

Amplifying the Voices of Girls and Women to Strengthen Systems and Improve Outcomes for Gender Equality

The 3D Program for Girls and Women advances gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment by helping local governments work more efficiently across departments, and with civil society and the private sector to increase economic opportunities for girls and women and address their health, education and safety needs. We call it good governance through convergent action.

Convergent action requires coordinated, evidence-based planning by local government to maximize resources and impact across stakeholders. It addresses the persistent limitations of development programs caused by working in siloes, with limited data and evidence and without the active engagement of the people they serve. We believe that girls and women are best served when traditional boundaries are crossed and the barriers of siloes are broken so that stakeholders – including girls and women themselves – can come together to get things done.

A key mechanism that we leverage in this process is women's collective action. We work with women workers' collectives and women's village committees to ensure that their priorities and needs are heard and addressed, many of which require coordination and action across sectors. We have also created much needed feedback loops between women and local government officials to increase accountability and facilitate processes to ensure that government programs reach women and their communities at scale and in a sustained way.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the impact of gender inequality and has revealed weaknesses in government systems in delivering basic, emergency and last-mile services. While the need for strong public health services has been highlighted, so has the need for well-resourced, nimble education systems, along with inclusive housing policies, quickly activated financial safety nets, rights-based policing, far-reaching communications infrastructure, and effective and inclusive emergency responses. Effective COVID-19 responses, recovery and resilience therefore require convergence across sectors and between government, civil society and the private sector to leverage an optimal combination of systems and reach, expertise and innovation, and resources. 3D Program platforms, which were designed to address disparities, inequalities and barriers to access in a convergent way before COVID-19, are now proving to be effective in facilitating COVID relief, information and responses.

Programs in Pune City

The 3D Program is working in partnership with the Pune Municipal Corporation, the Pune Smart City Development Corporation Limited, the waste pickers union Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) and their cooperative Solid Waste Collection and Handling (SWaCH), the Centre for Environment Education and a private sector philanthropist to:

- **Secure sustainable livelihoods for women waste pickers** by implementing a zero-waste model across Pune City that will safeguard their continued, collective involvement in solid waste management as valued workers and experts. Over 10,000 members of the waste pickers union KKPKP working across Pune City will benefit from the model. Waste pickers have been designated essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the program is supporting partners to ensure that waste pickers have the necessary resources and supplies to protect themselves and their families.
- **Increase access by women waste pickers and their families to social welfare benefits, programs and entitlements across sectors** through a decentralized *kendra* model that locates *kendras* or service centers within communities across 10 Pune City slums. Since 2018, over 4,000 waste pickers and their family members have accessed services in multiple sectors, including health, education, housing and legal aid. Designed to address disparities and barriers to access before the COVID-19 pandemic, the *kendras*, located close to the homes of waste pickers, is facilitating vital flows of information and data, as well as lifesaving supplies during the crisis. New programs are also being delivered through the *kendras*, focused on providing menstrual hygiene management (MHM) options to up to 5,000 women, medicine distribution throughout the slums, and youth mobilization.

- Improve the occupational and public safety of women waste pickers by leveraging local philanthropic and government funds and pro-bono architecture and construction services to repair and build well-ventilated, attractive and safe storage and sorting sheds, with on-site toilets and drinking water. The shelters enable waste pickers to separate and store recyclables and reduce their exposure to violence, injury and the elements. Over 820 waste pickers will benefit from the shelters across Pune City.

Programs in Rural Pune District

The 3D Program is working in partnership with the Pune Zilla Parishad (district government), ICRW Asia, Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM), Chaitanya, the Village Social Transformation Foundation (VSTF) and other partners in government, academia, civil society and the private sector to:

- Establish and strengthen **women’s village committees** to increase women’s participation in local governance to identify and address priorities, and to establish feedback loops to block, district and state officials to increase accountability and strengthen government programs for girls and women. The committees are in place in 5 villages in two blocks in Pune District, engaging and amplifying the voices of approximately 500 women and girls. The program is working with VSTF to create and support committees in an additional 250 villages across Maharashtra State. The village committee model will be used to strengthen *Mahila Gram Sabhas* or women’s local government committees that are required by India’s rural governance Panchayati Raj Act, but are rarely held, across Maharashtra.
- Pilot innovative convergent solutions for priority issues identified by girls and women to:
 - ◇ Increase job skills training and placement opportunities for rural young women through an innovative program based in Pune City, implemented with SNTD Women’s University, Pune, Tech Mahindra Foundation and MASUM to address the barriers that prevent them from participating in urban-based programs. 45 young women participated in the pilot program, and 16 are currently employed. Notably, more than half of the young women decided to complete their higher education and postponed marriage. Recommendations on how to make job skills programs more accessible to rural young women were documented and shared with government and private sector partners.
 - ◇ Increase options for menstrual hygiene management through a sanitary napkin distribution program and research study to understand and document their experiences and to increase MHM options and meet their needs during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - ◇ Increase safe transportation for education by working with the Maharashtra State Road Transportation Corporation (MSRTC) and education officials to align bus and college schedules to better serve girls and young women attending secondary school and college.
 - ◇ Gender training for public safety will be provided to MSRTC bus drivers and conductors, police, and school and college principals to strengthen accountability for girls’ and women’s safety in and across public spaces and jurisdictions. This will help facilitate girls’ and women’s mobility and increase their access to educational and economic opportunities.
 - ◇ Facilitating opportunities close to home to support girls’ and women’s skill development, food and water security, and their livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, the 3D Program is supporting the training and supplies to develop kitchen gardens, and is assessing the impact on women’s time use following the distribution of ‘water wheels’, containers that can be rolled and transport up to 45 liters or 12 gallons of water.

Partners

