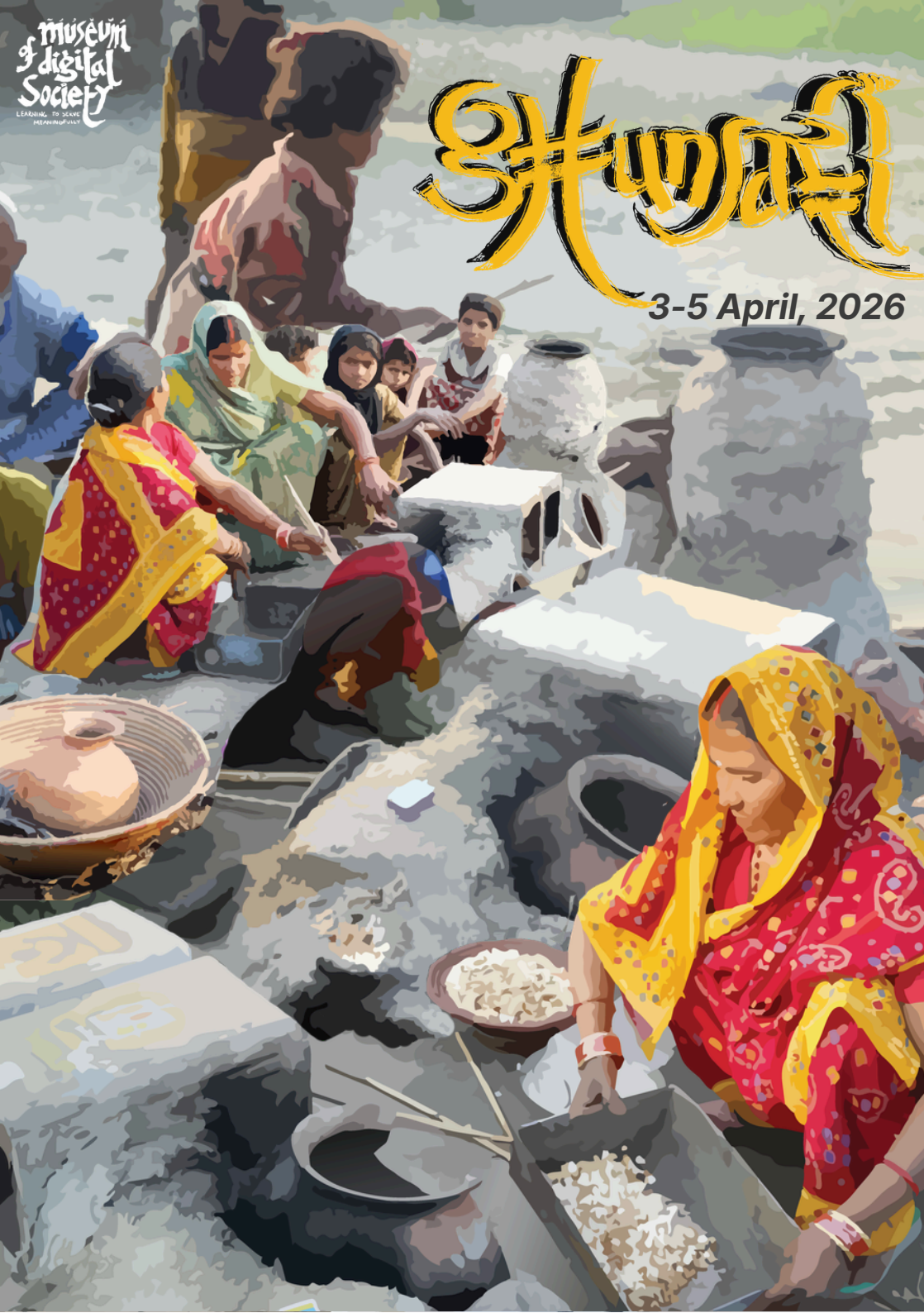


शुभ्रा

3-5 April, 2026





Ghunsari is a hyperlocal community activity, where women gather together almost on a daily basis to make snacks for their families: largely seen in West Champaran of Bihar.

It forms a symbol of collectivism, a women-led activity— and represents an act of enterprise as each woman makes snacks for her own family, a way of individual asset-making. This community gathering is a significant part of the ecosystem, a gathering and utilisation of resources for the whole village.



The Museum of Digital Society is a community-centred learning ecosystem that documents the journey of digital development in India, through the lens of DEF: a living archive of real-world stories showing how digital tools can transform lives.



Mayil is a campus of four guest houses, a community kitchen, and an open co-working and gathering space: each room a living collection of India's Geographical Indication-tagged craft.

The campus takes its name from the Tamil word for peacock, mayil, the national bird of India and one of the most recurring motifs in the entire canon of Indian craft.



Stargazing Terrace

Barkatt House

Amphitheatre

Museum of Digital Society

Museum Yard

Make 2 / Warehouse

Thogai

Stage

Maayam

Open Huddle

Aakam-Community Kitchen

Sivam

Sangamam

Digikargha

Amaidhi

Dome

Day 1

**Arrival at
Chennai Airport**

**Between
21:00-22:00**

**Taking a
Tempo Traveller**

**Arrival of group- settle
in, welcome drink +
discussion and activity**

**Welcome kits + room
assignments**

**Community
kitchen**

**Sivam, Thogai,
Dome**

Day 2

06:00-07:00

07:00-08:30

8:30-10:00

10:00-11:30

11:30-12:00

12:00-13:30

12:00-12:30

12:30-13:00

13:00-13:30

13:30-14:30

Sunrise walk

Time to get ready for the day/ prepare

Breakfast

**Introduction to 'Ghunsari' and
icebreaker session, meet the
participants/ facilitators/ team**

Breakaway sessions

Tea/ coffee/ juice break

**Setting the Tone:
Contextual Examples**

Brij Kothari- PlanetRead

Chetan Kapur- TAN Network

Deven- Auroville Ecosystem

Lunch

**Community
kitchen**

Stage

Across Mayil

**Museum
1st floor**

**Community
kitchen**

14:30-14:45	Collective meditation	Stage
15:00-16:00	Tour of the Museum of Digital Society	Museum
16:00-17:00	Zine-making/ creative exercise	Makerspace
17:00-18:30	Sunset viewing + tea and coffee break	
18:30-20:30	Continued Contextual Examples: <i>an interactive session/ presentation on the work, models and methods of the Digital Empowerment Foundation, led by Osama Manzar</i>	Museum ground floor

20:30-21:30	Dinner	Community kitchen
-------------	---------------	--------------------------

Day 3

08:00-09:30	Meet and begin the day at breakfast	Community kitchen
-------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------

09:30-10:30	Introduction to Changemaking Networks and Ecosystem Approach by Gopal	
-------------	--	--

10:30-11:30	'Beginning with the End' - a session facilitated by Osama Manzar on bringing a clear and direct purpose to the BDC network	
-------------	---	--

11:30 onwards	This time is open to self-guided activities from the BDC/ further sessions by guests or facilitators.	
---------------	--	--

Meet the Community

Inspirations





*After spending 30 mundane years helping tech businesses in Asia-Pacific, **Satyartha Mishra** returned to India from Australia to publish his memoirs, the hapless voyager, and by a sheer stroke of serendipity, found himself marvelling at a myriad of intersections in the social sector. At Alliance for Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE), Satyartha is responsible for broadening the climate change ecosystem for this leading climate change, energy efficiency policy and research think-tank. His interactions permeate NGOs, CSR/Philanthropy organizations across health, education, and rural livelihood with the aim of creating sustainable and scalable impact.*

***Dr. Prahalathan KK** is one of the co-founders of Bhumi. He was an ophthalmologist until the Chennai floods of 2015. His experiences during the flood prompted him to quit his medical practice and move to the social sector full-time. He believes every child deserves a quality education. He is passionate about making volunteering a habit among young people. At Bhumi, he now guides volunteering, programme strategy & fundraising. He also now leads Ekam, an organisation working on improving Maternal and Child Health.*



***Usha Devi Venkatachalam** is a technologist who has implemented software solutions & conducted capacity building training in 20+ countries. This combined with her family's agricultural roots has resulted in a social enterprise with a mission to nourish soil, water, biodiversity, & the planet. She is currently building Janani Climate Action Platform (JCAP) bridging corporate & foundation climate commitments with community-led ecosystem restorations & regenerative crop transitions.*



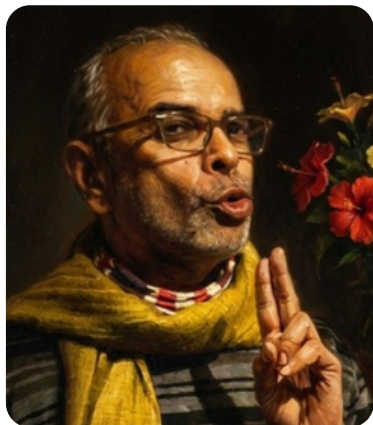


Faheem Ahmed is a social impact leader with 10+ years of experience enabling entrepreneurs and building ecosystems across India. At Acumen, he supports social innovators with capital, strategy, and organizational development, helping ventures scale and sustain impact. His work has contributed to strengthening a network of about 400 leaders and advancing initiatives that have impacted thousands of underserved individuals. With prior experience at Teach For India, Access Livelihoods and AIESEC, Faheem brings expertise in partnerships, program design, and community building, with a strong focus on driving measurable outcomes and long-term systems change.

Brij Kothari leads the Billion Readers (BIRD) initiative in India, aiming to transition the country's 650 million weak readers, speaking a mix of 22 official languages, to proficient reading skills. A billion people watch 3-4 hours of video entertainment every day. BIRD's core work is to mainstream Same Language Subtitles (SLS) on all such content on TV and streaming platforms, thereby causing lifelong incidental reading practice for all. Brij has a Ph.D. in Education from Cornell University. He is a social entrepreneur (Ashoka and Schwab Fellow) and Adjunct Professor at IIT-Delhi's School of Public Policy.



Hemakshi Meghani is an entrepreneur and systems change practitioner driven by a question: how do we build a society that is as principled as it is equitable? She is the co-founder of the Indian School of Democracy (ISD), an organization dedicated to nurturing principled political leaders, and led ISD from its inception in 2018 until 2024. Her journey spans Harvard Kennedy School and Stanford University to the classrooms of Teach For India, remote corners of India and statewide policy reform with BCG and Indus Action. A Dalai Lama Fellow and Echoing Green Global Fellow, Hemakshi blends policy expertise with a deep commitment to inner work, believing that systemic change starts with individual transformation. She is at her most alive when nurturing communities of women who challenge the status quo, and finds her purpose in the inner and outer journeys that lead us toward a more just and authentic society.



Manas Arvind is an entrepreneur, innovator, educator, and design thinker working at the intersection of food systems, agroecology, and grassroots entrepreneurship. His work is rooted in practice, with a strong focus on creating viable, land-based livelihoods.

He is the founder of the Gurgaon Organic Farmers Market, a local food initiative that has been running successfully for over a decade, and Grainny's, an organic food brand focused on everyday nourishment. Through the Farmversities Alliance, he continues to support learning ecosystems around farming and rural enterprise.

Merlia Shaukath is the Founder and CEO of Madhi Foundation, a Chennai-based nonprofit dedicated to strengthening foundational learning and reimagining school systems in India. An alumna of the London School of Economics and the University of Oxford, she brings strong experience in education reform, public policy, and systems transformation.

Under her leadership, Madhi has worked as the Chief Management Partner for Tamil Nadu's Foundational Learning Mission, reaching and serving 27 lakh children across 37,000 govt schools. Merlia is an Ashoka Fellow and Rainer Arnhold Fellow. She is deeply committed to advancing equitable, high-quality foundational learning opportunities for children from underserved communities across India through thoughtful, scalable, and inclusive education reform efforts.



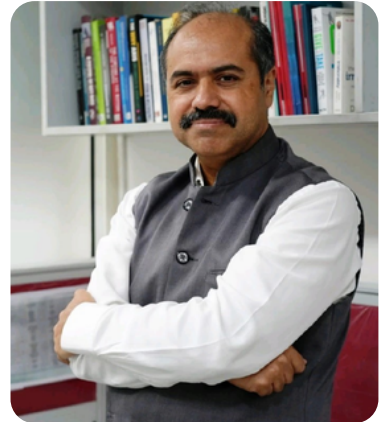
Deven Shah is a facilitator, educator, and conscious living advocate working at the intersection of integral education, inner transformation, and purposeful community. He has been based in Auroville since 2016, where his work centres on holding space for individuals and groups to attain inner-outer harmony. Prior to Auroville, he spent two decades working across marketing, digital media, and personal finance with startups, corporations, and nonprofits. He is also an active participant in ServiceSpace, Moved By Love, Vipassana, and Integral Yoga.





Samyak Jain is a social entrepreneur and development professional working at the intersection of education, student agency, and systemic change. He is the Co-founder of Involve Learning Solutions Foundation, which he built alongside a fellow IIT Madras graduate after turning down corporate placements. Involve has pioneered peer-led learning in India's government schools, reaching nearly a million students across six states. He was selected among the Top 30 fellows globally by The Gratitude Network, Silicon Valley.

Chetan Kapoor is a development professional and social entrepreneur working at the intersection of education, skill development, and inclusive employment. He is the CEO of Tech Mahindra Foundation, where he leads over 150 projects across 12 cities under the vision of "Empowerment through Education." He conceptualised the Foundation's flagship SMART program — one of India's largest CSR-led urban skilling initiatives. He is also the co-founder of Agrasar, a grassroots organisation focused on skills, social security, and education in Gurugram.



Jake Alexander is a multilingual strategic leader and development professional working at the intersection of global health, humanitarian response, and inclusive programming. He partners with donors and implementers to build and scale high-impact programs and funds for vulnerable communities in fragile environments. Fluent in Arabic, French, Russian, and Ukrainian among several other languages, he brings rare cross-cultural depth to complex global challenges.



Parthibhan Amudhan is a senior social sector leader and currently serves as Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the Billion Readers (BIRD) initiative. With over two decades of experience, he has been part of the executive team at PlanetRead and BookBox, contributing to large-scale efforts to improve literacy and access to education through innovative media and technology. He plays a key role in organisational leadership, operations, and scaling impact-driven programmes. His work focuses on advancing reading access and learning outcomes for underserved communities through sustainable, system-level interventions.

Gopal Garg is a social impact leader and ecosystem builder working at the intersection of youth empowerment, disability inclusion, and systems change. He is the Vice President of Youth4Jobs Foundation. He currently serves as Director of Ecosystem & Partnerships at Ashoka ASPIRe, a global initiative that supports social entrepreneurs in designing for exponential impact. He is also an Acumen Fellow and a United India Fellow.



Arti Garg is an aspiring agriculturalist, and has over 15 years of experience in the education and training sector.



Osama Manzar is a social entrepreneur, author, and digital rights advocate working at the intersection of information access, digital inclusion, and grassroots empowerment. He is the founder of the Digital Empowerment Foundation, established in 2002, which has directly empowered over 35 million people across 24 states in India. He conceptualised India's National Digital Literacy Mission, later adopted by the Government, and pioneered the PM-WANI framework for last-mile wi-fi connectivity. He is a Senior Ashoka Fellow and British Chevening Scholar.

Dr. Madanmohan Rao is a consultant, author, and knowledge management expert based in Bangalore. A graduate of IIT Bombay with an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, he formerly served as Communications Director at the UN Inter Press Service in New York. He is Research Director of Mobile Monday, co-founder of the Bangalore K-Community, and editor of three book series spanning Asia, Africa, and knowledge management. He has spoken in over 60 countries worldwide.



Abner Manzar is a development professional and storyteller working at the intersection of digital inclusion, research, and community impact. At the Digital Empowerment Foundation, he documents grassroots interventions across India through articles, films, and field research. Having travelled to over 400 villages, he brings to life the human stories behind digital development. He also researches digital capacity building and women's health equity with the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership.





Mohd. Shah Alam is leading DigiKargha established by the Digital Empowerment Foundation to drive the sustainability of the Digital Cluster Development Programme (DCDP) through a social enterprise model. With over 13 years of association with the program, he has been actively involved in empowering artisan and weaver communities by integrating traditional crafts with digital tools, market linkages, and sustainable livelihood opportunities. His work focuses on strengthening cluster development, promoting digital inclusion, and creating scalable impact across craft ecosystems.

Vivek Sekaran is a development professional with 15 years of experience implementing digital inclusion, women empowerment and artisan development programs. He is actively involved in developing women-run rural enterprises and digital cluster development of artisans, such as cotton and silk farmers, and weaving communities.

He is also a creative implementer of construction projects. Some of his notable buildings are Barkatt, the Museum of Digital Society and Infinity Homes. Vivek is also an Airbnb superhost, creating enriching experiences for people visiting Auroville and Pondicherry.



Gauthaman is responsible for overseeing logistics and ensuring smooth day-to-day operations at the Mayil unit. He manages guest coordination end-to-end, from arrival to on-ground support, ensuring a seamless and welcoming experience. He also supervises facility arrangements, maintains operational flow, bridging teams, and ensuring that both logistics and hospitality standards are consistently met.



Yuvasree Mohan is a Creative Officer at the Digital Empowerment Foundation, specializing in visual storytelling and design. She has contributed to major initiatives including the Digital Citizen Summit (DCS), Community Network Xchange (CNX), ReDEF, and the Digital Artisans of India Awards (DAOI), along with international projects such as the World Summit Awards (WSA), creating impactful and engaging visual experiences.

Sulaxna Toppo is a Communications & Media Consultant at Digital Empowerment Foundation, with a practice rooted in museum studies, heritage interpretation, and visual storytelling.

At DEF's Museum of Digital Society she brings together research, curation, and media to document and interpret grassroots realities, making them accessible through thoughtful and immersive storytelling formats.



Nikita Lakkaraju is a Communications and Media Consultant at the Digital Empowerment Foundation, with a background in design, research, and storytelling. She is currently a student at National Institute of Design (NID) Ahmedabad, where her practice spans curation, exhibition design, and mixed-media approaches.

At DEF, under the Museum of Digital society initiative, her work integrates visual storytelling with social impact narratives, focusing on how design can interpret and communicate complex realities.





Meet the Community

**Bihar Development
Collective**





Satyendra Kumar (Satya) is a first-generation development professional from the Dalit community and Founder and National Convenor of the National Youth Equity Forum (NYEF). Educated at JNU, TISS, and the UN in Geneva, he has spent nearly two decades advancing equity for marginalized youth, including Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, nomadic, and de-notified communities. Under his leadership, NYEF has grown to over 8,000 young leaders focused on access to higher education and building 21st-century skills for employability and entrepreneurship. An Acumen and Ashoka-CSIP Research Fellow, Senior Fellow at the American India Foundation (AIF), and Co-founder of CSEI and Gram Jagat, he is a recognized social entrepreneur, experiential educator, and strategic advisor to community-led organizations across India.

Abodh Kumar is from Vaishali district, Bihar, and began his journey with the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), using street theatre to raise awareness on social issues. After two years, he joined Nehru Yuva Kendra, formed a youth club, and later worked as a Master Trainer in the Bihar Education Project. He joined Pratham in 2008, continuing to use theatre for rural development until 2013. In 2014, he co-founded Project Potential with Zubin Sharma to address challenges faced by rural youth, especially around employment and guidance. He has also completed the Dasra Social Impact Leadership Program, a Post Graduate Diploma in Development Leadership from Azim Premji University Bengaluru (2024), and the DTSI course from ILSS.



Dr. Manish Kumar is from Dalsinghsarai block, Samastipur, Bihar, and a first-generation graduate from an agrarian family. He pursued History (BA) and Sociology (MA) at Jamia Millia Islamia (1997–2002) and has worked in social development and public health since 2002 across rural North India and in Kabul, Afghanistan (2008–10). He holds a PhD from IIT Patna (2011–2017), researching migrant workers' health experiences in Bihar under Dr. Aditya Raj. Since December 2012, he has been Trustee and Chief Functionary at Innovators in Health (India) [IIH], where he leads donor relations and project implementation for grassroots tuberculosis programs across Samastipur, Begusarai, and Madhubani, advancing community-based care, diagnostics, and operational research.



Alok Singh is a development professional from Buxar, Bihar, and Portfolio Manager at Nalanda Charitable Foundation (NCF), where he leads due diligence, co-creates grant proposals, and oversees fund utilisation for social organisations across Bihar. His work focuses on strengthening initiatives in education, health, and livelihoods through strategic and financial support, with expertise in grant-making, monitoring and evaluation, and financial modelling. He is also a Steering Committee Member and Director at Bihar Development Collective (BDC), contributing to ecosystem building through membership design, onboarding, and community engagement. A former Gandhi Fellow and Acumen Fellow, he has also completed the Organisational Development and Design Fellowship by Wipro Foundation and holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics.

Navnit Nisha is a public health professional with over five years of experience designing and implementing evidence-informed, community-based health interventions. She is Co-founder and Director of Pahunch Health and Research Foundation, a women-led organisation advancing accessible health services and generating grassroots evidence from rural Bihar. She holds a Master's in Public Health from IIMR University, Jaipur, and has worked with SRLM Jharkhand, Deepak Foundation, and Innovators in Health (India) in programme management and technical roles. From Bihar's Kosi region, she is committed to strengthening last-mile health access and building a technology-enabled, research-driven organisation for underserved areas.



Rajani is a social development practitioner from Patna, Bihar, and Founder of Sahyogi, a non-political, non-religious organisation advancing gender equality and social justice. For over a decade, she has led grassroots efforts to build inclusive communities, working with rural and urban groups, Panchayati Raj institutions, youth, and frontline workers. Her approach combines participatory learning, behaviour change communication, and creative methods like forum theatre and sports-based leadership. She has led initiatives such as Shashakt Kishori, Project RISE, the HERO Project, All Women Count, and Aurat Ki Adalat to promote leadership, well-being, and gender justice.



Pooja Singh is Co-founder of Kshamtalaya Foundation, working to build a compassionate and resilient society with a focus on mental health and well-being as a fundamental right. A Gandhi Fellow and Dalai Lama Fellow, she serves on the BDC Steering Committee and is a trained CBCT® instructor and SEE Learning (Level 2) facilitator. Her work integrates social, emotional, and ethical learning into education systems, especially for primary students and teachers, blending mindfulness, compassion, and movement-based practices to nurture resilience and community well-being.

Vivek is co-founder and former CEO of Kshamtalaya Foundation, supporting communities to revive the spirit of learning through self-directed education, systems thinking, and mindfulness. He has replicated the Gandhi Fellowship in Uganda and is an engineer, a graduate of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and an alumnus of the Gandhi Fellowship. A recipient of the Wipro Founder's Fellowship, Changeloom Fellowship, Acumen Fellowship, Gratitude Fellowship (2020), and Dalai Lama Fellowship (2022), he is also a certified CBCT instructor from Bihar.



Surya Prakash Rai is a Steering Committee member of BDC and Co-founder of Prayog, a library-based initiative in Gopalganj working across five districts of Bihar. For over a decade, he has engaged children aged 6–15 through storytelling to explore themes like gender, caste, and identity, responding to the need for access to books—especially expressed by girls. Prayog now reaches over 10,000 children through a largely women-led team. He is working to build a library ecosystem in Bihar by nurturing 5,000 women library educators and reaching over 1 million children by 2040.

Krishna Singh leads YDF's Bihar operations and government liaisoning, having been with the organisation since it scaled in the state. Born and raised in Bihar, he is deeply committed to nurturing the local development ecosystem for sustainable change. He holds a Master's in Rural Management and Development from Patna University and previously worked briefly as a hospital administrator. A sports enthusiast, he also enjoys travelling.





Sudha Kumari grew up in a Dalit household in rural Bihar, overcoming systemic poverty with a strong “never give up” spirit. Her journey transformed in 2019 when she joined NYEF as an Ambedkar Fellow, where exposure and learning helped her emerge as a role model in her community. Through experiences ranging from research in Delhi’s slums to building 21st-century skills and working with organisations like Diksha Foundation, she secured admission to Azim Premji University on a 100% scholarship, becoming a first-generation development professional. She is now Co-founder of Being Youth Equity Foundation (BYEF) and continues her journey as a Bodhi Fellow, working to carry forward NYEF’s legacy for Dalit youth in Bihar.

Shakila Khatoon is a social worker and community-based researcher from Araria district, Bihar, belonging to the Muslim Nat community. She holds a Master’s in Social Work from Patna University and is Founder and Managing Director of Vithi Foundation. Since 2016, she has worked extensively with slum communities and denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic tribes (DNTs), focusing on education, health, women’s empowerment, rights awareness, livelihoods, gender equality, youth development, and the welfare of women engaged in sex work. She is currently a Bodhi Social Entrepreneurs Fellow.



Santosh Suman is a social work professional from Bhagalpur, Bihar, focused on grassroots change and community-led development. He currently oversees state-level operations at the Bihar Development Collective (BDC) and represents the Robin Hood Army, working on food security and community welfare. He holds a Master of Social Work (MSW) and has a background in electrical engineering, with experience working with the Bihar government. His exposure to data science and qualitative research informs his analytical approach to social impact. His work centres on education, youth empowerment, livelihoods, and social inclusion, driven by a strong belief in collective action and community engagement.

Resources

From DEF's Publications



The Migrants



*Women
Empowering
Women*



*Digital
Ecosystems
& Social Impact*



*Log In, Link Up,
Light the Margins*



*Conversations
on Data Justice*



*Truth &
Deception in
the Digital Age*



*Decentralising
Benefits*



*Creative Problem
Solving*



Smart Villages

Resources

From DEF's Publications



*Prelude to the
Digital Future*



*India's Million
Missions*



Digital Didi



*GOAL
evaluation*



*Digital Training
for Rural
Weavers*



*Internet
Roshni*



*Rural Fact
Checkers*



*ICTs for
empowering:
accessibility
and inclusion*



*Landscapes of
creative
producers*

Ghunsari is a cultural practise of women collectives to gather in a common place and cook together.

In a ghunsari a big earthen pot based and wood fired based chulhas are made where a gathering of 20-40 women and children can gather with their farm based produce - mostly those which can be dry fried as snacks - for example - corn, millets, sweet potato, rice, makhana, gram, peanuts, and so on. Ghunsari gathering is a cultural practice of sharing, meeting, exchanging news and stories, and is symbolic to gender participation for useful work and domestic enterprising. Ghunsari is also a practise that defines the power of decentralised community members and collectivism to produce individual & decentralised impact.

For the modern times, Ghunsari is a women based co-working space for making most natural snacks for domestic as well as market use. Ghunsari is hyper local, yet diverse, essentially collective, and uses open public infrastructure - by the community, for the community and with the community.

Ghunsari is a age old intangible cultural heritage of northern Bihar, special around Champaran



- # Snack Enterprise
- # nano enterprise
- # women collective
- # Hyperlocal
- # social gathering
- # Shared space
- # Potluck

SOCIAL
COLLECTivism
INCLUSION
community
impact

