



## ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



**DHAATRI**

A Resource Centre for Women and Children

The year of 2021-22 became an extension of the impacts of the Covid pandemic experienced in all our field areas, and Dhaatri's focus of work was on relief and support to communities in these remote tribal areas. In this process, some of the acute problems faced that become more prominent due to Covid led to initiating new interventions on the ground, like with the children in Panna and Vidisha and on the water and health issues shared by women. The year became packed with several ground level programmes and field research to assess the status of women and children's food security and social security. The opportunity of networking and fusing alliances across the country and region became possible with the Covid context enabling online exchange of perspectives, strategies and actions. Some of the key programmes implemented during 2021-22 are:



## 1. COVID RELIEF AND SUPPORT

Working with a team of community leaders who are part of the Dhaatri fellowship programme, we have been able to reach out to adivasi and dalit communities across Karnataka, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Food kits and children's education kits were distributed with support from philanthropies like the Azim Premji Philanthropic Foundation, the Freunde der erzie hungskuntz, and from crowdfunding and individual donors. Supporting patients suffering from tuberculosis and silicosis and widows and orphan children were our main priority, given the abject poverty and ill health in some of these communities. Our teams also facilitated medical camps in some areas, referrals to the PHCs and awareness programmes for vaccination and covid hygiene. Below are some of the relief activities we implemented:





Nutrition kits distributed to pregnant women and new mothers in Chatra (Jharkhand), Udaipur (Rajasthan), Dahod (Gujarat), and Panna (Madhya Pradesh). [Supported by APPI]



Food and hygiene kits distributed to single women, widows, marginalised families, homeless, and leprosy-affected families in Palghar, Chatra, Udaipur, Dahod, Melghat, Raigarh, Kabirdham, Kanker, and Panna. [Supported by APPI, Milap, and Crypto Relief]







## 2. CHILDREN'S EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Covid brought out the stark realities that children in remote tribal areas face when they have no access to school or online learning facilities. In some places they received dry ration, but those from migrant families (and a substantial number belong to this category), are not even enrolled in school or have basic documents in place to avail of the dry ration. We found that the children needed to be engaged at least for a few hours in a day as their learning levels were deteriorating.

With the help of student interns Dhaatri initiated online learning for the children and this helped the children have some nutrition during these activities that we tried to provide, as well as participated in several fun learning activities that brought them to focus on some of their lessons. This informal process of learning brought out the need for a consistent support to the children even after schools reopened as there was a huge learning lag and children enjoyed attending the informal classes. This helped us identify some of the youth from the community who are themselves students in local colleges, but were in need of financial support for their fees and their family survival.

Bringing the needs of the children and the youth together, we initiated informal after-school education centres in Panna where the educators combined games, songs and text book lessons for whoever wished to attend. Interactions with these children also brought out the fact that many of them are dropping out of school due to not have basic resources-school bags, note books, text books, identity cards like birth certificates, aadhar cards, bank accounts, caste certificates, without which they are not allowed to enter the schools. This spontaneously led to evolving our community education programme to combine after-school centres and facilitation of linking them with governance bodies for their basic documentation, and school enrolment.





Children attending after-school evening classes in Panna.



Children in Panna get learning kits.



Fun learning activities for Children





### 3. YOUTH SKILLS AND AWARENESS

In Panna and Vidisha districts of Madhya Pradesh where we are working directly with the communities, we find that school dropout rates are highest from middle school level where boys and girls are forced into unskilled labour in the stone quarries, migration to construction sites and other odd informal labour activities. Physical problems like malnutrition, tuberculosis and social problems like substance abuse, sexual abuse, violence and caste discrimination are experienced by many of them. The need to work with this adolescent age group was felt by us and we started community youth programmes using interactive workshops, theatre, vocational skills activities and education support to build rapport with youth in Panna, Vidisha and Hospet. We conducted gender, culture and sexual rights trainings in adivasi ashram schools in Palghar district, Maharashtra, with adolescent girls.



*Workshop on women's health and hygiene with youth in Panna.*





*Youth workshop on DMF awareness in Saheba Tapra, Vidisha.*



*Gender and cultural rights training for adolescent girls in Palghar*





## 4. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

### A) STRENGTHENING THE ROLE AND INTERVENTIONS OF DHAATRI FELLOWS

Dhaatri has been working in seven states through Fellows who work at the community level, particularly with women. They mainly work on basic governance linkages to assist women in understanding how to get their entitlements and in making collective grievances on site specific challenges to their resource rights and livelihoods. Due to the Covid restrictions, this year, most of our capacity building workshops and consultations with the Fellows have been online. Using the PESA, FRA, DMF and women related laws and policies, Fellows have helped women on the ground approach authorities for several entitlements. We conducted a field training workshop in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh with Adivasi women on natural resources, FRA, DMF and PESA.



*Skillshare with Adivasi women in Raigarh.*





## B) FRA CLAIMS AND GRIEVANCES

Women, particularly widows, were helped in putting up IFR and CFR claims in at least five states. Women's inclusion in the FRCs, compilation of supporting verification documents to submit along with the claims and follow up with the SDLCs were the main activities that Fellows were involved in.



*Women were assisted in preparing and filing their IFR and CFR claims. Awareness meetings on FRA were also held.*





### C) GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND WOMEN'S BASIC ENTITLEMENTS POST RELOCATION

In Panna, 13 villages were relocated for the Panna Tiger Reserve. It has been almost 15 years since the relocation, but the majority of the families are staggering under poverty, hunger and lack of identity and basic amenities. We have undertaken village wise gender impact assessment to appraise of adivasi women's status and have submitted several petitions to the district authorities in relation to pending rehabilitation and new grievances. Similar assessment was conducted in Karnataka on the status of Devadasi women and we have initiated a help desk for women and their children. In Hospet, we conducted assessment of women's health and basic entitlements in abandoned mining areas and submitted micro plans to district authorities for rehabilitation of livelihoods and basic amenities. In Dahod, Gujarat, we conducted assessment of adivasi women migrant labour and their status of FRA claims. In Jharkhand, adivasi women are unable to make claims under the FRA and children are unable to attend public exams under ST category due to lack of caste certificates. We conducted an assessment of their situation and submitted several representations to state and national bodies. Gender impact assessment of community energy utilization was also conducted in Vidisha and Panna to understand the challenges faced by adivasi women in fulfilling their basic domestic chores.

In each field area, women organised community level consultations on the occasion of the International Day of Women and submitted several petitions to the local authorities on the above grievances. In the tiger reserve area, women complain that they have not been receiving compensation for cattle deaths caused by wildlife attacks, and they are incurring huge losses to their incomes and assets due to this. A ground level survey was conducted to assess the losses.







Surveys of Devadasi families in Karnataka



Displaced women, women mine workers, and women from affected communities in Panna, Vidisha, Udaipur, Dahod, and Thamnar, came together on International Women's Day to submit petitions and claims.





## **D) WATER AND HEALTH**

Women and children are particularly facing many health issues due to contaminated water and lack of potable water in these remote areas. The gender impact assessment revealed several cases of complaints from the women. These were documented and submitted to district and national authorities for cleaning of water bodies. We also participated in the regional dialogues and cross learnings from indigenous women on their water problems. A community health survey was conducted in Hospet, Panna and Vidisha as we are witnessing several cases of tuberculosis and suspected silicosis. Women are also found to be undergoing hysterectomies in large numbers as they complain that lack of water and toilets at the work sites are causing many reproductive and gynecological ailments.

## **E) CHILD MARRIAGE BILL**

We conducted consultations with adivasi and dalit women's groups through online meetings to assess the perceptions related to the proposed amendment to the Prevention of Child Marriage Act for increasing the age at marriage for girls. We submitted the collective representation on this regard to the concerned ministries.

*[Read our collective representation to the Parliamentary Committee.](#)*

## **F) WOMEN'S FOREST BASED LIVELIHOODS**

Migration seasonally is a necessity for adivasi communities in most of our field areas, due to lack of land resources and local livelihood or employment opportunities. Especially after Covid, women are hesitant to travel far. We supported some of their nutrition and income-generation activities to enable them to have additional nutrition and opportunities for skill building. Some programmes initiated this year as the food crisis is severe are, women's kitchen gardens, value addition of NTFP products and youth skills exchange. Van devi sahayata samooch procured/bred and sold Mahua oil and mushrooms. A major demand from the women is for proper implementation of the MGNREGS programme as adivasi women do not have job cards and face severe discrimination in getting employment. In some areas where there is no other resource for livelihood, women demanded for 300 days of employment guarantee. These were submitted to officials concerned.





Women collect Mahua with the help of nets in Panna.



Women's group cultivates mushrooms.



Women working on their kitchen gardens.







# **DHAATRI**

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