



Life. Transformed.

BETTING LONG ON WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY FROM THE MARGINS

PERCEPTIONS OF GIRLS IN WORK FROM THE MARGIN

In the patrilineality of India's society, women bear what is often an unfair burden of representing the family they are born into, or later married into. Social norms become a priority. Despite advances in the Indian economy, reduced birth rates, higher levels of female education, and other promising signals, **India's Female labor force participation (FLFP) declined from 32 percent in 2005 to 21 percent in 2018, making Indian women some of the least employed in the world** (Source: ILO 2020).

Only 18.6% of working-age women in India participate in the labour force, three times lower than men. (Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020)

WHAT STOPS WOMEN FROM JOINING THE WORKFORCE?



THE BIG FAT MATERNAL WALL:

Maternal Wall is the strongest and most open form of gender bias. It stems from stereotypes that link motherhood with lack of commitment and competence. Bias against women, stems not only from assumptions about how mothers should act, behave and conduct. **"Men who have stay-at-home wives assume that I am less family oriented, more selfish, and less sensitive to the needs of my children"**- notes Sravani, our Alumna from remote Jharkhand, who is a mother of 7 year and 5 year old sons. **"My home likes my income, but is unwilling to let me give up on household work, child care and eldercare duties."** - claims Sravani who works as an IT Executive in a private firm.



TUG-OF-WAR:

Young girls and adolescents from underdeveloped locations who encounter discrimination from other women often distance themselves. Prejudiced older woman who **"themselves experienced gender discrimination"** made sure younger women did, too, fuelling conflict between different generations of women. **"Undermined by own female relatives at home, I felt like quitting a career-opportunity."** - iterates our alumna Ramiya Kodi from the interiors of Andhra Pradesh. **"I was told by my women clan that learning computers was the sole preserve of the men in their village."** Tug-of-war is predominant in Indian homes – where often older women of the community having been discriminated in their early life due to social stigma – restricts the younger girls from achieving their goals.



PROVE-IT-AGAIN:

Two-thirds of our women-beneficiaries from marginalized locations of India, reported having to prove themselves over and over again. **"My father assumed that I will never be able to cut the interview"** marks Pavithra from the slums of Chennai, who is now an Associate at Accenture. Still in most parts of the country men are presumed to be competent, while women often have to prove their competence. **"Despite having better grades and skills than my brother, my career in one of the top multinationals is perceived to be more of a hobby."**- Pavithra speaks up hesitantly in the interview.



FEAR OF ISOLATION:

Majority of the girls and women from underrepresented groups feel either they need to distance themselves from others of their group, or align with the majority against their own group, in order to get included – which pauses their aspirations. The sense of fear restricts the young aspiring minds to gain self-empowerment. **"I still remember some of the chatter around when I expressed my desire to go out of my village and work in the city,"** our Alumna Soumyasree from Rajkanika, a remote corner in Odisha shares. **"If I am not abiding by the rules of our community, my very existence is under threat."** Later, Soumyasree refuses a job-offer and gets married.



THE MARRIAGE-GUILT:

In many traditional Indian societies, women's age at marriage acts simultaneously as a gateway to new family roles and the likelihood of producing offsprings. Coercive control from the male counterparts repeatedly makes them feel controlled, dependent, and compelled to either quit their existing livelihood after marriage or choose marriage over career. **"The pull between career and marriage has been my only stress"** – quotes 25 years-old Sushmita from Assam who works as a softskill faculty. **"I am often made to feel guilty for being a burden on my parents"**. Being abandoned by her husband, Mala (name changed due to privacy) from the Murshidabad district of West Bengal reports **"I was accused of leaving my 9-month-old at home in search of money."** when she went out to bring food to the table.



DIGITAL ILLITERACY AND UNFAMILIARITY:

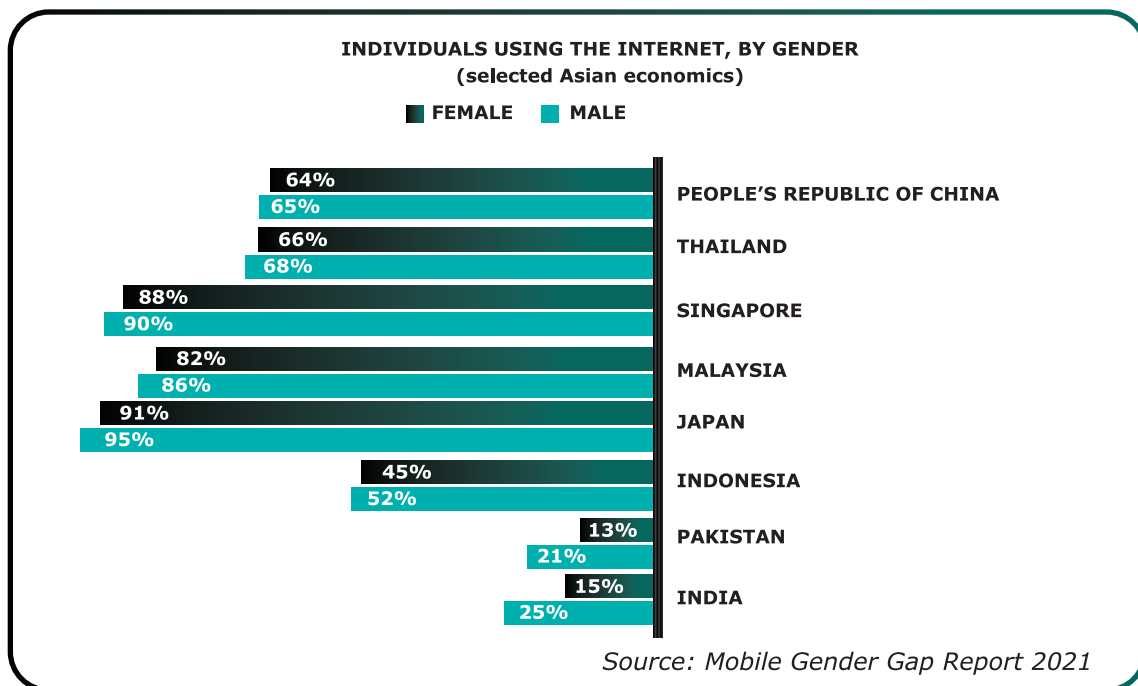
According to UNICEF, between March 2020 to February 2021, Indian schools were fully closed for 62 percent of instruction days, and partially for 38 percent. These school closures placed 320 million students including 158 million girls at risk of dropping out and reaching large learning gaps. Digital illiteracy and unfamiliarity with digital platforms deterred women students, aspiring job-seekers and entrepreneurs from moving to online when the need was immediate. 30 year-old Najin from Jharkhand reports **"I own a smartphone, yet my online activities are often governed by male relatives owing to my unfamiliarity with such smart devices."** The gendered digital divide has been preventing women and girls from accessing government social security benefits and even booking COVID-19 vaccination slots.

WHAT IS INDIA'S GENDERED DIGITAL DIVIDE?

Gender inequality in the physical world is replicated in the digital world. There is a large gap in women and girls' digital adoption and use compared to men and boys.

FACTS & FIGURES

Reasons for the digital gender gap include inequitable access to education and harmful social norms that exist in the "offline" world and impact digital realities and potential benefits for women and girls. Indian women are **15** percent less likely to own a mobile phone, and **33** percent less likely to use mobile internet services than men. In 2020, **25** percent of the total adult female population owned a smartphone versus **41** percent of adult men.



Within Asia-Pacific, India had the widest gender gap in internet usage in recent years, a gender gap of **40.4** percent with only **15** percent of women accessing the internet versus **25** percent of men.

Source: International Telecommunication Union, 2021

THE IMPACT:

82,000+ girls and women from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds - have been benefited through our technology driven programs – leading them to make conscious career decisions and financial stability.

WE ARE ABLE TO IMPACT



Women below the poverty line



Specially Abled



Minority Women



Victims of Trafficking



Low-income women



Small Vendors

HOW DO WE IMPACT

The fight for tech talent: The IT industry is set to grow by 7% in 2022 alone and would generate the highest employment opportunities for freshers. Today, skills like Java, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cyber security have become top-of-mind for many business houses. In a recent report commissioned by Amazon Web Services, the number of workers requiring digital skills in India will need to increase nine times by 2025 to keep pace with current demand.

Exclusively curated for socially disadvantaged women- groups, the technology driven interventions take into account the vulnerabilities that these women and girls have to face. The program process ensures that they learn and work independently, keeping aside the social discrimination by:

Providing a comprehensive skilling course starting with basics of IT, internet, identifying and understanding software

Enhancing skill development in deep programming and digital languages to enable the girls to communicate with these software/codes effectively

Training in financial and soft skills – including command over English which is an intimidating space for these women who have been to vernacular medium schools

Linking the women to the new-age employers, or crowdsourcing business module which allows them the flexibility of working within their familiar spaces or digitizing small businesses

Mentoring and hand-holding through the transition into financial independence and creating their command over safe online practices

Creating economic independence and a way to break out from their traditional income-generation methods of the vicious cycle of poverty

AT THE BENEFICIARY LEVEL

- Annual income of over INR 1,50,000 which is 2x their family earning
- Financial stability with a potentiality of being the highest earning member
- 100% retention in new-age earning spaces/companies
- Increase in decision making and awareness to information

AT THE FAMILY LEVEL

- Enhanced financial security
- Access to better health facilities and education for women
- Acceptance of the wife/daughter for technology-based jobs
- Improvement in quality of life with access to information

AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

- Emerging Role Models within the community
- Awareness and sensitivity to address gender discrimination against other peers
- Dignity in the social space
- Inclusiveness by male counter parts to have equal rights

INDICATORS

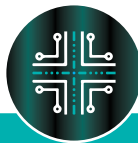
The five enabling spectrum that potentially boosted access and interest for girls in technology and career pathways, are:



Creating role-models from the underrepresented society to dispel stereotypes and instill aspiration in technology careers



Focusing on digital literacy and English communication as a foundation



Providing open online-resource via Learning Management System for tapping into knowledge repository anytime/anywhere



Mobilizing parents and community and making them key influencers for promotion of digital skills



Integrating digital education in facilitating day-to-day activities like online banking, e-shopping and browsing.

STORIES OF IMPACT

“My mother was abandoned by her husband for giving birth to a girl child!”

Unnati Kundar, 📍 Vasi, Maharashtra



I never called him “Dad”- recalls Unnati. Being disowned by her father since she was a girl child, Unnati was raised single-handedly by her mother. Later she discovered her father eloping with another women. She often heard her mother – describing the quarrels with her father as a minor squabble between couples.

Unnati’s protective mother being deceived by her father – set limitations on her young daughter from a young age. Immediately after her school completion, Unnati was forced to marry. First few months of her marriage was happy but soon, the new bride discovered that her activities were tracked– starting from what we wore to whom she met. On protesting, she was bruised. Later she was beaten and battered almost all days. Adding to her woes, Unnati’s in-laws made her cut down all ties with the outside world.

“I did not know how to react when I got pregnant.” iterates Unnati since this news made her husband start mental and physical torchures at home. Being unable to stand the harm which took a toll on her un-born baby, she took a call to get rid of her husband and his family. ***“The feeling of being a mother gave me the inner strength to secretly leave my in-laws house and file a divorce.”***

Unnati gave birth to a healthy baby but faced extreme financial crunch since there was no-income flow. Unnati opened a small bakery shop but due to the lack of proper brand-awareness, her business was doomed to fail. ***“My meagre income came from the orders I received from friends and select-few relatives.”***With each passing day, it was becoming increasingly difficult for her to run the family. It was then she got introduced to ANUDIP in her search for an employment.

Speaking to the career counselling team, Unnati was convinced to learn Advanced Digital Marketing program which could help her boost her own business online. It took her three months to get acquainted with technical social media skills like SEO, SMO, lead-generation camps and tools used for online advertising.

Today, we find ***Unnati’s bakery*** has a shiny optimized and easily searchable website with keywords that boosts her unique sweetmeats. Her bakery is also listed in various social networking sites with growing subscribers. Single-handedly she makes around INR 30,000 monthly from her bakery business with increased profit during festive seasons. ***“Only my skills did not abandon me. I am an entrepreneur cum mother today.”***

“Even for the tiniest of decisions- my mother and I, were not given the liberty to take a call for ourselves individually!”

Sandhya,  Tamil Nadu



Imagine a 21 years-old girl running the family and encountering gender barriers daily! Meet Sandhya Laxmi Pathy from Pallavaram, Tamil Nadu. ***“I get reactions from people I’ve just met as well as from men in my community that how can a girl solely carry family responsibilities.”*** Sandhya’s father had a business, but due to a major trade-crash – they lost everything! Till that time, her father was earning- he was the sole decision maker. ***“Even for the tiniest of decisions- my mother and I, were not given the liberty to take a call for ourselves individually.”*** What genuinely baffled the entire family – was when their father had to sell their house to pay back the debts. ***“It was a big loss for us. We had to sell our home, furniture and everything we had. But it was our father for whom the loss had been beyond devastation. ”***

Sandhya, the eldest of the two daughters, shouldered the responsibility of helping her family cope with the loss. Being young and being a girl – has been a major cause of concern for her relatives. ***“They told me I was not strong enough to face it. Deflated and dismayed, I apologized for not knowing that such a path was not open to me since I could not argue”*** Privately, she struggled with her decision to go out and earn but feared admitting it to her parents, who were in no condition to heal her fears having lost everything.

Stepping into her unique identity of taking decisions by herself, made her step out of the family value-structures with which she was raised – ***“and that was not okay for the people whom I know.”***- she recounts. Sandhya shifted to a rented one-room accommodation with her family. Her next step was to take up an employability training from ANUDIP which skilled her on advanced Tally along with IT and soft skills. Regardless of the disapprovals from relatives coupled with aggressive cold shoulders, and overly harsh criticism, she continued her training. ***“Each one of them tried to figure out – what was my training all about and why I went there every day.”***

On her training completion – she got a job-placement at Accenture in Chennai. ***“Clearly I had no time to rejoice my first-salary. I had to clear my sister’s college fees. I had to pay the rent for our room and share the remaining with my father who was unemployed.”*** Today Sandhya aims high to work better and get a promotion to re-build what the family lost. ***“Yet I do not forget the denial, some of my relatives have for me to take over family responsibility because I am not a son. This rejection never leaves me.”***

“Being a daughter of a sex-worker, they told me I am bound to marry a boy in the same trade.”

Ahana,  Near Bangladesh-India Border



Born to a sex worker near the India - Bangladesh border, Ahana still does not know who her father is. She was never sent to school like most other girls in her neighborhood. At the age of 6.5, she describes ***“I was kidnapped by some men. No-body knew where they were taking me but luckily few cops arrested them.”***

When she was seven years old, Ahana was rescued from trafficking and sent to a government-run shelter home for vulnerable children in Berhampur. ***“There I received nutritious meals twice a day and was introduced to schooling. I was given books, pencils, and a study mat.”*** Ahana started learning from private tutors at the shelter home and completed her class 10th board examinations. When Ahana was 18, she was forced to vacate the place after spending 12 years in the shelter. ***“Leaving the home made me quite baffled since I knew I had to go-back to the same community, from where I was rescued.”***

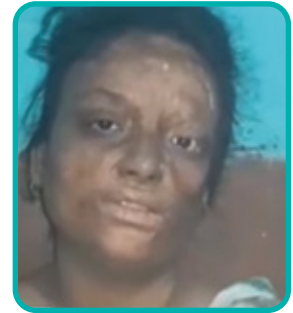
Returning to her native place which was well known for its red-light activities was no less than a night-mare for the 18 year-old. Her mother who was still active in her profession surrendered that she could not afford to fund her higher education. Ahana took up small tailoring jobs which helped her earn INR 500 -700 a month – to study further. ***“In 2018, I got admission in computer and IT training in ANUDIP Domkal, which promised us free classes and also provided transportation costs for us to come to the centre.”***

Breaking away from social stigma that was often intertwined with the daily lives of sex workers and their families, Ahana attended her class regularly. ***“Men followed me to the training centre to know my where-about. Women believed that I am following my mother’s profession.”*** After 1 year 7 months, Ahana got employed in one of the leading digital data companies with work from home facility. ***“Today I work on artificial intelligence and natural language processing projects.”***

“After I got a job I stopped my mother from continuing the sex-trade” –recalls Ahana as her first big achievement in life but the next big trouble cloaked when her neighbours insisted her mother to get her daughter married. ***“Being a daughter of a sex-worker, they told me I am bound to marry a boy in the same trade.”*** Ahana’s next step was to inform the ANUDIP faculty and trainers who supported and arranged a decent wedding with a groom, who works as a corporate employee. ***“I live with dignity with my husband who knows my past. We both work in the same company and dream a future in a decent society, freed from the murky world where I belonged.”***

**“Today I tell them, my face is burnt,
not fate.”**

Puja, 📍 West Bengal



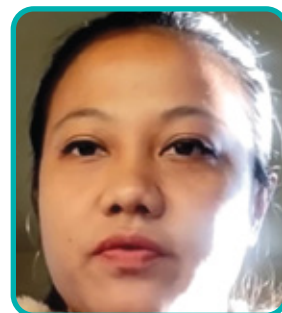
Puja accidentally fell into a giant vat of scalding hot kerosene oil when she was a child. Since then, she was made to believe that her face may not be critical to survival, but it was essential to social survival. Often, there was a fear of ridicule from the outside world and a sense of discrimination due to her physical appearance – which made her sit back at home. ***“The accident burnt my face. Since then this society made me feel excluded. But I refused to hear them.”*** Back in the village, Puja’s friends and family insisted her to stay within the confines of home since her burnt face became her only identity.

Contesting the prejudice, she came out to become financially independent. Even then the constant discrimination – from the world did not make her question her abilities. ***“I went ahead to enroll myself in IT and English training from ANUDIP’s Specially-Abled-Vocational-Education (SAVE).”*** She wanted to learn computers and English and meet new friends who were also tagged different due to their physical deformities. Puja and her class-mates were a cohort who attended classes and motivated each other ***“even when the world outside was prejudiced against their abilities.”***

Post four months of hand-holding sessions in English and computers, Puja went for an interview. ***“I was scared that they would judge me looking at my face, but something different happened here.”*** Today Puja is a Customer-Support-Executive at Vindya-e-Infomedia.

“They called me a small-town girl.”

Sneha Thapa,  Meghalaya



Coming from Northeast India, this 23 years-old remain undeterred when she heard **“small-town girl cannot survive in the corporate world.”** Sneha grew up in middle –class family in Shillong and spent most of her time – trying to find opportunities which can shape up her career.



“More than men, women in my community – had frowns whenever I spoke about career opportunities.” Sneha’s interest in IT and computers made her visit the nearest cyber-café almost every 5 days a week. Being a bright student, she strived to know more about the recent technology advancements. **“I came to know about the ANUDIP’s training on deep – technology courses available and affordable for anyone.”** Sneha took up the IMPACT course which made her study artificial intelligence, machine learning and natural language processing. She focused equally on ANUDIP’s ENGURU lesson for English comprehension and grammar. On her course completion, she got a job-offer from a leading digital data company - iMerit Technologies. **“I work on AI projects today and talk to international clients.”**

Sneha’s career aspirations left the prejudice way behind. **“My background and gender cannot hold me back from what I deserve.”**



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