

Munnade – A Journey of 15 Years | 2011–2026

From Small Beginnings to Years of Collective Work

In 2011, **Munnade Social Organisation** began its journey from the lived experiences of women garment workers. The founding team had worked in garment factories themselves and had closely experienced the hardships faced by women workers, such as low incomes, lack of social security, workplace harassment including sexual harassment, long working hours, long commutes, childcare challenges and social discrimination and challenges within families.

A small group of women garment workers came together with the intention of working with other women workers and their communities. What began with a small office and a strong sense of commitment with limited resources has grown into **15 years of women's leadership, community-based work and organisational development.**

The Early Years – 2011 Onwards

During the early years, Munnade focused on the social and emotional problems of women garment workers. It worked in and around the Peenya Industrial Area, Mysore Road and surrounding communities. Area meetings, factory-gate meetings, awareness programmes, and Self Help Groups were organised.

Small training sessions were conducted on Sundays, often with very limited resources. Experts from ESI, PF, the Labour Department, counselling, health and legal professionals were invited to share information with workers and these services were provided.

Munnade also began supporting workers' children to access educational scholarships by identifying eligible children, preparing applications and helping families complete the required documentation. This included helping family members to obtain social welfare benefits.

The organisation's early financial resources were very limited. Team members and well-wishers contributed from their own incomes towards office rent and advance, electricity, water, travel and programme expenses. One member even pledged her gold earring to raise ₹5,000 towards the office advance, a story that reflects the commitment with which Munnade began.

Growing Through Community Engagement and Women's Leadership

Over the years, Munnade's work expanded through continuous engagement, training and community activities, including enabling them to obtain entitlements, workplace social security benefits, providing assistance to workplace concerns and government welfare schemes.

Women workers came together to share their experiences, discuss challenges and identify ways to support each other. Self-Help Groups created opportunities for

savings, mutual support and financial awareness. Over time, these groups contributed to the emergence of worker-led cooperatives and collectives. In addition to this, Munnade expanded its work to include migrant workers, adolescent girls and other low-wage workers, with services provided to them including education support, entitlements, mental health support and other services.

The growth of women's leadership became an important part of Munnade's work, with women increasingly taking active roles within their workplaces and communities.

Strengthening the Organisation

In its early years, Munnade had limited experience with NGO administration, documentation, organisational policies and governance processes. The organisation gradually recognised the need to strengthen these alongside its programme work.

A significant turning point came in **2017**, following an assessment and subsequent support from Dhvani Foundation for Munnade's organisational development.

Over the following years, Munnade strengthened its management board processes, staff systems, documentation, financial management, policies, POSH systems, child protection mechanisms, complaints processes and other organisational procedures.

As a result, Munnade's governance and compliance assessment improved from **10% to 97%**. This organisational strengthening helped create clearer roles for the Board, staff and support groups and provided a stronger foundation for the organisation's continued growth.

COVID-19 – Responding to New Needs

The COVID-19 period brought a new set of challenges for garment workers and their families. With the support and approval of funders and partners, Munnade adapted its programmes to respond to immediate needs.

Food, rations, toiletries including sanitary pads, and breakfast distribution, as well as support to connect families with government services, became important areas of work. Support was provided across communities along Mysore Road and Peenya Industrial Area.

The closure of factory-based daycare facilities also created serious childcare challenges. In response, **Munnade established its first Care and Support Centre in Byatarayanapura in 2020.**

The work subsequently expanded to include educational support, nutrition, life skills, cultural activities and opportunities for children to participate in social and environmental learning. Munnade also supported adolescent girls for menstrual, reproductive and mental health awareness and services.

Worker and Women's Leadership

Factory-gate meetings, area meetings and leadership programmes have continued to create spaces for women workers to come together and learn from one another.

Women workers have gained confidence to speak about workplace concerns, engage with factory management and support other women in their communities.

The development of Self-Help Groups and worker collectives has also contributed to stronger networks among women workers. Some groups have gone on to develop cooperatives and independent worker collectives.

Health, Children and Access to Services

Munnade's work has expanded beyond workplace engagement to address the wider well-being of workers, migrant workers and their families.

Health camps, nutrition awareness, mental-health counselling and referrals to hospitals and other services have been provided over the years.

Workers are supported with information and assistance related to **ESI, PF, pensions, widow pensions and other government schemes**, including support with applications and connections with relevant departments.

Children remain an important part of this work. Through Care and Support Centres, educational support and outreach to adolescent girls, children are able to continue their education while also participating in cultural, social, health and environmental activities.

Munnade Today – 15 Years Later

As Munnade completes **15 years in 2026**, the organisation has developed into a more mature and structured institution with clearer board and staff roles, strengthened policies, financial systems, documentation and reporting processes.

Key organisational registrations, including **FCRA, 12A and 80G**, provide an important foundation for the organisation's continued work.

This growth has been made possible through the collective contribution of **women workers, worker leaders, staff, Board members, communities, partners, donors and well-wishers/supporters**.

Looking Ahead – 2026 and Beyond

Munnade's next chapter will continue to focus on workers, migrant workers, women and children, including adolescent children, while expanding its work into new areas.

The organisation aims to:

- Expand its work to more garment-producing communities.
- Further strengthen women's leadership and participation.

- Undertake research on workers, migrant workers, adolescent children and garment supply chains.
- Build stronger engagement with government departments, research institutions and other partners.
- Explore the relationship between climate change, heat stress, just transition and workers' lives.
- Strengthen mental-health support, livelihoods, digital and cyber skills.
- Strengthen children's education, care and protection, while creating opportunities for their holistic development, life skills, creativity, career development, child rights, digital learning and awareness of social and environmental issues.
- Improve organisational communication, documentation, knowledge management and public engagement.

A small initiative that began in 2011 has grown into a 15-year long journey of learning, leadership, community engagement and organisational growth.

The journey continues, with the same collective spirit that shaped Munnade from the beginning.