in the Government schools and Aganwadis of thier villages to foster the overall development of children in the community. Satwas location has also provided toys forthe children of the Anganwadis.



These programs have received widespread appreciation from the community for their selfless dedication to the community's growth, which represents a substantial divergence from personal interests.

Hatpialiya location supported government primary schools by installing chairs in the school premises and surrounding areas, providing comfortable seating arrangements for children and visitors.



The Kannod Mahila Pragati Samiti extended support to the NRC unit of the Kannod Government Hospital by providing two coolers ensuring relief from the intense summer heat and creating a safer and more comfortable environment for children and hospital staff.



Similarly, Kataphod Pragati Samiti and Udainagar Pragati Samiti supported more than 200 vulnerable and economically disadvantaged primary students by distributing school bags, notebooks, and other essential stationery items to facilitate their education.

4. Water Cooler Units and RO units through the Social Fund



Drinking water cooler units were successfully installed at the Maheshwar Bus station and Mandleshwar Government Hospital. The decision was taken over intensive discussion within the SHG community to ensure the need-based and effective utilisation of resources and Money.

Additionally, two RO purification units were installed in the two government high schools of Bagli location to ensure access to clean and safe drinking water for students.





4.10 Challenges

The challenges associated with the existing MFI structure continue to persist; however, these are being carefully addressed through strategic assessments based on the evolving needs of villagers. Some locations also faced operational challenges in programme implementation. Low levels of education, particularly in tribal areas, limited members' understanding of SHGs and microfinance institutions (MFIs), resulting in lower loan utilisation. Additionally, inadequate rural infrastructure and limited resources made it difficult to conduct training sessions and distribute materials effectively.

5. Commodity Aggregation



RamRahim Pragati Producer Company Limited (RRPPCL) operates under Part IXA of the Companies Act, 1956 (No. 1 of 1956) and is collectively owned and managed by 5,850 small and marginal tribal women farmers

who are members of 390 Self Help Groups promoted by SPS. RRPPCL is dedicated to promoting the adoption of Nature Positive Management of Agriculture (NPM) and exclusively trades in pesticide-free commodities.

Our core mission is to establish a resilient supply chain for pesticide-free agricultural products. The NPM movement aims to foster sustainable agricultural practices while also creating a distinct identity for our produce and connecting small-scale farmers with organised markets.

Company Overview	
Attribute	Details
Legal Status	Farmer Producer Company (FPC)
Incorporation Year	2012
Facilitating Institution	Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS)
Member Base	6000 tribal women farmers
Self-Help Groups	390 SPS-Promoted SHGs
Authorised Capital	₹1 Crore
Paid-Up Capital	₹ 70.5 Lakhs

RRPPCL champions the Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) model—an ecologically safe and economically viable approach to agriculture that eliminates the use of synthetic chemical pesticides. RRPPCL ensures that every batch of produce procured is tested for pesticide residues in FSSAI-accredited laboratories, in compliance with the Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017 (Jaivik Bharat Standards).

5.1 Opportunities

The past year offered several significant opportunities and achievements for the commodity aggregation programme:

1. The program successfully connected farmers to companies like ITC, Adani Wilmar, and Bharat Rohan, helping achieve better price realisation (3–8% higher than local mandi rates).
2. Red gram aggregation increased by 155.7% overall (across Bagli and Barwaha), thanks to enhanced focus on residue-free farming, improved drying practices, and buyer-led procurement protocols.
3. Bagli recorded a 156% increase in wheat aggregation, showing strong farmer engagement and improved field-level mobilisation.
4. Quality control improvements and post-harvest support like cleaning and grading played a key role in selling to premium markets.
5. More farmers are now aware of market rates, quality requirements, and buyer expectations, thanks to outreach and training activities.
6. Direct purchases from farmers eliminated intermediaries and improved earnings.
7. Grading machines introduced to address quality-related rejections.
8. Grocery activities provided affordable products and home delivery to members.
9. Sales of multiple seeds like wheat, maize, sesame, urad, etc. to members.
10. Fair prices for gram secured through market linkage with Indore mandi.



5.2 Challenges

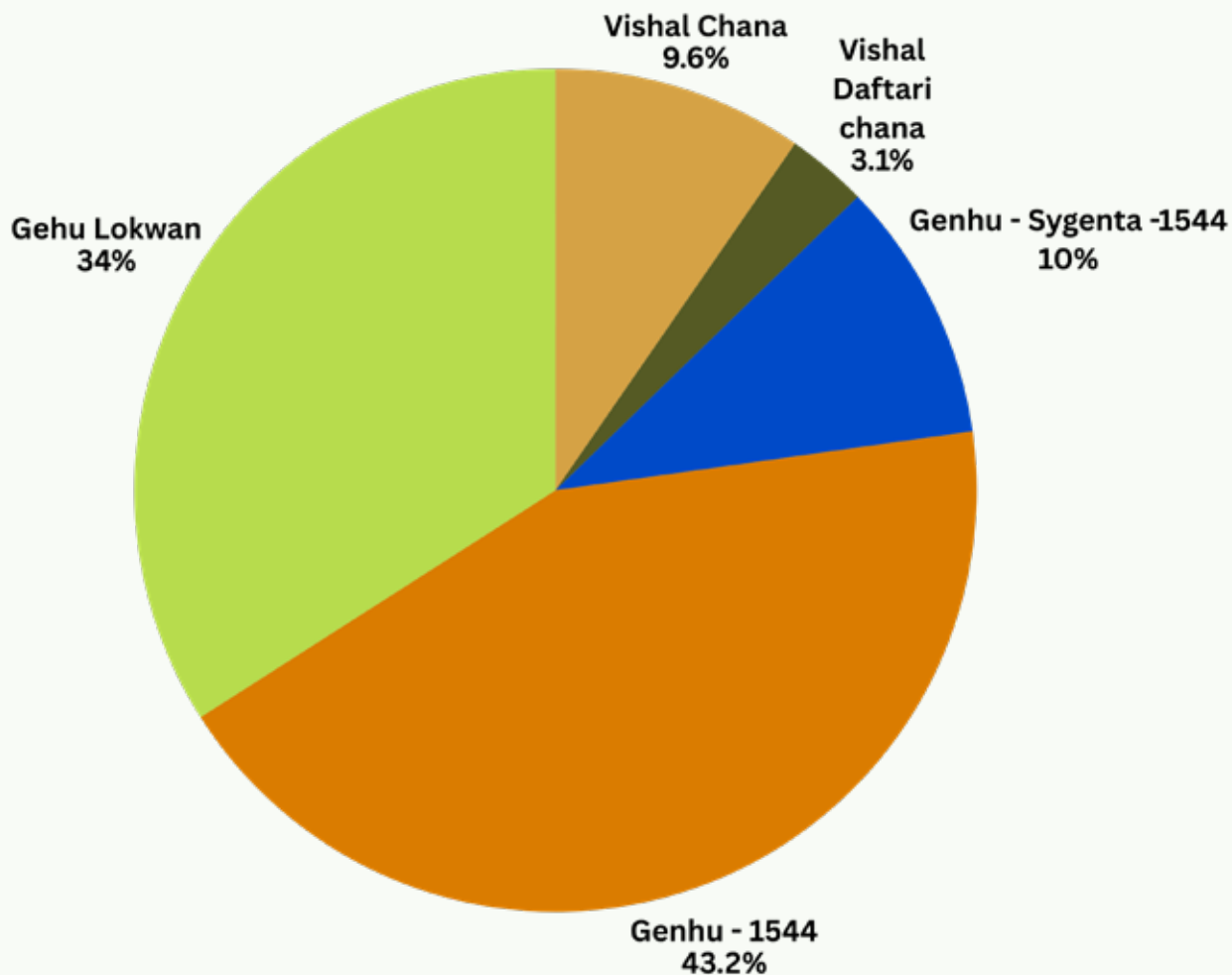
1. Bhikangaon faced 100% crop loss in chili aggregation due to unseasonal rains. Bengal gram in Bagli also saw heavy rejection due to moisture and pest damage.

2. Lack of drying platforms and grading facilities, particularly in Bhikangaon, reduced aggregation volumes and quality control capacity.

3. Smallholder farmers remained reluctant to aggregate due to fear of delayed payments or lower cash flow compared to local traders.
4. Dollar Chana and Bengal Gram aggregations reduced in Barwaha and Bagli due to inability to meet company parameters on size and moisture content.
5. Low awareness among farmers about quality standards and post-harvest handling.
6. Transportation issues led to distress sales.
7. Lack of trust among new farmer participants.
8. Local mandi rate disputes during procurement.

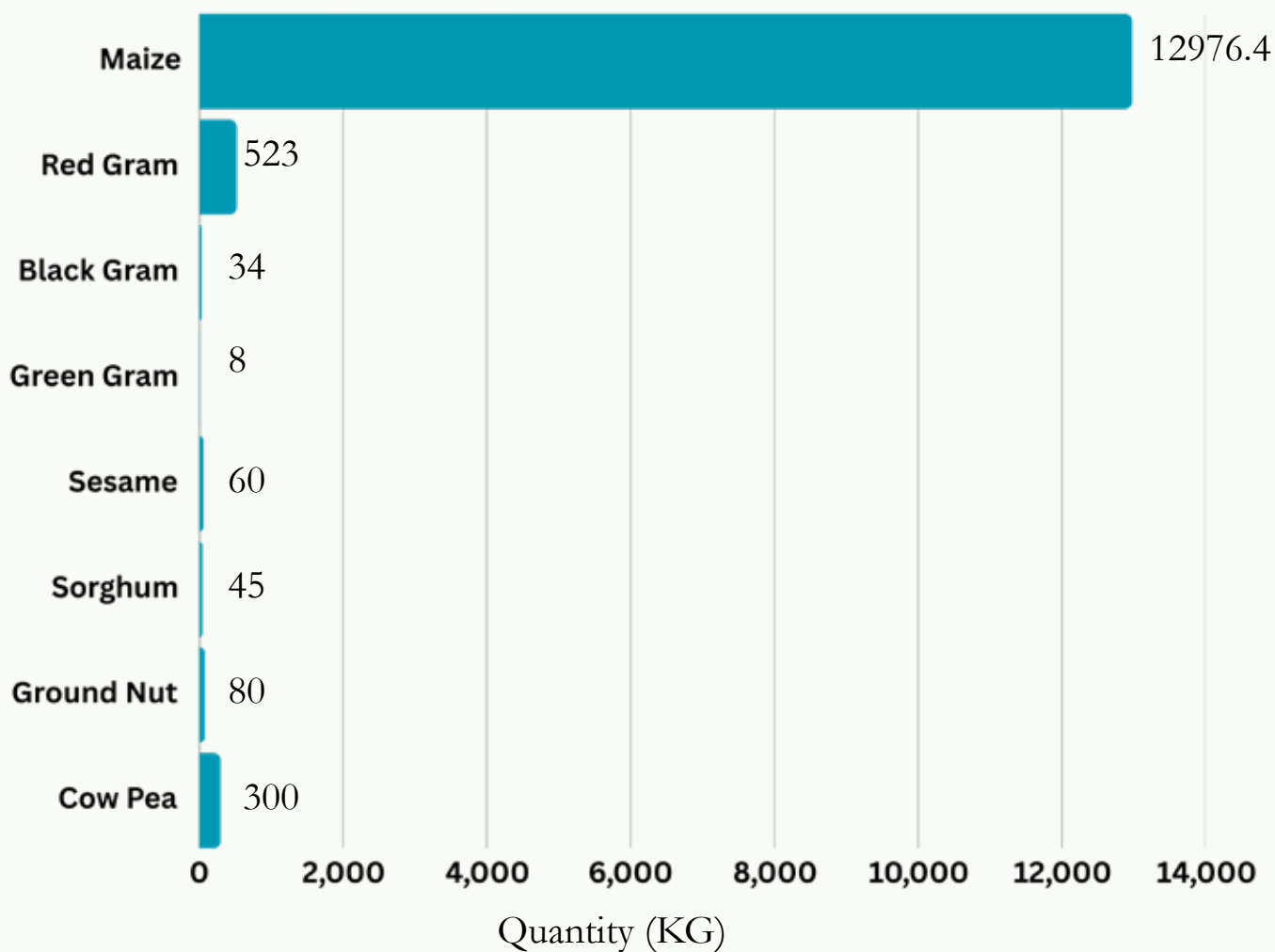
5.3.1 Rabi Seed Data

S. No.	Seed	Quantity (Q)
1	Vishal Chana	19.8
2	Vishal Daftari chana	6.4
3	Dolar Chana	0
4	Genhu - Sygenta -1544	20.6
5	Genhu - 1544	88.8
6	Gehu Lokwan	70



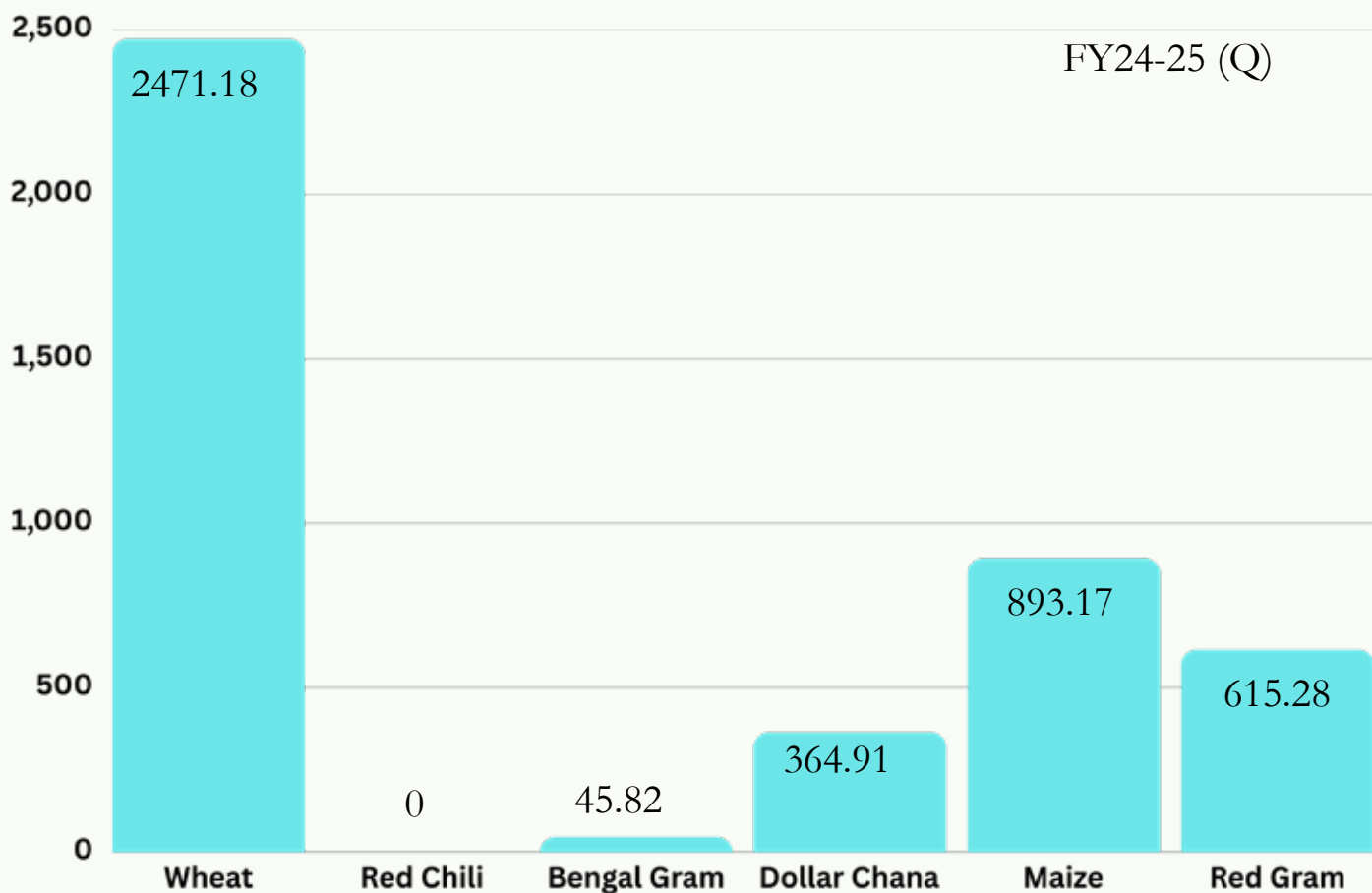
5.3.2. Kharif Seed Data

S. No.	Seed	Quantity (KG)
1	Maize	12976.4
2	Red Gram	523
3	Black Gram	34
4	Green Gram	8
5	Sesame	60
6	Sorghum	45
7	Ground Nut	80
8	Cow Pea	300



5.3.3. Aggregation Data

Commodities	FY24-25 (Q)
Wheat	2471.18
Red Chili	0
Bengal Gram	45.82
Dollar Chana	364.91
Maize	893.17
Red Gram	615.28



5.4 Results

S. No.	Activity	Output/Result
1	Aggregation of Wheat	2471.8 quintals aggregated (↑29.7%)
2	Aggregation of Red Gram	615.28 quintals aggregated (↑155.7%)
3	Aggregation of Dollar Chana	364.915 quintals (↓49.1% due to rejections)
4	Aggregation of Chilli	0 quintals (↓100%) due to unseasonal rainfall
5	Buyer Linkages	Linked with ITC, Adani Wilmar, Bharat Rohan
6	Training on Residue-Free Red Gram, wheat, bengal gram and chick pea	7000+ farmers trained under Non-Pesticide Management (NPM)

6. Livestock Management

6.1 Introduction



In the country's arid regions, livestock has shown itself to be a profitable and feasible substitute source of income for small and marginal farmers. Due to their comparatively lower input requirements



than farming, goat rearing and poultry raising are viable options for farmers with limited or no resources, particularly those who are landless laborers or tenant farmers.

By diversifying their sources of income, these activities also help farmers become less vulnerable to unanticipated events like weather shocks. Originally focused on dairy farming, SPS's Livestock Program now supports other livestock types including goats and poultry since they have been shown to be more affordable for low-income households with tiny and marginal farmers who cannot afford large animals. The Livestock Development and Support Programme has seen a successful phase of growth in the past years across eleven locations in 3 districts – Dewas, Khargone, and Amravati.



6.2 Livestock Program Outreach

S.No.	Livestock Program Outreach	
1	District	1. Deaws 2. Khargone 3. Amrawati
2	No of Village	397
3	Total Members	17064
4	Total Producer Groups	1219
5	SPS Location	1. Kantaphod 2. Udainagar 3. Punjapura 4. Kannod 5. Hatpipliya 6. Bagali 7. Barwaha 8. Melghat 9. Bhikangaon 10. Satwas 11. Khategaon 12. Bhagwanpura

6.3 Major Activities

6.3.1 Member & Beneficiary Engagement

The Livestock Development Program's capacity to empower and involve rural communities is the foundation of its success. 5165 members have actively participated in poultry farming, and 11330 members have actively engaged in goat rearing. It is noteworthy that 3,566 people engage in both hobbies, indicating a common dedication to diversifying their sources of income. Enhancing rural livelihoods and encouraging the integration of diverse livestock techniques have been made possible in large part by this dual engagement strategy. The initiative benefits a total of 20,510 cattle producers, therefore its influence goes far beyond its direct members.

This extensive reach demonstrates the program's comprehensive approach to community development, recognizing the vital connections between sustainable livelihoods, livestock well-being, and general economic growth.

The formation of Producer Groups, which are essential forums for information sharing, skill development, and group decision-making, is a pillar of the Livestock Development Program.



6.3.2 Meeting & Training

Strengthening the general health, illness control, and improved feeding practices capacities of small and marginal farmers. In addition to teaching the farmer the value of nutrition for the healthy growth of their animals and the maintenance of their livelihood, it helps them prevent diseases from the start. The goal of the training is to lower the mortality rate of cattle by preparing the member to act promptly on initial treatment and become self-sufficient in specific situations. As a result, they raise their herd size in order to generate more revenue.

To enhance the abilities of farmers and producers, a total of 2090 Meeting & training sessions covering 7577 participants were held in three different villages.

6.3.3 Health Care Service Center

The primary goals of the organization's livestock program are to reduce animal mortality and raise the net income of rural households, as the organization has spent decades working in the arid and tribal hinterland of Amravati Dewas & khargone. The organization's top goal is to create chances for livelihood and promote sustainable livestock development in order to strengthen the rural economy.

A number of issues that existed on the ground are addressed by the recently established Animal "health care service center."





Quick and simple access to medical care would enable animals to receive various services and treatment, which would assist to reduce the mortality rate. It will reduce the risk element related to the livelihood created by livestock and open the door for rural residents to choose this method of generating a living.

A more favorable environment eventually improves the animals' health, motivating the farmer to expand their flock. This enhances the producers' financial stability and is intended to put an end to distressed animal sales. The generation of livelihoods would help reduce rural-urban migration.

A total of Thirteen such centers have already been created in the three Districts of Dewas, Khargone & Amrawati, with one center covering almost seven villages to provide easy, time-saving, and cost-effective services for the target area's livelihood development.



6.4 Building animal shed for the demonstration for cattle, goat and poultry

To elongate the graph of animal mortality rate, the development of animal and poultry sheds is required to assure the animals' safety and security. It allows them to be protected from the extreme weather and hard climate. It protects them from several predators, including wild animals, reptiles, and harmful insects. Animal sheds help animals grow healthy, which allows members to increase the quantity quality of animals.



To emphasize the importance of the animal shed, the District of Dewas , khargone, and Amrawati This includes 386 goat sheds, 346 cattle sheds, and 259 backyard poultry shelters that were built.







6.5 Vaccination Activities

A vaccination campaign was successfully conducted across all project locations, Dewas, Khargone, and Amrawati, to reduce the mortality rate among goats and cattle. A total of 26,316 animals were vaccinated against Enterotoxemia (ET) and 31,291 against PPR (Peste des Petits Ruminants).

In addition, vaccinations were also carried out for HSBQ, Lumpy Skin Disease, and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) to ensure comprehensive livestock protection. This initiative has played a vital role in improving animal health, preventing disease outbreaks, and supporting livestock owners by reducing economic losses due to animal mortality.





6.6 Support to Landless, Destitute and Most Vulnerable Families through provision of Goats

For the people, goat farming is an important part of their livelihood and agricultural practices. In addition to providing manure to increase agricultural output, it also supports the livelihoods of farmers in rural areas. A goat is known as a poor man's cow (or mini-cow) because it not only gives its offspring wholesome, easily digestible milk, but it also provides farmers and the impoverished with a steady stream of additional income.

It is easier for women and children to manage, requires less capital and feeding expenses, and has higher reproduction rates because of shorter breeding intervals and a high prolific rate, making it a better choice for the rural poor.

Since raising goats usually involves free family work and doesn't call for complex housing arrangements or managerial abilities, family labor is efficiently used to make money. Regardless of wealth, it may be effectively practiced by producers of all kinds to generate regular revenue. Therefore, it provides food for impoverished rural farmers while simultaneously producing profit by using household waste materials and excess labor.

In this activity for Dewas, Khargone, and Amrawati locations, we have distributed 510 goats to 255 members and distributed 2 goats to each member., and also one-time support materials such as liver tonic Goat feed and mineral bricks.





6.7 Capacity Building of Paravet

Strengthening the paravets' ability to oversee the health care of animals is essential to ensure effective outreach and proper program implementation. In this phase, 47 paravets were trained on the new topic of Artificial Insemination (AI) from the three locations of Dewas, Khargone, and Amrawati. The training aimed to enhance their technical skills and capacity for effective mobilization, enabling them to provide improved animal health services and contribute to sustainable livestock development in their respective areas.

6.8 Cashless Scheme

The Cashless Scheme is a significant initiative of the cattle Improvement Programs, which is committed to promoting the welfare of livestock and reducing the financial strain on its members. This innovative program offers a full range of federation-provided basic services at a minimum cost to our program participants.

Currently, 3103 members are connected to the Cashless Scheme. Health cards with all of the beneficiary's livestock information have already been given to 3103 members.

6.9 Impact the Condition of Reduction Mortality Rate



Enhancing livestock health and management was the goal of the various interventions. Paravets' door-to-door care, immunization campaigns, health camps, enhanced health care services, appropriate housing management, distribution of goat banks, village-level training, improved nutrition management, and weighing fairs were all part of the all-encompassing strategy. The mortality rate among animals has significantly decreased as a result of these actions taken together.

6.10 Interventions Implemented-On time

- * Door-to-Door Treatment by Peravets
- * Vaccination & Deworming Programs during the Health camp
- * Proper Housing management
- * Goat bank distribution
- * Village level training & Cluster training by expert trainer.
- * Weighing Fair.

Sn	Activities	Activities	Unit	Numbers
1	Cashless Members & Health Card distribution	Cashless Members	No. of Beneficiaries (Overall)	3103
		Health Card Distribution	No. of Cards	3103
2	Health Support	Provision of treatment to livestock	Number of camps	83
			No. of treatments (Animals cured)	14269
3	Deworming in Animals	Deworming in Goats	No. of goats	43480
4	Vaccination in Animals	ET	No. of Animals	26316
		PPR	No. of Animals	31291
		Others (Large Animal)	No. of Animals	26700
5	Breed Improvement	Castration	No. of Bucks	1134
6	Capacity Building	Training of para-vets	No. of para-vets trained	47
		Training of producers and community members	No. of members trained	7577
		Mobile Cinema	No. of films shown	84
7	Groups & Activities	New group formation of livestock producers	No. of groups	169
		Meetings conducted for livestock producers	No. of meetings	2090
		New small and marginal farmers/ producers participating in livestock program	No. of new beneficiaries joined	3774
8	Distribution of livestock & health care centres	Distribution of goats to beneficiaries	No. of beneficiaries	510
		Distribution of Poultry birds to beneficiaries	No. of birds	10728
		Establishment of animal health care centers	No. of centers	13
9	Housing support & others	Goat Sheds	No. of Sheds	386
		Poultry Sheds	No. of Sheds	346
		Cattle Sheds	No. of Sheds	259

6.11 Challenges of Abortion in Goats

Abortion in goats is a growing concern in rural areas, affecting both animal health and the livelihoods of families who depend on livestock. During field visits, several goat rearers reported increasing cases of miscarriage, often without knowing the exact cause. This issue, though quietly suffered, has serious emotional and economic consequences.

One of the key reasons identified is infectious diseases such as Brucellosis and Chlamydia. Inadequate vaccination and limited veterinary access make the goats more vulnerable. Nutritional deficiencies, especially lack of calcium, phosphorus, and essential vitamins, also contribute significantly. Poor housing, exposure to extreme weather, and physical stress during long walks were common triggers reported by locals.

7. Entitlement, Health and Nutrition



The Entitlement, Health, and Nutrition (E-H&N) programme is creating meaningful change among tribal communities across 366 villages in the districts of Khargone, Dewas, and Amravati.

The program's core mission is to improve the health of women and children by reducing malnutrition and anemia

through deep community engagement. We provide crucial education on proper nutrition, anemia prevention, and hygiene for pregnant women and young children, while also working to increase institutional deliveries and vaccination rates, turning policy into practice.

Our strategy is grounded in strengthening local institutions and ensuring that families can access the government benefits they are entitled to. By fostering the active participation of women in local democratic processes, we are not just improving health statistics, we are also empowering entire communities to advocate for their rights and build a healthier, more equitable future.

Notable tasks empowering action groups and hissedari sabhas, providing access to a variety of schemes, educating and training members and leaders, and establishing 'Model Anganwadis' were carried out at the ground level. We work directly with a network of 539 Anganwadi centers, 246 Public Distribution System (PDS) shops, and 603 government schools to bridge the final gaps in service delivery. A key pillar of our approach is empowering communities with knowledge.

7.1 Empowering Women's Voices from Hissedari Sabha to Gram Sabha

To foster independence and raise awareness of fundamental rights in rural and tribal communities, we established the Hissedari Sabha. Through 2,959 meetings this past year in 363 villages, the Hissedari Sabhas serve as a crucial preparatory platform where women first discuss and organise around pressing local issues such as drinking water shortages, inconsistent PDS shops, incomplete housing, and pending pensions. Empowered with knowledge and collective support, they then confidently bring these matters to the formal Gram Sabha.



A key objective of this initiative was to address the historically low participation of women in the official Gram Sabha. Across three blocks, women now constitute over 44% of participants in Gram Sabhas, with many speaking in these forums for the first time. Women are not only raising their voices but are also gaining a deep understanding of governance, including the importance of a quorum, the function of official registers, and the authority of a passed resolution.



7.2 Capacity Building and Empowerment

7.2.1 Training of Trainers (ToT)

Our ToT sessions equipped field staff with practical skills and accurate knowledge to disseminate within their communities. Led by subject-matter experts such as Dr. Yogesh Jain on public health, Avantika Shrivastav on gender and social inclusion and Shashi Bhushan on community mobilisation through Hissedari Sabhas, and the fundamentals of the Indian Constitution. A total of 85 participants completed the ToT program, strengthening our cadre of community-based trainers.



7.2.2 Developing Community Leaders

We conducted intensive mobilisation and leadership development training for 358 women leaders from Hissedari Sabha groups. The leadership development component was strengthened through sessions facilitated by Shashi Bhushan, who focused on grassroots leadership skills, public speaking, negotiation with local authorities, and effective participation in Gram Sabhas.

Through role plays, mock Gram Sabha simulations, and practical exercises, women leaders enhanced their ability to raise community issues, demand accountability, and engage constructively with Panchayati Raj Institutions.

In addition, the trainings included residential workshops on crucial health topics such as hypertension, water-borne diseases, and the importance of a low-salt, low-sugar diet.





7.3 Building Trust and Accountability through Amukh Shivr

The Amukh Shivr is a community engagement platform designed to bridge the trust gap between villagers and the Gram Panchayat and strengthen confidence in local governance. These forums facilitate constructive dialogue by bringing together community members, Panchayat representatives (like the Sarpanch and Sachiv), frontline workers (ASHA, Anganwadi, etc.), teachers, and Hissedari Sabha leaders.

The Shivr provides a shared space to reflect on local development, address ongoing challenges, and allow community members to voice their concerns directly to officials. This encourages collective problem-solving and ensures that local issues receive the attention they require. This year, two Amukh Shivirs were successfully organised, bringing together 50 Panchayats in the Bagli block and reinforcing grassroots democracy in the region.





7.4 Combating Child Malnutrition with Local Solutions

To tackle child malnutrition across the Khargone, Dewas, and Amravati districts, we implemented a series of interventions focused on providing protein-rich, locally available foods like Poshan Laddu, Milk and Banana (Doodh-Kela) and Boiled Eggs to severely malnourished children, both SAM and MAM. Our approach was community-centric from the start.

Children were first identified through village weight checks, followed by personal visits to their families to respectfully obtain parental consent. Members of the Hissedari Sabha were involved throughout the process, helping to build community trust and educate parents on how simple foods can significantly improve a child's physical and mental development.

✳ In Barwaha and Bhikangaon, the flagship "2-Anda" (2-egg) activity provided children with two eggs daily to boost their protein intake. Barwaha also included a Chikki distribution program during the summer for energy-dense nutrition.

✳ In Bagli, a diverse range of activities was implemented, including the distribution of POSHAN Laddu, Doodh-Kela (Milk & Banana), and the 2-Anda program.



This collective effort yielded significant positive outcomes. Overall, 836 of the 965 participating children (88%) showed measurable nutritional improvement. The egg-distribution activity was particularly effective, helping 472 out of 596 children move from a state of severe malnutrition to a healthier status. These results highlight the profound impact that targeted, community-supported interventions with simple, local foods can have on a child's well-being.

7.5 Jowar Utsav: Celebrating Millets for Better Health

To promote the nutritional benefits of coarse grains, our Health and Nutrition team in Bhikangaon organised a vibrant "Jowar Utsav" (Sorghum Festival). The event brought together Self-Help Group (SHG) members and local women to celebrate the versatility of jowar. They prepared and shared nearly 20 different delicious dishes, from staples like chapatis and khichdi to festive treats like laddus and halwa.

More than just a food festival, the Utsav was a platform for learning. After the meal, women exchanged recipes and discussed how incorporating this traditional grain into their diets benefits the health of women and children. Inspired by the event, many participants decided to plant small patches of jowar on their farms, reviving this age-old crop in both their fields and their kitchens.



7.6 Home-Based Nutrition through Kitchen Gardens



To provide a sustainable source of home-grown fruits and vegetables, a kitchen garden initiative within the programme has distributed 6,468 seeds of different summer and winter seeds for families to grow produce in backyards and other unused spaces around their homes.

With the help of Agricultural team, periodic follow ups are taken with these households from sowing till harvesting of the produce. Seasonal seeds are provided such as: 1. Summer/Rainy Season: Bottle Gourd, Pumpkin, Bitter Gourd, Brinjal, Okra, and Cucumber and 2. Winter Season: Carrot, Fenugreek, Coriander, Beetroot, Tomato, and Pumpkin.





7.7 Health Camps

To address the immediate medical needs of villagers, a total of 122 health camps were organised. These camps provided essential services, including health education sessions, basic medical examinations, and consultations. Special camps were also conducted for pregnant women, focusing on antenatal checkups and providing guidance on documentation and registration to improve their access to critical maternal health-care services.

7.8 Maternal and Child Health

A core focus has been improving maternal and child health through the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) framework. Our efforts prioritised ensuring pregnant women receive the nutrition, checkups, and immunisations needed for a healthy delivery, while strongly emphasising the importance of institutional deliveries over traditional home births.



7.8.1 The "1000 Days" Program Health

Through our flagship “1000 Days” training series, expectant mothers were guided through the crucial period from pregnancy until their child’s second birthday. The sessions focused on simple, actionable steps like improving diet, attending regular checkups, and understanding vaccinations. A total of 1,067 such sessions were held across our operational areas.



7.8.2 Addressing Child Malnutrition

Tackling malnutrition remains one of our most pressing goals. This year, our two-pronged approach included referring 550 children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) to Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs) for intensive care. Alongside this, we conducted 965 awareness sessions for pregnant women, lactating mothers, and community leaders to promote better feeding and nutrition practices at home.

Anganwadi Centres are vital for the health and development of pregnant women and young children, yet many in Madhya Pradesh struggle with poor infrastructure and irregular services. To address these gaps, our ongoing work aims to transform 10 of these centers into Model Anganwadis.

We renovated essential facilities, including toilets, kitchens, and drinking water points, and upgraded electrical fittings. The buildings were also painted in bright, cheerful colors to create a welcoming, child-friendly atmosphere. To support cognitive and physical development, centers were equipped with educational toys, charts, and posters. Outdoor play equipment, such as swings and slides, was also installed to encourage active and joyful learning.

We reinforced the core mission of the Anganwadis by ensuring that every center provides nutritious meals and maintains access to essential health and immunisation services.



7.9 Challenges

- * Women in the Hissedari Sabha often face a lack of support from their families. Husbands and in-laws may discourage or prevent them from attending meetings and trainings, limiting their participation and undermining community ownership of development initiatives.
- * Many families don't recognise Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) as a critical health issue, resisting referrals to Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs). There is a strong preference for unqualified local healers, and even when supplementary food is provided for SAM children, inconsistent feeding at home remains a major challenge.
- * Girls frequently drop out of school after Class 5 or 8 due to early marriage, domestic workload, and a lack of safe, accessible schools. This perpetuates a cycle of limited opportunity and cuts them off from adolescent health and education schemes.
- * Many villages suffer from a shortage of trained health staff, irregular visits from ANM/ASHA workers, and poorly equipped sub-centres. Anganwadi centres are often closed or mismanaged, failing to provide essential early childhood care and support to malnourished children and pregnant women.
- * Poor information sharing by Panchayats means that many vulnerable individuals are unaware of their rights to pensions, housing, and maternal health schemes, despite having the necessary identification.
- * The employment guarantee program (MGNREGA) has been undermined by administrative delays and a narrow focus on construction, leading to very low person-days generated. This has eroded its role as a reliable source of local employment.
- * A lack of local jobs drives seasonal migration, where families face exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and low wages. While away, they lose access to PDS, healthcare, and education, trapping them in a cycle of poverty.

7.10 Menstrual and Reproductive Health Programme

In collaboration with Samaj Pragati Sahayog and Uninhibited organisation, a menstrual health program is being implemented across Punjapura, Bagli, and Udainagar locations. The programme mainly aims to educate adolescent girls and women of the village about menstrual and reproductive health, followed by removing taboo and offering environmentally friendly menstrual products along with making menstrual and reproductive healthcare accessible.

The work began with structured engagement with adolescent girls in government high and higher secondary schools through a 12-session module developed by Uninhibited. The sessions were designed to build trust first using games like Kho-Kho and other interactive activities to create comfort before moving into discussions around puberty, emotional changes, reproductive anatomy, menstrual cycles, and overcoming hesitation in speaking about these topics. Across the academic cycles, approximately 700 girls participated initially, followed by 854 girls in the subsequent phase, and 374 girls during the resumption period. The programme did not stop at school-based sessions; mothers, teachers, and families were also engaged to ensure that conversations continued beyond the classroom.



Recognising that not all girls have access to school platforms, sessions were also extended to adolescent girls at the village level, including those who had dropped out or were unable to attend formal institutions. This expanded outreach helped create peer networks where girls could speak openly, ask questions, and support one another. Over time, discussions moved from basic awareness to confidence-building and leadership among the girls themselves.

Parallel to adolescent engagement, the programme worked extensively with community women through structured “Mother Sessions.” These sessions focused on menstrual physiology, reproductive health, hygiene practices, and the social taboos surrounding menstruation. Over different phases, hundreds of women participated each quarter, 420 in early sessions, over 800 in later phases, and more than 577 in follow-up engagements. Alongside the training, menstrual cups were introduced and distributed in large numbers across villages, with more than 2,400 cups distributed.





The menstrual cup was positioned not only as an environmentally sustainable product but also as a financially practical solution. For many women, it represented long-term savings over 5–7 years compared to recurring expenditure on disposable pads. However, adoption required careful handholding. Follow-up sessions were conducted over several weeks to address doubts, demonstrate usage again, and build comfort. Peer influence played a significant role, when one woman adopted the cup confidently, others often followed.

The initiative also extended to SPS staff and federation leaders. Female staff members underwent in-depth sessions covering menstrual physiology, reproductive health, conception, and societal taboos. Over time, more staff and federation representatives were trained and introduced to menstrual cups, strengthening their ability to facilitate conversations in their respective communities.



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An important support mechanism during this period was the “Hello Saathi” helpline launched by the organisation Uninhibited. The helpline provided remote access to menstrual health information, self-care counselling, and tele-consultations with medical professionals. Women and adolescent girls from Udainagar, Punjapura, and Bagli actively used the service, with more than 350 calls made addressing concerns such as menstrual cramps, irregular cycles, white discharge, and difficulty conceiving.

The helpline offered confidential, non-judgmental support, reducing the need for unnecessary travel and financial burden. However, due to funding constraints, sustaining this service became difficult, creating a gap in accessible healthcare support.

7.10.1 Challenges

- * Deep-Rooted Taboos and Stigma- Menstruation remains associated with silence and shame. Initial sessions often faced hesitation, discomfort, or with drawal from participants before trust was gradually built.
- * Resistance to Menstrual Cup Adoption- Misconceptions regarding safety, insertion, and cultural beliefs slowed adoption. Multiple demonstrations and follow-ups were necessary to build confidence.
- * School Permissions and Scheduling- Securing approvals from schools required continuous dialogue, as administrators were concerned about academic time and parental reactions.
- * Helpline Sustainability- The discontinuation of the Hello Saathi helpline due to funding constraints created a gap in accessible medical consultation for women and girls.
- * Generational Differences- Older women sometimes held more rigid beliefs around menstruation, which occasionally conflicted with the information shared with adolescent girls.



8. Gender

One of SPS's core convictions, shaped by over three decades of grassroots engagement and reinforced by development experiences across the world, is that women's leadership is central to sustainable and equitable development. Time and again, we have witnessed with our women consistently demonstrate a long-term commitment to community well-being, with particular attention to health, education, livelihoods, and collective accountability.

Women's institutions, especially community-based groups, have also shown the courage to question systems, demand transparency, and hold public institutions accountable in ways that transform governance at the local level.

However, as SPS continued to engage deeply with institutional and financial challenges faced by women whether through Self-Help Groups, agriculture, livestock, or health programmes, it became increasingly clear that economic barriers alone do not explain inequality. The geographical and socio-cultural realities of the regions we work in pointed toward deeper structural issues rooted in gender norms and power relations. Questions around mobility, decision-making, ownership, access to resources, unpaid labour, and violence consistently surfaced beneath financial discussions.



This led SPS to formally initiate structured conversations around gender. The programme began with internal reflection and capacity-building within the organisation, supported by external trainers.

These early sessions focused on building conceptual clarity around themes such as understanding gender, the distinction between sex and gender, understanding gender and caste, gender construction and socialisation, the role of institutions in shaping norms, gender-based discrimination, power dynamics, and gender-based violence.

As internal understanding deepened, the need to extend these conversations into the field became evident. What began as small-batch discussions with community leaders during 2023-24 evolved into a full-fledged Gender Programme in 2024-25, supported by ABF. The programme now engages both staff and community members in structured trainings designed to address not only awareness, but also behaviour, institutional practices, and programme integration.

The programme also expanded to include a sports-based equity initiative for adolescent girls. In collaboration with Pudiyaador, a non-profit organisation that runs the pan-India initiative “Playquity,” SPS supports the Ultimate Frisbee Coaching Programme. This initiative uses sport as a medium to foster leadership, teamwork, confidence, and collective responsibility among adolescent girls and young women.

By creating safe and inclusive spaces where girls can participate actively, build physical confidence, and occupy public space, the programme challenges restrictive gender norms in practical and visible ways.

8.1 Gender Awareness and Advocacy through interactive trainings with community member

Across the first three quarters, gender trainings within the community were led by Avantika Shrivastav in both residential and field-based formats. These sessions engaged Self-Help Group (SHG) leaders, community women, and local leaders in structured discussions around gender roles, discrimination, and power relations. Over the course of the year, more than 1,400 person days training were conducted, reflecting a significant expansion from small-batch discussions to large-scale community engagement.

The programme began in the first quarter with a five-day training attended by over 100 women.

In the second and third quarters, the scale increased substantially, with more than 200 women participating each quarter through a combination of residential workshops and village-level sessions. While the format varied, the thematic focus remained consistent, gradually deepening based on participants' lived realities and ongoing discussions.



The trainings built conceptual clarity around foundational gender concepts while situating them within everyday life experiences:



* **Understanding Gender:** Participants examined the difference between biological identity and socially constructed roles. Discussions highlighted how gender expectations are shaped by culture, norms, and socialisation rather than biology.

* **Sex vs. Gender:** Clear distinctions were made between sex (biological characteristics) and gender (social roles and expectations), helping participants identify how rigid gender norms contribute to inequality.

* **Gender Construction and Socialisation:** Sessions explored how institutions such as family, school, religion, and media shape behaviour, dress, mobility, emotional expression, and division of labour for men and women in both domestic and public spaces.

* **Gender-Based Discrimination:** Women reflected on how discrimination manifests in restricted mobility, limited decision-making power, unequal access to education and employment, and exclusion from financial and land ownership systems.

* **Power Dynamics:** Discussions examined visible and invisible power structures within households and communities, including who controls income, who speaks in public forums, and who bears unpaid labour.

* **Gender-Based Violence:** The understanding of violence was broadened beyond physical abuse to include emotional, economic, psychological, and sexual violence. Participants also recognised denial of education, mobility, and opportunities as systemic forms of violence.

In the third quarter, the discussions evolved further based on group interest and emerging concerns. Additional topics such as reproductive health, menstrual cycles, dowry practices, sex determination, and girls' education were incorporated, allowing the sessions to remain responsive to community realities.



The trainings followed participatory and experiential learning approaches to ensure meaningful engagement and reflection. Sessions included both large and small group discussions, role-plays based on real-life scenarios, and reflective exercises, such as listing the perceived “pros and cons” of being a man or a woman, to critically examine gender norms. Interactive games were used to challenge stereotypes, while audio-visual materials, including short clips and stories, helped contextualise discussions. Participants also worked with charts, creative materials, and structured group presentations to articulate their perspectives.

Energizers and songs were incorporated to sustain participation and create an open learning environment. Together, these methods enabled women to connect theoretical gender concepts to their everyday realities within their homes, Self-Help Groups, and villages.

Across the quarters, the trainings led to noticeable shifts in both articulation and awareness among participants. Women demonstrated a clearer understanding of the distinction between sex and gender and increasingly recognised domestic violence in its multiple forms, extending beyond physical harm to include emotional, economic, and psychological abuse.

Discussions also enabled participants to link gender inequality with structural issues such as access to land, income, mobility, and education. Many women expressed a commitment to fostering more equitable practices within their households, including encouraging boys to participate in domestic responsibilities.

Self-Help Groups were increasingly viewed as potential safe spaces for discussing violence and issues of social justice. Importantly, the sessions created an environment where women felt able to voice experiences that are often silenced; in one instance, a participant shared her experience of domestic violence and was met with collective solidarity, reflecting a growing readiness to address such issues collectively rather than treating them as private concerns.

8.2 Gender Capacity Building within SPS

Across all four quarters, SPS invested deeply in strengthening its own organisational understanding of gender. These trainings were led by Harsh and Manak from The YP Foundation, with the intention of not only building conceptual clarity around gender, but also examining how power, behaviour, and institutional culture operate within the organisation itself. Later in the fourth quarter, this internal process was further strengthened through a Legal Preparedness workshop facilitated by Avantika Shrivastav, focusing on women's rights and institutional response to domestic violence. Over the course of the year, more than 1,200 person days training were conducted.



The initial trainings were conducted in residential formats across batches, engaging more than 100 staff members. What began as foundational discussions around gender gradually evolved into deeper reflections on sexuality, consent, privilege, and workplace dynamics. Participants examined the difference between sex and gender, explored how social norms shape identity and behaviour, and reflected on how these norms influence professional environments.

Sessions on listening styles, empathy mapping, and team exercises encouraged staff to understand each other's perspectives and recognise subtle patterns of exclusion or bias.

As the trainings progressed, conversations became more layered. Discussions expanded to include sexual identity, reproductive processes, cultural portrayals of gender in media, and the ways in which gender-based violence manifests across homes, workplaces, and public spaces. Consent was explored not as a legal formality but as a lived principle. Participants reflected on how workplace hierarchies can silence or pressure individuals and examined strategies to create safer and more inclusive work environments.

Interactive activities such as role-based simulations, reflective exercises, group presentations, and film screenings created space for honest dialogue. Exercises like the “Toxic River” activity highlighted teamwork, adaptive leadership, and the importance of inclusion in overcoming structural barriers. These activities were not isolated games but metaphors for workplace culture and collective responsibility.

By the third and fourth quarters, the focus shifted from awareness to application. Staff were encouraged to critically assess SPS programmes through a gender lens, questioning whether initiatives were merely inclusive in language or truly transformative in practice.



Programme teams began identifying concrete steps to integrate gender more intentionally into their work. This included discussions around strengthening women's decision-making power in agriculture and livestock programmes, increasing women's leadership within FPOs, engaging men in maternal health and caregiving conversations, and encouraging greater participation of women in Gram Sabha processes and land rights discussions.



The fourth quarter also marked an important step toward institutional readiness through the Legal Preparedness for Gender Justice workshop. Facilitated by Avantika Shrivastav, this training focused on practical legal knowledge, understanding provisions under the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita, processes of filing FIR and Zero FIR, roles of District and State Legal Services Authorities, and available compensation mechanisms for survivors of violence.



The workshop emphasised that awareness alone is insufficient; staff must be equipped to respond, document, refer, and support cases responsibly. Discussions also highlighted the need for structured internal mechanisms within SPS to address domestic violence cases and strengthen legal networks at the district level.

8.3 Playquity

Playquity, a pan-India initiative that promotes equality through sports, uses Ultimate Frisbee as a medium to build leadership, teamwork, and confidence among adolescent girls and young women. Over the past year, the collaboration between SPS and Pudiyador through the Playquity initiative has steadily evolved from a workshop-based intervention into an ongoing community-led process.

The journey began with a three-day residential frisbee workshop that brought together 45 participants, including adolescent girls and young women from different districts. The format of the game itself set the tone for what the programme stood for. Without third-party referees, players were responsible for resolving conflicts themselves, encouraging accountability, dialogue, and fair play. The “Spirit Circles,” held after matches, created space for reflection, girls spoke about how they felt, what worked in the team, and what could improve. For many, this was their first experience of being heard in a structured, respectful setting of sports.



The workshop focused not only on sport but on life skills like communication, leadership, resilience, and collaboration. Girls who had rarely travelled beyond their villages found themselves interacting with peers from different regions and backgrounds. The experience extended beyond the field, creating friendships, building confidence, and expanding aspirations.

Building on this foundation, four adolescent girls from rural Madhya Pradesh were selected through a home-visit and interview process to participate in the two-month “Coaches in Training” programme in Coimbatore. For most of them, this was their first time travelling outside their village.



During the training, they engaged not only in advanced sports coaching but also in discussions around gender, reproductive health, mental well-being, empathy, and leadership.



The exposure broadened their understanding of the structural barriers girls face and strengthened their confidence to address them within their own communities. On returning to their villages, these young leaders began forming their own cohorts. Over time, four groups were established, each with approximately 15 adolescent girls. Sessions are now conducted two to three times a week, combining outdoor sports activities with reflective discussions. Currently, nearly 70 girls across three active cohorts are regularly participating. What began as a short-term workshop has now become a sustained presence in the villages.

The shift is visible. Girls who earlier stepped out primarily for school or household chores are now gathering for structured sports sessions.

They negotiate time, claim space on playgrounds, and organise themselves into teams. The absence of referees continues to build their ability to resolve disagreements independently, reinforcing communication and mutual respect. Spirit Circles remain central, ensuring that reflection is as important as performance.

8.4 Challenges

- * Gender roles and power hierarchies are deeply embedded in family structures, caste systems, and cultural practices. Changing long-standing beliefs requires sustained engagement beyond one-time trainings.
- * Discussions on consent, sexuality, domestic violence, and power dynamics sometimes generate hesitation or discomfort. Participants may initially avoid open dialogue, especially when conversations challenge male authority or traditional expectations.
- * While conceptual clarity improves during trainings, applying these learnings within households and community spaces takes time. Social pressure and fear of backlash can slow behavioural shifts.
- * Women's participation is often affected by household responsibilities, caregiving duties, agricultural labour, and restrictions on mobility, particularly for residential or longer trainings.
- * Consistency of attendance has also been an ongoing challenge. Girls often balance school responsibilities, household chores, sibling care, and seasonal agricultural labour. During peak agricultural seasons or exam periods, participation sometimes fluctuates.

9. Kumbaya

9.1 2024-2025 at Kumbaya: An Overview



At Kumbaya, time whizzes past from one deadline to the other, managing orders, making samples, setting up production, prepping for exhibitions, packing for retail stores and responding to every new person who comes to us with hope and curiosity. The team barely has time to notice the passage of time or seasons. We simply move on from installing coolers to survive the heat; airing fabrics and checking leakages during monsoons and then to layering up and bundling next to the heater to bear the cold winters. Work and days move simultaneously like clockwork while we prepare seasonal collections for our clients.

In the midst of this incessant action, there are moments of hope, glory and wins that we, the people of Kumbaya reckon with. This year was very special for the recognition that came through our film the **Kumbaya Story**. Written, directed and narrated by our founder Nivedita Banerji, edited by Sumit Sisodiya and made possible through the collective effort and support from Dusty Foot Productions and SPS Community Media, the Kumbaya Story successfully documented the origin, the vision and three decades of blood, sweat and toil that went into the making of Kumbaya Producer Company Limited. **The film won the TVE Global Sustainability Film Award 2024 in the category Transforming Society and was selected by Kriti Film Club for their Beyond Borders Feminist Film Festival 2024.**

Another exciting highlight for the year was the beginning of the Indigo cultivation and the women farmers training with our knowledge partner - Avani Handicraft that took place at the Baba Amte Centre for People's Empowerment during August. The trial run of seeds sown in March 2024, was harvested in May 2024.

Like every year, Kumbaya's primary stitching training programme was carried out in different locations through the federation. This year Kumbaya trained a total of 193 women across Khategoan, Barwah and Bagli. They were taught how to stitch simple items such as shirts, kurtas, blouses, petticoats and children's clothes.

Kumbaya remains blessed with its well wishers and people meaning to do good work. In line with our design principles of circularity and reconstruction of fabrics, we received multiple donations of cloth this year. Madhu Chawla generously sent us dead stock from the export warehouses in Bombay twice this year. Sanjeevani Trust is another organisation that sent us fabric, along with individuals sharing their own collection such as Kanika and Parveen for Kumbaya to use.

9.2 Indigo

Indigo is the deep blue mesmerising colour that is spirited out of the leaves of the *Indigofera tinctoria* plant. This unassuming shrub has gifted the world with precious shades of blue, from midnight to sky, that synthetic dyes can never capture; and so, has been elemental in ‘writing’ the history of many countries, some with beauty and some with terrible darkness.

This year we have been on a journey to find this elusive blue. It has been a rare privilege to learn about indigo cultivation and dye extraction from Avani Handicraft, our knowledge partner, who have perfected the art of indigo and other colours from nature over many years in Uttarakhand. Indigo at Kumbaya and SPS began by sowing the seeds for a trial run in January 2024.

Indigofera tinctoria or Indigo is a shrub in the legume family (Fabaceae) and one of the traditional, primary plants used for producing natural indigo dye. It is a small perennial shrub, typically 1–2 meters tall, like Pigeonpea (Tuar). It has light green pinnate leaves and sheafs of pink or violet flowers. Indigo is a nitrogen fixing leguminous plant enriching the soil naturally. It is a short crop, ready for harvest within just 90 days. This allows for multiple harvests in a year, providing farmers with a frequent and reliable income source.

Indigo cultivation requires less water compared to other crops. Indigo also integrates well with other kharif crops, contributing to effective crop rotation, improving companion crop yields. Animals do not eat indigo. It is a regenerative crop, improving soil health and biodiversity.

Indigo dye does not pollute soil and water. Traditional extraction uses water and natural fermentation instead of harsh chemicals. The water left over is rich in nutrients and beneficial for the soil. It is non-toxic and gentle on the skin. It is said that Samurai warriors wore clothes dyed in indigo to help wounds heal faster.

The color develops through oxidation, with each dip adding depth, leading to unique shades. Indigo bonds to fibres in layers rather than all at once. It even fades beautifully.

We decided to plant indigo throughout the year in different seasons to understand how indigo would grow in our area. The first sowing in small plots failed due to the cold weather. However, the seeds we planted in March germinated and grew well through the summer on the SPS seedplot in Neemkheda village, and SPS campus some with irrigation.



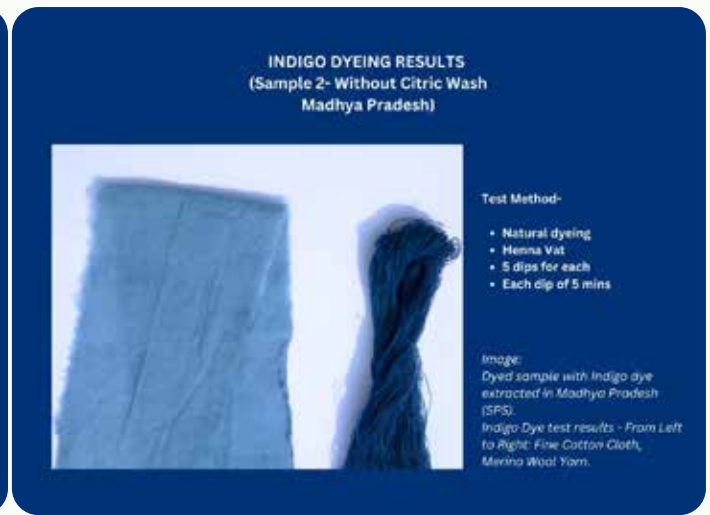
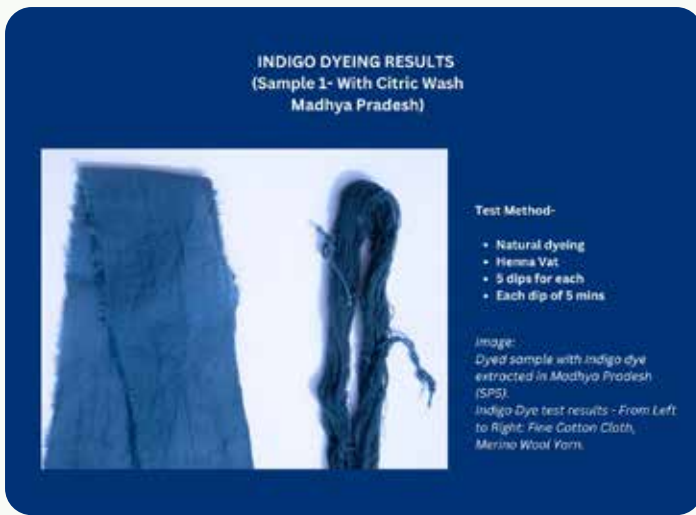
The best time to harvest indigo for maximum dye content is just before the plant flowers. This is a very short window of time when indican (the indigo precursor) in the leaves is at its highest concentration. Once the plant begins to flower, it starts directing energy away from leaf chemistry, and dye yield drops. If harvested too early the leaves do not get time to build enough indican.



If harvested too late the dye content declines.

We harvested a small quantity of Indigo plants at the beginning of June and learned how to soak, ferment, oxidise, decant and dry to obtain the pigment over a four-day virtual training session with Avani.

We sent the precious pigment by courier for a dye test to Avani in Uttarakhand. Here are the results.



Before distributing seeds for the monsoon, Avani conducted a two-day workshop on indigo cultivation with women farmers from Kantaphod Pragati Samiti and Punjapura Pragati Samiti federations in August. They visited farmer fields first to interact, and evaluate the conditions. Then a meeting was held at the BACPE campus with the farmers who were interested in cultivating indigo this season. The team from Avani conducted an MIS training, explained the advantages of indigo with the help of a presentation and film. Plans for moving forward were discussed including pre-harvest preparations, human resources, transport, dye extraction facility, and associated costs.

However, a prolonged monsoon that went beyond October destroyed the crop in most fields.



In conclusion, while the indigo quality from our pilot plots were promising based on dyeing tests and results, there were some challenges with the crop. Germination in January was unsuccessful because of the cold. February's sowing showed good growth with irrigation, but the onset of summer in March hindered progress. Summer sowing is viable for small farmers with limited irrigation resources. Next year we are keen to try again to see how we can make it work.

9.3 New Productions

Satya Sleeveless Dress, Mariana shirts, White shirts, Anasuya Dress, Anjali Strappy Dress, Reversible quilted jackets, Patchwork Kimono, Embroidered Corduroy Shirts, Reversible Bagru Shirts made into Kumbaya's new designs this year. We also cracked small items such as scrunchies, Christmas ornaments, heart badges in cloth, machine stitched and embroidered bird patches. The embroidery team learnt how to work with zardosi for Zazi and experimented with applique embroidery for greeting cards.







9.4 Design Collaborations

Like every year Kumbaya co creates with various designers, picking their expertise, contributing through our skill and learning along the way. The year 2024-25 saw some collaborative partnerships continue from the previous year and welcomed a set of new ones.

9.4.1 Kosala Livelihood and Social Foundation

Kosala livelihood and social foundation is a not-for-profit social enterprise, a subsidiary of the Aditya Birla Group, committed to supporting the Kosa silk weavers of Chhattisgarh. Kosala seeks to make this craft a source of sustainable livelihood, individual identity for artisans, and a recognition of them as co-creators and equal stakeholders in furthering their cultural legacy. They work towards transforming the Kosa silk value chain by combining the heritage craft with contemporary design whilst building a holistic ecosystem that empowers every stakeholder involved in the making of the Kosa silk.

Shailja Sachan, a designer we have closely worked with, introduced Kumbaya to Neeta Shah, CEO of Kosala Livelihood and Social Foundation. We received a set of 7 samples of corporate accessories including bags, laptop sleeves, pouches, ID card holder and file folder to replicate. Owing to the lack of appropriate fabric and machinery required to stitch these specific items, the discussion moved onto exploring garments. Shailja designed the tech packs for men's regular shirts, slim fit shirts, jackets, short and long kurta.

She stayed at the Jatashankar campus and worked with the Kumbaya team to make the patterns and embroidery designs for the Kosala styles. The initial discussion projected an order of 90 pieces in each style. However, once the cost estimates were shared, the prices were brought down along with the order quantity as it came to be expensive for them. We finally ended up making 171 pieces consisting of Men's jackets, short and long kurta. After completing the order, the leftover fabric and samples were sorted and returned to Kosala's Raipur office.

9.4.2 Gumfu Textiles

Gumfu Textiles is a brand exploring textiles through stories and culture, founded by Vedanti Phule. It specialises in handwoven home linen, placemats, table runners, cushion covers and stoles.

It was an interesting experience for Kumbaya's team to work with a brand that had styles very similar to our own and that came with detailed instructions along with the tech pack. For Gumfu, Kumbaya stitched placemats, table napkins, runners and cushion covers. We also created big buttons by punching fabric, hand stitched button holes and adding piping.

However, in the month of November communication became difficult with Vedanti over a hastened order and collaborative instagram post. Since then we haven't repeated any orders from Gumfu.



9.4.3 Annie G

Annie G is an alliteration with ‘energy’ and a brand that works with activewear and performance apparel, prioritising support and comfort. Their focus is on curating limited edition classic products with a focus on simple comfort and relaxed elegance.

Although our client Karen has been very patient and kind in her approach with us, working on her order has been a journey for us. Throughout the year there have been multiple revisions and reworking of the patterns that were sampled and approved earlier. We completed the order for 152 pieces including camisole blouses with and without frill, long striped dress with belt, jumpsuits and samples for strappy dress with smocking. Unfortunately, the fit of the jumpsuit and the strappy dress with smocking was not approved and is still being redone.

9.4.4 Rani & Reine

A brand based in Germany, that creates clothes and accessories from natural fibres sourced, spun, knit and created ethically by Indian artisans. Rani & Reine’s designs seek to bring the wearer comfort, freedom of movement and a chance to experience thoughtfully crafted textiles and inclusive sizing.

The Kumbaya team looks forward to the process of collaborating with Sarah Dunn, the founder of Rani & Reine. Like other international clients, she flies down and stays at the Jatashankar campus to work on the designs with the team that streamlines the entire process.

This year we worked on Winter pants, Swirl jacket, Panel top, Painter’s shirt and created some samples for Men’s shirts. Sarah worked with the team to make new design samples for scrunchies, christmas ornaments, patchwork cushions and men’s shirts. We experimented a lot to get the size and the elasticity of the scrunchies right.

It allowed us to use some of the printed leftover fabric which became quite a hit at the Botho Boutique. Sarah also selected some of the Kumbaya styles like the Flying Fox shirts, Patchwork Reversible Quilted Jacket, Mandarin Tunics with yoke and Bedcovers to be sold at her boutique.





9.4.5 Woven

Inspired by the need to create designs exclusively from handloom cloth in natural fibres, the founder of Woven, Laura Miles, creates graceful collections whilst designing and sourcing from Women Weave and Karghewale in Maheshwar. This year, Kumbaya produced a total of 312 pieces for Laura. We worked on familiar styles of the Ingrid, Nina, Lina, Ilse, Cora and Freya top and pyjama set. Owing to Laura's simple designs and clear instructions, it is a breeze to work and complete her orders within the stipulated time.



9.4.6 Zazi

A Dutch luxury fashion brand which works on creating global networks with indigenous artisans and celebrates women's collectives and artisanal craft. It encourages community development through creativity and facilitates women's economic and social rural independence.

This was Kumbaya's second year of working with Zazi. We saw a change in both Zazi's production manager and their order model. In the earlier part of the year, the team worked and coordinated with Shailja on bulk orders. Whereas towards the end, we created samples for the pre-order model with Maithili.

Kumbaya worked on a total of 170 pieces consisting of Titalee long and short dresses made from vintage ikat and plain silk. The fabric was handwoven, dyed and sent in parts to us. Thus the order was also completed in parts as and when we received the fabric. We also made tote bags from the silk that was left after completing the order. Unlike our usual orders that are mainly stitched in cotton fabric, Zazi orders enable us to navigate fine silks and play around with different styles of embroidery.



9.4.7 Tanja Leta

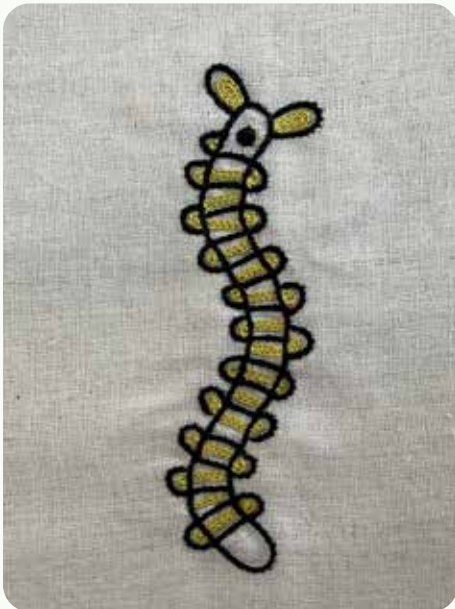
Kumbaya created patterns and samples of Slip Dress, Tote Bag and Knot Bag for Tanja Leta who had visited us. Out of these, 48 bags were taken up for final production. The process of making these bags involved adding 3 layers of flannel and following it up with quilting. The Knot Bag was a unique experiment for us to work with.



9.4.8 Numa

Drawing inspiration from travel and the diverse crafts around the world, Numa named after the Greek word "Pneuma" ("breath or air") creates garments representing the vital force or spirit that animates living beings. The brand uses rich traditional fabrics and artisanal workmanship for its styles while prioritising ethical sourcing and low-impact production practices. Numa's aim is to slow down the making of garments by having a sustainable approach and by making conscious decisions in all parts of the process. At the heart of its philosophy also lies a strong belief in expressing individuality and embracing authenticity, thus creating one-of-a-kind pieces.

Shailja Sachan arranged this collaboration with Numa's founder - Malika Jaroudi. Based on Shailja's designs, we created patterns, gradings and samples for 12 styles out of which we ended up making 11 in kala cotton and naturally dyed fabrics.



9.4.9 Abhisaran 2025

Axis Bank, one of India's largest private sector banks hosted Abhisaran 2025, a multi-stakeholder engagement for its partner NGOs and Axis Group leadership to unveil One Axis CSR Vision, a unified approach towards social impact across the Axis ecosystem. The event celebrated Axis Bank CSR's significant milestone of completing the 'Mission2Million' initiative and launched 'Mission4Million' to support an additional 2 million vulnerable households by fostering sustainable livelihoods, financial empowerment and skill development.

Dhruvi Shah, CEO & Executive Trustee of Axis Bank Foundation had requested for sample patchwork lanyards for this event. After having sent 5 different samples, Amrita and Samiha from Axis Bank Foundation finalised an assorted collection of 300 Kumbaya laptop sleeves in kalamkari and cotton prints with the Abhisaran logo stitched onto it.



9.4.10 International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT)

International Association of Women in Radio and Television is a non-government organisation (NGO) in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with a global network of 14 chapters and members in 54 countries. IAWRT envisions a world where women have an equal voice, and space in community media (rural and urban), as citizen journalists and equal partners in agenda-setting, dialogue and debate.

Kumbaya donated 233 tote bags with the IAWRT logo screen printed for their Chapter India's 20th Asian Women's Film Festival in February. As an organisation committed to women's empowerment, our team was thrilled to have our tote bags reach eminent feminist film makers across the world.



9.4.11 Destination Travel Management Company

In the month of March, Kumbaya received an order for 90 Tote bags through Manak Matiyani, a feminist and queer rights activist associated with the gender training for SPS. For this corporate gifting order, we improvised the existing Learning Stitch Tote bag and created a new design for the belts. Through coordination with Satnam from the organisation, the first 50 totes were sent in March and the remaining 40 were sent in April. This was a good exercise for us to think of marketing our products for corporate gifting.

9.4.12 Paws for a Cause

Artist bags made in corduroy with Paws for a Cause screen printed logo stitched onto it were donated to the organisation to keep medicare packages for animals. These practical and sturdy bags proved handy to the volunteers for their field day, looking out for the injured and the ill strays of Delhi. Paws for a Cause is an organisation that works towards adoption of dogs and cats, aiming to find each one a home in Delhi.

9.5 Retail Partnerships

Kumbaya continued its retail partnerships with Ambara, Jhappi Stores, Kriti Eco Boutique, Serenity and Jaivik Setu. The year came with a tragic end for Kriti Eco Boutique, a shop run with a lot of love by Bula didi in Pondicherry. This space had supported Kumbaya with endless encouragement and substantial sales for over 20 years. However, given the difficulty of sustaining a retail enterprise competing with the online market space, Bula didi took the decision to close the shop. The entire Kumbaya team was sad to see the store go and to receive the last of the stock from them.

The year also saw a happy addition to our partnerships. We secured a new retail space called Nainy's World in the heart of the Yoga hub in Mysore through Urja who had been familiar with Kumbaya when we were retailing with Maya La Boutique. The sales from this partnership has been quite heartening for us.

Jhappi Stores opened 4 new stores in luxury hotels of Goa namely, Taj Exotica and Kenilworth. The price point and margins however continue to be challenging decisions to calibrate.

9.6 Exhibitions

This year, for the first time the team attended very few and small exhibitions with a mix of Kumbaya classics and new designs.

1. The Green Hub festival, Bhopal
2. Flourish, Bangalore - more context, new area of Bangalore, held at Shankara Foundation
3. US Consulate, Mumbai
4. SRUTI, Delhi

Every year we begin our exhibition journey with a space at the Green Hub Festival in Bhopal, inviting familiar faces, new fellows and film enthusiasts at our stall.

Flourish Hearth invited us to participate in its exhibition held at Shankara Foundation Bangalore. It was a new location for the team but owing to the lack of publicity and holidays, both the footfall and our sales turned out to be low.

We were honoured to receive an invitation to participate in the Vendor Mela from Edna Sequeira, Community Liaison Office of the U.S. Consulate General in Mumbai. It was a brief Diwali exhibition for the consulate employees for two hours during lunch.

Another highlight was the invitation from Kanika Satyanand to be a part of SRUTI's 40th year anniversary celebration in Delhi. Kumbaya was among the 6 organisations working with artisans that set up their stall at Travancore House. The exhibit titled 'Journeys of Hope and Change' took the audience through SRUTI's work and impact right from its beginning. It also featured eminent people such as Shabana Azmi, Urvasi Butalia, Poonam Muthreja and Rahul Ram. Kumbaya's patchwork and embroidery cushions were gifted to the guests of honour.

9.7 Impact for FY 2024-25

- * **Employment provided for:** 53 producers and 10 salaried staff
- * **Collective wages earned by producers:** Rs. 32.93 lakhs
- * **Women newly trained under the stitching programme:** 193
- * **Total pieces produced:** 4,119
- * **New patches created from fabric waste:** 353
- * **Value of Patchwork products sold:** Rs. 0.85 lakhs
- * **International design collaborations:** 5
- * **Cities reached:** 14 (Mumbai, Pondicherry, Bangalore, Mysore, Indore, Bhopal, New Delhi, London, Tübingen, Havdhem, Amsterdam, Perth, Raigarh, Dubai)

9.8 Financial Report for FY 2024-25

The total sales for the financial year 2024-25 were valued at Rs. 79.82 lakhs. The breakup of the same is as follows:

Sales From Retail Stores

Organisation	Sales Amount 2024-25	Percentage of Total Sales 2024-25
SPS JS Campus, Madhya Pradesh (Sale Of Garment & Other)	3.26 Lakhs	4.08%
SPS Neemkheda Campus, Madhya Pradesh	1.50 Lakhs	2.27%
Online Stores Sales	0.39 Lakhs	0.49%
Kriti Eco Boutique, Pondicherry	3.94 Lakhs	4.94%
Mesh, Local Shopping Centre, New Delhi	0.03 Lakhs	0.05%
Serenity, Bangalore	0.09 Lakhs	0.11%
Ambara, Bangalore	3.15 Lakhs	3.78%
Nanumals Booktique (Nainys World Mysore)	1.37 Lakhs	1.73%
Jhappi Store	2.88 Lakhs	3.61%
Jaivik Setu Indore	1.27 Lakhs	1.60%
Total	18.09 Lakhs	22.66%

Sales Through Institutions

Organisation	Sales Amount 2024-25	Percentage of Total Sales 2024-25
Samaj Pragati Sahayog	6.43 Lakhs	8.07%
The Emerald Heights International School_ Indore	0.20 Lakhs	0.25%
Trifed Bhopal	4.83 Lakhs	6.06%
Kosala Livelihood And Social Foundation	2.36 Lakhs	2.96%
INEXTIS Events Pvt. Ltd. (Axis Bank Foundation)	1.54 Lakhs	1.94%
Gumfu Textiles	0.53 Lakhs	0.67%
Destination Travel Management Company (Manak Matiyani)	0.37 Lakhs	0.47%
Total	16.30 Lakhs	20.42%

Sales Through Institutions

Organisation	Sales Amount 2024-25	Percentage of Total Sales 2024-25
Labvisby, Sweden - 62156 (Maria Camila Jensen)	5.72 Lakhs	7.18%
Sarah Dunn, Rani & Reine, Germany	1.13 Lakhs	1.43%
Woven Studio, (Laura Miles) United Kingdom	6.60 Lakhs	8.27%
Zazi Vintage	15.41 Lakhs	19.31%
Annie G	2.68 Lakhs	3.37%
Tanja	0.86 Lakhs	1.08%
Total	32.34 Lakhs	40.63%

Sales Through Exhibitions

Name and Location	Dates	Sales Amount 2024-25	Percentage of Total Sales 2024-25
Bhopal Exhibition	20th July to 21st July 2024	0.21 Lakhs	0.27%
Flourish Planet Private Ltd (Bangalore Exhibition)	21st Sep to 22nd Sep 2024	0.35 Lakhs	0.44%
U.S Consulate General Mum- bai Exhibition	21st Nov 2024	0.24 Lakhs	0.31%
HDFC Bank Mumbai Exhibi- tion 19-12-2024	19th Dec 2024	0.16 Lakhs	0.20%
AGM Exhibition Khategaon	26th Dec 2024	0.04 Lakhs	0.06%
Delhi Exhibition Shruti Foun- dation	29th Mar 2025	1.10 Lakhs	1.39%
Total		2.13 Lakhs	2.67%

Sales Through Honey

Organisation	Sales Amount 2024-25	Percentage of Total Sales 2024-25
SPS JS Campus, Madhya Pradesh	1.03 Lakhs	1.30%
SPS Neemkheda Campus, Madhya Pradesh	1.14 Lakhs	1.44%
Safe Harvest Private Limited, Bengaluru	8.68 Lakhs	10.88%
Total	10.86 Lakhs	13.61%

Expenditures

Value of Fabric Purchased this Financial Year	33.96 Lakhs
Value of Honey Purchased this Financial Year	0.08 Lakhs
Total Wages Paid to Producers this Financial Year	32.93 Lakhs
Total	66.97 Lakhs

9.9 Organisational Challenges

* Kumbaya's commitment to quality and customer satisfaction often becomes a disadvantage when it comes to tricky clients. A series of revisions that seem minor but take a lot of time and effort in the entire supply chain end up being accommodated to ensure that the final product is as per the client's liking. However, these multiple rounds of sampling and corrections along with the absence of accurate tech packs have made some orders cumbersome for us.

* We have to constantly navigate perceptions of being a small social enterprise that needs orders to sustain. Despite the quality, finishing and professionalism offered by us while working from a village, some people continue to reduce us to a small village set up and try to cut corners when it comes to pricing. The notion of cheap labour continues to inform the lens of a few who reach out to work with us. Since we do need to provide employment to our producers we hardly say no to orders that come to us. This backs us into a corner with little wiggle room to negotiate higher wages.

* Being located in a small village has made sourcing and logistics difficult and expensive decisions. There were a lot of delays in delivery and the team had to keep following up with courier agents to ensure that the consignments moved. Export tariffs and freight charge at DHL has also turned out to be a challenging point in invoices and transactions.

* Kumbaya Producer Company Limited is an export compliant social enterprise and therefore has to abide by the Foreign Export Management Act. We have to show every export as a commercial shipment and reconcile our foreign transactions with the State Bank of India every month. Being a social enterprise draws further scrutiny and any irregularity in our finances can risk heavy penalties with potential loss of license. Therefore, Kumbaya has to be double careful and transparent in our dealings with international clients. We rarely send goods via third party agents who offer cheaper logistics and this can get difficult to explain to new clients.

* Kumbaya is geographically disadvantaged when it comes to support for crafts and finding the right talent. Since there has been no history of traditional craft in the region, it gets difficult to acquire people who would like to work as artisans. Even professionals such as project leads, pattern maker, sample masters and cutter are hard to retain given the remote location.

Every year Kumbaya Producer Company learns through encountering various challenges and achievements. While the year passes by in planning and executing one deadline and then the next, it takes immense combined effort to get through with limited resources and professional capacities. Kumbaya moves through repetitive effort, repair and resilience in order to keep things going.

Despite the difficulties, our hopes are rekindled every time we are met with a new client, a new design collaboration, a new retail partnership and a new order. It is the joy of simple symmetries, serendipities and the will of women to show up every single day that fuels Kumbaya into its next year.

10. Community Forest Rights

10.1 Introduction

The initiative to strengthen Community Forest Rights (CFR) under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, aims to provide forest-dependent communities with the legal authority to manage, protect, and use forest resources in a way that supports sustainable livelihoods while conserving biodiversity. This progress report presents the key activities undertaken during 2024–25 across 11 villages, with a special focus on the Melghat region of Maharashtra.

This report captures the ongoing journey of these communities as they secure their legal rights under the FRA to progressively build their capacity to manage forest ecosystems sustainably.



10.2 Plantation and Conservation

10.2.1 Plantation Drives and Reforestation Efforts

A key aspect of SPS's activities in 2024 was its focus on increasing green cover and rehabilitating degraded forest areas. In Sosokheda, Rangubeli, and Chethar, more than 9,000 saplings were planted, including species like bamboo, sal, tendu, and neem. In Sosokheda alone, 2,000 saplings were planted under a MGNREGA convergence, supported by a combination of government funding and voluntary labour from the community.

These plantation efforts aim to create a more resilient forest ecosystem, restore biodiversity, and support the sustainable harvest of forest products. SPS also worked with local youth groups to involve them in tree planting, thus creating future stewards of the land.

Year	Saplings	Area (ha.)
2021-22	5,000	10
2022-23	5,500	12
2023-24	5,000	10
2024-25	9000	20





10.2.2 MGNREGA Convergence

During the year, significant efforts were directed towards implementing natural resource management activities through MGNREGA, focusing on enhancing both environmental sustainability and community livelihoods. Key activities included Discontinuous Trenches (DCT), Continuous Contour Trenches (CCT), Trench Cum Mount (TCM) and various afforestation projects were carried out to restore degraded lands and improve the local ecosystem.



10.3 Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Harvesting

In the 2024 Tendu leaf harvesting season, communities in Sosokheda, Rangubeli, Nanduri and Chethar collected and generating approximately Rs. 30.94 lakh for the villagers. This economic benefit is crucial for local livelihoods. However, transportation challenges have posed a persistent obstacle to maximising profits. The delays in transport clearance, as mentioned earlier, were a source of frustration. SPS has been working closely with government bodies to address these logistical issues and ensure that the community is not financially disadvantaged by bureaucratic hurdles.

Year	NTPF (RS)	No. of Villages
2021-22	1,70,502	1
2022-23	16,98,979	3
2023-24	7,46,883	3
2024-25	30,93,590.28	4



10.4 Training and Capacity Building: Strengthening Local Governance

10.4.1 Training on Honey Beekeeping

One of the most successful capacity-building initiatives in 2024 was a hands-on honey beekeeping training held at the Silla Parishad Secondary School in Chethar village. Facilitated by Mr. Rajendrakumar Dudhkor, a renowned expert in the field, the program included 14 participants who gained valuable insights into sustainable beekeeping practices. Participants learned about the lifecycle of bees, the different types of hives, and how to set up beekeeping operations in a forest environment.

Detailed instruction on how to harvest honey without harming the bees or depleting the natural resource was provided. Also, the participants were educated about the economic potential of honey production as a viable, non-invasive way to enhance forest-based incomes.

10.4.2 Training on Human-Wildlife Conflicts (April 2024)

Human-wildlife conflict is a major challenge in forest regions, particularly in Melghat, where animals like tigers, leopards, and wild boars often stray into agricultural lands, damaging crops and sometimes threatening human lives. A crucial workshop in April 2024 at the Montfort Social Centre in Kusumkot, focusing on the prevention and management of human-wildlife conflicts.

During the training, experts provided community members with strategies to mitigate these conflicts, including: Community members learned about constructing low-cost barriers using local materials to protect crops from wild animals, participants were educated about the behaviour patterns of local wildlife and how to coexist peacefully with them while ensuring the safety of both humans and animals and different strategies were developed to make farmers aware about the presence of dangerous animals, reducing potential confrontations.

10.4.3 Training on Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Harvesting

As a significant part of the local economy, NTFPs such as Tendu leaves, medicinal plants, honey, and bamboo contribute considerably to the livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities. In 2024, SPS organised a series of training programs on sustainable NTFP harvesting practices.

Communities learned how to harvest NTFPs in a way that ensures regeneration and maintains the ecological health of the forest. Training also addressed the collection of medicinal plants, which have an emerging market, ensuring that community members could tap into these resources while respecting the forest's biodiversity.

10.4.4 Workshops on the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and PESA Act (February 21, 2025)

Recognising the importance of legal literacy, SPS conducted workshops to educate Gram Sabha members and community leaders about the legal nuances of the FRA and Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA). This workshop, organised on February 21, 2025, featured legal experts such as Mr. Tushar Das from Vasundhara Sanstha, Odisha, who explained the intricacies of the FRA's provisions regarding community forest rights.



10.5 Government Engagement and Administrative Support

10.5.1 Meeting with District Magistrate and Deputy Conservator of Forests (April 2024)

One of the significant government engagements in 2024 was a meeting with the District Magistrate of Amravati and the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) of Paratwada. The purpose of this meeting was to address delays in the transportation of NTFPs, particularly Tendu leaves, which was causing significant economic losses for the community. The meeting resulted in a commitment from the government to expedite the clearance process for transporting NTFPs, ensuring smoother logistics in the future.



10.5.2 Workshop on CFR Implementation (March 2025)

In March 2025, SPS collaborated with the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) of Dharni to organise a workshop focused on the implementation of CFRs and the role of Gram Sabhas in forest governance. Over 100 participants, including government officials, forest rights activists, and CFRMC members, attended the session on best practices in Forest Management, Government schemes available for forest conservation and livelihood development and the Role of Gram Sabhas for managing forest resources and mediating conflicts.

10.6 Boundary Demarcation and Land Management

One of the significant challenges faced by forest-dwelling communities is securing their forest boundaries. In 2024-25, SPS partnered with the Forest Department to demarcate CFR boundaries in key villages such as Chatwabod, Kekdabod, and Potilava. This process was done using natural markers like trees and stone bunds, as well as color-coded markings, to help clearly define areas of community ownership. This boundary demarcation is crucial for protecting the rights of forest communities and preventing encroachment. It also aids in creating clarity around resource-use regulations and conflicts, ensuring that the community has clear authority over their forest resources.





11. SPS Community Media

11.1 Introduction



The Community Media unit is the storytelling arm of the work undertaken by SPS. Its task is to translate the lived realities of rural communities into films, audio stories, and podcasts that can travel into village courtyards, Anganwadi centres, farmer group meetings, and school classrooms. The unit does not make films about communities; it makes films with them, and for them.

Subjects are selected because they matter to the people on screen:

the organic farmer who has reduced her input costs by half, the woman who fought for two years to get a death certificate and access her widow's pension, the children who mapped the streams of the Barjhai forest and understood, perhaps for the first time, why those streams were drying up.

This report covers the Community Media unit's work over the course of 2024.

It was a year of considerable output, 18 new productions, over 1,700 screening events, 35,000 audience members reached across 488 villages.

But the numbers tell only part of the story. The fuller story is in the discussions that followed the screenings: the farmer who said, after watching a film on organic pesticides, that he had never known the neem tree in his own field could be turned into medicine; the women in Badiya village who walked into a Gram Sabha for the first time because an audio story had told them it was their right; the children in Barjhai who planted a mahua sapling 'in the name of our ancestors' and pledged to protect it. That is what community media is for.

11.2 At a Glance: Key Figures for 2024-25

Media Dissemination (2024-25)		
S.No.	Particulars	Total
01	Total audience reached (Approximate)	35,000
02	Villages where films and stories were screened	488
03	Films screened during the year	118
04	Podcast / audio stories shared	18
05	Interactive small-group screenings	1,560
06	Open-air Mobile Cinema screenings	169
07	Classroom screenings	68
08	Audio story listening sessions (small groups)	1,027
09	People's Groups reached through dissemination	1,077
10	SHG Clusters reached through dissemination	61
11	Anganwadi centers reached	25
12	Documentary films produced	12
13	Animation films produced	3
14	No. of audio stories Produced (TERRA TALES बदलती जमीन पलटते पन्ने)	3

11.2 Media Production

The unit produced 18 original works during 2024-25 12 documentary films, 3 animation films, and 3 audio stories under the new Terra Tales (**बदलती जमीन पलटते पन्ने**) series.

Every production is directly connected to our work on agriculture, health, forest rights, livelihoods, or governance and is designed to be used as a tool for community discussion and to take programme forward. The production process itself is often as important as the outcome: filming in a village creates an opportunity to listen, and the conversations that happen around a camera crew frequently surface issues that shape future programme work.

11.2.1 Documentary Films

The twelve documentaries produced this year range across the organisation's core programme areas. Together they form a portrait of rural life in central India that is complex, specific, and deeply human.



1. What's in my basket: Crab

12 Min 41 Sec

Set in the village of Garaghat, in central India, this film follows Shankar & Reshma, a crab catcher, as both explore the life cycle, health benefits, and culinary delights of crabs. Interwoven with local folklore and reverence, the film also reveals the dark side of modern fishing, highlighting the ecological damage caused by toxic chemicals and electrocution. Through Shankar's voice, the film becomes both a tribute to age-old wisdom and a stark warning about the threats to aquatic ecosystems.



2. Mhari Topli Ma: Pitlaji

09 Min 24 Sec

In their early 70s, Ghotu Lal and his wife Binadi Bai passionately craft agricultural equipment with unwavering dedication. This documentary explores their profound knowledge of medicinal herbs and nutrient-rich forest vegetables. They generously share insights into the medicinal properties of herbs beneficial for diabetes, lactating mothers, and erectile dysfunction. Through their invaluable experience, the film underscores the significance of herbal medicine in promoting health and overall well-being.



3. The Artistes (Kalakaar)

25 Min

Today, the Nayak Bhopa community finds itself in a new reality, facing new challenges as the fate of its cultural heritage hangs awaiting an uncertain future.

As they survive this changing landscape with newly acquired skills, the question arises: how will their sacred art of singing hymns shape their existence? Will it be able to endure and maintain its significance or will it be lost in the modernity of our times?



4. Charoli (Cuddapah Almond)

Wild Edible Greens

11 Min 46 Sec

Deals with arduous journey and experience of a gatherer's family in the village of Lakshmi Nagar that collects Charoli from forest and consumes it, along how they earn selling it to traders. The important source of livelihood of the people of this village is the fruits obtained from the forest. The gatherer also explains about the nutritional and economical values of Charoli and how it is consumed in different ways at different places.



5. Kanda Tonic (Dung Cake Tonic)

Nature Positive Agriculture

04 Min 33 Sec

Sharda Bai Bachaniya, from the village of Dhantalab, has been practising Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) in farming for many years. She uses homemade organic medicine and manure in her crops that has helped her to procure surplus yield. In this film, Sharda Bai shares her experience of preparing dung tonic and method of using it in the crops of groundnut.



6. Testing Water Quality Health and Entitlement

17 Min 07 Sec

Groundwater contamination is a growing crisis across rural Madhya Pradesh, but it is a crisis that many communities do not know they are living inside. This film explains, in accessible and practical terms, how water quality is tested, what the common causes of contamination are, and what options exist for treatment. Crucially, the film emphasizes that communities have a choice to address the problem, or to find an alternative and that making that choice requires information that they are often denied. The film was produced in direct response to field teams reporting that communities were reluctant to acknowledge water quality issues, or did not know where to begin.



7. Bio Resource Centre

Women's Enterprise and Organic Agriculture

12 Min 40 Sec

This film is based on the organic medicine Bila Tonic. Nirmala Bai Komal Singh Chauhan is a resident of Kanjhar village. She learned how to make organic medicines by attending a meeting of a farmer group in the nearby village Patharwada. With the help of her husband, she plucks vines from the forest and, with the help of the Agriculture Programme



team, prepares organic medicine from the bel fruit. This bioconcoction helps in the growth of any crop and keeps the plants healthy. Along with selling this medicine to nearby farmers, she has also sprayed it in her chili crop, due to which the input cost of the chili crop has reduced and the production of the chili crop has also increased.

8. Bilva Tonic

07 Min 35 Sec

This film is based on the organic medicine Bila Tonic. Nirmala Bai Komal Singh Chauhan is a resident of Kanjhar village. She learned how to make organic medicines by attending a meeting of a farmer group in the nearby village Patharwada. With the help of her husband, she plucks vines from the forest and, with the help of the Agriculture Programme team, prepares organic medicine from the bel fruit. This bioconcoction helps in the growth of any crop and keeps the plants healthy. Along with selling this medicine to nearby farmers, she has also sprayed it in her chili crop, due to which the input cost of the chili crop has reduced and the production of the chili crop has also increased.



9. Man Ki Udaan, Kisson Ki Dukan Mind of full Fantasies

04 Min 38 Sec

The children from villages in and around the Barjhai Ghaat forest come together in an interactive and participatory workshop, weaving a story of the forest and the wildlife. The stream of consciousness narrative shapes into a delightful animation film.





10. Barshal Kand (Wild Yam)

08 Min 59 Sec

Part of the ongoing Mhāri Topli Mā documentary series on traditional food and forest knowledge, this film follows a group from Ratanpur village on a search for the wild yam, a nutritious tuber that older community members remember as a staple food but which younger generations have largely lost track of. The search itself becomes a form of knowledge recovery: elders describing how to identify the plant, where to find it, how to prepare it.



11. Ek Ped Purvajon Ke Naam

(A Tree in the Name of Our Ancestors) Plantation Festival

10 Min 35 Sec

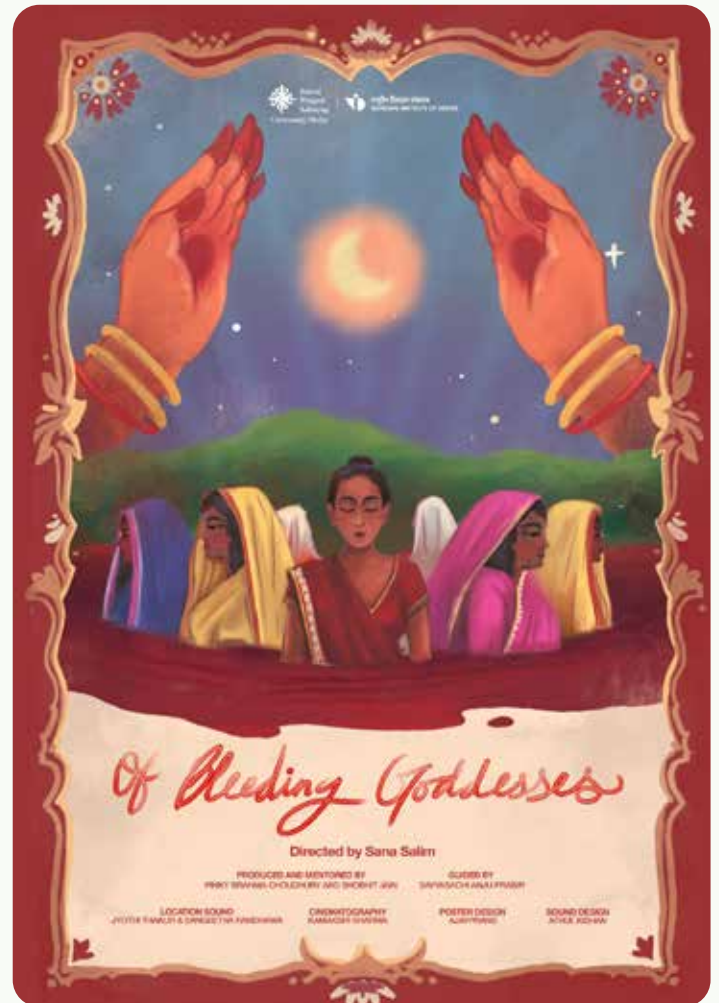


Communities from Barjhai, Salkhetiya, Panjariya, and Soblyapura collectively planted 300 trees and scattered thousands of seeds, including custard apple, mahua, neem, jamun, and mango. Women celebrated the event with songs and processions before planting, reflecting their deep connection with nature.

12. Of Bleeding Goddesses Menstruation, Belief, and Exclusion

38 Min 40 Sec

In Sobalyapura, a village in rural Madhya Pradesh, excitement throbs in anticipation of Navratri – a festival when Goddess Durga returns home from her in-laws for nine nights. The women fast during the day and dance till their feet give up during the night. The goddess comes down from the heavens to celebrate amongst them by possessing a woman of her choice. Against this backdrop, the film examines menstrual practices— its history, its significance and its effects – through the lived experiences of three women of Sobalyapura who cook and clean for their families after working in the field all day. Until they menstruate. Considered impure and un-touchable, these women are made to sleep outside the house; forbidden from entering the kitchen, waiting to be fed. They are denied touch during one of the most vulnerable times.



11.2.2 Animation Films

Three animation films were produced this year, each addressing a specific public health or governance issue in a format accessible to communities with limited literacy.

1. Iron Tablet — Maternal Health

04 Min 29 Sec



This film is about the iron tablets that the government provides for free at government hospitals and Anganwadis. This iron tablet is essential for pregnant women, as it keeps the haemoglobin deficiency that they face in control. Although these tablets are provided in Anganwadis, the proper procedure to take them is not explained. This film explains the proper procedure and the benefits women get by taking the iron tablet.



2. Sashakt Naari, Samarth Gram She Begins to Lead

7 Min 14 Sec

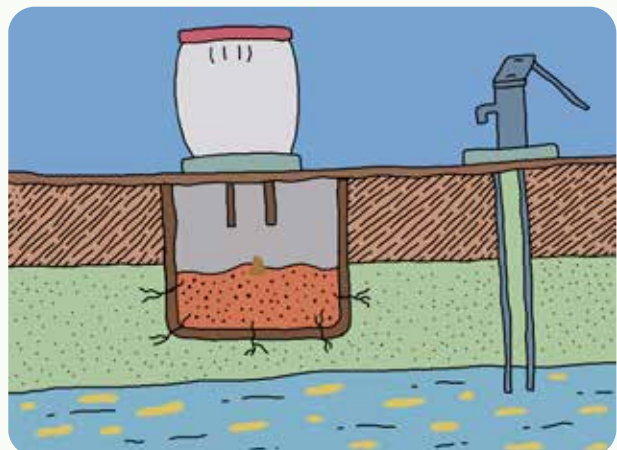


Set in a rural Indian village, It explores the everyday struggles of people affected by inadequate infrastructure and basic facilities, particularly impacting women. At its heart is a woman denied her rightful role as village head by her husband. Her journey to reclaim her voice begins with women who courageously speak up at a village council meeting, standing firm against the taunts from men.

3. Water Test Drinking Water Safety

5 Min 38 Sec

This animation film stresses upon the importance of testing drinking water to check whether it is clean or polluted, to prevent many extreme diseases.



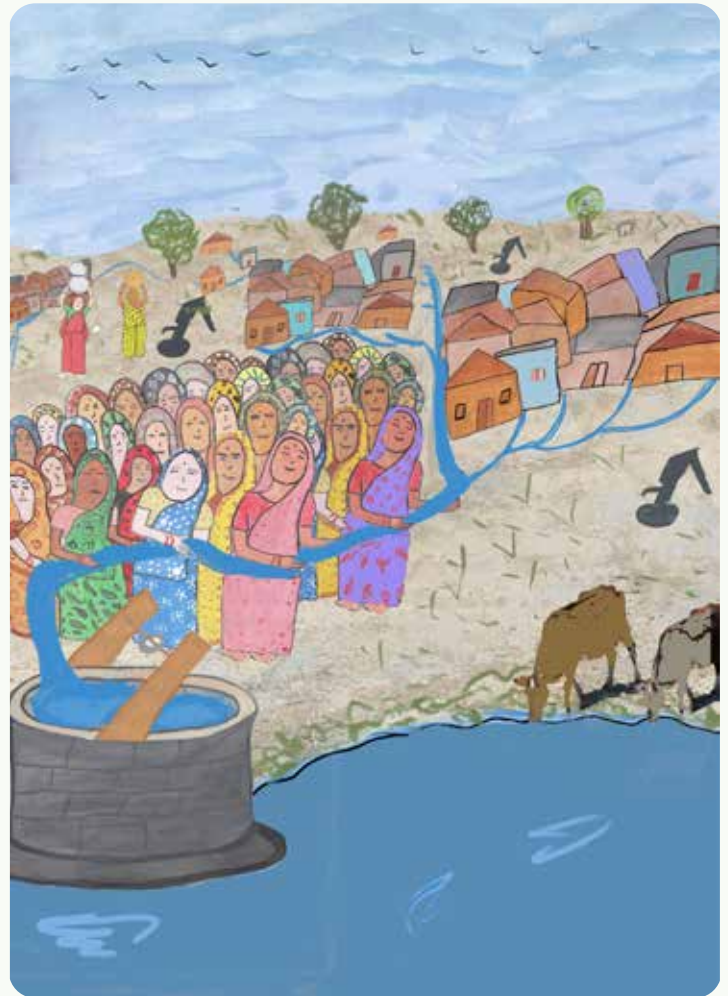
11.2.3 Audio Stories — Terra Tales बदलती जमीन पलटते पन्ने

The Terra Tales series is a new strand of audio documentary production, recognising that for many communities in the programme area, particularly those in remote or hilly locations, audio is a more accessible medium than video. Three new stories were produced in 2024, each a carefully crafted account of a real person navigating a real institutional challenge.

1. Women's Water Distribution Committee Rights and the Gram Sabha

18 Min 40 Sec

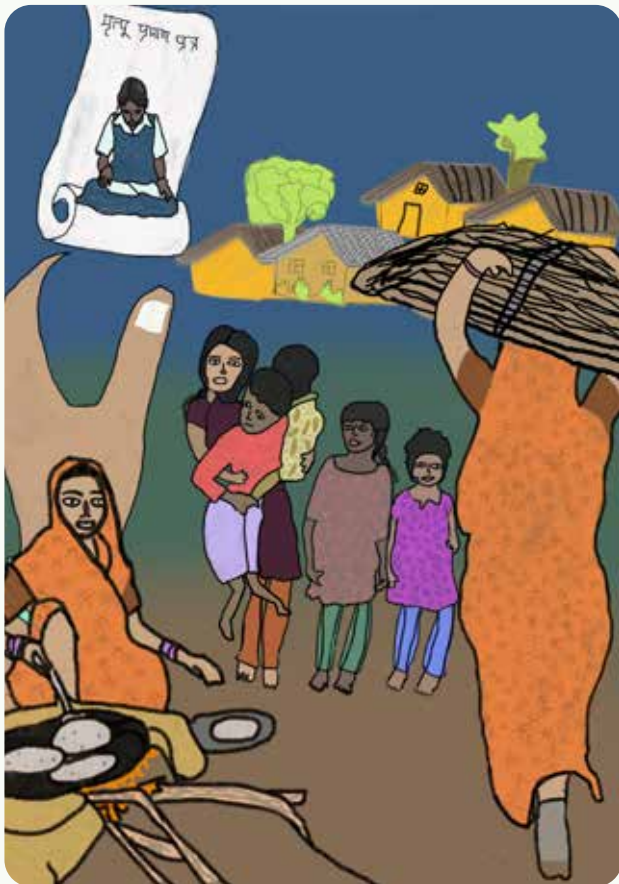
The women's SHG members of Baria village in Bhikangaon tehsil had been living with a water crisis for years before they discovered that they had rights they had never exercised. Once they became aware of those rights through the organisation's hisse-dari-sabha programme, they began holding meetings to discuss the problem formally. And then, for the first time in any of their memories, they attended a Gram Sabha, submitted formal written applications about the water crisis, and asked whether a water distribution committee existed in their village. The audio story follows this process with granular attention: the initial hesitation, the preparation, the meeting itself, the response. It is a



story about what it looks and sounds like when women who have been told their voices do not matter decide to speak anyway.

2. The Death Certificate Bureaucracy, Grief, and Survival

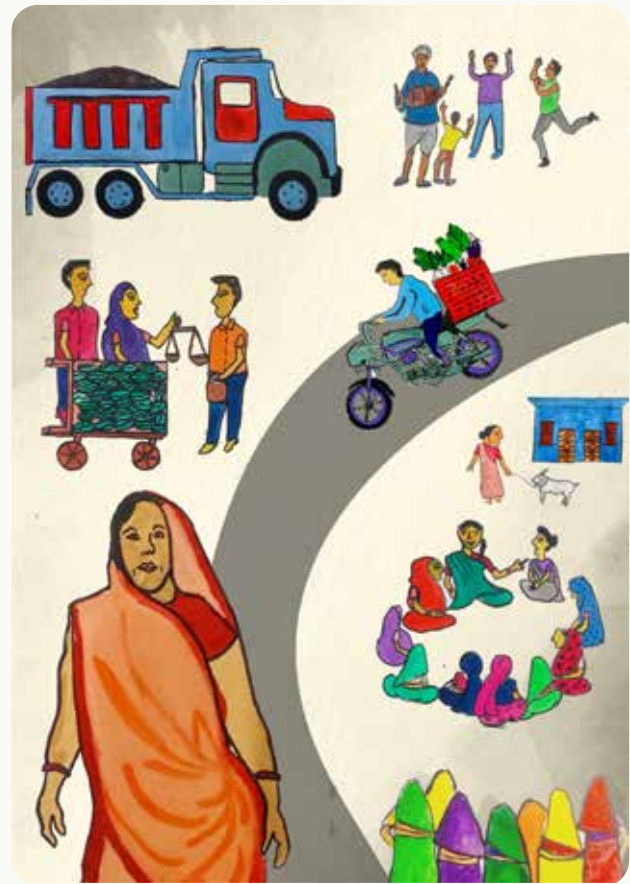
18 Min 59 Sec



When Tanu's husband died, she was absorbed in grief and in the enormous practical demands of surviving without him. Getting a death certificate did not feel like a priority until the absence of that document began to close doors one by one. Her daughter could not be admitted to a hostel. The widow's pension she was entitled to remained out of reach. The story follows Tanu through a long struggle with forms, offices, and officials, until the intervention of an Anganwadi worker and an SPS health and nutrition worker finally brings the process to a resolution. It is a quietly devastating portrait of how bureaucratic complexity falls hardest on those with the fewest resources to navigate it.

3. Ameena Self-Help, Resilience, and Survival

19 Min 17 Sec



Ameena was married young, before she had finished growing up. Her husband developed asthma and was often unable to work. She cared for him and for their two children with very little support and very little money. When she joined a Self-Help Group, something shifted, not dramatically or all at once, but steadily. The group offered low-interest loans; she used them carefully and well. Her family's financial situation began to stabilise. The audio story is told in Ameena's own voice, with all the complexity that implies: the fear, the love, the exhaustion, the pride. It does not offer the SHG as a magic solution, but as one important piece of a difficult life that she is navigating with intelligence and determination.

11.3 Screenings and Outreach: Taking the Work to the People

Producing a film is only half the task. The other half, arguably the more important half, is getting it in front of the right audience, at the right moment, in the right context to generate productive discussion. The Community Media unit uses three main formats for this: mobile cinema screenings in open-air village settings, Pico projector screenings in small groups, and classroom sessions in schools and Anganwadis. Each format has its own logic, its own challenges, and its own particular capacity to open conversation.

11.3.1 Mobile Cinema: Taking the Screen to Remote Villages

The mobile cinema is the unit's most ambitious and most logistically demanding outreach tool. A projector, screen, stand, and speakers are loaded onto a vehicle or, where no vehicle is available, onto the backs of motorcycles as in our Melghat location. Screenings happen in village squares, in school grounds, in clearings near the forest edge. The audience sits on the ground or on cots, often under open sky. The experience is communal in a way that indoor screenings are not: neighbours notice neighbours watching, conversations begin before the film is over, and the discussion that follows tends to be candid and wide-ranging.

This year, 169 mobile cinema screenings reached villages across the organisation's locations. In Melghat, one of the most geographically challenging areas, with poor roads and no dedicated programme vehicle, the local team organised 64 screenings across 48 villages, reaching approximately 3,000 people. The effort required to do this should not be underestimated. The team travels to each village on one or two motorcycles, carrying the equipment.

If the village is far, they arrange a small four-wheeler. The projector has limited battery backup, which means that if an audience asks for a repeat screening which they often do, the team has to weigh enthusiasm against logistics. Team member described the experience of screening in Melghat as bringing back memories from 17 or 18 years ago, when the team used DVDs and a television set to reach new groups in the Punjabura and Udaynagar areas. The medium has changed; the impulse has not.

11.3.2 Melghat: Collective Forest Rights Screenings

In several villages under the Collective Forest Rights programme, the mobile cinema screened *Zinda Kiya Jungle* and *Ehsaas Mendha Lekha*, two films about communities that have successfully managed their forests under CFR provisions and transformed their livelihoods as a result. In one screening at Nanduri village, Swami Bhaiya asked the audience whether they recognised the people in the film. They did, the film was about Sosokheda village, just three kilometres away. This proximity was significant: it shifted the film from being an inspiring story about distant strangers into something much more immediate. If the people of Sosokheda could do it, what about Nanduri?

"Dongar Taka Maka Da Taka | Da Taka Maka Abunj Taka"
— If there is forest, there is water; if there is water, we are there. — Korku slogan chanted by audience members after the CFR screening



After the screening, Suman Betekar Didi, who was present, observed that unity among the villagers was the essential condition for success. The audience then chanted a slogan in Korku that expressed, with great economy, the logic that the CFR programme is built on. People who had never heard of the Collective Forest Rights Act left with a basic understanding of what it meant and an expressed desire to explore what it could mean for their own forest

11.3.3 Melghat: Agriculture Programme Screenings

Dharni tehsil, which covers much of the Melghat programme area, is home to small and marginal farmers whose main challenge is reducing the cost of production while maintaining or increasing yields. The increasing use of chemical pesticides and weedicides has degraded the soil over years, creating a dependence that is difficult to break, not least because many farmers have grown up in a world where the agro-chemical shop is the first port of call for any crop problem.

Screenings of 'Say No Pesticides!' (Zahar Nahin Praakritik Chunen) in Melghat villages opened up conversations that the programme team had been trying to have for months. Farmers spoke candidly about what they already suspected but had been reluctant to say: that the soil feels different now than it did a generation ago, that yields have not risen in proportion to the inputs being poured in, and that the money spent on chemicals is money that farmers have to borrow. One farmer observed that the neem tree on the boundary of his own field could apparently be made into an organic pesticide and that he had never known this, despite the tree having been there his whole life.

Most telling was the acknowledgment, in several villages, that chemical medicines might be connected to the rise in serious illness in rural areas. Farmers are not scientists, but they are careful observers, and some have noticed correlations that public health researchers are only beginning to document formally.



11.3.4 Melghat: Health, Nutrition, and Livestock Screenings

Child malnutrition is entrenched in Melghat, and one of the most persistent obstacles to addressing it is a deeply held belief that a thin child is simply 'like the parents', a matter of genetics rather than nutrition or care. This belief is not malicious; it reflects a genuine understanding of the world that the programme must engage with honestly rather than dismissing. Screening the film *Buniyaad* through the mobile cinema created a space for exactly that engagement.



After one screening, the worried expressions on the faces of parents in the audience were visible. They had watched the film and were connecting what they saw to their own children. Questions followed about what was available at government hospitals, what foods could prevent anaemia, whether the team could help them access the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre. When the team returned to the same villages for follow-up discussions, they found that the film had unlocked conversations about early marriage, a subject that had previously been off-limits, as a factor in malnutrition.



The livestock programme used the mobile cinema to screen 'Urga Desi Dana, Ghar Ki Murgi Sona Barabar' (Indigenous Feed, Backyard Chicken Is Worth Gold) in communities where it was trying to expand goat and poultry rearing. The discussion that followed addressed something the programme team had been aware of but found difficult to raise directly: that despite the care villagers put into their animals, losses still occur, often because veterinary services are too far away and too slow to reach. The film created a platform for this acknowledgment and allowed the team to introduce information about chicken vaccinations and nutritional supplements that most farmers had no access to.



11.3.5 Bhikangaon Location: Screenings in Focus

At the Bhikangaon location, 13 mobile cinema screenings were held in 11 villages, organised jointly by the agriculture and health-nutrition programme teams. The agriculture programme used film to build momentum for a specific objective: expanding the number of farmers growing NPM (Non-Pesticide Management) chilli in the area.

The sequence of films chosen was deliberate. 'Keetnashak Rahit Mirchi Nursery ki Taiyari' documented the experience of farmers who had successfully grown NPM chilli in the previous season giving sceptics not a theoretical argument but lived evidence from people they could verify and challenge. 'Keetnashak ya Vinashak' (Pesticide or Destroyer?) addressed the harm that chemical pesticides cause to soil and ecosystem. 'Panch Pattiyon Ka Mantra' demonstrated specific NPM techniques and cost-reduction strategies.



The discussion that followed was not uniformly enthusiastic. One elder asked, with understandable directness, whether there would be any compensation for crop damage if the NPM method failed — a question that reflects the rational risk-aversion of a farmer who cannot afford to absorb a bad season. The agriculture team's response — that NPM farming today is the only way to protect agricultural land for future generations — addressed the long-term argument but did not fully resolve the short-term concern. This tension, between long-term sustainability and immediate livelihood security, runs through much of the programme's work and has no easy resolution.



The Bhikangaon health-nutrition team used film differently as a tool for building trust in government services that communities had reason to distrust. The NRC (Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre) is a facility that families of malnourished children are often reluctant to use, partly due to negative past experiences and partly due to the disruption of leaving home for fourteen days. Screening *Buniyaad*, which shows what NRC care actually looks like, gave the team a way to address this reluctance without dismissing the fears behind it. Seeing the facilities on screen, hearing a doctor explain the care process, learning that fourteen days of wage support is available — these details changed the calculation for several families.

11.4 Pico Screenings: Films in Fields, Homes, and Meeting Halls

Pico projectors are small, portable devices that allow films to be screened in any setting— a savings group gathering in someone's house, an evening session in the village chaupal when work has finished and people are sitting together anyway. They are less spectacular than the mobile cinema, but in some ways more powerful: the audience is smaller, the setting is more intimate, and the conversation that follows is easier to sustain.

This year, Pico screenings reached approximately 4,500 viewers across 119 villages in the Melghat area alone. Across all locations, 576 screenings in 163 villages were conducted for SHG groups, using films like 'Nirnay', 'Aarzo', 'Saath-Saath Sashakt Haath', 'Baithak Kaise', 'Pathshala', and 'Apna Bazaar' to explain how savings groups work and what they make possible.



The response to these screenings was consistently that women who had never considered joining a savings group began asking practical questions: How do you join? How much do you save? How large is the first loan? What are the rules?



These are not the questions of people who have been lectured; they are the questions of people who have seen something they recognise as useful and want to understand better.

In some locations, Pico screenings were used to introduce the live-stock programme in villages where it was new. Riyali Didi's Goats — a story of a woman who successfully

built a goat-rearing enterprise with SPS support was used in this way in Bhikangaon, with the livestock programme team present to answer questions and address concerns. The film made the abstract concrete: here was a real woman, in a real village, who had taken the organisation's support and built something with it.

11.4.1 Participatory Irrigation Management Screenings

Water sharing in agriculture is one of the most persistent sources of conflict in the programme area, particularly among farmers who are served by the same irrigation canal. Those at the head of the canal tend to take more than their share; those at the tail end get what is left, which is often not enough. This is not a new problem, but it is one that is extremely difficult to address through direct intervention because it involves the assertion of rights against neighbours and community members.

Film created an indirect route into this conversation. Forty-two screenings in 11 villages used the films 'Nahar Ka Pani Aakhri Khet Tak' (Canal Water to the Last Field) and 'Upar Galtan Se Musibat, Neeche Pani Ki Samasya' (Water logging in Upstream farms and no water Downstream) to open discussion about equitable water distribution. The films showed communities that had developed cooperative solutions to irrigation disputes, providing both a model and a vocabulary for discussions that participants had previously not had the language to begin.

11.5 Audio Story Outreach: Stories That Travel

The seventeen audio stories in circulation this year reached 3,000 group members across 250 villages in 15 locations. Audio is a different medium from film, more intimate, more portable, easier to share in settings where a screen is not available. The listener's imagination fills in what the eye cannot see.

Many of the stories were used



in hissedari-sabha meetings and SHG gatherings to spark discussion about specific issues. The story of Indira Nagar Ki Kahani and Kesharpati, about women who united through their savings group to resolve village-level problems — was used to introduce new hissedari-sabhas in villages where the concept was unfamiliar. After listening, women began spontaneously listing the issues in their own villages that could be addressed collectively: the water point that needed repair, the ration shop that was not functioning, the Anganwadi centre that was closed more often than it was open.



Group members became emotional while listening to stories of women who had faced situations similar to their own, an acknowledgement that their struggles were not unique, and that other women had found ways through them. This emotional recognition is not incidental; it is the mechanism by which the stories do their work.

After hearing the story of Ameena, a member of a savings group in Kannod said quietly: 'I thought I was the only one who felt this way.' Three other women in the room nodded.

In Bhikangaon, the story of Riyali Didi's Goats was used to introduce the livestock programme in new villages where the programme team faced the perennial challenge of establishing trust quickly. The story gave the team something to point to: not a brochure, not a promise, but a real woman's experience told in her own words. Questions followed about what breeds were available, what veterinary support looked like, what the process of joining the programme involved.

In Kannod at the Khategaon location, Sukhma Didi's story of successfully adopting NPM farming was shared with savings group members to encourage new farmers to join the agriculture programme. Discussions about private microfinance companies and their aggressive loan-recovery practices, triggered by the 'loan story' audio piece, led members to share their own experiences and reiterate the importance of staying within the group's system of low-interest, member-controlled borrowing.

11.6 Thematic Focus: The Barjhai Forest Campaign

Running through the year's work was a sustained programme of activity centred on the Barjhai Ghat, a section of the Vindhya mountain range that acts as a natural catchment area feeding streams and rivulets into the Narmada river and recharging the groundwater of roughly a hundred surrounding villages. Years of deforestation, combined with encroachment and the timber trade, had severely depleted the forest, disrupting wildlife habitat and reducing the availability of non-timber forest produce that communities depend on.

The most visible symptom of this disruption, the one that community members themselves identified most urgently was what they called the 'monkey menace'. Rhesus macaques, their habitat shrunk by deforestation, had moved increasingly into village roads and settlements. They tore roofing materials, stole food, and had begun to approach people aggressively. Community compassion made the problem worse: people fed the monkeys for religious or altruistic reasons, conditioning them to treat human settlements as food sources. Signboards asking people not to feed the monkeys were installed, but the response from villagers was consistent and reasonable: 'What will the monkeys eat if we don't give them food?'

The plantation festival was conceived as an answer to that question.

11.6.1 The Plantation Festival: 'A Tree in the Name of Our Ancestors'

In August, communities from Saalkhetiya, Barjhai, Panjariya, and Sobalyapura villages walked to different parts of the Barjhai forest range over several days, carrying saplings and seeds, singing bhajans and playing drums. They planted over 300 saplings and sowed around 100 kg of seeds like custard apple, ramphal, mahua, jamun, temru, tamarind, charoli, amla, and bor across five sites: Futa Naka, Sipahi Khudra, Peepal Kudiya, Gola Guthan, and Teen Dugdi, as well as in the protected forest area near Saalkhetiya.

The slogan adopted for the campaign, 'A Tree in the Name of Our Ancestors' drew on a practice of the Korku, Bhilala, and Silvi communities: planting trees in memory of departed family members. The practice had been declining as families migrated to urban centres. Reviving it gave the plantation drive a cultural and emotional depth that a purely ecological framing would not have achieved. People were not just planting trees; they were honouring the dead, maintaining a connection to the land, and participating in something that felt significant beyond the practical.





In Peepal Kundiya, as the planting proceeded, an old flute player from the village sat on the riverbank and played tune after soothing tune, creating a mood of quiet celebration. Children ran to the water and played. Some men sat on a hill and sang bhajans. The event felt, to those present, like something worth protecting.



Planning had been careful. Experts from the SPS Agriculture Programme advised on planting methods specific to each species, one mahua seed per hole because the trees grow large; two to four seeds per hole for smaller varieties; a spacing of five to ten feet between holes to allow root and canopy space. Water pots were installed at the Futa Naka site to support plants through the dry season. Seed bags designed by women of the Kumbaya group were distributed as gifts.

The partnership behind the festival was broad: Women's SHGs through the Hissedari Sabhas, the Forest Department (which opened its protected, fenced area near Saalkhetiya for planting, and promised community rights to the non-timber produce), Panchayat Sarpanchs Rekha Bai Karma of Barjhai and Annu Bai of Sobalyapura, Bagli MLA Murali Bhanwara, and the Bagli Pragati Samiti and Punjapura Pragati Samiti.

11.7 Protecting What Was Planted

The plantation would mean nothing if the saplings did not survive. The main threat was grazing cattle and goats, which roam freely through the areas where planting had taken place. Door-to-door surveys were conducted to map which families owned cattle, what routes their animals took, and which areas were most at risk. This data shaped the meetings that followed.

Meetings with pastoralists from Sobalyapura and Barjhai produced concrete agreements. The pastoralists agreed to route their animals around the plantation sites. Members of the Forest Protection Committee agreed to check the sites morning and evening for stray animals. Physical barriers were installed by SHG members. Children who guide goats in the mornings, a common role for younger children in these villages were given incentives including school bags, stationery, and shoes if they actively kept their animals away from the planted areas.

These agreements are fragile, as all community agreements are. They require monitoring, renegotiation, and ongoing attention. But the fact that they exist at all that communities have made formal collective commitments to protect a shared resource is significant.



11.8 Forest Fire Awareness

The Barjhai forest becomes extremely flammable in the dry months of autumn, winter, and summer. Wildfires, whether started deliberately or accidentally, cause severe ecological damage and destroy the very non-timber forest produce that communities depend on. A widespread but mistaken belief in the area held that burning sections of forest improved the quality of tendu leaves an economically important product. Forest officials who attended mobile cinema screenings were able to directly contradict this: fires damage tendu leaves rather than improving them. Similarly, the practice of burning mahua leaves under trees for easier collection, which often spreads into uncontrolled fires, was discussed openly for the first time in some villages.



Mobile cinema screenings of *Jadui Jungle*, held in four villages near the forest with Forest Department support and preceded by photo exhibitions on wildfire damage, gave officials and community members a shared platform. Older villagers in the audience were visibly moved, the forest in the film recalled forests they had known in their own childhoods, forests that now existed only in memory. Post-screening discussions were emotionally engaged in a way that formal awareness meetings rarely achieve.



11.9 Children, Education, and Connection to Nature

A forest traverse with school children from Barjhai and Sobalyapura in October took students deep into the Sipahi Khodra region, where they were taught about ground water, streams, and river networks. The experience was designed to be fun as well as educational, the children played in the streams, had a picnic breakfast, participated in dancing and games at the Baba Amte Centre for People's Empowerment. The goal was not to deliver facts but to build a felt connection: to make the forest somewhere these children had been, not just somewhere they had heard about.



An animation workshop with the same children over three days moved from basics, animation wands, flipbooks, self-portraits made of natural materials, to motion animation, collective story building, and morphing techniques using a light-board. The children developed a story centred on the Barjhai forest and its ecology, which was then produced as a short animated film. For the SPS team as well as the children, it was a revelation: complex ideas about forest fire, water, and ecological interconnection expressed through drawings and movement, by people who had never previously thought of themselves as filmmakers.



11.10 Awards and Recognition

The year brought sustained recognition for SPS films at festivals across India and internationally. The awards are significant not just as institutional recognition but as a signal that the films produced for and with rural communities in central India are speaking to audiences far beyond those communities and that the questions they ask resonate widely.

- ✦ Best Film Award, Water Conservation Category — CMS VATAVARAN 12th Competitive International Environment and Wildlife Film Festival and Forum (2024): P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani.
- ✦ 2nd Place, Institutional Category and Popular Choice Award — Samvaad Conclave 2024: Jadui Jungle.
- ✦ 3rd Place, Institutional Category — Samvaad Conclave 2024: Jameen Maa Ka Phool.
- ✦ Selected for National Documentary Competition, 18th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF 2024): Submerged. The Jowar Ballad was also selected for MIFF's special Mission Life collection.
- ✦ Selected for the 16th International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala: Bandhua, Antardrishti, and Kalakar.
- ✦ Selected for the 23rd Social Justice Film Festival: Sangeeta Manisha, The Road Back Home, Antardrishti, and Kalakar.
- ✦ Selected for the 20th IAWRT Asian Women's Film Festival 2025: Sashakt Naari Samarth Gram.
- ✦ ECO REELS 2025, Climate Charcha Edition (Bengaluru): Jadui Jungle.
- ✦ Samuday Ke Saath: Festival of Indigenous Films 2025: Jadui Jungle and Jameen Maa Ka Phool.
- ✦ Selected for SiGNS 17th Kerala, 5th Beyond Borders Feminist Film Festival, 26th Madurai Film Festival, and 23rd Social Justice Film Festival: Pushpa Ka Rickshaw.
- ✦ Selected for Golden Tree International Documentary Film Festival (Paris), All Living Things Environmental Film Festival, and Eco Reels Film Festival: Submerged.

- ✦ P for Pyaaz screened at School of Arts and Aesthetics Film Festival, JNU Delhi.
- ✦ Chidiya, Pujara and Solah Rala Chor screened at the Millet Revival Project event organised by The Locavore; Jowar Gatha also screened at the same event with a discussion attended by director Laxminarayan Devda and the film's mentors and producers.

At the Asian Women's Film Festival, She Begins to Lead received a strong audience response. Roshni Chouhan, attending her first film festival, presented the film. South Korean programmers expressed interest in featuring it in their competition category, and representatives from Times Group and Shantiniketan University asked about using it in classroom discussions. At Samuday Ke Saath, six team members attended their first-ever film festival — and boarded a plane for the first time.

Discussions there highlighted how indigenous cultures in Jharkhand differ from those in Nimad, and explored the role of film in preserving tribal languages, traditional dress, and custom.



11.11 Capacity Building: Expanding Skills and Perspectives

11.11.1 VR Camera Workshop

A three-day Virtual Reality camera workshop, led by Ram Alluri — a wildlife filmmaker and National Geographic Explorer with extensive experience documenting human-wildlife interactions — introduced the team to the possibilities and constraints of 360-degree filmmaking. For many team members, experiencing VR for the first time was startling. Nikita, a team member, removed the headset quickly after seeing a lion approach at close range: 'It felt like the lion was right in front of me,' she said. Others found themselves reaching toward elephants, diving into the ocean, picking flowers.



After the initial exposure, participants were divided into groups and tasked with identifying scenarios where a 360-degree camera could be particularly effective. Ideas generated included using VR to document forest fires in Jadui Jungle, depicting the journey of water from rainfall to river, recording traditional fishing techniques, and documenting plastic pollution in water bodies.



Each group then selected a subject and produced a sample VR film, facing, in practice, the distinctive challenge of the format: when the camera captures everything in all directions, nothing can be hidden, nothing framed out, and close-up shots become difficult to execute without overwhelming the viewer.



Post-production training introduced editing software specific to VR, and some shots required reshooting after participants reviewed the footage. The workshop was, above all, an expansion of imaginative possibility. The team left with both new technical skills and a new set of questions about what community media can look like.

11.11.2 Youth Cadre: Refresher Trainings on Forest Fire

Between April and May 2024, refresher training sessions on forest fire awareness were conducted with youth cadres across the north and south bank areas of Maheshwar, under the Natural Landscape Restoration Programme. Thirty-seven Pico screenings in these areas reached 449 beneficiaries, 267 men and 178 women.

The youth cadre were trained as community educators, equipped not only with knowledge about the environmental impact of wildfires but with the facilitation skills to lead discussions in their own villages. The objective is not a one-time awareness campaign but a sustained presence of locally rooted change agents who can monitor, educate, and respond.

11.12 SPS Weekly News Magazine



Saturday July 20, 2024

Issue 59 – श्रमदान कार्यक्रम

A Shramdaan Programme



खरगोन जिले की भगवानपुरा तहसील का एक गांव है गुलशिरी, जो लगभग 5 कि.मी. के दायरे में फैली हुई पहाड़ी श्रंखला पर स्थित है। यहाँ कुल 147 घर बसे हुए हैं, लेकिन रोजगार और आमदनी की कमी के कारण अधिकांश लोग शहरों की ओर पलायन करते हैं।

इन गरीब क्षेत्रों में विकास लाने के लिए लंबे समय के प्रयासों के बाद समाज प्रगति सहयोग (एस पी एस) संस्था वाटरशेड प्रबंधन का काम शुरू करने में सफल हो रही है। इस दूरदराज गांव में काम शुरू करना संस्था के लिए काफी चुनौतीपूर्ण था। एक अज्ञात संगठन के प्रवेश पर लोग इसपर तुरंत विश्वास तो नहीं कर पाए, उन्हें लगा की औरों की तरह ही सुविधा और योजना के नाम पर पैसे लेकर चले जाएंगे या फिर काम अधूरा छोड़कर किसी समस्या में उलझा देंगे। ऐसे पूर्व अनुभवों और वर्तमान शंकाओं की वजह से गांववालों ने सहयोग करने से इनकार कर दिया। लेकिन संस्था के कार्यकर्ता लगातार गांव में घूम-घूम कर लोगों से बातचीत और चर्चा करते रहे और उन्हें अपने किए गए अन्य कामों के बारे में बताते रहे, जिससे लोगों में विश्वास बढ़ा।

और पढ़ें

Guljhiri, a village in Khargone district, lies spread across some 5 km. of a hilly range in the Bhagwanpura sub-district. It has a total of 147 households, but the absence of livelihood and income opportunities drives most people to migrate



Saturday August 17, 2024

Issue 63 – महिलाओं की दृढ़ता से गांव में नल जल योजना[1] स्थापित हुई

Determined Women Bring Nal Jal Yojana[1] to their Village



The SPS Weekly is an internal news publication that documents the organisation's programme activities across its 15 locations, keeping the wider team connected to what is happening in the field and providing a record of community achievements that might otherwise go undocumented. Between April and September 2024, 26 news stories were prepared and shared with the SPS team and partners. The stories ranged from a report on women who halted a government collector to claim MGNREGA wages to a feature on a new ration shop established in Punarvaas village through community advocacy. Together, they form a weekly portrait of what collective action looks like at the ground level.

11.13 Challenges and Constraints

True reporting requires acknowledging the things that did not go as planned, as well as those that did.

The model code of conduct enforced during the Lok Sabha elections in 2024 temporarily suspended mobile cinema operations in some areas and prevented the screening of films related to government schemes, including films on MNREGA, which the unit had hoped to use to connect workers with their entitlements. The delay in obtaining permissions from local administration created additional disruption that proved difficult to make up.

In Melghat, the absence of a dedicated programme vehicle continues to be a significant constraint. The team's resourcefulness in working around this — transporting equipment by motorcycle, hiring small vehicles for longer journeys, managing battery backup carefully — is admirable, but it takes a toll on time and energy that could otherwise go into programme work.

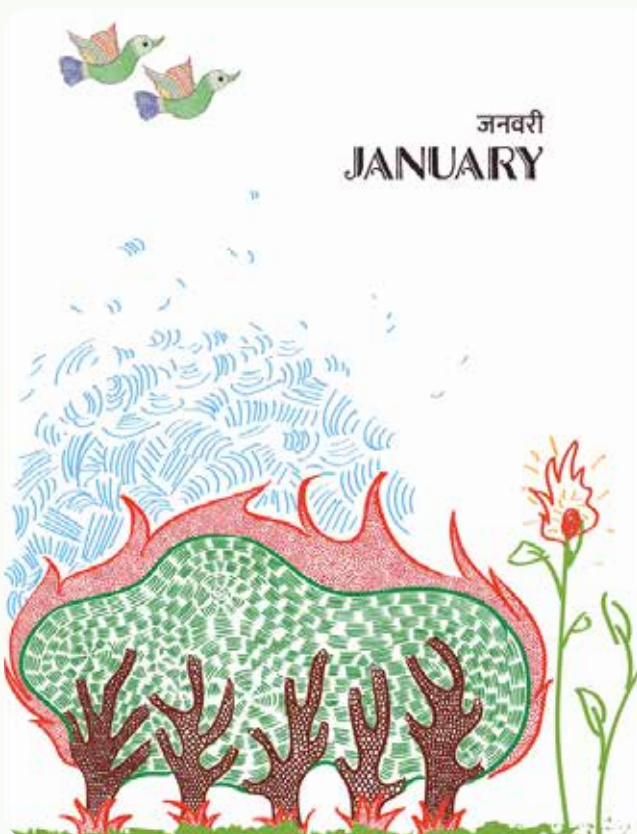
The tension between long-term sustainability arguments and short-term livelihood security remains unresolved in the agriculture programme. Farmers who cannot afford a failed season will not adopt NPM farming on the basis of principles alone. The programme needs to continue developing responses to this challenge, including practical risk-sharing mechanisms, rather than relying solely on persuasion.

Finally, there is the challenge of follow-up. Films and audio stories can open conversations, but sustaining those conversations requires ongoing engagement. The unit has taken important steps this year, premiering films online so that all 15 locations can watch and discuss simultaneously, conducting door-to-door surveys to understand community dynamics before planning activities, building youth cadres who can carry messages forward. But the gap between a single screening event and a lasting change in practice remains, and closing it is the work of years.

11.14 Looking Ahead

The year ahead will be shaped by several priorities. The Terra Tales audio story series will expand, with the unit exploring new themes and new voices. The Barjhai forest programme will continue, with close attention to whether the planting protection agreements made this year hold through the dry season. The VR filmmaking skills developed in the workshop will be applied to specific productions, beginning with the Jadui Jungle extension.

The 2025 annual planner will focus on forest fire awareness — detailing the environmental impact of wildfires and the collaborative strategies between community members and forest authorities that can prevent them. This is both a production project and a community engagement project: the planner will be used in village meetings, school classrooms, and forest department outreach.



The Film Premier programme — in which new films are streamed online simultaneously across all 15 locations, with teams watching and discussing together — will continue and expand. This format has proven its value: it builds organisational coherence, creates a shared reference point for programme teams working on related issues in different locations, and generates feedback that shapes how films are used in the field.



Above all, the unit will continue to do what it has always done: listen carefully to the communities it works with, make films and stories that reflect what it has heard, and find ways to get those films and stories to the people who need to see them. In a media landscape that is increasingly shaped by speed, volume, and spectacle, community media insists on something different — on slowness, specificity, and the irreducible importance of stories told by and for the people who are living them.

12. Network and Partnerships

Support Voluntary Organisation

Under the Support Voluntary Organization initiative, SPS is intensively working to support partner organizations in various states of India. These efforts aim to enhance their skills and knowledge in the areas such as watershed development, sustainable agriculture, and women's empowerment etc. To achieve these objectives, SPS conducts various skill developments training sessions and provides handholding support by visiting their operational areas.

Numerous activities have been organized under this initiative throughout the year. Approximately 330 days of capacity-building sessions were held at the Baba Amte Centre for People Empowerment, Neemkheda with participation from 1,092 individuals including NGO professionals, Government employees and students across various states, organizations and institutes. These sessions collectively provided 3,000+ person-days of training on key themes such as Watershed Development, NPM Agriculture, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO), Livestock Management, Community Forest Resource Rights, Health and Nutrition , Gender and holistic organizational approaches.

A dedicated training session on NPM Agriculture and Certification was organised for seven NGOs by the Agriculture Team of SPS and N+3F organisation. A comprehensive seven-day training on sustainable farming practices and FPO management was also held for partner organizations under the APF project, encompassing participants from Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal.

A four day training on Maternal Health and Blood Pressure facilitated by AID India with head facilitator as Dr. Yogesh Jain, joined with 8 grassroots organisation working with Health & Nutrition and the SPS H&N Team.

During the same year, consecutive Gender trainings facilitated by Avantika Shrivastav were conducted at the centre. Women from various locations participated to discuss and learn about different gender norms and concepts. Each training was conducted over a period of three days.

Additionally, a series of training sessions on holistic development approaches were conducted for students and interns from educational institutions such as Green Hub, Rajghat School, Jamia Millia Islamia, and Shiv Nadar University.

Under the external exposure visit activity, a total of 10 visits were conducted at SPS, showcasing various sustainable models such as watershed development, sustainable agriculture, FPO, livestock management, and community media. These visits were attended by 217 participants. Additionally, 84 internal training sessions and 11 exposure visits were conducted this year.

These training sessions and exposure visits are crucial for enhancing the skills and knowledge of participants, fostering the adoption of sustainable practices, and promoting effective organizational strategies. By providing hands-on experience and practical insights, these initiatives empower individuals and organizations to drive positive change in their communities and contribute to sustainable development.



Get In Touch

We are always welcoming of anyone who wants to come down to our office and have a first-hand understanding of the work we do at SPS. Here is how you can reach out to us.

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Our Partners

