

## The team of VSSM...



A dedicated, hardworking and sensitive team is a backbone of any organization, they are the limbs that keep an organization marching towards attaining its mission. VSSM is fortunate to have a strong team that has grown in strength and capacity over the period. The issues the nomadic communities face are very complex and difficult to comprehend for a person outside the communities. VSSM made a conscious decision to select as many team members possible from these communities itself. Yes they weren't much educated but they had a clear understanding and sensitivity towards the issues of their fellow community members. In the beginning years the connect happened when youth with leadership qualities showed willingness to help VSSM and later these youth became part of the VSSM team. Jayantibhai Bajaniya worked as a fitter in a private factory for monthly remuneration of Rs. 3000, his association with the activities of VSSM spread the word amongst the community that Jayantibhai can help them with government related works. The amount of people visiting him with issues meant that he spent all his salary on serving them tea and snacks!! Mohanbhai Bajaniya also spread a word of VSSM's activities while earning his

livelihood selling imitation jewelry and likes. Shardaben has dedicated her entire life to the cause of nomadic communities especially the women. A prerequisite Kanubhai put forward in any nomadic settlement willing VSSM's intervention is de-addiction. 'Give up your vices and will resolve your long pending issues...' is his mantra!! Naran and Tohid work on the motto 'fight to finish'!! Dare anyone especially the local level bureaucrats question their integrity and understanding of the issues of the nomads. Eshwarbhai, Mahesh, Harshad, Paresh, Madhuben, Ilaben, Eshwar (junior), Valji, Harkishan, Vandana, Vaishali, Reena share the same commitment and dedication to the cause. This is the team that is pushing its boundaries and taking ahead the endeavors of VSSM.

In its initial years VSSM received support from Respected Shri. Kantisen Shroff- Shroff Family and Charitable Trust to build a strong and committed team.

Along with a strong team at the grassroots VSSM also has a dedicated team at its head-office. Linesh, Dimpleben, Amiben, Harishbhai, Param, Swati, Nitaben, Sonia, Vipul and Vibhaben provide all the support the required for smooth functioning of the activities....

Issue No. 1

September 2016

*Brief  
of  
VSSM  
Activities :  
Nomadic and  
De-notified  
Tribe  
Communities*

# Astitva



Vicharata Samuday Samarthan Manch  
(VSSM)



### Vicharata Samuday Samarthan Manch (VSSM)

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Shri. Geeta Gala



VSSM came into existence as a collective of like-minded individuals threaded together by a cause of finding the vanishing nomads. With the emerging scenario its activities grew and the need of more organized and structured efforts occurred. In the year 2010 VSSM was formally registered as an organization and its trust board took charge of its activities...

Shri Madhavbhai Ramanuj, a well known poet, writer and an honorary office bearer at the Institute of

Kidney Disease and Research Centre, Shri. Madhavbhai holds the position of President of VSSM. An extremely concerned individual he makes sure the government and authorities hear the issues of the nomadic communities. The warmth of his presence is extremely reassuring for the team of VSSM.

Shri Liladharbhai Gada or Adha as we all call him has contributed tremendously towards the issues of rural health and access of health facilities in Kutchh. Shri. Mansukhbhai Salla has very aptly christened him 'Kutchh Na Gandhi'. He is the inspiration behind the Bhojai Hospital, Vagad Hospital and two residential schools for the mentally challenged Mansi and Manas Mandir. VSSM has only grown under his love and care.

Shri. Pravinbhai Laheri is a retired Principal Secretary for state of Gujarat. After his retirement Laheri Saheb became active towards the social causes of Gujarat. He also serves as Trustee at Somnath Trust, Sadvichar Parivar Trust and various other organizations. His presence and constant guidance inspires VSSM to continue with its endeavors.

Shri. Parulben Dandikar is associated with Bhumi Putra Magazine and Yagn Prakashan, she is someone who has travelled with me a lot in search of the lost nomads. Extremely warm and loving Parulben ties us all together.

Shri. Geetaben Gala is the founder of 'Manasi' a school for mentally challenged school in Bidla. At Manasi she is the mother to all its beautiful girls while at VSSM she is a Didi we reach out to....

Shri. Pragneshbhai Desai is a key official at Natraj, a leading company manufacturing flourmills. He is also associated with Gayatri Pariwar. Pragneshbhai performed the ground breaking ceremony for VSSM's upcoming educational enclave at Uvarsad. The significance of the ceremony was that Pragneshbhai explained each ritual in a relevant manner. Pragneshbhai's each visit at VSSM's office is accompanied by a donation cheque!!

It is a pleasure to be associated with such distinguished, compassionate and warm group of individuals all working towards the larger goal of uplifting the nomadic and de-notified communities.

## Brief of VSSM Activities

- 1 Human Rights...1
- 2 Education...15
- 3 Swavalamban (Livelihood) ...26
- 4 Housing Initiative...35
- 5 Vadia...41
- 6 Water Management...46
- 7 Gratitude Towards Donors...49





## Human Rights



*Temporary residence places of nomadic communities.*

### **PRELUDE**

Since the beginning of its inception, VSSM has been striving to ensure that the nomadic and de-notified communities have an access to various welfare schemes designed by the government to elevate the living standard of families surviving under stifling poverty. And these perhaps are the most challenging efforts for the team of VSSM, as it includes engaging in a constant struggle with the local level officials and the society at large. It is a constant struggle, as the attitude is always 'us and them' and not 'we' as it should be. SO the question that always pop up are why do they (nomads) need ration cards, plots, houses? Unless we all collectively do not change our mindset and accept these communities as citizens of this country, it is always going to be an uphill task for these and many other marginalized communities to lead a dignified life. ●

## Delays in Enforcement of Government Regulations

The apathy of local level bureaucracy is pathetic when it comes to implementation of policies that have been framed or reformed to benefit the nomadic communities. The trailing instances are excerpts from what happens at the grassroots as the team and communities strive to attain some basic human rights...

**We are here not to serve and support but to object and reject...**

"How can you get residential plot, you are already settled?"

"Sir, we stay in hutments and the land on which our huts stand is government's not ours."

"Yes, but the government is required to allot plots to only those nomadic families who continue to lead

itinerant lives, if you have been living at one place means you have settled down so how can we give you land?"

"Sir, that land on which our huts stand is not on our names, it is government's, we don't own a house! What if we are asked to vacate the land on which we are staying, we will have to vacate the land, we will have to unsettle ourselves and you are saying we lead a settled life!!"

"That is none of my concern, we cannot allot you land based on this directive."

"But Sir!!"

"Now do not argue any further, just leave we have many other things to attend."



*Can you call people living in such vulnerable situation as settled families ?*



*Families at Collector's Office with their plea.*

A resolution Dated 06/06/2003 No. JMN-392003/454 Para 3(A) of the State Revenue Departments States permits allotment of land for the purpose of building a house to Nomadic and Semi-nomadic communities leading wandering lives but now wish to settle down. Since, the nomadic communities haven't been aware of the existence of any such directive they have never requested benefits under this resolution. VSSM spread a word on this directive in the settlements. It works encouraging the families to file applications under this resolution. And ever since, we have initiated this process the applicants are countered in the manner reflected in the above dialogue.

A similar incident also occurred during a meeting chaired by

Mehsana Collector. One of the officials mentioned to have rejected a similar application requesting for land. And it was not just him, there were quite a few to join the chorus including an Additional Collector and other senior officials, all agreeing to the fact that these families cannot be allotted any land. The members of the nomadic communities present in the meeting were shattered witnessing such an approach. VSSM's Tohid was quick to argue, "Sir, what if we get a bulldozer and erase their huts and shanties, they will be homeless and vagrant again will that suffice??" How does one make such senior official understand the difference between a nomad and a settled human being?

Each official interprets the rules,

directives, modifications to the original rule etc. in a different manner, but there is one understanding that remains common amongst most of these officials and that is to collectively work towards denying the entitlements. They make sure to try their level best towards reject any application bringing forward one or the other objection. There have been instances when the Collector, Additional Collector, Mamlatdar or Taluka Development Officer all trying to escape from their duty to allot the land and sign the papers, what they choose to do instead is to forward the application to the next officer!! How can we escape the situation and pass on an application to make it someone else's worry is what they are always looking for!!

The Dafer families of Vijapur are awaiting the allotment of plots allocated to them since past 8 years. The Mamlatdar is a very supportive and compassionate individual but

still awaits permission from the villagers to allow allotment of land to Dafer. While he also keeps saying that the land in ours (government's) we will give it to anyone whom we deem fit!! We fail to understand such contradictory approach of officials.

In 2015, the Prant Officer asked us to submit applications for plots to the nomadic families living in Diyodar. The applications had to be attached with a Caste Certificate so few families went to the office of the Mamlatdar for the same. "Saheb, we live in hutments near Boda Road and we want to file applications for residential plots and hence require Caste Certificate," answered one of the community men when asked by the Mamlatdar what brought them the office. During the talk the Mamlatdar asked who was giving them land, "We are asking the land under the government's resolution for communities like ours." They were asked to come over the next

day. So by next day the Mamlatdar must have briefed himself on what the regulation was because when the community members came over he said, "the resolution is for those who haven't



*Nomadic people along with our field staff Naran at government office presenting their appeals.*



settled as yet. You have Voter ID cards, Ration card all bearing the address of your Boda Road hutments, so you aren't eligible to benefit from that scheme and hence there is no need for Caste Certificate, you may leave!!!"

Each application for residential plot has to be accompanied by Voter ID card, Ration card, Adhar Card, an affidavit stating that the applicant does not have own even a tiniest piece of land in whole of India, a document from Panchayat, official documents of the land requested and much more. So how is someone who is constantly wandering with his bag and baggage supposed to acquire and no application is entertained in absence of a single document!!

Our efforts, the continuous struggle and advocacy, can influence change in policies and regulations but they cannot influence change in the mindsets of officials and authorities. How can we bring about that kind of change?? "Ben, even the hardcore Dafer amongst us have given up robbery and adopted honest means to earn living. We have begun to understand what is good for us and look at these officials they just do not want to do their duty of serving and helping the poor like us!!" says Umarbhai Dafer who has been struggling to acquire land since last 8 years. Education and authority should be used to serve others and the government officials are in that position just to serve the poor and needy while what

they are doing right now is exactly the opposite of it...

### **The relentless resentment to permit residency to nomads...**

Article (19) (1) (e) of the Constitution of India guarantees the Fundamental Right in the nature of fundamental freedom, or right to freedom to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India. Of course, the right to settle does not allow to trespass into homes or restricted areas and the state also may restrict this freedom to protect the aboriginal tribes. Barring these clauses, a citizen of India therefore ideally should not encounter any challenges to reside in a city, town or village he/she wishes. But when it comes to the nomadic and De notified tribes, the hurdles of permanently settling in a village or town of their choice seldom cease to exist. The awareness on the challenges these communities endure on everyday basis should have changed the mindsets of the villagers who persistently oppose the presence of these communities in their villages. In spite of all our efforts we have yet to experience this complete change in the mindsets and approach towards the nomadic communities. And the relentless resentment to allow the nomadic communities to permanently settle down in their requested villages is proving to be a traumatic experience for the petitioner families as well as the team of VSSM.

## **Endless Protest**



*The tragic conditions in which vassfoda families stay along.*

### **Boratvada village decides to shell-out land for 6 Vansfoda families...**

Some 6 Vansfoda families have been staying on the outskirts (1 km away on government wasteland) of Boratvada village for many years now. Last year when the families were stationed near the village lake, the flash flood of July 2015 swept away their shanties and belongings. These families who barely managed to survive had been clinging to their traditional occupation of bamboo basketry. Distraught with the massive loss, they suffered during this natural calamity, VSSM has been trying to rehabilitate their livelihood and provide them

dignified living. The families now sell plastic home ware in the villages around Boratvada. The outskirts of this village has been their home for years and yet the villagers have been refusing to allow them piece of land where they can build a one -room house.

VSSM's Mohanbhai had facilitated the process of issuance of Ration Cards and Voter ID cards for the family of Boratvada village. Subsequently the families were to apply for allotment of residential plots as well and had been in process of accumulating the required documents. The need for Income Certificates brought them and Mohanbhai to the Mamlatdar's

office where they were shown a letter signed by 200 villagers opposing allotment of land to these 6 families!!!

“My heart skipped a beat on hearing what the Mamlatdar had to show whereas the families' faces turned pale with the looming uncertainties...” narrated a rather distraught Mohanbhai.

Hard-working and persistent that he is, Mohanbhai decided to meet the Boratvada Panchyat members and try convincing them.

“You are unnecessarily dragging the matter, we have decided we do not want to give any land to these Vansfoda!!” said a member.

“Sir, they are just 6 families and they have been here for years. You all have helped them get ration cards, now if you could just support a bit more they would atleast have a decent roof on their head and protection from such natural calamities!!” explained Mohanbhai.

“Don't you get it, we said no and no means no!! SO what if we supported with the ration cards, that doesn't mean we will give away land to them. You shouldn't be taking advantage of our goodwill,” was a harsh reply from another member.

“Where will they go from here, they are so poor and this is the place they call home!” tried Mohanbhai.

“That is not our lookout. We allow them in our village and what if they become our 'Saheb' tomorrow?”

argued one of the members.

“Saheb!!” said Mohanbhai

“Ofcourse. What if the government declares a reserved seat for this village during the panchayat polls. We will have to vote for them and call them Saheb!!”

“Sir, no such norms apply for these communities and they are just 6 families having 12 voters. Nothing like that can ever happen,” explained Mohanbhai.

“These communities have been pampered a lot by the government. Now if you can stop arguing and leave the office!!” they said asking Mohanbhai to leave.

Mohanbhai had no choice but to leave the office. It is heart breaking to experience such baseless and absurd reasoning from village elders who we expect to be wise and compassionate. As for now, the struggle continues.

“We stay in a corner of a village so that we do not become hindrance to anyone, we have never interfered in the matters concerning the village and yet the villagers are refusing our permanent settlement in the village. Where will we go if all of them keep refusing our settling down??” lamented these families

“I was small when my parents brought me here, I have grown up here. The letter the Mamlatdar gave saying 200 people refusing to allow us to settle here! On listening to Mamlatdar I went and met the



*Nomadic families waiting for their turn expecting govt. offices to give ear to their pleas.*

leaders, told them we aren't asking land for farming, we just want small piece of it to build 6 houses. I feel like I have been sacked out of my house. I just do not want to go anywhere from here, have lived here and will die here!!” is what heartbroken Rameshbhai Vansfoda had to say after experiencing such dejection.

Its either the rigid mindsets of the

society or the utter sluggishness of authorities on acting upon the filed applications there is always some reason that keeps these and thousands of extremely poor nomadic families from raising their fundamental rights to this country... Amongst all such depressing events there is always that hope that keeps us moving and the families hoping for a better tomorrow. ●

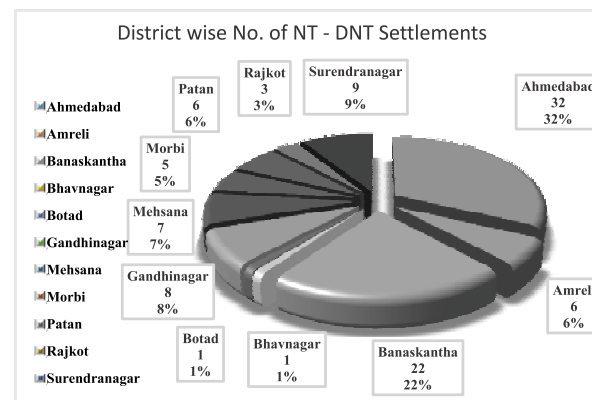
*Thine haste given this golden opportunity to extend our co-operation to enrich the lives of truly deserted families. We hope they get highest empathy from the government officials in all manner possible...*



**Details of applications and results to avail benefits of various government schemes within various nodal departments during April 2016 to August 2016 .**

Sr. No.	Particulars	Applications	Results
1.	Voter ID Card	327	412
2.	Change in Voter ID card	34	7
3.	APL Ration Card	64	116
4.	BPL Ration Card	0	3
5.	Antyoday Ration Card	13	0
6.	Ration Card Vibhajan	19	1
7.	Inclusion in BPL category	54	0
8.	Aadhar Card	370	92
9.	Shramyogi Card	70	12
10.	Mukhya Mantri Amrutam Card	0	64
11.	Maa Vatsalya Card	20	20
12.	Viklang ID Card	9	0
13.	Residential Plot	2969	0
14.	RSBY Card	2	1
15.	Housing Aid	19	1
16.	Individual Sanitation Block	94	25
17.	Caste Certificate	864	430
18.	Manav Garima Scheme	35	0
19.	Manav Kalyan Scheme	14	0
20.	Individual Electricity Connection	3	1
21.	Settlement Street Light Connection	1	0
22.	Widow Pension	1	0
23.	Old age Pension	3	0
24.	Bank Savings A/c Opening	70	50
25.	Kalupur Bank A/c Opening	32	32
26.	VSSM Interest Free Loan	186	186
27.	Kalupur Bank Loan	59	77
28.	Loan for Vadia	26	26
29.	Others / Miscellaneous	507	380
30.	School Enrollment	41	41
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5906</b>	<b>1977</b>

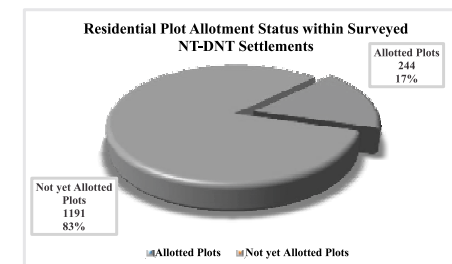
**Applications filed for various schemes :**



**A Primary Survey To Understand The Access To Various Schemes By Government Welfare Conducted By Vssm**

In Gujarat most of the nomadic and de-notified tribes are listed under the Backward and severely-backward communities of 'Socially and Educationally Backward Castes'. Such backward communities require special impetus to develop and

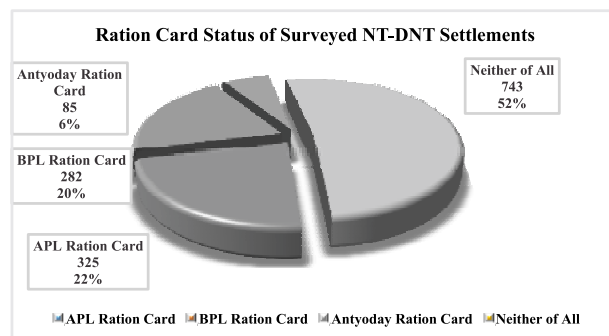
thrive. So are the special schemes and welfare measures designed by the government really helping these communities, is the question that we ask ourselves!! To understand the impact of the various government schemes planned for the nomadic communities we launched a survey in April 2016. The districts covered were Sabarkantha, Mehsana, Banaskantha, Patan, Surendranagar, Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Botad, Amreli and Bhavnagar.



**The major findings of the survey are:**

Total number of Districts covered	11
Total number of settlements surveyed	100
Total families surveyed	1435
Number of Individuals	6082
Number of Families allotted plots	244
Number of families staying on wastelands	1191
Number of families with BPL ration cards	281
Number of families with Antyoday Cards	86
Families with No cards at all	742
Families with APL ration Cards	326
Families with Ma and Ma Vatsalya Cards	153
Families with no health cards	1282

The findings reveal that most of the families stay in shanties and hutments on government wastelands or grazing land that are situated far from the village. As a result, these families are never considered in any village and hence do not enjoy much entitlements. In spite of surviving under absolute poverty only 06% of families



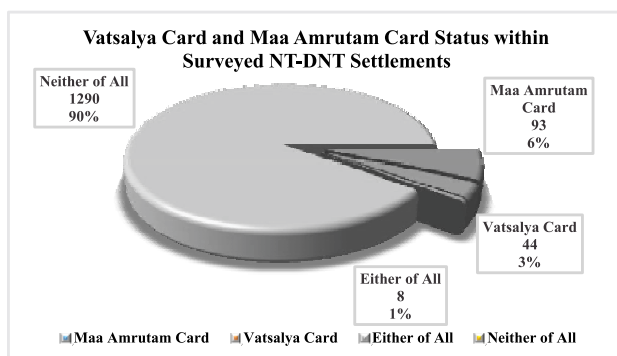
have Antyoday Ration Cards while 743 possess no ration cards at all. With no decent livelihood options all these family members survive on daily wages and with no ration cards or APL ration cards their food security remains deficient. The Supreme Court of India has made it mandatory to issue Antyoday Ration Cards to the Primitive Tribal groups. The Nomadic and De-notified tribes also face similar struggles and yet no such provisions are made for them. However, recommendations have been made under the National Food Security Act to provide grains to all these families, but that is possible only when they have a ration card. The primary issue here is issuance of Ration Card, a document that helps access many other welfare benefits.

The Government of Gujarat in 2012 launched the Ma Amrutam and Ma Vatsalya scheme to aid the medical emergencies of the families living below the Poverty Line

or belonging to the lower income groups (annual income of 1.20 lakhs or under). The idea is to protect the families from falling into debt traps. The nomadic families survive under abject poverty and are prone to most grave illness because of their living conditions. The members

of these communities are prone to illness like cancer and failing to get prompt treatment means fatal consequences.

The nomadic and de-notified communities become eligible to receive benefits from 27 of the numerous government schemes designed to benefit the poor. Through this survey VSSM has made an effort to study whether these schemes actually reach and benefit these communities. In the next couple of months, we intend to share the findings of this survey to the concerned government departments and officials..



## UPCOMING PLANS FOR THE YEAR 2016-17

### Conduct a comprehensive study to understand the socio-economic conditions of Dafer in Gujarat

The once de-notified community of Dafer has long reformed itself but continues to bear the burnt of the image its previous generations carried. Once termed as robbers and dacoits, a lot of Dafer families these days earn their living by guarding the boundaries of farms and villages where they are hired on contracts by farmers and village elders or are engaged in petty labor jobs. The community has long given up robbing and looting people but the society fails to recognize this fact while the police find it difficult to accept. The police officials based at various block level police stations make unwarranted raids to the Dafer danga (settlement), search the hutments and its residents, beat up the men and take them in custody. Mostly it is to meet their targets but the Dafer men are made to suffer a lot. They suffer from trauma and low self-esteem while the children and women live under the constant fear of police.

Last year, VSSM had representations of such frequent occurrences and police atrocities of the Dafer to the top police authority in the state. We have asked for a humane approach towards the Dafer



*Bhartari – traditional Ravanahatha players and performing prayers – this community still not included in Nomadic community*

as a result the atrocities have reduced but they haven't come to a complete stop.

During the interactions with the Additional Director General of Police Shri. Vinod Mall, we found an echo to our belief that the Dafer need to be given space in the villages to enable them lead settled life as most of their issues will ease out once the discrimination does not persist. However, inspite of our repeated requests the government or authorities aren't taking any proactive measures in this regard. Ironically the Dafer also features in the government's list of the 12 most backward communities amongst the 146 socially and economically backward communities and yet inspite of our consistent proposals no remarkable efforts have been undertaken for their growth.

Considering the government and



bureaucratic apathy, we have planned to carry out a statewide study to understand the socio, economic, educational status of the Dafer. The study will also focus on the societal mindset, approach of the police and access to government schemes. The study report will be made public and shared with authorities for better formulation of policies.

### **A survey of the evidently nomadic yet excluded Bharthari and Meer communities**

Since times immemorial, the Bharthari and Mir communities have lived nomadic lifestyles. The Bharthari were hosted to sing cradlesongs on birth of a child and the Mir were folk singers that sang for the Kings and the elite. However, after the accession of Kingdoms into India, the kings lost most of their opulence and so did the Mir lose their means to sustenance. The eventually began singing during festivals and fete but that too has been declining gradually with some now retorting to begging or rearing small cattle.

There are numerous such communities who have not been included in the official list of nomadic and de-notified communities. There are many sub-groups to a major tribes that do not find mention in the list. Once out of the list these communities fail to access any welfare schemes by the government. The nomadic communities as such have limited



*Meer community still not included in Nomadic community*

benefits from the government and that too these communities fail to benefit from.

VSSM has been writing to the government to revisit the list and make the necessary alterations. Since that is not happening we now plan to undertake a comprehensive study of the Bharthari and Mir communities, analyze and document the findings and share it with the government at the earliest. We hope to bring to light the injustice these communities have been enduring since decades.

### **The pending applications for residential plots**

The current plight of the nomadic and de-notified communities makes it very evident that they now need to lead sedentary lifestyle as their traditional occupations that required them to lead itinerant lifestyles have collapsed and they are no longer wandering as much. This shift means these families instead of temporary settlements will now require a proper place to stay. VSSM has been making efforts to ensure that the families staying in

the settlements that stand on the government waste-land are allotted plots to build homes but it takes years for an application to turn into a reality.

In the coming year we plan to make maximum applications along with a proposal for allotment of plots to these families. In the past, every time we talked about allotment of plots the local authorities asked us to file applications. It is another

matter that such applications are seldom considered. At present we have 1191 pending applications for allotment of plots. Nonetheless we shall do what the officials are asking us to do, file applications!!! And once we file applications we would share the data with the government officials and question them how much are they willing to expedite the matters since we have filed the applications!!! ●

## **VSSM's Continuous Lobbying Eases The Process of Obtaining Caste Certificates**

One of the most grueling tasks for the address-less nomadic communities when it comes to accessing various citizenry rights and government schemes has been obtaining identity proofs and *c i t i z e n r y d o c u m e n t s*. Unfortunately, until now these communities possessed none. Although the efforts by VSSM have made it feasible for these communities to acquire such documents, still a lot needs to be done on this front. When it comes to filing for allotment of residential plots a Caste Certificate is mandatory document that needs to be attached with the application. Now to acquire a Caste Certificate the applicants need to submit school leaving certificate of his/her father. Where as the fact is almost all of these applicants or the generations before them have never been to school. So how does one attach a caste-certificate. Over the years we have struggled a lot to convince the

local authorities that for the nomads such a pre-requisite is difficult to suffice.

As a result of our persistent requests, recently the government has eased the norms while filing for Caste Certificates for the nomadic and de-notified communities. Now the applicant will need to attach his/her school leaving certificate or if need be some relatives' school leaving certificate. The number of other proofs that had to be attached have also gone down requiring any one from Voter ID card, ration card or electricity bill.

Such modifications are not only easy boon for the nomads but for our team as well, as it will fast track the entire process of filling the form to filing the applications. We are grateful to all the government authorities for their empathetic approach and the support they have provided by modifying such rules. ●

## The Thirst for Education is Surfacing

April 2016 to August 2016



Excellent performance in curricular activities by VSSM's - Unnati Girls Hostel Daughters.

### Background

Education and the lack of it is one of the primary reasons behind the collective regression of the nomadic and de-notified tribes. And educating the children of the nomads is one of the most complex challenges that VSSM battles every day. The issue is not just about access or administrative will to enable the children of the nomads receive education, it is also about the abject poverty of the parents, their medieval mindsets, the child's unwillingness to adhere to some basic pre-requisites to initiate formal learning and much more. One can compel the executive to work

towards ensuring these children enjoy the Rights are entitled to as the citizens of this country. But how to tackle the parents who just aren't prepared to listen what is good for their children's future. Convincing the parents is the toughest part of educating the children of the nomadic tribes. Yes, we have come a long way and things are changing for better. In some nomadic communities, which did not have a single school-going child now makes lifestyle changes to accommodate their child's school schedule in their daily routine. To an entire generation of girls in need of special care, staying in hostel and receiving

education that promises them a brighter future. But the change happening is very gradual and we are afraid these children do not have time to wait for things to change.

The Bridge-School Program by VSSM and its efforts to mainstream the children in government schools have brought lot of nomadic children to the threshold of schools but there are thousands of children for whom access to government school is simply not possible because the settlements they live in are very far from a revenue village when these schools are located or simply because their parents remain consistently moving or the villagers aren't prepared to allow these children in government school!!! As a result, a few years back VSSM initiated its first hostel at Doliya, gradually this alternate worked out the best because it ensured close monitoring and consistency in education. Most importantly the dropout rate

decreased and more parents began demanding hostels for their children. VSSM, thus initiated a few more hostels in various parts of Gujarat that had high concentration of nomadic populations. Since the hostels were not at a great distance from their settlements, this arrangement was convenient for parents but proved to be challenging for VSSM when it came to administration and monitoring. With Doliya Hostel running at its full capacity and incapable to accommodate any more children we were required to think for other options. This is when we decided to relocate all the children at one facility as it would help in bringing down our administration cost and facilitate closer monitoring of the program closely.

**At present we have accommodated these children and relocated them at our hostel.**

### The Consistent Support by Sadvichar Parivar Trust

Setting Up Of Unnati And Vatsalya – The Twin Hostels By VSSM

The support Sadvichar Parivar Trust (SPT) has provided VSSM all through these years is difficult to express in words. Right from hosting us in our initial years to allotting us 2.75 acres of land to construct an education enclave in Uvarsad, a village situated near Gandhinagar. SPT has stood by VSSM like a rock,



Uvarsad Hostel Foundation Stone laying Ceremony



providing it all the space it needs to function smoothly and carry on with its activities. A couple of years back SPT spared part of its land to allow VSSM to build its office and later when the need to have a safe and separate space to accommodate girls with special care emerged the board of SPT permitted us to construct a hostel right besides VSSM's Ahmedabad office. This girls hostel has been named UNNATI and currently houses 36 girls from some of the extremely vulnerable section of nomadic communities.

The 175 children studying in Doliya had to be moved to other premises because of space crunch in Doliya. Initially it was planned that we would be moving all the hostels operated by VSSM to Uvarsad once the campus is built and fully functional but that thought will have to wait as obtaining the required land clearances to commence the construction is taking time and might slightly delay the project. As a stopgap plan SPT offered us access to its vacant campus in Naroda.

In June 2016, VSSM moved all the children from Doliya to the hostel it initiated in Naroda. The hostel has been christened VATSALYA and currently houses 263 children. VSSM had planned to enroll 300 children and informed parents across the settlements to send their children to which we received an overwhelming response when 653 children applied for admission to this

hostel. We have selected the most needy and deserving amongst them.

In the coming years if we feel the Uvarsad hostel might not be able to accommodate all the admission, SPT has offered us to continue using the campus as long as we need. If the current arrangement works out well we might choose not to relocate the elder children to Uvarsad and continue with the Vatsalya Hostel at Naroda.

## BATTLING THE ODDS

### Community mindsets- the two extremes

One of the major reasons for the educational deprivation of the children of the nomadic communities is the primitive mindset of its community members. While large sections of the nomadic tribes are convinced that there is no need to educate their children there are a few hundred who feel education will allow their children more opportunities for a better tomorrow.

We thought we should share with you the two instances we experienced during past couple of months that represent the two extreme mindsets within these communities...

**Kamlaben Gadaliya** was at VSSM's office to drop her sons Mangal and Kamlesh both of whom ran away without informing from the newly initiated Vatsalya hostel. "Ben, we have given them birth, but



Kamlaben with her children.

you are their true parent because you have cared to educate them. We Gadaliya are considered to be tough hearted people however it was with great difficulty and a heavy heart I chose to send my children to this hostel. Ahmedabad is quite far from Wankaner you see!! But my boys proved to be worthless, you cared for them like a mother and yet they decide to run away from school without informing anyone. You must have experienced so much stress worrying about the whereabouts of my children. When Valjibhai called up to convey that the boys had not reached back to the hostel more than them I worried about was you, how would you have felt!! You must have thought that Kamla's sons are useless. The moment they arrived in the settlement I beaten them up..they simply don't get it what will happen of them if they do not study.. we have endured so much of pain because we never got to go to school. We want our children to study and have a better future. We work hard to ensure they remain in school and look at these boys they do not want

to study. I have told them if they do not want to remain in school they have no place in the house so do not return back home.." a visibly upset Kamlaben continued speaking and crying at the same time.

Seeing her cry the atmosphere in the office turned a bit heavy but we were glad to see such commitment from a parent to educate her children. The sons while assuring not to repeat the mistake tried comforting her. They even promised me such episodes will not happen again and they will focus on studies! Rakesh who happens to be the elder to Mangal and Kamlesh also wanted to join the hostel. "Ben, enroll me in the hostel as well I too want to study!!" he requested and his mother also joined him. We have decided to enroll him, let's see how much he can study..

This shows how much efforts parents are putting in to ensure their children study and take very objective decisions, not to shy away from correcting and scolding their children.

Contradictory to this is the case of Ilaben Devipujak.

**Ilaben** and her husband **Jivabhai Marwadi (Devipujak)** are residents of Vavadi area of Rajkot. Vavadi has a large settlement of nomadic families. The settlement did not have a single school-going child. VSSM's Kanubhai began teaching the children here and gradually changing the lives of the families. Along with the children he



Jivabhai and his family

was also working with the parents and communities residing in the settlement. Kanubhai who also belongs to one of the nomadic tribes worked tirelessly to elevate the conditions of families in this and many other settlements. Jivabhai earned his living as daily wage earner. His addiction to alcohol was one of the major reasons of disputes between the couple. Kanubhai counseled Jivabhai into giving up his addiction and referred him for an interest free loan from VSSM's Swavalamban programme. He began his venture of selling seasonal (in demand) products. The living conditions of family also improved and for the first time the family had some money in the house. Jivabhai also began taking interest in the matters of community accompanying Kanubhai at various

government offices to follow up on the applications. At times like this it dwelled upon him how different his life would have been had he got an opportunity to study. As a result he insisted his children go to the bridge-school operated by VSSM. While the bridge-schools initiates the children into education the parents have to enroll their children into any of the hostel or ashram-shala. In 2015 Jivabhai decided to enroll his daughters in Doliya hostel. But his decision triggered never-ending fights between the couple. Ilaben was completely opposed to the idea of sending the girls to hostel. In spite of the opposition Jivabhai came and dropped his daughters Aarti, Champa and son Hira to the Doliya hostel. Back home the domestic arguments increased and home did

not feel like home anymore for Jivabhai. "I just don't feel like going home at the end of the day, my wife just keeps dragging the issue of our girls studying in Doliya!!" Jivabhai would often share with Kanubhai.

After the summer vacation of 2016, when the girls had to come to Vatsalya hostel, Ilaben brought the house down, "Since when did it become important to educate the girls, the women in my community are making it impossible for me because my daughters are living away from home, once a girl comes of age she cannot be living away from her parents, I do not want them to go anywhere, if you still choose to do so I will burn myself!!" is how she argued and threatened. Many of us intervened asking her to change her decision. But she did not budge. Hence the girls were pulled out of school. But Jivabhai sent Hira because his wife's arguments were only for their daughters. Ilaben had no reasons for Hira. So until she can find that Hira will continue to study

while his sisters Aarti and Champa will watch him from distance.. The community's belief that girls should remain constrained to house once they enter puberty hurts the future of thousands of girls like Aarti and Champa...

### **Tackling the disappointing approach of parents and arguments they pose....**

The Vatsalya hostel has many children whose either single or both parents were compelled by us to send their children to hostel. Most of these children were used as extra hands for begging, helping with chores or earning while parents remained busy with nothing important or kept procreating. The parents of these children pose a lot of hurdles before us, want their children back because they have lost their means to earning livelihood. Everyday, the team of Vatsalya has to tackle one or the other such parent who turns up at the hostel to take the child back. Some of the



Prayers performed by our Vatsalya hostel children



arguments they come up with are...

- We do not like it at home without our children.
- Ever since the child has come to hostel, his/her siblings have remained ill because they miss him/her.
- The mothers especially pose bizarre compulsion, "Bring back my child or I'll immolate myself!!"
- Our child ails of a serious illness; we will bring him/her back once he/she is few years older.
- After our child left home for hostel, our house has been cursed and the goddess hasn't permitted this decision of sending him/her for studies. We will have to take our child back.
- My child is crying a lot so I need to take her/him back.
- We have a social function and presence of all family members are compulsory. We'll take the child and bring her back once the function is over. (100% fake reason)

In short there are hundred such reasons that parents frame up and come-up asking us to send their children back...its easy to send them back but we consider the child's future choose to do otherwise.

### Challenges encountered while acclimatizing the children to a new environment

- Theft - many of these children are habituated to stealing hence, one or the other child keeps losing her belonging and the team remains busy scavenging for it..
- The nomads are people of few needs and hardly own anything, nothing more than a change pair of clothes and couple of vessels. Most of the children came to the hostel without footwear. VSSM managed to mobilize donation of flip-flops for these children. Now the issue is they aren't used to wearing any footwear and hence keep forgetting their slippers wherever they take them out. It's just been 2 months and we have already given 3 pairs of footwear to each child.
- Same it is with clothes. They find it difficult to carry and maintain new pair of clothes. In two months, they have torn their clothes so badly that it is difficult to repair them.
- Lack of water results in poor hygiene amongst the nomads. They aren't used to daily bathing hence the team at the hostel needs to keep tab if everyone has had their bath.
- There are numerous instances of infighting. We had to rush one

boy to the hospital when he received severe head injury while fighting with a fellow hostelite. The wound was deep and required the doctor to take few stitches.

- Since the atmosphere at the school they are enrolled is unfamiliar, they do not like going to school. Every morning when it is time to head for school numerous children complain of various aches or hide themselves to be able to miss the school.
- They do not like the daily homework so complains of hands aching are normal.
- Jyoti who has arrived from Rajkot has a habit of eating mud. At Vatsalya she began eating small grains of concrete. When this resulted into severe stomach ache she confessed about her habit. We took her to the hospital and got the primary investigations done. Along with some medicines the doctor has advised her to be fed banana etc. so that the stones are excreted. But if that does not happen she will be required to undergo a surgery. We communicated this to her parents to which her father Amrutbhai replied, "How will we manage to come, you go ahead and do whatever is to be done!!"
- Few children who did not like getting into a set routine and were forcefully sent by parents ran away directly from the

school. Until we could trace the boys the few hours remained nerve wrecking for the entire team.

These are few of the challenges we have been addressing however, the child-friendly team of VSSM is managing the situation with much care and patience ensuring that the children begin to like the new environment and fall in the routine with ease.

*Amidst all such instances a ray of hope beams out when we listen children talk wisely for their age. As did our little Arvind who has come to Vatsalya from a Fulvadee settlement in Banaskantha's Kaakar village narrate, "it is very natural all of these kids will not like it here, all these years they have begged and eaten, obviously the variety of begged food is huge and we get to taste so much one single meal, my father never allowed me to go to school, he feared that if I received education I'll not pick up the 'jholi' again!! But why do I need to pick a jholi if I have received education. I will find it difficult to make my parents understand but I have decided to never pick a jholi again in my life!!" (Jholi is a cloth bag that beggars use to put their alms.) Such young boy and such determination and clarity of thought amazed us.*

## Creating The Necessary Logistics For The Vatsalya Hostel



*Daughters of Vatsalya Hostel*

While the Unnati Girls Hostel functioning smoothly, the past few months we have exploited over energies with the setting and initiating the Vatsalya Hostel at Naroda. Right from talking about the hostel with the communities, to repairing it as the campus and the building that was to house the children had remained unused all these years it required some major repairs which we undertook before the children arrived. Another mammoth task was to arrange for the admissions of the children in the nearby private schools and mobilizing resources for food and other supplies. Some major works carried out to establish the logistics of Vatsalya hostel are –

**School Admissions** - The children who have been admitted to the

Vatsalya Hostel have been given admissions in N. V. Vidyalaya, Nutan High School, Anand School and Kanya Shala. While the girls studying in Unnati are enrolled in H. B. Kapadiya and Anand School.

It should be mentioned that the children enjoy going to school here, as they do not face discrimination, which is otherwise rampant in rural government schools. On the contrary, the teachers in these schools shower lot of love and affection on these kids.

**Transport/Commute to the School** – The 36 girls staying in Unnati Hostel are ferried to school in a private van but managing the transport of 263 children of Vatsalya Hostel in 4 different schools has been quite a challenge. The distance is more, the city traffic

is going bad to worse and it isn't safe for small kids to walk that distance. Hence, to address this issue we have purchased a School Bus to help us transport children to and fro from their schools.

**Bunk Beds for children-** We have also purchased Bunk-Beds for the Vatsalya hostel so as to accommodate more number of children in restricted space..



*Children ready to go to school*

roti making sessions. Hence, we decided to invest in a machine that rolls and roasts the rotis. This way, we have reduced our manpower dependency for rolling rotis as it was the single most challenging task for the cooks.

Expecting the children to help with these tasks is also inappropriate as they have morning school and need to leave the campus by 6:45 in the morning.

**Purchasing a Steam Cooker** – We have also decided to invest in a steam cooker which will help us steam cook Dal-Rice and vegetable in one go thus helping us save fuel and time and reduce the workload of kitchen team.

**Maintaining school uniforms** - is another issue and especially the white ones. The children aren't accustomed carrying white clothes and the school has white frocks as uniform. We have requested the school authorities to permit them wear denim and t-shirts which are easy to maintain and carry.



*Bunk Bed Facility*

### Installing Roti-Making Machine

– The children at Vatsalya have a very robust appetite. Most of them have never experienced so much food security or have always begged for food. They do not like anything else other than Roti and Bhakhari. Every meal required making rotis from 70 kg flour just for 180 children. In just 2 months 6 cooks left the job here. Since the kids did not like aloo-poha, upma or anything else, the cooks were required to get up at 3:45 in the morning and begin with marathon



The table below depicts the standard-wise break up of children staying with Vatsalya and Unnati hostels

Vatsalya Hostel				Unnati Hostel
Sr. No.	Standard	Girls	Boys	Girls
1	First	4	1	2
2	Second	3	2	5
3	Third	3	7	5
4	Fourth	12	17	4
5	Fifth	13	23	12
6	Sixth	14	39	3
7	Seventh	22	22	3
8	Eight	6	18	-
9	Ninth	2	17	-
10	Tenth	1	20	-
11	Eleventh	1	1	-
12	Twelfth	-	2	2
13	B Com.	-	1	-
14	B Sc.	-	1	-
15	B.A.	-	1	-
16	S.T.P. Course	-	10	-
<b>Total Girls &amp; Boys</b>		<b>81</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Total Students</b>		<b>299</b>		

### Child Sponsorship

Starting this year, VSSM has launched a sponsorship program to encourage its well-wishers and donors sponsor the educational expenses of the children staying with the hostels. The rising food prices and other operational costs make it difficult for us to sustain the program without assured commitments. As of now our well-wishers have sponsored education of 8 girls of Unnati hostel and we are requesting more individuals to come forward and sponsor a child and help her fulfill her dreams....



Children of Vatsalya Hostel

## Swavlamban Initiative

From inter-dependence to independence April 2016 to June 2016

### Introduction

It is often said that one should have a purpose in life; every sunrise should have a reason to look forward... Ironically, the once thriving and cheerful nomadic communities, have lost their purpose in life. They have been rendered 'useless' by the new world order that is all about industries and modern technology. The nomadic professions that required dexterous skills have become absolutely obsolete in this industrial world.

The emergence of such a society has created unique set of challenges for thousands of nomadic families skilled at hundred different occupations in the past. Since their trades have become useless, these families have lost the purpose in life. Most of them have no alternate skill-set or educations that can enable them earn a dignified living. The utter neglect towards these communities has pushed them into such harsh deprivation that most of them have chosen begging as a mean to earn living!!! And, the rest are



Owing independent vocations with help of VSSM's interest free loan program

clinging to their dying professions or earn living as laborers. Over the years, VSSM has worked to pull these families out of the clutches of abject poverty however, a lot needs to be done both at the policy and social level for the inclusive growth of these communities.

The **SWAVALAMBAN** program was launched in March 2014 as a response to mitigate the challenges, the families faced to earn a dignified living. Under the program, VSSM offers interest-free loans to individuals and families from nomadic communities willing to start their own independent ventures. Thus far, VSSM has offered loans amounting to Rs.1,82,27,343/- to 821 individuals. Currently loans worth Rs.1,08,24,465/- are in rotation and continued efforts are made to expand the scope of this program that eventually helps the nomads elevate their standard of living.

### Opening of some more avenues..

The Swavalamban program has been conceptualized to support the various livelihood initiatives of the nomadic communities. The support had to be essentially for livelihood so as to prevent them from falling into the debt traps of private

moneylenders. But the nomadic and many other marginalized communities incur debt to meet their social, educational and other requirements and no financial institutions are ready to support them in absence of documents and guarantors. Since last few months many nomadic families have approached VSSM with requests for financial assistance to meet their needs for house construction, medical expenses or educational expenses. The communities perceive VSSM to be their 'Guardian Angle' and rely upon us in times of need. There are some private companies who have ventured into micro finance while their interest rates are extremely high, their modus operandi in case of missed or delayed payment of installments also remains very harsh (mostly done by goons).

As a result of the frequent requests, VSSM had to begin supporting the families to help them meet their social and other expenses. As it can be understood from the trailing table carrying the data, as the moment, the number of beneficiaries isn't very high but we will be required to increase the scope as we are regularly approached for loans for the reasons mentioned in the table.

No	Broad Areas for support	No of beneficiaries	Loan Amount
1	Education	7	2,27,500
2	Medical	6	1,55,000
3	Social function	2	50,000
4	Construction of house	71	11,60,843
<b>Total</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>15,93,343</b>



Families received Loan support from Kalpur Bank.

### Quantitative data reflecting amount lent

The table below charts out the purpose of loans extended, the number of beneficiaries and amount of loan extended during the period of April 2016 to August 2016.

No.	Purpose for loan Livelihood Support	No. of beneficiaries	Total Amount
1	Cattle-farming	10	3,05,000
2	Purchase Camel Cart	5	1,50,000
3	Masonry- Centering	1	30,000
4	Cloth Material Selling	2	70,000
5	Cutlery Kiosk	55	8,97,000
6	Set up fabrication Unit	2	80,000
7	Farming / Agriculture	1	50,000
8	Broom Stick Business	4	40,000
9	Purchase of Computer	1	10,000



10	Small Grocery Store	9	2,65,000
11	Hand cart / Bicycle cart	2	20,000
12	Lace / Border Retail	3	55,000
13	Mosquito Nets Trading	1	30,000
14	Purchase second-hand vehicle	5	2,10,000
15	Purchase musical instruments	2	50,000
16	Plastic tub & buckets business	1	30,000
17	Purchase Plastic Hydraulic Machine	1	48,000
18	Saree Business	1	20,000
19	Seasonal business	2	50,000
20	Tea stall	3	85,000
21	Tea leaves sales	1	30,000
22	Timber Trading	1	10,000
23	Trading old tins	1	5,000
24	Vegetable hand cart	3	50,000
25	Bedsheet business	2	80,000
26	Bamboo work	5	1,30,000
27	POP Idols business	5	2,10,000
28	Educational Loan	4	1,47,500
29	Loan to meet social expenses	1	20,000
30	Loan to support construction of house	23	4,50,000
31	Loans to Rehabilitate families of Vadia	26	11,50,000
32	Medical Aid	3	80,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>186</b>	<b>48,57,500</b>

### Initiative to rehabilitate residents of Vadia

During the process to find alternate livelihoods for the residents of Vadia the biggest challenge we came across was to free the families from the debt traps of the moneylenders or the pimps. The families were so entrenched in the web spread by these cunning men that it was an

impossible task for them to work a way out on their own. Since all the families of Vadia lead a very isolated life, except the pimps no one else came to their rescue during the times of need. The interest on such loans is always too high and it is impossible for such families to repay

the loan in a lifetime. As a result, the daughters in the family were pushed into prostitution to repay the debt.

After thorough contemplation, VSSM decided to begin extending interest free loans to these families and free them from the traps of the private moneylenders. Until now we have extended loans amounting to Rs. 39,30,000/- to 91 families. Of

course the repayment remains gradual as the families are struggling with new way of living, are breaking away from the age-old shackles and trying to workout their new ventures. The families do not have fixed income as yet and struggle to pay back but we had been mindful of this situation and it was a calculated risk we have taken. ●

### Linkages with The Kalupur Commercial Cooperative Bank Ltd.

The absence of documents to support a loan application makes it impossible for the nomadic and other marginalized communities to access loan and financial assistance from the funding institutes. As a result these communities have to retort to private moneylenders and fall into the debt trap. Since past couple of years, VSSM has worked towards training the members of the nomadic communities to access the services of banks. The families are trained to form a habit of regular savings, open bank accounts and deposit their saving with the banks.

The Kalupur Commercial Cooperative Bank Ltd. (KCCB) has been a will-wishing partner of VSSM. They were much aware of the conditions of these families and the challenges they face if they have to access loan from a bank. As a result, the senior decision makers of the bank came forward with the suggestion to support these families. Initially, it started with

proving support to build houses and as the experience remained quite satisfactory, they extended the support to individuals willing to access loans for livelihood ventures. Of course, these loans aren't absolutely interest free, an interest of 10.5% is charged, the installments are worked as per the convenience of the recipient while the paper-work involved is also very nominal. The bank has also broadened its criterion and grants loans to other marginalized communities as well. This year the bank plans to lend around 4 crore rupees and the nomadic families staying in and around Ahmedabad are taking maximum benefit of it.

Until now KCCB has supported 403 families with the loan amounts ranging from Rs. 15,000/- to 50,000/-. It has also eased down many of its pre-requisites to ensure these families do not find it difficult to receive loans. ●

## VSSM helped them to start Independent Business



*Vashrambhai Raval with his loading AutoRickshaw*

**Vashrambhai Raval** is a resident of Banaskantha's Kankrej town. He earned his living through selling vegetables on a camel cart. Selling vegetables on a camel cart meant covering two-three villages through the day. The income he earned daily from moving in just 3 villages remained was barely enough to meet the daily household expenses. And if the camel fell ill Vashrambhai had to remain home for the day. To escape from such uncertainties he felt the need of buying a tempo rickshaw but finding enough funds remained a challenge.

Since he was aware of VSSM's Swavalamban initiative he contacted Naranbhai and requested

for a loan of Rs. 30,000/-. On availing the loan, he bought a second-hand tempo rickshaw and began selling potatoes, onions, bed sheets, blankets anything that earned him well. The rickshaw enables him to cover 5 villages in a day and the income is good as well. Vashrambhai has 3 sons and hopes to provide good education to all his children.

**Deepakbhai Bajaniya** hails from Jaspur village of Kalol block in Gandhinagar. Right from his early childhood, Deepakbhai was found of playing musical instruments and with time decided to make a career out of it. He has trained himself in playing Octapad. Over the period, he began receiving invitations to play Octapad at various musical



*Deepakbhai with his Octapad*

gatherings. Deepakbhai needed funds to invest in an Octapad but until that could happen, he performed on a hired instrument. But the rental for such instruments are so high that most of all that Deepakbhai earned was spent on paying the rent.

Deepakbhai has some amount that he had saved over the period of time and required around Rs. 20,000/- to buy a brand new Octapad. He applied to VSSM for a loan and from the amount sanctioned he bought a new Octapad. "There were times I had work but did not have the instrument cause someone else had rented it but now I have both, work and instrument. At times I had to say no to the assignment because I did not have instrument. But now I need not have to worry about finding the instrument and work is easily flowing in and income is good as." narrated Deepakbhai.

**Anitaben Bajaniya** approached VSSM with a request for a loan of Rs. 30,000/-. Anitaben is a resident of Guptanagar in Ahmedabad. Her family of 7 can barely survive on the sole income of her husband, requiring her to work as domestic help in the bungalows located in her neighborhood. However, working as a household help was not something she liked. She desired to have a venture where she could be her own boss. Like her fellow community members, she also wanted to begin her business of selling imitation jewelry, cosmetics etc. Since saving money from a single income was not possible she did not have necessary capital to invest and her desires could not take wings.

Anitaben met up with VSSM's Ilaben with a request for loan. Once the loan was sanctioned, she bought a handcart and the products to sell from a wholesale market. She began





Anitaben with her hand cart

selling her products through a daily market near her home in Guptanagar. The income has been very good, along with paying the installments regularly she is also began saving a small amount in Kalupr Bank.

The Savalamban Programme has enabled hundreds of such families improve their standard of living. VSSM is extremely thankful to all of you for being instrumental in bringing such remarkable change in the lives of these poor families. ●

### Challenges foreseen

Micro-finance has always been a neglected sector. However, since last few months, an interesting trend we have noticed is, arrival of private companies in this field. The reason we have come to understand is the ignorant, unassuming and honest beneficiaries. The risk involved isn't much and it is always easy to intimidate poor and meek people. Such private companies are never interested in helping or supporting poor; all they want is their capital and interest back. Goons, who do not think twice before hurting anyone, are hired to do the recovery of loans. In one of the slums of Ahmedabad, we happen to come across 2-3 banks and 6-7 such private companies involved in providing finance. The purpose for

seeking loan is never explored, all these companies are doing is making individuals and families reel under constant debt.

The Reserve Bank of India has also made it compulsory for the banks to extend micro finance. Hence suddenly institutions offering finance has suddenly increased and the poor unaware of how to use the loans offered to them become victims of excess funds. The conditions should have improved but lack of financial planning and guidance is having a reverse impact on this otherwise thoughtful and wise proposition. The upcoming plans by VSSM will also need to include financial mentoring for the nomadic families living in the urban areas. ●

### Upcoming plans

There is immense need for financial aid and loans from the vast populations of nomadic communities who aspire to change their economic lot. VSSM as an organization has a limited resources and reach hence, it is virtually impossible for us to meet the vast expectations. This is why we are under process to identify a bank that can cater to the specific needs of the nomads and help establish a smooth working relation with it.

In the coming months, the team of

VSSM will be focusing on identifying 100 more individuals from poorest nomadic families who need to alter their livelihoods and guide them towards achieving financial independence. The team works very cautiously to ensure that the donations, VSSM has received from its well-wishers, are judiciously used and reach the poorest of the poor. It is important that the funds do not sit idle, remain in circulation and reach to the one who deserve it the most. ●

### Our gratitude

*It would be practically impossible for VSSM to help and support thousands of nomadic families without the donations and financial support from you all. All of you have been instrumental in ensuring the nomads are able to lead their life with dignity. The entire team of VSSM and the families whom you have brought cheer will remain eternally grateful to you for your generous support.*

## Housing Initiative



*Deesa's L.P. Savaninagar built with help of Govt. & VSSM.*

### Background

The local level bureaucrats and authorities often ask to the nomads, “why do you need a house?” Well, the reply is very simple yet too complex, simple because they now need to lead settled lifestyles and complex because the need to settle down emerged because their traditional livelihoods are no longer relevant, hence they do not need to lead the itinerant lifestyles their earlier generations led. Whether we acknowledge or not but it is a truth that the government, bureaucrats and society needs to realize. These large mass of once nomadic communities now needs to lead a sedentary lifestyle

The path towards settling down thousands of these nomadic families is a mammoth and uphill task, its a task that is badly

intertwined with resistance and apathy. Right from the application for a Voter ID card to possession of plots to construction of a house, one thing that accompanies the nomads all along in the societal opposition and indifference.

Inspite of all these challenges we have collectively embarked upon a journey to create abodes for these communities. Living in a house is the most precious dream, they have seen; homes where they will raise, care and nurture their families; homes that will protect their families from elements and abuse. To experience the joy of living in a house of our dreams is matchless and we feel honored to be instrumental in supporting these families live their dream.

Nonetheless, we wouldn't have been able to experience this honor

without the support of you all – our well-wishers, friends and government officials who have provided persistent support to this cause. Each house that is being built has been possible only because of the collective efforts of the compassionate officials, our caring donors and the untiring community members who work the hardest towards realizing this dream.

Untill now the efforts of VSSM have been instrumental in building homes for 265 families while there are three upcoming settlements where construction of houses is underway. Through this report we try to throw some light on the progress made viz a viz the daily obstacles the entire effort faces.

### The Vadee Settlement At Dharngadhra

The ban on their traditional occupation of snake charming has brought the nomadic community of Vadi to a brink. With no other skill to earn living, the Vadi families survive on begging. There are few who don the costume of Sadhu and engage in astrology!! The Vadi families of Dhrangadhra settlement survive merely on begging. The government has allotted plots to 160 of these families, 153 of whom have initiated the construction of the houses while 7 families have walked out of the settlement because of some internal disputes.

153 families had began constructing their homes out of which construction of 115 is under progress

- 52 houses have been covered with a proper roof
- 4 houses have completed until lintel level
- 18 houses have crossed the lintel level
- 6 houses have finished with coping task
- 27 houses have completed foundation works and began with coping
- 8 houses have finished foundation works.

The work for adjoining sanitation units is also progressing simultaneously with -

- 87 sanitation units have been completely built while 50 of these units have built the sanitation pits. The tiling works for these 87 sanitation units is expected to commence very soon.
- 28 families are expected to commence construction of sanitation units pretty soon.



*The ongoing construction of Vadee Settlement at Dharngadhra.*



## Concerns

30 families who have just finished construction upto plinth level received a notice from the railway department asking them to stop the construction as their houses were too near to the railway track and it required further clearances, this time from the railways. The applications for the required clearances have been filed but there have been no movement on the issue. The officials keep pushing the issue saying they will come for site-investigations. As of now, we are clueless on when is that visit going to happen!!!

Similarly, 8 of these 153 plots are located in a depression that gets flooded during monsoons. Construction on these plots is next to impossible. We have requested the authorities to give all these 38 families plots on someplace else. But that isn't happening in near future is for sure!!

The families who remain present and assist with the construction are accomplishing the task very easily but those who need to move to earn their living are finding it difficult to reach to maintain the pace of construction. Most of the Vadi community members sustain themselves on begging which requires them to be on a continuous move. Since they aren't based in their settlement in Dhrangadhra for most of the time, the construction work of their houses suffers massive delays. It should be noted that the

community members are required to devote time and labour towards the construction of their houses. It is one of the prerequisites for accessing VSSM's support and failing to do so results into unwarranted delays. The families look forward to a proper house and need money to achieve that, requiring them to wander to earn even after the construction has initiated.

## The Vansfoda Settlement in Jesda

For the 8 Vansfoda families living on the outskirts of Jesda village, life has never been a smooth ride. Surviving on crippling livelihoods and living on the margins is a norm for most Vansfoda families. The families of Jesada could only manage to get their citizenry documents after VSSM got into touch with them. VSSM helped them acquire Voter Id Cards, Ration cards, Aadhar cards, Health cards etc. Subsequently, VSSM also facilitated these families file applications for obtaining residential plots. With the sanctioning of the plots came opposition from the residents of



*Housing construction at Jesda*

Jesada who refused granting them residency to the village. The land allotted to these families is surrounded by farms hence the farmers wanted the allotted land for the purpose of farming. To mark their resentment the villagers choked the only way leading to the settlement. The harassment was so intense that the government officials had to call for police protection while removing the barricades laid on the path to the settlement.

Since then the construction of houses has commenced, the families have received Rs. 70,000/- each as construction support for the government. The families have also opted for loan of Rs. 15,000/- each from Kalupur Commercial Bank.

The concerns of the ongoing construction getting stalled because of delays in receiving installments from the government required VSSM's intervention hence, with the support from our well-wishers we have extended Rs. 1,89,311/- to these families to procure the construction material and continue the construction process on a steady pace.

## The Settlement at Juna Deesa...

The 143 nomadic families living in Juna Deesa were sanctioned residential plots in the year 2011. However, the possession to the plots came only in 2015, after lot of conflict and struggle. The vested interest groups active in Juna Deesa



*The ongoing construction of Settlement at Old Deesa.*

were hell-bent not to allow these families to settle in the town and pose lot of issues all through the years. The families had lost hope of ever getting to build a house of their own but persistent follow-ups by VSSM ensured that government take steps on the matter.

The families residing in the Juna Deesa settlement are daily wage earners and have no savings to fall back on or shell out any extra cash required for ongoing construction of their houses. This means they are required to set out to work daily and contribute to the construction cost as and when the savings becomes possible. Also to be noted is that it might not be possible to find work in JunaDeesa all the time. They are also required to migrate in search for work.

Amongst the 143 plots that have been sanctioned, 13 families have not yet commenced with the construction as 3 individuals who had been allotted plots have expired, since they do not have any heir the plots will go back to the government, 6 families have commenced the construction but

are constantly wandering for work and haven't returned back for a long time while 9 families aren't prepared to take possession of the allotted plots as they are situated in a water body that floods during monsoons. There are 9 families who have not been able to procure and submit the documents required to claim possession of the plots failing to do so means no allotment of plots!!

As a result of the above mentioned hiccups as for now only 124 families will be able to accomplish the construction of their houses. The progress of the ongoing construction is as under-

- 45 houses have been built with just the flooring remaining
- 29 houses have roof, flooring and plaster remaining
- 23 houses have reached up to lintel level.
- 27 houses reached plinth level.

#### **Status of construction for sanitation units -**

- 105 sanitation units have finished construction
- 10 sanitation units have reached lintel level
- Construction of 9 units to commence soon

30 families have opted for the design that has washroom and bathroom combined while rests have chosen to separate the washrooms from bathrooms.

It should be noted that while the community members are following the construction guidelines and



*Housing construction at Old Deesa*

design laid by VSSM, they are also making some inclusions in the design to make the house bigger to fit their large families. As a result of these modifications the construction cost and their part of contribution goes up. The families are required to mobilize the money by themselves to enable to aid the additional modifications they desire.

To understand this issues that emerges quite often we will have to understand the math behind it

1,50,000	<i>is the approximate cost of the house</i>
-45,000	<i>is the amount from government support (paid in 3 installments)</i>
-25,000	<i>is the amount VSSM supports with the help of its donors</i>
-15,500	<i>is the amount provided by V S S M t o w a r d s construction sanitation unit</i>

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64,500 *is the balance amount the families need to mobilize to construct their much desired houses.*

Most of the settlements that are currently under construction face similar set of issues and delays that result primarily due to irregular cash flow. The daily wage earning families find it challenging to mobilize an amount like Rs.64,000 on their own, they also do not have savings or other reserve cash hence the construction work progresses at a very gradual pace. They have little choice but to follow the sequence Work-Earn-Build-Repeat.

#### **Challenges Faced Due To Government And Bureaucratic Apathy**

Water and power are two most important pre-requisites to enable cost-effective and speedy construction. The settlements that are under construction are devoid of any such basic infrastructures. Once the plots get allotted VSSM begins to request for water and power connection to the plots. The families also apply in the office of the Collector for the same. The government has provision to provide connections but it is only after the construction of houses had finished. In the meantime the families have to buy water for the construction purpose and this takes a major chunk of their construction cost.

In JunaDeesa high-tension cables pass through the settlement, relocating them is crucial for the construction of the houses in the settlement. We have made numerous requests for the same but the file seems to be caught up in

some bureaucratic web and we are waiting for the same to make its way out!!! For now we do not know when is that going to happen. Nonetheless, frequent requests did result into installation of 7 solar powdered streetlights in the JunaDeesa settlement.

#### **Upcoming Plans**

The 10 Vansfoda families of Ranuj village and 10 Saraniya and Vadi families of Chanasma village have recently been allotted residential plots and the permission to commence construction on these plots. The process of applying under the government's housing scheme will be done shortly. Once the applications are cleared we will begin with construction of houses for these families.

#### **Thank You For Turning Their Dream Into A Reality...**

The nomadic communities have never lived under anything more than a tarpaulin sheet or a jute bags sewed together, there are communities who survive merely under the roofs made of old sarees...and these are the families/communities who for the first time in generations are building a house of their own. Yes it is taking time, things are getting delayed and not progressing as fast as we want but there are some very valid and unavoidable reasons behind these delays. We are grateful for your empathy and understanding and can't thank you all enough for making their dream a reality... ●



## Interventions in Vadia

Since many decades the women of Vadia have sustained their families through the traditional occupation of prostitution. An occupation that a few women voluntarily embraced later got imposed on the girls born in this village. As time progressed, the occupation became intertwined with the community's identity in such a manner that it has been impossible to think of the women of Vadia otherwise. Ever since VSSM took baby-steps in this village, with a commitment to allow the women here to lead a dignified living, it triggered a mind-set change of the community members. A lot of families realized other possibilities and decided not to force this traditional occupation on the women in their families. Of course not all families have given up prostitution, there are a few still practice it but majority of the families have now chosen other livelihood options. The men are finding it challenging to work; the pimps are trying their best to make the lives of these families miserable since they chose to brake away from the clutches of debt slavery of the worst kind!! VSSM has intensified its efforts to provide all possible support to these families and assist them establish their lives afresh.

### Education Initiatives for the children of Vadia

In 2014, 35 boys from Vadia arrived

at the home of VSSM's Shardaben in Tharad. The reason, these boys wanted to go to school, as the defunct school in their village was incapable to meet their learning needs. The boys were enrolled at a school in Tharad. Within a year, there was a noticeable change in the behavior and approach of these boys as they had an opportunity to socialize with the outer world. Their parents were also pleased with the outcome. Our concern, however, was to educate the girls of Vadia as we reasoned that once the girls begin going to school, they would have a different worldview and understand immense possibilities that lie ahead of them. But, educating the girls was not as easy as it was for the boys. The teaching staff at the Vadia school was too judgmental in its approach towards the girls. While on the other hand, when it came to sending the girls to hostel, the parents were scared to let go of their girls into an environment they weren't familiar or did not trust! As a result, we decide to initiate a hostel in Ahmedabad especially for the girls of Vadia. Since June 2015 the hostel began functioning in VSSM's head office premises. 27 girls from Vadia are receiving education whilst studying in a leading high school of the city.

The initial period of acclimatizing the girls in the hostel has been tumultuous, as these young

daughters were never exposed to any environment other than Vadia. Use of foul language, foul play, fist and verbal fights over petty issues were the rules they practiced in the hostel. In spite of studying at the primary school in Vadia the children could barely read or

write. However, the loving team at the hostel and the compassionate teachers of the school patiently worked on these girls. Within few months the girls were not only participating but excelling at various co-curricular activities organized at their school, showing progress in studies and were gradually learning the rules of community living. The change in the outlook and approach of these girls has also been possible because we have enrolled girls from other nomadic communities in this hostel along with them. Once they began to live and interact with individuals from settlements and communities other than their own, a transition in the mindsets became possible.

Apart from working on the girls we also had to tackle the rigid attitude of the parents who had in the beginning, willingly sent the girls to the hostel but had suddenly experienced mindset change and wanted to take their daughters back. The threat they faced was from the



*Vadia's Farmer Bababhai*

pimps that manipulated the minds of the parents. The parents were always on the fault-finding mission and look-out for opportunities to withdraw their daughters from the hostel. We did suffer a setback when, 8 of the 35 girls enrolled initially were taken back by their parents following immense pressure from the pimps.

Yes the pressure is immense and we aren't always sure of what challenges lie ahead, but the families living under abject poverty and deprivation have now chosen to put in hard-work and carve a different life for themselves and their daughters. It is a path filled with challenges and uncertainties but at least these families have decided they shall walk that path and we are glad they have made that decision!!

As it is with the girls, 22 boys of Vadia have also been enrolled at one of the VSSM operated hostels. They are progressing well in their studies.

### Extending loans to free the community from debt bondage

Since as long as they can remember, the women of Vadia have been the sole-earners in their families and if they had to be removed from their traditional trade, these women need to have better alternates to earn a dignified living. it may sound blunt, but these women need money to keep themselves and their families afloat and to escape the prying eyes of the pimps. The men belonging to this village and community have never worked hard to sustain their families. They remained busy gambling or playing a role of pimp for their sisters or daughters!! It was crucial for the men to begin contributing to the family's income. Apart from sustaining the family, money was also required to meet unexpected social or other emergency needs. It was this urgent need of finances that the pimps took advantage, in turn the price that these families pay is life-long debt bondage and later initiating the small/young girls in the family into prostitution.

After the VSSM facilitated mass marriage ceremony in Vadia, a lot of families had expressed the will to break free of the profession they followed and save their daughters from a life of hell. VSSM has stood beside them so far and promised to continue doing so. 91 families were helped with interest free loans amounting to Rs. 39,30,000 to initiate their new livelihoods, to pay

off the money they owed the pimps and free them from debt-bondage which ultimately resulted into pushing the daughters into lifelong slavery of the worst kind.

At present 90 of the 150 families staying in Vadia have freed themselves from the traditional practice of prostitution while trying to make living by starting their own ventures, farming or working as manual labourers.

Apart from this, the other significant change visible is the number of women practicing prostitution. In 2005, there were 150 women associated with this profession, the current number of which is 30. Most of the women have entered into live-in relationships with the partner of their choice.

While the best possible outcome is rescuing the small girls who have had been forced into the profession before the change began to happen. These girls have been approaching VSSM for help; in last 6 months we have rescued 7 daughters between the ages of 16 to 19 years. These girls have entered into a live-in relationship with the customers, they might have liked at some point of time.

### Facilitating the construction of Sanitation Units

VSSM has helped with the construction of 90 homes in Vadia. These homes did not have a sanitation unit but when the government announced assistance

for construction of sanitation units under the Swachha Bharat Abhiyan it was decided these families will apply for the same. But the precondition under the scheme was that the

government would reimburse the amount once the applicant submits a picture of him/her standing besides a completed sanitation unit near the house they own (meaning the plot has to be on their name). The families of Vadia do not have so much money on hand to accomplish such project and many of the families in Vadia live on the farms that have been given to them by the government so many of these families aren't eligible to receive support from the government. Earlier VSSM has supported construction of 60 sanitation units for the families of Vadia, 40 of these do become eligible to receive government support for the constructed sanitation units. If their applications are approved, the amount will be passed on to the families living on farms and we shall commence with the construction of sanitation units for them.

### Desilting and deepening the lake at Vadia

In 1963, the government allotted



208 acres of agricultural land to help the families of Vadia earn a dignified living. But the issue was of water. With no irrigation facilities the families did not venture into farming. The government did drill 2 bore-wells but that too had maintenance issues. Later, VSSM drilled another bore-well and some families did start farming, but water has always been an issue in this region and the water tables are continuously depleting. Infact the region has been declared 'Dark Zone'. The region needs focused water management and rainwater harvesting efforts. We cannot continue rampant exploitation of one of the most precious natural resources on this planet!!

Starting last year, VSSM has initiated water-management activities in the region, starting with the deepening of a small lake in Vadia. However, the flash floods of



July 2015 brought in lot of mud in the lake requiring us to desilt and deepen it once again.

### **Supporting the HIV infected women of Vadia**

The HIV infected women of Vadia have given up their profession and their health is continuously deteriorating. VSSM is putting in efforts to ensure these women receive Rs. 1000/- from government but until that happens they have appealed us to extend support. Hence, at the moment VSSM is providing assistance of Rs. 1000 per month to each of these women.

Simultaneously, efforts are on to provide some livelihood earning skills to them, if that happens they will be able to start their own ventures and might not need the monthly assistance.

### **Assistance for construction of houses**

The unprecedented floods of 2015 completely destroyed the houses of 3 daughters who had married during the mass marriage ceremony and other 3 families who survive under extremely poor conditions. All of them needed VSSM's support to rebuild their houses. Along with VSSM's support, these families have also contributed towards the construction cost.

### **Upcoming plans for Vadia**

The year 2016 will also witness the weddings of 7 more daughters from Vadia. We all are aware of the fact that once the daughters are engaged and married they aren't forced into the profession of prostitution. Until that happens, it is difficult for them to escape the prying eyes of the pimps. We are preparing for the marriage of these girls and ensure that they lead a beautiful life ahead. Apart from this, we will also be supporting more families to break free from the clutches of debt slavery.

It is our dream to see that not a single daughter born in Vadia enters the traditional profession of prostitution. It pains us when we witness small girls into the trade and breaks our heart when we receive calls from them expressing their pain and desire to be out of this occupation. We were absolutely clueless in the beginning but it was the support of the society that has helped us realize some concrete change in the situation. As the parents come forward with a wish to educate their daughters, it makes us confident that even nature has transpired to help us remove these girls from the hell like lives they have endured. And we want to make the best use of this golden opportunity by ensuring these girls receive the kind of education that helps them progress much ahead in life!!

## **Rain Water Harvesting**

### **To Increase Water Sufficiency**



*July 2015 Flood Water logged in Nagla, Dodgam, and Khanpur*

The Saraniyaa community of Vadia, a community that until now was so deeply entrenched and enslaved by tradition has decided to shun and move away from their age old profession and give a fresh start to their lives. The families are now trying their hands at farming, cattle rearing and some other trades. Farming has become an obvious choice as many of these families have received land for the purpose of farming. Vadia is situated to the extreme north of Gujarat, a belt that is a very dry, arid and drought prone. Availability of water whether for drinking, domestic use or irrigation is always a challenge. Therefore the consequent issue that these families

of Vadia faced was sourcing water for irrigating their farms. The water that is available from 2 bore-wells is not sufficient to irrigate all the farms and both of these bore-wells have experienced their set of issues of maintenance, damage and failure.

Beginning last year VSSM initiated an experiment of sensitizing the community members towards the importance and need of rainwater harvesting and work towards making these families water sufficient. Respected Shri. Rashminbhai took a lead and played a pivotal role in this entire effort by conducting regular meetings with the Saraniyaa families of Vadia.

The village of Vaida falls in Banaskantha district, a district that gets its name from Banas, one of the mighty rivers of Gujarat. Few decades back the region around the Banas river were considered to be the one of the greenest belts of Gujarat but after the construction of Dantiwada dam the waters of this river stopped flowing downstream. For hundreds of years the river waters had fed the grounds well so the water tables were quite high, the farmers preferred to have wells as the water tables were high. However, as the water stopped flowing downstream the farmers began lifting ground water through digging bore-wells to irrigate their farms. But as the tables receded from 7-15 feet to 500 to 900 feet this otherwise lush region began experiencing severe water scarcity. The lakes in the region have also lost their depth and are unable to hold much water. Of late, the irrigation efforts by the government under the Sujlam Suflam Scheme has brought a canal near the once roaring river and the waters of Narmada have also reached this region, but all of this is too little, too late.

After a series of consultations with the community a plan was in place and they began working on making the water bodies of Vadia deep thus enabling them store enough rainwater. But as it is said, 'Man proposes, God disposes' the July of 2015 saw a natural calamity that the region had never experienced in past 100 years. The scale of flash floods was severe that



Flood water was first diverted to the lake and the remaining into the main canal

region suffered massive loss of livelihoods and property. The region that so far was severely water stressed suddenly became overwhelmed with water.

The flash floods resulted in severe water clogging in farms and other low-lying regions. In Tharad's Nagla, Dodgaum and Khanpur the farms remained submerged under floodwaters for 8 months and the farmers suffered heavy losses. The made numerous requests to the government seeking its help in draining the waters from their farms, they also went on hunger strike before the collector's office but their requests weren't heard!!! With no other option left the farmers approached VSSM seeking its support to find a solution to the issue.

The administration budged and decided to help the farmers drain the waters. Shri. Rashminbhai felt that the waters should not be allowed to go waste but should be stored at some place else. Hence a plan to drain the waters from the farm and channelize it into the lakes was devised. VRTI, a Kutchh organization working on water management issues also decided to join. The

villagers embraced the thought and agreed to work towards it. It was decided to drain the waters in the lake of Dod village but the lake had gone very shallow and needed to be cleaned up. The villagers too up the task of deepening and cleaning the lake.

VSSM supported the operational cost of JCB and the farmers bore the cost of excavating the mud from the lake. The lake gained depth of 10-12 feet. Along with deepening the lake VSSM also helped in cleaning the routes to bring water to other 3 lakes. The government then drained the farms and brought the waters to the deepened lakes. If this effort was not made the farmers might couldn't have farmed for 2 seasons but with the farms drained they took a summer crop.

However the dry and thirsty land of north Gujarat soaked up the waters as the lakes were completely dry within a month!!

### Lake at Vadgaum village also deepened...

After the learning about water harvesting experiences in the villages of Vadia and Dodgaum, the villagers of neighboring Vadgaum also approached VSSM for assistance in deepening of the lake in Vadgaum. VSSM helped with excavation while the mud was lifted by the villagers.



Pond deepening work begun at Vadgaumda

### Villagers inviting VSSM to work on water management issues in their villages..

The Government has declared some parts of Banaskantha as Dark Zones. Dark zones are "over exploited" and "critical blocks" in the state where level of ground water has significantly gone down due to uncontrolled lifting of ground water for agricultural use. Under such circumstances water resource management is the key and it becomes critical to save whatever little water that falls from the sky. As the information of VSSM engaging in water management activities is spreading in the region, it is receiving requests for support in increasing depth of the lakes. VSSM with its limited resources finds it difficult to meet so much expectation!! Government's intervention to meet the imminent need of preserving this precious natural resource is extremely important.

Once the monsoon subsides VSSM plans to support the farmers and take up activities of rainwater harvesting in the region.



## Friends of VSSM – Mumbai and beyond..

VSSM is truly blessed to have remarkable group of friends who have redefined the term Friendship.. The Friends of VSSM and Dharampur play the role of torchbearers when it comes to mobilizing the support required to carry our extensive activities.....

Our dear Pradeepbhai is a practicing Chartered Accountant. Inspite of his professional commitments he takes out time to get involved and provide his unflinching support to the organizations needing help while also motivating others to do the same...He practices a simple philosophy in life, "continue doing good work and go easy with life..." Its hard not break-out in a hearty laugh within first couple minutes of meeting Pradeepbhai, such is his wit and humor.. There is a Parsi gentleman in one Bollywood movie who kept saying 'majhani life' (what a blissful life) and that is how life is for everyone surrounded by Pradeepbhai's care and affection.....

A constant pillar of strength and support for VSSM is Shri. Chandrakantbhai Gogri who extends his gracious support to most of the activities. Shri. Chandrakantbhai is someone we count on whether it is for beginning some new initiatives or whenever a program faces some unforeseen financial challenge!! Though the opportunities to meet and talk with him rarely arise but the warmth of Chandrankanbhai and Aarti Family is something VSSM has always experienced.

Dear Rashminbhai Sanghvi is also a practicing Chartered Accountant by profession but the moment he comes across someone in pain and suffering

his immediate reaction is how to begin working so as to reduce the suffering. Write to him at 12 or 2 in the night we receive and immediate response from him.. Yes he is a bit strict and perfectionist by nature but his insistence to achieve perfection has taught us a lot. We are trying our best to meet up to his level of expectations and perfection. We are aware that because he cares for us he has such high expectations from us.... his compassion and dedication towards the cause of the nomads and other social causes makes us want to salute him....

Our respected and dear Lalbhai Rambhiya patiently listens to us whenever we need someone to share our thoughts and challenges. Lal Uncle is how we address him while the community members in various settlements call him Lal Kaka. It is fun when people older to him call him Lal Kaka!!

Meenaben Shah is another near and dear friend who constantly worries about us. She too is a Mumbai based practicing Chartered Accountant. The donation cheques we receive from Mumbai reach Meenaben's office. She takes responsibility of depositing them in the bank and ensuring that the receipts reach the donors.

The extremely humble and soft-spoken K. K. Zunzunwala is a Chartered Accountant as-well. His politeness is so contagious, its hard not to fall for it.. ...K. K is always besides us, constantly assuring everything will be fine..

Respected Atulbhai Doshi is a practicing Chartered Accountant who along with his practice runs a hostel for tribal children. He too constantly supports

VSSM in its endeavors and same it is with Manjunathji and Abhaybhai Bhagat.

Atulbhai Ambavat is another dear Chartered Accountant friend of ours. His wisdom is beyond age, at such a young age he has decided to lead a minimalist life so that he can donate to the causes dear to him. Atulbhai is a friend who always stands by VSSM.

Young and compassionate Hitesh is an architect who has designed VSSM's Uvarsad Educational Enclave. He has poured his heart in designing the project along with the inputs from Rashminbhai.

Such are our friends; VSSM's friends who worry about us and constantly work together to support us. From our smallest needs to the well-being of our team, their concern for all of us is unparalleled...

Every year we meet our friends and donors and talk to them about the ongoing activities, challenges we faced, our accomplishments and failures.. This year too the core group organised the meeting and we met on the 18th of June at Matunga, Mumbai. A large number of our well-wishing donors remained present in the program. We are grateful to have such strong presence of our friends in our lives.....Our sincere gratitude for their unflinching support...

The Giants Group of Central Mumbai has played crucial role in facilitating and smooth functioning of hostels operated by VSSM. The concern of its members towards the children staying with the hostel is reflected in the little details and needs they take care of, especially Madhuben, Beenaben, Harshaben who send loads of goods and stationary for the children the moment the new academic session commences!!

Just as in Mumbai, individual well-wishers and concerned citizens have also grouped up in Ahmedabad. Respected Kiritbhai Shah is always ready to help and ensures the any task concerning VSSM is accomplished. Whenever he visits the office he always brings donation cheque along...

Respected Namrataaben Shodhan and Satsang Pariwar is always besides VSSM while octogenarian Bimlaben Hura whom we all call Ba spreads her warmth in our activities and working tirelessly to mobilize support for VSSM by talking amongst individuals and groups.

If we have Pradipbhai in Mumbai we have Dr. Pankaj Shah in Ahmedabad, with such compassionate individuals like Pradipbhai and Pankajbhai besides us there is nothing to worry about!!! Pankajbhai not only supports but mobilizes support for VSSM as well...

Bhailalbhai or Dada as we all call him works at Dastaan Farm (a vintage car village in Naroda) is always concerned and ready to help the children of Vatsalya Hostel in Naroda.....

Respected Bhadrayubhai Vacchrajani, a sensitive writer and concerned individual always shows his concern and support towards our activities as do Jitubhai Gandhi from Pune, Chandrankanbhai Metaliya from Mumbai and many other individual well-wishers.....

Its an endless list of individuals who have supported VSSM in its various activities, it is because of the unparalleled and unflinching support extended by you all that enables VSSM work on its mission. By extending support to VSSM you have associated yourself the cause we work for and we shall be eternally grateful for your compassion towards the Nomadic and De-Notified tribes.

**Donation Details**

(The List Includes the Donation where the Receipts have been Issued  
from 1st April to 31st August 2016)

No.	Name	Amount /Rs.		
1	Rashmin Sanghvi	11,111.00	43	Continental Wings 5,000.00
2	Aarti Foundation	1,00,000.00	44	Snehvadan C. Parikh 10,000.00
3	CAA - Tea Club	7,500.00	45	Dimpleben Mrudangbhai Parikh 20,000.00
4	Vinodkumar P. Ambavat	35,000.00	46	Kishore K. Parikh 20,000.00
5	Heta Bhuta	20,000.00	47	Sutaria Developers 50,000.00
6	Nitinbhai Shingala	15,000.00	48	Kokila Cotton Export Ltd. 11,111.00
7	Rasilaben J. Parekh	7,000.00	49	Nutan Nagarik Sahakari Bank Ltd. 25,000.00
8	Dinkar Joshi	25,000.00	50	Dr. Premal Vipinbhai Naik 10,000.00
9	Continental Wings	5,000.00	51	Bhikkhu Gnana Jagat 5,000.00
10	Babubhai Parmar	1,500.00	52	Bidare Manjunath 50,001.00
11	Vinodbhai Jeshingbhai Chinai	1,00,000.00	53	Jayesh Merchant 50,000.00
12	Kusum Dalal	11,000.00	54	Manu M. Parpia 15,000.00
13	Late Shri Harishbhai Pranshankar Joshi	51,000.00	55	Navinbhai B. Patel 2,500.00
14	Parami Interiors	5,000.00	56	Balvant D. Mehtalia 15,000.00
15	Jai Jinendra Bhakti Mandal	5,000.00	57	Sumitra B. Mehtalia 10,000.00
16	Vinodbhai Bhagat	11,000.00	58	Kiritkumar H. Shah 1,000.00
17	M/s Gulabdas & Co.	21,000.00	59	Hirachand C. Shah 10,000.00
18	Late Sundarben Chandulal Shah	40,000.00	60	Aarti Foundation 1,00,000.00
19	International Trade Links	11,000.00	61	Kantaben Chhaganlal Suchak Foundation 1,00,000.00
20	Arri Enterprises	11,000.00	62	Mansi Memorial Trust 51,000.00
21	International Trade Links Inst. Pvt. Ltd.	11,000.00	63	Leelaben Bhate 5,000.00
22	Ilaben Umerbhai Nagarsheth	1,000.00	64	Mita Ketan Thakkar 35,000.00
23	Rashmin Sanghvi	50,000.00	65	Archana Panjawani 1,500.00
24	CAA - Tea Club	7,500.00	66	CAA - Tea Club 7,500.00
25	Gomiben Goswami	2,600.00	67	Ravibhai K. Shah 2,500.00
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42	Kaku Pradeep Dakhate	25,000.00	84	Well-Wisher 1,00,000.00
			85	Janki D. Amin 11,000.00
			86	Himmatlal Keshavlal Shah 1,000.00

87	Prabhuta D. Amin	11,000.00	132	Himanshubhai Harishbhai Melwani	5,000.00
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89	Vijaybhai S. Patel	1,000.00	134	Jalpa Modi	500.00
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110	Vaibhav J. Shah	2,800.00	155	Aarti Foundation	1,00,000.00
111	Praful Patel	7,300.00	156	Budhalal Chotalal Zaveri Charitable Trust	10,00,000.00
112	Kiran Pandya	4,000.00	157	Himaben Pandya	1,000.00
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			177	Prabhu Krupa	15,000.00



178	Subhash Dalal & Pankaj Dalal	51,500.00	201	Ambavat Jain & Associates LLP	1,00,000.00
179	Leela Dalal	6,500.00	202	Continental Wings	5,000.00
180	Shaan Dalal	6,500.00	203	Rishika M. Lekhadia	5,000.00
181	Anita Vasavda Lin	6,500.00	204	Ajit Prem Janmangal Trust, Bikaner	10,000.00
182	Annika Patel	6,500.00	205	Late Shri Vasantbhai Khandhar	2,500.00
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184	Hema Vasavda	6,500.00	207	Shreemay Charitable Trust	5,000.00
185	Rohan Patel	6,500.00	208	Vipulkumar Govindbhai Patel	2,000.00
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193	Vivek Vithlani	2,001.00	216	Hardikbhai Vachhrajani	1,000.00
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195	Ajit C. Mehta	1,00,000.00	218	Pravinaben C. Patel	2,000.00
196	CAA - Tea Club	7,500.00	219	Daksh Viral Bhatt	3,000.00
197	Aarti Foundation	1,00,000.00	220	Kishori Udeshi	50,000.00
198	Ramaben B. Shah	10,000.00	221	Amrutlal Shah	1,000.00
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A/C No. 33732434635  
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please donate

Kindly draw the cheques/DD of your donations in favour of  
"Vicharta Samuday Samarthan Manch" or "VSSM"

All Local Donations are eligible for Tax Exemption under section 80 - G of the I. T. Act

## The activities of VSSM on issue centric blogs and social media platform...

Social media and its effective use is key to information dissemination in current times. As increasing number of people turn to these new conventional methods of staying informed, VSSM has devised methods to reach out to its growing number of well-wishers and patrons. The VSSM website, VSSM Facebook page and various issue based blogs allow access to most of the information related to VSSM's activities. The blogs allow the donors read the stories of change their support and contributions have made possible. The stories are honest accounts of how the donations have helped change lives of thousands of individuals forever. The blogs are reflection of our commitment to ensure transparency and accountability in our work. All of the mentioned blogs are updated on regular basis.

VSSM works on issues of rights and entitlements, livelihood, education, housing for nomadic communities and rehabilitation of women of Vadia. We have 5 blogs, each dedicated to the areas we work on.



### Rights and Entitlements...

The daily updates on our endeavors for ensuring allotment of citizenry documents and the challenges we face in our efforts, our advocacy with various departments and policy makers, updates on the number of people allotted citizenry documents can be read on the blog **[www.nomadictribes.blogspot.in](http://www.nomadictribes.blogspot.in)**



### Livelihood...

The efforts by VSSM to help nomadic families earn a dignified living are accessible on the blog **[www.nomadsemployment.blogspot.in](http://www.nomadsemployment.blogspot.in)**. The blog features stories of change, honest accounts of how lives of families have changed because of the support they have received from VSSM and its donors, the trainings and its impact etc.

### Education...



Education of the nomadic children is of utmost importance to us. VSSM runs Balghars, Bridge schools and Hotels for these children apart from this we have various activities designed to ensure children enjoy their right to participation like saving groups etc. All these and many more of such activities VSSM undertakes for the nomadic children are narrated on the blog **[www.nomadseducation.blogspot.com](http://www.nomadseducation.blogspot.com)**

### Housing...



The desire to lead a settled life is something most nomadic families struggle to achieve and VSSM is making focused efforts to ensure that these families have a decent roof on their head. **[www.nomadshousing.blogspot.in](http://www.nomadshousing.blogspot.in)** is the blog that accounts all our housing related activities including the dreams and understanding of a bare minimum home for a nomadic family.

### Rehabilitation of Vadia...



Vadia – the once stigmatized community is now a thriving and bubbling community. VSSM has made some extreme breakthroughs in the lives of the families of Vadia. The results are extremely overwhelming not only for the community but also for the team and all those associated with VSSM. **[www.vssmatvadiya.wordpress.com](http://www.vssmatvadiya.wordpress.com)** is the blog that narrates our trials and turbulences while working with the community of Vadia.

All above blogs as well as VSSM's website – [www.vssmindia.org](http://www.vssmindia.org) – are regularly updated to show the progress in all our interventions done so far. It is also that the organization attains the transparency and truthfulness in all its ventures for the holistic development of Nomadic and De-Notified Tribes. This may enable you to understand and where possible enhance our efforts in the right direction, we heartily welcome your valuable suggestions for all our programmes...