



RAAH FOUNDATION
Annual Report
2021-2022

www.raahfoundation.org





Driving Sustainable Change

“ On the path (“Raah”) to Transformation ”

A thought is where it all begins. With a will to bring about a change that impacts lives, Raah Foundation is on a mission to empower underprivileged communities to select the most sustainable path (“raah”) forward.

Poverty can be eradicated and with the right approach and uniform allocation of resources, communities can thrive collectively.

As the drivers of change, we are here to do our bit to transform this world into a better place and create a sustainable difference.

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Founder's Note

“Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans”

We cannot think of a better way to describe how this year has gone by.

After celebrating a decade of our foundation earlier this year, we created a roadmap for the next decade. While we were still battling with the after-effects of Covid, we were struck with yet another wave – a deadlier and more chaotic one.

Unlike the first wave, this second wave spread fast creating havoc in our tribal communities. Unsure about what was happening, people started running helter-skelter or worse, still hiding in the jungles. The already fragile healthcare system crumbled under this disaster creating added challenges for the people as well as for the district administration. We then decided to rise to the occasion and established – Save Life, Protect Life, Provide Food Security and Livelihoods, our key focus for our upcoming fiscal year.

Fortunately, our appeal for support to save and protect lives resonated with numerous caring individuals and corporate donors, enabling us to go above and beyond what we aimed at doing.

Help poured in from different parts of the world – from Oxford university students to good Samaritans in Hong Kong, from the storytellers of Mumbai to a young volunteer in Bangalore. While this gave us enormous satisfaction, we still faced challenges in securing water for communities as several intervention villages got sealed due to the growing covid cases. Furthermore, Cyclone Tauktae followed soon after, adding to our stack of struggles.

We stepped up our efforts to provide livelihoods locally and went the extra mile, deeper and wider. Fortunately, our efforts were recognized and we found several new donors and supporters.

Women micro business got a big fillip when IIFL wealth foundation came forward supporting us to develop and facilitate opportunities for over 100's of women. We created over 12 different types of opportunities that women could choose from, for building their livelihood.

The availability of options was liberating for women while making the project sustainable. HDFC Bank supporting art-based livelihood projects further provided the needed impetus for this work.

The pandemic shifted our focus on the need to make communities financially resilient by creating ease of use of organised financial institutions. We identified 70 dynamic women and trained them in the nuances of doing everyday banking transactions digitally as well as paying their bills online. This win-win situation enabled better financial resilience to our community while creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for 70 odd women.

Climate action through the route of food forest got off the ground this year with a pilot plot on 10 acres of land in Jawhar. The learnings will be extended into a model that can then be scaled across different areas.

Overall, this was a great year wherein we achieved over two times growth in terms of both inputs and outcomes. We are super excited about the upcoming year as this would help us to build on the achievements of this year and grow bigger and stronger.



Girish Kulkarni
Founder & Strategic Advisor



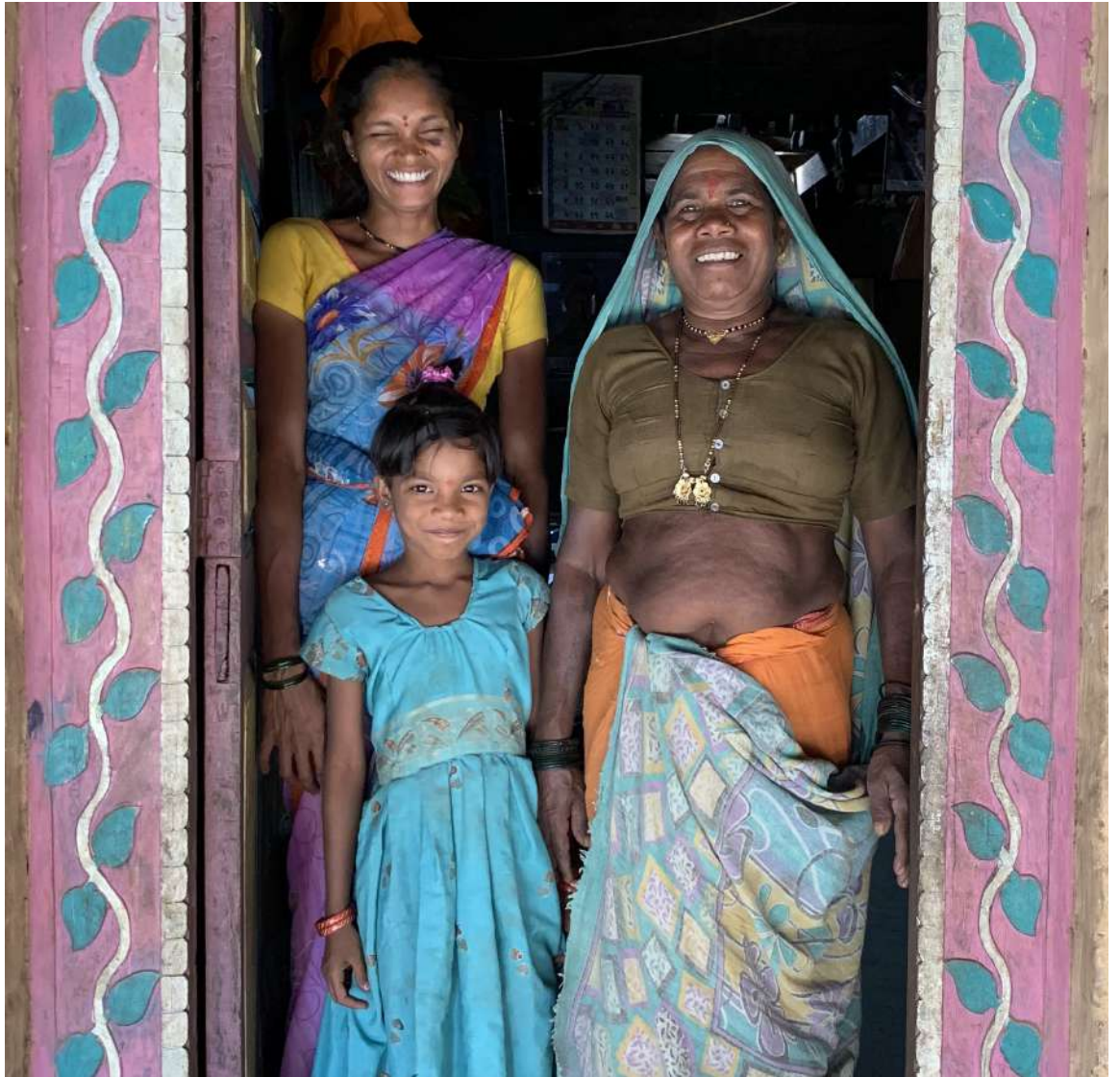
Sarika Kulkarni
CEO & Founder

VISION

“

A world where the marginalized
indigenous and tribal communities
live with dignity

”



MISSION

“

To empower tribal families to improve
their quality of life through sustainable
livelihoods while addressing the issues
of climate change

”

Our Partners

We thank our partners who supported us in 2021-2022 for their kindness.



Our Crowdsourcing Partners



and many individual donors and supporters.

About Us

Started by three professionals in 2011 who decided to use their education and experience to contribute to making this world a better place, Raah Foundation now is a large group of like-minded passionate individuals who have come together to find a solution to some of the most pressing and complicated problems of the world and to make a sustainable difference to this beautiful planet.



Raah Foundation adopts 11 Sustainable Development Goals of the 17 built on the principle *“leaving no one behind”*, to achieving sustainable development for all.

Holistic Tribal Development



01
WATER SECURITY



02
SUSTAINABLE
LIVELIHOOD & SKILL
DEVELOPMENT



03
CLIMATE ACTION

01.

Water Security For Tribal Communities

Programme Malhar

Water Security For Tribal Communities

According to the UN, Water security is defined as “the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability”.

Due to the topography hydrogeology, ignorance of locals, and a host of other factors, blocks of Jawhar and Mokhada have faced significant water shortages over the years. This is inspite of being the highest rainfall areas in Maharashtra.



Programme Malhar

The tribal communities of Jawhar and Mokhada oscillate between excess water to extreme water scarcity creating immense challenges for leading a normal life. Water is still a luxury to many tribes of Jawhar and Mokhada.

When probed deeper into the issue, the root cause of water scarcity is a **lack of water conservation and water security**. To tackle this, Programme Malhar was launched which focused on providing water security to the villages of Jawhar and Mokhada primarily through infrastructure.



Intervention Watershed Development



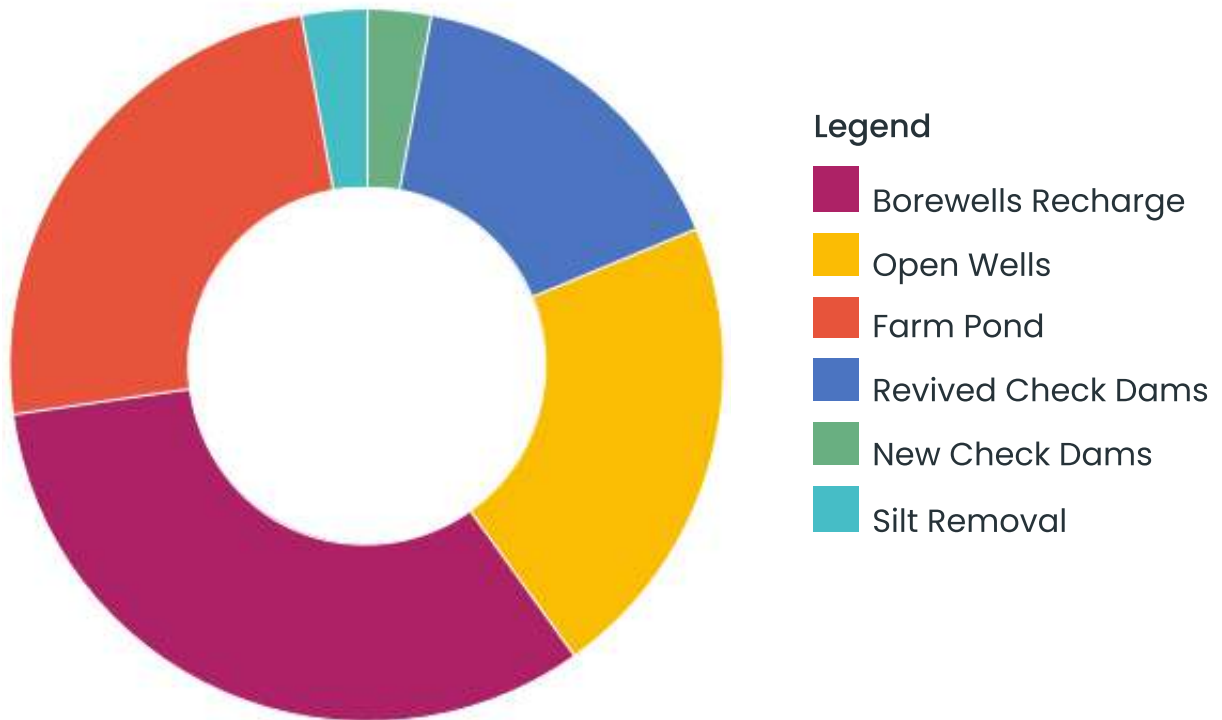
The work to make the tribal villages water secure begins only on the summer months of March – June as the soil needs to be completely dry to undertake any digging, excavation work.

Unfortunately like in 2020, 2021 brought in several challenges due to Covid Delta variant. Several villages had got sealed and it had become extremely challenging for us and our team to work. However, the determination of our team ensured that the critical villages that were on the brink became water secure. Malhar samiti's (village level water management committees) were formed and trained despite all the challenges faced.

Our team learnt to make do maximum work with limited resources in a limited time. Work had just gathered momentum when cyclone Tauktae hit the coastal parts of Maharashtra – creating havoc in our areas. Nevertheless, we are happy to showcase and share our work on water in 2021-2022.

We experimented with building a recharge structure for bore wells and have piloted this in two locations.

Watershed developed structures until 2021-2022



644 million litres of water conserved annually



02.

Sustainable Livelihoods & Skill Development

Programme Krishi | Programme Urja | Programme Samarth

02.

i.

Programme Krishi

Farming | Intervention



Farming As A Livelihood

India is an agrarian economy and is a land of small and marginal farmers. While majority of the tribal farmers are small land holders, severe water scarcity does not allow them to grow year-round crops. They also were traditional forest produce gatherers and lack adequate and modern farming knowledge. Our team works with the farmers to build their capacities and train them in the modern techniques while also curating the most viable and sustainable farming solution for their land type.

We also procure high quality seeds and saplings and provide other support like fencing, drip system etc. to make farming lucrative and exciting for the farmers.



Intervention

Farming was a big push as we scaled up Green livelihoods as our response to creating local opportunities for our tribal communities to make them more resilient. It was critical that they reduce their dependency on migration and start earning a decent income by living in the comfort of their homes.

Agroforestry :

NUMBER OF FARMERS ENROLLED

2200

FRUIT & VEGETABLE SAPLINGS

1,00,000+

(cashew, mango, amla, guava, lemon, jasmine)

ACRES

1000



New Experiments and Pilots:

After enormous success in spine gourd farming (2020), this year we experimented with three other crops – bush pepper, onion and turmeric. Farmers were sent for exposure visits and provided with training, capacity building and all other support to implement the pilot.

Other supplementary support:

Fencing is an extremely critical part of any agri intervention as there is a huge problem of free grazing cattle. This year we supported over 200 farmers put a fence around their farms.

Drip Irrigation systems:

Water needs to be judiciously used and we have been encouraging drip infrastructure widely. Drip irrigation is known to reduce the water usage by a third. Over 75 beneficiaries were supported with drip system this year.



SRAY PUMPS

400

WATER TANKS

76

TRAINED IN WATER USAGE FOR SEED PLANTING & CROP CYCLE

121

Women

71

Men



02.

ii.

Programme Urja

Agribased Livelihood | Art Based Livelihood | Ecologically Sustainable Livelihood | Microbusiness | Financial Opportunities

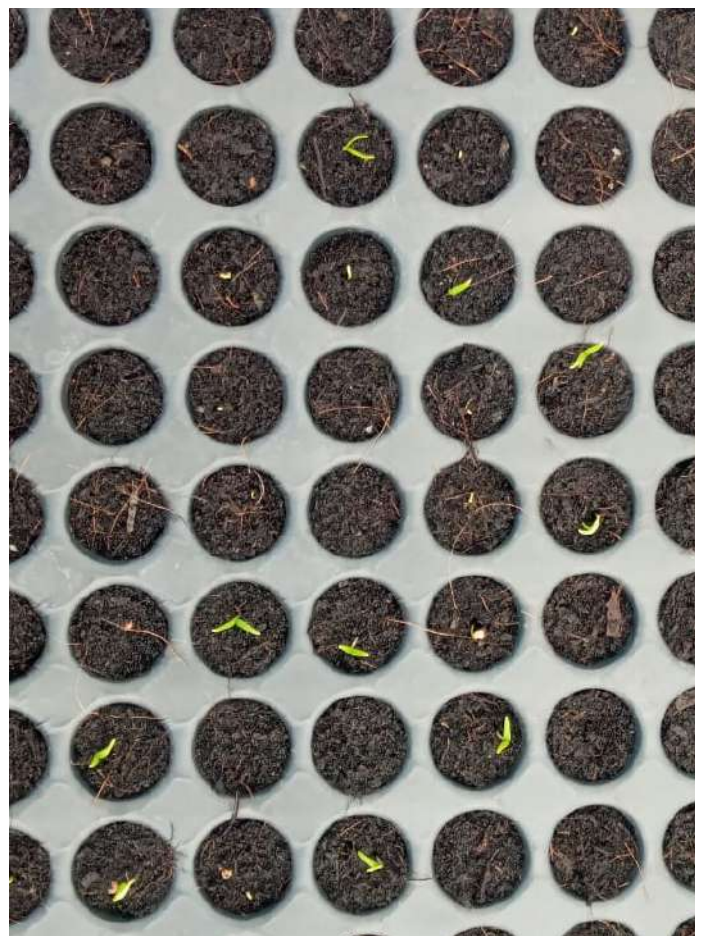
1000+ women entrepreneurs enrolled, supplementing their family income



Agribased Livelihood

Vermicompost: Raah Foundation regularly purchases vermi-compost from the open market to support its farmers under program Krishi. We will now be creating women entrepreneurs to make vermi-compost so that we can buy it from them, saving on transportation logistics. Women are provided with concrete trays, earthworms, shade net, pipes and watering cans. The compost is ready within 4 months and women can make an income.

- ◆ Year-round farming
- ◆ Agroforestry
- ◆ Monsoon farming
- ◆ Plant nursery
- ◆ Vermi compost



Intervention

Farm Nursery: Raah Foundation has been purchasing saplings each year to support the Krishi program. We will train women to set up farm nurseries, creating captive entrepreneurs. Women are provided with grow bags, compost, trays for growing seedlings, cocopeat, manure and seeds. Seedlings can be sold from 6 months onwards.

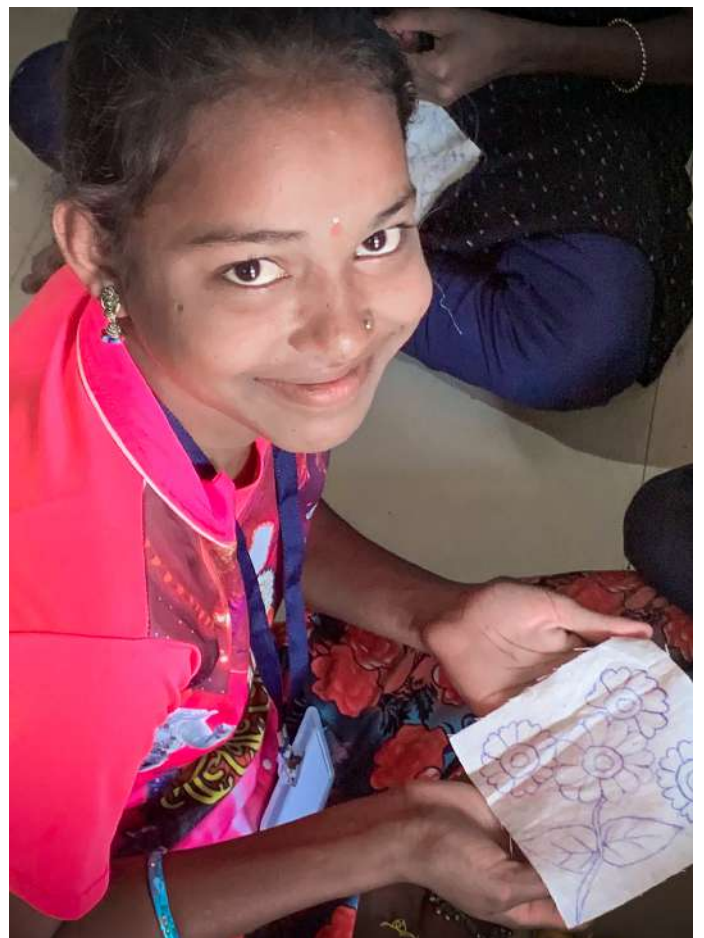


Art Based Livelihood

It is extremely critical to invest in women and ensure their sustainable participation in economic development of any community. Our tribal women are extremely hardworking and our Project on sustainable livelihoods facilitates local opportunities that support economic empowerment and development.

The best gift we can give to tribal women is provide them with choices. Through on ground research and multiple iterations – we have curated several opportunities for women that can provide a sustainable income from the comfort of their homes.

- ◆ Warli Art
- ◆ Grass Weaving
- ◆ Fabric Patchwork Art



Warli Art

Warli art is a traditional art form practised by the population in these areas and is recognized as a male-dominated art form. Raah Foundation's work via this project has a two-pronged transformational impact - changing the mindset of the local population about gender-defined entry and practice norms as well as providing a stream of livelihood for the trained girls. Under this Project, Raah Foundation brought in renowned master trainer Mr. Prakash Pithole, who used a combination of methodologies to train 5 girls in the Warli Art form.



Intervention

Grass weaving has been found to be an ancient art form practiced by several women in our tribal belt. We however found it to be on the verge of extinction as women were not able to commercialize the art form. We formed a group and identified a local trainer to rejuvenate the art form. Specialized trainers from Madhubani, Bihar were invited to further enhance their commercial skills. Women are now weaving magic with their fingers and making beautiful baskets, hats, table mats etc. These products would soon be available online for sale.



Ecologically Sustainable Livelihood

The tribal communities all over India are connected very deeply to their geographies. They revere every aspect of nature around them and make optimal use of even waste of the trees and shrubs. In line with their perspective and with Raah Foundation's ESG strategy to create- a 'Circular Economy' (a community that utilises its waste via re and upcycling measures), several skill initiatives were imparted to the women.

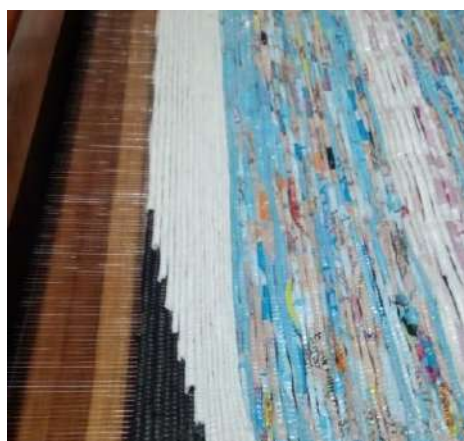
- ◆ Textile waste upcycling
- ◆ Single use plastic waste upcycling



Intervention

Plastic waste upcycling: Single use plastic bags, wrappers etc. are collected from Mumbai and locally and used to upcycle them into useful bespoke products.

Textile waste upcycling: Textile waste is dumped to the landfills and adds to the innumerable woes we are already facing. We collect textile waste before it is sent to the landfills and our women use it over looms to make mats and carpets etc.



Microbusiness

We map the village to identify the gaps that can be filled with providing micro business opportunities. We then select a determined yet needy women and train her. We also support her extensively to use the opportunity to the fullest.

- ◆ Grocery
- ◆ Dry Fish Selling
- ◆ Tailoring
- ◆ Flour Mill
- ◆ Photocopy
- ◆ Blacksmith
- ◆ Food business
- ◆ Fruit and vegetable vending





Jewellery Shop



Flour Mills & Groceries



Photocopy Machine



Blacksmiths



Tailoring



Fruit & Food Carts

Intervention

One of the best livelihood opportunities for these indigenous women is Tailoring. Not only are they able to practise it on their own time, but materials are plentifully available and affordable too. Also, it is seemingly a skilled livelihood that has social currency and respect. Women perceive it as a skill that they can master easily. The pandemic situation necessitated finding alternate sources of employment urgently, and many women believed that this would be a skill that would be a source of income in the short term too.



Financial Opportunities

One of the biggest obstacles in financial inclusion is the distance of the financial institutions from our villages. Going to banks is an arduous task and often involves a day's journey and loss of that day's wage. It was hence critical to improve the access to the institutions by bringing them closer to the people. We facilitated this by creating a network of women called E Dosts. Each of these E Dost have been allocated 800 – 1000 houses and they move around facilitating financial and banking transactions like checking account balance, deposits, withdrawals, transfers and so on. They also support utility bill payments and support investing in FD's and RDs etc. This is helping us move closer to our target of creating financially resilient and inclusive communities.

◆ E-Dost



E-Dost

Intervention

Women find it easier to approach other women to carry out these transactions, and the EDosts who perform them charge a small commission per transaction, thus earning money for themselves. A significant improvement was noticed in financial resilience and discipline, making this Raah Foundation's best and most valued skill training.

Services Provided By E-Dost

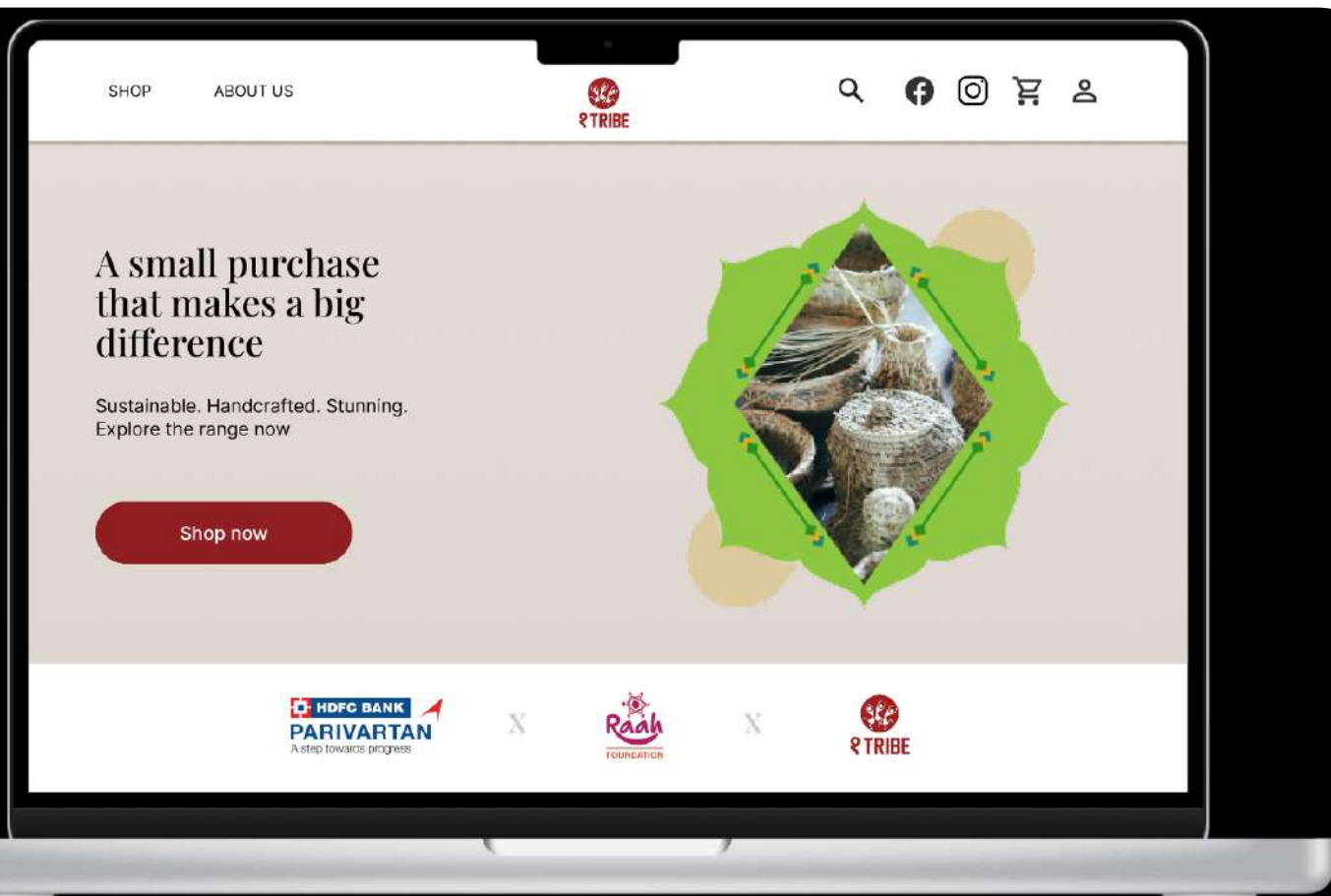
- 01 Investing in FDs & RDs
- 02 Setting - up of Bank Accounts
- 03 Deposit, withdrawals and e-transfers
- 04 Operating other financial instruments
- 05 Checking Balances
- 06 Utility payments like paying bills



Launch Of 1 Tribe

1 Tribe is the brand name of the products being weaved by our tribal women using the above three skills. The website would soon be operational, and products will be available to the world at large.

www.1tribe.in



03.

Climate Action

Regenerative Food Forests | Ecological Restoration Of Landscape By
Rewilding

Climate Action: Regenerantative Food Forests



The disastrous effects of climate change are undeniable and are acknowledged globally today as a severe threat to life on earth. Our indigenous people are first in the line of fire of climate change. It has become critical for us to step up our efforts by devising appropriate strategies and taking action through ecological restoration by promoting biodiversity and creating greener livelihoods.

We adopted the strategy of creating Food Forests on barren, unused land to mitigate the challenges of climate change at our level and in our geography.

Food forests have the potential to address numerous problems for the tribal indigenous communities, including poverty alleviation as forest resources generate income through employment and the sale of forest produce.

They also help reduce the vulnerability to climate change impacts and safeguard essential ecosystem services such as air and water purification, pollination, providing nutrition, controlling soil erosion, and sequestering carbon.

We have over 250 different species of plants, bringing in rich biodiversity.

No chemicals of any sort have been used. Every tree will be geotagged for identification, monitoring, and donor feedback. The trees become independent within three to four years of plantation. Some may even start fruiting.

Food forests are proven to provide sustainable livelihoods, access to nutritious food, environmental rejuvenation, and community building. The learnings and experiences of creating a Food Forest have been documented at every stage and the model created is now ready to be scaled up through replication across other locations.



Regenerative Food Forests

For the pilot, a 10-acre land belonging to a private farmer was chosen wherein only local native indigenous plants suited to the moist deciduous forest were used.

The plot of land was divided into the following Zones:

IMPACT CREATED

63 acres, 4050 saplings & 45 livelihoods

7-layered food forest (trees at 2 canopy heights, shrubs, herbs, grasses, tubers, and climbers) to meet the nutritional needs of the indigenous people.

Bamboo - used by the locals to create tribal handicrafts and utensils.

Rare, endangered, and threatened species to preserve and propagate rare and endemic species of trees from the forests.

Mini-grasslands for the birds to nest.

Groves for birds with local Ficus varieties that birds love. With more birds coming into our zones, there will be more seeds from their dropping, improving the biodiversity.

Groves consisting of native wild fruits and forest edibles.

Zones for plenty of flowering plants to attract pollinators – butterflies, bees, and birds.



Ecological Restoration Of Landscape By Rewilding



The adverse effects of climate change are real and it is here. So, to restore the lost ecological balance and diversity of landscapes, we decided to combine the wisdom of indigenous livelihoods along with the latest technological interventions to come up with solutions that help revive life on these lands naturally.

Embarking on this mission, for the commons, we decided to take up unused, barren lands for ecological restoration using a technique called rewilding.

Ecological restoration required a strategic plan based on land type, plant species suitable for the area, protection from grazing animals, soil and moisture conservation and nurturing for four years. Creating awareness among the local community and ensuring livelihoods is an integral part of the programme.

This programme plays a crucial role in maintaining ecological health, reducing poverty, and improving collective action in a village. Ecological restoration of common lands would result in a positive impact that is far-reaching and undoubtedly affect the entire community.





IMPACT CREATED

100 acres, 5000 saplings
& 55 livelihoods



04.

Covid -19 Support

COVID - 19 Relief

Background: Wave 2 - Delta Variant



The second wave of the Covid - 19 wave resulted in a significant shortage of medicines and oxygen facilities. The most impacted due to this deficiency were the rural, and tribal areas due to socio-demographic and geographic factors.

Since Raah Foundation has been a dependable social partner in these geographical areas, the local Government reached out for critical-care support and vaccination drives.

Raah Foundation took immediate action and worked in immediate relief as well as rehabilitation of the marginalised communities in these areas.



Intervention In Healthcare



The interventional activities summarized in the 3 broad themes

Save
Protect **Lives**
Rebuild Livelihood

The interventional activities summarized in the 3 broad themes

SAVE LIVES

24

oxygen concentrators were sourced and rushed to Jawhar and Mokhada

200+

lives saved thanks to timely provision of oxygen and access to HRCT scan facility.

PROTECT LIVES

Masks and Gloves distribution - awareness and campaigns to encourage correct usage of masks and gloves for the locals and the health workers

Distribution of oxymeters and selection and training of youth volunteers for early detection of symptoms

Encouraging locals to get vaccinated

Registering on CoWin app.

Conducting the vaccination drive with the Govt.

REBUILD LIVELIHOODS

Monthly ration support extended to 5000+ families to prevent hunger related issues.

Launch of Green Livelihoods - an agroforestry initiative.

05.

Future Plans

Our goal for FY 2022-2023

Raah Foundation believes in driving a sustainable change. Our cumulative efforts focus on bettering the livelihoods of the tribal and rural communities of Palghar and Nashik in key areas of life- water security, livelihood & skill development and climate action.

Our goal for the coming year 2022-23 is to:-

- a) Conserve 1068 million litres of water,
- b) Livelihood - 2700 Farmers will be supported. 1,000 women entrepreneurs will be trained on digital and financial literacy to improve their enterprise,
- c) Skill Development - 10,000 youth will be imparted skills for improving their employability across 10 centres in Maharashtra,
- d) Climate Action - Ecological restoration will be done on the headwater of the Godavari river in Nashik district. Apart from the environmental benefits such as increase in biodiversity and biomass; improved soil and ground water our efforts will have a huge impact on the quality and quantity of water in the Godavari river. In 2022-23, we will be restoring 525 acres by planting 78,750 saplings and nurturing them for 4 years.

Every program is carefully planned with a team of experts and passionate individuals who strive to do every bit of their capacity to facilitate an easier life for the villagers and the environment.

Small yet significant, these efforts have always added up, creating a community that fosters oneness and drives the wheels of transforming this world into a better place.

For the upcoming year, Raah is all set to take more under its umbrella of initiatives. We look forward to a fruitful year abundant with successful projects, happier faces, and empowered communities.

Water

1068 million litres of water conserve

01

Climate Action

525 acres will be restored by planting **78,750 saplings** which will be nurtured for **4 years**

02

Sustainable Livelihood & Skill Development

2700 Farmers will be supported

1,000 women entrepreneurs will be trained on digital and financial literacy to improve their enterprise

10,000 youth will be imparted skills for improving their employability across **10 centres** in Maharashtra

03

Reiterating Our Core Pillars

1. Climate Change mitigation and adaptation is integrated across all projects
2. Deep understanding of tribal communities
3. Design thinking approach- we include the voice of the farmers in every step of the project.
4. Low admin costs – 100% of the funding goes directly to the Adivasis
5. Founder/CEO, a women-led nonprofit with 100 % women in executive positions. CEO and the small leadership team is mostly pro bono hence admin costs are low.
6. Founder and family are donors to the Foundation
7. Holistic approach to tribal development – scaling deep and scaling wide simultaneously
8. A strong advisory board and committed donors and partners
9. Partnership approach – Work closely with Local leaders, Block Development Office, District Administration, State Government. All field team members are local.
10. Experienced collaborators and technical partners – ACWADAM- hydrogeology experts, Oikos – ecological services experts.
11. Meets all compliances – 80G, 12A, FCRA, 501(C)
12. All programs have a built-in exit strategy





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