Protsahan
India Foundation

Measuring What Cannot Be Counted

Building Agency Among Migrant Girls at the Last Mile for Higher Education, Formal Employment and Leadership through Protsahan's Trauma-Informed Fellowship



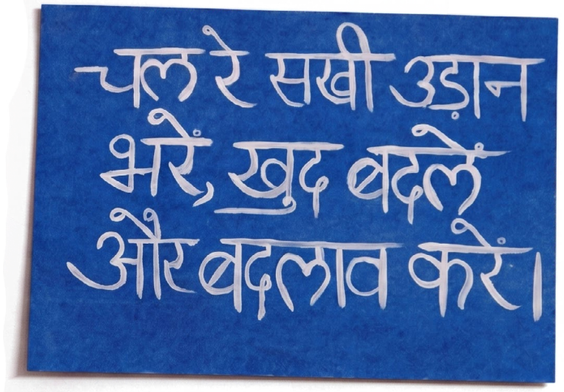


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Protsahan is a Delhi-based nonprofit organization dedicated to the care, rehabilitation, and reintegration of historically marginalized adolescent girls at the intersection of ultra poverty, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and migration. Since 2010, Protsahan has supported over 96,000 girls in Delhi's urban slums, enabling them to break intergenerational cycles of child marriage, child labor, and child sexual abuse. Through arts-based education and life skills training, we equip them for autonomous and thriving adulthood while strengthening their families' social protection to prevent institutionalization.

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Names and identifying details have been changed to protect privacy. Photographs and stories featured in this report are authentic, but images and narratives may not correspond to the same individual. This is done to safeguard the identity, dignity, and safety of children and young people who have experienced violence, exploitation, or other forms of adversity.



Note From CEO

Across India's rapidly expanding urban margins, young women from ultrapoor and migrant communities continue to navigate an unequal and fragile transition from education to livelihood. While access to schooling has improved over the past decade, the pathway from education to dignified and sustainable work remains deeply fragmented.

For first-generation learners, education represents a powerful beginning but not a guarantee of opportunity. What follows is often a period marked by uncertainty, where aspirations are negotiated against structural barriers, gendered expectations, and economic precarity. This transition phase remains one of the most invisible yet critical gaps in the development ecosystem.

At Protsahan, our work is rooted in communities shaped by migration and informality. The families we engage with are predominantly employed in the informal economy as construction workers, domestic workers, and street-based vendors, having migrated to Delhi from states such as Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Haryana in search of stability and access. Within these communities, many young women are the first in their families to receive a formal education. While education opens new possibilities, they continue to face barriers that limit their access to higher education, employment, and economic independence.

Over 16 years of sustained engagement, continuum of care, anchored in our H.E.A.R.T framework - Health, Education, Arts, Rights, and Technology - we have supported more than 96,000 marginalised adolescent girls across 130 urban slums in Delhi to enrol in and complete schooling. Yet, this progress reveals a deeper challenge, i.e., completing secondary education does not consistently translate into access to higher education, vocational pathways, or meaningful employment.

This disconnect is not simply about employability, it is also fundamentally about access and agency. Young women growing up in ultrapoverty encounter layered vulnerabilities like sexual and gender-based violence, restricted mobility, limited exposure to formal work environments, lack of access to professional networks, and deeply embedded socio-cultural norms. These constraints often redirect aspirations toward immediate survival needs, with early forced marriage and unpaid caregiving roles continuing to shape life trajectories.



These challenges are further intensified by a broader global context marked by uncertainty, which has reshaped the realities that young people must navigate. For marginalized young women in urban slums, these uncertainties often deepen existing vulnerabilities, limiting already scarce opportunities for stability and upward mobility.

In response to this, girls encouraged Protsahan to launch the Trauma-Informed Fellowship in September 2021. The fellowship is designed for young women aged 17–24, particularly first-generation college students, and adopts a holistic approach that integrates skill-building with psychosocial support. Recognizing that employability is shaped not only by technical competencies but also by lived experiences of marginalization, it prioritizes counseling for trauma cases, building confidence, communication skills, workplace readiness, and exposure to professional environments.

A key pillar of the program also focuses on micro-entrepreneurship. In contexts where formal sector entry remains exclusionary, micro-entrepreneurial pathways are positioned as a strategic and empowering route to economic participation. Young women are supported to design hyper-local enterprises, understand market linkages, and build sustainable livelihood models rooted in their own realities.

Equally central is the Fellowship's trauma-informed lens, which integrates psychosocial support, mentorship, and safe learning environments. It creates continuity in spaces where young women often experience disruption, offering not just skills but a sustained ecosystem of care, guidance, and opportunity.

Context is expertise. Earlier particiapnts of fellowship have helped shaped program for future cohorts. Communities don't just provide feedback but help design solutions.

- Sonal Kapoor, Founder & CEO

Barriers to Success

As part of the needs assessment process for the program, we conducted interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with over 300 alumnae girl champions of Protsahan aged between 17-24 years old. The objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the low retention rates in the job market, along with high dropout rates or failure to pursue higher education, leading to early marriage. The key reasons identified for not entering or remaining in the job market, along with the percentage of participants that expressed them, are highlighted below:

75% migrant girls expressed inability to receive feedback from employers and difficulties with basic technical skills and professional communication

95% migrant girls expressed limited understanding of formal workspace systems, HR policies, and compliance requirements, leading to challenges in navigating these environments effectively

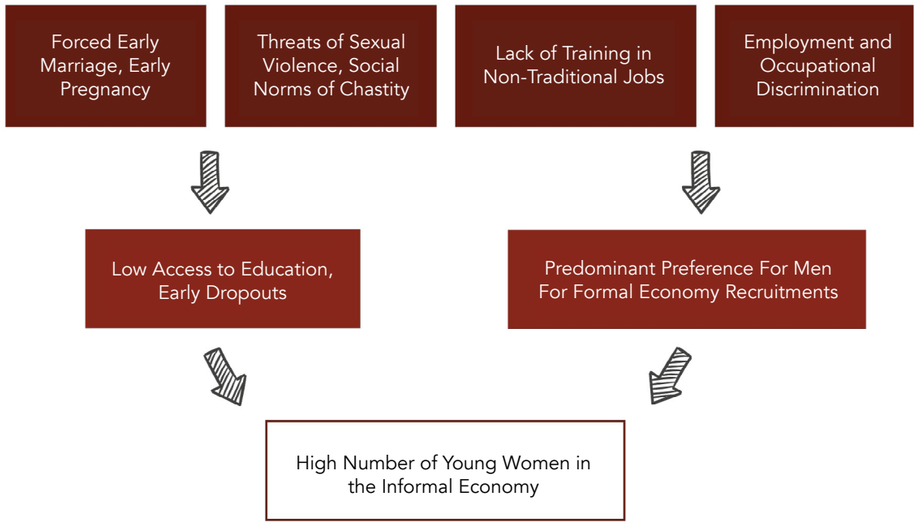
87% migrant girls expressed facing sexual and gender based violence in their lives

92% migrant girls expressed challenges in finding relevant opportunities with potential for growth, exacerbated by the prevalence of fake or scam job listings

95% migrant girls expressed additional responsibilities for managing household chores and caring for younger siblings, impacting performance at work and restricting job options

85% migrant girls expressed reluctance from families to send them outside their community for work, limiting their options

What Restricts Young Women From the Formal Economy?



Source: Guide For the Preparation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment, YEP, ILO, 2008 (Geneva).

What Happens When Girls Are More Equipped To Join The Workforce?

There are 253 million adolescents in the age group 10-19 years in India



$32 Billion can be added each year to India's economy by bringing girls into the workforce.



Women are most likely to invest their assets in their children and improve intergenerational development outcomes.



Source: World Bank, 2011, World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development (Washington)

Building Women's Workforce in India

The migrant girls from marginalized slum communities in Delhi have experienced extreme forms of oppression and exclusion with limited access to education and skills for the longest time. Their identities are long lost and not found in the hierarchy of the social ladder with their needs and requirements not acknowledged or considered.

To counter these challenges, Protsahan India Foundation launched the Fellowship program in September 2021 with the goal of holistic Employability Enhancement and Leadership Skill Development to combat the intergenerational cycle of sexual and gender-based violence and poverty.

The goal of the Fellowship is to bridge the gap between migrant girls and the opportunities available to them through increased accessibility, social agency, advocacy, and civic participation. These girls are first-generation learners in their families and communities to witness the importance of financial, socioeconomic, and job-oriented capabilities in professional settings.

The program is implemented for migrant girls aged 17-24 in slum communities. The program has been working towards preparing young girls to transition from education and learning to economic opportunities and active citizenship. It envisions a life for migrant girls to be self-empowered in their journey to higher education and become working professionals.

How The Migrant Girls' Fellowship Took Shape at the Grassroots

Looking Back at 2021 When the Fellowship Began



This is how the fellowship took shape, with the vision to empower first-generation college women, aged 17-24, for meaningful and well-paid employment, fostering gender equity, and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, abuse and trauma. initially called the Girl Champions Fellowship, it eventually evolved to Trauma-Informed Fellowships owing to continuous evolution of the design of the intervention based in feedback from the program participants themselves.



Girl Champion Fellows at a Glance:

- Aged 17 to 24
- First-generation school goers in their families
- First women in their communities to go out and work in formal workplaces
- Grew up in vulnerable situations in urban slum communities in Delhi with limited access to education and livelihood for women

Migrant Adolescent Girls: Context of Vulnerability

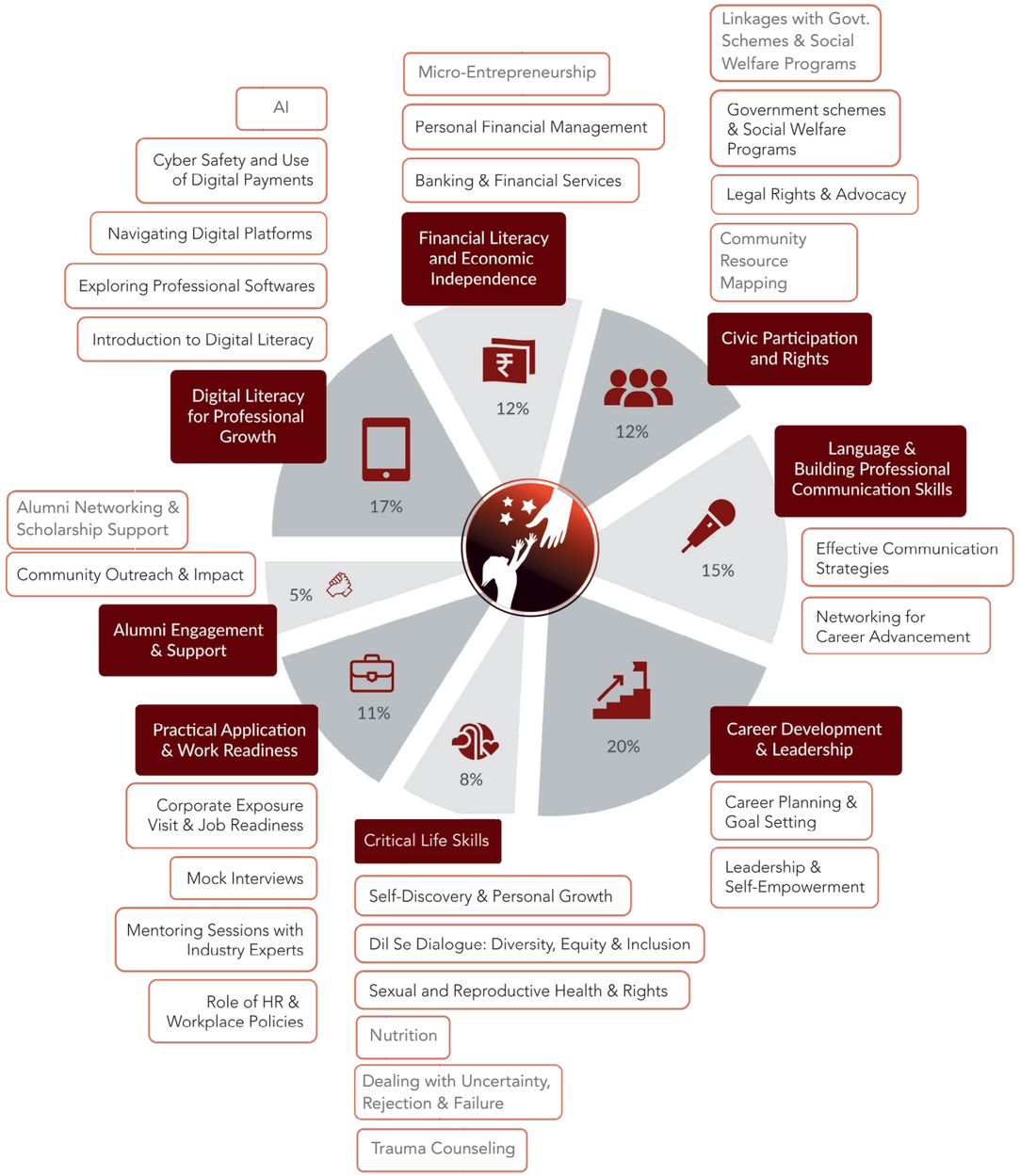
- Migrant adolescent girls in India are a largely invisible and growing group, constituting almost 20% of India's population
- In the 130 slum neighborhoods where Protsahan works, aspirations of migrant girls have been completely neglected by parents and communities
- As many as 89% of girls report sexual violence before the age of 12 in the slums where we work
- 83% of girls do not have access to safe learning spaces, psychosocial counseling services, creative life skills, access to information & internet, quality education, toilets, clean drinking water, proper nutrition, or adequate sexual & reproductive health and rights in the slums where we work
- Nearly 16% adolescent girls* in India are married as child brides so that parents have to spend less on the dowry or education

*UNICEF India: https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/end-child-marriage



Our Theory of Change

The Gender-Transformative Modularized Curriculum



Key Challenges Among Adolescent Girls In India

Health and Well-being

58%

Adolescent girls have received knowledge on SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights)
Sharma, S., & Sharma, P. (2019)

80-90%

50M children are affected by mental health issues and receive no support (UNICEF, 2021)

53%

Girls demonstrated correct knowledge of HIV prevention (WHO, 2021)

Breaking Childhoods: Child Marriage and Sexual Abuse

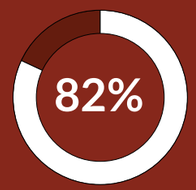
23%

of women (20–24) married before 18
(UNFPA, 2021)

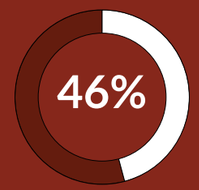
50%

reported offences against children are sexual offences (NPA, 2016)

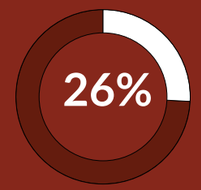
Education and Skills



of NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) Youth are Women*



Girls in India report parental encouragement
Mastercard. (2018)



Girls in India completed 12+ years of education
(NFHS-5), 2019–21

*India Employment Report 2024 (84.9 mn Women vs 18.5 mn Men)

65 Female youth have digital skills, for every 100 male youth (UNICEF, 2021)

Understanding Barriers to Girls' Agency in Ultrapoverty Context

Migration shapes the lives of many young women who enter Protsahan's Programs. For families moving between villages and cities in search of work, instability becomes a constant. Frequent movement disrupts education, breaks relationships, and limits access to health, protection, and entitlements. Girls are often pulled out of school for household or caregiving responsibilities, affecting not just academic progress, but also confidence, language, and the ability to imagine a stable future.

In urban settings, families often respond to perceived risk by increasing control over a girl's mobility and choices. Restrictions on movement, surveillance, and pressure to marry early are frequently justified as protection. These responses narrow access to education, skills and work, and deepen dependence, when independence is most needed.

Many adolescent girls and young women from migrant and lower-income communities do not enter skilling programs with equal starting points. Experiences of violence, neglect, or chronic stress, often normalised within their environments, shape how they see themselves, how they learn, and how they engage with opportunity.

A Trauma-Informed Fellowship begins by acknowledging this reality. Learning, decision-making, and persistence are shaped by emotional safety. Trauma-informed practice does not centre trauma as an identity, nor does it lower expectations. Instead, it consciously designs respectful spaces where young women can engage without fear of judgment or failure. What is often understood as "lack of aspiration" is, in reality, a reflection of constrained environments where choices are structurally limited.

For us at Protsahan, this means designing a fellowship that responds not only to skill gaps but to displacement, invisibility and loss of voice. Agency is not built in isolation. It is negotiated within families, influenced by community norms, and often constrained by structural inequalities. Through tech-enabled social mobility, young women are supported to use technology as a pathway to access knowledge, networks and opportunities, and to take risks, articulate aspirations, and make informed decisions for themselves.



Impact Highlights

The Fellowship Initiative, started as part of the Girl Champions Program in 2021-22, with first batch graduating in 2022-23.

417
Fellows Graduated



30
Fellows graduated from the 2022-2023 Cohort

39
Fellows graduated from the 2023-2024 Cohort

40
Fellows graduated from the 2024-2025 Cohort

308
Fellows graduated from the 2025-2026 Cohort

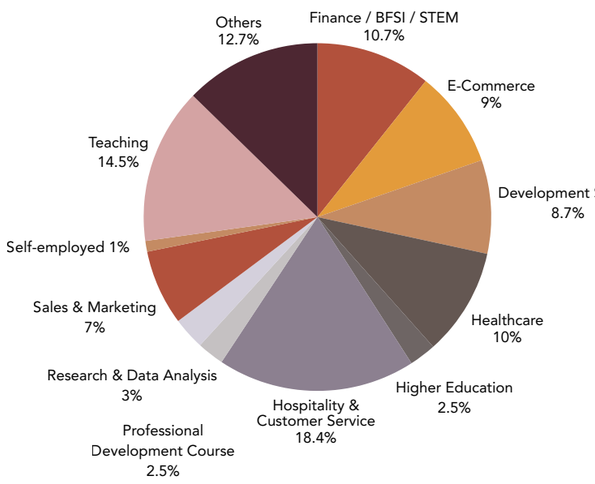
69%
Increase in the average household income of our fellows, with a significant norm shift, for many families shifting from below the poverty line to the middle class, with an additional 15,000 - 20,000 INR

99.7%
of girls who avoided forced early marriage, retaining agency over marriage and motherhood beyond age 18

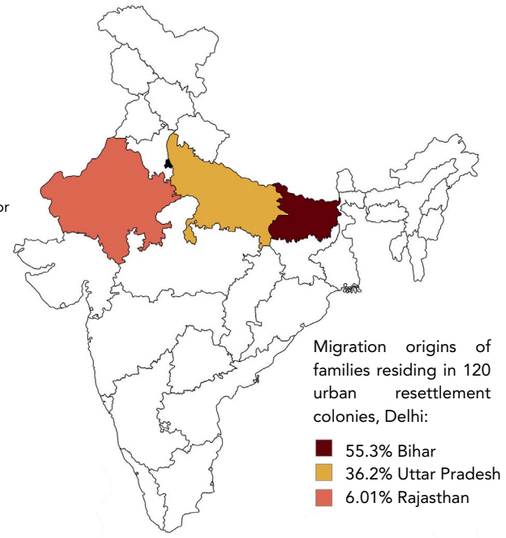
From asking their brothers to buy **sanitary pads in black poly bags,** to now taking their mothers to gynaecologists for fibroid and menopause care

95%
of girls access digital tools through Protsahan centres in urban slums

Sector-Wise Distribution of The Fellows' Employment



Geographic Distribution of Family Migration Origins of Fellows



Migration origins of families residing in 120 urban resettlement colonies, Delhi:

- 55.3% Bihar
- 36.2% Uttar Pradesh
- 6.01% Rajasthan

Gender Norms & Reproductive Rights

% of fellows who disagreed with these statements

Fellows (17-24 years) responded to a one-time set of statements on gender roles, reproduction, and women's employment. Across the statements, the majority of fellows held equity-aligned positions, rejecting gender-unequal norms around marriage, family decision-making, and workplace rights.

100%
"Husband can remarry if wife cannot have children."

94.6%
"Man should decide family size and women shouldn't be hired due to maternity leave."

92.9%
"Women's biology makes them a hiring liability."

91.1%
"Women are natural caregivers, shouldn't work."



98.2%
"Man alone decides whether a woman gives birth."

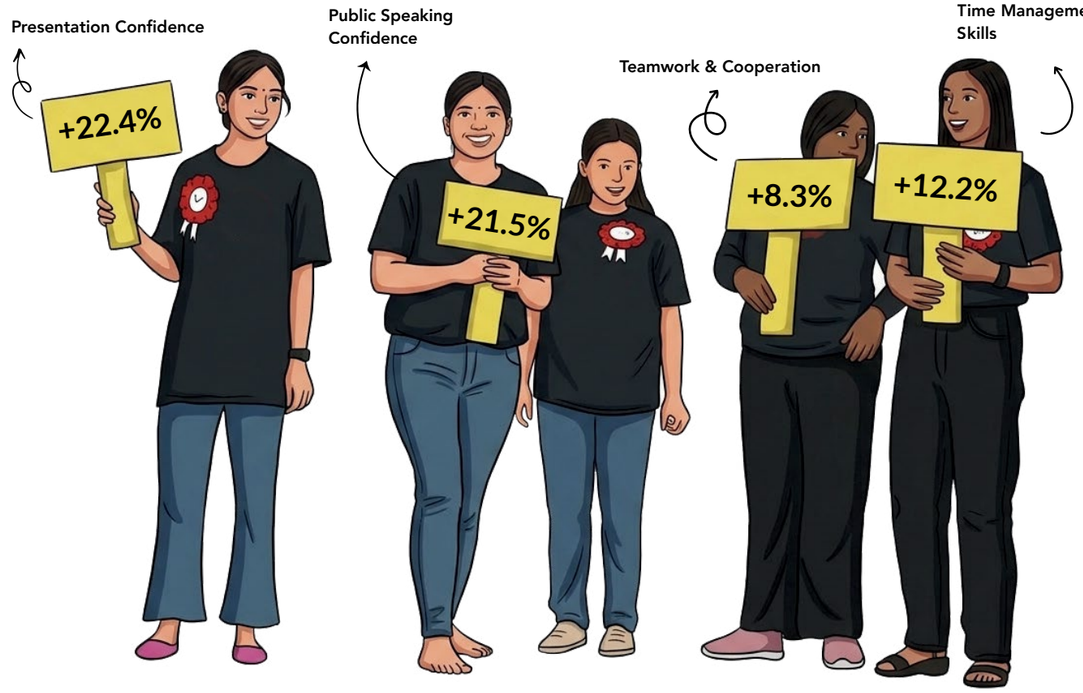
91.1%
"Contraceptive use makes a woman "not a good wife."

85.7%
"Birth control goes against God's will."

80.4%
"Sex should only be for having children."

78.6%
"Having children is important for everyone."

Growing Confidence, Finding Their Voice



Findings are based on a randomly selected sample of **56 fellows** (18.2% of the 308 fellows who completed the Trauma-Informed Fellowship in the batch of 2025–26).

Scan these QR Codes to learn more about the Fellowship Outcomes.

Why is “Fellowship” the Right Word?

Most programmes that work with adolescent girls and young women from urban poverty describe themselves in a certain language. Skilling. Placement. Vocational training. The vocabulary is functional, but it carries a quiet assumption that the girl’s life is missing a skill, and once the skill is delivered, the gap is closed.

We have come to believe this is the wrong frame.

What is missing in the lives of the young women we work with is not just a skill. It is the conditions in which a young woman can imagine herself as an agent of her own life and then, slowly and with support, act on that imagination. The deficit is not just technical. It is structural, emotional, social, and very often, deeply personal. A skills programme alone cannot address it. A fellowship rooted in her context, can.

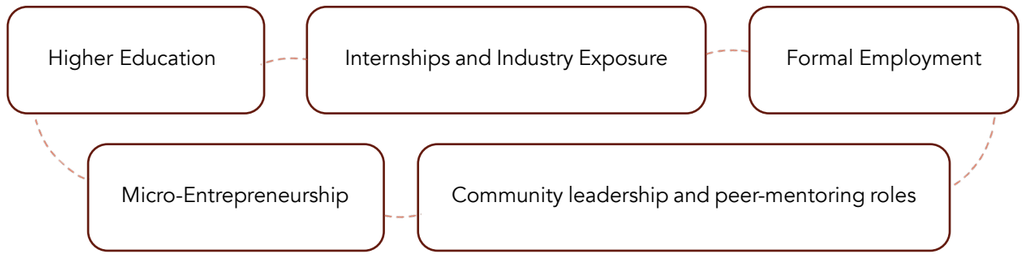


Protsahan’s Trauma-Informed Fellowships work with girls and young women aged 17 to 24 from migrantfamilies across the slum clusters of Delhi households held together by daily wage labour, construction, vegetable vending, rickshaw pulling, factory work, and domestic work. Most of the girls we engage are first-generation school goers. Most carry, alongside the structural weight of poverty, the more private weight of trauma, bereavement, eviction, domestic violence, early loss of safety, and early loss of choice.

A fellowship is not just a curriculum. It is a held space. Held over time. Held by trained mentors. Held by other young women who have walked the same path one or two years ahead. Within that holding, a young woman can begin to build the architecture of an adult life on her own terms through whichever pathway turns out to be hers.

The pathways — not just the destination

Trauma-informed fellowships are deliberately pathway-agnostic. The fellowship’s job is not to deliver a girl to a predetermined endpoint. It is to support her in discovering her own. In practice, our fellows take one/several of the following paths, often moving between them as they learn what fits.



The point is not which pathway. The point is that all five pathways rest on the same prior outcome: Agency.



What Agency Actually Looks Like, and Why it is Hard to Measure?

- the first time she travels alone on the metro to a session
- the first time she opens her own bank account and decides where her own earnings go
- the first time she says **"मुझे थोड़ा वक़्त चाहिए" "**I need some time", to a marriage conversation at home
- the first time she sets a price for her own work and holds it
- the first time she walks into a bank, a college admissions office, a government linkage portal as the person doing the navigating, not the person being navigated for
- the first time she disagrees with a mentor in a session and is met with welcome instead of rebuke
- the first time she chooses to stay in education rather than leave it for a wedding date
- the first time she walks out of an intimate violence partner in a relationship

None of these are line items in a logframe. All of them are **agency.**

The single hardest question in our MEL practice is not how to count enrolments or placements. It is how to measure agency. Agency does not arrive as a single observable event. It shows up in micro-decisions a fellow may not even recognise as decisions: We have learnt, over years of working with this population, that agency is best tracked through observable behavioural shifts across three domains and we offer this as our working framework, in the spirit of sectoral exchange.

Domain one — agency over body and daily mobility.

Schedule. Voice in household decisions. Refusal of routine violence. Ability to say no to small things, which is the precondition for being able to say no to large things.

Domain two — agency over money and skill.

Bank account in her own name. Decisions about where her earnings go. The shift from passive recipient of household financial decisions to active participant. Acquisition of skills she chose, not skills imposed on her.

Domain three — agency over the future.

Articulation of her own goals in her own words. Active choice about education, marriage, career, and fertility timing. Capacity to imagine futures that do not yet exist in her family's lived memory.

A fellow who is moving across these three domains even slowly, even unevenly, is moving in the direction the fellowship was designed to make possible. A placement number alone cannot tell us this. A trajectory mapped across these three domains, observed over the eighteen to thirty-six months a fellowship typically holds, can.





Khushboo's Journey: From Despair to Hope!



द्वारका की झुग्गी बस्तियों की संकरी गलियों में, जहाँ सपनों को साँस लेना भी मुश्किल हो जाता है, in the narrow lanes of Dwarka's slum clusters, where dreams find it difficult even to breathe.

Twenty-year-old Khushboo and her family had come from Khagaria district, Bihar, in search of work that did not exist back home. They belong to the OBC category, and Delhi was supposed to be the chance their village had not given them.

The first home they built in Harinagar's basti was demolished because it stood at the edge of a road. The eviction did not just take the house. It took her father, who, unable to bear the shock of homelessness and the weight of mounting debt, took his own life. The family relocated to a small rented room in the slums of Dwarka Sector 16A. The responsibilities of the household fell onto Khushboo's young shoulders. She found work in a factory, packing purses. The economic and emotional weight pushed her, at one point, into thoughts of ending her own life.

It was at this point that she reached out to Protsahan. She entered our trauma-informed care pathway first, counselling, psychosocial support, and the slow work of stabilisation. From there, she enrolled in the fellowship. Step by step, she has been finding her ground. She is now actively engaged in financial literacy, digital learning, and personal development sessions.

She has not yet arrived at a destination. The fellowship is not designed to deliver one on a fixed timeline. What she has, instead, is direction and the language to describe it for herself. She speaks now of building a better future for herself and her family.

निराशा से आशा तक, मौन से आत्मविश्वास तक, from despair to hope, from silence to self-belief.

Khushboo's story demonstrates a methodological point we want the sector to take seriously: the first measurable outcome of a trauma-informed fellowship is sometimes simply a young woman's continued aliveness, stabilisation, and re-entry into the imagining of her own future. That outcome will not appear in a placement count. It will appear in everything that becomes possible because of it.

Komal: What Agency Looks Like in Real Life



Nineteen-year-old Komal is a Girl Champion from Bhagalpur, Bihar. She lost her father in a workplace fire when she was six months old. The family has lived on a monthly pension from his employer, supplemented by the invisible labour her mother performs at home, and the futures her three siblings are still building.

Komal joined the fellowship five months ago and has just enrolled in B.A. (First Year) at the School of Open Learning, Delhi University. Alongside her studies, she has built Moon Tara, her handmade fabric bag business using traditional pearl techniques.

She began selling at college events and local markets. After fellowship sessions on digital skills, business planning, and social media marketing, she set up the Instagram presence, has sold over 40 bags, and is now conducting market research to refine her products.

Komal's story maps onto multiple agency domains at once: agency over money and skill (running her own enterprise), agency over the future (higher education enrolment, articulated business strategy), and the early architecture of community leadership through visible entrepreneurship. This is what an integrated agency outcome looks like when the fellowship is doing its job.

Rani: When The Family is Not Yet Ready



Eighteen-year-old Rani came to the fellowship from a migrant family from Alwar, Rajasthan, a Kumhar (OBC) household of six, where her father practises traditional pottery and where Rani continues to navigate domestic violence from her father and grandmother.

When she joined Protsahan, she was in Class 12. We supported her with a higher education scholarship, counselling, self-development sessions, digital skills training, and confidence-building work. Alongside her studies, Rani has spent the last three years making art, photo frames, Lippan art, and Madhubani paintings, which she sells in her local community and at small stalls. She is now building her presence online to reach a wider market. While doing so, she encountered cyberbullying. Through the fellowship's counselling support, she worked through the fear it had introduced and is rebuilding her digital presence on her own terms.

Her family still does not endorse her ambitions. This is part of the data, too.

Empowerment work does not always end in family endorsement. Sometimes it ends, for a long while, in a quiet, daily refusal to give up.

Rani's story reminds us that a fellowship's success is not contingent on the speed of household change. It is contingent on the durability of her own resolve, and our job is to keep building the scaffolding that holds that resolve up while the household catches up at its own pace.

Pinki: When Material Inputs are Constitutive



Nineteen-year-old Pinki migrated with her family from Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, and now lives in a slum settlement in Shiv Vihar. She has completed Class 12 from CBSE. Her father is neither financially supportive nor encouraging of her education, and is often violent towards Pinki and her mother after drinking. Her mother, a thyroid patient, runs a small shop. The household's monthly income is between INR 3,000 and INR 4,000.

Pinki joined Protsahan in 2024 and attended digital and financial literacy sessions through the fellowship. Something clicked. She discovered that what she actually wanted to do was work with computers.

To make that pathway viable, the fellowship provided her with a laptop. She is now pursuing a Bachelor of Computer Applications from IGNOU University and supporting her household through participation in linkage camps in her own slum community.

We share Pinki's story to make a methodological point that often gets lost in romantic readings of empowerment work. Trauma-informed fellowships are not only emotional and pedagogical interventions. They are, sometimes, deeply material: a laptop, a scholarship, a transit pass, a single document that opens a door that has been closed for two generations.

What These Stories Tell Us About How to Measure?

Looking across Khushboo, Rani, Komal, and Pinki, four MEL insights carry forward.

The unit of measurement is the trajectory, not the moment A fellow's enrollment, her first salary, her first solo metro journey, her first declined marriage conversation, these are points on a curve. Single-point indicators flatten the curve. A trajectory-based MEL framework, mapped against the three agency domains and observed over the life of the fellowship, respects what is actually happening.

Pathways are interchangeable Agency is not. A fellow may move from internship to micro-entrepreneurship to formal employment to higher education in any sequence. What is not interchangeable is the underlying agency that allows her to navigate any of those pathways at all. Programmes that report only on placement numbers are tracking the surface and missing the substrate, in extreme violence/vulnerability settings in ultra-poverty.

Healing is the precondition, not a parallel track Khushboo's story is the clearest illustration. No skills curriculum could have reached her in the state she came to us in. Counselling and stabilisation were not soft pre-work. They were the load-bearing infrastructure on which every subsequent input was eventually able to rest.

Material inputs are constitutive A laptop, a scholarship, and a cyberbullying recovery support session that allows a young woman back into her own digital life. The fellows are seeking a few specific resources that turn an aspiration into a viable plan.



Why This Matters Beyond the Fellowship?

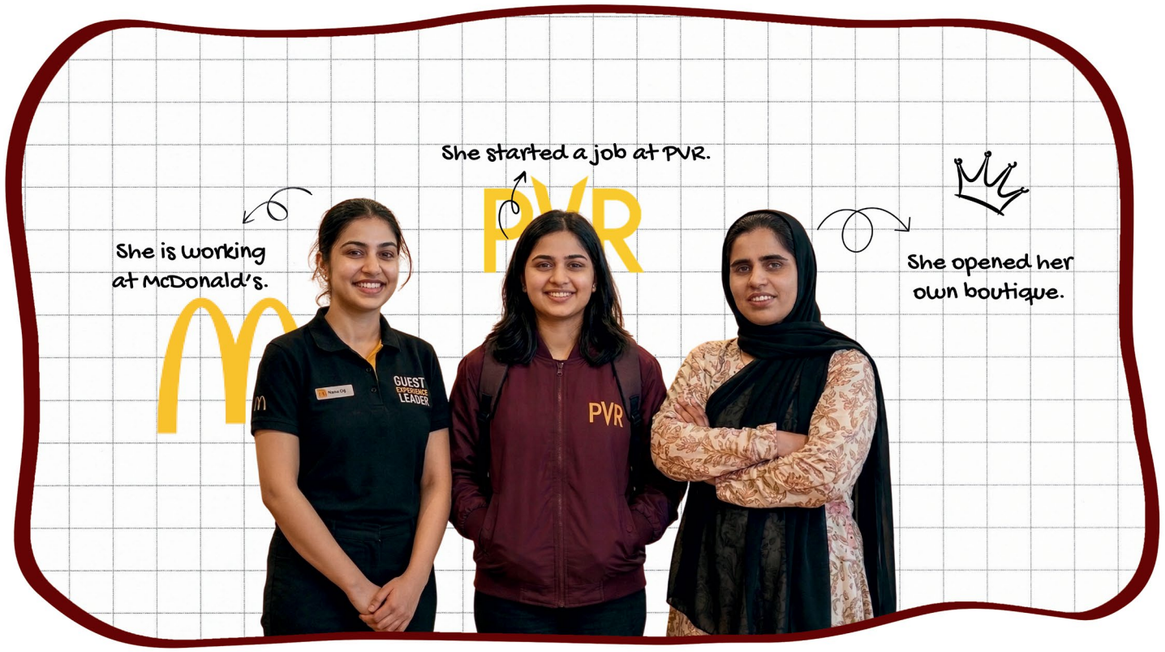
When a first-generation migrant family's daughter prepares for a mock interview, opens a bank account in her own name, sets a price for her own art, or enrols in higher education, what is happening is not only personal advancement. It is the slow, generational rewriting of who is allowed to imagine a future from her address.

Each of these journeys breaks a cycle. Each changes what younger cousins and neighbours' daughters now believe is possible from their own basti. Each puts gentle, durable pressure on a community's expectations of where a girl belongs, what she is allowed to want, and how loudly she is allowed to want it.

This is what we mean by empowering the girl and her entire ecosystem at the last mile. Not a top-down policy shift. A bottom-up rewriting of the local culture of possibility, one girl champion at a time. There is a difference between systems change work and ecosystem strengthening work. This is the latter.

Success, for a trauma-informed fellowship, is not just a placement number. It is the slow accretion of agency in a young woman's life — observable in how she moves through the world, how she names her own future, and how she carries herself when no one is counting.

We measure what cannot be counted by learning, patiently and rigorously, to read it well.





30 Fellows Graduated from the 2022-2023 Cohort



40 Fellows graduated from the 2024-2025 Cohort

39 Fellows Graduated from the 2023-2024 Cohort

308 Fellows graduated from the 2025-2026 Cohort


Graduation Cer
ellows

Engaging with Fathers in the Aspiration Building Exercises

सपनों का सफ़रनामा

Chronicles of Resilience: Discovering the Magic Within Impact Stories

क्योंकि हमारी लड़कियों ने हमें सिखाया कि जादू तो हम सब में होता है!

When Space Becomes Possibility:
From the Cricket Field to Community Leadership



"प्रोत्साहन के साथ जुड़कर मुझे पहली बार लगा कि मेरी बात सच में सुनी जाती है। यहाँ मैंने अपने बारे में सोचना, समझना और खुलकर बोलना सीखा। अब मुझे लगता है कि मेरे सपने भी मायने रखते हैं। मैं चाहती हूँ कि मेरे मोहल्ले की हर लड़की खुद पर भरोसा करे और अपने लिए रास्ता बनाए।"

- Fatima, 19

("After joining Protsahan, for the first time, I felt that my voice was truly heard. Here I learned to reflect on myself, understand myself, and speak openly. Now I feel that my dreams matter too. I want every girl in my neighbourhood to believe in herself and create her own path.")

Fatima grew up in a small village in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, in a household negotiating layered vulnerabilities and limited livelihood options. Her father, once a tailor, is now unable to work. Her mother manages the home, while the family's primary income comes from her elder brother, who works at a mall in Delhi.

Amid these realities, Fatima held on to her love for cricket. Every Sunday, she would make her way to the field. In her community, where girls' mobility is closely watched and often restricted, and where sport is coded as a male domain, her presence in that space carried meaning. It questioned who public spaces are intended for, and who gets to occupy them without scrutiny.

Her entry into the Fellowship at Protsahan marked a shift as a process of unlearning and rebuilding. The fellowship created a space where Fatima could reflect on her experiences, situate them within larger social realities, and begin to articulate her own aspirations. Sessions on leadership, digital literacy, and sexual and reproductive health were connected to lived experiences, helping her make sense of her own life within structures of gender, access, and power. Exposure visits to institutions such as Google, EY, and Naukri.com played a key role in expanding her sense of the possibilities.

Today, Fatima has enrolled in a two-year Dani Sports for Transformation Fellowship in a rural village in Gujarat. She works with children, especially girls, using sport as a medium for engagement and confidence-building.



As she steps into her fellowship, her journey comes full circle. She carries with her not just skills, but a lived understanding of what it means to be a girl negotiating space, voice, and choice. And now, she returns to similar communities, not as someone who has "made it out," but as someone who is building pathways within.

Fatima's journey reflects a shift across mobility, voice, and leadership. From negotiating access to public spaces to now facilitating spaces for other girls, she demonstrates how agency evolves from individual assertion to community leadership.

When Access Meets Aspiration:
Transitioning Into Higher Education



Roshni, 21, grew up in a small corner of Delhi, in a household where resources were limited but responsibilities were many. Her family migrated from Samothi village in Uttar Pradesh. She completed her B.A. through NCWEB, navigating her financial constraints. The family's monthly income of Rs 20,000 is primarily supported by her elder brother, who works in Janakpuri.

For many girls in her neighbourhood, education often stops at what is considered "sufficient." Aspirations are quietly negotiated, shaped by concerns of safety, marriage, and social acceptance. Roshni grew up observing this closely. ***"लड़कियां बोलती ही नहीं हैं यहां। डर लगता है उनको सपने देखने में,"*** she says.
("Girls here don't speak up at all. They are afraid even to dream.")

Her journey began to shift when she joined the Fellowship at Protsahan India Foundation. What stood out for Roshni was a space where she felt seen and heard.

Through life skills education and creative expression, she began to express herself with clarity and confidence.

Her admission to the Master's in Education program at Azim Premji University with a 100% scholarship marked an important milestone not just for her, but for other women in her family as well. For Roshni, education is about accessibility, who gets to study, who gets to continue, and who gets left behind. She began to see teaching as a way to address these questions.

Access to education is not only about infrastructure or enrollment, but about sustained support, belief, and enabling environments. When these come together, young women begin to imagine themselves as leaders, educators, and changemakers within their own communities.

"ज़िंदगी का असली मज़ा तो तब है जब हम मुश्किलों को अपनी आदत बना लेते हैं। घर से बाहर निकलकर पढ़ाई करना और बैंगलोर आना मेरे लिए अपने सुरक्षित दायरे से बाहर कदम रखना था। डर था, लेकिन उससे ज़्यादा भरोसा था, खुद पर और उस सफर पर जिसे मैंने चुना। फेलोशिप ने मुझे सिर्फ सीख नहीं दी, बल्कि एक ऐसा सहारा दिया जहाँ लोगों ने मुझ पर विश्वास किया। आज मैं अपने सपनों को लेकर पहले से कहीं ज़्यादा स्पष्ट और मज़बूत महसूस करती हूँ,"

- Roshni, 21

("The real joy of life comes when we learn to make difficulties a part of our habit. Stepping out of my home to pursue my studies and coming to Bangalore was a step outside my comfort zone. I was scared, but I had even more faith, faith in myself and in the journey I had chosen. The fellowship didn't just give me learning, it gave me support, a space where people believed in me. Today, I feel clearer and stronger than ever about my dreams.")

100% Scholarship at the prestigious
Azim Premji University, Bangalore



"हमारी बेटी ने खुद खरीदी है यह स्कूटी, अपने पैसों से! हमें तो विश्वास ही नहीं हो रहा है कि रितिका अब इतनी बड़ी हो गई है कि खुद कमाने लगी है और इतनी तरक्की कर रही है!"

- Rameshwari Devi, Ritika's Mother, on her daughter's achievements since the Fellowship

Increased Mobility:
Gliding Into the Future, on Wheels of Independence

For Ritika, financial independence has translated into increased control over her movement in life. Less than a year after finishing her fellowship, she has bought a scooty with the salary from her first job and is soaring around town on two wheels.

With a wide smile she shares, ***"दीदी, अब मैं अपनी माँ को बाज़ार तक ले जा सकती हूँ और यह सुनिश्चित कर सकती हूँ कि मेरी बहनें सुरक्षित अपने स्कूल पहुँचें।"***

Ritika is currently employed as a Sales Executive, where she efficiently manages customer care support at a leading bakery chain in Delhi. She is earning a monthly income of INR 19,000, and it is just her first job!

Like Ritika, approximately 32% of the fellows are currently working outside their community, experiencing greater mobility, freedom, and agency on an everyday basis.

Girls' Voices, Girls' Participation:
Systemizing Local Feminist Networks

Our fellows, Liza and Vishakha shared their journeys with Anjali Gurmukhani, Founder of Maitri, on her podcast. Their narratives embody their strengths, dreams, determination, and journeys from exploring the potential of working in Gurgaon to handling work-life balance and corporate dynamics like pros. Through their journeys, Liza and Vishakha have inspired many adolescent girls not only in their communities but also in rural areas across India.

We believe that there's no better way to understand the impact of the program than to hear from the fellows themselves. Here are the links to Liza and Vishakha's podcasts. Tune in now to hear what they have to share about their learnings from the program:

Scan these QR Codes to listen to Liza's and Vishakha's podcast episodes.



Navigating Setbacks and Entering STEM Pathways



Nidhi, 22, migrated from a remote village in Bihar and is currently living with her family in a migrant community in Dwarka, Delhi. Her father works in a private job, and her mother is a homemaker. After completing Class 12, she had to take a year-long gap due to financial constraints, all while continuing to prepare for NEET. At the same time, she joined the fellowship at Protsahan India Foundation.

Through the fellowship, Nidhi engaged with learning that is often absent in formal education, yet critical for young women navigating complex social realities. She worked on communication, learning to express herself with clarity and confidence. She developed digital literacy, including exposure to AI tools. Sessions on sexual and reproductive health and rights created space for informed, stigma-free conversations around her body, safety, and consent. The fellowship also introduced her to financial literacy, workplace readiness, and leadership, helping her view education and work as accessible pathways.

Not clearing NEET was a difficult moment. But Nidhi did not withdraw. She appeared for CUET and secured admission to Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, where she is now pursuing B.Tech in Food Technology.

For many young women from low-income and migrant communities, STEM education remains distant, not only due to financial barriers, but because girls are rarely given early exposure to science and technology in ways that feel accessible or relevant. At Protsahan, this gap is addressed intentionally, through hands-on learning, technology tools, and innovations rooted in everyday realities.

Nidhi's journey into a B.Tech program shows what becomes possible when girls are given early exposure, sustained support, and the confidence to enter spaces where they have been historically underrepresented.

> ***"एक साल का गैप लेना मेरे लिए आसान नहीं था, लेकिन वहीं से मैंने खुद को संभालना सीखा। प्रोत्साहन ने मुझे सिर्फ स्किल्स नहीं दीं, बल्कि खुद पर भरोसा करना सिखाया। जब मैं यूनिवर्सिटी पहुँची, तो लगा कि मैं पीछे नहीं हूँ, मैं तैयार हूँ। अब मुझे समझ आता है कि रास्ते बदल सकते हैं, लेकिन मेहनत और सीखने की इच्छा आपको आगे ही ले जाती है। आज मैं अपने सफर को लेकर पहले से ज़्यादा आत्मविश्वास महसूस करती हूँ।"***
>
> - Nidhi, 22

("Taking a one-year gap was not easy for me, but it was during that time that I learned how to rebuild and support myself. Protsahan didn't just give me skills, it taught me to believe in myself. When I reached the university, I realized that I wasn't behind, I was prepared. Now I understand that paths may change, but hard work and the desire to learn always move you forward. Today, I feel more confident than ever about my journey.")



Amplifying Local Voices:
Empowering Girls as National Gender Equity Advocates



> **"एक समय था जब मेरे मम्मी पापा मुझे प्रोत्साहन आने के लिए भी मना करते थे। कहते थे लड़की हो, इतना पढ़-लिखकर क्या करोगी? आज मुझे यह अवार्ड उनके सामने मिला। आज उन्हें मुझपर बहुत गर्व है। अब उन्हें लगता है कि मैं सिर्फ़ अपने लिए ही नहीं, बल्कि अपने समुदाय की बाक़ी लड़कियों के लिए भी कुछ कर सकती हूँ।"**
>
> - Jyoti, Centre Executive at Protsahan

Another aspect that the fellowship focuses on is amplifying the voices of local girl leaders. We believe that nobody can identify and talk about the local issues that adolescent girls are facing in their communities more than the girls themselves. Our gender-transformative, modularized curriculum focuses on providing tools and strategies to the fellows so that they can address the issues that are close to their hearts and advocate for the needs of adolescent girls in their community.

One of our fellows, Jyoti, who is now working with Protsahan as a Centre Executive and digital educator at one of our Girl Empowerment Centers, was awarded Charkha's Sanjoy Ghose Media Award in 2023, encouraging young girls from marginalized communities to emerge as catalysts of transformation, transitioning from their roles within non-profit organizations to influential media advocates. Along with a scholarship worth INR 25,000, she has gained mentorship and support to amplify voices in her community.



Building on Her Own Terms:
Micro-Entrepreneurship as Economic Agency



Sofia, 19, belongs to a minority community that migrated from Hapur district, Uttar Pradesh, in search of livelihood. She is one of eight daughters in a household where resources have always been stretched. Her father works as a daily-wage construction labourer, and her mother is a homemaker managing on a limited and uncertain income. Education for girls was never seen as a pathway to mobility.

When Sofia entered Protsahan, she came into a space that prioritises safety and voice. She began engaging with digital and STEM learning. What stood out was not just her participation, but her persistence. Recognising her commitment, Protsahan supported Sofia with a Rs 20,000 scholarship to help her transition into higher education. Today, she is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree at Kalindi College, University of Delhi. As a first-generation learner, this step carries weight not just for Sofia, but for her entire family, where no girl before her had access to a college education.

Sofia stepped into leadership spaces as a Girl Champion. Through community linkage camps and peer engagement, she began building confidence, communication skills, and a sense of responsibility towards others like her.

As part of the fellowship, micro-entrepreneurship sessions introduced girls to the basics of starting something of their own, with limited resources, and how to seek small-scale funding. For many, this was the first time entrepreneurship felt possible. Sofia was particularly drawn to these sessions. Understanding that she did not need large capital, she began exploring how to turn her stitching skills into a small venture. She opened a small boutique, and today has increased her family's monthly income from **Rs 9,000 to Rs 17,000.**

> ***"पहले लगता था कि मेरी पढ़ाई भी शायद बीच में रुक जाएगी। अब लगता है कि मैं अपने लिए भी कुछ कर सकती हूँ और अपने परिवार के लिए भी। बुटीक अभी छोटा है, लेकिन यह मेरा अपना है। और मैं इसे आगे और बड़ा बनाना चाहती हूँ।"***
>
> - Sofia, 19

("Earlier, I used to feel that even my education might stop midway. Now I feel I can do something for myself and for my family. The boutique is small right now, but it is mine, and I want to grow it further.")



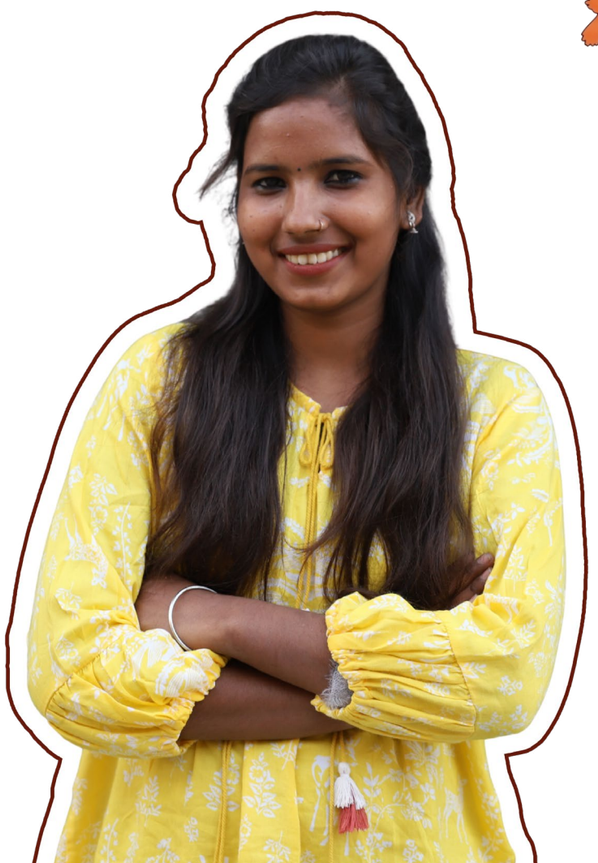
Breaking Stereotypes:
Empowering Girls to Pursue Diverse Career Paths

Most of the girls in our community opt for the Humanities stream in their higher secondary education. The reason for this is that most of the nearby government schools do not offer the Science stream as an option for girls, and the coaching for Commerce stream subjects is very expensive. Many families push their girls to pursue Humanities as mainstream roles or jobs for girls are imagined to be teachers or educators.

This is the story of one of our fellows, Payal. Payal had a keen interest in pursuing a career in healthcare. She always said, ***"दीदी, नौकरी ऐसी जगह करूँगी जहाँ मेरी इज़्ज़त हो और मेरे काम को सम्मान मिले।"***

Payal, through her research and dedication, figured out that one doesn't necessarily have to be from the Science/ Medical stream to pursue a career in healthcare. There are so many different roles that can even be pursued from the Humanities stream. Through this dedication, she came across the role of Dental Assistant. She completed her Dental Assistant's course from Clove Dental Clinic and is currently engaged as a full-time Dental Assistant in one of their outlets in West Delhi.

More than 10.7% & 10% of the fellows are pursuing careers in the BFSI (Banking, Financial Services & Insurance) & Healthcare sectors.



"जब भी मन में ऐसे सवाल आते हैं, तो हमेशा याद रखना की यदि तुम्हें अपनी मंज़िल तक पहुंचने में ज़्यादा समय लगता है तो तुम फेल नहीं होते। कभी-कभी हम अपने सपनों के लिए बेहतर तैयार हो रहे होते हैं।"

One of the fellows once asked Payal how she kept going after being rejected from so many jobs. She said, "Whenever such thoughts cross your mind, always remember that if it takes you longer to reach your destination, it does not mean you have failed. Sometimes, you are simply becoming better prepared for the dreams you are meant to achieve."

Dreaming Beyond Distance:
Empowering Girls in Higher Education

For most girls in our community, pursuing higher education is a dream, and many are only allowed to pursue it through distance learning. Attending regular college and classes remains a dream for many girls in our community.

But as they say, 'it only takes one person to make a change.' In our case, we knew that it would only take one girl and her family to break this cycle.

Prerna enrolled in our fellowship program in 2023, knowing with clarity and determination that she wanted to pursue higher education. Her mother, an Anganwadi helper, was supportive and encouraging of her ambitions.

She applied to Azim Premji University to study BA History full-time and received a 100% scholarship! She is presently in Bhopal, the first girl in her community to pursue higher education in a prestigious university outside Delhi.

Her success has opened doors for the higher education of other girls in the community as well. Now, more girls are willing to apply for regular courses inside and outside Delhi.

"मैं अपने समुदाय की पहली लड़की बनी हूँ जो पढ़ाई करने के लिए दिल्ली से बाहर आई है। मैंने अपने साथ-साथ, अपने परिवार के सदस्यों की सोच में भी एक परिवर्तन लाया है। अब और लड़कियाँ भी दिल्ली के बाहर अपने सपनों को पूरा करने जा पाएँगी।"

- Prerna, 19



Empowering Change:
Anupam's Journey of Paying It Forward



As a part of her selection process when we asked her, "What do you aspire to become?" She instantly responded, *"मुझे एक सोशल वर्कर बनना है। मैं अपने समुदाय की और लड़कियों को शिक्षा के साथ जोड़ना चाहती हूँ।"*

"I want to become a social worker. I want to help more girls in my community access education."

Anupam joined Protsahan's Girl Champions Fellowship program in 2021. She worked closely with 30 adolescent girls in her community. In the last phase of the program, when we again asked everyone about the sectors they wished to apply to, Anupam still had the same answer. She expressed her interest in continuing to continue working with girls in Protsahan and sharing her learnings with them.

Soon after completing her fellowship program at Protsahan in 2022, Anupam joined us full-time in the role of Youth Peer Leader. Since then, she has worked with thousands of adolescent girls in her community and is a role model for so many young girls. Today, when we ask girls whom Anupam mentors what they would like to become when they grow up, we often hear girls saying in the corridors of Protsahan, ***"हमें बड़े होकर अनुपम दीदी जैसा बनना है।" ("We want to grow up to be like Anupam Didi.")***

The fellows have mentored 2100 girls over the course of their fellowship, becoming role models for other girls to channel their potential and access opportunities that enable growth.



Beyond Marriage: Girls' Journey to Educational and Financial Independence

During Covid-19, we witnessed many older girls associated with Protsahan facing immense pressure from their families to get married. With many families losing their primary breadwinners, there was tremendous pressure on older girls and mothers to go out and earn.

It was during this time that we began engaging with numerous families and mothers. In one conversation with Geeta Devi, we learned that a family who had recently lost their primary breadwinner, Geeta Devi's husband due to Covid, was planning to marry off their older daughter, Poonam, who was 20 years old at the time. Poonam had been working as a domestic worker, earning INR 3,500 per month, and had dropped out of school in class XII.

After multiple conversations with both Geeta Devi and Poonam, we enrolled Poonam in our fellowship program. As a first step, Poonam enrolled in NIOS and began working on completing her secondary education. Simultaneously, on weekends, Poonam started learning stitching and invested in buying a stitching machine.

A few of her co-fellows became her first customers on this journey. Gradually, Poonam and her family regained their footing. After completing her fellowship, Poonam started a small boutique in her home. It's been two years since then, and Poonam's family no longer wants to forcefully marry her off. She is continuing her higher education while financially supporting her mother.

In the past two years, many of our fellows were on the verge of getting married due to immense family pressure. Through continuous engagement with family members and holistic support for our fellows, 41% of our fellows are currently pursuing higher education, and none of them have gotten married as a teenager.

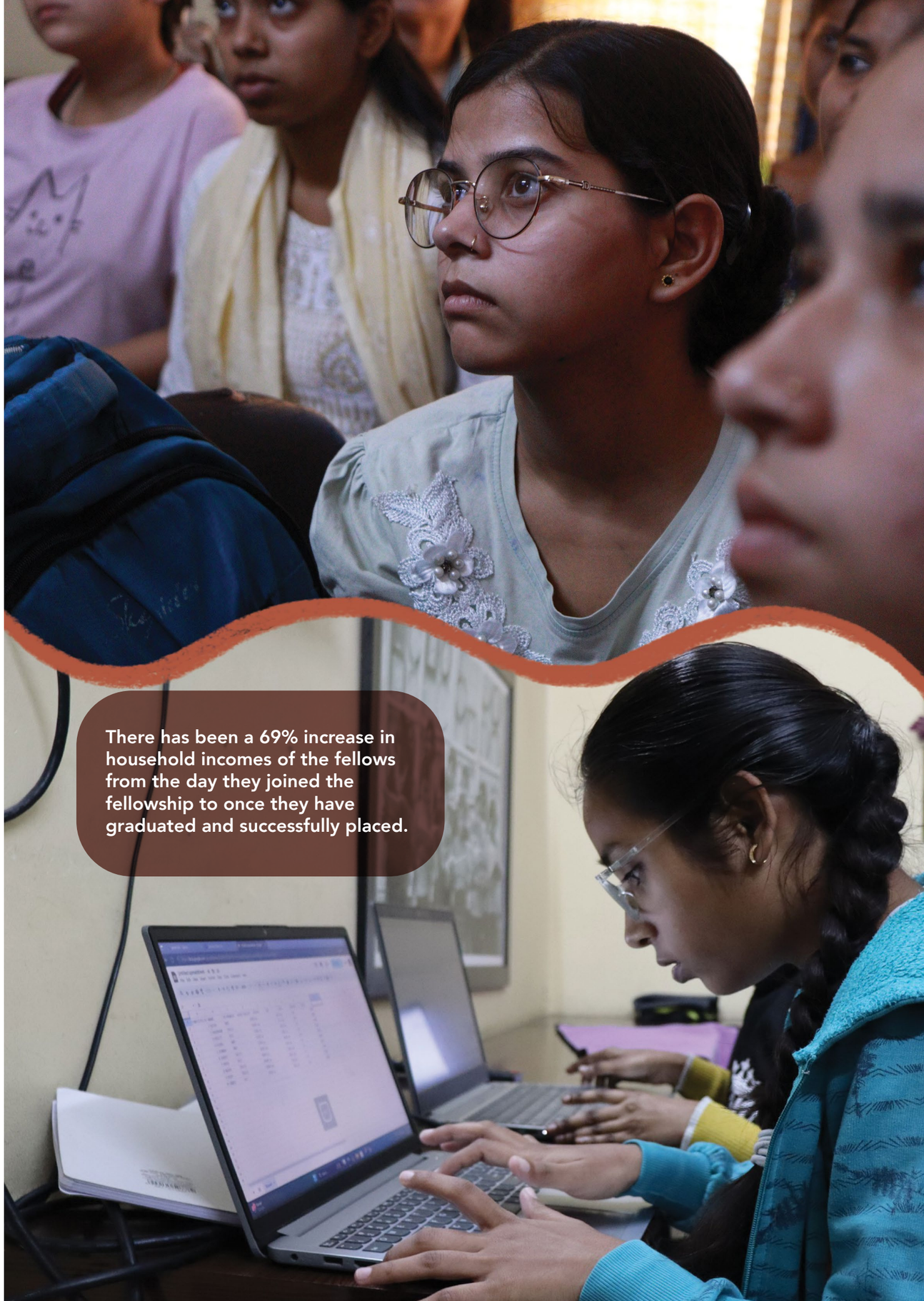
Empowering Girls: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty and Investing in Generational Success

Pakiza joined Protsahan's Girl Champion Fellowship program along with her sister Gulafsha to support their father who lost his job during Covid. Pakiza and Gulafsha went through the extensive training program where they excelled at digital skills and were introduced to various job opportunities. Pakiza is now working as a Content Developer for an EdTech brand, while Gulafsha works as a Customer Care Executive, collectively earning more than INR 30,000.

Both sisters have together broken the intergenerational cycle of poverty for the family. They have not only successfully achieved the objective of supporting their father but have also proven that investing in the education of girls pays great dividends for the entire community.

"दीदी, हम फ़ेलोशिप में सिर्फ़ यह सोच कर आए थे कि स्टायपेन्ड की मदद से हम हमारे पापा को थोड़ा सपोर्ट कर पाएँगे। हमें क्या पता था कि धीरे-धीरे हम इतना कुछ सीख जाएँगे और इतनी अच्छी नौकरी भी हासिल कर लेंगे। अब परिवार में पैसों की तंगी नहीं है।"

- Gulafsha, in an alumni conversation



There has been a 69% increase in household incomes of the fellows from the day they joined the fellowship to once they have graduated and successfully placed.

80% of all adolescent girls (N=362) in Protsahan's programs reported that they would approach doctors/ gynecologists for matters related to pregnancy or sexual health. This shift shows a remarkable awareness, confidence and agency in seeking professional care, alongside 60% who turn to parents and 35% who seek guidance from Protsahan staff.

Our work as facilitators at Protsahan is rooted in strong conceptual frameworks of SRHR, but we break them down to make them simple, contextual, and relevant for each group. We use a mind–body–heart approach drawing on Theatre of the Oppressed (Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal), dance movement therapy, and experiential learning (David Kolb). These methods enable young girls not just to learn, but to feel, embody, and practice agency in their own lives.

- Simran, Sehmat Collective

Saksham Nari ka Saksham Safar:
Sarita as Youth Advocate

Sarita joined the fellowship as a commerce student, knowing that she wanted to flourish in the field. She took active initiative in all employability enhancement training, becoming an avid user of LinkedIn, too!

She is presently working as a Finance Executive at a renowned company. Recently, she seized the incredible opportunity to speak at the National Consultation on Enhancing Participation of Young Women in the Labor Force with YuWaah India at UNICEF.

Championing gender equity and the impact of financial independence as a migrant woman working through patriarchal norms, she spoke for the strengthening of women around her as she shared her "**Saksham Naari Ka Safar.**"

Sarita stands tall, self-reliant, an active citizen in her community.

"मंज़िल उन्ही को मिलती है, जिनके सपनों में जान होती है; पंख से कुछ नहीं होता, हौंसलों में ही उड़ान होती है!"

- Sarita, talking about her journey

"Dreams come true for those who dare to believe in them. It is not our wings, but our courage, that helps us soar."





Our Girls Make it to Ernst & Young!

Three girl champions earned their place in the EY Rise Internship Program, pushing beyond the limits society once set for them.

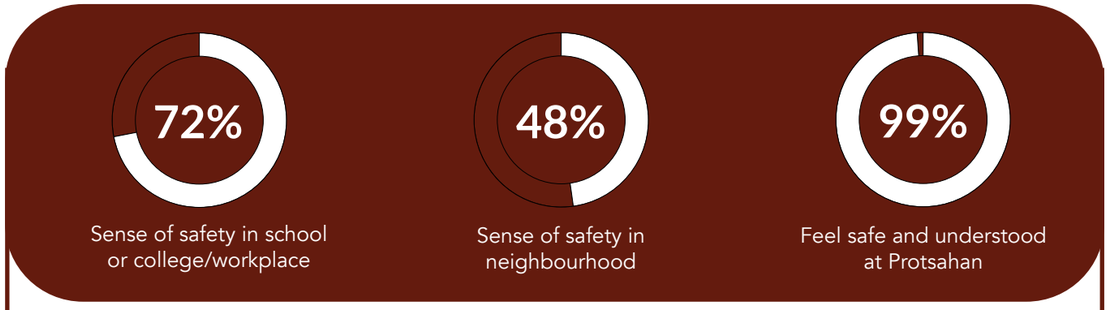


Rights, Livelihoods And Entitlements

Safety

For many adolescent girls in Delhi's migrant slums, safety is fragile. At school or college, most girls (72%) feel secure, yet one in four still walk into classrooms with unease. Outside, the risks grow sharper—only 48% feel safe in their own neighbourhoods, leaving more than half navigating fear in the very spaces they call home.

Level of safety at school, college, workplace, community vs Protsahan



99%

of girls shared that they feel safe and understood at Protsahan. Protsahan has built something rare: a space where safety is not conditional but guaranteed, and where trust allows girls to share openly.

Protsahan's centre feels like the safest place for me, a space where I am treated with respect. Here I can share my feelings freely, knowing Didi listens with patience and never with judgment.

- Girl Champion, 18 Years Old



Over 60% of girls were aware of formal support channels in cases of violence or abuse—68% mentioned the police, 67% Protsahan, and 64% state helplines (1098/181). A smaller share (23%) identified teachers or school counsellors as trusted points of contact.

Awareness of Support Services for Violence or Abuse (n=385)

68% Police Station

67% Protsahan

64% 1098/181 Helpline

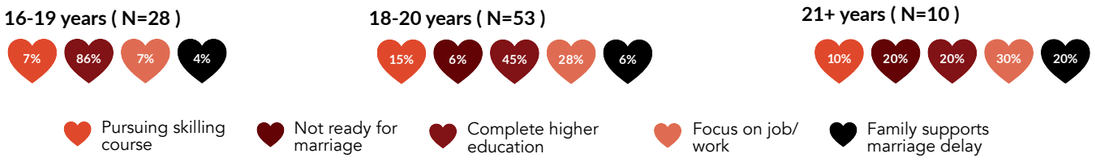
23% Teacher or School Counselor

Agency and Delayed Marriage

Where early marriage continues to shape the futures of adolescent girls, the fact that 99% of Protsahan girls remained unmarried beyond 18 is extraordinary. Nationally, this figure stands at 77%. What this gap represents is not only statistical progress but also the story of girls exercising agency in environments where their choices have historically been constrained.

This agency extends beyond marriage to decisions about motherhood. 99% of Protsahan girls delayed pregnancy until after 18, compared to a 92% national benchmark. The near-universal postponement of marriage and pregnancy reflects how girls are not only envisioning different futures but also successfully negotiating with families and communities to claim them. For younger adolescents (16–17), education (86%) was the overwhelming priority, with nearly all expressing their intent to continue studies. Older youth spoke of combining higher education with skill training or jobs while holding the confidence to tell families, "not yet" to forced early marriage.

Age-Wise Aspiration and Factors Behind Marriage Delay (%)



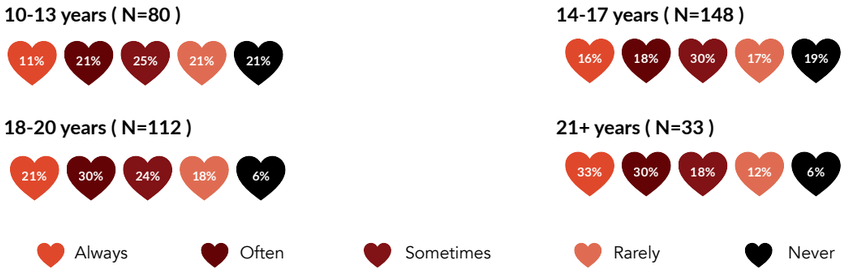
These numbers signal more than programmatic success. They point to a generational transformation: when girls are supported with dignity and opportunity, they consistently choose to delay marriage and motherhood. In doing so, they are reshaping gender norms not only for themselves but for their siblings, peers, and entire communities.



Household Decision Making

Overall, about 40% of girls reported that their opinions are often or always considered in household decisions, and a similar share felt able to make their own choices around education, marriage, or work. Importantly, in decision-making this autonomy deepens with age — rising from 32–34% in early adolescence, to 51% among older adolescents (18–20), and reaching 63% among young women aged 21 and above. This progression reflects how agency develops over time: girls begin by voicing preferences in smaller matters and gradually move towards shaping life-defining choices.

Girls' Active Role in Family Decision Making (%)



The trajectories of Protsahan alumni reinforce this pattern. Girls from highly vulnerable backgrounds—daughters of daily-wage workers and migrant families—are now pursuing Master's programs at Azim Premji University in Bangalore and Bhopal. Some of them now have full time jobs at respected workspaces like Genpact, McDonald's, Magicpin, LIC India, Radisson Blu Hotel chains, etc. Such milestones are more than academic achievements; they signal the expansion of horizons and the capacity to occupy spaces once deemed unreachable. Increased mobility, whether to move to another city for higher education, to workplaces beyond the neighborhood, or simply negotiating family permissions to travel, emerges as a concrete outcome of strengthened agency.



Civic Participation

Girls' voices are steadily finding space in both schools and communities, marking the early seeds of leadership and agency, though gaps remain.

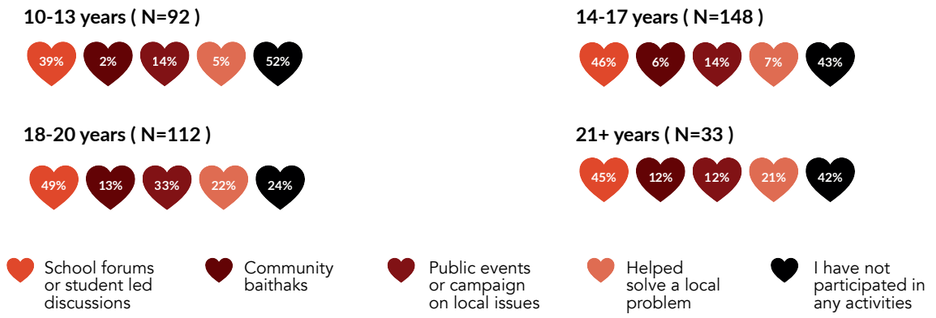
GECs as springboards: School forums and girl-led discussions are the strongest entry points, consistently engaging 39–49% girls across age groups. This shows that GECs are not just learning spaces, but also the first public stages where girls begin to express opinions and practice leadership. As girls move into late adolescence, their civic footprint expands. Among girls aged 18–20, one in three (33%) have joined public campaigns on issues like cleanliness and climate issues, safety, or education, and nearly one in four (22%) have spoken up to help solve local problems.

These are powerful indicators of growing confidence and hyperlocal social action.



Shifting gender norms in households is the first lever of wider social change. But it's possible due to the effort required — sustained counselling, repeated reinforcement, and trustbuilding with families. Continued support is vital.

Civic Participation of Adolescent Girls



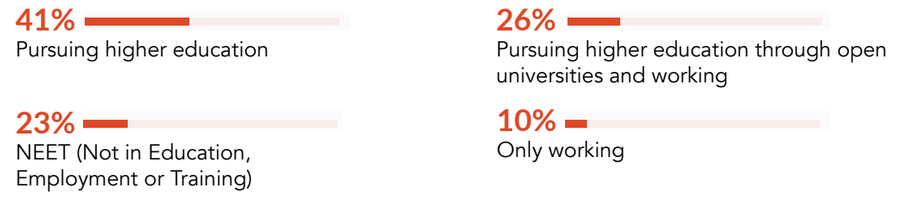
Livelihoods

For adolescent girls in migrant slums, earning an income is a social turning point, not just an economic milestone. Even modest first earnings are reshaping girls' sense of independence, shifting decision-making dynamics at home, and challenging and shifting entrenched gender norms around who contributes and who is heard.

Among the cohort, 36% are engaged in work, either by combining studies with employment or by working exclusively, while 23% fall into the NEET category (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). The majority remain connected to higher education, with many focused solely on pursuing higher education before seeking a first job. **When compared with national data, where 43.8% of girls aged 15–24 are NEET [NSS Report 2021]. This cohort reflects a higher engagement, indicating stronger retention in education and work pathways.**

Among girls aged 18 and above, 36% reported earning their own income, compared to 25% nationally. 41% pursuing higher education are expected to enter work after completion, is a glimmer, that should not be ignored.

Status of Education, Work, and NEET % (age: above 18 years) [N=145]



63% of college-going girls earn less than INR 10,000 per month, while 60% of those who have completed education earn between INR 10,000–INR 23,000. Yet in households where fathers are daily wage laborers and mothers work in informal care or domestic labor, even an additional INR 12,000–15,000 per month can significantly raise household income—reshaping both family economies and power dynamics at home. Several past alumni shared crossing incomes of INR 30,000–32,000 per month.

Parents have started to take me seriously. Earlier they would think I'm still immature, but now, because I also financially contribute, they listen to me more. I have added Rs.16000 to my family's monthly household income. This is just my first salary.

- 21 Year Old Girl, GEC 5

Ritika bought her own Scooty, within a year of finishing her fellowship. "Didi, now I can take my mother to the market and make sure my sisters reach school safely. Buying my own scooty from my first salary felt like flying on two wheels — it gave me freedom I had only dreamed of.

Behind these first earnings lies a scaffold of support carefully built by Protsahan for girls facing adverse childhood experiences. Most girls stepped into the workforce only after developing the skills and confidence needed to do so with the girls champion program of the organization.

What emerges is not just an income statistic, but the story of how layered investments in skills, confidence, and connections create pathways for girls to earn with dignity at depth of scale with those with difficult childhoods filled with adversity and violence.



Nearly nine in ten adolescent girls credited Protsahan with building their skills (87%), the foundation of employability. Career guidance (61%) then shaped their choices, while exposure to new opportunities (41%) widened what they believed possible.
For a smaller but significant share (22%), industry networks created by Protsahan became the bridge to internships, apprenticeships and placements.

The story is not just of training, but of opening doors, widening depth of trajectories and professional agency, and building pathways that girls could walk on their own, no matter the cards the past has dealt them.

Areas of Support Provided by Protsahan (%) [N=54]

87% Skills and capacity building

85% Encouragement and motivation

61% Career guidance

41% Opportunities and mentoring

22% Access to industry networks

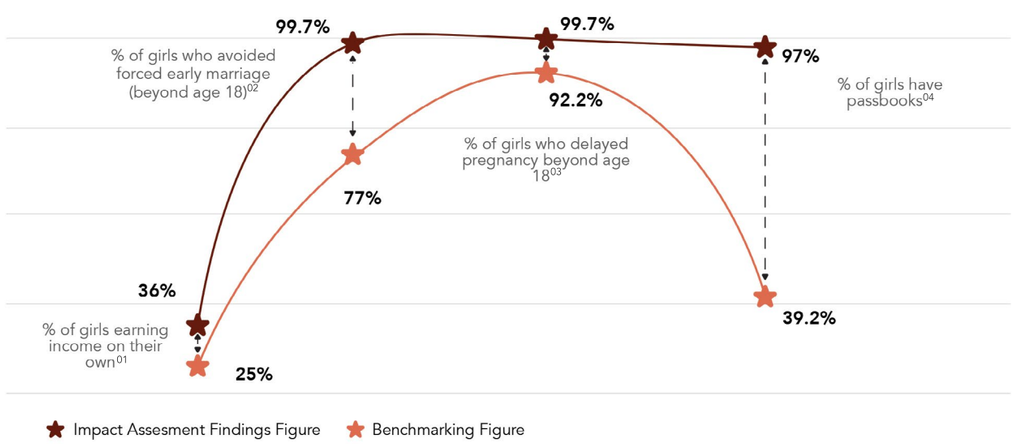
Rights & Entitlements

Every girl participant and her parents now have Aadhaar cards — a striking achievement for ultra poor households that move between states and are most at risk of exclusion.

Almost all girls (97%) have bank passbooks, and 90% possess school-related IDs or certificates. These aren't just government issued documents; they are proofs of identity and social protection that become the keys that unlock scholarships, welfare transfers, and uninterrupted schooling for the girls who have fallen off the margins. Protsahan's role has been pivotal, guiding families who have never been educated, through complex paperwork and ensuring no girl's education falters for lack of an ID. **Among parents, core identity documents like voter IDs and PAN cards are nearly universal, but access to social protection schemes remains uneven.** Less than half had E-Shram cards (49%) or labour cards (36%), and two-thirds had ration cards (67%). These gaps are precisely where Protsahan has stepped in—through awareness drives, youth leaders, and one-on-one support — helping families apply for ration cards, labour IDs, and other entitlements that strengthen household security for the girls.

Protsahan's Rights & Livelihoods Outcomes & National Benchmarks

The evaluation makes clear that Protsahan is not only enabling girls to avoid forced early marriage and delay pregnancy, but doing so at levels far beyond national trends. Even in the area of income, where barriers are steep, girls associated with Protsahan are more likely to begin earning on their own. What stands out is not just protection from forced early marriage and motherhood, but the creation of new possibilities, where girls can take critical life decisions, pursue opportunities, and exercise greater independence. For those growing up in deeply marginalized contexts, this shift signals a profound transformation.



National benchmarks are included for contextual reference only; differences in population size, sampling frames, and denominators mean these figures should not be interpreted as causal or directly comparable estimates.



01 McDougal, L., Raj, A., & Singh, A. (2022, January 27). What does NFHS-5 tell us about women's status, safety, and economic positioning in India?
02 Singh, M., Shekhar, C., & Shri, N. (2023). Patterns in age at first marriage and its determinants in India: A historical perspective of last 30 years (1992–2021). SSM - Population Health, 22, 101363. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2023.101363.
03 Anupma, A., Sarkar, A., Choudhary, N., Jindal, S., & Sharma, J. C. (2022). Assessment of risk factors and obstetric outcome of adolescent pregnancies through a prospective observational analysis. Cureus, 14(10), e30775. https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.30775
04 The Economic Times. "Women Own 39.2% of Bank Accounts in India: Govt Report." The Economic Times, 10 Nov. 2022,

Youth Advisory Collective (YAC)

Reimagining accountability through youth-led gender transformative community models

The Youth Advisory Collective was created to ensure that girls do not lose the community, leadership opportunities, and support systems that helped them build agency in the first place. It serves as a space where young women continue to learn from one another, shape Protsahan's direction, and strengthen the collective voice of girls growing up at the margins.



During the COVID-19 crisis, adolescent girls from migrant communities across six Indian states were trained as youth researchers to lead a peer-driven study, Adolescent Girls & Ambitions in COVID. Their findings exposed the realities shaping their lives: interrupted education, rising child marriage, violence within homes, restricted digital access, economic distress, and declining well-being. More importantly, they revealed something often overlooked in traditional program design. Girls were not passive recipients of support.

They were analysts of their own realities, capable of identifying risks, solutions, and pathways forward. Their insights directly influenced the redesign of Protsahan's continuum of care model and informed the launch of the Protsahan Fellowship in 2021. The Fellowship was conceived in response to a growing concern voiced by young girls themselves: many were being pushed into early marriage as families struggled to cope with economic insecurity.

Over the years, another pattern became visible.

"Girl Champions often engage with Protsahan for three to four years. Building confidence, voice, aspirations, and decision-making power takes time, particularly among girls navigating childhood adversity, migration, poverty, and gender discrimination. Yet our teams observed that when girls transitioned out of regular programming—whether through graduation, employment, migration, or other life circumstances—the social forces surrounding them often remained unchanged," says Govind Rathore, Trauma Informed Fellowship team member.

Many young women continued to thrive. They secured employment, pursued higher education, delayed marriage, supported younger siblings, and shifted norms within their families. Yet for others, the structural pressures of poverty, patriarchal control, violence, and social exclusion remained powerful enough to pull them back into cycles they had worked hard to escape. This insight challenged a common assumption in youth programming: that agency, once built, is permanently secured.

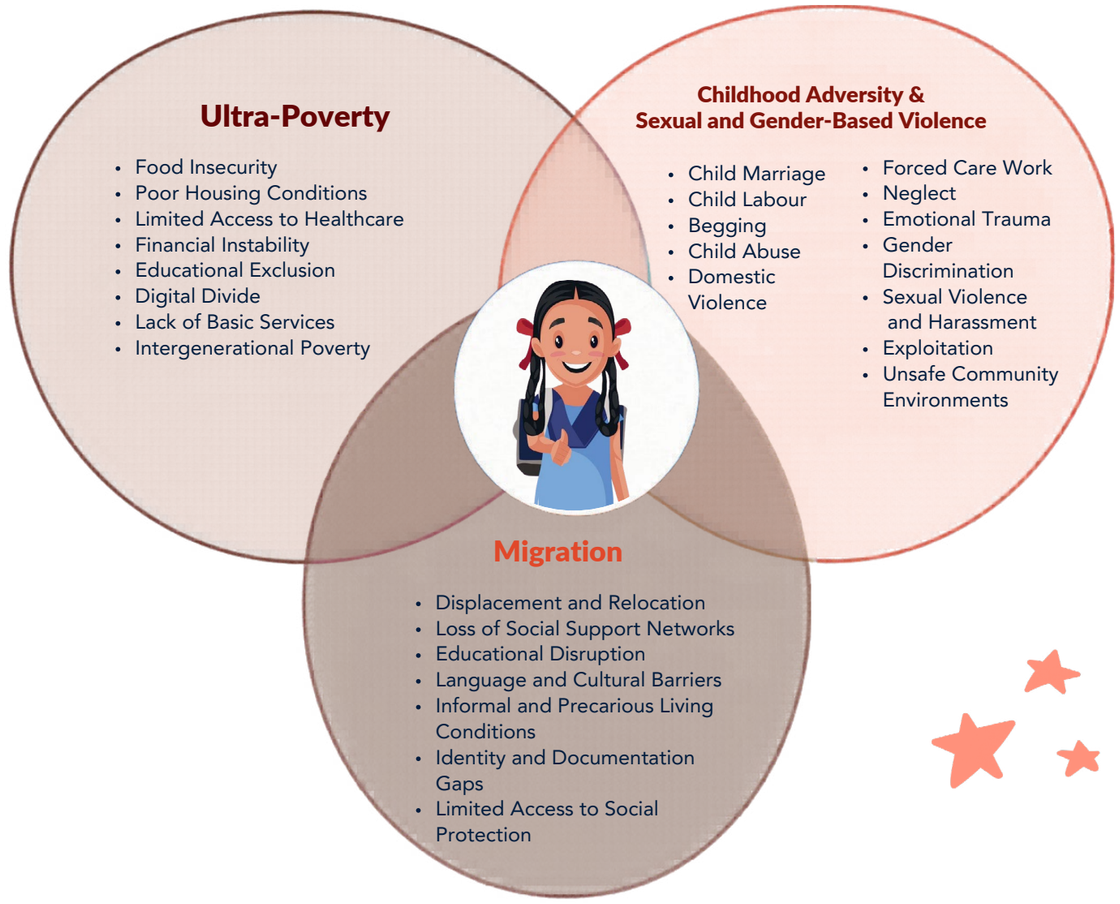
For girls growing up at the intersection of migration, urban poverty, and childhood adversity, agency is not a destination. It requires reinforcement, community, and opportunities to exercise leadership over time. In 2025, Protsahan established the Youth Advisory Collective (YAC), or Yuva Samooh, to create that bridge.

The Collective brings together alumni Girl Champions who continue to shape Protsahan's work through lived expertise. More than a consultation mechanism, YAC represents a shift toward shared decision-making and grassroots accountability. Members provide real-time feedback on emerging challenges, review program approaches, identify gaps, and contribute to decisions that affect the next generation of girls.

The current Collective includes alumni aged 17–24 from low-income communities, government schools, urban migrant slum settlements, and marginalised backgrounds. They contribute to curriculum reviews, training design for more youth peer leaders, child and adolescent safeguarding processes, and the development of trauma-informed linkages. Through quarterly dialogues with program leadership and the CEO, their perspectives inform operational priorities and field-level strategy within Protsahan.

At its core, YAC reflects a simple belief: young women closest to the challenges are often closest to the solutions. Context should also be treated as expertise.

The long-term vision extends beyond program feedback. We see the Youth Advisory Collective as the foundation of a self-sustaining ecosystem of peer leadership.



Understanding the intersectionality of risk: poverty, migration & violence shape the realities of the girls, Protsahan serves.

“कभी मैं इस मंच पर सीखने आई थी। आज मैं इसेआगे बढ़ाने आई हूँ। मुझे अभिव्यक्ति मिली, आत्मविश्वास मिला, और अब मेरी भूमिका है कि और लड़कियों के लिए भी ऐसे अवसर तैयार करूँ।”

- Kumkum, Our Fellow

“I first came to this platform as a learner. Today, I return as a leader. It gave me the space to express myself, the confidence to speak up, and the courage to dream bigger. Now, my role is to ensure that more girls have the same opportunity to be heard, to lead, and to shape their own futures.”

Members of Protsahan’s First Youth Advisory Collective with the Team





Income as Agency

How Girls' Livelihoods Shift Gender Norms In Marginalised Migrant Households

In Delhi's migrant settlements, where most families balance survival on a single fragile income, the entry of a daughter into the world of paid work is a social reordering, not just an economic shift towards upward class mobility. What begins as a modest salary or stipend ripples far beyond the payslip.

For families accustomed to viewing daughters as burdens to be married off early, a girl's earnings suddenly reframe her as an asset. Household dynamics start to bend: conversations that excluded her now seek her opinion; mothers who bore the double weight of unpaid labour and neglect find their standing lifted; and the urgency of child marriage is replaced by parental pride in her ability to contribute.

As one Protsahan staff member observed: "Earlier, her voice wasn't counted at all. But after she started supporting her father financially, she was asked for her opinion — even in small things like what to buy for the house. At the same time, her mother's respect also grew. **Suddenly, she was no longer invisible.**"

For adolescent girls in marginalized communities, income is never just money. It is mobility and the power to interrupt cycles of early marriage, invisibility, and silence. It is the quiet but radical shift from being "a responsibility" to becoming a recognized decision-maker at the family table. Protsahan has strongly seen the effects at household levels where livelihood skilling has become a lever for healing and growth for the young girl.



"घर में पैसे और करियर की बात उतनी खुले तौर पर नहीं होती। यहाँ आकर लगा कि ये बातचीत नॉर्मल होनी चाहिए। मैंने यहाँ देखा और महसूस किया कि फाइनेंशियल इंडिपेंडेंस वाकई कैसे होती है।"

- Sahiba, Protsahan Fellow

One fellow shared, **"At home, conversations about money and careers don't happen very openly. After coming here, I realized that these discussions should be normal. Here, I saw and understood what financial independence really looks like."**

Protsahan Fellows Ace KARM Conclave

A workshop was conducted on financial independence by I Am My Own Laxmi, was to foster financial independence, money management among young women. At the event, a UN Women representative shared her journey of becoming financially independent. During her sharing, she emphasised and encouraged young girls to become independent and build assets in their names. She also shared that hundreds of times her job applications were rejected, but she didn't give up, and now, at the age of 50+, she is a UN Women representative. Similarly, a para badminton world champion and paralympian shared her journey of fighting against circumstances and becoming financially independent that spark for girls who lack the privilege of inspiration and role models in their lives.

इस कार्यक्रम से मुझे बहुत कुछ नया सीखने को मिला और अपने सपनों को पूरा करने की नई प्रेरणा मिली। मुझे यह विश्वास मिला कि मेहनत और सही दिशा में प्रयास करने से हम अपने लक्ष्य ज़रूर हासिल कर सकते हैं।

- Sonam, TIF Fellow

"This program gave me fresh inspiration to pursue my dreams and the confidence that with hard work and the right direction, we can achieve our goals."



Engaging with Families and Redefining Support

As the fellowship scaled, a critical insight emerged. The fellowship can create enabling spaces of learning and reflection, but the realities within a young woman's home continue to influence how far she can exercise that agency. When her growth is not recognised or supported within her own household, her journey becomes heavier, often requiring her to negotiate for freedoms that should have been fundamental.

It is from this understanding that "Dialogues with Men" was designed and introduced as an important intervention within the fellowship. The intent was not to shift the focus away from girls, but to acknowledge that sustainable change requires engaging with those who shape the conditions of their lives. Fathers, brothers, and grandfathers, often positioned as decision-makers within families, were invited into a structured space of dialogue that they are rarely part of.

Men participate in two-hour dialogues. These sessions carefully designed using a trauma-informed and gender-sensitive approach. The men are encouraged to examine their own beliefs around gender, control, protection, and aspiration. The space reflects questions such as: What does safety for girls really mean? Who decides the limits of a girl's mobility and voice? How are ideas of honour tied to her choices? And what would it look like to support, rather than regulate, her growth?

What emerged were layered and contradictory responses, revealing deeply internalised patriarchal norms and critical reflections. One father shared,

"**मैंने अपनी बड़ी बेटी को पढ़ने दिया, काम करने दिया... क्या ये काफ़ी नहीं है?**"
(**"I allowed my elder daughter to study and work... isn't that enough?"**)

At the same time, there were visible shifts in how some men began to articulate their thoughts.

> ***"जब मेरी बहन सबके सामने बोलती है, तो मुझे गर्व होता है... पहले शायद मैं उसे रोकता।" ("When my sister speaks in front of everyone, I feel proud... earlier, I might have stopped her.")***
>
> - Rajkumar, Brother of a Protsahan Fellow

> ***"मैं नहीं चाहता कि मेरी बेटी वही मुश्किलें झेले जो उसकी माँ और दादी ने झेली थीं।"("I don't want my daughter to go through the same struggles that her mother and grandmother faced.")***
>
> - Bansilal, Father of a Protsahan Fellow

What we are learning is that you cannot build a girl's agency without also paying attention to the world she is returning to. The fellowship continues to work deeply with girls on their skills, their confidence, and their sense of self. But alongside that, these conversations with men are slowly creating shifts in the environment around them.



Community Dialogues,
Samudaay Ki Aawaz



The community-led dialogues are spaces where mothers, fathers, brothers, and guardians could engage, question, and reflect. During these interactions, the fellowship approach is shared in detail with families to build both clarity and trust. The community members are taken through the seven-month journey, so they can understand how it moves beyond skilling.

The dialogue spaces with mothers open up conversations that extended far beyond the fellowship itself. They speak not only about their daughters' journeys, but also their own lived experiences. Many mothers speak about how their daughters are growing up differently, more confident, more expressive, and more willing to question. One mother shared how her daughter now asks questions at home that she herself would never have dared to raise. Another described how her daughter negotiates for her study time and takes ownership of her learning in ways that feel new within the household.

At the same time, these narratives are layered with the realities of resistance within families. Several mothers acknowledge that while they want to support their daughters' education and career aspirations, they continue to navigate pushback from fathers or extended family members. As one mother expressed,
"जब घर में ही लोग सवाल उठाते रहते हैं तो सपोर्ट करना आसान नहीं होता।"

These conversations are the way mothers locate their daughters' journeys within their own histories. Many often speak of their education being cut short, not only due to financial constraints, but more often due to early marriage and gender norms.

Across these discussions, the idea of dignity has emerged as a central theme. For the mothers, livelihoods are not understood only in terms of income generation, but as pathways to respect, voice, and self-worth. They spoke about wanting their daughters to be able to stand up for themselves, to be heard within their families and communities, and to move through the world without fear or silence.

("At home, there are often arguments about her studies and going out. Her father and others say, 'What's the need to do so much?' I get caught in the middle, but I understand that if we don't give her the opportunity now, she might blame us later. I want her to live her life on her own terms, better than we did.")

"घर में अक्सर बहस हो जाती है उसकी पढ़ाई और बाहर जाने को लेकर। उसके पापा और दूसरे लोग बोलते हैं कि ज़रूरत क्या है इतना करने की। मैं बीच में फँस जाती हूँ, लेकिन मैं समझती हूँ कि अगर अभी हमने उसे मौका नहीं दिया तो बाद में वो हमें ही दोष देगी। मैं चाहती हूँ कि वो अपनी ज़िंदगी अपने हिसाब से जी सके, हमसे बेहतर।"

- Rani, Mother of Protsahan Fellow



हमारी तो पढ़ाई 7वीं के बाद ही रुक गई थी। घर वालों ने कहा था अब ज़्यादा पढ़ने की ज़रूरत नहीं, शादी करनी है। आज भी कभी-कभी लगता है कि अगर पढ़ लेती तो ज़िंदगी थोड़ी अलग होती। इसलिए मैं अपनी बेटी को रोकना नहीं चाहती। घर में सब लोग साथ नहीं देते, सवाल करते हैं, पर मैं उसके लिए खड़ी रहती हूँ। मैं नहीं चाहती कि उसे भी वही अधूरापन महसूस हो जो मुझे होता है।"

- Iccha Devi, Mother of Protsahan Girl

"My education stopped after the 7th grade. My family said there was no need to study more because I would eventually get married. Even today, I sometimes feel that if I had continued my education, life might have been a little different. That's why I don't want to stop my daughter. Not everyone in the family supports it, they question it. But I stand by her. I don't want her to feel the same sense of incompleteness that I still feel."



Industry Exposure Visits: Bridging Worlds

We strengthened the fellowship's engagement with the corporate ecosystem through partnerships with organizations such as Google, Ernst & Young, and EZ Office. These collaborations were designed as structured learning journeys that place young women within real-world professional spaces they are often socially and structurally excluded from.

As part of the Trauma-Informed Fellowship, fellows visited the corporate offices. They participated in sessions of digital literacy, artificial intelligence tools, social media engagement, and the ethics of navigating online spaces. These engagements were facilitated through mock interviews, peer learning spaces, and mentor-led conversations that unpacked skills, behaviours, and mindsets required to navigate the future of work.

For many fellows, this marked their first direct interaction with formal workplaces. Being physically present in these environments played a critical role in shifting internalised perceptions of who such spaces are "meant" for. It enabled them to see themselves not as outsiders looking in, but as potential participants within these ecosystems.

The visits also became important sites of negotiation around mobility and permission. For several fellows, reaching these offices involved navigating family concerns, unfamiliar routes, and personal hesitation. Engaging with these barriers in real time strengthened their decision-making capacity and confidence.

"मैं पहली बार इतने बड़े ऑफिस में गई थी। अंदर जाते ही लगा कि मैं यहाँ की नहीं हूँ। सब कुछ इतना अलग था लोग, माहौल, काम करने का तरीका। मॉक इंटरव्यू के दौरान मैं बहुत नर्वस हो गई थी, आवाज़ भी सही से नहीं निकल रही थी। लेकिन जैसे-जैसे सेशन हुए और फीडबैक मिला, समझ आया कि ये सब सीखा जा सकता है। वहाँ किसी ने ये नहीं कहा कि तुमसे नहीं होगा। उल्टा समझाया कि कैसे बेहतर कर सकते हैं। मुझे पहली बार लगा कि गलती करना भी प्रोसेस का हिस्सा है। पहले लगता था ये दुनिया हमारे लिए नहीं है, अब लग रहा है कि कोशिश करें तो हम भी यहाँ तक पहुँच सकते हैं।"

- Nazia, Our Girl Champion

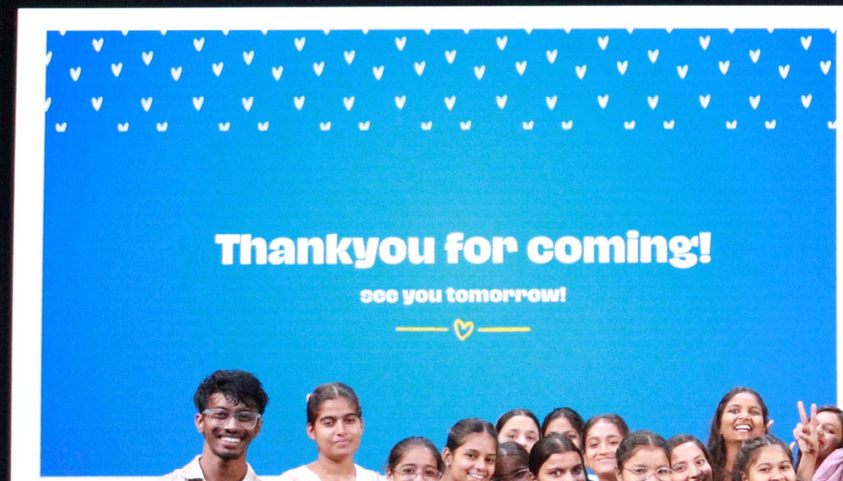
"It was my first time visiting such a large office. The moment I walked in, I felt like I didn't belong there. Everything seemed so different — the people, the environment, the way work was done. During the mock interview, I was extremely nervous and could barely speak properly. But as the sessions progressed and I received feedback, I began to understand that all of this can be learned. No one told me that I couldn't do it. Instead, they showed me how I could improve. For the first time, I felt that making mistakes is part of the process. Earlier, it felt like this world wasn't meant for people like us. Now, I feel that if we keep trying, we too can find our place here."

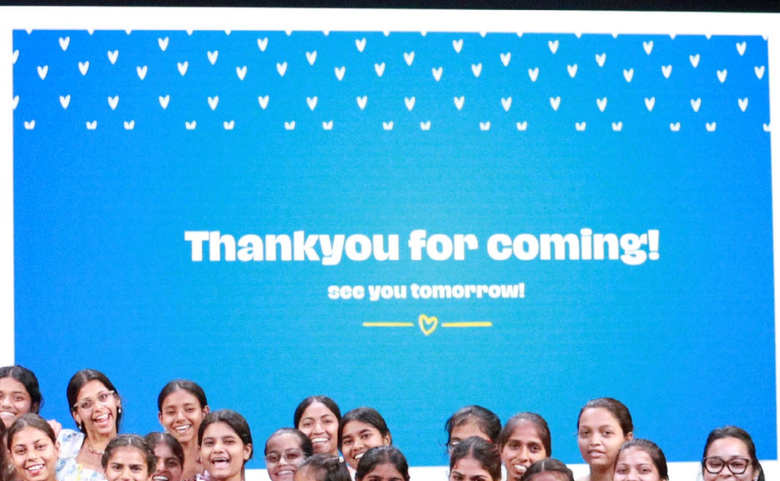


Gearing Up for Workforce Participation

Watch Muskan's Journey of Navigating Workplaces with Confidence

Mock interviews were intentionally designed as a core component of the seven-month fellowship. Over the course of the fellowship, each interaction was structured as a one-on-one conversation with mentors from diverse professional spaces, including IMGC, Google, Azim Premji University, The Nudge Institute, PVR INOX, Accenture, Bandhan, Mule Dreamin and other institutions.


Thankyou for coming!
see you tomorrow!


Thankyou for coming!
see you tomorrow!

Linking the Unlinked with Govt. Services and Systemic Care

In communities where access to basic documentation remains a persistent barrier, Protsahan's Linkages Camps act as last-mile bridges between marginalised families and the systems meant to serve them. Designed as hyper-local, community-led platforms, these camps enable migrant families to access essential identity documents, social protection schemes, and public services, advancing tech-enabled social mobility by simplifying access to digital governance systems. These camps respond to a structural gap for migrant families who often remain excluded from welfare systems due to the absence of basic documents. For most families, accessing documentation requires multiple visits to government offices or cyber cafes, navigating unfamiliar digital systems, and bearing out-of-pocket costs.

For them, we bring these set up within neighbourhood spaces, the govt. linkage camps make it possible for families to initiate and complete documentation processes in one place, without losing a day's income or relying on external middle-man. But what really defines this model is who runs it.

Our Girl Champions lead these spaces and are trained to use digital tools, navigate government portals, and support families through each step. Over time, they become the first point of support within their communities, especially for women who often feel hesitant and excluded from these systems. Their presence not only improves access but also builds trust and willingness to ask more questions.

Across 2024–26, a total of 3,046 individuals and families were linked to essential documentation and government entitlements through Protsahan's Linkages Camps. This included support for Voter ID registrations and corrections, PAN cards, E-Shram registrations, labour cards, income certificates, Aadhaar services, ABHA cards, ration card e-KYC, bank account openings, school admissions, anganwadi enrolments, and access to welfare schemes such as widow pensions.

In both years, the estimated total value unlocked stands at Rs. 46.31 crore via 20 camps. More importantly, the process strengthened girls' agency, digital literacy, leadership, and resilience. When a girl independently applies for a government document and supports others to do the same, she steps into a position of confidence and influence. The Linkages Camp model reflects the core vision of our Fellowship Program, empowering girls with digital access, institutional navigation skills, and creating the shift of viewing girls as an asset rather than a liability.







From Access to Agency: Girl-Led Linkages Camps 2024-26



922
Voter ID registrations and corrections for individuals



669
Workers accessed E-Shram cards



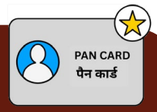
253
Labour card applications were processed



297
Families accessed income certificates



247
Ration Card E-KYC processes were completed



248
Individuals applied for PAN cards



66
Children were supported with school admissions



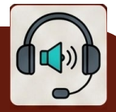
64
Aadhaar enrolment and updates for individuals



26
Children and 12 women were enrolled in Anganwadi services



165
Individuals accessed ABHA health cards



7
Individuals were connected with Women Helpline services



9
Women supported with widow pension schemes

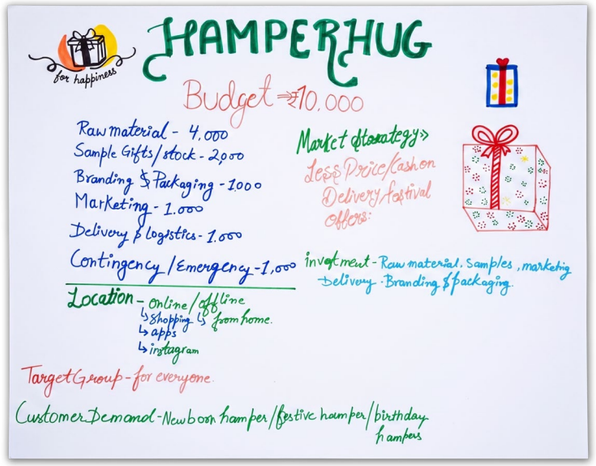


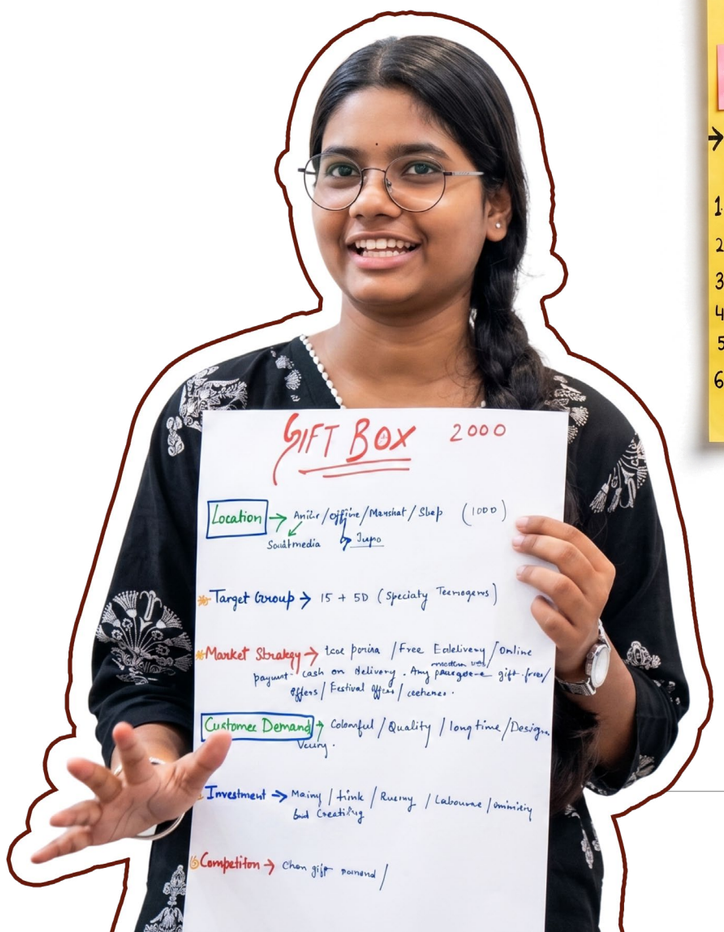
61
New bank accounts were opened

Enabling Micro-Entrepreneurial Pathways

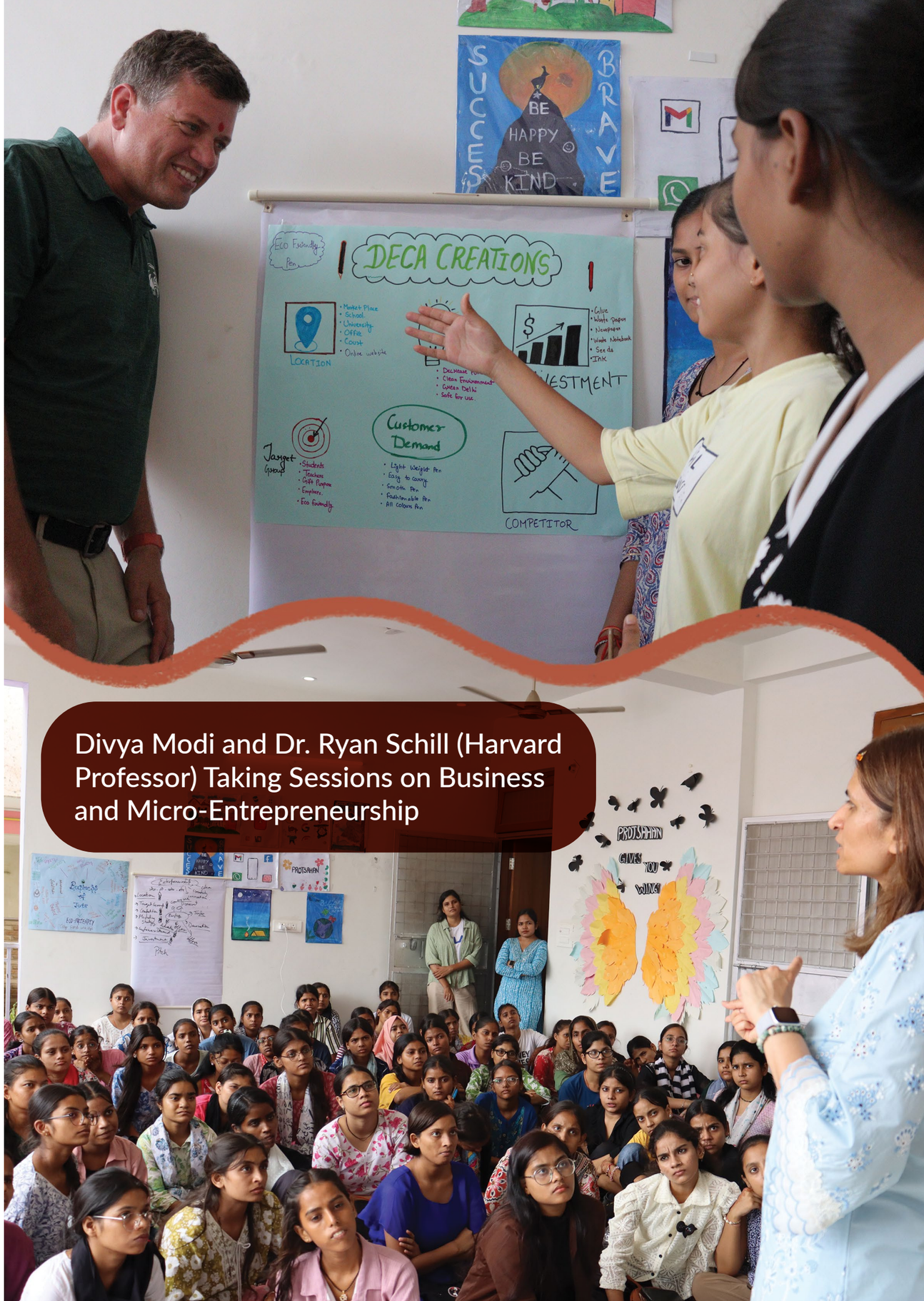
We facilitated sessions with fellows on setting up micro-enterprises, helping them think through what it actually takes to start something of their own.

माइक्रो-एंटरप्राइज़ सेटअप पर हुए इस सेशन में, फेलोज़ ने सिर्फ बिज़नेस के बारे में नहीं सीखा, बल्कि यह भी समझा कि उनके विचार, उनकी मेहनत और उनकी पहचान खुद में एक "उद्यम" हैं।









Divya Modi and Dr. Ryan Schill (Harvard Professor) Taking Sessions on Business and Micro-Entrepreneurship



#MentorsofProtsahan

Ecosystem of Support

Mentors as Enablers of Transformation



Vipul Kalra, Musk Leaf Studio

"Theatre has a unique power, it creates a safe space where transformation happens naturally. Our pedagogy plays a key role in this process. It is designed in a way that encourages participation and ensures that every individual finds their voice. Theatre in this sense becomes a tool not just for performance but for self-discovery and confidence-building. One moment that really stayed with me was from the Dwarka centre. There was a fellow who was extremely hesitant at the beginning, but over time, her energy, participation, and confidence grew remarkably."

Celebrating Our Mentors



Vernita Verma, Varnan Films

"We hosted the fellows from Protsahan India Foundation for a corporate exposure visit, and it turned into one of those deeply satisfying exchanges you carry with you. It wasn't a one-way conversation. Between our leadership team and the girls, there was curiosity, honesty, and a shared sense of possibility. We saw hope in the generation to come, and what was truly rewarding for us (and I say this on behalf of the entire leadership team) was how much energy we received back from them. These girls are not just intelligent and smart, they are hungry to learn, to grow, to understand the world better. Their questions, their intent, their presence reminded us why such spaces matter. We're genuinely happy we met them, and we look forward to the day when some of these young women walk back into our space as colleagues. Wishing them courage, opportunity, and everything they deserve as they move forward."

Simran Sanganeria, Sehmat Collective

"We use Theatre of the Oppressed, dance movement therapy, and experiential education. These methods help participants break barriers, trust each other, and open up about sexuality and rights in a safe, playful way, and feel comfortable discussing topics related to sexuality, relationships, body autonomy, and rights. Through role plays, reflection exercises, and group discussions, and develop a deeper understanding of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in a safe, inclusive, and non-judgmental environment. These methods also foster self-expression, confidence, empathy, and critical thinking, enabling participants to make informed decisions about their health and well-being."





Melvin Mathew, Bandhan AMC Limited

"Protsahan's commitment to working with adolescent girls day in and day out is truly commendable. It takes nerves of steel to engage with their realities every single day, and that unwavering drive is what defines the organisation."



Mranalini Jain, DryM Foods

"It was truly an honour to have been a part of your endeavour towards empowering the girls. I was touched by the girl champion's zeal to learn and implement the knowledge. They were so enthusiastic during the candle-making session. All of them had that passion for growth and knowledge. It is possible only because of your hard work and guidance to make them learn new things. One thing which stood out was their curiosity and brainstorming during the class, as to how they can make new and different candles. Their creativity knew no boundaries."







Celebrating Our Mentors

#MentorsofProtsahan

Aamer Bijli, PVR INOX



"Working with Protsahan has been one of the most grounding experiences for me. Spending time with girl champions and being part of spaces that focus on education, confidence, and well-being has been deeply meaningful. It has been inspiring to watch them gradually find their voice, build self-belief, and open themselves to new possibilities. One of the biggest learnings for me has been that growth often happens quietly. In classrooms and learning sessions, the most powerful moments are sometimes the smallest ones. Choosing to participate, asking a question, sharing a thought, or simply showing up with curiosity and courage. This journey has also reminded me that meaningful support is not about trying to "fix" anything. It's about listening with patience, being present, and creating environments where dignity, respect, and encouragement remain at the center. My association with Protsahan continues to deepen my perspective, encouraging a more thoughtful, patient approach while focusing on long-term support, strengthening life skills and confidence, and supporting education and career pathways for these young learners."



#MentorsofProtsahan

Mukul Rastogi, Advisor and Governing Council Member

"I have had the opportunity to interact with young fellows from Protsahan on different occasions over the last year. The word that popped up in my mind post the interactions is "Dabangg" in the nicest way possible. Girls exhibiting inner strength and confidence, enthusiastic, assertive, with a strong desire to contribute and positively enhance their lives. Every interaction has been revitalising and quite often has left a smile on my face. Clearly, if time and right intention exist, a huge difference can be made to many young lives. So glad to be associated with Protsahan and its extended community. May the tribe grow and prosper!"

Subhi Bhardwaj, Google

"I've been partnering with Protsahan for over a decade now and seeing its impact grow despite & in spite of their care, capital & intense skill set requirements is beyond compare. They did not begin easily, nor is their journey a walkover even today, but the sheer global merit and love they've been able to garner over these years is a testament to their rooted, unshakeable & consistent efforts in protecting, growing, educating, healing & investing in sufficiency trainings of girl children that they have diligently made into champions.
Who doesn't want to be a part of SUCH a massive undertaking, where the impact goes beyond generations of people, cutting across the toughest working environments and circumstances. Could keep going, but there won't be enough words to shed light on how inspiring, resilient, and persistent they have been in their grassroots-level impact."





Celebrating Our Mentors

#MentorsofProtsahan

Puja Marwah, Advisor and Governing Council Member



"Creating a small, substitute space for a handful of children is not enough, we cannot rely on the 'Oasis approach'. Protsahan's vision goes further: the system itself must be strengthened to create lasting spaces of safety and concern. This means engaging directly with frontline duty bearers- teachers, child protection officers, lawyers, the judiciary, and the police. While no single organization can do everything, Protsahan makes strategic choices about which actors to work with, ensuring that its grassroots practice informs and influences systemic change."



I believe this fellowship provides a vital platform for young women to share their unheard emotions, thoughts, and curiosity. It is apparent that these opportunities empower them with confidence and strong communication skills. Moreover, these community learning centres serve as an oasis in a desert. I have been training the fellows on their legal entitlements and key govt. schemes.

- Krishna Sharma, Advocate, Mentor



Ajatshatru, Life Skill Trainer

"A series of Life Skills workshops were conducted with fellows participating in the fellowship program at Protsahan. The workshop was to strengthen self-awareness, emotional intelligence, communication skills, collaboration, responsible decision-making, and future aspirations among participants. I used participatory and experiential learning methods, including games, role plays, movement-based activities, reflective journaling, pair sharing, discussions, creative expression, and group exercises.

These workshops created a safe and engaging space for fellows to reflect, express themselves, build emotional awareness, and strengthen interpersonal skills. Participants demonstrated increased openness, confidence, collaboration, and willingness to engage in discussions around identity, emotions, aspirations, and future planning. The experiential and reflective approach helped participants connect deeply with themselves and one another, making the sessions meaningful and impactful."

Celebrating Our Mentors

Mapping SDG to Trauma-Informed Fellowship





Meet The Trauma-Informed Fellowship Team



Mission Partners

Bandhan AMC · Azim Premji University · KV Mariwala Philanthropy Initiative · EY Foundation · Divya Modi · salesforce · echidna giving · dasra · Adobe · Ashoka Everyone A Changemaker™ · airbnb · fiserv. · fyl For Youth Leadership · EMpower · Google · United Way Mumbai · The/Nudge Institute · Catalysts making things happen...

How You Can Help Build Resilient Futures for More Migrant Girls

Fund Our Institution

Contribute by providing financial support to sustain and expand our organization's impact and vision, where more girls join the formal workforce, uplifting their families from poverty—one family at a time.

Offer Mentorship Support

Volunteer your time and expertise to mentor our fellows, guiding them through their journey towards personal and professional growth.

Host Industry Exposure Visits

Open your company's doors to our fellows for exposure visits, providing valuable insights into various industries and career paths.

Spread the Word

Give us a cheer on social media and follow us on LinkedIn and Instagram to stay updated on our girls' journeys!

About Protsahan India Foundation

Protsahan is a Delhi-based nonprofit organization dedicated to the care, rehabilitation, and reintegration of historically marginalized adolescent girls at the intersection of ultra poverty, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and migration. Since 2010, Protsahan has supported over 96,000 survivors in Delhi's urban slums, enabling them to break intergenerational cycles of child marriage, child labor, and child sexual abuse. Through arts-based education and life skills training, we equip them for autonomous and thriving adulthood while strengthening their families' social protection to prevent institutionalization.

- Child Protection
- Mentorships
- Scholarships
- System Linkages
- Healing with Art
- Fellowships
- Youth
- Digital & Financial Literacy


Protsahan
India Foundation
"मैं भी Einstein"
आओ देखे MAGIC के पीछे का LOGIC

Give the Gift of Healing

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