

**Development Support Team,**

**Pune**

**Annual Report**

**2021-2022**

## Development Support Team Pune

### Annual Report 2021-2022

#### **Foreword**

With two successive lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, and being the second year of COVID-19 pandemic, it was full of challenges in health, livelihoods, survival and climate change. Above all was the fear of the unknown loomed large and this period of uncertainty. It was like taking a step forward and ten backwards. DST's small team continued its efforts to continue the community engagement processes which was not an easy task. Providing support to the COVID response teams, engaging with the COVID Action Collab to enable the support for the urban and rural organisations working in providing health care was one of the main tasks we undertook. In partnership with Param Health Centre continued their efforts to work in health under SDG 3 and continuing and revival of livelihoods of our community women in partnership with Ishanya Foundation and Parama Naturals. DST has continued its efforts in contributing to various networks too.

Gives the Board a relief to share that the team and staff are all well and working with more rigor. We are grateful to everyone with whom DST partners for this contribution and present this brief narrative with a hope that the coming year will help us stabilise our work.

I am very hopeful collectively challenges will be resolved. The pandemic has taught us one lesson that collaboration and partnerships will be the new norm.

Harvinder Bedi

Managing Trustee, DST

## Brief Background

When the Development Support Team (DST) was established in 1984 it was primarily a “response” to the needs of the development sector where one segment of the stakeholders were very small NGOs/Community Based Organisations (CBOs). DST owes its existence to CAA, Oxfam (Australia). DST started as a support service organisation in a small way and accepted a variety of challenges in its growth path and journey. DST has grown into a multifaceted organisation responding to the needs of the sector and also proactively initiating some processes/programmes to build an improved understanding of the current challenges.

DST has been working towards strengthening the organisational structure of the weaker sections of the society with a special focus on women for over three decades. The organisation believes and practices the ideology of people’s participation in self development and moving on to sustainable development of the community at large. DST lays emphasis on women’s active participation and involvement in the development processes.

Over the past two decades has worked towards Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women through various training modules, exposure visits and the promotion and strengthening of a community-based community owned institutions – Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Federations. The focus has been on working towards Financial Inclusion, Financial Planning and Financial Literacy of the women so as to enable them to access Formal Financial services that include safe savings and credit options and insurance. Since 2018 we have included Digital Empowerment as an important intervention as a step towards sustainability.

### **Organisational Structure**

DST is registered as a Society and a Trust and is governed by the rules and regulations applicable under the respective Acts. The governing body comprises social workers, activists, academicians and individuals committed to the field of development.

### **DST’s Objectives**

- *To provide information, research, training, finance and other support to voluntary agencies working in the field of socio-economic development*
- *To undertake and to assist studies and research in the field of development.*
- *To provide facilities for the exchange of information and experience among different voluntary agencies working in the field of development.*
- *To undertake and to assist organization of workshops, seminars and training courses for workers engaged in development.*
- *To undertake all such programmes and activities as might help development.*

Following activities, events and programs were undertaken by DST during the year:

## Digital Strategy

Before the pandemic, the monthly staff meeting with community workers was a platform for monitoring and evaluation, capacity building and sharing challenges and best practices. During the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic and the two successive lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, no physical visits were possible to the urban or rural communities and the DST team communicated with the community workers through phone calls and the WhatsApp groups.

DST has worked on digital empowerment of the community women since 2018, hence the team decided to adopt a digital strategy to monitor the progress of the health project implemented in Lohegaon and Yerwada in partnership with Param Health Centre. The DST team created a WhatsApp group with the Community Workers to plan the implementation of the project, monitor the activities and share the updates/progress. The Community Workers identified the community resource persons who had access to smartphones. They collected the data of the beneficiaries pre and post distribution of Vitamin D through online tools (Google forms) developed by DST in Marathi. Training the team during the awareness session enabled them to efficiently use these forms to collect the data.

## Disaster Response: COVID Response

In response to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, a COVID Response Team was formed by CYDA joined by corporates, CSRs, individual donors and other civil society members, aimed to assist them through these difficult times. DST has been part of the Maharashtra Covid 19 response team. DST has worked with the Citizen's Initiative in Pune, led by CYDA, Pune, a collaboration of donors, corporates, and civil society members.

DST also is a member of the COVID Action Collab (CAC) which is a pan-India, people-centric, multi-disciplinary platform working with diverse stakeholders, on relief, recovery and resilience-building initiatives aimed at supporting the most vulnerable communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the second lockdown in May 2021, CAC conducted a needs assessment exercise and the DST team had identified the need for medical equipment: oxygen concentrators, oximeters, PPE kits and oxygen masks for the COVID care centres and rural PHCs in and around Pune. In response DST received the medical equipment from Swasti Health Catalyst supported by Give India in June-July 2021.

Mrs Bedi, Managing Trustee and Mr Shirish Kulkarni, Board member, Development Support Team, Pune handed over:

- Ten oxygen concentrators to CYDA's COVID response program
- Two oxygen concentrators to Aadhaar Samajik Sanstha



Another collective that worked to enable support was the Help India Breathe 2021 group that demonstrated, how a community came together, and donations multiplied exponentially to assist grassroot NGO's saving lives and helping India through the ravaging Covid crisis in May 2021. DST enabled 4 oxygen concentrators for CYDA through Help India Breathe 2021 which was a collective and collaborative response to provide the support to PHCs and other not for profits working in COVID response.

## Partnership with Param Health Centre

Development Support Team(DST) in partnership with Param Health Centre continued their efforts to work in health under SDG 3. Monitoring factors that affected women's health and well-being especially during the pandemic and supporting health promotion and disease prevention, through the use of Vitamin D has been the focus of this partnership and DST and Param Health Care worked in collaboration through this 4 month project since October 2022 to reach out to a 1,000+ beneficiaries, from Yerwada and Lohegaon, collected baseline data and post assessment data to demonstrate the impact of Vitamin D on improving general health. This initiative provided an opportunity for the low socio-economic strata of the community to improve their health and learn about the benefits of Vitamin D.



Implementing this program included dissemination of information regarding the dosage, training personnel to distribute the tablets to a wide audience as well as utilising digital platforms to coordinate, monitor and assess the impact. Using Google forms, has allowed for collection of data with detailed accuracy as well as promotes a digital strategy towards uplifting this strata of society - in which DST has played a key role.

## Partnership with Parama Naturals

Two successive lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 had a disastrous effect on local small businesses leaving them with zero revenue. Parama Naturals, has been partnering with Development Support Team (DST) for reviving income streams of community women and micro-entrepreneurs in Self Help Groups and federations, by giving them additional work, thinking innovatively, and enabling digital outreach for them.

The challenges have been very different, as community intervention was limited and training on new skills could not be conducted. DST team helped in the design and promotion of a suitable product combination by enabling community women to make hand painted diyas, potlis and tea lights for the Parama Naturals gift collection for the 14th Yellow Ribbon Fair organised by Ishanya Foundation held from 8th to 11th October 2021.



The journey of providing marketing platforms for showcasing handcrafted products of our rural and urban entrepreneurs began at MCCA Pune CSR summit in 2019 and has come a long way in continuing livelihoods by enabling partnerships with for profits especially in these challenging times during the pandemic. ParamaNaturals in partnership with Development Support Team and [YouthAid Foundation](#) organised an event on October 23, 2021, for marketing the products of urban and rural communities.



## Technical Support to Samruddhi Welfare Development Foundation

DST provides technical and financial support to Samruddhi Welfare Development Foundation which caters to the credit needs of CBOs – Self Help Groups. Loans to the tune of Rs. 35 Lakhs have been disbursed through the SHGs to their members.

### Events

Medha Ranade, DST conducted a session on the RBI Regulatory Framework for Microfinance Loans for 30 women from Yerwada. These were also translated to Marathi by the DST team and were shared as handouts with the participants

### **Participation at various National and International events**

During the year 2021-22 DST continued its engagement with three National Networks of which DST is a member VANI, SADHAN and Enable Network. Owing to the pandemic majority of the events were online or in the hybrid mode. The Board members, Mrs. Mini Bedi, Mr. Shirish Kulkarni and Ms. Medha Ranade participated in the online events organised during the year by PAIRVI, VANI, MAHAVAN and Enable Networks.

VANI: The voluntary sector has gone through a very difficult time during the last two years, there was an unprecedented humanitarian crisis due to COVID-19. VANI being a National network worked with its members and non-members by providing a mechanism to share and learn, especially in areas of legal compliance with new regulatory environment plus capacity enhancement, work towards mitigation of COVID-19. VANI held numerous online events on the above issues with inputs from sector specialists Niti Aayog and Centre for Social Research, Ashoka University. Mrs. Bedi was also a resource person and shared these debates and learnings with DST Trustees/staff and also at regional meetings.

We are grateful that VANI kept these debates and processes alive and DST was an important stakeholder from Western Region.

SADHAN: The microfinance sector also followed a similar path as VANI.

Enable Network: A Hyderabad based National Network, DST is a founder member. They work mainly on SHGs, Federations and FPOs. Enable were already ahead of other networks in area of digital/process so were quickly able to reach the ground programs and assist them.

MAHAVAN: DST is working at the Pune District level to support this network and create an enabling environment through collaborations and cooperation.

DST participates in various state and national level processes on socio-economic issues, climate change, environmental protection and international processes such UNFCCC's COP. During the year on behalf of DST Shri Shirish Kulkarni participated in following meetings which were organised virtually by the associate hosts.

June 5, 2021: To mark the 'World Environment Day', one of the close associate organisation of DST, CECOEDECON Jaipur, launched a short video on its work on environmental protection titled as "SONA MAATI" (Golden Soil). Along with launching the video a discussion on the subject matter was also organised where agriculture, climate change, environmental experts from India and world over shared their views on the subject. As suggested by CECOEDECON we forwarded the invitation to some likeminded organisations in Maharashtra which are working on issues of environment, climate change, forest protection and climate resilient agriculture. More than 10 NGOs and some farmers from Maharashtra participated in the event. The video highlighted the significance of preservation and promotion at indigenous food traditions, keeping in view of the eco-system diversity & sustainability and was released by Ms. Catherine Fischer, Public Diplomacy Officer, U.S. Embassy New Delhi.

CECOEDECON also organised another webinar on Digitalization of Agriculture; Opportunities and Challenges for small farmers. The virtual meeting extensively discussed the high potential of introducing simple digital technologies to protect, manage and market the crops and how climate impacts can be reduced if we have a digital early warning system available with the farmers. While participating DST also mobilised other 10 NGOs from Maharashtra to participate which are working on CC and climate resilient agriculture.

Stree Aadhar Kendra Pune, Sampark Mumbai, UNICEF Mumbai and office of The Hon. Dy. Chairperson Maharashtra Legislative Council Dr. Neelam Gorhe, organised a webinar titled "Manthan Conference on Climate Change and SDGs" on 24th January 2021. DST provided list of potential NGOs which are engaged in working on CC issues and also participated in preparatory meetings held for this by hosts. The webinar was attended and experiences were shared as and where relevant.

Similarly, Stree Aadhar Kendra, Sampark Setu and Government of Maharashtra organised number of virtual meetings on MGNREGS and Corona related issues. DST was specially invited for such meetings where it provided inputs in the online events.

Whilst writing this report DST's engagement with these processes continues. DST now need to reflect how best to use the learning from these processes for DST programs.

## Ongoing Processes

### **Capacity Building of Community Workers**

DST also supports the grassroots cadre of Community Workers who are DST's link to all the urban community based initiatives. Two in person meetings were conducted in September and December 2021 to take a review of the challenges faced in the communities and planning of the roll out of the Vitamin D project in Lohegaon and Yerwada reaching out to 1,000 beneficiaries. All communication was through telephonic calls and Community Workers WhatsApp groups owing to the second lockdown and increased number of cases due to Omicron cases in January 2022.

## Linkages

### **1. Sa-dhan**

Sa-Dhan's mission is to build the field of community development finance in India to help its member and associate institutions to better serve low-income households, particularly women, in both rural and urban India, in their quest for establishing stable livelihoods and improving quality of life. DST representatives participate in national level conferences organized by Sa-dhan involving the stakeholders of micro finance sector.

### **2. Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)**

VANI is a network of voluntary development organizations with a purpose to provide a platform for safeguarding and highlighting voluntarism and voluntary action in India. The Managing Trustee is an advisor to VANI. DST is actively involved in the VANI processes on policy related issues of the NGOs.

### **3. PAIRVI**

DST has worked in partnership with PAIRVI on Climate Change and has played an active role in macro-micro linkages, sharing national and sub national policies with small grassroots organizations and community based groups to enhance their understanding on Climate Change.

### **4. MAHAVAN**

VANI has promoted independent state chapters to bring together CSOs/ VDOs in Maharashtra. Members of VANI from Maharashtra have initiated MAHAVAN ( Maharashtra Voluntary Action Network) as an informal forum of Voluntary Development Organizations to share knowledge, strengthen organizations and negotiate with the Public (Government) and (Private) Corporate sector on equal partnerships.

#### **5. International Association for Community Development (IACD)**

IACD has recognized consultative status with the United Nations and its agencies.

## Acknowledgements

The Board of Trustees gratefully acknowledges the support received by DST from – Forbes Marshall, Ishanya Foundation, MCCIA, PIC, Unlimited India, Dr. Renu Mahtani and Parama Naturals. The Board would also like to place on record its appreciation of DST Staff for their dedication and active involvement in successfully carrying out the various programmes and activities of the organisation. We are also grateful to the CBOs, Federations, SHGs and Community Workers for their valuable contribution in promoting women’s groups, providing micro finance services and livelihood options. We also sincerely thank our Auditors, Ramu and Associates, for their guidance and auditing the annual accounts of DST.

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Sr. No	Name	Designation
1	Mrs. H. Bedi	Managing Trustee
2	Mrs. Medha Ranade	Secretary
3	Mr. Shirish Kulkarni	Treasurer
4	Mr. S.T. Pillay	Trustee
5	Mr. Koushik Sekhar	Trustee

### STAFF

Sr. No	Name	Designation
1	Sonia Garcha	Consultant
2	Jayant Navale	Finance Manager
3	Suresh Chavan	Project Assistant
4	Sonal Walzade	Office Secretary

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Public Trust Act Regd. No. F/2805/Pune

Society Regd. No. MAH/1807/84/Pune

FC(R) A No. 083930084

Income Tax Act 1961

Section 12A Regd. No.3984

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