

BAPU TRUST FOR RESEARCH
ON MIND & DISCOURSE

ANNUAL REPORT



2024-25

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In memory, with Gratitude and Resolve

This Year, with heavy hearts we remember our beloved Dr. Bhargavi, who passed away on May 22, 2024 morning after a prolonged illness. On behalf of the entire Bapu Trust family & communities, we remember a remarkable individual who embodied the qualities of a compassionate leader, teacher, mentor, guide, and visionary.

Her profound empathy & boundless kindness touched the hearts of everyone she encountered. As a leader, she embodied integrity, perseverance, compassion, and a deeply collaborative spirit. Her pioneering work at the Bapu Trust steered the global discourse in psychosocial disability towards the transformation of communities for inclusion.



As a visionary, she led from the front, fearlessly and with courage. For the last 25 years, she crossed many challenges, always striving to create thriving conditions for individuals, families, and communities to be recognized as persons first, to grow and flourish. Her leadership was marked by heartfulness and a relentless commitment to improve the lives of others.

Though Bhargavi has left us, her empathy, kindness, vision, and legacy will continue to inspire and guide us in our mission. Her teachings will forever be a part of our journey and will encourage the Bapu Group to progress over the coming decades.

by Ninad Indulkar (Director Operations)

ABOUT THE CEO

In his career spanning 4 decades, Seshadri has straddled the Corporate and Development world. For the initial 23 years of his career, Seshadri was a Wholesale Corporate and Investment Banker. He shifted to the Development space in 2011- he commenced this journey at Kaivalya / Piramal Foundation, an organization engaged in the field of education, and more specifically in the systemic change in governments at various levels. He worked as the Director of Finance and Partnerships there.

Seshadri has a deep, personal association with mental illness and well-being. He joined Bapu Trust in January 2025. He is deeply affected by the plight of 200 million Indians who are reported to be experiencing a lack of mental well-being. Seshadri is aware of lot of good work already done by different actors in this space equally he is conscious of a whole lot of initiatives to be taken to make a significant, material difference to the afflicted people – He truly believes that BT's community based cross sectional model can be scaled to create a true impact- he also believes in the power of ecosystem, where different organizations bring their unique methods to solve this dire problem.

Message from Mr. Seshadri S, CEO – Bapu Trust

I am delighted to share my thoughts on BT. In the limited time I have been in BT, I have had the opportunity to study and understand BT's unique contribution to developing and delivering on a community-based, cross-sectional services in the space of psychosocial disabilities.

The years 24-25 have been traumatic for BT. After a prolonged struggle with Cancer, the beloved Founder, Bhargavi Davar, left the temporal world. Her larger-than-life presence was sorely missed! However, people in BT showed tremendous resilience in the face of an unprecedented crisis to continue to serve the communities with the same passion and dedication. They rose to the occasion to take on several challenges that Bhargavi's absence brought with it and came out with flying colours in the end. I salute the people of BT and their spirit! Looking ahead, I see great potential in BT for leveraging the enormous potential built over the years, both in advocacy and execution of demanding programs. I wish great success to BT in its endeavour to impact the psychosocial space in India deeper and wider!



ABOUT US

India's mental health system bears a colonial legacy of outdated laws, asylums, and policies that prioritise control over care, further deepened by displacement, inequality, and expanding institutions. The Bapu Trust challenges this mindset through community-based approaches that affirm dignity, inclusion, and rights, rooted in new ethic of collective responsibility where happiness and well-being are fundamental human rights.

The spirit of work comes from Bapu herself—a woman of spirituality, poetry, and resilience. She was punished with incarceration and invasive treatments for breaking social roles, her devotion dismissed as “madness.” Her suffering became a turning point for her children, especially Bhargavi, who founded Bapu Trust to reimagine mental health with dignity, inclusion, and respect for the grey spaces between madness, creativity, spirituality, and pain. Dreaming forward, we envision a world where well-being is holistic, healing is non-violent and creative, and people recover through choice, play, and self-directed care.

VISION

We want to see a world, where emotional well being is experienced in a holistic manner, and not just as ‘mental disease’. We dream of healing environments where every person uses their own capacity to make choices, heal themselves, recover and move on. Recovery methods will be creative, non-violent, non-hazardous and playful.

MISSION

We create, pilot and monitor community inclusion programs. Such programs enable the autonomy and independence of persons living with mental health issues and psychosocial disabilities. We work towards linking people with Development services. Programs aim to expand on the aspirations and potential of communities, to strengthen resilience and opportunities for pursuit of happiness. Our program provides modular interventions to address a matrix of psychosocial needs by providing choice. We advocate to change the structural, social, legal and policy environment, so that they remain human rights compliant, just and fair to people with a psycho-social disability. We strive to create enabling environments for people with psycho-social disabilities where they can realize all their human rights without barriers (guided by the Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities).

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

HEALTH

Shortlisted For the Jury Round 2025

- 11 Gurupriya Vision Research Foundation 108
- 12 Pallium India Trust 116
- 13 Pro Rural 124

Shortlisted 2025

- 14 Bapu Trust for Research on Mind and Discourse 132
- 15 FIND India 136
- 16 LEPRAs Society 140
- 17 North East Society for Agroecology Support 144
- 18 Population Foundation of India 148
- 19 Project Concern International 152
- 20 Sri Someswarnath Mahadev Trust (SANMAT) 156

Behind the Scenes 218

Credits 220

Title Page: *Antarang Foundation, shortlisted for the HCLTech Grant 2024 in the Education category.*

Opposite page: *Action for Social Advancement, shortlisted for the HCLTech Grant 2024 in the Environment category.*

1

Ranked among **Top 10 NGOs in Health** category in the HCLTech Grants; featured in the HCLTech Grant Compendium, The Fifth Estate Vol. IX.

2

Contributed to **Inclusion International & TCI webinars** on UN Guidelines on Deinstitutionalization (Chapters 6 & 7), focusing on inclusive community support and equal access to mainstream services.

3

Led a full session in the **Community of Practice on Deinstitutionalization** (TCI Global, CBM-A & DFAT), showcasing BT's Seher and Going Home programs and community-based independent living models.

4

Speaker at **ICJ conference on Access to Justice**, Kathmandu, May 2024; submitted a video highlighting BT's approach to preventing institutionalization through community networks.

5

Caught the interest of **Rural India Supporting Trust (RIST)** at Zero Conference 2023; hosted RIST Executive Director in July 2024 to explore long-term collaboration.

6

Successfully navigated a **critical funding transition**, receiving bridge support from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives and securing year-long and core grants from TrueNorth, Mariwala Health Foundation, and others through 2026.

SEHER – COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AND INCLUSION PROGRAM (CMHIP)

The UN Disability and Development Report (2018) highlights that persons with disabilities continue to face persistent barriers to education, health, livelihoods, and participation. Addressing these barriers is essential not only to uphold their human rights but also to enable their full participation as agents of change and beneficiaries in the development process. The Seher program aligns with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 17's call to "leave no one behind," by working at the community level to create inclusive environments.

Through its psychosocial and disability-inclusive approach, Seher strengthens access to services, promotes dignity, and ensures that persons with psychosocial disabilities are not only beneficiaries but also active participants in development. In line with SDG 3c, a core strategy of Seher is to train grassroots cadres to deliver psychosocial services in marginalized and excluded communities, ensuring alignment with disability-inclusive development frameworks. By embedding accessibility, equity, and rights into all interventions, Seher contributes to building resilient, inclusive communities where everyone has the opportunity to pursue wellbeing and opportunity to grow and contribute.



CMHIP – OUR IMPACT

Activity	April 24 To March 25
Total number of clients	204
Community Mental Health Volunteers (CMHVs)	25

Self Care sessions	2904
Nutrition sessions	1431
Family sessions	802
Home visits for Therapeutic Group participants	925
Barefoot Counselling sessions	3001
Health care sessions	1451
Social/Livelihood Support	1020
Sessions for Client Inclusion	409
Client Referral for various schemes	1998

Outreach through Awareness Activities

Activity	April 24 To March 25
Outreach (no. of people) through Awareness activities	14653
Awareness activities/meetings and Events	1650

STORIES OF CHANGE

(Name has been changed for confidentiality purpose)

Sasha, 56, has lived with disability since childhood, caused by polio when she was not given a vaccine dose. Despite undergoing three operations on her leg, her mobility remained limited. This deeply shaped her life. She never married, while all her sisters built families of their own. Caste beliefs also prevented her father from allowing marriage proposals that came her way.

After her parents passed away, Sasha was left to live alone in her family home. She inherited her father's pension of ₹1500, which became her only steady source of income. It was never enough to cover her daily needs. At times her sisters or neighbours offered money, but Sasha often refused, not wanting to feel dependent. Loneliness weighed heavily on her. "Sometimes I missed my mother so much," she shared, recalling her feelings of isolation and stress.

Three years ago, her struggles became sharper. Living alone, with limited financial resources and declining health, Sasha felt she had no support system. It was at this time that she met Bapu Trust field staff during a community meeting on mental health. The issues they spoke about mirrored her own. She chose to approach them and openly shared her situation.

Soon after, an assessment was conducted. Three forms of support began:

- Self-care sessions: Breathing practices such as forceful breathing, relaxation techniques, and mindfulness exercises to help reduce anxious thoughts.
- Nutrition support: Guidance on healthy diet practices and referrals for food aid.
- Individual sessions: Conversations that helped Sasha name her challenges, reflect, and find ways forward.

Alongside this, practical interventions were also critical. Sasha's disability certificate had expired, and the team worked with her through multiple hospital visits — Aundh, Sassoon, and finally Kamala Nehru — until her certificate was renewed. The process was long and often discouraging, but with persistence her disability percentage was corrected from 55% to 65%, making her eligible for pension renewal. With Bapu Trust's support, her pension restarted, doubling her monthly income to ₹3000.

Importantly, Sasha also found connection. She became part of a single women's group started in her community, giving her space to share, be heard, and feel less alone.

STORIES OF CHANGE

(Name has been changed for confidentiality purpose)

Maya is a 37-year-old woman living in Kelewadi. She was identified during our corner meeting. Her family includes her husband and two children. One of her children is intellectually disabled. She doesn't receive any support from her husband.

She often experienced physical problems like body pain, headaches, and a pounding in her chest. She also had mental health issues such as feeling lonely, not talking to anyone, not wanting to go outside, and being very afraid that people would call her bad names. She felt a lot of anger and numbness. She was mentally troubled. In her society, no one talked to her or included her in anything.

We started working with her using the 8-point framework and provided intensive counselling. We focused on how she can see herself differently. We also discussed cleanliness at home and how she can keep herself clean. We worked on her fears and her rights to speak up for herself. We helped her get ready to go outside and face people, and we discussed how she can deal with others. Breathing exercises were also practiced with her to help reduce her fears.

Her confidence began to grow. Though she was also referred to a homeopathic doctor for her symptoms like numbness and excessive sleep which also contributed to improving her condition.

She was also included in a trauma group, which helped her interact with more people. She made friends, and her social circle expanded. We held meetings with her neighbours to help her get involved in the community.

We also connected her with a local organisation which provided her with a sewing machine to start her own income-generating work. She is now earning through her work in her neighbourhood. She speaks up in her family and is now recognised as a confident, capable person.

She is now motivating herself and others to stand on their own feet. She says, "Because I came to your sessions, my life has become very happy. I am self-reliant now."

— ” —

PROGRAM FOR INCLUSION (PFI)

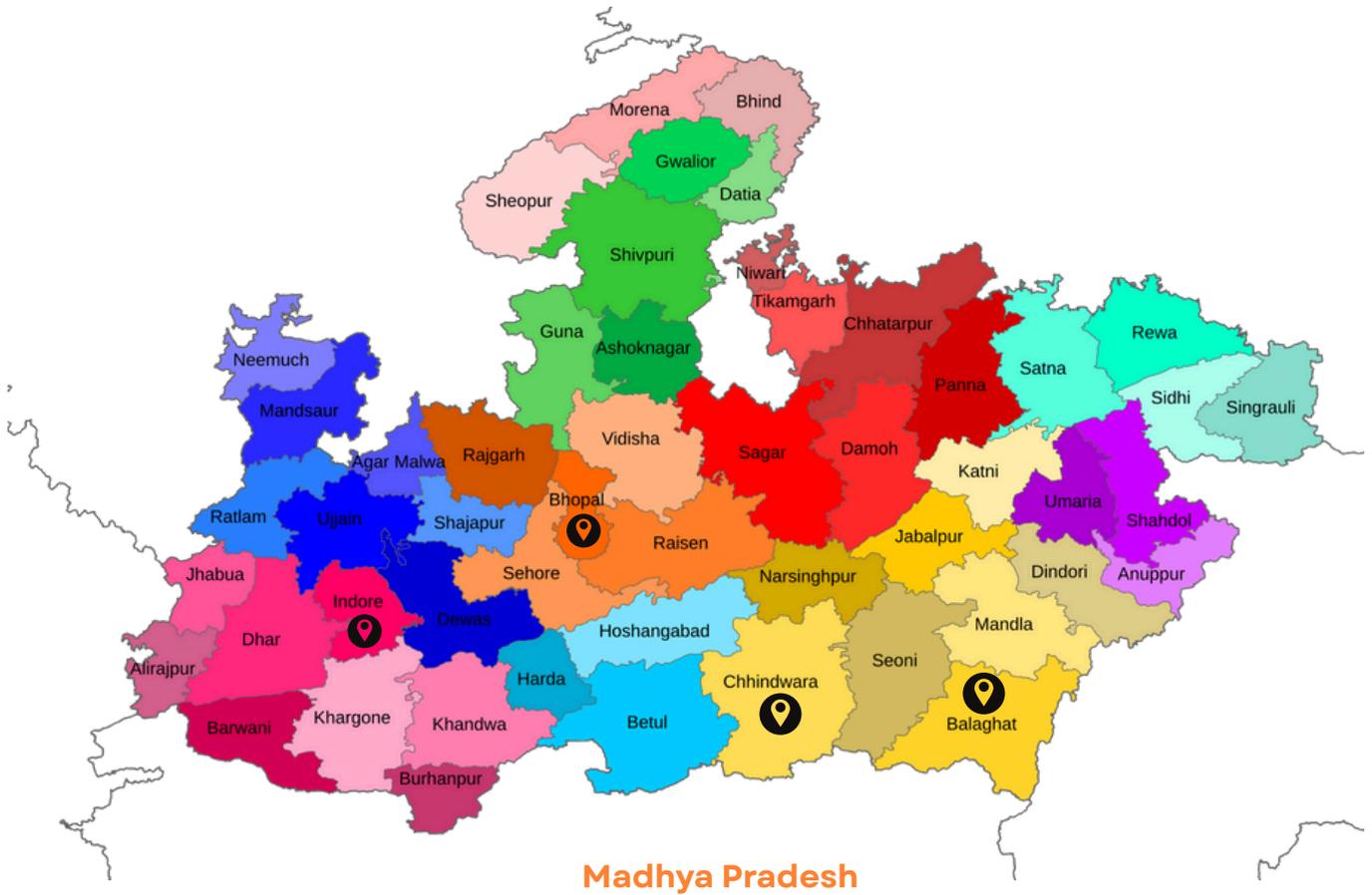


Through its Programming for Inclusion (PFI) initiative, Bapu Trust is enabling development partners to take progressive steps toward building community-based support systems and services that facilitate the inclusion of persons with psychosocial distress and disabilities.

Anchored in the SDGs, particularly Target 3.8.1 on achieving universal health coverage and 3.c on strengthening the health workforce, PFI focuses on two key strategies: (i) building the capacity of organizations to enhance service delivery for persons with psychosocial distress and disabilities, and (ii) training grassroots cadres to provide psychosocial services in marginalized and excluded communities, ensuring alignment with disability-inclusive development frameworks. By embedding inclusion into programming and strengthening local systems, PFI contributes to expanding access, dignity, and resilience for some of the most excluded populations.



Vikalp Samajik Sanstha (VSS)
विकल्प सामाजिक संस्था



MP: Bhopal, Barwani, Indore, Pandhurna - Chhindwara

CHHTT: Raipur, Bilaspur, Bastar, Sukma



OUR PARTNER – VIKALP SAMAJIK SANSTHA

Established in 2005, Vikalp Samajik Sanstha works in Madhya Pradesh on health and nutrition, education, women's empowerment, and microfinance, following a rights-based approach. Since 2021, Vikalp has partnered with the Bapu Trust under the Program for Inclusion, integrating psychosocial health into its community-based programs. Guided by Vidish Kulkarni and Saurabh Dubey, and supported by BT-trained team members Sanjay, Shailendra Sen, Gayatri Saniyal, and Pravin, the organization has steadily built knowledge and practice in mental health while adapting approaches to Barwani's mixed urban-rural context.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Launched a pilot psychosocial program in Barwani, later scaled into a full program.
- Conducted barefoot counselling, awareness sessions, and psychosocial activities with children and parents, in collaboration with local police.
- Localised and implemented the PFI program for Barwani's urban-rural fringe.
- Actively engaged in BT trainings, supervision meetings, refresher sessions, and partner workshops.

IMPACT

- Strengthened team skills, confidence, and stability, with no staff turnover ensuring continuity.
- Achieved positive psychosocial health outcomes in Barwani's communities.
- Expanded work areas and reinforced its role as an active partner in Bapu Trust's program.
- Built lasting connections with Cohort 2 organizations, sharing experiences and strengthening peer learning.
- Team members reported improved personal well-being alongside professional capacity building.

OUR PARTNER – BASTAR SAMAJIK JAN VIKAS SAMITI

Bastar Samajik Jan Vikas Samiti (BSJVS), established in 2003, works to improve the quality of life of tribal communities in Chhattisgarh through programs in agriculture, education, health and hygiene, HIV/AIDS, and income generation. Since 2021, under the Program for Inclusion with the Bapu Trust, BSJVS has integrated mental health awareness and psychosocial well-being into its development work. Led by Sushil Pandey and Jagannath Kompella, and supported by BT-trained team members including Rameshwar, Suchitra, Manisha, Isha Yadav, Dr. Narayan Pant, and Nagesh, the organization has contextualized mental health models for remote tribal settings while building stronger institutional capacity.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Conducted pilot programs in Bastar and Bilaspur, embedding mental health into ongoing development projects.
- Delivered barefoot counselling and community-based psychosocial activities that were positively received.
- Adapted the PFI Program to village-level contexts, overcoming geographical barriers.
- Actively participated in BT trainings, supervision, refresher workshops, and MIS training for data accountability.

IMPACT

- Improved community well-being and acceptance of psychosocial health interventions in tribal areas.
- Established community based psycho-social services in conflict areas.
- Enhanced program monitoring and accountability through MIS training.
- Built peer-learning networks with Cohort 2 partners and strengthened collaborations with government and community institutions.
- Scaled and Institutionalised the program through government partnerships.
- Integrated self-care as a regular part of human resource development in the organisation.

PFI – OUR IMPACT

Activity	April 24 To March 25
Clients served	147
Outreach	38111

Corner Meeting	382
Poster exhibtion	228
Chalta Bolta	477
One minute anchoring	526
Vartaphalak	466
Gully Charcha	461
Awarness Meeting	109
Nutrition session	118
Self care session	421
Support session	420
Family session	83

STORIES OF CHANGE

Suman, age 21, resides in Block Jagdalpur. We met her a year ago at one of our corner meeting. At that time, she was unable to sleep, had very negative thoughts, felt lonely, experienced a lot of stress, and was often depressed and tense.

She had once eloped with a boy she liked, but her family brought her back through deception. Though she wished to stay in touch, her family forbade it. At times, the boy called asking for money, and out of concern for his survival, she sent what she could. She often wondered how to convince her family that her happiness lay with him, but instead they opposed the relationship, restricted her movements, and rarely let her go out alone. This left her feeling, "Why is this happening only to me?"

We spoke with her family, explained our work, and obtained their consent to begin supporting her. After some sessions, she expressed that she also wished to study further, but later she confided in us that she actually did not want to study anymore. Instead, she wanted to work.

While we looked for jobs for her, we enrolled her in a tailoring class. Suman successfully completed the course, and now she stitches her own clothes. We also counselled her family about how they could support her and understand her better so that she could move forward positively. They listened to us and started treating her more kindly.

As a result, Suman's distress was reduced. She started sleeping well. She gave up thoughts about that boy. Her family also began supporting her. Knowing that she did not wish to study further, they stopped pressuring her about education. Now, Suman is doing well.

We began with self-care practices weekly. Soon, she also started practicing at home. We worked with her family as well. Her family wanted her to continue her studies.



- Client's Story from BSJVS (Bastar Samajik Jan Vikas Samiti)

STORIES OF CHANGE

(Name has been changed for confidentiality purpose)

In a small village lived **Seema**, who was forced into child marriage at 15. Her education was cut short, and she faced household burdens, financial struggles, and emotional distress. The effects of child marriage impacted her health, confidence, and overall wellbeing, while her family remained trapped in poverty and illiteracy.

The turning point came when Vikalp NGO reached her through their Voice of Survivors workshop. For the first time, Seema felt heard. Surrounded by other survivors and supported by the Vikalp team, she found the courage to share her story. With consistent mentoring, she realized her dreams didn't have to end with child marriage.

Vikalp helped her re-enroll in school, filled out admission forms, and restored her self-esteem. With their support, she convinced her family that education could transform not just her life, but the future of their entire community.

Today, Seema is continuing her education with determination. Guided by Vikalp, she now reaches out to other girls in her village, spreading awareness about the dangers of child marriage and the power of education.

Her journey shows that while child marriage can pause a girl's life, with the right support, she can begin again—and inspire change for others.

Child marriage clipped my wings, but with Vikalp's support and education, I found new ones. Now, I want to ensure that no girl is ever deprived of her dreams.



- Client's Story from VSS (Vikalp Samajik Sanstha)

PARTNERS & FUNDERS



BOARD MEMBERS



Ms. Sumangala Kumar, Trustee at Bapu Trust, brings over 25 years of leadership experience as Senior HR Manager in a Public Sector Bank. A Postgraduate degree in Social Work and an MBA from IGNOU, she has strengthened Bapu Trust's public presence while also serving as President-Elect of SIPME to advance gender equity and inclusion. She combines sincerity and willpower to promote mental health, social wellbeing, and a culture of inclusion.



Ms. Deepa Athani, a core member of Bapu Group, has been the backbone of its financial stewardship since the early days. With deep expertise in nonprofit finance and compliance, she has ensured transparency, accountability, and integrity in all operations. Her steady leadership continues to anchor the organization's growth and commitment to inclusive mental health and social justice.



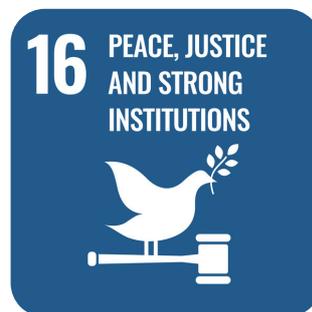
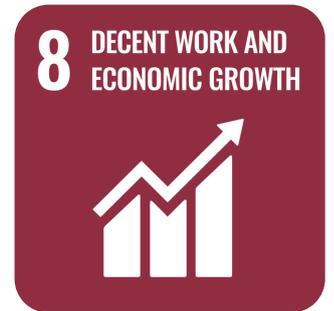
Kavita Nair, Training Director at Bapu Foundation, is a social worker with over 20 years of experience in community-based psychosocial health. A TISS alumna and certified Arts-Based Therapy practitioner, she blends healing with social justice. She has led national and global training programs and is a core member of Transforming Communities for Inclusion-Global. Her work integrates Eastern mind traditions with rights-based, inclusive mental health practices.

FINANCIAL AUDIT REPORT

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Registered Address

B1 Kaul Building, Third Floor Above Ministry of
Labour Office, Off, Shankar Sheth Rd, opp. Kumar
Pacific Mall, Gurunanak Nagar, Pune, Maharashtra
411042

 bt.admfin09@gmail.com

 <https://bapustrust.com/contact/>