BLOSSOM TRUST

STRATEGY 2020 - 2023
Almost 27 years ago Blossom Trust was created in response to the needs of the communities in Tamil Nadu. Over the years we have reached more than 1 million people, with our projects mostly related to health subjects such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and diabetes.

In recent years, we have successfully completed several projects to improve the lives of the people in our communities most in need. Our CEPT project (Campaign for Education, Prevention and Treatment of TB) was completed in 2018 and reached more than 100,000 people, providing instruction for recognizing symptoms and support for accessing testing and treatment. Our Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are active on topics related to TB, HIV/AIDS and Diabetes, as well as supporting each other with their economic aspirations.

Now, heading into a new decade, it is time to re-evaluate our work and where we see the organization going in the coming years. In 27 years India has grown economically, bringing more basic needs to the majority of its people. This also means that the needs of the communities have changed, requiring a new approach. A new strategy for the coming three years is therefore fitting at a time when India is classified as an emerging and developing country. Despite the economic improvements, which have positively affected the current healthcare system, there is still much to be done.

For women, many basic needs in India are still not self-evident. This strategy is designed to continue our efforts for another three years to improve the lives of the girls and women in our community. We are confident that this strategy will contribute to the further development and growth of Blossom Trust and it is a pleasure to share that journey with you.
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MISSION

Through women empowerment & gender equality, ensure that communities are self-sufficient in improving their health, environmental, economic and social needs. We aim to achieve this by working in partnership with local and global actors.

VISION

Blossoming the power in every individual to reinforce healthy, thriving communities across Southern India.

VALUE STATEMENT

Inclusivity. We believe in gender equality, achieved through the empowerment of women as agents of change, and the inclusion of all.

Participation. We believe in listening to, acting on, and engaging with the voices and needs of the community, to bridge the gap between the grassroots and global stakeholders.

Equity. We believe in the fundamental rights of marginalised groups, through equitable access to healthcare, education, and secure livelihoods.

Resilience. We believe in sustainable practices, with impacts that are tangible, measurable and lasting.

Partnerships. We believe in cross-sector collaboration and NGO partnerships, harnessing expertise to generate effective change at the community-level.
ORGANIZATION HISTORY AND PROFILE

To know where we are going in the future, it is important to understand where we came from. Blossom Trust has evolved over the years, by continuously listening to the voices of coming from the community, in order to improve the lives of the most marginalized.

THE START OF BLOSSOM

Blossom Trust was created in 1993, but even before the official creation, efforts were being made to help the most marginalized in the community. Our founder, Father Vima Amalan, was part of a theatre group in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, as a part of his Thesis M.A. in Theatre Arts & Pastoral Communications (University of Chicago). Realizing how arts and performance can make even the most difficult of subjects more approachable, he started the EduClowns performances.

The performances of these clowns were designed to educate the community on important topics, often health related. Its success led to the creation of an established non-profit organization, Blossom Trust, making it one of the first NGOs in the region. Blossom is a government registered NGO under the Indian Trust Act; registered under the Income Tax Act under Section 12 A (with Tax exemption), with FCRA approval, allowing us to raise funds beyond the Indian borders.
The work of Blossom aimed to help the most marginalized of our community, with a strong emphasis on supporting young girls and women. Over time Blossom built a network within the healthcare, women, children and economical sector of Virudhunagar and continued to focus on health related projects. Our health projects have supported people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and diabetes.

To realize the sustainability of our projects, one of our approaches is the creation of self-help groups (SHGs) among the rural women. The members of these SHGs, concerning topics such as HIV/AIDS, TB or economic development, continue to support each other even after the official project cycle has been concluded. This component of our projects has generated a network of more than 100,000 people in the community.

Today, Blossom Trust operates in the 11 blocks of Virudhunagar District, in 2 blocks of Madurai District and in 13 blocks of Kanchipuram District
One of the main topics of our work is addressing stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with TB. From one of our projects, CEPT, the Rainbow TB Forum was created. This forum of people affected by TB has taken the conversation to the state level, advocating for the rights of people living with TB. This has expanded our work beyond the borders of the Virudhunagar District.

In addition to this, Blossom opened its second office in 2010. In previous years the Chennai office in Kanchipuram has contributed to implementing Blossoms projects in Kanchipuram district. Our branch office specializes in HIV related interventions. The Chennai office in Kanchipuram is currently focusing on the transgender community in Chennai, for which a project has been running since 2018.

Blossom has built its international donor base with volunteer outreach, an internship programme and establishing partnerships with global stakeholders involving beneficiaries in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its projects. Change cannot be achieved alone, and we value partnerships to bridge the gap between community needs and (inter)national resources. One of the main stakeholders of development in India is the Indian government. At Blossom we believe it is paramount to collaborate with government agencies to achieve the best results. Many of our projects are thus in partnership with the local or state government, and we aim to continue to collaborate with government initiatives throughout Tamil Nadu.
STRONG FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Blossom Trust’s director, Ms. T. Mercy Annapoorani, has been with Blossom Trust since its inception in 1993. Ms. Annapoorani met the founder of Blossom being part of the same theatre group and helped set up the organization. She has earned a diploma in Theater Arts (1998), a Master of Commerce with a Diploma in Human Resource Development (1999), a Master of Arts in Sociology (2000) and a Master of Women’s Studies (2005). She is the recipient of the Kalai Valar Mani Award from the Madurai Arts Club in 1998 and the 2002 International Prize for Women’s Creativity in Rural Life by the World Women’s Summit Foundation (WWSF), Switzerland.

As Blossom primarily focuses on the rights of women and girls, we are proud to have a managing team and board consisting of mostly women. We aim to encourage gender equality within our organizational structure, by providing equal opportunities for women and men to move into leadership roles within the organization.
CORE STRATEGIES

As we look ahead to the coming three years, we consider the strategies for our core programs and potential new programs. The following strategies have come forth from our strategic planning process.

A NEW COURSE

Over the last decade, we have continued our work at the community level to improve the lives of the marginalized people. We have aimed to provide support wherever needed. However, in our dedication to defend the rights of the people living in our community, we have struggled to keep a uniform message about our work. To tackle this, we enter this new decade with an approach that reinforces the mission and vision we have had from the start. Women have always been at the centre of everything we do. When Blossom was created in 1993, our main goal was to contribute towards the development of the communities, by empowering women and children. Our view has not changed. We believe that by achieving gender equality, we achieve development for all.

This new strategy therefore goes back to the core of our work: women empowerment, gender equality and vulnerable children. For our current projects, as well as our future projects, we will stay within the scope of four subcategories; health, social empowerment and economic empowerment and environmental protection. Dayspring Home, one of our long running projects, serves as a stand alone category, due to the nature of the work. This new strategy will allow us to continue with most of the same projects and priorities but with more direction and centralised efforts. Our work will continue in the 3 districts we have been previously operating, Virudhunagar, Kanchipuram and Madurai, and leaves the door open for an expansion on local, regional and national level.
Giving a voice to the voiceless has always been, and will continue to be, our primary mandate. We believe that in order to best serve the community, you need to work in and in partnership with the communities themselves. We always work closely with our community networks to ensure that all projects are community-oriented, and we listen to feedback from members of the community to make sure that the projects reflect existing needs and deficits.

Looking forward, we will continue to maintain and strengthen our reach and our engagement, encouraging these bi-directional conversations to streamline our efforts and maximise our impact.

Giving a voice to those who are under-represented or marginalised is more than just having a community base. It is about bringing the needs and rights of the community to a regional, national and international playing field. The strength of our existing network is a significant asset to our organisation, which has previously allowed us to make a far greater impact for small communities by partnering with expert institutions, government sectors and international stakeholders. To this end, we will be focussing on fostering our existing networks and collaborations across all policy levels, and seeking to generate new connections across the board. As our existing strengths and connections lie within Tamil Nadu, we will move towards incorporating a more substantial context-analysis and research component as part of every project, to better identify regional or international funding and partnership opportunities that specifically meet the needs and requirements of the Tamil Nadu state. Communication is key: to give a voice to the voiceless, we need to make interpersonal connections to those who matter.
Hosting international interns also brings the opportunity for attracting international funding, so we will be encouraging future interns to seek funding opportunities within their home country to widen our network of international stakeholders.

On the administrative side, we believe that continuous improvement of our organisational infrastructure leads to more effective project implementation. We will be looking to improve our internal communication and administration of data resources to create greater continuity and accountability, both for our projects and for content management.

We strive to uphold our values and practice them within our own infrastructure. Our top priority, in line with our ethos for women empowerment and gender equality, is to continue to maintain gender balance within our staff and ensure that equal opportunities exist. We also recognise the value of cultural diversity. We intend to continue running our successful internship programme, attracting diverse national and international staff, and work towards full acceptance and appreciation of other-culture perspectives, to help navigate more challenging cultural differences and bring new insight to project development.
PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our new strategy will influence the work we are currently doing, as well as the projects we intend to run in the future. It is therefore important to consider the goals and objectives for each program, and set up our goals on how to expand the work of Blossom.

HEALTH

Health for all has been one of the main pillars of Blossom since its inception. With the network we have built over the last 26 years, we do not intend this to change. Currently there are 3 independent self help groups (SHGs):

- Paneer Poo, for HIV positive women
- Survive Sugar, for people living with diabetes
- Rainbow TB Forum, for those infected or affected by tuberculosis.
Currently one of our main health related projects is our targeted intervention project to prevent HIV amongst the transgender community in Kanchipuram, Chennai. This project is funded by the Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society (TNSACS) and involves a project team and 7 Peer Educators to educate the transgender community on how to prevent contracting HIV.

Each group has hundreds of members, who continue to support each other to live happy and healthy lives. We continue to use these networks for all our health related projects. To bring the networks back to their full potential, funding will be needed for projects related to these SHGs. In the next 3 years we plan to reorganize our thousands SHGs to have regular contact and meetings. That means that the members will be visiting the office regularly. We aim to have 70% of the groups back in action in 2023.

Our aim for the coming three years is to expand this project by adding a safe house, increase the mobility of our peer educators by providing them with their own transport and thus increasing the reach of their work, and to continue building our network of transgender advocates in the area. We will continue to partner with local and international stakeholders to achieve these goals.
Our EduClowns have been part of Blossom since the creation in 1993. The EduClowns are non-professional actors, coming directly from our communities, selected from within our network of self-help groups affected by TB and HIV/AIDS. Wearing the mask and clothing of a clown, the performers are able to step out of themselves, as they are no longer restricted by the traditional boundaries that hold them to the taboo and prevent them from addressing stigma.

The EduClowns are an entertaining element that makes our organization stand out. Not only are they very effective to utilize during awareness campaigns, they also ensure behavioral change among the community. Serving as ‘change agents’, the EduClowns make difficult topics like sex, menstrual health and HIV more approachable.

The EduClowns methods has been proven to engage audiences in the community, get the attention of policy makers and funding agencies alike. We therefore strive to increase the amount of EduClowns performances in the coming years and to improve the EduClowns educational skills for them to educate the community even more effectively. To do this we will set up a full fledged campaign team of 15 EduClowns members by 2023, who will get training in regards to activism and generating behavioral change. To give more visibility to our EduClowns we aim to connect with similar groups locally and internationally. We also intend to incorporate a research component to all our EduClowns events, to increase the value.
**SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT**

To improve the lives of women in the rural communities of Tamil Nadu, it is imperative to address the social status of women in society. Unfortunately, in rural India, women do not have the same rights as men. At Blossom we strive for equality of men and women, marginalized groups, vulnerable children etc. We intend to implement more social empowerment projects in the coming years, related to equal opportunities at home and at work. Our creche continues to provide young mothers the opportunity to get jobs and build a career. The creche is supported by government funds and we will continue supporting these women in the coming years. For our social empowerment SHGs we aim to have 70% operational again in 2023.

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**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

Economic Empowerment has been a focus of Blossom since the beginning in 1993. The Mahalir Thittam was one of Blossom’s longest running projects, starting in 1997 and concluding in 2015. The project was aimed to support women by means of micro-finance. From Mahalir Thittam the Poomalai Women’s Collective was formed in 2004. This SHG has been built with the purpose of providing the women an opportunity to start their own small businesses. They achieve this by putting in small amounts of money and financially supporting each other’s businesses. They also promote each other’s businesses in their own community, which prevents them from having to take big loans from the banks, which often results in immense financial pressure. By supporting each other the SHG not only helps women financially, but also serves as an advocacy tool. Our women in the communities have expressed the desire to further continue with the Poomalai initiative, as this micro-finance project opened many doors for them in the past. Just like our other SHGs, we aim to have 70% of our Poomalai SHGs back in action by 2023.
We all need to contribute to a more sustainable world. The climate crisis is demanding a new approach from individuals, companies and governments. As India is at a high risk to feel the consequences of the climate crisis, we at Blossom believe that communities need to be involved to address climate change and the consequences. We aim for all projects to be sustainable and environmentally friendly, and aspire to increase our environmental protection work. Our farm at Dayspring is fully organic, using no pesticides in the production of the fresh produce, instead using the manure from the livestock is used to fertilize the land. In the coming years we are going further still, using the manure from the livestock to create bio-gas to cook with. As the farm serves as an example for the whole community, it allows for training the community on sustainable farming and living. We intend to continue investing in and expanding our agriculture programmes and make them more accessible to the wider community. By 2023 we aim to have built an additional training shed for non-residential training.
DAYSPRING HOME

Dayspring Home has been an important endeavour since it was established in 2004. However, due to the nature of the program, it does not fall under any of the categories within our 2020-2023 Strategy and should be considered a separate entity. That said, there are some changes to be made looking forward.

Starting in 2004 as an orphanage, Dayspring provided a home for children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. Over the years, we have opened the doors to children who are in need of support because their own families cannot provide for them. While Dayspring began as an orphanage, it is no longer fair to use this term. We will therefore be discontinuing the use of the term ‘Orphanage’ in all communications and representations, and exclusively use the term ‘Designated Children’s Home’. By doing so, we also distance Dayspring from outdated connotations of orphanages, which might impact our work and reputation.
FINANCIAL GOALS

Blossom strives for transparency of its financial accountability and compliance, with the goal to implement effective and efficient projects.

CROWDFUNDING

Since 2010 Blossom has been active on GlobalGiving, a crowdfunding platform for organizations and individuals alike. Our network on the platform has grown over the years and we are proud to have both one-time and recurring donors who support Dayspring. Having one main crowdfunding platform comes with risks, and we have recognized the need to diversify the platforms through which funds are raised, to minimise the risks. Looking forward, we will explore other ways of crowdfunding to limit future risks and increase the stability of our income.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

As Blossom is solely dependent on grants and donations, we are exploring options to improve the sustainability of our income, which will allow us to build on our current operations. To do this, we will be looking into a more stable source of income. One approach is the establishment of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partner. Our goal for the near future is to initiate a partnership with a local for-profit organization, who will support a continuous project. In 2014 India became the first country to make CSR mandatory, with gender equality being one of the main topics of the CSR compliance. We will therefore strive to set up a CSR collaboration in the district as soon as possible.

PROJECT FUNDING

Next to our day-to-day operations Blossom continues to implement programs in the form of project cycles. We intend to utilise the organisation’s diverse past experience to illustrate our strengths when seeking a range of funding opportunities under the new strategic objectives. When looking into funding new projects, this means we will remain within our new mandate by focussing our projects on women, gender equality and children.
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REGISTRATION DETAILS
Registration Number: 85/93 FCRA
Approved & Indian Tax Exempt
Date of Registration: 7 June, 1993
Place: Aruppukottai
Act: Indian Trust Act 1882

Please visit this website for more information about Blossom's registration and financial status.
Unique Darpan ID: TN/2011/0041351

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