

# EAST REGIONAL GATHERING (Bihar & West Bengal)

30th August 2025



**“We want to get to know each other and see how we can come together to amplify our work together.”**  
– Tapasi Koley, Sramajibi Mahila Sangha.

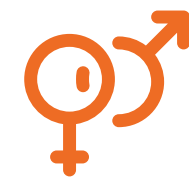


On 30th August 2025, 62 of us representing 32 organizations from Bihar and West Bengal came together in Kolkata for the East Regional Gathering. For many, it was a chance to meet old friends from the Rebuild journey; for others, it was the first time stepping into a space where language, geography, and issue areas didn't divide us but brought us closer.

**“Hope is that today we will go beyond the differences of language and come together as a community.”**

- Dr. Shreya Mitra, Towards Future.  
And that's exactly what unfolded.

**Thematic areas of work:**



**Gender**



**Child's Rights**



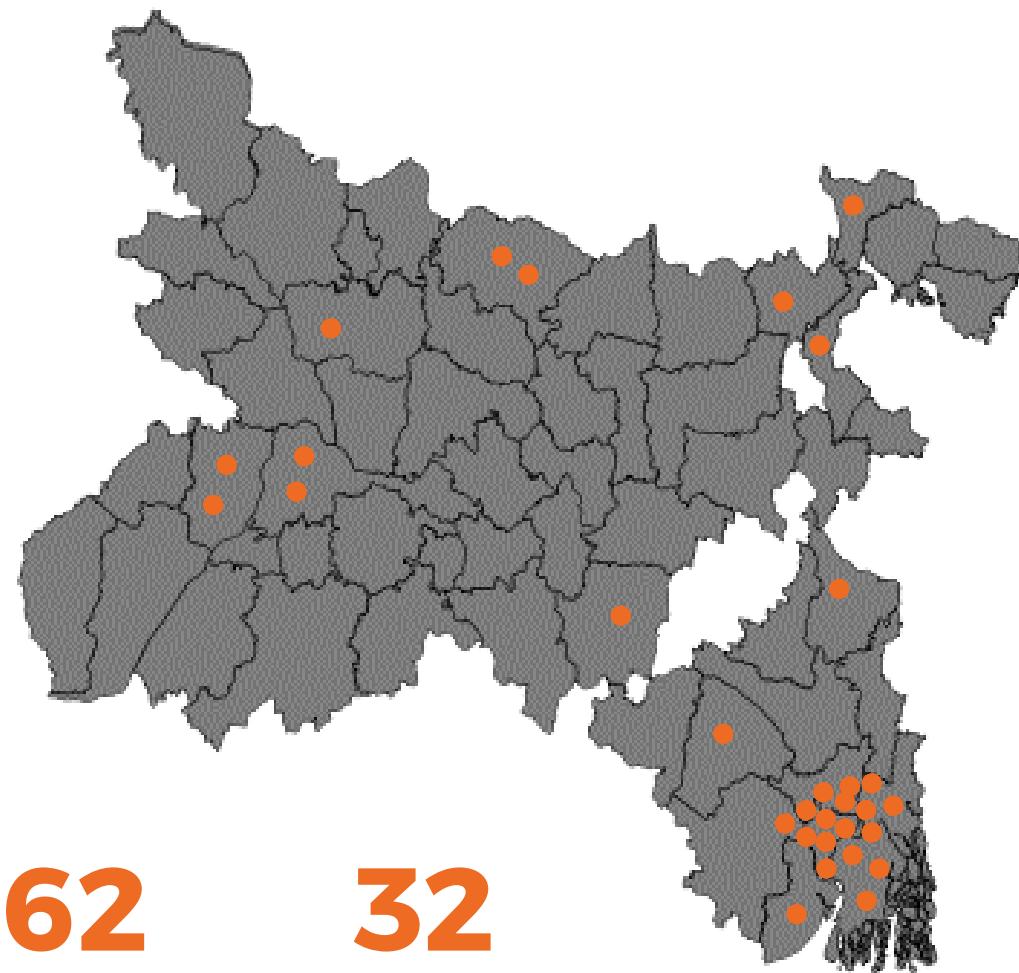
**Human Rights and Social Justice**



**Education**



**Livelihood**



**62**

**leaders and staff members**

**32**

**organizations**

**“कार्यक्रमों और मीटिंग्स में 5% भी महिला नेतृत्व नज़र नहीं आता, लेकिन Rebuild उसे प्राथमिकता देती है। यह बहुत बड़ी बात है और इसके लिए हम आभार व्यक्त करना चाहते हैं।”**

- Nirmala, Sarvo Prayas Sansthan.

# STORIES IN ACTION: WORLD CAFÉ

The World Café buzzed with energy. Many of us realized that, even while working in the same region, state, or city, we hadn't been aware of the breadth of organizations around us.

- **Networking** was one of the biggest takeaway from this session.
- We sharpened how we speak about our work. A key aspect of our work is to communicate in a crisp manner. This was a good opportunity to polish how we talk about our work.



- Stories on climate change inspired us to think more deeply: ***“I was touched to see such deep work happening on climate change. We often have very surface level understanding of how we can contribute to climate change. But I hope through the gathering we take back the aspiration to go deeper and contribute to slow down climate change.” - Shilpa Sanyal, Rupantaran Foundation.***

# COMPLIANCE: LEARNING TOGETHER

The session took the form of a fireside chat with Kumar Vikas, Associate Director at Dasra, an expert in compliance and was moderated by Sanjina from Rangeen Khidki. The compliance session stood out for its practicality. With rules around FCRA and Income Tax changing so often, many participants appreciated having a safe space to ask questions openly.



Participants deep in discussion, asking sharp questions and clarifying doubts on FCRA compliance.



Kumar shared key updates on FCRA compliance from publication rules to fixed assets, admin costs, and bank account norms.

“যেই জায়গাতে আগে কাজ করার স্বাধীনতা ছিল না, সেটা এখন করতে পারছি, ফ্লেক্সিবল ফান্ডিং-এর সহায়তায়।” - জবা ভট্টাচার্য, SMOKUS.



## THE POWER OF FLEXIBLE FUNDING

A recurring theme through the day was how flexible funding gave us freedom, hope, and room to innovate.



“नाउम्मीदी की जगह उम्मीद दिखती है।”

- Farzana Begum, Rahat.



“Many funders want a reference point before giving for a new thing. We used Rebuild’s fund for wellness and gratuity of employees and then used that to influence other funders. It worked for us.”

- Koyel, Sappho for Equality

**In Diksha, an urgent ground-level program could only run because flexible funds filled the gap.**

*“The use of flexible funds to drive innovation truly stands out. For instance, the Eco Reporters model adopted by a few organizations has become a powerful example.”*

“इस फ़ंड को हमने ‘आज़ाद फ़ंड’ नाम दिया है।”

- Farzana Begum, Rahat.

# NARRATIVES OF CHANGE

Storytelling took center stage, reminding us that authentic voices move people beyond numbers. Three different styles of storytelling was explored:



- ▶ **Animated Films (Sappho for Equality):** Co-created animations telling stories of everyday violence against marginalized communities, making invisible struggles visible.
- ▶ **Beneficiary-led Documentaries (Bhoomika Vihar):** Guided by the motto *“Jis ki ladai, us ki aguvai”*—communities themselves narrating and acting in their stories, with dignity and care.
- ▶ **Comics (Rupantaran Foundation):** Using simple tools like paper and pens, communities created comics that sparked local change. A Class 7 student’s comic even stopped corporal punishment in his school.

**The takeaway was clear:  
beyond statistics lie human lives, and storytelling itself can ignite change.**

**“There is immense potential for collaboration in storytelling.”**  
- Rahima Khatun, Nari-O-Shishu Kalyan Kendra.

# THREADS THAT EMERGED

Across sessions, a few strong threads tied us together:

**Collaboration and Networking:** The Bihar Development Collective showed us how 40+ organizations support each other without external funding—an inspiration for our own ecosystem.

**Gender as Cross-Cutting:** Gender justice is relevant across education, livelihoods, and child rights. Many called for deeper, practical trainings to build confidence in addressing it.



**Common Issues:** Underage marriage, domestic violence, human trafficking and reproductive health emerged as shared concerns across states. There is potential in coming together and learning from each other.

**Data Gaps:** Outdated datasets limit our advocacy. With 241 organizations in the Rebuild portfolio, we have a “gold mine of data.”

**Capacity Building Needs:** FCRA, Income Tax, and compliance were highlighted as urgent areas for learning.

# LOOKING AHEAD

The gathering ended not with closure but with commitments to keep walking together:



**Organize quarterly meetings—both virtual and physical.**



**Build an online repository to share modules, resources, and learnings in multiple languages.**



**Create a data bank on under-researched issues like domestic violence and reproductive health.**



**Use the WhatsApp group actively for polls, updates, and collective sharing.**



**Form thematic coalitions, starting with gender-focused groups.**



**Plan specific trainings on compliance and statutory issues.**



## FEEDBACK FROM THE DAY

**“The facilitation style was excellent - inclusive and participatory. I felt that my voice mattered.”**

**“Peer learning was the most valuable part. Listening to challenges and solutions from other NGOs made me feel connected and less isolated.”**

**4.8/5**

**On logistics**

**4.7/5**

**Quality of sessions**

**4.7/5**

**Facilitation of sessions**

## CLOSING REFLECTIONS

As we left Kolkata, many of us felt grateful for the chance to learn, network, and strengthen each other. Some suggested making future gatherings two-day events with exposure visits, while others highlighted the balance between virtual and physical formats.

What united us all was a shared sense of belonging to a community which believes in collaboration. Each of us tackling the same issues in unique ways and finding strength in supporting one another.

### Food for thought

“जेंडर को एक मुद्दे के रूप में संबोधित करने में नज़रिए को व्यापक करने की ज़रूरत है। हम आज भी जेंडर की बात बाइनरी तक सीमित रख रहे हैं, और इसे बदलने की आवश्यकता हम महसूस करते हैं।” -

Koyel Ghosh, Sappho for Equality.



"Humein solidarity mehsoos ho raha hai"  
Rahima Khatun, NOSKK

