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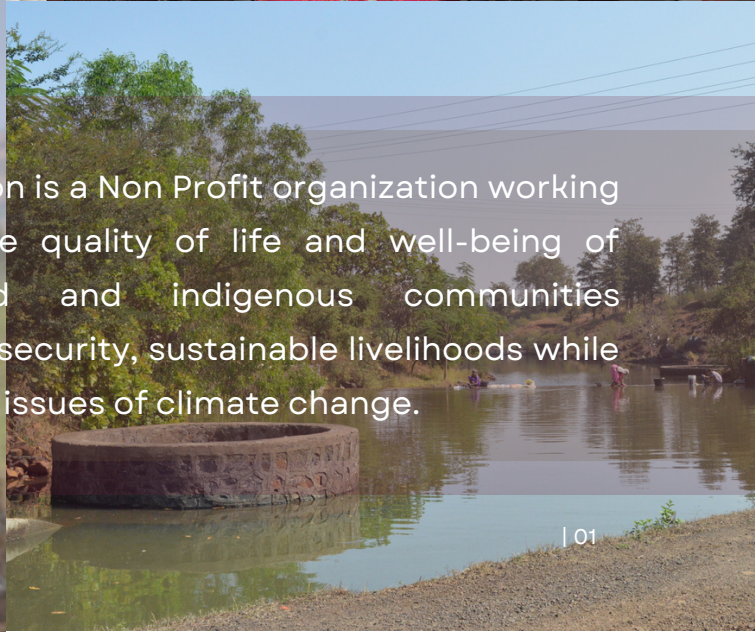
Gender Report

FY 22 - 23



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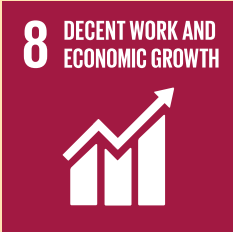

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Our Mission

Raah Foundation is a Non Profit organization working to improve the quality of life and well-being of underprivileged and indigenous communities through water security, sustainable livelihoods while addressing the issues of climate change.

Raah Foundation adopts 11 Sustainable Development Goals of the 17

Program	SDG Mapping
Program Water Security	 
Program Sustainable Livelihoods- Climate Smart Agriculture	  
Program Sustainable Livelihoods for Women	  
Program Sustainable Livelihoods - Skill Training	  
Program Climate Action	  

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Water

Streamlined water work into three parts - work on surface water enhancement, on ground water table improvement and on on water usage & a demand lens by catalysing people around cooperatives to ensure water use efficiency.



Sustainable Livelihoods: Climate Smart Farming

After a successful pilot on turmeric, started another pilot on dragon fruit known as a resilient crop. Our flagship food forest and other projects continue growing impacting over 2000 small & marginal farmers directly.



Sustainable Livelihoods: Skill Training

The first centre was inaugurated at Dadar to provide skill training for employment in service sector to urban poor youths. The program provides guaranteed employment. The program has enormous potential and will be expanded soon to other locations.



Sustainable Livelihoods: for Women

In Jawhar & Mokhada: focus was on digital literacy & financial inclusion to ensure women got better grip on their micro businesses to become more confident that supports scale up.

In Pen the product based livelihoods project was further strengthened and expanded. The focus is first on identifying the market & then moving backwards to teaching the relevant skill to the women.



Climate Action

The program was consolidated after an elaborate stakeholder engagement that led to a strategic focus on rejuvenating and reviving the barren & degraded land in the upstream catchment of Godavari river in Nashik.

This involved planting 45,000 saplings on 163 acres in the first phase. The plan for next five years is to work extensively over 15,000 acres.

Partnership with the Government:

This year also saw a successful collaboration with the District Administration and Forest Department as well as multiple Gram Panchayats. There is also a liaisoning with other organisations working on environment in Nashik.

We are on a mission of creating a better and dignified world for some of the poorest communities that are stuck in intergenerational intertwined layers of poverty. We are moving closer to our mission - thanks to amazing our passionate partners, donors and an incredible team.

FOUNDERS MESSAGE



Girish Kulkarni

Founder and Strategic Advisor,
Raah Foundation



Dr. Sarika Kulkarni

CEO and Founder, Raah
Foundation

When we started Raah Foundation and decided to focus on the tribal indigenous areas, we remember the first few visits extremely vividly. Village after village, we saw no men; only women and girls, young children, and elderly living in the villages. Men had migrated to the urban cities to work as casual labour. It became very obvious to us that women had to be at the centre of any development project that we plan and implement. We use a gender lens to look at all our projects and this approach over the years has made our work extremely sustainable and scalable. Women have played a big role in what we do and everything we do. Every year we assess our work with women and analyse the gaps that may exist to become better at what we do and how we do it.

Over the years we have been privy to multiple stories of courage and change that have emerged from the field validating our approach. Women are taking development into their own hands and changing the course of their lives. Our work on creating sustainable economic opportunities has paved the way for their improved status in the community giving them the much needed confidence. Many of them have become leaders and even won local elections and inspiring the next generation to emulate this success.

When we started working with women – we always used to wonder how to evaluate our work and how it was impacting them. While economic opportunities can be quantified and assessed – it is very difficult to assess the impact on their self-esteem and confidence. We were desperate to find and calibrate this change and one day while being busy communicating we had a eureka moment. My colleague had just come back from a field visit and was narrating her experiences of speaking with the women and she casually mentioned that she had a better conversation this visit as women had opened up and were more comfortable and that they were looking into her eyes while talking. We froze for a moment and realised that this was what we were looking for – and “**looking into the eyes**” became our scale and our code word to understand if there has been a change. Every time we met a woman we noted down if she looked into our eyes and if she didn’t how much time did she take to do that. And what happened between the two big events – from not looking into our eyes to actually looking into our eyes. This became our success mantra.

While we have found KPIs (Key performance indicators) for tracking most of our work – we haven’t yet succeeded in calibrating the happiness and satisfaction our work with women has given us.

Our senior management team too is dominated by women – strong enormously passionate women. They are leading from the front, are ruthless about going above and beyond, yet extremely humble and empathetic.

We are extremely proud of the “Raah” (path) we have created that is creating a better, happier, and healthier life for the tribal and underprivileged communities.

How do we calibrate our gender work?

Our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are based on how many opportunities did we create for women and how they use it for :

1



Economic Empowerment

2



Leadership Roles

3



Financial Acumen & Resilience

4



Self Esteem & Confidence

It is important that **her status improves** in the household as well as in the community and the village. It is important that **she earns money and saves** it to feel empowered. It is also important that **her confidence is enhanced** and she is encouraged to become leaders and participates in local level governance activities. It is important that **our work touches every aspect of her life.**

Our work directly benefits women



WATER AVAILABILITY

Water underpins all social problems and especially can be a huge obstacle for women the absence of year-round water availability keeps her busy with water. Our program on water works on multiple fronts:

1

Improve ground water table. Catch every drop where it falls and when it falls on the surface.

2

Map water use with source and ensure year round water availability in each source.

3

Work on both - the demand side and supply side. Ensure judicious water usage while creating adequate supply sources.

900

million litres of annual rain water harvesting capacity created.

60,000

Water beneficiaries across 110 villages



Women are both direct as well as indirect beneficiaries.

Direct: When we make the village drinking water secure (availability is always more than its need), we immediately unlock a woman's time and energy which can be channelized into an activity that makes her life better.



When women do not have to walk for water, they save :-

1500

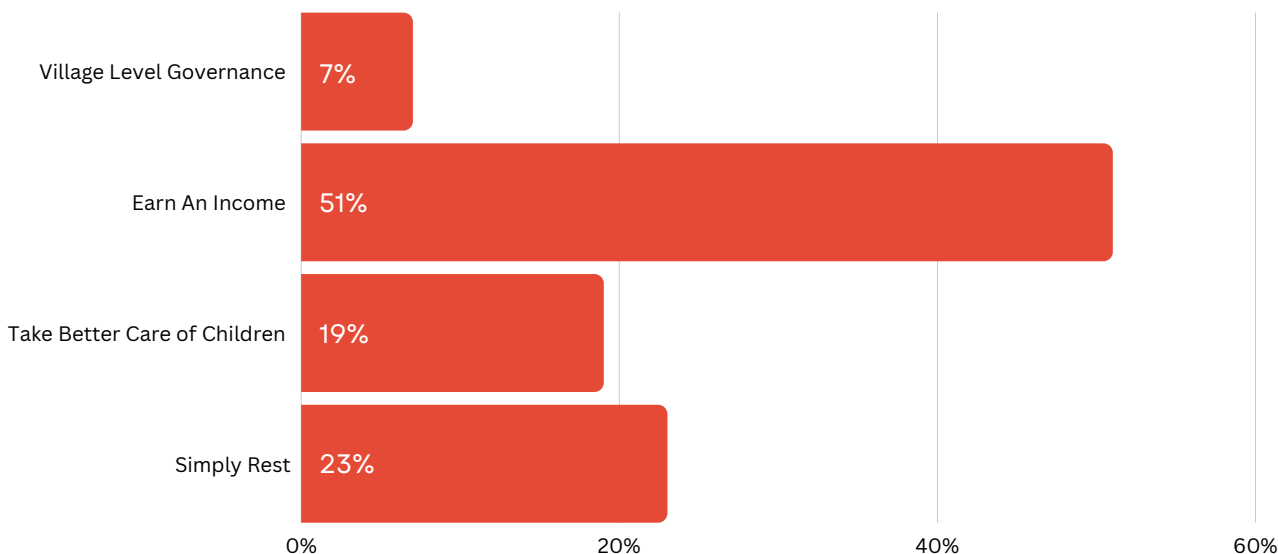
hours per annum on an average.

1/5th

of active life

This saved time unlocks a woman's life and she can now choose how to spend this time.

We asked women how they want to use this saved time and they gave us the following answers:



“for the first time since my childhood I had control and choice on how I want to spend my time”; Bagubai told us when drinking water became available in her village for the first time since she remembers.

-Bagubai

While, Laxmibai confesses that for the first time in her life, the income she was earning made her feel good about herself. This was surprising, in-fact shocking as she was fetching water, she cooked, she took care of her family – she was doing so much for her family yet it was the income that made her think she was contributing. This was a huge revelation and goes on to slot women in roles that are not recognised or respected although are extremely critical for any family.

Lost Income:

To put things into perspective we decided to monetize the lost income (time spent

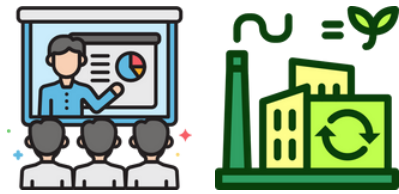
on fetching water if used for economic activity).

1500 hrs **₹ 273**
 per annum lost Current labor
 due to water rate in the state
 scarcity we work in

₹ 4,09,500
 Lost Income for one woman (Assuming the woman uses at least few hours saved for earning an income)

We can easily eradicate poverty If we just make villages' water secure and connect women willing to use this time productively to earn an income with possible opportunities. Once water unlocks time for women – we focus on other aspects of her growth and create a situation that will make her strong enough to start looking into our eyes.

Economic Emancipation of Women



FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Our program with women has been designed and curated with their perspectives and point of view. Even though they save time on water, they still have multiple other household chores to attend to and can find only a few hours each day for livelihoods. Also, some women can grow in independent activities while others thrive in a group. We have both types of programs to cater to different personalities.

We reach out to the women who are interested in pursuing an economic opportunity and ask them what they would like to do.

And they take time to decide. We were initially perplexed and surprised about this. When probed further, we were told that the women have never been asked this question before and don't know what to do when given a choice.

This meant we had to further work with our women and encourage them to take decisions about their life and their "career". We learned slowly and organically

that our programs evolved to now directly creating opportunities to over 1000 women directly and several others indirectly. These women are confidently earning back the lost income and changing the course of their life.

From being unsure to checking out the opportunity to confidently running & growing the business and earning enough money to feel good about themselves. And contributing to household decisions as also village-level governance - our women have surely come a long way. All the woman needs really is an opportunity and the removal of obstructions that stand in the way of her pursuing it.

A large number of women becoming entrepreneurs has helped us make it mainstream thus improving the overall perception of women by everyone. The enhanced capacity realisation of women has improved their income-earning potential and nudged them to move above and beyond.

Opportunities created for Individual Women

Grocery Shop | Blacksmith | Food/ Fruit Stalls | Knickknack Corner | Photocopy Business | Flour Mill business



Opportunities created for Group Businesses

Quilting Art | Grass Weaving Art | Textile Waste Up-cycling Business | Plastic Waste Up-cycling Business | Warli Art



Digital & Financial Literacy for Women



DIGITAL & FINANCIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN

Most of the women entrepreneurs we work with have never been to school and cannot read or write. While their enthusiasm and excitement to use the opportunity to change their lives by earning a sustainable income is huge, they are limited by their literacy levels. This was creating a big obstacle for us as these women entrepreneurs were finding it difficult to get a complete grip on their businesses and hence creating challenges for scaling up. We took the help of digital tools and got our women entrepreneurs onboarded on an easily usable app that uses a pictorial interface for communication. This broke the ice and our women quickly adopted these tools which are now helping them scale up their business and improve their income.

Women are also taught basic money management skills which further helps them use the money earned judiciously and save it wisely and rightly to become resilient.

Women as Financial Advisors:

The villages we work in are located on mountain tops or deep valleys and are quite cut off. The banks and other financial institutions are located in the

block headquarter and our community often has to spend the entire day walking to access them. This makes using organised financial institutions unviable and difficult to use. Unfortunately, this forces the communities to save the limited income earned by them in boxes and pans at home. This is responsible for keeping the community perennially stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation. It was important that banks are used regularly and the communities have the acumen and understanding of using banks effectively. The only way forward was to bring banks to people. We created an army of women financial advisors cum banking correspondents, each catering to 500 - 600 households. These women have been extensively trained in financial literacy skills and have been equipped with a biometric accessory that can enable basic banking transactions like checking account balance, transferring, withdrawing, or depositing money, etc. These women also guide the community on fixed deposits and benefits of savings and investments etc. They charge a small commission on every transaction.



We have 70 such women financial advisors supporting over 4000 families to become financially resilient while earning a respectable monthly income. The women are called **E-Dost** (Dost is a Hindi word for friend). These women have become role models in the village and have supported our cause of building a gender neutral world.

Women in Leadership roles:

We love to see the world from a woman’s perspective and hence incorporate their opinions and viewpoints in everything we do. To make our work sustainable we create local village-level committees. These committees take our work forward by donning leadership roles and taking charge of village development allowing the villagers to self-sustain and for us to exit. All of these committees mandatorily are gender neutral and ensure equal wom-



-en participation. Some of these women leaders have found the confidence to even don political hats and have fought and won local-level elections. And this is the beginning. We have the vision of supporting women to come forward and take development into their hands and are taking multiple steps in this direction.

Resilience in Women for Climate Action



WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Last year, amidst steep slopes, strong winds, and heavy rain, men doubted the women's ability to handle the plantation. Undeterred, the women accepted the challenge and successfully planted 5,000 saplings with unwavering determination. The men prepared the pits while the women did the planting.



Empowering Women Through Youth Skill Training: A Tale of Transformation & Progress



YOUTH SKILL DEVELOPMENT

A brighter future starts by taking action today. Since the inception of the Youth Skill Training Program in Nov' 2022, there has been a significant and measurable impact - with 37 women already completing their training and an additional 12 on their way to finishing the course as well. This training provides valuable opportunities for **21st-century skill development** and employment prospects through its diverse and comprehensive modules that encompass essential life skills, values, English language proficiency, financial management through Tally and GST, computer literacy, retail, and sales and marketing techniques. This holistic curriculum arms the women - also known as 'business associates' - with the knowledge and expertise they need to achieve success in the corporate world. Furthermore, it arms them with **economic independence** that helps them take independent decisions for their present and future.

With dedicated efforts and 280 hours of intensive training over the course of 35

days, these women have developed the competence and confidence to thrive in various service sector roles.

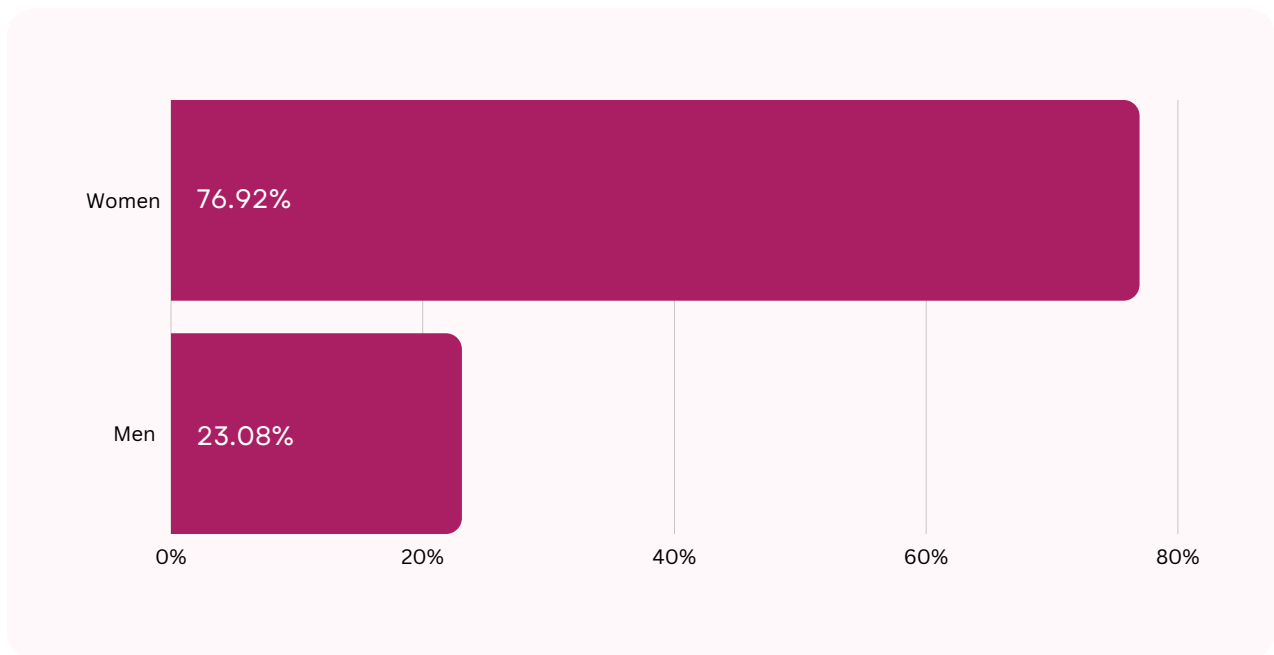
The impact goes beyond training, as we brought 33 women back to the workforce who have already secured employment as a direct result of the programs and are continuing their journey of transformation.



The success achieved so far highlights the potential of this program, leading to plans for expansion into other locations. As the program gears up for future initiatives, including the College to Corporate program for final-year students and employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector, it is clear that these skill training programs are transforming the lives of women and paving the way for a more inclusive society.



Women in Senior Leadership of Raah Foundation



To conclude, the entire team of Raah Foundation takes pride in our work with women and the impact we are making to make a better, healthier, and happier world for them. It is a world they are designing for themselves and where they feel confident and safe. A world where they decide and they participate.

We will continue on our mission of creating a gender just and neutral world.

OUR PARTNERS



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