

# Prayas



NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2024 TO DECEMBER 2024

## ***“Rehabilitating Lives: Two-Day Consultation on Prisoner Rehabilitation”***

Prayas has organized a two-day consultation on rehabilitation of prisoners at TISS in October 2024 in collaboration with the Forum of Socio-legal and Rehabilitation Initiatives in Criminal Justice. The Forum is an alliance of about 15 organizations in India working in prisons and criminal justice to help rehabilitate of prisoners, children of prisoners, and crime victims and their children.

The consultation program was inaugurated by Prof. Bipin Jojo, Dean, School of Social Work, TISS. The program started by paying homage to Shri Ratan Tata, who sadly passed away on 9 October 2024. The house remembered the important role played by the Tata trusts in developing the fields of criminal justice social work and socio-legal interventions in the CJS.

Issues related to working in prisons, and the challenges of working with women prisoners and children of prisoners were discussed on the first day and a discussion was held on library facilities, vocational training, mental health, and post-release support on the 2nd day.

The purpose of this consultation is to work on a draft policy note on rehabilitation of prisoners and children of prisoners which can be used for advocacy purposes with multiple stakeholders.

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### In this newsletter:

Latest projects, workshops, trainings, recreational activities, and more. Keep Reading!



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**"Prayas and AkzoNobel India Empower Prisoners with Vocational Training in Decorative Painting for Sustainable Rehabilitation"**

For the past many years, Prayas, has been attempting to provide sustainable rehabilitation solutions for prisoners and released prisoners. One of the ways has been organising vocational training programmes in collaboration with recognised training institutions. Prayas have been collaborating with AkzoNobel India to provide decorative paints vocational skill training to prisoners.

Since 2022, AkzoNobel has trained over 300 male and female prisoners in Thane Central Prison and Byculla District Prison. Once the prisoners return to society, the training helps them apply these marketable skills and start a dignified life. Of the 130 prisoners released till now, 40 of them are already working as professional painters.

The Bharuch Unit of Prayas organized a training program for prison officers at the Gujarat Institute of Prisons and Correctional Administration in the month of September. The program aimed to enhance the officers' understanding of the rehabilitation process for prisoners. Social workers from Prayas shared their experiences, discussing challenges and emphasizing the significance of rehabilitation efforts.

The training covered key topics such as the impact of imprisonment on individuals and their families, the struggles faced by children of prisoners, and the need for awareness and recreational programs. With 63 trainees and 33 prison staff participating, the initiative highlighted the importance of a rehabilitative approach, ultimately supporting the successful reintegration of prisoners into society.



**"PLV Training: Building Leadership and Positive Impact"**

A pioneering Para-Legal Volunteer (PLV) training program was conducted in Kalyan District Prison in both male and female sections, in the month of September 2024. This initiative aimed to empower prisoners with legal knowledge, enabling them to navigate the justice system effectively. Trained facilitators guided participants through interactive sessions, covering essential topics such as legal aid, bail, and the prison system. Through this program, prisoners gained a valuable understanding of their rights and responsibilities. By bridging the knowledge gap, the PLV training fostered a sense of self-advocacy and resilience among prisoners.

**"Capacity Building for Prison Officers: A Step Towards Rehabilitation"**





***“Strengthening Rehabilitation: Consultation on Effective Implementation of Probation of Offenders Act”***

Probation is a reformative and rehabilitative measure in the hands of the judiciary that allows for the release of offenders in the community (instead of imprisonment), on bond of good behaviour or under the supervision of a probation officer, in offences where the maximum sentence does not amount to life imprisonment or death.

Prayas had organized a one-day consultation on the Effective Implementation of Probation of Offenders Act, 1958, in the month of November at TISS Mumbai Campus, jointly with the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Maharashtra, Maharashtra Prisons Department, and the Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority.

The participants included Probation Officers involved in the implementation of the PO Act, of 1958, prison officers, and Secretaries of the District Legal Services Authority in Maharashtra.

The consultation led to very lively discussions and debates and participants came up with good suggestions which were submitted to DWCD, MSLSA, IG Prisons office and Principal Secretary, Law and Judiciary Department, GoM, who is the Chairperson of the State IDC on Prisoners.

The consultation was inaugurated by Prof. Bipin Jojo, Dean, School of Social Work, TISS. Hon'ble Mr. Shripad Deshpande, Deputy Secretary, MSLSA, Ms. Rani Bhosale, Superintendent, Thane Central Prison, and Ms. Suvarna Pawar, Deputy Commissioner, DWCD gave their opening remarks. Dr Prashant Narnaware, Commissioner, DWCD, gave the keynote address online.

The valedictory address was given by Hon'ble Justice Mr. M.L. Tahiliyani, former judge of Bombay High Court and former Lokayukta, Maharashtra.

We hope this consultation helps to address some of the long-standing issues with the implementation of this legislation.

**"Addiction to Freedom: A Journey of Recovery"**



In the month of December 2024, Prayas conducted a de-addiction program at Mumbai Central Prison, aimed at helping inmates overcome addiction and embrace a healthier lifestyle. Expert counselors led interactive sessions focused on self-awareness and empowerment, with 50 youth prisoners participating. This initiative marked an important step toward their rehabilitation and well-being.



**"Rehabilitation Through Skill Development: A New Initiative at Nagpur Central Prison"**



A Skill Employment Training Program was launched at Nagpur Central Prison on October 1, 2024, offering prisoners vocational training in carpentry, sewing, and bakery. The prison was registered as a Vocational Training Provider (VTP) by the Maharashtra State Skill Development Society after consistent efforts and follow-up by the Prayas team. The program is designed for convicts aged 18 to 45, with 30 students per batch, focusing on enhancing employability and rehabilitation prospects. By gaining hands-on experience, prisoners build confidence and self-reliance, preparing them for employment and successful reintegration into society upon release.

**"Body and Mind: A Healthy Balance"**



In December 2024, Prayas conducted a mental and physical health awareness session for 35 children residing at the Dongri Children's Home, specifically targeting the girls' section. In collaboration with the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), the session aimed to educate young minds about essential health aspects.

Ms. Sakshi Desai from Prayas initiated the program, which provided a platform for the children to openly discuss their concerns and gain valuable insights into maintaining overall well-being.

**"Health is Wealth"**



Niramaya Health Foundation, with the support of Metropolis Healthcare Limited, launched the "SPARSH" health initiative and recently organized a General and Dental Check-up Camp at Dongri Children's Home. Coordinated by Prayas, TISS, the camp featured a team of 4 doctors, 1 social worker, and 1 nurse, who worked diligently to promote the children's health and well-being. The event also included yoga and meditation sessions, providing a holistic approach to wellness. The camp saw enthusiastic participation from 50 children. Additionally, the Buddhist Panchayat Samiti Tardev generously donated notebooks to students enrolled in the 10th and 12th standards.

**"Exposure Visit: Discover and Learn"**

In November 2024, an enriching exposure visit was organized to WIT (Women's India Trust), Panvel. The women participants gained valuable insights into vocational training and entrepreneurship opportunities. Interactions with skilled instructors and successful entrepreneurs fostered motivation and empowerment.



## "One Day, Endless Possibilities"

In the month of December 2024, the Prayas Bharuch Unit hosted a one-day workshop on "The Impact of Legal Aid Services on the Rehabilitation of Prisoners." The workshop saw the participation of 35 district legal aid advocates and DLSA Bharuch staff, with Hon'ble Shri D.B. Tiwari, Secretary of DLSA, and panel advocates praising the session for highlighting the importance of collective efforts in the criminal justice system. The event focused on the pivotal role of legal aid services in prisoner rehabilitation, ending with suggestions for future training programs. A "Tree of Hope" was drawn to symbolize the future impact of legal aid on prisoners' rehabilitation, fostering renewed optimism for change.



## "Fostering Social Awareness": Tilak College Students Learn About Prayas's Rehabilitation Work



In the month of September 2024, students from Tilak College participated in an orientation visit to the Children's Home Dongri office of Prayas. During the visit, students gained valuable insights into the organization's mission, objectives, and impact. They interacted with senior social workers, learning about programs focused on empowerment, education, and rehabilitation. The visit sparked meaningful discussions and fostered a sense of social responsibility among the students. This enriching experience familiarized the students with Prayas's rehabilitation work for children in conflict with the law.

## "Promoting Criminal Justice Social Work in Aligarh District Prison"

Prof. Vijay Raghavan attended a conference at Aligarh Muslim University on November 12th Working in the Criminal Justice System organized by WAFI (Welfare Actions for the Incarcerated), a project initiated by Prof. Shereen Sadiq, Chairperson of the Sociology Department. This project works with undertrial prisoners at Aligarh District Prison in collaboration with the UP Prisons Department and DLSA Aligarh.



The project is an outcome of the work done by Ms. Sabika Abbas, a TISS Criminal Justice Fellow from 2015-18 who worked in Aligarh District Prison under Prof. Raghavan's mentorship. As part of the fellowship work, Ms. Sabika built bridges with Prof. Sadiq and continued the work after she finished her fellowship, with the help of the Sociology Department students.

The project is now working full-time with the support of the Azim Premji Foundation and the support of interns from various departments of AMU. It gives one great satisfaction when efforts by one's students bear fruit and lead to something concrete and useful. The students were admirable, very heartening, and energetic under her leadership.





### Strengthening Rehabilitation: Key Takeaways from the 4th National Conference of Women Prison Officers

In the month of September 2024, Prof. Vijay Raghavan participated in the two-day 4th National Conference of Women Prison Officers organized by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), at the Central Detective Training Institute (CDTI) at Jaipur. It was a good gathering of prison officials, faculty from prison training and academic institutions, and NGOs from different parts of the country.

He spoke on the panel on the role of prison officials in the reformation and rehabilitation of women prisoners. He stressed the need for trained social workers to be appointed in prisons, especially concerning the rehabilitation of women prisoners and their children left outside. A resolution was passed at the end of the session stressing this suggestion.

The conference was a good opportunity to meet and interact with like-minded people across geographies.

### "Hon'ble Justice Gavai Visits Nagpur Central Prison, Interacts with Social Workers on Legal Aid and Prisoner Rehabilitation"



Hon'ble Justice Gavai, Judge, Supreme Court of India, and Chairperson, NALSA; Hon'ble Justice Nitin Sambhare of Nagpur Bench, Bombay High Court, and Hon'ble Justice Ravindra Ghuge of Bombay High Court, visited the Nagpur Central Prison in the month of December 2024. They were accompanied by the Member Secretary, Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority, Hon'ble Shri Sameer Adkar, Principal District Judge, Nagpur, Hon'ble Shri Dinesh Surana and other members of the judiciary.

### "Jagrukta Abhiyan: Street Play"



In the month of September , 2024, a vibrant team of youth performed a thought-provoking street play titled "Haan Hum Bhi Insaan Hai" (We Too Are Human) at Sai Ganesh Mandal in Mankhurd, Mumbai. In collaboration with Jan Jagruti Vidyarthi Sangh from Roma Banjara Colony, the play focused on gender issues, shedding light on the challenges faced by various genders and the importance of societal support for gender equality. Through this impactful performance, the youth aimed to raise awareness, inspire change, and encourage the community to embrace and respect humanity in all individuals, regardless of gender.



### “Awakening to Wellness: Awareness Session” — Celebrating World Mental Health Day on October 10

Mental health is just as vital as physical health, playing a crucial role in one’s overall well-being. Prioritizing mental health involves acknowledging and managing emotions, seeking support when needed, and cultivating self-care habits. By doing so, we can foster resilience, happiness, and a healthier life.

In observance of World Mental Health Day, Kalyan District Prison hosted a session for male and female prisoners, led by psychiatrists Dr. Vatsal Suchak and Dr. Anuradha Rathod from Sion Hospital. The session focused on promoting mental well-being, reducing stigma, and encouraging open dialogue about mental health. The experts provided valuable insights on stress management, coping mechanisms, and emotional resilience, equipping prisoners with essential tools to better manage life’s challenges.

### “Informing, Inspiring, and Educating: International Adoption Awareness Month Observed”

The month of November is observed as International Adoption Awareness Month. On this occasion, various online and offline programmes were organized in Sakar Sanstha.

On this occasion, a street play regarding adoption awareness was presented by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University College of Social Work’s students. The play was about how girls fall victim to their mistakes made at a young age, its consequences, the voluntary services available, and the procedure of voluntary adoption. Mr. Sachin Dongre, social worker from Prayas, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar Central Prison was also present. Members of the executive board of Sakar Sanstha, volunteers of the Kshitij Project, and office staff were present for this event.



### "Tumhare Naam" Podcast: Sharing the Voices of Social Workers in Criminal Justice



The podcast "Tumhare Naam" is shaped by the experiences of five social workers from Prayas, a field action project of Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Developed through online sessions and workshops with The Third Eye think tank, the podcast aims to enhance the writing and documentation skills of social workers. The participants, with up to 29 years of experience, focus on criminal justice social work, supporting women prisoners, released prisoners, and vulnerable groups. The podcast highlights the field experiences of social workers and explores significant issues, such as the client-social worker relationship and the struggles and challenges faced by clients and social workers during the clients’ rehabilitation journey. It also demonstrates how documentation can serve as a powerful tool for learning and advocacy.

Below is the podcast link...

<https://thethirdeyehindi.in/podcasts/tumhare-naam/>



## “A Step Towards Justice: Partial Implementation of Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme in Maharashtra”

The Support to Poor Prisoners scheme for the release of undertrials and convict prisoners by paying their cash bail amount of up to 40000 and penalty amount up to 25000 was initiated by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2023. Prof. Vijay Raghavan, Project Director, Prayas and Professor at TISS, was one of the members of the committee set up by MHA to finalize the scheme. He had suggested the need for social workers attached to the prison or the DLSA to carry out due diligence to identify cases who could be released under the scheme. The guidelines issued by the MHA for the implementation of the scheme has provisions where the District Empowered Committee (chaired by the collector) can take help of a NGO, social worker or probation officer to identify cases.

In Maharashtra, where Prayas social workers are present in many prisons, the article India Spend shows that there has at least been partial implementation of the scheme. In other states, there are no cases released under the scheme so far.

This demonstrates the crucial role that social workers can play in helping prisoners to get access to justice and post-release rehabilitation support.

<https://www.indiaspend.com/.../why-indias-bail-scheme-for...>

## “Empowering Women: A Self-Help Group Training Initiative”

As part of a skill development initiative, women participating in the SHG (Self-Help Group) training program crafted cotton bags, showcasing their newly acquired skills. The program focused on empowering women by teaching them valuable vocational skills, with a specific emphasis on sustainable and eco-friendly products. Through this hands-on training, the women learned the techniques of designing and producing high-quality cotton bags, enhancing both their creativity and confidence. This reflected the participants' commitment to learning and self-improvement.

Through this initiative, the women have gained confidence, developed their sewing skills, and earned a sustainable income. Each bag tells a story of resilience and determination, inspiring others to support their cause. By promoting these handmade bags, Prayas contribute to women's economic independence.



## "Certified Training in Detergent and Phenyl Making: Empowering Women with Practical Skills"

A certified training program in detergent and phenyl making was conducted at Navjeevan Mahila Vasigruh to equip women with practical skills that can lead to economic independence. The training, which focused on the entire production process, provided participants with the knowledge of formulating and manufacturing quality detergents and phenyl. Upon completion, the women received certificates, validating their newfound expertise. This program aimed to empower women by giving them the tools to start small businesses, create job opportunities, and contribute to their families' financial stability. By acquiring this valuable skill, the women are now confident to become successful entrepreneurs, contributing to their families' well-being and the local economy.







**“Discovering Biodiversity: Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Borivali – A Memorable Visit”**

In December, Prayas organized a recreational outing for JJB unit with 52 aftercare youths, accompanied by 8 staff members. The group visited the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, where they immersed themselves in the natural beauty and peace of the surroundings, and later visited the peaceful Borivali Pagoda. This enriching experience aimed to foster a sense of togetherness and well-being among the youths. The outing provided a refreshing break from their usual routines, allowing the youths to connect with nature and learn about the importance of biodiversity. The outing was a resounding success, with the youths and staff alike returning with cherished memories and revitalized spirits.



**"Relax, Recharge, Refresh: Wellness Workshop"(mv)**

In the month of October, 2024, Bharuch District Prison hosted an inspiring motivational movie screening that captivated the attention of 130 prisoners. The event aimed to uplift spirits and encourage personal growth among the prisoners, offering them a glimpse of hope and resilience through storytelling. As they gathered to watch the film, the atmosphere was filled with anticipation and companionship, encouraging a sense of community among the participants. This initiative provided entertainment and a powerful reminder of the possibility of transformation and recovery, reinforcing the importance of maintaining a positive outlook despite challenging circumstances.

**"Healthy Habits for a Better Tomorrow"**



Medical College, Kharghar, conducted an informative Ayurveda medical awareness session, which drew the significant participation of 69 individuals, comprising clients and staff members. The session commenced with an insightful lecture by a doctor from Yerla Medical College, who emphasized the importance of Ayurveda in maintaining overall well-being, highlighting its holistic approach to health. Following the lecture, a basic health check-up was conducted, allowing participants to undergo a comprehensive assessment of their health. The medical team from Yerla Medical College subsequently prescribed Ayurveda medicines to those in need, ensuring that participants received personalized guidance and care. The session proved to be a valuable experience, empowering participants with knowledge and awareness about Ayurveda and its applications. This awareness session demonstrated commitment to community health and well-being

### **"Galabhet: Strengthening Family Bonds"**

In December 2024, Prayas organized a heart-warming program, "Galabhet," at Kalyan District Prison which brought together 20 children and their incarcerated mothers. The event was particularly poignant for one young girl, who had prepared a special birthday message for her mother, expressing gratitude and love for her mother's presence in her life.... The child wrote, "Chai mein chini nahi hai toh peene mein kya mazaa, Zindagi mein maa nahi toh jeene mein kya mazaa" (What's the fun of drinking tea without sugar, what's the fun of living life without the presence of one's mother). As the girl read out her heartfelt note Infront of the prison Superintendent, the emotional moment left him visibly moved.



The innocence and empathy displayed by these children served as a powerful reminder of the importance of family bonds and the impact of such programs in nurturing love and connection.

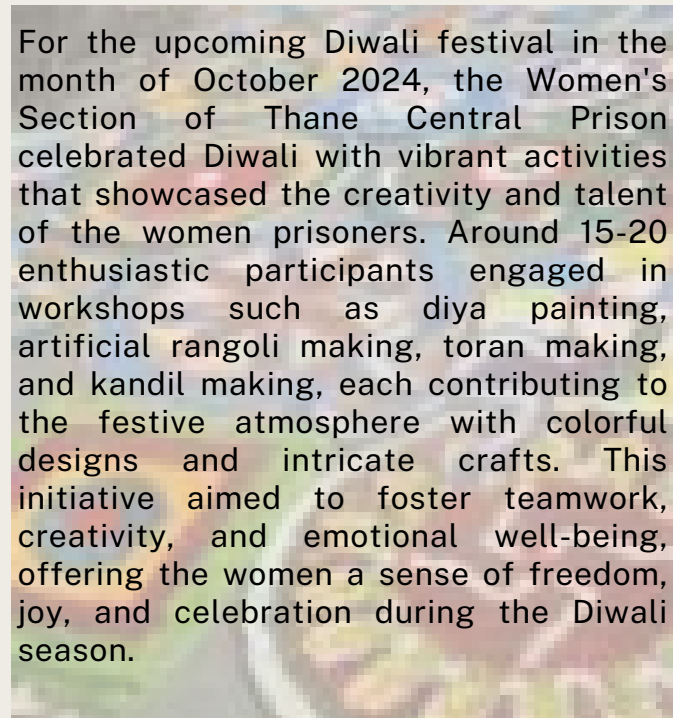
### **"Hope and Harmony: Celebrating Togetherness"**

The 10-day Ganesh festival is being celebrated with great devotion and enthusiasm in Maharashtra. The festivities are marked by traditional rituals, cultural events, and vibrant decorations, filling the air with excitement and piety.

In the festive month of September, 2024, Prayas organized a series of engaging games that brought together staff and women of Shanti Sadan Mahila Vastigruh and Kalyan District Prison in a spirit of camaraderie. The women also created a beautiful Ganpati Bappa idol using soap and decorated the space nicely. The fun-filled activities, filled the air with laughter and excitement. Everyone joined in with great energy, creating cherished memories while strengthening bonds of friendship and teamwork. The event not only highlighted the festive spirit but also fostered a sense of unity and togetherness, making the celebration truly special.

### **"Unlocking Creativity: Diwali Workshops at Thane Central Prison"**

For the upcoming Diwali festival in the month of October 2024, the Women's Section of Thane Central Prison celebrated Diwali with vibrant activities that showcased the creativity and talent of the women prisoners. Around 15-20 enthusiastic participants engaged in workshops such as diya painting, artificial rangoli making, toran making, and kandil making, each contributing to the festive atmosphere with colorful designs and intricate crafts. This initiative aimed to foster teamwork, creativity, and emotional well-being, offering the women a sense of freedom, joy, and celebration during the Diwali season.



### **"Unlocking Potential: WDC's Pre-Placement Training for Women"**

The Women's Development Centre (WDC) in Mankhurd has been actively conducting daily programmes for two months, focusing on the holistic development and empowerment of women pre-placement trainees. The literacy classes, designed to meet the diverse needs of the trainees, have covered essential reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Additionally, the centre has offered various activities such as craft work, personality development sessions, and games. With 17 enrolled trainees, the pre-placement programme aims to equip women with the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary for better employability and personal growth. The initiative strives to create a supportive environment that fosters self-reliance and empowerment.





### **“Rehabilitation Through Entrepreneurship: Prayas' Diwali Initiative”**



The Maharashtra Prison Department organized a Diwali sale outside Thane Central Prison, in the month of October 2024, featuring products crafted by inmates and released prisoners. Prayas set up a vibrant stall showcasing a variety of handicrafts, textiles, and artisanal goods created by the prisoners. This initiative aimed to support rehabilitation through economic empowerment, offering a platform for prisoners to regain dignity and reintegrate into society. The sale not only helped improve prisoners' livelihoods but also raised community awareness and appreciation for their skills.

### **“Painting Hope and Joy: Diya Decorating Workshop at Navjeevan Mahila Vastigruha”**

At Navjeevan Mahila Vastigruha, 23 enthusiastic women participated in a diya painting activity in the month of October 2024, transforming plain clay diya into vibrant masterpieces. Before the creative session, Prayas social workers conducted an informative workshop on sourcing raw materials, wholesale purchasing, costing, marketing strategies, and painting ideas. Equipped with this knowledge, the women skilfully painted their diyas, infusing them with colour and life. Concluding the session, a thought-provoking discussion unfolded, exploring the emotional significance of lighting diyas. The women shared heartfelt sentiments, describing the peace, hope, and joy that illuminating diyas bring to their lives, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness.



### **"Activity-Based Learning"**



In the month of December 2024, Prayas organized a creative and festive workshop of 2 days on the paper bag and candle making, perfectly timed for the upcoming Christmas celebrations. The engaging sessions allowed participants to showcase their artistic abilities, crafting vibrant candles that symbolized hope, joy, and warmth. A total of 22 CCLs participated, guided by five volunteers from the Akino and Anamika Foundations, with support from Prayas staff. The workshop atmosphere was filled with excitement and cheer, embodying the festive spirit. This initiative not only fostered creativity but also strengthened the sense of togetherness and community among the participants.

## "Mat Rangoli: Where Art Meets Tradition"

On day before the year 2024 end, Shanti Sadan Mahila Vastigruh hosted a Mat Rangoli Making Training session, which saw the enthusiastic participation of 9 women. Among the participants, one woman demonstrated exceptional dedication, a former sugarcane cutter and a new mother with a 2-month-old baby. Despite her personal responsibilities, she carefully balanced childcare while immersing herself in learning this new skill. She completed her rangoli with remarkable finesse, showcasing her natural talent and determination. Her inspiring passion and perseverance stood as a powerful reminder of the importance of offering women opportunities to explore their creativity and acquire new skills.



## "Welcoming the New Year with Creativity"

In the end of December 2024, the Women's Development Center (WDC) of Prayas hosted a creative activity to usher in the New Year. Nine enthusiastic women participated in a greeting card-making session, showcasing their artistic skills. This initiative provided a platform for self-expression and creativity. The women crafted personalized greeting cards to celebrate the dawn of a new year. The event was a resounding success, fostering camaraderie and joy among the participants.



## Acknowledgement

***We want to express our sincere appreciation to our contributors and partners for their steadfast support. Their generosity and faith in our mission have had a real impact on the lives of people we serve. By working together, we are inspiring people to realize their greatest potential and making a lasting difference. We really appreciate the sponsors' and donors' dedication to our common goal, and we look forward to more sponsorships that will promote progress and improve people's lives. We appreciate the sponsors and donors who have helped us on our path to building a better future.***