



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

DECCAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY



NOTE FROM DIRECTOR

Change is inevitable, and for an organization with a history spanning over four decades, the year 2024-25 marked the beginning of a new chapter. As we continue to mourn the loss of our beloved founder, PV Sateesh, we also carry forward his vision—redefining the future of DDS and strengthening the voices and lives of the women in our sangams.

This year, we remained rooted in our traditions while embracing new energy and ideas. The 24th edition of our signature Biodiversity Festival was held across 21 villages, bringing together thousands from our community to celebrate and promote biodiverse cropping practices. Our region's famed table mango varieties were once again at the center of a joyful summer celebration, as the Mango Festival brought together farmers, friends, and consumers of Sangam Organics to honour the richness of local food diversity.

We deepened our connections through the All India Millet Sisters Network, which held its fourth biannual conference in Zaheerabad, in collaboration with 16 partner organizations. Locally, we expanded our reach by welcoming 10 new sangams into the DDS family—each one a step toward strengthening our community-based model.

We were humbled by the recognition received this year, particularly the Kirloskar Vasundhara Mitra Organization Award, which honours the tireless efforts of our sangams and the strength of our collective vision.

Looking ahead, DDS remains committed to building a just, nutritious, and equitable food system—nurturing biodiversity, empowering women, and inspiring sustainable change. Our vision is to strengthen peer learning and community networks that support agroecological approaches to farming and food. We will continue to build and support women leaders who not only transform their own communities but also contribute meaningfully to global conversations on food systems that center women and their families. As we grow, we aspire to be an organization that addresses the challenges of our times—climate, inequality, sustainability—while keeping food sovereignty at the heart of everything we do.

DIVYA VELUGURI

Executive Director

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

2000 acres of biodiverse crops cultivation

6500 people consuming diverse diets



28 varieties of crop and genetic varieties grown in monsoon

33 varieties of crop and genetic varieties grown in winter



42 village sangams actively meeting every week

84 Karyakartas mobilizing in sangams and meeting monthly



80 Lakh INR annual turnover for Sangam Market!

4000 urban consumers reached for safe organic food



60 health karyakartas trained on herbal medicines

1211 people treated in villages with plant-based remedies



50 legal karyakartas trained on FIR registrations and latest laws

9 farm bulletins recorded during kharif season





DDS honored with the 2024 Kirloskar Vasundhara Mitra Organization Award.

The year started with great news of DDS being honored with the ‘Kirloskar Vasundhara Mitra Organization Award’ during the Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival 2024. The award statement honors DDS “..as an agri-focused NGO, they’ve been transforming the landscape of Telangana with their innovative projects in rain-fed millet cultivation and sustainable land management.”

The complete video statement of the award can be seen [here](#).





24th Mobile Biodiversity Festival celebrated grandly!

The 24th edition of the Annual Mobile Biodiversity Festival was celebrated with an opening ceremony on January 14th 2024 to a concluding ceremony on February 12th 2024 Machnoor Village. The caravan of biodiversity travelled through 21 villages this year for nearly one month. This festivity infused each village it visited with a sense of celebration, featuring lively caravans, traditional songs, and spirited dances. Furthermore, our Sangham Farmers actively engaged with hundreds of local farmers in each village, emphasizing the significance of millets, biodiversity, and indigenous seed varieties. The enduring tradition of the Mobile Biodiversity Festival serves as a testament to the unwavering determination and resilience of our Sangham women. Through this festival, they proudly celebrate the richness of agro-biodiversity in their fields, affirming their dedication to preserving traditional crops and agriculture.



Sangam Women come together for International Women's Day!

The Deccan Development Society commemorated the International Women's Day with a celebratory rally and event by nearly 150 Sangham women farmers. The rally from on the main centre in Zahirabad town from Canara Bank to Cafe Green Ethnic witnessed huge crowds. Sangham women sang songs and raised slogans on the relationship between women, biodiversity, health, and environment.

The rally concluded in a meeting at DDS Campus in Pastapur where dignitary guests Ms. B. Girija Devi, Director, Centre for People's Forestry and Ms. Sudha Gopiraju, Prominent Development Activist shared their solidarity speeches.

DDS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Senior Sangham Karyakarthas also utilized the occasion to speak about how sanghams became the first stage for them to interact with other women and form bonds of sisterhood. Sangham members Anshamma and Kamalamma reprised special roleplaying drama on this occasion which was thoroughly enjoyed by the participants.





DDS women proudly showcase biodiversity on International Seed Day

On the occasion of International Seed Day on 26th April, 45 sangham seed keepers have come together to display 80+ seed varieties. Most of these included local landraces of millets, pulses, oilseeds and other food crops. Few rarer varieties like black pigeonpea, spotted pigeonpea, green chickpea, red mungbean, black cowpea etc stood as special attractions.

Karne Narsamma, a senior seedsaver from Gunjoti village said “It is nice to see such events being organized. We are quite proud of saving seeds that we have been passed down to us from our ancestors. In such events, we find out what varieties other farmers and other farmers look at the varieties we have. We can borrow from each other return the seeds next year.”

Bidakanne village sangam stood out in the meeting for displaying the highest number of seed varieties among sangams – totalling to an outstanding number of 71 varieties!





Mango Festival brings forward many varieties

On 26th May 2024, DDS organized a special Mango Feast to bid goodbye to king of Indian summer before the arrival of monsoon. Nearly 60 participants including urban enthusiasts, farmers and scientists took part in this event. From commercial varieties like Benisha to rare local varieties like Red-tipped mango and black mangoes, a total of 28 mango varieties were on display, consumption and sale during this festival.

Dr. C. Varaprasad, Head scientist of DDS-KVK on this occasion said “Sangareddy region was once famous for many varieties of mangoes. There are still many mango trees that

DDS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

around that are older than 50 years. It was said that the Nizam King was a fan of mangoes and used to source his mangoes from this region overnight. However, many of the older varieties do not have a demand in the market anymore, leading to their decline. More awareness must be generated among public to encourage their consumption.”

Ms M. Chandramma, a senior sangam karyakarta said “In older days, we used to find many varieties of mangoes within our villages. Now we have forgotten them and have started to rely on mangoes that are being grown elsewhere and are artificially ripened. It is important to identify trees with such rare varieties and preserve them at any cost.”

Ms K.Shailaja, Horticulture expert at DDS-KVK said “People now recognize only 4-5 mango varieties which are available in market. But there is considerable diversity in mangoes. Few varieties are good for health, few are useful as juice varieties, few are useful for making pickles and some varieties are aromatic. It is important to document this diversity.”

After the meeting concluded, DDS staff members sang a special song on mangoes. A special mango feast which included 10 different recipes made with mango was organized.





New Sangams participate in Village Mapping PRAs

In summer of 2024, DDS staff organized Participatory Social Mapping and Resource Mapping in 5 new village sanghams at Algole, Jamlai Thanda, Siddapur Thanda, Ontlelgadda Thanda and Vaddi villages. Firstly, sangham members identified their households in the village and provided a social map of settlements of different communities and the presence of amenities in their villages. Later, they added mapping of their farms and forests around the village to draw an ove Most sangham members in these new villages, as is the case in other villages, hold lands in most challenging conditions than any other in the village. They are often shallow depth, located on cliffs or on the other extreme prone to waterlogging.

DDS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Sangam members also identified landless households and other disadvantaged households that are more economically challenged due to different hardships. In Algole village which lies proximate to Zahirabad town, members also raised the issue of toxic-contaminated water from nearby industries flooding their fields from nearby canals during peak monsoon and spoiling their crops. The lack of livestock ownership among sangam members also arose as a consistent issue among farmers as an impediment to practice ecological agriculture. These exercises allowed us to develop village level action plans that will be useful for future projects and to advocate in local level government schemes





DDS celebrates annual Uncultivated Green Festival

On 25th August 2024, DDS organized the fourth annual ‘Uncultivated Greens Festival’ at DDS-KVK campus in Didigi Village, Zahirabad Mandal. At least 150 urban consumers, farmers and journalists participated in the event. Dr. Salome Yesudas, nutrition expert participated as a chief guest to the event.

Visitors first took a tour around rainfed farms of Sangam women in Potpally village where women farmers showed visitors around 15 crop and 25 uncultivated greens varieties. “As urban people, we don’t know much about these greens and consider them only as weeds and grass. It is illuminating to hear that most of them are infact edible and are natural sources of several important nutrients.”

DDS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

After the field visit, participants shared their experiences in a meeting at DDS-KVK campus. DDS staff sang a special song on Uncultivated Greens on this occasion. During the meeting, Dr. Salome Yesudas said “DDS started researching on Uncultivated Greens 20 years ago after realizing how important they are for women peasants. Most women work in other farms for weeding and forage different greens for several purpose including cooking, fiber, composting etc. We sent these greens for nutritional analysis to National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) in Hyderabad. Their analysis showed us many surprising results. Compared to commercially available greens like Palak or Coriander, these uncultivated greens had 4-5 times nutrients in them. With events like these, we aim to bring forward the knowledge and intellect of rural and dalit women who have been preserving these greens from several generations.” B. Lakshamma, senior sangham farmer said “The idea of completing eliminating weeds is increasing in our villages now. Many large farmers are completely using herbicides to eliminate these greens in their farms. This is dangerous to soil health and endangers our health too.”

After the meeting, participants indulged in a special greens and millet lunch which contained curries of at least 20 varieties of uncultivated greens recipes





Sangam Farmers visit Wardha for exposure visit!

In September 2024, 20 sangam women and 5 DDS staff members visited Wardha and Nagpur in Maharashtra as an exposure visit in dryland agriculture and appropriate rural technologies. On 20th September, sangam members visited Dharamitra Resource Centre, an established organization in Wardha region working on rural technology use and preservation of traditional rainfed agricultural practices in the region. DDS members interacted with renowned Dr. Tarak Kate, founder director of the organization who kindly gave a detailed presentation and demonstrations of the various activities the organization is involved in, most notably the use of agricultural wastes.

DDS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

On the second day, Chetna Vikas, another veteran NGO working in Vidarbha region hosted DDS members and offered an extensive tour of various farm models they are currently experimenting with. Dr. Niranjana Maru from Chetna Vikas took feedback from DDS women on their opinions for demo farms. Sangam women found their integration of biofences, previous harvest stalks and creeper vegetables to be a novel model. On the final day, DDS members visited Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur and honored the legacy of Dr BR Ambedkar towards the fight for social justice for marginalized castes and women in India.





All India Millet Sisters Network organizes 4th National Convention.

The All India Millet Sisters Network (AIMSN), a national network initiated by DDS works with nearly 5000 women farmers from 16 partner organizations across 10 states in India. The network came together on 4th to 6th November 2024 at Deccan Development Society, Zahirabad for the 4th Biennial National Convention. Nearly 120 participants including women farmers, NGO representatives, academicians, civil society members, agricultural scientists and journalists participated in this convention.

On 4th November, a workshop on Policy and Advocacy was undertaken between partner organizations, academicians and millet entrepreneurs at Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Begumpet

DDS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Guest participants of the workshop included Dr Shrijit Mishra, Hyderabad Central University; Dr. Manjula Menon, Azim Premji University; Dr. A. Ravindra, WASSAN; Ms Vishala Reddy Vuyyala, Milletbank; Dr. Sangappa, Indian Institute of Millet Research etc. The workshop was a fascinating platform to bring academics, journalists, entrepreneurs together with civil society members working since decades on millet promotion and reflect on current situation of policy framework around millet cultivation and the future prospects.



On 5th and 6th November, millet sisters gathered together at the DDS-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Didigi for the biennial convention. Few dignitaries who attended the event included Sri K.Manik Rao, MLA, Zahirabad Constituency; Dr. Sheik. N. Meera, Director of ATARI Zone X and Ms Swati Tiwari, Deputy General Manager at NABARD, Hyderabad. Participants of the event first paid tribute to Mr PV Satheesh, founding member of Millet Network of India (MINI). Millet Sisters started the event with regional songs on millets. Fifteen millet sisters from different states were honoured in the meeting.

DDS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Addressing the audience, Sri K. Manik Rao said “Few decades ago, Zahirabad was mostly millet-growing region. After introduction of rice in PDS and without any government support, farmers have stopped growing millets. The price offered for cotton is now so much more than millets. But it is millets that are best suited for our region and for our health. I will carry this message to our constituent assembly”.

Millet Sisters displayed an astonishing diversity of millet seeds, nearing 70 varieties, from different parts of India during the convention. Partner organization brainstormed on the future pathways and action items for the network during stocktaking sessions. All participants enthusiastically reaffirmed their commitment to the message of millets that any initiatives for promotion of millets should primarily benefit its biggest preservers i.e. marginalized women and respect their local and generational knowledge.





DDS organizes Biodiversity Quiz with school students

In December 2024, Deccan Development Society organized a unique 'biodiversity quiz' with high schools students in Zahirabad, Jharasangham and Nyalkal mandals. Around 80 rural students participated enthusiastically in this quiz, answering questions on crops, seeds, trees, plants, medicinal herbs and local festivals around them. The winners of mandal level quizzes were invited to Sangam Radio station at Machnoor village for a grand final quiz that involved 3 rounds – identify the picture, multiple choice and identify the seed. The first prize was bagged by K. Harshitha, V. Amulya, M. Rishwanth Reddy and P. Arun from Siddartha High School.

DDS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The second prize was won by C. Sheshu, M. Shruthi, Y. Krishnaveni and U.Ganesh from Zilla Parishad High School, Mirzapur. The third prize was awarded to T. Naresh Mudhiraj, E. Ajay Banu Goud, T. Srivalli and S. Radhika from Telangana Government Model School, Jharasangham. School officials complemented the quiz was encouraging rural children to know more about their roots and looked forward to collaborate on more awareness programs.



DDS- KRISHI VIGYAN KENDRA IN 2024

The DDS-KVK had an eventful year in 2024 hosting many significant workshops, training sessions and experimenting on new technologies related to organic dryland agriculture through Farm Testing (OFTs), Frontline Demonstrations (FLDs), training and extension activities, etc. Farmers and rural youth in the Sangareddy district (erstwhile Medak) have benefited from the KVK activities and trainings since its inception.

Some of the frontline demonstration by DDS-KVK in 2024 Bengal gram variety under rainfed conditions, high yielding bush type Dolichos bean variety Arka Amogh, integrated crop management practices in Papaya, Nutrition Sensitive Organic Kitchen garden and Assessment of Ethnoveterinary practices on parasitic infection in ruminants.

Achievements of Mandated activities (1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024)

Activity	No. of Activities	No of Participants
Animal health camps (No. of animals treated)	10	257
Bimonthly Newsletters (English, Tamil and Telugu)	4	120
Exhibitions	8	6450
Extension Literature	1	200
Farmers visit to KVK	18	689
Kisan melas	1	530
Lectures delivered as resource per	8	246
News paper coverage	146	10200
Popular articles	13	11000
Radio Talks	4	546
Research articles	2	32
Success stories	2	1200
TV Talks	12	18500

DDS- KRISHI VIGYAN KENDRA IN 2024

Activity	Target	Achievement
Planting material produced and distributed (in Lakh)	0.228	2.20
Live-stock strains and finger lings produced and distributed (in Lakh)	0.3	0.005
Soil samples tested by Traditional Laboratory (No)	1500	2118
Mobile agro-advisory provided to farmers (No.)	25500	33814
No. of Soil Health Cards issued by traditional Laboratory (No.)	1500	2118



MEDIA CITATIONS IN 2024



Japan News: A special feature on Mogulamma was published on January 9th, 2024 in The Yomiuri Shimbun, one of the largest circulating daily print newspapers in Japan. The article talked about her journey from being a single woman to a successful inspiring farmer, now taking up several leadership roles in her community and also across states, as millet sisters. The clipping can be viewed [here](#)

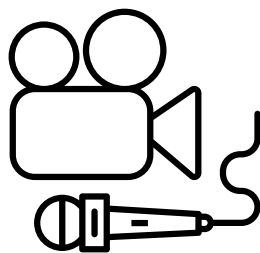
Borgen Project: The Borgen Project, a US based progressive non-profit has featured DDS Sangams as an inspiring example of 'Solidarity economy' in their online blog during April 2024. The post can be viewed [here](#)

MEDIA CITATIONS IN 2024

Times of India: On October 10th 2024, DDS Sangam women were featured on national wide print edition of the most circulated news daily in India, The Times of India as conservers of native biodiversity. The article can be viewed [here](#).

Journal of Quantitative Economics: Dr Suresh Reddy, Dr E Revathi and Dr P Dayakar published their findings of their sample survey of DDS farmers in the internationally peer-reviewed academic journal 'Journal of Quantitative Economics'. Based on their findings from the study, they argue that institutional support for millet farmers, such as that offered by DDS, can make millet farming profitable for rainfed farmers. The paper can be accessed [here](#)

FES: The Foundation for Ecological Security has featured senior DDS sangham member, Ms Gangwar Anjamma in their video series 'Champions of Commons'. The video can be seen [here](#).







CONTACT US:

Liason Office:

Deccan Development Society,
1-11-242, Kishen Residency
1, 101, Street No. 5
Opposite Pantaloon
Begumpet, Hyderabad, Telangana 500016

Project Office:

Deccan Development Society (DDS),
Pasthapur Road,
Thammadpalli,
Zaheerabad Mandal, Sangareddy Dist
Telangana 502318

www.ddsindia.org