

Annual Report 2021 – 2022

STARS Forum

JP Naik Center, Jijai Nagar, Kothrud, Pune

<https://www.starsforum.org/>

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1. Introduction

STARS (“Skills Training for Advancement in Rural Societies”) Forum was established in 2010 with the objective of constituting a common platform for NGOs and individuals working in the area of knowledge-transfer of relevant marketable/vocational skills in rural and tribal populations and also among the urban poor anywhere in India, for mutual support and to advance this field by providing a forum to dialog, problem solve, and facilitate sharing and evolution of best practices & innovative approaches so as to reach as many needy people as possible through practical, relevant and cost effective ways. Started as an informal group, the activities of the Forum witnessed sustained participation from NGOs, indicating that the platform was not only sustaining but also growing.

Here we present Annual Report of STARS Forum’s activities conducted in Year 2021-22.

2. Proceedings of STARS Forum’s 12th Annual National Conference (6-10 December, 2021)

The Conference theme was **COVID Retrospective: Looking Back Looking Forward Livelihood**. Nearly 728 people across the country as well as abroad registered for the free online conference. Professionals from different skills development institutions, NGOs, social enterprises, academic institutions and government bodies registered and on an average 100 attended the conference to deliberate on this theme

The theme of the conference was “**Covid Retrospective - Looking Back, Looking Forward**”. The country had been through nearly 21 months of the Covid pandemic. The pandemic had affected everyone in different ways. Every individual, community and organisation had to take steps to adjust to the impact of the pandemic. Some of us have done better than others. So what were the lessons learnt and how can those be applied by others? What innovations, approaches hold promise? This conference seeks to explore these topics.

The conference brought speakers from across India, from the USA and Italy. Speakers from different sectors threw light on the conference theme.

Organisational adaptation: Two examples of how organisations adapted themselves to the pandemic were covered. **Shri Paramjeet Singh - National President of Dharam Bharati Mission** spoke about how they used the pandemic as an opportunity to move from “DBM to DBM 2.0”. **Shri Shirish Patwardhan, Vice-President, Swa-Roop Wardhinee**, Pune spoke about not just how their organisations transformed, but also how their communities stepped up to address critical societal issues.

Covid and Persons with Disabilities: PWDs have always been largely marginalised but the Covid pandemic made things worse. **VS Radhakrishnan - Chairman of Cheshire Disability Trust** - explained how they continued engagement with PWDs during this period, what changes they had to adopt, and what were some of their success stories. **Tommaso Zorzi - Chief Designer of the Villa Angaran San Giuseppe**, from Bassano Del Grappa (Italy) shared an interesting case study involving restoring a heritage site, converting it as community centre and using the facilities to provide skills training as well as livelihoods for not just PWDs, but also any persons who were suffering from physical or mental challenges. Can we adapt this case study to the large number of heritage sites in India and make them community and livelihood centres too?

The condition of migrants and reverse migration were a major focus during mid-2020. Transform Rural India Foundation conducted a large survey to explore the issues surrounding inclusion of migrants in the formal system of labour, access to finance etc. **Aliva Das - Lead - Youth Initiatives** - gave a presentation on the key findings as well as some of the recommendations coming out of that survey.

Can the widespread availability of mobile internet and smartphones enable a digital connect between rural suppliers/producers and urban consumers? **Pragati Gokhale who founded MarketMirchi.com** demonstrated the power of technology in giving a zero-cost digital marketing platform to connect these two. The disruption of traditional supply chains during Covid could enable formation of new ones powered by technology.

Formal industry sectors have been active in raising the skill training levels in ITIs and other polytechnics. Dr. OP Goel - Head of Bosch India Foundation, Bangalore - gave a

detailed view of Bosch's acclaimed skill training and apprenticeship model. Their consistently high quality of training is now being scaled up across all districts of India and setting up of skilling centres are a new entrepreneurship opportunity.

Three eminent leaders gave a very important macro perspective of Covid impact, the need to change our economic structures, and the need to bring communities together by fostering the concept of fraternity. **Medha Patkar** - well known social activist, **Prof. Robert "Doc" Hall** - **Prof. Emeritus**, Indiana University (USA) and founder of Compression Institute, and **Prof. Roberto Catalano** - **Chair of Theor-Ethics of Dialogue**, Sophia University (Italy) - gave these important perspectives.

Video recordings of the above talks:

1. Paramjeet Singh, Dharam Bharati Mission and Aliva Das, Transform Rural India Foundation: <https://youtu.be/NSiwCyLF5k4>
2. VS Radhakrishnan, Cheshire Disability Trust and Tommaso Zorzi, Villa Angaran San Giuseppe: <https://youtu.be/RZBsaZAHxn0>
3. Medha Patkar, social activist and Shirish Patwardhan, Swa-Roop Wardhinee: <https://youtu.be/mPgU589yjFw>
4. Pragati Gokhale, MarketMirchi.com & Dr. OP Goel, Bosch India Foundation: <https://youtu.be/sU9Fnb05d7I>
5. Robert "Doc" Hall, Compression Institute & Roberto Catalano, Sophie University: <https://youtu.be/AM65ZOwCg3E>

3. Kitchen Garden Course for nutritional support

STARS Forum has conducted training on 'Kitchen Garden' for its member NGOs during COVID lockdown. This training was conducted with the support of experts from following organizations-

- i) Vigyan Ashram , Pabal, Pune
- ii) Medicinal Plant Conservation Trust, Pune
- iii) Rural Commune, Mumbai

The course is designed to train students in theory and the practice of setting up and running a Kitchen Garden.

In Year 2021-22, STARS has conducted a Hindi Kitchen Garden training program. It was conducted all over India, from around 10 states. We received 146 registrations for the same. Around 90 participants completed the course successfully.

The course videos are:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9dJEYzzABg&t=320s>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX_t86lvISg&t=267s
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqZjOXs34Zk&t=234s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiDgCrVAhWQ&t=207s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dktJ2Z2cMHw&t=181s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xH2xQIQWqM&t=156s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk2ykA3UjEA&t=119s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUgveOiT2Zg&t=93s>



4. STARS Forum's new projects

4.a. Distant Learning Resources for Livelihoods

La Fondation Dassault Systemes is dedicated to transforming the future of education and research with the learning and discovery capabilities of 3D technology and virtual universes. The Foundation supports projects in India to bring about transformation in Education and Research. It is working with the objective to improve engineering skills and support innovation in Indian Academia/ Research Centres, to accelerate education transformation, to encourage scientific research, to encourage vocation for science and engineering among young people and to support education programs for Underprivileged & Specially abled citizens.

STARS Forum along with Prabhu trust and La Fondation Dassault Systemes have entered into a partnership in the project “**Creating a Quality Distant Learning Resources for Livelihood Training**”.

4.b. TheSkillsGuru.in:

STARS forum has developed website: theskillsguru.in on which the skill training videos are uploaded. Till now, two skills training materials are uploaded that includes videos, important material PDF, question paper etc.

4.c. Upgrading school labs and Conducting Basic Technology in Uttar Pradesh

UNICEF is an agency of the United Nations responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. UNICEF is working closely with STARS Forum in a project “**Flexible learning opportunities including pre-vocational and life skill education to out- of-school children.**”

The project is being executed in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. For life skill education, Introduction to Basic Technology (IBT) course is implanted in 60 schools in Lucknow and nearby schools. For each school, one instructor is appointed to execute the course.

The IBT program has the following objectives:

- STEM (Science , Technology , Engineering, Mathematics) Program in School
- Learning While Doing pedagogy in school
- Project based learning
- Students involved in Socially useful productive work (SUPW).
- Community Services – Students providing various services to the community as part of their learning.
- Integration of ‘Work Activity’ with School curriculum

Why IBT?

- To develop intelligence of a child
- ‘Activity stimulate the intellect by the hands’ – Mahatma Gandhi
- To develop creativity, logical thinking, skills, values like dignity of labour, team building, gender equality etc.
- To connect education with the real life problems.

4.d. Upgrading school labs and conducting Basic Technology courses for rural schools in Maharashtra

STARS Forum has partnered with Tata Technologies to implement Introduction to Basic Technology (IBT) program in rural/semi-urban schools across Maharashtra.