

KARUNAR KHETI TRUST

Quarterly Newsletter

April-June, 2024 | Issue 1, Vol. 1



August, 2024

In this Issue:
Key Highlights
Building a House of Peace
Our Beneficiaries & Impact
Financial Summary & more

KARUNAR KHETI TRUST & ITS PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

Karunar Kheti Trust (established July 30, 2019) is an early-stage rural non-profit institution *built by the people, for the people* to work at the pace of our rural community for contextually empowering development in the interconnected areas of education, health, and livelihood, and is rooted in one of the typical rural areas of Assam that comprises its tea-plantations and traditional villages.

Our work, as such, is fundamentally grounded by our Principles of Action:

1. **Empower communities** directly disempowered by problems to become a part of the solution
2. **Listen to communities** to build wholesome empowering movements mindfully of the communities' **capability & capacity, scale of economy, pace of its culture, and wisdom of its consciousness**
3. **Develop ground-up & contextual**, which if required must be **first-principles based, real-world-applicable practical systems & processes** for
 - a. Manifesting the **coherent wisdom~skills of the individual~collective heart~body~mind**
 - b. **Discipline of truth & compassion**
 - c. **Participatory processes**
 - d. **Living wholesomely with the non-human world**, which include animals, soil, plants, lakes, rivers, and mountains.



FOREWORD BY OUR FOUNDER

Gratitude & Accountability ~ Principles ~ Roots & Growth

In offering our first quarterly newsletter, I feel ineffable gratitude grounded by accountability to each & everyone flowing in a coherent stream of humanity that has created this manifestation of Karunar Kheti in resonance with larger Universe. May this resonance be peacefully long lasting enough and may we know when its time has passed — for such wisdom, I pray, *daily & always*.



From this ineffable wellspring of gratefulness, emerge *two immediate streams*, worthy of becoming rivers, and of which I can write of in greater clarity of words:

1. This *newsletter is emergent from the ground up & rooted in our principles of action*: the ground has been in preparation for more than 5 years now, beginning with seeding of such principles from which have emerged, deeply rooted, *little by little, day by day*, many shoots, some which lived & some which died, of *our work in education, livelihood & rural institution building*.
2. *The invaluable trust & patience* of such a humanity that has empowered us to keep doing the *hard work of working on our roots & learning from our failures, consistently & persistently*, especially when such trust & patience are, rightfully, tested.

Our *systems of administration, management & communication* emerged simultaneously, but by deliberate design only as much as needed for the core integrity of such work, while also being constrained significantly by our resources. Only lately, because of our strong foundations in such principled core work are we not just able to, but also organically appreciate the great need for, deliberately & directly also growing & nurturing such systems, and which, naturally, are opening up new tributaries of growth and *one of which is leading to, finally, offering such quarterly newsletters*. Systematic *fundraising*, which till now continues, at best, in rudimentary models, will also be soon emergent, much to our great need and, therefore, also to our great relief!

Such gratitude cannot be complete without feeling *grateful for my dear friend & colleague, Gaurav Sarma*, under whose leadership of exceptional integrity such systems of administration, management & communication are emergently manifesting as fundamental pillars in their own right.



Reading this Newsletter

In addition to self-explanatory titles like Key Highlights, Selected Media Coverage, Picture Galley, Financial Summary etc, I urge the readers to deeply read

* the terse, but dense note on *Karunar Kheti Trust & its Principles of Action* (front-inside cover),

* *Spotlight* on *Shanti Ghar (House of Peace)* (page 7) that is significantly deepening our processes for inclusive and peaceful participatory process, and

* our perspective on impact as noted in *Our Beneficiaries & Impact* (page 8).

A Call for your Invaluable Feedback

Lastly, but not in the least, I deeply invite the readers to send us your feedback, spanning critical to validating because this newsletter is, above all, *a wholesome process of communication to hold us accountably to humanity*, and as such, without your feedback & participation, such wholesomeness can be anything but be so whole.

Please support us be so accountable & wholesome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arjun', with a large, stylized initial 'A'.

Arjun

Founder ~ Managing Trustee ~ Education Leader

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KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Education

Selenghat Valley School

Guiding the Streams of Freedom towards Discipline of Freedom

The past few months at Selenghat Valley School (SVS) have been about guiding the streams emerging from the pristine wellspring of freedom, which we have been nurturing in our children and teachers since the inception of our school in 2020, towards its natural flows into its related structure and discipline, especially in children entering the Preparatory stage of education (Classes 3-5).

We focused on conducting assessments which spans developing to the next incremental level a wholesomely rooted grading philosophy to its nitty-gritty practical details, classroom observations and reviewing our curriculums, and above all, working with our teachers to develop a sense of realization, organization, structure, and discipline to work with the tremendous energy, thought and hard work our students are becoming capable of.

Arjun, our Education Leader, has been key in observing that the time was now ripe for such development and leading the related efforts.

Parent Engagement

As a community school, its fundamental for us to listen to the needs and aspirations of our parents. As our methods of teaching based on experiential learning are extremely new in our context, it has been a humbling journey for us to balance the freedom of education and expectations from our parents. Feedback from our parents is vital for balancing freedom of education with practical realities of culturally normalised rote learning, and continuing to explore the path forward that maximizes the freedom of education as a collective.

SVS is financially supported by parents & guardians, SSK Exports Ltd, and several individual donors.

Engagement with Government Schools & Anganwadi Centres

We have begun, recently since January 2024, engaging with 2 government Lower Primary Schools and 3 Anganwadi Centres as part of our systematic government school engagement program.

Grounded in the stepping-stone particular challenges and needs of the schools and Anganwadi Centres, some of our practices such as the 'Morning Circle' have been introduced to cultivate overarching harmonious relationships between students and teachers that flow into its several tangible tributaries of impact such as increasing student attendance, positive participation in class from both students, teachers, Anganwadi workers and, thus, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Already we can observe practices of our Morning Circle improving bonding between students, teachers, and Anganwadi workers that is leading to significantly improved class participation and, therefore, learning activities.

Currently, we are walking on the first steps of a clear strategic planning for each of these schools and Anganwadi centres. Teachers and Anganwadi workers have begun to demonstrate a level of understanding of child development principles and their application in the classroom.

They are increasingly developing the inner

confidence, knowledge, and skills to focus on the needs and interests of the children, and encouraging active participation in class activities. For example, they are using play as a fundamental way for children to explore and learn, and there is an observed increase in teacher confidence in creating nurturing learning environments.

This initiative is supported by Wipro Foundation Education Grant.

Livelihood Development

Organic Farming & Mushroom Cultivation

Our two livelihood initiatives, mushroom cultivation and facilitation of SHGs, have been moving parallelly for the past couple of years.

Now since the foundational strengthening has been incubated for both these initiatives, and observing the tremendous potential these initiatives hold for livelihood development in the tea plantation context, one of our major work in the past months has been to try and integrate both the initiatives.

This draws on from a significant development over the past year where a vacant land measuring approximately 0.024 hectare has been allotted by the tea garden management of the plantation, where we are based, for community members to develop a livelihood development model through farming activities. This has created a significant opportunity for the local unemployed youths and a SHG group involving 12 members from our area to come together to develop an organic vegetable farm.

As we have been incubating this mushroom cultivation business development model for the past 4 years by supporting a group of 2-4 farmers and adequate foundational capacity relating to core agricultural knowledge and basic business bookkeeping has now been built, we have decided to shift the production set-up to the allotted land in the community where the business can be further developed as a viable livelihood development model with greater ownership by the community.

As part of our long exploration of viable livelihood options for SHG women, we are finally exploring the scope for tailoring.

Exploring Tailoring as a Livelihood Generation Option

A lot of SHG women from our area know tailoring and are practicing it as an alternate income generation activity in their individual capacities.

For a lot of women, tailoring emerges as a viable interest and income generation option as it goes well with the prevailing gender and social norms, and can be done during spare time.

Such feasibility has propelled us to explore collectivisation of women into a tailoring unit, especially as we already have had experience from organizing 7-8 women into a tailoring unit as an emergency response measure to make masks during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

A group of 5-6 women have shown their interest and we have had a series of discussions on how to start such a unit, which primarily includes deciding on a place to work together and initial funding requirements along with finer details of the initiative. In conceptualizing this idea, we are deeply thankful to Nansi Munda, our intern from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati, who participated in the meetings and enriched us with her ideas from her own experience in tea plantations from North Bengal during her month-long internship with us.

Our livelihood development initiatives is supported by Roots to Branches (2020-2023) & Azim Premji Foundation (2023 to present).

Organisational Development

As an early stage, grassroots community-led institution, organisation development becomes a core area of our work in which we focus on creating empowering processes and systems for the organisation, while working on-the-job leadership development from the community.

In the context of the above, we have made significant progress in the parameters of Finance & Accounts, HR, Governance, M&E, and Donor Reporting over the past months. Some highlights from such work include:

- Presenting FY 2023-24 budget utilisation reports to our Board of Trustees.
- Completing our first donor reporting and accountability exercise by sending out fund utilisation and gratitude letters to all financial donors from FY 2023-24.
- Conducting the first review of our Personnel (HR) Policy and related HR systems & processes.
- Developing a draft of our first comprehensive Finance Manual, that will act as a blueprint for all our Finance SoPs.
- Conducting the first PoSH Policy sensitisation session with our staff and selection of the Internal Complaints Committee from among our staff (ICC).
- Continuing to develop a culture of quarterly review reporting by each team.

Our vision to build a community-led institution seeks to address the extreme disempowerment of tea plantation communities towards empowering processes of development, where communities are able to chart their own course of development.

Therefore, our pace of growth is contextually calibrated to the pace of our communities and we are deeply mindful and patient of this as we build formal systems and processes.

Leadership development becomes very important in such an endeavour and we have been able to build a second-line of executive leadership in the above mentioned areas.

Our Organisational Development efforts is supported by Roots to Branches (2020-2023) & Azim Premji Foundation (2023 to present).



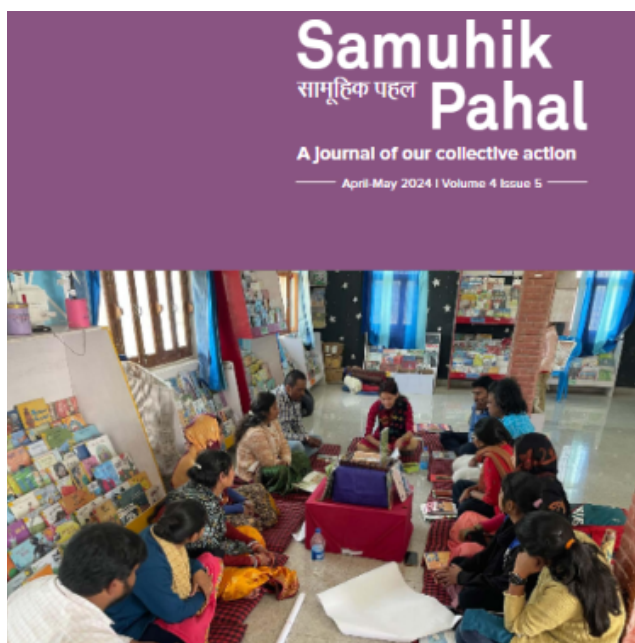
TRAINING CALENDAR



SELECTED MEDIA COVERAGE/INVITED SPEAKER

1

People Practices in CSOs, Reflections on our efforts to build a wholesome organization: Our principles of action and our gradual training, article by Arjun Trivedi, published in Wipro Foundation's Samuhik Pahal Volume 4 Issue 5, April-May 2024



2

Education for peace and the wellbeing of humanity, a video clip showcasing our school in DD News Assamese, May 2024



3

'Opening Boundaries with Arjun Trivedi', organized by Sunbird Trust: Arjun was invited to speak to community school leaders under Sunbird Trust, June 29th 2024

SPOTLIGHT

Deepening Community Participation *Shanti Ghar* (House of Peace)

As a community-based rural institution, participatory processes are the fuel that drives our work and collective ethos. It is for a long time that we have dreamt of a space which can be a culmination and representation of one such tributary that emerges from the wellspring of such processes, which is of our people-culture-design-craftsmanship. Such a dream is finally coming to fruition in the form of '*Shanti Ghar*,' which translates to a 'House of Peace'.

The idea of a *Shanti Ghar* was nurtured by our Founder, Arjun and subsequently, a concept and design emerged with discussions with our architects, Uday Goswami & Jayesh Ganesh, peppered with their own architectural vision.

This concept and design was presented to our community through a series of meetings where the community members shared their feedback on the design, and, thus, fundamentally and significantly contextualizing it to our needs and reality. Around 80 members from the community participated and took co-ownership of the process.

A 23-member committee was formed during the meeting, which comprises members with wide-ranging experiences from building with bamboo to RCC structures, etc. to community stakeholders such as SHG members. They have all come together to make the vision a reality by a will to contribute their skills, craftsmanship.

We are also looking to collaborate with like-minded architects, designers, social workers, and others who would want to be part of building such a community space. As a first step, we have presented the concept to the National Institute of Design, Jorhat.

Financial support for Shanti Ghar is being provided by Mr AK Khaitan.



OUR BENEFICIARIES & IMPACT

A Note on our Impact

These are but only our immediate and direct beneficiaries, which, like the tip of an iceberg, are trivially easily visible, and, as such, rest on an *inordinately and profoundly deeper and broader impact* that can anything but be linearly accounted for. However, it is our objective to, soon, write about such deep impact so meaningfully and mindfully.

<p>Selenghat Valley School (SVS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 130 children enrolled • 260 parents reached through systematic engagement
<p>Government School Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly working with 10 teachers • Directly working with 2 Govt. Schools & 3 Anganwadi Centres • Directly working with 70 children
<p>Livelihood Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to 25 SHGs with 300 women • Support to 3 farmers to develop livelihood model based on mushroom cultivation

PICTURE GALLERY

Glimpses from the Week-Long Workshop with our Professional OD Consultants



Discussion with the Executive Team,
26th June, 2024



PoSH Policy session with our staff,
28th June, 2024

Glimpses from External Exposure of our Livelihood Team



One with the Sewa Bikash Foundation
trainers, 6th June, 2024



Exposure visit to MD's Farm with our
SHG members & farming team
members, 5th April, 2024

Glimpses on the Cultivation of the Heart~Mind~Body: Our Collective Efforts



Happy Aditya out in the community to collect banana plants which our community generously offered to the school



Aditya, Deba & Ritesh deeply engrossed enriching the soil for the plants



Experimental Rainwater Harvesting Pond

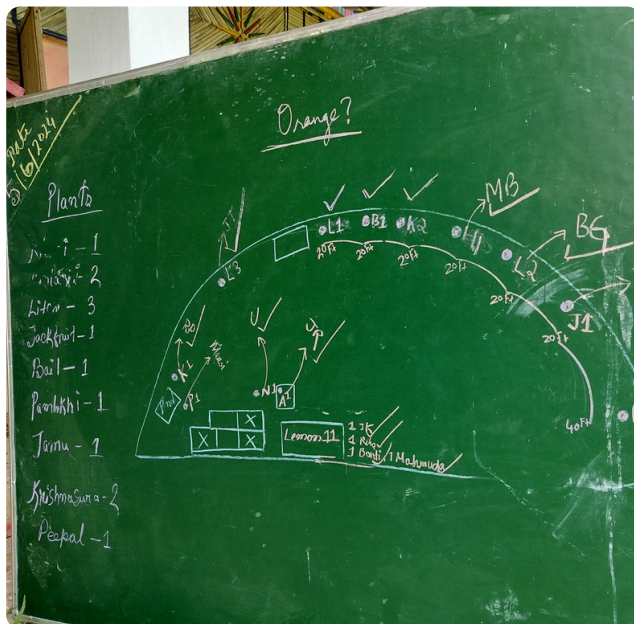


Experimental Ecological Principles based Farm Model

Observation of World Environment Day



Observing Life in the Soil



Our Tree Plantation Master Plan

Bitter-Sweet Moments



Arbash, Deba & Mansi spotted relishing mangoes



Tommy, our beloved campus dog, passed away in April

TEAM REFLECTIONS



The training at Sewa Bikash Foundation re-energized us to continue our efforts after the green mould outbreak which destroyed 800 mushroom cylinders. If one has to learn mushroom farming, the summer season is the best time since it throws more challenges and problems as compared to the winter season when it is relatively easier.

–Rajib Patra, Farming Lead



In the process of writing the case stories of SHGs, I have had the opportunity to look closely into the lives of fellow SHG members. Even though we know each other and the families, I learnt about the struggles and challenges in their lives.

–Junaki Rajuwar, SHG Facilitator



“How can I advance the management team through effective leadership and how can I develop my communication skills to engage with community members and funders? How does a school manager manage school operations and what responsibilities does a manager have in this role?”

–Deba Nayak, School Manager, reflecting on his leadership

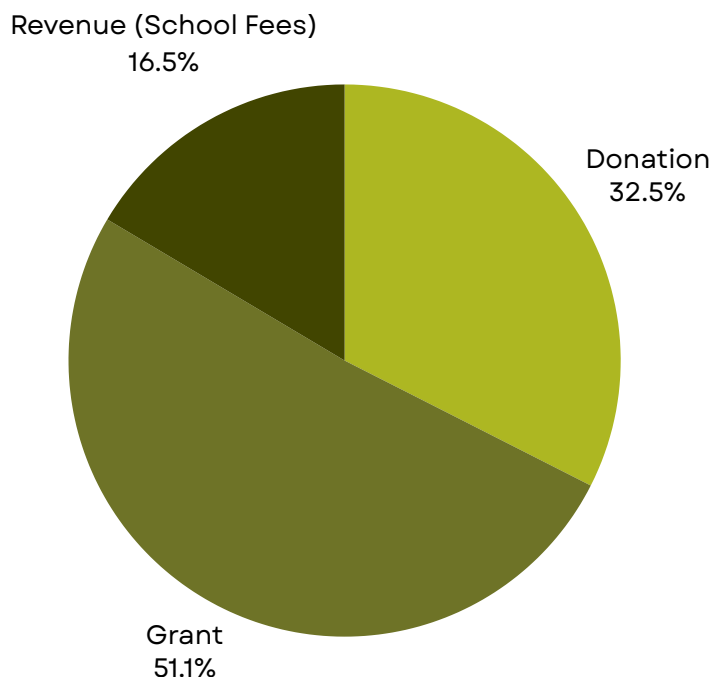


FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Please note that the presentation of this quarterly summary will contain artefacts because accounts can only be balanced at the end of the financial year.

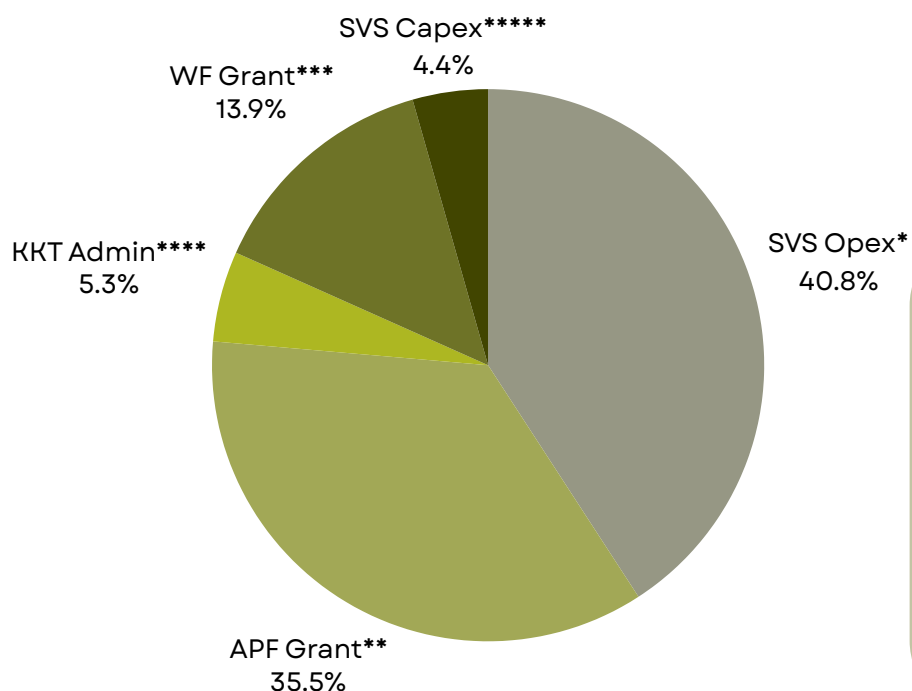
Distribution of Income

Total Income in INR: 13,75,049



Distribution of Expenses

Total Expenditure in INR: 10,77,828



- *Selenghat Valley School Operational Expenses
- **Azim Premji Foundation Grant for Organisational Development & Livelihood Programs
- ***Wipro Foundation Education Grant for Systematic Govt. School Engagement Program
- ****Karunar Kheti Trust Administrative Expenses
- *****Selenghat Valley School Capital Expenses

OUR TEAM & SUPPORTERS

**We are Grateful for your Efforts to Build a
Community-led Institution**

Our Board of Trustees

Khogan Patnayak, President
Unoti Kondha, Vice-President
Rajib Patra, Secretary
Arjun Trivedi, Founding & Managing
Trustee
Mineswar Dutta, Co-Founder Trustee
Tinamani Aarchid, Trustee

Our Staff (April-June, 2024)

Arjun Trivedi, Education Leader
Aditya Nayak, Ecological Farming Trainee
Arbash Ahmed, Trainee Accountant
Banti Gogoi, Assamese Language Teacher
Deba Nayak, School Manager
Deepshikha Dutta, LKG Assistant & Dance
Teacher
Deepshikha Khatoniar, SHG Volunteer
Gaurav Kumar Sarma, CEO
Gunjan Patra, Sports Teacher
Jerina Nayak, Lead Facilitator (Govt.
School Program)
Junaki Rajuwar, SHG Facilitator
Jyoti Kondha, Class 1 Teacher
Jyoti Topno, Math Teacher
Kailyani Patra, Executive Assistant
Mahmuda Begum, UKG Class Teacher
Milina Dutta Sawra, Nursery Class Teacher
Minakshi Mishra, Trainee Accountant
Pradip Singh, Construction Lead
Priyanka Rajak, Administrative Secretary
Punam Nayak, SHG Facilitator
Putoli Tandia, LKG Class Teacher
Rajib Patra, Livelihood Operations Staff
Ramen Prophan, Office/Secretarial Staff

Rihamoni Dev, Nursery Assistant Teacher
Rintimoni Pachani, English Language
Teacher
Ritesh Nayak, Field Assistant
Sangita Gogoi, Head Teacher
Sumaru Mirdha, Farming Team Member
Sunita Gorh Nayak, Cook
Swapnadeep Bhorali, Accounts Lead
Usha Tanti, UKG Assistant Teacher
Yashmin Begum, Teachers' Assistant
Fincubator Advisors Pvt. Ltd., OD
Consultants

Our Architects

Uday Ranjan Goswami
Jayesh Ganesh

Our Institutional Partners

SSK Exports Ltd.
Wipro Foundation
Azim Premji Foundation

Our Donors in April-June, 2024

Assam Bengal Navigation Company Pvt. Ltd.
Col Abhiram Bose
Diganta Barooah
Diphlu River Lodge
Kartikeya Narayan Singh
Major Rohit Lodha
Manish Mishra
Mr Prashant Kumar Pardey
Nansi Munda
Priyamvada Trivedi
Sunil Amarnath Sahani

Our School Management Committee (SMC) Members

Anita Bhumij
Arjun Trivedi
Ciyen Nayak
Dadul Saikia
Dilip Gogoi
Junali Kondha
Junmoni karmakar
Nondeswar Guwala
Romesch Gamang
Rubi Boruah

Our National Advisory Committee Members

Dr. Gautam Barua, Director, IIIT, Guwahati & Ex-Director, IIT Guwahati
Krishna Dutta Deka, Senior Lecturer at District Institute of Education and Training
(DIET), Jorhat, Assam
Purnima Contractor, President, Association for Early Childhood Education and
Development (AECED), Mumbai

Our Local Advisory (*Poramorxor*) Committee Members

Achyut Gogoi
Arjun Trivedi
Dimbeswar Gogoi
Dinesh Sawra
Kashinath Patra
Montu Gogoi
Rana Gogoi
Sangita Gogoi
Tarun Rajuwar
Tushar Pal



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Assam 785636

To know more about our work ,
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or
write to us at karunarkhetitrust@gmail.com



Donations made to Karunar Kheti Trust are qualified for deduction under section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961 and also qualify for CSR contributions.