

## Partners Show the Way

Skillshare International's stakeholder workshops have become an annual feature since September 2002. We aim to build the capacity of our partner organisations by facilitating opportunities for networking and sharing learning. The stakeholder workshop is a key event for achieving this in Asia.

At the first workshop in Bangalore in 2002, partner organisations, development workers and Skillshare International staff agreed that they should embrace the opportunity to share learning, experiences and good practice. Partners agreed that they should share the hosting of meetings to enable participants to gain a deeper understanding of each others' programmes and share learning. Skillshare International's Regional Director for Asia, Julie George, explains, *"the fact that the workshops have continued for five years with partners taking ownership of the processes involved, including planning and organising, and that partners take equal responsibility to make this happen every year, shows its high potential to be sustainable."*

Each year, participants from our four priority sectors (health, education, environment and economic empowerment) agree on a different theme for the next workshop. The workshops are always interactive and facilitated by participants from partner organisations, development workers, Skillshare International staff and external experts. They are also a space for participants to use tools and techniques from Skillshare International's leadership development programmes, such as domain mapping and life-lining. At some workshops, external consultants lead training sessions on new areas of work.

As a result of these workshops, our partners communicate directly with each other to share information and work together. For example, good practices like the use of the *Matti Kundi*, a terracotta piggybank for pregnant women to save money for maternal expenses, introduced by Seba Jagat in Orissa, is now being replicated by other partners working in resource-poor tribal areas. The Tsunami response programme, which enabled women to lead local development interventions, proved valuable learning for partners whose client communities face natural disasters like floods and drought every year.

*Photo of Seba Jagat client with her Matti Kundi © Skillshare/Dinesh Baliga*



In 2006, the focus of the event was on meeting the needs of people living with HIV and AIDS, and mainstreaming their needs across different programmes. The host organisation Samraksha gave insights into how their programme provides holistic support to people living with HIV. For many, this was the first exposure to such an intensive care and support programme. Julie George recalls, *"Samraksha highlighted the importance of mainstreaming HIV across all programmes and addressing the issue through a preventive approach without waiting for a pandemic. The focus was to put internal policies in place to avoid discrimination at work."*

As a regular participant and facilitator, Julie George explains the benefits of the stakeholder meetings: *"the main learning has been that it is possible indeed to set up a sustainable system for continual learning across partners which empowers them to be key stakeholders and decision-makers in this process."*