



TARA Akshar+ Wins 2022 Commonwealth Award

TARA Akshar+ programme won the 2022 Commonwealth Education Awards under the category *Rethinking Education for Sustainability* on 28 April, 2022 in a virtual ceremony. The Awards took place triennially to coincide with the 21st Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM), hosted by the Government of Kenya in Nairobi on 27 and 28 April, 2022.

Initiated in 2005 by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Awards draw attention to educational practices with replicability potential in different Commonwealth contexts and promote sharing of knowledge and expertise. The awards highlight and recognise the quality and diversity of learning systems, resources, and spaces among the Commonwealth member countries. By recognising excellence and innovation, the Secretariat support education and learning initiatives that are being conducted in the member countries, highlight the great work of education professionals, and signal the key role of education and learning in achieving sustainable development.

There were six areas and categories for the Awards, one being the *Rethinking Education for Sustainability*. This category aimed to recognise organisations working on education projects that demonstrate an innovative and impactful sustainability programme or policy designed to enhance institutional sustainability through education, from an environmental, social, economic, or human sustainability perspective. TARA Akshar+ was the obvious choice as it is a Functional Literacy and Numeracy programme that enables non-literate women to read, write, and do simple arithmetic by use of advanced memory techniques and computerised graphics. It ensures the highest quality of learning by the women in just 56 days. This is followed by a 6 months *Gyan Chaupali* for sustained learning. The programme has so far successfully made over 238,000 women literate. The programme empowers women to learn to first read the word and then the world, which enables them to work towards a

sustainable future with access to quality living, developing knowledge, skills, behavior, and values needed to think responsibly. The programme empowers women to take charge of their own lives and the context they are in, rather than just being receptacles of information. The TARA Akshar+ programme has won many awards in the past including the Wise Award in 2016, eUttara Award in 2014, and Buckminster Fuller Challenge Award in 2011.

The awards recognised the winners for six categories including Rethinking Education for Innovation, Rethinking Education for Work, Rethinking Education for Sustainability, Education as Pathways to Peace, Education for Inclusion, and Commonwealth Outstanding Teacher or School Leader. This year, a record number of entries – 2,462 entries – from 32 countries were received, of which 640 met the submission criteria. Judges were highly impressed by the numerous examples of excellence, resilience, talent, and innovation in the many submissions received.

The finalists were drawn from a list that features inspirational educators and innovative projects ranging from those that aim to promote literacy among women and tackle youth unemployment, to those that empower teachers and academics, and promote peace education.