



Where are the Girls?

Girls face multiple vulnerabilities that inhibit their ability to access a basic education: risk of child marriage, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and child labour. All these barriers are intensified during crises. Nearly 10 million secondary school girls in India could drop out of school due to the pandemic, putting them at risk of early marriage, early pregnancy, poverty, trafficking, and violence, finds a policy brief by Right to Education Forum published on 22 January 2021.

The pandemic & the girls

UNICEF's report suggests that school and college closures, economic stress, service disruptions, and parental deaths due to the pandemic are putting the most vulnerable girls at increased risk.

Since 2020, ANUDIP works to improve the mental health and economic conditions of women and girls from low-income and Covid affected families in India by providing them with employment exclusively in technology. With the nation-wide lockdowns, we trusted technology as the game-changer which brought about positive changes - in their lives, roles and careers. We hope these stories inspire you to be bold for change. Recognizing the unheard stories of women, who took the lead - for change!



Covid Marriages: 'She was asked to marry to ease off the burden'



Amreen Yusuf, Maharashtra

“ MY FAMILY TOLD ME I SHOULDN'T SAY NO TO SUCH AN OFFER, AS THE BOY WHO WANTED TO MARRY ME WAS FROM A WEALTHY FAMILY. ”

Only a few months back, Amreen Yusuf was under a lot of pressure from her orthodox and low-income family in Malad to accept a suitor, marry and help ease the family's financial strains. Pre-pandemic her marriage was delayed because no private moneylender or bank was ready to give a loan. Desperate families, left without a livelihood in the middle of a pandemic, were rushing to marry off their daughters owing to lessen expenses.

Amreen's family believed she should follow suit. Challenging everyone, she wanted to work and be financially independent to help her low-income father rather than a marriage. While four of girls in the same neighborhood got married, **Amreen took up an employability course in Accounting with Tally-ERP to get an insight on the market-aligned jobs. The training session at Anudip covered interesting aspects like accounting basics,**

Tally ERP software and English communication proficiencies. She attended three interviews arranged for her Anudip's placement cell post her training.

Her next move amazed everyone in her community. **Amreen took up the offer from Tata Consultancy Services, one of the reputed global MNC's as an Export Payment Executive with a starting salary of INR 13,000 monthly.** Her salary - was not just money but it was a significant contribution in a family - where no woman have ever gone out for earning.

“ IT HAS BEEN A TOUGH YEAR FOR MY PARENTS. MY MARRIAGE TO A WEALTHY FAMILY – WAS THE ONLY RESORT TO LESSEN THE BURDEN. IT TOOK ME TWO MONTHS TO CONVINCING MY FATHER AMIDST SOCIETY PRESSURE. IT HAS BEEN SIX MONTHS NOW, AND HE HAS NOT TALKED ABOUT MARRIAGE TO ME. ”



‘No time to grieve’: What losing a breadwinner to COVID-19 is like



K Kawiken Liu, Manipur

“ MY MOTHER USED TO TELL ME THAT I DO NOT HAVE TO FIND WORK IMMEDIATELY AFTER FINISHING MY EDUCATION. I SHOULD DO WHAT I FEEL GOOD ABOUT, ”

- says Kawiken. But her mother’s words are now a privilege she can no longer afford. K Kawiken Liu from Manipur lost her mother after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic leaving her broken and shattered. The 21-year-old has had to change her plans because the responsibility of running the household had fallen on her, who had just completed a degree course in History.

While the pandemic has left collective loss and trauma in its wake, there are some like Kawiken’s family who have found themselves at a greater disadvantage than others after losing the sole breadwinner. She have had to hold in their emotions and take responsibility sooner than she anticipated. Kawiken searched for all possible income-generation ways to fund her 6 sibling’s education and bring food to the family. **Enrolling for ANUDIP’s technical IT skills with a hope of a stable income in such a trauma - reflected her resilience in the darkest hour of life.** “I haven’t even had a moment to grieve,” Kawiken remembers her mother, “I wish she could see me today in my new roles.”

Today Kawiken works as a Desktop Support Engineer at R-Labs- an IT company in Meghalaya earning INR 20,000 per month doing on-site and remote technical jobs including setting up of computer hardware systems, installing and upgrading software, and troubleshooting basic IT issues. Recently, Kawiken received appreciation from the company’s CEO and was rewarded a cash incentive of INR 50,000 for her hard work and perseverance during the time of Covid-19 lockdown. She got back her confidence and with the loving memory of her mother she was ready to fight for life like never before.



Online Business Motives during the Pandemic - Lessons from the Crisis



Illora Roy, North Bengal

Before the pandemic, 32 year-old Illora Roy and her husband lived a relatively comfortable middle-class life in Alipurduar, North Bengal. A stringent curfew aimed at stopping the spread of the disease turned her husband's small business - and their lives - upside down. As business evaporated, so did their savings. Forced to cut back on food, Illora says she became desperate, even turning to friends for cash transfers.

Unquestionably, this has been the most difficult moment for Illora's family. Compelled by the circumstances Illora came to Anudip in search of a job which was a complete uncharted territory - since no-one in the family knew what 9 to 5 job looks like. This introduction - opened new avenues as she discover a new business strategy. **Through Anudip's e-commerce program to scale up small-business, Illora turned her physical shop - to an online one, registering her shop Yubraj Fashions in Amazon, one of the largest e-com sites globally.** Anudip Faculty - equipped her with the processes and procedures to advertise, collect and streamline online orders. **Illora's small shop which was on the verge of shut-down - now is making 50% more profit than before.**

Back in Alipurduar, Illora is also recommending her friends who have similar local business - change to digital.

“ E-COMMERCE HAS BEEN PREDOMINANT DURING SHUTDOWN, BUT LESS TECHNOLOGY-SAVVY SMALL BUSINESS-OWNERS LIKE US WOULD LAG BEHIND, IF THEY ARE NOT BEING DIRECTED AND TRAINED. GRATEFUL TO ANUDIP TEAM FOR ENABLING ME COME OUT OF MY BRICK-AND-MORTAR BUSINESS MODEL AND FUEL MY STAY-AT-HOME BUSINESS THROUGH DIGITAL. ”



Old for us, new for some empathing the academic equalizer



R.SOWMIYA & R. SONIYA, Chennai

The twins - Soniya and Sowmiya lives with their 49-year-old mother, who works as a housekeeping aide in a healthcare clinic on COVID-19 front lines. She empties patient trash, wipes down and disinfect surfaces - which makes her more vulnerable to infections. Yet, she does that all to earn a monthly remuneration of Rs. 7500.

Soniya and Soumiya both completed college and their younger sister is an 11th grader -student who finds it difficult to study online - with a second-hand smartphone which is mostly monopolized by their mother as the head of the family. "On some days we do not have money to buy groceries, as I strived to arrange data pack for educating my children", rues their mother. **In such conditions - the twin decided to take up a web designing course from Anudip.** With everything virtual and only one smart-phone, it became difficult for them to continue. "Patchy connections made it worse to access course materials at times." Recalls Soumiya "We got enrolled in different batches in Anudip since we had to learn from one single phone."

Soniya focuses "This problem echoes with many other students in my slum, who faces similar troubles due to inadequate technology devices." **After their training, Soniya got a job as an Associate in Accenture, earning INR 13,000 per month while Sowmiya joined TVS as a Junior Executive drawing INR 10, 500 per month.**

SOWMIYA SAID "WE DONATED OUR FIRST SALARY TO FEW CHILDREN IN OUR SLUM WHO WERE NOT BEING ABLE TO AFFORD EDUCATION ONLINE BECAUSE WE KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE BEING NOT ABLE TO STUDY."



“Quarantined” even before Pandemic



Khayonisha Khatoon,
India - Bangladesh Border

Khayonisha Khatoon lives in Bhagwangola, a community development block in Murshidabad district in West Bengal, very close to the Bangladesh-India border. After finishing her class X boards, she eloped with a 20 year boy from the neighbourhood. She was only 14 and her parents had to seek help from the local police to get their daughter back home. Since then, she was left isolated for more than a year, from her family, friends, festivals and the outside world.

“ QUARANTINE – IS A NEW WORD THESE DAYS BUT I CAME TO KNOW HOW IT FEELS TO BE BOYCOTTED AND LOCKED UP IN A SINGLE ROOM. MY AMMI (MOTHER) GAVE ME FOOD - BUT I WAS ONLY ALLOWED TO EAT ALONE INSIDE THE LOCKED ROOM. ”

When Khayonisha turned 16, she was forced to marry a man, whom she has never met before. “My parents had to bribe my in-laws to accept a girl like me, who is boycotted.” Marks Khayonisha. Needless to mention, life after her wedding was different. The marriage failed miserably – and Khayonisha was back to her parent’s home, again isolated, after being abused. It was then when the mobilizing team from Lalgola centre of Anudip came to know Khayonisha. When Khayonisha decided to start her life – forgetting her troubled past, none in her family supported her decision to join the training centre. “I could see rounding eyes from neighbours whenever I stepped out for my classes”

At the very beginning, the Anudip training was an intimidating space for Khayonisha, from starting to learn English which seemed an alien language to her and using it to interpret and follow instructions. **An important focus of her training at Anudip was on introduction courses on the basics of computers and operating systems, using spreadsheets, word processors and internet. This was followed by 9 months of Cloud Sourcing Task Contributor (CSTC) training ensuring her digital navigation skills, online finance management, setting up work profile, bidding for work, and delivering quality output in crowdsourcing works like image tagging, data-mining, and data entry.**

After more than a year of Khayonisha’s coaching in new-job training, she was placed in one of the leading digital data companies and does crowd-sourced digital data work. “When they see my company-lanyard, they change the way addressed me. In no-time my identity transformed – from the girl who eloped to the lady who is an ITes Executive at a multi-national company! – Khayonisha assures, happily!



Rounding Eyes: On new line of work



Bainjanti Devi, Jharkhand

36 year old Bainjanti lives in Sugnu, a rural landscape in Jharkhand with her husband and in-laws. The monthly income of the family of 5 is INR 5000 which came from her husband's Toto-rickshaw which was parked in the second wave of COVID in India.

With relaxations in the lockdown, her husband took out his Toto but rued on very few passengers availing their services. Bainjanti never earned before but this was the first time in 15 years of her marriage, she was ready to shoulder equal responsibilities to save a family.

Breaking conventions, she contacted Anudip's Haqdarshak's program managers who advised her to take up the course where she could start earning after only 6 weeks of mobile app training. She was trained on how to help technologically challenged rural Indians - access several government welfare schemes through an app. This short-term employability course enabled her to process documentation like ADHAAR, Pan, Ration Card and avail other government schemes digitally for unreached rural citizens.

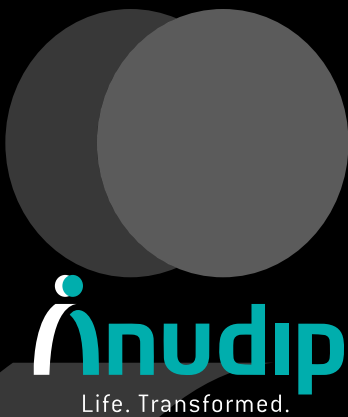
Her family was evidently worried and circumspect initially when she confessed her intentions to get into this line of work. **To start with, she helped 5 of her neighbours avail government schemes with the help of the mobile application she was trained on.**

Her first income was Rs. 4000 which gradually scaled up as more people came to her for availing similar schemes, for which they otherwise would have to travel to the city. In the next few months - she ramped up her income to Rs. 7000 per month with her door-step visit to families who needed to avail welfare benefits.

Donning her new role as a Haqdarshak Sewaak, she now trusts more in what she could achieve.






"IT WASN'T EASY TO START WITH. IN SUGNU WHERE PATRIARCHY IS HIGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONVINCING PEOPLE THAT A WOMAN CAN HELP THEM ACCESS WELFARE BENEFITS. I FOUND THESE EXPERIENCES POWERFUL ENOUGH TO FUEL MY GROWTH."
SAYS BAINJANTI.





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