



WOMEN'S EDUCATION PROJECT

Sisterhood ♦ Leadership ♦ Economic Independence



www.WomensEducationProject.org



From Our President & Vice President

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Dear WEP Supporters,


If COVID's impact on the world cannot be overstated, then its impact on women and girls, decimating lives and livelihoods and threatening economic, educational, healthcare and human rights gains, can (almost) *not be imagined*. This context makes the tremendous accomplishments of WEP and its partners even more remarkable.

Where large international NGOs stopped or paused operations, WEP kept going. Students tutored one another, attended WEP's online courses and distributed homemade masks and food parcels. WEP-India hired staff, engaged local funding partners and established new programs.

As we move forward to 2022, we wish to thank you for your continued support and invite you (perhaps again) to contribute to this very special, growing organization for young women to become economically independent leaders, creating new possibilities in their own lives and communities.

On behalf of the WEP Board and Council, we wish you a happy holiday season and an even happier new year.


Minal Patel, WEP President


Deepika Mandrekar, WEP Vice President



From Our Founder & WEP-India Director

Dear WEP Supporters,

One of WEP's brightest lights of 2021 was the establishment of the WEP-India Trust, its Board and staff, whose steadfast commitment to our mission doubles our strides towards serving many more young women across India.

Working alongside our new and long-standing partners, we have revised our Academy curriculum to include a Ripple Effect Certificate, built an online Resource Library and established the Women's Collaboration Lab (see page 10). A metrics toolkit is in the works for 2022 to best capture and communicate the very special world of our Leadership Academy.

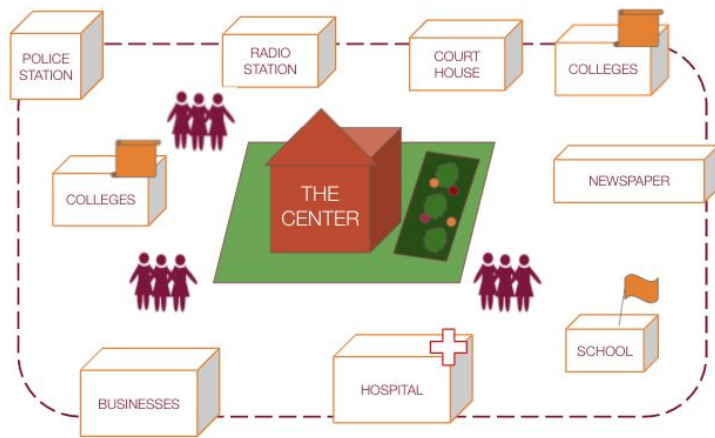
As 2021 draws to a close, we are so proud to present our students' inspiring achievements and invite you to share this report with family and friends. Wishing you the happiest of holidays and many bright lights in 2022!


Zoë Timms
WEP Founder


Malini Eden
WEP-India Director

THE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Women's Education Project (WEP) educates young women to become knowledgeable, confident and responsible leaders. Our Leadership Academy, in partnership with grassroots NGOs, provides a locally-sourced, holistic curriculum for women, ages 15-to-24, to make informed choices for themselves and positive change in their own lives, families and communities. Within a spirited sisterhood, they gain knowledge, skills, and a broad understanding of their opportunities. Graduates enter formal sector careers or pursue entrepreneurial livelihoods of their own choosing.



The **Campus** is the community itself where students engage in experiential learning. The **Center**, the heart of the Campus, is a safe space for friendship, study, nutrition gardens, club and mentor meetings and Certificate courses.

5 CERTIFICATES

1. **Foundation:** health, nutrition, rights, personal finance & civic engagement
2. **Skills:** study, computer & communication
3. **Exploration:** projects & field trips
4. **Specialized Study:** livelihood & career readiness skills
5. **Ripple Effect:** changemaker training

NEXT STEPS

Scholarships and introductions to colleges, internships, training programs & employment.

ALUMNAE COMMUNITY

Online and in-person community, continued access to resources & mentorship opportunities.

WEP-Madurai & WEP-Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu Enrollment: 75 & 20



In a milestone for WEP's growth, the WEP Leadership Academy was expanded to a second location in Tamil Nadu: Ramanathapuram. Vijayalakshmi (Viji), Director of the Madurai program since 2005, registered her own organization, Ilakku ("goal" or "vision" in Tamil), and worked in partnership with the Association for Integrated Rural Development (AIRDR) to serve both locations.

2021 Academy Highlights:

- Opened Ilakku for 75 students in Madurai
- Awarded two students an Ilakku prize for designing their new logo
- Provided 50 students Next Steps scholarships to area colleges in Madurai
- Supported student-led online tutoring and clubs: Technology, Finance, Language, Sports and Dance
- Distributed COVID relief packages to students, their families, and neighbors
- Held a Ripple Effect session spending a day with the elderly, dancing and playing games
- Attended two WEP-India led Ripple Effect online webinars with other WEP Academy students
- Provided Specialized Certificates: Tally (accounting software) and TNPSC (public service exam preparation)
- Introduced a local scholarship fund which awarded two students full college scholarships
- Attended Student Connect with University of Wisconsin-River Falls aspiring ESL teachers & a Community Connect with our annual NJ golfers
- Held interviews in Ramanathapuram, selecting 20 students to attend the Academy
- Oriented students to the Ramanathapuram Academy curriculum and began in-person sessions at the AIRDR offices

Certificate Courses & Sessions

- reproductive health
- emotional intelligence
- mindfulness & wellness
- study skills
- communication skills
- volunteerism
- media privacy
- the metaverse

WEP-Hyderabad, Telangana Enrollment: 72



Photos: (L) Celebrating college acceptance



WEP-Hyderabad, led by Esther Subhashini (Director since 2009) in partnership with Development Focus, reopened after the Covid shut down to enroll 72 new and returning students. Immediately, the Center provided much needed quiet study space for students completing college exams, as well as activities including meditation and deep breathing.

2021 Academy Highlights:

WEP-Hyderabad's focus on training students as changemakers generated significant accomplishments. In addition to attending the WEP-India Ripple Effect Certificate course, students were instrumental in the re-opening of a community health center and the remediation of a drainage problem that caused significant local pollution and disease (see page 10).

Having attended alternative livelihood training, students:

- Received hatchlings to raise fish in tanks and drums at home
- Are raising chickens for eggs and sale
- Studied and grew medicinal plants
- Planted nutrition gardens using compost & natural pest control
- Harvested seeds to share with new students
- Reported producing vegetables & fruit for family consumption & sales
- Taught new students & inspired neighbors to start their own gardens

Students also:

- Started a daily practice of meditation, voice training, exercise, and reading the newspaper
- Formed a Cycle Club (A student taught six local children to ride.)
- Held a Book Club for pleasure and to read to local children
- Led two Connects: one for Microsoft employees and the second at WEP's Annual Forum

A student was admitted to a Fine Arts College and plans to be a writer; another was admitted to Pharmacy College.

Three alumnae are in training to become the Academy's Mentors and administer the program's daily activities. Recently, they have completed 25 house visits and are now writing program reports.

Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh

Enrollment: 92



Sandhya Puchalapalli, Founder of Aarti Home for Girls (Vijay Foundation Trust) & WEP Director since 2012, in response to COVID, developed the Leadership Academy's first residential program, providing the curriculum in a 4-month accelerated model.

2021 Academy Highlights:

- Provided three cohorts of 30+ students the WEP Leadership Academy's Five Certificates
- Brought in local experts to teach mindfulness and social emotional intelligence
- Developed an emphasis on the Telugu language particularly through the study of ancient poetry traditions
- Invited guest speakers to discuss OBGYN issues, violence against women and HIV-AIDS
- Focused Academy courses to support entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods:
 - Photography, videography, terracotta jewelry and tailoring
 - IT Skills, Microsoft Office & G-Suite wordprocessing, spreadsheets and presentation software
 - Financial Literacy: banking operations, family budgeting, and basic arithmetic
 - Government regulations and governance
 - Virtual and in-person visits to area sites (zoo and waterfalls) and businesses

With the assistance of WEP, two alumnae were admitted to a Bangalore institution to become Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers, and another two alumnae began study at a culinary and hotel management program in Chennai and plan to become chefs.

Bap Block, Rajasthan

Enrollment: 30



2020 brought an exciting opportunity to open a new Academy funded by new partner WomenServe in Bap, Rajasthan, marking WEP's first expansion into North India. WomenServe staff operate the Academy under the management of Sarita Sen and the oversight of Lata Raman, Suresh Kumaway and Subhashree Pradhan.

2021 Academy Highlights:

- Inaugurated the Academy on October 6th. An attending local official, Leela Devi, stated that she *"was very happy, because for a long time [she] wanted to benefit the girls of this area. In this academy [she] saw a glimpse of her dream and would do everything possible for the Academy."*
- Held community meetings in six villages to raise awareness and introduce the WEP program
- Chose 30 of 106 applicants for the first cohort
- Established the Academy Center with a friendly, welcoming, inspiring atmosphere
- Purchased 430 books, televisions, computers, sewing machines and other resources
- Initiated the Academy's Foundation Certificate with courses in mindfulness, health, rights, civic engagement and personal finance
- Began the Academy's Specialized Skills Certificate offering courses in tailoring and cosmetology
- Held regular counseling sessions to discuss students' studies, social relationships and personal issues
- Conducted weekly mentor meetings to review and plan

Special COVID Project with Development Focus in Gumla District, Jharkhand



WEP partnered with Development Focus, an organization directed by Thomas Paul, for a special COVID relief project, addressing food security, livelihood training and resettlement of migrant returnees. 150 households (approximately 1,000 individuals) from 20 rural and tribal communities in Gumla District villages of Jharkhand participated in the 6-month program.

13 households received two goats each; 30 received 12 chickens each. Hens started laying eggs and 62 chicks have been born. Home garden seeds were distributed depending on the land and water availability. All recipients received livestock and garden management training.

As part of WEP's COVID relief project, DF organized a COVID-19 awareness program and vaccination drive in three villages. DF reports that more villagers are getting vaccinated due to this campaign.

Thomas Paul, DF Director, tells of two recipients:

A 40-year-old widow lives with her 3 sons and 4 daughters in a remote forest area. Her husband's [death] made [her] responsible to work and care for the family. She is not educated ... but with great difficulties is helping her children continue their education. She is a daily wage earner in agriculture fields. Her children's health condition is poor because they do not have enough to eat. She was selected by the local committee ... to receive 2 goats. The first change observed during goat training program was that she learnt to write her name ... She was very happy [about this.] She learnt goat rearing techniques ... and how she can treat them with locally available remedies. When she received goats along with little two nannies, her heart was filled with joy. She is confident that the family's quality of life will improve.

A 22-year-old young man who could not study past 10th standard due to the financial condition of his family has 2 siblings who are in high school. He left for Goa to earn for the family. He worked in a fisheries company. During the Covid-19 pandemic he had to return to his village with great difficulties. He has been selected [to receive] training on vegetable gardening. He said, "I have learnt a lot during the training and now I can make nursery beds." He said, "I received [from Development Focus] potatoes, green peas, tomatoes and cabbage seeds and have already planted and am happy. I also planted potatoes on my own so that I can obtain more profit from vegetable gardening."

Women's Collaboration Lab & Ripple Effect

In 2021, WEP opened the Women's Collaboration Lab (WCL), housed within WEP-India's office in Bangalore. This innovative program addition provides our partners with oversight, training and a Consortium in which to share ideas, successes and challenges. WCL also produces virtual program-wide workshops for the Academy Certificates, uniting students and alumnae across India. In its first year, WCL developed the Ripple Effect Certificate and changemaker training.

WCL provided approximately 90 students and alumnae with two series of the Ripple Effect program, exploring critical issues that arose during the pandemic and how to successfully advocate within one's family and community. Sessions included:

- COVID-19 health and safety information
- Combating misinformation
- Safe migration and human trafficking
- Resilience building, stress management, empathetic leadership & volunteerism

COVID RELIEF

WEP and WEP-India worked closely with our NGO partners to provide one month of food and sanitation rations to 1,250 WEP students, alumnae and their families (totaling 6,225 individuals) across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Jharkhand. Some received live poultry, vegetable seeds and sustainable livelihood training. As part of this effort, students stitched and distributed masks and sanitary pads, delivered relief parcels and tutored children.

WEP-Hyderabad Director, Esther Subhashini, tells a story of the Ripple Effect in action:

During the lockdown of 2021 when the whole country was in the turmoil of COVID's second wave, WEP-Hyderabad encouraged the students to begin community projects. First they created a social map of their colony or village, then jotted down public services such as schools, markets, and health facilities and, finally, listed important issues affecting the community.

Three students noted that many people of their village who were sick couldn't go to the Government Hospital because there was no public transportation nor could they go the village's Primary Health Center (PHC) because it wasn't functioning. The students felt this was essential to resolve.

After giving suggestions for how to draft and distribute petitions and communicate concern to authorities, the students first spoke to their families and others in the community to obtain signatures. They submitted this personally to the Sarpanch at the Gram Panchayat Office telling him that they will send their petition to the Mandal Health Officer if action was not taken by him. The Sarpanch promised them that he will see that the PHC reopens.

And, voila! Within three days, the PHC had opened and a doctor was available for services from 9 am to 10 pm. The villagers were very happy about this work of our students and how it assisted them during a very critical time.

Students in Action: 1. Clinic Petition 2. Teaching Cycling 3. Time at Elderly Home 4. Aspen Fellow Award for Village Health Work 5. Ration Delivery 6. New Sewage Canal Cap 6. Tutoring Children





2021 FORUM & RED BANGLE AWARD

On November 9th, 2021, WEP hosted its 8th annual Forum, presenting Anita Bhatia of UN Women and Marissa Wesely of Win-Win Strategies with the Red Bangle, an award presented annually to exceptional women "who by their life and accomplishments demonstrate the eloquence of the human spirit and inspire others to higher goals."

The Red Bangle Committee selected Anita and Marissa because of their long-standing dedication to women's equality and their recent work mobilizing the international community while shining a light on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on girls and women.

WEP-Hyderabad students opened the Forum, sharing their recent initiatives as changemakers (see pages 6 & 10). The panel, an engaging conversation on the topic "*Leadership in a Time of Covid*," focused on raising the voices of women at the grassroots level.

Anita Bhatia, Assistant Secretary-General and UN Women's Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, UN System Coordination, Sustainability and Partnerships, remarked, "You cannot have any policies to reconstruct societies, to build inclusive countries, governments and policies, unless you are thinking about women and, most importantly, not unless you have women sitting at the table, being a part of decision-making."



Marissa Wesely, co-founder of Win-Win Strategies (WWS), a program that fosters collaboration between women's funds, rights organisations and companies to jointly work to advance women's economic resilience, agreed, stating that "grassroots organizations have their power. They recognize the problems, they live with the daily injustices, they recognize the issues, they create the solutions, and it's only been shown more intensely throughout the pandemic how critical they are for any sort of global solution."

IN OUR STUDENTS' VOICES

I am proud to be a member of WEP Madurai. It helps me gain knowledge and develop my skills.



After my marriage, I had lost my relationship with myself. After coming to WEP, I feel as if I have found myself again and the void has been filled. I feel excited to meet my new friends at the Academy everyday, learn new things in the class and now, I do not feel good if I miss a single day. ...



My family used to remind me that I cannot do anything in life and I am useless. After coming to WEP, I [identified] my strengths and weaknesses and have gained confidence upon myself. ... Everyone at my family says that I cannot read and write, my siblings study and I only do cooking. The Academy gave me the confidence that I can also read. Now, I come to the Academy regularly and an hour earlier and spend time in the library. I love coming to WEP.

My parents are farm workers and I joined the Academy to explore career options and to decide which is best for me. I liked it here, because, I will be provided with the knowledge to choose my career. My teachers are all good. ... While living in the Aarti campus, I saw the greenery in the campus and was influenced by the method the plants are grown here and how natural resources are utilised. I was also attracted to organic farming and ... learning new techniques. Our district has been badly affected by floods and the Academy gave us a chance to go and see the devastation that occurred. Through Aarti we distributed relief material to the affected and we were moved by their tragedy. ...

I consider WEP-Madurai is my family member. It gives me more confident to achieve something in my life.



I am a student of Aarti WEP Leadership Academy. I am happy that I have joined this Academy as I am learning many things which are not taught in the school. My interest lies in cooking and I am, under my coach, learning to cook forgotten recipes of Andhra Pradesh. I surf the internet and search for recipes. I am given a free hand in the Aarti kitchen and have tried to make some sweets using jawar, jaggery and coconut scrapings. My friends liked its taste and appreciated me. I felt happy. To develop empathy in us, the Academy has given us a chance to interact with the COVID widows. After talking to them, I felt for them as they have lost their loved one and are in the streets without support from their in-laws ...

I joined in WEP-Hyderabad in 2019. I attend several training: storytelling, communication skills, bookclub. WEP provides many benefits, study materials and bus pass. I am getting scholarship. Giving me a wonderful opportunity.



Before joining the Academy, I used to be a short-tempered person. I used to be such an angry person that I would skip meals for days together. Once I harmed myself physically whilst in anger. However, I have been able to control my anger after attending counseling at WEP. I love coming to the Academy and everyday I get to learn something new which I have never learnt anywhere before.



When I was in my fifth grade, my mother passed away and I had to shoulder the responsibility of my younger siblings. Due to this, I had to quit my studies. Under WEP guidance and counselling, I registered myself with Rajasthan State Open and have filled my form for 10th examination. At WEP I study and it has given me a lot of confidence. I love coming to the Academy every day.



OUR JOURNEY

Founded WEP,
opened program
in Madurai

2002

Opened
Hyderabad &
Kadapa programs

2007-2012

2005

Hired 1st Director

2022

- Standardize Academy at all current partners
- Expand student-led Connect program
- Develop online platform for Academy
- Explore new partnership opportunities
- Launch Major Gifts Campaign

2019 - 2021

- Established WEP-India
- Opened Rajasthan program
- Revised Leadership Academy
- Opened Women's Collaboration Lab
- Established Connect program

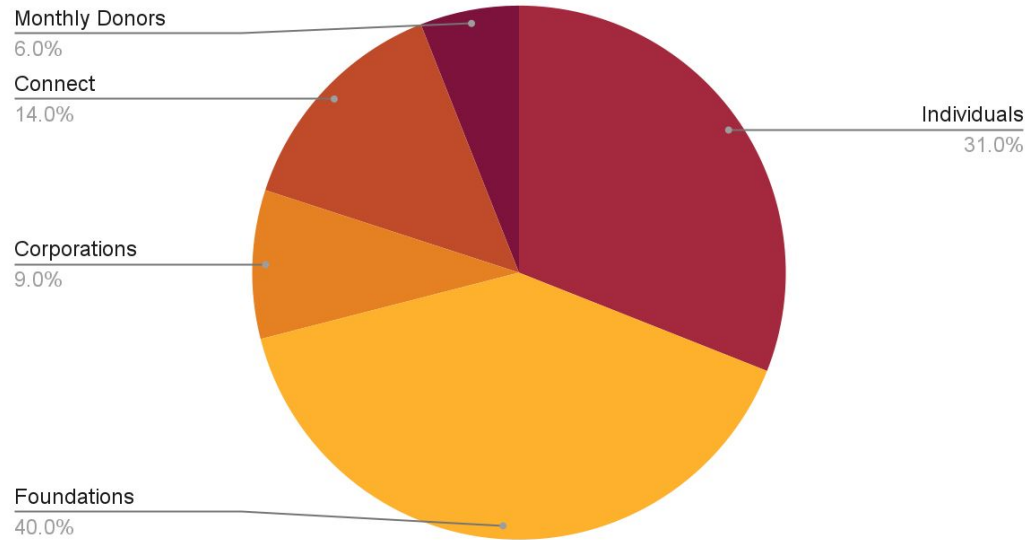
2002 - 2019

- Served over 2,500 students
- 64% entered formal sector careers
- 100% married after 18 years of age

FINANCIALS



2020 SUPPORT



	2020
Income	\$190,740
Expense	\$167,330
Income over Expense	\$23,410

In 2021, WEP ...

secured a grant from WomenServe to support the Academy's revision, develop the curriculum and online resource library and translate materials into Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu.

developed our Connect program. In 2020, students teaching Rangoli to Microsoft employees initiated our Connect program, which has now grown to include Corporate, Community and Student Connects between our students in India and supporters in both India and the US.

secured a PaxWorks grant to fund our Ripple Effect training program, stipends for students' self-directed community-based projects, and sessions to tell their stories of change through film, photography and other media.



A special thank you to our dedicated donors and foundation and corporate supporters: Vandermark Foundation, Inmaat Foundation, WomenServe, Shibulal Family Philanthropic Initiatives, Ness Digital Engineering, Orbis Investments, PaxWorks, Magic EdTech, Odysseus Solutions, ClassLink and edWeb.

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