

# 2019-2020



[www.equidiversity.org](http://www.equidiversity.org)  
[equidiversity@gmail.com](mailto:equidiversity@gmail.com)

Kolkata- 34 Ballygunge Circular Road. Pin- 700019

Birbhum: Kirnahar Station Para; PO.-Kirnahar; PS-Nanoor. Pin-731302

South 24 Parganas: Village & PO-Durganagar, Dakshin Gangadharpur; PS-Dholahat. Pin-743399

# **Foreword to Annual Report**

## **2019-2020**

Dear Friends,

With great pleasure I present the Annual Report of Equidiversity Foundation for the financial year, 2019-20. I hope that this report provides an insight into the ambitions and challenges that shaped us as we bring forth the work done in the year. As Equidiversity Foundation continues its journey to empower women, children and other socially marginalized sections in the community in the political, social and economic arenas, we aspire to impact peoples' lives and get influenced by them.

This was a year to rejoice as three of our community leaders were felicitated by Bharat Sabha on the occasion of International Women's Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March for their contribution in mobilizing and leadership roles in strengthening women's voices to promote rights in the communities through the activities of Nari Jagaran Committees. Lalita Midya (South 24 Parganas), Namita Kalindi (Purulia) and Rupasi Chaudhuri (Birbhum)- we are proud of you!

I would like to sincerely thank my dedicated and hardworking colleagues, our volunteers for their effort and time, our Trust Board Members and Advisors for their continued guidance and support. We are indebted to our donors and funders for believing in our goals. Most importantly, we express our appreciation to the communities in South 24 Parganas, Birbhum and Purulia, where we work, for accepting us with open arms.

We look forward to gaining your support, understanding, valuable inputs and participation in our volunteer pool.

Anindita Majumdar  
Managing Trustee

# Introduction

---

The work of Equidiversity Foundation can be summed up by dividing it into 5 verticals.

1. *Strengthening women's equal participation in rural local self governance (Panchayati Raj Institutions) and address gender issues*
2. *Social Mobilization & Institutional development in the community through mobilization of women in the community into Nari Jagaran Committees*
3. *Strengthen Children's Autonomy & Leadership to promote child rights, gender equality and child protection*
4. *Encourage and strengthen youth led community initiatives to address prevention of early marriage and trafficking and promote gender equality in South 24 Parganas, Birbhum and Purulia- West Bengal, India*
5. *Emergency community support due to any natural calamity and disaster.*

We work with various stakeholders in the community, elected representatives, local self-help groups (SHGs), opinion leaders, voters- both men & especially women, children and youth to illuminate the role that gender plays in everyday life and in democratic governance. We use the gender lens to make individuals and systems institutionally reflective of & conducive to shifting power dynamic to a more inclusive and egalitarian society.

## Strategies of our work:

- Social mobilization
- Evidence based lobbying and advocacy
- Capacity development
- Engagement of men for Gender Equality
- Research and knowledge/skill transfer
- Institutional building and development in the community
- Collaboration and coordination with political systems, government institutions, non government organizations and movements for women's equal participation

## Our Vision

Equidiversity Foundation envisions a society where there is gender equality, co-sharing of power and freedom from gender based violence.

## Our Mission

Equidiversity Foundation is committed to create an environment that promotes gender equality through political, social and financial empowerment with active informed participation of

## Our Reach

| District                 | Block                         | GPs  |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Birbhum</b>           | Nanoor                        | Kirnahar I, Daskal Gram Kareya II                      |
|                          | Labpur                        | Jamna, Thiba, Dwarka                                   |
| <b>South 24 Parganas</b> | PatharProtima                 | Dakshin Gangadharpur, Srinarayanpur<br>Purnachandrapur |
|                          | Kulpi                         | Kamarchawk   |
|                          | Falta (only Child Parliament) | Ponkamrra (only 1 Primary School)                      |
| <b>Purulia</b>           | Jhalda II                     | Nowahatu, Tatuara                                      |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>6</b>                      | <b>11</b>  |

## A Glance Through Our Activities

In this financial year we consolidated our work in 11 Gram Panchayats and also worked as a Resource Organization to other non profit organizations, developing capacities of their staff and beneficiaries on gender, governance and project management. Our membership with networks working around women and child rights helped us strengthen our capacities further and equipped us better to work deeply on rights issues.

In this financial year, we were able to directly work with more than 8000 people in the communities where we work.

| TOTAL MEMBERS DIRECTLY WORKED WITH           | South 24 P  | Birbhum     | Purulia     | Total       |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Women ER and Leaders                         | 50          | 30          |             | 80          |
| Men ER and Leaders                           | 48          | 41          |             | 89          |
| Women members of Nari Jagaran Committee      | 124         | 518         | 120         | 762         |
| Survivors                                    | 23          | 25          | 87          | 135         |
| Adolescent boys and girls                    | 84          | 63          | 433         | 580         |
| Schools                                      | 13          | 12          |             | 25          |
| Children                                     | 1194        | 1493        |             | 2687        |
| Teachers                                     | 43          | 51          |             | 94          |
| Parents                                      | 576         | 721         | 218         | 1515        |
| Total community members directly worked with | 1237        | 736         | 500         | 2473        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>3392</b> | <b>3690</b> | <b>1358</b> | <b>8440</b> |

Our work with the Gram Panchayats to strengthen women's voices and leadership within the Gram Panchayat and in the community



The aim of this work is to change the environment where women serve as proxy leaders to one where women actively participate in decision-making processes & governing, ensuring democratic leadership. On this matter we worked in 8 Gram Panchayats in Birbhum and South 24 Parganas. We worked to develop capacity and provide handholding support to women elected leaders to actively participate in decision making processes and governing, ensuring democratic leadership.



## Women Elected Representatives' Role in organising Gram Sansad Sabhas



■ Total Sansads

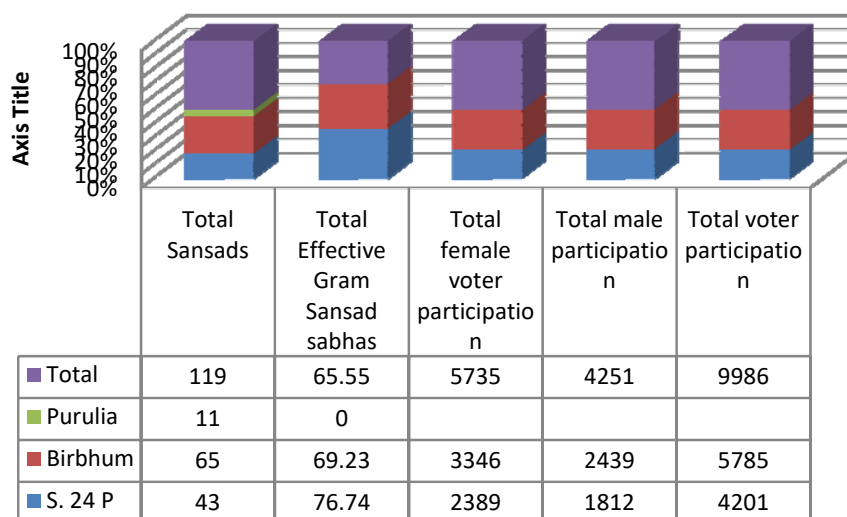
■ Total Women elected member led sansads

■ % of women led effective sansad sabhas

The other aspect of the work is to develop capacity of women voters through self help groups to engage in Annual Action Plan of the Village Council or Gram Panchayats (GPs), contribute in implementation and monitoring of service delivery & create strong support base for the women leaders.



## Women's Participation in Gram Sansad Sabhas



### Some Issues raised by women

- Street lights for women's safety
- Vaccination camp for livestock
- Nutrition garden at Primary and Secondary school
- Vat at Primary School & ICDS centres
- Capacity building for SHGs and women elected leaders
- Campaign and awareness programmes on social issues
- Soap distribution at ICDS and Primary Schools
- Special care for mal-nourished children
- Support to poor and needy students
- Input cost for disaster management
- Awareness camps for gram sansad sabha and gram sabha
- Formation of planning team with members of NJC and capacity building
- Tubewell for ICDS
- ICDS boundary wall
- Construction of children's park

### Snippets of Plan implemented by GPs

2019-20

- Plan Nursery through SHGs
- Street lights
- Support for needy students
- Awareness programmes on social issues
- construction of children's park
- Vaccination camps for livestock
- Formation of planning team with members of NJC
- Training and meeting for VTs of Adult Literacy Centres for women
- Construction of toilet from women in rescue centre
- Awareness for gram sansad sabha and gram sabha
- Tube well for ICDS

## Advocacy with the Gram Panchayat to strengthen the Village Level Child Protection Committees



The advocacy strategy is aimed at policy change. We advocated with the Panchayat Samities in both Nanoor and Pathar Protima Blocks to motivate them to prioritize formation and activation of Village Level Child Protection Committees (VLCPCs). Our advocacy with the Gram Panchayats where we are working, had revealed earlier that although such committees

were formed some two years ago, no one was aware of the membership, role and existence of such committees. We organized 2 back to back awareness meetings in Sreenarayanpur Purnachandrapur GP and Dakshin Gangadharpur GP of Pathar Protima Block in collaboration with the Panchayat Samity who took the responsibility of notifying the GP Pradhan, Health Supervisors, Head teachers, ICDS Supervisors for the meeting. The awareness meetings were attended by 164 representatives.

We followed up these meetings with strong advocacy with the 2 Gram Panchayats in South 24 Parganas and Birbhum. As a result of our effort, 10 VLCPCs have been formed by Daskal Kareya GP in Birbhum district with 140 members and 13 VLCPCs in Sreenarayanpur GP & Dakshin Gangadharpur GP in South 24 Parganas with 120 members.



### TOTAL REACH THROUGH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

|                          | Orientation with members of VLCPC | Total members reached out to through meetings |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>South 24 Parganas</b> | 4                                 | 284   |
| <b>Birbhum</b>           | 1                                 | 53  |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>5</b>                          | <b>337</b>                                    |



## Strengthening of women voters through mobilization into Nari Jagaran Committees

The goal here is to strengthen women by activating their understanding of gender equality, governance and rights to enable them to mobilize themselves into Community Watch Committees popularly called Nari Jagaran Committees in order to stand by the side of women/children facing violence and promote rights issues of the marginalized. We hope that with time they will active voters and demand their entitlements & accountability from the local self governance particularly in terms of addressing issues of violence & gender inequality and push for their inclusion into Village Council Annual Plan and Budget.



*NJC members submit their demands and plans to the Convenor, Women and Child Social Welfare Sub Committee, Dakshin Gangadharpur GP, Pathar Protima Block, South 24 Parganas*



*Neighbourhood meetings by women led by NJC in the presence of sadasya (elected member) of that sansad*

### Mobilization of women in the communities

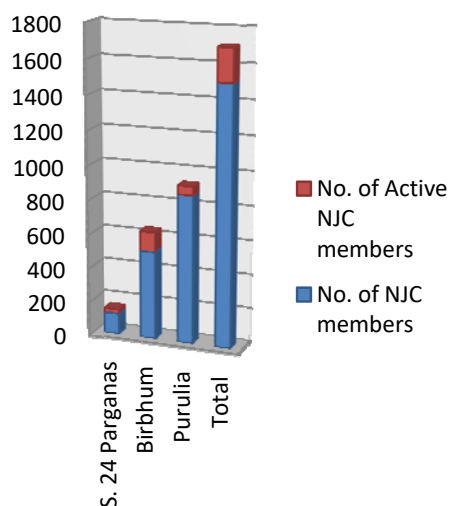
| ACTIVITIES                              | South 24 Pargans | Birbhum     | Purulia     | Total        |
|---|------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Public awareness and campaign           | 3555             | 2275        | 686         | 6516         |
| Meetings & VHND & Campaigns             | 1389             | 1356        | 310         | 3055         |
| Membership with NJC                     | 124              | 518         | 370         | 1012         |
| Elected members and Political Leaders   | 50               | 30          | 10          | 90           |
| Women reached out to through programmes | 5071             | 4322        | 1500        | 10893        |
| Members of Adult Literacy Centres       |                  |             | 124         |              |
| Regular Classes attended by women       |                  |             | 85          |              |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>10189</b>     | <b>8501</b> | <b>3085</b> | <b>21566</b> |



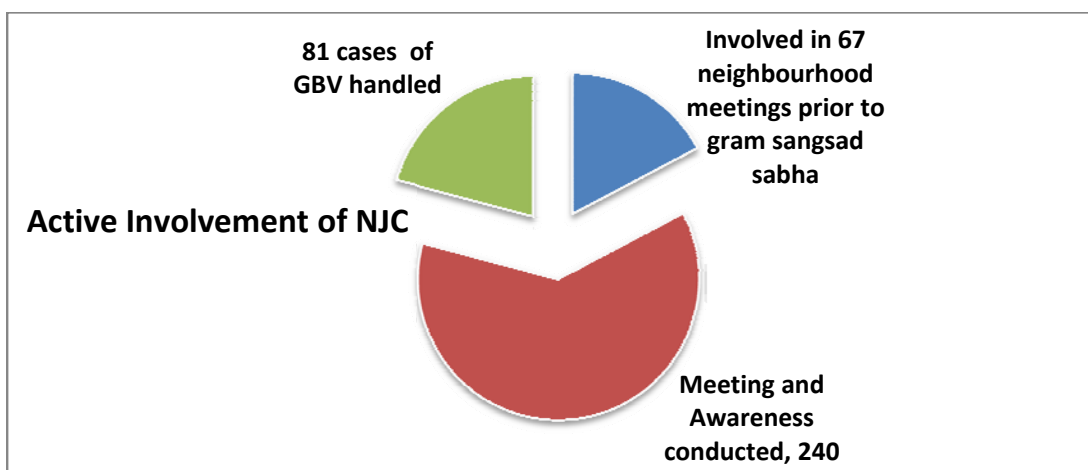
This year we were able to focus more on strengthening the existing 9 Nari Jagaran Committees. From their active involvement in GP level planning team to organizing neighbourhood meetings prior to gram sangsad sabha; to conducting of awareness programmes on women's rights in their localities; to handling cases of gender based violence( domestic violence, intervening to stop early marriages, cases of elderly abuse etc), the Nari Jagaran Committees have been busy. This year, the numbers of active members have also increased and comprise 13% of the membership.



### Active Members of NJC



### Involvement of the Nari Jagaran Committees in South 24 Parganas, Birbhum and Purulia



## Livelihood Initiatives by NJC

### Birbhum Masala Making Units



2 units were set up by 18 women in November 2019 who have begun by running them for 6 hours daily on a rotation basis. The units are used for masala grinding and grinding besan, wheat, rice flour etc. Women bear the cost of wiring, electricity, machine transport, equipments and raw materials. They sell their products in locally. The Gram Panchayat has supported them by linking them with the mid day meals cooked in schools where they provide the masalas.

### **Duck Farming by 15 women**

| Ducks | Eggs Produced | Eggs Sold @ 5 | Male full grown Ducks sold | Total sales from eggs & duck sales | Total Expense | Total Profit |
|-------|---------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| 109   | 5530          | 1700          | 3080                       | 30,730                             | 14,170        | 16,560       |



**Muri Making by 1 unit**

**Birbhum**

**Mushroom**

| Expense on raw material | Total Sales kg | Income | Stock | Total Income | Profit |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------|-------|--------------|--------|
| 3775                    | 77.9           | 4526   | 688   | 5214         | 1439   |

**Production**

In South 24 Parganas & Birbhum, 136 women produced 161.7 kgs of oyster mushroom which they primarily consumed for high nutrition



value. 15 women in Birbhum took up mushroom farming as a business.

## Our Work with Children

We have adopted **Child Parliament** as a model to encourage child participation, leadership and strengthens life skills like self awareness, empathy, critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship & coping with stress, coping with emotions and rights.

With the support from Fogla Foundation, Equidiversity Foundation has worked with almost 900 children (78% of whom are from the marginalized communities) of 6 Primary Schools in rural South 24 Parganas, Pathar Protima Block till October 2019. While the work has been accepted by the community and the schools readily, the impact of the work has also started unfurling.

|                  | South 24 Parganas | Total |
|------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Children reached | 861               | 1897  |
| Members of CP    | 114               | 354   |
| Ministers        | 30                | 102   |

and bring the child back to school.



*Haldarpara School Headmaster reported an increase of 6% (84 from 78) in attendance. "The Ministers run to homes of children who are absent for more than 2 days to find out cause, talk to parents to bring them back".*

*"This model has brought in some changes in the school.-children are confident to participate in various programmes, we have never involved all students in awareness rallys. Today even local people are joining the rallys. Moner Katha Baksho is providing children with a space to express their thoughts, pain etc- which they would not speak earlier and no discussion would take place. Boys and girls would not do activities and sports together. We would also not allow them to do the same. Today that has changed-boys and girls are participating together. Our PM of the Child Parliament would not speak at all. When she became the PM, I thought she would not be able to do anything. But today she has the confidence to speak and children listen to her. At the SI office, on her own she stood up and spoke about various issues in school". Head Teacher, Benetarabunivadi School*

The Education Minister is especially in charge of monitoring absenteeism and takes steps through home visits to contact the absenting child and parents

*"Had the teachers formed the Child Parliament, I would not have become a minister as I am not good in studies. Sirs would have chosen students who are good in studies". Education Minister, Durganagar Primary School*





*The Food & Health Minister and team are in charge of looking into Health & Hygiene Education by monitoring the mid day meal cooking process, checking hygiene condition of children, feeding children iron tablets, ensuring that each child performs the 10 steps of washing hands before eating.*

*The Gender Justice & Sports Ministers ensure that gender discrimination does not take place during any activity and particularly during sports and play time. 4 schools (out of 6) have introduced football for girls and encourage playing kho kho, kabaddi together*

*The Prime Minister leads all activities including rallies & campaigns, coordinates with all & holds weekly meetings. The PM also oversees the Moner Katha Baksho*

### ***Children acting as agents of change and social entrepreneurs***

88% children were involved in rallies and campaigns on health, hygiene, environment protection. More than 14% CP members played an organising role in these campaigns

The Cabinet members made 45 home visits to monitor absenteeism



*“Our PM was be absent regularly. We informed the head teacher that we want to change her. After this, her regularity has increased. Previously she would not want to call meetings and fight with us. Now, She calls meetings”. Education Minister, Bhajna Halderpara PS*

### ***Leadership, Participation, Accountability***

86% schools reported an improvement in attendance and enrolment. The Cabinet members made 45 home visits to monitor absenteeism



Parent-Teacher meetings have become a regular affair in 66% schools

98% children actively participated in electing 30 CP Ministers and 114 nominated members of the Ministries

***Greater involvement of local government to promote child rights***





*Advocacy with Pathar Protima Panchayat Samity has lead to its active involvement in activating the Village Level Child Protection Committee (VLPCs) in GPs*

*The GP Annual Action Development Plan has included vat for garbage collection and composting in 3 Primary schools in Birbhum*

*1 GP is considering preparing a list of names of families reported by children and women in the community for toilet construction*



Exposure visit with CP ministers & selected CP member with SI and Panchayat Samity Sabhapati in SI office. The objective was to provide an opportunity for children and the authorities to interact with each other and give the children a voice to share their experience in education and raise issues that concern them. Very important issues have been raised from the CPs of every school and also presented a charter of demands to the authority. It also provided an opportunity to the teachers to raise some critical issues in the schools that needed resolution. The SI also raised important questions of accountability from the teachers.

***The second phase began from January 2020***



Programme Location

13 schools in Pathar Protima, Kulpi and Falta in South 24 Parganas and 13 schools in Nanoor & Labpur in Birbhum were identified for the programme.

- ❖ **84.6%** of schools adopted the elaborate Child Parliament Election Process.
- ❖ **64.4%** of the Primary Students (class II-Class V) engaging in voting through secret ballot
- ❖ **138** children were elected as Ministers and
- ❖ **346** children became members of different Ministries.

## Our Work with youth and adolescents



In this financial year, with the support of Terre Des Hommes, we were able to work with adolescent girls and boys to create a safe space for them to express themselves and enquire about any issue that concerned them. Our reach included (a) the adolescent and young adults (male and female; aged 16-25 yrs) studying in 2 Secondary and High Schools and also the school drop outs and those who are survivors of early marriage in the community; (b) the parents of these adolescents and young adults.

### Areas covered

| District          | GPs      | Name                        |
|-------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Birbhum           | 2        | Dwarka<br>DK II             |
| South 24 Parganas | 2        | Kulpi, Dakshin Gangadharpur |
| Purulia           | 1        | Nowahatu                    |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>5</b> |                             |



### Total Reach achieved

| Adolescent Girls | Adolescent Boys | Parents | Nari Jagaran Committee Members | General public | Total |
|------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| 534              | 112             | 313     | 55                             | 200            | 1214  |

### Activities Undertaken

|  | Total | Participants |
|--|-------|--------------|
| Workshops and gender trainings                   | 12    | 293          |
| Business Programmes in 2 schools                 | 3     | 498          |
| Programmes / campaigns/ rallies in the community | 4     | 454          |
| Meetings with members of 'Samhita Clubs'         | 129   |              |
| Meetings with GPs                                | 11    |              |
| Workshop on gender with GPs                      | 2     | 57           |
| Meetings/awareness with parents                  | 27    | 413          |





## Some Results seen

- 7 'Samhita Clubs' emerged in the community where youth and adolescents and children can discuss freely, seek information and support for issues related to sexuality, rights, scientific spirit, life skill etc.
- 486 youth/adolescents have become members of these Samhita Clubs.



*Disha Manik, 17 years is a member of Samhita Club. She is the shy type. Her father is bedridden and their family is dependent on her mother who sells vegetables and earns 2000-3000 a month. Most days, their meals comprise of rice and boiled potatoes. In one of the sessions of Samhita Club, Nisha opened her heart out sharing her experience of poverty, neglect, expectations of carrying family's responsibilities on her shoulders, her feelings of anger towards her mother, her thoughts of running away from home and so on. This was the first time she felt alive and unafraid to share her thoughts and feelings.*

*Nisha went through a regular counselling sessions and so did her mother. As a result there has been a lessening of tension between her and her mother. Moreover, Nisha has enrolled herself into a tailoring training centre so that she can earn money to continue her studies after Madhyamik. Nisha is also dreaming about standing on her own feet and supporting her family.*

- 22 (17 girls and 5 boys) took initiative to mobilize youth in the community and spread awareness

• 22 youth (17 girls and 5 boys) co-worked with 55 members of 2 Nari Jagaran Committee to mobilize 454 youth and women and spread 5 awareness in locality through rallies and awareness programmes on the evils of sexual violence, early marriage.

- 646 girls and boys were reached out to through this initiative.



## Our work as a Resource Organization

As a resource organization, Equiversity Foundation continued to develop team capacity of Jeevika Development Society on gender and rights.



This was a year to rejoice as three of our community leaders were felicitated by Bharat Sabha on the occasion of International Women's Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March for their contribution in mobilizing and leadership roles in strengthening women's voices to

promote rights in the communities through the activities of Nari Jagaran Committees. Lalita Midya (South 24 Parganas), Namita Kalindi (Purulia) and Rupasi Chaudhuri (Birbhum)

## Networks and Partnerships

We continued to be active partners of national networks like AMAN Global Voices of Peace in the Homes, TDH Foundation-Kolkata, Bhabna West Bengal network against early marriage.

On behalf of Bhabna network, we played a very active role in designing and implementing a study on understand the current trends and impacts of early marriage.

## Relief Activities

Bulbul cyclone had caused havoc in the lives of many in the Sunderban area of Pathar Protima. Many of the poorest of the poor families that we work with, many of whom are women headed households have suffered heavy losses- from losing roof, damaged houses to losing a part of their mud houses. With the support of St. Mary Lodge, we were able to support 30 families who needed an additional tarpaulin sheet.





## Our Team

### Trust Board

Anindita Majumdar, Managing Trustee

Shyamali Acharjee

S. Ghosh

### Programme Implementation Team

#### Birbhum

Tarun Banerjee

Jhuma Ganguly Hazra

Rupasi Chaudhury

Beli Bagdi

Kashmira Bibi

#### South 24 Parganas

#### Purulia

Namita Kalindi

Jayanti Mahato

Dilip Banerjee

Chandana Baksi

### Advisory Board

Bulbul Baksi

Sanjay Sen

Prittwish Tripathy

Mandira Banerjee

Rabindranath Pramanik

Lalita Midhya

Labani Mondal

Sonali Bajkhan Pradhan

Santoshi Mahato

### Volunteers & Interns

Bijoya Ghos

## Supporters and Donors

Fogla Foundation

SXC Alumni 1960-61

DHP India Ltd.

ST Mary Lodge

Udita Utsav Committee

Splash for Kids

Arora Matthey Ltd

Tarun Banerjee

Anindita Majumdar

Rudradeb Chaudhuri

Anuradha Kapoor