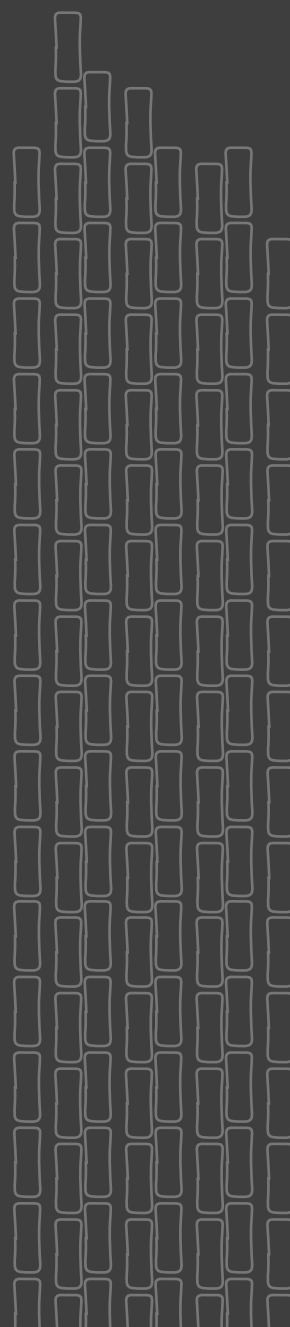


Digital Roshni 4



Digital Roshni 4  
The changing lives of women  
adapting digital tools

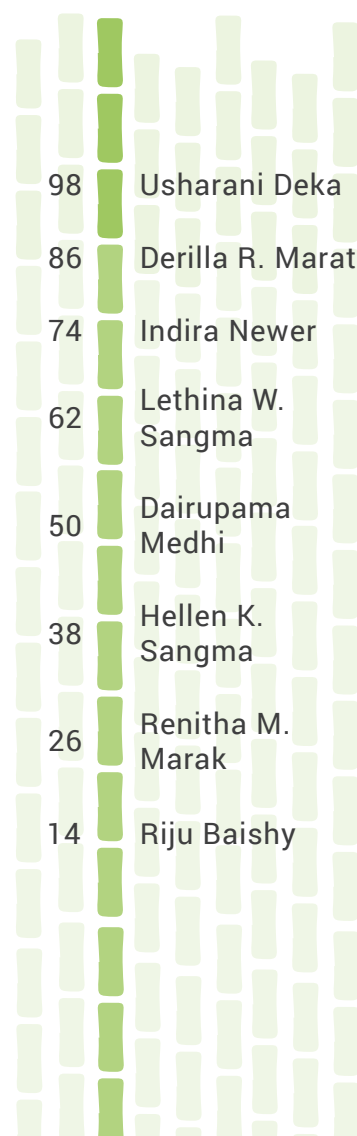
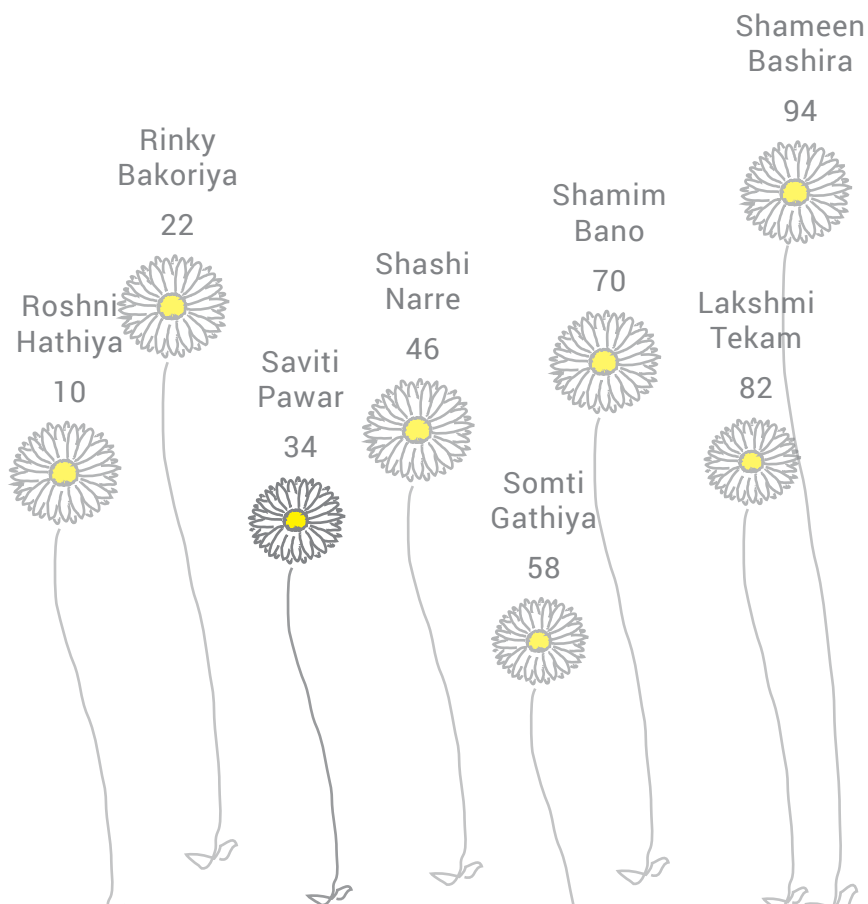
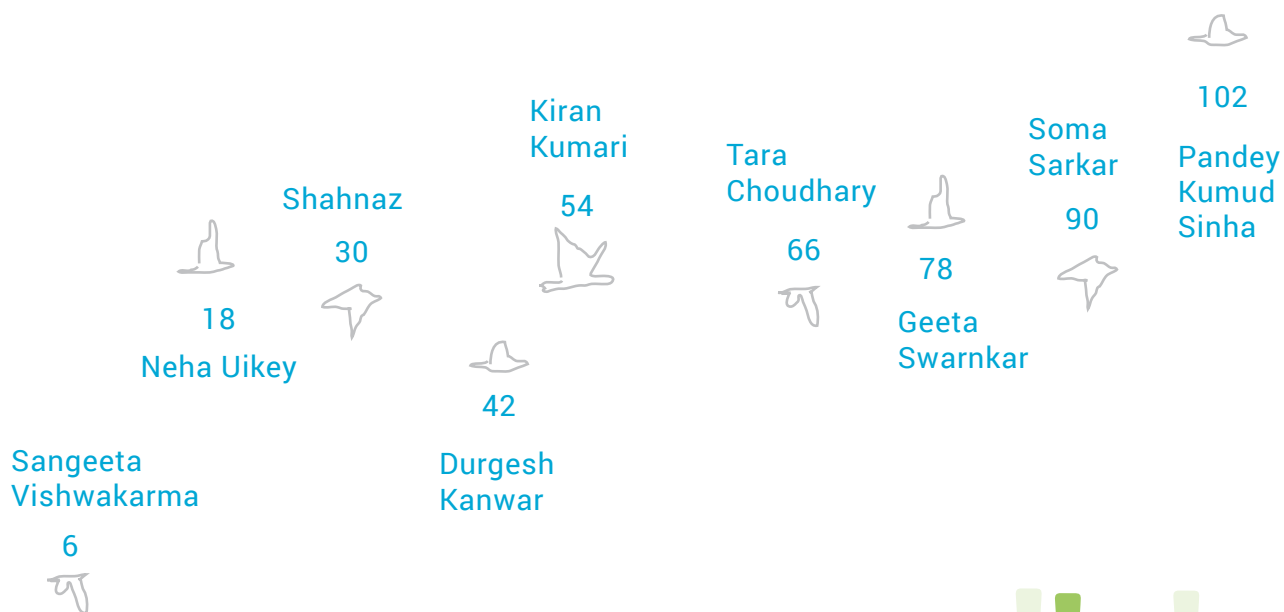
This book is the fourth in a series of four publications that describe the socio-behavioural insight of girls and women across villages in the country where they are being introduced to digital media, social media, ICT tools, community media, computers, mobiles and other modern digital tools or devices.

Copyright:  
Digital Empowerment Foundation  
Concept, illustrations, design and  
layout: Cathy Pin-Chun Chen  
Text Editors: Udit Chaturvedi  
Contributors: Jayanti Bapat,  
Aanchal Mittal, Banangku  
Momin, Riju Baishy, Jolly Kazi,  
Adya Parashar & Osama Manzar

Published & Distributed by  
Inomy Media Pvt. Limited

Contact:  
House No. 44, 2nd & 3rd Floor  
Kalu Sarai, New Delhi – 110016  
Tel: 91-11-26532786 /  
Fax: 91-11-26532787  
Email: [def@defindia.net](mailto:def@defindia.net)  
URL: [www.defindia.org](http://www.defindia.org)

Contribution/donation price:  
As per readers' wish



## INTRODUCTION



I once heard from a friend of a friend, “generosity is an act of value transaction”. This is a society where many of us expect something in return with the act of giving. Yet many of these women that I visited inherit the belief of sharing. They were once offered light, and now they spread that tint of radiance to make it last longer and brighter.

The thought of creating the Digital Roshni series started in 2016, a couple of months before that International Women’s Day 2016 (March 8). The intention was simple. I wanted to understand rural Indian women’s everyday behavioural changes before and after their encounters with technology. One of the essential parts of the stories is to have them reflect and compare the concept of a woman when they were young (very often taught and told to them by other important elder figures from their childhood) and their future vision of a woman. Through this, I hope to see confidence and empowerment in these women’s understanding of their value in their communities.

For the first batch of women that we reached out to, we started with phone interviews. Each interview usually lasted two hours. We asked women from different regions of India

the same questions. From time to time, we dwelled on very specific details of their answers for them to describe a particular scenario. One of the interviewees, while weeping about her father's recent demise, insisted on sharing her story with us because of the change and the hope she perceived. In one of the centres we visited, 15 women lined up, waited for me and my interpreters for hours and hours, just so all of them could share with me a slice of their lives. I still remember their faces, after the long extended wait, their excitement to present their enrichment in the little time each of them had with us — one and a half hours.

There were times when I felt like I was the investigator. While interrogating these women, I invaded their memories and thoughts about their childhood, their family situations and their future aspirations. They nevertheless shared their patience, their smiles, their food, their emotions and their stories, regardless that we're meeting each other for the first time.

They give and they support.

Roshni 4 is a compilation of selected stories that stuck with me during the production of these series. In these stories, I find strength and admiration.

From all the Roshni women, I embrace generosity as the connection between people and people, people and their communities, and people and themselves. These are the stories of sharing. I hope we can all share our stories with those who come in our lives for some sunshine, rain and warmth.

cathy

## SANGEETA VISHWAKARMA

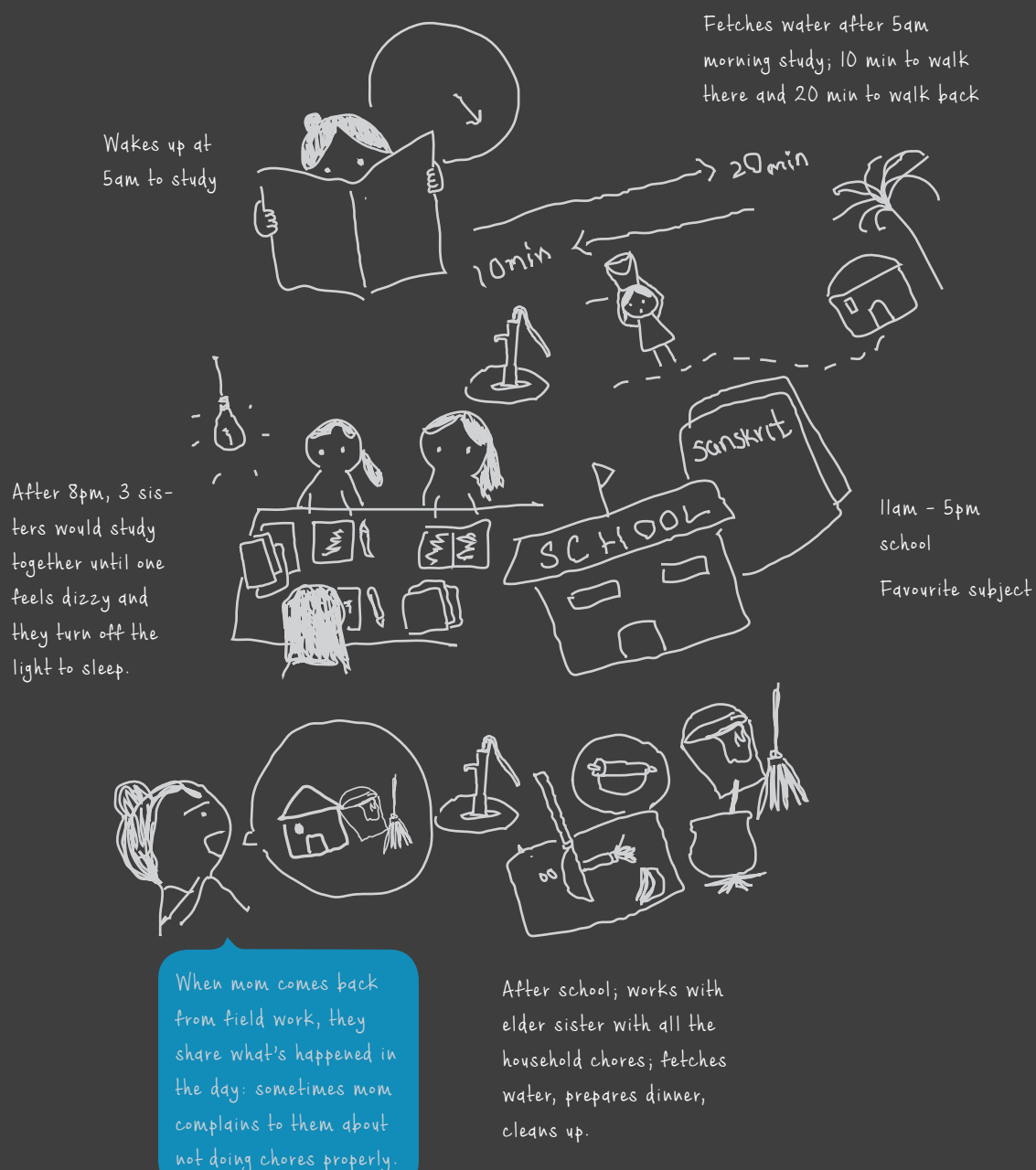
**Age** 21; married; 2 brothers & 3 sisters;  
**Sibling rank** #3; **Education level** 10th standard; **Background** As a child, Sangeeta has seen her family face difficult financial conditions. Her father is a blacksmith and her mother is a friendly woman with whom Sangeeta shares everything. Sangeeta's mother wants her children to be educated; however, due to financial difficulties, she has had to work as a labourer and often seek her children's help as well. As a child, Sangeeta wanted to learn tailoring and computer but she could not pursue her dream. Now, Sangeeta helps pay for her youngest brother's education who recently finished school.



Jhakhli is a remote village, with little access to telecommunication, in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. Most of the people are engaged in sericulture and related activities. DEF runs a CIRC in this village.



10 years ago



## Present

She and her husband chat about the centre. She wants him to start studying, and helps him fill up education form.

He drops and picks her up from the centre, but does not like to visit the centre as other people would gossip.

Wakes up at 5:30am and finishes all the housework alone

Husband has three goats: she helps out, but she does not like their milk.

She likes to explain things to children through animation and images.

8:30 am - 9am  
Teaches and manages CIRC; answer inquiries, Xerox tasks.

New slot has opened from 7-8pm for the labourers in the village who want to acquire basic computer training.

On the Internet, she wants to search for henna designs, tailoring, government schemes, information about fertilizers and learn panchayat work because she thinks they are not active enough.



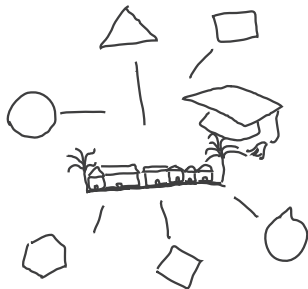


MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD TAKE CARE OF HER DIGNITY  
BECAUSE WHEN ONCE IT'S GONE, IT'S  
GONE. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD NOT GET INVOLVED IN ANY  
WRONG COMPANY OR ACTIVITY.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER  
A WOMAN SHOULD IGNORE OTHER  
PEOPLE'S MOCKERIES. HELP COMES IN  
ALL FORM, SHE SHOULD PURSUE HER  
DREAM BUT UNDERSTAND HER LIMITS.**

#### *Sangeeta's Aspiration*

She wants to turn her village into a proud village by encouraging people in her village and the nearby villages to learn about computers. She believes that children today are a place where they can learn really quickly and help disseminate their knowledge to others. She wants to prove to her grandparents that education means something, and it can bring them somewhere. Education can help make them proud.



## ROSHNI HATHIYA

Age 20; unmarried; 1 brother & 5 sisters;  
Sibling rank #7; Education level 12th pass;  
Background Roshni's parents cared deeply about their children's education. Because there was no proper school in the village, the family moved to a nearby town to their grandparent's place to provide better education to their children. Roshni's mother is a strict but friendly woman who is protective and a little hesitant to let her children roam around outside, while her father has more faith in them. Roshni grew up under her grandparent's influence, who strongly support educating the children. The aunt, who earns and manages the house, has always been an inspiring figure for Roshni. The grandparents are liberal and teach her to treat the untouchables equally. They are also very open and have made her understand that menstruation is a natural process, something which all women go through.



Village Mardanpur in Shahpur block of Betul district, Madhya Pradesh, is home to a CIRC that is dedicated to providing digital literacy, digital services and access to information and entitlements in a socially backward community.



10 years ago

Roshni wakes up at 5 am and cooks breakfast for herself.

Though she's not responsible for other chores, she never bothers her mother for breakfast.



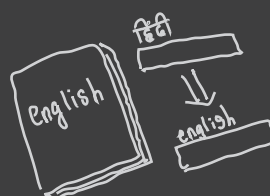
By 10 pm, she washes and irons her uniform for the next day. Sometimes her father helps with ironing the clothes.



By 7 am, she gets ready for school. She walks to school with a friend who lives on the outskirts of the city. It's a 1 km walk.

In school, her favourite subject is English. She has a sharp memory. She enjoys reading everyday and indulges in it whenever she gets some free time. She loves translating texts from Hindi to English.

Roshni wants to join the police force. She cleared her exams but due to her relatives' objections and doubts, she didn't pursue the dream, and now feels a little sad about it.



She spends time with a friend who's an only child and whose mother passed away. She sometimes helps out with her friend's household chores.



She is closest to her younger sister. They try to study together and she helps her little sister with homework.

She never helps with the farm work. Roshni's father doesn't force her either to do household chores because he believes at this age she should focus on her studies.

Present

A simple line drawing on a white background. On the left is a cup of tea with steam rising from it. In the center is a bowl of food, possibly a bowl of soup or a bowl of rice. To the right of the bowl is a broom. The drawing is minimalist, using only black outlines.

A hand-drawn illustration in a sketchy, yellow-on-white style. On the left, a girl with dark hair is shown from the chest up, looking thoughtful with her hand to her chin. A thought bubble above her head contains the word 'School'. To her right is a building with a sign that says 'CIRC' and a window with a grid pattern. A motorcycle is parked in front of this building. Further right, a group of seven simple human figures are gathered. In the foreground, a laptop is open, displaying the word 'HOLI' on its screen. To the right of the laptop, there is a box labeled 'Google' with 'Divali' written inside it. Another building with a 'CIRC' sign is visible in the background on the right.

could help  
ies  
literacy.



show kids  
on harmful  
such as o  
fertilisers  
become a

She converts videos to CDs to show kids and women information on harmful agricultural practices, such as overuse of pesticides and fertilisers. Soon, men might also become a part of her sessions.

12

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT BE OVER-FRIENDLY WITH OTHERS. SHE SHOULD ALWAYS GO STRAIGHT TO SCHOOL AND COME BACK HOME.  
MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT LET HER PARENTS DOWN; SHE SHOULD ALWAYS BE BRAVE..

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT A WOMAN CAN LEARN EVERYTHING ON HER OWN AND SHOULD NOT DEPEND ON OTHERS. GIRLS SHOULD KNOW HOW TO OPERATE THINGS AND ACQUIRE INFORMATION. THEY SHOULD NOT GET INTIMIDATED BY THEIR HUSBANDS. IF A WOMAN WANTS TO EARN, SHE SHOULD HAVE THE FREEDOM TO EARN HER LIVELIHOOD.**



#### Roshni's Aspirations

Roshni wants to grow with the CIRC. She wants to be a pro at computer skills. Every time she comes out of a training, she learns something new. Yet, she feels that there's so much more to learn. She wants to have more women and children learn about computers. When women complain about the distance, she advises them that they can come in a group. She wants them to learn about managing bank accounts, accessing college admissions and applying for government schemes. She believes that if women can access more information, they can lead a better life.

## RIJU BAISHY

Age 28; married; 1 brother & 1 sister; Sibling Rank: #1; Education level Master of Arts in development studies ; Background Riju's father is a businessman who works on government tenders. Her mother is a teacher in a high school, and teaches drawings, social studies and Hindi. Riju's mother is a strong woman who used to own a fashion store. Riju and her siblings discuss things with her mom first who then communicate it to their father, who usually supports his children in everything. In her family, everyone helps in the kitchen. The younger brother gets most attention from the family, but he is also bullied the most by his sisters. Riju grew up with a close relationship with her grandparents. She is married to an engineer.



Guwahati in Assam, is home to several urban slums. The city sees a constant influx of migrants, from nearby hilly villages, who leave behind their homes to seek better opportunities in the capital city. The district boasts of a high literacy rate of 91.47%, with male literacy at 94.24% and female literacy at 88.50%. DEF runs an regional administrative office here, and a literacy centre in Nagaon district.



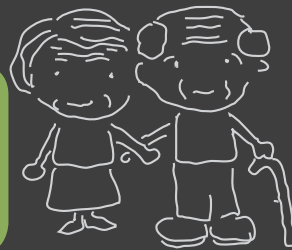
## 10 years ago

On Sundays, she and her sister visit their grandparents.



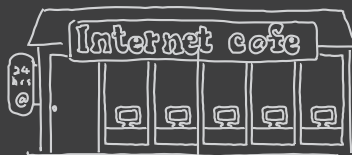
She wakes up at 6 am, reads the newspaper and gets ready for college.

There is a computer lab in her college but there are always too many people in the queue to use the lab.



From 9 am to 2:30 pm, she attends college. She is involved in a number of cultural activities, such as singing and dancing. She is a trained classical singer and dancer.

When she needs to access the Internet, she goes to an Internet cafe that charges Rs. 20/hour.



She collects poems and articles, shortlists them, edits them and then publishes them in the monthly college magazine.

She has a computer at home but no Internet connection.



The government awards computers to students who achieve 1st division. Her brother has installed some games on the computer, so he uses it the most.



She goes out on field visits to gain social awareness about grassroots communities.

She studies by herself for three hours when she gets home, has dinner with her family, and studies a little more afterwards.



She finds changes in the Indian economy fascinating.

From 3-4pm, she takes tuitions for her subjects. She enjoys studying, especially economics: through diagrams, Excel sheets, projections, scores.

## Present



She does a lot of her work on a phone now, mostly because it requires urgent attention. She has four laptops and one mini projector in the house.

Her husband is like a friend to her. He helps out with the household chores and loves cooking. They often cook together on weekends.



She wakes up at 6 am and spends an hour reading the newspaper.

Later in the evening, she calls up her friends, siblings, parents and in-laws to speak to them. Father-in-law, who is 70 and translates holy books, needs a lot of attention. If she doesn't call, he gets agitated.



She cooks food for her husband and sister-in-law.

She watches daily news on TV.

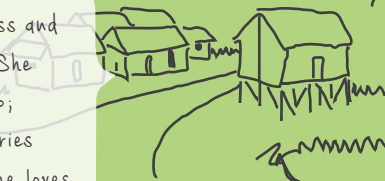


After office, she goes to the market and buys vegetables.



From 10 am to 5:30 pm, she sits at the CIRC where she manages the project budget and heads communications. She's responsible for delegating tasks to others and creating activities and programmes for people visiting the CIRC.

She tries to provide awareness and policy information to people. She learns a lot from villagers too; everyone has his/her own stories and perspectives to share. She loves gender issues and is interested in working with women's right in the development sector.



She mobilises people in different villages to encourage them to learn computers to access information.



She travels twice a week to the Sonapur centre.

When a new project is launched, she has to figure out the logistics and assign tasks.

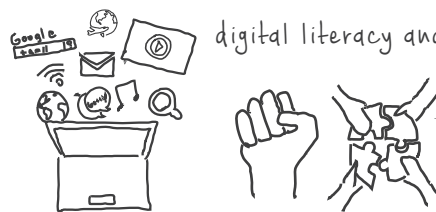


MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT, SMART  
AND WISE ENOUGH TO MAKE HER  
OWN DECISIONS.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN  
SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT. SHE SHOULD BE  
HER OWN EARNER, HER OWN VOICE AND  
MAKE HER OWN DECISION-MAKER. IF SHE  
GIVES LOVE AND RESPECT, IT WILL COME  
BACK TO HER.

#### Riju's Aspirations

She wants to be involved in her community and open her own NGO. She enjoys working with grassroots people and empowering them. She believes that education is important and one needs the Internet to access knowledge and information. Access to education provides access to digital literacy and, subsequently, empowerment.



## NEHA UIKEY

Age 21; unmarried; 1 brother; **Sibling rank** #2; **Education level** BSc; **Background** Neha's father works as a seasonal farmer. Her mother is a housewife who has studied until Class XI. Neha's mother and she are like best friends. Neha also has an uncle who is a college teacher, and the two families live together with their grandparents as a joint family. Neha has always seen her mother as a soft-spoken and friendly woman who takes care of the entire family. Whenever Neha leaves for college after a vacation, her mother cries but she wishes that all her daughter's wishes are fulfilled. Neha is passionate about hockey but says that her college hockey team fights more often than they practice. She has even hit some boys in a few fights.



Kala Akhar is a village located in a tribal belt of Hoshangabad district in Madhya Pradesh. The region is secluded and cut-off from mainstream progress or means of communication, which convinced DEF to establish a CIRC in this village.



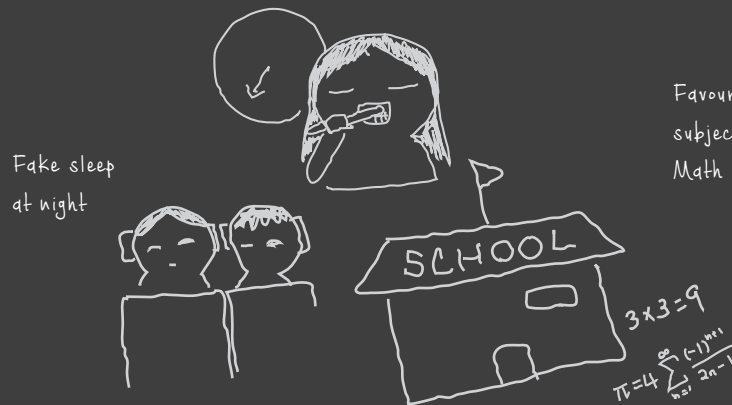
## 10 years ago

Wakes up at 8am,  
brushes teeth for 30 min.  
Dad often gets mad at her  
for taking too much time.

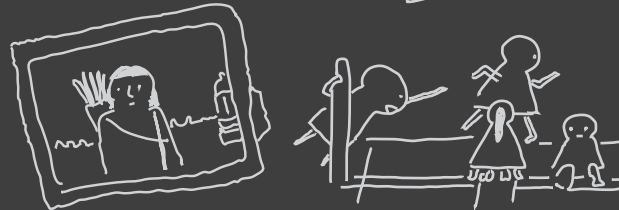
If their uncle (a  
teacher) catches  
them awake, he  
forces them to study.

Fake sleep  
at night

Favourite  
subject;  
Math



Watch TV together;  
Ramayana series



School from 10am  
to 4.30 pm.

Rooms around with  
classmates and  
plays khokho

Long pooja before dinner

Grandparents are very  
religious. Children sit a  
bit and eat before the  
grandparents do. The  
mother would then serve  
the grandparents, and  
eat afterwards.



Plays with cousins  
after school;  
badminton, pittthoo



The entire colony is housed  
by members of her extended  
family so she has many  
cousins. Mother would shout  
their names and then she  
would come home.

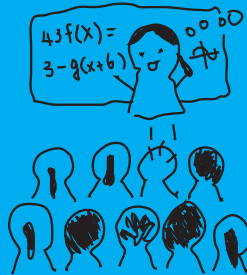
## Present

Use Google on phone to help her answer questions



Wakes up 8am; study for competition exam.

Mom and aunts take care of household chores; cleaning and cooking



She teaches Math to students from Grade 1 to 9 from 7-8pm.

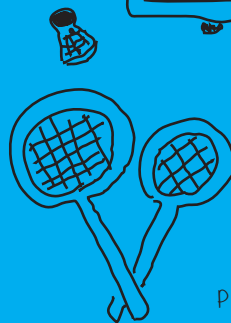


If she has time, she chats on WhatsApp groups, and plays games like Candy Crush.



Practices Bollywood dancing for 1-2 hour

She has a monthly subscription of dance tutorial, 59 rupees per month.



Plays badminton with aunt and uncle

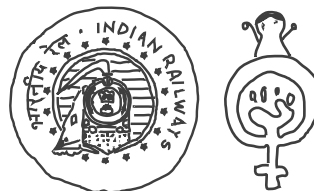
During examination period, her CIRC visits decrease; but she often thinks of ways to implement and utilise the knowledge she has learnt from CIRC in her studies or tuition classes.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE ABLE TO MANAGE THE HOUSE WELL ENOUGH TO AVOID COMPLAINTS FROM IN-LAWS ABOUT NOT BEING TAUGHT WELL BY HER PARENTS

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN COULD DO WHATEVER HER HEART SAYS. A WOMAN SHOULD NOT BE SUBORDINATED TO HER BROTHER'S LEVEL.**

#### Neha's Aspiration

She wants be independent before marriage, and wants to gain a job in the government sector - railways preferably. She wants to be able to work and earn enough so that she could give back to her parents, who spent much energy and finance on her.



## RINKY BAKORIYA

Age 21; unmarried; 2 brother & 2 sisters;  
Sibling rank #3; Education level 12th pass;  
Background Rinky's father is a farmer and her mother is a homemaker. Her mother wishes for her daughter to pursue higher education, and not get married at an early age. Her father wants the daughters to inherit his farm lands. He teaches his daughters about farming and transfers his skills to them. Rinky's mother does not force her children to help out with the housework, and lets her daughters focus on their studies. Rinky is best friends with her mother. Her grandmother loves Rinky the most, but also wishes to get her married at an early age for security reason. The girls in the family have a hard time fighting for their right to continue their education as they live around 7 kilometres away from the main road. Rinky's eldest sister got married early after learning tailoring; the second sister fought for a bit and studied up to 10th Standard. Rinky is the one who has the strongest desire to continue studying and understands the importance of education.



Doudi is a village located in Kesla block of Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. A socially backward district, as many as 90 per cent of the population belongs to Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes. The village, itself, is largely cut out from access to most infrastructure, facilities and information. DEF runs a CIRC here.



## 10 years ago

Rinky sometimes wake up at 1 am to study and suffers from slight insomnia. She enjoys the quietness of that time.

She likes studying alone as she can focus more. She feels she gets disturbed when she studies with her older siblings. She wants to learn from her mistakes.

In the evening, she watches daily soap operas on TV with her mother at the neighbour's place. Sometimes her siblings join them. She goes with her mother because it can be a bit dark for her to venture out alone.

Rinky helps her uncle's children do homework. The kids are 3-4 years younger than her, but they are not that interested in studying.

Rinky wakes up at 5 am to study.

She and her sister do the house chores. Her mother makes breakfast, while their father helps in the kitchen.

She gets ready for school, which is 1 km from her house. There she meets her friends.

Rinky's father likes to talk to her about farming. He wants his daughters to learn his farming skills.

Her grandmother, who is a singer, teaches them music. But the elder sister is not interested in learning from the Grandma.

Rinky won first place in a dancing and singing competition.

## Present

Rinky wakes up at 5 am to study. She does some outdoor work and gets ready to leave for the centre. She reaches CIRC centre at 9 a.m. To her, the centre is like home. She takes half an hour to clean the place.

Earlier when the connection is not so good, she couldn't use YouTube. Now she knows how to download songs on her tablet.

Her grandmother now has her own place. Rinky goes to the grandmother's house everyday before going home and tells her about her day at the CIRC.

In the evening, she goes to her neighbour's place to talk to the girls, to find out about the latest developments in the school. She aims to go to her aunt's and neighbour's place to mobilise girls and tell them about the benefits of joining the CIRC.

Villagers eagerly wait for Rinky, as she understands the different values and concerns of the villagers.

Rinky encourages others to share what they've learnt with one another, to create an environment of peer-to-peer learning.

She has no fixed timetable. If people from nearby services comes by, she continues to teach them (total 20-25 people).

By 5 pm, she goes back home and studies for a while. Rinky doesn't do much housework because she needs to study for exams.

The family is concerned about her health as she stresses easily about her studies.



She practices teaching the Internet training module before her students arrive. She wants to learn constantly be a better teacher to her students.

At the centre, Rinky teaches a batch of kids to dance. This makes them want to visit the centre frequently. Rinky feels that if the kids come to the centre, they can learn computers.

She mobilises people to visit the centre. She arranges SHG meetings at the centre, so others can see the centre. She likes to mobilise more women, so that they can further mobilise other women.



Earlier, Rinky led a very protected life and did not know much about the outside world. Now because of her association with a SHG, she has grown with others.



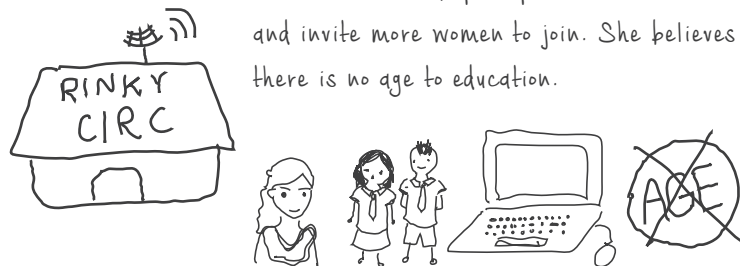


MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY MORE AND NOT GET MARRIED AT AN EARLY AGE. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD LEAVE EDUCATION AND LEARN FARMING SO SHE CAN EVENTUALLY OWN THE LAND.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT WHEN A GIRL IS GROWING UP, SHE WILL HAVE DISTRACTIONS AROUND HER, BUT THERE'S ALWAYS A RIGHT TIME FOR THE RIGHT THINGS; AND SHE SHOULD ALWAYS FULFILL HER WISHES.**

#### Rinky's Aspirations

She wants everyone in the village to use the centre and derive the benefits of a computer education. She wants to partner with someone and open up her own CIRC and invite more women to join. She believes there is no age to education.



## RENITHA M. MARAK

Age 38; married, 2 daughters & 2 sons; 4 sisters; Sibling Rank: #2; Education level Class 10; Background Renitha's parents sell clothes. Her mother is a hardworking woman who cooks for everyone at home. The parents are strict though, especially about attending school. She is closest to her middle sibling, who has obtained the highest education in the family — graduated from Class X. Renitha got married when she was in Class X and could not complete her education. Her husband was in Class X too at the time. Her parents were not happy about her marriage but Renitha was adamant that she wanted to marry her boyfriend. Her husband is now a driver in the medical department.



The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.



## 10 years ago

She teaches her daughter alphabets and numbers. Her daughter likes to play more than she likes to study. The son is too young to study, so he plays with neighbourhood children.



She wakes up at 5 am, makes tea and cooks maggi for everyone's tiffin.

She doesn't have time to play with her children.

She sends her daughter to a nursery school and goes for her tailoring class that go on for an hour or two.



The tailoring classes cost her Rs. 300 a month.

Sometimes, the husband drops the daughter off at the school on her scooter. Her husband is supportive because she makes clothes and school uniforms for the family.

A maid helps with cooking in the evening and takes care of the children.

She spends time with her husband, whose work schedule is not fixed. He has to drive the ambulance in the morning and evening, or when any emergency call is made.

She picks her daughter up from the school in the afternoon and returns home to do household chores.

## Present

Renitha had never touched a computer before joining the CIRC. Now, she has learnt the basics of computers. She doesn't have a mobile phone. Her husband had bought one for her once but the daughter felt jealous and took it.

Both the children have mobile phones and a computer at home. She likes that her children can use the Internet.

She often visits the community with her husband, and helps people in solving their problems. Her husband is extremely supportive of her.

Her husband pays for groceries and house utilities.

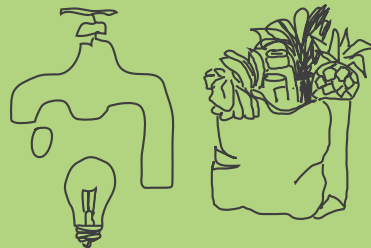


Her youngest child is 10 and her oldest is 16 now. Renitha wakes up at 7 am. The maid cooks and Renitha starts her tailoring work for orders that she receives from community members. Her customers often bring pictures of designs they want replicated in scarves and skirts.

She makes Rs. 2000 - 3000 a month. She sometimes looks up new design ideas on the Internet.



She doesn't teach her children at home, instead asks them to take private tuitions after school.



Her second son gives her the most headache as he is very demanding. Most of the time, it's her husband handling the son and she dealing with the daughter.

## ATM

Before an ATM was set up in their area, the husband gave all the cash to Renitha to manage and take care of. Now that there is an ATM nearby, the husband doesn't withdraw too much at one time and does not need to give her money to keep safe. She is unhappy with the ATM's presence.



She happy that her husband solves a lot of household problems. The couple likes to watch TV together.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD LEARN WOMEN'S ROLES (SUCH AS BASIC HOUSEHOLD CHORES) AND BE RELIGIOUS.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE RELIGIOUS AND A GOOD PERSON. SHE SHOULD FOCUS ON EDUCATION AND BECOME INDEPENDENT AND SHE SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEARN AS MUCH AS SHE CAN AND AS MANY THINGS AS SHE CAN.

#### Renitha's Aspirations

She wants to buy a new computer for herself and take a loan to expand her tailoring shop, besides offering tailoring lessons to others in the community. She thinks a computer will be helpful, especially if her daughter pursues the same profession and helps in the business.



## SHAHNAZ

**Age** 24; married, 1 daughter; 1 brother & 2 sisters;  
**Sibling rank** #2; **Education level** BA in Economics;  
**Background** Due to financial difficulties, Shahnaz has had a tough journey in acquiring her education. However, throughout the journey, Shahnaz's parents have strongly believed in her ability to be successful. They have higher hopes for Shahnaz than they do for their sons. The father was a painter and the mom a housewife initially; but she was determined to take on extra jobs as a janitor at a local school and as a maid in neighbouring houses to provide financial support for Shahnaz's education. Her father married Shahnaz off after she completed Class XII, when she was only 19, because he believed that her husband could provide Shahnaz better higher education than he could. Shahnaz's father, even after his death, continues to be an inspiration for her. Shahnaz does not want to be known as Yusuf's wife. She wants her father to be known by her name.

*The past illustrated on the right describes the two-year period when Shahnaz could not attend school, and when she and her sister would visit their aunt every day to help out with household chores and learn Islamic literature.*



Mungaska is a semi-urban area located in Alwar city of Rajasthan. There, DEF runs its smallest CIRC, with two computer systems.



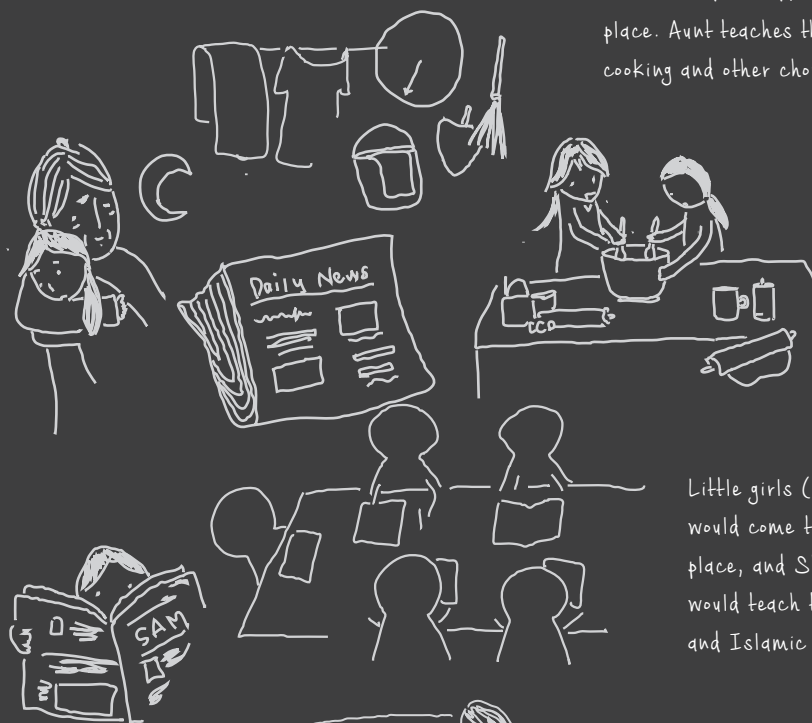
## 10 years ago

At night, she sleeps with her grandmother.

Her parents fight often due to their financial situation, which upsets her. Very often, she cries at night, and her grandmother consoles her, telling her everything will be alright.

She wakes up around 7-8am, and together with her sister, help with chores.

She spends much time with her sister at her aunt's place. Aunt teaches them cooking and other chores.



She reads the newspaper at night. During daytime, she doesn't have time. She gets it from her aunt's place.

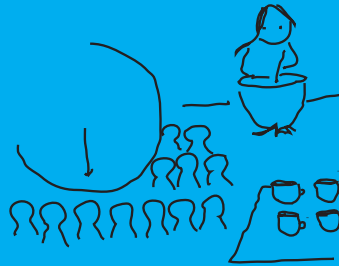
Little girls (10 - 15) would come to her aunt's place, and Shahnaz would teach them Urdu and Islamic studies.



Aunt also teaches them Urdu; writing and reading. Aunt often tells them stories from the Quran.

## Present

She uses Internet for recipes, on-line forms and government schemes. She, especially, appreciates how she can Skype with Yusuf when he is away to other cities/countries for Bhapang performances.



Wakes up at 6am. Along with her sisters-in-law, she makes tea, does chores, and cooks for everyone (12 people).

She is very proud of Yusuf. He has made her more outspoken and confident; however she insists that she has her own identity, rather than being just Yusuf's wife.



During the day, she takes care of her daughter. When the baby sleeps, she studies, though sometimes, she falls asleep too.

She still likes to read newspaper and course books. She also checks for job vacancies on Google.



She trains students from 2:30 pm - 7 pm. Before her class starts, she prepares for the class.

She likes to draw flowers and cartoons. She also likes to use recycled material to make craft items. She has made a bangle box and a wedding invitation card.



She asks everyone to not touch her books on the shelf. She wants them in the same place where as she has placed them in.

When she visits her grandmother back home, they spend hours chatting.

She received a laptop from her scholarship. But she gave it to Yusuf. She didn't know how to use it. However, she got interested in it later, and learnt from her husband.



MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED TO HER FOUR WALLS. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY, GO OUT AND ACHIEVE SOMETHING.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN CAN FIND A PLACE IN NEWSPAPERS, JUST AS MEN ALWAYS FIND A PLACE THERE.



#### Shahnaz's Aspiration

She wants to be a teacher. She wants to see herself in the newspaper, and wants her father to be known by her name. She does not want to be known as just Yusuf Khan's wife.

## SAVITI PAWAR

Age 25; unmarried; 2 brothers & 4 sisters; Sibling rank #3; Education level Bachelor of Arts; Background Saviti's parents are agricultural labourers. Her father is a violent alcoholic. Her mother works hard and even steps out of the village to earn more money. As a child, Saviti never understood the situation and often slept at grandmother's place. Hence she spent more time with her grandmother than her parents. When the father would get violent, no one could stop him. The parents did not want Saviti to attend school, but her elder sister paid for her education and convinced the parents to let her study. Saviti is very enthusiastic about her education. Her mother wishes her children to have a comfortable life, but is unaware of what the outside world is like. She doesn't know how to teach her children to find a better lifestyle. Between her completing 12th standard (in 2009) and her enrollment in a B.A. programme, there was a five year gap. She is closest to her uncle's daughter-in-law.



Doudi is a village located in Kesla block of Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. A socially backward district, as many as 90 per cent of the population belongs to Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes. The village is largely cut out from access to most infrastructure, facilities and information. DEF runs a CIRC here.



10 years ago

Saviti wakes up at 6 am to study. She's fond of learning English. Saviti also helps with the household chores. Her mother leaves in the morning to work in the field.

In school, Saviti finds Social Science the most difficult subject. She enjoys playing Tappu and Kho-Kho.

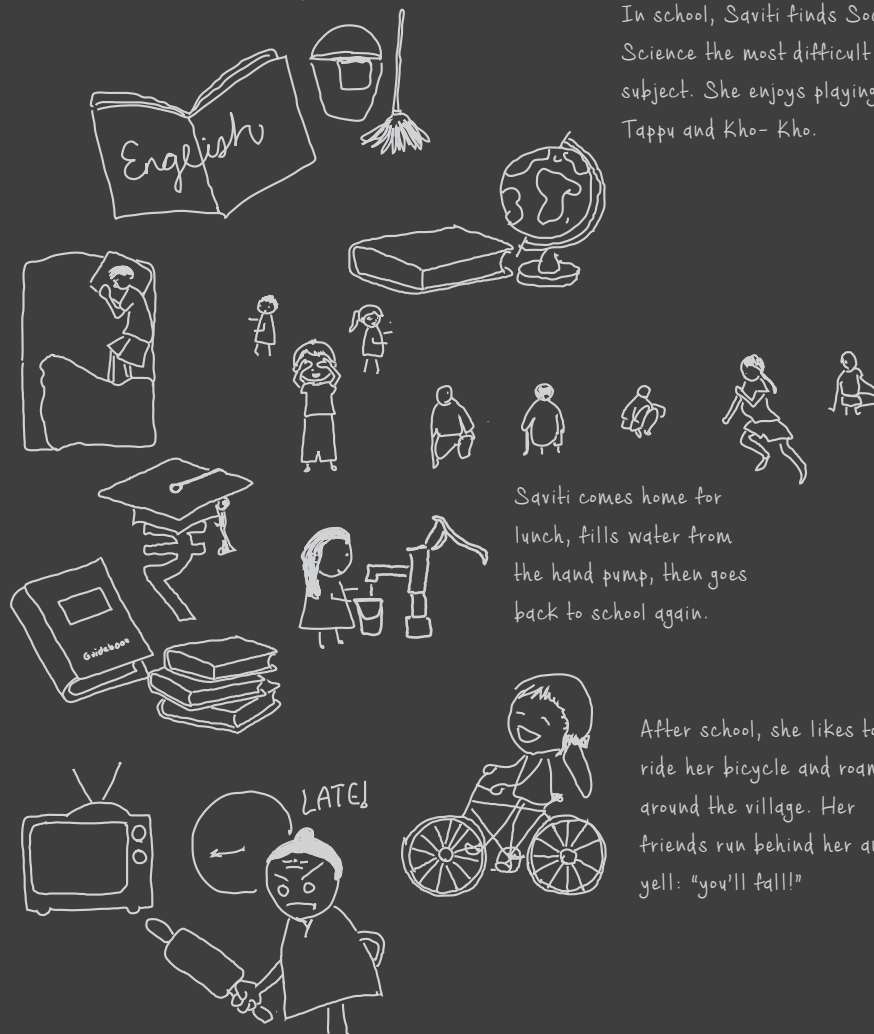
Everyone in the family sleeps in one big room. She shares the bed with her grandmother, and the father has a bed to himself.

When she does her homework, Saviti takes help from a guide book. The father often observes the children studying and scolds Saviti's brother when he finds him not studying. Her brother has flunked a class and now is in the same standard as her. She sometimes wins scholarships for 250-350 rupees, which she uses to buy guidebooks.

Saviti comes home for lunch, fills water from the hand pump, then goes back to school again.

After school, she likes to ride her bicycle and roam around the village. Her friends run behind her and yell: "you'll fall!"

Her uncle has a TV in his house. She sometimes likes to go with her neighbours to watch TV with his daughter-in-law. If she misses her mother's call for her, she is beaten up for watching TV.



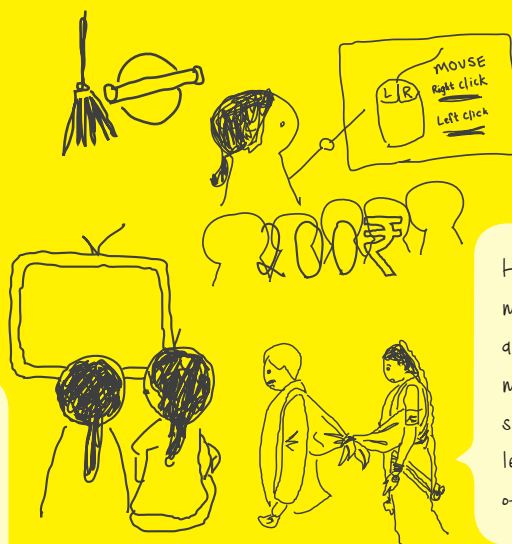
## Present

Saviti and her younger sister wake up at 6 am. Her younger sister helps out with the household chores.

Saviti is in the centre from 7 am to 5 pm. She writes emails and learns to type in Hindi because some other women know how to do it and she wants to improve at it. She trains five batches a day in digital literacy.

After returning home, she goes to her uncle's place to watch TV with his daughter-in-law, but she doesn't enjoy it as much anymore, as they don't have much time to spend with each other.

Saviti had convinced her uncle's daughter-in-law to come to the centre. She came to the centre for five days, but could not continue as she was occupied at the farm.



Her parents want Saviti to get married, but she wants to work at CIRC longer before getting married. She keeps convincing her siblings to come to the centre to learn, but they think it's a waste of money (200 RS/course).



Saviti manages accounts, registration and attendance at the centre.

She talks to her friends on the phone. Sometimes 15-20 days before the exam, she gets back to her regular studies and goes to class to get updates from friends.



She mobilises women to join the centre.



CIRC gives them a lot of homework on how to check reports, take photos, edit photo, etc.

She uses the Internet to look up songs and learn Photoshop, English by watching videos on YouTube.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT BE LAZY; SHE SHOULD BE HARDWORKING. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD EARN MONEY AND BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT; SHE SHOULD NOT ASK FOR MONEY FROM OTHERS.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN CAN STAND ON HER OWN FEET AND ACHIEVE HER GOALS. SHE CAN BALANCE HER HOUSEHOLD CHORES, FAMILY AND WORK.**

#### Savitri's Aspiration

She would like to mobilise more people from all age groups to join the centre and enroll for digital literacy. She also wants to learn more about the technology. She believes that what you can do on computer cannot be achieved perfectly on a mobile phone. Saviti wants a well-read and understanding husband who would match her calibre. Wherever she's married, she wishes to start a centre in that village.



## HELLEN K. SANGMA

Age 38; married, 2 daughter; 2 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling rank #1; Education level Class 10; Background Hellen's parents got separated when she was young. Hellen stayed with her father but moved in with her mother when she was 18. The two had met after so long that her mother could not recognise her when she first moved in. As a single mother, she supported and sacrificed a lot for her children. As a child, Hellen was not allowed to go out much as household chores were considered the responsibility of girls and education was not considered important enough for them. But she had home-schooled herself.



The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.



## 10 years ago

She wakes up at 5 am to start with household chores. She also pushes her daughter to study.

On weekends, she spends time with her maternal family and writes letters to her sister in Nagaland.



Her husband helps with the cleaning and cooking.

When her husband returns, he helps her with pending housework, following which they watch a movie together, sing and pray to God.



She and her daughter go to school together.

After school, she returns home for more chores and helps her daughter with homework.



She is a teacher at the nursery school where she teaches 18 children. Her daughter is one of them. She teaches them alphabets, numbers, nursery rhymes, and discusses healthy tips, moral science and stories from the Bible.

She always has to be conscious of not giving any special treatment to her daughter.

## Present



She wakes up at 5 am to clean and cook for her family; her husband helps her too.



She reaches the nursery school by 8:45 am, and teaches children alphabets and numbers. She uses Powerpoint presentations, images and videos to discuss topics like health and moral science. She even downloads songs from the Internet to sing along with her students.

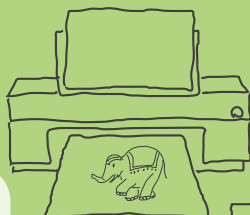
She invites underprivileged children to come to her house and use the laptop.



When she takes children out for a nature tour, she likes to carry her camera.



At the CIRC, she prints pictures for children to colour in, and looks for class decoration tips and recipes on Google.



After the class is over, she goes through the children's notebooks for the day, prepares lesson plan for the next day and reorganises the classroom.

She also helps neighbourhood children in school work.

She charges Rs. 2 per page for printing.



She teaches her children how to use computer: how to type, download and watch movies.

When her husband returns from work, they work together in the kitchen and talk about their day.



Her husband is very supportive of her attending training classes at CIRC. He wants her to learn more tools like Photoshop and other programmes, and is willing to take household responsibilities.



Her daughter also shows her different things she can do on the computer. She likes to download songs and then sing them out loud.



**MY MOTHER TOLD ME** A WOMAN SHOULD BE HUMBLE AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HER FAMILY. **MY FATHER TOLD ME** A WOMAN SHOULD TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A WOMAN – TO TAKE CARE OF HER FAMILY.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN CAN BE ANYTHING, IF SHE TRIES HARD. IN STRENGTH, WE MAY BE WEAKER THAN MEN BUT WE ARE NOT BACKWARD IN OUR KNOWLEDGE. WE CAN LEARN THINGS THAT MEN LEARN. WOMEN NEED TO ADOPT ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TO RUN THE FAMILY.**

#### *Hellen's Aspirations*

She wants to provide underprivileged children access to digital technology as she believes it makes one's life easier. She often discusses health and sanitation topics with women in her community. Hellen wants to pursue Bachelor of Arts with a focus on History.



## DURGESH KANWAR

**Age** 26; married/widow; 1 brother; **Sibling rank** #1; **Education level** Double MA in History and Sociology, nursing; **Background** Born in Tilonia, Durgesh, eldest of the two siblings, was brought up like a boy. Her mom always thinks on her behalf, and brings home anything she thinks Durgesh would need. Durgesh has been observing her parents working in the social sector at Barefoot College for several years. She first saw her mother receive training and now watches her train others. Unfortunately, Durgesh lost her husband in an accident just a few months after their wedding.



At Barefoot College in Tilonia, Ajmer district of Rajasthan, DEF has set up campus-wide wireless broadband connection under its Wireless for Community programme, besides two CIRCs and a community radio station.



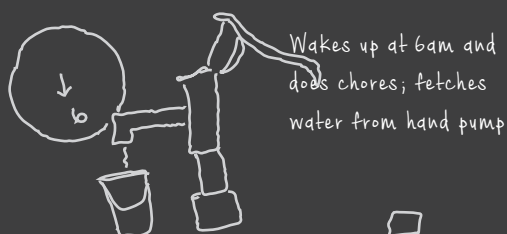
10 years ago

The family does not have a phone: they go to the PCO booth in the campus to call her grandparents.

Dinner time is family time where everyone shares their day stories.

Her mom would ask her how she remembers her vast vocabulary.

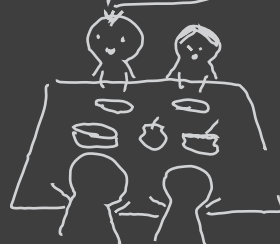
After tenth standard, she moved to Kishargarh to continue her education because science stream was not available in her village; it is then she realised that the world is really big beyond Tilonia.



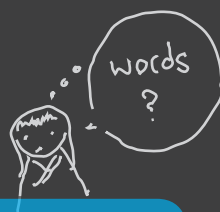
Wakes up at 6am and does chores; fetches water from hand pump



Attends school at 10am. Favourite subject is science

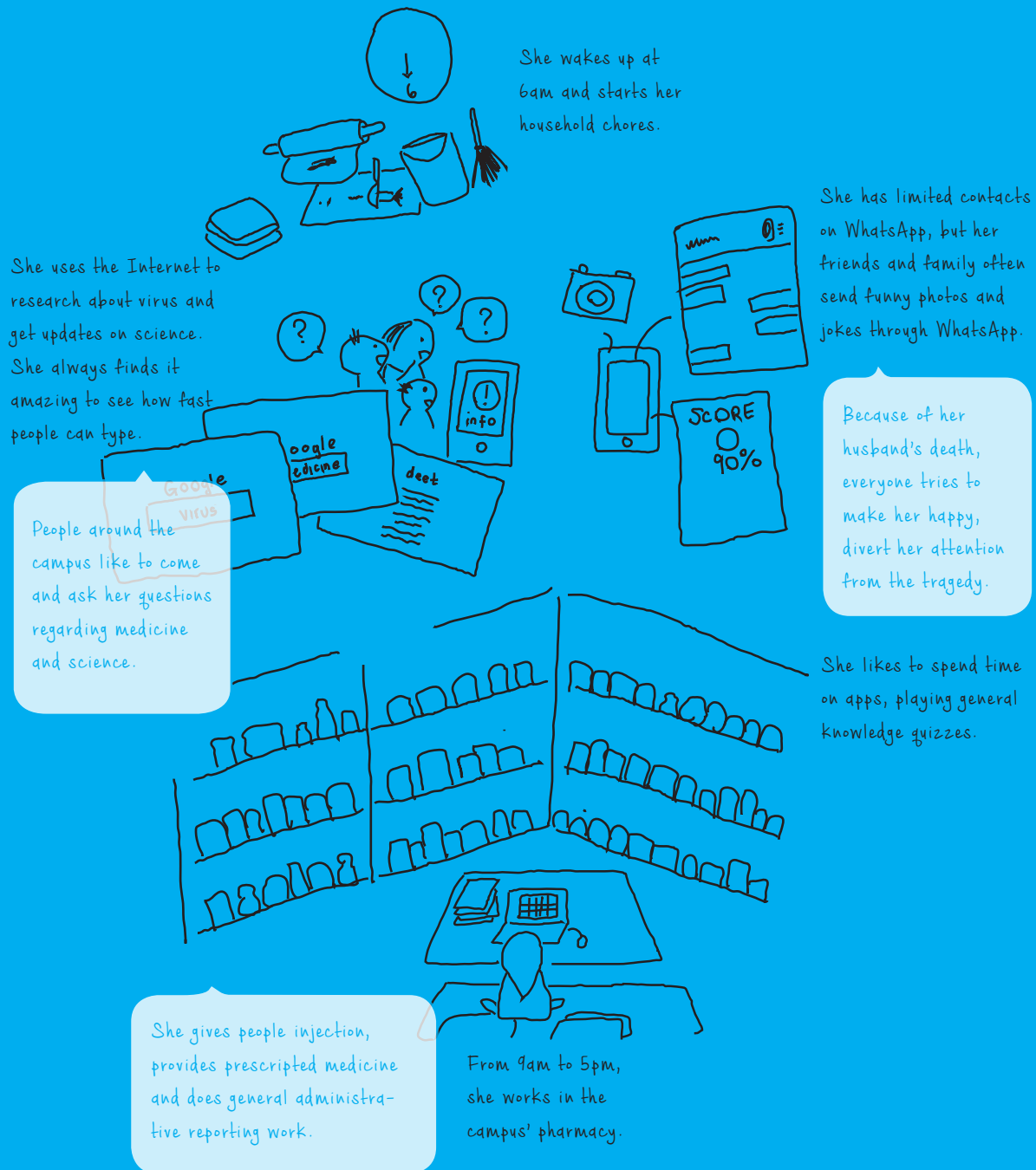


In the afternoon when she returns to Barefoot College campus, she plays with children in the campus; football, volleyball.



Sometimes, she enjoys the atmosphere, and likes to watch and not play.

## Present



MY MOTHER TOLD ME WOMAN  
SHOULD BE FREE TO DO ANYTHING.  
MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD SET NO BOUNDARIES FOR  
HER ACTIONS.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A  
WOMAN CAN DO WHATEVER SHE  
WANTS, AND SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO  
CARE ABOUT WHAT OTHERS THINK.  
A WOMAN SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS  
A BURDEN ON HER FAMILY.**

#### Durgesh's Aspiration

She believes it is very important to be close to one's family and fulfill their needs. She would like to be involved in a science-related career.



## SHASHI NARRE

Age 28; married, 1 girl & 2 boys; 4 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling rank #1; Education level 7th; Background Shashi's father is a coal miner and her mother is a farmer. Shashi is very close to her four brothers. If they have any problem, they approach her for advice. Shashi's mother is polite and friendly but strict. She works in the field and supports her children's education but her father is not so keen for her education. Her paternal uncle supported her education, but she failed 8th standard. Her mother wants everyone to pursue higher education. Girls in the village are not allowed to roam around as much as boys do. Their father has made it clear that the mother will be held responsible if the girls go out and something happens.



Jhakhli, with little access to telecommunication, is a remote village in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. Most of the people engage in sericulture and related activities. DEF runs a CIRC in this village.



10 years ago

Shashi wakes up at 5:30 am. She does all the household chores alone such as mopping, water fee cleaning and cooking. Sister-in-law and mother-in-law never help.

Her father-in-law believes that women should wake up early. If one wakes up late, everyone will already be done with their chores.

During her free time, she watches TV, but she doesn't like to stay in the house. Her husband sometimes takes her to a neighbour's house to socialise and watch movies.

She never used to talk to other people and just sleep. She used to cry.

From 9 am to 1:30 pm,  
she works in the field.

She comes back for lunch, eats food and packs food and returns to the field until 5:30 pm, while others come back a little later.

Until 9 pm, she continues to do the household chores alone without any help. If she asks her sister-in-law to help, she'll fight with her.

Mother-in-law and father-in-law don't let her visit home that often. Sometimes her husband helps out if she asks. She serves food to everyone while she eats alone afterwards.



## Present

She wakes up around 6 am. She's changed her mother-in-law and sister-in-law's attitude, they now help her with household chores.

She's more aware of her rights, and no longer scared. She still does the household chores, but she leaves home by 8am for the CIRC, and leaves the rest of household chores for mother-in-law and sister-in-law.

Her children used to go to CIRC and tell her about what they've learnt. They motivated her to join CIRC.



She teaches her daughters and her sons to do household chores.

She mobilises women; she goes door to door, organises meetings and collects data.

She started going out of the house and solve others' issues, as she understands her and their rights more.



She now only goes to field when she has time. Her in-laws scold at her for being late for meetings.

Sister-in-law cooks dinner on most days now.

She knows how to put movies in the tablet. Her children like to play on the tablet. Her husband plays games on the tablet too.

The daughter also knows how to cook. When Sahshi's busy, her daughter and husband help out with household chores.

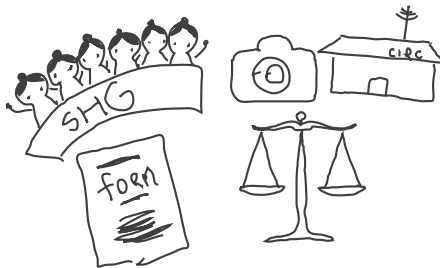


MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD  
NOT GO OUT ALONE.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A  
WOMAN SHOULD BE BRAVE. SHE  
SHOULD BALANCE HOUSEHOLD  
CHORES AND HER WORK. A  
WOMAN HAS TO BE BRAVE AND  
NOT BE SCARED.**

#### Shashi's Aspirations

She believes that her life has changed a lot since she joined a SHG. She has learnt about paralegals, case studies, online registrations, photography and looking for information online. She hopes CIRC can help and change the situation even more. She wishes her kids can get the best education possible.



## DAIRUPAMA MEDHI

Age 46; unmarried; 1 brother & 4 sisters; Sibling Rank: #1; Education level BA; Background Dairupama's father is a primary school teacher and her mother is a housewife. Her parents are like close friends to her. They don't keep secrets from each other and share everything freely; but her father has a short temper and is stricter than her mother. When the children have problems, they usually approach the mother first but they enjoy going fishing and cycling with their father.



Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRC's in Sonapur.



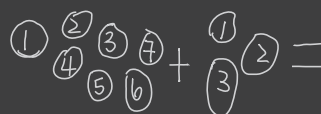
10 years ago

She wakes up at 4 am and does household chores. Her father, a teacher, leaves early for school.

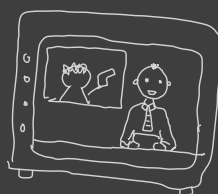
She doesn't have a cell phone.



She reaches to the anganwadi centre by 8 am. There, she prays with the children, teaches them art and craft, sings with them and uses pebbles to teach them numbers.



In her free time, she watches soaps and news on the TV and chats with her parents.



She looks after the registration paperwork and visits home of children if they have not been coming to the anganwadi centre for a while.

She attends her monthly anganwadi meetings.



She helps her mom in the kitchen but she doesn't enjoy cooking much.

Present

She wakes up at 4 am,  
and cleans the house and  
cooks for the family.

She visits the CIRC on Sundays for her Bachelor's programme classes. She's pursuing her last year now. Every day, from 11 am to noon, she devotes an hour for her studies. Her favourite subject is sociology, but she doesn't like English as a subject much.

She is into an online business where she helps sell products online. In one case, she sold nine Ayurvedic products in two weeks.

She even looks up information for her class assignments and checks her Bachelors' programme exam results on the Internet.

She accesses the Internet on her mobile for Facebook, WhatsApp and Google.

She goes for a morning walk.

She reaches the Borkhat Anganwadi Centre by 8 am. Here, she does art and craft with children, she sings with them and uses pebbles to teach them numbers.

As the number of government schemes available in the state for entitlements have increased, so has her work load. So has to maintain a database of available schemes for different groups and entitlements, and keep track of people who have availed the services through the centre.

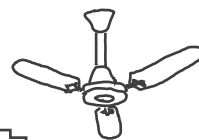
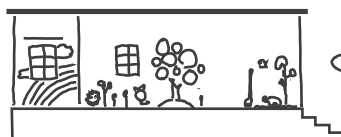
Sometimes, she brings her office work home if there is too much load.

MY PARENT TOLD ME THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE PROUD OF HERSELF AND BE INDEPENDENT. SHE SHOULD NOT CARE ABOUT ANYONE ELSE'S OPINIONS.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE EMPOWERED AND INDEPENDENT.

#### Dairupama's Aspirations

She hopes to get promoted to the post of a supervisor at the anganwadi centre. She wants to improve the condition of the centre. She wants to set up a separate kitchen, improve the quality of food, install ceiling fans and make proper seating arrangements for children.



## KIRAN KUMARI

**Age** 28; married, 2 sons; 1 brother and 1 sister; **Sibling rank** #1; **Education level** BA in Psychology; **Background** In Kiran's memory, her mom always took really good care of them. However, as her family lived in Assam, she spent much of her childhood with her aunt and uncle, in Mansoorpur, who initially didn't have any children of their own. Later, when they had two sons, they became like Kiran's own little brothers. The aunt is like a 'chhoti ma' (younger mother) to Kiran. While Kiran's parents and relatives supported her in acquiring education, villagers believed that girls should stay at home as education is not that important for them. When Kiran complained about this mentality to her uncle, who is like a second father to her, he teased Kiran but told her to concentrate on her studies.



Mansoorpur is an underserved village in Bihar that is mostly inhabited by an agricultural community. DEF runs a CIRC in this village.



10 years ago

Coaching school  
5:30am - 7:30am  
School starts from  
9am to 3:30pm

Kiran likes to read things out loud when studying. While questioning the need for girls to study, she was asked by the neighbours to keep quiet, and not attract so much attention.



Transition; Kiran married a man who she believes she can learn from, even when the marriage was against the family's wishes. Together, they moved to Tilonia, Barefoot College, for a couple of years. There, Kiran learnt about radio programming, solar engineering and created radio circuits.



## Present

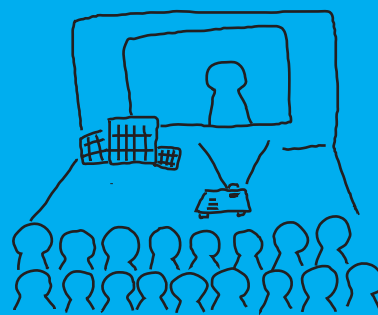
Sometimes, she comes home while her husband stays at the centre. She cooks food and chats with her son. She asks him about school, and tells him about the centre. The son asks her, every day, if she has downloaded any cartoon for him at the centre.



Prepares lunch for her son and gets him ready for school

Son asks her to check weather on her mobile phone every morning.

"Picche dekho" (look behind and wave) she says to her son every morning as he leaves for school, just as her mom used to say to her.



Every evening, the centre projects a video outside the CIRC building. People who pass by, stop and watch the video. The broadcasted video can be about a community meeting, or meeting with the village head, etc.



Manages and teaches at the CIRC centre from 10:30am to 5:30pm. She also handles video recording and writing work.

People like to visit the centre even after its working hours. It is a community hangout hub for many people in the area.

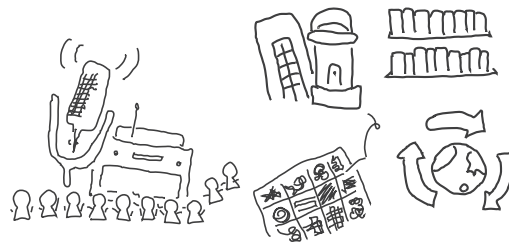


MY AUNT TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION TO  
HER MANNER AND BEHAVIOUR. SHE  
SHOULD BE CALM, COMPOSED AND  
NOT ATTRACT ATTENTION.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN  
SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE A POSITIVE  
ATTITUDE AND NOT BE CYNICAL OF  
SITUATIONS. SHE SHOULD ALWAYS  
SPEAK UP, TRY AND LEARN. THE NEXT  
GENERATION DEPENDS ON WOMEN'S  
EDUCATION. A WOMAN CAN INFLUENCE  
YOUNGER GENERATIONS AND PASS ON  
EDUCATION TO THEM.**

#### Kiran's Aspiration

Kiran and her husband, Raghav, wish to resume their community radio centre someday. She wishes to have sub-centres that teach villagers about solar energy, accessing a library, crafts and stitching, and re-cycling.



## SOMTI GATHIYA

Age 30; married; 4 brother & 4 sisters;  
Sibling rank #6; Education level 8th;  
Background Somti's mom is a housewife and father is a farmer. Somti's mother is a strict women who allows the boys to roam around, but doesn't give the girls the same freedom. She often scolds the children but never forces the girls to do household chores. The family takes care of 12 buffalos and sell milk for a living. Her father is a very old fashioned who thinks education is not that important. Somti was married off at 16 in the same family where her sister was wed into. Her husband is also a farmer, who grows wheat, corn along with other crops. Her sister is sick so Somti helps take care of the house and her sister's three children.



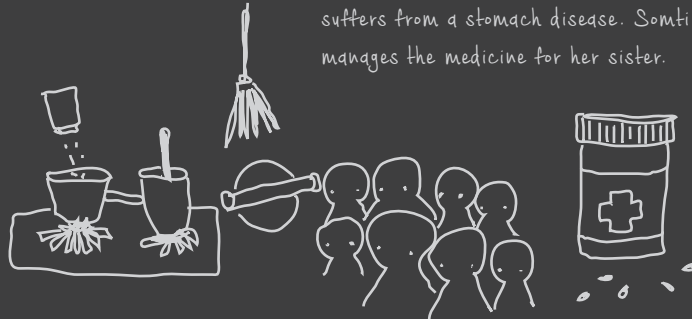
Raipur is the capital city of Chhattisgarh. DEF operates a CIRC in one of its semi-urban locations where rail and road connectivity is limited.



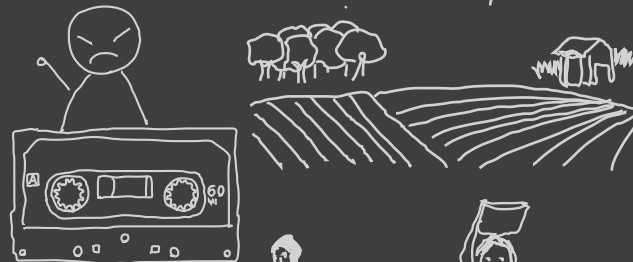
10 years ago

She lives with 8 people in the house. She wakes up at 5 am, and does a lot of household chores. Her elder sister suffers from a stomach disease. Sonti manages the medicine for her sister.

Her husband is old-fashioned, but he gets old hindi cassette songs for her; she listens to the songs when she needs to calm down from anger.



She helps out in the farm. There are 2 acres of land for household use and seasonal products. Sonti helps sieves wheat (remove extra wheat).



In the evening, she teaches her children. She doesn't differentiate between her children and loves them equally.



Sometimes she works with her husband at the MGNREGA site. Her husband digs out mud and she carries plates of mud from one place to another. She never used to work like this at her parents' home.

She hopes that when the three of them grow up, they'll take care of her in old age. Children don't treat her just as a mother, but a friend too.



Her sister talks about her illness a lot while Sonti tries to motivate her to get better and remain positive.

She rests when she gets some free time. She gets up by 4 pm to start working on her chores again.

## Present

She wakes up at 5 am and does household chores. Her husband helps her with cooking.

Somti is happy that she has found an opportunity to step outside her house and learn computers. The financial situation in the house has improved.

The SHG that she is associated with, told her husband that it is not women's role to cook; she also gets to know her rights through the SHG.

Her elder sister now moved houses, but lives really close by. Somti's husband is very supportive of her work at the centre. He reminds her not be late for the centre. "You are late, go!" He takes care of the leftover chores when she is at work.

She uses the Internet to watch videos on YouTube, download recipes, find tailoring patterns, weaving information and english speaking courses. She uses Google Translate.



She reaches the centre around 9 am. The first thing she does is open her inbox and reply to the emails she's received. The coordinator asks them to send email back to his email as a habit.

Her husband asks her to download stuff from the centre for him. She likes to show him what she's learnt and what she has done at the centre. He's never been to school, but he comes and visits her.

In the middle of the batches (she train 4 batches of students), she learns the models, practices her computer skills and trains others.

Two of her children visit the centre to learn computers. Her sister is a tailor. She stitches clothes for the community members. Somti encourages her sister to come to the centre.



She still owns an old phone but manages to store old Hindi songs on her phone.

She first joined a NMS (women's group) to learn about women's right. At first, her husband opposed her decision. He believes that women should stay at home or help out with field work, but her sister persuaded him to let Somti go. After joining, NMS, Somti became more confident. In 2015, Pradan (NMS people) asked her to join the CIRC. She had no experience with computers and started by learning how to pick up phone calls and download songs.

She used to think computer is for the scholars. Now she thinks it's a left-handed thing that everyone should learn. She uses it for meeting, making reports, photocopy, accounting and scanning.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A GIRL SHOULD GAIN RESPECT FROM OTHERS. SELF RESPECT IS VERY IMPORTANT; IF ONE LOSES RESPECT, ONE LOSES EVERYTHING. A WOMAN SHOULD NOT DO ANYTHING THAT'LL BRING SHAME TO HER OR HER FAMILY.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER  
A WOMAN CAN FULFIL HER  
WISHES. THEY SHOULD NOT  
STOP THEMSELVES BECAUSE  
OF OTHERS' OPINIONS. THERE  
IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN  
BOYS AND GIRLS.**

#### Somti's Aspirations

She wants to learn more advance level of computer skill and wishes to do everything via Internet. She's now spreading awareness about digital literacy and encourages others about its benefits. Now, everyone in the village knows her and are very proud of her. She believes that the world runs on computers.



## LETHINA W. SANGMA

Age 46; married, 1 daughter & 2 sons; 4 brothers & 1 sister; Sibling rank #1; Education level BA Psychology; Background Lethina's father got another wife when she was in Class III. Her family was then supported by her grandfather who is a pineapple farmer. Lethina was the one who backed her mother to divorce her father. Her mother, a brave single parent, took good care of her daughter who has dedicated her life to her children. Lethina was close to her grandmother who was blind. It was the grandmother who helped Lethina become disciplined. Lethina was married in her early 20s. Her husband, secretary to the president in a missionary school, encouraged her to complete her studies (she had failed Class XII). She then went on to pursue a BA in Psychology through free online courses. She now works at a senior position at the school, where she helps organise seminars and meetings, and coordinate children's activities



The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

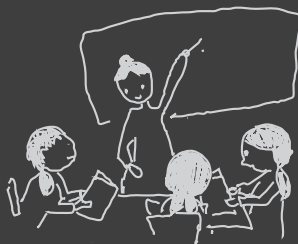


10 years ago



She wakes up at 3 am to read books and the Bible.

When the family moved to Turq, she began working in the school as an assistant teacher for students of Classes IV and V, teaching all subjects.



She cooks a snack for her husband and prepares lunch for her family. Her husband, who likes to cook too, helps in the kitchen when he has time.

She and her husband help the children with homework.



The couple take computer lessons together.



She goes to college to pursue her final year in psychology.



Her children sometimes rip her textbook, which she then has to paste together to study from.

She is usually busy studying that she only has half an hour to cook.



The group travels to Bengaluru and Mysuru to perform, which her husband supports. She feels lucky.

She joins a musical choir in Pune. The group practices twice a week, and mostly sing English songs, Christmas carols and some Hindi songs.

Present



The word of our God  
stands forever



A simple line drawing of three children's heads and shoulders. They are looking upwards towards a church roof. The roof has a cross on top and several musical notes floating around it. The children have simple, happy expressions.





MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE  
EDUCATED AND HUMBLE.

MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD BE PERFECT IN EVERY WORK.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A  
WOMAN HAS TO TAKE CARE OF  
HER MOTHER. AS WOMEN, WE  
HAVE THE SAME POWER AS MEN;  
WE CAN DO MUCH MORE ACTUALLY.  
WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO MAKE  
FIRM DECISIONS.

#### Lethina's Aspiration

She wants women in her village to be educated and digitally trained. With technology, they can type, print, and earn a little. They can also understand how to apply for scholarships and entitlements and be informed of their surroundings. She also wants to pursue an MA in Psychology.



## TARA CHOUDHARY

**Age** 30; married; 5 brothers & 1 sister;  
**Sibling rank** #3; **Education level** 10th  
standard; **Background** Tara is conscious  
of her disability. Initially, she could not  
imagine what she would do with her life.  
When people visit Tilonia and approach  
her, wishing to take a photo of her, she  
refuses and, instead, provides them an  
old photo of her. When Tara first came to  
the campus to attain computer training,  
she was scared of what people would  
think of her. But she went on to complete  
her education till Class X after she arrived  
in Tilonia.



At Barefoot College in Tilonia,  
Ajmer district of Rajasthan, DEF  
has set up campus-wide wireless  
broadband connection under its  
Wireless for Community  
programme, besides two CIRC  
and a community radio station.



10 years ago

In the morning, the sound of her mother in the kitchen always wakes her up.

Sometimes, she helps in household chores, but only in the ones where she can sit down and work: but it is never compulsory for her.

In the evening, everyone sits together to study. She teaches her little sister.

When she joined Barefoot College, she took up different tasks and learnt various skills.

Learnt to use computer, input medical survey data, fill out data, handle Xerox machine, manage dairy shop, manufacture sanitary napkins and train other women.

Because there is a three-year study gap, she learnt to read different books by practicing reading and writing on her own.

## Present

She reads religious books and cooks for her brother. She feels responsible for her brother's well-being and education.

She sleeps at 8pm and wakes up at 5am. People often make fun of her schedule.



She also reads E-newspaper and listens to music online.

She now works in Neerjaal, a water quality measurement project. Her colleagues collect water samples, test them and she records and feeds the data into an Excel sheet, using the Neerjaal portal.

Using her mobile phone, she listens to radio programmes and reads English.



She also joined English classes so she could learn and practice her English skills.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD DO WHATEVER SHE WANTS TO DO. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD INSPIRE OTHER GIRLS IN THE VILLAGE WITH HER LEARNINGS.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND NOT BE CYNICAL OF SITUATIONS. SHE SHOULD ALWAYS SPEAK UP, TRY AND LEARN. THE NEXT GENERATION DEPENDS ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION. A WOMAN CAN INFLUENCE YOUNGER GENERATIONS AND PASS ON EDUCATION TO THEM.

#### Tara's Aspiration

She is financially supporting her brother's education; she wants to see him succeed and be proud of him. She wants to learn everything in Tilonia; solar engineering and waste management, and wants to be really skillful at them.



## SHAMIM BANO

Age 30; married, 2 daughters; 2 brothers & 1 sister; Sibling rank #4; Education level 8th; Background Shamim is the youngest out of the 5 children. She is closer to her second brother who is 3 years older than her. She is a tomboy and likes to climb trees and play cards. Her grandmother would often scold her for behaving like a 'boy', but her brother and mother often protect her. Her father is a tea vendor. She receives most of the pampering from her father, who also lets her play and be a 'tomboy'. She has to drop out of school because the school is too far from her house.



Quide Millath Nagar is semi-urban cluster located on the outskirts of Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu. DEF used to run a CIRC in this area, which was predominantly habited by Scheduled Tribes, followed by Scheduled Caste. The centre has now been shifted to Pinnangudipatti in Pudukkottai district. The village, with a literacy rate of 73.19%, is home to about 250 families, most of whom have been classified as Scheduled Caste.



## 10 years ago

Shamim was married off at the age of 19. She wakes up at 5:30 am and by 6 am, she prepares tea for the entire family of six members. From 7 am to 9 am, she prepares breakfast with her sister-in-law for a family of ten. After this, they wash clothes and prepare more food.

She has seen a computer at a relative's house, but is too scared to touch it. She fears she'll break the computer she is not well educated.



There are three children in the house, two of them are infants. A lot of time is spent on taking care of the babies.

Her husband comes home from work at 10:30 pm. He works as a welder with his brother. Only after her husband and brother-in-law have eaten, Shamim sits down to eat around 11:00 pm.



In her free time, she does embroidery and patchwork, which she learnt before her marriage.

In the evening, she often grinds batter for dosa or idly with her sister. It takes upto two hours for the entire process.



At 2:00 pm, she serves food. The whole lunch affair takes 2 hours. At 4 pm, Shamim eat alone.

She has no computer at home, but her husband has a smartphone. They have a landline which is broken.

After the landline was fixed, everybody at home could use it. Shamim calls up her neighbours, parents and friends. She calls her husband while he is at work to ask him to buy things from the market, or to ask him if he has had eaten lunch.

## Present

Shamim now lives separately with her husband and two daughters. Shamim wakes up at 5 am and sends her daughters to the mosque. After she walks them to school, she finish all her chores.



Shamim leaves for work at 10 am. She works at an NGO. Her work involves meeting people and gathering data from the neighbouring community.

She meets patients of tuberculosis and counsels them. She also helps women tackle issues involving domestic violence. She is very patient and friendly with people so they open up to her. She loves her job. She wants to do more voluntary work to help the women of her community.

In her free time, she takes her daughters to the market. Sometimes, she takes them to the bank or the post office and teaches them how transactions are made. She takes them to the railway station to teach them how tickets can be bought, etc. She wants to make them self-reliant in life.



She loves to read books in Tamil. Her favourite genres are crime and suspense.

She picks up her children from school and takes them to tuition class.



Anytime

After work, Shamim goes to the market to buy groceries.



She prepares supper by 9 pm for her daughter to eat. Her husband comes home late. However, Shamim doesn't have to wait for him to have her dinner. The pair sometimes eat together.

Shamim helped CIRC in the initial mobilisation phase. She spoke to the Panchayat heads and women to visit CIRC for basic computer literacy. She conducted door-to-door awareness drives for almost 4 months. She has not learnt computers yet, but would like to. She now uses a smartphone to call her husband.

She teaches her children how to be more organised. In return, they teach her how to ride a bicycle.

Earlier, she lived in a small house with a big family. Now, she has more time, space and freedom. She can even argue with her husband if she wants.



MY MOTHER TOLD ME A GIRL SHOULD  
FOLLOW HER CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS.  
MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT A GIRL  
SHOULD ENJOY HER LIFE.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A GIRL  
SHOULD BE FREE TO DO ANYTHING;  
LEARN, DANCE, SING, TRAVEL TO  
PLACES OR STUDY. BUT SHE SHOULD  
ALSO DRESS UP WITH MODESTLY.  
THE WORLD NEEDS WOMEN BECAUSE  
A WOMAN IS THE BACKBONE OF  
EVERYTHING. ONLY A WOMAN CAN  
GUIDE A MAN TO SUCCESS.**

#### Shamim's Aspirations

Shamim wants her daughters to be self-reliant and ready to face anything in life. She wants to see herself complete her formal education. She wants to be employed in a government department. She wishes more minority women would come out of their houses, and explore the world outside their homes.



## INDIRA NEWER

Age 51; single; 3 brothers & 5 sisters;  
Sibling Rank: #5; Education level  
Pursuing BA; Background Indira's  
family is from Nepal and so her mother  
couldn't speak Assamese well. Her  
father works as a security guard.  
Indira's mother is a very simple and  
humble woman; and both the parents  
value education. But she was forced  
to drop out of school after Class X due  
to financial constraints. At home, all of  
them help in household chores. A few  
years ago, her sister and brother-in-law  
passed away, leaving a child behind.  
Indira has raised the child as her own.



Sonapur is a semi-urban  
region near the state  
capital Dispur in  
Assam where a large  
population is dependent  
on agricultural farming  
for livelihood. DEF  
operates one of its  
oldest CIRC's in Sonapur.



## 10 years ago

She wakes up at 4 am, washes herself and takes care of the cows. She feeds them water and grass, then starts cleaning the house before she sits down to have tea with her family.

The family has tea and biscuits in the evening, and pray together.

She likes to do gardening. She's planted onions in her garden.

She visits children's home if they have been missing from classes for a few days; and also provides information about schemes to pregnant women in the community.

Sometimes, when there is too much work, she brings her papers home and works on them until midnight.

After the anganwadi classes ends around noon, she does her paper work.

She supervises her niece and nephew's studies.

They sit for prayers together.

She works at the Amarabathar Anganwadi Kendra where she takes care of 30 children.

She teaches them alphabets and numbers. Every week, they pick a word and conduct activities around the word for engaging learning. She also talks to them about sanitation and hygiene.

Every morning, she greets them by kissing their forehead and instructing them to place their shoes properly.

## Present

Now the General Secretary of Assam's Anganwadi Corporations, Indira uses her phone for communication a lot. Phone is like her friend now.



She wakes up at 4 am and does yoga and stretching exercises.

She takes care of the poultry farm.

She sleeps in the middle, between her two nieces.



She teaches at the anganwadi centre.

At home, her brother and sister-in-law take care of grocery shopping.



She welcomes children and engages them in an open discussion with all of them. She teaches children alphabets, numbers and nursery rhymes. She also provides them with snacks and makes them aware about hygiene.

She has a 19-year-old adopted daughter. Before dinner, they sit down and study together for a couple of hours.



Her nieces eagerly wait for her return from the anganwadi centre.

She has moved her paperwork to computers.

MY PARENT TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD GO OUT AND DO  
WHATEVER SHE WANTS TO DO.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER  
A WOMAN SHOULD BE  
INDEPENDENT AND LEARN  
TO ACCESS THE INTERNET  
FOR INFORMATION.

#### Indira's Aspiration

She wants to fly a plane. She wants to improve her anganwadi centre where there is a dedicated corner for every subject, including science. She wants her centre to be connected to the Internet and act as a model centre for her community.



## GEETA SWARNKAR

**Age** 44; married, 3 children; 1 brother and 2 sisters; **Sibling rank** #2; **Education level** MA in Political Science; **Background** Her parents are protective. Geeta's father is a primary school teacher who never discriminates between genders and takes everyone's opinions when making decisions. Geeta's mother is a housewife. Whenever Geeta goes out, she needs to be accompanied by either her mother or her brother. Geeta was married early (before she turned 20) because her parents believe that it is difficult to find a decent guy when a girl is older. Now, she is married to a man who is 10 years elder to her. In her initial years of marriage, there were a few frictions between her and her in-laws due to dowry complications. However, Geeta proved to be a dedicated and under standing daughter-in-law, and soon overcame the phase.



Tamnar is a semi-urban area in Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh. The area is known for coal mining, and had access to only expensive digital education until DEF opened a CIRC here.



10 years ago

Geeta adjusts her routine according to her husband's shift at work.

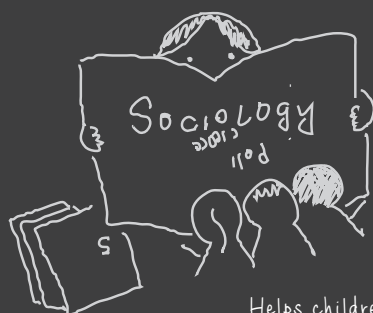


Wakes up at 6am, prepares lunch for children, gets them ready for school, and prepares tea for in-laws

Study time shifts according to her husband's schedule; 12am to 2am or 8:30am to 9:30am



She reads books and magazines and tries out new recipes.



Helps children with homework. She reads their textbooks and helps them with all subjects.



She spends time with neighbours: they paint and stitch together. She also paints curtain and sofa cushions.

She wanted to teach in school but at the time, she wasn't allowed, because she doesn't have a degree.

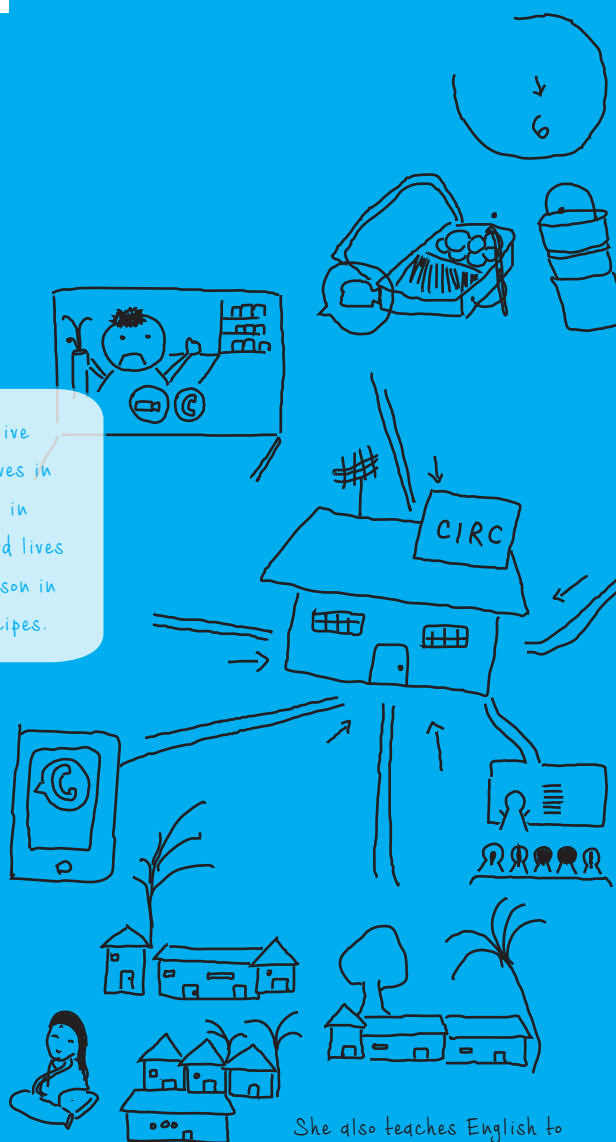
Her schooling stopped at age 16, when she got married. After eleven years, she convinced her in-laws and husband to let her pursue further education under three conditions; never flunk any class, never complain about housework and take no external coaching education.

## Present

She enjoys emails and video calling with her children.

Her children do not live in the village; one lives in Europe, another lives in Chennai and the third lives in Chhattisgarh. Her son in Europe sends her recipes.

She also likes to chat on WhatsApp and checks her mail on phone.



Wakes up at 6am and prepares tiffin for herself and her husband

She leaves home at 8am, and reaches CIRC centre around 9am. She educates girls, makes reports, holds panchayat meetings.

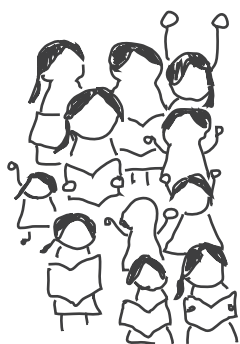
Everyday, she chooses different routes to go to the centre so she can visit different villages on the way and learn about their conditions. Because of this, she makes many friends through her social service work, which has become her hobby.

She also teaches English to village children and helps teenage boys get away from drug abuse.



MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE CARE  
OF HER FAMILY.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT A  
WOMAN SHOULD BE A GOOD HUMAN  
BEING, AND MAINTAIN THE BALANCE  
BETWEEN BEING A MOTHER, A SISTER  
AND HER OTHER ROLES. A WOMAN  
HAS THE ABILITY TO ANALYSE AND  
FEEL DEEPER; SHE SHOULD NOT FEEL  
INFERIOR TO MEN.**



#### *Geeta's Aspiration*

She hopes for an empowered society for women where there is zero discrimination between gender. Ways to empower women: encourage women to study and acquire education opportunities; translate household chores to livelihood opportunities; connect various self help groups (SHG) with different institutions.

## LAKSHMI TEKAM

Age 35; married, 2 boys; 2 brothers & 1 sister; Sibling rank #1; Education level 12th; Background Lakshmi's mother is a simple lady and a hardworking housewife. Her father is a farmer who works in the fields and sells vegetables, wheat and corn. Lakshmi often feels that she needs to help her parents. Growing up, she felt that there was not much of a difference between how her parents treated the girls and boys. They let the children study until they could afford it. There were no schools in the village after 8th standard, so she dropped out briefly. She often feels that she is obligated to help with the finances in the house. When she finally returned to school after a gap of two years, she had to travel 20-25 km from her village. Her parents then started trusting her more to go out.

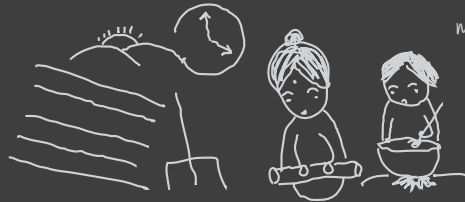


Village Salimet in Shahpur block of Betul district, Madhya Pradesh, houses a CIRC that caters to the digital and information needs of the population, 90 per cent of who belong to backward castes.

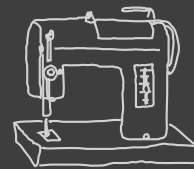
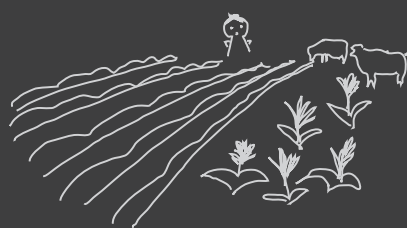


10 years ago

Lakshmi wakes up before sunrise, around 4 am to work in the field. Around 5 - 6 am, she helps her mother with cooking food.



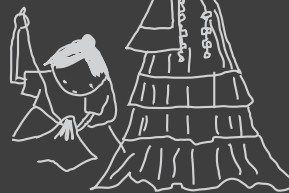
She goes out of the house to the nearby field to observe what the neighbours are working on during the harvest season.



She stitches from 8 am to 4 pm; buttons, hemming. She earns 100-240 rupees per day. During wedding season, she stitches until 9 pm.



She's closest to her mom and often takes advice from her. If a boy approaches her and shows interest of marriage, she would take approval from her mom first.



Everyday for an hour, she teaches her younger sibling maths and other subjects.

She helps her mom with household chores, while her sister and brother finish school work.



She is like a mother figure and helps resolve fights amongst her younger siblings.



She teaches the girls in the village to stitch.



## Present



She wakes up between 5 and 5:30 am. She stays with the in-laws and her two kids (six people in total). By 8 am, she finishes her household chores. Mother-in-law often helps with her leftover chores.

At the centre, she addresses people who inquire about the centre, its benefits and services.



She takes a 5 min walk to the centre. In summer months, there are 8-9 batches with 2 people managing the centre.

She wants to pursue her BA. The first time she came to CIRC to receive her 5 days training, she was shivering, but she's no longer scared of computers.



During free time, she uses PPT to practice the skills, and the Internet to find recipes, search for news and information about pesticides, agriculture and stitching. She likes using Google, YouTube, English learning courses. She has a better grasp over things now than she did earlier.

The family has dinner at 9:30 pm. She cooks while her husband takes care of the children's studies and other house work.



Her husband is very proud of her. He is glad she's pursuing her dream of learning computers. Kids also know about computers and teach her at home. The children teach her how to use a mobile phone: change wallpaper, record music, click photo and send text messages.

She sits with her children to discuss with them about school activities and studies. She regards education highly for her children.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD  
COMPLETE THE HOUSEHOLD CHORES.  
MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY,  
HAVE A JOB BEFORE MARRIAGE. SHE SHOULD  
FULFIL THE DREAM THAT HE COULD NOT FULFIL.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A  
WOMAN COULD BE INDEPENDENT,  
EDUCATED, AND STAND ON HER OWN  
FEET. SHE SHOULD LEARN FROM THE  
UPS AND DOWNS OF HER LIFE.**

#### Lakshmi's Aspirations

She would like to see herself as the village representative for providing knowledge. She wishes that the level of digital literacy in her village will grow and that skill and knowledge training will be provided to people beyond CIRC. She wishes her children would move out of the village to pursue better education and job.



## DERILLA R. MARAT

**Age** 54; married, 1 daughter & 1 son; 2 brothers & 2 sisters; **Sibling rank** #1; **Education level** Class 10; **Background** Derilla grew up in a poor family yet her parents were always supportive of her decisions and provided her with whatever they could. As a child, she had to walk 7km to her missionary school and, being the eldest sibling, doing laundry was her responsibility. She sometimes had to find vegetables in the fields and drink water from the drain as she was too shy to ask for water. Now, she feels like she's living in a palace; but's always been lucky to have a loving and fair family. Each of the siblings, irrespective of their gender, have always been fed equally. If one got new clothes, the others got new clothes too. Derilla got married when she was in her early 20s.



The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.



## 10 years ago

She starts cooking around 4:30 am and prepares meal for her family. By 8 am, she and her husband leave for work.

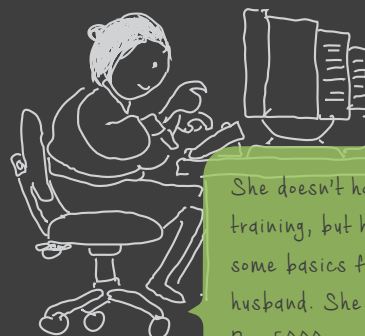
Her husband works from 9 am to 4:30 pm. He translates content for the church from English to Garo, and she types it slowly on a computer.



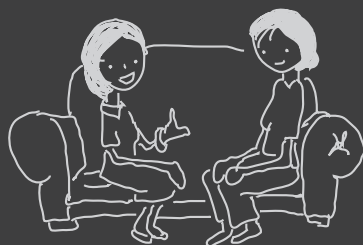
She does not own a mobile phone.



She learns to bake at the church.



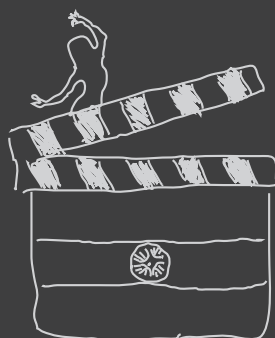
She doesn't have computer training, but has learnt some basics from her husband. She earns Rs. 5000 a month.



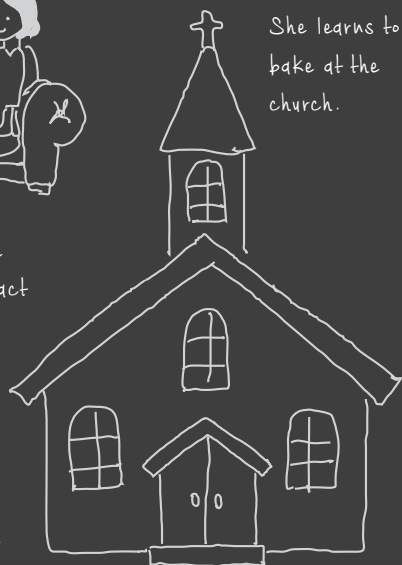
Her friends often come over to share and interact with her.



She visits sick people and asks them to come to the church for the Lord's blessings.



They watch Hindi films.



After dinner, her father usually leads the family worship service. In his absence, her mother does it. Prayers can be lead by anyone in the house.



The family likes to play its own games. In the game, one imitates a mother chicken while the eagle tries to catch her chicks.

## Present



She wakes up at 3 am to prepare bakery materials for customer orders, which usually go up to six loaves of bread and 40-50 cream buns

She also makes burger and supplies them to a school canteen. Thirty-six of them a day. Each item costs Rs. 10 rupees. On Fridays, there are more orders for bread.

She also offers simple printing services at her place. She charges Rs. 2 per page for printing, and Rs. 10 for typing and printing a page.



She lives close to her current office where she's a typist. When she's free, she looks up recipes on Google.

She uses a camera to take photos of the baking process to show to her students while teaching them to bake. She also takes photos of meetings. She says, "Nowadays, report means nothing without pictures."

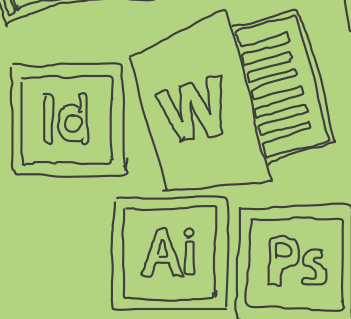


She designs books and other material, and sends them to Kolkata for printing.



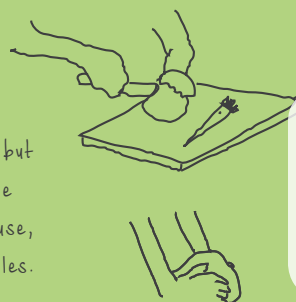
At home, if she's free, she likes to bake. She has to set the dough to expand.

She was selected under a special women empowerment project, and received a laptop. Slowly and steady, she learnt to use PhotoShop, Illustrator and other desktop publishing tools.



She enjoys meeting new people at her bakery. Women come to her place to learn how to bake. She charges Rs. 200 to teach a woman to bake one item.

Her son has low IQ but he helps her in simple chores around the house, like chopping vegetables.



When Derilla makes preparations or bakes, her husband helps her too sometimes.

She has recently moved to Shillong, so she wants to make new friends.



MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD  
LEARN TO COOK, STITCH AND CLEAN.  
MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD  
LOOK AFTER HER YOUNGER SIBLINGS. .

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN  
SHOULD LOVE TO COOK. AS THE ONE WHO  
PREPARES THE MEAL IN THE HOUSE,  
A WOMAN TAKES CARE OF EVERYONE'S  
HEALTH. IF SHE PREPARES BAD MEALS,  
THE FAMILY WON'T BE HEALTHY.

#### Derilla's Aspirations

She wants to stay in her village and  
teach women to bake and cook. She  
wants to promote a vegetarian diet.



## SOMA SARKAR

Age 54; widow; 1 brother & 1 sister; [Sibling rank #2](#); [Education level](#) BA; [Background](#)

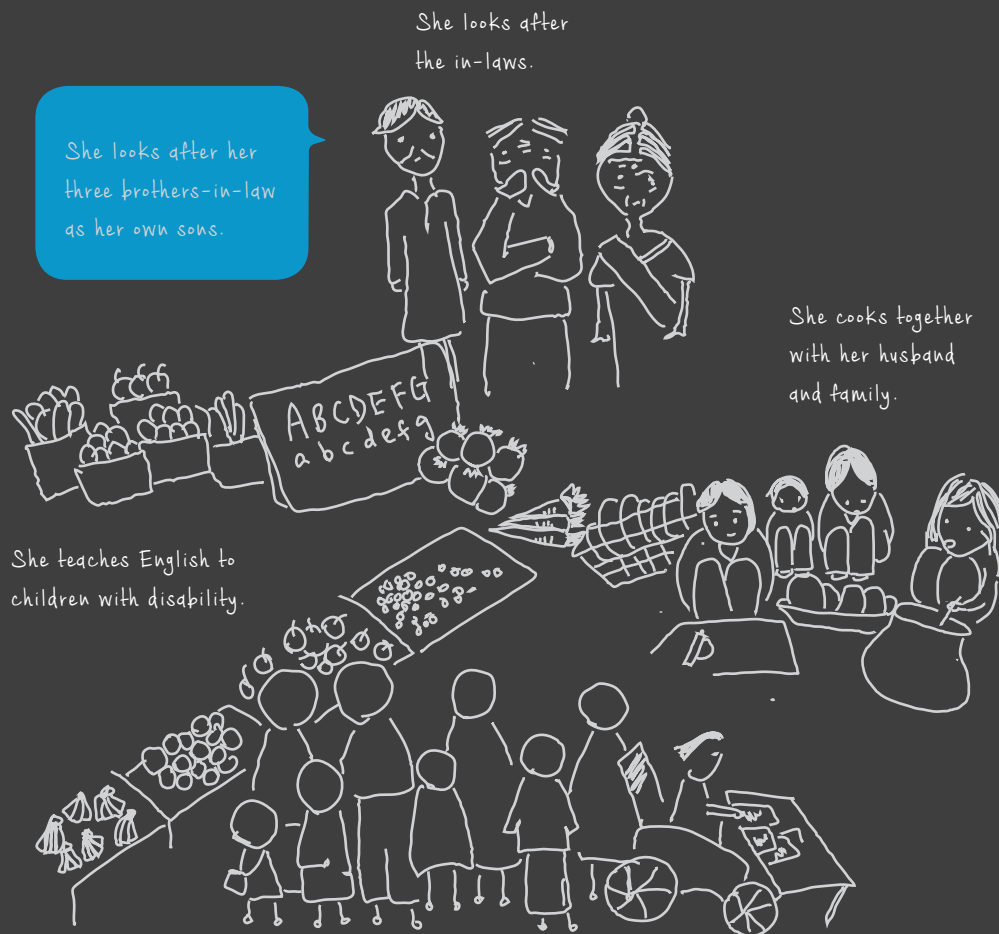
She completed her education from an English-medium school. Her father was a businessman, and Soma had a passionate and loving mother who wanted to see her daughter become a singer, but Soma, as a child, was more interested in becoming a dancer. Soma always wanted to continue her education along with her passion in dancing; however, she was deemed physically unwell. The doctor had advised her against dancing. Soma lost her sister when she was seven years old, and most of the household responsibilities fell upon her. She got married in 1986, and lost her mother four years later. A few years later, she lost her husband and children as well. Soma has always felt a sense of regret for not fulfilling her mom's dream of becoming a singer.



Jauhar Academy is a school in Ranchi, Jharkhand, from where DEF runs a CIRC.



10 years ago



She looks after  
the in-laws.

She looks after her  
three brothers-in-law  
as her own sons.

She cooks together  
with her husband  
and family.

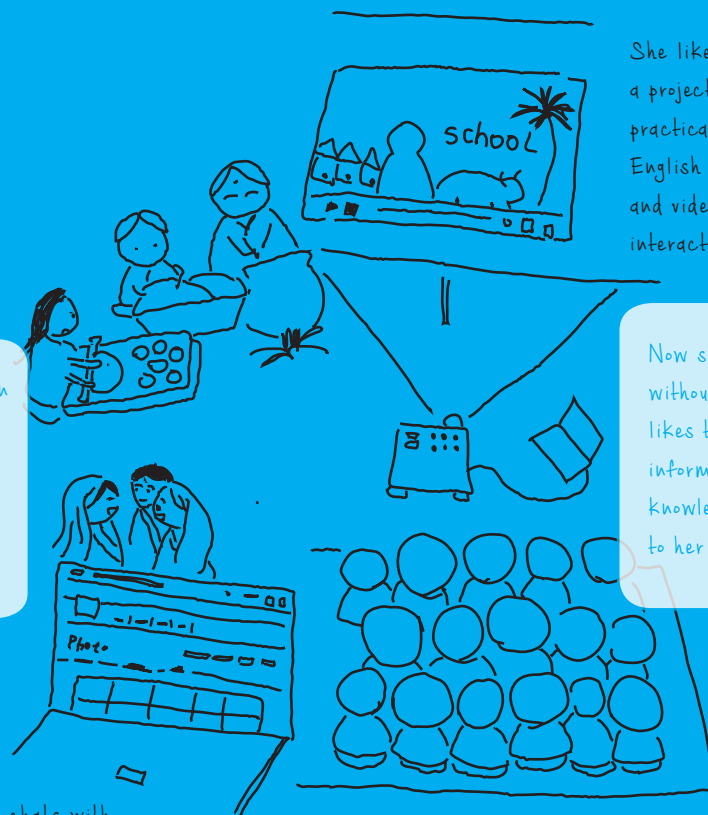
She teaches English to  
children with disability.

She visits market places to identify  
drug abused street children and teach  
them hygiene and way of life. She  
tries to involve them in school with  
other children of the village.

## Present

Almost every Saturday, CIRC students visit her house and cook with her.

After she lost her children and husband, she used to feel lonely; but now she is busy with work, and CIRC students are like her family



She likes to teach through a projector, and screen practical films. She finds English textbook problematic and videos to be more interactive and helpful.

Now she feels uneasy without her laptop. She likes to learn about new information, acquire the knowledge and transfer it to her students.

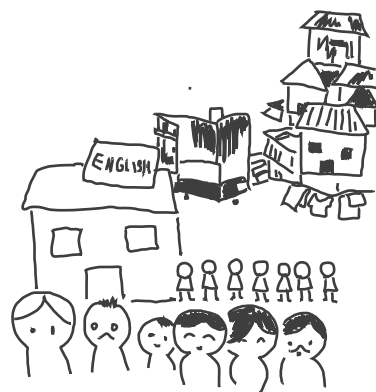
Every evening, she chats with her friends. She also brings a laptop to their houses and sometimes likes to share photos on Facebook.



Mobilisation activity; she visits different villages and talks to children about digital literacy.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A DAUGHTER  
CAN FULFIL THE DREAMS THAT A  
MOTHER COULD NOT ACCOMPLISH.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A  
WOMAN CAN DREAM AND STAND  
ON HER OWN FEET.



#### Soma's Aspiration

She is interested in working with children in slum areas. She wants to meet new and interesting people, and open a spoken English centre in her village.

## SHAMEEN BASHIRA

Age 36; married, 2 daughters; 3 sisters;  
Sibling rank #4; Education level BSc  
Chemistry, MSc Computer Science, BEd.;  
Background Shameen is the youngest in  
the family. After her father passed away  
when she was young, her mother sin-  
gle-handedly raised her daughters. Sha-  
meen is very close to her third sister, and  
the other two are married and live with  
their husbands. Her sister at home, who is  
three years older, is very supportive of her  
and even helps her in her studies. Their  
mother is very particular of her daughter's  
education; though she's more liberal than  
the other mothers in the area, she doesn't  
allow her daughter to talk to boys.



Quide Millath Nagar is semi-urban cluster located on the outskirts of Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu. DEF used to run a CIRC in this area, which was predominantly habited by Scheduled Tribes, followed by Scheduled Caste. The centre has now been shifted to Pinnangudipatti in Pudukkottai district. The village, with a literacy rate of 73.19%, is home to about 250 families, most of whom have been classified as Scheduled Caste.



## 10 years ago

Shameem wakes up at 6 am and offers prayers for half an hour. She then helps her sisters-in-law prepare breakfast. There are 12 members in the family; her husband has four brothers. Shameem has a one-year-old daughter. Her husband is a professor of economics at a government college.

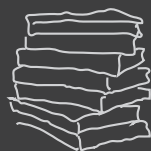


Whenever the couple gets a chance, they go watch the circus or an exhibition.



She owns a mobile phone, which she uses to make calls or play games.

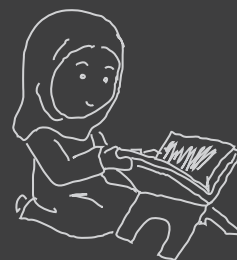
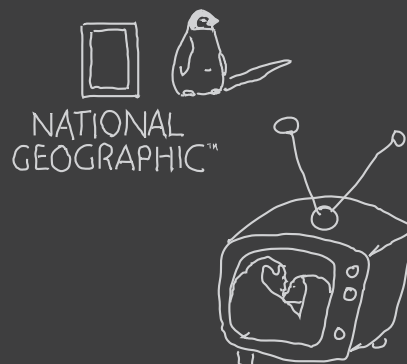
She spends the next few hours doing the laundry. From 11 am to 1 pm, she prepares lunch with her sisters-in-law. At 2 pm, her husband and the other men of the house return for lunch. After the men are done eating, the women sit down to eat together.



She enjoys reading novels. Her favourite genres are crime and romance. She mostly reads in Tamil and her favourite author is Rajesh Kumar.



At 5 pm, she prepares tea for everyone.



Later, she cleans up the house and reads the Quran.

At 7 pm, she starts preparing dinner while watching her favourite soap operas. Sometimes, she likes to watch the National Geographic Channel.

## Present

Shameem's husband is pursuing his PhD and uses the laptop in the house more than the other members. He even encouraged Shameem to earn a B.Ed in 2006, a compulsory degree for those who want to teach.

The application that she uses the most on her phone is WhatsApp.

The family access the Internet through mobile Internet. If somebody wants to access the Internet on the laptop, they turn the phone into a hotspot.

She wakes up at 6 am and offers prayers for half an hour. She makes breakfast and packs a tiffin for her husband and kids.

By 11 am, she completes her household chores and then reports at CIRC Quaidemillath Nagar in Trichy where she works as a computer trainer. The centre is located not very far from her house. Here, she teaches children basic computer applications and how to use the Internet. She stays at the centre till 7 pm, and takes a two-hour lunch break in between.

By the time she reaches home, her sisters-in-law have already prepared the dinner. The men eat first, and women follow.

Shameem listens to songs on YouTube or watches travel and wildlife videos. She also shops online sometimes.

Shameem takes her daughters to the terrace to feed them. Sometimes, she is so hungry that she steals a couple of bites from their meal.





MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN  
SHOULD TRY TO ACHIEVE  
WHATEVER SHE WISHES FOR.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT  
A GIRL SHOULD BE GENEROUS AND  
HONEST. SHE SHOULD NOT CHEAT  
OR STEAL. I WOULD TELL HER THAT  
THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN  
MEN AND WOMEN; NO MATTER  
WHICH FIELD, WOMEN CAN LEAD.**

#### Shameen's Aspiration

Shameen sees herself living as a nuclear family in the near future, and with a well-settled job. She wants her children to grow up to become IAS and IPS officers. She wishes to travel more with her husband and children; and wants to teach computers to as many people as possible.



## USHARANI DEKA

Age 63; widow, 1 daughter & 1 son; 3 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling Rank: #1; Education level Class 6; Background Usharani used to live in Shillong with her husband who works in the police force. She was in Class X when she got married. Soon after, she got pregnant and had to drop out of school. Her father is a primary school headmaster and her mother is a housewife. Usharani grew up in an extended family with eight siblings and cousins. Usharani's mother is a religious, motivated and respectable lady. Now in her mid-80s, her mother has always encouraged her to pursue her education and understand her tradition. It is their mother who has the right to choose the marriage partner for her children. When Usharani's husband passed away in an accident, she was devastated. It was her mother who gave her examples of other widows who were leading happy and successful lives. She told Usharani, "If Indira Gandhi could run the country, what makes you think you can't raise two children?" When Usharani was in her 50s, her son died too. It was then she realised she needed to complete her education. She feels education gives her a better opportunity to establish her identity and lead a good life. The coordinator at CIRC Sonapur convinced her to take up a course in digital literacy. Today, she is trained in computers and now pursuing a Bachelor Preparatory Programme (BPP) that is integrated with the course offered at the CIRC. She's is trying to clear her exams in history, math, English, economics, Assamese and political science.



Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.



10 years ago

She wakes up at 4 am to pray.



She does the house chores.

She eats her meals with her son.



She and her friends often sit together to share their religious beliefs. She has appeared on TV to talk about religious studies.



The son helps more with household chores as the daughter is very studious and prefers to spend her time studying.

She has a temple in her house where she sits down to translate the Bazawari script into local language (Assamese). She writes religious books.



Usharani is active in social and cultural activities in the neighbourhood. She goes to the temple, reads and delivers religious lectures in small gatherings and religiously prays to Lord Krishna.

## Present

She wakes up at 4:30 am,  
cleans, cooks and does yoga.  
She follows Ramdev style.



Now that her son is not  
around, her daughter takes  
care of her and goes out to  
buy grocery for the house.  
But they don't have their  
meals together.



ॐ



She prays.



She usually only  
steps out of her  
house for religious  
events.



She studies for 2.5  
hours. English is the  
hardest subject for  
her. She enjoys  
understanding religious  
concepts, and writes  
them down to translate  
them in Assamese.



She has taken a two-year  
computer course to learn to  
type in Assamese. She finds it  
easier to type on computer than  
write on paper.



She writes religious  
essays, poems.

**MY MOTHER TOLD ME** THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE RESPECTED IN THE SOCIETY. SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO COOK ALL THE TIME, BUT SHE NEEDS TO HAVE AN IDENTITY OF HER OWN. SHE SHOULD HAVE HER OWN SPACE.  
**MY FATHER TOLD ME** THAT A WOMAN SHOULD SET EXAMPLES FOR OTHERS.

**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD UNDERSTAND HER CULTURE, HER TRADITION, ACHIEVE GOOD EDUCATION AND LEAD A GOOD LIFE. SHE SHOULD LEARN TO ADJUST WITH PEOPLE AND HELP THOSE IN NEED TO FIND A PLACE IN THE SOCIETY.**

#### Usharani's Aspiration

She believes that god will lead her forward and she'll continue with her religious writings.



## PANDEY KUMUD SINHA

**Age** 69; widow, 1 son & 1 daughter; 5 brothers; **Sibling rank** #6; **Education level** BA Sociology, MA Sociology, Bachelor of Music; **Background** Kumud lives in Dhanbad in the state of Bihar. She belongs to a big joint family in which her uncles, aunts and cousins lived together. She is the youngest among her siblings, and is pampered and protected by her five doting brothers. For almost every chore, there was a help employed at Kumud's home, so she didn't have to do much around the house and spent most of her time studying or playing. Kumud is inspired by her mother who single handedly manages the entire household. Her father is a free thinker and wants his daughter to pursue her dreams.

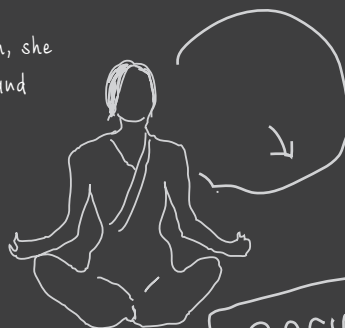


Vaithukuppam is a region in Puducherry city inhabited mostly by the fisherman community. DEF runs a CIRC here.



10 years ago

At 4:30am, she wakes up and does yoga.



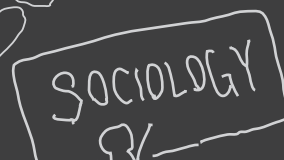
She likes to reflect on old days; sometimes she sits with her sitar and practices music.



She watches TV soaps.



Nickname; Chunni Chidiya (tiny sparrow)



Her husband drives her to school where she teaches sociology to 11th and 12th standard students.

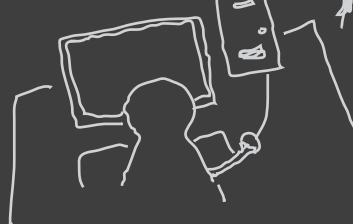


She enjoys her afternoon tea.



As active members of Sri Aurobindo Society, every Friday, she and her husband host a study circle at their house.

Kumud and her husband have a dial-up connection. She does not enjoy using computer much as it hurts her eyes.



She does not have the chance to work on computer because her husband occupies it quite often. Her husband is interested in online shopping.

## Present



She wakes up at 5:30am and does yoga for an hour.

Plays sitar in the evening, and lights incense sticks



She drinks tea and supervises the cook in the kitchen. She then eats breakfast and takes her medicine.

She waits for her son to pick her up from the centre. They then drive to his office to have lunch with her daughter-in-law.



Kumud uses her phone to call to inquire about her paternal house in Darbangha and for village updates.

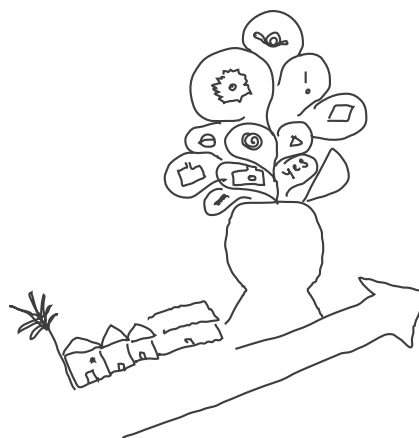


She also listens to Indian classical music on YouTube.

She visits CIRC every day and learns basic computer skills and tools, such as Paint and surfing on Internet. She likes to write to her daughter who studies in the US.



**I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A GIRL  
COULD FLY AS HIGH AS SHE WANTS  
AND ALWAYS KEEP HER HEAD UP.**



She wishes to see change in her village. She wants to see people become more open-minded and willing to accept changes. She would like to see them give up their orthodox and superstitious mentality to welcome progress.

She wishes to see change in her village. She wants to see people become more open-minded and willing to accept changes. She would like to see them give up their orthodox and superstitious mentality to welcome progress.





सत्यमेव जयते  
Ministry of Minority Affairs  
Govt. of India

**NASSCOM**  
FOUNDATION



European Union



Google



Vodafone  
Foundation



Microsoft



indus  
TOWERS



SIR RATAN TATA TRUST &  
NAVAJBAI RATAN TATA TRUST



WITH YOU ALWAYS



Centre for  
microFinance

**TATA AIA** LIFE

**BRITISH  
COUNCIL**



ERICSSON



रेलटेल  
RAILTEL



Common Services Centers Scheme (CSC)  
Department of Electronics And Information Technology  
Government of India



कृष्णकान्त सन्धिके राज्याक मुक्त विश्वविद्यालय  
KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

