



Best Practices Foundation

Annual Report 2011 - 2012



A Message from the Director

Best Practices Foundation (BPF), founded in 1999, is an NGO based in Bangalore, known for documentation, dissemination and innovation of best practices in the fields of development, governance and gender. Its grassroots branch in Dharwad serves as an incubation site and testing ground to experiment with new ideas and innovations that will empower the poor. BPF has always had a highly skilled multi-disciplinary team from Ivy league and other leading institutions that has enabled it to work across sectors such as governance, gender, livelihoods, education, health, vocational training, and natural resource management.

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 peoples.

In the last decade, BPF has (a) developed innovations (b) led action research (c) collaborated with policy-makers (d) documented case studies (e) conducted programme evaluations (f) produced toolkits to scale up initiatives, and (g) published books and compendiums on best practices for sustainable development.

BPF has partnered with a wide range of national (Sri Dorabji Tata Trust, AKF) and international donors (UNDP, World Bank, USAID), civil society organisations and government (MHRD, Planning Commission – GoI, Karnataka State Women’s Development Corporation) and academic institutions (University of Cambridge, Development Planning Unit – University College London, IRMA) to provide research, documentation and evaluation services and for up-scaling of its livelihood innovation model Market Oriented Value Enhancement (MOVE). A complete list of donors and partners is attached.

For the future, we aim to see BPF move forward to take on additional responsibilities as a national and regional hub for the exchange of best development practices. At BPF, we celebrate the strength, creativity and ingenuity of grass-roots 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.

Projects (April 2011–March 2012)

BPF Dharwad

- **Improve livelihoods of 120 village women and youth through market training, October 2010 to December 2011 from Deshpande Foundation**

The project funded by Deshpande Foundation aimed to build entrepreneurial skills for illiterate poor rural women and youth. As part of the project 172 women and youth from eight villages in Dharwad taluk were trained on MOVE and 79 businesses were successfully established.

From Homemaker to Entrepreneur

Neelambika Yavagallamath, from Narendra village in Dharwad taluk of Karnataka, was a housewife before she underwent MOVE training. Her husband being the sole breadwinner, had to support the education of their two school going children along with managing the family's expenses. Her interest in setting up her own business motivated her to participate in the training, where she conducted a market analysis to understand the viability of cloth business. She says, *"It taught me to find out what is in demand. Only then, can I decide which products will sell and which products won't. I asked people what kind of clothes they buy, where they buy from and in what quantities. This survey helped me to choose the type of clothes I should invest in"*. Confident about her skills post training and the results of the survey, she launched her business selling sari and blouses, with Rs.20,000 capital borrowed from her self-help group. During the first two weeks of doing business, she sold Rs.12,000 worth of clothing and earned a profit of Rs.1,000. Encouraged by the customer response, she invested additional capital and expanded her product portfolio to include children's clothing, lungi and men's underwear. Further, realising the potential for roti business in the markets of Narendra and Dharwad, she invested Rs.19,500 from her own earnings to sell *jowar roti*. Today, Neelambika is a proud entrepreneur, who owns two businesses, and says, *"I feel very good to have a business. I feel I can grow this business in the future and earn more than 2,000 every month. With this income, I can repay my loan and contribute to my children's education. This is very exciting!"*



- **Livelihood Training for MSM-T Population August 2011 to March 2012 Karnataka Health Promotion Trust Bangalore**

BPF innovated a pioneering livelihood programme for MSM populations and to a smaller extent for women with HIV AIDS. A total of thirty-one participants completed the MOVE training of which seven participants have already started businesses and five have upgraded their existing businesses. Five more have got employment after the training. A total of ten more are expected to start businesses, where five are undergoing skills training and another five are preparing to start their businesses. The project has been extended till July 2012 to follow up on the businesses established and to nurture the new businesses expected to start.

The Vermicelli Man

Suresh from Mandihal village in Dharwad is an example of someone who used lessons from MOVE training to improve his existing business. Before joining MOVE, he owned a 2 horse-power vermicelli machine, selling 100-120 kgs of vermicelli per week, and earned a profit of Rs.12,000/- per month. The training gave him the confidence to grow his business. With the results from the market survey, he decided to take a calculated risk. He invested Rs.18,000 of his own savings on larger capacity equipment and the electrical connection required to power it, thereby quadrupling his weekly output to over 400 kilograms. Talking about the most valuable aspect of MOVE, he says *“I learned how to improve my marketing approach”*. The training helped him to accurately set a profitable retail price, brand his business under the name ‘Sri Sai Home Products’, formulate new marketing strategies and improve customer relations. Suresh’s vermicelli has gained a growing reputation for quality with customers travelling up to 15 kilometres from surrounding villages and the city of Hubli. He gives four reasons for the success of his business, saying *“I build good relations with my customers, I make a consistently good quality product, I ensure reliable supply and I maintain hygienic standards”*. Today, his mother and sister also help him in his business. Suresh dreams of expanding his business and is proud to say, *“The profits from my business has climbed to Rs.30,000 per month. I plan to increase production, employ two people, and target higher volume of sales.”*



Disclaimer: Name has been changed to protect confidentiality of the participant.

- **Navodyami Program of DF**

BPF staff collaborated with KIMS Karnataka University Dharwad in conducting training of Trainers of Deshpande Foundation's Navodyami programme. BPF master trainers trained Navodyami trainees on MOVE and conducted a follow up of their businesses.

BPF Bangalore

- ***“Towards designing a training module to engender anti-corruption measures” a project in collaboration with the Huairou Commission and UNDP***

In collaboration with the Huairou Commission and UNDP, BPF conducted a study across eight countries in order to create a toolkit aimed at engendering anti-corruption programmes globally.

- **Seeing Beyond the State: Grassroots Women's Fight Against Corruption**

In collaboration with the Huairou Commission and UNDP, BPF conducted a pioneering study across eight countries on grassroots women and corruption in 2012. Corruption, defined by the UNDP as the “misuse of entrusted power for private gain”, is a major obstacle for development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The study’s objective was to document grassroots women’s lived experience of public-sector corruption in the developing world. It is intended to act as a corrective to the paucity of research on the gendered impact of corruption on poor communities. The project’s aim is thus to contribute to anti-corruption initiatives by prioritizing and foregrounding grassroots women’s voices, while also presenting these women’s recommendations for country-level programming.

“Corruption is getting worse and worse every day. Those of us who are poor are affected most. If you want a job in public service, you have to pay. You want medical treatment, you have to pay. You seek justice, you have to pay police. Now if your child can’t get a job and you have spent money educating her, what will you do?”

– Women from SWID.

- **Engendering Anti-Corruption Programmes: A Tool-kit Designed to Produce Actionable Outcomes**

Based on the findings from the study above, BPF produced a toolkit that targets global policy makers and programme managers that focus on anti-corruption initiatives. The toolkit aims at providing a snapshot understanding of grassroots women’s experience of corruption, the strategies employed by them to fight corruption and finally, recommendations that can engender the design and policies of anti-corruption programmes and agencies.

Certain principles were drawn based on grassroots women’s recommendations and research done by BPF that would enable international agencies to engage with grassroots organizations in anti-corruption work. They included:

1. See corruption as endemic and pervasive for grassroots women.
2. Recognize grassroots women as agents of change.
2. Promote the voice of grassroots women.
3. Broaden the notion of “women’s participation in governance”.
4. View ‘women’ as a heterogeneous group.

- **Building the Foundation for Girl's Education and Empowerment: The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level Implemented by Assam Mahila Samata Society**

In 2003, the Government of India (GOI) launched the National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) aimed at closing the gender gap in elementary schooling in the country. Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS) with support from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is implementing the scheme in 781 elementary schools in six educationally backward blocks (EBBs) in three districts of Assam since 2007.

BPF conducted a study that explores the strategic partnership between AMSS and UNICEF for NPEGEL, AMSS's innovative implementation of the programme, and its impact on girls' education in the three target districts of Dhemaji, Tinsukia and Udalguri in Assam. Overall, the study revealed positive trends among teachers, community members, currently-enrolled students, and dropout girls. Many teachers and community-based organisation (CBO) members who received NPEGEL gender training became aware of gender discriminatory practices at school and in the home, and were sensitised to problems being faced by girls in their pursuit of education.

- **Local Solutions to a National Problem: Innovations in Targeted Interventions for HIV/AIDS Prevention in Karnataka, India funded by Karnataka Health Promotion Trust**

In 2011 BPF in collaboration with KHPT produced a compendium consisting of ten case studies across Karnataka that represent unique creative strategies to improve outreach and increase service delivery in the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS. Each practice is an example of localized, community focused solutions developed to address the outreach and service delivery imperatives of HIV/AIDS prevention interventions with increased effectiveness.

- **DFID project for documentation of Best Practices in Women's Empowerment from November 2009 till May 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. In 2011 BPF published four policy briefs on women's federations and Sanghas targeting different audiences for policy.

- ▲ **EDUCATION FOR EMPOWERMENT**

IN 2011, BPF provided policy inputs to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to locate literacy programmes within women's collectives, embed literacy in the process of empowerment, and ensure social and community oversight on educational processes.

- ▲ **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN**

In 2011, BPF provided policy inputs to the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) to Increase community participation and oversight through federations and to define rights-based women's federations as implementation partners for The Ministry of Rural Development.

▲ **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

IN 2011, BPF provided policy inputs to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) to recognize rights-based women's collectives as grassroots partners in democratic processes promote federation-driven, community-based governance mechanisms and involve collectives of empowered women to engender governance.

▲ **WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT**

In 2011, BPF provided policy inputs to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) to recognize rights-based women's collectives as grassroots partners for women's issues, promote synergies with these collectives to implement pro-women Acts and recognize federations as building blocks for women's holistic development.

- **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 produced in 2010 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 tested results of having measured them and the process undertaken by BPF to arrive at these indicators, are detailed in the report. This report was shared with the World Bank and other stakeholders in 2011.

In 2011 at a round table held in Bhopal city BPF launched a policy brief entitled *Decentralised District Planning: Planning And Monitoring* based on this previous work. At this round table BPF provided policy inputs to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) to recognize the autonomy and build the capacities of the local planning units, recognize social audit processes as intrinsic to ensuring community engagement in monitoring and have planning indicators that reflect process, outputs, and outcomes.

- **Transforming development: Creating synergies between Grassroots Women and Institutions of governance, a project conducted on behalf of the Huairou Commission**

In 2012, BPF published a compendium of best practices to show how Grassroots organizations have evolved relevant strategies in their respective contexts to utilize and benefit from global trends to include women in governance and decision making. The compendium covered seven case studies from six countries including Philippines, Brazil, Kenya, Peru, Nepal and India. These initiatives evolved as part of the Millennium Development Goal 3 Initiative of the Huairou Commission that aimed to increase women's participation, asset ownership, particularly in land and housing.

GROOTS Peru's strategies utilize existing decentralization policies to mainstream women's concerns into local and national political agendas. Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) in India monitors public services around issues of health, water and

sanitation through the formation of Health Governance Groups. GROOTS Kenya has pioneered a new strategy called Champions for Transformative Leadership which challenges negative stereotypes of women leaders and builds coalitions of grassroots and elected women leaders to hold elected officials accountable. Espaço Feminista in Brazil creates a platform for grassroots women leaders to build strategic alliances to propel advocacy efforts and facilitate dialogue between women and policy makers. The Cooperativa Ser do Sertão in Brazil mobilized farmers into food cooperatives, facilitating energy efficient technological innovations which enhanced income, productivity, and improved food security on scale. In the Philippines, DAMPA through community mobilization uses collaborative or confrontational rights-based approaches with local governments. Lumanti from Nepal ensures that the community participates in program planning, implementation and monitoring by center-staging grassroots organizations' involvement in large scale housing projects with government agencies. The foundation of grassroots women's organizations lies in a large, mobilized constituency which has provided the base for many transformative innovations that have breathed life into governance mechanisms over the years.

- **Project for HIVOS on evaluation of SSP in Maharashtra Integrating Microfinance and Livelihoods - The Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) Experience, published in Endodontic retreatment in rural India A case series, June 2nd 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 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. In 2011 BPF produced a summary report based on this study which has been published on line by HIVOS.

Reports and Publications

- *Building the Foundation for Girl's Education and Empowerment: The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level* Report of a study commissioned by Assam Mahila Samata Society supported by UNICEF, March 2012
- *Engendering Anti-Corruption Programmes: A Tool-kit Designed to Produce Actionable Outcomes*, on Behalf of the Huairou Commission, in partnership with UNDP, March 2012
- *Seeing Beyond the State: Grassroots Women's Fight Against Corruption*, report of a study conducted on Behalf of the Huairou Commission, in partnership with UNDP, March, 2012
- *Local Solutions to a National Problem: Innovations in Targeted Interventions for HIV/AIDS Prevention in Karnataka, India*, a compendium of best practices funded by Karnataka Health Promotion Trust, March, 2012

Four policy briefs on women's federations and Sanghas targeting different audiences for policy and decision making on behalf of the Ministry for Human Resource Development:

- *Education For Empowerment*, May 2011
- *Community Development And Women*, May 2011
- *Women's Leadership In Local Governance*, May 2011
- *Women's Rights And Empowerment*, May 2011
- *Decentralised District Planning: Planning And Monitoring, May 2011*, a policy brief produced in partnership with Debate, SDTT and the Asia Foundation BPF published
- *Transforming development: Creating synergies between Grassroots Women and Institutions of governance*, a compendium of best practices published on behalf of the Huairou Commission, 2012.
- *Integrating Micro-finance and Livelihoods - The Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) Experience*, HIVOS, May, 2011
- *Market Oriented Value Enhancement for Commodities and Services: A Trainers Manual to Promote Access to Markets for the Poor*, Books for Change, Bangalore 2012.

BPF Representation:

- Sudha Menon represented BPF at a workshop entitled *National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework and the Unorganized Sector*, NUEPA, Government of India, New Delhi, March 1-2, 2012.
- Dr. Sangeetha Purushothaman and Priya Pillay represented BPF at a round table in Bhopal and presented a policy brief on indicators for decentralized district planning in May 2011.
- Huairou Commission, Brazil, Sangeetha Purushothaman attended the World Urban Forum and the Global Summit *on Grassroots Women's Leadership and Governance in New York from 15th March to 1st April 2011*.
- Tara Tobin and Sangeetha Purushothaman presented the findings of the study on grassroots women and corruption at the Commission on the Status of Women at a session hosted by the UNDP in February 2012.
- James Brockington and Sangeetha Purushothaman attended a conference on Urban governance in India hosted by Janagraha Janagraha, and IIHS on decentralized urban planning in Mysore in November 2011

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