

# ANNUAL REPORT



# DHAATRI

2020-21



## Dhaatri Trust – A Resource Centre for Women and Children

### Annual Report 2020-21

#### Introduction

The year 2020-21 has daunted the world with nature's fury. Sadly, the poor and landless faced the most severe brunt of this human-created global crisis that put millions of lives not only at risk, but on a prolonged period of debilitating hunger and uncertainty. The year taught us how to cope with this new crisis, not only as a team but as an institution in taking responsibility for a year-long work on emergency relief.

At Dhaatri, we were able to keep our eyes and ears on the ground to extend our capacities for relief support and emergency outreach thanks to the ground level work of field teams. They worked relentlessly and courageously in the communities to enable linkages with government and philanthropic bodies help with resources and interventions. It has also been a year of learning not only on building our institutional capacities for a new kind of emergency work, but also in building our understanding and dialogue on impacts of such emerging modern epidemics on rural women and children in India and Asia. The opportunity for many learnings came, despite the physical restrictions, for local and regional exchanges, in sharing stories of resilience and collective advocacy. The online medium of sharing that Covid forced us into, also provided an immense opportunity to learn from different networks, on a wide range of subjects that would have otherwise been difficult. It threw open many doors for listening and learning. It was fascinating to understand how quickly rural and tribal women campaigning in remote hills, could pick up technological skills and keep the communication and emergency work possible through these new pandemic challenges.

Many challenges were also faced by communities, not only on dealing with hunger, but in making their voices heard with regard to proposed policies and legal safeguards, as a result of new discourses around Covid relief and economic restoration. Many stories went unheard. We tried to capture some and tried to engage with governance institutions. The strength in collective dialogue and creative sustainable spaces are a hope we carry forward at the end of a year of multiple challenges.

In this report, we briefly provide a glimpse into Dhaatri work in the year 2020-21.

#### Covid Relief and Emergency Outreach work:

Emergency support work started with helping migrant workers with shelter and food and assisting them in reaching their villages. In this process, we interviewed several migrant workers and their families in order to link their appeals for support to concerned authorities. We joined hands with other groups in Telangana to submit a joint representation to the state government ([Click Here](#)). We took help from various civil society networks and individuals, to connect migrant workers returning home for food, money and transport. We helped migrant workers with registration for their travel

and facilitated their road and rail travel in many places ([Click Here](#)). The restrictions caused by lockdown prevented the poor from getting their grievances heard and seeking help especially where relief did not reach the needy due to lack of documents like ration cards, aadhar cards or pension cards. Particularly for Devadasi women, widows, single women, migrants trapped at work sites and landless poor families who could not produce these documents, the Covid lockdown caused serious problems in accessing food. We organized several online meetings with our field teams and Adivasi networks. Our field teams conducted intensive documentation and surveys to identify these families and record their appeals for help. We conducted short term documentation training sessions for field animators who produced short documents to capture the field problems. These documentary capsules of audio and video evidence were shared with local officials, media and on social media to link people's needs with sources of emergency support. These platforms proved to be effective means of raising public sensitivity and contributions, while also bringing positive response and immediate relief measures from local authorities. ([Click Here](#))

As requests poured in from communities facing food shortages and lack of wage labour during and after the lockdown, we took up ration distribution during the first and second wave of Covid crisis. These were distributed in the tribal mandals/blocks of Andhra Pradesh (Paderu), Chattisgarh (Kanker, Kabirdham, Raigarh) Gujarat (Dahod), Jharkhand (Chatra, Simdega), Madhya Pradesh (Panna, Rewa), Maharashtra (Palghar, Amaravathi), and Rajasthan (Udaipur). These kits were given to Adivasi families, largely from PVTG habitations, widows and silicosis affected families.

In Rewa, we also supported the field team in running a month-long highway kitchen, where more than 3200 migrants traveling in buses, lorries and even on foot on the borders of U.P, were provided with fresh cooked meals.

As part of Covid safety measures, we helped with organizing community Covid centres where field teams collaborated with local authorities in helping these centres by undertaking community awareness on Covid safety and vaccination, Covid testing and medical outreach for affected families. These awareness programmes were combined with emergency livelihood support to women's groups who supplied some of the ration items, fresh snacks for children, stitched masks that had slogans to disseminate awareness on Covid and the rights of Adivasis.

Ration Kit (1100 kits) distribution in Andhra Pradesh Visakhapatnam district of Paderu Mandal in three Panchayat of Salugu, Vantlamamidi and Modapalli.



COVID relief distribution to 500 single and widowed women in Palghar district



COVID relief distribution (500 kits) to single and widowed women of Bhil and Pateliya communities in Dahod district.



COVID relief distribution (250 kits) to single and widowed women of Kol Adivasi and Dalit communities in Rewa district.



COVID relief distribution in Umrahan, Madiyan, Bador, Kaimasaan, Darera Villages of Panna district, M.P for two rounds with 552 families in May and 251 single and widow women headed families in October and ration distribution to children who lost their parents, in January (Raj Gond, Sor Gond, Nand Gond, Yadav, Dalit communities).



WHRD Sadhana Meena distributing relief material during COVID lockdown to mining affected communities in Zawar, in Udaipur district.



The team in Rewa set up a ' Shramik Kitchen' on the highway in order to provide food to migrant labourers travelling on road to their villages after the announcement of COVID lockdown. They prepared and packed cooked meals for the migrant labourers to ensure they don't starve enroute. Along with cooked meals, they also distributed nutrition kits which included sanitary pads, edibles like grams, jaggery and groundnut. Through this important initiative, they reached out to 3200 migrants.



### Mask Campaign for Right to Work and Right to Food

Adivasi Women's Campaign for right to forest land and right to get employment for 300 days under the MGNREGS programme was supported through Masks as a space for campaign messages





Mask Campaign in Melghat district with Children for right to Quality and Cultural Education



Nutrition Programme during lockdown - Mahua laddus were prepared by widows of Panna and given to children as supplementary nutrition.



Adivasi and Mining Affected Women campaign for their rights in the midst of Covid crisis:

Women's forest and environment rights campaigns related to the Forest Rights Act, women's share in rehabilitation from DMFT funds, safety and education of girls, promotion of Warli women's knowledge and art were interlinked with Covid health awareness messages. In Hospet, Karnataka, Dalit and Devadasi women campaigned for their livelihood rights under MGNREGS and entitlements to Devadasi families, that tried to dialogue with district authorities on the need for linking DMFT funds with MGNREGS, environment rehabilitation of mining affected villages and measures for eradication of the Devadasi system.

*DMF Ka Hissa* became a slogan for women's groups to represent their immediate needs to local authorities, particularly with regard to livelihood restoration through assured wages under MGNREGS from DMFT funds and relief for migrant workers under the BoCW funds. Landless poor dalit women in Hospet demanded for immediate work under MGNREGS with a slogan for 300 days of work per person per year as a right to work and live with dignity.

MGNREGS Campaign for 300 days work in a year, ongoing campaign of Dalit Women in Hospet







Adivasi women marginal farmers from Dahod in Gujarat and Panna and Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, campaigned for right to work locally as migration is not a desirable option, especially since the pandemic crisis. Adivasi women vegetable vendors' union in Palghar demanded for their right to urban spaces for marketing their produce, without violence and intimidation. Adivasi women in Udaipur campaigned for clean-up of their water bodies and agricultural lands from mine toxicity and right to DMF funds for food security and safe health. Adivasi women in Telangana appealed to the local authorities not to evict them during these pandemic times from their forest and agricultural lands.

Adivasi women from affected villages around Zawar mines participated in the poster campaign 'DMF ka hissa' to demand that the DMF projects should address the violations faced by them due to mining and pay heed to their demands.



Women small farmers and landless dalit women in mining affected villages of Hospet, Panna, Rewa, Surguja, Raigargh participated in the campaign 'DMF ka hissa' to demand that the DMF projects should restore their contaminated land and water bodies and rehabilitate their livelihoods and basic rights to clean drinking water, employment, education, housing and toilets.



Adivasi Women Vegetable Vendors' Union in Palghar demanding their rights to urban space for their livelihood



Even while women were struggling through their local crises, there was a continued exchange of solidarity and sisterhood- across states and national borders. Adivasi women from the ground participated in sharing their stories and giving strength to each other, all through the year. The International Indigenous Peoples' Day was celebrated with online programmes of solidarity. The 16-day campaign to end violence against women was conducted across the network with online programmes like the right to water campaign and indigenous women's traditional knowledge practices. Women participated actively in the South Asia Consultation on Women's Rights and Natural Resources where community leaders and experts came together to exchange perspectives.

Water campaign In Panna and Udaipur.



A collective platform that came out of the Covid struggle was a state level network of Devadasi women and youth in Karnataka. Initiated as a relief support to Devadasi women's families in 10 districts, the platform became a voice of assertion on the rights and entitlements and the demand for state responsibility in enacting the Devadasi (Prohibition and Rehabilitation) Act in Karnataka. Through this platform, an assessment of the situation of Devadasi women and their children, the status of education and basic amenities and the social exclusion faced by these families was documented by the youth of these families. A state level consultation was organized by the network under the guidance of Sakhi, to make visible the demands of Devadasi women and their families.

State level consultation through Vimuktha Devadasi Mahila & Makkala Vedike in Hospet, Karnataka



Documenting Adivasi and Dalit Women's Voices and Representations to state authorities:

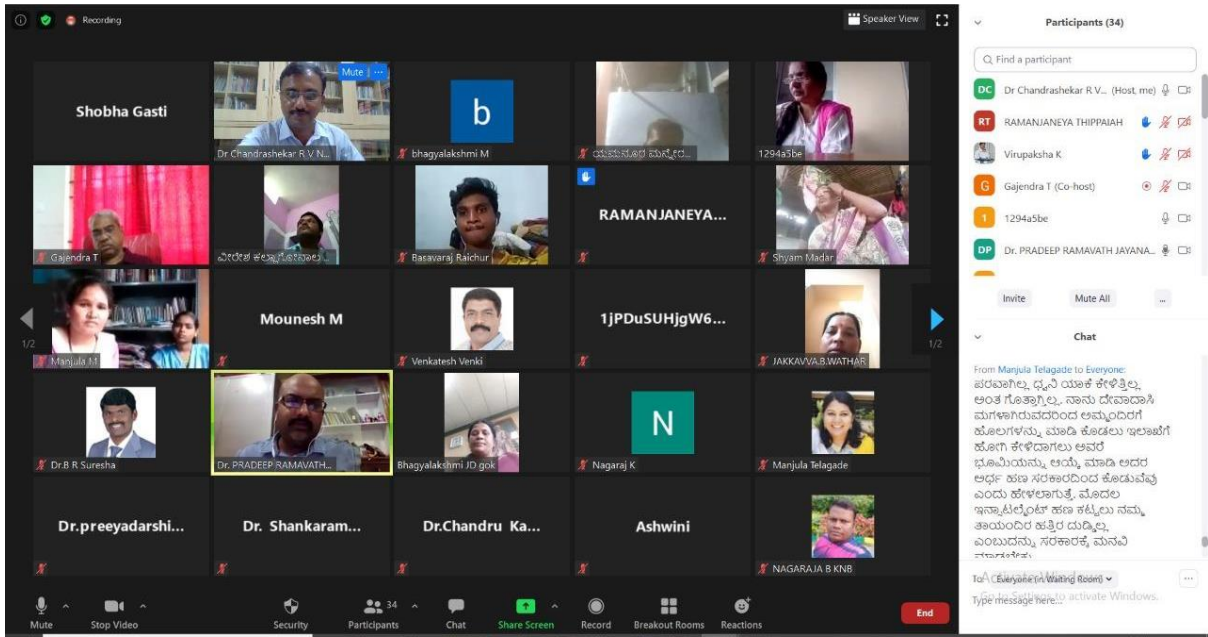
Dhaatri's work in strengthening the voices of Dalit and Adivasi Women through training and documentation of their struggles as well as conducting social and gender audit of social security schemes was a part of the year's advocacy linkages for environmental justice to women and children. This year we conducted online training to field teams on understanding laws and procedures, the Forest Rights Act, being the most important vehicle for Adivasi women. We provided training material in Adivasi languages-(<https://www.dhaatri.org/library>) and conducted hands-on training to field teams on procedures for making claims and the role of the Gram Sabhas.

We also conducted online and offline trainings on the DMF to many NGOs and our field teams. Our team developed gender audit formats and conducted field assessment of the implementation of the DMF funds in three states, from the perspective of women and children. We also worked with field teams in assessing the losses and damages from extractives projects in order to represent community level micro plans and demands to local authorities for linking DMFT funds with mining area rehabilitation from a community perspective. The site-specific violations identified were represented to district level authorities for grievance redressal and to enable a dialogue for a people-centred DMF implementation.

At the national level, we collaborated with civil society networks to organize consultations on specific issues related to Adivasi communities. We co-organised a consultation with the Expert Committee of the MoTA on Community Forest Resources and on PVTG Habitat Rights under the Forest Rights Act and submitted a collective representation of issues raised ([CLICK HERE](#)).

Capacity building online and offline workshops to Devadasi women and children in Karnataka





Meeting with community on DMF fund and DMF assessment in Kamturu, Sandur Karnataka.





Government primary school got smart class in P.K Halli under DMF Fund



DMF social audit of schools constructed in Kojawala, Pipli, Rajasthan.



Gender Impact Assessment and Women's situation in the Mining area of Madhya Pradesh.



## Linking and Learning:

Regional exchanges with indigenous sisters for South-South solidarity through the network of WAMA has given us strength in collective learning and information sharing on natural resources, extractives and lobbying with bodies like the UNBHR. Through this network, we co-organised and participated in online sessions to build research skills in economics and investments monitoring, community monitoring and mapping. We shared information through the WAMA newsletters and cases from the ground. We helped our friends from the pastoral communities in Mongolia develop a set of community guides on gender impact assessment of extractives for affected communities and field practitioners. the Mongolia handbooks: (<https://www.dhaatri.org/library>) From India, we submitted a representation on the impacts of Covid 19 on indigenous women and children, to the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples' Rights. We also joined hands with the Resisters' Dialogue, another regional women's platform for sharing stories of Covid impacts in Asia and celebrated online, the Resisters' Solidarity Night as part of the International Human Rights Defenders' Day.

## Women's Struggles for Alternate Livelihoods during the pandemic:

While local campaigns demanded for response from governance institutions to meet their demands for livelihood support and basic amenities, women also tried to create their own livelihood initiatives during Covid crisis. Both Adivasi women with their knowledge and engagement of forest resources and Dalit landless women with their strength of physical labour, took up new challenges of creating livelihood models. With support from philanthropic institutions like the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives-APPI (who provided both relief and livelihood support), and several other institutional and individual contributions through online crowd-funding platforms and through direct support, women were helped with seeds, sapplings, livestock, processing machines and small-scale infrastructure to set up their kitchen gardens, cattle rearing sheds, NTFP processing units and agricultural activities. The network of Adivasi women used the strength of vocational skills in exchanging skill-based expertise from their forest based livelihoods like bamboo products making, soap-making, bead-crafts and others which have strong potential for *atmanirbhar* (*self-reliant*) livelihoods.

We hope that these local initiatives create a platform for engagement with governance bodies on self-reliant and sustainable local solutions to climate crisis. These initiatives are Adivasi and Dalit women's self-representational solutions for the global debates over Just Transition and Recovery or Sustainable Eco-Systems Restoration models on community mitigation and adaptation practices that are low-cost, decentralized, ecologically and socially sustainable.



We distributed Bamboo sapplings to Adivasi women in Panna.



Distributed Banana plants to Adivasis in Paderu





Organic Vegetable Seeds distributed to Adivasi women for setting up kitchen gardens in Panna.



Organic Vegetable Seeds distributed to Adivasi women for setting up kitchen gardens in Dahod.



Organic Vegetable Seeds distributed to Adivasi women for setting up kitchen gardens in Visakhapatnam.



Organic Vegetable Seeds distributed to Adivasi women for setting up kitchen gardens in Rewa



Organic Vegetable Seeds distributed to Adivasi women for setting up kitchen gardens in Udaipur.



Small scale Flour Making Machine given to Adivasi women for marketing their spices as income generation support to women's group in Dahod.



Helped to Set up kitchen gardens with Dalit Landless women in Hospet, Karnataka.



Kitchen gardens set up by Adivasi women in Panna, Madhya Pradesh.



Animal husbandry programme to support Alternative livelihood for Dalit and Devadasi Women in Hospet





Agriculture activities by Devadasi and Landless Women and Youth in Hospet, Karnataka.



Van Devi Sva Sahayata Samooh, a women's group in Panna took up group activity with collection of Mahua seeds, extraction and marketing of Mahua oil



Pain relief balm and Nutritional mahua laddu made by community women's group in Chatra



## Training to Widows and Single women to make handmade soaps in Manayan Village, Panna.



## Bead and Bamboo Jewelry training to Youth in Melghat district, Maharashtra.



## Culture and Education during the distress of Covid

Covid posed many anxieties to women on the domestic front. Not only securing food for their families was a constant challenge, the closure of schools put children at risk of dropping out from school and sliding back in their academic learnings. We tried providing short periods of cultural and health awareness activities to children. Starting with Covid awareness activities with supplementary food from forest resources, we connected with youth to act as informal educators whenever Covid restrictions were relaxed. Combining academics with nature-based crafts and games, the youth provided some relief to parents by engaging the children in creative activities in Panna, Rewa and Palghar. The children of the Warli tribe learnt how to do their art (write their chauk) from elders. Sampurna Bamboo Kendra taught children and youth simple bamboo-based crafts through online classes. Children gathered seeds and planted sapplings in their neighbourhood. However, we had to abandon these activities as the second wave threatened to spike. We also supported young Adivasi professionals in developing Adivasi fonts and digitizing their script as with the Savara script.

Children Planted Mahua and other wild plants in Panna



Provided Nutritional Mahua laddu supplementary food to the Children in Panna, Madhya Pradesh.



Learning through online and offline fun activities in summer in Panna, Madhya Pradesh





Learning through fun activities in summer in Rewa, Madhya Pradesh.



Children learn to make their own Rakhis with Bamboo in Panna



Bamboo craft making with youth from the community

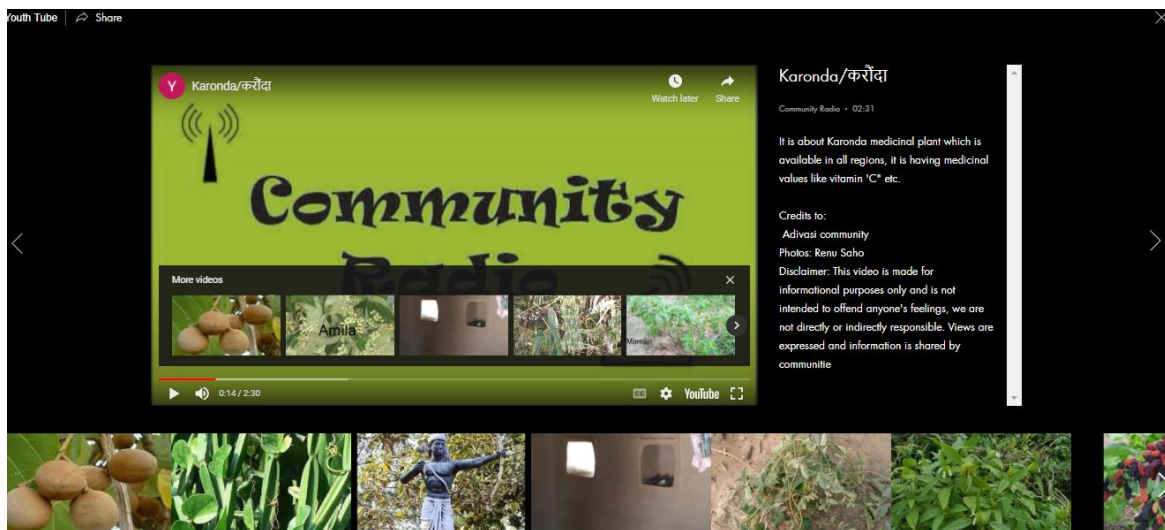


## Youth from Palghar received Bamboo Crafts Training



### Youth Tube:

We have started a you tube channel for the Adivasi community specially focused on youth to share and exchange their local knowledge and practices. Adivasi youth from different states collect stories from their elders and share them through this social media channel. Youth contributed 16 stories this year mostly related to medical herbs, local recipes and forest produce. We launched this as part of the celebrations of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples'. We call this as our Adivasi YouTube programme.



Website links: <https://www.dhaatri.org/reports>.

Youtube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCECuAYf44Mn7HkMU2MOWqQ>.

We hope that these small initiatives get opportunity for more creative expressions in the coming year and that women from these remote hills are able to engage with policy makers and governance institutions for more decentralized solutions to climate crisis.

#### Our Appreciation:

Dhaatri received very good support from our core funders for our Covid relief activities and support to the field teams, by spontaneously putting faith in our work in this crisis situation. We are overwhelmed with the cooperation and flexibility from our valuable donors- Mama Cash and Both ENDS whose sustained supported gave us the opportunity to evolve in our vision of bringing public attention to environment justice concerns from a feminist lens in India. Women's Fund Asia helped us grow as a feminist platform on environment justice and natural resource rights, making new connections and partnerships in South Asia. It provided a unique opportunity for learning and advocacy linkages. Our sisterhood of solidarity and regional exchanges became an important vehicle of learning and strategy building with the assistance from NTFP-EP and FCAM. This year, we were able to extend our support through training and community leadership building through the unique programme of the International Indigenous Women's Fund (IIWF/AYNI). It helped build strong leadership of Adivasi women across many states, who were the backbone of the entire Covid emergency support work and the rights of Adivasi women. They were the ears and eyes from the ground who brought to light the many cases of violations on Adivasi women and their natural resources. Their call for help was spontaneously responded by APPI, the philanthropic unit of Azim Premji Foundation and together, we were able to provide ration kits to many families. Many individuals have stood by us with their contributions in cash and kind – these invisible hands made it possible for us to collectively deliver our commitments this year. We are most grateful as a team to all our donors and supporters.

possible for reaching out to children and women struggling with crisis and neglect. We wish to thank all for giving us another year of opportunity to fulfill our institutional role.



