

Annual report 2023-24

Foreword:

I am happy to share our annual report for the year 2023 – 24. The year was full of activities and also challenges for the board as it is undergoing Organisational Development exercise while remaining active in the field. The focus of our programmes and activities was on promotion of understanding of mental health issues at the community level in urban poverty pockets of Pune and PimpriChinchwad, promotion of understanding of climate resilient agriculture and allied livelihood activities amongst small NGOs and help them reach the knowledge to their local farmers, facilitate drought relief by coordinating with policy makers, administration and NGO network members operational in drought hit areas. The programmes are part of the processes and they will continue on the ground beyond this reporting year.

Board members are discussing and debating the future programmes and organisational structures to make DST work and services more effective in the sector. The sector is experiencing many challenges within and externally from designing the strategies to address the poverty, implementation of pro-poor and pro-environmental policies and Programmes and comply as per the prevailing legal requirements. As a support service organisation we will try and support small NGOs to strengthen their grassroots works and also stay effective in the sector.

The Board of Trustees gratefully acknowledges the support received from Dr..MridulaApte, Vidula Psychological Consultancy Services (VPCS) and their staff who actively participated in our Jagruti project on mental health. We also acknowledge the trained Jagruti workers from the community who worked whole heartedly for reaching the Programme concept at community level.

Dr.NeelamGorhe, Deputy Chairperson, Maharashtra State Legislative Council and Founder President of StreeAdhar Kendra, Pune for organising the drought workshop in December 2023 in coordination with DST. We also acknowledge the support and guidance received from Shri. VivekAtre, who is facilitating our OD exercises. Our thanks are also due to our Auditors 'RSVA & Co' for their guidance and auditing the accounts of DST.

Shirish Kulkarni
Chairperson

Pune, India

Brief Background

Development Support Team (DST) was established in 1984 primarily to strengthen the NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) through capacity building, documentation and various types of other financial and non-financial support. DST started as a support service organization in a small way and now DST is standing as a professional and robust organization.

Also from 2001, DST has been working towards capacity building of weaker sections of the society with a special focus on women for over two decades. DST always believed in women's empowerment which leads to active involvement in the development process which is necessary for the better future of the community and Society. DST was directly engaged in Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women through the promotion and strengthening of a community-based, community owned institution such as Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their Federations for the last twenty years. DST also focused on Financial Planning and Financial Literacy of these institutions as a part of process of empowerment of women.

It is sensitive to the environmental issues and works closely with NGOs, networks and government agencies on climate change issues promoting resilience and mitigation measures.

Organizational Structure

DST is registered as a Society and a Trust and is governed by the rules and regulations applicable under the respective laws. It is also registered under FCRA, Indian Income Tax Rules, CSR 1 and Darpan. The governing body comprises social workers, development professionals and practitioners who are all committed to socio-economic development of women, poor and marginalized.

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, which promoted development*

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

Project on Mental health-Jagruti project:

Mental health is important at every stage of life from childhood, adolescence as well as adulthood. It has an influence on our social, emotional, physical and cognitive health. Unfortunately, many people do not obtain the necessary care due to ignorance and the stigma connected with mental health. Climate change is playing a very important role which impacts the mental health of the individuals' severely.

Keeping these things in mind a project on mental health named as 'Jagruti' was taken up by Development Support Team in collaboration with Vidula Psychological Consultancy Services.

The programme is being implemented in two areas on the outskirts of Pune city viz. Dapodi and Ramtekdi. As a part of community leadership building on mental health issues 15 workers comprising 7 from Ramtekdi and 8 from Dapodi area were selected to work as 'Jagruti workers' to interact amongst the community women, youth, adolescent girls and children. These workers were trained with following **objectives:**

- Train women workers to work as Mental Health Volunteers to work at community level on mental health issues
- Help them understand the severity of psychological symptoms, distress and disorders and help communities to understand the same to improve psychological life conditions.
- Train Mental Health Volunteers to empower and equip them with practical techniques to screen and prevent mental illnesses
- Find out the number of persons with mental health concerns from the area.
- Increase the sensitivity and awareness about mental health across the community through community leaders and community based organisations in the area.

Part 1: Training of Jagruti workers:

The topics covered during training were Self-awareness, Stress management, Mental health sensitisation, Psychological first aid, Suicide prevention etc. 12 training sessions were held for the 'Jagruti workers'. These sessions were participatory, informative and interactive.



Part 2: Family survey:

The training sessions were followed by a family survey in the 2 intervention communities conducted by the MH volunteers/ Jagruti workers. They carried out Family Survey and collected data which was analysed to draft a report which is available for study and reference to all. Following data would represent the **population covered under the survey:**

Communities	Families	Male	Female	Total
Dapodi	3228	6431	6524	12955
Ramtekdi	1874	3637	3619	7256
Total	5102	10068	10143	20211

Overall 20,211 population was covered under the survey and the **Highlights from the data analysis can be narrated as below:**

- *Number of nuclear families was higher (74.5%) than the joint and extended families.*
- *In 20% families head of the household was woman*
- *8359 (53.6% of the population >15 years) were busy in some or the other occupation*
- *1624 (about 8.8%) individuals were either in the process of completing graduation or completed graduation. Few of them had completed post-graduation also.*
- *3598 (23.1% of the population >15 years) were persons found with some kind of addiction. The addiction of tobacco in different forms was very common.*
- *Percentage of the duration of consumption >5 years was very high i.e.69.7%.*
- *4.2% (out of population in the age group >15 years) persons were found with some symptom of mental illness.*
- *The symptoms like 'low mood' and 'tension' were very common and found in about 66% individuals having some kind of addiction.*



Part 3: Community awareness programme:

It was felt necessary to talk openly about mental health so as to reduce the misconceptions and stigma regarding mental health in the community. Keeping these things in mind and for better understanding of mental health, four awareness generation programmes were organised for the communities. These were followed by discussion on individual issues with the Psychologist present for the session. The response was very encouraging.



Part 4: Dissemination programme:

7 Jagruti workers shared their thoughts during this programme which were as follows:

- Community needs help and guidance for mental health problems/issues
- This subject/topic is not covered in official trainings of ASHA workers' who work at grassroots.
- Learnt how to communicate with people and also understood the importance of confidentiality for mental health problems
- They are willing to help community on this 'missing but most important issue in today's socio-economic context' in future as well.

Learning from the project

- Need of more motivation and understanding of mental health issues

- Need to conduct more awareness generation programmes for community, continuity in such programmes is necessary to motivate the people to come forward and share their different types of stress to decide on healing measures.
- Building the bridge towards the larger community is very important
- Need of repetitive short- training capsules like programs focusing upon addiction, stress, anger, communication skills etc.

Manual on Mental Health: DST is in the process of publishing a manual on issues of mental health which will prove handy and reference material for senior social workers working on mental health. DST is planning a long term programme on the sector of climate change, mental health, counselling and precautions.

Rural Livelihood Intervention/Promotion in rainfed areas:

DST in keeping with its role as a bridge between small community based organizations and the larger development sector, has taken up an initiative to help rural based CSOs to develop a NRM based Livelihood Programme. This year two NGOs operational in semi-arid rain fed areas of Solapur district in Sangola and Karmala blocks have been identified to work directly with farmers to introduce climate resilient livelihoods which will support their farming and create sustainable incomes. The planning process is underway to introduce the same during forthcoming monsoon.



Coordination of Drought Relief through MDRSP:

The network of 17 NGOs from Marathwada and Western Maharashtra regions namely 'Maharashtra Drought Relief Support Programme' was founded by present DST Chairperson in 2012 along with a few similar minded organisations from the drought prone areas of Maharashtra especially Marathwada and Western Maharashtra. Found in 2012-13 in response to address the severe drought conditions prevailing the large parts of semi-arid areas of the state. The organisations came together as a network to mobilise government relief and development programmes especially employment under MGNREGS, water, fodder for cattle and reaching 14 Public Welfare Schemes of social security, crop and individual insurance, support for agriculture development, etc. during 2012 to 2017. Chairperson while coordinating the efforts of members also mobilised resources, arranging/organising capacity building support to network members and communities and documentation of the process besides coordinating with state government policy makers and administration.

The network also worked during the 2023-24 severe drought that affected most parts of semi-arid areas of Western Maharashtra and Marathwada, coordinating with government agencies and mobilising drought relief support from various sources. This experience proved very handy in coordinating with government agencies, policy makers and network members in guiding to mobilise government relief resources. The work will continue now more as a preparatory work to face droughts in the future with special reference to water conservation measures and promotion of natural / organic farming practices.

DST's Participation at various National events:

Secretary MedhaRanade participated in the following events:

- **Dasra** NGOMeeting held in Pune at Raja Bahadur City Centre on 3rd Oct. 2023. It was a gathering of 11 grassroots NGOs working in Maharashtra and Gujarat. These NGOs are led by the individuals who come from the same communities whom their NGOs serve. The representatives of funding agencies like TarachandRamnathSeva Trust, Swiss-Aid, Dasra etc. were present for the meeting. The event was organised mainly to help grassroots NGOs for funding.
- Half day dissemination workshop organised by Pathfinder organisation on 14th June 2023. Dr. Anil Paranjape and MedhaRanade attended the dissemination workshop organised by **Pathfinder International** in Westin Hotel, Koregaon Park. Pathfinder in collaboration with State Family Welfare Board, Maharashtra and supported by Gates foundation had taken up YUVAA project with the tag line **safal couple**. The project was implemented in 5 districts (Kolhapur, Sangli, Solapur, Satara and Ahmadnagar) of Maharashtra. It was attended by 15-20 NGOs (CASP, FPAI, Pachod, Shelter etc.) working in the field of health. The experiences and data were shared during the workshop.
- Inauguration /launch of the "Integrated Health Programme in 121 slums in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad Corporation" organised by Institute of Health Management (IHMP), Pachod (Pune Unit) on 6th Jan 2024 held at YASHADA,

BanerRoad,Pune.IHMP had implemented project on health through ASHA workers from PMC and PCMC area for last 1 and half year on experimental basis, now it is being expanded to 121 slums through the CSR funding received from Bajaj-Finserve

Chairperson Shirish Kulkarni also participated in some of the events:

- Participated and facilitated a one day workshop on drought planning jointly organized by StreeAadhar Kendra, DST and Office of Dy. Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Council Hon. Dr. NeelamtaiGorhe. The workshop was organized at Pune in the first week of December 2023 which was attended by about 50 NGO representatives from drought affected blocks/districts of Maharashtra. Facilitating the workshop along with Dr. NeelamtaiGorhe, he suggested the relief strategies to address the prevailing drought conditions and harsh conditions that would occur during the summer months from April to June 2024. Further he also suggested the need and importance of coordinating with government agencies to reach the drought relief measures announced by the state. The workshop proceedings were followed by him with Dr. Gorhe's office at VidhanBhavan Mumbai and with NGOs.
- Attended a one day event on promotion of Millets organized by CECOEDECON Jaipur and KisanSewaSamitiRajashthan who jointly organised the event under the banner of "Indigenous food festival" on **7th February, 2024**. This festival was to provide an opportunity to small and marginal farmers and agrarian communities, practicing agriculture using local seeds and organic methods, to exchange their seeds, value-added products, agri practices, marketing skills and other experiences. The event was organised at **Chaksu in Jaipur District**.



As requested by organisers, Chairperson suggested names of two NGOS which are working on promotion of natural or organic farming amongst small and marginal farmers in the state. The two organisations from Yavatmal and Dharashiv districts participated in the event and set up their stall demonstrating traditional seeds and food grains / millets grown by them amongst farmers. Both stall had hundreds of seed varieties of millets, vegetables, pulses and oil seeds and received encouraging experience of interacting with other NGOs with similar progammes in India and also local farmers from Rajashthan.

As a member of one of the side events, Shirish Kulkarni shared his experiences on natural farming and efforts being done by NGOs in the state of Maharashtra with

whom he is assorted with and promotion of concept of moving towards chemical free farming practices.

Association:

1. Voluntary Action Network India (VANI): VANI is a network of voluntary development organizations with a purpose to provide a platform for safeguarding and highlighting activities and actions of the Voluntary Organizations in India. The Managing Trustee of DST is an ex-officio advisor to VANI
2. MAHAVAN: VANI has promoted independent state chapters to bring together CSOs/VDOs in Maharashtra. The members of VANI from Maharashtra have initiated MAHAVAN (Maharashtra Voluntary Action Network) as an informal forum of Voluntary Organizations to share knowledge, strengthen organizations and negotiate with the Government as well as the corporate sector on the basis of equal partnerships. DST is working at the Pune District level to support this network.
3. Chairperson is founder and associated with Vidarbha Livelihood Forum (operational from 2006) which is working on implementation of progressive policies concerning tribal and environment such as Forest Rights Act, Biodiversity Act, PESA, MGNREGA, etc.
4. Chairperson is also founder and associated with a network of NGOs namely Maharashtra Drought Relief and Support Programme (MDRSP) operational in drought prone districts of Maharashtra especially Marathwada region and parts of Western Maharashtra.

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