Our vision is to sew and grow the seeds of equitable employment for women to break the poverty cycle and leave no human behind.
Our Story

Who are we?

Sewing the Seeds (STS) is an Australian registered charity, that works in partnership with grassroots NGO Samugam Trust based in Pondicherry, South India. STS provides textiles education and employment to women who face social and economic barriers to safe work in India.

What do we do?

We create safe employment by selling customised handmade wholesale textile products made by the women, for retail stores, events (B2B) and our ecommerce store (B2C). Some of our customers include, Queensland Museum, Melbourne University and Mecca Cosmetica.

We provide education through technical skills around sewing, designing, hand stitching, screen printing and pattern making, as well as non-technical skills like leadership, communication, financial literacy and menstrual health to increase self-confidence and self-care.

We aim to be the space that the women build internal self confidence through their work, and also external connections through community building. Many of the women we work with are from communities like the nomadic, tribal and sex worker communities. It is common that many women face economic hardship and barriers to accessing safe employment, due the realities of growing up in poverty and subsequently not having access to formal education. Many also experience domestic violence and social discrimination due to gender, sexuality, disabilities and/or being a single mother or widow.

Poverty Cycle & Social Determinants of Health

We approach our work through the public health lens and in more detail with a social determinants of health perspective*. This perspective considers the poverty cycle and the role we can play in supporting the breaking of this cycle.

Social determinants of health: we focus on how economic stability impacts an individuals health outcomes.

Poverty cycle: we focus on how making safe work accessible and inclusive can reduce or break the poverty cycle.

*https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1
Our Theory of Change & Impact Outcomes

Since 2011, the project has supported 160 women in the gig economy, currently 12 women with full-time employment, and raised their income through wages by 14x.

Inputs
- Fully equipped sewing centre for employment & training
- Sewing the Seeds centre management in Pondicherry
- Partnerships with internationally based social enterprises to facilitate B2C sales & B2B orders across markets in the USA, Australia, UK & Europe.
- Relationships with local community stakeholders & NGOs for community development, disaster recovery, education & healthcare.
- Sewing the Seeds team in Australia
- Online and market retail stores
- Community development leaders

Activities
- **Education**
  - Textiles education and training for women and girls from disadvantaged backgrounds.
  - Education in business and financial management.
  - Education on women’s health and well-being.
- **Employment**
  - Full-time & part-time employment to create customised wholesale and retail textile products (i.e. bags, lanyards, fashion products, homeware).
  - Employment to incorporate design, hand-stitching, screen-printing & pattern making.
- **Empowerment**
  - Creating a safe space for personal development & community integration.

Outputs
- No. of employment hours provided
- No. of training hours provided
- Changes in earning capacity and financial wellbeing
- Access to physical welfare and safety
- Decision-making capacity in households
- No. of women engaging in safe & sustainable employment
- No of children receiving an education.
- No. of initiatives taken to support community development, community inclusion & access to economic, social and physical rights.

Outcomes
- **Short-term**
  - Increased savings capacity and stability of income
  - Increased access to skills, training & development
  - Increased self-confidence & self-esteem
  - Increased access to exercise decision-making and collective agency
  - Increased support for social participation and inclusion
- **Medium & Long-term**
  - Reduced participation in unsafe work and informal economy
  - Increasing economic stability, children going to school and breaking poverty cycle
  - Increased women’s agency & changes to patriarchal gender roles
  - Strengthened social structures & social inclusion in society.

UN Sustainable Development Goals We Address at STS

The Team of Women who Sew the Seeds

ANNE AUNTY
MANAGER

VALLI AKKA
ASSISTANT MANAGER

SHARMILA AKKA
TAILOR

MEENA AKKA
TAILOR

VASANTHI AKKA
TAILOR

SATYA AKKA
TAILOR

LAKSHMI AKKA
TAILOR

SUSHEILA
TRAINEE

SIVAGAMI AKKA
TRAINEE

ATHI
TRAINEE

NAGU AKKA
TRAINEE

MALADY AKKA
TRAINEE

Sewing the Seeds Australia team

GAYLE FACTOR
CEO & CO-FOUNDER

SAKSHI THAKUR
CEO & CO-FOUNDER

ROJA BABU
CFO & CIO

MIA GOTTLIEB
COO
Sewing the Seeds

Thank you for your continued support.

ABN: 45646320854
Instagram: @sewingtheseeds
Website: www.sewingtheseeds.org

How can you help?

While our end goal is to create safe work sustainably through textile product orders, we are not there yet. We need funding support to help us get through this transition period of growth to get to a sustainable impact and business model for the women to have continuous safe work.

Philanthropy funding will help fund:
1. Up-skilling and additional training for the women. This costs on average up to $5000 a month.
2. Provide the support to fund financial literacy and other health program for the women. This costs up to to $3000 a month.
3. To support more women have access to safe employment through periods of lower orders. This can cost up to $12,000 a month.
4. To support the operational costs in Australia to scale our support and impact (this is our team wages which is $300,000 for a team of 4).

Over the past 5 years STS has built key relationships and partnerships with international markets that has supported us to thrive during challenging periods like the pandemic. It is this strategy and model which represents our unique point of different and has supported us in our growth. Our international market presence opens opportunities for increased customer segments, stronger economies, increased traction and exposure. We want to support other social enterprises doing similar work to us in India, to have access to international markets. This is pivotal as during the 2020 pandemic, the lack of international market exposure led to many women-focused social enterprises closing down, and consequently impacting the lives of many women, and communities.

The long term goal at STS is to partner with other women-led social enterprises in developing communities to open up that international market, so together we can sew the seeds of safe and equitable employment for women, break the poverty cycle and leave no human behind.

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