



IPE GLOBAL
Expanding Horizons. Enriching Lives.



IPE Global Limited

Jaipur Office: IPE Global Limited, 301, 302, 303, 3rd Floor, Signature Tower, Lal Kothi
Telephone: +91 11, 40755900, +91-8233700233
E-mail: manzil.ipe@gmail.com



मंज़िल

आर्थिक रुप से आत्मनिर्भर और सशक्त लड़कियां



MANZIL

Empowering girls through economic opportunities







FOREWORD



P. C. Kishan, I.A.S.
Secretary,
Department of Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship
Government of Rajasthan

Girls and women do not get the same opportunities as boys and men, which limit their overall participation towards the economy. Early marriages and pregnancies only perpetuate a chronic cycle of health risks, poverty, and financial dependences. Economic empowerment is a catalyst that can shift girls from being regarded as liabilities to assets, empowering them to take their own decisions.

Project Manzil, working with marginalised girls, has enabled several girls from across the state, including the remotest parts of tribal belts in Dungarpur, to have access to skill training. They are now earning an income of their own.

In collaboration with Manzil, we aim to break barriers that limit girls' opportunities. We have already seen girls travel outside their villages, districts and even the state for the first time in their lives and aspire for a better future.



MESSAGE



Sushri Renu Jaipal, I.A.S.
Chairman and Managing Director
Rajasthan State and Livelihoods Development Corporation (RSLDC)
Government of Rajasthan

Skill Development is the backbone to address unemployment in the country and usher a prosperous economy. The Rajasthan Skill and Livelihoods Development Corporation (RSLDC) seeks to foster employment by providing relevant market-driven skills among the youth, unskilled and unemployed people. We hope they will leverage RSLDC schemes and programme which will lead them to get a job and grow in their career.

The last two years have been devastating for all of us across the globe. The COVID-19 pandemic has disintegrated economic and livelihoods infrastructures worldwide. However, despite this, we ensured regular development of skills for our youth who desperately needed a job but were unable to compete in the market due to lack of skills. Given this, we have placed particular focus on the need for short-term courses and skilling opportunities for girls.

With Manzil, we aim to alter social norms that limit the mobility of girls and skill them for a brighter future. What is most heartening to see is the increase in demand for modern-age courses by the girls, they are eager to be skilled in Healthcare, Retail as well as Information Technology.

It is just the dawn of our journey, and we need to drive it to achieve the ambient scale of goals and objectives that we have set for ourselves. I hope this publication will shed light on the journeys of the courageous girls across our state. I also extend my best wishes to the vibrant team for the forthcoming years.



MESSAGE



M. K. Padma Kumar
Chief Operating Officer
IPE Global Limited, New Delhi

Manzil was envisioned to promote economic liberty among young women as a way of building their agency and enabling them to take decisions on their age of marriage and first pregnancy in selected districts of Rajasthan.

Towards this, IPE Global partnered with the Rajasthan Skills and Livelihoods Development Corporation (RSLDC). Our objective was simple: ensure that girls from rural and marginalised backgrounds who have dropped out of schools are linked to skill training centres and provided with economic opportunities.

This book is about celebrating the success of Manzil, and it is a moment of pride and honour to see this book with impact stories come to life. This year, as we celebrate 25 years of IPE Global, we also pledge to strengthen our work in empowering young girls and enabling them to live a life on their terms.

I applaud the effort of Manzil's team members who have gone to remote corners of Rajasthan, trying to support and give voice to girls and their dreams. In so many ways, they have done the unthinkable. But a bigger applause must be given to the girls, who fought and convinced their families, stepped out of their comfort zones, and went against the grain. They are the real heroes of this book.



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NEED FOR MANZIL

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- 16%** of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are currently married¹
 - 48%** of girls with no education were married below 18 years as compared to 4 percent with higher education²
 - 26%** decrease in the risk of adolescent pregnancy is noted for girls who have undergone vocational training and sex education³
-

Sources :
¹(UNICEF)
²(NFHS 5)
³Bandiera et al, Washington DC, USA, World Bank 2012



ABOUT MANZIL

Manzil enables access of young girls (14-21 years) to quality vocational education and economic opportunities for increasing their agency to act independently and make their own choices. This allows prevention of early marriages and subsequently delays first pregnancies.

Over the last few years Manzil has maximized opportunities and overcome several challenges, including COVID-19, to adapt and move ahead. The Project has facilitated enrollment of girls in vocational courses and facilitated jobs for them across some top employers, both in Rajasthan and across India. The project is working across more than 180 schools and 6 districts (Udaipur, Jaipur, Tonk, Ajmer, Bhilwara and Dungarpur).

IMPACT STORIES





REKHA SEN

Retail Sales Associate



Rekha Sen of Gohandi, Phagi block in Jaipur district, grew up watching her mother, Mithu Devi, raise her and her two siblings singlehandedly as an Anganwadi worker. For Rekha, her mother was her role model, whose persistence made her value financial stability and independence. However, opportunities being scant and having little knowledge about the options, the best thing Rekha could find was a job at a paltry salary of Rs. 3,000 — an amount so low that it barely helped improve the economic situation at home.

When Rekha met Sushila Kavar, a Manzil Community Motivator, it took some convincing for her to enrol for a specialised market-driven Rajasthan Skills and Livelihood Development Corporation (RSLDC) skill-training course in retail in Jaipur. While Rekha agreed, the journey was challenging. Pursuing the course entailed living alone for the first time in a big city and battling homesickness alongside more significant issues like the social pressures of marriage. She recalls several moments when she felt like giving up. This is where Sushila stepped in again.



"Sushila didi promised to get more girls from my village. When my morale dipped, she became my sounding board, reminding me of my mother's extraordinary grit while raising us single-handedly," says Rekha.

Rekha completed the course and got a Retail Sales Associate position at a store in Jaipur, with a compensation of Rs. 10,000. Rekha's journey has already become aspirational for several girls in her village, some of whom have already enrolled in skill courses to try and forge an independent life for themselves. Rekha has become a role model for many such girls. *"Sometimes life indeed comes a full circle,"* she says. Her income has helped improve her family's situation, and she has even proceeded to fund her college degree independently.





JYOTI RAIGER

General Duty Assistant



Every day, when 21-year-old Jyoti, General Duty Assistant at a hospital in Jaipur, gets ready for work, she remembers how her life changed the day Community Motivator, Seema, from Manzil, first walked into her home ten months ago.

During Seema's first visit to Jyoti's house in Lalchandpura, Jhotwara panchayat, of Jaipur district, she was met with resistance from the family and community. They contended that girls didn't go out to work, and any job had to be home-based or fit "for women," such as becoming a tailor or a beautician. However, in less than a year, Jyoti's success has significantly changed these perceptions of Lalchandpura's girls. So much so that many have joined professional skill training courses run by the Rajasthan Government and followed in Jyoti's footsteps professionally – in the hospital & healthcare industry.



In a family riddled with hardship and extreme poverty, Jyoti recalls how difficult the situation became when her father, the sole earning member of the house, met with an accident and lost his job. However, despite the prospect of having their family (6 daughters, including Jyoti, and one son) practically starve, the family was adamant about not letting Jyoti work. With great difficulty, Seema had to convince the family to let Jyoti pursue the General Duty Assistant course. Jyoti recalls her initial apprehensions, but eventually, she decided to enrol for the course. In the four months, she learnt many skills, including computer and other soft skills. Soon after completing the course, she gave an interview at a hospital and was immediately hired.

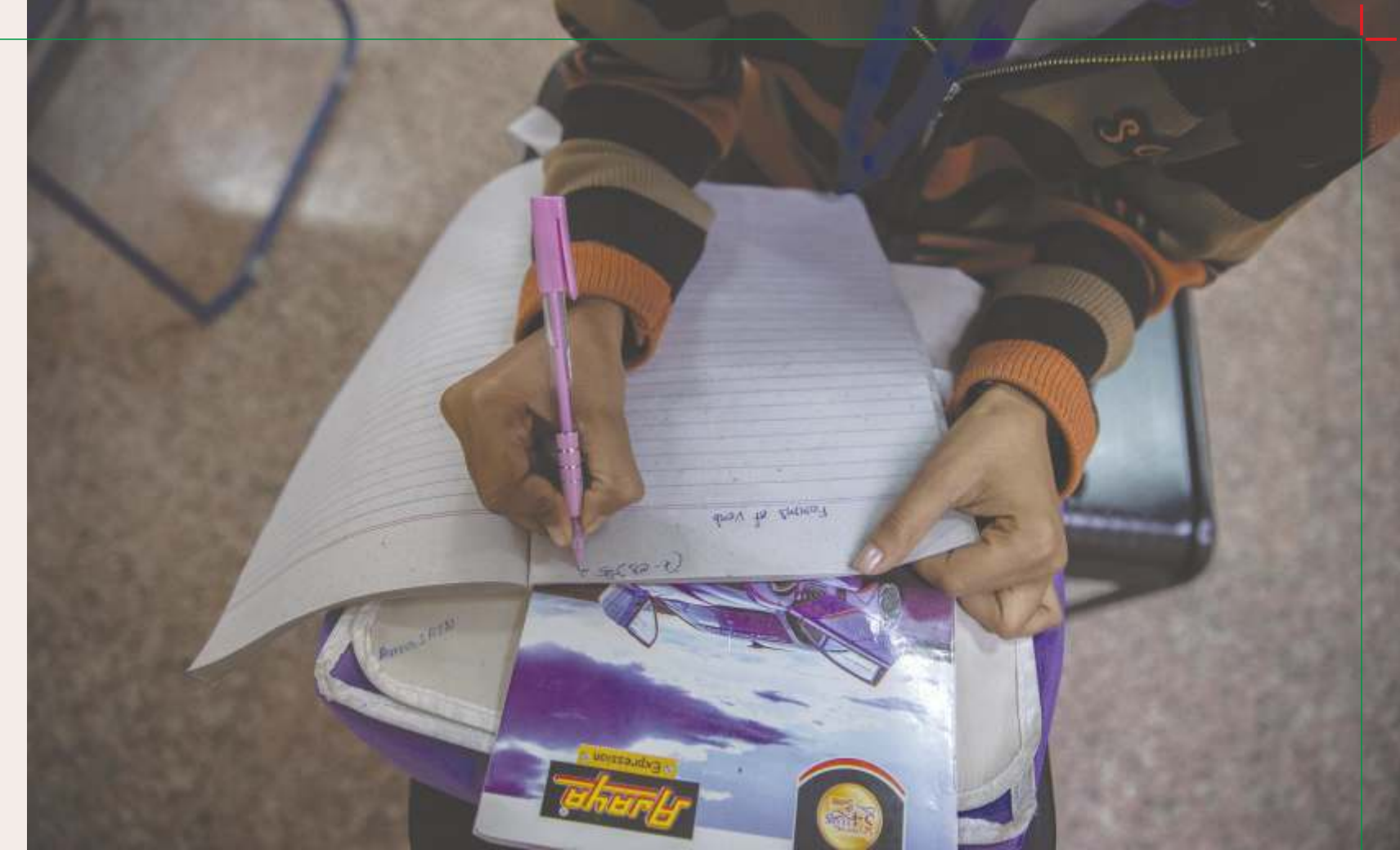
Her responsibilities at work are varied — she has worked in patient care and billing and continues learning about other sectors. Though not large, her financial contribution is critical to supporting her family. She says her biggest achievement has been understanding the importance of being economically independent. Living by herself has also helped her see the world differently and become much more confident.

On the other hand, she also now has the complete support of her family, who have learnt from seeing first hand how even a girl can earn and support her family to lead a life of dignity.



MONIKA PARJAPATI

Computer Programmer



Tucked away behind the fragrant mustard fields of Kothputli, Jaipur district, is Mordha village, where locals refer to an aeroplane as "cheel gaadi". Nobody in the village has been on a "cheel gaadi" except 20-year-old Monika, one of its youngest and perhaps most inspiring residents.

Daughter of a stone layer in Mordha village, 20-year-old Monika grew up knowing she did not want a life confined to housework and did not recognise the power she believed her dreams carried. *"I always wanted to study but knew that with our limited financial means, it would be difficult,"* she says. Monika's father was supportive of the education of his five children, but his financial situation was not in his favour. After Xth Grade, Monika had to take up Humanities despite her growing interest in Science & Technology, as the village school only offered the particular stream. *"If I had the option, I would have taken up Science, but that would have meant going to a private school outside my village, which was simply not an option for financial reasons,"* she recalls.



Meanwhile, in 2019, soon after completing school, Monika was married off. However, she continued studying while living with her parents after marriage. *"The boy is also studying and building his career. Why should my daughter not study? Both can complete their education. After that, she can move to her in-laws,"* says Shambhu, her father.

It was around this time that Monika met Babita, the Community Motivator, who informed her about a range of skilling courses, that would let her upgrade her skills and make it easier to get a job. However, Babita's suggestion to send Monika for further studies did not go down well with Monika's family, especially her in-laws. Babita counselled Monika's parents and in-laws, convincing them of the programme's authenticity and value.

Once convinced, Monika chose to pursue a Software Diploma course. She flew to Pune, where she learned coding and computer languages for nine months. Soon after completing the course, Monika became an intern in the same centre at a monthly salary of Rs. 15,000 and has been working there as an employee. She received her first salary as a full-time employee in January this year, *"It is now Rs. 21,000 monthly,"* she says with a gleeful smile. At her age, she is the highest-earning girl in her village.



RESHMA BERWA

General Duty Assistant



Dressed in an olive-green shirt and pant uniform, taking confident strides across her workplace, Reshma Berwa is unrecognisable from the girl she was a few months ago.

Like millions of other girls in the country whose unpaid labour goes unrecognised, Reshma's daily chores back home in her village in Tonk entailed helping with errands, carrying buckets of water from the field, cooking, and cleaning. She recalls girls in her school dropping out as they were married off or due to economic hardships. Growing up seeing this, Reshma was determined to change this narrative.

Archana Gautam, a Community Motivator, visited Reshma during a door-to-door survey. After understanding Reshma's aspirations and interests, she told her about the available skill courses and job opportunities she could avail on completing the course. She showed interest in the General Duty Assistant course. However, there was much resistance from her family as the course was residential. The nearest skill training centre was 16 km. from Reshma's village. Concerned for her safety, her family was unwilling to send their girl away. *"Who will marry our girls if anything happens to them?"* said Badrilal, her father. Archana was prepared for this. Like other Manzil Community Motivators, she has been trained to work within the community and foster normative changes wherein girls are valued and better understood. Archana conducted a series of counselling sessions with Reshma's parents, citing examples of other girls working in the district, facilitated by Manzil. Archana also showed videos of the centre to assure the family about campus security.



Finally convinced, her family allowed Reshma to pursue the three-month course. After completing the training, Reshma appeared in interviews and was offered a job at a hospital in Jaipur with a monthly salary of Rs. 10,000. As a Duty Assistant, Reshma has several responsibilities. *"We have to take care of patients, monitor them. Check their blood pressure and sugar levels,"* she says.

Alongside her job, Reshma is pursuing her graduation and paying for it with her income. While working and studying in Jaipur, Reshma visits home a few times a month. *"When I go back to visit home, they all say – oh our doctor is here, the nurse is here. It feels very good,"* she says with a smile.

As for her family, they are overjoyed with their daughter's achievements. *"We are so proud of Reshma,"* says her mother, Bacchi Devi, with a big smile. On the cusp of a new life, Reshma knows that had she not been in this job, her life would have taken a different course. She reiterates that empowering girls financially helps them recognise their inherent worth and gives them agency to decide their path – in her case, pursuing graduation after a break and pushing back her age of marriage.



SEEMA JATT

Research Analyst



Belonging to Rahami, 60 kms. from Udaipur, Seema Jatt was born into a traditional family. As was the custom, they started pushing her for marriage as soon as she turned 16. At Seema's insistence, this was postponed until she was 18.

Marriage was never one of Seema's priorities. She wanted to pursue higher studies and carve out her future. However, in 2021, when she turned 20, her parents convinced Seema to get married against her wishes. She was also compelled to discontinue her studies. This made Seema feel helpless. According to her, she was unhappy in her marriage and thought that she did not have a purpose in life.

During this time, she met Bhagwati Joshi, a Community Motivator from Manzil. Seema's initial selection of a Beautician Course didn't interest her, and she dropped out mid-way. Soon after, she joined the Office Assistant Course, which she successfully completed. Her family and her in-laws did not support her decision. However, with Bhagwati by her side, Seema joined a company as a Research Analyst in Udaipur at a monthly salary of Rs. 9,000.



During that time, Seema's husband also lost his job — making her the only earning member of the family. Looking back in gratitude, Seema's father, Madhu Laal, acknowledges Manzil's efforts in assuaging their fears about their daughter's safety. *"We were scared of letting our girl go into the city,"* he says.

As for Seema, the job has made her more sure of her abilities. *"When I started, I did not even know how to hold a mouse properly,"* she says. *"We had on-job training, where they taught us everything, from data entry, excel, data-mining to mouse shortcuts,"* Seema adds.

Seema is already considering upgrading to another job with a higher salary. *"Manzil is important because it helps girls like me, from small villages, realize our potential in becoming financially independent,"* she says.



MONIKA GARASIYA

Master Trainer, Tailor



When Monika Garasiya of Dungarpur took her mentor and Manzil district coordinator Sneha on a ride on her Scooty, it was no ordinary moment. It was a moment of vindication for a girl who had been seen as a burden her whole life.

Having contracted polio at the age of one, Monika's right leg was permanently disabled even before she learnt to walk. Belonging to an economically deprived family, Monika was like an invisible member who finished school and continued living at home doing household chores. Unlike other girls her age, Monika was not considered for marriage because of her disability. The monthly disability pension she received from the government was hardly a consolation.

When the Manzil team met Monika, she was so demotivated that the thought that she could study further – let alone be financially independent – was the last thing on her mind. At that time, there was a special programme for disabled youths in the Dungarpur district. *"We had 70-80 girls, including Monika, who got enrolled thanks to this special drive,"* recalls Sneha.



Monika enrolled in an RSLDC-sponsored skill training centre, where she pursued her training in tailoring. This new lease on life drove her, and even when her father passed away in the village, Monika did not give up. She took a 10-day break from her course and resumed the course after attending her father's last rites. After completing the training, Monika was appointed trainer at the same centre, on a monthly salary of Rs. 7,000. After a few months, she moved to another training centre, also as a master trainer, and now works at Divyang Kaushal Kendra as a master trainer.

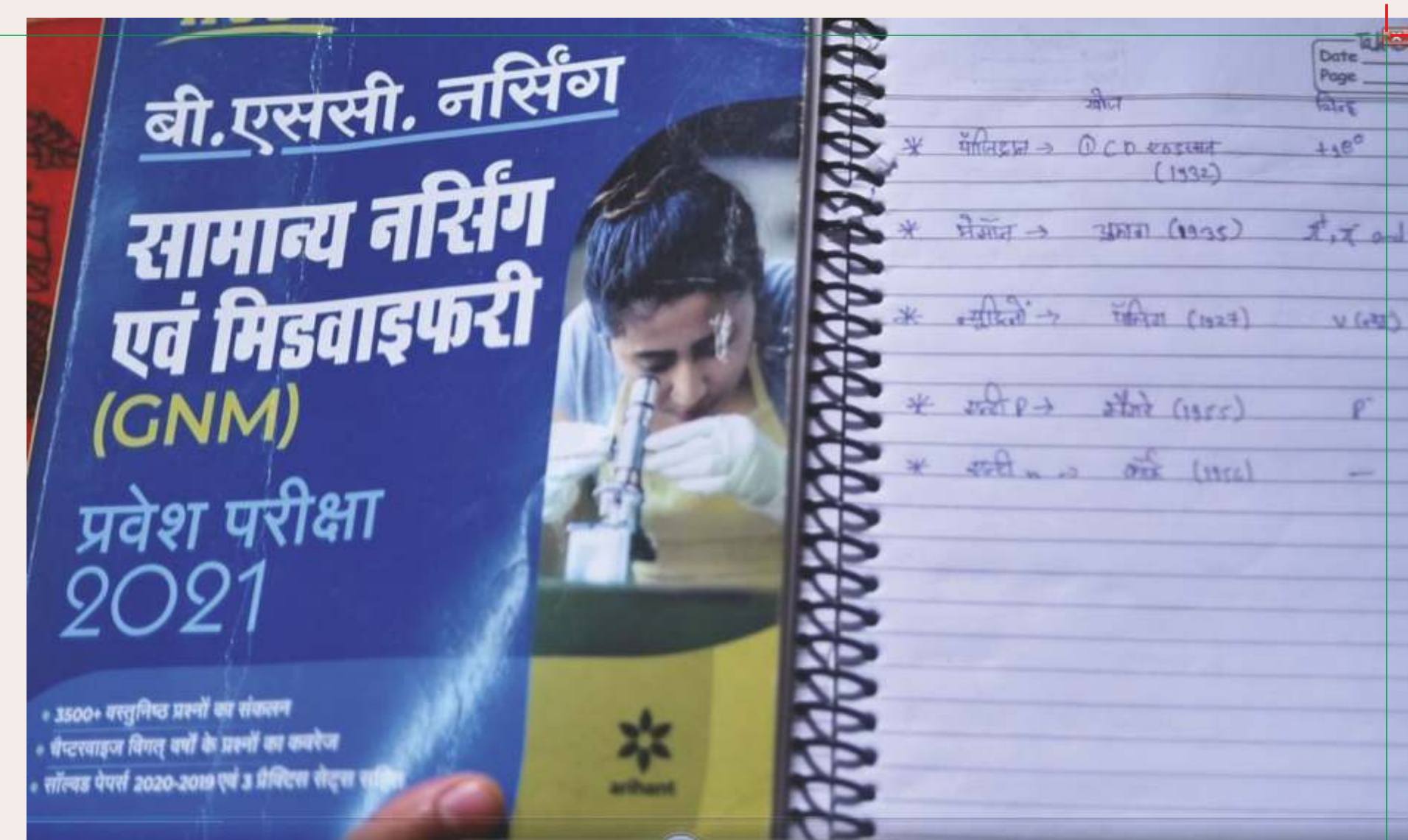
After her father's death, the burden of responsibility has, in a complete twist of fate, fallen on Monika, who has been single-handedly sending money to her mother. While many girls send part of their savings home, Monika, one of the rare cases, sends her entire salary home. *"Since I stay on campus and my living expenses are free, I can send my entire salary home. Besides, my mother needs the money,"* she says.

Over time, Monika's achievements have been widely applauded. The Social Welfare Department gave her a Scooty to aid her mobility, while the Former Secretary of RSLDC honoured Monika by giving her a sewing machine. In July 2022, Monika was awarded by the Hon'ble Minister of State for Sports and Skills, Ashok Chandna, on World Youth Skills Day. Ridiculed initially, today Monika has emerged as changemaker in the locality. Monika's skills have only strengthened over time, and there is now talk of her setting up a boutique in Udaipur. *"Disability should never become a hindrance in one's path to success. If you truly desire it, you can accomplish anything with the right skills,"* she says.



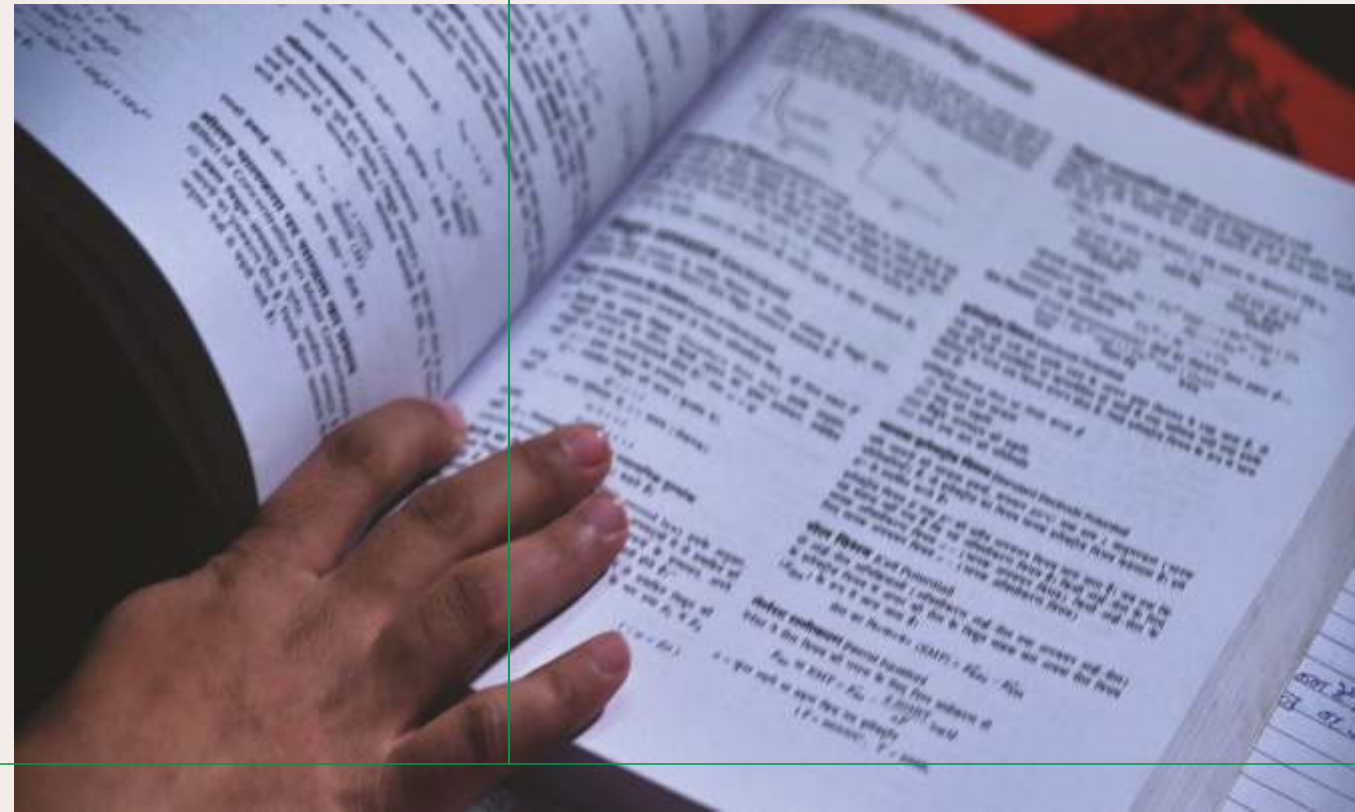
KASHISH SHARMA

General Duty Assistant



At 18 years of age, Kashish Sharma of Gulapura village of Bhilwara district has an incredibly clear vision for her future and is one of Manzil's youngest achievers. The daughter of a textile mill worker, Kashish always wanted to work and earn a decent livelihood, unlike most women in her village. She has already made good on pursuing her goal and is working as General Duty Assistant at a hospital in Jaipur.

Growing up in a family of meagre means — her father being the sole breadwinner — Kashish always knew her family could not afford the fees for her to study beyond school. She also sought to contribute to her family's expenses, given how hard her father had to work to make ends meet. In March 2020, while she was awaiting her Class XII results, the COVID-19 lockdown delayed her plans to go to college. At that time, Manzil's Community Motivator, Kantha, visited the family and informed them about the courses that Kashish could pursue. She enrolled in the General Duty Assistant Course, which trains students in the practical aspects of hospital work — such as what to do in an emergency. In her first interview, Kashish qualified for a job at a local hospital. She joined work in May 2021.



After taking up the job, Kashish decided to move out of her home in Bhilwara and rent a room in Jaipur, sharing it with another course-mate. *"It was Kantha didi's assurance that convinced my parents that I would be fine in Jaipur. She helped me set up my new place, looking into things like electricity and water,"* says Kashish.

Kashish's financial acumen and clarity are incredible. With the Rs. 10,000 salary she gets per month, she pays Rs. 2,000 towards room rent, Rs. 1,000 towards provident fund, and another Rs. 1,000 towards other expenses and saves the remaining Rs. 6,000 in her bank account. From time to time, she also sends money home to her parents.

Kashish seeks to grow further in her career and is presently pursuing a Lab Technician Course. She also wants to get a Bachelor's degree in Science. Her parents stand by her and are not pushing her to get married. *"If I did not have this job, I would have been married within two years,"* she admits.



DEEPA SHARDA

Tech-Support



Growing up in Chachyavaas village, Ajmer district, Deepa Sharda, from a very young age, had to single-handedly take care of her family. With her father working outside the home and a mother who needed to be cared for due to a disability, Deepa was left to fend for herself. Deepa started working while in school, doing odd jobs wherever she found the opportunity, which paid the bare minimum. Her older sister used to help at home before she married and moved to her in-laws. Her brother, meanwhile, moved to Ajmer city to work. For the longest time, Deepa was the only child at home.

However, Deepa wanted to pursue higher education and sought an independent life outside her village. *"I always wanted to do something else."* She took the prestigious National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) entrance test and qualified for placement in one of its top centres. However, she had to opt out because the family could not afford the fees.



During her NIFT exam preparation, Deepa first heard of Manzil through one of its Community Motivators. *"I always wanted to leave my comfort zone and try new things,"* she says. *"I thought of putting my dreams of becoming a fashion designer on hold and becoming financially independent first."* Deepa decided to take up the three-month Cloud Computing course in Jaipur, facilitated by Manzil. The initial stages of the course were challenging. *"I studied in a small village school and had never even switched on a computer. But as I started learning, things got easier,"* she says. Her commitment and perseverance made her one of the only two girls who qualified for the grilling national level certification to pass the course. Skilled in a reputed course, Deepa plans to complete her graduation and join a software development company. In the meantime, she wants to hone her computer skills while earning to support her family.

Valuing her independence, Deepa continues to live in Jaipur with a friend whom she met through Manzil. Deepa believes that the best of her career is yet to come. Deepa manages to save some money, which she sends home. She tries to visit home once a month, and most of her time is spent with her mother.



VINEETA KRIPLANI

System Engineer



Growing up in a small town with father who ran a mobile repairing business, Vineeta was always interested in computers, despite never owning one. Her parents never discouraged her ambitions but didn't know enough to say anything more about it. When she was in Grade 10, Vineeta's father got into a car accident, leaving him unable to walk. "This affected our business and our family's finances. I had to apply for a scholarship for need-based students whose families cannot afford school fees," she says.

Quiet and determined, Vineeta finished her schooling in Bhilwara and followed it up with a Bachelor's in Computer Application (BCA) from her city college. Despite the COVID-19 lockdown forcing her to stay home after graduation, Vineeta watched hours of YouTube videos about vloggers in her field. *"I watched their lives and learned so much about their journeys."* She also read up all she could find on new programming technologies and languages, which is why, when Vineeta met Akram from Manzil and heard about the three-month course in Cloud Computing, she immediately jumped at the opportunity. She did the three-month course at Jaipur, and soon after qualifying the competitive certification process, she landed a job at a global software development company.

Working here, Vineeta is doing what she enjoys the most and enthusiastically talks about her role *"This is a service-based company where clients come to us with their requirements. For instance, if they have a department store business, they might need software to help users easily buy something from their website. Based on such requirements, we build a product,"* she says. She further adds that because of the Manzil programme, she can live her dream of working in the tech industry.



ARCHANA SEN

Telecaller



When Archana, of Govindgarh village in Chomu tehsil of Jaipur district, was growing up, she saw two of her elder sisters being married off while both were in the middle of their studies. In a family comprising five children – three girls and two boys – her father, on his meagre driver's salary, was in a hurry to marry off his daughters from a very young age. The father did not see value in letting their girl's study as he never thought they would work and earn a living.

After Archana completed her schooling, she met Community Motivator Saroj and expressed a desire to continue her studies. Saroj routinely visited Archana's house to convince her family, who had firm reservations about sending Archana out alone. Archana was pursuing a job in a beauty parlour, but she always dreamed of doing more. After much persuading, Saroj convinced Archana's family to send their daughter to get trained.





Archana took a course on soft skills and, soon after, heard of a vacancy in a bank in her district from her Community Motivator. An offer had opened up in a reputed national-level private bank in Jaipur, where Archana now works as a telecaller, answering queries and addressing complaints. She now earns a significantly higher salary than in her previous job. In the nine months of her employment, Archana's space within her own home has changed considerably. Archana now supports her younger brother's education and is a critical decision-maker within her family. She has also convinced her elder sister's in-laws to allow her to work.

Meanwhile, Archana is also pursuing a post-graduation degree in Geography with her own funds. However, the most significant change has been in her confidence. *"Earlier, I used to sit at home, and even going out locally into Chomu seemed difficult. Now I regularly travel to Jaipur city on my own,"* she says. *"I cannot recognise the person I used to be. I can't sit at home anymore,"* she says.



GYARASI TELI

Emergency Care Support



Growing up in a conservative family in the Bhilwara district, Gyarasi Teli remembers that even leaving the house without her parent's permission was impossible. However, she was committed to complete her studies; fortunately, her parents and in-laws supported her. She went on to finish school and enrol for graduation while still living with her parents, despite being married early.

While pursuing graduation, her parents started pressuring her to move in with her in-laws. Gyarasi, on the other hand, wanted to complete her education, continue living with her parents and support them financially.



Gyarasi recalls, *"Moolchand didi from Manzil informed us about the different types of free skill development courses run by the RSLDC for girls in rural areas. At first, I could not believe that so many opportunities existed."*

However, Gyarasi's parents were hesitant as they did not know about the relevance of this course and what it would entail. Gyarasi was resolute, and she took her parents to attend several counselling sessions organised by Manzil. To further assure them of the course's value, she took them to visit the skill training centre in Bhilwara for her admission.

"When my parents saw the centre, talked to the manager, and saw the facilities available for girls, they were convinced," she says. Gyarasi then enrolled in the General Duty Assistant Course and trained for five months. Gyarasi's efforts in convincing her parents came to fruition after she completed the training and got placed in Emergency Care Support at a local hospital in Bhilwara. A few months into the job, Gyarasi now earns Rs. 7,000 every month. While she was offered a higher salary in Jaipur, she chose to stay close to her family.

The financial security has also given Gyarasi the confidence to pursue a General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM) Course to become a Nursing Officer. *"Thanks to Manzil, I have become financially capable of taking control of what I want to do with my life!"*





COMMUNITY MOTIVATORS
The Backbone of Manzil



NAJMUN NISHA

Bhilwara

Sitting on the sunlit balcony of her newly constructed two-storeyed house in Bhilwara district, 41-year-old Najmun Nisha is exhausted from the day's work, but her heart is full. There have been so many highs in the last two years of her being a Community Motivator under Project Manzil — a fitting counter to the decades of lows that preceded it. *“My mother and brother were strongly opposed my going out for work. Now, with great “shaan” (pride), my mother tells everyone that my daughter earns as much as any man. My brother Saleem argues with anyone who says women shouldn't go outside to work,”* says Najmun, her eyes shining.

Three years ago, Najmun couldn't have imagined any of this. Like so many girls in her community, Najmun was married off at the age of 18 years and soon after had her first child. For the first several years of their life, she and her husband worked at a shop owned by their relatives. Their pitiful monthly income of Rs. 500 did not even cover their basic needs. To supplement their income and pay for her children's education, Najmun recalled doing odd jobs, mainly tailoring and teaching. *“I used to stitch curtains, ‘razai’ (duvet covers), and bed linen. I was good at teaching Urdu, so I even took on students, earning Rs. 30 per student.”*

It was during this time that Najmun heard of Project Manzil and decided to apply for it. She recalls facing opposition. *“But I wanted to secure the future for our family and, more importantly, get into social*

work and help girls get access to opportunities that I did not have,” she adds.

Joining Manzil as a Community Motivator almost immediately did many things for the family. On the personal level, it helped Najmun take a stand against the social pressures coercing her underage daughter to marry. On the financial side, it was a significant boost to the family, especially as it eventually allowed them to secure a home loan to buy a home.

“The onus of running the household mostly falls on my shoulders,” she says.

Working as a Community Motivator while managing a family with all its responsibilities isn't a cakewalk. On the field, she oversees the Kothri block, which covers 25 villages. In every village, she first gets in touch with the Sarpanch and other local staff like Anganwadi workers. *“We need to build relationships with people - because why else will a villager trust me and suddenly put their young daughter in my charge?”*

“There are many success stories, and many people know me as the person who has helped their family,” Najmun says. Due to her intervention, many girls are now working in Jaipur city and earning for a dignified life.

In the two years she has been working with Manzil, a lot has changed for her too. *“I am the only working woman from our community in our area.”*

She persuaded her daughter to continue her studies. After a gap of a few decades, she resumed her studies, and she is currently in her second year of B.A. She goes everywhere on her Scooty, something she could not even drive a couple of years ago.



KALI GURJAR

Tonk

Kali Gurjar, from Tonk, was born in an ordinary family of six members. Growing up, Kali's father never distinguished between his sons and daughters. He taught her to drive a bike, a scooter, and a tractor. *"He always had high hopes for me and motivated me to do what I wanted,"* she says. However, her whole life took a turn in 2016 when she lost her father to a tragic road accident.

To become the woman her father had always envisioned, Kali completed her graduation but did not know how to get a job. During this time, she came across Manzil and joined a three-month General Duty Assistant (GDA) training course hoping to get a job. Soon after, she joined a local hospital as GDA. But she was inspired by Manzil's vision. *"Manzil project inspired me. I wanted to be like Archana Didi and support girls to become economically independent,"* Kali says.

In 2020, Kali joined Manzil as a Community Motivator. With Manzil, Kali found perfect alignment with her goals. In the two years, she has motivated 200 girls to join skill courses and facilitated jobs for over 50 girls from Niwai block. Door-to-door surveys, enrolments, and motivating girls and their parents are a constant. This also means spending more hours on the road and even taking up a rented room, where Kali pays a monthly rent of Rs. 2,000. Further down the line, she wants to pursue a Master's degree in Social Work. These endeavours usually raise eyebrows in her community, but Kali doesn't feel answerable to anybody, especially since she has the support of her immediate family. What is truly important to Kali is being part of the change in the lives of young girls — because she knows what it is like to have someone in your life empower you, even when the whole society is against them.

On World Youth Skills Day, Kali was awarded the Youth Icon Award for her endeavours by Shri Ashok Chandna, Hon'ble Minister, Department of Skill, Employment & Entrepreneurship. She concludes by saying, *"My father would be proud to see the empowered individual I am today."*



MANISHA MEENA

Dungarpur

all her background and values, serving as the channel to manifest future goals. *"Since we grew up in a more urban part of Dungarpur, I wanted to see more of village life and motivate girls to carve a life of their own,"* she said. In September 2020, Manisha's Manzil journey began, taking her on a whirlwind tour around rural Rajasthan.

Manisha Meena, 28 was raised in a home where women ran everything and her mother, a police officer, made all the important decisions. It also explains why Manisha chosen the life she has and is now a Community Motivator for Manzil.

Manisha's mother had joined the police force when she was 18 years old, much before she got married, and was the first person from her village to go out for work. With such a role model in her home, Manisha always aspired for a financially secure future. *"I always knew I would be like my mother with a stable and powerful job,"* she says.

After schooling, she secured a diploma in Agriculture, which ensured her direct admission into the Agricultural University in Jodhpur. When she graduated in March 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown, she heard about Manzil from her cousin. Manzil was the right confluence of

There has been so much for Manisha to learn, *"When we are in the community, we have to speak in the native language and not in Hindi.* She further adds, *"Also, more than parents, brothers play an important role in decision-making these days,"* she says. She recalls a case where a girl was ready to do a skill training course. Her parents had agreed, and her brother, despite being sceptical, had given her a go. *"However, when I called the next day for confirmation, he said he won't send his sister because he was doubtful of our intentions."* However, after multiple rounds of counselling and intervention of the Sarpanch, he finally consented for his sister to join the course.

"Initially, things were tough. But now, I am so familiar with all the villages and every person there that they all know me and talk to me easily. Whenever I visit, they all call us 'the Manzil walein' (the Manzil people)," Manisha says with a laugh.



BABITA JANGID

Jaipur

Born and raised in Delhi, Babita Jangid, 37, one of Manzil's Community Motivators, was an orphan living with her relatives. She was married off at a young age and moved to the interiors of Rajasthan, where her husband's family lived. However, her in-laws were supportive of her getting an education. Babita completed her graduation and pursued various professional ventures while her husband moved to Dubai for a carpentry job. *"I was in the dairy business for a few years, selling milk from our two buffaloes. I next started a coaching centre, where I taught General Knowledge and Reasoning to 55 students,"* she recalls. However, the pandemic and nationwide lockdown put an end to her coaching business.

"With three children to feed, a paralysed mother-in-law, it was challenging to have no job or money," Babita said.

At that time, she came to know about Manzil's Community Motivator position. Already having shifted base to Kothputli, a Rajasthani town closer to her hometown of Delhi, Babita realised this was the opportunity she had been waiting for. The first couple of months were tough, recalls Babita. She did not know anybody in her area, and most of the residents in the village were apprehensive of her. As is customary for Manzil CMs, she met Manju Sharma of Mordha village, an Anganwadi Karyakarta. For Babita, this was the beginning of a rewarding professional and personal association.

In the initial cases she worked on, a few families had even asked Babita to leave Kothputli since they were suspicious of her and did not believe in what she was saying. However, encouraged by the guidance of senior Manzil staff, Babita kept doing her job. She encouraged the girls to enrol in classes that were deemed outside the *"female sphere"* and offered advice to parents when they were afraid.

"Women are usually encouraged to go into tailoring or become beauticians because they are the 'safe options.' These jobs allow women to work while being indoors," she says.

"But I refrain from putting girls into these typical courses because they don't allow workers to progress professionally beyond a certain point. In other courses, there is a better chance for professional growth, exposure and experience. The girls get to step out of their homes, work in towns or cities, and can boost their finances," she says.

After two years of hard work on Babita's part, the parents, who were initially hesitant about sending their daughters outside the village, are proud of their daughter's achievements.

Shambhu Parjapati, whose daughter Monika was the first girl Babita got enrolled, recalls how Babita assured his family about their daughter's safety. *"She promised us our daughter would be safe. And true to the word, after the course, she brought back our daughter, just as she had promised she would, and now, a diploma holder,"* he recalls.

In two years, Babita has got 50 girls from her block skilled through Manzil's programme, all of whom are now employed in various sectors. *"Manzil's training and guidance helped me teach many girls about the importance of financial independence. I feel content with the work I have done,"* she says.

