

Shramik Vaani

INTRODUCTION

About Gram Vaani

Since 2012, Gram Vaani ('voice of the village') has provided a network of community voice-based platforms to over two million users in over 12 Indian States. The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system allows users, particularly those who are illiterate or offline, to share knowledge and experiences as a way to drive collective action, behavioural change and social accountability.



About Shramik Vaani

Project summary

Shramik Vaani (workers' voice) was launched by Gram Vaani in partnership with local unions and activists. Supported by the C&A Foundation, the project aims to give a voice to low-income industrial workers across India, particularly women in the garment and textile industries.



Why the project matters

- 01 The vast majority of garment and textile workers are women, working under the supervision of male managers. Despite a strong legal framework, these women are still exposed to poor labour standards and human rights violations.
- 02 The industry is composed of production centres dispersed over various parts of the country and it is common for workers to commute long distances every day. Combined with the burden of household tasks, workers have little time for meetings, education and social dialogue.
- 03 Workers rarely receive regular employment contracts so they have no means of recourse if employers fail to adhere to labour laws relating to minimum wages, working hours and overtime pay. In many of the factories, unions are not tolerated and workers who seek to enforce the law are pushed out.

Aims and objectives

Through increased awareness and adoption of technology, workers collaborate to hold their employers and governments accountable for working conditions.

Theory of Change



ACTIVITIES

Shramik Vaani project sites and partners

Saajha Manch, Delhi NCR

The platform was launched directly with the community, rather than a union, along with affiliate partners who support workplace safety, legal aid and safe migration. It aims to address compliance failures relating to wages, overtime pay, proof of employment and statutory benefits, as well as report local news uncovered by mainstream media.

Driving action

"I had been working as a tailor for almost five years when the company sacked me without compensation. I filed a case with the labour court and reported it on Saajha Manch. The company then offered me 15 days' pay plus bonus, but after I demanded what I was entitled to in court, my final severance package included three months of wages, plus paid holidays, plus bonus. I am grateful to Saajha Manch, and want to send a message to India's workers - stand up for your rights!"

TTCU Kural, Dindigul and Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Workers Union (TTCU) is made up of 6,000 (mostly young) local women working in cotton mills and garment factories. The union aims to address a wide range of issues, including the Sumangali scheme, sexual harassment, unpaid overtime, minimum wage violations, and occupational health and safety. TTCU uses the platform to help expand membership, raise awareness, support legal cases and track and redress members' grievances.

Raising awareness and support

"There are growing numbers of migrant labourers moving south. Because these migrants tend not to keep proof of ID, they are being exploited by the mills. The government must ensure companies adhere to minimum wage rates, and pay these workers what they are legally owed."



SEWA Vaani Indore, Madhya Pradesh

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a national-level union. In Indore, it brings together over 100,000 home-based workers, housemaids, street vendors and construction workers. The platform is used to help its members find work, invest in their own businesses, negotiate with employers and improve access to government entitlements.

Improving access to entitlements

"My ID card wasn't registered with the correct details, so I was unable to access social security. Thanks to a programme broadcast on SEWA Vaani Indore, I learned how to update my details at the municipal corporation. Now it's done!"

Urimai Kural, Chennai

Increasing awareness and encouraging debate among the members of two women workers' unions in the garment and other industries, the platform supports campaigns which challenge employers who sack workers without compensation, fail to uphold legal minimum wages and sexually harass their workers.

Reporting complaints

"My aunt works in the housekeeping department of a factory. The other day she came to me crying, saying that her boss was acting inappropriately. She supports her two sons alone and we are afraid she'll lose her job if she complains to management. Can you help us?"

CONTACT

Gram Vaani is looking for partners and investors to help expand its platforms, so it can reach more sites and workers.

For more information, please contact:

Vijay Sai Pratap, CEO, vijaysai@oniondev.com

Aaditeshwar Seth, Co-founder, aseth@oniondev.com

Orlanda Ruthven, Head, Workforce Programmes, orlanda.ruthven@oniondev.com