TOUSIF'S JOURNEY

Tousif

Khandwa

I was born and raised in Khandwa district, Madhya Pradesh, one of India's most rural and economically disadvantaged regions. Coming from a low-income background, I was chronically absent from school because I needed to work to support my mother and sisters. I was able to complete my secondary education thanks to the teachers who saw my potential and tutored me for free after-hours.

Youth

At age 18, I began working at a motorcycle repair shop, but whatever free time I had, I devoted to volunteering, because I wanted to help others like my teachers had helped me. I got to know members of the Korku indigenous tribe. I loved the beauty of their songs and the strength of their ancient culture.

Tragedy

One year during a drought in Korku 40 children passed away. I met one mother who had lost her child and went out to work the very next day. She told me "if I do not go, I will loose my other child too." This moment changed my life forever.

Founding

My Korku friend Pramila and I founded Musht Samaj Seva Samiti. Through education and livelihood projects, our mission is to enable rural communities to live with dignity in their ancestral homelands. In our first few years, we worked full-time without any compensation.

Action Time

For ten years, we have worked to keep girl children in school and increase the quality of education for all children. Most importantly however, we seek to help youth understand their power to solve their own problems and create change.

Grassroots Change

Now, we have a team which is 20 members strong, all of whom are youth from the villages where we work. Many team members are graduates of our own education programs. We are fortunate to receive grants from large and respected donors from across India.

Vision

In the past ten years, my co-founder and I have built a successful grassroots organization despite immense economic and cultural barriers. In the next ten years, I aspire to share our learnings, helping marginalized communities across India live with dignity in their ancestral homelands.