

# Project TRANScend 2.0

## Annual Report

**April 2024 – March 2025**

The Humsafar Trust x KPMG Global Services Pvt Ltd.



**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



**5** GENDER  
EQUALITY



**8** DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



**10** REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



# Project Details

**Promoting inclusion and bring awareness about Trans/ Hijra persons in India through comprehensive Transgender Entrepreneurship Program.**

Project TRANScend 2.0, supported by KPMG Global Services and implemented by The Humsafar Trust, aims to strengthen socio-economic inclusion of Transgender communities by enhancing access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

TRANScend 2.0 advanced its mission to promote workplace inclusion for Trans and Hijra persons and nurture LGBTQ+ community entrepreneurship. To build inclusive environments, the project conducted sensitisation sessions with educational institutions, facilitated a targeted recruitment drive, and maintained a growing database of transgender CVs to support equitable hiring practices. Simultaneously, under the Dolphin Tank programme, seed funding was extended to selected community entrepreneurs, known as "Dolphins." These entrepreneurs received ongoing mentoring through monitoring visits and were provided with market linkage opportunities, including participation in exhibitions like Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and HST's Gulabi Mela, thereby strengthening their visibility, networks, and economic independence.

**Project Beneficiaries:** Socio-Economically marginalised Transgender Persons.

**Objective 1: Promote the inclusion at the workplace and bring the awareness about Trans/ Hijra persons in India.**

- Activity 1.1: Sensitisation with educational institutes.
- Activity 1.2: Targeted recruitment drive.
- Activity 1.3: Maintaining database of transgender CVs

**Objective 2: Nurturing community entrepreneurs**

- Activity 2.1: Entrepreneurship project – Seed funding support
- Activity 2.2: To Assess the outcomes and disseminate the findings of the programme



## **Objective 1: Promote the inclusion at the workplace and bring the awareness about Trans/ Hijra persons in India**

In 2024–25, Project TRANScend 2.0, focused on promoting workplace inclusion for Trans and Hijra persons by fostering awareness and sensitivity within educational spaces. A total of six sensitisation sessions were conducted, reaching **92 students** and **88 educators** across key institutions.

At **Spherule Foundation**, two sessions were held with tailoring and makeup course-enrolled community students on the occasion of Sankranti, and another on Women's Day, both emphasizing gender inclusivity and challenging stereotypes about Trans and Hijra persons.

**Bright Future** hosted three sessions—at their Kurla, Parle and Ghatkopar centres—targeted at educators and teaching staff. These engagements focused on embedding inclusivity within institutional processes and explored the need to update representation in educational materials to reflect identities beyond the gender binary.

At **Auxilium Academy**, a session with academicians prompted critical dialogue around the integration of trans inclusion in formal education systems. Together, these sessions aimed to build foundational allyship, shift mindsets, and support the creation of safe, affirming learning spaces for gender-diverse individuals.





Furthermore, as a part of Project TRANScend 2.0's commitment to fostering inclusive education-to-employment pathways for transgender and Hijra persons, HST organized the SAKSHAM Job Fair 24, a community-led job fair focused on LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workforce. This landmark event brought together 20+ inclusive employers and 229 Trans-identifying job seekers from across India, providing direct access to career opportunities and workplace networks. It also included a DEI-focused panel and powerful cultural performances celebrating LGBTQ+ resilience and creativity.

The fair furthered the project's goals by creating safe, affirming spaces where community members could engage with potential employers and showcase their skills—bridging gaps between education, skilling, and sustainable employment. By integrating employment readiness with visibility and allyship, the job fair reinforced TRANScend 2.0's holistic model of socio-economic empowerment through education, training, and institutional sensitization.





## Objective 2: Nurturing Community Entrepreneurs



The Humsafar Trust's Dolphin Tank initiative, as a part of TRANScend 2.0, selected **Four Transgender Entrepreneurs** to receive capital grants through a rigorous and competitive evaluation process. The selection was based on a structured scoring matrix collaboratively developed by a panel of jurors. This matrix assessed applicants on multiple parameters including personal background and lived experience, strength and feasibility of the business idea, market potential, business model and financial projections, and team and execution strategy. The initiative aimed not only to fund promising business ventures but also to uplift individuals from the transgender community by supporting their aspirations for self-reliance and visibility in the mainstream economy.

The final cohort of grant recipients reflects a diverse range of entrepreneurial visions and experiences. Selected individuals proposed businesses spanning sectors such as sustainable fashion, rural livelihoods, gender-affirming fashion, and healthcare services. The ventures demonstrated a strong commitment to local impact, with many rooted in community leadership, employment generation, and sustainability. These entrepreneurs also illustrated how their gender identities and lived realities have shaped their business journeys and inspired their models—often transforming personal struggles into community-driven solutions.

The grants awarded in 2024-25, ranged from INR 63,500 to INR 2,00,000, tailored to the specific financial needs and scale of each business. One initiative focuses on upcycling textile waste into handmade accessories, aiming to reduce environmental impact while creating sustainable livelihoods. Another introduces a rural economic model through animal husbandry and dairy farming led by a collective of young transgender individuals. A third venture builds a fashion boutique and studio rooted in gender expression and self-affirmation, while the fourth aims to scale a physiotherapy and polyclinic business offering accessible healthcare, especially for marginalized populations.

## Overview of the Dolphins FY 2023–24

### 1) Riyam Jain:

Riyam Jain, the **founder of Genderse**, is a 26-year-old transgender man and entrepreneur from Ludhiana, Punjab, who is redefining accessibility in gender-affirming apparel. Having navigated personal rejection after coming out and leaving a toxic work environment during his transition, Riyam channelled his lived experiences into creating Genderse—a homegrown brand that designs and delivers affordable chest binders for transgender men.



His venture stands as a testament to resilience, innovation, and community-centered entrepreneurship. As a participant in the Dolphin Tank initiative, Riyam was awarded a capital grant that played a pivotal role in legitimizing and sustaining Genderse. The full disbursal of INR 1,75,000 against his pledged support empowered him to address critical gaps in his business operations, enhance product offerings, and continue serving a community often left out of mainstream conversations on body positivity and gender expression.

The capital support enabled Riyam to invest in procuring quality raw materials and improving the design and comfort of his binders—ensuring they were both safe and affordable. Additionally, the grant helped him strengthen order fulfillment logistics and stock management, improving customer experience and expanding reach. These enhancements reinforced the reliability of Genderse as a trusted brand within queer and trans networks.



For Riyam, the Dolphin Tank initiative was more than financial aid—it was an affirmation of his journey, encouraging him to dream bigger and continue his advocacy through enterprise. He envisions Genderse not only as a brand but as a movement that champions gender diversity and body autonomy.



## 2) Shubhi:

Shubhi, a 29-year-old transgender woman from Pune, Maharashtra, is the visionary behind **Ratnamala by Shubhi**, an imitation jewellery venture rooted in elegance, resilience, and identity. Having navigated numerous blue-collar jobs to fund her education and livelihood, Shubhi embodies the grit and determination of an entrepreneur who has carved her path against the odds. Her participation in the Dolphin Tank initiative marked a significant turning point in her entrepreneurial journey. Receiving the full-fledged support of INR 1,50,000, Shubhi was empowered to expand her business with renewed confidence and purpose. The grant not only offered her the financial push to scale her operations but also served as a powerful validation of her identity as a businesswoman.



With the support, Shubhi was able to invest in bulk procurement of raw materials, diversify her product line, and streamline packaging and branding for a more professional appeal. These developments helped her position Ratnamala by Shubhi as a promising homegrown brand, to compete in both local markets and online platforms. As Shubhi continues to grow Ratnamala by Shubhi, she looks forward to showcasing her work at exhibitions and beyond, believing that platforms like these are essential for bringing trans-led businesses into the mainstream and celebrating their creative spirit.

## 3) Nikunj Jain:

Nikunj Jain, a 32-year-old transgender man from Suwasra, Madhya Pradesh, is the co-founder of **Sehat Masala**, a homegrown spice brand deeply rooted in health, tradition, and community. Run alongside his family, Sehat Masala primarily serves blue-collar workers, offering affordable and nutritious spice blends that bring both flavour and wellness to everyday meals. Selected as a recipient of the Dolphin Tank initiative, Nikunj received the full-fledged support of INR 79,500, which has been instrumental in stabilizing and scaling his venture. The seed grant arrived at a crucial time, enabling him to invest in better packaging solutions, improve product shelf life, and prepare for introducing new spice varieties that cater to evolving market demands.



For Nikunj, Sehat Masala is more than a business—it is a livelihood lifeline for his household and a means to anchor his work as a grassroots advocate. He is actively associated with the Tapish Foundation, an NGO working for the rights and visibility of transgender men, and channels part of his entrepreneurial spirit into supporting others in the community.

The capital support through Dolphin Tank fortified his ability to maintain consistent production and explore newer distribution networks. It also gave him the validation and visibility needed to present himself confidently in both entrepreneurial and advocacy spaces.



Nikunj envisions expanding Sehat Masala into a widely recognized trans-led enterprise that empowers his family and creates opportunities for others like him. He sees platforms like Gulabi Mela and similar community marketplaces as essential springboards to share his story, reach larger audiences, and break stereotypes about trans men in business.

#### 4) Aishwarya Reddy:

Aishwarya Reddy is a dynamic entrepreneur from Bangalore who wears many hats with confidence and grace. A transgender woman with an eye for beauty and business, she runs **Glamour Unisex Salon**—a space she envisioned not just as a workplace, but as a safe, affirming haven for people across the gender spectrum. Alongside this, she also manages a bustling South Indian food outlet, reflecting her deep-rooted connection to culture and community.

Her entry into entrepreneurship wasn't easy. Aishwarya faced years of discrimination and harassment, both in professional and personal spaces. Undeterred, she quietly saved every rupee from the odd jobs she took up, investing it into building her ventures—places where she could lead on her terms.

The Dolphin Tank seed grant of INR 1,75,000 came at a pivotal time in her journey. With it, Aishwarya is now upgrading essential salon equipment, enhancing service quality, and expanding her client offerings. For her, this isn't just about better tools—it's about evolving with dignity and reinforcing that trans-led businesses can deliver excellence and care.

Her ventures have become community touchpoints—her salon offers not only beauty services but also jobs to other LGBTQ+ persons, and her food outlet is gaining popularity for its authentic flavours and warm hospitality. The grant has helped her bridge aspiration with action.

Aishwarya views her growth not only as personal success but as a message: that despite social barriers, transgender entrepreneurs can thrive, diversify, and lead. She hopes to continue expanding her businesses while mentoring others in the community, championing visibility and self-reliance through her own lived example.



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*I'm Aishwarya Reddy, founder of Glamour Unisex Salon—a space I created to earn a livelihood and support the transgender community. After facing workplace discrimination and rejection due to my identity, I was determined to build something of my own. With guidance from my supportive guru and the transformative help of The Humsafar Trust and KPMG through the Dolphin Tank initiative, I upgraded my salon, doubled client footfall, and achieved profitability. Today, my business is thriving, and I've even started exploring my dream of entering politics.*

## Overview of the Dolphins FY 2024-25

### 1) Tarana:

Tarana, the founder of **Tarun Fashion Boutique and Studio**, is a fashion entrepreneur, from Bareilly, who has built her brand at the intersection of creativity and self-expression. As a participant in the Dolphin Tank initiative, she was selected as a recipient of a capital grant, which became a significant catalyst in strengthening and expanding her venture. Through the program, Tarana gained access to a wider network of support and visibility, which proved essential in advancing her business goals.



A partial funding of INR 1,20,000 was provided to her projected needs of INR 6,00,000/- which cushioned her to fortify her business. It enabled her to meet critical business needs and invest in revamping various aspects of her studio. Having started her venture around the time of the Dolphin Tank program, Tarana credits the initiative with facilitating holistic growth—from stabilizing operations to enhancing her creative reach.

The capital support she received was thoughtfully utilized to meet a range of foundational business needs. A professional brand photoshoot helped define and elevate her visual identity. She was able to onboard a tailor, contributing to a more efficient production process, and helping her invest time in more collaborations and fashion shows.

Modest renovations transformed her workspace into a more functional studio environment, while the procurement of raw materials ensured the continuity of her design work. These investments collectively strengthened the operational and creative backbone of her venture.

A key milestone for Tarana was her participation in Gulabi Mela 2025, which offered a platform to showcase her work and connect with new audiences. She hoped for similar opportunities across cities, emphasizing it could contribute to the broader recognition of her brand. She believes that visibility in larger markets is essential for entrepreneurs like her who are working to carve a space in mainstream fashion while challenging conventional norms.





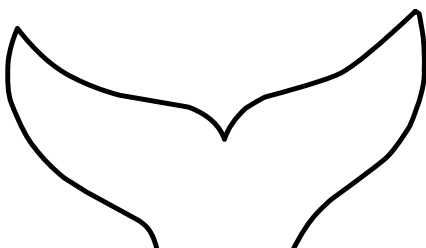
Since her involvement with the Dolphin Tank, Tarana's customer base and workload have both grown steadily. Tarana observed her income grow more than double—from ₹1,12,000 in 2023–2024 to ₹2,50,000 in 2024–2025—reflecting significant growth in her entrepreneurial journey. Looking ahead, she plans to expand her team and set up a professional studio space that will help in hosting high-quality photo and video shoots for her brand. While she suggests increasing financial support for future participants, Tarana remains deeply appreciative of the initiative's impact.

## 2) Rashi:

Rashi, a trans woman entrepreneur from New Delhi, runs ***Jharna by Rashi***—a sustainability-focused enterprise that transforms discarded fabric scraps into handcrafted tote bags, accessories, and art pieces. Her journey into entrepreneurship emerged from quiet perseverance amid exclusion. In early efforts to learn painting and design, she encountered non-inclusive environments where her presence was often met with silence. Undeterred, Rashi turned to YouTube and other online platforms to self-learn, slowly building her skills through trial and resilience.

A turning point came when she joined the Dolphin Tank initiative in September 2024. At the time, her business struggled with limited resources and basic tools. The seed grant she received enabled her to acquire a sewing machine, an interlock machine, and raw materials—allowing her to work independently and expand production capacity.

Since then, Rashi's business has seen a significant financial shift. In the six months before the support (March–August 2024), Jharna by Rashi earned ₹63,000. In the nine months following the intervention (September 2024–May 2025), sales rose to ₹1,42,500—more than doubling her previous income. This growth is directly linked to the operational boost and curated market opportunities facilitated by the Dolphin Tank, including stalls at IIM Nagpur and the UNESCO office.



Despite the progress, challenges persist. Rashi finds social media promotion daunting and notes that visibility for queer-led businesses is often seasonal—peaking during Pride Month and quickly fading. Inconsistent access to curated markets remains an issue; a recent event in Gurgaon even led to financial loss, highlighting the need for year-round ecosystem support.

Still, Rashi remains hopeful. Through Jharna, she aims not only to sustain herself but also to pave the way for others in the transgender community. The Dolphin Tank was more than a grant—it was an affirmation of her potential and a milestone in her journey toward self-reliance and social change. Her story illustrates the power of targeted, trans-affirmative support, and the need to sustain such efforts year-round.

### **3) Debgopal:**

Debgopal, an activist, and entrepreneur from West Bengal, envisioned a bold and transformative project: a transgender-led animal husbandry and dairy initiative in the rural outskirts of Kolkata. With a deep understanding of the social and economic barriers faced by the trans community—especially in non-urban settings—Debgopal applied to The Humsafar Trust's Dolphin Tank initiative seeking support to bring this vision to life. The selection was a turning point, instilling hope and reaffirming the potential of trans-inclusive rural entrepreneurship. At its core, the venture aimed to build a replicable model of dignity and economic inclusion in regions where formal employment for transgender individuals remains a rarity.



Backed by the grant, the team initiated their animal farming operations. What began as an idea born out of both urgency and aspiration has since evolved into a steadily growing enterprise. The project currently employs two transgender individuals full-time and two others on a part-time basis—many of whom had never before had access to secure and formal income. The initiative is not only a business—it is a movement reclaiming space for trans people in rural economies, grounded in self-sufficiency and social empowerment.

The capital support provided through the programme was instrumental in acquiring the first set of resources required to expand the business. It enabled the purchase of livestock and fodder—two crucial inputs that laid the operational foundation for the farm.

The collective's annual income grew from ₹1,57,500 in 2023-24 to ₹3,41,000 in 2024-25—over a 115% increase—driven by business diversification beyond mushroom farming to include vegetables, jam-jelly-pickle production, and cow-based farming.

This practical support served as the springboard from which the team began to build out their model, combining local expertise with a community-first approach.



Participation in The Humsafar Trust's Gulabi Mela further expanded the initiative's reach. Two employees from the team had the opportunity to travel, connect, and showcase their journey—an experience rarely afforded to trans-led rural projects. It provided them not only with exposure but also with validation and a sense of pride in their work.

Debgopal refers to the current phase as a “litmus test,” where the groundwork has been laid, but the road to long-term sustainability will require continued financial, institutional, and emotional support.

The journey so far has been nothing short of transformative. With gratitude to the Dolphin Tank programme, The Humsafar Trust, and its supporters, the team now looks ahead—with renewed ambition—to scale their impact, sustain livelihoods, and create ripple effects for the trans community in rural India.

#### **4) Dr. Rudra:**

Dr. Rudra Bhashani, a trans man from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, has dedicated his life to healing others through physiotherapy. Running his own clinic, he faced a range of challenges—limited equipment, constrained finances, and the ongoing pressure of sustaining operations alone. But in 2024, his journey took a decisive turn with his selection as a Dolphin Tank grantee under The Humsafar Trust's entrepreneurship initiative.

The seed grant enabled Rudra to upgrade his clinic significantly. He procured essential physiotherapy equipment, created a dedicated treatment area, installed air conditioning for patient comfort, and covered crucial rental overheads. These improvements transformed his clinic into a more efficient, professional, and inclusive space, directly benefiting both his practice and the community he serves.



The impact has been measurable. In the year before receiving support (FY 2023–24), Rudra’s clinic earned ₹4,89,429. In the year following the Dolphin Tank intervention (FY 2024–25), his income rose to ₹6,50,480—a nearly 33% increase. This growth reflects not just improved infrastructure, but a renewed sense of trust and visibility among patients who now experience better quality care in a more welcoming environment.

Beyond the financial uplift, Dolphin Tank contributed significantly to Rudra’s confidence as a trans entrepreneur. His trip to Mumbai for capacity-building and networking with other grantees and partners like KPMG gave him a powerful sense of solidarity. It reminded him that inclusive entrepreneurship is not only possible—but thriving.

Looking ahead, Rudra hopes to expand services across Madhya Pradesh, creating inclusive healthcare spaces that uplift others from the queer and trans community. For him, Dolphin Tank was far more than a grant—it was a milestone on a journey toward empowerment, visibility, and long-term impact.



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*My name is Dr. Rudra Bhasani, and I’m a physiotherapist based in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. As a trans man, I’ve faced many challenges—especially hiding my identity out of fear of violence and lack of family acceptance. Starting my own clinic allowed me to live and work authentically. With support from the Dolphin Tank initiative, I expanded my clinic space, doubled my patient capacity, and upgraded my equipment to offer better care. This support hasn’t just strengthened my business—it’s also empowered me personally. Today, I live a more confident, fulfilling life, both as a healthcare provider and as myself.*

# Dolphin Tank Dissemination and Impact

The impact of the Dolphin Tank initiative has gone well beyond initial seed funding. It has catalyzed a tangible shift in how trans and queer entrepreneurs perceive, build, and sustain their businesses.



Of the eight enterprises supported under the programme between 2023 and 2025, five are now registered entities—two of which completed their registration process during the course of their engagement with Dolphin Tank. Several entrepreneurs also began separating personal and business finances, opening dedicated business accounts and initiating formal accounting practices—an important milestone given the informal nature in which many queer-led businesses typically operate due to structural exclusion.



Crucially, the initiative instilled foundational financial management practices, such as tracking income and expenditure, preparing break-even strategies, and building credit readiness. Five entrepreneurs expressed readiness and willingness to apply for loans or financial products—marking a clear shift away from sole reliance on non-returnable grants. While many had never previously considered formal credit systems as accessible, the Dolphin Tank intervention helped demystify these processes, building their confidence to pursue sustainable growth.

Visibility was another key area of growth. Seven out of eight supported enterprises participated in the 2025 Gulabi Mela, setting up sales stalls to engage directly with customers—many for the first time in a mainstream market space. This not only helped validate their work but also provided meaningful income and networking opportunities. These public engagements, along with consistent mentoring and support, have enabled entrepreneurs to better navigate fluctuating markets and seasonal dips, such as the Pride Month surge followed by slower months.





What began as a small step toward economic inclusion has evolved into a powerful journey of dignity, skill-building, and self-determination. By aligning with ecosystem partners from the social and corporate sectors, the Dolphin Tank initiative has proven that LGBTQ+ entrepreneurship—when provided with targeted, trans-affirming support—can thrive despite systemic hurdles. As the programme continues to grow, its core remains unchanged: building a future where queer and trans entrepreneurs are not the exception, but an essential and visible part of India’s business landscape.

**We are grateful to KPMG Global Services Pvt. Ltd. for your unwavering support.**

