

Annual Report

2021-22

DEVELOPMENT FOCUS 2021-2022

One of our migrant returnee beneficiaries with a bounty of potatoes farmed on his land after he joined the project





Educators Empowering Communities for Inclusive Growth

VISION

A just and humane society that ensures equal opportunities for quality of life to every citizen of India through relevant and quality education to the most marginalised.

MISSION

To create relevant opportunities for the most marginalized sections of society, by engaging with and building the capacity of civil society actors, such that it leads to Educated, Egalitarian and Empowered communities.

VALUES

Hope | Respect | Commitment | Accountability | Transparency

STRATEGIES

Empowering Communities:

Mobilising marginalised sections of society to raise awareness and self-confidence to unleash the potential within them.

Creating Opportunities:

Developing the capacities of local organisations to promote feasible, affordable and sustainable solutions thus increasing opportunities for them and future generations.

Strengthening Civil Society:

Mobilising the weaker sections of society to raise awareness of their rights and to claim their entitlements.

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Village members wearing masks made by our Youth Clubs as part of a livelihood activity

1. REFLECTIONS

As the Development Focus team presents this report for the year 2021-22, here are a few thoughts to consider. India has been growing and growing rapidly. The economy of India is a middle-income developing market economy. It is the world's fifth-largest economy by nominal GDP and the third largest by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). However, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), on a per capita income basis, India ranked 142nd by GDP (nominal) and 128th by GDP (PPP). Digital India is a flagship programme of the Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Several services have become easily accessible under this scheme. Our cities and towns are developing with all these benefits available to most inhabitants.

At the same time, life is very difficult for millions of Indians who are on the fringes of society. For a large number of Dalit and Tribal communities of Central India; there are no roads and no bridges. Women have to walk long distances to collect water and spend hours to collect firewood to cook their daily meal. There are no toilets or bathrooms. Having electricity supply is still a distant dream. There is no mobile connectivity and hence no digital services. Basic needs like a health centre or school are few and far between. Even the few that are there do not have adequate human and material resources. Children are the worst affected and have no future to look forward to. These are the realities for the poorest 10% of our people.

It is in this scenario that Development Focus has been working.

These are the realities for the poorest 10% of our people.

We have deliberately chosen to go to some of the poorest districts of Jharkhand and Odisha. We are also working in 2 of the very poor districts of North Karnataka and in Mizoram in the Northeast. In the year of report, we have been implementing a project in 3 districts of Jharkhand to help children and youth see opportunities for learning and livelihood in their own villages and prevent them from moving to cities without a safety net, only to be under-employed and abused.



One of our Migrant Returnees reunited with his family and earning a living in his own village

Ushering in social justice has been an important and cross-cutting initiative in all our projects.

Another innovative project has been to promote rural entrepreneurship by building the IT skills of nearly 110 rural youth to provide online and offline services to their communities in as many villages. This project is implemented in North Karnataka, Odisha, and Mizoram.

The COVID pandemic swept in unannounced and hit like a huge Tsunami. The poor have been the most affected. We saw hundreds of migrant returnees flood into villages where we were working, empty handed and totally devastated. The villages that were already poor suddenly had more mouths to feed and the flow of small money from their relatives in the cities totally stopped. Although we had not planned for an initiative, we had to act and act fast.



As part of our projects we first meet with the partner organisation and set up a meeting with village members. Here we hear their stories, learn their needs and how our project will empower the whole community.

We implemented a project for migrant returnees in 2 districts of Jharkhand to provide sustainable livelihood to the returnees that led to enhanced food security in the villages. The returnees and their families were also facilitated in the process of social reintegration and protection of women and children's rights.

Ushering in social justice has been an important and cross-cutting initiative in all our projects. Youth have been enabled to see alternatives to unsafe migration, child marriages stopped, children engaged in child labour are back in school and much needed services provided to communities living on the margins of society.

This report which is in your hands provides a glimpse of what has been achieved and the challenges faced. We are grateful to all who through their commitment and hard work have made this happen. Although much has been achieved, this is just a drop in the ocean. There is still so much more to be done in this great country of ours. Through our efforts we join hands with all those who want to see the wide disparities narrow down and people living in harmony with their basic needs met.



2. DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

Three likeminded professionals came together to establish the organisation and registered Development Focus (DF) as a Trust in March 2006. The aim has been to reach out to children and youth in excluded communities, and to facilitate them to see opportunities that can transform them, so that they can see meaning and purpose in their lives. The interventions are always with community participation such that the projects are sustainable, even after the project cycle is over.

Our strategy has been to work for the poorest of the poor and we have been working in the tribal belt of Central India, covering the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh. More recently we have included Mizoram in the Northeast and two very poor districts in North Karnataka. Our programme strategy has been to empower communities to claim their rights and entitlements related to education, infrastructure, livelihood etc. from the State.

In the first few years, Edukans Foundation in the Netherlands was our donor partner, and we had a strong relationship with them for nearly 10 years. This greatly helped the fledgling organisation to establish itself and build DF to be a strong and resilient organisation. This partnership ended due to policy changes in both governments. Thereafter we have been receiving financial support from MISEREOR in Germany, the CSR of Tata Consultancy Services, and funds we raise from individuals, social media, and small organisations.

*"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."
-Nelson Mandela*



A young mother weaving mats as part of a livelihood activity



The strong belief that every human being, however poor or marginalized, has God given **potential**. We work to help them realize and unleash this potential.

Some of the core values that the organisation subscribes to are:



Cost effective approaches with a **wide impact**.



To bring a **positive change** in the attitudes and behaviour of people and developing local leadership that can lead to sustainable development.



The projects do not set up parallel structures like schools and hospitals but empower people to **claim their rights and entitlements** for quality services from the state.



When isolated, the poor are powerless and voiceless. By mobilizing them into **homogenous groups**, they understand their rights and can claim their entitlements.



People have fundamental rights and possibilities that need to be **nurtured**.



Partnerships with like-minded players and networking are of great significance.



Respect for every individual in the community, staff members and organisations.



Value for **people's culture and initiatives** and include initiatives to enrich the same.



Respect for the **law of the land** as responsible citizens and fulfilling all statutory requirements – not out of fear of being penalized but as a core value.



People can find the best solutions for their problems if provided the opportunity. We seek to **listen to them** leading to bottom-up approaches.

The way forward is not easy, when it comes to meeting the requirements and raising the needed resources for the projects. However, Development Focus is determined to press on to make a difference in the lives of children and youth from excluded communities.



One of our entrepreneurs setting up shop where internet connectivity is possible. Sometimes this means under a tree in the village where customers can get access to online services

3. BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The pandemic changed our lives in many ways, not just physically and socially but also digitally. Our country is now in overdrive, with the rise of Information Technology (IT) services replacing so many manual processes. Digital platforms are increasingly used for obtaining legal documents, and other vital records, like caste certificates, land records etc. Online money transactions are also becoming popular for people who cannot easily access a bank or a ATM. The use of the internet for social media and entertainment is fast replacing the need for a television or radio. Online education at various levels is being used extensively.



Since some villages are in remote areas, some of our entrepreneurs travel and conduct services on the backs of motorcycles

The CSR of Tata Consultancy Services has conceptualised the BridgeIT project to bridge this digital divide and take these online services to remote rural areas. Development Focus has been implementing these projects since 2017, to train youth from disadvantaged communities to use computers and technology to



Online money transactions, legal services and identity documents being created in remote areas

provide online services to their communities. The project also provides sustainable livelihood to unemployed rural youth.



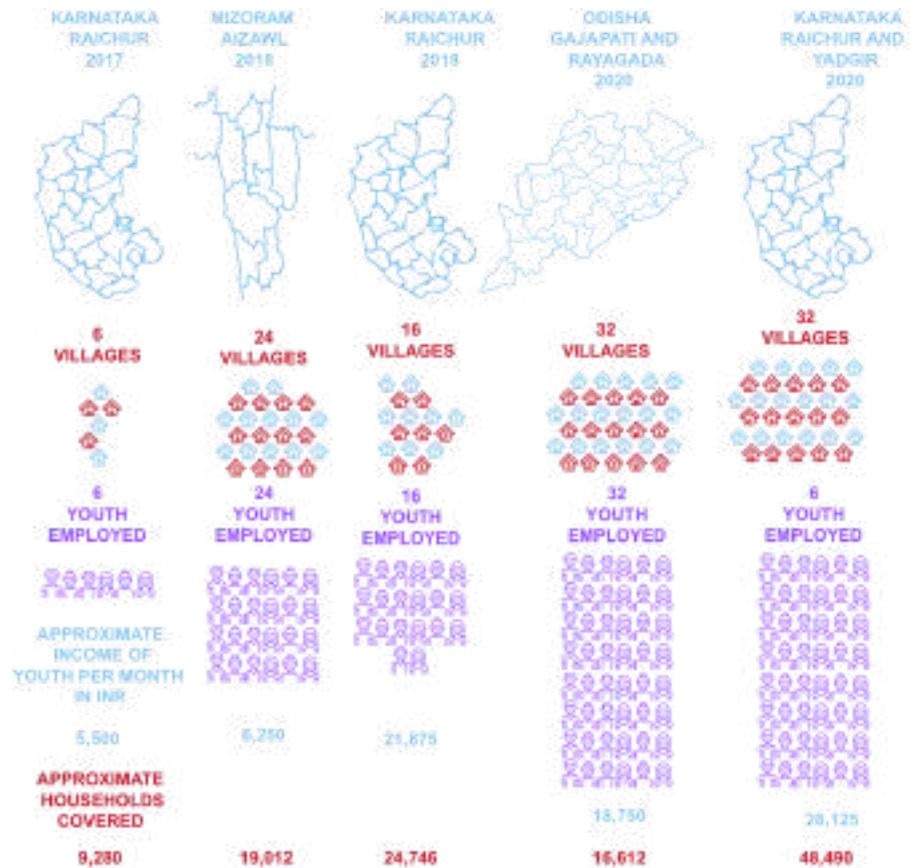
Children crowd around Nagalaxmi's newly opened shop in Raichur to purchase stationery and sweets



As the graphic on the right conveys, many households in remote, rural areas now have access to online services and 110 educated youth from disadvantaged backgrounds are earning a decent living in their own villages by serving their community. Some highlights are:

- Youth who had no knowledge of using a computer or a printer have now set up Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Common Service Point (CSP) to serve their communities. Most of them have successfully set up a shop providing both online and offline services
- Community members are very happy to have various online and offline services made available to them right at their doorstep
- Entrepreneurs and their families have a better quality of life, many of them solely relying on the income earned
- They provide legal services to people in their villages and act as a link between the wronged community member and the legal fraternity to seek justice
- Some entrepreneurs provide event photography and videography services during weddings, birthdays, and festivals by providing photos, videos, and albums

AN OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION:



I started my business by providing photocopying and printing services which were the only market opportunities in my village. As in business, I got an urge to widen the scope and area of my business, so I created a business page in 2021. I started promoting my items like photocards, Polaroids, stickers etc. Through my online page, I have gained many customers not only from my state, Mizoram but also from other states. I appreciate all the positive responses from my customers. It is beyond my imagination that my products are appreciated and in demand all over India. My business has had a huge impact on my family, and I am able to support them financially. One thing I have learned from my journey is - Staying flexible and open to new possibilities can lead to great things - as can hard work.



Muantei, successfully runs her business, effectively making use of her computer, printer and laminator and her God-given potential

Muantei Ralte, rural Aizawl



Muantei sells a variety of products through her business named 'Moonlit Craft'

- Entrepreneurs have gained respect among the community and are seen as knowledge centres in their village – this in spite of being shunned initially as a member of an excluded community or a woman.
- Women entrepreneurs have gained confidence and the ability to support themselves and their families despite the cultural stereotypes. Many of them have put off early marriages
- Entrepreneurs have expanded their business to the extent that some of them are now able to provide jobs to other young people in their communities.
- Entrepreneurs have braved the lockdowns due to the pandemic, floods and storm in Odisha, and social pressure to give up, especially for the women entrepreneurs.



Entrepreneurs provide banking services for community members

Although I completed my degree, I was unable to find a job. Due to various cultural norms, it is difficult for women to find work outside the home. A woman is expected to stay at home and do all the household work on time. I joined the BridgetT project against my family's wish, but I was confident I would succeed. My family would be so unhappy when I travelled for training and meetings, but I was adamant that I must access training to provide services for my village. I faced a huge challenge when I tried to set up my shop with resistance from other village members. Although it was a struggle at first, my determination and the variety of services I was able to offer from my shop eventually won my family over. Now, as a successful entrepreneur I am even able to support my family and provide online services for my village.



One of the entrepreneurs who travels to the top of the hill to conduct online services to get better internet connectivity



Channabasava, a committed Module Lead for the North Karnataka region, travels up to 130 kms to visit entrepreneurs in 1 cluster group.

Bhimavva, entrepreneur, Yadgir

Since childhood, I have been keen to provide for my family. I completed my bachelor's degree in Arts but was unable to find a job. Then I took up a tailoring course hoping I would find work but there again, I was unsuccessful. My family could not support me any longer and I was married and told to look after the house. My husband migrated to Gujarat in search of work, and I was left all alone. My determination to do something grew stronger. I joined the BridgetT project and was scared at first since I hardly knew anything related to computers. My motivation to learn paid off and I learnt to operate the computer, printer, scanner, and other computer related software. Now I learn new skills everyday by surfing the internet. I earn around INR 15,000/- each month and support my family.

Binami Raita, Entrepreneur, Gajapati



Sometimes photo booths are a blue cloth pinned to the wall of a house. A village member will have an identity proof to show with this photo.



Youth Club and Community Watch Group members stand proudly next to a rice hulling machine after they receive training for maintenance, use and repair of the machine

4. EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES AND LIVELIHOOD FOR YOUTH

Development Focus has been implementing this project since 2019 in three districts of Jharkhand and covering 70 villages that are predominantly tribal. Jharkhand is a state that is rich in natural resources - forests, minerals, and abundant land. It has a diverse population consisting of Adivasis (26.3%), scheduled castes (12.1%), and other marginalised groups, as well as several religious denominations. Yet, more than half its population lives below the poverty line. Gaps between rural and urban areas are wide, as also between different groups of the population. Along with Bihar, it has been identified as the most food insecure state in the country with a 52 per cent deficit in food grain production. The daily per capita availability of food is 230 grams in Jharkhand as against 523 grams for India as a whole.

The challenge of development includes the elimination of persistent and endemic deprivation, as well as the prevention of sudden and severe destitution because of economic inequality.

Jharkhand is adorned with some of the richest deposits of iron ores and coal in the world. Despite this, the state is confronting challenges of underdevelopment, high incidence of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, and ill health. Vulnerable social groups like the Adivasis, scheduled castes, women, and migrants are at the marginal end. The indigenous groups comprising of 85 to 90 per cent of the total population of Jharkhand have been the worst hit by the large-scale exploitation of natural resources of the region through the development of mines, industries, and commercial exploitation of

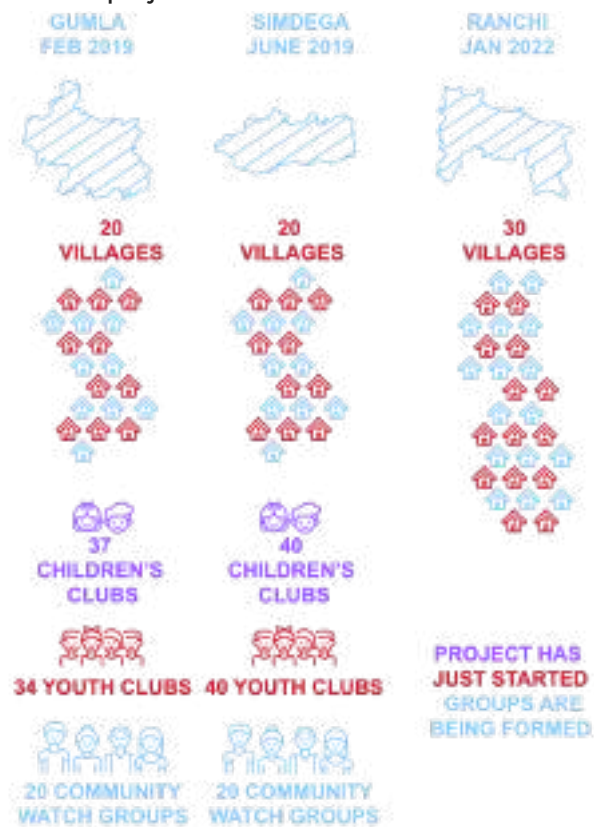
forests. Most of them are in a state of semi-starvation throughout the year.

The remaining 10 to 15 per cent of the population of the area are immigrants who migrated to amass wealth for themselves. The history of the indigenous people of Jharkhand is one of struggles against such outside exploiters, who have gradually reduced them to a non-dominant position. The Government of Jharkhand is trying to address these issues and has formed an independent society named Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) with financial support by UNDP.

The problem is far greater than what JSLPS can address within a reasonable time.

Development Focus is playing a small role in empowering the communities and facilitating youth to see livelihood opportunities.

A serious fall-out of this situation is unsafe migration and trafficking of children and youth who see no future for them in their homes and villages. There are no livelihood opportunities or enough food to eat. They end up as unskilled labourers or house maids in cities only to be exploited and abused. Some are subjected to inhumane forms of abuse. Many of them are too embarrassed to come back home and the families hear from them no more. Development Focus is implementing a 3-year project in three districts of Jharkhand to address the needs of children and youth in terms of holistic learning and facilitating them to see livelihood opportunities using the resources around them in their villages. The community is sensitized of the ill effects of unsafe migration/trafficking and few adults in the community are mobilized into Community Watch Groups (CWG) to check this migration. Children's and youth clubs have been formed, with special focus on girls, in every project village and members are sensitized on the consequences of unsafe migration. An overview of the 3 projects:



Sister Bibia Gorette Ekka and Mr. Anil Kumar Tirkey who manage project activities in SITARA



John Lakra and Louis Lakra who manage the project activities in AROUSE



Children clean up their school grounds before a cultural program



Team games are a big part of Children's Club activities

Activities for CCs

CHICKENS 550 & DUCKS 50 SOLD
INR 1,37,500/-

KITCHEN GARDENING
432 PARTICIPANTS

VERICOMPOST
500 KG MADE

PAPER BAGS
2,500 MADE
INR 500/-

GARLANDS
500 MADE
INR 75,000/-

SOAP/ SURF MAKING
287 PARTICIPANTS

BLACKBERRIES
250 KG COLLECTED
INR 12,500/-

SAKODA SEEDS
500 KG COLLECTED
INR 11,500/-

WEEKLY MARKETS & FESTIVALS
INR 50,000/-

CHILD ABUSE, CHILD RIGHTS, UNSAFE MIGRATION, AND RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT

Children's Clubs - CCs

Children are mobilized in clubs in the project villages. The goal is to give them a platform to share their lives with one another by expressing themselves and discuss daily experiences both good and bad, leading to child participation in issues affecting their lives. In the clubs, they play games, study their lessons, and learn their cultural songs and dances. A unique activity is Earn While You Learn (EWYL). This initiative facilitates children to learn child-friendly skills to earn money while they are still in schools. This year children learnt chicken/duck rearing, vermicomposting, kitchen gardening, flower gardening, paper bags and garland making.

Further, children are sensitized by the Yuva Mitras, about their rights, to include age appropriate Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). Awareness on realities like child abuse, early marriage, and child labour are provided to them in the clubs. Representatives from all the children's clubs came together to understand what child abuse is and how it affects children. They learnt how they can be instrumental in bringing a stop to this harmful practice in their families, in schools and their communities. The children's club representatives meet to discuss these issues and then go back to their respective clubs and pass on the information to their club members.

Youth Clubs - YCs

The youth clubs provide a platform for the youth to come together and learn from each other and support one another in times of crisis. The clubs have helped them to build relationships. In the year of report, new clubs have been formed and new members added. The youth clubs have been carrying out the following activities:

- **Grow Your Money (GYM).** A unique model to learn hands-on entrepreneurship.
- **Livelihood training.** Youth have been grouped according to their interest for livelihood skills.
- **Social and cultural activities.** All the youth in all the clubs have enjoyed these activities.
- **SRHR inputs.** Change agents / Yuva mitras are trained, who share their learning with club members
- **Sensitizing youth of their rights and linkages created with duty bearers.**

The club members are becoming aware of rights. Youth have been emboldened to speak in public with confidence and are beginning to claim their entitlements. Girls are speaking up for their rights and taking are actively participating in all the youth club activities.



Youth involved in providing water to village members with the help of the mobile water pump

During this year the focus has been on employability and facilitating the youth to set up production units. In Gumla and Simdega, the youth groups have set up Rice hulling machines, oil extracting machines, peanut de-sheller, and portable water pumps. The youth who are involved in these production activities have been given training in bookkeeping to track their business activities. Apart from the above, the youth groups have been involved in 1. Paddy cultivation, 2. Winnowing, 3. Administering manure in the agricultural field 4. Planting fruit and timber trees, 5. Taking contract from the forest department, 6. Construction of Community Hall 7. Laying of roads and 8. Digging of ponds. Nearly 50 youth have started their own business activities this year.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) has invited youth from the clubs and provided training in agriculture, horticulture, and para veterinary. 95 youth have benefitted. The youth have also been formed into production units and given training in the use of the appropriate technology equipment provided.

Youth bring Benefits

Infrastructure facilities: The Youth group in Nadipar village was trained on the roles and responsibilities of the Panchayat. They were also made aware of the schemes available for their villages from the Panchayat. They approached the Panchayat officials and sought a mud road (about 2 kms long) leading to their village and a community hall. These were sanctioned and the youth participated in the construction through MGNREGA. Encouraged by this success, they approached the Electricity board and requested for electricity to their village. For the first time, the village has got electric grid connection and the community is overjoyed and thankful to the youth who have facilitated this. Further, 10 youths from the village received drip irrigation system from the agricultural department. Through combined efforts they were able to get these benefits.

One of the best things I have learnt in the youth club is how to get involved in business!! I never knew that I could make money and enjoy cash in my hands. During the Shivratri festival, a lot of outsiders come to the temple in our village. I set up a shop to sell "Pani poori". In just 2 days, I was able to make a profit of Rs.1,500. From this project I am learning to earn money while still pursuing my studies.

Amisha Minj, YC Lathatoli



Youth learning to use the Rice huller

Livelihood Production Units



Activities for Youth Clubs



SAL LEAF PLATES
1000 PLATES MADE
INR 2,000/-



GARLANDS 550
MADE
INR 82,500/-



BADHANI GRASS -
BROOM
700 MADE
INR 84,000/-

I enjoy going to the youth club and have attended almost every meeting and training sessions. I have made good friends. I have learnt about health and physical development of the human body from the SRHR training. I share my learning with my friends in school and in the village.

Komal Minj, YC Dina

Monalisha is free

This story is about an empowered youth club in Lathatoli, a remote village in Gumla district of Jharkhand. Monalisa (Mona) is the eldest child among 4 children in a marginalized tribal family. Her parents are subsistence farmers with very meager income. Under the circumstances her parents wanted to marry off Mona, who is only 17 years old and studying in 11th grade. This would have shattered Mona's dreams of pursuing education and finding a decent job. Her close friend from the youth club Roshni (which means Light) decided to take up the matter and discussed this in their club meeting. Club members were convinced that this is child marriage and not acceptable. The youth club members shared this development with the project officer. They decided to convince Mona's family to put off the wedding. After several sessions and persuasion, Mona's parents agreed to postpone the wedding. The groom was also supportive of this decision. Mona has since completed her 12th grade and wishes to pursue her bachelor's degree. She was even employed in a petrol pump during her summer vacation to support her education and to help her parents financially. Mona is now a confident young girl with her dream of a degree and a good job becoming more realistic. She is very grateful to Roshni youth club.

Mona says 'I was worried that my dreams would be shattered with this marriage, and I would end up like any other girl in my community ending up being a housewife. Now I have a dream to chase and want to shoulder responsibilities with my parents. Roshni youth club of Lathatoli has 29 active members - 19 girls and 10 boys.

Water for the Village

Access to safe drinking water: The inhabitants of Natawal village had an acute drinking water problem. There are 4 tube wells in the village. But none were in working condition. Women and children had to walk long distances to draw water from small ponds. As the ponds dried up in summer, they had to go further to fetch water. The CWG members approached the Panchayat officials with a written memorandum. The officials repaired all the 4 bore wells and now the villagers enjoy safe potable drinking water. The villagers got the confidence of approaching the Panchayat officials because the CWG members were taught about Panchayat raj system and how it works. After gaining awareness of their rights, they are beginning to claim their entitlements. The whole village is very happy and proud of their achievement.

Community Watch Groups - CWGs

The CWG is made up of 9 or 11 community members who voluntarily participate in project implementation, monitoring, and sustainability of the project initiatives after the project cycle is over. CWG members have been provided various trainings and awareness on various issues relevant to them. They are now able to meet Government officials and avail welfare schemes available for their communities. The CWG members can claim their entitlements. The members are encouraging children and youth to participate in club and livelihood activities. CWG members are now equipped to monitor any stranger walking into their village in the guise of placement agencies. They are also stopping child marriages that takes place in their villages. They have stopped 5 child marriages in this year of report. They collect data of youth going out of their villages to cities in search of jobs and try to track them

Government Schemes



303
BENEFITTED

1. COMMON PONDS
2. CHABUTRAS - VILLAGE COMMON MEETING PLACE
3. PM AWASH YOJANA - MOULDED HOUSES
4. COW SHEDS
5. GOAT SHED
6. WELL
7. COMMUNITY
8. BORE WELL
9. ROADS TO VILLAGES
10. ELECTRICITY SERVICE TO VILLAGE



112
BENEFITTED

1. DRIP IRRIGATION
2. VEGETABLES SEEDS
3. VEGETABLES GRADING MACHINES



Youth members involved in building houses as part of the livelihood activity

Training for CWGs



1333
MEMBERS

1. UNSAFE MIGRATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS
1. RIGHT TO EDUCATION (RTE)
2. RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI)
3. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS



369
MEMBERS

1. CHILD RIGHTS AND CHILD MARRIAGE



1299
MEMBERS

1. NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT. 2013
2. GOVERNMENT WELFARE SCHEMES AND SOCIAL SECURITY
3. PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTION
4. FOREST ACQUISITION ACT AND RIGHTS TRAINING
5. EXISTING CROPS ON HIGH YIELD
6. MODERN TECHNOLOGY ON AGRICULTURE



Community members enjoy fresh water now



violated. Each batch of students will be trained for a duration of 18 months.

Each academy will have a resourceful facilitator. The facilitator will invite various experts to come and raise the awareness and knowledge of the students on relevant social issues and ways of redressal. Resource persons will also be invited to train the students on the use of various communication skills to effectively communicate in their villages. Each academy will be equipped with computers, laptops, projectors, drawing materials etc. Youth who join the academy to become Change Agents will participate in the process of setting up the course such that it will be relevant to their communities.

Outcome: The selected student would already belong to a youth club in his or her village, where he or she will be involved in a sustainable livelihood activity. Being financially independent, the Change Agent will be able to concentrate on taking up social issues of their peers and bringing about change. The Change Agent will work independently or in small groups along with other change agents from nearby villages.

They will all have the liberty to go back to the leadership academy to use the equipment or consult the facilitator or visiting experts to further develop their skills. The Change Agents will make a strong, sustained impact to bring a big change for the betterment of their villages on an ongoing basis.



5. DEVELOPING CHANGE AGENTS

The Human Development Index of Jharkhand state (as of 2019) is 0.59 which falls in the last 3 of 36 states and union territories of India, indicating the poverty level of the state as well as social indicators such as literacy, school enrolment, infant mortality, and child nutrition. Families are unable to meet their basic needs like food, clothing and shelter and there is nothing tangible to improve this situation. Social injustice thrives in an environment like this. Child marriages, child labour, trafficking of children / youth and the practice of harmful traditional practices are rife. Women and girls suffer the most in such a situation.

Seeing no livelihood opportunities in their village, men, women, and children opt for "Unsafe Migration" to metros and cities with no safety net. They look for any kind of job that can bring them some money and end up being exploited physically, mentally, and sexually.

Girls who remain in the village, tend to drop out from school, confined to their homes to help with the household chores and look after younger siblings. They are considered a burden since it is an extra mouth to feed and often abused by friends or family members. The boys suffer a similar fate. With no job opportunities and unable to complete their education, they turn to drugs, alcohol, or joining underground movements leading to violence. The lives of thousands of boys and girls are thus lost each year.

To address these concerns in an effective manner, Development Focus has started a new, innovative initiative. Along with the larger project, "Sustainable livelihood and life skills for tribal youth in Ranchi district", described in section 4 of this annual report, we have started a Leadership Academy to build the capacity of young girls and boys to become Change Agents in their own communities. We hope to form 2 academies exclusively for girls, and 2 academies with both boys and girls.

Each batch at the academy will have 25 students so that every student will be given individual attention and opportunity to develop. The student will be chosen based on criteria, such as commitment to the cause, good communication skills and good track record. The student will be sensitized on prevailing social evils and injustices prevailing in their community. Their skills to address their communities, to include children, youth and opinion leaders will be developed at the academy. They will be taught to use songs, poems, street plays, posters, videos, social media etc. to convey the message and sensitize the communities about prevailing evils instigated both from within and without.

They will be linked with duty bearers like the police, law enforcement agencies, district officials etc. to seek redressal in case the rights of individuals or communities are



Distribution of small animals as part of the Migrant Returnee project

6. OUR RESPONSE TO MIGRANT RETURNEES

The unprecedented pandemic caused by COVID19 took the world by storm. The sudden lockdown with further extensions to contain the spread of the disease greatly affected the livelihood of migrant workers and their families that number over 100 million in India. Many of these daily wage earners, including construction workers, shop assistants, street vendors, domestic workers, porters, drivers, etc. became jobless overnight, with no alternate source of income. A deadly second wave devastated India, leaving millions of people infected and putting stress on the country's already overburdened health care system. As of April 2022, 43.1 million people were infected with the virus and around 0.52 million deaths reported. However, experts say that the actual figures are likely to be much higher.

The healthcare system in rural India, especially in remote tribal villages is awfully poor and not equipped to handle a pandemic like this. People were literally falling dead in the villages with no safety protocols being followed.

The reverse migration of laborers from cities, in large numbers has been creating chaos in extremely poor villages. There is shortage of food and a steep drop in living standards leading to conflicts. Families could not even afford the two basic meals they were consuming per day and had to cut it down to one. Further, the returnees were taking with them a different lifestyle that they had adapted in the cities. Explosion of gender-based violence and child abuse has been taking place, which has been an unfortunate post-Covid trend.

Explosion of gender-based violence and child abuse has been taking place, which has been an unfortunate post-Covid trend.

Development Focus which already had a presence in Simdega and Gumla districts of Jharkhand where we are implementing the project to prevent and protect youth from unsafe migration were aghast to see what was happening with migrant returnees pouring in without a Rupee in their hands and battered by the arduous trek home. Although it was not pre-planned, we decided to do the best we could.

People were literally falling dead in the villages with no safety protocols being followed.

We took up the following interventions in 5 villages of Simdega district and 20 villages of Gumla district reaching out to 240 returnee families:

1. Raising awareness on Covid-19 and preventive measures. There were misconceptions and fake news spreading among the tribal communities. Through community meetings we helped dispel the false notions. Sanitizers and masks were distributed to curtail the spread of Covid. We further facilitated the tribal villagers to stitch masks and sell among themselves.

2. DF worked with the local Primary Health Centers to mobilize people for vaccinations.

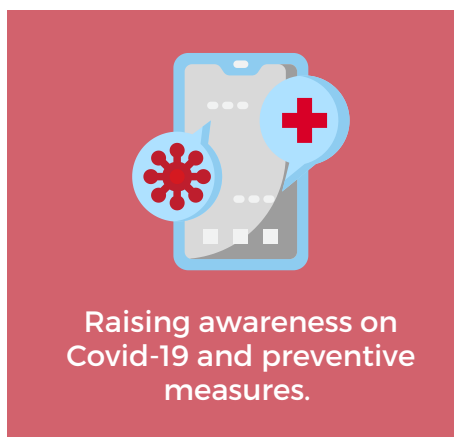
3. We provided cash for work to a few extremely needy families to meet their immediate food and other needs. DF also facilitated linkage with MGNREGA so that they can earn for their living

4. DF aided migrant returnee families to start livelihood activities leading to food security in the villages. This included home gardens and small animal rearing (chicken, goats, and pigs). The identified beneficiaries were trained on their respective livelihood activities by field experts. They were also suitably linked with Kisan Vilas Kendra for further trainings, and exposure visits. They were also given practical tips on how to treat the animals when they fall sick.

5. We saw the need for social reintegration and protection of women and children. DF had already formed Community Watch Groups in the villages. These members were provided training in conflict resolution, gender-based violence and child abuse. Community Watch Groups played a pivotal role in peaceful resettlement of the migrant returnees.

Asia CMS, Women's Education Project, and MISEREOR supported this initiative in short notice. We also raised funds through online fund-raising platforms.

The returnees families were happy to receive this timely assistance which helped them settle in their villages with dignity. The host community participated in this initiative and are proud of what they have achieved.



Migrant Returnees receive chickens as part of the livelihood activities leading to food security in the villages

Stories of Change

Ajay is from Jilinga village in Gumla district. His father died in 2013 and the responsibility of taking care of the family fell on him. Ajay is married and has two little daughters. The family does not possess any land to cultivate and lived a life of penury. This made Ajay to migrate to Kerala, which is around 2,150 kms looking for work as an unskilled labourer. In Kerala he was cheated by his employer and discontinued work. After searching for an alternative work, he finally found a job in Madurai, Tamil Nādu. He earned good wages and was sending money to his family. Due to Covid, his factory was closed, and Ajay could not sustain himself and decided to return to his village. Due to the lockdown, there was no bus or train. With great difficulty he reached Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand. After reaching Ranchi, he was quarantined for a week in an extremely unhygienic place. From there he managed to reach home by trekking and hitching rides. He had spent all the money he had saved for this journey to include bribes he had to pay at state border crossings. Although empty handed and worn Ajay was overjoyed to be back home with his family. Through the project he has received 10 chickens. The chickens have started multiplying and he has started selling the chicken. Through the training received, he hopes to establish a large chicken farm and earn enough to educate his daughters. He is very grateful for the project and vows not to migrate to cities.



Ajay reunited with his family and vows not to leave the village again



Suman Beng with his bounty of tomatoes on his land

Suman Beng is from Kathgaon village of Gumla district. He is 45 years old and lives with his wife and 3 children. He is the sole bread winner of the family. Seeing no livelihood opportunities in his village, Suman migrated to Kerala, which is nearly 2,200 kms away in August 2019 and started working as a casual labourer in a Calcium factory. Within one month he and his friends got wounded in a work-related accident. He requested his factory owner to take him to hospital. After much pleading his owner sent him to hospital. Suman wanted to run away from work. When his owner learnt about his intention, he gave him work in a fruit garden where he earned good wages. With this, he supported his daughter to study her undergraduate course in Ranchi. Being a hard and committed worker, he was sent to work in a coffee plantation near Ernakulam. With the start of the pandemic life became very difficult with worries about himself and his family back home. His owner refused to send him home despite repeated requests. Suman asked his daughter to buy a train ticket for him and his nephew. They travelled from Ernakulam to Ranchi when few trains started running. From Ranchi he reached Gumla where he was quarantined for ten days. On reaching his village, the villagers kept him in quarantine for another 15 days. It was a nostalgic time when he could not even shake hands with his family members. Finally, when he reached home, he felt that he had a second birth. Now he does gardening in his home village with inputs from the project. He has decided not to go anywhere but to stay in his village and earn a living.



Ajay with his chickens that he hopes he can establish a large chicken farm soon



Suman Beng reunited with his family after a long journey home

7. APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

Appropriate technology (AT) is a movement encompassing technological choices and applications that are small-scale, affordable by locals, decentralized, labour intensive, energy efficient, environmentally sustainable, and locally autonomous.



Youth stand proudly next to the rice huller machine after completing the training on how to assemble, maintain and use the machine as part of their livelihood activity

It was originally articulated as “Intermediate Technology” by the economist Ernst Friedrich “Fritz” Schumacher in his work *Small is Beautiful*. Both Schumacher and many modern-day proponents of appropriate technology also emphasize the technology as people centred.

Although a lot of development has taken place in the use of digital and other forms of modern technology in India, these hardly reach out to poor rural communities. Development Focus sees the relevance of Appropriate Technology in remote rural areas of this vast country to make a big impact on the excluded communities living there. One of the much-needed initiatives is to provide livelihood opportunities to youth in their environment. Due to lack of opportunities, a large number of youth migrate to cities with no safety net, and some are even trafficked only to be exploited and abused. Appropriate Technology can provide livelihood opportunities for them in their own villages.

Plenty of natural resources in the form of non-timber forest products are available as well as agricultural products of small and marginalized farmers are available.

Presently, these are sold at throw away prices to outside traders who come to exploit the communities. If the youth are skilled to process these items and add value to the same, using appropriate technology, they can sell the items at 3 to 5 times the present selling price. Some of the AT devices that Development Focus has introduced to rural communities and to provide livelihood options to tribal youth are:

Leaf plate making:

The forests surrounding many of our project villages have Sal trees. Young people, women, and children have been collecting and selling the leaves at throw-away prices. The project has been skilling the youth to produce leaf plates and leaf bowls and sell them at a good price, enabling them to make a decent profit. The AT equipment introduced are heavy duty sewing machines to stitch the leaves together and manually operated press with moulds to produce leaf plates and bowls. Youth are formed into production groups to carry out various activities involved like



Girls learning the leaf plate making process readying the plates for sale at the local markets

collecting the leaves, preparing the leaves for processing, stitching the leaves, pressing the plates/bowls, packing them, and marketing them. The youth are facilitated to register their group enterprise as a producer association. The youth are also linked to e-commerce sites so that they can sell their produce online. With greater awareness in the country on the use of plastics and other non-biodegradable materials, there is great demand for leaf plates and bowls, both in rural and urban centres

Oil extraction:

Different oils seeds like groundnuts, sunflower, sesame, Niger seed, and linseed are grown by the small and marginalized farmers in our project areas.



A girl learning to use the oil extractor



Youth members are trained on the use and maintenance of the Oil Extractor

They sell the unprocessed seeds at a cheap price to agents who come to exploit them. Substantial value can be added if oil is extracted from the seeds and the oil is sold. These oils have a ready market both in the community, in nearby urban markets as well as online. Presently, the oilseeds are grown by farmers in the community and are sold cheaply to outside agents. When community members need cooking oil for consumption, they spend so much more for oil that is processed elsewhere in large factories. With groups of youth operating their oil extractors, community members bring their oil seeds and get oil extracted for a small payment to the group. Apart from providing this service to the community, the production groups buy oil seeds from various farmers giving them a reasonable price for their produce, process the same and market the oil. The groups have gone through the basics of entrepreneurship. They maintain their books of account and share their profit among the group members.

Rice hulling:

The process of paddy hulling is to remove the rough paddy husks and process it to brown rice (non-polished rice). The husk is removed by friction as the paddy grains pass between two abrasive surfaces that move at different speeds.

The staple food for communities in the project area is rice. Paddy is the main crop of the small and marginalized farmers. Without irrigation facilities, they grow paddy only in the monsoon season. When they harvest, they use crude methods to hull the paddy or take it to nearby towns before they can use it for their daily consumption. With poor roads and no proper transport facilities, this is a difficult and costly process that they must go through before they can enjoy the fruit of their labours. Farmers who sell their excess paddy, can realize more money if it is hulled and sold as rice. Small groups of youth are provided a paddy hulling machine driven by an engine since electricity is not available in many villages. They are also skilled to hull paddy and run a group enterprise. Group members share the profit made each month. An appropriate technology device like this makes a big difference to the subsistence farmers and members of the community.

Portable water pumps:

One of the greatly appreciated AT devices is the portable water pump. Almost all the agricultural land in our project areas have no irrigation facilities. Farmers cultivate only during the monsoon, which itself has become unreliable due to climate change. Even growing vegetables is not easy since they must fetch and pour water.

A small, portable water pump driven by a petrol engine is given as the starting capital to a group of four young people. Two of them use the pump 3 days a week and the other two for the other 3 days. The pump can pump water at the rate of 500 litres per minute and a litre of petrol can run the pump for 3 hours. They take the pump to farmers in their community and irrigate the small farms from shallow wells and open ponds. The farmers pay them between Rs.80 to Rs.100 for every hour of water pumped. The youth earn their livelihood by providing this much-needed service.

Every youth group involved in providing services to their community using AT devices, also save a small amount of the profit made as Business Development Fund. Money can be withdrawn from this fund to meet maintenance costs as well as to replace old equipment that are unserviceable.



Fuel Efficient Stove ready to use

Fuel saving stoves:

More than 67% of rural households still use firewood and other biomass for cooking using inefficient stoves. In states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, this percentage is over 80%. The stoves produce unburnt hydrocarbon, which is a major health hazard. Women and children also risk themselves and spend long hours collecting firewood from forests. The fuel saving stove that is built using locally available materials still uses biomass, but the fuel consumption is reduced to almost half and the toxic emissions are cut-off due to more complete combustion. Youth are trained to build these stoves to earn a living and rural households have a healthier cooking device with much less time spent to gather firewood.

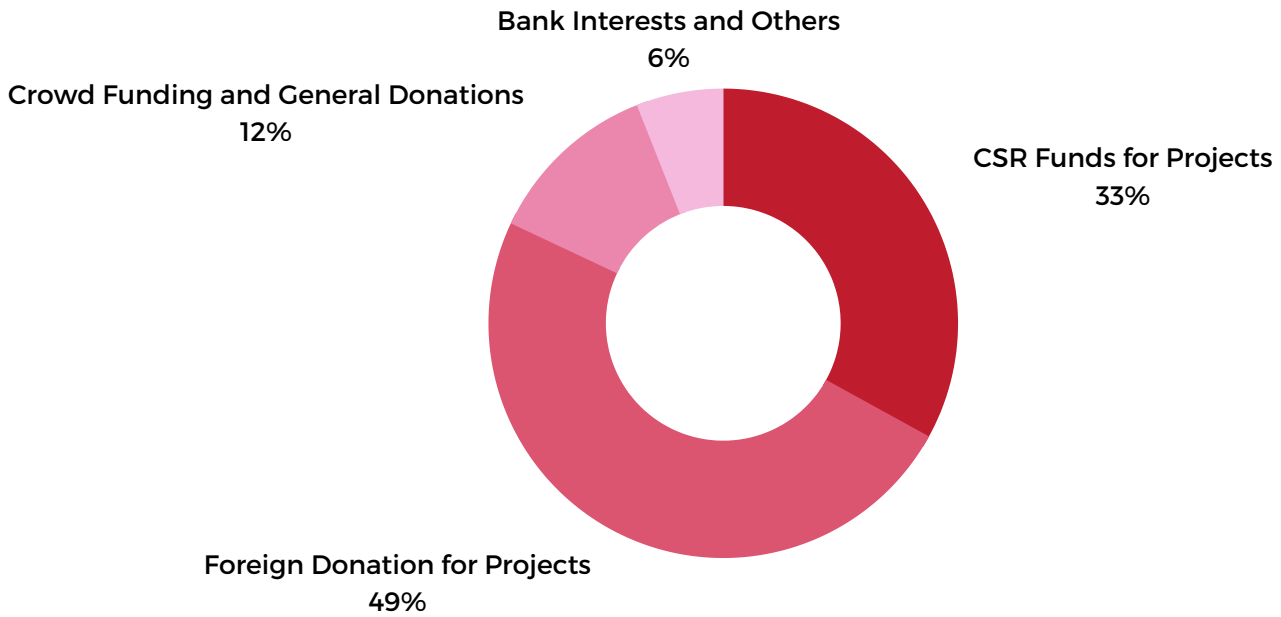
Conclusion:

These are just a few AT devices introduced by Development Focus in our project areas. Both the youth as well as their communities greatly appreciate these initiatives. There are many more relevant devices that can be introduced, and Development Focus is working on them.



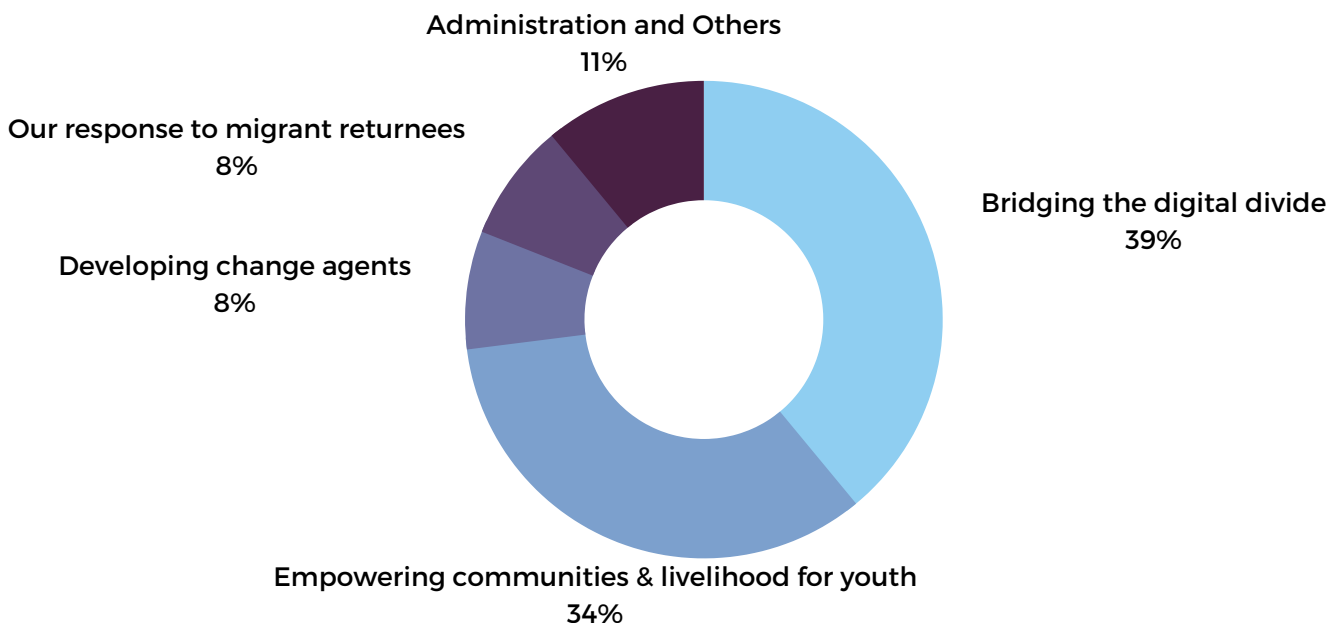
Youth using the portable water pump to provide water to the farms

8. FINANCIALS



CSR Funds for Projects ● ₹ 39,78,000
 Foreign Donation for Projects ● ₹ 58,68,789
 Crowd Funding and General Donations ● ₹ 13,81,146
 Bank Interests and Others ● ₹ 7,33,287

Bridging the digital divide ● ₹ 53,21,713
 Empowering communities & livelihood for youth ● ₹ 45,86,632
 Developing change agents ● ₹ 10,57,420
 Our response to migrant returnees ● ₹ 10,73,877
 Administration and Others ● ₹ 15,06,367





9. OUR TEAM

Our team
 Back row L to R: Betrayan, Masillamani, Thomas, Emmanuel, Dipty
 Front row L to R: Priyanka, Pearl, Deepika, Sanjana

“ I am honoured and proud to be a Team member of Development Focus I joined Development Focus as a Project Coordinator in March 2020 and got the wonderful opportunity to serve in the Odisha BridgeIT Project. This project aims to solve actual problems on the ground by creating livelihood opportunities for rural youth through entrepreneurship and help their communities by providing much needed online services. My experience working with the project has been great. Hearing their stories of hardship, makes me realise how privileged I am.

But seeing them rise above their circumstances to make the most of their opportunities, also humbled and thrilled me. The Odisha BridgeIT entrepreneurs had immense potential to make it big and it was a great honour and privilege to be able to mentor and guide them through this process to achieve their dreams. I thank Development Focus and BridgeIT for giving me this wonderful opportunity to serve, help, learn, and grow through this experience.

”

Ramesh Lima



Ramesh is part of our team in Odisha



Our vision is clear and our commitment unwavering. A just and humane society, where children have their right to childhood, vulnerable young people can live a dignified life, and women have an equal say on decisions pertaining to their lives, is what we strive for. It is easy to sit at the edge of the pew and hope for someone to do something against these social evils. But we have chosen to take a leap of faith to be that someone who does something against these evils. We encourage you to join us in this battle for a better world!

You can be part of this initiative by:

» **Contributing** to enable us to reach a larger population of needy people

» **Volunteering** your services on short-term or long-term basis
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Development Focus

917, 3rd C Cross, 9th B Main, HRBR Layout
1st Block, Bangalore: 560043, Karnataka,
INDIA

EMAIL: df@devfocus.in

PHONE: +91 80 2545 1823



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