



SAMERTH CHARITABLE TRUST WORKS WITH VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES - EMPOWERING THEM TO GAIN ACCESS TO THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Our vision is to build a Humane, Sustainable & Equitable Society



Samerth Charitable Trust firmly believes that every human being must live a dignified life. In our journey spanning over two decades, we have firmly put this belief into action, empowered vulnerable, marginalised communities and provided them with the social as well as economic dignity.

Our Mission:

- To work towards strengthening capacities of vulnerable communities & groups to get their entitlement in every aspect of human existence
- To influence policy making to include provisions for excluded and marginalized

groups by creating alternative models.

- To engage and advocate towards gender balanced development through collective, participatory and empowering actions

Our Values:

We believe in urgent action, innovation, using traditional knowledge with scientific temperament.

Over two decades, Team Samerth has worked relentlessly, empowered vulnerable, marginalised communities and provided them with the social as well as economic dignity. Our collaboration with government programmes gave us the strength to broaden our reach and impact. The support we have received from institutions, corporates and thousands of generous individuals has enabled us to touch the lives at the grassroots level.



BACKGROUND:

Samerth Charitable Trust, also referred to as Samerth was founded to capacitate people and institutions so that they can live a life of dignity. Samerth actively started working in 2001 in Kutch District, Gujarat as a response to the devastating earthquake at that time. The earthquake left several individuals either maimed, homeless or without their families. Samerth initiated support through building houses, facilitating health facilities, providing safe and clean drinking water & promoting education. The Kutch program has now evolved to work extensively on participatory ground water management, reviving ponds and wells, building rain roof water harvesting structures. Over the years the Kutch Program has impacted approximately 50,000 lives directly and ensuring a 25% drop in distressed migration, a huge issue in the area.

In 2002, we expanded our work in Ahmedabad, with focus once again was on marginalised and vulnerable communities. We worked with children & adults with special needs, on early education and leadership development among women of the local communities. Today, the Ahmedabad program runs a day care and vocational centre for 90 children and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, providing them access to daily therapies such as physio, speech and psychotherapy. They are also given regular consultations with specialists; an individualised education plan (IEP) is developed for all along with providing vocational training to young adults. The team also works with 13 government schools & community centres on enhancing education in the foundation years, reaching out to more than 2500 children.

In 2006, the Samerth team moved its focus to Chhattisgarh and began working with the PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) like the Baiga tribal community in Bilaspur district. The program now has spread across 8 other districts and works on education, water management, livelihoods and community empowerment with primitive tribal groups.

CURRENT PROGRAMMES:**PARTICIPATORY GROUND WATER MANAGEMENT:**

Samerth uses the Participatory Ground Water management (PGWM) principles and emphasizes on Building, Reviving, Repairing and Reconstructing Water-Harvesting structures through its initiatives. The programme is based mainly to understand the groundwater scenario in the regions of Kutch and Chhattisgarh. Samerth began working in 2001 in Rapar region of Kutch, a drought-prone area facing water scarcity for 8 months of the year. In Kutch –Samerth has constructed, revived and recharged over 342 ponds, 131 wells, 26 check dams, 5 stepwells, 135 individual RRWHS (Rain Roof Water Harvesting Structures) at the household level and 25 in schools, Anganwadi 7, Gram panchayat 1 (data as of 2021). Due to Samerth's interventions, 10% of families are now only migrating in the peak summers for a short span of two months. In the last two decades due to Samerth's interventions, 15,000 households from Rapar, Nakhatrana and Bhachau, have increased their incomes from Rs. 24,000 to Rs. 80,000 due to water availability for growing cash crops, increasing livestock, access to green pastures and carrying out dairy activities (providing milk to local dairies).

In Chhattisgarh, the tribal communities living in remote interiors and forested areas do not have a continuous supply of safe drinking and usable water. Samerth's programme on the water in the state aims to ensure safe drinking water, use of Participatory Ground Water management (PGWM) methods and to strengthen self-governance at the community level. Samerth began working in 2007 and till date has covered 22,000 households in 3 districts (Bilaspur, Kawardha and, Mungeli) with emphasis on tribal localities. Currently, Samerth has developed a cadre of Jaldoots in Chhattisgarh and provided training to them with the support of experts and have been able to successfully implement water resource development programme in different blocks of Chhattisgarh state.)



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EDUCATION:

Samerth believes in increasing accountability of the Public Education System (schools and Anganwadi) so that the local government takes positive steps to address the inequality by ensuring universal quality public education system for children ages 3-14 years. Samerth's Education Program focuses mainly on: Improvement in the quality of learning outcomes; Increasing awareness amongst parents towards importance of educating their children; ensuring the continuation of education and retention of children from distress migration affected families along with strengthening the implementation of 'Right to Education Act'.

In 2020, the Ahmedabad team has been reaching out to more than 2,500 children in 13 government schools. Through this program, Samerth is working to bring about systemic change in the pedagogy (change in method of teaching and learning) being implemented in schools to make it child-centric. The team also runs 'support centres' for out of school children and first-generation learners/ students, providing academic support to them.

The Chhattisgarh education program has grown exponentially since we started in 2007. Right now, the team works in 120 villages with 84 schools covering 3,000 residential and non-residential children on improving their overall education. the team operates 82 Seekh Kendras (learning centres) with the support of 301 community volunteers under the facilitation of the local community to enhance learning outcomes. At present, the education Programme in Chhattisgarh is reaching out to 140 government schools for enhancing quality education, reaching out to 13,000 students across 8 districts.

Our education interventions in Kutch were initiated in 2020, during the lockdown as our team found that there was complete breakdown of any educational process in the remote hamlets of Kutch – most which had erratic electric supply and almost no families with smart phones. There was a fear that these children, especially girls who were now involved in housework would become dropouts and never go back to schools. Samerth team-initiated centres in these hamlets with play and creative activities to involve, excite and stimulate children and help them come back into the folds of education. Parents were counselled to support and encourage their children to continue their educational journey. Local youth were motivated and capacitated as Baldoots – with intensive training on creative pedagogies. Currently there are 31 such centres, operational in the interiors of Rapar & Khadir taluka in Kutch reaching to more than 750 children daily.

LIVELIHOOD:

interventions in Chhattisgarh began in 2007 to address the pressing issues of livelihood for PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group), PwDs (People with Disabilities) and Small landholding farmers. The effort aims to strengthen the process of claiming individuals as well as Community Forest Rights under Forest Rights Act and by the means of Sangathans (Community Based Organizations), working on the conservation of the forest as a source of livelihood, community forest management and conservation. In Chhattisgarh, Samerth has helped set up 1253 Self Help Groups (SHGs). With 626 SHGs we are involved in livelihood and skill development activities such as making traditional jewellery,

mushroom cultivation, soap making, agarbatti and phenyl making after receiving the trade-based training. Under Samerth's livelihood programme intervention, 400 small farmers and 600 landless families have benefited by Strengthening Community-Based 'Seed Banks' and 'Tool Banks'. This has promoted short duration crops like local vegetables, maize, oilseeds & millet produce. Alongside, we have promoted alternative livelihood options. Samerth has worked with the local communities to get them entitlements so that they could get enrolled and qualified for accessing government programmes and develop their village assets such as ponds, springs, Rain Roof Water Harvesting Structures, Earthen Check Dams in Kutch and Kwardha district of Chhattisgarh.

Samerth started its livelihood activities in 2003 in Kutch with 'cash for work' scheme through desilting, rebuilding and deepening of village ponds. Since then, Samerth has been providing opportunities to develop livelihood for the underrepresented communities by facilitation of MNREGA funds for the construction of water bodies. We also provide seed capital to poor families to meet agricultural needs such as buying seeds, vermicomposting and providing fodder for cattle. In 2019, over 3136 families received work facilitated by Samerth under MNREGA in 61 locations.

In Ahmedabad, the Samerth programme team supports livelihood activities for 22 adults with disabilities, 45 parents, caretakers as well as community members through activities such as jewellery making, cloth masks and paper plates.

DISABILITY:

Working with children and adults with disabilities is another focus area of Samerth who works towards creating an inclusive society and that include disability. Currently Samerth is working with children and young adults with development and intellectual disabilities to provide services that help develop their basic communication and independent living at the Samerth Talim Kendra (STK), a resource and learning centre set up for children with disabilities in Juhapura area. The centre currently works with 90 children and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to receive therapies and services by trained and qualified professionals. Under the current project, children & young adults with disabilities are being trained at the centre and their homes to learn communication and daily-living skills, and receive basic education, access to need based therapies.



Along with this, Samerth also ensures access to education and rehabilitation training where children and young adults with disabilities can learn to live independently and as part of society. The impact of the existing programme can be seen in the positive change in the lives of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and also their families thus providing for a strong foundation for the proposed project interventions.

Samerth also runs a disability programme in the state of Chhattisgarh where it spearheads the Chhattisgarh government's Social Inclusion Programme in 2 districts– Mahasamund and Raipur. The programme aims at ensuring conducive environment for PwDs (Persons with Disabilities) to access their rights and to economically empower as well as increase their participation in mainstream development. Through the programme, the team mobilizes PwDs at various levels and facilitates for self-advocacy. Till date, we have been able to reach more than 3500 to link them to various entitlements, form more than 100 Self Help Groups and train them in different vocations.

SAMERTH USP:

Samerth works with unreached and marginalised communities by ensuring their entitlements are met through education opportunities, natural resource management and promoting livelihoods. We believe in collaborating with government programmes for wider reach and impact. We combine institutional, corporate, individual and government support to work in the three geographies on programs that are aimed at producing tangible results.

We are registered under the **Bombay Public Trusts Act** and hold a 50% exemption certificate from Income Tax u/s 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Our Head office is in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. We also have field offices in Kutch and Chhattisgarh.

Samerth Talim Kendra – Centre providing need based rehabilitative services to Children with intellectual disabilities Centre operational since 2007



Samerth Charitable Trust is one of the only registered NGO providing specialised services for children and young adults with intellectual disabilities such as mentally challenged, down syndrome, autistic, children with cerebral palsy etc. in Vejalpur area of Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

Geographically Vejalpur Sarkhej is a neighbourhood in new west zone of Ahmedabad, the area was developed in 1973 for the people who lost their homes in the flood that year. Earlier it was a small suburb with a population of less than 50,000 people until the mid-1980s, but later, it saw an influx of the most marginalised and poorest populations taking the population to more than 5 lakh.

Samerth Charitable Trust (SCT) is working with children and young adults with development and intellectual disabilities to provide services that help develop their basic communication and independent living at the Samerth Talim Kendra (STK) in Juhapura area.

The centre is currently helping 90 children and young adults with intellectual and developmental

disabilities to receive therapies by trained and qualified professionals. Along with support for these children, Samerth is also ensuring access to education and

rehabilitation training where these children and young adults can learn to live independently.

Samerth was supported by Gujarat CSR Authority (GCSRA) in 2016. At that point, the centre was providing services to 42 children with physio, speech and sensory therapy. But a few of the children had grown into adults and had attained some degree of independence. Their parents were extremely worried about their future. It is then that with GCSRA's support we could set up a vocational centre. The centre was divided in three wings, based on the abilities of the children – bead craft for children who had motor disability and could not move but were deft with colors and fingers, paper plate enterprise for children who could handle some weight, could count, pack etc and a photocopy machine for children who could run an enterprise independently. This centre currently supports 25 adults with disabilities along with their caretakers.

BACKGROUND TO SAMERTH TALIM KENDRA (STK)

It is estimated that there are about 10.92 lakh persons with disabilities in Gujarat alone. From its establishment in 2007, today we have been instrumental in bringing hope in the lives of more than 300 children & young adults along with their families.

Samerth Talim Kendra (STK) – was established in

budget as it catered to a basic need from the community to have the one-of-a-kind centre in this area. Samerth trains women from within the community as teachers and equips them with knowledge through training on available courses on disability from professional institutes that helps them gain not only professional training but also in debt knowledge on working with children and young



2007, 5 years after Samerth Trust started its operations in Ahmedabad. There had been a long-standing demand for the kendra in the operational area covering western Ahmedabad slums (encompassing Makarba Vejalpur & Sarkhej areas). It is one of the poorest areas with poor civil amenities and lack of infrastructure. Samerth works with marginalized and disadvantaged communities living in slums and shanties.

While working with children and young adults with disabilities in the community, the Samerth team recognised that girls face a double disability! They not only have to cope with the development or intellectual disabilities they have but also face a major socio-cultural barrier. Parents are reluctant to send these girls outside of the fear of abuse, plus there is very little motivation to invest in time and resources to ensure they receive the appropriate services. Thus, the ratio of girls to boys availing such services is always low. Therefore, Samerth has made a conscious move through its work to bridge this gap, ensure that these girls are provided the services that will bring a positive impact in their lives.

Over the years the program has been supported by various small donors for short periods of time. Till we received GCSRA support the programme was thoroughly underfunded, it survived on a shoe string

adults with disabilities.

IMPACT OF COVID ON THE CURRENT PROGRAM:

The centre and the children have suffered greatly due to Covid pandemic. The lockdown when initiated caught the entire organization and the communities in which Samerth is working unaware as it did globally. After the initial week of mayhem, Samerth immediately went into relief mode and started providing essential ration supplies to the families who had lost all means of livelihood & any source of income and even exhausted their meager savings. Samerth then went ahead and provided nutrition kits for the children from Kendra, as we could see regression - like certain children who had shown progress in communication before COVID, for example acquiring language went back to just gestures. The therapists confirmed that one of the factors for the same was poor diet. We also began reaching out to them through one-on-one video calls for physio & speech therapy as well as extracurricular activities by the special educators. Today, the centre reaches out to all of the 90 children on a regular basis through multi-pronged strategy of online/offline – at home, at centre services.

The vocational centre was operational through out the COVID first and second wave and provided much needed financial stability during these tough times.



“This programme is very close to my heart! There is a great demand from the community but a lack of availability services. After support from GCSRA, we could increase our reach as well start a much needed vocational training centre. The increase in numbers from 42 to 90 in such a short span in itself is a testimony of the importance & impact of the programme and what GCSRA support has helped us achieve!”

Ms. Gazala Paul

Managing Trustee & Founder Member, Samerth Charitable Trust



Arhaan Sheikh a 9-year-old boy was born with Down Syndrome and later developed speech and hearing impairments at the age of 3. He came to Samerth Talim Kendra (STK) when he was 4 years old and at that time he was unable to walk by himself and needed to be carried everywhere. Arhaan currently lives with his parents and two siblings in Sarkhej, Ahmedabad. His father works as mechanic in a garage and his mother is a housewife.

When he joined STK he was unable to communicate his basic needs and only managed through simple gestures and actions that only his mother understood thus making him completely dependent on her. As he started coming to the centre he underwent regular speech and physio therapy. Special educators worked with him to independently perform daily living activities. A specific goal-based action plan was developed for him, which was reviewed every quarter.

Today Arhaan can walk independently and can even sit comfortably without support. He is able to say complete sentences and can independently go to the neighborhood grocer alone where he is able to identify different denominations while paying. He enjoys playing with his siblings and has great interest in cars. He loves going with his father to the garage and likes to lend him a helping hand.

“I never dreamt that one day I will be able to see Arhaan walk and talk like my other children. That not only will he become self-sufficient, but will be able to help me in my chores! This gives me great hope that Arhaan will be able to lead a life of dignity”- Arhaan's mother- (her quote has been translated from Gujarati, her native tongue).