



Fields of dreams

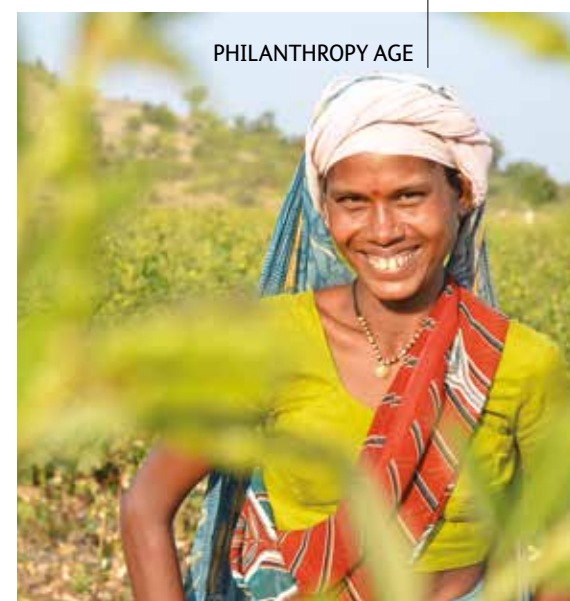
The peasant farmers of rural Maharashtra, in central India, face a constant struggle for survival. Uneducated and often illiterate, they remain wedded to outdated and inefficient farming practices and this perpetuates a cycle of poverty, with generation after generation doomed to till the same land for the same meagre returns. In partnership with government agencies and local NGOs, the Tata trusts are working to enlighten tiny rural communities as to more effective farming techniques. In villages where making the most of the soil underfoot can mean the difference between life and death, a little education goes a long, long way.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE In a small village in Vidarbha, central India, a woman crosses a new man-made waterway that has enabled local farmers to improve their crop yields dramatically; using pumps to draw from subsidiaries of the main waterway, farmers irrigate fields of cotton, soybean and red gram; a farmer stands in front of his fast-growing cotton crop; the agricultural interventions of the Tata trusts and their partners have so far changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of households across six districts in Vidarbha





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Members of a 'Producer Company' gather in Deoli, a small city in central India; producer companies are collectives that allow local farmers to group together and overcome poor market access, lack of institutional credit, dependence on moneylenders, the presence of unscrupulous middlemen, and unfair trade practices; the group has leveraged its collective financial muscle and purchased a dal grading machine to speed production; hundreds of women are among the collective's 2,800 small producers

