SPRING 2025 / ISSUE 4

# HER Journal

**WOMEN'S GLOBAL VOICES** 



HER WORK

Sisterhood Our Superpower

**HER LIFE** 

United & Empowered Women Building Unity

HER WORLD:TRAVEL

My Trip to India
A Life-changing Journey



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Dear Readers,

As we step into this season of new life and resurrection, I'm thrilled to welcome you to the Spring issue of HerJournal. This edition is both a celebration and a call—a celebration of the courageous women who are rewriting the story of rural India, and a call to all of us to join them in their mission.

Our theme, "Transformation of Rural India through Grassroots Women Leaders," captures the heartbeat of what we are witnessing in the field. In this issue, you will read powerful articles about women serving on the frontlines—women who, despite being disadvantaged by social norms and economic barriers, are leading with conviction, compassion, and courage.

These women are proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom to some of the most unreached corners of our nation. They are not only planting seeds of faith but cultivating new pathways of social and economic transformation. From initiating women's transformation groups to launching micro-enterprises with their first-ever loans, these leaders are reshaping the spiritual and socioeconomic landscape of South Asia.

I was recently in a primitive village tucked away in central India. For the first time in its history, women in that village received microloans—a small beginning, but one that marked a turning point. Their eyes carried hope, their hands carried purpose. These micro-level initiatives are catapulting them into a new era of growth and dignity. This is transformation—not from the top down, but from the inside out.

Empowered women are changing the face of our communities. But their voices, though fierce, are still faint. They need us—not to speak for them, but to amplify their stories, uplift them in prayer, and walk with them in solidarity. They remind us that the Kingdom of God is not built in silence but in the boldness of those who dare to rise.

With hope and resolve,

Rebecca Stanley

Editor of HERJournal &

President of Kairos Global Foundation

HER Journal, WOMEN'S GLOBAL VOICES

Mobilize.Equip.Transform









#### **SPRING 2025 / ISSUE 4**

# HER Journal WOMEN'S GLOBAL VOICES

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#### FEATURE / HER WORK





**GRASSROOTS LEADERS...** 

THE Women
Transforming
Rural India





n the rural heartlands of North Karnataka, a quiet revolution is taking place. It's not being broadcasted on news channels, nor is it receiving large-scale recognition. But it is seen in the lives of the people being touched, particularly women, like Shilpa Siddu Bhosle. She is sowing seeds of hope, resilience, and empowerment. This is her story—one of overcoming adversity, defying societal limitations, and transforming her community through the power of faith and leadership.

#### Early Life and Challenges

"My name is Shilpa Siddu Bhosle, and I come from a rural village in North Karnataka, India" she begins, reflecting on her early years. "Growing up, my childhood was marked by deep financial struggles. My family lived in poverty, and because of that, my early years were filled with uncertainty and limitation."

For many, growing up in such conditions would mean having dreams stifled before they even began. Shilpa's family, like many others in rural India, had few resources to offer, and educational opportunities were out of reach. But amidst the hardship, something within her began to stir — a quiet yet unshakable faith that would eventually give her the strength to rise.

"I couldn't pursue higher studies or training. Poverty meant many doors were closed. But my community played a different role," she recalls. It was through church activities such as Sunday school and prayer groups that she began to find her voice. "These early spiritual environments helped me understand who I was and gave me a sense of purpose."

In a family where societal norms often dictated a woman's role as quiet and obedient, these spaces became a sanctuary where she could grow, speak, and dream—things that felt out of reach in her everyday life.



She saw in me what
I couldn't see in myself
& nurtured my calling.
Her encouragement was
like water to a thirsty plant.

— SHILPA SIDDU BHOSLE

#### **Overcoming Barriers**

Living as a woman in a rural, patriarchal society meant facing invisible but powerful barriers. "We were expected to remain quiet, hidden, and certainly not to dream of leadership," Shilpa shares, a quiet strength in her voice. "These invisible barriers were the hardest to break because they were built into our mindset and way of life."

Yet, despite these pressures, Shilpa's faith and determination started to carve out a path. "There were times when the weight of it all made me want to give up," she admits. "But it was the Word of God and prayer that gave me strength to go on. Even when I couldn't see the road ahead clearly, faith became my light."

As she continued her spiritual journey, Shilpa's understanding of her own worth began to shift. She started to believe that God's call on a woman's life transcended cultural norms and restrictions. Gradually, she found the courage to speak up—first in small groups, then in larger community gatherings.

It wasn't easy. There were whispers of opposition, doubts, and societal expectations pushing back against her. But she didn't give up. "The church community stood with me, and a remarkable woman named Mrs. Reeta became my mentor. She saw in me what I couldn't see in myself and nurtured my calling. Her encouragement was like water to a thirsty plant."

#### Stepping into Leadership

The turning point came unexpectedly. Her husband, a pastor, suffered a serious accident that left him unable to fulfill his duties. The leadership of their church, and the responsibility for their community, suddenly rested in Shilpa's hands. While many would have seen this as a crisis, Shilpa saw it as a moment of divine clarity. "I knew God had been preparing me for this," she reflects.

With the support of her community and her unwavering faith, Shilpa stepped into the role. "It hasn't been easy—balancing leadership, family responsibilities, and societal expectations is a constant struggle," she admits, "but it has been worth it. Every time I see a woman in my village find her voice, or a young girl dream about her future, I know the effort is not in vain."

Shilpa's leadership didn't stop at managing the church. She and her family began a house church that continues to grow, providing a safe space for people to connect, learn, and find spiritual growth.

#### Vision and Legacy

For Shilpa, the work isn't just about today — it's about creating lasting change for future generations. "I deeply desire to see change in my community—not just for today, but for the next generation," she shares. "I want to raise women leaders who will not be afraid to stand for truth, justice, and compassion. I want our daughters to grow up knowing they have value, voice, and the ability to lead."

Unfortunately, even today, many communities—including some within churches—are hesitant to accept women in leadership roles. For Shilpa, this is an issue of both faith and justice. "That has to change," she says firmly. "We must rise up and ensure that the next generation of women is empowered, equipped, and embraced."



Her vision is clear: If I could change just one thing in rural India, it would be this: the right for every woman to live in equality—to have access to education, leadership, and dignity, regardless of where she is born.

#### Message to Other Women

Shilpa's journey, though extraordinary, is a reminder that every woman has the potential to overcome barriers, rise above challenges, and lead with strength and compassion. "To every woman out there who feels small, voiceless, or forgotten — I want to say this: You are not alone. Your past does not define your future. Keep walking, keep believing, and don't be afraid to rise."

Her words resonate with deep conviction: "Your story matters. You can lead. You can transform. And through you, God can change the world around you."



amana, a 40-year-old healthcare worker from Vinukonda, is rewriting what it means to be a woman in rural India. Her journey—from a childhood marked by poverty to becoming a beacon of hope in her community—is one of resilience, compassion, and unwavering determination.

Growing up in a small farming village, Ramana's early years were defined by hardship. "Education for girls wasn't a priority," she recalls. "I spent more time helping with chores than studying." Healthcare was virtually nonexistent; home births were the norm, and preventable diseases claimed countless young lives.

But even amid these harsh realities, the seeds of purpose were quietly taking root. Watching her mother—a woman with no formal education—help neighbors during childbirth sparked something in Ramana. "She was my first role model," she says. "Her kindness made me want to do something meaningful."

#### Dreams Against the Odds

Poverty made everything harder. Ramana often walked miles to school, studied under a flickering kerosene lamp, and skipped meals to make ends meet. "In our village, people believed girls didn't need education. Marriage was our future," she says.

But one event changed everything: a young woman in her village died in childbirth due to the lack of medical help. "Her death lit a fire in me. I knew I had to become someone who could prevent that from happening again."

Choosing to become a healthcare worker was a radical act. "People laughed when I said I wanted to work. They said, 'Why work? Your husband will provide." But Ramana pushed forward, teaching herself medical terms, building trust one household at a time, and facing resistance with patience and quiet strength.



She walked miles
to reach pregnant women,
educated families about
hygiene, and helped guide
them toward safe,
hospital-based deliveries.
"At first, they didn't trust me.
But slowly, my actions
started speaking louder
than their doubts."

#### The Power of Persistence and Community

Ramana's greatest strength lies in her consistency. Even when people shut their doors, ignored her advice, or clung to dangerous traditions, she kept going. "I reminded myself of the babies I vaccinated, the mothers I helped deliver safely. Those small victories gave me strength."

Community support didn't come overnight. But as she proved her dedication, neighbors who once questioned her began seeking her help. Other women started standing beside her, and senior health workers became mentors. "Their belief in me kept me going."



#### Leadership Born from Service

Though she never aspired to lead, Ramana's work made her a natural leader. She spearheaded a village-wide initiative to reduce maternal mortality by promoting hospital deliveries. With the help of AAV field staff and patient education, her efforts led to a drop in maternal deaths to zero. One night, she even saved a woman's life by rushing her to the hospital just in time.

Ramana's aspirations are clear. She dreams of accessible rural healthcare, more women in leadership, and breaking the cycle of early marriage and lack of education.

"I want girls to grow up knowing they can be more than housewives. That they can be doctors, leaders, decision-makers," she says with conviction. "My mission is to make sure they have more opportunities than we did."

#### If She Could Change One Thing...

"If I had the power to change one thing," she says without hesitation, "it would be the health-care system in rural India." Her vision is one where no child dies from lack of vaccines, where mothers don't risk their lives giving birth, and where healthcare is a right, not a privilege.

#### Leading the Charge

Shilpa and Ramana's stories are not just ones of personal triumph—their stories are also of the transformation happening in their communities, as they lead. Their stories are of a generation inspired, and a future reimagined. They may have started their journys with nothing but dreams, but today, they stand as proof that with courage, compassion, and determination, women can truly bring fruitful, lasting change.

These women join the ranks of the many hundreds across rural India who are leading the charge in this grassroots movement.

#### You Are the Beginning of a Movement

Ramana's Message to Women..

To women facing similar struggles, Ramana has a simple but powerful message:

#### **Believe in Yourself:**

"Even when others don't. Your strength lies in your determination."

#### **Start Small:**

"Help someone, learn something, speak up. Change begins with one action."

#### **Educate and Empower:**

"Knowledge is freedom. Once you learn, teach others. Lift each other up."

#### **Have Courage:**

"People may doubt you. But if you stand firm, they will start to listen."

"You are not just one woman," she says. "You are the beginning of a movement."



#### **MOST FAMILIAR TO ME**

By Mallory Muetzel

It's not hunger that wakes me from a fitful sleep. It's him. His curse that tightens its hold on me every day.

I don't feel those hunger pangs anymore because he won't let me eat more than one small meal a day.

It's worse for my growing children. I kiss their foreheads. Their thin limbs poke through the blanket and I curse him who keeps us tired.

If I ate breakfast, the trek would take half the time it does. But sleep fogs my mind and I'll need two hours of darkness to bring the day's water ration home for me and my children.

I leave my hut before the sun rises to walk the dirt trails snaking through the brush and palms, water bucket in hand, with nothing in my belly.

Only the determination to somehow save my children from him spurs me onward.

He's kept us from filling our bodies with food. He won't let us have access to clean running water in our village.

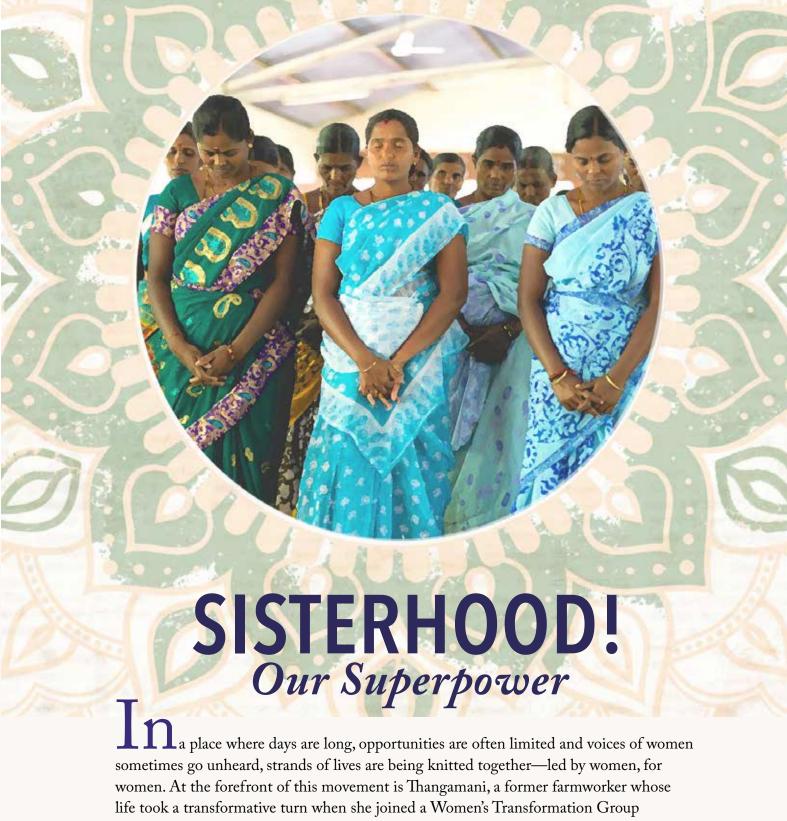
And he'd never let my children or me go to school. He's removed any protection I might have from being assaulted. He makes it so I must go through dangerous stretches of the jungle while it's dark, where any number of predators could be waiting to get me.

Constantly he reminds me of what I'll never have. A whole and healthy family, an education, a reliable source of income, a full stomach, access to medical care, and a future. He'd never let me have those things.

If only I could escape him for good, I could dream of something beyond survival.

He goes by many names but there's one that is most familiar to me.

I know him as Poverty.



(WTG), a community group supported by IGL, a Christian NGO. What started as a simple conversation in the fields became the first step on a powerful journey of leadership, empowerment, and sisterhood.

"I used to work on a farm," Thangamani shares, reflecting on her life before joining the group. "One day, IGL leaders visited and spoke to me. That moment changed everything." Inspired by their words and supported by their belief in her potential, Thangamani stepped into a new role—one that not only changed her life but would eventually touch the lives of many others.

In the past 10 years, Thangamani has led a WTG with passion and purpose. What drives her most is the transformation she's seen—not just in herself, but in the women she works alongside. "We support each other. I never imagined IGL would help me come this far," she says with pride.

Before joining the group, Thangamani struggled with confidence and independence. "I couldn't speak up or face people," she admits. But the support of her group provided a nurturing environment where she could grow. Through conversations, shared challenges, and creative problem-solving, she found her voice—and helped others find theirs.

One powerful example of this strength came when the group struggled to open a bank account in their area. "We faced rejection and had to travel far just to try," she recalls. "It was exhausting. But we didn't give up. Eventually, we succeeded." It's moments like these that highlight the importance of perseverance and the strength found in unity.

#### **Fighting Social Isolation**

In rural communities, social isolation is often rooted in a lack of education and early responsibilities placed on girls. "Many are sent to work young, then married off. They don't get the chance to grow or stand up for themselves," Thangamani explains. The WTG group offers an alternative—a space where women can explore their potential and support one another in doing so.

"When someone in our team struggles, we come together," she says. Whether through group discussions or emotional support, no one is left behind. The result is a deep sense of belonging, a true sisterhood that empowers women to overcome loneliness and isolation.

Thangamani's leadership extends beyond her group. "People see how we work and feel inspired," she says. "Even those who aren't members ask, 'Why can't I do that too?" By setting an example of collaboration and

resilience, the group is slowly changing the mindset of their village—encouraging more women, especially the younger generation, to believe in themselves.

Their impact can be seen in the growing number of women-led businesses and the increased confidence among village women. "We've created a space where women can learn, share, and grow," she explains. "We've become a source of strength and inspiration."

The journey has not only brought success—it has brought self-discovery. "Being in this group made me believe in myself. It taught me to speak up and take on responsibility," Thangamani says. From improved communication skills to better problem-solving abilities, the tools she's gained have impacted every area of her life—including her family.

And leadership? That's no longer a distant dream. "This group has helped many women, including myself, take on leadership roles," she shares. "We've proven that we can lead, support others, and make a difference."

#### Resolving Differences with Respect

With every group comes different opinions. Thangamani handles conflict with grace: "When there's a disagreement, I bring everyone together. We talk openly and find a solution as a team." This commitment to collaboration and fairness reinforces the values at the heart of the group—mutual respect, unity, and shared growth.

#### A Beacon of Hope

Thangamani's story is more than just a personal journey—it's a testament to the power of sisterhood. Through empathy, empowerment, and unwavering support, the women of this WTG are redefining what's possible for women in rural communities.

#### Their message is simple but profound: together, we are stronger.

HER LIFE: Community



**ECCLESIASTES 4:12** 

#### We are stronger together & empowered!

When we come together, we can do so much more. But, we often find ourselves in difficult conversations or challenging relationships.

We asked leaders from the KGF Board to share how best to build unity.

## United & Empowered

#### WOMEN BUILDING UNITY

#### Find common ground

I lived in Casper, Wyoming for the past 20 years. I had many women in my life from my children's school, my church, and from my husband's practice. I also served on many boards and nonprofits and bonded with women with like causes. With these women I have a deep history of sharing life in its best form and in those most painful moments.

It's all different now that I've moved to Southern California. My husband's retired, I don't have a home church, my kids are grown and pursuing their careers and I'm living in a place where I know very few people. Making friends and bonding with women is difficult. It's been a slow process but I have found a community of women. Although we do not have a shared past we do have some common ground. We are united in our care for humanity, the earth and all of God's creatures.

This is my tribe. We share a deep care and concern for the future. We have banded together to give a voice to the things Jesus cares about such as justice, mercy, caring for the poor and the greatest of all.... simply loving people.

-Vicki Orcutt

# Surprisingly, one of the most challenging places to build unity is among Christian women in the church.

Wherever women work together to accomplish something, their creativity and "take-charge" natures can often clash and create division.

A good way to easily overcome these divisions is by using and modeling these **three simple strategies**:

**Be prepared** for such conflicts to arise. Realize that *disagreement* is part of the brainstorming process, presents itself in most group dynamics, and doesn't have to be threatening.

**Acknowledge** (privately, and to the group), that these conflicts are merely a display of the many gifts and talents God has blessed each of us with and that, in itself, *is cause to celebrate*, not despair.

Ask the women to relinquish ownership of their ideas to the *One who created them* for the greater good of the task at hand. If a certain idea or suggestion isn't used this time, it may be the perfect fit next time!

—Paula French

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

#### Establish a focused vision

Building unity in any environment takes time, but it's always worth the effort. In a professional setting, I believe that establishing a focused vision for the team is a crucial first step. With both friends and colleagues, fostering common ground through positive, clear communication goes a long way in creating peace and unity. My favorite part is making time for fun and enjoyment, which helps strengthen camaraderie!

—Angela Woerner

#### Affirm & recognize

A key approach in facilitating unity—especially with women, is recognition. As women it is not uncommon to feel overlooked. When a person takes the time to see and acknowledge an ability, gift, or talent in someone a bridge is built.

Once that recognition and affirmation is in place, if it is possible to put that woman in a position (work, volunteer, even just asking her to use her ability to help) unity shines through.

When we hold a mirror to each other's strengths and then find ways for each other to use those strengths so that we can shine a spotlight on them, unity is born.

Encourage a woman today!

—Tara Metzger

### A LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY

### Reflections on My Trip to India

As told by Joanna Fisher

Last October, I had the incredible opportunity to travel to India with a group of women, an experience that left an indelible mark on my heart. As a professional wedding photographer, I am used to documenting stories through my lens, but this journey pushed me beyond my comfort zone in ways I never expected.



My family was never really into traveling much but I was always drawn to India. Even as young as 6 years old, I was like, "I'm going to go to India one day."

Back in 2019, I decided, this is it, I'm going to India. It was a three week trip and the day I left to come home, I decided, "I'm going back, don't know when or how but...I fell in love with the country and the people. There was a draw that was inexplicable, but I see now that it was the Holy Spirit.

I was at a mission's conference at my church and Becky Stanley (KGF President) came and spoke about the work happening in India. I was like, "sign me up." This was my chance to go back. A year after that, when Becky was visiting my church again, a trip was being planned. There was a small group of women who were going to help teach at a women's conference and it really seemed like the timing was right. So in the fall of 2024, I was back in India. We traveled to the states of Tamil Nadu and Telangana and spent time seeing the ministry work of India Gospel League (a partner of KGF's).

Prati with women leaders

While every moment of the trip was filled with meaningful encounters, two experiences stood out as particularly profound.

#### A Special Bond with Prati

On the last night of our trip, I wrestled with an internal struggle. As a relatively new Christian, I felt hesitant about sharing my testimony (more about that later). I'm more comfortable being behind the camera, capturing moments rather than stepping into the spotlight. I kept thinking...

# "Who am I to stand in front of these women & speak?"

I shared these fears with Prati, a woman who became very dear to me. She oversees the Women with a Mission Ministry and is also the mother of Becky Stanley, President of Kairos Global Foundation. That night, Prati gave me a scarf that had been given to her. She prayed over me and encouraged me to step forward in faith. It was a powerful moment, one that deepened my connection to her and left me with a lasting sense of purpose.





Another moment that continues to stay with me was meeting a young woman at the conference. I don't know her name, but after I shared my testimony, she followed me outside, took my hands, and gave me a necklace. In return, I gave her a ring and told her, I will remember you, and I will pray for you.

The exchange lasted all of two minutes, but it was profound. We didn't need words to communicate the connection we shared in that moment. I think of her often, praying for her and cherishing the memory of that brief but powerful encounter.

#### My Call to Action

Throughout the trip, moments like these continued to unfold, reinforcing how meaningful this journey was. One of the most impactful experiences was visiting a Life Center. Seeing its impact on an entire village changed everything for me.

The Life Center wasn't just a building—it was a beacon of hope. Within the space was a telemedicine center, a convenience store, a skills center, and even a gym. Women were learning how to sew while their children received care in a safe environment.

The ripple effect of transformation was undeniable.

I returned home with a renewed passion and shared my experiences with my church. The impact was immediate—we received the green light to adopt a village. Now, we're committed to being part of this incredible movement, ensuring that more communities in India receive the support and resources they need.

This journey was more than just a trip—it was a calling. And I know this is only the beginning.

#### "I came back with such a passion thinking ...

this changes everything for a village."









## Interested in going to India?

#### Here's Joanna's tips...

- Go with an open mind and be willing to just roll with it, things change last minute.
- Go with no expectations.
   We were safe and comfortable.
- The most important piece... Surround yourself with prayer.

I would say, this sounds like a given but pray before you go, while you are traveling and when you get back. For instance, I was all panicked about having to get up and speak at the women's conference. That's not something I'm used to doing. And my testimony is not super flowery. It definitely has some grit, so I was nervous about sharing. I was nervous if it was too much or not enough. I remember I woke up in the middle of the night while we were at Sharon Gardens. I felt like I had more, *like God gave me* more of a message. It was this huge piece that I had not considered. It was not a part of what I was going to say. I turned on my laptop and started typing.

The response to that portion was like "thank you God".
Apparently, that piece was really needed. It didn't come from me.
So being in prayer and receiving that was a huge blessing that got passed on.

Consider going with a women's KGF team. A trip is planned for January 2026.

Kairos Global Foundation Mobilize.Equip.Transform

# JOIN US in INDIA.

JANUARY 2026.

This ten day networking opportunity has something for everyone.

Whether you're a business professional, an entrepreneur or have a heart to engage and work alongside women in South Asia, this is a unique chance filled with relationship building, collaboration and meaningful encounters.

Interact with rural women leaders, gain insight into their challenges and explore opportunities for partnership...

Visit a rural village

Be a part of a water well, home or Sharon Mart dedication

Take part in a leadership panel discussion

Engage with KGF partners and local leaders

Learn how thoughtful rural leadership development is paving the way for sustainable transformation

Interested in learning more? Scan the code...





CHAMPIONING WOMEN WORLDWIDE

# STAND FIRM IN YOUR FAITH, BE CONFIDENT IN IT & ENJOY

Rosey is a young women who grew up in Manipur, India. Her story is one of brokeness, redemption, triumph and hope.

-ROSEY



Read more of Rosey's story in our HERJournal Spring Issue 2024 at *kairosglobalfoundation.org* **Or scan the QR code** 





#### A Look into India's Kitchen Gardens

India's unique climate and soil conditions contribute to its rich and diverse agriculture landscape. This diversity not only adds to the complexity and richness of Indian cuisine but also supports the livelihoods of rural women.

The Kitchen Garden initiative happening throughout rural villages empowers women to grow their own vegetables and fruits, enhancing food security and nutrition while providing additional income through surplus sales. The initiative has led to reduced grocery expenses, improved health outcomes from pesticide-free produce, and financial benefits for families.

#### The Land of Spices

India is often regarded as the "land of spices." Its geography has played a pivotal role in the development of its spice trade, and currently accounts for more than 70% of global spice exports.

The northeastern states of India, such as Assam and Sikkim, are known for unique spice varieties like large cardamom, ginger, and turmeric, which thrive in their moist, subtropical environment.

The warm, tropical climate of southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka is ideal for growing a wide variety of spices such as black pepper, cardamom, cloves, and cinnamon.

Everyday cooking in India includes a variety of spices... cumin, coriander, turmeric, mustard seeds, cardamom, cloves, and cinnamon.

#### A wide variety of fruits & vegetables are grown across India.

#### Northern regions FRUITS

Apples, cherries and pears are widely grown.

#### Vegetables

Common vegetables in northern India include potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots and radishes.

#### Southern regions FRUITS

Tropical fruits like bananas, guavas and pomegranates.

#### **Vegetables**

Common vegetables in southern India include cauliflower, spinach, eggplant and tomatoes.

#### "King of the Fruits"

Mangoes are considered India's "king of fruits," and are abundant in the summer months, especially in regions like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh.

#### **OH MY CURRY!**

The southern and western regions grow vegetables used in curries and sambars (a lentil- based stew).

Other vegetables grown in India are fenugreek and bottle gourds.



#### Our purpose found in our name...

In Greek, the word *kairos* translates to opportune time or the right time. It's a pivotal moment where a word or action could have monumental results. For the women receiving training and microloans to fuel their careers, this important moment offers meaningful and productive career opportunities that would otherwise be impossible. With education and the funds to drive their dreams forward, they can shed the burden of harsh working conditions for little pay, and embark on a life free from poverty.

#### **KGF'S VISION**

Holistic transformation of rural communities through empowering women WORLDWIDE.



Learn more by scanning the code kairosglobalfoundation.org





