

EMPOWERING VILLAGES



1305 Landmark Towers, Opp. Wadala Telephone Exchange,
Dadar East, Mumbai - 400 014

contact@aroehan.org
www.aroehan.org





Empowering Villages

Creating an empowered cadre of youth who will lead their communities to positive transformation

Imagine this - A quaint little village, lush and green with vegetation, abundant water and electricity. There are healthy children playing in the sun while men and women are discussing the need for a new check dam in their village. It is a pleasant thought, isn't it?

Unfortunately, reality paints a different picture. We see a village which is parched, hungry and thirsty. Villagers walk miles for a pot of water. Children climb over mountains to reach their school. Many villagers suffer poor health, unemployment and low income.

AROEHAN aims to breathe life back into these villages through infrastructure, education and modern technology. Join hands with us to recreate the lush, green and sustainable villages of our dreams.



AROEHAN: About Us

AROEHAN - Action Related to the Organisation of Education, Health And Nutrition

In the Palghar district of Maharashtra, Mokhada Tehsil witnessed a heart-breaking tragedy in 2005 and 2006 when 169 children passed away due to malnutrition. We quickly began a search for a solution and found food scarcity was not the only cause of this tragedy. Several interconnected issues like lack of proper education and good health practices along with frequent migration and poor governance also contributed to it. We felt an urgent need for an integrated intervention to remedy the situation. We were keen to support their right to life. We founded AROEHAN which is the acronym of **A**ction **R**elated to the **O**rganisation of **E**ducation, **H**ealth **A**nd **N**utrition. It also sums up the focus of our work.



AROEHAN began as a field action project for the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan. It was later registered as an autonomous non-profit organisation. AROEHAN has been working to bring about sustainable changes to the lives of tribal communities in the Mokhada, Jawahar, Dahanu and Palghar blocks of the Palghar district in Maharashtra.

Vision:

To bring sustainable change to the lives of tribal communities and rural poor such that they are empowered to access and utilize their resources to the optimum, keeping in mind the principles of social justice and human dignity.

Mission:

To create an empowered cadre of tribal and rural youth who will initiate and sustain efforts of change in their communities, upholding the Constitutional values and the values of personal integrity, tolerance and justice.



Our strategic 5-year plan for a sustainable future

After extensive discussions with the villagers and tribal communities, we have made a thorough assessment of their needs. Our work of more than a decade has given us good insights to facilitate development of the people and their communities.

We have prepared a set of goals and built a strategy to create sustainable solutions for these people. Our big goal is to transform 101 hamlets across 12 Gram Panchayats belonging to the Mokhada Taluka into 'Model Sustainable Villages'.

By 2025 we aim to fulfil the following strategic goals in the hamlets:

Preventing Migration

Good farming practices and water conservation techniques have helped the landholding farmers generate higher income. But low income forces the marginal farmers, landless farmers and members of the tribal communities, especially the Katkaris who belong to the 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups', to migrate for a period of 5-6 months every year in search of jobs. This post-monsoon migration forced on an already socio-economically weak group has left them with deteriorating health and their children with uneven schooling and education.



AROEHAN aims to reduce their migration by 50% by increasing land under cultivation, creating awareness about multi-cropping, growing vegetables, floriculture and horticulture; helping with skill training and creating local jobs to enhance their income which will help them stay healthy and give their children a better chance at education.

This will also help address the unemployment problems that the local youth, who graduate from nearby colleges face due to lack of skill training.



No More Malnutrition Deaths

A nation's development depends on the health of its people and the same rule of thumb applies to states, cities, towns and villages. Though Maharashtra is the largest contributor to the country's GDP, its rural areas report high Wasting (26%), Severe Acute Malnutrition (9%) and Underweight (40%) in children under the age of five, while women suffer from Malnutrition (30%) and pregnant women especially suffer from Anaemia (50%). This is further complicated by superstitions in the community which cause malnutrition.

AROEHAN aims to bring the number of malnutrition deaths to zero by creating awareness about health and nutrition and educating people to move past superstitions.

No Child Out Of School

A good education opens doors to new possibilities, new thoughts and new ideas. The dropout rates in the identified villages are very high. The hilly terrain and far-away location of schools coupled with poor transport facilities prevents both students and teachers from reaching the schools. The literacy rate in Mokhada is low at 46.54% (Male – 53.7%, Female – 39.4%). Without education, the children will face poor employability with all attendant problems; suffer poor health and low standard of living. Without education, the girls are likely to suffer more.

AROEHAN aims to bring awareness about the value of education and make sure that no child is left out of school. We plan to establish an Educational Hub with STEM learning, language training, teacher training, and a library for the overall development of children in ZP schools.



We want these Educational Hubs to also disseminate awareness about Constitutional rights and responsibilities, and connect schools and children to the surrounding realities, thus making school curricula more practical. We hope to build responsible citizenship through this endeavour.

Putting Power in People's Hands

Any development program is successful only when the people involved sustain the changes. AROEHAN's work until now has helped with cropping patterns, increased the land area under irrigation and cultivation, brought notable reduction in migration for some villages, and created better income generation. All this has elevated the lifestyle in these hamlets. But there is a long way to go for sustainability and self-governance.



People must learn to generate and manage village infrastructure by sensitive utilisation of the natural resources, by availing government schemes and funds; this requires active participation in Village Gram Sabhas and engagement with the block governance structures. This, along with awareness about government schemes; forest rights; financial literacy; technical know-how in agriculture and other livelihoods, and market linkages will make the communities self-sufficient. When everyone is given an equal voice, especially the marginalised villagers and women, to articulate their needs and engage with elected representatives, a truly sustainable village is created. For us, the vehicle to initiate this change is the pada samiti at the hamlet level. **AROEHAN aims to establish a citizen's forum having a Woman's Wing at the tehsil level to give citizens a platform to advocate for their rights.**

Our achievements that drive us forward

- 940 acres of land under vegetable cultivation
- 4,83,656 trees planted by 7700 farmers to generate income and help afforestation
- 220 water harvesting structures in 50 villages generating 17 crore litres of water leading to a decrease in thirst days
- 770 farm ponds with 30000 litre capacity leading to storage of 231 lakh litres of water for irrigation and domestic use during non-monsoon months
- 258.57 KWatt green energy generated by installation of 32 solar systems in 30 hamlets
- 248 Village Health, Nutrition and Sanitation Committees and 692 Mata Samitis made functional, *143 Pada Samitis formed and trained on good governance to bring sustenance and help the villagers voice their concerns

Malnutrition and Anemia are seeing a drop in numbers in our project villages after a rise in awareness about health and nutrition for young mothers and children.

The number of 'Thirst days' are falling for villagers after we constructed and rehabilitated small and medium sized cordons, subsurface bunds, gabion structures, and wells.



In an area yet to be touched by electricity, we introduced a solar-based lift irrigation along with newer techniques like raised-bed farming, mulching and drip irrigation for easy farming.

Small and marginal farmers embraced Rabi cultivation of vegetables and floriculture with our encouragement, and it has proven to be a good income generator for them.

When the basic necessity of water was 2 km away, we constructed a check dam with a solar operated pump to bring water to Khairmal, a hamlet with 11 houses on top of a hill.

Educating women will always bring positive changes to any community. We have been giving vocational training to women in tribal communities to begin and sustain changes.

When the COVID-19 pandemic created a huge migrant crisis across the country, AROEHAN acted within 24 hours to provide essentials and gradually reached out to the first 70 families within 24 hours and later to several villages.

Help us revive a village

Volunteer with us!

You can become part of this change. Volunteer to be our ambassadors, plant trees, raise funds, interact with the villagers, learn from them and work with them on solutions. Contact us to know how you could contribute.

Help us raise funds!

Building check dams, providing solar power and bringing technology to villages are absolutely necessary and will give these communities a bright future but these projects also require big funding. If you could help us raise funds, together we can bring modernity to the villages and inch closer to becoming a truly developed nation. Like Gandhi once said 'The future of India lies in its villages'.

Donate to us!

AROEHAN began its journey to bring health, education and well-being to the villages many years ago, and our fuel through the years have been the people who have collaborated with us by offering their expertise and hard work, and supported us through donations. With your help we can continue the good work and strive towards creating more sustainable villages/communities.

To make donations, please visit: <https://www.aroehan.org/payment-mode.php>



Trustees of AROEHAN

Helen Joseph, PhD (Chairperson)

Helen Joseph is the founder chairperson of Aroehan. She retired as professor from the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan and was member of the University Grants Commission's (UGC) National Consultative Committee and Key Resource person for the Capacity Building of Women Managers in Higher Education. She is also chairperson of YUVA urban initiatives and lends her voice and support to other developmental organisations working with women and other vulnerable groups.

Anjali Kanitkar (Secretary)

Anjali Kanitkar is our founder and retired as an Associate Professor at the College of Social Work Nirmala Niketan. She also served as the Director of Social Audit for the Government of Maharashtra and works with various organisations to bring positive changes to the tribal and rural communities in both practice and theory.

Purushottam Kulkarni, PhD

Purushottam Kulkarni holds a PhD and works as an associate professor at IIT Mumbai. He focuses on the areas of drinking water provisioning, watershed interventions, and adding formal mechanisms in academics to work on development-related problems.

Dinesh Ahir, Chartered Accountant and Treasurer

Dinesh Ahir has a keen interest in the development sector especially in the issue of urban space and is on the Board of several non-profit organisations like NAGAR and AGNI.

Vivek Patwardhan

Vivek Patwardhan retired from Asian Paints as Head-HR. He was appointed as 'TISCO Chair Professor of Industrial Relations' at Tata Institute of Social Science in 2006. He was independent Director of MSL Driveline Ltd (formerly Mahindra Sona Ltd.) 2015-19. During 2017-18 he was President of Rotary Club of Thane Metro. He is also a blogger who writes regularly about labour-management relations and actively engages in social work post retirement.

Meenal Gandhe

Meenal Gandhe has over 20 years of experience in the corporate and development sectors. Her areas of interest include community development with a participatory approach, women empowerment and work with children in need of care and protection. The focus of her work is on maternal and child health in rural and tribal communities.

Johny Joseph (Treasurer)

Johny Joseph is the Executive Director of Creative Handicrafts which works for the welfare of women and children. He has been working in the field of social work and research for over 25 years. He is also the Asia Representative to the Board of Directors of WFTO.

Adv. Satyadev Pandey

Adv. Satyadev Pandey practices in Mumbai and Gujarat.

Naresh Jena

Naresh Jena is an ex-secretary of Maharashtra State Social Welfare Board with experience of more than 37 years in various capacities from being a probation officer and jailer to a government official with the CSWB and DWCD. Post retirement, he continues to contribute through various field organisations.

Mohan Surve

Mohan Surve has more than 30 years of experience in the Social Development Sector. He is one of the founding members and currently the Chief Executive Officer of Vikas Sahyog Pratishthan, an organization working on sustainable development. He has experience with governance & leadership and shares his expertise with grassroots NGOs.