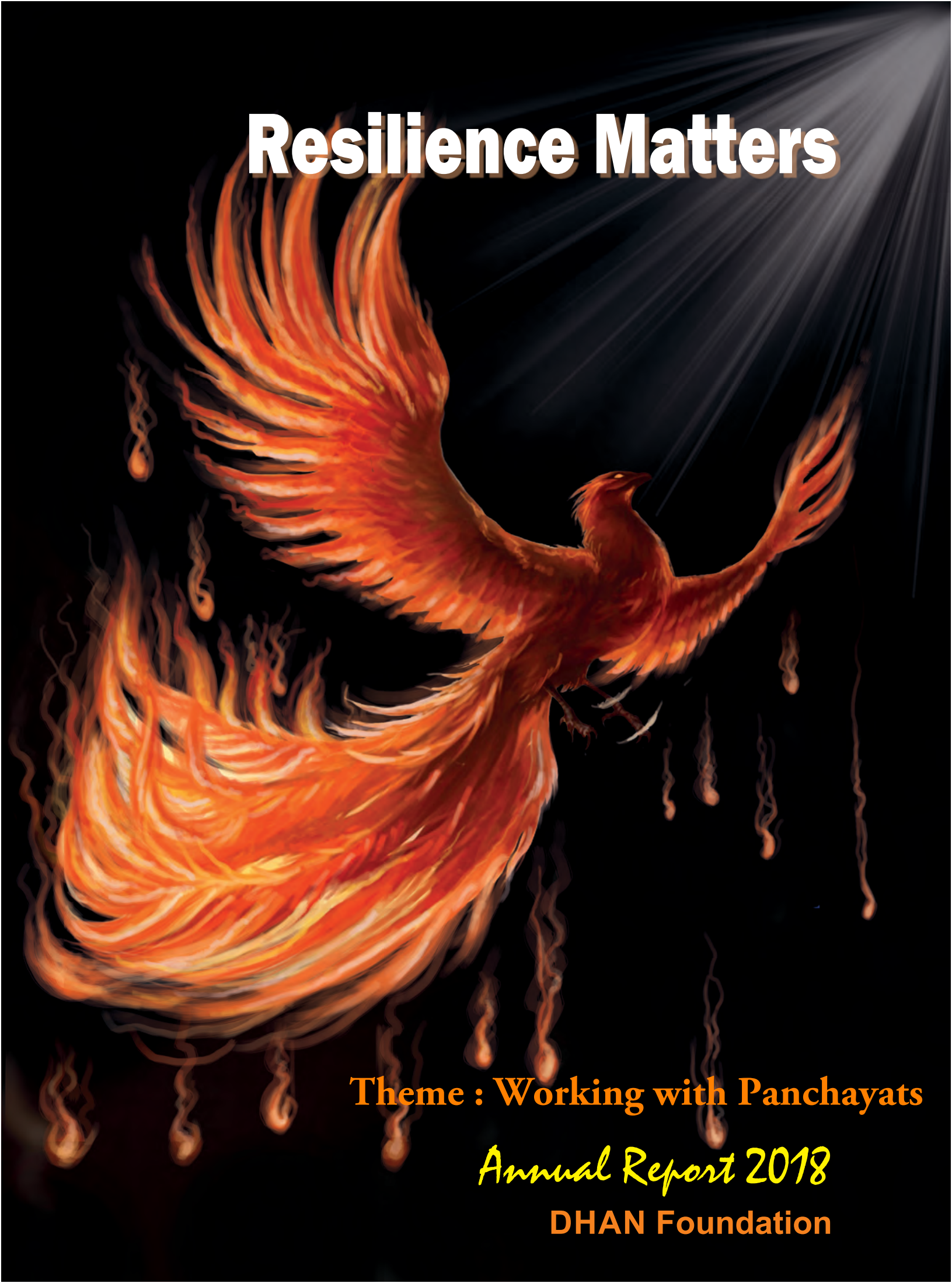


Resilience Matters

A phoenix, a mythical bird that is reborn from its own ashes, is depicted in the center of the image. It is shown in a dynamic, upward-flying pose, with its wings spread wide and its tail feathers fanning out. The bird is rendered in vibrant shades of orange, red, and yellow, giving it a fiery appearance. Below the bird, there are several small, teardrop-shaped flames or droplets falling, suggesting the bird is rising from a state of destruction or rebirth. The background is a deep black, which makes the bright colors of the phoenix stand out. In the upper right corner, there are several thin, white lines radiating outwards, resembling rays of light or a starburst effect.

Theme : Working with Panchayats

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Mythical phoenix bird symbolizes rebirth/renewal and could also be an illustration for Resilience Building. Resilience is the ability and capacity of the people, households, communities, countries to cope up with Shocks and Stresses through mitigation, adaptation and quickly recover in order to reduce chronic vulnerability and enable sustained development, inclusive growth and learning and transformative capacity. Indeed the poor being more vulnerable to shocks/stresses are required to be built with adequate capacity to cope up and also to regain health and wealth.

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DHAN Panchayat Development Foundation

1.0 Background

Grassroots Democracy and Good governance has direct impact over development. The democracy has more meaning when it built from grassroots. The concept of 'Direct democracy' through empowered participatory & deliberative governance is treated to be the basic right to the community. Good governance through direct democratic practices is seen as the foundation for sustained and equitable development. DHAN Foundation has demonstrated successful models of community governance more than two decades. Its significance contribution in terms of Building effective participation by the community, especially at local levels of governance is widely appreciated.

2.0 DHAN's experience in working with Panchayats

Informed citizenship is the key to advance development and reduce deprivation. DHAN believes that Poverty Reduction and Grassroots Democracy are the two eyes of Development process. It has proven track record on building excellent participatory, democratic models by way of various self – governed people institutions such as Self – Help Groups, Farmer's associations, Cooperatives and recently in the form of Farmer Producers Organization. Also, building democratic practices at Village Panchayat is possible, as it serves as development forum and its area of operation is small to handle also it is having direct connectivity with local community.

So, to make our democracy more reasonable and help in national building, there is immense need for linking local level people institutions with mainstream Panchayats and other government agencies. Helping the local Panchayats to follow democratic principles and activities to keep its activities transparent and effective. This initiative, Panchayat Development Foundation will enable such interface across nation.

For the past 13 years, DHAN is working with about 750 Panchayat raj institutions in various parts of country in enabling better governance. It also collaborates with various institutions such as European Union, United Nations Democracy Fund, RGNIYD, NIRD, The Hunger Project to make significant impact at field level.

3.0 DHAN Panchayat Development Foundation as Subsidiary of DHAN Collective

Towards scale-up democratic processes, DHAN has established separate institution as part of DHAN Collective called, DHAN Panchayat Development Foundation with following objectives during the year 2018.



1. To put efforts in transforming Village Panchayats as real “self – governing / self – reliant Ethical Panchayats by incorporating and practicing of Gandhian values.
2. To promote, converge and guide Village Panchayat level and Block Level Panchayat Development Associations to synergize and work with Village Panchayats for enhancing Democratic Practices.
3. To guide Panchayat raj Institutions in legal and technical aspects of governance including application of Information Technology and promotion of e – Panchayats for enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency in its operations.
4. To create platform for linkages in-between community based organization such as SHGs, Youth clubs, Farmer’s associations with local Village Panchayat system for access entitlements, better participation and enhance livelihoods.

4.0 Scaling-up of activities for deepening Democracy

4.1 Capacity building for Panchayat Stakeholders:

The local body elections are held in India for selecting 3.2 million people representatives in every five years. All section of people is coming for local body governance. They must understand their role and responsibility and the administrative systems. Besides this, they must gain confidence to administer the office. Secondly, the people in the village community have major role in Panchayats and they must aware their role and responsibilities. Thirdly the functionaries in local bodies must equip well as to guide and perform in the system. Towards achieving this, steps will be taken for building the capacity of all the stakeholders of the village panchayats in Tamilnadu and other states also.

4.2 Creation of Model Panchayats:

Thrust will be given for creating model Panchayats in all working states which will give good lead for Panchayat performances. The model will be created by way of introducing various democratic tools and practices, enough development focus at village level good leadership, creating good development impact at village level, enhancing the people stake at Panchayat administration and practicing transparency at Panchayat level etc.

4.3 Linking the SHG community with local panchayats:

The SHG community is spreading in all villages in our country. The poor people are involving in the SHG organisations. When the poor community actively take part in the local governance system. Our democracy system will be improved and the real democracy can be promoted. Towards this, the SHG community will be facilitated to link with local panchayat system in a large scale to attain mutual advantages. This will be facilitated in all possible states where we are working.

4.4 Panchayat education to the Community:

All states have their state Panchayat Act based on the constitutional guidance. Each state has their own style of implementation of Panchayat systems. But the major stakeholder of Panchayat, the people do not have much understanding about the local bodies. It results for poor elected representatives in Panchayat elections. So, the basic education on panchayat system will be offered for all section of stakeholders viz. Voters especially youth, elected representatives, students and local functionaries. This will be arranged in all regional languages.

4.5 Facilitating State Level Policy Advocacy:

Towards smooth operations and effective impact to be created in the community, the operational system will be streamlined through policy advocacy initiatives. Based on the field operations and the state context, the state policy on local bodies will be suggested for changes then and there.

4.6 Special thrust for Women Leadership and weaker section:

Our Constitution insists reservation for women in local bodies not less than one third of the total seat and for the scheduled caste and tribal having reserved seats according to the population ratio. The reservation concept was not properly understood by whole system and they are not properly groomed for taking their role. Their role and responsibilities are encroached by others in most of the situation. This has to be streamlined by way of preparing them through rigorous capacity building initiatives.

5. Impact of UNDEF support Project “FEDAM”

During past two years, focus of the programme was mainly on implementing the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) support project, “Fostering Ethical Democracy and Advancing Micro-justice” in five locations such as Alanganallur in Tamil Nadu, Bannur in Karnataka, Koraput in Odisha, Pipiloda in Madhya Pradesh and Bagidora in Rajasthan. The project aims in empowering SHG women, youth, students, and Village panchayat leaders on democratic tools and practices.

The goal of the project was to build the capacity of citizens to actively participate in local democratic processes. The project objective was to empower tribal and rural women, youth and students through a strategy which involved training women from SHGs, students and youths, and by providing para-legal aid services through a Micro-justice initiative and Right to Information campaigns to support the wider community. Another core strategy of the project was to complement existing government programmes and systems in order to improve services and demonstrate a workable design for replication in other areas.



Villagers speak out about the barriers to accessing entitlements

“I am Nagajothi. I am 55 years of age and live in a village in Tamil Nadu. After my husband died, I tried many times to obtain a pension but without success. Village officials wouldn't help and instead asked me for large sums of money. I felt helpless and anxious. I then went to the Legal Aid Clinic (LAC) for help. They applied on my behalf, there were no more obstructions from local officials and I received my pension in two months”.

“I am Parvathi Bai. I live in a village in Rajasthan. I heard about a government scheme where you can get money for building a toilet in your home. I submitted an application but never heard back despite approaching the Panchayet President many times. I then went to the LAC, they forwarded my application for me and I received the money to build a toilet.”

“I am Udhayakumar. I am 48 years old and live in a village in Tamil Nadu. I inherited two acres of land from my father as a gift and tried to get a Patta (land registration). Village officials would not help and instead kept asking me for more and more money. I was not happy about this but had no choice. I paid them several times for surveys and other fees but without receiving my Patta. I learnt about the Right to Information Act from a campaign by the DHAN Foundation. I sent an RTI application to the Public Information Officer in my local government office and within a few days, the Patta was granted without the need for further bribes. I was very relieved to sort this out and have told other villagers about the power of the RTI Act”



The intended beneficiaries comprised:

- **Direct beneficiaries** – Total 9,850 comprised of 7,500 women (1,500 per area); 1,000 youth defined as 18-25 year olds (200 per area); 1,000 students defined as 12-17 year olds (200 per area); 250 para-legal volunteers (50 per area); involvement of 100 elected representatives and officials.
- **Indirect beneficiaries** – Total approximately 50,000 persons across all 5 project sites were expected to indirectly benefit from the mass RTI campaign and the provision of para-legal services.

Micro Justice Services - Helped to access pension

"My name is **Mrs. Mohanty**. I live in a village in Odisha. I am a widow and after my husband died, I experienced great trouble in receiving the widows' pension that was due to me. My husband used to work as a security guard. He died in 2004 whilst on duty leaving me alone with our 5 children.

I approached many government offices for help but all my efforts were futile. Finally, I attended the Legal Aid Clinic (LAC) and they arranged legal support. The lawyer studied the case and discovered an error in the dates of birth of 2 of my children which was preventing us from receiving child entitlements from their deceased father.

Project implementation was structured over two years: the first year laid the foundation by training women, youth, students and elected representatives/officials; and the second year involved putting this training into practice through community initiatives: the setting up of youth associations, dialogue meetings between citizens and officials/politicians, a RTI campaign and the provision of legal aid services.

The project was broken down into eight outputs and two outcomes with four outputs planned to result in the achievement of Outcome 1 in Year 1 and the remaining four outputs to be delivered in Year 2 and result in Outcome 2. The two outcomes of the project were:

- **Outcome 1:** Develop the capacities of women, youth and students on democratic practices and tools, ensuring their practice and participation in democratic processes.
- **Outcome 2:** Democracy initiatives through dialogue meetings with local authorities and elected representatives alongside facilitating increased awareness of the Right to information Act and para-legal support.

6. Way forward

Democracy is not just a value, it is inevitable component for triggering development and equitable justice. So, the DHAN Panchayat Development Foundation will work for promoting grassroots democracy and build effective, participative and transparent governance in a way that every citizen is given with choices to build their capabilities and feel it is their nation and they are taking part in building it.

Resilience Building Regenerates Lives with Dignity



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