



Institute of Social Studies Trust

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24





Institute of Social Studies Trust

# ABOUT ISST

The Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) is a charitable non-profit organisation founded in 1980. For over four decades, ISST has diligently dedicated itself to fostering social change, through active **evidence building around women's economic empowerment and active community engagement**.

*“ISST aims to bring to the centre stage and address gendered dimensions of labour through a critical public-spirited enquiry and a gender transformative approach necessary to build a just and equitable society, especially on issues concerning women, children, and other marginalised communities.”*

ISST pursues its goal through its four programme pillars - Research, Evaluation, Capacity Building, and Community Outreach across the four thematic areas of Gender Based Violence and Work, Informality, Precarious Work and Care, Gender and Digitalisation of Work, and Women Powering the World of Work.

ISST is registered through Trust Deed Registration and is an FCRA compliant organisation. In recognition of its work, ISST has been conferred a special consultative status (II) with the Economic and Security Council of UN (UN ECOSOC). ISST also holds the Equivalency Determination (ED) Certificate (US).

# CONTENT

<b>1. Chairperson's Message</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>2. Director's Overview</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>3. Thematic Areas</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Gender Based Violence and Work	10
2. Informality, Precarious Work, and Care	12
3. Gender and Digitalisation of Work	13
4. Women Powering the World of Work	14



<b>4. Our Programme Pillars</b>	<b>16</b>
1. Research	17
2. Community Outreach	24
3. Evaluation	30
4. Capacity Building	32
<hr/>	
<b>5. Engagement and Dissemination</b>	<b>34</b>
a) Workshops and Seminars by ISST	35
Special Feature   Shram aur Hum	36
b) External Presentations by Team	38
c) Engagement with Ecosystem	40
d) Library	41
Publications	43
e) Communications	45
<hr/>	
<b>6. Team Engagement</b>	<b>46</b>
a) Organisation BUILDing	47
b) Monthly Staff Meeting	47
c) Joint Saathi Centre Meetings	47
d) Quarterly Research Workshop	47
<hr/>	
<b>7. Organisational Overview</b>	<b>48</b>
a) Governance	49
b) Annual Meetings	49
1. Board of Trustees Meetings	49
2. Academic Planning Committee Meetings	49
3. Financial and Administrative Committee Meetings	50
c) Our Team	50
d) POSH	51
e) Summary Financial Statement	52



# CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Dear Reader,

For the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), this past year has been one of transformation and growth. Our journey has been marked by milestones that have highlighted the power of collaboration, commitment and the dedication of our team.

Central to this was the two-day event, Shram aur Hum two, a one-of-its-kind gathering that bridged the worlds of research and grassroots activism. This multifaceted event created a space where researchers, advocates, and community members could come together to share, learn and support one another. It was incredibly rewarding to witness our staff's engagement, ownership, and pride in bringing this event to life, transforming it into a vibrant forum for advocacy and a platform for meaningful connections.

While the event gave us an opportunity to showcase our work to the world, internally, the team worked to build the core of the four thematic areas that were identified in the previous year by developing concept papers for each theme that would guide the work of the organisation. Subsequently, the community teams reflected on how the themes connect with the community outreach programme. For the first time, the community centre team took a systemic approach to create a demographic profile and link it to the performance of the students that are associated with the centre, in order to analyse issues that affect learning outcomes.

During the year, we launched our Facilitating Gender Transformative Evaluations (FGTE) course for senior professionals. Designed to deepen expertise in gender-transformative evaluation, this course has become an important addition to our capacity-building initiatives, supporting sector leaders as they work to shape more equitable and effective programs for improved gender equality outcomes.

We also focussed increasingly on communication and advocacy. Our efforts to make our research accessible to wider audiences have amplified the voices of those we serve and allowed us to share critical insights with policymakers, fellow organizations, and the general public. Additionally, under the BUILD grant provided by the Ford Foundation, we have strengthened our internal processes, enhancing ISST's resilience and efficiency to better serve our mission.

In our ongoing journey, we are grateful for the steadfast support from our donors and partners, who make our work possible. Our sincere appreciation goes to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, American Jewish World Service (AJWS), Wipro Cares, Institute of Development

Studies (IDS), UNFPA, World Food Programme, Porticus, USAID, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3iE), and Womanity Foundation. Their invaluable support empowers us to expand our work, develop new research, and bring our insights into action. Throughout the year, our team remained deeply engaged and connected, guided by a shared vision of creating an equitable and inclusive society. None of our progress would have been possible without the tireless efforts of our dedicated team—researchers, program coordinators, community mobilisers, administrative staff, and support personnel—who bring our mission to life every day. I would like to commend their commitment and passion which continues to drive ISST forward, even amidst complex social and economic challenges.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the Trustees for their dedication, time, and guidance in upholding ISST's organisational values. In November 2023 we were saddened by the sudden demise of our longstanding Trustee, Nirmala Banerjee, a distinguished economist and a cherished mentor. We are committed to carrying forward her legacy with renewed purpose and dedication.

**Ms. Sarojini Ganju Thakur**  
Chairperson, ISST



# DIRECTOR'S OVERVIEW

As we reflect on the fiscal year 2023-24, it is with immense pride and gratitude that I present this overview of the Institute of Social Studies Trust's (ISST) accomplishments, challenges, insights and aspirations. We continue our work to foster gender equity and social justice in women's world of work.

This year, ISST began aligning all its work under the four themes identified the previous year - Gender-Based Violence and Work, Informality, Precarious Work and Care, Gender and Digitalisation of Work and Women Powering the World of Work. The research and the community outreach teams came together to integrate the thematic issues into their regular activities.

The work done under the Gender-Based Violence and Work amplified the idea that gender-based violence cannot be understood in the binary of domestic violence and violence at the workplace, especially for the large number of women working in the informal sector. Studies explore these themes through our work on women and land rights, home based workers, and dynamics between gender-based violence and aspirations of young girls and boys.

The theme Informality, Precarious Work, and Care brought to light the intersectional vulnerabilities faced by women engaged in informal work that is also becoming increasingly precarious given the poly crisis created due to the global economic, climate and health challenges. The 2022 Declaration of G 20 under the India Presidency unequivocally stressed the need to expand care provisioning. ISST's work on the Compendium on Childcare Models, its study on the frontline workers during COVID and the challenges of the ASHA workers keeps the focus not just on childcare and but also on the care workers.

The theme Gender and Digitalisation of Work explored gendered dynamics of technology usage to reveal significant disparities in access, control, and opportunities for women and girls in low-income communities. While digital technologies can offer many opportunities, these technologies are mediated in and through the existing social structures that remain patriarchal and discriminatory. The study on ASHA workers underscored the dual-edged nature of digitalisation, highlighting both its potential to empower and its capacity to exacerbate existing inequalities. A new study initiated with young boys and girls will explore the differential app usage.

The theme Women Powering the World of Work examines women's agency and resilience mediated through collective action to demand better wages and working conditions in the formal and informal sectors. The work on different forms of collectivization of women farmers and of women workers in the garment industry highlight the significance of collectives and their role in negotiating with state and the markets.

ISST streamlined its operational structure through four program pillars - Research, Evaluation, Capacity Building and Community Outreach. These four programs in turn are assisted by the Program Support Team that consists of the Accounts Manager, the Librarian, Program Manager and the Communication Manager.



ISST research is marked for its innovative and participatory methodologies to draw out nuances of gender and intersectional discrimination, the collective and individual agency demonstrated in various contexts of the working women and young girls and boys. The idea of embedded research was introduced as an additional form that allows for grounded research and take the techniques of observation, listening to those who are embedded in the field itself. We hope this form of research will grow in the coming years as one more method of bridging the gaps between research and practice.

We continued to drive the gender-transformative evaluation discourse, partnering with organisations like Home Net South Asia to develop robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning frameworks. Our evaluations have not only assessed programmatic impact but also informed strategic planning for sustainable change.

The Saathi and Yuva Saathi Centers remain vibrant hubs of engagement, serving over 300 children, 200 adolescents, and 100 women annually. Along with providing educational support to complete schooling and graduation, these centres make special efforts to engage students with constitutional values through age appropriate activities, to recognise the deep-rooted gender inequality and to promote practices and behaviour that challenge patriarchy in different forms.

Our flagship courses, such as “Facilitating Gender Transformative Evaluations” and “Women and Work: Making It Count,” have empowered a diverse cohort of professionals to champion gender equity in their respective domains. The introduction of a course for senior professionals marked a new milestone in our capacity-building journey.

ISST’s engagement in the ecosystem dialogues has been pivotal in bridging the gap between research and policy. Events like the “Shram aur Hum” and our participation in international conferences and policy dialogues held by the government and multilateral organisations have been opportunities to use evidence-based reports to inform critical issues. The “16 Days of Activism for Violence Against Women” campaign and the dissemination of our publications have further solidified our reputation as a thought leader in the field of gender and work. As a founder member of Evaluation Community of India (ECOI), we supported EVALFEST 2024 that brought together national and international experts and young and emerging evaluators.

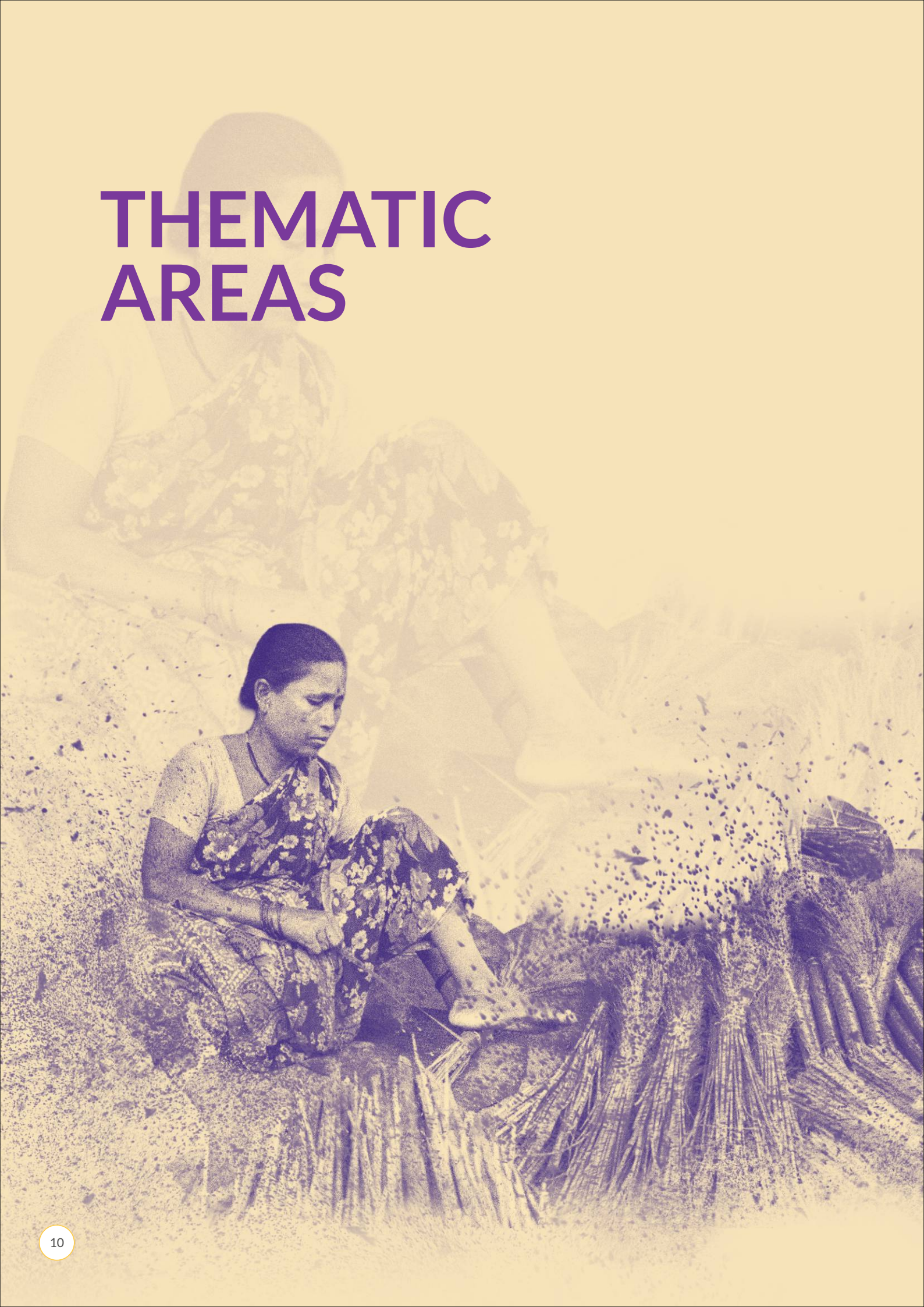
None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support of our donors, partners, friends and well-wishers. Your belief in ISST’s mission inspires us to strive harder every day. A huge round of applause to our dedicated team, whose passion and resilience drive our work, and to the communities we serve, who continually remind us of the transformative power of collective action. The support and guidance received from our eminent Trustees and the Chairperson have allowed us to take bold and imaginative steps. Thank you for your trust and partnership.

While the year has been marked by achievements, it has also presented challenges. The evolving socio-political landscape and the persistent barriers faced by marginalized communities underscore the need for adaptive and inclusive strategies. Our work has reaffirmed the importance of fostering collaborative partnerships, leveraging technology responsibly, and prioritising the voices of those most affected by systemic inequities.

As we move forward, ISST remains committed to deepening its thematic focus, expanding its programmatic reach, and enhancing its ability to influence outcomes. Together, we will strive for a just and equitable society through gender transformative approaches.

**Dr. Jahnvi Andharia**  
Director and Research Fellow, ISST

# THEMATIC AREAS



Over the past two years, ISST has been diligently aligning its work of generating theoretical insights and empirical understanding of the women's movement and its struggles. This has been achieved by streamlining our work across four main thematic areas of Gender-Based Violence and Work, Informality, Precarious Work and Care, Gender and Digitalisation of Work, and Women Powering the World of Work. These themes not only reflect the current ethos of the women's movement but also resonate with ISST's long-term commitment to exploring women's work through multiple lenses.

After establishing these four main thematic areas, the ISST team spent the last year refining their focus and developing individual concept notes, which will serve as the initial reference points for future work in these areas. This process involved extensive unpacking of concepts and trends, expert consultations, reading and referencing, all the while ensuring that the core principles of each theme were upheld.

Below is a brief overview of each theme and how they have evolved over the last year:

## 1. Gender Based Violence and Work

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. While physical and sexual violence may leave visible marks on the victims, the psychological, emotional, and economic abuse may often remain hidden. The theme focuses on GBV in places of work, which could be inside or outside the house with a two-fold approach. Firstly, explore the systemic violence beyond its physical aspects to include limited opportunities, dispossession, invisibility and symbolic violence perpetuated through various institutions, family, state, market and community. This will accentuate the importance of studying intersectionality and inter-generational violence. The second approach, challenges the artificial distinction between public and private domains, especially for the women employed in the informal sector. Taken together both these approaches build on the understanding that violence stems from unequal power dynamics and affects multiple aspects of victim/survivor's lives.

Violence against women has always been a key focus in several studies conducted by ISST, which have highlighting its impact on access to decent work. This year, ISST's studies provided insights into this theme through the exploration of women's land rights and land relations, and the MEL project, which examined the role of grassroots organizations like HomeNet South Asia in using ILO Convention 190 to advocate for a violence-free world of work. The study on land rights revealed that women's land relations act as a strong mediator for their access to land rights, which, in turn, shows a strong positive correlation with a reduction in violence against women. The HomeNet South Asia study highlighted the ground-level reality that women must first be able to name and define the various forms of violence they experience, and recognize that the home is also a place of work. A long road remains before the four South Asian countries implement laws and mechanisms that address the violence faced by this specific group of informal workers.

A pilot fellowship program is being designed under this theme to explore how an embedded research approach can inform the uncovering of different facets of violence experienced by women employed in the informal sector.

The 'Navigating Gendered and Structural Barriers to Aspirations' study also looks at GBV as post-facto phenomenon in the sense that what are the consequences of these acts of violence and how they even affect the aspirations of young women who experience it in their everyday lives.

As we delve deeper into the theme with perspective of work, in the next step, we will attempt to

unpack the labour codes from a GBV lens. The team, though is currently focused on women workers, will also look at the work conditions and contributions of transwomen and the experiences of violence in their world of work.

## INSIGHTS

*Gender Violence as a phenomenon is pervasive and encompasses a vast area of study. In our discussions, we found that it cuts across all our programmatic themes and is also present in the communities we work with. Defining the focus of this theme was challenging. The first step was to center it on women's world of work, as it would be in sync with the legacy of ISST's work. Our discussions identified the gaps in the theoretical understanding and the need to go beyond the perpetrator-survivor victim approach. The theme brings into focus the underlying systemic factors that contribute to the pervasive nature of violence despite growing awareness, legal redress and support mechanisms. Going forward, the aim under the theme would be to challenge ourselves to go beyond binaries, be rooted in women's world of work and contribute to the theoretical discourse.*

## 2. Informality, Precarious Work and Care

With the theme, we explore the gendered experiences of precarious work, understanding it as both an economic challenge and a threat to life's reproduction. We focus on intersectional analyses of women's workforce participation and the impact of precarious work on marginalised groups, considering their heightened vulnerabilities during crises like pandemics, economic upheavals, and climate change. Precarious work, characterized by informality, uncertainty, instability, low wages, and inadequate social benefits, is a long-standing issue in the Global South, exacerbated by neoliberal policies. It significantly impacts women, whose reproductive and caregiving labor has always been precarious and often invisible.

Over the past year, we have refined our focus to build evidence related to Informal and Precarious Work and Care (IPWC), aiming to support policy shifts towards gender-transformative social protection and care systems. We realised the need to sharpen our conceptual understanding, especially in light of the extensive scholarship on informality in the Global South. By revisiting our work on care, reviewing the conversations in the care ecosystem, we realised there is a huge gap between the existing research and policy material. With our future work, we intend to bridge this gap by contributing to the public and policy discourses. For this, our focus has shifted from purely theoretical work to producing policy briefs based on our studies, aiming to influence discourse on building better care models.

We will also aim to expand the concept of care beyond childcare to include eldercare, disabled care, unpaid/underpaid community care, and environmental care. Our studies, policy briefs and convenings will contribute towards developing this understanding and the larger discourse on care. Our recent study, Compendium of Full-day Childcare models, has provided insights into various models tailored to regional challenges, highlighting that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective, especially for marginalised communities, thus emphasising the need for standardised benchmarks that are adaptable to community needs. A significant contribution of this work was also highlighting the often-invisibilised role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and care workers in the care discourse, advocating for their recognition and partnership.

While our current evidence is largely on childcare models, given the stage of demographic dividend we are in, we advocate for hybrid care models that can transition to eldercare, avoiding issues seen in Kerala, where changing demographics have left some care systems underutilized.

In the coming year, we intend to contribute to our of enriching public and policy discourses with our ideas by completing studies, writing op-eds, and producing policy briefs. We will be engaging with key stakeholders in meaningful conversations about care systems, ensuring our work remains relevant and impactful.

## INSIGHTS

*As we shifted focus towards policy contributions, we learned to be more attuned to the ecosystem's needs and discussions. Recognizing ISST's extensive work, we sought to present it in impactful ways, ensuring our research aligns with 'public-spirited enquiry' and informs policy. By identifying key discussions on scalable models and quality childcare, we reinforced our commitment to a broader concept of care from a Global South perspective. While current discourse often narrows to unpaid childcare and eldercare, we emphasize the importance of addressing domestic work, subsistence work, and unpaid labor as crucial issues for feminists in the Global South as well as central in policy discussions for creating of responsive & inclusive care models.*

### 3. Gender and Digitalisation of Work

This theme (earlier known as Gender and Digitality) aligns with SDG Goal 5, which advocates for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; particularly Goal target 5.8 which aims to promote empowerment of women through technology. At ISST, the theme will build on our existing expertise in women and work while exploring the impact on women and work owing to rapid digitalisation in the country and the South Asia, expanding into the newer forms of digitalisation in the world of work.

The proposed study under the theme: "Analysing Gender Disparities in Smartphone App Usage among Adolescents and Young Adults in Delhi: A Comprehensive Examination of Patterns, Access, Control and Backlash" delves into the nuanced exploration of the gendered dynamics surrounding smartphone app access and usage among adolescents and young adults in (Kalyanpuri) Delhi. The study aims to scrutinize the patterns of app usage, investigate the access levels across genders in low-income and high-density areas, and assess the control individuals exert over their app utilization. The research will also investigate the gendered patterns of backlash that accompanies the use of smartphones. Through a methodical examination, the research seeks to shed light on the intricate interplay of gender, technology, and societal factors, providing valuable insights for both academic discourse and practical implications in the digital landscape.

This study being conducted among young boys and girls in the Kalyanpuri community has sparked interest among both research and community center teams to further explore the impact of digitalization on their lives. Following this, the community centres conducted sessions on cyber security, safe smartphone usage, and more.

Another cross-cutting study under this theme and the IPWC theme, examines the impact of digitalisation on informal care workers, in particularly the ASHA workers. Additionally, we will

explore linking the scope of digitalisation of work with the prospects of skilling young women in non-traditional livelihoods.

In the coming years, the team will expand its scope to explore more research, action and policy change which will create an enabling environment for girls and women to access decent work opportunities in the growing digital economy.

## INSIGHTS

*The smartphone app study identifies the barriers and challenges to access to digital opportunities for women and girls from low-income communities. The study on ASHA workers provides evidence of the impact of digitalization on ASHA's work from a gender and intersectional lens. Both these studies indicate the need for policy makers to focus bottom up for any policy or programme to be implemented in the long run.*

## 4. Women Powering the World of Work

Transitioning from the broad theme of "Movement Building and Claims Making" to "Women Powering the World of Work" (WPWoW), the theme focuses on women workers and their world of work. The world of work includes all forms of paid and unpaid work, informality and precarity in work, and care work and reproductive work. 'Powering' in the theme brings attention to how women's collectivisation, or participation in collective action and claims-making, is influencing the world of work. This thematic engagement at ISST combines gender transformative approaches and women's economic empowerment which seeks to not only improve women's economic status but also investigates the underlying power dynamics and social norms that hinders women's access to rights and economic opportunities.

The emphasis is on the specific impacts of women's collectivisation and claims-making in both paid and unpaid work sectors. This is done by understanding the feminist engagement or integration of gender transformative approach within the collectives. ISST's approach also considers women's active citizenship, viewing their claims as rights of citizens and as women and not just as workers. This perspective includes recognising women's contributions beyond the traditional family setup and understanding reproductive work as a value addition to the household and the economy. By adopting the pathways-to-change approach, ISST aims to unpack the factors leading to social or policy change and not limit the collectivisation processes and structural impediments to only collective building. The point is to also contextualize these structural elements, the processes of collectivisation in different sectors, legislations, government programs, or interests from the actors who are part of the larger associated movements.

To develop this theme, we are employing feminist methodologies in both research and programs, which are essential for deepening our understanding. These methodologies emphasise mixed, qualitative, participatory, and collaborative approaches to research and programs. This approach fosters critical reflection and dialogue, supports the development of legal and policy frameworks, and encourages us to consider institutional transformation.

## INSIGHTS

*To bring about change through a gender transformative approach, it's crucial to view women's roles and contributions holistically rather than in isolation. This involves analysing how women are placed socially, politically and economically in both paid and unpaid work. We must also consider how she contributes to and energises collective efforts. Collectivising and organising emphasises the kind of engagements and struggles women have in the world of work through their absence or presence in these collective institutions. These dynamics throw light on the broader changes in women's struggles and engagements in the workforce. This approach focuses on the political economy of gender and work and how social movements like feminist, labour, peasants and other movements are built around or by them, which is essential for a gender transformative approach.*



# OUR PROGRAMME PILLARS



The thematic areas guide the Institute's work by incorporating different perspectives and intersectionalities, and the medium of the work is structured around our four programmatic pillars: Research, Evaluation, Community Outreach, and Capacity Building. Research and Community Outreach have been integral to ISST's work since its early years, whereas Evaluation and Capacity Building, which are equally valued in the ecosystem, are more recent additions.

The following sections will give a snapshot of our efforts in these four programmatic areas over the last year:

## 1. Research

Through its initiatives in research, ISST continues to unpack a diverse range of social issues that affect women's work and opportunities to work. With collaborative and participatory methods of research, the studies provide quality evidence on issues of women and work for fellow researchers with academicians, funding organisations, as well as policymakers.

The section below features the research studies undertaken by ISST during last year with support of the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Digital Greens, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Ford Foundation, Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), and Womanity Foundation. The studies have given us new insights while furthering our mission to create an equitable and just society for all.

Name of the Study	Thematic Focus	Locations
Navigating Gendered and Structural Barriers to Aspirations: Experiences of Youth in Kalyanpuri, New Delhi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender-based Violence and Work</li> <li>Gender and Digitalisation of Work</li> </ul>	Kalyanpuri, Delhi
Sustaining Power: Women's Struggles Against Contemporary Backlash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender-based Violence and Work</li> <li>Women Powering the World of Work</li> </ul>	Bhavnagar, Gujarat; Udaipur, Rajasthan; Gurgaon, Haryana; Mumbai, Maharashtra
Gendered Impact of Tourism on the Lives and Livelihoods: Case Study of Khajuraho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informality, Precarious Work and Care</li> </ul>	Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
Understanding Work and Identity of Women Farmers: Role of Collectivisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender-based Violence and Work</li> <li>Informality, Precarious Work and Care</li> <li>Women Powering the World of Work</li> </ul>	Ranikhet, Uttarakhand Zira, Punjab Yavatmal, Maharashtra Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

Name of the Study	Thematic Focus	Locations
Compendium: Towards Evidence Building for Childcare Provisioning for Marginalised Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informality, Precarious Work and Care</li> </ul>	Across the country
Unpacking the Circular Economy: Foregrounding the Contributions of Workers in the Informal Economy in Delhi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informality, Precarious Work and Care</li> </ul>	New Delhi
Digitalization at the Frontlines: An Exploratory Study of Experiences of ASHAs in Haryana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informality, Precarious Work and Care</li> <li>• Gender and Digitalisation of Work</li> <li>• Women Powering the World of Work</li> </ul>	Sonipat, Haryana
Learning Document on Various Aspects of Women's Land Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-based Violence and Work</li> </ul>	Dewas and Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh Gariabad, Chattisgarh Udaipur, Rajasthan
Socio-Technical Innovation Bundles (STIBs) for Women Farmers' Resilience and Empowerment: A Case Study of Utthan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender and Digitalisation of Work</li> </ul>	Bhavnagar, Gujarat
Analysing Gender Disparities in Smartphone App Usage among Adolescents and Young Adults in Delhi: A Comprehensive Examination of Patterns, Access, and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender and Digitalisation of Work</li> </ul>	Kalyanpuri, East Delhi
SRLM and Women's Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women Powering the World of Work</li> </ul>	Across the country

## Navigating Gendered and Structural Barriers to Aspirations: Experiences of Youth in Kalyanpuri, New Delhi

The study, situated in the Kalyanpuri community of East Delhi, explores the aspirations and challenges faced by adolescent girls in economically marginalised areas. Using a case-study approach, the study delves into various forms of violence - physical, sexual, and psychological - that restrict these girls from realising their dreams. The research team also conducted semi-structured interviews with key figures in the girls' lives, including family members, peers, teachers, and NGO representatives, to identify factors shaping their experiences and offer solutions for addressing gender-based discrimination against them. After completing the case studies this year, the team analysed the qualitative data and began drafting the report.

## Sustaining Power: Women's Struggles Against Contemporary Backlash in South Asia

Spanning across the South-Asian countries of India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, this study seeks to understand the success factors behind women's movements in these countries, focusing on how they sustain their relevance despite facing backlash.

In India, ISST leads the research by closely collaborating with four women's struggles: Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Aandolan (BMMA), Nyay Samiti of Samarthan Mahila Sangathan (SMS), Community for Social Change and Development (CSCD), and Kotra Adivasi Sangathan. The research team employed diverse research methodologies, including case-level and national-level political and economic analysis (GPEA), panel interviews, oral histories, group discussions, and reflective workshops that incorporate technique from the 'Theatre of the Oppressed.'

Through the year, the team completed the first round of data collection for case study 3 and 4, and the second round for all the four movements. After coding the extensive qualitative data, the team initiated the report writing process. Additionally, as part of the project's reflective component,

national teams from all four countries gathered in Nepal for a workshop in January. Regular interactions between the India team and IDS Sussex teams are essential to track progress, share experiences, and analyse findings from a South Asian perspective.

## Gendered Impact of Tourism on Lives and Livelihoods: Case Study of Khajuraho

The study, in collaboration with the Equitable Tourism Options (EQUATIONS), examines the gendered dimensions of labour in the tourism industry. Using a case-study method, the research investigates how tourism sites function as workspaces that intersect with the socio-economic, cultural, and political lives of local communities. The study uses an eclectic mix of qualitative and participatory research tools to collect data for the first case-study at the Khajuraho temple complex in the Chhattarpur district of Madhya Pradesh. Over six months, the team conducted periodic site visits to develop a place-based understanding and gain insights into the lives of those who depend on tourism for their livelihoods.

After analysing the data, the team focussed on drafting the report, which is currently under review and will be published soon.

## Understanding Work and Identity of Women Farmers: Role of Collectivisation

Set in the states of Uttarakhand, Punjab, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh, the study aims to explore the nuances of feminist consciousness among women farmers who are part of collectives,



focussing on the strategies these groups use to strengthen their identity and agency. The study employs a mix of qualitative methods – interviews, focused group discussions, and participatory exercises - to identify and analyse the systemic invisibility and discrimination faced by women farmers in India. After completing the literature review and two rounds of data collection, the team spent the year analysing the findings and began drafting the report.

## Compendium: Towards Evidence Building for Childcare Provisioning for Marginalised Communities

The project, which aims to highlight the pivotal role of childcare in women's lives and work, documents existing models of full-day childcare and after school care services for children from marginalised backgrounds in India. In the discourse on women and work, the compendium's main objective is to showcase the positive impact of full-day childcare on the well-being of both mothers and children. After interviewing 30 organisations across India that provide childcare services, the team created individual profiles for each, emphasising the crucial support they offer to the women with young children.

A short film 'Not a Child's Play', developed as part of this study, explores the challenges faced by women in rural and tribal areas in managing the childcare and highlights the benefits of effective, universal, full-day childcare support.

Following the finalisation of the report, a soft launch of the study was done on our social media channels. The report and film were also presented at the National convening by SEWA/Mobile Creches in May 2023.



## Unpacking the Circular Economy: Foregrounding the Contributions of Workers in the Informal Economy in Delhi

The study highlights the vital contribution of informal workers - including waste pickers, home-based workers, and street vendors - in Delhi's circular economy. By doing so, it seeks to prioritise informal livelihoods in discussions around promoting a circular economy. The qualitative research spans across six distinct livelihoods: sorting and reselling food grain and spice waste, e-waste dismantling, reselling used household electronics, repairing and reselling shoes, knife and scissor sharpening, and recycling used clothes into new products. The study underscores the resourcefulness of informal workers in managing waste and closing material cycles through repair, reuse, and upcycling of discarded materials. Despite their positive contributions to both the economy and the environment, these informal workers continue to face stigmatisation, invisibility, and the constant threat of unfavourable legislation.

After finalising the report, it was launched and widely shared across digital platforms, including social media, through a dedicated campaign.

## Digitalisation at the Frontlines: An Exploratory Study of Experiences of ASHAs in India

The study, conducted across the states of Haryana, Kerala, Meghalaya, and Rajasthan, examines the impact of digitalisation on the work of ASHAs, mapping the integration of digital innovations into their roles and considering the implications from a feminist intersectional perspective. The study aims to provide a bottom-up view of digitalisation in the healthcare sector, shifting the discourse in India to focus on experiences of female frontline workers. It uses a mixed-method approach to capture the lived experiences of ASHA workers across the four states. The qualitative methods include interviews, focused group discussions, and observations, with ASHA workers, union

members, and government health officials.

Throughout the year, the team conducted intensive field work in Kerala, Meghalaya and Rajasthan, including organizing workshops for ASHA workers as part of their methodology. The team will now begin analysing the data to draft the report.

## **Learning Document on Various Aspects of Women's Land Rights**

The research focusses on understanding the work of seven organisations on women's land rights (WLR). The study explores how these organisations began working on WLR, their target groups and stakeholders, and their approaches and methods - such as raising awareness, providing legal guidance, and resolving conflicts. This information will be compiled into a comprehensive report detailing all aspects of working on WLR. The study employs an ethnographic research style, involving in-depth engagement with the organisations through field visits across Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha. With the fieldwork completed, the team is now in the process of writing the report, which will be reviewed and published.

## **Socio-Technical Innovation Bundles (STIBs) for Women Farmers' Resilience and Empowerment: A Case Study of Utthan**

This study aims to explore the combination of interventions by Utthan that bundle technical, social, and behavioural innovations to make women farmers more resilient and empowered. The initiatives address the harsh realities faced by women farmers, particularly in the context of climate change, aiming to create a support system and a sisterhood of empowerment for long-lasting community impact. The case study is a testament that economic empowerment alone is not enough; instead, a holistic approach such as the one taken by Utthan, which combines technical training with socio-political reforms, is essential for breaking down structural barriers for women.

## **Analysing Gender Disparities in Smartphone App Usage Among Adolescents and Young Adults in Delhi: A Comprehensive Examination of Patterns, Access, and Control**

This research delves into the nuanced exploration of the gendered dynamics surrounding smartphone app usage among adolescents and young adults in Delhi. The study aims to scrutinise the patterns of app usage, investigate access levels across genders, and assess the control individuals exert over their app use, highlighting the intricate interplay of gender, technology, and societal factors. These insights will contribute to both academic discourse and practical implications in the digital landscape. The team employs a mix of interviews and focused group discussions to explore the main research questions with adolescents and young adults. By year-end, the team had completed the literature review and was in the final phase of field work.

## **SRLM and Women's Empowerment**

This study uses a combination of empowerment frameworks to analyse the functioning and success of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) within the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, considering the contextual factors influencing them and their impact on members' lives. A qualitative approach was used for data collection and analysis, including semi-structured interviews. After completing the data analysis and report writing, the study was published and widely shared on social media.

## Methodology In Focus

*The ISST team continuously strives to develop tools and techniques that help in retrieving comprehensive information on the issues and people in focus, ensuring a deep understanding of context, challenges, and lived experiences, which in turn leads to high quality research outputs.*

*Originally designed to explore the benefits and challenges of digitalising the work of ASHAs in Haryana, “Digitalisation at the Frontlines” study later expanded its scope to include three additional states—Rajasthan, Meghalaya, and Kerala. The study began with intensive fieldwork in the Sonipat district of Haryana. Following this, the team organised a dissemination workshop where they shared key findings with the ASHAs and conducted activities to better understand their experience with smartphones. This approach not only enriched the research but also empowered the ASHAs by returning valuable insights to them for their ongoing work.*

*Given limited time and resources, the research team designed a methodology that included workshops with ASHA Workers Union of 3 states – Rajasthan, Kerala and Meghalaya to share findings of Sonipat as a starting point and then draw out their state specific experiences. Interactions with government officials in various states provided their views.*

*The approach provided a dynamic and immersive experience for the entire team allowing the study to draw out comparisons between different states and offered a possible national understanding on Asha’s and digitalisation.*

## 2. Community Outreach

ISST's community outreach programme began over 20 years ago with smaller interventions by the research team in the East district of New Delhi. With the aim of giving back and supporting the community, the Saathi centre was formally established in 2006 as a dedicated space for children and women at the Kalyanpuri police station. For over 16 years, the community programme has strategically addressed these needs and challenges to achieve long-term and valuable impact.

The Saathi centre, through the Bachpan programme, reaches out to children aged 3 to 15 years from the community. The programme aims to enhance character development and personality growth, while ensuring school enrolment, re-enrolment of school dropouts, and facilitating access to the 25% economically weaker section (EWS) quota in private schools. To improve youth employability, the team works to enhance their skills, personality, and confidence by supplementing their education with opportunities to learn vocational skills, computer literacy, and participation in life-skill sessions that cover topics such as gender sensitisation, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) laws, emotional well-being, career counselling, and social and community responsibilities.



The team has initiated a systematic process of developing a database of the children who utilise its services known as the “Demographic Profile of Saathi Centre Students”. This longitudinal database will capture critical elements of the children's social and economic backgrounds and track their learning progress over time. Each entry is assigned a unique number, enabling us to track students who may drop out for a few years and later return - a common occurrence as their parents often return to their villages and then return to the city in search of work.

In the first year of data collection, the Saathi Centre team recorded entries for a total of 257 children across various age groups: 3-5 years (58), 6-12 years (127), 13-14 years (35), and 15-16 years (37). Of these 257 children, 128 young girls regularly attend the centre for different activities and educational support. The profile clearly indicates that the number of girls attending the centre increases with age. It is often observed that the parents in the community are more willing to spend on after-school education support (tuitions) for the boys rather than girls, resulting in a higher number of girls in the age group of 12-15 coming to the centre. Notably, we have a 100% passing rate for the girls who come to our centre.

The Yuva Saathi Centre spearheads the organisation's initiatives among adolescents and young adults by creating a safe space where they can express themselves, ask questions, and explore their identities and choices. The team engages them in various constructive activities and workshops on issues related to gender, constitution, traditional and non-traditional livelihoods, vocational education, and more. Both centres

*The demographic profile is a comprehensive dataset of the children associated with the Saathi and Yuva Saathi centres, collected by the team members over the past year and a half. This data not only provides an overview of the background of the children and their families but also highlights some of the acute issues these children face, such as malnourishment, anaemia, and violence.*





*Both teams use a gender transformative approach in developing activities and planning sessions. While the initiatives are equally relevant and open to the entire community, imbining a gender lens into everyday life is essential for building an equitably just society.*

offer help desks that provide services such as Right to Information (RTI) filing, admissions assistance, form-filling, vaccination information, and counselling for social, emotional, and economic well-being. The ISST Saathi Centre also hosts a community library, providing access to a range of useful books and publications for community members, especially children to develop reading habits among them.

**Highlights of activities through the year:**

**Annual Events**



**Shram aur Hum**

- Slew of activities with adolescents leading as volunteers
- Interactive engagement at stalls from young and adult audiences alike
- Exposure, confidence building and personality development for the adolescents of the community



**BalUtsav 2023**

- An annual event celebrating the children of the community
- Activities, games, music & dance were part of the celebration
- Participation by over 250 children from both Saathi and Yuva Saathi Centres



**Summer Camp 2023**

- Yearly activity in the month of May-June
- Thematic focus on 'To know the Constitution'
- Samvidhaan activity to breakdown the concepts of the constitution
- Participation by 200 children, including both boys and girls

## Theatre as a Medium of Expression



### **Nukkad Natak (Street Play) at ACT 14**

Exposure to the world's largest theatre festival by Atelier Theatre group with a street play performance in the community complemented by performances from other college theatre groups.

### **Women's theatre group**

Led by Mr. Kuljeet Singh from Atelier theatre group, a group of **12 women** were trained for theatre as a medium of expression.

### **Theatre workshop**

Learning the basics of theatre such as reading, voice modulation and acting to encourage adolescents to express themselves through theatre and to raise awareness around prevalent issues and their possible solutions.

**Participation by 10 girls and 2 boys**

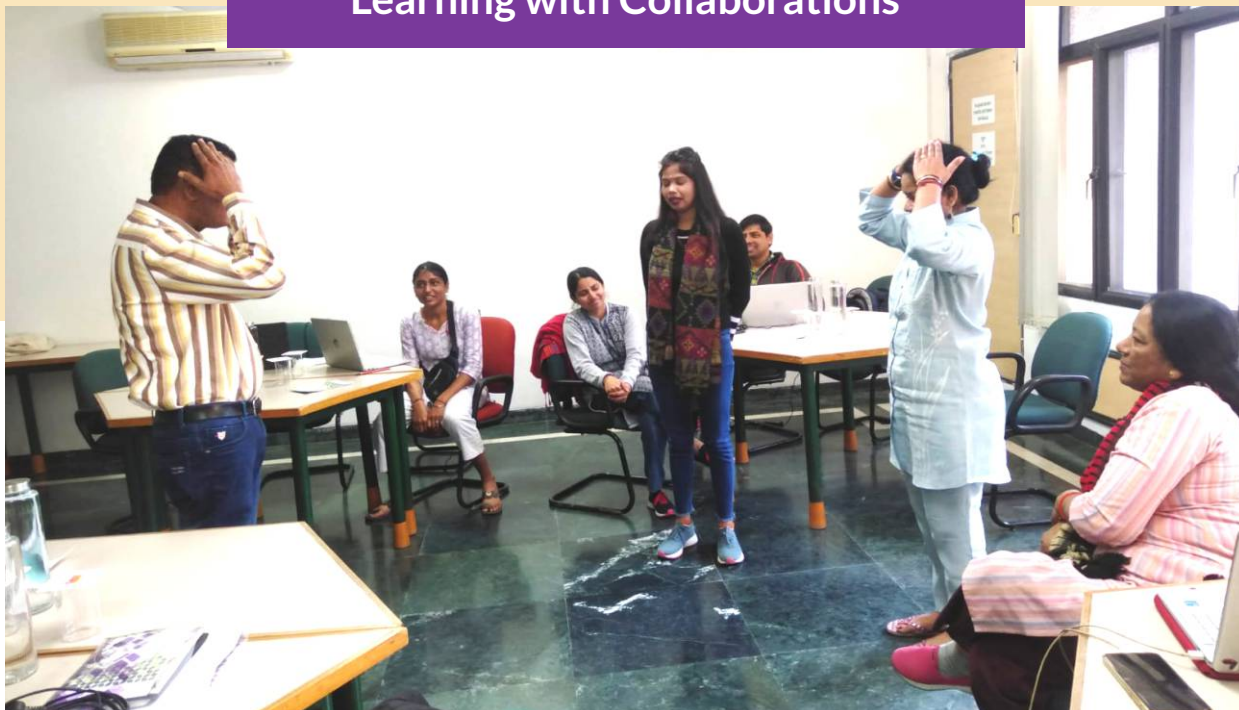
### **Theatre presentation at Akshara theatre**

Facilitated by Atelier theatre group, the group performed the play 'Say no to plastic' at Akshara theatre in front of audience

**Participation by a group of 45 girls, boys and women**



## Learning with Collaborations



### **EKLAVYA Education Foundation**

Exchange of knowledge to build team's capacity for curriculum development and documentation via visits to and from the Eklavya team.

### **World Comics**

Exposure trip to Okhla Bird Sanctuary to learn about flora and fauna, information about migratory birds through drawing and painting.

**Participation by 5 girls and 1 boy**

**Kriti Film Club's** movie screening for initiating conversations on issues like nature, friendship, social and personal issues. Children enjoyed and followed up with questions and experiences

**WIPRO RUN** was an opportunity for the Saathi Centre Team to participate in the marathon organised by WIPRO where they interacted with other organisations. Children also participated in the run at the India Gate, New Delhi.

**Delhi Police Cyber Cell's** session on cyber security to create awareness around increasing online frauds and how to keep safe from them.

**Participation by 23 girls and 17 boys**

**Magic Bus Foundation's** session on Career counselling provided information about traditional and non-traditional livelihoods and employment opportunities.

**Participation by 18 girls and 7 boys**

**Modi Care Foundation's** session on adolescents and associated issues of drug abuse, physical and mental health, hygiene, POCSO and POSH.

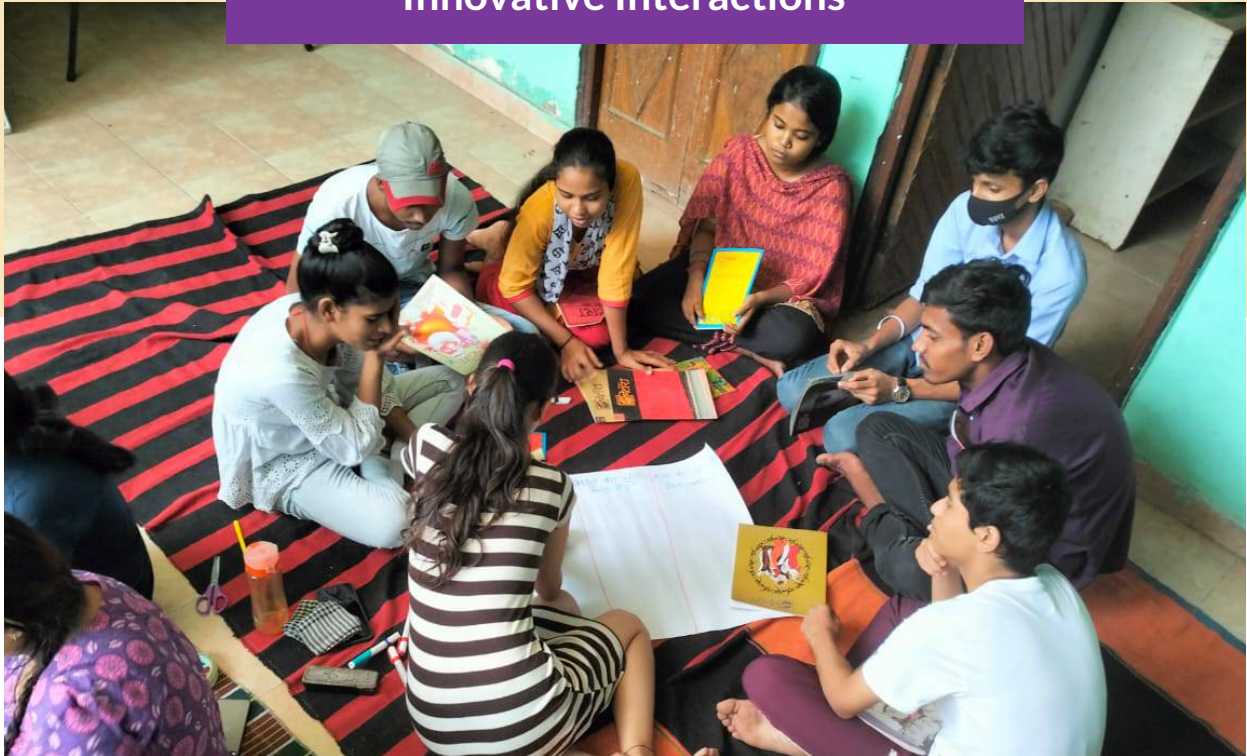
**Participation by 17 girls and 13 boys**

Session by doctor and nurse from the **AIIMS De-addiction Centre** on drug abuse to create awareness about the different types of drugs and how to help someone who is using them.

**Participation by 8 girls and 17 boys**

**Bookworm organisation in Goa** hosted a five-day workshop from September 4-8, 2023, for 20 participants from 15 institutions, focusing on library management and fostering community engagement with books. Staff members of the ISST Saathi centre participated in the workshop.

## Innovative Interactions



Initiative of **Mobile Library** in the Kalyanpuri community to engage with the members through storytelling, games, role-play, reading, etc.

Celebration of National Youth Day with a **Seminar on Volunteerism** and visit to Rajghat.

**Participation by 6 girls**

**Gender Sessions** with adolescents to create awareness about physical changes they go through during adolescence. The session saw active participation by girls in sharing their experiences and emotions whereas the boys in the group hesitated in sharing.

**Attended by 40 girls and 12 boys**

Visit to the **National Book Fair** at Pragati Maidan provided an opportunity to the young children and adolescents to learn about variety of genre, writing formats, literature and more. The visit helped in invigorating their interest towards reading habits.

Encouraging **gender equality in accessing public infrastructure** like Parks by organising games such as cricket, kabaddi, kho-kho which saw participation from both boys and girls,

**Participation by 25 girls and 10 boys**

**Visit to elected MLA's Office** to understand his work and responsibilities towards their community.

**Participation by 9 girls and 8 boys**

The **Session on Samvidhaan Live** directed the centre's belief in instilling values of 'better citizenship' among the adolescents. As part of the activity, adolescents went within their community to complete tasks such as planting trees, holding discussion on violence and caste & religion based discrimination.

**Participation by 16 girls and 14 boys**

**Session on Gender, Patriarchy, Attraction, Sexuality and LGBTQI+** to develop an understanding on these issues amongst the adolescents. The group was encouraged to reflect, share their views and raise questions.

Adolescents celebrated the **Youth film day at Film City, Nehru Bhavan** where short films on environment protection, wildlife protection and caste and religion based discrimination were screened.

**Participation by 28 girls and 17 boys**

“ सभी धर्म एक है,  
धर्म और जाती में भेदभाव  
नहीं करना चाहिए  
(All religions are one,  
there should be no  
discrimination based  
on religion and  
caste)

Humne sikha ki  
choti choti chizo se hum  
apne aas paas kitna bada  
badlav la sakte hai.  
(We learnt how small  
initiatives can lead to  
bigger changes  
around us.)”

“ काश मे भी पक्षी  
होती तो खुले आसमान में उड़ती  
और जहा मन करता चली जाती  
(If I had been a bird, I would  
also have flown  
into the open sky and  
gone wherever  
I wished)

” Pahli baar maine  
iss tarah ki charcha  
ladko ke samane ki  
hai.  
(This is the first time I  
have talked about this  
in front of the boys)

“ Mai pahli baar book  
fair me aaya hu. Mujhe to  
pata hi nahi tha ki itane  
sare log kitab kahaniya  
padna pasand karte hai.  
(This is my first visit to a  
book fair. I didn't know so  
many people like to read  
books and stories)

“ पहली बार पार्क में  
क्रिकेट खेल कर बहुत अच्छा लगा  
वरना आज तक सिर्फ लड़को को  
ही पार्क में खेलते देखा है  
(I liked playing cricket in the  
park. This was a first,  
otherwise till now we only  
see boys play)

“ मंच पर पहली बार नाटक  
करते टाइम मुझे बहुत गर्व  
महसूस हो रहा था  
(While performing the play  
on the stage for the first  
time, I felt proud  
of myself)

*Through these initiatives and efforts,  
the two centres collectively reach approximately*

**300**  
CHILDREN

**200**  
ADOLESCENTS

**100**  
WOMEN

*every year.*

## 3. Evaluation

ISST's extensive experience in evaluation continues to shape its participation in the gender transformative evaluation discourse. Its role in the evaluation sector is defined by the studies we undertake for various organisations (NGOs) and government departments, by involvement in the gender and evaluation community, and by initiatives to build the capacities of young and emerging evaluators and gender professionals.

### Setting up MEL for catalysing collective action towards a violence-free world of work for women home-based workers (HBWs) in South Asia

This three-year initiative complements ISST's extensive work with home-based workers, striving to enhance the lives of women and promote gender transformative evaluation. In its role as a project partner, ISST will create a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework for HomeNet South Asia and its partners in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The project emphasises building grassroots capacities to tackle gender-based violence, drawing on the principles of ILO Convention 190. In the second year of this partnership ISST contributed to effectively generate evidence on what kinds of changes emerged both big and small and documented the key propelling factors that are adding up to the intended impact. The data was analyzed using the overarching framework that was developed during Phase 1.

### Evaluation of a Leadership Program for Informal Workers Union

The evaluation broadly assessed the achievements of the Sewa Aagewan LeadersVikas Program I by SEWA Bharat across the states of Delhi, Punjab, Jharkhand, and Nagaland focussing on the outlined objectives and strategies:

- The quality and usability of the leadership training modules.
- The impact of training on the aagewans and their subsequent involvement in the community
- Feedback of the community on the role and abilities of the aagewans
- The impact of training of trainers and the improvement in the training skills
- The support provided to cadre of organiser and their development in organising skills

The study used Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with aagewans and In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with aagewans, state coordinators, trainers, and organisers. The evaluation was completed, and the report was shared with the Sewa Bharat team.

### Meta-analysis of research studies on Digital Green's interventions with women farmers

The meta-analysis examined the research and interventions conducted by Digital Greens in India and Ethiopia through a gender-transformative lens. The qualitative meta-analysis required the team to develop a specific framework based on the principles of gender-transformative evaluation, enabling an understanding of the effectiveness of these interventions for women farmers. The analysis led to key recommendations for Digital Greens in both India and Ethiopia, aimed at enhancing gender-sensitive initiatives and their outcomes. The report was completed within the year.



## The Gender and Evaluation Community

The community, hosted on the Ning Platform, continues to integrate theories, learnings, experiences, discussions, and initiatives from evaluations across the globe. **With 5,287 members worldwide, over 100 actively participate in discussions, job postings, and blog writing.** The recently introduced 'Monthly Corner' has been able to garner attention as a space to showcase publications, blogs, case studies, and more. It has also increased engagement with various organisations and other communities.

## EVALFEST 2024

As the Secretariat for the Evaluation Community of India (ECOI), ISST continues to play a pivotal role in promoting gender-sensitive approaches within the evaluation space. In 2024, ISST once again co-led the planning and management of EVALFEST. As partner, ISST organised a panel titled "Engendering SDG Monitoring: Multiple Pathways" to foster dialogue on the need for gender-sensitive monitoring mechanisms in achieving the SDGs. ISST team members contributed as chairpersons, speakers, and roundtable discussants for various other panels while others participated with great interest.



## 4. Capacity Building

Drawing on years of expertise in development research, ISST recognises the significance of capacity building as a bridge between research and practice. With the aim to engender the evaluation space, ISST launched its first course, Facilitating Gender Transformative Evaluations, in 2017. Since then, we have successfully introduced another perspective building course, Women and Work: Making it count in 2021, and Facilitating Gender Transformative Evaluations for Senior Professionals in 2023. These courses have established ISST as a key player in the capacity building sphere.

### Facilitating Gender Transformative Evaluations (FGTE)

Launched in 2017, the FGTE course has been highly successful and is well-regarded within the gender and evaluation community. The course, open to early and mid-career professionals in the South Asian region, is centred on feminist evaluation ethics and principles, making it the only course of its kind in the world that specifically focuses on gender transformation in evaluations. A revised version of the course was launched in 2019. With approximately 30 participants in each cohort, the course has successfully completed six iterations.

**180 professionals  
trained,  
30 participants  
in each cohort**

**Highlight: The Malaysian Evaluation Association recognised the course's value and made a special request to open applications to their professions. Currently, this course is open to participants from the South Asian countries of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan.**

“ Although the case study was not as per my expertise, but the group work enabled me to gain insights into the issue of environment and climate change. Also, it was a very engaging group work, it enabled iteration of perspectives and diverse views and practical application of evaluation theories and framework.  
(On Group work)

“ I really liked this module - think bringing in perspectives of how these frameworks helped organisations and how they used the recommendations might be insightful  
(On Module, Introduction: Framework for Gender Transformative Evaluations)

### Women and Work: Making it Count

Designed to foster perspective building, this course is tailored for professionals dealing with complex economic data who seek conceptual frameworks to better understand women's work. It critically explores the participation and absence of women in the economy, providing an overview of significant trends, perspectives, frameworks, developments, and debates. ISST has successfully conducted two iterations of this course, both online and in residential formats.

This year, the team concluded the second iteration of the course with the launch of the podcast series 'Working out Work' and a series of short films that thematically covered the course. The team



is also exploring ways to distil the learnings of the course into shorter formats for universities and practitioners in regional languages.

## Facilitating Gender Transformative Evaluations for Senior Professionals

The first iteration of this long-awaited course was launched in August 2024 with a cohort of 31 participants from India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Specifically designed for senior evaluation and gender experts, the course aims to enhance their capacity in gender transformative evaluations by building on their existing knowledge and skills.

“ I really, really enjoyed learning from portions of the FTGE course which I could engage in and also understand. I benefitted immensely from the GT Frameworks and how to engender evaluations in Module 1, 2 and 4. I enjoyed the contact hours and also the group assignments which I did with others. I thank each and every one of the facilitators who were all quite brilliant and I learnt a lot from each one of them.

“ Need to do such trainings for more people. Could organise one such training for donor community only, one for CSOs and one for UN organisations. Everyone needs to be on the same or similar page while promoting feminist gender transformative evaluations.

# ENGAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION



## a. Workshops and Seminars by ISST

Date	Name	Participants
13 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	Webinar - Women and work: Learnings, reflections and impressions	40
23 <sup>rd</sup> -24 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	Shram aur Hum	400
15 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	Research dissemination workshop for the study digitalization at the frontlines: A scoping study of ASHAs' experiences in Haryana	25
21 <sup>st</sup> -22 <sup>nd</sup> December 2023	Internal workshop- Gender diversity and the world of work	28
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2024	Internal workshop- Gender and Digitality	19



## Special Feature | Shram Aur Hum 2023

ISST celebrated its journey of over 40 years with a two-day event, Shram aur Hum, held on June 23rd and 24th, 2023. The event highlighted all aspects of ISST's work through exhibitions, panel discussions, masterclasses, plays, stand-up comedy, live exhibits, a bazaar, and film screenings. It concluded with a gala evening honouring our Founder-Director, Ms. Devaki Jain, who also celebrated her 90th birthday in June.

Aanchal Kapur from Kriti: A Communication and Development Praxis, curated the event and led the team's efforts towards its successful execution. Despite the short planning period, the team found the experience overwhelming yet fulfilling.

*The exhibition, which opened on June 21st, showcased ISST's ideology and work in research, evaluation, community outreach, and capacity building by sharing insights and evidence. Panel discussions focused on newly introduced thematic areas, providing a platform to share knowledge and gather insights from experts. Masterclasses offered learnings from our two courses – Facilitating Gender Transformative Evaluation, and Women and Work: Making It Count. A play by a women's group from our community centre, 'Das Din ka Anshan', and a stand-up comedy act by Preeti Das added humour while conveying important messages on issues of gender. The Interactive Nazariya by ISST, the fun segment featured film screenings, a bazaar, games and activities by Saathi Centre, and a live exhibit on the circular economy workers.*

With over 300 online registrations and 400 attendees, the event was a resounding success. Participants showed great interest in the discussions and activities. The gala evening, attended by prominent figures in the feminist space, was filled with shared memories and heartfelt tributes. The evening ended with **captivating performances of Dastan-e-Choubuli by Meera Rizwi and Shadab Hussain, and Sufi music by Radhika Sood Nayak.**

The discussions and highlights from the two-day event have been compiled into a report and a short film (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5MCtWtVK8Y>).





Devaki Jain (Founder-Director ISST) with her friends and colleagues.



ISST Team with Devaki Jain



## b. External Presentations by Team

Name of the Presentations	Presented by	Presented at	Location	Date
Women's work and care in agriculture: From a collectivisation lens of women farmers in India	Jahnvi Andharia	31st IAFFE Annual Conference	University of Cape Town, South Africa	July 4- 8, 2023
Cultivating dreams: Empowering aspirations of young women in agriculture in India	Jahnvi Andharia	Changemakers 20 Summit		August 15 -20, 2023
Defying the digital health tide: ASHA collective's resistance to healthcare digitalisation	Sreerupa and Sneha Makkad	Workshop on digital health: Regulatory and policy perspectives	University of WARWICK	September 4, 2023
Platformised governance and 'platform workers' of the health sector: Experience of ASHA workers of India	Sreerupa	31st IAFFE Annual Conference	University of Cape Town, South Africa	July 4-8, 2023
Creating spaces for social care: Experience of national lockdown in Delhi	Ashmeet	British Association of South Asian Studies (BASAS) Annual Conference 2023	University of Leeds, United Kingdom	April 5, 2023
Writing on the peripheries of data	Saeed	Writing data: Inter-disciplinary perspectives	Center for Writing and Communication at Ashoka University	April, 2023
Interlinked crises and social protection	Mubashira Zaidi	Regulating for decent work	International Labour Organisation	July 10-12, 2023
Processes of community care during times of crises: Experience of national lockdown in Delhi	Mubashira Zaidi	Webinar: Building a more caring world: Implications for the community by Baha'i Chair for studies in development	Devi Ahilya University, Indore	August 26, 2023

Name of the Presentations	Presented by	Presented at	Location	Date
Aspirations and the everyday negotiations - the lives of adolescents living in urban informal settlements	Mubashira Zaidi	Changemakers 20 summit		August 15-20, 2023
Unpacking gendered experiences and challenges of women in platform work in India	Anweshaa Ghosh	ISST-IWWAGE joint panel, 31st IAFFE Annual Conference	University of Cape Town, South Africa	July 4-8, 2023
Beyond the norm: Scope of Nontraditional livelihoods (NTL) skilling for women in achieving women's economic empowerment	Anweshaa Ghosh	Changemakers 20 summit		August 15-20, 2023
Master class on women and work	Benu Verma	Changemakers 20 summit		August 15-20, 2023
Exploitation faced by beauticians on beauty platforms	Shipra	Gendered experiences and understanding of the gig economy in India, 64th ISLE Conference		
Experiences of ASHA workers in Haryana's public health sector	Sreerupa and Sneha Makkad	Gendered experiences and understanding of the gig economy in India, 64th ISLE Conference	University of Hyderabad	March 29-31, 2024
GBV and women's work - Overview paper	Benu Verma	Changemakers 20 Summit		August 15-20, 2023

## c. Engagement with Ecosystem

Through its longstanding work in research, community outreach, evaluation, and capacity building, ISST has made meaningful contributions to policy formation—both directly and indirectly. By creating evidence to support socially equitable policy and programmes.

Our role within the larger ecosystem is essential. We contribute by fostering dialogues that seamlessly integrate theory, field evidence, and actionable policy recommendations—helping to create a holistic understanding of the socio-economic issues affecting marginalized communities.

In 2023-24, ISST continued its efforts to solidify its position as a critical player in important discussions and consultations. The following initiatives demonstrate our commitment to driving the discourse on women and work, aligned with the vision and mission of our organization:

- **Participation in the Expert Group Meeting for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)**

*Dr. Jahnvi Andharia was invited to present a paper at and Co-Chair of this significant meeting that feeds into setting the agenda for the upcoming CSW proceedings. She presented the significance of women's collectives in achieving development goals.*

- **Steering Committee Member of the Feminist Policy Collective**

*ISST was invited to be a member of the collective and Dr. Jahnvi Andharia was then invited to be a steering committee member.*

- **Contribution of a Chapter in the IWWAGE-NITI Aayog Report**

*Providing evidence-based insights into the lives of women workers in care and platform economy.*

- **Engagement in the IWWAGE G20 Thematic Workshop on Nari Shakti: Towards Women-Led Development**

*ISST participated in the deliberations held with the NITI Aayog and the IWWAGE to focus on taking forward the commitments made during the India presidency of G-20.*

- **Participation in the High-level Workshop by the World Bank and International Finance Corporation**

*Contributing to discussions on women's leadership, female labour force participation, and need for collective action to change social norms.*

- **Organising a panel at the Digital Citizens Summit, Bangalore**

*Advocating for digital inclusion and rights for women in the evolving digital economy.*

- **Presentation at the ISLE Conference 2024, Hyderabad**

*Engaging with academicians and researchers to bring out the experiences and understanding of gig economy in India.*

These initiatives reflect ISST's dedication to elevating issues central to women's economic empowerment, ensuring our voice is part of key policy conversations.



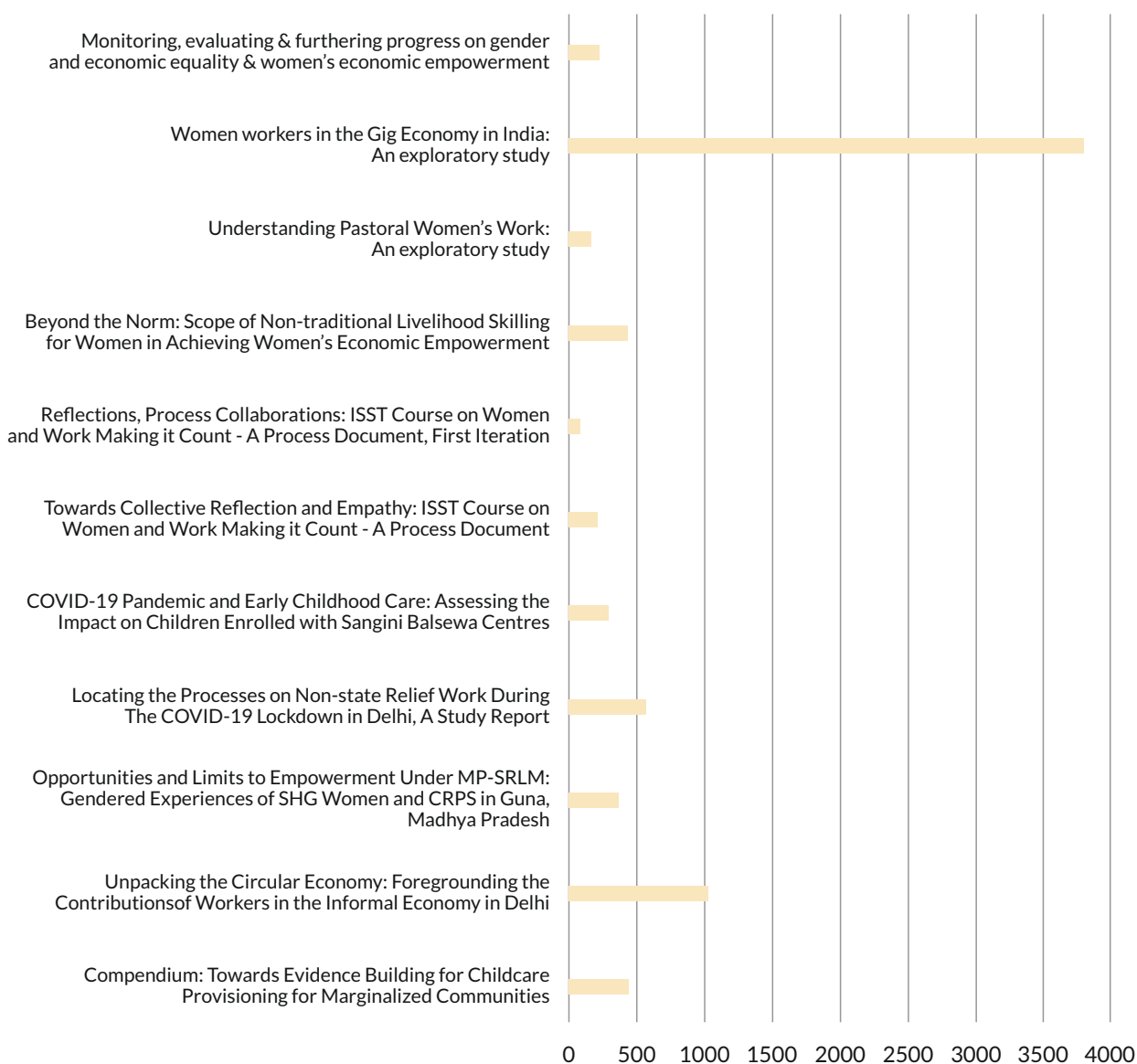
## d. Library

Established in 1984 as one of the first libraries within a feminist think tank, the ISST Library anchors ISST's work and houses some of the most significant historical works on women's labour and the feminist movement. The digital library, hosted on DSPACE, offers open access to ISST's extensive collection of work. The physical library is organised and managed through Koha. Over time, the ISST Library has evolved to provide various services to the ISST team, library members, and interested individuals.

### Dissemination of Publications

The library uses platforms like SocArXiv, SSRN, and DSPACE to share ISST's publications for wider outreach. The image below presents statistics on user views and downloads of our recent research reports across these platforms, based on data from May 2023 to February 2024.

#### Total Views and Downloads of the Reports



All recent publications are licensed under Creative Commons to facilitate ease of citation and access.

The fortnightly newspaper clippings and quarterly journal content, shared by the library on topics such as gender, women and work, violence, informal work and economy, home-based work, and gender and climate change, reach over 550 recipients and are widely appreciated.

## Feedback Quotes

*Thanks so much for providing such a great service.*

*Mala Khullar*

*Thank you for your continued efforts*

*Rashmi Agarwal*

*Well done!*

*Devaki Jain*

*Thanks. I owe you my intellectual growth, you always provide me with the best readings.*

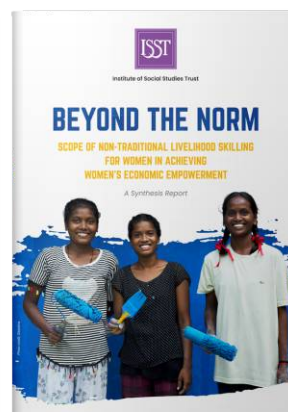
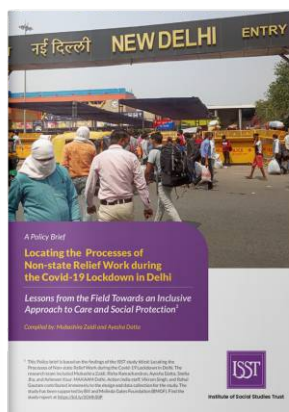
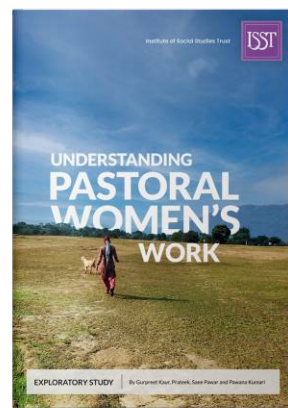
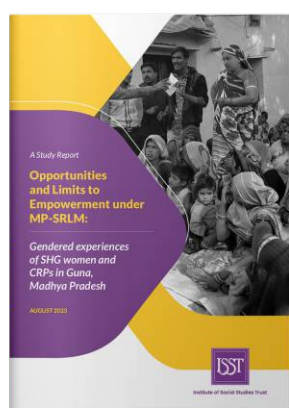
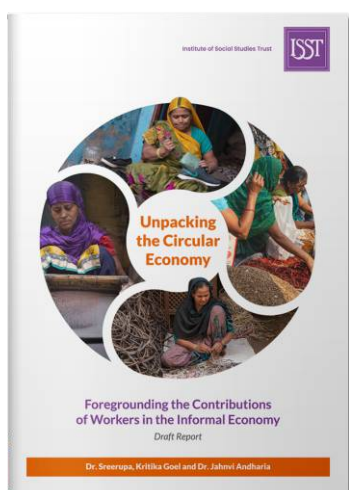
*Shalini Sinha*

*I am Hetal Vora, Programme Officer-Gender at Population First. I am writing to you with reference from Dr.Sharada A. L and would like to request your assistance in obtaining a compilation of newspaper and journal articles on gender-based themes for the year 2022 and if possible, contact details of the journalists.*

## List of Publications

Name	Author(s)	Date	Type (Study report/Journal paper/ Policy Brief/Book chapter)	Name of journal/ book/ publisher)
Modernity of Slavery: Struggles Against Caste Inequalities in Colonial Kerala	Benu Verma	27th April 2023	Book review	Doing sociology
Mobile Girls Koottam: Working Women Speak	Benu Verma	12th May 2023	Book review	Asian Journal of Women's Studies, Taylor & Francis
Towards Collective Reflection and Empathy: Women and Work Making It Count, Process Document, 2nd Iteration	Benu Verma	June 2023	Process document	ISST
Locating the Processes of Non-state Relief Work during Covid-19 lockdown in Delhi	Mubashira Zaidi, Ayesha Datta	June 2023	Policy brief	ISST
Engendering the Gig Economy in India	Anweshaa Ghosh, Risha Ramachandran	June 2023	Policy brief	ISST
Skilling Women in Non-traditional Livelihoods: Pathways to Women's Economic Empowerment	Anweshaa Ghosh	June 2023	Policy brief	ISST
Feminist Collaboration(s) and Affect: Work with Pastoral Women	Saee Pawar, Prateek and Gurpreet Kaur	3rd July, 2023	Journal paper	Asian Journal of Women's Studies, Taylor & Francis
Opportunities and Limits to Empowerment Under MP-SRLM: Gendered Experiences of SHG Women and CRPs in Guna, Madhya Pradesh	Mubashira Zaidi, Monika Banerjee	August 2023	Study Report	ISST

Name	Author(s)	Date	Type (Study report/Journal paper/ Policy Brief/Book chapter)	Name of journal/ book/ publisher)
SEWA Bharat Aagevan Vikas Program: An Evaluation of Women's Grassroots Leadership Across Four States of India	Nidhi Sen, Anwesha Ghosh, Jahnavi Andharia, Ashmeet Kaur Bilkhu	September 2023	Study Report	ISST
Unpacking the Circular Economy: Foregrounding the Contributions of Workers in the Informal Economy in Delhi	Sreerupa, Kritika Goel, Jahnavi Andharia	September 2023	Study Report	ISST
Compendium: Towards Evidence Building for Childcare Provisioning for Marginalised Communities	Monika Banerjee, Ashmeet Kaur	October 2023	Study Report	ISST



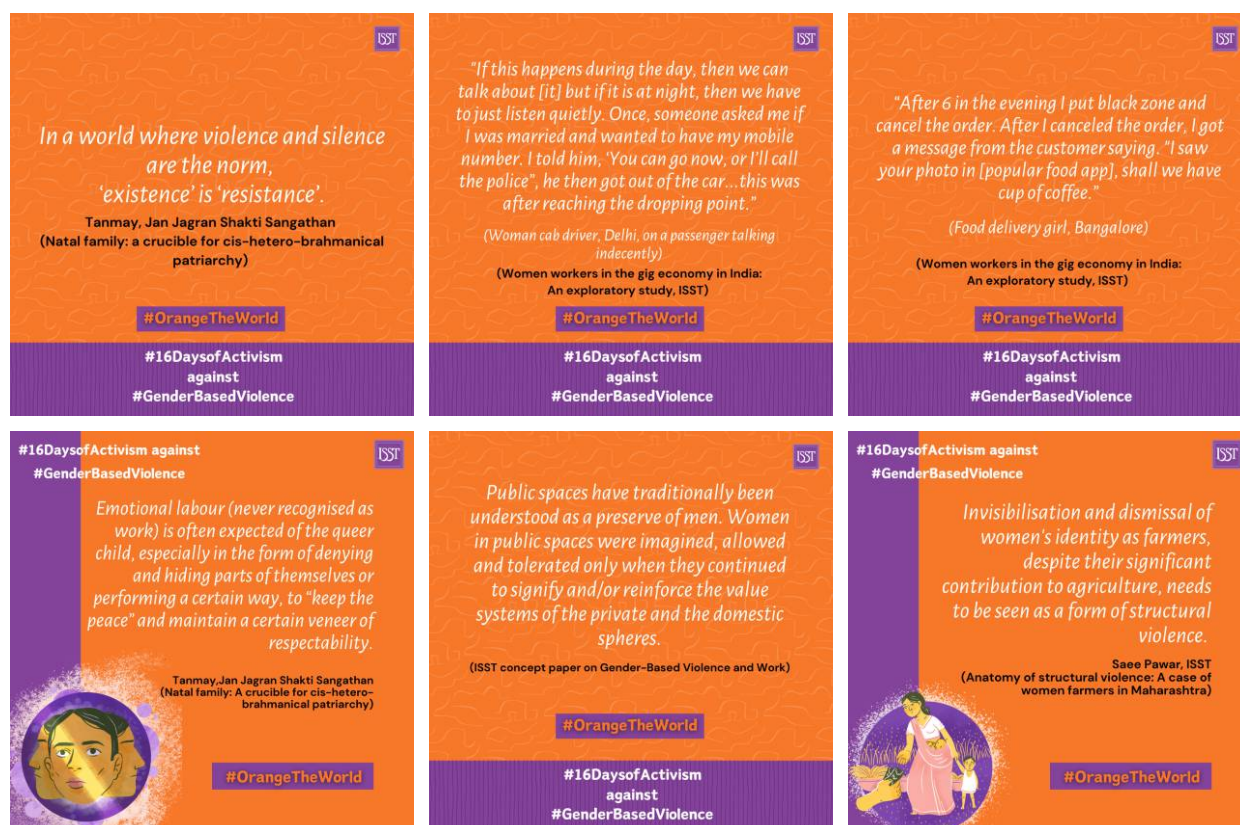
## e. Communications

Since 2021, ISST has seamlessly integrated communications into its organisational structure and programmes. The communications team has effectively streamlined both internal and external messaging, ensuring alignment with programme teams to advance the organisation’s statement of purpose. Through strategic social media engagement, regular website updates, dynamic event promotion, and the creation of compelling collateral, the team has significantly broadened ISST’s outreach to diverse audiences.

Over the past year, the communications team has achieved notable milestones, including the development of the organisation’s annual communications plan, a comprehensive social media policy, and an annual communications calendar to guide the team’s efforts in the year ahead. A key initiative was a social media workshop aimed at empowering the research and community centre teams to share their work more effectively online, offering practical guidelines and tips to enhance content creation.

The team has also focused on strategically disseminating the organisation’s work and promoting events through targeted campaigns. The most impactful campaigns this year included the Shram Aur Hum event, the release of the study on circular economy, and the 16 Days of Activism for Violence Against Women campaign, each garnering significant attention and appreciation.

Consistent content sharing and proactive audience engagement have enabled ISST to reach a broader audience through digital platforms. While the organisation maintains an active presence on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, LinkedIn has emerged as a standout platform, with ISST’s followers surpassing the 3,000 mark this year—a testament to the growing recognition of the organisation’s efforts.



# TEAM ENGAGEMENT



## A) Organisation BUILDing

The FORD grant for 'Support to connect research and grassroots activism to reduce violence against women through norm change and strengthening policy, and for project support for institutional strengthening' has given us the flexibility to explore new possibilities for the institution and enhance our processes and systems.

Throughout the year, the core team continued with their Thursday meetings to structure the organisation's work. Additionally, meetings were held with the community centre team identify the connections between their work and the four themes. Concurrently, the thematic teams organised internal workshops to deepen the ISST team's understanding of these themes.

## B) Monthly Staff Meeting

ISST's monthly staff meetings have continued to serve as a platform for team members to share their milestones, learnings, and insights from their day-to-day work. The meetings also provide an opportunity for team members to discuss their challenges and seek collaborative solutions. The meetings usually conclude with a fun activity, fostering team bonding and helping everyone to get to know each other better.

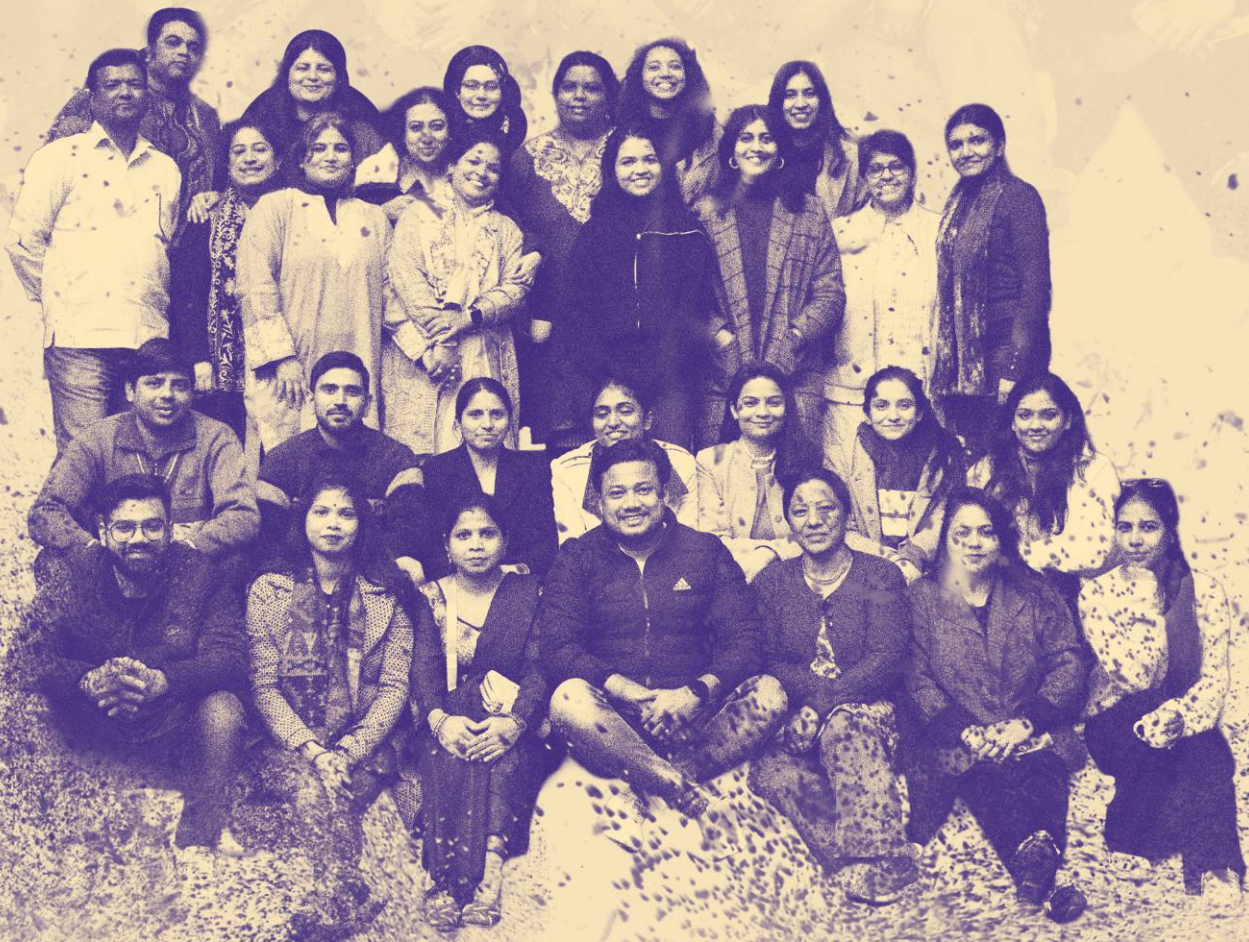
## C) Joint Saathi centre Meetings

The Saathi and Yuva Saathi centre teams, with support from the admin team and in the presence of the organisation's director, jointly hold these meetings. These meetings serve as a creative space where the community teams can share innovative ideas, possible plans, learnings, insights, and challenges. Both teams collaboratively plan their activities and events, seeking inputs and suggestions from their colleagues.

## D) Quarterly Research Workshop

The quarterly research workshop provides a dedicated space for the research team to discuss their upcoming and ongoing studies. It's an opportunity to brainstorm methodologies, the ethics of research, explore new ideas, and identify ways to advance the existing studies. This focused environment encourages generation of ideas rather than just execution. (8th November 2023)

# ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW





## A) Governance

ISST is registered as a Public Charitable Trust in 1980. It is governed by a maximum of 12 trustees and has two sub-committees: the Academic Planning Committee, and the Finance and Administration Committee.

Below is the list of Board of Trustees for the Financial Year 2023-24

1. **Ms. Sarojini G Thakur**, Chairperson
2. **Professor Gita Sen**, Member
3. **Professor Nirmala Banerjee**, Member (Till 3rd November 2023)
4. **Ms. Kameshwari Jandhyala**, Member
5. **Ms. Ratna Mangala Sudarshan**, Member
6. **Prof. Ashwini Deshpande**, Member (Till 16th September 2023)
7. **Prof. Peter Ronald DeSouza**, Member
8. **Mr. Srinivas Kumar Alamuru**, Member

## B) Annual Meetings

### 1. Board of Trustees Meetings

As per the provisions, two Board meetings are held every year, and all members of the board are required to attend them. For the year 2023-24, the meetings were held on 16th September 2023 and 14th March 2024.

Meetings were held with the required quorum to ensure oversight and compliance.

### 2. Academic Planning Committee (APC) Meetings

The members of the academic planning committee are:

- **Gita Sen**, Chairperson
- **Kamlesh Gaur**, Member
- **Sarojini G. Thakur** (Special Invitee)
- **Jahnvi Andharia**, Ex officio member
- **Anweshaa Ghosh**, Convenor
- **Ratna M. Sudarshan**, Member

In the APC meetings, programmatic details are shared by the research team members to seek guidance and suggestions from the board members.

For the year 2023-24, the APC meetings were held on 15th September 2023 and 13th March 2024

### 3. Financial and Administrative Committee (FAC) Meetings

The members of the Financial and Administrative Committee are:

- **Srinivas Kumar Alamuru**, Chairperson
- **Kamlesh Gaur**, Member
- **Jahnvi Andharia**, Ex officio Member
- **Kameshwari Jandhyala**, Member
- **Sarojini G. Thakur** (Special Invitee)
- **Nitin Shukla**, Accounts Manager (Special Invitee)

The committee looks over the financial and administrative aspects of the organisation and includes approval and reporting of yearly as well as project budgets.

For the year 2023-24, the FAC meetings were held on 15th September 2023 and 13th March 2024.

### C) Our Team

(For the year 2023-24)

The team consists of full-time employees, consultants, part-time and short-term consultants, and volunteers.

#### Saathi Centre, Delhi

##### Delhi Office

- **Jahnvi Andharia**  
Director and Research Fellow
- **Mubashira Zaidi**  
Research Fellow and Program Lead
- **Anweshaa Ghosh**  
Research Fellow and Program Lead
- **Sreerupa**  
Research Fellow and Program Lead
- **Benu Verma**  
Research Fellow and Program Lead
- **Ashmeet Kaur**  
Research Consultant
- **Gurpreet Kaur**  
Research Consultant (Till 31st May 2023)
- **Sae Pawar**  
Research Consultant
- **Prateek**  
Research Consultant (Till 31st May 2023)
- **Camellia Reja**  
Research Associate
- **Diksha Shriyan**  
Research Associate
- **Alpaxee Kashyap**  
Project Consultant
- **Sheena Kapoor**  
Project Consultant (till 31st August 2023)
- **Tanisha DasGupta**  
Research Consultant
- **Sneha Makkad**  
Research Consultant
- **Akila Ramesh**  
Librarian
- **Monika Sharma**  
Communications Manager
- **Divya Khanna**  
Strategic Communications Consultant
- **Nitin Shukla**  
Accounts Manager
- **Kamalika Mukhopadhyay**  
Programme Manager
- **Mohan Singh**  
Administrative Assistant
- **Rubina Bemb**  
Fundraising and Advocacy Consultant (Till 31st October 2023)
- **Kritika Goel**  
Research Consultant (Till 10th November 2023)
- **Neha**  
Executive Assistant to the Senior Team
- **Rajender Prasad**  
Consultant
- **Shipra**  
Research Analyst

- **Kamlesh Gaur**, Coordinator
- **Sarita**, Bachpan Coordinator
- **Rajeev Kumar**, Field Coordinator
- **Ruby**, Bachpan Programme Assistant
- **Dharmender Kumar**, Community Programme Assistant
- **Neeraj**, Assistant Bachpan Programme
- **Poonam**, Community Mobilizer
- **Nisha**, Math & Science Teacher
- **Jyoti**, (Till 31st August 2023)
- **Pooja**, Volunteer (Till 11th August 2023)
- **Mithlesh**, Volunteer

### **Yuva Saathi Centre, Delhi**

- **Ira Wadhwa**, Coordinator
- **Kavita**, Animator, Youth Resource Project
- **Vandana**, Animator, Youth Resource Project

## **D) Prevention Of Sexual Harassment At Workplace (POSH)**

As per the requirements of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013, ISST has a POSH Internal Committee.

The committee's members as on 31st March 2024 were:

- **Anweshaa Ghosh**, Chairperson
- **Nitin Shukla**
- **Vandana**
- **Ashmeet Kaur**
- **Benu Verma**
- **Sudeshna Sengupta** (External Committee Member)

The committee members sent monthly awareness materials to the ISST team.

The annual POSH training was organised online on 10th January 2024 and was facilitated by Ms. Richa Rastogi from Humsafar.

The team also submitted the annual POSH report to the District Officer/Commissioner of Labour, Deputy Commissioner Office, South Delhi.

# SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2023-24

## Summary Statement Annual Income and Expenditure as on 31.03.2024

Particulars	Financial Year 2023-2024 (Rs. in Thousand)	Financial Year 2022-2023 (Rs. in Thousand)
<b>Income</b>		
Interest Income	1,984.00	1,936.00
Donations & contributions	414.00	156.00
Other Income	76.00	73.00
Overhead Charges	2,421.00	3,513.00
Project Grant	45,412.00	43,078.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,307.00</b>	<b>48,756.00</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Administrative Expenses	3,212.00	2,750.00
Project Expenditure	45,412.00	43,078.00
Property Expenses	2,223.00	1,305.00
Trustee Meeting Expenses	210.00	103.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,057.00</b>	<b>47,236.00</b>
<b>Excess of Income over Expenditure: 2023-24</b>	<b>(750.00)</b>	<b>1,520.00</b>

# SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2023-24

## Summary Balance Sheet

Particulars	Financial Year 2023-2024 (Rs. in Thousand)	Financial Year 2022-2023 (Rs. in Thousand)
<b>Application of Funds</b>		
Fixed Assets	4,985.00	2,500.00
Investment	44,105.00	34,300.00
Current Assets	4,470.00	8,370.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,560.00</b>	<b>45,170.00</b>
<b>Sources of Funds</b>		
Endowment Fund	21,800.00	21,800.00
Publication Fund	584.00	600.00
Building Fund	1,540.00	388.00
Fixed Assets Fund	3,445.00	2,112.00
Accumulated Surplus	6,823.00	7,573.00
Current Liabilities	110.00	84.00
Project Fund Balance	19,258.00	12,613.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,560.00</b>	<b>45,170.00</b>

\*Auditors: Thakur Vaidyanath Aiyar & Co., Chartered Accountants, 221-223, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi - 110002.

We are deeply grateful to our donors and partners for their invaluable support and contributions, which have been instrumental in helping us work towards our statement of purpose.

## Donors

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American Jewish World Service (AJWS)

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Ford Foundation

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Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

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## Collaborators

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Digital Green Foundation

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HomeNet South Asia

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International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)

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SEWA Bharat

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## Support for EVALFEST 2024

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Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)

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Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (World Bank)

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International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3iE)

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New Development Bank

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Porticus Asia Ltd.

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United National Population Fund (UNFPA)

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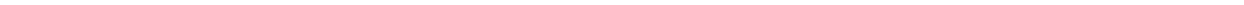
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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World Food Programme



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Institute of Social Studies Trust

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