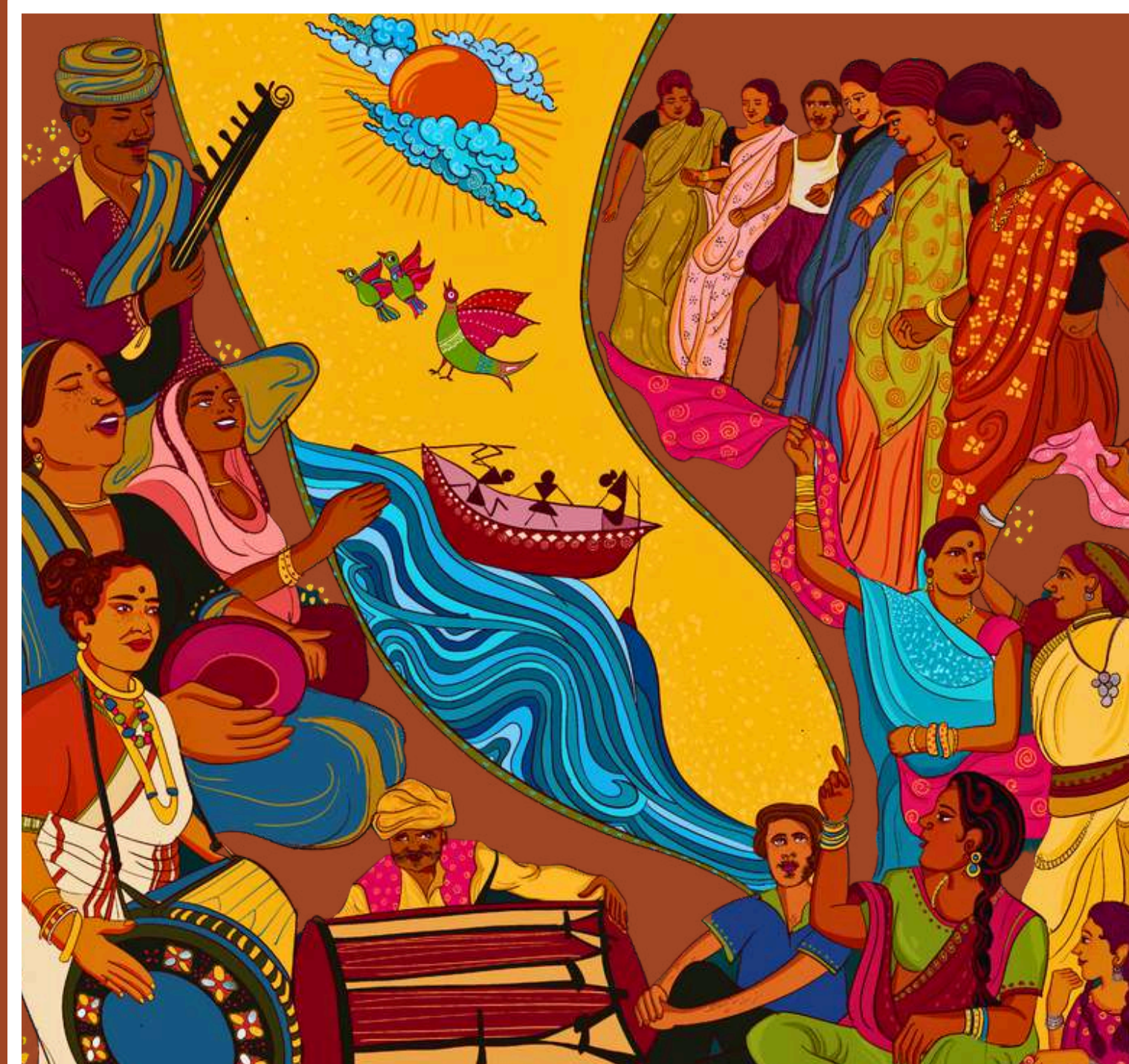


~SRUTI



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

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ABOUT ŠRUTI

Founded in 1983, ŠRUTI (Society for Rural, Urban and Tribal Initiative) is built on the conviction that individuals are powerful catalysts for social change. Conceived by eminent social sector leaders, including Tara Ali Baig, Sanjit (Bunker) Roy, Ela Bhatt, Lotika Sarkar, Poonam Muttreja, Samir Chaudhuri and V. Ramalingaswami, ŠRUTI has, over the decades, fostered individual and community action to secure justice, rights, dignity, and opportunity for some of India's most marginalised groups.

The Fellowship Programme is the central pillar of ŠRUTI. Apart from modest personal honoraria, it extends need-based non-financial support to the Fellows. Grounded in mutual understanding, respect and transparency, it is a space for learning, unlearning, sharing and dialogue.

The Fellowship Programme supports collective action and local leadership through its network of Fellows. Together with volunteers, The Fellows forge grassroots collectives to build self-reliance amongst communities, empowering them in their search for equality, dignity & justice.

The Fellows are ŠRUTI's link to the ground. They are the pivot around whom volunteers (karyakartas) coalesce. Building collectives within their communities, they identify local issues, addressing them through questioning and non-violent strategies, within the constitutional framework. Synergy is generated as Fellows and their ecosystems interact and intersect, fostering the growth of networks and alliances around common issues.

The Fellowship Programme combines financial support (fellowship honorarium) with intermediary guidance to enable individual Fellows or groups to implement community-focused initiatives. Over the years, it has evolved to also incorporate collective learning, with comprehensive perspective- and capacity-building initiatives, outreach and cross-learning programmes, and resource mobilisation forming the core pillars of the ŠRUTI Fellowship Programme. Funded primarily through domestic support partnerships and strategic fundraising efforts, the Programme continues to invest in individuals with resilience, idealism, and compassion – leaders capable of bringing together and standing with communities in their struggles.

One of the Programme's flagship initiatives, the School for Social Change (SSC), exemplifies this approach. Developed and refined over years of collaboration with Fellows, SSC provides intensive training and mentorship to equip emerging community leaders with the knowledge, skills, and strategic insight necessary for sustained social engagement.

With over four decades of experience, ŠRUTI remains steadfast in its mission to help cultivate socially committed leaders who advance equity, justice, and sustainable development at the grassroots level.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

This year, ŚRUTI marked a momentous milestone: 40 years of collective journeys, grassroots struggles, and enduring hope. Although the celebrations unfolded in March 2025, coinciding with the organisation's forty-third year, the milestone offered a rare pause: a moment to look inward at our processes, outward at the shifting grassroots landscape, and forward to what the coming decades demand of us. ŚRUTI@40: Celebrating Journeys of Hope and Change became more than an event. It became a lens through which we re-examined who we are, why we began, and how our ways of working must evolve to stay true to our commitments.

ŚRUTI@40 brought together Fellows, volunteers, researchers, artists, donors, and movements - not simply to commemorate, but to collectively make sense of our journey. Through regional events, archival exhibitions, songs, and shared memories, we revisited the methods that shaped our work: slow, patient organising; decentralised decision-making; and deep relationships with communities. The culminating programmes in Delhi - From the Archives, Geet aur Gatha, and Satrangi Chowk - did more than celebrate our history. They revealed the ebbs and flows of cultivating collective action, the tensions between continuity and change, and the creative, often improvised processes through which ŚRUTI has navigated four decades of political, social, and ecological shifts.

This reflective moment gained unexpected urgency in June 2024, when torrential rains flooded Delhi and left the ŚRUTI office submerged in waist-deep water. What might have been a crippling institutional setback instead became a living example of the collective ethic we have always upheld. As Fellows and partner networks offered space, resources, and solidarity, we were reminded that our strength has never been in infrastructure - it has always been in relationships. The crisis pushed us to re-evaluate internal capacities, strengthen support systems, and revisit how organisational processes align with field needs, reaffirming that resilience is something we practice together, not merely invoke.

Across the country, this ethos continued to find expression in diverse contexts. Youth engagement, a long-term organisational investment, expanded through decentralised regional shivirs of the School for Social Change. These youth-led processes exposed fresh challenges: how to balance ideological grounding with rapidly changing socio-cultural aspirations; how to nurture scientific temper and critical thinking in an era saturated with misinformation; and how to meaningfully distribute leadership to younger voices without reproducing hierarchical templates. Yet the prognosis is hopeful. These spaces now hold the seeds of a new generation of leadership that is rooted, reflective, and capable of reimagining democratic participation.

Forest rights work - a cornerstone of ŚRUTI's commitment - continued with renewed vigour. Fellows deepened participatory mapping, strengthened Gram Sabhas, and supported communities, especially women, in asserting CFR and CFRR claims. But the field realities also highlighted emerging pressures: commercial interests accelerating land-use change, administrative resistance, and the emotional toll on organisers navigating prolonged legal and bureaucratic processes. National- and state-level consultations helped consolidate learnings, refine strategies, and confront a central question: how do we sustain people-led democratic forest governance when both ecological realities and democratic spaces are shifting - and where effective assertion of rights now demands deeper civic and democratic engagement than ever before?

Fellows working with marginalised informal-sector communities grappled with overlapping crises of livelihoods, urban precarity, and climate vulnerability. Grounded civic action revealed remarkable local ingenuity, yet also the structural exclusions that keep community-led solutions on the margins. These experiences pushed the organisation to reflect on how to better amplify local strategies, strengthen inter-state solidarity, and bridge lived realities with outreach and learning engagements - an increasingly important task as civic spaces evolve and participatory processes require more sustained, collective involvement.

Through all this, ŚRUTI@40 emerged not only as a commemoration but as a bridge - connecting past wisdom, present challenges, and future possibilities. It reminded us that history is a living archive, shaped every day through struggles for dignity, justice, and democratic participation. The anniversary reaffirmed ŚRUTI's role: to stand with the most marginalised, nurture decentralised leadership, and protect democratic spaces for collective action.

The challenges ahead are unmistakable - shaped by a shifting democratic landscape, narrowing civic spaces, and the increasing requirement for deeper democratic engagement alongside climate uncertainties and widening socio-economic inequities. Yet the prognosis remains hopeful because the resilience of communities continues to outpace the crises they face. Their creativity, endurance, and unwavering hope remain our compass.

As we enter our fifth decade, we do so with humility, a renewed sense of responsibility, and deep gratitude. The journey ahead will require stronger internal systems, deeper inter-movement collaborations, and sustained nurturing of decentralised leadership. But our foundational commitment endures: to continue building a society rooted in justice, equality, and the transformative power of collective action - one process, one struggle, and one shared step at a time.

In solidarity,

Shweta
Executive Director

ANNUAL OVERVIEW 2024-25

The reporting year opened with an unprecedented crisis. In late June 2024, heavy monsoon rains caused severe flooding across Delhi, submerging the ŚRUTI office in waist-deep sewage water. The basement – housing key functions such as the library, finance, administration, and resource mobilisation – was extensively damaged. With it, valuable organisational materials, including documents, equipment, and archival records spanning over four decades, were lost.

Despite the scale of loss, the immediate and collective response from Fellows, staff, and partners reflected the strength of ŚRUTI's network. Cleanup and recovery efforts began within hours, supported by solidarity and resource sharing across the Fellowship. Within two months, the office was relocated, and core functions were restored. The experience reaffirmed the organisation's belief that ŚRUTI's strength lies not in infrastructure, but in its people – their resilience, commitment, and shared vision.

From this turbulent beginning, the year unfolded into a phase of renewed momentum and deepened engagement. Youth-led platforms like Yuvaniya, collective learning through a decentralised perspective/ capacity-building across the Fellows' areas, and School for Social Change shivirs in four states created spaces for information, skills, critical thinking, scientific temper, and grounded leadership. Across rural and forest regions, Fellows and sangathans strengthened community-led processes for claiming and implementing rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA). Alongside grassroots mobilisation, collective learning and reflection shaped new strategies to advance democratic forest governance.



As part of this process, ŚRUTI facilitated a series of state-level consultations in partnership with grassroots organisations and community leaders. These forums provided space to take stock of the on-ground status of FRA implementation – reviewing progress in CFR and CFRR claims, identifying bottlenecks in verification and recognition, and strengthening the leadership of Gram Sabhas, particularly women and Adivasi youth. These consultations also became crucial spaces for knowledge exchange across regions, enabling communities and collectives to learn from each other's approaches and challenges.

Building on the insights from the states, a national-level consultation on forest rights was convened later in the year. Bringing together Fellows, activists, researchers, legal experts, and state representatives, the consultation focused on reinforcing the political will, administrative accountability, and institutional support required to effectively implement FRA. The emphasis was on grounding national strategies in local realities, amplifying the leadership of communities, and positioning forest rights within broader questions of climate justice, governance, and social equity.

The year concluded with ŚRUTI@40: Celebrating Journeys of Hope and Change, a milestone gathering that brought together Fellows, sangathans, artists, supporters, and allies from across the country. The celebration served not only as a tribute to four decades of collective action but also as a re-commitment to the path ahead: of continuing to support people's struggles with hope, imagination, and unwavering solidarity.

ŚRUTI FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

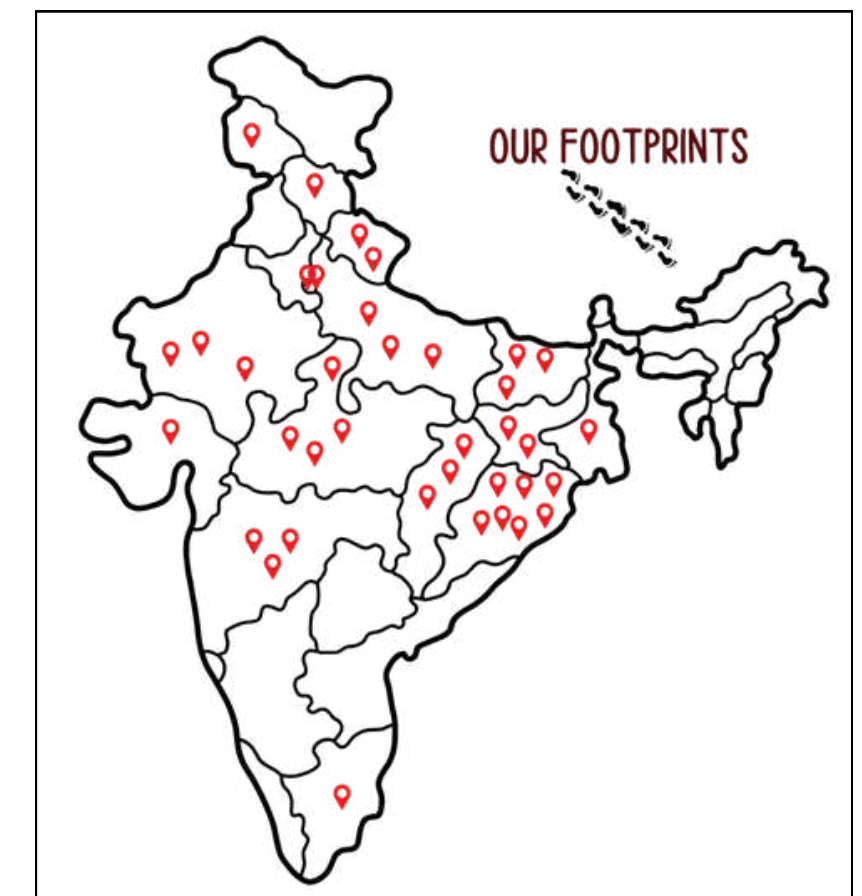
The ŚRUTI Fellowship Programme supports individuals and communities engaged in grassroots social work, ensuring that processes of change remain organic, context-specific, and rooted in local realities. With a strong emphasis on constitutional rights and community-led interventions, the Programme advances its objectives through outreach, collective organising, participatory engagement, capacity building, and solidarity.

The Fellowship Programme blends **fellowship support** (financial support) with dedicated facilitation to help Fellow groups to drive meaningful, community-centred change. Over time, it has evolved into a dynamic ecosystem that not only supports grassroots initiatives but also strengthens the Fellowship framework itself.

Built on decades of engagement with community collectives at the grassroots, and designed collaboratively by Senior Fellows, Mentors, and the ŚRUTI team, a set of **fellowship-building initiatives** (intermediary processes) has been developed at the village, regional, and state levels across key pillars to deepen and expand programme impact.

- Perspective building, through platforms like the School for Social Change (SSC) and Training of Trainers (ToT), with a strong emphasis on rationality and scientific temper
- Capacity building in key thematic areas
- Skill enhancement for effective community expression
- Cross-learning opportunities, including exposure visits
- Outreach and networking, from regional engagements to national conferences
- Youth engagement and leadership development
- Knowledge curation and dissemination

Together, these pillars create a vibrant collective learning and sharing space that deepens the impact of the Fellowship Programme.



Since its inception, the Fellowship Programme has supported the work of more than 150 Fellows across India.

At present, ŚRUTI supports **38 Fellows, 5 Mentor Fellows, and 170 karyakartas (volunteers from the Fellows' groups)**, who collectively work with people's groups in **15 states/union territories**: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

The current outreach of the Fellowship extends to **nearly 7500 villages and 270 urban clusters, engaging approximately 7.1 lakh families and reaching over 3.5 million people.**

STATE	DISTRICTS	ŚRUTI FELLOW'S NAME	FELLOW GROUP NAME
• Bihar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champaran, Gaya, Nalanda • Araria, Katihar, Kishanganj, Purnia, Saharsa • Khagaria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kailash Bharti • Sohini • Umesh Chaurasia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mazdoor Kisan Samiti • Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan • Farkiya Kala Sanskriti Sangam
• Chhattisgarh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Korba, Surguja • Baloda Bazar, Mahasamund • Korba, Surajpur, Surguja 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jangsai Poya • Rajim Ketwas • Narendra Armor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaon Ganrajya Sangathan • Dalit Adivasi Manch • Jan Abhivyakti
• Delhi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest, Southwest, South Delhi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dharmendra Yadav • Sadre Alam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delhi Nirman Mazdoor Sangathan • People's Foundation
• Gujarat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahmedabad, Sabarkantha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mujahid Nafees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority Coordination Committee
• Himachal Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pawna Kumari 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kisan Sabha
• Jharkhand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Singhbhum, Jamshedpur, Seraikela Kharsawan, West Singhbhum • Gumla, Latehar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kumar Dilip • Jerome Kujur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visthapit Mukti Vahini • Jan Sangharsh Samiti
• Kashmir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgam, Srinagar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Sheikh Ghulam Rasool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School for Rural Development and Environment
• Madhya Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barwani • Chhindwara • Damoh • Gwalior, Shivpuri 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jayashri • Aradhana Bhargava • Veerendra Kumar • Abhay Jain, Swapnil Shukla 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adharshila Learning Centre • Kisan Sangharsh Samiti • Bundelkhand Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan • Zenith Society for Legal Empowerment
• Maharashtra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latur • Raigad • Bhandara, Chandrapur, Gondia, Nagpur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dashrath Jadhav • Sopan Sutar • Vilas Bhongade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shramjeevi Sangathana • Sarvahara Jan Andolan • Kashtkari Jan Andolan
• Odisha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angul • Balangir, Bargarh • Dhenkanal • Dhenkanal • Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Sundargarh • Mayurbhanj • Nayagarh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sripati Sinku • Lochan Bariha • Sovan Marandi • Salkhu Murmu • Umakanta Naik • Lalmohan Murmu • Prafulla Nayak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malayagiri Adivasi Sangharsh Manch • Zindabad Sangathan • Adivasi Chetna Sangathan • Adivasi Mukti Sangathan • Lok Mukti Sangathan • Simplipal Adivasi Sangharsh Manch • Adim Adivasi Mukti Manch
• Rajasthan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chittorgarh • Dungarpur • Jhalawar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narayani Bhil • Madhulika* • Hira Lal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khetihar Khan Mazdoor Sangathan • Jungle Jameen Jan Andolan • Hum Kisan
• Tamil Nadu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Sathyamangalam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.S. Selvaraj 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vyavasayigal Tozhilalargal Munnetra Sangham (VTMS)
• Uttarakhand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Nainital, Uddham Singh Nagar • Pithoragarh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gopal Lodhiyal • Basanti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Panchayat Sangharsh Morcha • Maati Sangathan
• Uttar Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ayodhya, Ambedkar Nagar, Bahraich, Sultanpur • Jaunpur • Mirzapur, Varanasi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afaq Ullah • Lal Prakash Rahi • Suresh Rathaur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awadh Peoples Forum • Dialogue in Solidarity, Harmony, & Action, DISHA • MGNREGA Mazdoor Union
• West Bengal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South 24 Pargana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pabitra Mondal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sundarban Jana Shramajeebi Manch

* Madhulika from Rajasthan is a new Fellow associated with ŚRUTI this year.

KEY ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE

The **School for Social Change (SSC)** is ŠRUTI's flagship programme aimed at strengthening grassroots youth and community leadership among marginalised communities. It provides a platform for participants to articulate their lived experiences, analyse structural inequalities, and come together for their rights. Through multi-phase training camps, follow-up sessions, and integration with sangathan processes, SSC nurtures informed, resilient, and action-oriented leadership across diverse socio-political and ecological contexts.

The programme operates across four language-based regions, namely Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, and Odia. It employs interactive pedagogy, including group discussions, role-plays, theatre, games, and study of local practices, supported by audio-visual tools. At its core, SSC fosters scientific reasoning, critical inquiry, collective problem-solving, and accountability, equipping youth and community members with the skills to pursue justice, dignity, and democratic values. In 2024-25, state-level SSCs in Hindi, Tamil, and Odia reached nearly 150 youth from 40 districts across 12 states.

In Tamil Nadu, the 4th batch's final phases were completed by 40 participants from Adivasi, Tamil repatriate, and fishing communities across Nilgiri, Coimbatore, Thiruvavur, Tanjavur, and Erode. The 5th batch commenced with 42 participants from Nilgiri, Sivagangai, Kanyakumari, Madurai, Thiruvavur, and Coimbatore. In Odisha, 40 participants from Adivasi and Other Traditional Forest Dwelling (OTFD) communities across 11 districts completed three phases of the 5th batch. The Central (Hindi) SSC's 4th batch engaged 30 participants from 10 states/union territories, including Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), Maharashtra, Bihar, and Kerala.

Together, these efforts have built a vibrant, interconnected network of youth leaders, rooted in their communities and equipped to advance struggles for justice, equity, and democracy.



SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (SSC)

NEW TRAINERS, WIDER REACH: SSC'S GROWING YOUTH NETWORK



*In Pictures: Knowledge that powers collective action:
Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop underway*

To meet the emerging need for SSC training across diverse groups, ŠRUTI has focused on expanding its pool of trainers. Alongside regular SSC shivirs in four language schools, **Training of Trainers (ToT)** programmes are being conducted for participants identified from previous SSC batches. In the past year, two ToT rounds trained 25 participants from Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.

These new trainers have initiated SSC shivirs at regional levels, conducting workshops based on SSC modules in their respective states. In total, 13 SSC camps were organised across six regions: Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra (Vidarbha and Latur), Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Odisha, engaging over 240 young people (83 young women and 146 young men) from diverse villages and districts. The outreach spanned 57 villages across 18 districts, strengthening youth leadership, fostering collective learning, and building a vibrant network of informed and confident young leaders capable of advancing community-driven action.



The year-long School for Social Change (SSC) workshops culminated in a three-day Youth Festival at Dalit Shakti Kendra, Ahmedabad, from 27 to 29 September 2024. The festival, themed “Climate Change, Development Paradox, and People”, brought together 160 young participants from 35 organisations across 16 states, including ŚRUTI fellows, sangathan karyakartas, team members and subject experts.

The festival provided a vibrant platform for dialogue, exchange of ideas, and cultural expression. On the first day, participants engaged through Yuva Adda, Youth Assembly, and campus campaigns, reflecting on issues ranging from political participation, social justice, and rationality to science and critical thinking.

The second day deepened understanding of climate justice through sessions with subject experts and an interactive exhibition showcasing traditional seeds, agricultural produce, and locally woven fabrics from diverse regions. Fellows and trainees connected these exhibits to their own practices, sharing strategies for preserving indigenous seeds and sustaining local farming in the face of climate change.

A mock public consultation allowed youth to debate the environmental and livelihood impacts of development projects, experiencing dialogue, dissent, and consensus-building firsthand. Cultural activities, marches, and slogans amplified the spirit of solidarity, while participants from the 2023–24 SSC batch were felicitated, and fellows shared reflections to inspire the next generation of leaders.

By fostering critical engagement, cultural expression, and collective action, the SSC Youth Festival 2024 emerged as a dynamic platform to nurture youth leadership, celebrate diversity, and advance the agenda for climate justice across India.

YOUTH FESTIVAL 2024: BUILDING A YOUTH AGENDA FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE



In pictures: Participants at the Youth Festival engaged in activities

STRENGTHENING VOICES FOR FOREST RIGHTS

Between October and December 2024, ŠRUTI facilitated a series of state-level consultations on forest issues across nine states/union territories: Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal. In addition, three regional consultations brought together representatives from the Himalayan region (J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand), the Southern states (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka), and the Northeast (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura).

The process engaged over 800 participants from more than 100 districts, representing more than 80 grassroots sangathans and community organisations. These consultations provided critical spaces for dialogue on the implementation of the FRA and broader issues of livelihoods, governance, and community rights.

Discussions at the local level empowered communities to highlight state-specific challenges such as the need for timely recognition of claims, strengthening procedural support, and balancing sustainable resource management. These conversations also fostered the exchange of successful grassroots approaches and innovative solutions. At the state and regional levels, leaders came together to align their goals, enhance collaborative advocacy, and develop coordinated strategies to engage effectively with government authorities. Overall, the consultations strengthened understanding of forest rights implementation across diverse contexts, reinforced solidarity among communities and groups, and laid the foundation for locally grounded and state-level strategies for democratic forest governance.



In pictures: State Consultations on Forest Rights across different regions

STATE-LEVEL CONSULTATIONS 2024



NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON FOREST ISSUES

A three-day 'National Consultation on Forest Issues' was held in New Delhi during 11-13 December 2024, bringing together over 200 delegates from 20 states, including grassroots organisations, legal experts, civil society groups, and Parliamentarians. The consultation served as a key platform to deliberate on the implementation of the FRA, address on-the-ground challenges, and explore strategies to strengthen decentralised forest governance while empowering Gram Sabhas and forest-dependent communities.

The sessions were organised thematically, covering background and context-setting, state-specific experiences, emerging challenges, and relevant constitutional and legal frameworks. Discussions generated nuanced insights into the intersections of forest conservation, community rights, and evolving legal frameworks, with special focus on women's critical role in forest management, principles of ecological and social justice, and the powers and responsibilities of Gram Sabhas in managing natural resources.

The consultation concluded with a set of forward-looking recommendations aimed at strengthening democratic forest governance. Key suggestions included expanding documentation and knowledge dissemination, fostering state-to-state and regional cross-learning, and promoting experiential learning through workshops and exposure visits. The event reaffirmed the collective commitment to building an inclusive, just, and accountable forest governance system, safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of present and future generations.



In pictures: Debates, dialogues and solutions at the National Consultation on Forest Issues



TEAM BUILDING AND ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING IN GOA

From 18 to 22 December 2024, the ŠRUTI team visited Goa for a combined team building and annual planning meeting. The team retreat included team-building activities that encouraged dialogue, reflection, and collaboration, strengthening cohesion and shared purpose among team members. The review session was facilitated by Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, President of the ŠRUTI Executive Board, helping build synergy within the Fellowship team and offering guidance and strategic insights.

For new team members, the visit served as an important introduction to ŠRUTI's vision, values, and work processes. The planning meeting provided a platform to assess ongoing initiatives, identify emerging priorities, and collectively map the organisation's strategic roadmap for the year ahead. This group visit not only reinforced internal solidarity but also energised the team for the challenges and opportunities of 2025.



In Picture: Dialogue, reflections and discussions during the team meeting

ŠRUTI@40: CELEBRATING JOURNEYS OF HOPE AND CHANGE



*In Pictures: ŠRUTI@40 - Celebrating
Journeys of Hope and Change*

Since its inception, ŠRUTI has served as a vital platform for grassroots collectives to express everyday struggles and aspirations through diverse forms of cultural expressions. As ŠRUTI entered 2025, the vision for ŠRUTI@40: Celebrating Journeys of Hope and Change was to bring this spirit to a broader audience, reaching the citizenry, including youth and students from schools and colleges, regionally and nationally, through immersive, inclusive celebrations.

The lead-up to the national event featured a series of Regional Culmination Programmes in Lucknow, Bhopal, Ranchi, and Ooty, held in February and March. These gatherings were rooted in the local cultural ethos of each region, drawing participation from a wide spectrum of communities.

The national celebration took place over 29–30 March 2025, at Travancore Palace, New Delhi, bringing together ŠRUTI Fellows and volunteers, alongside civil society groups, writers, researchers, journalists, donors, academicians, and well-wishers.

The first day was marked by insightful discussions, storytelling, and performances that showcased the personal and collective journeys of ŠRUTI Fellows. A special educational exhibition engaged urban youth (school and college students) with grassroots perspectives on pressing social issues.

On 30 March, ŠRUTI@40 opened to the public with thoughtfully curated spaces that celebrated four decades of grassroots struggles and collective resilience. Distinguished guests inaugurated the programme: ŠRUTI mentor Pradip Prabhu, renowned actress and activist Shabana Azmi, actress and singer Deepika Deshpande Amin, ŠRUTI founder member Poonam Muttreja, and musician-activist Rahul Ram. Their presence lent warmth, inspiration, and heartfelt support, making the occasion truly special.

The celebration began with 'From the Archives', a multimedia exhibition offering an immersive journey through ŠRUTI's history. It traced people's collectives and their work on themes like identity, dignity, forest, land, labour, migration, among others. It turned out to be a living archive of voices and memories.

As evening fell, the courtyard transformed into a stage of sound and storytelling with 'Geet aur Gatha'. A soul-stirring performance of folk songs in 18 languages and dialects echoed the cultural diversity of the grassroots. There were electrifying performances by Rahul Ram, JUST US, and Dastaan Live, whose reimaging of M.K. Raina's play Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein into a 'rock opera' powerfully addressed issues like migration, inflation, and climate change. Shabana Azmi's words reaffirmed a deep solidarity with grassroots struggles for dignity and justice.

Adding vibrant colour and flavour was ‘Satrangi Chowk’, a lively cultural hub featuring spices, seeds, and handloom stalls from Kumbaya, Baragaon Weaves, and Aha Vastra. Complementing this sensory feast was a delicious spread of regional delicacies from 10 states, thoughtfully curated by Café Lota.

Together, these spaces – From the Archives, Geet aur Gatha, and Satrangi Chowk – formed more than just a celebration. They were a rich sensorial journey through ŠRUTI’s legacy: a confluence of culture, memory, and solidarity, designed not only to honour the past but to inspire a more just and equitable future.

The event’s success was a result of the collaborative efforts of the co-organisers – Excurators, Teamwork Arts, Baragaon Weaves, Red Cedar Hospitality, Geet aur Gatha, and Sparrow Communications – who, along with ŠRUTI, co-created a truly unique and memorable experience for all.

As ŠRUTI@40 came to a close, it left behind not just memories, but renewed energy and inspiration to carry forward the spirit of the celebration and the values ŠRUTI embodies. In the coming months, From the Archives will travel to new venues and cities, continuing to tell the story of collective struggle, dignity, and hope – to wider audiences.

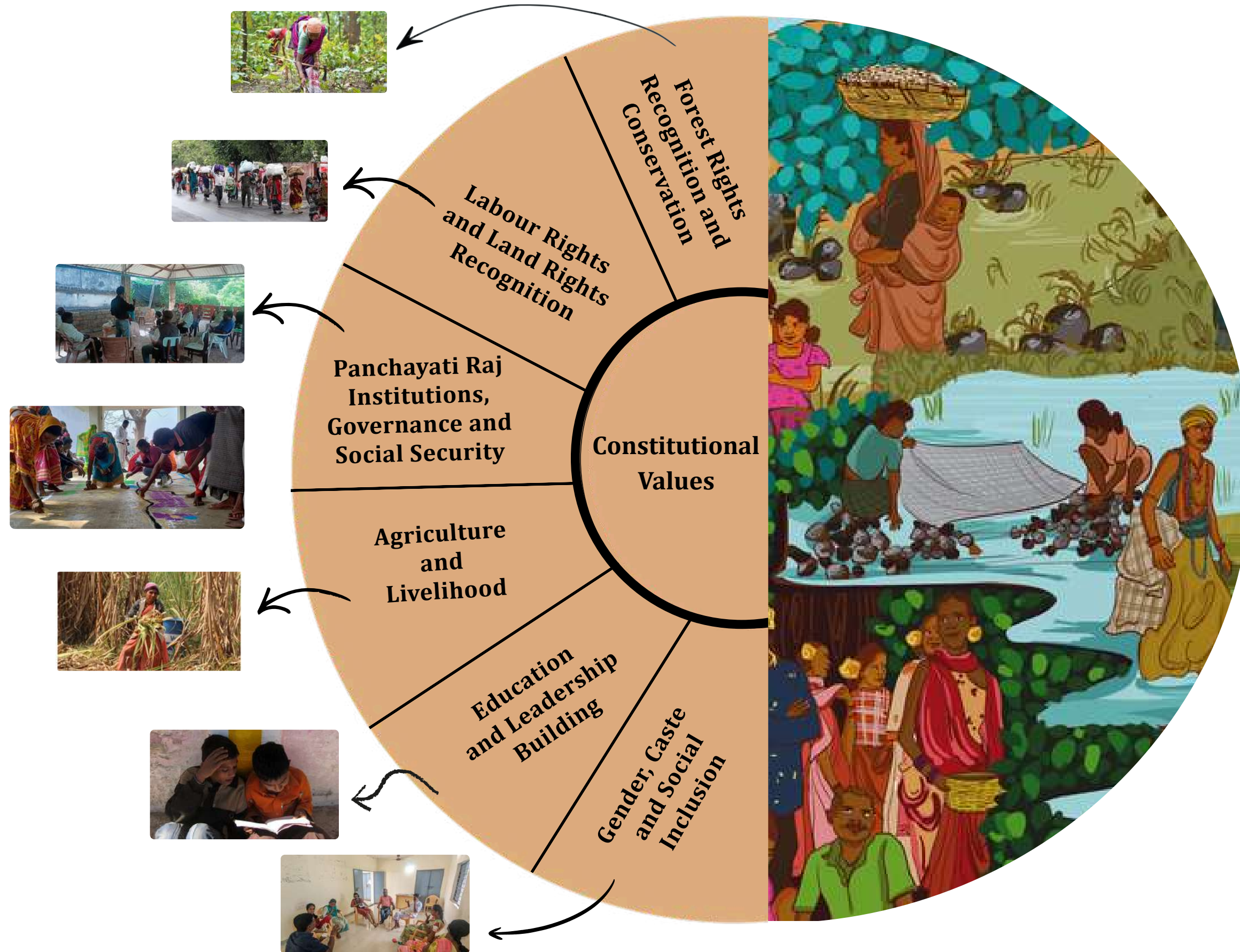
The journey continues – with newer spaces to create, voices to amplify, and stories yet to be told.



In Pictures: ŠRUTI@40 - Celebrating Journeys of Hope and Change

THEMATIC AREAS OF WORK IN 2024-25

The engagements of Fellows in their respective work areas during this period may be grouped into the following thematic areas



FOREST RIGHTS RECOGNITION AND CONSERVATION

Across India's forested regions, Adivasi and forest-dwelling communities continued to assert their rights even as recent policy and legal shifts weakened safeguards, diluted community consent, and expanded centralised control over forests. These developments accelerated forest diversion and strained community-led governance, prompting communities to respond with greater organisation, legal clarity, and strategic leadership.

In this context, Gram Sabhas emerged as central institutions for community leadership in forest governance. Legal-literacy trainings, workshops, and public forums equipped communities to navigate shifting regulations, while alliances helped carry grassroots concerns into broader policy arenas. A major focus remained on advancing Community Forest Rights (CFR) through collective mapping, documentation, and sustained administrative engagement - efforts that led to the submission and recognition of numerous claims. Patta correction processes under the Forest Rights Act also strengthened the rights recognition process by aligning recorded landholdings with historical use.

At the same time, community governance systems were consolidated. Forest protection and management committees were revitalised, community working plans were crafted using local ecological knowledge, and Biodiversity Registers were prepared in line with statutory mandates. Strengthened Gram Sabha federations, particularly visible in states like Chhattisgarh, enhanced communities' capacity to engage authorities collectively and assert their legally recognised rights.

Together, these interventions in the year 2024-25 advanced the legal recognition of forest rights and deepened community-led conservation and governance. They also underscored persistent challenges such as bureaucratic reluctance, policy volatility, and ongoing pressures on forest-dependent livelihoods. Even so, the experience affirms that organised, rights-aware communities remain central to sustaining both ecological integrity and democratic accountability in India's forests.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ **Capacity Building:** A total of 1,676 trainings on FRA were conducted by the Fellow groups, including 335 regional-level sessions, reaching nearly 90,000 community members across multiple states.
- ❖ **IFR:** In Odisha alone, 8,297 Individual Forest Rights (IFR) claims were facilitated, supporting communities in securing their forest tenure rights.
- ❖ **CFR Process Initiation:** Trainings and facilitation efforts led to the initiation of nearly 1,000 CFR claims across six states: Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. Approximately 320 of these claims have been submitted to the Sub-Divisional Level Committees (SDLCs), covering 81,486.81 hectares of forest land.



Rights Recognition and Community Management Efforts in Remote Areas of Chhattisgarh

A key challenge in Chhattisgarh after the recognition of Community Forest Rights (CFRs) has been ensuring the transparent use of funds allocated to the forest department under various schemes. In Gariaband and Dhamtari districts, 29 CFR titles have been recognised, covering 45,783.67 hectares. Twenty-eight CFRMCs have been formed with dedicated bank accounts, and management processes are underway in 30 Gram Sabhas. These committees have collectively received ₹2.1 lakhs from the administration and ₹26.16 lakhs from the forest department through MGNREGA convergence and mobilisation of CAMPA funds.

In Bastar and Dantewada, CFR titles have been granted to 22 Gram Sabhas, covering 22,857.85 hectares and benefiting over 32,000 tribal people. Seven Gram Sabhas have constituted CFRMCs, and nine have initiated community-led forest management processes.

Together, these developments signal meaningful progress in local self-governance and community stewardship. With recognised rights and direct management of funds, tribal communities are strengthening forest protection while creating avenues for sustainable livelihoods and greater autonomy in decision-making.

HIGHLIGHTS

❖ **Recognition of Rights:** As a result of these efforts, 70 CFR rights have been formally recognised in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand, securing community governance over 45,260.79 hectares of forest.

❖ **Exposure Visits:** Two exposure visits enabled ŚRUTI Fellows from Odisha to learn effective CFR management and protection practices from experiences in Chhattisgarh.

❖ **Strengthening CFRMCs:** Around 75 villages and their Community Forest Resource Management Committees (CFRMCs) were strengthened through targeted training. These committees are now actively managing forests spanning 53,388.07 hectares.



A Forest Village's Resilience in the Struggle for Basic Infrastructure, Tamil Nadu



In Tamil Nadu, the forest department continues to impose restrictions on developmental activities in forest villages, despite the FRA recognising the right of communities to take forward such activities. In Kattimattam, a forest village in the Nilgiris, residents face persistent challenges, including a lack of proper roads, water supply, and electricity, which also affects five nearby villages. These issues become particularly severe during the monsoon season, as pothole-ridden roads make it difficult for residents to access hospitals and schools.

This year, communities faced increased challenges in accessing roads due to the forest department's restrictions, in the face of which they demonstrated remarkable resilience. Through persistent engagement with the district administration and effective collaboration with members of Panchayati Raj Institutions, they successfully made the forest department withdraw the road use ban. As a result, road repairs were initiated, and essential services like water connections and street lighting were reinstated. The village had applied for CFRR, CFR, and the conversion of the forest village into a revenue village. Communities and advocates are actively engaging with the government to advance the processing and recognition of these claims.

Collaborations with Government Departments in Chhattisgarh

In 2024, constructive collaboration developed between Gram Sabhas, government departments, and forest officials in Chhattisgarh. With Matiabahara in Gariaband district emerging as a model Gram Sabha, district officials from the revenue, forest, and social welfare departments visited this Gram Sabha to learn from its Community Forest Resource Management Committees (CFRMCs). These engagements led to the integration of convergence plans with CFRMC management strategies and direct budget transfers to CFRMC accounts.

Matiabahara has not only seen success in securing its rights but has also initiated innovative forest management and post-recognition activities. State departments now look to Matiabahara for perspective-building, and its members are regularly invited to train both officials and other Gram Sabhas. These trainings focus on aligning government schemes with livelihood and non-timber forest produce (NTFP) initiatives, strengthening local governance and resources, and creating community-driven rules and penalties for sustainable forest management.



Women's Leadership in Prioritising Native Species in Odisha

In 2024, the Odisha government announced a plan to plant Palmyra palms across the state, directing the forest department to oversee implementation and issue permissions. In the Batagaon cluster forests of Nayagarh district, the department proposed plantations of Palmyra palms - an approach that risks creating monocultures and diminishing biodiversity. For Indigenous communities, who depend on diverse forests for food, medicine, and daily needs, replacing native vegetation with a single species can undermine both ecological balance and cultural practices.

For over two decades, the ŚRUTI Fellow group **Adim Adivasi Mukti Sangathan** in the region has worked closely with these communities, promoting forest protection and advocating for afforestation strategies that prioritise ecological diversity. This long-term engagement has strengthened local understanding of the harms of monocultural plantations, with women in particular emerging as strong voices for safeguarding indigenous species. Their collective action to protect native flora underscores the value of sustained, community-centred environmental work - demonstrating how informed communities can guide more sustainable, inclusive forest management.



Rights Recognition and Sustainable Use of Forests in Bada Bhangal, Himachal Pradesh

In Himachal Pradesh, the protection of medicinal plants has become a pressing concern as species traditionally used by local communities face severe depletion due to commercial exploitation by middlemen. This unsustainable extraction has pushed many plants towards extinction, alarming residents who have long depended on the biodiversity for livelihood and cultural practices.

In response, Gram Sabhas in eight villages of the Bada Bhangal region have formed committees to regulate and monitor the collection of medicinal plants. Permits are issued only to local residents, ensuring controlled and sustainable harvesting that allows the regeneration of threatened species. At the same time, these committees encourage villagers to sell their produce directly in the market, helping them secure fair returns while reducing dependence on exploitative intermediaries.



Biodiversity Protection in Odisha's Gandhamardan Hills



In March 2023, the Gandhamardan Hill Range in Odisha was declared a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS), covering 18,963.898 hectares across Bargarh and Balangir districts. Known as the 'Ayurvedic paradise' of Odisha, the hill range is home to an extraordinary diversity of medicinal plants and wildlife.

ŠRUTI Fellows, working with local authorities, facilitated the formation of five biodiversity committees across the panchayats of the hill range. Through a series of meetings, these committees and local communities were engaged in awareness-building and collective conservation planning. One of the key outcomes has been the initiation of systematic

documentation of medicinal plants across all five panchayats. On the CFR front, claim processes for 28 villages were completed and submitted to the SDLC. However, following the implementation of the state's Mo Jungle Zameen Yojana (MJJY), the claims were sent back to the village level for revision. ŠRUTI Fellows are now assisting communities in revising and strengthening their claims. While mapping has been finalised, the joint verification of claims is still awaited.



LABOUR RIGHTS AND LAND RIGHTS RECOGNITION

In 2024-25, ŠRUTI Fellows engaged with the interlinked challenges of landlessness, insecure tenure, informal work, and uneven access to welfare schemes - structural issues that continue to disenfranchise Dalits, Adivasis, migrant workers, bonded labourers, and unorganised workers. These conditions have reinforced economic precarity and social marginalisation, underscoring persistent gaps in policy implementation, administrative accountability, and equitable resource distribution.

ŠRUTI's interventions this year reaffirm the principle that recognition of land and labour rights is foundational to dignity, justice, and democratic participation. The emphasis on mobilising women and youth reflects a broader policy insight: rights realisation is most durable when communities build sustained collective capacity and have platforms to engage with state systems on their own terms.

On land rights, Fellows' engagement with revenue departments and local governance structures highlighted systemic issues - ranging from inaccurate land records to procedural lapses in relocation and the continued under-recognition of women's independent land ownership. By facilitating record corrections, supporting families facing involuntary relocation, strengthening community claims over homestead and agricultural land, and promoting women's pattas, these interventions directly addressed governance deficits. The resulting increase in patta applications, issuance of homestead pattas, and adherence to procedural safeguards points to improved administrative responsiveness where community processes are strong and persistent.

On labour rights, Fellows focused on expanding access to essential protections for informal workers - an area where policy intent remains high, but execution is uneven. Support for job cards, labour board registrations, and identity documentation improved workers' entry into social security and welfare systems. Interventions around withheld wages under MGNREGA and other schemes revealed recurring administrative gaps but also demonstrated how continuous engagement can enforce accountability. Awareness-building on bonded labour and workplace exploitation, along with direct rescues from hazardous sites, underscored the ongoing risks faced by vulnerable workers despite existing legal safeguards.

Efforts to organise beedi workers, waste workers, brick kiln labourers, migrant labourers, domestic workers, piece-rate workers, and urban hawkers into collectives revealed a critical policy lesson: worker organisation remains one of the most effective mechanisms for addressing informality at scale. These collectives are emerging as platforms for systematic advocacy, enabling workers to negotiate conditions, articulate sector-specific demands, and interface more effectively with state institutions.

By linking immediate entitlements with longer-term empowerment, ŚRUTI's interventions strengthened community institutions, nurtured local leadership, and enhanced the ability of marginalised groups to organise and negotiate. The year's work indicates that when rights processes are community-driven and sustained, they not only improve access to entitlements but also contribute to a more responsive and accountable governance environment.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ **Labour:** A total of 1,314 activities were conducted by Fellow groups, including 1,175 at the village level, 200 at the regional level, and 10 at the state level, reaching over 63,000 participants. These platforms facilitated discussions on informal labour, minimum wages, social security, and safe working conditions. Activities comprised awareness campaigns, rights-based workshops, collective negotiations with employers, and mobilisations advocating the implementation of labour laws.
- ❖ **Land:** 526 meetings and training, including two state-level consultations in Maharashtra and Bihar, strengthened community efforts for secure land rights recognition. Interventions included legal awareness sessions and paralegal training.
- ❖ **Perspective-Building:** 52 programmes focused on understanding policies such as the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement (LARR) Act 2013, while 38 sessions targeted skill development for land record corrections. Together, these initiatives reached 33,575 people, enhancing community capacity to engage effectively with administrative systems.
- ❖ **Domestic Workers:** 1,424 domestic workers were registered with welfare boards, ensuring access to protections including pensions, health insurance, and maternity benefits, facilitated through awareness drives, door-to-door campaigns, and legal aid clinics.
- ❖ **Labour Entitlements:** 3,109 labour cards were issued, granting workers access to state-provided benefits covering housing, education, and insurance.
- ❖ **MGNREGA:** 3,248 new job cards were issued, expanding employment opportunities and ensuring minimum work provisions for rural households.

- ❖ **Social Security:** 3,109 informal workers were registered on the E-Shram portal, broadening access to social security schemes such as insurance, pensions, and livelihood support.
- ❖ **Health Access:** 1,819 people received health and Ayushman cards, enhancing access to affordable healthcare.
- ❖ **Financial Inclusion:** Fellows facilitated 2,258 KYC (Know Your Customer) updates, ensuring uninterrupted access to entitlements linked to bank accounts and government schemes.
- ❖ **Land Distribution:** In Angul district, Odisha, 400 families in Parjang block received homestead land, addressing long-standing demands for secure housing and land rights through collective action and sustained engagement with the revenue department.

Land Records Study and Correction, Rajasthan



Jungle Jameen Jan Andolan (JJJA), a ŠRUTI Fellow group, undertook a review of land records in Mandva (Dovda tehsil) and Seedadi (Kherwada tehsil), Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, to identify inconsistencies. The study found numerous errors, including misspelt names and deceased individuals still listed as landowners. The sangathan supported community members seeking corrections in navigating official procedures to update their records.

In the Badesar panchayat, the Khetihar Khan Mazdoor Sangathan has been leading sustained efforts to address landlessness. A survey across five villages identified families without land, as well as those residing on or cultivating land without pattas. The sangathan is now facilitating the process of securing pattas for these families and ensuring their rightful inclusion in the Record of Rights.

Struggle for Life and Dignity in a Resettlement Colony, Madhya Pradesh



Amdar Colony in Shivpuri district, Madhya Pradesh, houses 25 Sahariya families (a PVTG) resettled in 2016 from Majhera onto government land along National Highway 76. While houses were built, the move left families without electricity, safe water, schooling, anganwadi services, or healthcare. Children dropped out because reaching the nearest school meant crossing a busy highway. Malnutrition, tuberculosis, and contaminated handpump water became routine, forcing families to rely on unsafe quarry water. With no land or livestock, most adults worked in quarries or dominant-caste farms, leading to silicosis, early deaths, and what residents describe as a ‘village of widows’.

Since late 2020, **Zenith (Society for Socio-Legal Empowerment)** has taken up these concerns - writing to the National Human Rights Commission and petitioning the Tribal Welfare Department. As a result, electricity has been connected, a teacher appointed, anganwadi meals restarted, and plans for a reliable water supply set in motion. Yet core issues persist: unsafe drinking water, insecure livelihoods, caste harassment, and the lack of land titles. “Without documents, we are unsafe

drinking water, insecure livelihoods, caste harassment, and the lack of land titles. “Without documents, we are invisible to every government scheme,” residents note. Amdar Colony’s experience highlights the importance of community-led resettlement planning, which can significantly reduce post-relocation hardships while strengthening dignity, rights, and inclusion for marginalised communities.

Organising Women Piece-Rate Workers

For over two decades, the Delhi Young Artist Forum (DYAF) has worked with girls from the resettlement colonies of Bhalswa and Bhawana, nurturing leadership and collective strength. Many of those girls are now young women who have taken on the responsibility of organising within their own communities under the umbrella of **Asangathit Mazdoor Sangharsh Morcha**, a ŠRUTI Fellow group.

What began as an effort to convince families to send their daughters to DYAF gradually evolved into deeper engagement with women themselves, most of whom work in the informal sector as unrecognised and underpaid piece-rate workers. Through regular discussions and meetings, young women leaders initiated collective reflection on these challenges, building solidarity around the rights of women workers.

This process has since grown into an organised membership of nearly 350 women. Young leaders now plan trainings, lead discussions, and experiment with new forms of collective action. The struggle, however, extends beyond the organisation. It is also about breaking entrenched patriarchal norms, challenging stereotypes, and enabling women to recognise and exercise their own strength.



Women Farmers' Assertion of Land Rights in Chhattisgarh

In Mahasamund and Baloda Bazar districts, 120 women secured land titles in their own names - a major shift in regions where women were traditionally excluded from property ownership. This progress was driven by sustained efforts of the Dalit Adivasi Manch under Zameen pe mahilaon ka malikana haq (Women's right to own land).

Women were mobilised to discuss inheritance rights within families and village forums, while men participated in Samajhdar Jodidaar sessions that used dialogue, role play, and community theatre to address cultural resistance and build shared support for women's ownership. Families were also assisted in completing registration procedures, preparing documents, and engaging with revenue authorities, enabling women to benefit from subsidies and agricultural schemes tied to landholding.

The initiative has sparked a deeper social change. By recognising women as equal stakeholders in land and agriculture, communities are reshaping norms of care, responsibility, and justice - moving toward a future where gender equity is integral to both family and community life.

Struggle for Secure Land Rights in Odisha

For generations, tribal and poor families in Odisha have lived and cultivated on revenue land without formal rights, making them vulnerable to eviction. In July 2024, when eviction orders were issued, **Lok Mukti Sangathan**, a ŠRUTI Fellow group mobilised communities across three districts, successfully securing a stay by highlighting protections under the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) 1996, FRA, and Odisha's Odisha Prevention of Land Encroachment (OPLE) Act 1972, which grants landless families entitlement to homestead and agricultural land. This provided crucial relief to affected families and reinforced the importance of legal safeguards.

Beyond this immediate success, the sangathan has continued to raise awareness and engage communities on proposed amendments to the OPLE Act that could reduce entitlements. Through programmes in nearly 900 villages and coordinated advocacy with elected representatives, the sangathan has strengthened community voices around land rights and the distribution of surplus land to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families. These efforts mark important strides towards securing long-term land rights and livelihood security for vulnerable communities.

The Continued Quest for Justice of Gramdani Villages, Rajasthan

The Gramdan movement, initiated by Vinoba Bhave during the Bhoodan Andolan, envisioned villages collectively managing land and development through empowered Gram Sabhas. Rajasthan's enactment of the Gramdan Act in 1971 institutionalised this visionary approach. Despite legal shifts that challenged these institutions, the ŚRUTI Fellow group Jungle Jameen Jan Andolan (JJJA) has actively worked to revive its role.

In 2024, eight villages sought to clarify land records, while public meetings and delegations pushed for recognition of Gramdani farmers and access to agricultural benefits. Though formal registration awaits a government order, these efforts are fostering important dialogue and strengthening community resolve to secure their rights and sustain the legacy of Gramdan.

From Isolated Struggles into a Collective Crusade, Uttar Pradesh



In Mehdona village, Uttar Pradesh, where most families survive on beedi rolling, the **Awadh Peoples Forum** began its work through children's education. This engagement soon revealed the harsh realities of beedi work: low wages, health risks, and systemic neglect. Women workers, who form the majority, earn just ₹20 for rolling 100 beedis, often spending an entire day to make barely ₹50. Despite being covered under the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act 1996, most remain unaware of their entitlements, while health facilities, social security, and government schemes are virtually absent.

A survey of 100 households conducted by the sangathan confirmed poor working conditions and widespread health problems such as respiratory illness and eye irritation from tobacco dust. In response, the Forum has initiated regular meetings with women workers, creating spaces for awareness-building, solidarity, and collective action.

For many in the community, this is the first time they are coming together on a platform to discuss exploitation and demand rights. What began as scattered, isolated struggles is slowly evolving into a shared movement, transforming individual hardship into collective strength and laying the foundation for organised collaboration of the workers.



Responding to Migration and Labour Exploitation, Madhya Pradesh

In the western tribal belt of Madhya Pradesh, migration has become a structural reality. Each year, thousands of Adivasi families from Barwani, Alirajpur, Khargone, Sendhwa, and Jhabua travel to Gujarat and Maharashtra as shrinking local employment, erratic rainfall, and agrarian distress push them into wage labour in sugarcane fields, onion farms, construction sites, factories, and textile units.

The ŚRUTI Fellows at **Adharshila Learning Centre** began by documenting migrant workers' experiences, exposing widespread exploitation - non-payment of wages, lack of contracts, unsafe working conditions, sexual harassment of women workers, and minimal compensation for sharecroppers or workplace accidents. Although protections exist under the Minimum Wages Act, Bonded Labour Abolition Act, and Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, implementation remains weak.



To address issues spanning multiple states, the group helped strengthen the **Paschim Bharat Mazdoor Adhikar Manch**, a network across Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra that enables rapid action in cases of wage theft, bonded labour, and distress migration, along with coordinated follow-up for relief and compensation.

Throughout the year, the Fellows held meetings and awareness drives in villages, weekly markets, and block gatherings across Barwani, Sendhwa, and Alirajpur. These efforts built solidarity, enhanced legal awareness, and supported intervention in 14 specific cases, including wage disputes and challenges faced by women workers. They also coordinated inter-state rescues of labourers and assisted families facing distress migration from Sundarbans (Karnataka) and Chhattisgarh (Tamil Nadu), supported by the Madhya Pradesh network.

Through sustained coordination and outreach efforts, the ŚRUTI Fellows are forging a crucial support system for Adivasi migrant workers - transforming isolated hardships into a collective push for dignity, justice, and rights.

PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL SECURITY

ŠRUTI's work underscores a persistent structural gap in India's local governance architecture: while PRIs and Gram Sabhas are constitutionally empowered, they remain functionally weak due to low awareness, limited administrative support, and entrenched social exclusion. The organisation's emphasis on grassroots democracy thus reflects a pointed diagnosis - participatory institutions cannot deliver unless communities are equipped to exercise their authority.

The 2024-25 interventions across nine states showed that meaningful participation is achievable but far from automatic. ŠRUTI Fellows succeeded in broadening the role of women, Dalits, Adivasis, and youth, and in operationalising PESA norms in Scheduled Areas. These gains demonstrate that institutional inertia can be reversed through sustained facilitation. Yet the reliance on civil society actors also highlights a systemic deficit: without state-backed capacity-building and accountable local administration, Gram Sabhas risk slipping back into symbolic rather than substantive forums.

The outcomes offer clear policy lessons. Revitalised Gram Sabhas - actively deliberating, planning, and engaging with local administrations - demonstrate that empowered communities can shape development choices and defend resource rights when institutional pathways are clarified. To sustain such gains, however, reforms are essential: regular training for PRI representatives, enforceable mechanisms for PESA implementation, transparent processes for village planning, and stronger channels for community oversight. Ultimately, ŠRUTI's work illustrates that strengthening PRIs is not simply about improving welfare delivery but about shifting governance power downward - an objective that requires coordinated commitment from both state systems and organised community action.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ **Strengthening Local Governance:** 481 meetings and trainings (373 at the village level and 108 regionally) organised by the Fellows brought together 28,585 participants, revitalising Gram Sabhas and PRIs as spaces for planning, dialogue, and accountability.
- ❖ **Water Security:** 16,542 families gained access to clean drinking water through collective monitoring of schemes and sustained engagement with local bodies.
- ❖ **Social Protection:** 4,464 people accessed pensions (old age, widow, disability) through awareness drives and follow-up with officials.
- ❖ **Housing Rights:** 1,951 households, including 539 under PM Awas Yojna, secured permanent housing, with Gram Sabha resolutions ensuring priority for the most vulnerable families.
- ❖ **Food Security:** 1,191 ration cards were facilitated, improving access to subsidised food grains and strengthening oversight of the Public Distribution System.
- ❖ **Documentation and Identity:** 411 income certificates and 324 caste certificates were secured, enabling access to entitlements, scholarships, and reservations.

Land Bank Transfer Stalled in Bamra Block, Odisha



In Sagra Gram Panchayat, Bamra block of Odisha, notices were issued to transfer community land into the Land Bank, despite Adivasi families having cultivated these lands for years and the broader community relying on them for collective use. As the area falls under the PESA Act, which recognises Gram Sabha authority over land and resources, this unilateral move caused significant concern.

Before these notices, **Lok Mukti Sangathan** had been actively supporting Gram Sabhas, regularising meetings, promoting participation of women and youth, and raising awareness of rights under PESA. This groundwork enabled the Gram Sabhas to respond swiftly and collectively when the land transfer issue emerged.

Through sustained village meetings, resolutions passed in Gram Sabhas, petitions to the Tehsildar, and memorandums to district authorities, the community could get the transfer halted by the administration, reinforcing the Gram Sabha's role as the legitimate decision-making body under PESA. This experience underscores that empowered Gram Sabhas, strengthened from within, can safeguard community resources and successfully challenge top-down decisions that threaten their legal rights.

Van Panchayats: A Legacy of Community Stewardship in Uttarakhand

For decades, Van Panchayats in Uttarakhand have stood as a strong example of community-led forest governance, protecting forests while ensuring local access to essential resources like fuel, fodder, and water. Rooted in collective participation, they embody environmental stewardship and self-reliance for mountain communities.

Though recent administrative and policy challenges – such as delays in funding and bureaucratic hurdles – temporarily affected their autonomy, communities and local organisations actively mobilised to defend their rights. Through awareness campaigns, meetings, and dialogue with officials, they successfully secured the release of long-pending funds and the resumption of microplan preparations in districts like Champawat and Nainital.

These positive outcomes have revitalised Van Panchayats' functioning and highlighted the strength of collective action in protecting both community rights and Uttarakhand's forests.



Additional Days of Work for Women under MGNREGA, Rajasthan

By December 2024, most members of the Jungle Jameen Jan Andolan had completed their 100 days of MGNREGA work. Women from Balwada, Malmatha, and Sharam took the lead in applying for the additional 25 days promised in the 2023 state budget. When their applications were initially rejected, the women mobilised, attending the Aam Sabha, meeting the District Collector, and engaging their village panchayats directly. Their persistence paid off: on 16 January, an order was issued granting 50 additional days of work.

Implementation followed in phases, and by 20 February, four villages had begun the extended employment. Women inaugurated the worksites with songs and dance, celebrating not only the livelihood opportunity but also the triumph of collective determination.

The Collective also strengthened Gram Sabha participation as a foundation of local democracy. Ahead of the 2 October Gram Sabha, women held preparatory meetings, discussed priorities, and developed their own MGNREGA plans, which they confidently presented. Their active engagement marked a shift from passive recipients of schemes to assertive actors shaping decisions within their panchayats and local governance processes.



Claiming Women's Space in Gram Sabhas, Chhattisgarh

Across 20 panchayats in Mahasamund and neighbouring districts, **Dalit Adivasi Manch** has been actively working to reclaim the Gram Sabha as a space of people's power. In villages shaped by patriarchy and feudal structures, women are often present but silenced, excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making. The sangathan has addressed this through a sustained process of awareness-building, organising women's Gram Sabhas as platforms for debate, strategy, and political education.



These forums allow women to begin with personal and household concerns and progressively engage with broader community issues, including access to schools, welfare entitlements, drinking water, and systemic neglect of Dalit and Adivasi communities. Through cycles of discussion, strategising, and intervention, women are increasingly asserting their voices individually and collectively within formal Gram Sabhas.

Facing resistance and attempts to marginalise them, women have adopted bold measures such as refusing to sign the Gram Sabha register when their demands are ignored, challenging the quorum and the legitimacy of decisions taken without their participation.

Women's Participation in Local Governance for Housing Rights, Rajasthan

This collective resolve has led to tangible outcomes: in several panchayats, women have ensured inclusion of housing and pension beneficiaries, secured commitments for handpumps in water-scarce hamlets, and pressed for improvements in school infrastructure.

The **Khetihar Khar Mazdoor Sangathan** in Rajasthan launched a campaign to secure housing for poor Bhil families, with a special focus on single women, across six panchayats in Bhadesar block. Many families were living in precarious conditions in kuccha houses. Around 100 women were supported in applying for homes under the Awas Yojana, with the sangathan assisting them in navigating bureaucratic processes and transforming individual struggles into a collective effort of realising their rights.

The initiative included meetings in panchayat bhawans, where Sarpanches and other local representatives were invited to engage directly with women. These forums provided a platform for women to voice their concerns and highlight the urgency of their housing needs. Responding to these demands, local authorities assured priority for women applicants, resulting in many securing approval for homes under the Awas Yojana.



AGRICULTURE AND LIVELIHOOD

For the communities ŠRUTI works with, livelihood insecurity reflects the intersection of structural inequality and intensifying climate stress. Erratic rainfall, degraded commons, and shifting policies have weakened already fragile farming systems, disproportionately affecting small farmers, women cultivators, and landless labourers. ŠRUTI's work this year highlights a central insight: resilience depends as much on strong local institutions and collective agency as on technical adaptation.

The year's interventions showed how participatory processes can convert dispersed knowledge into practical strategies. Farmer exchanges, trainings, and seed-sharing initiatives strengthened communities' ability to evaluate risks, adopt climate-resilient practices, and revive indigenous crops. Support in accessing state schemes underscored that institutional navigation - rather than scheme design alone - often determines who benefits. The resulting diversification of crops and improved nutrition point to the gains possible when communities regain autonomy over resource management.

Cooperative initiatives in handloom, horticulture, and aquaculture further illustrated that economic security rises when diversification aligns with collective organisation. These efforts expanded income options while improving communities' leverage with state institutions. By pairing immediate support with institution-building, ŠRUTI enabled a shift from reactive coping to proactive, community-led adaptation.

Overall, the year demonstrates that vulnerability is not a fixed condition but a reflection of weak institutional access and uneven policy implementation. Strengthening community organisation, knowledge systems, and engagement with the state offers a clear pathway to more stable and ecologically grounded livelihoods.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Around 450 meetings and trainings were conducted across states, including 366 at the village level and 70 at the regional level, reaching over 17,300 participants. Discussions focused on challenges such as climate change, soil degradation, access to Minimum Support Price (MSP), sustainable farming, seed preservation, and collective market strategies. Coastal communities raised concerns about sea erosion, declining fish stocks, and restrictive fishing regulations.
- In Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Tamil Nadu, Fellows supported farmers in preserving indigenous seeds, organising seed festivals, and establishing community seed banks. Awareness of organic and climate-resilient farming was strengthened through exposure visits, demonstration plots, and farmer-to-farmer exchanges.

- 882 farmers accessed income support under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, facilitated through documentation drives, application camps, and follow-ups with local authorities, providing critical relief against rising input costs.
- Additionally, 601 farmers secured agricultural seeds via state schemes or collective procurement, ensuring crop security and reducing market dependence.
- In Maharashtra, 450 women benefited from the Bhand Kit Yojana, receiving essential household kits to enhance food and nutritional security.
- 246 families were linked to additional livelihood schemes, including horticulture support and goat-rearing initiatives, helping diversify income sources.

A Community-Led Farming and Diet Initiative in Chhattisgarh



Dalit Adivasi Manch, a ŚRUTI Fellow group in Chhattisgarh, has been reviving indigenous farming practices through a community-led seed bank. Local seed varieties were collected from farmers across villages to conserve and reintroduce them, ensuring that Adivasi communities retain control over their agricultural resources rather than relying on market-driven hybrid seeds. To address high rates of anaemia, especially among women, the sangathan promoted ragi cultivation across 10 panchayats.

In 2024, nearly 100 farmers grew ragi on small plots using traditional varieties, reintroducing this iron- and calcium-rich staple into local diets.

The initiative extends beyond grains. Families have been encouraged to establish kitchen gardens with local seeds, reducing dependence on market vegetables often grown with heavy pesticides while enhancing household nutrition. By combining indigenous staples like ragi with diverse kitchen-grown vegetables, the project strengthens food sovereignty, ecological sustainability, and community health.

Stitching Together Livelihood and Dignity in Rajasthan

The *Adarsh Handloom Cooperative* in Rajasthan, established by ŚRUTI Fellow group **Hum Kisan** in 2004, has evolved into a thriving livelihood initiative with 35 looms and 60 families actively engaged, the majority of them women. With an annual turnover of around ₹30 lakhs, the cooperative produces high-quality pure cotton cloth while ensuring that all members participate in decision-making. This collective approach has been particularly empowering for women, helping them gain confidence and social recognition in a society still influenced by feudal norms.

The cooperative's commitment to quality has earned district-level recognition, with members winning 1st, 2nd, and 4th prizes at the Handloom Weavers State Awards in Rajasthan. Its fabrics are now exported to the United States and Japan. In 2024, the cooperative launched its own website, expanding reach, increasing visibility, and paving the way for sustainable growth and long-term impact.



Reviving Tea Plantations to Safeguard Livelihoods, Tamil Nadu



The Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Corporation (TANTEA), established in 1968, aimed to rehabilitate Sri Lankan repatriates under the 1964 Indo-Sri Lanka agreement while providing sustainable livelihoods through tea cultivation in the Nilgiris, particularly Gudalur. The initiative also sought to combine economic development with social welfare.

In recent years, however, TANTEA has announced a reduction of tea cultivation from 10,000 to 5,000 acres, resulting in the termination of over 500 temporary workers. Neglected plantations in Cherambadi, Cherakode, and Pandiar reverted to forest patches, increasing the risk of animal attacks.

Through sustained discussions facilitated by **VTMS** with workers, unions, and the corporation, a resolution was reached to revive part of the neglected land. As a result, 500 acres were cleared, and tea plants rejuvenated, creating renewed employment for around 200 workers while improving plantation maintenance and safeguarding livelihoods.

Community Voices Shaping Livelihoods and Resource Management, Sundarbans, West Bengal

The Sundarbans, an ecologically fragile and unique region, supports thousands of traditional fishermen, crab harvesters, and honey collectors whose livelihoods depend on its forests and waterways. Communities in remote villages across Kultali, Gosaba, Canning, and Hingalgunj blocks face high vulnerability to cyclones, storm surges, ecological degradation, and administrative challenges. Delays in the issuance and renewal of Boat License Certificates (BLCs) result in significant financial losses, while restricted access to waterways and forest areas further threatens survival.



In response, a consultation was organised by **Sundarban Jana Shramjeevi Manch** on 8–9 February 2025 in Canning, bringing together nearly 50 community leaders to identify challenges and propose actionable solutions. Recommendations included the timely issuance of BLCs, the restoration of blocked waterways like the Matla River, the inclusion of Sundarbans rivers in the Ganga Action Plan to revive aquatic biodiversity, and the expansion of saltwater fish hatcheries modelled on successful freshwater projects. Further engagement with the concerned departments is required to push for acceptance of the recommendations. Such community-driven solutions offer a roadmap to strengthen livelihood security while promoting ecological sustainability in the Sundarbans.

EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP BUILDING



For ŚRUTI, education is a political and transformative process through which marginalised communities cultivate critical awareness and strengthen democratic agency. This year's work took place amid structural inequities that continue to constrain meaningful access to learning: under-resourced government schools, irregular teacher availability, economic pressures that pull children into labour, gender norms restricting girls' mobility,

and caste- and language-based exclusions that disadvantage Dalit and Adivasi learners. Policy trends emphasising centralised examinations, digital mandates, and privatisation often overlook these lived realities, widening existing disparities.

Amid these constraints, ŚRUTI's interventions demonstrated how community-led spaces can counter structural barriers and foster more equitable learning environments. Strengthened study centres, libraries, and youth forums provided settings where curiosity, dialogue, and scientific temper were nurtured alongside academic support. Digital engagement enabled new forms of participation - particularly for girls with restricted mobility - while sustained mentoring and career guidance helped rural youth navigate institutional gaps that typically limit their educational and vocational trajectories.

The results point to a clear analytical insight: educational progress is most effective when communities hold ownership and young people are positioned as active contributors. Youth-led study groups, peer mobilisation, surveys, and cultural initiatives showed how supportive spaces can stimulate leadership and civic engagement. At the same time, persistent challenges - insufficient public investment, restrictive norms, and uneven digital infrastructure - indicate the need for continued strategies that link household aspirations with institutional accountability.

ŚRUTI's work this year highlights constructive pathways for reform: embedding education within community processes, prioritising justice-oriented pedagogy, and building the confidence and organisational capacity that enable marginalised learners to participate more fully in democratic life.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 857 trainings and meetings were conducted at the village, regional, and 22 state levels, engaging over 21,000 youth and young women. These platforms became vibrant spaces for collective learning, nurturing grassroots leadership while sustaining organisational processes.



- Youth-led initiatives included forming study circles, conducting surveys, and using social media to raise awareness of rights.
- Increased participation of young people in state-level platforms across Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu enabled them to articulate local realities within broader macro issues, ranging from employment and land rights to climate change and food security.
- 1,495 students received tuition support and scholarships in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand, helping bridge gaps in access to education and enabling continuity in their studies despite socio-economic challenges.
- 612 youth were trained in digital literacy in Uttar Pradesh, enhancing their access to online services, educational resources, and employment opportunities.

Education Gaps Addressed in a Village in Jharkhand

In 2023, youth associated with **Visthapit Mukti Vahini**, a ŠRUTI Fellow group, launched an education initiative in Palashbani village, East Singhbhum district, Jharkhand, to address gaps in quality schooling that often lead to high dropout rates and low learning levels. A local woman generously donated her land to establish a library, while educated village youth began volunteering to teach younger children regularly.

Today, the initiative supports over 300 children across Palashbani and nearby villages through four fully free study centres, providing inclusive, high-quality education. Beyond academics, the centres foster scientific temper and critical thinking among children.

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These sustained efforts have yielded notable achievements: six children from the study centres were selected for the prestigious Eklavya Residential Schools, reflecting the community's growing educational engagement. The programme has continued successfully for five years, strengthened by the committed involvement of city-based youth who regularly visit and support the centres.



Building Community Libraries in Dungarpur, Rajasthan



Jungle Jameen Jan Andolan (JJJA) has established four active community libraries in Balwada, Ghoogra, Malmatha, and Dhamod of Dungarpur district: two in the homes of library educators, one in a panchayat bhavan, and one near a school. These libraries are managed by educators from the same communities as the children, with qualifications ranging from class 10 to a bachelor's degree. They facilitate after-school activities such as read-aloud sessions, games, and theatre, regularly engaging 8–15 children aged 4–15.

To strengthen the educators' skills, three training sessions are conducted monthly, complemented by visits from team members and external resource persons. The initiative has grown through book donations from organisations and individuals, as well as funds raised via the Donate a Book campaign. Two educators have also applied for Ekalavya's Library Se Dosti course, which combines classroom learning with practical experience; Ekalavya has waived the course fee. Looking ahead, the vision is to expand these libraries into vibrant community spaces for children and youth, supported by interns and volunteers who can contribute ideas and actively engage with rural communities.

Digital Dialogues: Cinema as a Tool for Youth Engagement and Solidarity, Uttar Pradesh

In Uttar Pradesh, a sustained online initiative by a collective of ŚRUTI Fellow groups engages youth, women, and marginalised communities through regular Friday film screenings. The programme particularly empowers young women, providing a safe space for dialogue and creative expression despite mobility constraints. Each week, around 50 participants watch short films addressing critical social issues, ranging from gender-based violence and climate change to peace and communal harmony, followed by interactive discussions that encourage reflection, perspective-sharing, and connections to local realities.

The initiative also incorporates small writing exercises, helping participants articulate their thoughts and strengthen critical thinking skills. Beyond individual learning, it fosters connections across districts, creating a network of young people who exchange experiences, build solidarity, and collectively explore solutions to pressing challenges.



Career and Education Guidance for Rural Youth, Bihar

In 2025, **Farkiya Kala Sanskriti Sangam** engaged youth across 16 flood-affected villages in four panchayats of Khagaria district, Bihar, where structural neglect, recurrent disasters, and entrenched social hierarchies severely limit access to education. Children, especially girls, face systemic barriers that push them out of school, perpetuating cycles of marginalisation. This year, the initiative reached around 250 young people, positioning education as a tool for social empowerment and political accountability.

The programme equipped youth with knowledge and skills to challenge inequities. Capacity-building sessions included career counselling, competitive exam guidance, CV-building, and higher education planning, including preparation for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET). Girls were particularly encouraged to resist societal and familial pressures to drop out, asserting their right to education and shaping their futures.

By raising awareness of higher education opportunities and providing concrete guidance, the initiative strengthened rural youth's capacities to pursue studies beyond their villages. For first-generation learners, these efforts opened pathways to college, instilling confidence and equipping them to navigate academic challenges successfully.





GENDER, CASTE, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Caste, gender, and social exclusion continue to operate as structural barriers that restrict rights and dignity for Dalits, Adivasis, women, and other marginalised groups. Their persistence, despite constitutional safeguards, highlights deep gaps in institutional accountability and social norms.

ŠRUTI's work this year illustrates how organised, community-led approaches can address these deficits. Through sustained mobilisation, legal literacy, and culturally rooted engagement, Fellows helped communities interpret rights frameworks, challenge entrenched hierarchies, and use institutional mechanisms for justice. The underlying insight is clear: rights are realised when communities gain both the knowledge and collective confidence to claim them.

These efforts produced tangible shifts. Communities pursued legal remedies for violence and discrimination, while women, Dalits, and Adivasis strengthened their presence in local governance. Such changes reflect growing agency and improved ability to negotiate with state systems. Stronger women's collectives and emerging grassroots leaders also signalled a widening base of inclusive local leadership.

Initiatives with adolescent girls reinforced this trajectory by building early awareness, confidence, and decision-making capacity - laying the foundation for long-term shifts in gender norms.

Together, these developments point to a critical takeaway: community-rooted strategies that combine rights education, collective organisation, and leadership development can transform structural exclusion into pathways for justice and democratic participation.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 600 meetings and trainings were organised, mobilising more than 27,000 participants on gender, caste, and social inclusion.
- Fellows conducted 137 trainings that strengthened awareness on patriarchy, caste discrimination, constitutional remedies, and key legislations such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 and the Domestic Violence Act 2005.
- Over 480 village-level meetings and more than 80 regional-level meetings fostered collectiveness and sharing of experiences, helping to collectively raise issues of discrimination and exclusion.

Reviving Culture Through Women in the Sundarbans

In the Sundarbans, **Sundarban Jana Shramjeevi Manch (SJSM)**, a ŠRUTI Fellow group in West Bengal, has launched a cultural initiative to strengthen the role of women in riverine communities. By creating a dedicated cultural wing, the programme preserves local traditions, fosters community cohesion, and builds resilience in villages frequently impacted by cyclones. On 9 March 2025, an event at Golpata Bhabar Bhuban in Sundarbans featured Bonbibí Pala performances and folk songs, highlighting women's contributions to storytelling and cultural preservation, attended by around 80 community members.

Women actively lead these activities, organising events, mentoring youth, and sharing knowledge through stories, songs, and performances about land, rivers, and natural resources, which are central to livelihoods and survival. Centring women's participation not only preserves cultural heritage but also nurtures intergenerational learning and community leadership. The initiative demonstrates how culture can be a vehicle for empowerment, resilience, and sustainable community development in the face of environmental and social challenges.

Reimagining Public Spaces in Bihar

In Bihar, ŚRUTI Fellow group **Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan (JJSS)** mobilised its youth cadre to organise an 'Azaadi Walk' through Araria town, addressing rising crimes against women and marginalised communities. The walk sought to create inclusive and safe public spaces for women, transgender individuals, and socially marginalised groups, while pressing the government for accountability and action against perpetrators. Residents, queer groups, feminist collectives, and democratic organisations actively participated. Feminist songs played by e-rickshaws, slogans, and pamphlet distribution amplified the collective demand for dignity, safety, and equality across caste and gender lines.

Building on this commitment, JJSS also reimagined Chhath celebrations in the Araria and Katihar districts of Bihar. Stalls offering water, tea, and lemonade replaced traditional festivities, while loud and

misogynistic music was substituted with progressive songs. Pamphlets promoted environmentally conscious and socially inclusive practices, rooted in the ethos of *Ganga-Jamuni tahzeeb* (syncretic culture). The initiative reinforced respect for both the environment and marginalised communities, earning positive engagement from society and demonstrating that cultural celebrations can be a powerful medium for advancing social justice, gender equity, and collective responsibility.

Empowering Girls to Learn, Connect, and Dream, Uttar Pradesh

The **Awadh People's Forum**, based in Faizabad (Ayodhya), Uttar Pradesh, reached approximately 454 adolescent girls last year through its community education centres, **Prerna Kishori Vikas Kendras**. These centres operate in urban neighbourhoods – Dilkusha, Shahadat Ali Khan ki Chhaoni, Maqbara, and Pahadganj – as well as in rural areas of Mehdona and Dhobiyara in Milkipur block.

Founded on the belief that education extends beyond the classroom, the Kendras provide safe, consistent spaces where girls can connect, learn, and build confidence. Open daily from 3 to 6 pm, they help bridge schooling gaps, strengthen reading and writing skills, and employ innovative, activity-based methods to make learning engaging and meaningful.

For many girls from families of daily wage earners and sanitation workers, the Kendras have become spaces of hope and empowerment. They nurture aspirations, foster confidence, and enable girls to envision brighter futures, creating a foundation not only for academic growth but also for social and personal development.



Building Awareness on Women's Health in Khagaria, Bihar

In Khagaria district, **Farkiya Kala Sanskriti Sangam** has been working with women and adolescent girls across four panchayats – Aolapur, Gangor, Tetrabad, and Jahangira – reaching around 20 villages and approximately 300 participants. Through regular discussions, meetings, trainings, workshops, and community activities, the initiative focuses on enhancing awareness about women's and adolescents' health.

The programme emphasises the importance of understanding bodily changes, recognising health challenges, and seeking timely treatment. Encouraging participants to openly share their experiences fosters an environment where health is no longer a taboo subject.

A significant impact has been the shift in attitudes toward health. Women and adolescents are now more conscious and proactive about their well-being, discussing concerns without hesitation and seeking support from nearby Primary Health Centres, ASHA workers, or ANMs whenever necessary. This initiative not only strengthens knowledge on health but also encourages community-level dialogue, early intervention, and sustained engagement, contributing to improved health outcomes and greater empowerment for women in rural Bihar.

Fostering Critical Thinking and Livelihood Skills Among Young Women in Uttar Pradesh

The **Samata Kishori Yuva Manch**, formed by the **MGNREGA Mazdoor Union** in Uttar Pradesh, provides a platform for adolescent girls to discuss gender discrimination, build awareness about their rights, and develop leadership skills. Active across 60 villages, each with 30–40 members aged 5 to 25, the Manch hosts weekly meetings where girls share concerns, engage in perspective-building sessions, and participate in various trainings.

In 2025, the Manch took the lead in organising programmes such as Mahila Mahotsav, which saw participation from over 2,000 girls, alongside Republic Day and Independence Day celebrations. Beyond awareness and leadership development, the initiative equips girls with livelihood skills; around 200 received stitching training this year, adding to the 150 trained previously, many of whom are now earning an income. Similarly, 150 girls completed computer training, enhancing their digital literacy and access to opportunities.

The Manch continues to nurture critical thinking, promote rights awareness, and sustain a process of social change led by young women, empowering them to participate actively in their communities and shape their futures with confidence and skill.



CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES

India's constitutional values - justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity - provide a strong framework for safeguarding dignity and non-discrimination. Yet widening inequalities, reduced institutional accountability, and rising sectarian tensions indicate a growing disconnect between constitutional commitments and lived experience. Marginalised communities often face the sharpest consequences, encountering restricted access to resources, limited institutional response, and shrinking civic space. Strengthening public engagement with constitutional principles is therefore essential for reinforcing democratic practice.

ŚRUTI's work this year illustrated how community-led processes can help rebuild this engagement. Through mobilisation, rights education, and culturally rooted communication, Fellows supported communities in interpreting constitutional guarantees and using them to address discrimination, access remedies, and participate more confidently in public life. These efforts encouraged people to connect personal experiences with broader frameworks of justice and equality.

A strong emphasis on youth and community leadership broadened participation further. Volunteer networks, discussion groups, and cultural forums created spaces for dialogue on equality, secularism, justice, and peace, turning constitutional ideals into shared reference points for collective action. These platforms strengthened social bonds and enhanced communities' ability to engage with institutions and civic processes.

The year's efforts demonstrate that communities with the awareness, confidence, and collective strength to draw on constitutional principles are far more able to claim their rights and influence a more inclusive and democratic sphere.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1,144 meetings were organised by Fellow groups across 70 regional and 25 state-level platforms, reaching 13,460 participants. These spaces enabled communities to engage with the core constitutional values of equality, justice, liberty, and fraternity.
- 201 trainings were conducted in Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, focusing on constitutional rights, protections against discrimination, and the role of citizens in strengthening democracy.
- 15 state-level programmes in Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Maharashtra expanded solidarity across diverse groups.
- Commemorations of Ambedkar Jayanti, Gandhi Jayanti, Republic Day, Independence Day, and Indigenous Peoples' Day were held across 15 states, where songs, theatre, debates, and cultural performances became powerful mediums to celebrate pluralism and reaffirm India's diverse socio-cultural fabric.

Highlighting Adivasi Leaders' Role in Shaping the Constitution, Across States

The **Jungle Jameen Jan Andolan**, in collaboration with individuals from multiple organisations, undertook an initiative to spotlight the often-overlooked contributions of Adivasi members to India's Constituent Assembly. As part of this effort, a series of posters was created in Hindi, English, and Oriya, ensuring accessibility for communities across regions and states.

Ahead of Constitution Day, the sangathan shared these posters with organisations nationwide, encouraging widespread celebration and dissemination of the Adivasi legacy in shaping constitutional values. The series was officially launched online by People's Archive of Rural India (PARI) and Adivasi Lives Matter, who shared it via their websites and Instagram platforms. This digital launch significantly amplified the initiative's reach beyond Dungarpur, drawing national attention and highlighting the critical role of Adivasi leaders in India's constitutional history.

By combining creative expression with advocacy, the initiative not only educates communities about historical contributions but also reinforces the importance of inclusion, representation, and recognition of marginalised voices in the nation's democratic and constitutional journey.



Inauguration of 'Samvidhan Ghar' in Chhindoli Village, Chhattisgarh

As part of the Samvidhan Sathi Abhiyan, **Dalit Adivasi Manch** conducted awareness meetings across 20 villages in Chhattisgarh, engaging communities in understanding the Constitution. Village walls were inscribed with the Preamble, which residents read aloud, fostering collective reflection and appreciation. The Samvidhan Yatra saw participation from around 400 people across 40 villages, and one household in Chhindoli village, Pithora block, generously donated their house to serve as the Samvidhan Ghar (Constitution House).



On 26 January 2024, coinciding with Republic Day, the Dalit Adivasi Manch inaugurated the Samvidhan Ghar, marking the culmination of a two-month campaign. The donated house was transformed into a vibrant community hub for constitutional literacy. It now houses books on the Constitution, profiles of Constituent Assembly members, including a dedicated section on women's contributions, and provides practical resources such as government scheme forms with guidance for completion.

The walls feature posters of freedom fighters and assembly members, while a small library and toy corner engage children with constitutional values from an early age. By blending learning, history, and civic empowerment, the Samvidhan Ghar has become an inclusive space where communities can collectively explore, celebrate, and practice democratic principles.

Youth-Led Samvidhan Yatra to Promote Constitutional Awareness, Jharkhand

The Samvidhan Yatra in Jharkhand's Kolhan division is a youth-led initiative aimed at promoting constitutional values, civic awareness, and scientific temper, with a special focus on engaging youth from marginalised communities. Organised by **Visthapit Mukti Vahini**, the six-day campaign reached diverse audiences across educational institutions and community spaces, mobilising over 100 volunteers.

Launched in 2022, the Yatra has grown into a vibrant movement that combines education, dialogue, and cultural expression to foster an informed and just society. In 2025, the campaign employed engaging tools such as mobile libraries, poster exhibitions, short and documentary film screenings, Samvaad (dialogue) sessions, workshops, Nukkad Nataks (street plays), signature collections, and 'Constitution Trees'. Collaborative art activities, including painting, creative writing, and reading the Preamble aloud, encouraged participants to engage with constitutional principles both reflectively and creatively.

Events were held across rural and urban spaces, including Bara Sigdi village in Hansbil, Potka; Patamda Inter College in Jalla; ARKA Jain University and XITE College in Gamharia; Kashisahu College in Seraikela; and Bistupur JAM Street in Jamshedpur. By bridging villages, universities, and public streets, the initiative successfully connected with around 1,000 students, educators, social workers, and community members, strengthening youth leadership and civic engagement across the region.

Girls Bringing the Constitution to Life Through Performance, Rajasthan

Adharshila Residential School, associated with the ŚRUTI Fellow group in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, supports girls from marginalised communities, particularly Bhil and Meena Adivasis, many of whom face extreme poverty or have lost a parent, making continued education challenging.

Every Saturday, the school hosts Bal Sabhas, where students present plays, dances, poems, and stories of inspiring women. To strengthen constitutional awareness, the school introduced Constitution textbooks for Classes 6 to 12. While the content was important, many students found it dry. The girls proposed transforming it into a play, turning learning into a creative and engaging experience.



Preparation was intensive and collaborative: dialogues were adapted from the textbooks, rehearsals ran nightly from 9 to 11 pm, and stagecraft techniques were learned through online resources. Despite initial doubts, the girls delivered a confident performance during Adharshila's farewell ceremony.

Their dedication soon gained wider recognition. On 2 October, the Collector of Chittorgarh honoured them for their Constitution-themed play, followed by an acknowledgement from the local MLA on Adivasi Day. This initiative not only enhanced constitutional understanding but also fostered confidence, teamwork, and public expression among the students, turning education into a transformative, community-celebrated experience.

INTERNAL COMMITTEE (IC) UPDATE

The Internal Committee (IC) was reconstituted on 29 November 2024 with the following members:

- Ashadevi K.R. – Presiding Officer
- Amit Kumar Singh – Member, ŠRUTI Team
- Jojy Mathew – Member, ŠRUTI Team
- Tejasvita Malhotra – Member, ŠRUTI Team
- Sohini – Member, ŠRUTI Fellow
- Jayshree – Member, ŠRUTI Fellow
- Arvind Anjum – Member, ŠRUTI Fellow
- Purnima Gupta – Member, Trainer and Subject Expert
- Purwa Bhardwaj – Member, Trainer and Subject Expert

Following the reconstitution, the updated list of IC members was prominently displayed within the office, and all staff were sensitised regarding the role, mandate, and procedures of the Committee. During the reporting period, one case was formally reported to the IC. A thorough enquiry was conducted, recommendations were submitted, and the organisation has implemented appropriate actions in accordance with the Committee’s guidance.

PEOPLE

ŠRUTI General Body

01. Sanjit (Bunker) Roy, Founding Member
02. Poonam Muttreja, Founding Member
03. Samir Chaudhuri, Founding Member
04. Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, President
05. Prof. Prabhu Mohapatra, Vice President
06. Prof. Rajeswari Raina
07. Prof. Uma Chakravarti
08. Rita Sarin
09. Avinash Kumar
10. Kanika Satyanand
11. Abha Singhal Joshi
12. Nitin Sethi
13. G.B. Panda
14. Kabir Dixit
15. Gazala Jamil
16. Jamal Kidwai

ŠRUTI Executive Board

1. Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, President
2. Prabhu Mohapatra, Vice President
3. Jamal Kidwai, Treasurer
4. Kanika Satyanand, Member
5. Rita Sarin, Member
6. Avinash Kumar, Member
7. Ghazala Jamil (until December 2024)

ŠRUTI Team*

1. Abhinand MS, Asst. Programme Executive
2. Abhishek Sarna, Programme Trainee
3. Abhishek Swaroop, Resource Mobilisation Trainee
4. Asha Raveendran, Sr. Programme Executive
5. Amit Kumar, MIS Officer
6. Baldev Thakur, Finance Officer
7. Hafsa Naaz, Programme Executive
8. Hukum Chand, Resource Mobilisation Assistant
9. Jojoy Mathew, Officer, Finance & Admin.
10. Juheb Jhony Choudhary, Sr. Programme Executive
11. Kamal Chand, Sr. Programme Executive
12. Mahipal Singh, Programme Executive
13. Rakesh Sharma, Asst. Manager, Resource Mobilisation
14. Saurabh Sinha, Program Director
15. Shweta, Executive Director
16. Tejasvita Malhotra, Programme Executive
17. Zeba Wasi, Asst. Programme Executive

**In alphabetic order. as of 31st March 2025*

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Society For Rural, Urban & Tribal Initiative (SRUTI)
303/4, Kaushalya Park, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-110016
Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2025

		(Amount in INR)	
Particulars	Note	31 March 2025	31 March 2024
I Sources of Funds			
1 NPO Funds	3		
(a) Reserve Funds		1,96,01,967	2,56,00,411
(b) Corpus Funds		34,45,16,500	34,42,66,500
(c) Assets Funds		7,76,635	4,44,567
(d) Project Funds		1,40,92,277	2,14,94,661
		37,90,47,379	39,18,06,138
2 Non-current liabilities			
(a) Long-term borrowings		-	-
(b) Other long-term liabilities		-	-
(c) Long-term provisions		-	-
		-	-
3 Current liabilities			
(a) Short-term borrowings		-	-
(b) Unspent Grant Balance		-	-
(c) Other current liabilities	4	50,00,515	28,60,215
(d) Short-term provisions		-	-
		50,00,515	28,60,215
Total		38,40,47,894	39,46,66,353
II Application of Funds			
1 Non-current assets			
(a) Property, Plant and Equipment and Intangible assets	5	22,67,802	16,53,730
(i) Property, Plant and Equipment			
(ii) Intangible assets			
(iii) Capital work in progress			
(iv) Intangible asset under development			
(b) Non-current investments	6	-	-
(c) Long Term Loans and Advances		-	-
(d) Other non-current assets		-	-
		22,67,802	16,53,730
2 Current assets			
(a) Current investments	7	33,96,25,533	34,32,87,289
(b) Inventories		-	-
(c) Receivables		-	-
(d) Cash and bank balances	8	2,96,36,124	4,41,81,102
(e) Short Term Loans and Advances	9	1,25,18,434	55,44,232
(f) Other current assets	10	-	-
		38,17,80,091	39,30,12,622
Total		38,40,47,893	39,46,66,353

Brief about the Entity & Summary of significant accounting policies 1&2
The accompanying notes are an integral part of the financial statements.

For & on behalf:
S. Sahoo & Co
Chartered Accountants
Firm No. 322952E

CA (Dr.) Subhajit Sahoo, FCA, LLB
Partner
MM No. 057426
UDIN: 25057426BMICEY2858
Place: New Delhi
Date: 30-09-2025

For & on behalf:
Society For Rural, Urban & Tribal Initiative (SRUTI)

Enakshi G. Thukral
President
Shweta
Executive Director

Society For Rural, Urban & Tribal Initiative (SRUTI)
303/4, Kaushalya Park, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-110016

Income and Expenditure for the year ended on 31st March 25

		(Amount in INR)	
Particulars	Note	31 March 2025	31 March 2024
I Income			
(a) Donations and Grants	11	3,76,49,812	6,94,03,581
(b) Other income	12	2,68,71,612	2,29,59,345
II Total		6,45,21,423	9,23,62,925
III Expenses:			
(a) Expenditure on Objects of Organization-Program Expenses	13	7,52,06,240	4,89,35,233
(b) Donations/Contributions Paid- Amount Sub Grant	14	-	-
(c) Establishment Expenses	15	21,96,106	26,40,108
(d) Depreciation and amortization expense	16	2,09,904	1,95,378
Total		7,76,12,250	5,17,70,719
IV Excess of Income over Expenditure before exceptional and extraordinary items (III- IV)		-1,30,90,827	4,05,92,206
V Exceptional items		-	-
VI Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year before extraordinary items (V-VI)		-1,30,90,827	4,05,92,206
VII Extraordinary Items		-	-
VIII Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year (VII-VIII)		-1,30,90,827	4,05,92,206
Appropriations Transfer to funds:			
Transfer to/(from) Project fund:		-71,52,384	1,91,66,368
Balance transferred to General Fund:		-59,38,444	2,14,25,838

Brief about the Entity & Summary of significant accounting policies 1&2
The accompanying notes are an integral part of the financial statements

For & on behalf:
S. Sahoo & Co
Chartered Accountants
Firm No. 322952E

CA (Dr.) Subhajit Sahoo, FCA, LLB
Partner
MM No. 057426
UDIN: 25057426BMICEY2858

Place: New Delhi
Date: 30-09-2025

For & on behalf:
Society For Rural, Urban & Tribal Initiative (SRUTI)

Enakshi G. Thukral
President
Shweta
Executive Director

Society For Rural, Urban & Tribal Initiative (SRUTI)
303/4, Kaushalya Park, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-110016

Receipts & Payment Account For The Year Ended 31st March 2025

		(Amount in INR)	
Particulars	Note	31 March 2025	31 March 2024
RECEIPTS			
Opening Balance :			
Cash and Bank Balances		4,41,81,102	49,96,437
Donation & Grants	17	3,76,49,812	6,94,03,581
Other income	18	2,68,71,612	2,29,59,345
Corpus Donation Received		-	30,00,00,000
Loan & Advances Received		1,64,469	12,88,516
Total		10,88,66,994	39,86,49,878
PAYMENT			
Expenditure on Objects of Organization-Program Expenses	13	7,52,06,240	4,89,35,233
Donations/Contributions Paid- Amount Sub Grant	14	-	-
Establishment Expenses	15	21,96,106	26,40,108
Non Recurring Expenses		4,91,908	1,48,645
Loan and Advances Paid		13,36,616	27,44,790
Change in Investment		-	30,00,00,000
Closing Balance			
Cash and Bank Balances		2,96,36,124	4,41,81,102
Total		10,88,66,994	39,86,49,878

Brief about the Entity & Summary of significant accounting policies 1&2
The accompanying notes are an integral part of the financial statements

For & on behalf:
S. Sahoo & Co
Chartered Accountants
Firm No. 322952E

CA (Dr.) Subhajit Sahoo, FCA, LLB
Partner
MM No. 057426
UDIN: 25057426BMICEY2858

Place: New Delhi
Date: 30-09-2025

For & on behalf:
Society For Rural, Urban & Tribal Initiative (SRUTI)

Enakshi G. Thukral
President
Shweta
Executive Director

INSTITUTIONAL DONARS



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