# ANNUAL REPORT 2018 – 2019

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1. **PREFACE:**

**Prakriti - Resource Centre for Women and Development** is a registered non-governmental organization operational since 1990. Established for outreach at a national level, the organization works on programs and activities that augment the status of women, particularly in rural areas. Prakriti’s work area has predominantly remained stretched around outlying rural districts of Central India to include districts in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The project office is located in Village Lonara of Nagpur district in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra state. In the initial years up to quite recently, Prakriti undertook several pioneering, long term projects that set the pace to act as forerunners for building momentum to women’s movement that was ushered in these parts.

Blessed with a dedicated team of board members at the helm, Prakriti project staff with its band of committed social workers, activists and volunteers, have all assisted in taking the organization from strength to strength. The objective of the organization is to set in motion and run women-centric programs for bringing about desired social transformation for their civic, political and economic betterment. All projects have focused on sensitizing the masses on need for gender equity and equality by identifying and training change agents for such gender specific interventions. At its own level Prakriti works pro-actively as an advocacy body for policy intervention at all levels – state and national. It does this by effective networking with allied agencies to foster expediency and efficiency on issues related to women’s empowerment.

Working as a resource centre on women’s issues, Prakriti collates and collects important data and information from the ground to put it to use to strengthen rural women’s roles in civil society. All relevant information on varied issues that were worked upon over the years are documented and archived for being put to use for wider dissemination. We share the database as reference material with other NGOs and institutions working on similar lines. Prakriti’s resource centre has a library that offers a collection of reports on various projects implemented over the years. The organization has reading materials and study papers from seminars, workshops, research studies, along with books, manuals, audio-visuals and documentaries.

Prakriti Annual Report 2018-19 documents the work undertaken up until now to continue with promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality in our work areas. The report highlights the organization’s key initiatives during the past year, provides a summary of the financial statements, and shares information on programmes and projects, besides sharing contact information.

Prakriti, with its core understanding of ground issues and an operative infrastructure in place, is keen to expand its work since clearly a lot more needs to be done yet. The
present global times showcase that women’s issues are much the same all over the world. Internet movements like #Me Too and Women’s March Global tell us that we are all living in the same old world of women’s subjugation. Even as we take up causes of strife and deprivation of local women, we need to keep strengthening bonds with likeminded associations finding solutions to issues of common interest.

This year’s annual report highlights some of the key results achieved in 2018–2019 in strengthening mutual alliances and increasing networking for women’s leadership and participation. The journey to enhance women’s economic empowerment, end violence against women and girls, engage women in the political space and to make gender equality central to development goals remains intact and in place. Learning from the experiences of past projects we look forward to new programmes, especially since we find ourselves at the crossroads of women’s movement. We will certainly find the road to a promising future. Our approach will determine ways and means to bring gender specific and holistic development in the lives of rural communities that we serve.

Prakriti has witnessed numerous stories of change, hope and transformation over the past twenty-nine years. As we continue to work on our commitment for women’s empowerment, we do recognize the immensity of task. We strive on ahead to ensure that we empower girls and women to overcome their existentialist challenges. We hope to explore new avenues and initiatives that will help in taking our agenda forward. Prakriti’s objective, remains focused on attracting enthusiastic support for our plans and approaches that will hopefully impact the initiatives with transformations we seek.

We take the opportunity to thank all stakeholders— beneficiaries, donors, State Government, and especially the communities that imbibed the lessons to build up their capacities— and thus made the aspirations achievable. We look forward to steady hand holding and support for new endeavours that will become positive drivers of change and development in the region.
2. **MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY:**

Decidedly we are going through the hottest political summer presently. With ever-scorching climatic temperatures along with the recently concluded boiling party-politics that ended with rather unfathomable electoral outcomes, it is definitely a season of strife and discontent. As we look ahead to the coming monsoons that remain a tipping factor in the economy of our rural parts, arguably, after the finalization of a new elected government, it is the status of non-governmental organizations that remains an important issue for us.

Attitudes of late, towards NGOs, have undeniably cast questionable aspersions on the sanctity of the role of civil society organizations. As grounded institutions of long standing it becomes our duty to resurrect our relationship with the government in order to mark out our critical roles as custodians of the marginalized. With private, profit-making companies entering the sector through their CSR agendas, this becomes all the more important since old-style NGOs are left to survive in a rapidly shrinking space.

As committed organizations involved in restructuring the social construct, NGOs have to once again reinvent themselves. With growing space for private-public partnerships NGOs should offer their supportive roles to advocate for the rights and empowerment of the downtrodden, particularly women and rural citizens, who remain at the fringes of any development narrative. As grass root warriors NGOs have remained focused on ensuring service-provision to the poor.

**Prakriti**’s focus has remained steadfast on building capacities of people and people’s institutions. Our efforts have enabled the poor and marginalized to have a say and be heard. All through the past nearly 30 years we have worked in a missionary manner to empower rural women to get their bearings, to be able to visualize a future of their making. Through thick and thin with every support that came our way, we trudged on a resolute path to work for the betterment of rural women through programmes aimed to increase their social, economic and political status.

But now we seem to have come to a point when we need to re-evaluate our potential. There are challenges aplenty creating constraints in our being able to continue with our future plans.

Prakriti Resource Centre for Women and Development has been a game changer in Central India where it still works intermittently with rural women of four contiguous States. Our focal aim that intended to change the rural scenario and the local governance agendas worked really well since in our role as grass root level catalysts we could go in depth to reach out to the specific group of people. The vision, our funders, our board members, our staff and the very people with whom we worked – all acted in unison with
a cohesive sense of purpose to bring forth the multiple deliverables that converged in bringing our mission to its culmination. Our bottom line has always been transparency and accountability.

Having said this, I would like you to read an account of our activities that were undertaken in the past financial year. You will appreciate and understand the manner in which we were operating with limited resources and certain constraints. However, it is our sense of responsibility and our commitment to the big picture that helps us to keep moving ahead. We remain grateful for the support and handholding of institutions that continue to have faith in our capability. Our central facility located near Nagpur helps in extending the capacities of both beneficiaries and agents of change to be able to carry on with the tasks and agendas.

**Prakriti** is focused on working harder than ever to close the gender gap. When the organization started back in 1990, we never imagined that we would grow to become a movement directly reaching almost 10,000 women and men in the rural regions of four central states of our country. We stay on track by moving forward to achieve gender parity in rural areas with an eye on quality and commitment. We look forward to scale new programs to reach more women and girls in the region. Working for over three decades now the organization has been empowering women and girls in rural areas by facilitating them to learn of their basic rights and to increase understanding of social issues from a gender perspective. Also, we have taught them to seek ways to enhance their social, economic and political status. Operating on a national level, our work area is focussed on a defined regional level. Our consistent efforts over the years, have built up capacities of individuals, communities and institutions to create an equitable and gender-just society. We hope the following report will help you gain a deeper understanding of our work and aspirations to continue making a difference in lives of women and rural communities.

Shobha Sakharwade  
Secretary  
Nagpur  
31st May, 2019
3. **NAGPUR DISTRICT CENTRE:**

Under the auspices of the Nagpur District Centre nearly fifteen villages falling under Nagpur Rural are being assisted by Prakriti for different socio-economic betterment programmes. Following are the kind of programmes undertaken during the reporting period.

- A workshop was organized in the month of **July 2018** for the benefit of girl students of higher middle sections of Adarsh Vidyalaya, a school located in village Gumthala. Students participated in the workshop that was designed to facilitate their learning about Women’s Health and Gender Perspectives. 32 school girls took part in the workshop that focused on educating the participants with regard to physical changes occurring during puberty on the adolescent body. The talk included the presentation of a brief documentary film on the subject. The workshop discussed and focussed on gender discrimination. In a bid to understand personal experiences, a questionnaire was used to document their understanding on issues they faced. Ms Pratibha Ukey and Ms Sheetal Band of Prakriti coordinated and successfully managed the workshop.

- On **June 7, 2018** a programme was organized for women of village Savarmendha for women-farmers and self-help group women-members including participants of additional four adjoining villages of Bailwada, Chanapa, Brahmanwada and Sillori. The programme was conducted under the guidance of Shri Khandare, Assistant Agriculture Officer, Agriculture Department, Saoner, who encouraged the women participants to understand the intricacies involved in cultivating crops. Among other things he explained to them the process of planting seeds, method of using fertilizer and timeframe for sprinkling pesticide, how to test soil, and importance of insurance cover for crop-yield. It is being seen that good crop-worthy agricultural land in Savarmendha village and other villages around it, is being sold off by villagers who then live off the sale money for their everyday expenses. The fact of the matter is that due to lack of good yield from cultivation and ever-increasing cost to be incurred for agriculture is turning farmers away from their traditional occupation. Agriculture for them is proving to be a losing proposition. However some women have begun by themselves or in groups to undertake cultivation on leased land. They are keen that agricultural yield should be above average so that they benefit by the undertaking. They are also worried that if the village continues selling out agricultural land, soon, they will be out of the loop of a traditional livelihood and wonder what the next generation of children will face if they cannot subsist on assured yield or how they will be gainfully occupied. This is the reason why so many participants for the training expressed their interest and willingness to learn more efficient ways of doing better cultivation.
3.1 **Programme with SHGs in Nagpur District:**

Prakriti had undertaken a rigorous self-help group project that ran consistently from 1998 until 2010. Women had joined together in large numbers with these self-help groups. Aside from empowering the groups in economic terms these SHGs had also empowered women individually and also at the societal level to emerge as a strong organized force that could address issues and have a say in matters affecting them. They learnt to raise their common voice and define their own identity in the scheme of affairs – be it home or the community. For the past few years, it is noticed that these SHGs are distracted from their original objectives. The repercussions of the groups dismantling could be seen on the village women. They were now seeking help from outsiders for problems that they had earlier resolved themselves through their combined strength within the SHGs. Often the issues now become vicariously complicated when outsiders mediated on their behalf. For instance, this led to an increase in incidents of violence against women. Or in some cases undue interference in families’ earnings and expenses, and so on.

It was because of this situation in the wake of years of successful SHG formation and maintenance that in some identified villages it was thought appropriate to conduct counselling trainings. Such meetings with SHG members undertook renewed motivation for savings and fund disbursement. This would allow to understand the current loan processes, assess the groups status, and check their skills in running the group and also to know if the SHGs were making good returns. For this purpose, 804 women members of 64 SHGs from 13 villages were included in the participatory discussions in a bid to sharpen their capabilities. There were actually two reasons behind pursuing this line of action:

1. **To understand the actual status of the SHG and ensure its rejuvenation by making it strong as before by proper planning.**
2. **To find out ways and means to increase livelihood options for village women who were supplementing household incomes through their meagre earnings.**

To ensure this the following tasks were decided as a course of action.

- First and foremost, to organize the SHGs book keeping records.
- Keeping in mind the earnings and expenses of SHG members to lessen the burden of loans.
- To align the women members with government’s agricultural schemes.
- To help start income generating schemes through the SHG to increase their earning capacity.
- To make efforts to ensure that expenses on ill-health be curtailed by healthy living.
- To make them conscious and aware of the benefits of cleanliness and healthy nutrition.
• To make them see the difference in an SHG and micro finance company.
• To motivate the women members for cooperative farming.

Keeping the above points in mind, **following training programme** were organized

1. **August 1-2, 2018** had Prakriti organising a training programme for SHG leaders and post-holders at the office premises. **Ms Sunita Bagal** facilitated the training under her expert guidance, in which the following issues were taken up for discussions:
• Differences between SHG and Micro Finance company formation, objectives and management.
• Reasons for fragmentation of SHGs and what can SHG members do to stop disintegration of a group.
• Management of SHG’s joint funds and management of personal savings of members.
• Sharing documented information through films on SHG’s and Individual’s successful and productive occupations.
• New techniques and role of social media to encourage better record keeping and group management in the near future.

The training focused on the usefulness of SHG as a medium for empowerment of women and how in present times it was an ingenious tool for their economic betterment. This will ensure continued sustenance for the group members with lasting monetary benefits as well as keep their economic usefulness deployed in an expedient manner. For this it will be critical to ensure good leadership in the group and to ascertain that all women members are accruing monetary benefits.

Prakriti is working in 12 villages of Nagpur Rural with nearly 50 SHGs to improve upon their capabilities to emerge as strong groups. To continually increase the capacities of these groups Prakriti has undertaken the following efforts:
• All SHGS were assisted in improving and better managing their record keeping and book keeping activities for which they were made to create new registers.
• Groups in villages **Ghogli, Chanapa, Sillori** were assisted with savings activities and members taking on individual livelihoods were encouraged.
• Women of villages Lonara and Bokhara who were skilled in some occupation were put together to create two SHGs and were then linked to the local branch of IDBI bank.
• Disintegrated SHGS were taken up and meetings organized repeatedly to make them active once again. This involved getting the SHGs that were not meeting regularly to plan and chart monthly meetings in a disciplined manner.
• Groups that were having defaulters in regular meetings were encouraged and motivated to understand the importance of timely payments. It was decided that members who continued defaulting in payments would be asked to leave the SHG.
2. **November 29-30, 2018** for the women members of these SHGs, under the tutelage of Ms Sunita Bagal. The refresher course began with the reminder of the objectives of group formation to go on to elaborate the personal, familial and societal transformations that had taken place in the lives of these women members. They were presented with facts and figures with regard to changes in their economic and social betterment. The women were made to recognize the improvements in their social transformation after becoming members of SHGs.

**Training Programs for SHGs in Progress**

Having spelled out the advantages of the SHGs, the women members were made to see the importance of good maintenance of accounts and book keeping that was essential to manage the financial aspects of the SHG. This was key to give their savings and credit activities the desired directions in a safe manner. It is apparent that the women are keen to move forward and take on livelihoods that they could manage. For this purpose, they were given information on importance of making wise choices in picking up an occupation, understand consumers requirements and how advertising helps in any business. Also, why it was essential to plan savings and credit to manage and strategize on a yearly basis. To do this it was beneficial to draw up a monthly calendar for occupational activities. It was suggested that the women write down their struggles in the way of accomplishing tasks that could become a case study in itself. This intensive training had a total of 36 participants. The immediate effect was that the women of Ghogli and Sillori brought out a plan to start seasonal business during festivals.
3.2 **Counselling Centre for Women Affected by Violence**

*Prakriti* offers counselling services to women and their families affected by domestic violence. The intention is to see that families remain happy, live dignified lives and that women get to live rightfully in an undisturbed manner. However domestic strife occurs intermittently and cases of discord come voluntarily to the counselling centre. This happens usually through women who have experienced the benefits of counselling and know such mediation will bring about amity and accord in disturbed families. Even with laws in place to punish offenders for domestic violence, and despite efforts by police department through helpline for women, one-stop crisis centre, mobile van etc, women affected by domestic violence seek support and help of the Prakriti counselling centre. Being aware of the legal penalties and stringent action, there is increase in number of men consulting Prakriti counselling centre.

Some cases often require the support and mediation by local police authorities too. Critical cases are discussed with them and their support becomes instrumental in asking the offensive partner to come forth for discussions. At times even the police station sends over cases of domestic dispute to *Prakriti* counselling centre knowing full well of our capabilities in handling family strife. Police officials also visit *Prakriti* to take part in relevant programmes.

The counselling Centre sees several cases where husband and wife lack compatibility and remain at loggerheads with each other. This in time gives way to domestic violence, economic deprivation for the wife, and, husband finding another woman. All this ultimately leads to a break-up point for the couple, almost within a year. In many cases the man will go and marry another woman without any legal resolution for the first wife. Left by herself the wife seeks employment but suffers the ignominy of rape which she does not even report for fear of more repercussions.

In recent years many newly married women appear open to seeking legal resort in case of inability to live together. Cases of incompatibility come regularly to the counselling centre and they are assisted in seeking due guidance and support. In very many cases after due discussion with police officers and lawyers the wife is helped to file and register a case of domestic violence with the court. Aside from counselling local women Prakriti facilitates these kind of cases that come from different organizations seeking help and support for victims of domestic violence.

**Special Findings of Counselling Centre:**

- There is a continued increase in cases registered by men against their wives, and majority of these complaints are to do with wives leaving their married homes.
• The counselling centre has made note of presence of mental health issues like depression, suicidal tendencies, mood disorders among women leading to related problems. Offences against men have seen that they largely suffer from consequences of addiction to alcohol.

• Along with domestic violence the cases registered with the counselling centre have seen a connection with other criminal offences that among others include child sexual abuse, persecution of members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and sexual abuse of women.

**STORY OF CHANGE**

*Rama and Anil* had been recently married in April 2018. Both are educated and the marriage took place after due concurrence of both families. After some time had passed the marriage began suffering and relations became strained between the couple due to constant interference and meddling on the part of Rama’s mother. At the same time a distant relative of Anil’s who had been wanting to marry his daughter to Anil, began threatening Rama and also pestering Anil. Both husband and wife became so frustrated due to the escalating tensions between them caused by interference and complaints by members of both sides of the families, that in sheer desperation and anger Rama ultimately left her husband’s house and returned to her mothers’ home.

When the case was referred to the counselling centre both husband and wife were harbouring hurt and anger and were not ready to reason out to manage their alliance. Gradually over time after several counselling sessions the real reasons of the unrest and tension between the couple became clear and were steadily clarified. The counsellor encouraged them to understand that since all interference was coming from external family members it was crucial that they first worked together to strengthen their relationship so that no outside intrusion could weaken their bonding. It is to the credit of the couple that they comprehended and fully understood the nuances of the counselling and agreed to give their wedded life another boost. Good sense ultimately prevailed and now they are living together as a compatible couple looking forward to the marital joys in their lives.
A married couple from Borgaon village in Nagpur rural district were involved in undertaking daily-wage jobs together for their livelihood. Mostly they would be working at construction sites to do structural jobs for building activities. At one point they were working on a site where both of them were working on different jobs at the same general location. One day the contractor at the site forced himself on the wife and sexually molested her. Feeling vulnerable and fearing retribution, the wife, although hurt and distraught decided to keep quiet about the terrifying incident and continued working daily. Out of fear she did not mention the rape attack to anybody. This made the contractor bold enough to begin loitering around the victim’s home and would wait for an opportunity to ask her to come out to meet him. One day the husband witnessed the contractor’s misconduct and upon hearing of similar accounts of persistent misbehaviour from the neighbours, he asked his wife to tell him everything that she was tolerating.

Upon hearing of the offensive episode and subsequent persecution he along with his wife decided to deal with the situation. Gathering courage to combat the contractor’s pursuit and offensive behaviour, they both decided to come to Prakriti Counselling Centre to seek guidance where they both narrated the course of disturbing events. Actually, a month had passed by since the contractor’s assault when he had molested the woman and all signs of the forced attack had ceased to exist. Even so, a FIR was lodged with local police station to report the complaint of rape and sexual persecution of the wife.

It is commendable that in this particular case both the husband and the in-laws showed remarkable tolerance and patience. Despite the wife having been raped the husband took care to go about the entire affair with a sane mind. Since the matter was so sensitive in nature, they did not discuss it with any outsider. However, after seeking assistance from the counselling centre and getting support for registering a police report, they felt very relieved and felt their tension dissipate. The matter has been taken up by concerned authorities and the contractor has apparently been summoned. Hopefully things will conclude and justice will be served.
3.3 **ANNUAL CONFERENCE & VASUDHA SMRITI AWARD (2018-2019):**

For the past five years, Prakriti is organizing its Annual Conference of rural women and Vasudha Smriti Award ceremony at the Prakriti Centre premises at Lonara. This year too, this event was organised on **February 10, 2019**. Senior Gandhian from **Nayi Taleem Samiti Sewagram Ashram Wardha**, Shri. Kanakmal Gandhi presided over as chief guest for the occasion. Senior Social worker, freedom fighter and Gandhian philosopher **Smt. Leelatai Chitale** also took centre stage at the Annual Conference and Award Function.

Prakriti Governing Board Members included **Shri Gogate, Shri Sharda, Shri Sarvan Kumar, Ms. Jahnvi Andharia, Ms. Suvarna Damle** and **Ms. Shobha Sakharwade**. The conference brought the Sarpanch of Village **Besa** of **Nagpur Rural District Smt. Shalini Kangali**, Sarpanch of Village **Hingni** of **Wardha District Smt. Shubhangi Mude** and Sarpanch of Village **Patur** of **Akola District Smt. Reena Shirsat** who were all awarded with the Vasudha Smriti Awards. The occasion saw the distinguished chief guests felicitating the awarded women as well as addressing the gathered rural women participants. They were overwhelmed hearing accounts of the success stories and achievements and each of the dignitaries informed the audience that their extraordinary work for women’s
empowerment in the rural regions was making them see the future with renewed hope and anticipation for the success of rural women.

**Regional Director of All India Institute of Local Self Government, Nagpur, Shri Jayant Pathak** addressed the gathering to inform and instruct the women as to the qualities and skills required for women leaders to emerge as strong and influential trailblazers, in his extremely relevant and extensive talk. **Ms. Jahnvi Andharia** spelled out her views on the key contributions of women’s organizations in today’s world of changing social and economic environment. She forewarned the women that they must be wary of being overburdened with workloads and monetary burden on one hand and on the other hand be cautious of being made use of to implement and complete the very work on their own. The conference benefited hugely by the sharing of experiences by women sarpanch members from Balaghat, Chandrapur, and Nagpur districts in the final session of the day, conducted by Ms Sunita Bagel. The conference included the presence of women Panchayat members, panch, sarpanch, Prakriti staff members along with representatives of other NGOs in large numbers.

4. **PROGRAM WITH DISTRESSED FARMER’S FAMILIES:**

The past two decades have witnessed rural parts of tragedy-prone Vidarbha to continue being riddled by farmer’s suicides. This has left countless families – women and children, to suffer the sad repercussions of loss and deprivation. Last year was even worse when besides farmers even farm-helps committed suicide and either died or suffered tremendous physical debilities after consuming pesticides. Rural agriculturists are not being able to endure the hardships of their livelihoods and in sheer frustration take the ultimate step of killing themselves.

**Prakriti** has been consistently involved since the past ten years in assisting bereaved families, particularly the women to learn to manage their lives and move on ahead with due support and hand holding.

**Prakriti**’s efforts have been around assisting the farm widows to tackle the ensuing economic problems and learn to manage the farmlands to their best advantage. The organization has spearheaded and been instrumental in creating an alliance called MAKAAM with other likeminded organizations to work for the economic and social empowerment of the farm widows. The network has taken on very many effective tasks to improve the lives and living conditions of large numbers of farm widows to assist them in making a comeback to near normalcy and learn the ropes to manage their lives.

- **Support for the education of Children of Farmers who Committed Suicide:** Prakriti and Maharogi Sewa Samiti jointly undertook the delivery of bicycles and school books for the children of suicide affected families. Five children – four boys and one girl studying
in high school became beneficiaries for obtaining bicycles that assisted them to reach school that was quite a distance away. Overcoming their commuting problems, they now attend school regularly and also make use of bikes for other regular routine work.

Ms. Suvarna Damle, Executive Director, made monitoring visits to three villages in Akola District in December 2018 to discuss with the farm widows and field workers with regard to problems affecting the bereft families. Online portal The Quint contacted Prakriti in January 2019 as they were keen to do a story on Prakriti’s involvement with farm widows affected by loss of husbands, livelihoods and way of life. They visited three villages – Borgaon, Khadki and Maasa to interview and see for themselves the condition of farm widows and the interventions undertaken by Prakriti field workers involved with them. This human-interest account was published online on March 8, 2019 on the occasion of International Women’s Day. It can be perused on the links shared as: https://youtu.be/POM8x4zljpE

Prakriti’s work with suicide affected farmers families, their trauma, psychological wellbeing and other related issues drew the attention of BBC World, journalist Ms Kalpana Pradhan who contacted the organization to know all about the work. Subsequently both Ms Pradhan along with Mr Harry Johnstone, a journalist and writer collecting similar accounts on starvation and suicides from all over the world for his book, contacted Ms Suvarna Damle for discussions that took place in Nagpur and Wardha in January 2019. Mr Johnstone is on a world trip to gather stories of bereaved families’ accounts where women and children act as bread winners. It was on this account that Prakriti’s work drew their attention and they paid a visit to understand and comprehend the support and assistance given to bereaved women and children to aid in their survival and revival.

Media coverage also drew the attention of NFK World, a Japanese broadcast agency that was keen to understand the manner in which Prakriti interacts with suicide affected families in villages of Akola District. Their story focused on how Prakriti approached the affected families, what advice it gives, how the dialogue takes place, and what kind of counselling is given. They have made an audio-visual film on all these aspects entitled: Widows of Vidarbha – Horrific Yet Courageous Story of Farm Widows. This may also be viewed on - https://youtu.be/POM8x4zljpE
5. **PANCHAYAT SAKHI PROGRAM:**

The Panchayat Sakhi Program was implemented successfully by Prakriti from the year 2000 until 2012. The project was implemented with the hope and intention of increasing participation of women in Panchayats, to figure out and overcome the problems they would face in doing this and to intensify the role of women leaders in Panchayats. Looking onto the need and relevance of this programme Prakriti re-launched efforts for the project in 20 villages of Nagpur (Maharashtra) and Balaghat (Madhya Pradesh) districts since July 2018. The project is being financially supported by R. G. Manudhane Trust. The project identified and now mentors ten village Panchayats of **Saoner** and **Parshivni** from Nagpur rural district and ten village Panchayats of Varaseoni tehsil from Balaghat district. Under the aegis of this project the following activities were undertaken during the reporting period:

- Women members of identified Panchayats elected the **Panchayat Sakhis** who acted as mentors for the women Panchayat members. Further the women sarpanch and women members of Panchayats were encouraged to comprehend and gather information on current situations and foresee the kind of problems that will have to encounter. To be able to do this the women members had to contend with the following issues:
  - Most women members, nearly 80% had entered the Panchayat elections on the insistence of families, political parties or politicians in their areas. Only about 20% self-motivated women had contested and won elections on their own.
  - In Nagpur Rural where Panchayat elections had taken place very recently, this was for the first time the election for the post of Sarpanch was direct and thus all the women candidates contesting for Direct Sarpanch elections found it hard to cover entire village for canvassing their candidature.
  - In Ghogli village of Nagpur rural, school going children being few in numbers had the Zilla Parishad school to shut down. However, there was great demand from the parents that the school should re-start as all the parents could not afford the higher fees of the private schools. Sarpanch of the village Smt. Wankhede too agreed to this demand and assured to take steps in this direction. Sarpanch also informed that an application seeking permission to open the school in the village has been received from a private school.
  - Panchayat Sakhis in Balaghat informed that the appointed Panchayat representatives focus on making use of government funds in their own wards/areas thereby disrupting all-inclusive development.
  - Women Sarpanches of few villages take keen interest in implementation and management of Panchayat affairs. This is true in case of Ghogli and Gumthala villages in Nagpur Rural and in Tumadi and Rampayali villages in Balaghat.
Successfully Implementation of Panchayat Sakhi Program In Balaghat District of Madhya Pradesh

On **August 17** Prakriti organized the monthly meeting of Panchayat Sakhis of Balaghat District at Prakriti campus in Lonara, in which the following ideas became the points of discussion:

- The objectives, work-areas and working policies under the Panchayat Sakhi Programme.
- Assessment of women’s roles and participation in Panchayats.
- Focussing on planning and effective implementation.

Under the Panchayat Sakhi programme the Panchayat Sakhis were identified and selected at the village level for the purposes of this programme and largely these are Panchayat elected members as well.

**GRAM SABHA:**

- In Balaghat District social workers and Panchayat Sakhis met village men and women to make them understand the importance of attending Gram Sabha meetings in order to get relevant information on various schemes floated by the government that will be useful and advantageous for them. Such meetings are really very vital since village women and men both need to comprehend that their attendance at Gram Sabha
meetings is imperative for their welfare. Panchayat Sakhis presence helps in sharing greater understanding of the significant schemes as also all necessary understanding and help is facilitated by them. Women facing difficulties were given assured assistance by Panchayat Sakhis in dealing with issues confronting them.

- Gram Panchayats have established a Yuva Gram Shakti association that includes youth between the ages of 18 to 25. They have become members of the Yuva Gram Shakti group by the due efforts of the Panchayat Sakhis.
- In the Nagpur Rural districts, the Panchayat Sakhis extended support to educate Panchayat members and create wider awareness of the fact that ten percent of the general Panchayat funds are allocated for women and child development. Panchayat Sakhis became instrumental in organizing the village women, and the gram Panchayats were approached with applications to undertake social events like haldi-kumkum and health camps for women. Likewise, efforts were undertaken to ensure that the disability fund allocation under the gram Panchayats for needy men, women and children in rural regions knew about the benefits and to this end an awareness campaign was assumed by the Panchayat Sakhis.

FIELD ACTIVITIES:

Panchayat Sakhis of Nagpur Rural districts continued with sustained efforts for empowering the Gram Sabha members. Even the smallest of savings groups meetings were made use of to understand the importance of being active in Gram Sabhas. Every common villager could be associated with the activities of Gram Sabha for schemes like MNEREGA, Housing construction schemes or any other government scheme coming to the Gram Sabha for the betterment of villagers.

- **Voter Awareness Programme** was conducted by Panchayat Sakhis from October to November 2018 in various villages of Balaghat district. Through the medium of rallies and gatherings village communities were made aware of their invaluable right to vote. Alongside first-time voters of age 18 and above were assisted to get their voter cards made. These rallies were attended in huge numbers largely by women and youth who participated with enthusiasm. Lingmara, Tumadi, Thanegaon and more adjoining villages of Varaseoni tehsil of Balaghat district took part in these public awareness meetings.
- In village Ghogli of Nagpur Rural district women and Panchayat Sakhis jointly undertook the women’s campaign for mass awareness to make the village addiction free when plentiful cases of were discovered of liquor being sold in the village.
- On **November 21, 2018** a village women’s meeting was organized in village Tumadi of Balaghat district which included the participation of Prakriti Nagpur staff – Pranav Pathak as well as Ms Shivani Sharma of The Hunger Project who jointly convened the meeting to draw out and discuss women’s problems being faced by majority of women.
- **Madhya Pradesh Foundation Day** that falls on **November 1, 2018** became the occasion to undertake programmes in Balaghat district. The Sarpanch and Panchayat members of village Rampayali were encouraged to undertake the extremely pitiable condition of Kumhar Tola locality of the village and to undertake improvements to make the place more habitable. Likewise, Sirra Tola of village Thanegaon suffering ill consequences of lack of water drainage received inputs to resolve the issue.

- On **December 21, 2018** on the occasion of International Women Agriculturist Day Panchayat Sakhi celebrated it with a programme entitled **Krishi Aajeevika Samvardhan Karyakram** that included the participation of District Panchayat Adhyaksha, Smt. Rekha Bisen, Nagar Palika Adhyaksh, Shri Vivek Patel, Smt Swati Bisen, Krishi Vistaar Adhikari Shri G P Daharwal, Shri. Vinay Shrivastava and more officials. Key inputs shared with the participants included talks on Organic Farming, Poshan Vaatika or Nutritional Gardening, official agriculture schemes by the government, role of SHGs, organic manure and vermin-composting and all agriculture schemes available were explained in great detail.

- Panchayat Sakhis are continuing with the task of linking up needy people with relevant government schemes in Balaghat district. These schemes include Ayushman Bharat, Pradhanmantri Jan Arogya Bima Yojna, Niradhar Yojna, Atal Pension Yojna, Pradhanmantri Sukanya Yojna, and so on that are being promoted for the benefit of the villagers. Also, in Tumadi, Khapa and other villages meetings were undertaken by Panchayat Sakhis for voter education and awareness of government schemes.

- **January 25th** is observed as Voter Education Day and on this day Panchayat Sakhis of Varaseoni tehsil in Balaghat District organized a public meeting for the occasion. The intent was to ensure that all those who did not have their voter cards could be motivated to obtain them and to spread the good word about unbiased elections. This included organizing several rallies from schools and Anganwadis to conduct a mass voters’ education programme.

**MEETING WITH WOMEN GRAM PANCHAYAT MEMBERS:**

On **September 20, 2018** elected representatives from various Gram Panchayats and members of different SHGs gathered at Prakriti Lonara Centre where a meeting had been organized for them in which the following issues were discussed for their benefit.

- Constitutional amendments in Panchayati Raj and women’s reservation bill implemented thereafter, finance Aayog, model Gram Panchayat etc.
- Information related to government ordinances related to roads and road works, orders related to settling of disputes and encroachments on rural roads and pathways through agricultural fields.
- Information related to micro finance companies, mandatory sanctions required from Reserve Bank of India for implementing micro finance schemes and in particular information related to Maharashtra vis-à-vis micro finance programmes.
• Sharing information on zero rate of interest loan schemes especially for SHGs.
• Sharing information on various schemes and projects formulated especially for women by the Mahila Aayog and Central Government.

Workshop For Members Of Gram Panchayat & SHGs

On all these above-mentioned points, relevant information was shared with the participants. To facilitate a better understanding of all these issues discussed with the participants they were divided into smaller groups by Ms Payal Chamatkar, Principal of Matru Seva Sangh, who put out key questions on inputs given that were answered correctly in writing by the women. Thereafter the facilitator embarked on an insightful lecture on the history of Gram Sabha entitled, “Gram Sabha: The Foundation of Women’s Rights” and had deep discussions on the subject. She elucidated the fact that had Gram Sabhas not been in place rural women would not have had the opportunity to step up in civic or political life. Women now need to include the youth in the workings of the Gram Sabha and make them understand the importance of being associated for village development through the Gram Sabha. Also, the members should be so actively involved so as to undertake really extraordinary work and show positive outcomes that will prove the efficacy of Gram Sabhas to the rural residents. In this context the facilitator stated that Gram Sabhas in backward regions and especially in tribal areas were really empowered and they could become a learning point.

Women members of SHGs from Ghogi, Sillori, Chanapa and Gumthi villages shared the financial activities of their groups. Participating women were keen to know how they could be instrumental in stopping liquor sale in villages and how they could increase women’s involvement in Gram Sabhas. They were told that persistent collective campaigning in villages by the women members could change the situations.

• The speakers for the event were Mr Jayant Pathak and Ms Payal Chamatkar who were invited as chief guests. The programme was attended by women Panchayat members of 12 villages from Nagpur district. The newly elected members were given training on leadership skills and development.
• Prakriti Nagpur office organized the Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Scheme and Training Programme on March 26, 2019. Ms Aarti Bais of Swaraj Mitra Sangh shared important information on MNEREGA for women labourers under the said scheme. The programme included the participation of women labourers under the MNEREGA scheme from villages of Bokhara, Lonara, Gumthi, Ghoghli, Sillori, Itangoti, Lonkhairi etc.

EXPOSURE VISIT: To keep the women Panchayat Sakhis, members and village women leaders energized and motivated with regard to their work an exposure trip was organized on January 8, 2019 to infuse them with fresh inspiration. Panchayat Sakhis and Gram Panchayat members of Nagpur Rural district made a visit to Sheetalwadi Gram Panchayat for this purpose. One of the past Woman Sarpanch of Sheetalwadi, Ms Yogita Gaikwad provided all relevant information on the workings of Gram Sabhas and women’s role in them. It was for this express purpose that the exposure visit was undertaken.

ACHIEVEMENTS:
• Majority of poor households and needy people in the villages were provided with the necessary assistance to benefit from the government schemes under the aegis of the Panchayat Sakhi programme.
• In some Gram Panchayats nearly 10 percent of the funding available for women and child development was utilized by the women consciously for their benefit.
• Five percent of Gram Panchayat funding was used by Gram Panchayat Women Sarpanch for distribution among disabled people to assist them.
• A major success was seen in Ghogli village of Nagpur Rural district where the anti-liquor campaign led to the shutting up of all liquor shops in the village.

CHALLENGES:
Though it is been 25 years of women’s reservation in the local self-government, still majority of elected women prefer to remain passive and don’t show much motivation towards their responsibilities as elected representative. Another hindrance in drawing their attention and mobilising their participation is the fact that majority of rural women work as daily wagers in agricultural fields it becomes very difficult initially to assemble them and get them interested in the objectives of the programme.
6. **WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE) PROGRAM:**

**Women’s Economic Empowerment** Programme with support from **Global Fund for Women**: This programme is being implemented since **January 2019**, in 30 villages of Nagpur and Chandrapur districts of Maharashtra. The objectives of the programme are as follows:

- Assisting women under duress of heavy loans and supporting them to increase their savings.
- Increasing women’s rights and access to resources.
- Increasing competency of women leaders.

The programme started in January with identifying villages for the preparation of the baseline to draw up the working area. The first line of action was to find out the SHGs running in the villages, percentage of women burdened by loans, their relationship with banks, their leadership skills and willingness for productive income generation projects. All this kind of information was gathered in written detail and a note was made on the women and SHGs that were lagging behind in payments and defaulting in the monetary transactions. Also made note were undercurrents regarding prevalent friction and tension as also their lack of access to resources. Moving forward, in this very month the field workers were chosen who were informed of the project, its objects and its working methodology.

In the next month the SHG group leaders were brought together under a two days training programme held on **February 15-16, 2019** to facilitate them to focus on the following issues:

- Building up their understanding on the meaning of empowerment
- Role of SHGs in women’s economic independence
- Economic planning for SHGs
- How can an SHG make correct investments of its savings

The training included 35 participants of SHGs from Nagpur and Chandrapur. Two identified villages in Nagpur became the focal point of a detailed study prepared for enumerating the poor economic situation and finer details of loan burden. As per the report it became clear that nearly 70% of the women were suffering from inability to repay their loans. Women need money for various living expenses which is why they take loans all the time but continue to be tied to the vicious cycle of remaining crushed under the weight of the burden over their heads. Since they do not have sufficient funds to run their lives each time drawing on a loan leaves more defeated. With no regular livelihood they endure their loans and interest on loans rising every time. Added to this mental agony are the woes of intoxication and gambling that their menfolk indulge in, leaving them absolutely bereft. To
assist such women and bring them out of their monetary tensions, Prakriti has devised a ten-point action plan that is being implemented for their benefit.

In Chandrapur district that has number of SHGs, even so, the positive impact of such savings groups is not visible among the women mainly because they are not having regular livelihoods and their economic situation remains dismal. Migration, displacement, dependency on forest produce, conflicts with forest officials, lack of information, are all the various factors that disrupt their hope for being gainfully employed. These are the challenges besetting women and women’s groups in Chandrapur.

The WEE project is assisting women to increase their leadership skills and for this purpose women leaders are being identified in every village. For this purpose, village meetings were held in villages of both district under the project. In both Nagpur and Chandrapur working areas, the SHGs were included in the preliminary meetings that discussed and worked upon the following points.

- Creating the Whats App Group on phone for the SHG members. Sharing all information on this group so that everything remains transparent.
- To lessen dependency and habit of taking loans from micro finance companies.
- To pay attention to single women – widows, unmarried, those not getting pension, those not having shelters, and those suffering domestic violence and to ensure they are all offered social security and that their problems are resolved at the earliest on a priority basis.
- Women were inspired to take up economic activity so that they could supplement incomes. The occupations that appeared feasible to them included sale of saris, making bags and purses, goat rearing and fisheries etc. The aim is to see that women can do something to earn money for themselves.
- Some SHGs are running in an informal manner that usually does not allow them to benefit from government schemes or even get bank loans at lower rate of interest. It was decided to link such groups with banks after motivating them to strengthen their working systems.

Identifying and Organising Women Leaders: This project is totally devoted to economic empowerment of rural women. It is for this purpose that natural leaders exhibiting the following traits were identified:

- Diligent and hard-working women
- Active leaders/members of SHGs
- Women who lent encouragement to SHG activities
- Women who motivated others for being more aware

Such identified women from Nagpur and Chandrapur were included in a meeting held in March at Prakriti. The women were informed about the intent, goal and workings of the
project. They were shown a film depicting how normal, ordinary village women had made changes in their villages and made an example of their endeavours.

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Program for Economic Empowerment of Women in Progress

Thus, initiated into the programme the women leaders were involved in training programmes to groom them so that they in turn would go back in their villages and teach the village women with regard to the following:

- Creating awareness among rural women about property rights
- Ensuring that book keeping and record maintenance was transparent and regular
- Making efforts for creation of women’s security fund and ensuring rightful implementation of government schemes for women

7. **ONE BILLION RISING CAMPAIGN 2018-2019:**

This is the third consecutive year that Prakriti has been taking part in the One Billion Rising Campaign. This year Prakriti’s contribution to One Billion Rising Campaign was to focus on the sexual abuse and harassment faced by tribal and Dalit girl-students living in government hostels. For this purpose, Prakriti collected and documented all relevant information in this regard, and subsequently organized a workshop for these girls living in the government hostels. Other than this the following activities were undertaken under the O.B.R. campaign programme.
• On December 10, 2018 on the occasion of World Human Right’s Day that celebrated the Jash-ne-Samvidhan Rally in New Delhi, Prakriti field staff workers, women Panchayat members and Sarpanches participated in the rally.

• On December 7, 2018, cases pertaining to violence against women that had not received due justice despite having been issued judgements by the courts, were taken up for review in the presence of official stakeholders that included Counsellor from attached to various police stations in Nagpur, Police Officers from Nagpur rural Police department, Lawyers, Legal Officer from District Women and child development office.

• Ten girls living in five Tribal and Social Welfare hostels of Nagpur district were approached to share the discrimination and sexual violence to which they had been subjected. A detailed report has been prepared by Prakriti after discussions with the victims on their sorry situations.

• On February 28, 2019a workshop was organized at Prakriti campus in Nagpur for the Tribal and Dalit girl students living in government run hostels.
8. **PRAKRITI - WOMEN’S REGIONAL NETWORK (WRN) - INDIA PROGRAMME:**

Women’s Regional Network is operating in India, Afghanistan and Pakistan to build peace among the region and specifically look into the issues affecting women. Here are the activities carried out by WRN in India during the year:

a) **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS (CC):** Community Conversations were held in Kashmir and Madhya Pradesh. Abha Bhaiya conducted final visit to tribal belts in Madhya Pradesh in the month of June to conduct CCs with women who are at the forefront of resistance movements against numerous cycles of displacement due to predatory developments projects. WRN Core group members visited Kashmir again in July to complete the CC.

b) **LAUNCHES OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS:** The CC conducted in Madhya Pradesh was scheduled as a press conference in September 2018. The launch garnered media attention to the issue of the dangers posed by nuclear power plants and the concerns that the indigenous people’s resistance movement raises against the proposed plant in MP. The WRN Kashmir CC was launched at India International Center on September 24th 2018. The WRN India team of researchers felt that given the complexity of Kashmir conflict and everyday situation, it would be better to present it as a work-in-progress in front of those interviewed as part of this research.

c) **WRN ROUNDTABLE IN SRI LANKA:** WRN organized Roundtable discussion on women, Peace, and Security in Colombo on May 7th, 2018. The Round Table had two objectives: First was to bring together women engaged in peace work in Srilanka and those in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India for a discussion on the critical women and peace issues of the day. Second was to introduce WRN Srilanka and discuss the potential and interest of those present in joining the network and working together regionally.

d) **PARTICIPATION OF WRN IN RIGHTS CONFERENCE, CANANDA:** WRN was represented by Chelsea Soderholm (COO) and Padmini Ghosh (India Coordinator, who attended with a goal of learning more about human rights in digital age. The conference also allowed WRN staff to meet the professionals who could advise WRN with our own cyber security, assist in assessing our risk profile and identify measures we should take to keep our data secure and most importantly, the lives of our members on the frontlines.

e) **AWARENESS AND OUTREACH INITIATIVES:** WRN India team has been working on its outreach training program through the year. The program reaches out to through talks and training sessions, primarily to youth in the interest of expanding, sensitizing and building capacities of peace constituencies beyond activist’s circles.
9. **OTHER PROGRAMS:**

**9.1 CONSULTATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE & RESULTANT EFFECTS ON WOMEN AGRICULTURISTS:**

*Prakriti* has been involved with women farmers who have been bearing the brunt of adverse weather situations, particularly droughts and scanty rainfalls that have been the direct outcome of changes in global climatic conditions. Under the auspices of **UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)** and **MAKAAM (Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch)** a two days consultation was organized on February 18-19, 2019 at Sewagram Ashram premises. The resource persons who took part in the deliberations included experts like **Shri K. C. Malhotra, Smt Chhaya Datar, Shri Tarak Kate, and Ms Soma K.P.** The conference included the following sessions:

1. Women Farmers & Agriculture/ Changes in Climatic Conditions
2. Women Labourers and Outcomes of Livelihoods affected by Climate Change
3. Animal Husbandry, Animal Conservation and Allied Livelihoods Affected by Climate Change
4. Women associated with Fisheries and Effects of Climate Change on their Occupation
5. Forests and Forest Related Livelihoods Affected by Climate Change
6. Farm Widows of Suicidal Farmers Undertaking Cultivation and Effects of Climate Change on their Occupation

These sessions were facilitated by **Ms Suvarna Damle, Prakriti**, in which the rural women field workers participated in full measure. Discussions in the course of conference focused and concurred on the following points prominently.

- Climate change directly affects and has deep impacts on the livelihoods of women farmers. Additionally, women cannot do away with their traditional occupations, since that is the only way of life they know.
- The destruction of natural resources in the name of development and continued carbon emissions in the environment are rapidly affecting rainfall, monsoon patterns and access to water sources leading to ever increasing rise in global warming. Such adverse impact is pretty widespread and the efforts of few people will make no difference in the ill-effects of the situation. In fact, it will take decades of sustained efforts to reverse the situation.
- People will have to think and evolve varied ways in which to challenge and contain the impact of global warming. In particular we will have to focus on water conservation and the best practices for sustainable use of water.
- We now acknowledge that Global Warming has a direct impact on occupations related to forests, animal husbandry, fisheries and agriculture.
The most effective ways and means that have helped combat climate change need to be more widely communicated and publicised on an official level.

Climate change is a reality and we need to warn everyone about the ill effects of climate change.

9.2 MAKAM VIDARBHA REGIONAL CONSULTATION:

On January 8, 2019 Vidarbha level Regional Consultative meeting was held at Prakriti. MAKAM partners from Vidarbha discussed on the following in the meeting:

- Women and families affected by farmers suicides should be provided with social security benefits and similar schemes created especially for their advantage.
- To keep up the pressure on the government to increase the ex-gratia amount for payment to families affected by farmers suicides.
- To plan and organize an in-depth joint conference by UNDP and MAKAM to deliberate on the consequences of climate change.
- Presentation of efforts undertaken in respect of communities’ forest rights in Gadchiroli district.

The meeting had the representation of MAKAM network members from Wardha, Gadchiroli, Yavatmal, Amravati and Akola districts. MAKAM – SOPECOM Secretariat organization from Pune deputed Ms Seema Kulkarni and Ms Pallavi Harshe to this consultative process held at Wardha.

9.3 SAMVAD HELPLINE AT WARDHA DISTRICT COLLECTOR OFFICE:

MAKAAM and State Commission for Women, Maharashtra organized a workshop in February on the problems being faced by rural women and their families whose farmer husbands had committed suicide. The aim was to undertake a brainstorming discussion on the state of affairs by network members on the ground observing their pitiable condition. In the course of this workshop the Divisional Commissioner, Shri. Anoop Kumar declared the setting up of a helpline facility for farmers of the district. Prior to starting the helpline government officials that included Collector Wardha and Commissioner Nagpur as well as MAKAM representatives elected representatives to ensure the smooth management of the helpline. In the month of June, the Wardha Collectorate started the Samvad Helpline services for which the toll-free number is 18002332383.

Farmers and their family members can call this toll-free phone number in Wardha district to inform them of any problems being faced by them. Affected farmers who call on this number obtain a token number after they have described the difficulties faced them in their occupation. Helpline personnel make note of the issues and callers and proceed to provide relevant assistance after understanding and reviewing the problem. Once the
nature of the problem is understood the matter is forwarded to the relevant government department for further action. Helpline service personnel also make due interventions and take up the cudgels for resolving issues of callers. The efforts are on-going till the very end until the resolution to the problem has been fully provided. The District Collector himself monitors the proceedings for helpline callers on a daily basis.

All Gram Panchayats in the district have been covered under the Samvad Helpline project with a poster visibly displayed in all Gram Panchayats. This is to ensure that such important information is readily made available to all the people. It is seen that the helpline is largely used for drawing attention to the following issues:

- To know about monetary loan
- To know why loan waiver payment is not credited in bank account
- Difficulty at Tehsil Office for making changes or altering titles in agriculture-land documents
- Inability to obtain promised reimbursement on time from government for pest infected cotton crop
- Difficulty in obtaining crop loan from bank

**Prakriti** has been involved right from the beginning with this Samvad Helpline project, being a member of the MAKAAM network. Prakriti field staff has ensured commendable efforts for the smooth running and management of the Helpline as well as making it a feasible programme among rural farmers. The Samvad Helpline programme has received good coverage from media also with news being shared on the efficacy of the programme by Times of India and Hindustan Times newspapers.
Help a call away for Wardha farmers

For instance, if a farmer calls to complain that compensation for pink bollworm attack has been adjusted against his crop loan, the collectorate staff contacts the bank and the matter is resolved.

For more information, please contact the Collectorate of Wardha at 91-7491203323.
9.4 **Case Study Workshop With SAATHI:**

On **July 17-18, 2018** Prakriti organized a Case Study Documentation workshop for the field staff workers who are the primary respondents and observe the tragic accounts day in and day out on the field. There are many social and economic issues and repercussions after a farmer commits suicide and towards which not much attention is given. In particular the ill-health aspects and health fall-outs for the family affected by the head of the families’ passing away remains one of the least important considerations when dealing with farmers suicides. The purpose of this workshop was to train field staff to be able to create cohesive case studies for advocacy purposes that would bear out the issues that could become supportive factors in providing the requisite pathos in totality.

MAKKAM and Jan Arogya Abhiyan are preparing case studies from 12 districts of suicide affected families of Marathwada and Vidarbha to present them at the winter session of the Maharashtra Assembly in December 2018. This is to draw attention to the plight and problems of the suicide affected families. In this context a training programme on documentation of case studies was organized in Aurangabad where Prakriti representative Nilesh Gawande participated.

Each district is submitting around 25 such case studies. Based on the problems and main demands emanating from these accounts a Letter of Appeal will be prepared and forwarded to all the Assembly members so that they may present the request in the assembly for discussion and resolution to the same. **Prakriti** prepared 25 case studies from suicide affected areas of Akola district.

![Case Study Workshop With SAATHI](image)

9.5 **Pre-Election Awareness Program Organized By The State Election Commission:**

It is the responsibility of election commission to organize smooth electoral process which is law abiding and free from any unlawful practices. The election commission organizes awareness workshops for the government officials before elections to mobilize participation and cooperation from all sections of the society.
Such workshop was organized by the State Election Commission on 18th September at VANAMATI, Nagpur, in which officials from local self-government departments, participated. Ms. Suvarna Damle from Prakriti was invited to speak about involving minority, women and other deprived sections of the society in the electoral process. This regional workshop included chairpersons of ZillaParishads from Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara and Gondia districts.

9.6 BEEJOTSAV— (FESTIVAL FOR CONSERVING TRADITIONAL SEEDS & PROPAGATING ORGANIC FARMING)

On March 15-17, 2019 Beejotsav festival was organized. The Seed festival focuses on organizing farmers and agriculturists to join together for safeguarding traditional seeds and giving a boost to organic farming. Farmers from all over Vidarbha pitch in for this annual event to showcase the need for conservation of traditional seeds as well as display a variety of organic produce. The occasion also becomes a venue for sharing innovative techniques, new information on agriculture and sale of rural artefacts and traditional foods.

The Beejotsav organizes special lectures in the morning hours to share information on innovative trends in farming. This year one of the sessions focussed on women farmers in which Prakriti participated along with MAKAAM network members. Ms Suvarna Damle from Prakriti took active part in the session on the increasing role of women farmers in rural areas for agriculture. Lack of women’s roles in farm decision making, health concerns of women, climate change affecting agriculture and farmer’s suicides were the issues taken up for discussions.

9.7 EXPOSURE VISIT BY MANAVLOK:

Manavlok is an NGO that is working in Marathwada region of Maharashtra. On 24th December 2018, the organization deputed their project staff along with farmers from their work area, SHG women members, aanganwadis workers, ASHA workers and students of social work for a meeting to gain in-depth understanding of gender aspects in implementation of programmes for rural development. Both organizations introduced each other and shared their focal area of work. Manavlok runs the Manaswini programme in their area to work on issues related to curtailing domestic violence. Since Prakriti has
been implementing programmes on violence against women through the Vikasinis, especially developed for the purpose, it was appropriate to offer an exposure to gain experiences in this regard.

Key staff, Ms Suvarna Damle and Ms Pratibha Uikey who have been working on these issues since inception provided telling instances of Prakriti’s work on Violence Against Women and the positive effects through the programme. Vikasinis from Balaghat and Nagpur shared their experiences of VAW work on the ground and how through sustained education and training of rural women they learnt to face all odds against suppression and subordination.

One of the Vikasinis named Pratima Bhimte shared her personal experience of how she overcame unjust treatment at home by becoming vocal and demanding her rightful place in the family when she was initially not allowed to even step out of the marital home. Shanta Raikar, a single woman also shared her experience of uncertainties and suppression to have finally learnt to live life on her terms. Today she is the Up-Sarpanch in her village. Another lady named Muneshwari learnt to survive and overcome her circumstances and today she is ever ready to assist other women in predicaments to take them to the Tehsil headquarters for Jansunwais under the SDO’s office. Similarly, Laxmi became the Sarpanch in her village and has helped all projects for abandoned women’s welfare to be successfully implemented. Archana, another strong Vikasini shared her account of how she managed to get liquor shops banned in her village. Several other victimised women also shared their experiences as to how Prakriti organization assisted them with giving correct information and supportive backing to deal with their situations.

Manavlok and Prakriti appeared to have undergone and experienced common set of experiences. Both organizations concurred that they could work together on violence against women issues affecting communities in their work areas, for which they could support and collaborate with each other. Discussions were held on how best they could move forward in these directions.

9.8 COLLECTIVE IMPACT PARTNERS:

Five American Organizations - Rise Up, How Women Lead ,Global Fund for Women, World Pulse and Public Health Institute have all collaborated and decided for making the Collective Impact Partnership for Maharashtra state more decisive and effective. Representatives of these organizations are involved in training, fund raising, and support on all related issues in the framework of the Collective Impact Partnership. Ms Pratibha Uikey from Prakriti attended the meeting organized by the collective.
9.9 **Meeting to Discuss the Need to Build Capacities of Counseling Center, to Deal with Cases of Domestic Violence and Child Sexual Abuse:**

A meeting was organized at Chetana Vikas, Wardha on 10th July to discuss the capacity building initiatives for the counsellors dealing with cases of domestic violence and child sexual abuse in various parts of Maharashtra. Prakriti deputed Ms. Suvarna Damle to participate in this meeting. The need to organize workshop and refresher courses was unanimously agreed by all the participants. It was also discussed that in recent years, cases of child sexual abuse are increasingly reported. Many times, both cases – child sexual abuse and domestic violence are reported in the same family.

It was decided to list out the trainers and counsellors so that training can be organized. The organizations participated in the meeting included, Chetna Vikas, Wardha, MASUM, Pune, Chaitanya, Pune, counselling centres supported by Central Social Welfare Board etc.

10. **Study on Livelihood of Farm Widows Sponsored by Maharashtra State Commission for Women:**

A study on the livelihood issues of widowed women farmers was supported by the Maharashtra State Women’s Commission. MSWC provided funding support for undertaking the study in Akola district infested by farmers suicides and where widows were coming to terms with the tragedy but unable to be gainfully employed. The focus of the study was on finding out what occupations could be adopted by the farm widows and what were the key problems hindering their hold to a livelihood. Also, the study attempted to find out how these problems could be resolved. A detailed report on the six-month study has been prepared by Prakriti.

The study report brings to the fore the following findings:

- Farm widows do not have sustainable alternate livelihood options and agriculture is the sole familiar occupation that may offer them income generation opportunity.
- Only a very small percentage of widows have tailoring skills and majority of the farm widows do not have any other occupational skills.
- Villages in the district do not have the presence of government run employment guarantee schemes, nor any efforts in this direction are being made by local government departments.
- There is complete lack of awareness on government schemes or legal recourse among the farm widows.
- Majority of the women cannot leave their households and young children to step out for seeking employment.
Since there agricultural lands are not being cultivated, they end up taking loans for running their households.

There is a sense of insecurity among them on account of being widows and they feel that chances for them to gain employment are meagre.

The Study findings are definitely proving useful for further work with the farm widows that Prakriti hopes to continue doing for assisting and improving lives of families affected by farmer’s suicides.

11. CONTRIBUTION IN THE REPORT BY HLRN ON FORCED EVICTIONS IN INDIA:

Housing and Land Rights network established the “National Eviction and displacement Observatory” in 2015 in order to document and monitor the forced evictions across India as well as to assist the affected communities with relief, restitution and access to justice, where possible. In the year 2018, HLRN found that government authorities, at both the central and state levels, forcefully evicted at a minimum, 202,200 people across urban and rural India.

A report titled as “Forced evictions in India in 2018: An Unabating National Crisis” was prepared by HLRN. Prakriti, contributed in this report by reviewing the forced eviction in Nagpur district and its impact on the lives of the community. Prakriti visited the following sites in Nagpur:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Comments and observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mominpura, Boriapura</td>
<td>Many residents are still staying here and they said only part of their house has been demolished, which was joined with the IGMC wall. One month notice was served to the residents and occupants, Shop keepers lost their business, while residents rebuilt their houses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardi Road</td>
<td>Pardi is one of the significant site of Smart City development in Nagpur. The Pardi fly over has caused most of the forced evictions. The residents of Pardi have formed Smart City Peedit Manch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saoner, Patansaongi, Dhapewada road</td>
<td>The evictions at this site were reported in March 2018. The land where evictions took place was Zudupi Jungle land and the residents at this site were mostly migrant families from nearby areas. They have approached the MLA and some of the residents have obtained stay order from the court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangalwari Zone</td>
<td>Evictions occurred at this site on the encroached land of Nagpur Municipal Corporation, no substitute place or livelihood alternatives were thought for the evicted population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. **Future Plan of Action:**

As we look back to the past year gone by, one fact remains certain that Prakriti is consistently advancing the theoretical foundations of gender equality, that were such abstract notions to begin with, by ingraining them irreversibly in the traditional mind-sets. The organization is engaged with rural communities and networks with like-minded organizations to promote the cause of rural women’s development, alleviate their impoverished state, and bring them into the fold of the current social, economic and political framework.

Prakriti’s inherent resources – our integral staff, data and knowledge properties and our tools and practices for bringing about desired changes in these deep-rooted communities has indeed made the need for gender equality a must in every sphere of societal space. The annual report highlights the inter linkages and dimensions of change that have occurred for allowing the organization to continue making sustainable progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Prakriti’s action-oriented programmes facilitate the change process that helps in transforming the unequal power dynamics in rural regions and allowing gradual advances for gender equality. Prakriti’s programmes strengthen and contribute to gender equality as also to inspire feminist leadership. Decidedly, all our future plans will follow this line of action and we hope to continue to inspire rural women to be open to becoming instrumental in augmenting such change.

Our plans are chalked out for the next year and we will be implementing our programmes and activities with same dedication and commitment. As always, we look forward to support and hand holding in the best of traditions since we all know very well that discrimination against women and girls is a pervasive and on-going phenomenon occurring at every level, everywhere.

We will remain true to our underlined motto – To reach out to the most vulnerable of women’s groups.
## A. LIST OF BOARD MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Name of Board Member</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Smt. Kalindi Mujumdar</td>
<td>Chairperson, Prakriti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Shri. Subhash Gogate</td>
<td>Vice-Chairman, Prakriti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Smt. Shobha Sakharwade</td>
<td>Secretary, Prakriti</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Smt. Suvarna Damle</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Shri. Ravinder Kumar Sharda</td>
<td>Treasurer, Prakriti</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Dr. Smt. Rajni Patni</td>
<td>Member, Prakriti</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Dr. Shri. Rajeev Kulkarni</td>
<td>Member, Prakriti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Shri Saravan Kumar</td>
<td>Member, Prakriti</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ms. Jahnvi Andharia</td>
<td>Member, Prakriti</td>
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