



Give More
Give Sooner
Give Better

Leena Dandekar

A Transformative Journey in Philanthropy



Leena Dandekar's philanthropic journey is deeply rooted in a commitment to sustainability, responsible consumption, and environmental stewardship. Following her tenure at the Camlin Group, she transitioned from corporate leadership to impact-driven philanthropy, seeking a purpose beyond personal or business gains.

➔ Early Roots of Giving

Her visits to rural India were an eye-opener—she witnessed firsthand the deep interlinkages between economic prosperity, social well-being, and environmental sustainability.

The realization that social issues and environmental challenges are inherently connected fueled her resolve to dedicate capital and expertise toward fundamental change.

At the heart of her approach is the idea that environmental and social challenges must be addressed holistically



➔ A Journey of Intentional Giving

For Leena, philanthropy is more than financial contributions; it is a long-term commitment to driving change through evidence-based interventions. The establishment of Raintree Foundation in 2018 marked the formal beginning of her philanthropic vision—a structured approach to addressing climate resilience, sustainability, and biodiversity conservation.

“*This (Raintree) isn't just a passion project—it is a generational commitment. We are building something that we hope will outlast us and create real, lasting change.*”

Key Principles of Strategic Philanthropy

- **Do No Harm, Create Positive Impact:** Raintree ensures that all investments and interventions uphold the dignity and well-being of both people and the planet—going beyond minimizing harm to actively fostering regenerative and restorative solutions.
- **Data-Driven and Deep Listening:** Every initiative is anchored in rigorous data collection and meaningful engagement with communities. The organization prioritizes responding to real, lived realities rather than assumptions, ensuring that all efforts are rooted in ground-up insights.
- **Interconnectedness and Circularity:** Climate action is the foundation of Raintree's work, encompassing sustainability, circularity, and responsible consumption as interlinked priorities. Circularity promotes a regenerative system where waste is minimized, resources are reused, and materials are kept in circulation for as long as possible.
- **Civic Custodianship:** Sustainable change requires community ownership. Raintree believes that the community is the true custodian of the environment and fosters civic custodianship—encouraging shared responsibility and empowering people to sustain and scale solutions for long-term well-being.

Family Philanthropy: A Collective Commitment

For the Dandekar family, philanthropy is more than just a shared responsibility—it is a shared philosophy, one built on a deep and evolving understanding of climate action. Their approach is structured around what they call ‘nesting circles.’

- At the outermost level is climate action, which encompasses their broader vision.
 - Within it lies sustainability, a commitment to practices that ensure long-term ecological and social well-being.
 - Inside that, circularity serves as a guiding principle, reinforcing their belief that resources should be used regeneratively.

This structured philosophy has allowed the family to align their values, resources, and professional expertise in a way that is both strategic and deeply personal. Their commitment to climate action was largely influenced by the concerns of the younger generation.

A Generational Legacy

Leena co-founded Raintree Foundation with her children, Abha and Vivek Dandekar, who bring their unique expertise and passion to the organization. Abha leads the human resources function at Raintree and has given significant attention to mental health as a resilience measure.

Vivek, who serves on Raintree’s board alongside his mother and sister, contributes to shaping the foundation’s strategic vision and ensuring the seamless integration of philanthropy and impact investing. One of the defining aspects of their family philanthropy is their ability to integrate. They firmly believe that capital can and should be deployed strategically to create meaningful change. What sets the Dandekar family apart is their corporate thought process. Unlike many family-led philanthropic ventures where roles often blur, they have established clear professional boundaries while maintaining a shared purpose



“My children are very knowledgeable, and they are acutely aware of the privileged position we are in. They understand how deeply the climate crisis affects those who are the backbone of India’s economy—the people who provide us with food and essential resources.”



Philanthropy in Action

Raintree Foundation

Making an Impact

Water Security: 200 households with year-round access; 73 farm ponds and 30 solar pumps powering irrigation; 4.5M litres of safe drinking water delivered.

Livelihoods: Farmers' rice yields up 42.5%, 178 poultry units earning 145% profits, and 62 families accessing ₹13.5 lakh in no-interest livelihood loans.

Inclusion: 405 women raised 23 issues at Gram Sabhas, 1,500+ villagers sensitized in mental health, youth led gender equality campaigns across 11 villages.

Clean Energy: 8 villages with solar water systems serving 654 households, and 60 biodigesters saving ~75 trees a year while reducing women's drudgery.

Biodiversity: 571 plant and 172 bird species documented, forest fires cut by 30%, 825 saplings planted, and 1,900+ people engaged in conservation.

At the core of Raintree's mission is a landscape-based model that weaves together climate action, community empowerment, and biodiversity conservation. This integrated approach allows for holistic interventions that strengthen environmental resilience and human well-being simultaneously.

Raintree's work spans three key pillars:

- **Climate:** Promoting clean energy, agriculture, watershed ecology and conservation solutions to reduce environmental impact and enhance climate resilience.
- **Community:** Driving livelihood generation and fostering community resilience through regenerative agriculture, skill development, and inclusive grassroots initiatives.
- **Biodiversity:** Reviving watershed ecology and supporting biodiversity conservation through habitat restoration and protection of endemic species.

Raintree embeds **gender equity, social inclusion, community custodianship, and grassroots mental health** into all its work, ensuring interventions are locally led and sustainable. By promoting watershed management to mitigate floods and secure water, conserving biodiversity to boost carbon storage and climate adaptation, and advancing climate-resilient, agroecological farming to enhance food security and restore land, Raintree is poised to foster thriving ecosystems and resilient communities.

➔ Stories of Impact

From Potter to Protector: How Raintree Foundation is Creating Environmental Champions in Velhe

In Sakhar village, Velhe, potter and shopkeeper Sandeep Kumbhar always cared for the environment but lacked direction—until Raintree Foundation arrived. Through their conservation programs, he found his calling.

Sandeep joined the Village Development Committee, Farmer Groups, and most notably, the Forest Fire Prevention Group, where he now leads efforts to protect local forests.

His journey from craftsman to environmental champion captures Raintree's impact: empowering villagers to become stewards of their land.



"By investing in grassroots leadership, Raintree is breaking social barriers and fostering long-term community transformation."



"In the past, battling with water shortage and scarcity was a huge problem. This farm pond has changed our lives. Now I can water the newly planted 100 mango trees in my farm, and have started a fishing business. This has certainly increased my income."

From Water Scarcity to Prosperity

Raintree Foundation's Farm Ponds transformed water-scarce farming in Velhe Taluka by storing rainwater for dry months. Farmers like Dnyanoba Phanse expanded cultivation, planted 100 mango trees, and started a profitable fishery, diversifying income.

This initiative enabled year-round high-value crop production, boosted market opportunities, and enhanced climate resilience, ensuring long-term prosperity for agricultural communities.

Case Study Highlights

Leena Dandekar's philanthropic journey highlights the power of vision, persistence, and evidence-based action in driving meaningful change. She believes that true philanthropy goes beyond quick fixes, requiring deep community engagement and long-term commitment to sustainability. Her approach to climate resilience is rooted in listening—to the land, the people, and the science—ensuring that interventions are both effective and scalable.

Leena's work also highlights the power of intergenerational collaboration. Working alongside her children, she has built a philanthropic model that bridges business acumen with deep social commitment. The Raintree Foundation's work in Velhe is a testament to how focused, patient efforts can transform landscapes and communities.

Leena's leadership serves as a model for philanthropists, urging them to embrace complexity, and commit to change that endures, underscoring the importance of purpose-driven giving—where capital, strategy, and compassion converge to create lasting, transformative change.

“There are a lot of people out there who want to get involved, but may not have the monetary resources, but a little goes a long way”

“Leena's philanthropic journey inspires other to embrace bold, long-term commitments to sustainability and climate resilience.”

“Real change takes time.”



Join the flow

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For more information contact:

Accelerate Indian Philanthropy: info@indianphilanthropy.org
Raintree Foundation: contactus@theraintree.org