

KARUNAR KHETI TRUST

Quarterly Newsletter

July-September, 2024 | Issue 2, Vol. 1



December, 2024

In this Issue:
Key Highlights
Spotlight on our Assessment System &
a Youth-Led Community Initiative
Reflections from our Community
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

*Development as Freedom** Borne of Practical Frameworks of *Being Peaceful*

It is anything but uncommon knowledge there is such wisdom and its practices *that if embodied* can cultivate, at least, a baseline of individual & collective resilience, peace, joy, and creativity as an empoweringly fundamental response to our most commonly unifying existential human-condition of suffering.**



Our envisioned *Shanti Ghar* (House of Peace). Click [here](#) to read more.

And such *embodiment of being peaceful*, I observe, can lead to creating a strong, *arguably even a fundamental*, platform to respond to *practical problems* that individuals & communities face and wish to solve, and, therefore, towards *practical solutions* for inclusive & sustainable *development as freedom* where we must now attempt to make *coherent in wholesomeness* human life & non-human life, local & global, science & religion, politics & truth, thinking & doing, modern & traditional, rural & urban, and a list of the other *fragmented, isolated, divided, to intractably conflicted & distressingly polarized aspects of individuals, culture, consciousness & institutions arising out of a fear based*, and thus a disempoweringly negative, response to such a human condition of suffering as well as the profound practical problems we face today.

In summary, such *development as freedom* can possibly move us all out of, what I observe, *deeply systemic cycles of a disempowering suffering* at all levels of existence on our planet.

Reading this Newsletter

As such, based on such a perspective of development as freedom, for our work in education, I invite the reader to read **Deepening Compassion, Its Discipline & Concentration (page 1, Key Highlights/Education)** and **Emergent Competency-Based & Encouraging Learning-From-Failure Assessment System (page 7, Spotlight)** where we tersely note some aspects of such practical frameworks with children, teachers and parents, its challenges, and progress.

**Freedom* from *fear*, whose meaning will be made clear in the due course of reading this foreword.

**Suffering is used here anything but negatively disempoweringly or in *fear*, but in line with philosophy of Dhamma where I see it as it is the empowering acceptance of certain realities of life that affect us all, and which can lead to a positively empowering response of *freedom*.

Our school's sports teacher, **Gunjan Patra's** work with children & youth of our area noted in **A Spark of a Youth-Led Movement (page 8, Spotlight)**, I contemplate on the basis of a portrait of *building the essential discipline that such freedom requires* through physical & mental exercises and sports, without which it can be reduced to just a vision or a dream.



In deep meditation

In developing such frameworks of development as freedom, it has been a particular challenge to observe the challenges of our livelihood leader, **Rajib Patra**, as he started taking over the reins of our model **Mushroom Cultivation** unit as it was reeling from an *extreme outbreak of Green Mold* that destroyed months of hopeful efforts of our team (**page 2, Key Highlights/Livelihood Development**) and they literally started afresh as no factor(s) could be isolated as the cause(s) for this confounding phenomena, or at least so for us.



Rajib & his team

Beyond the diverse tangible challenges that the team and Rajib faced, and still are facing, it humbles me as I find ourselves working just as hard, if not more, to face yet another great test to not lose grounding to, but *deeply work from such practical frameworks of action that on the basis of being peaceful keep people together in such crises.*

Signing Off with Gratitude

In all such efforts that *deeply test* our collective balance of *fear~freedom*, the *practice of gratitude* for the many people & institutions who are so deeply supporting us, and all our children, teachers, staff, leaders, and community members who have accepted the curious exploration to develop of such a collective action for peace, is becoming a *core grounding practice of discipline* to live with the *soaring wisdom of freedom*, mindfully of our fears, which are just as real and even intimately to fundamentally connected to our freedom.

I am literally signing off in gratitude for all of you,



Arjun

**Founder ~ Managing Trustee ~
Education Leader**



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KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Education

Selenghat Valley School

Deepening Compassion, Its Discipline & Concentration

We significantly deepened our process & practices to develop our compassion and its discipline, where, for example, in our *morning process* (a wholesome process to ground ourselves daily in the wellbeing of our heart~mind~body and its interbeing with larger life) we, at the rate of a people, significantly deepened:

- **Caring for plants & soil**, where, particularly, we moved to developing next-level systems~processes~practices for composting & mindfully giving such nutrients to the plants.
- And similarly for **inorganic waste management** to develop next-level systems~processes~practices to segregate & dispose of sustainably such waste, and, in general, continue our efforts to mindfully further reduce consumption of plastics, which includes, led by our students, implementing~developing a Towards Zero Plastic Waste policy.

Last, but not the least, our long-term developing practices of **heart~body~mind in movement~breathing-stillness** are beginning to acquire a deeper & mature quality.

Parent Engagement

Due to the developments highlighted in the previous section and efforts noted in our previous newsletter, we recorded a **parent-engagement of 85%**, which is anything but an ordinary milestone. This is also the first time that we noted the details leading to this data with increasing levels of analytical clarity and, as such, this statistic is based on aggregating data from several key tributaries that comprise our wholesome effort to engage with parents, spanning our formal Hridayar Kotha meetings (Conversation from the Heart) to personal visits & meetings.

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

Collaboration with Government Schools & Anganwadi Centres

In collaboration with Wipro Foundation we are moving along on the basis of a fairly comprehensive, even if still exploratory, 3-year framework with 6 major outcomes to collaboratively work with the local govt schools of the area, which currently are at the Anganwadi and Lower Primary (LP) level. These outcomes are:

1. Core Trust based Relationship to Explore Collaboration
2. A Community of Students~Teachers~Parents Rooted in a Collective Confidence of Heart~Body~Mind that Facilitates Trust-Based Meaningful Relationships
3. Theoretical Knowledge of ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education)
4. Practical Knowledge as well as Ability to Practice ECCE
5. Theory ~ Practice of Assessment as a Continuous & Wholesome Observation~Feedback System
6. Ability for Ground-Up & Principled Curriculum Development

Having started with 5 schools at various stages of steps 1 & 2 of this framework, we have moved forward to start including aspects of 3 & 4 in 3 schools.

Our Govt. School Collaboration work is supported by Wipro Foundation Education Grant.

Livelihood Development

Organic Farming & Mushroom Cultivation

Our mushroom farming team went through a process of deep immersion in the past few months while recovering from an extreme outbreak of **Green Fungus/Mold** due to which 800 cylinders got damaged.

The spread of green mold is utterly contagious and can spread rapidly. The team had to take some drastic measures due to which production was halted completely to start the cycle afresh. This experience turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the team, rich with a lot of learnings and revealed other areas of improvement in the production cycle.

During the July-September period, the team was able to make and put into production 800 cylinders with a potential to produce, at least, 800 kgs of mushroom. Thus far, 100 kgs of mushroom have been harvested.

The team has also started another mushroom farming unit in the community in line with the vision for making it a sustainable livelihood option for the community.

Exploring Tailoring as a Livelihood Generation Option

An exploratory tailoring unit was started with 3 SHG women on 19th July, 2024. This initiative has been entirely led by the SHG women.

The space for setting up the tailoring unit was offered by an elderly woman in the community who had a small shop by the roadside. The Village Organisation (VO) offered a grant of Rs. 8,500 to the women to buy a new sewing machine from their accumulated savings.

The 3 women spend around 1.5 hours every day at the tailoring unit and managed to receive 48 orders through door-to-door visits. They have been able to earn a total income of Rs. 4,470 with a net profit of Rs. 2,810 during the July-September period.

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

Organisational Development

Since the past few months, we have been working towards strengthening our participatory processes internally with our team members and externally by sharing our work and engaging with our local community. We have also made significant

progress in strengthening our financial processes by building the capacity of the team and drafting/finalisation of organisational policies. Some highlights from such work include:

- Drafting and finalisation of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (PoSH) Policy and a staff sensitisation session (facilitated by Fincubator Advisors Pvt. Ltd.) followed by selection of Internal Complaints Committee members.
- First Annual Review of our Personnel Policy with staff and board members which included a comprehensive review of all the clauses of the policy with necessary additions and modifications.
- Finalising expenditure budget heads in Tally. This will enable us to assign expenses in pre-defined budget categories for smooth financial management and reporting of expenses.
- Designing our books of accounts, including the year ending formal audit reports in a participatory process & collaboration between our accounting staff & CA, reflecting our staff's significant empowerment with respect to a ground-up driven experiential understanding of the complete cycle of basic accounting to the highest level audit reports that truly reflects the depths of our work.

- Physical verification of all our assets and assigning codes to keep track of all our fixed assets.
- Quarterly reporting (April-June, 2024) of our work and expenses to our board members
- Deepening community participation with SHG members and tea estate management to share with them about our work, receive feedback and explore further scope of improvement and engagement.
- Publishing our first Quarterly Newsletter for April to June, 2024
- Financial Support of 5 Lakhs from Smile Foundation to support our work in education.
- Establishing and strengthening relationships with district-level government departments for growth of our school and fundraising purposes.

We would continue to build on this momentum in the coming months.

Our Organisational Development work is supported by Roots to Branches (2020-2023), NE-RCRC in collaboration with Dhwani Foundation (2021-22) and Azim Premji Foundation (2023 to present).



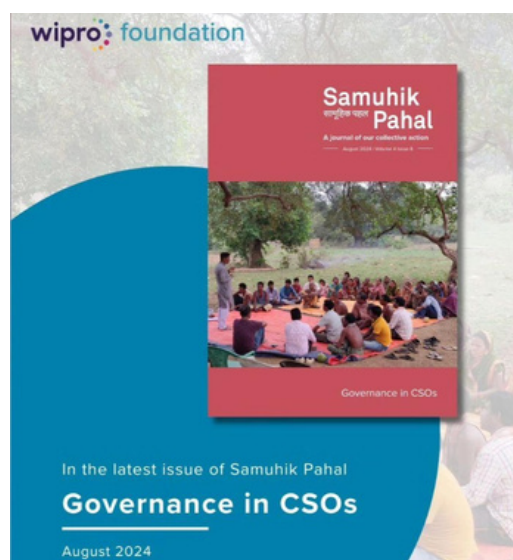
TRAINING CALENDAR



MEDIA COVERAGE/SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS/PARTNERSHIPS

1

“Governance of CSOs: the importance of community, participation and trust”: Our work in Governance featured in Wipro Foundation’s Samuhik Pahal, page 28, August 2024, Volume 4 Issue 8



2

Gaurav Sarma (CEO) presented about KKT’s work at the NE-RCRC Partners Meet, (a regional alliance of NGOs from the Northeast now renamed as North East Together) held in Guwahati, 21st-22nd August, 2024

3

Solar Decathlon India: Project partnership with Ecosphere 2.0, a team of 13 students from the B. Arch and B. Tech programs at Jamia Millia Islamia, committed towards sustainability and developing innovative, eco-friendly building solutions



Solar™
Decathlon
India

SPOTLIGHT

Emergent Competency-Based & Encouraging Learning-From-Failure Assessment Systems

While there are several **emergent points under a formal framework of systematic competency-based assessment system** and as also discussed significantly in the National Education Policy 2020, and based on which our head teacher, Sangita Gogoi, is also taking a course at Azim Premji University (APU, Bangalore), we are observing that, and as Sangita is also feeling validated as she takes her course, **such points are naturally emerging as we work deeply immersed in the freedom perspective of education** that empowers a child's curiosity and ability to interact with life, and ,as such, also its problems, spanning immediately urgent to existential.

Continuing from such a journey's work in the previous quarter, in key aspects we reached significant levels of maturity and with heartening feedback from the students as well as teachers. For example:

- **Learning-From-Failure** processes are made a deep part of the wholesome process that invite & encourage students to learn from their failures, which feels like anything but a non-trivial step forward to embrace the great and even fundamental freedom & joy of learning
- **Wholesome System:** Going significantly beyond the usual half-yearly & year-end exams, we have created a significantly richer & diverse system that includes, for example, **several smaller assessments**, and to **encourage self-learning & problem-solving abilities, self-study assignments & projects**. We envision that as children get older, they increasingly become independent~collaborative self-learners, and as such, empowered with the freedom & discipline of curiosity & problem-solving.
- **Teachers significantly developed their processes** for creating as well as grading such assessments

Our Assessment System as Innovative, Its Profound Challenge of Balance, and The Middle Way

Such systems of assessment, in our context and arguably in most contexts of India, can be considered to be, and even rightfully & fundamentally, **innovative**, especially in the great challenge from the normalization of rote-systems of learning & assessments, and thus, this great expectation of parents that schools feel like a force as real as gravity. Over time we have faced several such challenges and learning from its failures~successes has taught us that the *Middle Way* can be a starting point, to at least be compassionately & deeply listening and open to learning from/in systems we are interacting with.

A stepping stone in this *Middle Way* is, at least for now, **implementing numerical marking system much earlier than we would like to** — ideally, we would not like to use numerical marking till at least the beginning of the Middle stage of education (Class 6 onwards), but because our parents currently, and in a sense, also rightfully, are unable to, with interest and even meaning, interact with a system without such numerical marks, we have started it significantly earlier in the Preparatory stage (Class 3 onwards).

We envision that as we, collectively as students, teachers, parents, and community, build more trust and get feedback of more tangible results based on our processes, we can keep adjusting such and, in general, the path of this *Middle Way*.

In a sense, our greatest effort is to remain determined, persistent, and consistent in practicing the profound wisdom of the *Middle Way*.

SPOTLIGHT

A Spark of a Youth-Led Movement: Selenghat Community Sports Club

Our Sports Teacher from Selenghat Valley School, Gunjan Patra, has started a sports club to provide a platform and empower the youths from tea plantations to pursue certain competitive career avenues such as Police and Army as well as to inculcate the habit of sports and holistic development that it offers. Since the past 5 months, a group of around 30 community youths around the age group of 13-17 years can be seen every day in the playground following a strict regimen of warm-up exercises, athletics, football, and meditation.

Gunjan is trying to bridge a much-needed gap in career paths as well as formal coaching which the youths from tea garden areas cannot access adequately. “Very few youths from tea garden areas manage to get into the Police or the Army. They have to travel to Teok town which is around 10km away to access formal sports coaching and it is often difficult due to the distance and financial constraints. So, I decided to start a freely accessible club for our community youths.” He observes that youths from tea plantation areas get easily distracted by mobile phones and take up addictive behaviours such as consumption of pan masala. “They need a platform where the discipline of sports will help keep them on the right path.”

To support Gunjan’s community-based initiative, write to us at karunarkhetitrust@gmail.com or reach out to him at: +91 86608 54898



A QUANTITATIVE PROFILE OF OUR WORK

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

<p>Selenghat Valley School (SVS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 130 children • 260 parents reached through systematic engagement
<p>Government School Collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Government Schools & 3 Anganwadi Centres • 10 teachers • 70 children
<p>Livelihood Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 SHGs with 317 women • 3 farmers
<p>General Resource Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 local skilled artisans reached for construction of <i>Shanti Ghar</i> (House of Peace) as part of our sustainable & community architecture effort • Partnership with 13 students from Jamia Millia Islamia as part of Solar Decathlon India

PICTURE GALLERY

Shanti Ghar (House of Peace): Community workshop on Advanced Bamboo Construction Techniques



12 local artisans/construction workers during a day-long exposure visit cum Community workshop on Advanced Bamboo Construction Techniques in Guwahati, facilitated by Piyush Sharma from Ekarth Studio & organised by our Architect/Friend Uday Ranjan Goswami

To know more about our sustainable & community architecture efforts, visit [our school's project page on Architecture-in-Development](#).

Revitalisation of our New Academic Block



Mr. Ashish Phookan, Director ABN and JTI Private Ltd, our donor and well-wisher addressing students, teachers & staff during his visit to our school

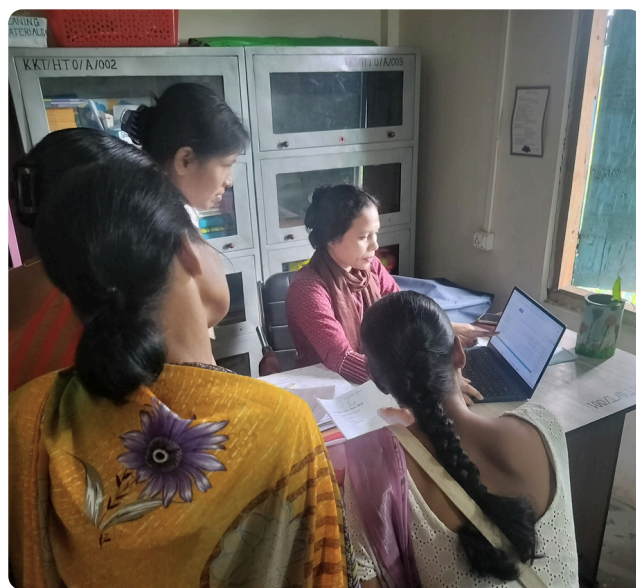


New verandah & creepers to provide much needed to the students and teachers from heat

Parent Engagement



Glimpse of a Hridayor Kotha (Speaking from the Heart) Session



Jyoti, our Math teacher, making a presentation to the parents

Observing Local Cultural Traditions at Selenghat Valley School



Karam Festival Celebrations in our school

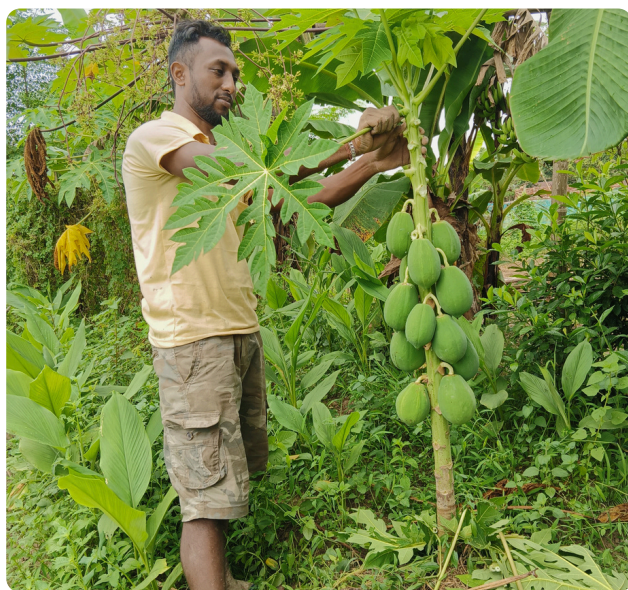


Diha Naam (Congregational Prayer) performed by students

Local Economy of Well-being



Our facilitator Junaki (extreme left) with the tailoring team



Papaya tree bears fruit in abundance in our school farm

A Participatory Ethos



Baisahabi Grant, Assam, India
QFGV+P4X, Baisahabi Grant, Assam 785636, India
Lat 26.777346°
Long 94.492759°
22/09/24 12:04 PM GMT +05:30

A Glimpse from the First Annual Review of our HR (Personnel) Policy with staff

Pallavi, our Executive Assistant presenting a quarterly update on our work to the SHGs that KKT is engaged with directly

Fundraising Efforts



Rajib & Aditya, our Livelihood Development Leaders pitching their projects based on organic mushroom cultivation at the Green Hub Conservation Grants, 2024 in Tezpur

Picture Courtesy: [Green Hub Facebook Page](#)

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR COMMUNITY



I am truly happy with the engagement with KKT. As our centre does not have a helper appointed currently, to have someone come and spend time with the children is a great help for me and makes it easier to manage other responsibilities such as cooking & reporting. Milina (teacher engaged at the Anganwadi centre through the government engagement program) made a commendable effort to prepare for the ECCE day last month, where the nearby anganwadi centres also participated. I have kept the posters designed by her for future use.

–**Rekha Nayak, Anganwadi Worker**



The training on mushroom cultivation in Guwahati and the exposure visit to Jorhat have been eye-openers for me. Most of all, I enjoyed meeting new people and listening to their unique perspectives and work. These exposures showed me how we can become self-sustainable through mushroom and vegetable cultivation. I believe that a good team can achieve anything. Trainings are just a starting point. We need a strong collective effort and good leadership to make things work. Now we are seeing such a spark in our area as we are collectively setting up the mushroom and vegetable farm in our locality with support from KKT.

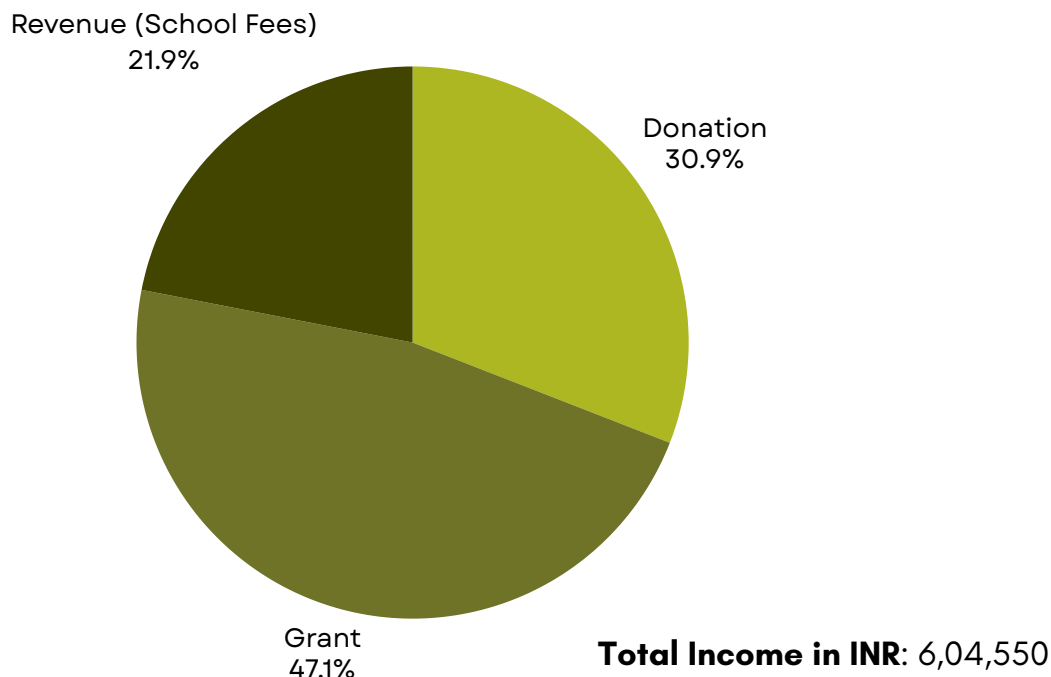
–**Minu Nayak, SHG Member**



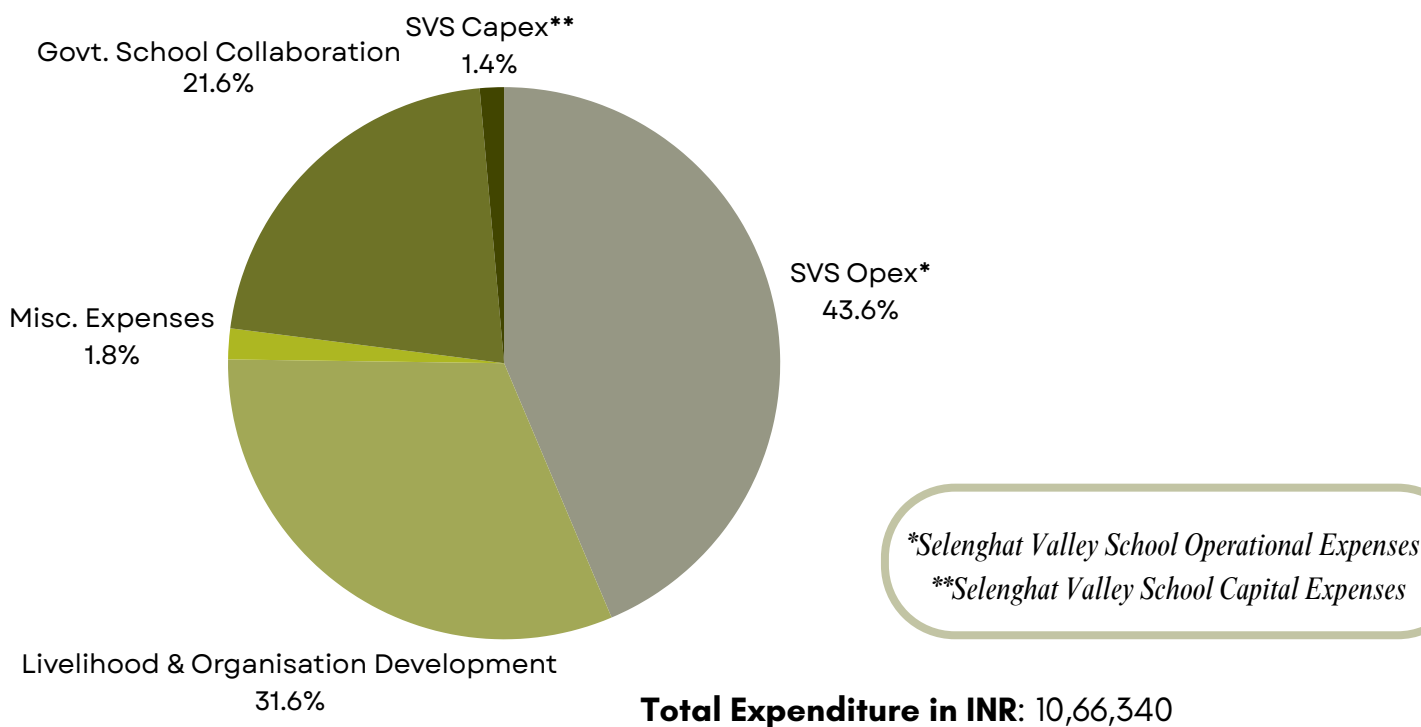
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

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



Distribution of 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

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 Prodhan, 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

Azim Premji Foundation
SSK Exports Ltd.
Wipro Foundation

Our Donors in July-September, 2024

Arvind Kumar Khaitan
Major Rohit Lodha
Yaspal Levin

Our School Management Committee (SMC) Members

Anita Bhumij
Arjun Trivedi
Ciyen Nayak
Dadul Saikia
Dilip Gogoi
Junali Kondha
Junmoni karmakar
Nondeswar Guwala
Romesh 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
Rana Gogoi
Sangita Gogoi
Tarun Rajuwar
Tushar Pal

We offer our deepest condolences to the family of Late Mr. Montu Gogoi, who has left for his heavenly abode, leaving behind valuable contributions for the community of Selenghat over several years and has been a founding member of our Local Advisory (*Poramorxor*) Committee



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DESIGNER

Anvita Jain

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Yusuf Sait

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Assam 785636

To know more about our work ,
please visit www.karunarkhetitrust.org

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.