



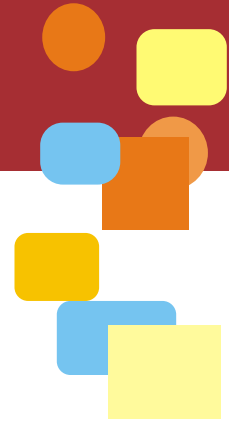
Best Practices Foundation

Annual Report 2010-2011



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A Message from the Director

When Best Practices Foundation was established in 1999, I envisaged creating an action-based research organisation which identifies, innovates, documents and disseminates best practices and solutions in development in India and abroad. At the time of its creation, BPF consisted of a three-person team working out of my family home in the heart of Bangalore city. Today, we are an interdisciplinary team of 16 individuals based in two offices in Bangalore and Dharwad in Karnataka.

BPF Dharwad, our incubation center, is now embarking on a new path of enhancing livelihoods based on natural resource management techniques. BPF Dharwad continues to be approached by various

organizations to provide training on its livelihood innovations.

Over the past ten years, BPF has transformed into a knowledge-based institution which facilitates the exchange of innovative solutions to address some of the most pressing development issues worldwide. Having worked to strengthen local governance, enable access to public services, create sustainable livelihoods, encourage environmentally-conscious agricultural

methods, and promote gender-sensitive and inclusive practices, BPF aims to establish itself in the next ten years as an innovation agency devoted to the identification, dissemination and institutionalisation of best practices to empower poor and marginalised people.

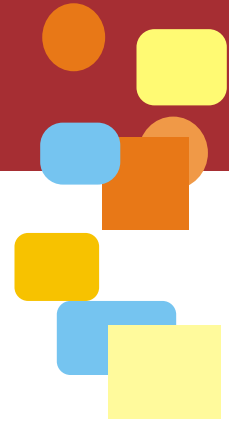
Collaborating with a variety of stakeholders ranging from state governments and international funding agencies to civil society and grassroots organisations, BPF has developed a vast network of partners with whom to innovate, strengthen and evaluate development initiatives. Our approach is characterised by a marriage of the theoretical and the practical, guided primarily by a commitment and relevance to the ground.

At BPF, we celebrate the strength, creativity and ingenuity of grassroots organisations and individuals to address the many issues plaguing their societies. BPF seeks to recognise and promote these local solutions and encourage a continuous process of collective learning and cross-fertilisation with development practitioners and government ministries to improve service delivery and better address the needs of communities on the ground.



Best Practices Foundation

Annual Report 2010-2011



Projects (April 2010–March 2011)

BPF Dharwad

- **Quarry workers on health and livelihood extended** till September 2010 from Deshpande Foundation

This project aims to improve the health and livelihoods of quarry workers through health education and MOVE training started in April 2008. In the first year 48 people were trained in three batches and 26 started businesses. In this year, five new participants underwent value enhancement skills training and added value or up-scaled their business. One business was added and today 27 businesses are operational.



- **Natural Resource Management project,** September 2009 to February 2011, from Deshpande Foundation



The Natural Resource Management Project commenced on 1st Sept., 2009, aimed at enhancing the livelihoods of 50

farmers, through promotion of Integrated Farming Systems in one acre land of the selected farmers in Mandihal and Daddikamalapur villages. It also aimed at up gradation of skills and tools of selected plumbers in Yarikoppa village in Dharwad Taluka of Dharwad District.

A total of 58 farmers adopted integrated farming systems resulting in improved environmental

conditions. For instance, 16,147 forestry seedlings, 1,340 short gestation plants like lemon, curry leaf, drumstick, and papaya and



2010 long gestation plants like mango and sapota were planted by farmers in Mandihal and Daddi Kamalapur villages. The farmers also planted fodder root slips, and sowed stylo hamata seeds on the bunds leading to greater bio-diversity.

Two plumber self help groups were given plumbing tools and are repaying the cost of tools back to the SHG and it will be used to provide tools to new members of the Sangha. This has created a mechanism by which skill upgradation can be realized through increased access to better equipment. The outcome of this work reflects best in the increased incomes of plumbers of Rs 500 - Rs 1,000 per month (an increase of 10 to 20 percent).

- **Improve livelihoods of 120 village women and youth through market training,**

October 2010 to September 2011 from Deshpande Foundation

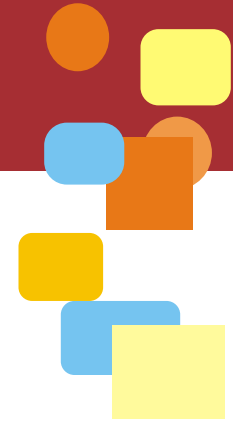
The Project aims to train 120 participants from six villages in Dharwad taluk and about 60 businesses are expected to start by the end of the project. To date 122 people have completed the training, about 26 businesses have begun. Another 35 businesses are expected to start in the next six months.



- **SSP – MOVE ToT of MOVE in Maharashtra,** from January 2010 to March 2011

Best Practices Foundation

Annual Report 2010-2011

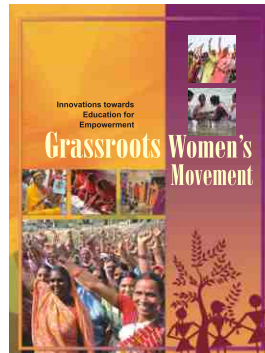


The project aimed at Knowledge Capacity Transfer to SSP trainers/women BPF conducted 14 days training on MOVE to develop course curriculum with the participation of existing entrepreneurs and staff in SSP's working areas in Maharashtra.

BPF Bangalore

- **DFID project for documentation of Best Practices in Women's Empowerment** from November 2009 extended till March 2011

Revision in National policy on Education (NPE) in 1992 marked a departure from conventional adult literacy programmes. It recognized and accepted the need for active participation of women in improving their access to knowledge, information and education. Through the Mahila Samakhya programme, women were mobilized into Mahila Sanghas, which provided a space for critical reflection, questioning and participatory learning, led by women themselves.



Several practices and innovations were developed by the sangha women themselves, in response to their problems, during the implementation of the programme in identified Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB) in ten states across India.

BPF published a compendium, which covers best practices and innovations in Mahila Samakhya from across eight states and attempts to showcase the icons amongst these practices. Federations and Sanghas, including kishori sanghas, have been studied as the main building blocks of the movement.

The core practices include:

- a. The Adult Literacy Programmes, imparting need based literacy and numeracy, embedded in a holistic framework of education for empowerment.
- b. Nari Adalats, women's courts that deliver gender

justice run by poor women themselves.

- c. Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSKs), which constitute residential schools for young adolescent girls.
- d. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), a national programme which mainstreamed the MSKs.

The innovations include:

- a. The Data Exhibition in Assam, a form of social audit, where federations present information from household surveys alongside official data towards better planning and monitoring.
- b. The Panchayat Literacy Programme for Women in Uttarakhand, which promotes women's political participation as elected women representatives (EWRs) in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, as well as citizen participation in the Gram Sabha.

- **Rural Urban Governance** project for Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, from April 2009 to March 2011

BPF undertook a study titled *Towards Making District Planning Committees More Effective: Creation of Participatory Indicators and Documentation towards Guidelines for Action*. The main project objectives were to create a set of indicators, to measure progress of District Planning Committees (DPCs) through a collaborative, participatory process. Process and impact indicators were created and tested for all levels: Gram Panchayats (GP), Block Panchayats (BP), Zilla Panchayats (ZP), and Municipalities. A report provides an updated status of the findings of these indicators tested across three sites with its partners - PRIA, Development Alternatives, and Debate. Process and impact indicators, along with the tested results of having measured them and the process undertaken by BPF to arrive at these indicators, are described at length in the report. A policy brief was produced aimed towards dissemination at a round table to be held by the Asia Foundation in New Delhi entitled *Decentralized District Planning: Planning and Monitoring*.

Best Practices Foundation

Annual Report 2010-2011



■ Project on documenting 'Voices' for Aga Khan Foundation in Gujarat, January – March 2011



BPF conducted a study to document the essence of *Mahila Manch* or women's federations through the medium of "Voices", a publication which presents anecdotes and stories of participants to show strategies used and the consequent impact of the interventions. The team visited two districts in Gujarat, Netrang and Gadu during January 2011. The *Mahila Manch* at Netrang and Gadu address social issues relevant to women. In Netrang, the main issue was related to a large proportion of women being widows while in Gadu, it was related to salinity of water leading to lack of drinking water and health problems.

■ Project for Huirou Commission - on women and decentralized governance



BPF produced a compendium of grassroots initiatives from five different countries which provide insights into the participation of local communities in decentralized decision making and local governance. The active involvement of grassroots women in local governance, in turn, builds ownership over

local development as well as the leadership capacities of women. The examples below cover grassroots women's initiatives from Peru, the Czech Republic, Russia, Kenya and India. Grassroots activities are diverse yet are relevant to grassroots

movements all over the world. Servicios Educativo El Augustino (SEA) advocates for effective functioning of the decentralization process in Peru, enabling women and members from the marginalized communities to engage in participatory planning and local governance, through mechanisms such as the Participatory Budget, and the Coalition of Local Councils. The Mother Centers in the Czech Republic shows the importance of partnerships and networking with local government and international grassroots organizations for addressing problems faced by working mothers in a patriarchal post-Communist society. Similarly, in Russia, the Information Center for the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF) works closely with local women in several cities including Petrozavodsk and Putschino, establishing neighborhood groups to influence city policies to improve infrastructure of neighborhoods. GROOTS Kenya works with networks of neighborhood groups on monitoring public services and ensuring better reach for marginalized groups, particularly HIV infected populations and their families. Similarly, Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) in India monitors public services around issues of health, water and sanitation through the formation of Health Governance Groups, ensuring access of the poor to health insurance and organizing health camps to access services.

■ Project for HIVOS on evaluation of SSP in

Maharashtra

Integrating Microfinance and Livelihoods - The Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) Experience, February 2011



SSP aims to

bring women and poor communities from the margins to the mainstream of development by forging partnerships with institutional actors and providing

Best Practices Foundation

Annual Report 2010-2011

technical support for community driven initiatives. Together, SSP, grassroots federations, and social enterprises provide range of solutions/initiatives to meet health, energy, water, sanitation, food security, and agriculture needs of the poor in a changing climate. This case study documents lessons and insights from a women's empowerment, entrepreneurship and governance approach that centres around facilitating access to microfinance, livelihoods, health and other services. It examines

the multiple initiatives of Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), a learning and development organisation working in rural Maharashtra and other states, primarily through the lens of empowering women in poor communities in rural India.

Reports and Publications

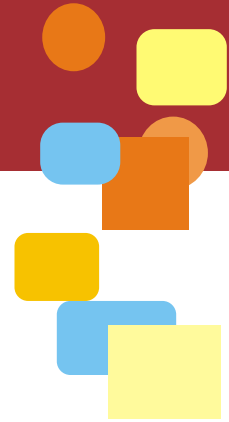
- Three Toolkits (*Nari Adalat, Panchayat Literacy for Women, and Addressing Inequalities through Gender Education*) developed and disseminated at a National Workshop in Delhi in September 2010
- Compendium of Mahila Samakhya's Best Practices in Women's Empowerment entitled "*Innovations towards education for empowerment: Grassroots Women's Movement.*" published and disseminated at National Workshop in Delhi in November 2010
- Four policy briefs on Federations produced in March 2011 for advocacy aimed at four Ministries of the Government of India: Human Resource Development, Women and Child Development, Panchayati Raj, and Rural Development
- Report entitled *Integrating Microfinance And Livelihoods: The Swayam Shikshan Prayog Experience* published on the HIVOS website which is part of an international study on women's empowerment
- Report on *federations* submitted to Aga Khan Foundation in March 2011
- MOVE (Market Oriented Value Enhancement) manual for services under print
- A policy brief on Decentralized District Planning: Planning and Monitoring)

BPF Representation

- Represented BPF at the WEP Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop at Jakarta, Indonesia from 23rd May to 28th May 2010 organized by Asia Foundation
- Huairou Commission, New York, Preethi Krishnan and Sangeetha Purushothaman attended the Global Summit on Grassroots Women's Leadership and Governance in New York from 15th March to 1st April 2011.
- Represented the Huairou Commission at the UN-Habitat Best Practices Steering Committee Meeting in Brazil on 14th March 2011
- Represented the Huairou Commission at the Grassroots Women Academy and UN -Habitat World Urban forum in Brazil in March 2011
- Attended a Round Table on Building Leadership skills to improve women's health status in Bihar organized by Packard Foundation in New Delhi on 26 April 2010.

Best Practices Foundation

Annual Report 2010-2011



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