

Annual Report

2024-2025



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A Message From the Secretary

Since **Prakriti's** founding in **1990**, our organization has been **dedicated to empowering women** socially, politically, and economically. Over the past three decades, we have been incredibly fortunate to have the support of many stakeholders, well-wishers, and volunteers, and we extend our sincere gratitude to each of them.

This year, **Prakriti** team participated in a significant campaign focused on "**Safe Public Places for Women.**" This initiative marks an important beginning, and we believe such campaigns are crucial for fostering dialogue. We welcome all voices, whether in agreement or dissent, as every perspective is valuable to us. A key highlight of this campaign was the new partnership forged with the **Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC)**, a collaboration we are very excited about.

We are also seeing inspiring progress among **women farmers**, who are increasingly demonstrating remarkable courage and interest in climate-resilient and agro-bio divers farming practices. These women are now confidently preserving seeds, making informed decisions about crop choices, and successfully applying for government schemes. It is particularly encouraging to see even landless women taking up farming on leased land.

Our direct and indirect outreach to thousands of women brings us immense satisfaction, as we truly believe in the power of working together.

However, as the global situation evolves, new challenges emerge daily. In these times, the **solidarity of women's collectives** provides us with immense hope and strength.

Finally, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all our board members, staff members, field workers, and volunteers for their unwavering dedication and continued support.

Thank you!

Shobha Sakharwade
Secretary | Prakriti



The Preface

It gives us great pleasure to present the **Annual Report of Prakriti for the year 2024-2025**. This report is not just a record of our activities, but a reflection of our continued commitment to the cause of women's empowerment, equality, and dignity in both rural and urban settings.

Prakriti, a registered non-governmental organization, has grown steadily from a field-based operational centre into a nationally recognized platform for women's development. Our strength lies in our team of dedicated board members, staff, social workers, volunteers, and activists from diverse walks of life who bring energy, expertise and passion to every initiative. With a vision of creating a family-centred society grounded in equitable and sustainable development, **Prakriti** has consistently worked to empower women—especially those from rural backgrounds—by enhancing their access to education, health, economic opportunity and legal rights. Through women's groups and community engagement, we help build resilience, foster leadership, and promote respect for women's contributions in families and society.

In the year **2024-2025**, our activities have been both impactful and wide-ranging. We conducted an extensive awareness drive focussing on women's right to inheritance from both maternal and paternal sides, empowering them with legal knowledge often denied or overlooked. Our ongoing **Panchayat Sakhi programme** continued to build leadership skills among women elected to local governance bodies, ensuring their meaningful participation and effective governance at the grassroots level. Additionally, through the **Jaga Dakhva Abhiyaan**, we held public outreach events at major transport hubs in **Kalmeshwar, Saoner, and Nagpur**, urging citizens to stand up against harassment of women in public spaces.

As a resource centre on women's issues, Prakriti also engages in data collection, research, and documentation. This year, we expanded our library and knowledge base, sharing valuable resources with other NGOs and institutions across the country. Our ongoing collaborations with national and international organizations continue to enrich our work and expand our reach. Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our mission to nurture leadership in women, build awareness among both women and men, and catalyse social transformation through capacity building and knowledge-sharing. We invite all our partners and supporters to walk with us as we strive toward a more just, equal, and inclusive society.





Woman & Land Rights Programme

Prakriti is helping increase women's access, control and decision making in the context of land

Prakriti's Women & Land Rights Program empowers rural women to claim legal ownership of land-vital for their livelihood, identity, and security. Through workshops, legal guidance, and community mobilization, women learned about inheritance rights, documentation like Form 8A[^], and how to access support during disputes or evictions. Despite social resistance, women began asserting their rights, shifting gender norms and inspiring change. The program strengthens women's agency, promotes economic independence, and fosters a more just society where women are recognized as rightful landowners and decision-makers in their communities.

Prakriti is implementing women and land rights program in 30 villages of Nagpur rural. The program is to make women aware of their inheritance land rights and help the needy women to demand their land rights. The program is implemented on the premise that though most of rural women derive their livelihood from land but, they neither own the land title nor allowed to make any decisions regarding land use and safety. Through this program, **Prakriti** is reaching out to women from agrarian households and helping them to increase their access, control and decision making in the context of land. The program team along with field-based women leaders are implementing the program. Following is the summary of activities and programs carried out during this period. These interventions, held in the form of residential workshops, awareness drives, and village-level meetings, empowered women volunteers and community members by equipping them with knowledge, legal tools, and collective confidence.

- The year began with a **two-day residential workshop** (March 19-20) for 25 rural women volunteers, moderated by **advocate Surekha Borkute**. This session confronted deep-rooted issues such as **domestic violence, alimony, property inheritance, and violence against teenage girls**. Women shared real-life stories, and Adv. Borkute guided them on how to address these cases by building **trust-based relationships** with women in distress. The significance of [^] **Form 8A**-a key legal document for property ownership-was also explained. In a striking revelation, **Jayshree Nimbalkar from Borujwada** shared that among the 62 women she reached out to, only **11 had registered their marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**-an essential legal prerequisite for securing land rights.

[^] 8A refers to a land record document that details a person's land holdings within a specific village

- On April 24, **Sunita Bagal**, the Governing Board. Member of Prakriti who conduct the training sessions on various issues time to time for Prakriti staff led a session focussed on Prakriti's Vision and Mission, underlining justice as the foundation of empowerment. Volunteers debated, "Who is an empowered woman?" and learned to discuss issues like equality, land ownership, and self-worth with village women. Two days later, District Protection Officer **Ms. Manjusha Rahane**, along with block officers, addressed 39 deprived women, shedding light on the Right to Residence and how legal aid can be accessed when women face eviction.



Women leaders performing the activity during the session



Mr. Sachin Patil, Secretary DLSA and SP Mr. Pande providing guidance to the MMWs

- A workshop was held on **30th August**, in which 45 MMWs - Most Marginalized Women participated from 18 villages. In this workshop, cases related to land rights, domestic violence, sexual violence, etc. were discussed. **Mr. Sachin Patil, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA)**, representatives from One Stop Crisis Centre and **Senior Police officer Mr. Pande** listened to the cases and provided necessary guidance.

Ms. Suvarna Damle, Executive Director, Prakriti voiced the urgent need for police support

in land rights cases. addressing women facing legal hurdles. This chapter in Prakriti's journey reiterates a core truth: **Land is not just an economic asset, but a cornerstone of dignity and agency for rural women.** Empowering them with rightful ownership is not a legal necessity, but a transformative act of social justice.



Panchayat Sakhi Programme

Prakriti's effort to educate elected women representatives



Team of Panchayat Sakhi

Prakriti's Panchayat Sakhi Program has empowered over thousands of elected women representatives across Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh equipping them with leadership, governance, and problem-solving skills. By enabling women to actively engage in Panchayat meetings, raise critical gender issues, and influence local decision-making, the program fosters inclusive governance and systemic change. Women leaders now challenge inequities, advocate for community welfare, and hold officials accountable. The initiative

not only builds confident, informed women leaders but also strengthens democratic processes at the village level-ultimately paving the way for more equitable and responsive governance for all.

For over 15 years, **Prakriti** has been at the forefront of promoting women's leadership in local governance through the **Panchayat Sakhi Program**. Implemented across Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, this long-standing initiative remains one of the few sustained efforts focused on capacity-building of elected women representatives.

Program Overview : With support from **R.G. Manudhane Foundation** for Excellence, the Panchayat Sakhi program was carried out in 20 Gram Panchayats across Nagpur (Maharashtra) and Balaghat (Madhya Pradesh) for the year 2024-25. A total of 45 elected women were trained, of whom 10 were designated Panchayat Sakhis, supported by a dedicated project coordinator.

The primary aim was to build leadership capacities of elected women, enabling them to participate actively and meaningfully in Panchayat-level governance.



Meeting of Panchayat Sakhi in progress

IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Leadership Development** : Through training sessions, real-time problem-solving, and peer interactions, Panchayat Sakhis evolved into visible community leaders. A striking example is Vaishali, a first-time representative from a marginalized background who emerged as a trusted local leader through the program.
- Addressing Gender Inequities** : Panchayat Sakhis raised and addressed critical gender issues including domestic violence, molestation, and girl child discrimination in villages like Dahegaon, Kusumbi, Sillewada, and Pota, fostering a safer, more equitable environment.
- Active Participation in Governance** : All 10 Sakhis consistently attended Gram Panchayat meetings and Gramsabhas, raised resolutions, asked pertinent questions, and contributed to decision-making processes.

- 4 **Policy Implementation & Awareness** : Creating awareness about Women and child development fund at Panchayat level, proposing plan for its utilization, adding name of women in property register at panchayat are some of the important work done by all panchayat sakhis.
- 5 **Gramsabha & Strengthening The Panchayat** : • Engaged key Gramsabha committees (Health, Water, Education, Women's Welfare) • Successfully advocated for Women's Committees formation in 5 Gram Panchayats • Highlighted governance issues like substandard infrastructure and non-disbursal of travel allowances for women members • Promoted gender-equal practices such as issuing joint tax receipts
- 6 **Practice-Level Changes** : • Women representatives now demand accurate documentation in Panchayat minutes • They access and interpret official circulars independently • Non-performing staff are held accountable during monthly meetings • Sarpanchs now exercise greater authority-e.g., in Kothulna, a female Sarpanch refused to sign a completion certificate until full electrical work was executed • In Sillewada, the appointment of a Rozgar Sewak for MNREGS was facilitated through Sakhi intervention.

“Prakriti trained us to fight for women” - Former Sarpanch **Nisha Ande**

“ I understood the functioning of gram panchayat because of training provided by Prakriti. I could understand record-keeping, paper trails, information about govt. schemes because of Prakriti. Most importantly, I could fight for women’s rights because of this NGO”.

Looking Forward : The year has proven that Panchayat Sakhis not only fill a crucial gap in grassroots governance but also inspire systemic change through courage, knowledge, and community engagement. **Prakriti** is committed to continuing this program in Nagpur, leveraging the skills of the already trained Sakhis. A forward-looking action plan is in place to build upon this year's gains and deepen women's participation in local democracy.

Empowering Women in Local Governance

- **26 Gram Panchayats engaged**, including 6 through the **Vasudha Smriti Award for Women Sarpanch**.
- **113 elected women leaders reached** through the **Panchayat Sakhi** program - **8 of them Sarpanchs**.
- **20-30 Gramsabha committee members** connected through various activities and one-on-one engagements. • **20 nominations** for the Vasudha Smriti Award received from **5 districts: Gadchiroli, Yavatmal, Bhandara, Wardha, and Nagpur**. • **5-day capacity-building workshops** conducted for elected women and Panchayat Sakhis. • **10 grassroots-level meetings** held with male and female Gramsabha members. • Women Sarpanchs and Panchayat leaders **exposed to cross-learning** platforms, including **national conferences**. • **5 elected women** participated in the prestigious **SHE REPRESENTS** program in Delhi, hosted by the **Indian School of Democracy**. • **Vasudha Smriti Award ceremony** successfully conducted at **Prakriti Campus in February**.

Sunita Tekade : A Leader Who Stands Tall

A Panchayat member from **Patansavangi** and a Panchayat Sakhi, **Sunita Tekade** stands out not just for her activism, but for her fearlessness. She challenged her own political colleagues on misuse of panchayat funds and supported women facing violence and injustice. In a patriarchal setup, Sunita made her voice count-raising issues that mattered and mentoring other women representatives. Despite being unmarried, Sunita shoulders the responsibilities of an entire household-her aging father, brother's family, and the farm. Her leadership is respected, her decisions valued. She breaks the myth that unmarried women are unfit for public office. Sunita is not just leading her panchayat - she's anchoring a family and inspiring a generation.



Programme with Women Farmers

Growing Roots of Self-Reliance

Prakriti's sustained efforts have empowered women farmers to move from vulnerability to self-reliance through agro bio-diverse farming practices. By providing seeds, training, and consistent field-level support, Prakriti has helped women reclaim their role as knowledge holders and cultivators. These women are not only growing food for their families but also restoring soil health, conserving indigenous seeds, and challenging long-held myths about what women can or cannot grow. In the process, they have built stronger communities, increased food security, and emerged as leaders and change makers in their villages.

In the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown, **Prakriti** stepped forward with a clear mission - to empower women farmers in parts of Vidarbha through sustainable, self-reliant agricultural practices. Over the past four years, this commitment has blossomed across six villages, where nearly 60 women are now cultivating half to one acre of land each using agro-bio diverse, organic farming methods.

These women - smallholders, marginal farmers, and even landless cultivators farming on leased land - often face challenges like lack of access to quality seeds, natural pest control methods, financial support, and resilience strategies against crop failure. **Prakriti's** focussed support has come in the form of seed provision, hands-on training in organic cultivation, seed conservation techniques, kitchen garden promotion, and exposure visits. The result: not just greener fields, but stronger, more confident women

“We used to think that crops like moong, urad, and millets couldn't grow here. Now, not only are we growing them, but sharing the surplus with others,” says Ujjwala Shinde, proudly holding a basket of freshly harvested tur dal - a crop that has seen excellent yields this year.

Women like **Asha Jumade** have transformed their plots into thriving ecosystems. “My field stands out - it's greener and fuller compared to the ones that only grow cotton and tur,” she notes. This shift to diverse, chemical-free farming has improved soil health, conserved indigenous seed varieties, enhanced food security, and strengthened community bonds through mutual aid during sowing and harvesting. Some



Women farmer engaged in bio-diverse farming

women, like Sneha, discovered forgotten leafy vegetables such as Kunjir, Khaparkuti, and Tarota through Prakriti's training sessions. “I had never even heard of these vegetables before. Now they grow in my kitchen garden - free, nutritious, and chemical-free,” she says with pride. The reintroduction of non-BT cotton seeds has been another milestone. Two traditional varieties were distributed, and farmers were encouraged to experiment. “We grew a few

rows alongside our usual crop and the difference was clear. These native seeds are more resilient and better suited to our land,” shared Malini Jivtode during her talk at Nagpur Beejotsav.



Woman farmer engaged in bio-diverse farming

At Prakriti, these women are not just farming land - they are cultivating change.

Despite setbacks - such as the loss of moong and urad crops due to erratic rains - the spirit of resilience remains unshaken. Women have diversified their produce, reduced dependency on external inputs, and gained the confidence to speak up, share, and lead.

Beejotsav (Seed Festival) : It is an event organized by **Prakriti** to provide a platform and an opportunity to women farmers to understand the importance of seed preservation, seed exchange and seed conservation. This event was held at **Prakriti** office, Lonara in the month of April. About 100 women farmers from 14 villages participated in this seed festival. This was the second successive **Seed Festival** organized by **Prakriti** and was well received by women.

“ I am aware of variety of leafy vegetables which grow in my farm but never gave a thought to preserve its seed and share it with other women. This seed festival has prompted me to preserve seeds. ”
- Durga Kathawate



Seed Festival at Prakriti ▶



Fellowship Programme

Prakriti's Fellowship Program empowered educated rural women-especially married and widowed women-to become local change-makers. Through hands-on training in rights, leadership, health, and governance, fellows engaged 18 villages, reaching over 1,000 women and girls. They addressed critical issues like domestic violence, menstrual health, financial awareness, and recognition of women farmers. The program fostered confidence, political aspiration, and community leadership. By equipping women to lead from within, the fellowship cultivates grassroots change that uplifts not only individual women but also the larger social fabric of their communities.

Prakriti's Fellowship Program marked a significant step in engaging educated rural women-particularly married women who have completed at least 10th grade-for grassroots leadership and social change. Anchored in the ethos of learning by doing, the fellowship aimed to empower women to both gain knowledge and serve as local change agents. Six women from Waraseoni block of Balaghat are given fellowship. The fellowship starts with selection of 2-3 villages, where the selected fellows will work during her fellowship tenure. The current batch of six fellows have selected 18 villages and are carrying out activities related to women's empowerment. Here is the description of activities carried out by the fellows :

SHG Engagement : Fellows attended SHG meetings to understand loan practices and guided members to prioritize internal lending for sustainable benefits. They raised awareness about reducing dependence on micro-finance companies and identified systemic issues such as domestic violence, pension access, low wages, and exclusion from government schemes.

Community Awareness Programs : Over 220 women attended awareness events on violence against women and support services. Experts from One Stop Crisis Centers participated. Key connections were established with government departments for long-term collaboration.

Youth-Focused Initiatives : Adolescent Girls' Survey - 180 girls were surveyed to assess health, education, and safety awareness. Findings revealed reluctance to report harassment and challenges in managing menstruation, especially during monsoons. This led to planned programs on menstrual hygiene and self-confidence.

Women Farmers' Survey : Fellows reached out to 420 women farmers. Although most contributed significantly to agriculture, their roles were unrecognized. On Women Farmers' Day (October 15), 160



Rural women attending awareness event on violence against women

women celebrated their identity as farmers by showcasing native seeds and affirming, "We are farmers."



Awareness program for Adolescent girls organized by fellows

Awareness Programs in Schools : Sessions were held in six government schools with 175 girls, promoting life skills, decision-making, and menstrual health. Girls received information on safety resources and iron supplements through Anganwadis.

Identifying & Supporting Women Leaders : The fellows identified 90 potential women leaders across villages. Many aspired to contest local elections. Ten of them spoke at the January 26th Gram Sabha, joined by 192 community women.

Leadership Workshops & Exposure : Leader women participated in workshops on leadership styles, problem-solving, and women's rights. On International Women's Day, 690 women from both tehsils shared their experiences. Additionally, 29 women attended a conference in Nagpur themed "Relevance of Gandhian Thoughts", while 24 joined a workshop on property rights.

“

I came in contact with Prakriti during my tenure as sarpanch. When this opportunity for fellowship came, I immediately applied for it. It is helping me in building my understanding of social issues, which will help me in my political and professional career.

Daneshwari Rahangdale
Sihora | Balaghat

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“

I am a widow and have to raise my two children for which I tried many options. However, this fellowship was the only opportunity which has helped me in gaining self-confidence and I feel more prepared to deal with my responsibilities.

Rashmi Meshram
Katangi | Balaghat

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Shabana Khan: Breaking Barriers, Stitching Futures

In the quiet village of **Navegaon** in **Balaghat's Katangi** block, **Shabana Khan** is quietly challenging norms. A graduate from a conservative family where women are discouraged from working, Shabana's dream of using her education seemed distant. But courage pushed her forward - she applied for and secured the post of Mate under the MNREGS scheme. This job brought her into contact with villagers, both men and women, and soon she met Lakshmi, a **Prakriti** Fellow. Recognizing Shabana's leadership spark, Lakshmi encouraged her to mobilize women and girls in her village. Together, they initiated tailoring and computer classes, giving many women a platform for self-reliance. Today, Shabana and Lakshmi are nurturing a movement - quietly but firmly weaving empowerment into the fabric of village life.

”



Annual Conference and Vasudha Smriti Award

Rewarding women leaders for showing courage to transform

Prakriti honoured three exceptional women sarpanchs with the Vasudha Smriti Award, celebrating their leadership in rural governance and development. Instituted in 2015, the award recognizes women who drive transformative change in their communities through initiatives in health, infrastructure, legal access, and sustainable development. By spotlighting these leaders, the award inspires societal recognition of women's capabilities in public life and governance. It not only empowers women to step into leadership roles but also encourages inclusive, grassroots-driven progress, reinforcing the idea that rural women can be powerful agents of change.



Participated women in Annual Conference

To mark its 24th Foundation Day, **Prakriti** hosted a two-day annual conference at Lonara, Nagpur on **February 18 -19, 2025**. A key highlight of the annual observance is the Vasudha Smriti Award - an award that honours outstanding women sarpanchs for their exemplary leadership in rural development. Instituted in 2015, the **Vasudha Smriti Award** has, to date, felicitated 27 inspiring women leaders from villages across Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and even as far as Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. The 2025 edition added 3 more names to this distinguished list:

1. **Yashodha Patel** (Sarpanch, Kauhakuda, Thana Pathora, Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh)
2. **Vibha Raut** (Sarpanch, Agargaon, Devli, Nagpur, Maharashtra)
3. **Himane Wakudkar** (Sarpanch, Nandgaon, Mul, Chandrapur, Maharashtra)

Yashodha Patel was recognised for her dynamic efforts in removing encroachments, rehabilitating the displaced, converting barren lands into cultivable fields, and providing access to clean drinking water and essential infrastructure. Her proactive implementation of multiple government schemes made her a beacon of change.

Vibha Raut led vital initiatives in health and hygiene, notably reopening a health centre that had remained shut for 25 years. Her contributions to drinking water access, sanitation under the Swachh Bharat Mission, education, and the construction of a 9.5 km road were widely appreciated.

Himane Wakudkar used her legal background to ensure the smooth delivery of government schemes to those in need. She worked across sectors - water, hygiene, health, education, and employment - and also fostered a culture of sports in her village.

The event commenced with a tribute to **Late Shri Subhash Gogate**, former Vice-President of Prakriti, who passed away on January 26, 2025. The welcome address was delivered by Prakriti executive director Suvarna Damle, who also gave an overview of Prakriti's journey since its inception in 1990. Especially present were Prakriti Chairperson **Dr Rajiv Kulkarni**, Secretary **Shobha Sakharwade** Executive Director **Suvarna Damle** and Member **Dr Astha Agrawal**. The inaugural session's theme was "Relevance of Gandhi's Ideas Today", with eminent Gandhian and freedom fighter **Smt. Lilatai Chitale** and **Shri. Rameshchandra Sharma** gracing the event as chief guests. The session was conducted by **Ms. Sangeeta Savarkar**.

In the second half, **Nirupama Deshpande of Sampurna Bamboo Kendra, Lavada**, shared her inspiring work of over three decades in promoting bamboo craft in tribal regions. More than 4,500 tribal youth in **Melghat** have been trained under her initiative. She offered to help Prakriti's women members learn bamboo craft and market the products for sustainable livelihoods. **Shubhada Deshmukh, founder of Amhi Amchya Arogyasathi in Kurkheda, Gadchiroli**, shared insights from her 35 years of work with Adivasi farmers and women. She spoke on the Forest Rights Act and emphasized the importance of decentralized village governance, highlighting how women's self-help groups are actively preserving forests. Two other sarpanchs, **Lakshmi Gajbhiye and Seema Game**, spoke about how Prakriti had supported their leadership journey.

The second day focused on Self-Reliance and the Dignity of Labour. Executive director Suvarna Damle moderated the session, introducing speakers **Vaishali Bezalwar** and couple from **Paradsingha (Madhya Pradesh) Shweta Bhattad and Tanmay Joshi**. Vaishali Bezalwar, a Gandhian thinker and organic farmer, spoke passionately about preserving native seeds, the role of cow-based agriculture, and valuing physical labour. Shweta Bhattad and Tanmay Joshi shared their journey in zero-till farming and the benefits of natural, sustainable agriculture. The event concluded with Suvarna Damle invoking Gandhiji's 11 vows, reminding participants of the principles of truth, non-violence, self-restraint, and service - values that continue to shape **Prakriti's** mission.



Distribution of Vasudha Smriti Award

Other Programmes

8.1 Jaga Dakhva Abhiyaan – 2024

Creating Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls

Jaga Dakhva Abhiyaan, launched by Prakriti in collaboration with FERA/Akshara and MSRTC, aimed to raise awareness about harassment of women in public transport spaces. Held at bus depots in Saoner, Nagpur, and Kalmeshwar, the campaign used street plays, posters, and open discussions to spark community engagement. It empowered women and girls to speak up, seek help, and reclaim public spaces. The initiative fostered dialogue, challenged social norms, and promoted collective responsibility for women's safety - marking a crucial step toward creating inclusive, respectful environments where women can move freely and confidently.



In December 2024, Prakriti, in collaboration with FERA/Akshara and the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), launched the Jaga Dakhva Abhiyaan to raise awareness about violence against women and girls in public spaces - specifically bus depots and stands. The campaign aimed to engage the public in conversations around safety, harassment, and the importance of creating inclusive and secure transit zones.

Three MSRTC bus depots were selected for the campaign - Saoner, Nagpur, and Kalmeshwar - with the dates scheduled as follows: Saoner on December 10, Nagpur on December 13, and Kalmeshwar on December 27. These locations were chosen for their strategic importance and direct link to areas where Prakriti works.

The campaign featured street plays, poster exhibitions, and interactive discussions conducted by a dedicated team of volunteers, field workers, and Prakriti staff. Kalmeshwar witnessed the highest level of community participation, especially from high school girls who actively engaged with the campaign material. The MSRTC staff at all locations supported the initiative and helped facilitate smooth execution.

Importantly, the campaign not only raised awareness but also provided a platform for many women and girls to share their personal experiences with harassment. Students and women expressed gratitude for the information shared, stating they now knew they could seek help from NGOs like Prakriti or MSRTC staff.

A post-campaign review revealed personal growth stories: Praveen, a Class 12 student, defied her brother's disapproval to perform confidently in a street play. Ashwini, a college student under pressure from family due to marriage expectations, chose to participate and received praise from relatives - changing even her mother's perception.

Through Jaga Dakhva Abhiyaan, Prakriti successfully turned public spaces into platforms of empowerment and dialogue - one bus stand at a time.

8.2 International Women's Day Celebration

Prakriti celebrated International Women's Day on March 8, 2024, at its Lonara campus, in the presence of around 40 women participants. These included Zilla Parishad (ZP) school teachers, Gram Panchayat members, and Anganwadi Sevikas from nearby villages such as **Bokhara, Lonara, Sawarmendha, and Chanapa.**



ZP teachers and Anganwadi Sevikas were honoured by Prakriti on the occasion of International Women's day

The event was organized to acknowledge and honour the tireless efforts of teachers and Anganwadi Sevikas in shaping the next generation and contributing to public health in rural communities. Their work plays a crucial role in both education and healthcare, forming the backbone of a healthy, progressive society.

The programme began with an introductory speech by Suvarna Damle, Executive Director of Prakriti. The event was compered by Vaishali Haste. In her address, Suvarna

Damle extended warm wishes on the occasion of International Women's Day and shared the purpose of the gathering. She highlighted Prakriti's work over the past 35 years in empowering rural women and noted the significant changes that have occurred during this time.

She traced the origins of International Women's Day to the historical injustices faced by women globally and emphasized its core message - equality for all. While acknowledging the progress made, she pointed out the ongoing challenges faced by women and girls, stressing the importance of continuing efforts toward fairness and equity.

During the interactive session, Damle engaged with teachers, Panchayat members, and Anganwadi Sevikas to understand the current status of women's health, education, social standing, and behavioural changes. The discussion was open and candid, revealing evolving concerns in the lives of rural women.

One ZP school teacher noted that while women have gained access to education - a positive development - cases of violence and abuse against women are still increasing. Another participant observed that many girls today appear more impatient, emotionally reactive, and sometimes show a lack of respect for elders, which affects their interpersonal relationships.

An Anganwadi Sevika mentioned that, fortunately, gender discrimination among parents is declining, but also expressed concern that some girls may misuse their newfound freedom, showing signs of irresponsible behaviour.

Another teacher highlighted that early onset of puberty is becoming more common among girls, which could have long-term health implications. Several Anganwadi Sevikas also observed a noticeable decline in average female height over recent years. Changes in dietary habits were also discussed. Participants expressed concern that many girls today are unfamiliar with basic fruits and vegetables, reflecting a shift away from traditional, nutritious food. Mobile phone addiction was identified as a major issue, contributing to distraction and disengagement among young girls. The women present unanimously urged Prakriti to restart its training and awareness programmes for girls, which they believe are more necessary now than ever.



“Proud Movements”

- **Padma Bhusari** and **Kumudini Dhole** from Nagpur and **Sangeta Tayde** and **Sarita Wairale** from Akola district have featured in the book titled as Pushkala, which is documentation of success stories of women farmers practicing Swaavlambi Sheti.
- **Ms. Archana Keche** spoke about her experience as farmer about mitigating climate change as during a session at **India Land Development Conference at Pune in November 2024**.
- At Nagpur Beejotsav **Ujjwala Shinde**, **Malini Jivtode** narrated their experience as woman farmer and about various initiative like seed conservation, promoting agro-bio-diverse farming etc.
- **Ms. Lakshmi Gajbhiye**, **Ms. Sheetal Pandey** were selected as **Krishi Sakhi** under ATMA and UMED project by the State Government.
- **Ms. Yogita Sonawane**, **Ms. Sngeta Choudhary** participated in a training at Ahmedabad organised by WGWO on women and their land rights.



Their stories in their own words.

Participation in Other Programmes and Events

- Prakriti applied for **Martha Farrel Gender Equality Award** and was selected in round one and Two in the last qualifier round their representative visited Prakriti and hold meeting with the staff and with community members. Though Prakriti could not qualify for the award, however this application provided an opportunity to retrospect Prakriti's program for prompting gender equality and may be in the subsequent years, this effort will be fruitful.

- **Visits and internship by Social Work Students** : This year students from MSS institute of social work visited Prakriti to understand about the work and students from the faculty of Social Work (RTMNU) were placed for field work at Prakriti. As part of the field work they created awareness about alcoholism in Sawarmendha village. The student during their field work highlighted the fact that due to growing alcohol addiction, many youth are searching for brides, but girls are refusing to marry young men from this village and as a result the birth rate has reduced drastically, this has further impacted the enrolment in the local anganwadi and primary school.



Visit of students from Matru Sewa Sangh Institute of Social Work



Archana Keche in ILDC

- In the month of November, **Ms. Pooja Ledange** and **Ms. Archana Keche** participated in India Land Development Conference in Pune. They are shared their experience in panel discussion Rooted Resilience : Why Land Matter for Women in a Changing Climate.
- In the month of February, women leaders, **Archana Keche**, **Yogita Sonawane** and **Sangita Choudhary** were attended the training course

organized by **WGWLO on women's land rights**. These women leaders have gone beyond the farm, advocating for land rights and local governance, proving that when you sow seeds of knowledge and dignity, the harvest is deep and enduring.

- A meeting of NGOs from **Wardha, Gadchiroli, Nagpur and Yavatmal** was held at Prakriti in the month of November, 2025. This meeting was held to plan the Jaga Dakhva Abhiyaan (a campaign to ensure safety for women and girls at public places).



NGO representatives participated in planning meeting of Jaga Dakhava Abhiyan





List of Board Members

Sr. No.	Name of Board Member	Designation
1	Dr. Shri Rajeev Kulkarni	Chairperson
2	Shri Subhash Gogate	Vice-Chairperson
3	Smt. Shobha Sakharwade	Secretary
4	Ms. Suvarna Damle	Executive Director
5	Shri. Ravinder Kumar Sharda	Treasurer
6	Dr. Ms. Jahnavi Andharia	Member
7	Mr. Saravan Kumar	Member
8	Adv. Ms. Aparna Singh	Member
9	Ms. Sunita Bagal	Member
10	Dr. Ms. Astha Agrawal	Member



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