Annual Report 2024-2025

Vidya Dham Samiti



Message from Vidya Dham Samiti

Dear Friends,

The year 2024 was an important milestone in the development journey of Vidya Dham Samiti. For more than two decades, we have been working alongside marginalized, vulnerable, and disadvantaged communities in Bundelkhand towards building a just, equitable, and dignified society.

This year, too, several initiatives were undertaken in collaboration with women, youth, and community-based organizations on issues such as rights awareness, leadership development, livelihoods, natural resource conservation, and social justice. Thousands of women and young people associated with community organizations have emerged as agents of change in their villages, setting new examples of positive transformation at the local level.

This report is a brief documentation of the key activities, achievements, and inspiring efforts of the community during 2024. We believe that through the collective strength, participation, and leadership of the community, this journey of change will continue to grow stronger in the years ahead.

Warm regards,

Team, Vidya Dham Samiti

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Establishment of the Organization

Vidya Dham Samiti was established in **2001** by a young and dedicated social worker along with a group of like-minded young people. Their objective was to work towards the social and economic empowerment of poor, marginalized, and disadvantaged communities in the Bundelkhand region. Since its establishment, the organization has continued to grow and has undertaken effective work on the rights of poor and marginalized communities, access to government schemes, and issues of social justice. The organization has built a credible identity among local communities, civil society organizations, the administrative system, and regional media. Several innovative initiatives and public welfare programs implemented by the organization have also received coverage in leading national newspapers and magazines.

Vision of the Organization

To improve the social and economic conditions of marginalized communities and to establish a balanced and sustainable relationship between people and natural resources.

Mission of the Organization

To empower people through awareness generation, community organization, and guidance so that they can effectively access their rights and government schemes. The organization also works towards promoting good governance and creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

Our Area of Work

Vidya Dham Samiti works in Banda district, Uttar Pradesh. The organization works across 30 villages on issues related to health, education, community empowerment, livelihoods, climate change, and social justice. Women, Dalits, marginalized youth, and children deprived of education are at the center of the organization's initiatives. We believe that informed and aware citizens can effectively raise their voices for their rights and lead lives with dignity

Impact in One Year

- 5 sewing centres were established to promote livelihood opportunities and skill development.
- 105 farmers were provided with seeds to support agricultural activities.
- 5 non-functional Anganwadi centres were successfully revived and made operational again.
- 185 people from 8 villages were supported in accessing employment opportunities under MGNREGA.
- Community Grain Banks were established in 6 villages, ensuring access to food grains for families in need.
- 576 families were connected with various government schemes and entitlements, including housing, pensions, ration, and employment.
- 632 people were sensitized about their rights and entitlements through trainings, conferences, and educational exposure visits.
- A sustainable farming initiative was initiated with 50 families to promote environmentally friendly and sustainable agricultural practices.
- 78 young people were connected with employment opportunities.
- 2,000 trees were planted across 15 villages to promote environmental conservation and improve green cover.

Establishment of Community Grain Banks



With the support of Vidya Dham Samiti, Community Grain Banks were established in 6 villages in 2024. The objective of this initiative was to ensure that families in need could access food grains in a timely manner during difficult situations, so that no one in the community would go hungry. Through the Grain Banks, 656 community members received essential food grain support. The initiative not only strengthened food security but also promoted a sense of cooperation, solidarity, and shared responsibility within the community. To ensure the sustainability of this initiative, a community-based system has been developed whereby beneficiaries return the grain they receive within a period. This system will enable the Grain Banks to continue supporting families in need and remain operational in the future.

Public Dialogues on Government Schemes



Public dialogue programmes were organized by Vidya Dham Samiti with community representatives from 25 villages to discuss government schemes and issues of public interest. During these programmes, participants shared key problems, challenges, and difficulties related to accessing government schemes in their respective villages. Through collective discussions and the exchange of experiences, strategies were developed to address these challenges, and action plans were prepared to effectively raise the issues with the concerned government departments. This process helped increase awareness among community members about their rights and entitlements, strengthened collective leadership, and reinforced organized efforts to address local issues

Revival of Anganwadi Centres

The Anganwadi centres in 5 villages had remained non-functional for a long period, depriving approximately 345 children of early childhood education, nutrition, immunization, and other essential services. Community leaders raised this critical issue and continuously followed up with the concerned departmental officials by submitting complaints and advocating for the restoration of services. As a result of the community's active participation and collective efforts, the authorities took prompt action and ensured the reopening of all 5 Anganwadi centres. As a result, children once again began receiving essential nutrition, education, and health services. At the same time, parents became more aware of the importance of Anganwadi services, creating a more supportive environment for the overall development of children. This achievement is an important example of community unity, leadership, and awareness of rights and entitlements.

Promoting Organic and Natural Farming

Vidya Dham Samiti organized a training programme on organic farming for 127 farmers from 17 villages. The objective of the training was to raise farmers' awareness of sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices and to introduce practical ways to reduce the increasing cost of farming. During the training, farmers were provided with detailed information on the harmful effects of excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, as well as the environmental, economic, and health benefits of organic farming. Practical training was also provided on the preparation and use of Jeevamrit, Ghan Jeevamrit, compost, and other organic fertilizers. As a result of this initiative, farmers showed increased interest and awareness about organic farming, and many farmers took steps towards adopting organic agricultural practices on their farms. This effort is contributing significantly to the conservation of natural resources, improvement of soil fertility, and promotion of safe and sustainable food production.



Community Education Centres for Children Deprived of Education

To support children who were deprived of education, the organization established Community Education Centres in 10 villages. These centres were effectively managed and helped 43 out-of-school children from the project area to reconnect with education. In addition to the 463 children who were already attending the centres in the previous year, a total of 506 children are now receiving educational support through these centres. All Community Education Centres regularly provided children with academic support and opportunities for learning, helping them continue their education and strengthen their learning skills.



Life Skills Training

Vidya Dham Samiti organized a life skills training programme for 120 adolescent girls. The objective of the training was to develop their self-confidence, leadership abilities, decision-making skills, and capacity to face life's challenges in a positive manner. During the training, the girls received important information on the importance of education, health and hygiene, a balanced lifestyle, self-protection, personality development, and opportunities for self-employment. They were also encouraged to become aware of their rights, plan for their future, and work towards becoming self-reliant. The training enhanced the girls' knowledge, confidence, and skills, while motivating them to continue their education, adopt a healthy lifestyle, and develop a positive outlook



towards their future. This initiative was an important step towards the empowerment and holistic development of adolescent girls.

Staff Capacity Building Training



A three-day training programme was organized to strengthen the effective implementation of the project, with the participation of 17 members. The training provided detailed information on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Right to Education (RTE) Act. The training focused on strengthening the active participation of School Management Committees (SMCs) in accordance with the Right to Education Act. It also enhanced the understanding of participants on how to engage with Panchayats to facilitate access to employment under MGNREGA and improve participatory planning of works at the Panchayat level.

Awareness and Access to Government Schemes



Regular entitlement and rights-awareness workshops were organized to raise awareness among community members about their rights and various government schemes. These workshops provided information and guidance on schemes related to Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, MGNREGA, the Public Distribution System (PDS), pensions, health, and education, including the application and enrolment processes. As a result of these efforts, many eligible families were able to access and benefit from government schemes. Community

leaders also effectively raised issues related to Anganwadi services, drinking water, roads, and other basic facilities with the concerned authorities. This initiative played an important role in making the community more aware, organized, and empowered to claim their rights and entitlements

Village-Level Meetings and Community Leadership Empowerment



Community-level meetings were organized in 28 villages, with a total of 29 village-level meetings conducted in collaboration with community leaders and Gram Sabha members. A total of 722 people participated in these meetings. The objective of the meetings was to identify community issues and promote collective efforts towards finding solutions. Discussions focused on education, health, livelihoods, conservation of natural resources, and other local development issues. The challenges faced by the community were identified, and collective action plans were developed to address them. This participatory dialogue process provided rural community members with an opportunity to share their views, experiences, and suggestions, thereby enhancing their awareness of their rights and strengthening their understanding of social issues.

Success Stories

1. Improving Anganwadi Services in Tirra Ka Purwa



In Tirra Ka Purwa hamlet of Atarra rural area, the Anganwadi centre was not functioning satisfactorily, and supplementary nutrition was not being distributed to children and women regularly or properly. Santoshi, an active community worker associated with the organization, mobilized local residents and raised their concerns for the effective implementation of this important nutrition programme. With the support of the community, she submitted a complaint to the concerned authorities. Following an inquiry into the matter, the authorities took the necessary corrective measures. As a result, the functioning of the Anganwadi centre improved, and beneficiaries began receiving supplementary nutrition and other essential services regularly

2. Mainstreaming Children into Formal Education in Bhaggupurwa



In Bhaggupurwa village of Mahua Block in Banda district, Urmila, a member of the Chingari Sangathan, teaches children at a community education centre run by Vidya Dham Samiti. The centre was established for children who, for various reasons, were unable to attend mainstream schools. Urmila provided regular educational support to these children and prepared them for enrolment in formal schools. Through her guidance and continuous efforts, 25 children were enrolled in mainstream schools. Even after their enrollment, Urmila continues to support the children

for two hours every day, helping them overcome learning difficulties and adjust comfortably to the school environment.

3.Improving Education and Mid-Day Meal Services in Kathela Purwa

Kathela Purwa village has a government primary school and is predominantly inhabited by the Dalit community. Most families are landless and migrate to nearby towns and cities in search of daily-wage employment. Although many children from these families were enrolled in the school, most did not attend regularly. Some accompanied their parents for work, while others spent their time moving around the village. With community participation, the Vidya Dham Samiti team conducted a Social Audit of education services in the village. The audit found that there were 136 children between 5 and 14 years of age, of whom only 80 were enrolled in school, while the remaining children were deprived of education. Among the enrolled children, only 45 attended school regularly, while others migrated with their parents to work in larger cities. The audit also revealed discrepancies in the Mid-Day Meal scheme. Although only around 45 children were attending school daily, school records showed that meals were being provided to 75–80 children. Through the Right to Information (RTI) process, bills and vouchers related to the purchase of food grains for the Mid-Day Meal programme were obtained and examined. Several bills and vouchers were found to contain discrepancies and were identified as potentially fraudulent. These findings were transparently shared with the community, and a detailed report was submitted to the District Basic Education Officer. As a result, the functioning of the school improved, all children who had been deprived of education were reconnected with the school through the efforts of teachers, and significant improvements were also made in the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal scheme.

4.Gudiya's Inspiring Journey Towards Self-Reliance



Gudiya, from Naugawan village in Naraini Block, had to discontinue her education due to serious financial and family difficulties. Her father worked as a daily-wage labourer to support the family, but due to a serious illness, he had been unable to work for the past year. As a result, the family's financial condition became extremely difficult, making it challenging to meet even their basic daily needs. During a community meeting, Champa, a community leader from the village, brought Gudiya's family situation to the attention of the community and the organization. Vidya Dham Samiti then contacted the family, understood their difficulties in detail, and provided support for Gudiya's father's treatment. At the same time, with the aim of helping Gudiya become self-reliant, the organization encouraged her to undertake tailoring training. After completing the training, Gudiya started working as a tailor and gradually began earning an income by stitching clothes for people in the village. This helped bring a significant improvement in her family's financial situation. Today, Gudiya is not only financially self-reliant, but also trains other girls and women in her village in tailoring, inspiring them to pursue self-employment and become independent. Her journey is an inspiring example of rural women's empowerment and self-reliance

Acknowledgement

Vidya Dham Samiti extends its heartfelt gratitude to all the communities, women and youth leaders, partner organizations, well-wishers, donors, and government departments who have continuously supported our efforts through their guidance, cooperation, and trust.

We express our special appreciation to the communities who, despite facing numerous challenges, have actively participated in this journey of change and demonstrated the strength of collective leadership, solidarity, and perseverance. Their commitment, participation, and determination are the true foundation of our achievements.

We are deeply grateful to all our supporters and partners whose continued collaboration and trust have strengthened our efforts towards social justice, gender equality, community empowerment, and sustainable development. Their partnership has enabled us to reach more communities, address local challenges, and create opportunities for people to claim their rights and lead lives with dignity.

We look forward to continuing this journey together in the coming years, working collectively towards building a more just, equitable, inclusive, and empowered society.

With sincere gratitude and appreciation to all our partners, supporters, and community members.

Team, Vidya Dham Samiti