Digital
Roshni
Digital Roshni 2
The changing lives of women adapting digital tools

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

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INTRODUCTION

Women are a great human resource in all countries and the role of women in society is constructive for development. Women have the opportunity to play a major and visible role in social transformation using technology. The extensive reach and penetration of information technology into every area of society creates enormous opportunities for women. Most current discussions focus on the increasing numbers of women as users of information technology with great emphasis on their use of the Internet. However, little attention is given to the potential role women might play as catalysts in an information-based society.

Women in many countries across the world face inequalities in different spheres. In the name of social, cultural and traditional customs, women, especially those in rural areas, are continuously marginalised.
Empowering women by making them digitally literate enables greater share of control over household and community resources, including financial and decision-making. Technology has filled the gap between education and employment prospects for women. Around the world, the capability of women to participate in a knowledge society is unacceptably underutilised. In the knowledge society, they need access not only to new technologies but also to education, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities as well as the ability to participate fully in knowledge based activities.

Rural development in India is one of the most important factors for the growth of the Indian economy. This edition of Digital Roshni sheds light on how women should be empowered to flourish their knowledge and skills as an integral part of socio-economic development of a country. Rural India is contributing and can contribute a lot to the nation; thus, this heart of India requires emphasis on methodologies, policies and programmes, which can uplift the nation as a whole.

Aanchal Mittal
*Digital Empowerment Foundation*
Age 19; unmarried; 5 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling rank #7; Education level Bachelor in Science; Background Sandhya’s parents are agricultural labourers who work in the fields. Her mother manages both the household chores and labour work. Sandhya’s parents do not discriminate between their children. Her mother teaches them how to cook and sometimes plays indoor games with them. Sandhya’s paternal uncle, who is paralysed, lives with them. He believes that Sandhya should understand her duties, and encourages her to focus on her education. Sandhya’s parents are not strict. In the family, respect is very important; however if the children disagree with the elders, they are free to voice their opinions to the elders. Her older brother and sisters help her understand what is right and wrong.

**MY MOTHER TOLD ME** A WOMAN SHOULD RESPECT AND LISTEN TO OTHERS AND SHOULDN’T FIGHT WITH THEM. **MY FATHER TOLD ME** A WOMAN SHOULD NOT STAY OUT LATE; SHE SHOULD NOT BE AROUND BAD COMPANY.
10 years ago

Sandhya plays with other children in the village (pittu garam) from 8 - 9 am, and gets ready for school.

Sandhya’s elder sister cooks the dinner. Her parents like her elder sister more because she is like a motherly figure: she keeps the house together and contributes towards the house expenses. Sandhya is often told to be more like her elder sister.

Sandhya’s mother and elder sisters play tapes and the younger siblings dance together.

Sometimes Sandhya’s mother goes to another villager’s house to watch TV or they gather together and talk about their day.

After school, she fetches water from the pump, which is 5 - 10 min walk from her house, and helps her sister mops the floor and wash the utensils.

She loves playing in the school. Sandhya’s favourite subject is environmental studies. The students plant trees in the campus.

Sometimes after dinner, the family goes to another villager’s house to watch TV or they gather together and talk about their day.
Sandhya stays in Gwalior, where she attends college. She comes home for holidays. Sandhya stays in a hostel where she shares the room with three other girls. She wakes up at 5 am everyday. The girls make their breakfast together.

The girls in the hostel know that Sandhya can use a computer. So they ask her questions, such as word meanings, but she can’t buy too much data on her phone.

Sandhya calls home everyday around 7 pm. She talks to with her mother about her meals, health, and college. She misses eating together with the family. Sometimes the girls in the hostel chat and pull each other’s leg on the terrace.

She leaves for college at 8:30 am, though the hostel is far from the college. She studies and ask seniors for help.
Sandhya wishes to open a general clinic in her village. She and her elder sister share the same interest and experience in nursing. She left CIRC to pursue her nursing training; nevertheless, she misses teaching computers to children at the centre. She is fascinated by computers and wants to learn how computers can be incorporated into her clinic activities.

I would tell my daughter that a woman should not be in bad company; she should have the freedom to do what she wants to do.
SONAM KALME

DEF runs a CIRC in village Morpani in Kesla block of socially backward district of Hoshangabad in Madhya Pradesh. In this village, 70 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture and unstructured occupations.

Age 20; unmarried; 3 brothers & 3 sisters; Sibling rank #1; Education level 2nd year in Commerce; Background Sonam shares a very close bond with her mother and tells her everything. Her mother is a busy woman who takes care of the house, cattle and fields. She has also been working as a cook in a school for the last eight years. Her brothers help by fetching wood and groceries for the school. When the children need permission to do something, they first ask their mother who takes their inquiries to the father. The children are more scared of their father than their mother.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE BRAVE AND ALWAYS BE INVOLVED IN GOOD DEEDS.

Sonam wakes up at 5 am and studies with her siblings for an hour.

Sonam fetches water and makes tea for everyone. If her mother is busy, Sonam helps in cleaning the house and cooking for the family.
She cycles to school. Her favourite subject is Hindi.

10 years ago
She and her two friends like to plan their future together. Sonam wants to join the Army. Her interest in the army developed from watching TV.

At night, Sonam helps her siblings with their homework. They chat, but they don’t play.

When Sonam’s mother returns from work, she cooks dinner for 10 to 11 people.

She visits her grandfather’s field that is close to the house. She plays and roams around with the goats.

Sonam’s mother works in the field, takes care of cattle, buffalo and goats. She also washes and irons the clothes.
Sonam wakes up at 5 am to fetch water, mop the floor, cook, and manage cow dung.

At 9:30 am, she leaves for the centre.

At the centre, Sonam practices typing, surfs the Internet, browses videos on Youtube, checks her email, and makes video calls to other women entrepreneurs.

Sonam shares whatever she has learnt during the day with her mother, such as how to download songs.

After she gets home from the centre, she takes out half an hour to pray.

Sonam helps her siblings with their school work after dinner; they also like to share school related stuff with her.

The family is happy that she has the opportunity to learn and everyone encourages her to make the best use of it. Her sister visits the centre regularly while her brother comes once in a while.

She still goes to her grandfather’s place to play with the goats.

After she gets home from the centre, she takes out half an hour to pray.

Sonam helps her siblings with their school work after dinner; they also like to share school related stuff with her.

The family watches TV together.

She then studies Economics Management for her correspondence course.

The family watches TV together.

The family watches TV together.

The family watches TV together.

The family watches TV together.

The family watches TV together.

The family watches TV together.

The family watches TV together.
I would tell my daughter a woman should stand up for her rights. She should speak up if people talk behind her back.

Sonam’s Aspirations

She likes to research about the army on the Internet. She wants to join the army and protect the country. However, her parents don’t approve of it. They don’t think it’s a place for girls.

She wants women and children in the village to be digitally literate so that they can become more aware when people make fun of them, and be smarter than their parents.
Sevanti wakes up at 8 am and gets her children ready for school. She makes tea, cleans the house and cooks food for her family.

As a pampered child, she was confused about the role of a woman; she only realised the burden and responsibilities of being a woman after her marriage.

Age 42; married, 3 daughters & 2 sons; 4 brothers; Sibling rank #1; Education level 5th standard; Background Being the youngest and only girl in the house, Sevanti was pampered by her parents and her older siblings. She grew up in a protective environment, where she didn’t engage in housework as a child, and did not realise the baggage that comes with being a woman. Her mother, a friendly woman, only learnt household work after marriage and would take care of children and field work. Her father works as a primary school teacher and stays out of town. Sometimes the mother visits him. When the river overflowed in the village, it became harder to get to school. Therefore, Sevanti dropped out after 5th Standard, and got married to a farmer when she was 15.
Her neighbours come and chat with her about their problems and their children.

Once she finishes her chores, she goes to the field and brings food to her mother-in-law and her husband.

She doesn’t discriminate between people of different castes and allows her children to play with everyone.

By the time she’s back, her children are already back from school. They play, and do homework. She watches her elder daughters help the younger son in homework. She tries to teach cooking to her daughters.

Her discrimination

At night, the family watches news and soap operas on TV together. The husband likes to watch cricket and news.
Sevanti wakes up at 6 am, prepares food and tea. By noon, she has finished most of the household chores.

Sometimes during the day, she prepares upcoming meeting notes as she is the president of a women’s self help group.

Sevanti has her SHG meeting every Friday at 8 am. It is 4km away, but her husband, who supports her engagement with the SHG, always drops her to the office.

As the president of the SHG, she manages accounts, collects money from people, audits, signs and checks the account.

She goes to various villages to inform women about important information such as women’s gathering and meetings.

When there’s a federation meeting, which involves 350 women, she tries to understand their problems and ensures that they leave with a solution. She enjoys motivating women to stand up for themselves.

When a woman needs money, she uses the money collected by the group to help her.

When she has time to go to the centre, she likes to watch videos and listen to songs. She believes that her children should learn more about computers. Her husband also wishes that Sevanti would learn more about computers so she can manage and record accounts digitally.

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Sevanti’s Aspirations

She would like to work towards empowering women by building their confidence and making them more aware of their own rights. She would like to further her education, learn how to write, and acquire more skills.

I would tell my daughter that a woman should be aware of her rights and be brave. She should pursue higher education and step out of the house; her world should not be restricted to her house.
Rajni Marshkule

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

Age 20; unmarried; 1 brother & 5 sisters; Sibling rank #7; Education level 12th pass; Background Rajni’s father is a farmer. As the youngest child, Rajni sees her mother as a loving woman who wholeheartedly takes care of the house. Growing up, her parents saw much danger in letting the girls go out too often as they thought the society has bad company, so they feared the children would engage with bad company. Her mother supports her studies. Rajni wants to join the police force. Her father does not disapprove, but feels worried about his daughter. Rajni’s sisters are homemakers.

"My mother told me a woman should mind her tongue and refrain from saying everything in front of everyone. My father told me that a woman should be brave and not be scared of anyone."
Rajni attends school from 10 am to 4:30 pm. Her favourite subject in school is Hindi.

She plays games, like pittu, with the children from her neighbourhood.

In the evening, her grandmother recites old stories from her childhood. Rajni really enjoys listening to these stories.

Rajni fights with her brother over their stationery. She earns a little pocket money for finishing up her brother’s homework. She charges her brother 1 rupee per page.

Rajni is closest to the fourth sister. Her older sisters bully her, but not her fourth sister. She always takes Rajni along wherever she goes.
From 4:30 - 8:30 pm, Rajni does most of the housework as her mother does not keep well. Sometimes her fifth sister helps out. Her elder sister does the housework later in the evening.

Rajni walks half an hour to reach the centre, which is 2 km away from her home. She conducts classes for three batches of students from 9:30 am until 5:30 pm.

In between her batches, Rajni learns English via Google, checks her email, and learns how to search for information on the Internet.

In the evening, when she comes home, she makes tea, serves food and makes the bed.

Rajni's best friend Neetu, who is in the final year of her BA programme, doesn’t know how to use the computer because she doesn’t have the time to learn.

Rajni likes to talk to her mother. Her mother asks her about Internet activities in the centre. Rajni promises her mother that she would teach her computer even though she’s illiterate. Rajni believes that digital literacy is a skill that can be learnt even if one doesn’t receive proper education training.

She enjoys listening to religious songs. Earlier, she would go to the shop and ask people to download it for her. Now she has learnt how to download the songs herself.

After dinner, the family watches soap operas on TV together.
Rajni’s Aspirations

Rajni would like to work for her village, where she can see the villagers’ growth, development and involvement with digital technology, hence the community can be more digitally empowered. She wishes to set up a more advanced and improved computer centre in the village that would allow people to use the Internet for various functions like research, banking, accounting, etc. She also wants to mobilise more women to join the centre. She would like to pursue a computer-related education.

I would tell my daughter that a woman should be brave. She should be respectful towards her parents and take care of them as they have given birth to her.
Anita wakes up at 5 am, lights the chula, mops the floor, fetches water, makes tea and cooks for her daughter who is two and a half years old. There are 10 people in the family.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE FOCUSED AND DEDICATED TO WHAT SHE IS DOING. MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT A WOMAN SHOULD NOT FEEL SCARED WHEN TEASED. SHE SHOULD HAVE THE COURAGE TO INFORM OTHERS.

Age 29; married; 2 brothers & 5 sisters; Sibling rank #8; Education level 8th; Background Anita grew up with many siblings in the family; however they did not go out often. Her mother, a farmer and seasonal labourer, works under MNREGA. Her mother manages both field work and household chores. Anita’s grandparents believed that only boys should pursue higher education; hence Anita’s brothers have completed their education until 11th Standard while most of her sisters have only managed to study until the 5th Standard. When her grandparents passed away, her elder siblings encouraged Anita to attend school to study further. The school in her village only offers education up to 5th Standard; so she had to travel a little farther to attend school. Anita managed to complete her former education up to 8th grade, but she continues to learn even today. Anita got married when she was 16. Her husband works in the panchayat.
Out of the 10 members, 3 are women who work together and finish their household chores by noon. They sometimes eat the leftovers from the night before. Their eating time is flexible.

Anita washes clothes and takes a bath. Around 2:30 pm, she rests for an hour to an hour and a half. Sometimes in the afternoon, the women gather together to chit-chat.

Everyone has dinner together at night.

When she faces any problem, Anita visits her siblings to ask for solutions. Her brother stays with the family. She has no time for a hobby.

Around 5 pm, she prepares food and starts all the household chores again. The men come back by 6:30 pm. Sometimes they also help out with the household chores. Her father-in-law sometimes collects things from the market.
Anita’s waking up time is a lot more flexible and she gets up between 6 am and 8.30 am.

Both Anita and her husband work under MGNREGA. Her husband has a clerical job as well, whereas she works as a labourer.

Every Sunday, Anita visits her daughter, who is at a boarding school, and brings her a tiffin box.

She likes to play ka-baddi and cricket with her son.

Anita’s husband and other members in the family help out with household chores; now there’s only 4 people in the house. Her daughter is enrolled in a boarding school.

She is a member of Self Help Group (SHG), where she is involved in clerical work like documenting minutes of a meeting, capturing case details, and recording attendance.

When she has time, she collects and fills agriculture-related data and forms, and tries to understand human rights. She also likes to video chat with her friends.

PRESENT
Anita’s Aspirations

Anita would like to work for the centre and learn and grow with it. She wants to inspire more women to come to the centre, learn how to use the Internet and use its various features to find information on government schemes. She wishes her children would be successful in life and be able to achieve whatever they want.

I would tell my daughter that a woman should be brave.
Roshni Hathiya

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

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT BE OVER-FRIENDLY WITH OTHERS. SHE SHOULD ALWAYS GO STRAIGHT TO SCHOOL AND COME BACK HOME. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT LET HER PARENTS DOWN; SHE SHOULD ALWAYS BE BRAVE.
By 7 am, she gets ready for school. She walks to school with a friend who lives on the outskirts of the city. It’s a 1 km walk.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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By 10 pm, she washes and irons her uniform for the next day. Sometimes her father helps with ironing the clothes.
Roshni lives with her husband. She wakes up early to finish her homework by 8 am.

By 9:30 am, she reaches the centre to manage it. Students from a nearby college, which is 5-6 km away, come to learn computers at the centre. School children also come during the afternoon. To teach children computers, she shows them information on topics of their interest such as their favourite festivals.

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

When she has free time, she uses Photoshop and practices typing. She also likes to search for old songs and their lyrics. Her husband is also fond of music.

Her husband has been very supportive of her working at the CIRC. He drops her off at the centre, and wants to enroll for classes as well. He knows how to operate some panchayat websites. She thinks he still knows more than her. She also wants to enroll her sister at CIRC.

By 5 pm, she returns home, tired. She cooks and waits for husband to come home. Her husband shares stories from the Panchayat with her. They watch a soap opera on TV together.

After marriage, she wanted to go back to school and thought CIRC would help her with her studies because of digital literacy.
I would tell my daughter that a woman can learn everything on her own and should not depend on others. Girls should know how to operate things and acquire information. They should not get intimidated by their husbands. If a woman wants to earn, she should have the freedom to earn her livelihood.

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

Doudi is a village located in Keela block of Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. A socially backward district, as many as 40 per cent of the population belongs to Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes. The village, itself, is largely cut out from access to most infrastructure, facilities and information. DEF runs a CIRC here.

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

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY MORE AND NOT GET MARRIED AT AN EARLY AGE. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD LEAVE EDUCATION AND LEARN FARMING SO SHE CAN EVENTUALLY OWN THE LAND.
She gets ready for school, which is 1 km from her house. There she meets her friends.

10 years ago

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rinky won first place in a dancing and singing competition.

She gets ready for school, which is 1 km from her house. There she meets her friends.
Rinky wakes up at 5 am to study. She does some outdoor work and gets ready to leave for the centre. She reaches CIRC centre at 9 a.m. To her, the centre is like home. She takes half an hour to clean the place. She practices teaching the Internet training module before her students arrive. She wants to learn constantly to be a better teacher to her students.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She mobilises people to visit the centre. She arranges SHG meetings at the centre, so others can see the centre. She likes to mobilise more women, so that they can further mobilise other women.
I would tell my daughter that when a girl is growing up, she will have distractions around her, but there’s always a right time for the right things; and she should always fulfill her wishes.

Rinky’s Aspirations

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

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

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

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A GIRL SHOULD GAIN RESPECT FROM OTHERS. SELF RESPECT IS VERY IMPORTANT; IF ONE LOSES RESPECT, ONE LOSES EVERYTHING. A WOMAN SHOULD NOT DO ANYTHING THAT’LL BRING SHAME TO HER OR HER FAMILY.
She rests when she gets some free time. She gets up by 4 pm to start working on her chores again. Sometimes she works with her husband at the MGNREGA site. Her husband digs out mud and she carries plates of mud from one place to another. She never used to work like this at her parents’ home.

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

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

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

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

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

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

She teaches her children. She doesn’t differentiate between her children and loves them equally.
She wakes up at 5 am and does household chores. Her husband helps her with cooking.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She is happy that she has found an opportunity to step outside her house and learn computers. The financial situation in the house has improved.
I would tell my daughter a woman can fulfil her wishes. They should not stop themselves because of others’ opinions. There is no difference between boys and girls.

Somti’s Aspirations

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

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

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

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD COMPLETE THE HOUSEHOLD CHORES. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY, HAVE A JOB BEFORE MARRIAGE. SHE SHOULD FULFIL THE DREAM THAT HE COULD NOT FULFIL.
She stitches from 8 am to 4 pm; buttons, hemming. She earns 100-240 rupees per day. During wedding season, she stitches until 9 pm.

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

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

She teaches the girls in the village to stitch.

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

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

She goes out of the house to the nearby field to observe what the neighbours are working on during the harvest season.
She wakes up between 5 and 5:30 am. She stays with the in-laws and her two kids (six people in total). By 8 am, she finishes her household chores. Mother-in-law often helps with her leftover chores.

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

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

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

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

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

She wants to pursue her BA. The first time she came to CIRC to receive her 5 days training, she was shivering, but she’s no longer scared of computers.
I would tell my daughter a woman could be independent, educated, and stand on her own feet. She should learn from the ups and downs of her life.

Lakshmi’s Aspirations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During her free time, she watches TV, but she doesn’t like to stay in the house. Her husband sometimes takes her to a neighbour’s house to socialise and watch movies.
She wakes up around 6 am. She’s changed her mother-in-law and sister-in-law’s attitude, they now help her with household chores.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Her children like to play on the tablet. Her husband plays games on the tablet too.
I would tell my daughter a woman should be brave. She should balance household chores and her work. A woman has to be brave and not be scared.

Shashi’s Aspirations

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

Kamthi village in Shahpur block of Betul district is a location for one of DEF’s many CIRCs in the state of Madhya Pradesh. In this village, 70 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture and unstructured occupations.

Age 20; unmarried; 4 sisters; Sibling rank #3; Education level Bachelor of Arts; Background Vinita’s mother is mentally challenged. Vinita is one of the younger girls in the house. They live with her grandmother, who is very supportive of their education. As little girls, they can do a lot of things they want and have the freedom to roam around, as long as they inform the elders that they’re going out. She is closest to her youngest sister who is two years younger to her. They share everything with each other. The eldest sister has studied until the 9th Standard, while the second one has completed her BA. Her father owns a cycle store and works from 8 am to 8 pm.

MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STAY WITH HER FAMILY AND NOT SPEAK ILL OF OTHERS. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT CONFRONT ANYONE WHO SPEAKS ILL OF HER. A WOMAN SHOULD ADJUST.

Vinita wakes up at 6 am. The three younger sisters take bath together and get ready for school. The elder sister helps the grandmother with household chores.
In school, Vinita enjoys math. She is usually the first one to answer questions in class.

Vinita enjoys learning computers in school.

Vinita likes to draw rangoli designs on paper and scrapbooks.

When she returns from school, she plays and does her homework, but she doesn’t help much with household chores.

Vinita’s father asks about school and is supportive and motivates the kids to study. He tells them a story everyday.

She sometimes chats with her older sister, who teaches her ways of learning. She has advised her to wake up early in the morning to learn better.

Sometimes one of the sisters shouts at the mother. The other sisters comfort the mother and share thoughts with her, but the mom doesn’t react much.

She helps her younger sister with school work so that she can grasp things better.

She watches popular tv soaps with her family.

She helps her younger sister with school work so that she can grasp things better.
Vinita wakes up at 5 am. She’s now eldest in the house. She fetches water from the well. The other sister cooks, washes, mops and cleans. Now, 6 people live in the house.

**PRESENT**

She reaches the centre to teach 2 batches of students. Kids and school teachers come to learn about computers. There’s a batch for college girls. She teaches them computers, Internet and how to fill up form.

She practices her skills: makes graphs, market sheets and excel sheets. She manages accounts, and other services at the centre. She chit-chats with other women entrepreneurs.

In the evening, she spends time with her dad who shares religious lessons and religious books.

The grandma tells them how to do things and right and what not to do.

She learns embroidery and Makeram bags with her sister. Vinita prints the design and gives them to her sister. Sometimes the sister also visits the centre.

Her father and grandmother are proud of her that she’s a trainer in the village and want her to continue training others.
I would tell my daughter that a woman can do what she wants to do, be kind to people, not to say bad things about others and not to be over confident about anything.

Vinita’s Aspirations

Vinita wants to join the army because she wants to work for the people. Her father and grandma told her that she could fill up the form, and they won’t stop her. She wants to learn to type faster and she wants people to be digitally literate as now everything is online; kids too should know how to fill up forms and do online activities. She wants more advanced in computer literacy.
SAVITI PAWAR

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

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

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT BE LAZY; SHE SHOULD BE HARDWORKING. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD EARN MONEY AND BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT; SHE SHOULD NOT ASK FOR MONEY FROM OTHERS.
In school, Saviti finds Social Science the most difficult subject. She enjoys playing Tappu and Kho-Kho.

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

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

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

Everyone in the family sleeps in one big room. She shares the bed with her grandmother, and the father has a bed to himself.
Saviti and her younger sister wake up at 6 am. Her younger sister helps out with the household chores.

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

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

Saviti manages accounts, registration and attendance at the centre.

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

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

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

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

She talks to her friends on the phone. Sometimes 15-20 days before the exam, she gets back to her regular studies and goes to class to get updates from friends.
I would tell my daughter a woman can stand on her own feet and achieve her goals. She can balance her household chores, family and work.

Saviti’s Aspirations

She would like to mobilise more people from all age groups to join the centre and enroll for digital literacy. She also wants to learn more about the technology. She believes that what you can do on computer cannot be achieved perfectly on a mobile phone.

Saviti wants a well-read and understanding husband who would match her calibre. Wherever she’s married, she wishes to start a centre in that village.
All children wake up at 6 am and do chores that are divided among them. They fetch water from the hand pump and mop the house, while Mohini’s aunt cooks.

Age 22; unmarried; 2 brothers; Sibling rank #1; Education level 12th; Background
Mohini’s father is a farm labourer and her mother a housewife. Since childhood, she has lived with her maternal uncle and his family due to her family’s financial difficulties. Her uncle is a farmer and pays for her education. Her aunt, who is an ASHA worker, believes that education is more important than household chores. The aunt treats her like her own child, and Mohini feels more at home with her uncle. She’s always encouraged to study and boys in the family help out with household chores. Mohini is very close to her grandmother and misses her the most. She understands that her parents have worked hard for her education, and respects them for that.

DEF runs a CIRC in village Morpani in Kesla block of socially backward district of Hoshangabad in Madhya Pradesh. In this village, 70 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture and unstructured occupations.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD RESPECT ELDERS. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD NOT GET INVOLVED IN BAD ACTIVITIES AND BRING SHAME TO THE FAMILY. MY AUNT TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD FOCUS ON HER EDUCATION.
10 years ago

After school, her aunt does the household chores while the children play with other village children. They recite poems and tell stories to each other.

They study together and help out each other for an hour and a half.

After school Mohini, along with her cousins, also visits her grandmother who encourages her to study and wants her to pursue higher education.

After dinner, they all sit outside together, and tell Mohini's aunt, and uncle, what happened throughout the day.

Mohini has many friends in the colony and visits a different friend's place everyday.

She was asked to come back to the village because the brother needs tuition fee.
Mohini wakes up at 5 am and cooks for the family. Her brother fetches water while her mom works in the field.

Sometimes her mother comes back to check up on the children, and returns to the field soon after.

**PRESENT**

When her cousin visits her, they go out and are allowed to stay out until 9 pm.

Mohini’s parents, uncle, aunt and grandma are proud of her and want her to mobilise all the children in the village to join the centre. They will help her in any way they can. She’s very grateful for it.

Mokini reaches the centre around 9:30 am. She teaches a batch of 5 people for an hour.

She maintains the record of the number of photocopies Excel sheets. She also reads the state local news at the centre.

Sometimes, she plays songs while working.

She calls her grandmother, aunt and uncle every day.

She does video calling and plays music on YouTube (Jhor Dhar Bar). She’s also learnt how to change the background of the laptop.

Children from the village come to her place to watch TV. She also mobilises these children to visit the centre. Children ask her to play songs and to show them how to Google for cartoon.

When she gets back home, her brother fetches her water.
I would tell my daughter a woman should have self-respect, and respect others at the same time. She should pursue a good education, a good job and learn from others.

Mohini’s Aspirations

She wants people to understand that the centre was opened to benefit the villagers. The village should grow with the centre. She wants to do something on her own, and not be dependent on the community. She’d like to pursue a career along the academic path.
Seema takes the bus to school at 10 am. When the mother isn’t well, the younger sister and Seema take care of household chores.

Age 30; married, 1 daughter; 3 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling rank #5; Education level Master of Arts in Sociology; Background Seema’s father is a retired coal miner and her mother is a housewife who did not receive much education as a child. As a result, she does not leave the house too often but takes good care of the house and the family. Seema’s family lives with about 20 other relatives in a joint family. Her mother expresses that because she did not have the opportunity to obtain a sound education, she has a deep desire to see her children well educated.

My parent told me a woman should not go out at night.
There are no phones in the house.

Seema helps her younger sister with her homework in the evening.

Seema and her sister cook dinner. The family dines together in the evening.

After dinner, the family bonds over watching TV.

Seema plays Ludo with her younger sister.

No one argues with the elders regarding what to watch.

Seema works from 7-10 am. When she leaves for school, the younger sister takes over household chores. When it is time for her sister to go to school around noon, Seema returns home to take over the household chores. Their father is retired and stays at home.
Seema wakes up early and prepares breakfast and lunch for the entire family by 5 am. Around 7 am, the children leave for school. There are seven children in the house.

Seema uses Facebook, plays Candy Crush and searches information for her homework.

After completing household chores, Seema studies for her government exam with her niece. Seema is interested in getting into the railways.

The cycle of housework repeats after her daughter returns from school.

In her free time, she reads the newspaper and checks different recipes online.

With her daughter, Seema likes to play badminton and teaches her school work.
I would tell my daughter a woman should be independent and be able to fulfil her wishes on her own.

Seema’s Aspirations

Seema would like to have a government job. She would like to learn more from the centre, disseminate the information and skills to others and create awareness about the benefits of digital skills.
SHAYARA RAHMAN

Located in North-East Bengaluru, Nagwara is a semi-urban cluster mostly inhabited by members of the Muslim community. DEF runs a CIRC in this residential area.

Age 38; married, 2 sons; 3 brothers & 1 sister; Sibling rank #5; Education level 10th; Background Shayara’s father passed away when she was in the 9th Standard. Her mother is a simple woman. Shayara started taking classes of younger children when she was in 8th Standard. After her father’s death, a number of family responsibilities fell on her mother. In her mother’s absence, Shayara lives with her grandmother. Shayara, the youngest child, is closest to her mother.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY HARD AND BECOME SELF-RELIANT. SHE SHOULD BE ABLE TO STUDY, BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE, KEEP HERSELF UP-TO-DATE. SHE SHOULD BE CONFIDENT, BRAVE AND STRONG.
From 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, she stays in school where she teaches kindergarten kids. As a kindergarten teacher, she has a good bond with kids. They share all their family stories with her.

After coming back home from school, she takes tuitions for children between 1st to 4th standard.

At 5:30 pm, she engages in some housework.

After getting free, she spends some time on leisure activities. She reads books in Urdu and English or watches old films.

She wants to learn computers, but she can't, partly because of the high private fee and partly because she doesn't have enough time.

Her husband works at a resort manager in Kolkata as a soft-skills trainer. Whenever her husband comes home, they go for walks to a park.

Shayara sometimes calls her mother to have a chat.

10 years ago
Shayara wakes up at 6 am and reads the namaz, then prepares breakfast and packs tiffin for her husband and her two sons.

From 10 am to 6 pm, she works at an office as a receptionist.

After coming home, she is visited by a 3-year-old girl who lives in her neighbourhood.

The little girl is very fond of Shayara, who plays with her, or sometimes teaches the girl new things. The little girl often sleeps over at Shayara’s house. Shayara’s children are either off to tuitions or out to play during this time.

Shayara completed her basic digital literacy course at CIRC Nagawara last year. She uses her computer skills at her job as a receptionist. At home, she sometimes uses her husband’s laptop. She sends emails and makes video calls to her sister-in-law who lives in France.

She also uses Google to search for general knowledge. She, especially, enjoys reading about birds and plants.

On Sundays, or after 9 pm on weekdays, the family goes to malls for ice-cream.
I would tell my daughter that the world cannot run without women. Women are the backbone of everything.

Shayara’s Aspirations

Shayara wants to buy a plot of land and build a school on it. She wants to impart education to children from backward regions and provide them with all the facilities and exposure that their counterparts get in cities.
She wakes at 7 am and gets ready for the day. She helps her mother wash clothes of the entire family.

Age 28; unmarried; 2 sisters; Sibling rank #2; Education level 9th; Background

Chithra was born with an eye condition that gave her a poor vision. She couldn’t see properly, and was unable to continue her studies post 9th Standard. Chithra’s older sister is an introvert, but that doesn’t stop Chithra and her younger sister from engaging in the usual sibling fights. She also enjoys playing kabaddi with her sister. Her mother is very friendly, while her father is strict. Chithra wears glasses.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A GIRL SHOULD BE EDUCATED AND LEAD A GOOD LIFE. MY FATHER TOLD ME A GIRL SHOULD NOT SPEAK TO BOYS OR MAKE FRIENDS WITH THEM.

S CHITHRA

Puducherry is a Union Territory of India where DEF runs a CIRC near the fisherman community quarters. In this town, the CIRC staff also works with underprivileged girls, orphan boys, tribal communities and transgenders to make them digitally empowered.

She wakes at 7 am and gets ready for the day. She helps her mother wash clothes of the entire family.
At 10 am, she eats breakfast and watches TV till 1:30 pm.

Due to her eye condition, she has difficulty reading.

After lunch, from 2 to 5 pm, she sits and make gajras. She earns up to 40 rupees each day by making and selling those gajras.

A girl visits her in the morning every day and gives her jasmine flowers. She picks the gajras from Chithra. A ‘gajra’ is a small garland made by sewing together jasmine or mogra flowers, and is worn on head as an accessory.

Chithra’s family owns neither a computer nor a mobile phone. They don’t even have a landline.

Until 7 pm, she helps her mother with the chores. Then the family has dinner together and watches TV.

At 10 years ago.

Until 7 pm, she helps her mother with the chores. Then the family has dinner together and watches TV.
After coming back home from the CIRC, she watches TV, makes gajras, and helps her mother with work. She wakes up at 7 am, gets ready and does laundry.

She visits CIRC Vaithikuppam with her two friends who live in the neighbourhood.

In class, Chithra’s first worry was that she wouldn’t be able to see text or icons. Trainers at the centre made the font and icon size bigger on her computer so that she could see everything clearly.

Her protective mother was hesitant, at first to send her for computer classes. She was convinced when Chithra’s friends assured her that they would also accompany her to the class and back home.

Chithra’s sister attended college and that is where she learnt computers. Chithra never attended college, but even she can now work on a computer. Chithra can turn on a computer, change the desktop background, use Paint, save documents, etc.

She now has a Facebook account which she uses to chat with her friends and family. She also uses WhatsApp. She likes to share videos and pictures that she captures at family functions.
I will tell my daughter that a girl should be educated and able stand on her own feet.

S Chithra’s Aspirations

She would like to see herself at a job where she can make use of her computer skills. She would also want to teach her mother how to operate a computer.
Shamim was married off at the age of 19. She wakes up at 5.30 am and by 6 am, she prepares tea for the entire family of six members. From 7 am to 9 am, she prepares breakfast with her sister-in-law for a family of ten. After this, they wash clothes and prepare more food.

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

**MY MOTHER TOLD ME A GIRL SHOULD FOLLOW HER CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS. MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT A GIRL SHOULD ENJOY HER LIFE.**
There are three children in the house, two of them are infants. A lot of time is spent on taking care of the babies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

She has seen a computer at a relative’s house, but is too scared to touch it. She fears she’ll break the computer she is not well educated.
Shamim now lives separately with her husband and two daughters. Shamim wakes up at 5 am and sends her daughters to the mosque. After she walks them to school, she finishes all her chores.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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I would tell my daughter a girl should be free to do anything; learn, dance, sing, travel to places or study. But she should also dress up with modestly. The world needs women because a woman is the backbone of everything. Only a woman can guide a man to success.

Shamim’s Aspirations

Shamim wants her daughters to be self-reliant and ready to face anything in life. She wants to see herself complete her formal education. She wants to be employed in a government department. She wishes more minority women would come out of their houses, and explore the world outside their homes.
Jayanthi wakes up at 8 am and gets ready. Her sister prepares breakfast and does other chores. Since Jayanthi is the youngest, she doesn’t have to do much work in the house. Her two eldest sisters are married.

Jayanthi’s mother is a kind and soft-spoken woman while her father is a little strict, especially when it comes to his children’s education. All her siblings are like friends to her but she’s closest to her second brother. They would play indoor games and watch cricket matches together. Their mother only had to tell her eldest daughter not to speak to boys, and the other sisters followed.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A GIRL SHOULD ONLY CONCENTRATE ON HER EDUCATION TO MAKE A BETTER LIVING.

Puducherry is a Union Territory of India where DEF runs a CIRC near the fisherman community quarters. In this town, the CIRC staff also works with underprivileged girls, orphan boys, tribal communities and transgenders to make them digitally empowered.
At 9 am, she leaves for work after breakfast. She works as an office assistance, and has to work a lot on MS Office applications. She had learnt computers after graduating from college.

On weekends, she likes to play board games with her brother. They often play chess.

She comes home at 6:30 pm, and spends the next two hours watching TV.

In the evening, she sits down with her sisters to share about her day at work. She especially needs company on a bad day.

Later, she has dinner and goes to bed by 10 pm.

They don’t have a computer at home, but her father has a mobile phone, which the family shares to make calls. She has never used the Internet.

The family goes to the beach on weekends.
Her husband is a social worker. Depending on his shift, he leaves anytime between 4-7 am. She prepares lunch and packs tiffin for her husband and her two daughters. Her mother-in-law also lives with them.

At 8.30 am, she drops her children off at the school on her scooter and then reports by 9 am at the local CIRC where she is a trainer.

Jayanthi wakes up at 4 am and starts with household chores.

She does own a computer at home, but does all her computer-related work at the CIRC. She uses the Internet to listen to songs, watch shows and look up English translation of words from the local language.

In her free time, Jayanthi likes to rest and sleep. She is much more systematic now than she was earlier, and irons and arranges the clothes for the family on a weekly basis.

On weekends, the family goes to the beach. Sometimes, her children, husband and mother-in-law go for a late night movie but she is always too tired to join them.

Her younger daughter, four-year-old Darshana, uses the computer at the CIRC to watch Spiderman videos on YouTube. She is a self-taught child, and Jayanthi thinks the kid knows more than she does about computers.

Major part of a tuition class includes helping children in their homework.

Besides basic computer literacy, she also gives lessons to primary school students. Though she teaches all subjects she isn’t particularly interested in science. She stays at the CIRC till about 7 pm.

Around 2.30 pm, she picks up her daughters from school and brings them to CIRC.
I would tell my daughter that she is free to pursue her dreams and ambitions. I would not put any restrictions on her. A woman is an all-rounder. She takes care of her home and her work. Nothing in this world is possible without a woman; the society will stop functioning in the absence of women.

Jayanthi's Aspirations

Jayanthi wants to continue teaching computers to children. She hopes to see women in her community using the computer to earn a livelihood. She also wants to visit the Taj Mahal once.
Kalaimani wakes up at 6 am, gets ready and walks to her school which starts at 8:30 am.

Age 21; unmarried; 2 sisters; Sibling rank #1; Education level Bachelor of Science Physics (pursuing pre-primary teacher training course); Background Kalaimani’s father is a porter and sells vegetables in the market. Her mother helps him in his work. She is a very strict lady who is extremely particular about how her daughters dress and talk. She wants the children to dress modestly and not be too talkative. Kalaimani’s father is the more liberal and jovial parent. The mother doesn’t allow the children to go out alone as she thinks it will spoil them, so the children only go out with their mother and usually to the market. Kalaimani is always very protective of her sisters. She combs their hair and feeds them. They play hide and seek outside the house. However, this makes their grandmother very angry. Sometimes, the grandmother locks the girls in a room so that they don’t go out.

“My mother told me a girl should study hard but not go out much or travel. My father told me a woman should visit places close to the house and not stray anywhere far.”
Mid-Day Meal is served at the school at noon. However, she hates the food as she has found bugs and worms in the food more than once.

Her favorite subject is biology.

After lunch, she plays with her sister for a while. From 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm, she sits down to do her homework.

She walks back home at 4:30 pm and has her lunch. Her mother is back from work too by then.

She has two close friends who would visit her house often. However, Kalaimani is not allowed to visit their house.

She has seen a computer once but never touched it.

They have no TV, phone or computer at home. When they have to make a call, they go to the nearest PCO.

Sometimes, her grandmother asks her to sweep the floor – a chore that Kalaimani hates.

After lunch, she plays with her sister for a while. From 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm, she sits down to do her homework.

She walks back home at 4:30 pm and has her lunch. Her mother is back from work too by then.

Her favorite subject is biology.

After lunch, she plays with her sister for a while. From 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm, she sits down to do her homework.

She has seen a computer once but never touched it.

They have no TV, phone or computer at home. When they have to make a call, they go to the nearest PCO.

Sometimes, her grandmother asks her to sweep the floor – a chore that Kalaimani hates.
She wakes up at 6 am, prepares food and packs lunch for everyone.

She uses the Internet only at the centre. She likes to watch Tamil and Hindi soaps, listen to music, look up travel-related information, read Bollywood news and find out about latest science discoveries.

She takes a bus and reaches college by 9:30 am where she is enrolled for a Pre-Primary Teacher Training Course.

After college, she returns home, cleans the place and sits down to work on her college assignments.

She joined the CIRC about a year ago and learnt basic computer operations, followed by desktop publishing. At the centre, she received career counselling and was suggested to become a teacher. After Kalaimani finished her digital literacy course, one of her sisters joined too.

She enjoys teaching. She teaches children from kindergarten to Class IV.

She takes a bus and reaches college by 9:30 am where she is enrolled for a Pre-Primary Teacher Training Course.

At 3 pm, she leaves her house for CIRC Puducherry where she works as a tutor. After she’s done giving tuitions, she surfs the Internet, practices her Hindi, and tries to read up about different methods of teaching.

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She doesn’t see her friends anymore as they moved houses but she misses them sometimes.

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She doesn’t see her friends anymore as they moved houses but she misses them sometimes.

She uses the Internet only at the centre. She likes to watch Tamil and Hindi soaps, listen to music, look up travel-related information, read Bollywood news and find out about latest science discoveries.
I would tell my daughters that they can be whatever they choose. Girls should be encouraged and not restricted. The world needs women because we know how to care.

S Kalaimani’s Aspirations

She wants to see herself as a well-settled teacher, and a mother of one.
N NANDHINI

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Age 21; married - pregnant with one baby; 1 brother & 2 sisters; Sibling rank #2; Education level Bachelor of Science Physics; Background Nandhini lives with her parents and three siblings. Her father is a cycle mechanic and owns a shop while her mother is a housewife. Sometimes, Nandhini helps her father at the shop. Her mother is very supportive and friendly; and Nandini shares everything with her. She also likes to play outdoor and indoor games with her siblings and is learning Bharatanatyam.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD MARRY SOMEONE HER PARENTS CHOOSE FOR HER. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY AND BECOME SELF-RELIANT.
10 years ago

Kollams are traditional hand-drawn patterns made on the ground with rice. They are drawn twice-a-day outside the door or on the porch. It is believed that Gods enter one’s house in the morning and then in the evening, and hence, women draw kollams to welcome the gods.

She cycles to school. Her favourite subject is mathematics. She also takes Bharatanatyam lessons at her school.

The family does not own a phone or a computer. They go to the nearest PCO to make calls.

On weekends, the family goes to the beach or for a movie.

Nandhini also likes listening to music.

She helps her mother in the kitchen and in making kollams.

Nandhini has learnt to draw and paint in school, and likes to sketch when she has the time.

The family does not own a phone or a computer. They go to the nearest PCO to make calls.

On weekends, the family goes to the beach or for a movie.

Nandhini also likes listening to music.

She helps her mother in the kitchen and in making kollams.

Nandhini has learnt to draw and paint in school, and likes to sketch when she has the time.
Nandhini wakes up at 5 am and just listens to music for an hour. For the next one hour, she surfs the Internet and chats with her friends or family on WhatsApp.

She then helps other women in the house prepare breakfast. There are 14 members in the house, including her parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, their wives and their children.

She eats lunch around 1 pm and watches her favourite TV soap.

Nandhini still likes to draw kolam at the door.

After breakfast, she helps her sister-in-law look after the latter's baby who is only six months old.

Her husband is concerned about Nandhini using a mobile phone. He believes that a mobile phone can be dangerous for the baby. So, she is only allowed to use her mobile for two hours in the morning.

Her husband is a quality checker in a laboratory.

Later in the day, she takes some rest before heading to CIRC Puducherry where she takes tuitions for all subjects from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm for students up to Class VII.

The family spends their evening sitting together and talking.

Nandhini is pregnant and must not forget to take medicine with her breakfast.
I will tell my daughter that she can achieve anything she wants; and I will tell her that the world cannot survive without women.

N Nandhini’s Aspirations

Nandhini has done her B.Ed and holds a PhD. She is a college lecturer and wants to use her knowledge of computers in taking notes, making graphs and looking up relevant information on Google.
MUMTAZ BEGUM

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

Age 39; married, 1 daughter & 2 sons; 3 brothers & 5 sisters; Sibling rank #9; Education level 8th; Background Mumtaz is the youngest among her siblings. Her mother is a jolly and soft spoken person, and is extremely helpful. Mumtaz was never a pampered child and has always been pretty much on her own. She is not very close to her brothers. After dropping out of school early, she began working with her sisters as a beedi roller at a cottage industry in her neighbourhood. She would earn Rs. 30 to 40 per day, and contribute to her family income.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD HAVE A STRONG MIND AND BE BOLD BUT SHE SHOULDN’T SPEAK TO MEN, EXCEPT HER FATHER AND BROTHERS.
MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD WALK ON A STRAIGHT PATH AND NOT GET DISTRACTED.

Mumtaz wakes up at 5:30 am, and prays for about 15 mins. She then gets her nine years old ready for school and sees her off in an autorickshaw. Until 1 pm, she completes all her household chores.
At 1 pm, she prepares lunch. Her husband, who is an electrician, comes home around 2 pm for lunch, and the two sit down together for a meal.

When her son comes back from school, she washes his uniform and makes tea for him.

Later, she helps him with his homework, following which he goes out to play.

In the evening, she spends some time watching the news before preparing dinner. Dinner is usually light — idli or dosa.

After feeding her son, she waits for her husband to return home. They usually eat together unless she’s very hungry and can’t wait for him to return.

They don’t have a phone or computer in the house so they go to their neighbour’s house or the nearest PCO to make calls.

On some days, she visits her mother’s or her sister’s house.
Mumtaz has three children now. She gets them ready for school and sends them off in an autorickshaw now. She sends her younger two to CIRC after they come back from school. Though she is enrolled at the CIRC, she likes to visit the centre on some days and volunteer for the mobilisation activities undertaken by local partner organisations. Mumtaz likes to help people in need or hear of others’ experiences.

She had heard about the CIRC through a friend who works at a local NGO. Mumtaz has a phone and she uses it to make calls mostly.

She has a computer in the house but she doesn’t use it because she doesn’t know how to use it. Her children and husband do. However, she wants to learn at the CIRC.
I would tell my daughter that a woman is bold enough to face any difficulty. She should also know how to treat and respect her elders. I would tell her a woman plays a very important role in this world. A man needs a woman, as a wife or as a mother, especially when in his lows.

Mumtaz’s Aspirations

Mumtaz sees herself helping people and serving the society. After learning computers, she wants to teach other women in her community too.
SHAMEEN BASHIRA

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

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

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

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

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

She used to be a teacher at a government school in the village.
10 years ago

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

At 5 pm, she prepares tea for everyone.

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

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

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

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

Whenever the couple gets a chance, they go watch the circus or an exhibition.
She wakes up at 6 am and offers prayers for half an hour. She makes breakfast and packs a tiffin for her husband and kids.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The application that she uses the most on her phone is WhatsApp.
I would tell my daughter that a girl should be generous and honest. She should not cheat or steal. I would tell her that there is no difference between men and women; no matter which field, women can lead.

Shameen's Aspirations

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

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

Age 35; married, 2 sons; 3 sisters; Sibling rank #3; Education level 7th; Background Sultan is closest to her second sister, however, she fights a lot with her other sisters. What makes her bond better with her second sister is their common interest in playing games and sports like marbles, which are typically labelled as boys’ games. But she also enjoys playing house-house and kitchen-kitchen with her sisters and friends. To ensure the girls learn to carry out formal and official procedures, their father takes them to banks and post office when she has work their. Sultan’s father is a notary stamp vendor and her mother is a homemaker who educates the daughters through her wisdom.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE BRAVE. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE SELF-DEPENDENT.

Sultan wakes up at 5 am, gets her five-year-old son ready and packs lunch for him. She then sends him to school in an autorickshaw while her husband leaves later, by 9 am, for work.
10 years ago

Once her son and husband are gone, she spends some time watching TV while finishing up household chores. Sometimes, she has to go out to the bank or the market and visits her friends on her way.

In the afternoon, she prepares some light snack for her son, following which the two of them walk to a nearby mosque where he takes Islamic lessons.

After her Islamic classes, the son goes for tutions, while she prepares dinner. The son comes back at 7 pm.

She joined tailoring classes eight years ago, and she likes to stitch clothes sometimes.

When her sister is in town, they go out to together for a movie or lunch or to the market.

She and her husband own a phone each but they don’t have a computer at home. Sultan only uses her phone to make calls – to her mother, husband and others in the family.

Sultan has seen a computer but never used one.

Her husband comes home around 2 pm, and the couple has lunch together. They then rest until 4 pm when it’s time for their son to return.
She wakes up at 5 am, gets her children ready for school, packs their lunches and sends them off. By 10 am, Sultan finishes her work too, and then takes an hour-long nap.

Sultan’s younger son is learning basic digital literacy at CIRC, Quademillath Nagar. She, too, is interested in learning computers as she wants to expand her knowledge and fit them in the modern world.

When her husband is home, the two of them have so much to share about their lives and work away from each other. They’ve always made important decisions together.

She runs a small tailoring enterprise at home.

Sultan has now learnt to use WhatsApp on her phone and likes to chat with her friends, husband and extended family.

She has a laptop at home but she seldom uses it. She finds her mobile much more accessible for everything. She frequently makes video calls to her husband, who visits India once in two years for three months.

The family likes to go for movies or picnics. Sometimes, when the husband is home, they take a trip to Bengaluru or Mysuru.
I would tell my daughter that a girl should be bold and courageous but should also set her limits. She should be professional but not a flirt. And I will tell her that only a woman can handle and manage everything in this world without messing anything up.

Sultan’s Aspirations

Sultan wants to help her son fulfill his ambition of becoming a pilot. She wishes to see a more liberal, free and safe society for women in future. And she wishes to teach computers to children in her community.
NAGALAKSHMI

Puducherry is a Union Territory of India where DEF runs a CIRC near the fisherman community quarters. In this town, the CIRC staff also works with underprivileged girls, orphan boys, tribal communities and transgenders to make them digitally empowered.

Age 28; married, 2 sons; 1 brother; Sibling rank #1; Education level 8th; Background Nagalakshmi’s father passed away when she was young; and it was after his death that she developed a close bond with her brother. They would play games like kho-kho, kabaddi and cricket together. However, soon after her father’s death, she had to drop out of school due to financial constraints and start contributing to the household income. At present, she works at a leather factory with her cousin; and her mother is very proud of her.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE COURAGEOUS BUT ALSO AWARE OF HER LIMITS.
10 years ago

She then gets ready and takes an hour-long bus to the leather tanning factory where she works.

After coming back home, she does laundry and helps her mother in the kitchen prepare dinner.

During this time, her brother is out, playing with his friends.

The family sits together for dinner and television at 8:30 pm. Sometimes, they skip watching the TV and just share their day with each other.

Often in the evening or on weekends, the family goes to the beach. Sometimes, Nagalakshmi goes to the beach with her friends and plays games there.

Her shift at the factory gets over at 4:30 pm. By 5:30 pm, she’s usually home. Sometimes, she works overtime, for an extra hour.

The family does not own a phone or a computer but she’s seen a computer at a friend’s house in the neighbourhood.
Nagalakshmi wakes up at 6 am, does the dishes, helps her older son get ready for school and then drops him off at his school by 8:30 am.

Nagalakshmi is a student of CIRC Vaithirkuppam. After her breakfast, she spends some time revising what she had learnt the previous day and then goes to the CIRC.

In the evening, she cooks some light snack for her son while he does homework. Later, her son and her younger brother play together while Nagalakshmi assists her mother in the kitchen.

Once Nagalakshmi is free from all her housework, she spends some time with her friends in the neighbourhood. These are friends she’s made at CIRC.

She has learnt to use various computer and Internet applications, including Paint, MS Office, Facebook and Gmail. She feels particularly happy that she can download photos from the Internet and save it on her computer or phone.

She, especially, likes to look up baby photos.

She likes to share some good photos with her friends on Facebook and WhatsApp and play games like Candy Crush and Temple Run with her children.

When her husband is at home, they like to go to the beach in the evening.

Since her husband lives in the Gulf for six months, she often speaks to him through voice calls. It’s something that her brother taught her. Nagalakshmi got married six years ago.

In the evening, she cooks some light snack for her son while he does homework. Later, her son and her younger brother play together while Nagalakshmi assists her mother in the kitchen.

She, especially, likes to look up baby photos.

She likes to share some good photos with her friends on Facebook and WhatsApp and play games like Candy Crush and Temple Run with her children.
I would tell my daughter a girl should participate in extracurricular activities. With motivation and guidance, she can achieve anything. Women are important because without a mother, the world wouldn’t even exist.

Nagalakshmi’s Aspirations

She wants to open a tailoring and embroidery boutique and see herself transform into a successful business woman.
Preethi wakes up at 6 am. Her mother gets the girls ready for school. They have breakfast and leave her and her sister ready for school.

Preethi is very close to her sister, so much so that they’re like best friends. The two of them love to play football together or take their skipping rope outdoors in the evening.

**PREETHI**

Puducherry is a Union Territory of India where DEF runs a CIRC near the fisherman community quarters. In this town, the CIRC staff also works with underprivileged girls, orphan boys, tribal communities and transgenders to make them digitally empowered.

Age 16; unmarried; 1 sister; Sibling rank #2; Education level 12th; Background Preethi’s father is a painter who works at construction sites; her mother is a housewife. The former is a very strict man while her mother is a kind, gentle and loving woman. Preethi is very close to her sister, so much so that they’re like best friends. The two of them love to play football together or take their skipping rope outdoors in the evening.

**MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE SOFT SPOKEN AND NOT TOO TALKATIVE. SHE SHOULDN’T GO OUT ALONE BECAUSE BOYS CAN BE DANGEROUS. MY FATHER TOLD ME EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT BUT ONE SHOULD NOT PUT SAFETY AT STAKE.**
She studies General Knowledge, English and Social Sciences at school. During recess, she plays with her friends in the school grounds. Her favourite teacher's name is Dhanalakshmi.

Preethi loves to watch her mom cook and observe how she cuts and dices the vegetables. She often asks her mom if she can help, but her mother never takes help from her.

After school, the girls go for tuition classes where they complete their homework.

Once their tuition is over at 7 pm, the sisters return home and play with their friends in the neighbourhood.

At dinner, the girls share about their day with their parents, following which the girls watch a music channel or cartoons on TV.

Sometimes, the family goes to a nearby park for a picnic, and play games like cricket. On weekends, they go to the beach where their parents buy them ice cream and popcorn.

The only member in the house with a mobile phone is her father, who owns a feature phone. When her mother wants to make a call, she either goes to a PCO or to a neighbour’s house. Even though the mother does not own a phone, she makes a call to her husband every day to confirm what time will he come home for lunch.
Preethi wakes up at 7 am, and helps her mother in the kitchen in preparing breakfast. At 9 am, she leaves for the temple.

Preethi is taking digital literacy lessons at CIRC Vaithikuppam where she arrives every day at 10 am. She has learnt many things in these classes, including the use of Paint, MS Office and the Internet.

At present, she is learning computers as she believes it would help her in her education and her career.

At 7 pm, the sisters step outside the house for a change of air. They either go to the market or visit a friend’s house. The girls cannot step out of the house alone but have to always go out together because their parents are very protective.

Neither of them owns a phone. In case the girls are getting late, they use their friend’s phone to inform their parents. Their parents get really worried if the girls don’t reach home by 9 pm.

Preethi likes to watch nail art tutorials on YouTube. She also likes to search for her favourite actors’ photos on the Internet.

Preethi wants to become a nurse. Unfortunately this time, she missed the admission dates and has been forced to take a gap year. In this gap year, she is learning computers as she believes it would help her in her education and her career.

Every evening, the family spends time together watching TV programmes. They also go together for family functions and ceremonies.

Preethi enjoys embroidery - flower patterns are her favourite - that she learnt in school.

After her CIRC lessons, she comes back home and helps her mother in the kitchen. When her father comes home, they have lunch together.
I will tell my daughter that a woman could be versatile and an expert in all fields. She can do everything that a man can do. Women are important because every child’s first teacher is his/her mother.

Preethi’s Aspirations

She wants to see herself as a nurse, helping people. She says computers will help her at work in taking notes and maintaining accurate patient records.