

IIMPULSE

IIMPACT's Quarterly Newsletter

April – June 2021



“When girls are educated their countries become stronger and more prosperous” – Michelle Obama

Sonali Kishkhu is a girl from the jungle-adjacent area of Kodalia village, Bankura. Her father is a daily wage earner and her mother is a labourer assembling leaf plates for livelihood. She grew up in an atmosphere where the daily hardships had eroded civic goodness within the community, all villagers struggling well below the poverty line. Lack of cultural normalcy and use of foul language was rife and respect for people was non-existent

When Sonali joined the IIMPACT Learning Centre (LC) supported by NSE, many traits of her rough upbringing were still predominant in her behaviour. She was raw, showed acute disrespect for others and would frequently resort to improper language publicly.

Sonali's story shows how IIMPACT creates building blocks towards transforming the lives of women, families and entire communities in India by educating and empowering the girl child."

Over time, with the sensitive attention and supervision of her LC teacher and compassionate companionship from other students, she has transformed herself to a gentler self with marked behavioural and positive cultural changes. Her performance in class has also shown consistent improvement. This positive effect has also cascaded to her family as well who have been motivated to treat others with respect and have displayed heightened sensitivity towards the community. Now Sonali believes she can become a teacher one day and we at IIMPACT share her belief.

IIMPACT is a non-profit organisation established in 2003 by the IIM-Ahmedabad alumni batch of 1978. The organisation, through its Girl Child Education Program identifies out-of-school, irregular to school, and dropout girls between the ages of 6 to 14 in marginalized villages of India and provides them with quality primary education. The objective of the program is to empower and mobilize young girls from rural disadvantaged and socially backward communities, provide them with holistic education-focus on skills and competencies which enable the child to be a self-reliant, confident learner and become active change agents for their communities.

IIMPACT started with just 450 girls across 15 Learning Centres in 2004, Today IIMPACT has its presence in 11 states and supports close to 60,000 girls across 1936 Learning Centres.

The IIMPACT Learning Centre model establishes single-teacher led Learning Centres imparting Primary-level education using a Multi-Grade Multi-Level approach. IIMPACT runs this project for about 5-6 years in one locality, up to the time that each girl enrolled in the Learning Centre has received a firm grounding in primary education.

To know more visit www.iimpact.org

From the Executive Director's Desk



Dear Friends,

We come to you with the first newsletter of IIMPACT for Financial Year 21-22. This will give you a glimpse of our intervention with our girl students in the reporting quarter. This year also started with a second wave of COVID which required us to put our ALA under suspension until 15th June for across centres which was needed to protect our children and the teams.

However, with the learning of last year, we were able to better prepare ourselves to engage with our children and teachers. While the ALA was suspended we utilised this time to roll out CEP for our children from grade 1 to III and 'Chote Vaigyanik' (children scientists) for those who were in grade IV & V . The whole idea was to keep children productively engaged, generate curiosity in the minds of the children and inculcate in them a spirit of enquiry.

Across IIMPACT intervention states about 166 teachers and 40000 plus children participated in these projects. The most heartening part was the participation of parents and elders as the children were expected to do these projects staying at home or in small groups of peers living in the vicinity . The kind of projects which were attempted included - Our Village, Plants, trees, and crops, Animals ,Journey of seeds , Water, Houses, Transportation, Corona Pandemic and Family. The whole exercise culminated in zone wise exhibitions where children demonstrated and talked about the projects they did and answered questions.

Another important initiative of the quarter was the launch of IIMPACTs own YouTube channel ' SUNO KAHANI, GUNO KAHANI ' aiming to improve language skills of children. The channel is for children , to children by the children – not limiting it to IIMPACT learners . Through this channel children are telling stories to each other followed by discussion in the subsequent sessions with their peers and teachers' around those stories. Initially they are reading stories from various books but gradually the expectation is that they would create the stories to tell to their peer group . This will increase their listening skills alongside creativity , comprehension and ultimately writing . The whole project is designed to contribute to language learning . You will see a glimpse of these initiatives in this newsletter. As I write to you we are preparing to move to the second stage where gradually we aim to start ALA taking account of our children, their status , their learning and the way forward .

In all this our back-donors have been a pillar of strength for us – trusting , engaging and empowering with their support There are several new supporters who joined us last year during covid with their support . We are deeply indebted to them and to all our partners, interns, volunteers, pro-bono consultants who handled our social media , worked on our website and supported us in enhancing our resources , Adya and Gauri are to be especially mentioned – two young girls' residing in different parts of the world who fund raised last year to support their centres. IIMPACT salutes their commitment and confidence to the cause . We look forward to many more such young people to come forward , be a buddy supporting a group of girls or a centre , and contribute with their skills , expertise and experience in a specific area.

In the end as the Christian African philosopher, J. S. Mbiti's phrase says, "I am, because we are; and since we are therefore I am"

Sincere regards,

Dr. Shubhangi Sharma

Quarter 1

“When we own our stories, we get to write a brave new ending”



The long sprint towards her dream - Aneesha's Story

20-year old Aneesha is taking a breather in the scorching heat having just finished her 5 km long run. She has just cleared her SSC examinations for joining the Delhi police force and preparing for the physical test. It is morning in MahwaKhurd, a remote district in Rajasthan and Aneesha has a really long day ahead of her, she has her B.Ed classes to attend. She already dreams of being deputed to handle law and order situations. Her poise and confidence inspires one to believe that her dreams will come true.

It is difficult to imagine though, that the timid ,shy and somewhat dispirited girl who entered the MahwaKhurd Learning Center 14 years back is today's Aneesha.

Her father was an agricultural labourer and mother, a housewife with 3 more siblings at home. She was the eldest.

Her teacher Pinky still remembers the first day of Aneesha in the LC when she entered with a slate clung to her chest rolling the corner of her almost torn frock with her tiny fingers escorted by her mother . Pinky says- 'she was an underdog, always immersed in herself. It was a frustrating experience for me to make her speak even a few words in the beginning. But I would always see her most excited when any activity, especially the physical activity, is conducted in the learning sessions. She would stand up quietly and within minutes will change into another person-moving rapidly . Also, another striking fact about her was her sense of duty . She was responsible for filling the water pot for the girls' before they arrived. I never had to remind her even once while she was a student at the LC. Every day before all of us reached we would find Aneesha quietly sitting and waiting for all of us with a water pot neatly filled in and rolled with a wet cloth . She never spoke much but whenever she did there was a quality firmness in her voice which was intriguing.

5 years passed and after passing grade V from LC she left to study further in the village Government school and then in the nearby town to complete her 12th grade. Responding to a call for joining the Delhi Police Force, Aneesha successfully cleared her written entrance exams, only the physical test remains to be passed.

Fondly remembering her days in LC Aneesha states – 'had it not been for the LC I probably would have remained illiterate and would never be what I am today . I would have been perhaps married off and by now would be the mother of at least 5 children , and she laughs. There was no way I could have gathered the courage to enter school with my humble background. This one chance altered my life forever and I can't be more grateful!'

Stating this she excused herself and resumed practicing her sprints – her sprints towards her dreams.....



Never to give up is what she knows - Najema's Story

Najema just finished an online training session. It had been a busy day for her, reaching out to students and making sure they are engaged is a difficult task during lockdown. "But I have learnt a lot in the process too, and I really enjoy teaching" she says. Najema Khatun is a teacher with the IIMPACT Girl Child Learning Center under Suti-II block in Murshidabad. But life was not very easy for her a few years back. Her difficult childhood started when her father remarried and her mother left home taking with her Najema and her three other siblings. Growing up in extreme financial hardship, Najema and her family were dependent on the very little income of her grandparents with no financial support from her father. Najema was in standard 5 in school, when her grandparents and mother decided to marry her off.

But being very young she was fearful of the prospect with little idea of what it meant as an arrangement. Despite her protests, she was married off nonetheless within the next few months, and shifted to her in-law's residence. Unable to adjust to her new life forced upon her she would remain in shock for long periods of time. Finally she could dissolve her marriage with the help of her family. But even then education remained an elusive dream.

Finally one day with the encouragement of an IIMPACT teacher she joined the IIMPACT Learning Center in her village supported by Titan. For Najema, this was a blissful revisit to her lost childhood. A year later, the IIMPACT support group also helped Najema take a stand against the decision of being forcefully married off again. Her association with IIMPACT inculcated in her a strong confidence to stand up for her rights. Not stopping the fight there, she continued to encourage other girls to enrol their names with the local IIMPACT learning centre and worked to spread awareness for social issues that she was being made aware of through her education. Najema has become an example of empowerment and a role model. A group was formed with children, known as "SISHU BONDHU" to share their issues with peers which often lead to resolution of underlying problems. Najema helped steer the activities of this group by acting as their peer. After graduating from IIMPACT learning center, she continued her education in a Government run school. She continued her crusade against child marriage and child labour, also helping, enrolling drop-outs. Her social activities gained wider visibility even at the state levels getting her several awards from different circles. She received the West Bengal Government's 'BIRANGANA' award, the certification of 'KYABAT MEYE 2017' from the 'Women & Child development and Social Welfare Department', and a commendation certificate from CINI for her remarkable work.

Since 2018, Najema has been a teacher in the IIMPACT 'Girl Child Education Programme'. In her role she ensures children get education opportunities and teaches them never to give up.



Community shows the way - Ratti Khan, Training officer IIMPACT recounts his experience

Let me take you back to 2006. It was a time when, although IIMPACT's Girl Child Education programme (GCEP) in Alwar, Rajasthan was around 2 years old, we were still trying to establish ourselves as well as our programme in the field and community. This period was full of challenges and new struggle each day, yet full of zeal and learning opportunities.

The community's interest in girl child education so less that for them education and girls had no correlation. At most some parents would send their daughter to Masjids or the local Madrasa to undertake religious studies.

Keeping in mind the community background and their perception of education, the IIMPACT team carefully designed a one-day plan full of activities, games and fun filled learning which was mapped till class 3. Activities were carefully selected ensuring that learning outcomes and increase in learning levels among girls could be traced and demonstrated. We realized the need to show a path to the girls, their families and the wider community in order to continue the programme in Alwar.

The story doesn't end here.... imagine a male teacher wanting to teach girls in a community which is conservative and not ready to send girls out of their homes. Not only did they not want their girls exposed to education, the community had serious reservations about books with pictures, singing with expressions, dancing etc. The major insecurity was that if these girls get educated, then they will speak for themselves and would want to be decision makers demanding their rights. And no one was ready for this change. Meanwhile, the program started gaining popularity for all the wrong reasons. There were false rumors and negative thoughts around the implementation of the program. IIMPACT kept on conducting many meetings educating and spreading awareness with the help of Village Education Committee (VEC), but not with much success. However, we were determined to make a difference. We were ready for the challenges. Every morning with the new light, our dedication towards the cause turned brighter. The more challenges we faced, the better prepared were we to go the long mile!

Fortunately, a turning point came. We could convince the religious leaders and influential people of the villages of Mewat to come and attend a meeting at Ramgarh, where all the rumors and wrong believes associated with the girl child education and IIMPACT program was discussed. All associated study material, registers to be maintained for documentation, plan for next 5 years and the objective of GCEP were discussed. Suggestions and comments of religious leaders and heads of the communities were taken into consideration and a pledge to work to achieve the best was shown. As it was a muslim dominated community, the role of religious leaders were of great importance. All members of the meeting assured that going ahead rumors regarding the GCEP neither will be encouraged nor will be accepted. Parents would be motivated to send their daughters in the safe environment to study. These influencers became the torch bearers of IIMPACT helping in all difficulties as well as spreading the message of education for girls.

Just a year later in 2007 40 new Learning centres were initiated by IIMPACT at Kishangarh, Alwar with the support and involvement of the community, religious leaders and panchayat members. The community not only helped initiate the process but gave suggestions and feedback as sincere co partners and allies of the programme – it was once again proven that communities are our strengths.

The Bulletin Board

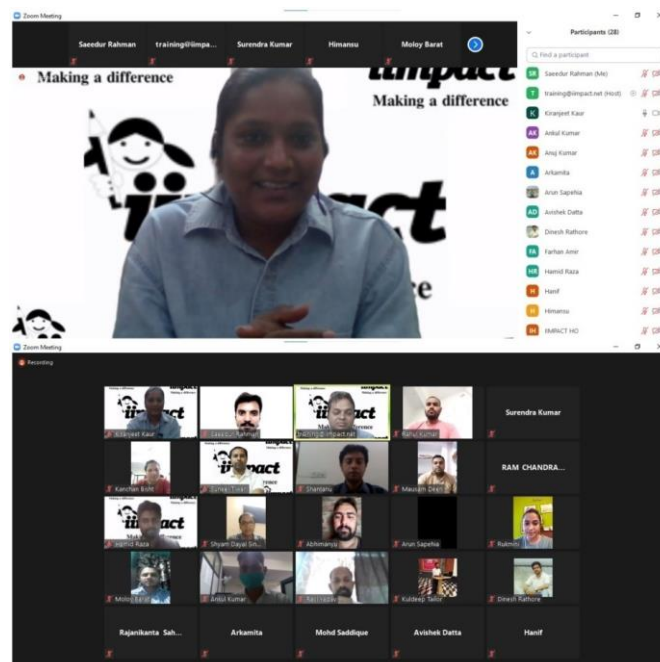
Goshthi

“Sharing will enrich everyone with more knowledge”
– Ana Monnar

Goshthi is an interactive platform where people working in IIMPACT share their learning incidences and experiences of interacting with children, parents, and communities. Starting in May 2021, every week on Mondays, colleagues from all over India hold a virtual meeting. Here one person volunteers to share his/her experiences, thoughts and learning points. This fosters a discussion amongst colleagues on the topic. This helps in opening up avenues for -

- ✓ Cross-learning and getting an insight on individual perspectives on education
- ✓ Sharing of best practices
- ✓ Motivating team members to be role models

So far, six such enriching sessions have been spearheaded by colleagues leading to discussions which proved to be extremely useful



“SunoKahaniGunoKahani”- IIMPACT’s new YouTube channel



“After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world” – Phillip Pullman

Stories play a vital role in the growth and development of children. Stories do not just develop the language and literacy, they convey values, beliefs and social norms which in turn shape children’s perception of reality. With this view in mind IIMPACT launched its first storytelling YouTube channel SunoKahaniGunoKahani on 27 May 2021.

Using this forum, children in different IIMPACT centers from all over India will weave and share their stories with each other and learn from each other. Nearly 800 participants joined the launch and currently we have over 2.55K subscribers tuned in.

To listen to fascinating stories by amazing storytellers do visit IIMPACT’s YouTube channel “SunoKahaniGunoKahani”

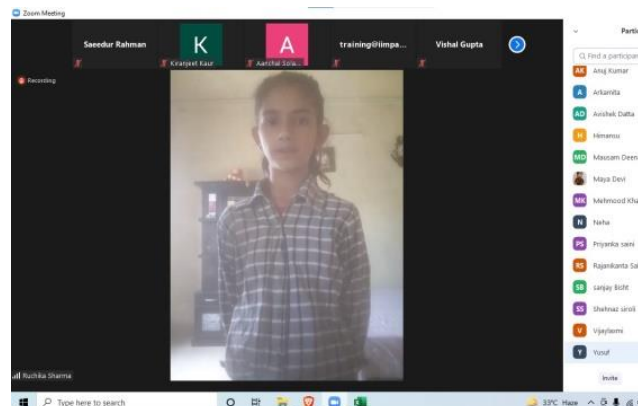
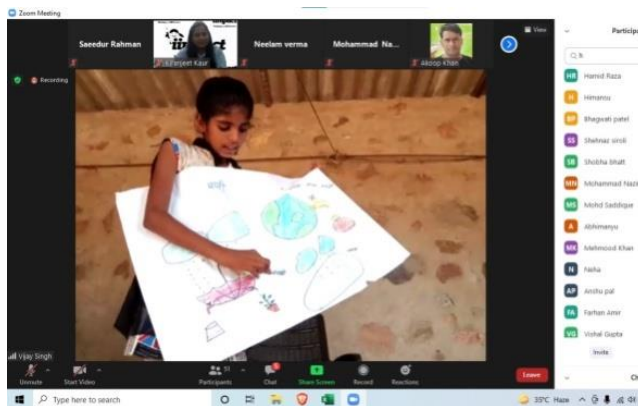
Children's Virtual Science Exhibition-Project "ChhotaVyagyanik"

In the month of June 2021, four separate virtual exhibitions were held from four of IIMPACT's project locations. The exhibition was part of the project "ChhotaVyagyanik" (aka Junior Scientist), a child engagement initiative for children studying in classes 3 to 5 in the IIMPACT Learning Centers, during the second wave of the pandemic. In this project children learn about topics in the context of a theme by interacting with the community or with members of their household. It is based on the methodology of discovering through initiative, in order to enable the students to continue to learn in a systematic way even at home.

Modern research on learning shows that children show interest if they are given enough opportunities to ask questions and find answers (National Curriculum Framework-2005). The project Junior scientist encourages students to follow a similar process.



In the virtual exhibitions, selected students made 15 minute presentations on their chosen themes and fielded questions from the audience. It was hoped that this endeavour would equip children with abilities to critically look at various aspects of their lives and instil the curiosity in them to ask more questions. The virtual exhibitions not only encouraged children to develop critical reasoning and comprehension, but were also a wonderful platform to develop their self-confidence.

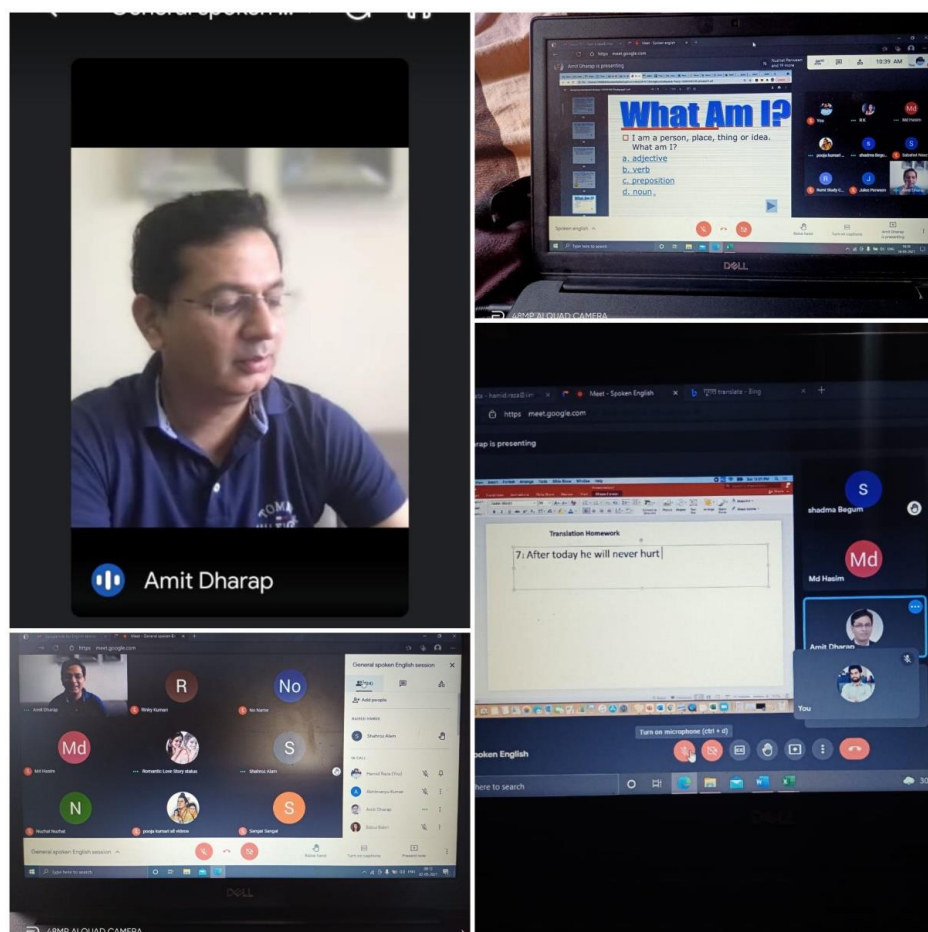


Titan takes Time-out to teach English

From the month of May 2021, members of Titan executive team volunteered to give spoken English training to teachers in the IIMPACT learning centers. It was a great learning experience for our teachers who learnt a lot from Titan professionals like Amit Dharap, Gaile Cutinha, Jaideep Maity, Pradeem Kumar Yadav among others.

Mr Amit Dharap, Regional Business Head East, Titan shared his experience of the programme - "It has been an absolute privilege to support the teachers of IIMPACT. Their zeal to learn English is absolutely infectious. They always amaze me with their energy and drive for learning. They continue to keep showing up regularly, despite so many challenges in their lives, created by the pandemic and its after-effects. I find that all of them want to learn, despite adverse financial and personal conditions at home. One of the best class happened when we had planned to do a small poetry appreciation session. I was expecting some very basic poems to be brought in by the teachers for the class discussion.

However I was delighted to find that a few teachers came with poems of Rudyard Kipling and William Wordsworth !! I was absolutely amazed at their love for the subject and it inspires me to help them to my best ability. More power to all of them and to IIMPACT for trying to create a difference in their lives through education. " – Amit Dharap



“Educate a girl and she will change the world”



IIMPACT's journey so far has been extremely rewarding and this has been made possible with the support of compassionate people whose generous donations and involvement helped us grow.

We look forward to your being part of our journey. Together we can change many lives, make positive transformations in the society and make numerous dreams come true.

Join hands with IIMPACT , together let's make a difference

Get Involved!

DONATE NOW!

IIMPACT

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Thank You