

# *Dhaatri Trust*

*A Resource Centre for Women and Children's Rights*

## **Annual Report**

April 2016-March 2017



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**Introduction:**

Dhaatri is a Resource Centre for women and children's rights. It is a small platform to support the everyday struggles of rural and indigenous women. Registered in 2007 under the Indian Trusts Act, the Centre is an initiative to represent the voices, perspectives and campaigns of rural, adivasi and marginalized women in India and for the protection of the rights of their children. Through our work, we help women access information, research, capacity building and exchange of skills and strategies. We work with women in communities and women's rights defenders to promote gender equality and ecological justice.

Dhaatri works mainly in three panchayats of Paderu mandal of Visakhapatnam district with adivasi communities in 40-50 villages. The conflicts around forests, podu cultivation and dwindling food security have been a long standing concern where women, inspite of being the primary actors in production activities in farming and forestry, face several problems related to legal rights, livelihood needs, and ill-health. Their role in governance and decision-making within the framework of PESA or within customary institutions is marginal and the new constitutional rights are slow to be realised. Increasingly, we are also finding the need for giving attention to the needs of adolescent girls who have never had the opportunity to be enrolled in school or have to drop out of school to become full time farmers. They have no opportunities to build livelihood skills and diversify their incomes or have any awareness about their legal rights or health and security. They are also becoming exposed to new challenges to their social security and customary spaces for negotiation and decision-making. Observing these changes, Dhaatri has started working throughout this year, in bringing adolescent girls together with the purpose of strengthening their capacities in gaining natural resource based livelihood skills and in building their peer networks for social security and health.

One of the areas of serious systemic failure in the tribal areas is the state's inability to deliver universal primary education. Despite the constitutional mechanisms of the Right to Education Act which lays down the fundamental duty of the state to provide quality education and the several entitlements of children in accessing education, the key structural change envisaged through the constitutional role of the community in ensuring this, remains at the periphery. The School Management Committees are at a notional stage where adivasi communities have not been given opportunity to harness this legal right. We at Dhaatri believe that building the capacities of the Gram Sabhas and the SMCs in the tribal areas, particularly the hill-top villages is crucial to visualising any progress in primary education being effectively implemented. We also understand that this requires long term perseverance in order to strengthen the community's ability to negotiate with the state to demand for entitlements. Dhaatri aims to work with the community in making this long term perseverance along with the belief that bringing traditional knowledge and adivasi relationship with nature close to children's education play an important role in this process. We work with the vision that engaging with the community elders, the state instruments responsible for delivery of primary education,

especially teachers and local administration will help in making the connection between the community and the state more effective.

The year 2016-17 was a year of collaboration and networking with other civil society groups and consortiums working from an environment justice and gender equality lens. Dhaatri was fortunate to receive support and strength in this collaborative process to protect the rights of women and children in some of the critical contexts of natural resource rights and social security. Dhaatri has worked closely with Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri, Sakhi Trust, Hospet, Prithvi Trust, Panna, and with mines, minerals & PEOPLE, New Delhi in coordinating some of the critical issues around natural resources, extractives, conservation and development needs of women and children.

We have worked with Prithvi Trust in strengthening their field interventions with women and youth in order to address the crisis of drought, displacement, lack of livelihood alternatives, occupational health problems like silicosis, women and children's health. We have also worked closely with Sakhi Trust to support their work with dalit and devadasi women whose health, economic rehabilitation and development needs are central to the work of Sakhi. The need for rehabilitation of closed and abandoned mine sites through the perspective of demands of women in local communities has been a focus of advocacy and linkages with government and statutory bodies.

We have also worked with local CBOs like Sanjeevini and VRDS to exchange knowledge and resources in relation to women farmers, foragers and youth.

At an international level, we initiated a youth community service programme in 2016 in collaboration with the Freunde der Erziehungskunsts Rudolf Steiners and invited four young student volunteers under the Weltwärts programme of the German Ministry. They have worked with the field team of Dhaatri in documentation, training and workshops with children and youth.

## **Activities in Detail:**

### **Women:**

#### **Safeguarding Adivasi Women's legal rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006:**

A major focus of Dhaatri's work is in building women's leadership and capacities to engage with their customary and state institutions in negotiating for their land rights. As the FRA provides for a definitive legal right of entitlements to forest lands for women as joint title holders and as equal participants in the institution of the Forest Rights Committees, our efforts have been, at the primary level, working with the Gram Sabhas and FRCs in including women as active members. We have been conducting a series of village level and cluster level trainings all through the year to engage women with this legal tool, and strengthen their understanding of the process of making individual and collective claims.

Training the team in understanding the Forest Rights Act and state rules, processes of making claims and filling up the required forms for individual and community (CFR) rights and procedures for grievance redressal at sub-divisional and district levels, mapping of individual podu boundaries and community forest boundaries, participatory biodiversity mapping and assessment of resource status in order to do a micro planning for each village community forest

was a major activity. This training was further implemented by the trainers at the community level with youth vigilance groups. More than thirty villages have so far filed for claims through a process of institutionalizing the FRA through dialogue with local authorities and gram sabhas in the formation of Forest Rights Committees (FRCs). Women have been encouraged to take active participation in the FRCs. Six villages were helped with submitting claims for re-survey of individual podu lands which were earlier neglected. Two training programmes were organized for Dhaatri team in Hyderabad on the FRA process and on the mapping of FRA lands using GPS. A field visit was made to implement the mapping in six villages for CFR claims.

#### **CFR micro planning**



A public consultation of adivasi women from FRCs in Visakhapatnam district was convened by Dhaatri in June 2016 where they could present their grievances and problems related to the implementation of the claims with the sub-divisional level authorities. The consultation resulted in positive assurances from the administration for processing of claims, especially that of CFR claims and claims in JFM areas.

#### **Sub-divisional level Consultation with Women from FRCs, Paderu**





**Collaborating with South Asia Institute of Harvard University on action research to assess the participation and perspectives of adivasi women in the context of the FRA:**

As part of its project on Livelihoods and Human Rights, the South Asia Institute of the Harvard University supported Dhaatri with a six month field research to bring out the voices of adivasi women in the context of the FRA implementation. ‘Interrogating the Norm-Innovative Interventions for Promoting Gender Justice and Safety in India’ was a publication that was a result of intensive micro level research by Dhaatri team in putting together an analysis of adivasi women’s awareness, participation and perspectives on the FRA vis-à-vis their legal rights within their customary framework and with that of the constitutional framework. A grand book launch was organised by SAI Harvard University in New Delhi in December 2016. This publication is available on our website: [www.dhaatri.org](http://www.dhaatri.org) and that of Harvard University’s <http://southasiainstitute.harvard.edu/livelihood-creation-project-publications/>.

**Focus group discussion with women on awareness about FRA**



### SAI Harvard Book Release Public Event at New Delhi



#### **Adivasi Women Farmers: Strengthening women's livelihood rights:**

Dhaatri believes in strengthening the women's consultative and decision-making role in land management while also advocating for legal rights to own land and for creating opportunities of new skills in farming and production activities. Towards this end, Dhaatri has initiated dialogue with women in the community to promote women farmers' platforms for support and capacity building for collective skill exchange, planning and exploring alternatives to current setbacks in farming. Two training programmes were conducted in Visakhapatnam district with the resource expertise from VRDS, Kadapa on organic farming, improving soil fertility for podu lands, inter-cropping, seed storage and exchange. The youth and women were given inputs in improving their food crops on podu lands, improving soil fertility through dynamic inter-cropping changes, preparation of organic fertilisers to improve soil fertility, exchange of seeds to regenerate the land area under millets and to improve the health of the seeds through this exchange and weeding techniques. The women's groups exchanged seeds this year and Dhaatri facilitated the sourcing of some varieties of millets from other network partners. This has helped in increasing the area under millet cultivation in at least 15 villages this year. The team of Dhaatri and youth teams went on exposure visit to other field areas for understanding new techniques and alternative strategies being explored by NGOs. They visited Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, interacting with women's groups, producer cooperatives and processing centres developing products with agriculture and forest produce. With the purpose of promoting women's exchange of knowledge and strategies, a Women Farmers' Mela was planned where adivasi women from the local villages and from other states were invited to share their seeds and resources. The Youth groups in the villages were trained in hosting the

Mela and facilitating the participation of women from different villages. The Mela was postponed from March to April 2017 due to women being busy with other farming activities and festivals. It was organised in Poolabanda village with participation of women from five states.

**Seeds Exchange programme**



**Exposure visit for livelihood training to Aadhimalai processing centres, Keystone Foundation, Tamil Nadu**



**Youth participation in Training on Organic Farming and soil fertility  
Poolabanda**



**Adivasi Women, Displacement and Conservation:**

The problems related to illegal mining, forceful eviction from forests in the name of protecting the tiger in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh and the distress migration in search of basic survival for the adivasis raised the serious need for dialogue with local and national state institutions and to share this with the international community of environment and gender rights movements. The condition of mine workers and the impact of ill-health on the widows and wives of mine workers was our first concern. We worked closely with Prithvi Trust in mobilising women and youth to take up village level actions. We organised workshops with women and youth on the issues of drought, problems of displacement and economic sustenance.



## Youth Workshop and Village level Survey on Drought held at Panna, Madhya Pradesh



## Water conservation workshop Bikampur



Community meetings with women affected by conservation and illegal mining in Panna



Discussion with youth on migration in Panna



Formation of Youth groups in Panna



### Workshop with youth for capacity building



#### **Occupational health issues and women's rights:**

Panna area has several cases of silicosis among mine workers and their families. Prithvi Trust has been submitting appeals regarding compensation and rights of workers affected by silicosis. The recent Supreme Court ruling directed state governments and concerned statutory bodies to submit the status of actions taken for rehabilitation of victims suffering from silicosis and the safety standards at mine sites. As a result, Prithvi Trust was invited to participate in a review consultation organized by the Ministry of Labour. Dhaatri coordinated with the project partners in preparing a memorandum and helping Prithvi Trust in submitting the same to the Ministry. As a follow up, Dhaatri team made two field visits to document the cases of silicosis victims in Panna district. In January 2017, Prithvi Trust, mines, minerals & PEOPLE, Keystone Foundation and Dhaatri co-organised a state level workshop on Silicosis in order to lobby with the government for a state policy on the rehabilitation of families affected by silicosis and for a work safety standard in mine sites to prevent silicosis. The consultation was followed up with preparation of a draft policy based on inputs from the workshop, and this was submitted to the Department of Labour, M.P. After several deliberations, the draft has been accepted with some modifications and a Silicosis rehabilitation policy has been framed by the state government. The workshop also resulted in the Department of Labour taking initiative to conduct medical camps in Panna and other districts. The field team facilitated the identification and diagnosis of victims and follow up on these medical reports is in process. Although the medical camps were conducted with ill-equipped testing tools, we are hoping that this will help in submitting a report to the concerned ministries and to the Supreme Court on the silicosis cases and to lobby both on compensation and on work safety standards in mine sites. The team of Dhaatri also helped in organising workshops for youth and children of silicosis affected families to help in counselling, rehabilitation of children facing substance abuse and child labour. We also helped in mobilising clothes and food for some villages in Panna who were suffering from the severe cold wave during the winter. One village, Umraivan, was assisted in getting solar lights for all households through well-wishers and friends of Dhaatri.

## Documentation of Cases of Silicosis in Panna district



## Distribution of Solar Lamps in Umraivan Village



## Advocacy linkages to support the campaigns for rehabilitation of Devadasi women and women in Extractives:

Sakhi and Dhaatri have collaborated in undertaking training for young girls from devadasi families on counselling and in micro-level planning under the District Mineral Fund. These were submitted to the district authorities and Dhaatri coordinated with other partners in organising consultations with NGOs on the DMF. Since January 2017, we have started an ethnography research on the self-narratives of Devadasi women in the backdrop of mining. Girls and devadasi women themselves are being trained to document their own life histories and this process is enabling a platform for first hand narration of perspectives from within rather than external interpretations of cultural trajectories of exploitation.

As a process to highlight the problems of women and girls from mining and forest areas, Dhaatri has facilitated and participated in a few international forums and shared the experiences and strategies on the ground.

**AWID –Brazil, A workshop on environment justice and extractives:**

Dhaatri and Sakhi along with many such organisations attended the international conference organised by the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID). We shared experiences and strategies of adivasi and dalit women pertaining to natural resources and livelihood rights. One of the main sessions in which we made presentations was on human rights and environmental justice together to showcase the power of cross movements. It is a unique platform where feminist perspectives and women’s rights movements came to share the common concerns with the global environmental justice movements. Dhaatri facilitated a presentation of Roopa Rani from Sakhi in sharing her experiences as a child labourer in the mines and the work of Sakhi in the rescue and rehabilitation of girls from mining and devadasis from the affected communities. Keystone Foundation supported the participation of Gayathri from Dhaatri and Mama Cash, the Netherlands, supported the travel of Bhanumathi Kalluri for her participation. We thank all of them for creating this opportunity for our team.

**Brazil- AWID Meeting**



**Presenting mining issues from India at AWID International Forum, Brasil**

### **GAGGA Inception Meeting:**

Dhaatri was invited to participate in the planning of the GAGGA (Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action) vision and strategy for addressing the environment justice concerns from a feminist perspective. The consultation was organised in May 2016 at Amsterdam.

### **Regional Consultation of GAGGA members in Sri Lanka:**

As follow up to the international inception meeting, a regional consultation for planning of regional actions under the GAGGA programme was organised in November 2016. Dhaatri was also invited to participate and provide inputs into this planning. We thank South Asia Women's Fund for supporting our participation in this consultation.

### **International Workshop on Digital Security:**

In February 2017, Dhaatri was invited by Mama Cash, the Netherlands, to participate in an international workshop on Digital Security and Women's rights for promoting security of women working on development issues and gender. We much appreciate the support from Mama Cash for giving us these new insights into technology and development concerns.

### **Regional NTFP-EP workshop at Kotagari:**

Dhaatri was invited by Keystone Foundation to participate in a regional workshop of the NTFP-EP network held in January 2017 at Kotagiri, the Nilgiris, to share strategies and perspectives on gender, environment and natural resource rights.

### **Youth Action:**

#### **Training for Trainers:**

Orientation sessions with trainers on land and forest rights, gender concerns in tribal areas and preparation of training workshops for community youth and youth in high schools. In Dhaatri three such sessions were organized in Hyderabad and our field centre in Visakhapatnam and followed by monthly review meetings. Youth trainers were given training in understanding of the FRA claims and mapping of individual and community forest boundaries using GPS in consultation with elders. These were followed up with field implementation and training to community youth in 10 villages as a result of which CFR claims were submitted based on the biodiversity mapping and mapping of physical boundaries. Dhaatri team in collaboration with Sakhi underwent quarterly training on gender, health and counselling. Each session had five to seven field team members who participated in the orientation in each area. These sessions consisted of detailed orientation on adolescent health and sanitation and gender issues-background material was prepared by the team that included child rights and women's rights laws, body mapping, background information on menstrual hygiene, practical guide to making sanitary napkins at home and hygiene maintenance and sexual health issues of youth.

## GPS training and survey of FRA land - for youth and women



### Community Youth Training:

Community level awareness training programmes with youth in Visakhapatnam to create spaces for youth participation were conducted on a monthly basis in each village to help set up youth vigilance groups. Four such cluster level trainings were conducted and detailed mapping was undertaken in four villages with the youth and elders. Each of these programmes was attended by 15-20 youth. Community training programmes with youth were conducted on the following issues:

### Menstrual Hygiene and gender training:

Three training programmes for adolescent girls on menstrual hygiene and nutrition were conducted at the field centre in Visakhapatnam. In each 20-25 girls participated and the main activities during these trainings were understanding the body and human development, dialogue with the girls on menstrual health, learning to make sanitary napkins and preparing for kitchen gardens. The fourth training consisted of walking through the forest to identify medicinal plants with the help of local healer and an orientation on home remedies, wild plants and kitchen gardens to address menstrual health problems like white discharge, excess bleeding, inconsistent cycles, anemia and infections.

#### Health, sanitation and local remedies - Workshops with adolescent girls in Poolabanda







**Workshops with High School Girls on Gender and Reproductive Health**





### **Training Youth to organize Adivasi Women Farmers' Mela:**

Village level and field centre level orientation workshops were organized with adivasi youth to plan the Adivasi Women Farmers' Mela in Poolabanda village. The orientation consisted of understanding the purpose of the mela, dialogue with women farmers in their respective villages, planning with the women on collection of seeds and recipes for the mela and for conducting discussions around farming. As a result of this orientation, some of the youth worked with the women in their villages in preparing for their participation in the mela.



### **Cultural training and theatre:**

In order to use the medium of theatre and through exploring the traditional forms of cultural expression among the adivasis, a Trainer of Trainers Theatre Workshop was conducted in Hyderabad for Dhaatri, Sakhi and Prithvi teams. The three day workshop imparted skills to the three teams (15 members) in developing effective role plays, training community youth and motivating the communities to stop child labour and child marriages.

### Theatre Workshop



Theatre workshop at Secunderabad

Roadshow near Charminar

This was followed by a field cultural festival organized with the community youth and high school students in Visakhapatnam tribal hostels. A team of 40 theatre artists and students from Bangalore were hosted by Dhaatri with the help of the community youth groups and the District Education office and residential schools. The team spread across four villages and four residential high schools to conduct theatre workshops and to initiate youth into community youth theatre groups. We thank Mr.Lava Kumar of St.Joseph's College of Commerce, Bangalore and his team for conducting these trainings.

### Adivasi Cultural Theatre workshops at Government Schools in Paderu area from October 30-2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016





### **Community Youth Training on Child Rights Protection:**

Based on the skills imparted, the youth human rights defenders have conducted village level trainings and workshops with the youth on similar topics. The purpose of the workshops is to initiate youth vigilance groups at the community level to monitor violence, addictions and child labour, child marriages and governance programmes. Dhaatri team organized gender training in four high schools in Visakhapatnam and with youth groups in six villages to strengthen youth groups

### **Workshop with boys on gender equality and social security in adivasi residential high schools from November 26 and 27, 2017 at Malakapolam**





Dhaatri team made two field visits in September and October to Panna to follow up on the workshop with the Prithvi youth. A three day field level training was conducted for the youth and children in Panna in four mining affected villages

**Workshop on Youth Counselling Skills to Dhaatri Trainers held in Hospet**





### **Youth livelihood skills:**

Two adivasi youth masons were sent to Keystone Foundation for learning skills in rammed earth house construction. They had hands-on experience working with the construction team of Keystone which gave them an important opportunity to look at traditional house construction with local material using improved modern techniques.

### **Poolabanda Community Centre:**

The most exciting achievement of the year was the successful construction of a Community Resource Centre in Poolabanda village based on the skills learnt on rammed earth construction from Keystone. The youth masons improvised the tools locally and the team successfully completed a small community training centre in March 2017. This was inaugurated at the Adivasi Women Farmers' Mela. Dhaatri wishes to thank Keystone Foundation for all the training and support and the volunteers of Dhaatri for working so hard in raising funds through crowd funding and through organising food festivals and other small events in Hyderabad.

### **Learning to Construct a Rammed Earth Structure for our Community Centre at Poolabanda**



### **Volunteer Programme with German Students:**

One of the most exciting activities of Dhaatri in 2016-17 was the new collaboration with the Freunde der Erziehungstuns Rudolf Steiners, in providing an opportunity for student volunteership for social service in India. We hosted four volunteers this year-young, energetic and highly motivated women who brought new vigour and excitement to the team. They have participated in many field programmes with women, youth and children and contributed to the education and training programmes. Two of them worked very hard with the team in Poolabanda and performed many creative workshops with the adivasi children in the primary schools and high schools. They integrated several cultural activities with craft and sports and demonstrated how education can be a joyful experience for children. Two other volunteers participated in conducting field research on silicosis and forest issues, participated in the youth and children's trainings in the mining affected villages of Panna. Together all the four volunteers worked very hard in fund raising through their social networks and through organising food bazaars in Hyderabad which helped in raising public awareness on the concerns of women and children in remote forest areas along with raising resources for our Community Centre in Poolabanda. We cannot thank all our four volunteers enough for their valuable work with the children and youth.

#### **Volunteers organize Art Workshops with children in primary schools**



**Internships:**

In 2016-17, Dhaatri took two interns of the Masters' Degree programme in Dalit and Tribal Studies from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai for their rural practicum.

**Table of Dhaatri Activities for 2016-17**

<b>Activity list in Dhaatri field area in 2016-17</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Orissa exposure on women group build	6
Exposure visit for livelihood training to Keystone processing centres, Tamilnadu	3
Women farmers' village meeting	16
Awareness programme in Kumarthom school	12 Children
Youth workshop on drought and women workshop at Panna	5 members attended
Poolabanda –FRA youth meeting	52
Lolangipadu – FRA youth workshop	45
Dallapalli - FRA youth workshop	65
Cluster level training on seed keeping and distribution	Malapadu-38 Poolabanda -47 Dallapalli-63
FRC Formation	15 villages
AWID forum participation	2 members
Co-organised Women farmers' meeting in PMRC	350
Eco-friendly construction training	2 trainees
SMC training and conducting social audit	8 schools
Youth Workshop on setting up weekly market at Buruguchattu	30 participants
CFR claims	12 villages
Gender training for community youth	30 members
Trainer of trainers workshops	8 members
Counselling workshops for trainers (3 sessions)	5 members each
RTE workshop for youth	2 villages
High school programs on gender and environment	4 schools
Theatre workshop for team	16 members
Seeds distribution	10 villages
GPS trainings	15 members
FRA Survey and resurvey claims submitted	6 villages
Barefoot researchers' training for SAI Harvard study	7 members
Gender workshop for team	10 members
Women farmers' groups formation	10 villages
Youth workshop on theatre	4 high schools, 3 villages with 40 university students and faculty
Organic farming training for community youth and women	30
Menstrual health-training for adolescent girls	29
Study on tribal women in crime	1+2 TISS interns
Silicosis study and workshop with youth for capacity building	30 youth



<b>Activity list in Dhaatri field area in 2016-17</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Art workshops with children	3 schools covering 45 children
Gender workshop with high school boys	23
Workshop on Migration issues at Panna with youth and with women	32 40
Women farmers interviews	6
Silicosis study	49 interviews
KGBV Panna girls workshop on hygiene	28 girls
Education support	3 students
Training centre at Vijayawada	1
Solar Lights distribution	24 lamps

### **Our Appreciation:**

Our work with women and children and our growth as a resource centre this year was an effort not only by our own team at Dhaatri but a process of strong support and solidarity we received from many organisations and friends. We are most grateful to the two most supportive organisations that have helped and collaborated with Dhaatri -Keystone Foundation, the Nilgiris and Sakhi Trust, Hospet. Without their moral support, we could not have had the courage to take on much of the responsibilities of coordination and field actions. We particularly wish to thank Snehalatha Nath and Bhagyalakshmi of these two organisations for their consistent help in all situations. We also wish to thank Ashok Shrimali of mm&P for his exuberant support and collaboration in many of the coordination activities this year.

We wish to thank BothEnds, the Netherlands, Mama Cash, the Netherlands and South Asia Women's Fund for including us in many of their consultations and international meetings. We also wish to express our appreciation to all our individual donors and supporters for responding to our calls for assistance in times of crisis in the field and extending support to our development and education programmes. We would like to thank SAI Harvard University for selecting us from a wide cross section of civil society organisations to collaborate on a research programme.

### **News:**

We are happy to inform that Dhaatri Trust has been granted registration under the FCRA for receiving foreign funds from the year 2017.