For this year’s annual events, we chose to feature a concept rarely discussed in development circles: the Courage to Connect. The idea describes a vulnerable exchange between people who are paying attention to one another. When we bring this courage to our connections, we deepen our respect for those we seek to support, we inspire change, and we build trust. It’s how The Hunger Project achieves sustainable progress in our work to defeat hunger and poverty.

What’s especially wonderful about this approach is that it recognizes, right from the start, the wisdom and dignity of all people. It permits us to skip patriarchal programming and move directly to strategies that address underlying problems.

In her speech at our West Coast event last spring, Ruchi Yadav, the Senior Program Director for The Hunger Project-India, did a wonderful job of explaining how the Courage to Connect applies to a number of its successful programs.

She introduced us to Hansa (see the next story) and said, “Courage is about two things: the power within – that self-esteem, that confidence to stand for what you believe in; and the power with – [so] people can move with you. It’s how we engage and make things happen.”

It takes courage to listen and be vulnerable. It takes courage to take action and create lasting change. And it takes connection to achieve the world-changing progress we are making together.

Please consider joining us in New York City for our Fall Event weekend in October (more information below). This gathering will be a wonderful opportunity to learn more about The Hunger Project and participate in advancing our movement toward a world without hunger.
HANSA: THE COURAGE TO PROTECT THE FOREST AND THE FUTURE

Hansa Devi is just one woman. One very empowered woman. And because of her and the women she mobilized, one of the last pristine forests of India has been saved from over-development.

Hansa’s journey began five years ago when she attended The Hunger Project-India’s leadership development workshops. Hansa’s goal was to be elected to the local council where she could influence decisions regarding the future of her community in Northern India. These workshops prepared her for success.

Getting elected was an achievement. But what she did next was a feat of true bravery. The council was petitioned to allow development that would have decimated a large portion of the community’s forest. So, unlike the rest of the council, she refused to sign the request.

When she was intimidated, she stood firm. When she received death threats, she mobilized more than 200 women to stand with her to protect the forest. These women knew that the ecosystem the forest provided was more than just a beautiful thing, it was the key resource for their livelihoods.

In the end Hansa won. “We have learned that we don’t have to run away. We will keep standing.” In telling Hansa’s story, Ruchi Yadav, the Senior Program Director for The Hunger Project-India, said, “Hansa is one woman, but in India, we’re now working with 8,000 women like Hansa. And those 8,000 women are impacting 8.8 million people.”

The courage Hansa shows every day in fighting for the health of her community is truly inspiring. The Hunger Project is proud to partner with women like Hansa.

IN INDIA, 6,000 WOMEN LIKE HANSA ARE FIGHTING FOR WATER, FOR DIGNITY, FOR EDUCATION, FOR HEALTHCARE, AND AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE, HUNGER, AND POVERTY.