BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

A Biennial Report of Sam-Haq Trust



August 2024 to July 2026

SAM-HAQ TRUST

EQUITY. JUSTICE. INCLUSION.

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OUR JOURNEY

Sam-Haq Trust grew out of a team that had worked together for close to two decades at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), where our engagement with homelessness and destitution first began. While working at TISS, there came a time when we felt that we needed to move out of the institution frame which on the one hand gave us support and protection but on the other, exercised certain bureaucratic limitations on our functioning. When the time came to move out of TISS and build an independent organisation, we knew this transition would not be uneventful. The core team that had worked together for most of those years chose to stay together and take this step as one entity. The organisation was first registered as The Koshish Trust in May 2024, and was renamed as Sam-Haq Trust in the first quarter of 2026.

Over the years at TISS, we had built an entire structure of social capital. This included strong working relationships, organisational ties, and advocacy connections with government bodies and other organisations, built up over years, and in some cases decades, of hard work. When we left TISS, none of this could simply be carried over with us. A great deal of effort went into rebuilding these relationships and bringing them into our new organisation, which was still finding its ground.

The initial days were also marked by several struggles with TISS over technical matters. These added further strain to a transition that was already difficult. Alongside this, it was a period of real uncertainty for the team. There were genuine risks involved, and no one could say with certainty how the new organisation would take shape.

The initial period of setting up our work in the field was not without its own difficulties. Identifying new communities, establishing trust, and beginning structured work on the ground took time, and did not go as planned. Our work in Seawoods, one of the communities we had built a relationship with, came to an end when the people living there were removed from the site by local authorities. This was a setback, both for the community, who had built their lives in that space over time, and for us, as it meant finding a new community and building work from scratch all over again. Eventually we identified a new community in Tatanagar, C.B.D. Belapur in Navi Mumbai, and started fresh work there. After these early challenges, our field presence has now become fairly stable, and our work across the communities we engage with continues to grow with time.

Despite these challenges, we moved forward. We were sustained by the support of our mentors, our Advisory Board, and our families, who gave us the confidence to take this path. We are especially thankful to the Azim Premji Foundation, whose trust and support for this new initiative went far beyond the resources they provided. And they approved funds for us even before the organisation came into existence.

The Problem We Work On

Homelessness and destitution areoften seen as a personal failure rather than what they truly are: the result of deep and age-old inequalities in society. People living without a home face many hardships each day, from the lack of a safe place to sleep, to poor access to food, healthcare, and sanitation. Beyond these everyday struggles, homeless people in India also face a further danger: the risk of being arrested simply for the state of being poor, under laws such as the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, which in practice are often used against people simply because they are homeless or destitute, regardless of whether they were begging at all.

Our Philosophy, Vision, and Objectives

We believe that social issues such as homelessness and destitution are systemic in nature, and not the result of individual failure. Our philosophy centres on working together with state actors to reform institutions, strengthen accountability, and build sustainable, rights-based solutions. Over the years, the team has been able to demonstrate well the effectiveness of the systems approach that is at the core of our organisation.

We envision a society where justice and equality form the core of how it functions, where poverty is not treated as a crime, and where every individual lives with dignity.

To move towards this vision, we work towards clear objectives. We seek the repeal of beggary laws across the country, and the institutionalisation of social audit as a mandatory government system. We work towards safe and dignified shelters for homeless citizens, and towards a comprehensive rehabilitation framework for the poor and destitute. We also work to shape how the public and communities understand and talk about beggary and homelessness.

The Field and the Systems

Our engagement with the systems has been growing, and remains at the core of our work. We believe that direct support to communities, while necessary, is not enough on its own to bring about lasting change. It must be matched by continued engagement with the institutions and systems that impact people's lives directly or indirectly.

Our leadership is a member of the Supreme Court-appointed shelter monitoring committee for the urban homeless, taking part in the effort to ensure that shelters across the country meet the standards set by the Court. We have also built a strong relationship with the National Human Rights Commission of India, engaging with it on the issue of beggary and the rights of homeless persons, and working to bring these concerns before a body with reach across the entire country. Alongside these engagements, we have also worked to build relationships with the media. We believe the media has an important role

to play in shaping how the public understands homelessness and destitution. We have made media relationship so that the realities faced by the people we work with are reported with accuracy, sensitivity, and understanding.

Our commitment to the field and to the people we work with remains firm. People living in homelessness and near-homelessness, and in destitution, deserve support, dignity, and a fair chance at a better life, not suspicion, punishment, or exclusion. This report is an account of the work we have carried out towards that commitment: the programmes we have run, the partnerships we have rebuilt and formed, and the small but meaningful changes we have witnessed along the way.

THE WORK AT A GLANCE

The figures below give a quick overview of our work across the two-year period from August 2024 to July 2026, covering our direct engagement with clients. Each figure is discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.



PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

This chapter presents the activities carried out by Sam-Haq Trust from August 2024 to July 2026, across our worksites in Mumbai and Delhi. It brings together the numbers from this period along with a short account of the work.

Casework

Casework is a crucial part of our direct work with clients. It is the process through which our team engages directly with each individual, understands their situation, and works with them towards a resolution. Over this period, our teams undertook casework with 314 individuals.



This work is often gradual, and progress is not always immediate or visible. Yet it is this consistent, patient engagement that builds trust with the community, and it is this trust that makes the rest of our work possible.

Counselling and Psychosocial Support

Counselling and psycho-social support are offered to clients who are dealing with distress, trauma, or difficult circumstances in their lives, whether within institutions such as Prem Daan and shelters, or within the communities we work in. Over this period, our

team provided counselling to 129 clients, and psycho-social support to a further 66 clients.



Documents and Entitlements

Access to basic identity documents is often the first, and sometimes the most difficult, step. Without documents such as a birth certificate or an Aadhaar card, individuals are unable to access schools, healthcare, government schemes, or even formal employment. A part of our regular work is therefore focused on helping clients secure these documents.



Over this period, we supported 13 individuals in obtaining birth certificates, working with local authorities and, where needed, helping families navigate the paperwork and procedures involved. We also supported 7 individuals in obtaining an Ayushman card,

giving them access to government-supported health insurance and a route to affordable medical treatment. Alongside this, our team supported 45 individuals in their Aadhaar cards.

Aadhaar Camps

In addition to our regular casework on documentation, we organised dedicated Aadhaar camps, bringing UIDAI services directly into the communities we work with in Navi Mumbai. This made the process far more accessible for clients who would otherwise have had to take a day off from work to get work done at an Aadhaar centre.



Through these camps, 41 children's new Aadhaar enrolments were done, and a further 81 individuals had their existing Aadhaar details updated, whether correcting phone numbers or updating biometrics.

Education

Education remains one of our most important areas of work. Many of the children in the communities we work with are either involved in begging, or at risk of being drawn into begging. Our education programme works to ensure that these children are able to study.

Over this period, we supported 171 children in gaining admission to school. This involved engaging closely with parents to encourage them to send their children to school, and addressing the underlying barriers, such as missing documents, that often stand in the way. We also worked with nearby schools to strengthen the community's access to these institutions.

Alongside school admissions, 228 children attended our own classes. We have support classes for school-going children as well as classes for out-of-school children. The support classes help children keep up with their schoolwork. Without this support, many childre fall behind within a few months of starting school, and are at risk of dropping out

altogether. Our support classes have been an effective way of addressing this problem, keeping children in school and engaged with their studies. And with the classes for non-school going children, we prepare them for school enrolments.



Youth Engagement

We continue to build connections between young people and the issues we work on, both within our client communities and among students from outside. During this period, 42 youths became part of our peer group engagement.



Alongside this, we hosted 13 students for field placements and internships, from various institutions. This gave them direct exposure to our work on the ground, and an opportunity to engage with the realities faced by the communities we work with.

Family Reintegration

Helping clients reconnect with their families remains an important part of our work, particularly for clients placed in institutions such as Prem Daan and shelters, as well as those we meet through our community and night out work. Over this period, we successfully supported 27 clients in reuniting with their families.



Motor Driving Training

As part of our effort to challenge patriarchal norms, we ran a motor driving training programme in the Lal Bagh community, aimed particularly at opening up new livelihood opportunities for women. Driving has long been seen in these communities as work meant only for men, and we wanted to use this training as a way of challenging that idea.

In total, 10 individuals took part in this training, 8 men and 2 women. While the training was conceived with women's participation at its centre, several women who initially joined the programme eventually dropped out, for the same reasons that had made this training necessary in the first place: resistance and disapproval from within their own

families and community, rooted in the very patriarchal norms the programme sought to challenge. But it is important that women showed courage even though only two of them could complete the programme. This is a first step in a long struggle.



Night Out Programme

Our night out programme is one of the most crucial ways we reach homeless individuals on the streets. Teams go out at night to areas known to have a concentration of homeless people, offering immediate relief such as blankets, and sometimes food or medicines, and working to connect individuals with nearby shelters wherever possible. Over this period, our teams carried out a total of 31 night outs across Mumbai and Delhi.



Systems Engagement

Alongside our direct work with communities, we place equal importance on engaging with the systems and institutions that impact the lives of homeless and destitute people. This engagement takes several forms, from formal submissions and committee work, to sustained relationship-building with key government bodies.



We made a submission to the National Human Rights Commission on “Support for Persons in Beggary,” and took part in an NHRC open house discussion on the subject in February 2026. Our leadership also serves as a member of the Supreme Court-appointed shelter monitoring committee for the urban homeless, taking part in regular meetings and reviews of state-level compliance with the Court’s directions on shelter. We also built a collaboration with the Child Welfare Committee, working with them to support the admission of children into shelters where families were unable to care for them. Alongside this, we continued our relationship with the Regional Mental Hospital, Thane, supporting clients in accessing psychiatric care, both on an outpatient basis and, where needed, through admission.

Alliances

We also believe that working alongside other organisations strengthens the impact of our work. Over this period, we remained active in three such alliances. We initiated the National Alliance for Dignity and Inclusion (NADI), which brings together ten organisations from eight states, and held two meetings of the Alliance during this period. In Mumbai, we initiated to form a city-level alliance of organisations, working together to strengthen rehabilitation services for the homeless across the city. We also remained a core member of the Rationing Kruti Samiti, a coalition working on the right to food, through which we continue to raise the specific barriers homeless people face in accessing public distribution system.



Research

Over the last two years, we did two major research. The first of these studies, I Exist, was completed last year, and was based on a sample of 504 clients. It focused on documenting the lived experiences of people in destitution, in their own words, and identifying clients who needed long-term support and intervention.



We are currently carrying out a livelihood study, with a sample of 510 clients. This study looks closely at the question of livelihood among people living on the margins of the city, understanding the work they do, the barriers they face, and how they negotiate with their circumstances.

WAY FORWARD

As we look back on this two-year period, from August 2024 to July 2026, we see a journey that began with real uncertainty and has, through continuous work and perseverance, brought us to a place of stability. We left TISS with a great deal to rebuild: the relationships, the trust, and the systems that had taken years to form. We faced tussles and delays in the early transition period, and later, setbacks in the field itself, such as the closure of our work in Seawoods. Yet, we kept moving forward.

Looking at the two years together, what stands out most is the shift from setting up to settling down. The first year was spent largely on laying foundations: registering the organisation, building our team, forming our Advisory Board, and finding our footing in new communities. The second year saw this foundation put to use, with our programmes growing in reach and depth, from casework and education, to research, advocacy, and our engagement with government systems.

We are now at a point where our work is fairly settled. Our communities know us, our institutional partnerships are fine, and our internal systems are in place. This gives us a strong base to work, and going forward, we can now focus more of our energy on deepening our work. This means going further into each programme, reaching more people, and continuing to work for change at the level of laws, policies, and systems that affect the lives of the homeless and destitute across the country.

The road ahead is long, and the challenges faced by the communities we work with are far from resolved. But we move into this next phase with a settled base beneath us, and with the same commitment that brought us here: that every person, however poor or destitute, deserves to live with dignity.