Digital Roshni 3
Digital Roshni 3
The changing lives of women adapting digital tools

This book is the third 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

“Usse mobile matt dena, bhaag jayega kisi ke saath.” “Tu haath mat laga, tuje chalana nahi ayega!” were words that came instantly when women went close to a phone.

“Mobile hawaijahz thodi na hai ki mey usme baith kar gayab ho jaungi!” “Mobile bomb hai kya? Ki phaat jaega?” were expressions shared by women when they were denied the use of a mobile phone.

“Daal-baati, sev-tamatar ki sabji, sabkey video hai!!” “Chotu, idhar aah, A B C D ka video dekho!” “Sarkari schemes toh ghar baithey hi se mil sakti hai!” were the excited voices of women after they used phones.

In spite of the benefits, out of the 612 million females in India, only 28% own a mobile phone. The gender gap in terms of ownership of phones is recorded to be 36%. (GSMA, 2015) Women continue to face socio-economic and cultural barriers to the use of mobile phones and it is these barriers that DEF is trying to break to empower women in 170 villages across the country.
DEF since its inception in 2002 has created numerous impact stories through Community Information Resource Centers (CIRCs); employing women coordinators, trainers, managers and reaching out to thousands of girls and women in the community. Access to rights and entitlements, watching dance videos and Bollywood songs to learning Mehendi designs and self-defense, from learning English, typing to using social media platforms, women have used digital tools to positively impact their lives.

In this third part of Digital Roshni series, we bring to you 25 stories of women and girls from distant villages of India who shared with our team, stories of their interaction with technology. Our team travelled to remote places and spent hours and days collecting information, sharing meals with them, accompanying them to their fields and thus, understanding the social background of these women. The stories are inspiring and continue to motivate us in our work for women empowerment.

We hope these stories light up your day and remind you of the power that women hold to influence each one of us.

Sharada Kerkar
Digital Empowerment Foundation
The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

Age 34; single mother, 1 daughter; 2 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling rank #1; Education level Class 8; Background Suchitra’s father is a former police constable who was forced to leave his job for some family reasons; he no longer has a stable income. Suchitra’s mother is a hardworking woman who owns a cigarette shop, and earns Rs. 100-200 a day. Everyone’s treated equally in the family and they are close to each other. They look up to their mother as a problem solver for many things.
MY PARENTS TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE EDUCATED AND BE ABLE TO EARN FOR THE FAMILY. SHE SHOULD ALSO BE A SOCIAL PERSON IN THE COMMUNITY.

Suchitra wakes up at 5 am and cooks for everyone in the house – seven people and a dog.

She leaves the house at 10 am for work where she makes garments for traditional clothing.

She earns Rs. 2000 a month. She makes eight tops a day and each piece costs Rs. 80.

She comes home between 5-6 pm and cooks dinner for everyone. If she is late any day, her sister cooks for the family.

She plays with her younger sister’s children. Sometimes the neighbour’s children join in too. They usually play football or cricket.

Her sister helps her with the cleaning while their brother studies. Sometimes, if there’s more work than usual, the mother stays back to take care of the children.

She enjoys tailoring, but there is no machine at home so she has to hand stitch clothes.
She wakes up at 5 am, cooks for everyone and prepares a tiffin for her daughter. Suchitra’s father has found a job at the Food Corporation of India as a helper, and earns Rs. 1500 a month.

She shares a lot with her daughter, for whom she dreams of an educated future. Her daughter also teaches her a lot of things that she learns at school, including her newly acquired digital knowledge.

Sometimes she stays back longer to make arrangements for the next day’s meal for anganwadi children.

After she was identified as one of the beneficiaries under a special women’s empowerment project, she received a laptop, a digital camera and a printer to run a small enterprise. Here, she gives women like her the opportunity to experience computers. Some come just to watch movies. She charges a nominal amount for services like printing, scanning and Internet surfing.

Present

She drops her daughter to school and goes to the anganwadi centre where she cooks for 53 children. She cooks chana, milk, sooji, rice and pulses.

Sometimes she even leads the prayer when the teacher is absent but she’s not literate enough to teach the children. But she enjoys singing, dancing with the children, telling them stories and playing games with them.

She cares the most about two children who have lost their mother. They stay with a relative as their father lives separately with his new wife.

She shares a lot with her daughter, for whom she dreams of an educated future. Her daughter also teaches her a lot of things that she learns at school, including her newly acquired digital knowledge.

Suchitra had never set eyes on a computer until she had joined the CIRC.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE EDUCATED SO THAT SHE CAN EARN A LIVING INDEPENDENTLY. SHE SHOULD BE SOCIAL, KIND, HUMBLE AND HELPFUL.

She wants to apply for a loan to buy a few sewing machines and start her own boutique, but each machine costs about Rs. 40,000. She even wants to teach some women in the community to sew, and she learns a lot from YouTube.
DERILLA R. MARAT

The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

Age 54; married, 1 daughter & 1 son; 2 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling rank #1; Education level Class 10; Background Derilla grew up in a poor family yet her parents were always supportive of her decisions and provided her with whatever they could. As a child, she had to walk 7km to her missionary school and, being the eldest sibling, doing laundry was her responsibility. She sometimes had to find vegetables in the fields and drink water from the drain as she was too shy to ask for water. Now, she feels like she’s living in a palace; but’s always been lucky to have a loving and fair family. Each of the siblings, irrespective of their gender, have always been fed equally. If one got new clothes, the others got new clothes too. Derilla got married when she was in her early 20s.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD LEARN TO COOK, STITCH AND CLEAN. MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD LOOK AFTER HER YOUNGER SIBLINGS.

10 years ago

She starts cooking around 4:30 am and prepares meal for her family. By 8 am, she and her husband leave for work.

Her husband works from 9 am to 4:30 pm. He translates content for the church from English to Garo, and she types it slowly on a computer.

She visits sick people and asks them to come to the church for the Lord’s blessings.

She does not own a mobile phone.

Her friends often come over to share and interact with her.

She learns to bake at the church.

She doesn’t have computer training, but has learnt some basics from her husband. She earns Rs. 5000 a month.

The family likes to play its own games. In the game, one imitates a mother chicken while the eagle tries to catch her chicks.

They watch Hindi films.

After dinner, her father usually leads the family worship service. In his absence, her mother does it. Prayers can be lead by anyone in the house.
She also makes burger and supplies them to a school canteen. Thirty-six of them a day. Each item costs Rs. 10 rupees. On Fridays, there are more orders for bread.

She lives close to her current office where she’s a typist. When she’s free, she looks up recipes on Google.

She uses a camera to take photos of the baking process to show to her students while teaching them to bake. She also takes photos of meetings. She says, “Nowadays, report means nothing without pictures.”

She wakes up at 3 am to prepare bakery materials for customer orders, which usually go up to six loaves of bread and 40-50 cream buns.

She designs books and other material, and sends them to Kolkata for printing.

She was selected under a special women empowerment project, and received a laptop. Slowly and steady, she learnt to use Photoshop, Illustrator and other desktop publishing tools.

She uses a camera to take photos of the baking process to show to her students while teaching them to bake. She also takes photos of meetings. She says, “Nowadays, report means nothing without pictures.”

She enjoys meeting new people at her bakery. Women come to her place to learn how to bake. She charges Rs. 200 to teach a woman to bake one item.

Her son has low IQ but he helps her in simple chores around the house, like chopping vegetables.

When Derilla makes preparations or bakes, her husband helps her too sometimes.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD LOVE TO COOK. AS THE ONE WHO PREPARES THE MEAL IN THE HOUSE, A WOMAN TAKES CARE OF EVERYONE’S HEALTH. IF SHE PREPARES BAD MEALS, THE FAMILY WON’T BE HEALTHY.

Derilla’s Aspirations
She wants to stay in her village and teach women to bake and cook. She wants to promote a vegetarian diet.
Age 32; married, 2 daughter & 2 son; 2 brothers & 3 sisters; Sibling rank #1; Education level Class 8; Background Bobitha grew up in a poor family. Her mother, a hardworking housewife, could not afford to send her to school. When she was briefly in school, she once had to take a three-week leave to take care of her brother who had dropped out of middle school. Having seen her mother toil hard, she, too, chose to stay home and help her. Bobitha got married when she was 15 years old, it was her decision. Her parents strongly opposed the marriage. However, after marriage, she felt she was treated unfairly. Bobitha’s oldest daughter also got married at an early age, which really upset her.
She wakes up at 5 am and gets her children ready for school. The eldest of the siblings leads the others to school.

She enjoys singing hymns.

She talks to her children a lot. Her youngest son is always around her, except when she’s out working in the field. However, the closeness has decreased as she works too much and doesn’t have as much time to spend with him.

She works as a labourer and a cleaner, earning daily wages. She mixes cements and bricks and/or cleans other people’s houses. She also has another job at a solar complex where she earn Rs. 130 a day. Most of the money she earns goes towards her children’s expenses.

She doesn’t talk to her husband much because he’s always drunk.

Her husband drinks a lot and spends his money in gambling.

Children fetch water for the house. She takes a nap in the afternoon before she begins to cook again for dinner.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD LEARN TO COOK BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE.

MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD HELP HER MOTHER IN COOKING.

10 years ago
During festive seasons, she shares food with neighbours. She likes to gossip with her friends. Her situation with her maternal family has also improved.

She wakes up 5 am and makes breakfast for everyone.

She reaches CIRC by 9:30 am and cleans the office.

She looks after the accounts and admissions in a register, and handles the printer for in-house and external services. She earns 5000 rupees/month.

She enjoys watching Hindi films on YouTube or looking up recipes on Google.

She hasn’t taken any course at CIRC.

Her eldest daughter cooks, so she doesn’t have to cook at home. She asks her sons to run errands, carry water in the morning and in the evening, and clean the house.

Her husband is responsible for buying all household grocery and utilities. She supports her children’s education.

Present
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD NOT GET MARRIED AT AN EARLY AGE. SHE SHOULD BE A GOOD COOK AND A CONSIDERATE PERSON.

She sees herself working at the CIRC for the rest of her career time. She doesn’t have the urge to become a trainer, but she would like to be promoted to the post of an office assistant. She wishes the best education and life for her children. When her oldest daughter got married at an early age, she lost a bit of hope but she wants all of her children to grow up to be good people.
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Age 38; married, 2 daughter; 2 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling rank #1; Education level Class 10; Background Hellen’s parents got separated when she was young. Hellen stayed with her father but moved in with her mother when she was 18. The two had met after so long that her mother could not recognised her when she first moved in. As a single mother, she supported and sacrificed a lot for her children. As a child, Hellen was not allowed to go out much as household chores were considered the responsibility of girls and education was not considered important enough for them. But she had home-schooled herself.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE HUMBLE AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HER FAMILY.

MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A WOMAN — TO TAKE CARE OF HER FAMILY.

On weekends, she spends time with her maternal family and writes letters to her sister in Nagaland.

When her husband returns, he helps her with pending housework, following which they watch a movie together, sing and pray to God.

After school, she returns home for more chores and helps her daughter with homework.

She wakes up at 5 am to start with household chores. She also pushes her daughter to study.

Her husband helps with the cleaning and cooking.

She is a teacher at the nursery school where she teaches 18 children. Her daughter is one of them. She teaches them alphabets, numbers, nursery rhymes, and discusses healthy tips, moral science and stories from the Bible.

She always has to be conscious of not giving any special treatment to her daughter.

She and her daughter go to school together.

10 years ago

She is a teacher at the nursery school where she teaches 18 children. Her daughter is one of them. She teaches them alphabets, numbers, nursery rhymes, and discusses healthy tips, moral science and stories from the Bible.

She always has to be conscious of not giving any special treatment to her daughter.
She wakes up at 5 am to clean and cook for her family; her husband helps her too.

She reaches the nursery school by 8:45 am, and teaches children alphabets and numbers. She uses Powerpoint presentations, images and videos to discuss topics like health and moral science. She even downloads songs from the Internet to sing along with her students.

After the class is over, she goes through the children’s notebooks for the day, prepares lesson plan for the next day and reorganises the classroom.

At the CIRC, she prints pictures for children to colour in, and looks for class decoration tips and recipes on Google.

She also helps neighbourhood children in school work. She charges Rs. 2 per page for printing.

When her husband returns from work, they work together in the kitchen and talk about their day.

Her husband is very supportive of her attending training classes at CIRC. He wants her to learn more tools like Photoshop and other programmes, and is willing to take household responsibilities.

When she takes children out for a nature tour, she likes to carry her camera.

Her daughter also shows her different things she can do on the computer. She likes to download songs and then sing them out loud.

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I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN CAN BE ANYTHING, IF SHE TRIES HARD. IN STRENGTH, WE MAY BE WEAKER THAN MEN BUT WE ARE NOT BACKWARD IN OUR KNOWLEDGE. WE CAN LEARN THINGS THAT MEN LEARN. WOMEN NEED TO ADOPT ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TO RUN THE FAMILY.

Hellen’s Aspirations

She wants to provide underprivileged children access to digital technology as she believes it makes one’s life easier. She often discusses health and sanitation topics with women in her community. Hellen wants to pursue Bachelor of Arts with a focus on History.
LETHINA W. SANGMA

The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

Age 46; married, 1 daughter & 2 sons; 4 brothers & 1 sister; Sibling rank #1; Education level BA Psychology; Background Lethina’s father got another wife when she was in Class III. Her family was then supported by her grandfather who is a pineapple farmer. Lethina was the one who backed her mother to divorce her father. Her mother, a brave single parent, took good care of her daughter who has dedicated her life to her children. Lethina was close to her grandmother who was blind. It was the grandmother who helped Lethina become disciplined. Lethina was married in her early 20s. Her husband, secretary to the president in a missionary school, encouraged her to complete her studies (she had failed Class XII). She then went on to pursue a BA in Psychology through free online courses. She now works at a senior position at the school, where she helps organise seminars and meetings, and coordinate children’s activities.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE EDUCATED AND HUMBLE.

MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE PERFECT IN EVERY WORK.

When the family moved to Tura, she began working in the school as an assistant teacher for students of Classes IV and V, teaching all subjects.

She wakes up at 3 am to read books and the Bible.

She cooks a snack for her husband and prepares lunch for her family. Her husband, who likes to cook too, helps in the kitchen when he has time.

She goes to college to pursue her final year in psychology.

Her children sometimes rip her textbook, which she then has to paste together to study from.

The group travels to Bengaluru and Mysuru to perform, which her husband supports. She feels lucky.

She joins a musical choir in Pune. The group practices twice a week: and mostly sing English songs, Christmas carols and some Hindi songs.

When the family moved to Tura, she began working in the school as an assistant teacher for students of Classes IV and V, teaching all subjects.

She and her husband help the children with homework.

The couple take computer lessons together.

She is usually busy studying that she only has half an hour to cook.

The group travels to Bengaluru and Mysuru to perform, which her husband supports. She feels lucky.

She joins a musical choir in Pune. The group practices twice a week: and mostly sing English songs, Christmas carols and some Hindi songs.
The word of our God stands forever.

She prints sermons and translations, to provide them to members of the church.

She takes photos during church meetings and cooking classes and makes reports to submit to the church union.

Most people at the union level don’t have a laptop.

Her youngest daughter, who does not stay with her, cries when she hears her mother’s voice on the phone.

They also read the Bible with others.

They read a couple of verses before getting ready for office.

The family goes about morning devotion rituals together.

From 9 am to 4:30 pm, she looks after women in the Garo Hills. They hold meetings to talk about self-esteem as it is an issue among women in the region. They also hold cooking and baking lessons, and later sell what they make in the market to improve their economic conditions.

In the children’s congress, she teaches them about discipline and involve children in arts and crafts, such as making Christmas cards.

Every Sunday, children have to write sermons, memorise Bible verses and sing hymns. She uses the Internet to retrieve arts and craft ideas.

She uses PowerPoint to communicate better while delivering messages to people in her community. When she uses PowerPoint in her cooking classes, women show more interest.

Her husband has a heart condition, and has been advised regular physical activity.

She wakes up at 4 am and goes for a stroll with her husband for 40 minutes. She looks after women in the Garo Hills. She prints sermons and translations, to provide them to members of the church.

She takes photos during church meetings and cooking classes and makes reports to submit to the church union.

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I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN HAS TO TAKE CARE OF HER MOTHER. AS WOMEN, WE HAVE THE SAME POWER AS MEN; WE CAN DO MUCH MORE ACTUALLY. WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO MAKE FIRM DECISIONS.

Lethina’s Aspirations

She wants women in her village to be educated and digitally trained. With technology, they can type, print, and earn a little. They can also understand how to apply for scholarships and entitlements and be informed of their surroundings. She also wants to pursue an MA in Psychology.
The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khaki range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

Age 25; single; 2 brothers & 1 sister; Sibling rank #1; Education level BA; Background
Tengkrinchi’s mother is a loving and hard-working housewife. Her father works at a radio station as a typist. He is not a strict man but he does scold his children if they’re mischievous. Tengkrinchi’s mother asks everyone to extend help in the house, especially in cooking and cleaning. Everyone’s treated equally in the house; but if anyone comes home after 9 pm, he/she gets pulled up. Tengkrinchi is closest to her mother in the family. If her younger siblings have some issue, they ask Tengkrinchi to communicate it to their mother.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE GOOD AT DOING HOUSEHOLD CHORES. SHE SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT AND ABLE TO EARN BY HERSELF.

She wakes up at 5 am and makes tea for everyone.

She is studying in Class X, and helps her siblings with school work. She even makes notes for her younger brother who clings on to her the most.

The family watches Doraemon together. They have seven dogs.

She shares stories with her sister, who is also close to her, and quarrels with her for joy.

In the Garo tribe, the youngest daughter gets the family property, the older daughters have to leave the house. This happened in Tengkrinchi’s family as well; they had to move out of the grandparent’s house. Tengkrinchi remained at the same school, which was near her grandparent’s house, but her younger siblings go to a different school.

She doesn’t have a mobile phone but uses her friend’s phone to inform her parents of her safety when she’s travelling.
She wakes up at 4 am and takes a 2 km morning walk alone. It’s dark at that hour, but safe.

She makes tea for her father. Other family members don’t drink tea.

She cooks for everyone in the morning, usually pulses, meat and rice.

After completing her final year of study, she would like to work outside Tura. She’s currently looking for jobs to apply for through her phone.

She likes to watch videos on YouTube, scroll through her Facebook feed, look for baking recipes, download songs and make video calls.

Before attending the CIRC programmes, she didn’t have much knowledge in computer literacy.

She’s the only child at home now, other siblings live in different cities. And so she misses gossiping and quarreling with them.

She works at her aunt’s stationery establishment where she handles the wholesale market and earns Rs. 2000 a month.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT, RESPECT HER ELDERS AND BE FRIENDLY WITH HER COMMUNITY MEMBERS. SHE IS A GOD’S CHILD AND SHOULD RESPECT ALL HUMAN BEINGS.

She wants to open a cake shop and uses YouTube to learn to bake new cakes. Though she has been able to follow the design instructions, she’s not much satisfied with the consistency of taste yet. She, therefore, wants to attend proper baking lessons in a city and return with more expertise. She also wants to provide financial assistance to her parents and her siblings, to contribute to their education and wedding later.
LAKSHMI ARENG

The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

Age 32; married, 3 sons; 3 sister; Sibling rank #2; Education level BA; Background Lakshmi lost her father, a Hindi teacher, at an early age, and her mother raised all the children single handedly. Before marriage, Lakshmi felt much more free and stronger as a woman. After she got married, she could feel she was carrying many more responsibilities. Her mind is constantly occupied by things about her family now.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD LOOK AFTER HER FAMILY AND HER CHILDREN’S EDUCATION. IF HER CHILDREN SUCCEED, THE CREDIT GOES TO THE MOTHER; IF THEY FAIL, THE MOTHER IS BLAMED.

She wakes up at 6 am and cooks breakfast for the family.

She takes tuition for children at a private school from 6:30 am. Students are aged between 5 and 8, and are taught all subjects.

At 9 am, she goes to another private nursery school, where she teaches 62 toddlers alphabets and nursery rhymes. She also teaches English literature.

She teaches children to eat properly with a spoon and a napkin around them. But she doesn’t force the children to eat. Those who don’t want to eat, don’t have to.

She plays music on a tape recorder and dances to it while singing out loud.

Every evening at 4:30 pm, she drinks a cup of tea and watches a Hindi television series for an hour.

When school gets over at 2:30 pm, she takes tuitions for 5-8 year olds.

She cooks with her mother, usually Garo rice, pulses, chicken and dried fish. Doing the dishes is her responsibility.

She teaches children to eat properly with a spoon and a napkin around them. But she doesn’t force the children to eat. Those who don’t want to eat, don’t have to.
She wakes up when her youngest child, who is one year old, wakes up. That is usually around 7 am.

- She has a maid who has stayed with the family for the last five years. The maid cleans, makes tea and cooks for the family.

For breakfast, they eat maggi, bread and butter and/or fried rice.

She watches some television series after sending her older children to school. Her youngest is still learning to walk.

When her children come back from school, they say, “Mom-mom, take my bag, take my tiffin.” They play football and seven stones.

She naps with the baby if there’s time or does the laundry.

Present

There is no Internet on her phone; and her husband doesn’t know how to use the Internet either.

Before attending the CIRC course, her eight-year-old child used to teach her computers. At CIRC, she has learnt to type and paint. She often practices typing poems. Her sister is a computer teacher.

When her husband returns from work, they cook dinner together. The children are fed first, and then the couple eats together.

When her children come back from school, they say, “Mom-mom, take my bag, take my tiffin.” They play football and seven stones.

She watches some television series after sending her older children to school. Her youngest is still learning to walk.

When her children come back from school, they say, “Mom-mom, take my bag, take my tiffin.” They play football and seven stones.

She naps with the baby if there’s time or does the laundry.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE COURAGEOUS. SHE SHOULD BE BRAVE, HONEST AND CLEVER. SHE SHOULD NOT BE STEPPED OVER BY OTHERS. WHEN COURAGE COMES, CLEVERNESS WILL FOLLOW.

She’d like to take a loan to open a bookshop where she can read and sell books. She also wants to move out of the town and get a bigger house for the family.
DIMCHI MARAK

The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

Age 24; unmarried; 1 brother; Sibling rank #2; Education level Class 12; Background Dimchi’s mother works at the district statistical office. She is a helpful and jolly woman who laughs a lot. She chats with her community, has good personality and a cool temperament. Her dad, works in the public health department. He doesn’t like it if his children roam around too much and don’t study enough. He often scolded or beat them up as kids. Dimchi is closest to her brother, who is a talkative person and resembles their mother a lot. Together, they play football, basketball and chess.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD GO TO CHURCH, WORSHIP, LEARN COMPUTERS AND STUDY WELL.

MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE VERY HELPFUL, HONEST AND FRIENDLY.

She wakes up at 6 am. Her mom and their housemaid make tea for everyone.

She studies for three hours and takes a bath. She studies social studies, geography, history, economics and civics.

She attends a Christian school from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm.

The school is strict. If the students do not complete their homework, the teacher punishes them to take five rounds of the school campus. So sometimes, when they’ve not completed their work, they bunk school by jumping over the school boundary wall. But she tells her mother if she hasn’t completed her homework.

Her schooling has been delayed for three years due to her gallstone issue.

Parents usually come home late in the evening, so they eat dinner separately but they watch TV together later.

Sometimes, she studies in the evening. She doesn’t like learning Garo, the local language.

When she roams around and comes home late, her brother beats her.

After school, she hangs out with her boy and girl friends. They play badminton, watch TV, climb trees, eat tamarind, catch fish with friends.
She wakes up at 6:30 am. The housemaid makes tea and cooks for everyone. She sweeps the house and does laundry for everyone. Once it's done, she puts them out to dry.

She accesses the Internet at her aunt’s place to use Facebook and Google, the latter usually for college projects and assignments.

She likes to roam around to explore new places around her neighbourhood, spend time admiring sceneries and tree houses.

Later, she studies. Her favourite subject is social studies. She dislikes political science and Garo.

She studies for 1-3 hours again. She wasn’t a very good student in school but she now realises the importance of education and studies harder.

She visits the CIRC for one hour every day to receive computer training. She finds working on Powerpoint easy.

She finds CorelDRAW and Photoshop difficult to learn.

She attends college from 9:30 am to 3 pm.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE A GOOD PERSON WHO SHOULD SPEND TIME WITH HER COMMUNITY. A WOMAN WHO IS RELIGIOUS CAN LEARN MANY GOOD THINGS AND HELP BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN THE SOCIETY.

Dimchi’s Aspirations

She wants to finish her degree, find a government job and get married. She also wants to travel with friends.
RIKATCHI R. MARAK

The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

Age 23; single; 4 brothers & 1 sister; Sibling rank #4; Education level Bachelor of Commerce; Background Rikatchi has been living with her uncle and aunt for several years now for easier access to education facilities. Her aunt is a friendly, caring and generous woman who works as a business woman, taking up contractual government school projects. The family is strict when it comes to children using mobile phones, and there are more restrictions on a girl’s movement. The boys in the house are sent to get grocery from the shops or clean the car. Rikatchi’s mom is a housewife and father is a social worker. Rikatchi is closest to her oldest sister who dropped out of school after Class X and got married. They used to study in the same class. Back home, if boys follows Rikatchi after school, she would be scolded by her parents. It was in Class X that she moved to Tura.
MY AUNT TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD DRESS PROPERLY AND RESPECT HER GUESTS. SHE SHOULD LEARN THE ROLE OF A WOMAN — COOKING AND CLEANING — AT A YOUNG AGE.

She attends St. John's Missionary School. She plays volleyball and football in school. She enjoys studying maths but she doesn’t score very well in the subject.

She helps her mom with household chores and likes to watch TV, especially music channels. She likes staying at home and doesn’t enjoy going out as much.

The father scolds them if they don’t study enough but they mother never scolds them.

She sings with her sister.

She wakes up at 6:30 am when her mom makes tea for everyone.

Her school is 3km away, and they have to walk the distance, so they leave home at 7:30 am.

She enjoys studying maths but she doesn’t score very well in the subject.

They study on their own without any guidance from their parents.

All her siblings dropped out of school and married early, she is the most educated member of the family.
Her aunt pressures the children to wake up at 6 am and clean the house.

She likes to chat with her neighbour, cousins, sisters and aunts.

She attends college from 9 am to 2:30 pm. Later, she hangs out with her friends. They often go out for picnics or hang out at each other’s place.

She used to drink earlier, but her boyfriend is religious, so she quit drinking.

She goes for computer lessons from 3 – 4 pm. She didn’t learn much computers at school but she’s learnt a lot at the centre, including Facebook and Photoshop.

Her siblings and cousins take computer lessons too.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY HARD AND LIVE OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE SO SHE DOESN’T HAVE TO STRUGGLE. SHE SHOULD DRESS SENSIBLY BECAUSE IT INFLUENCES THE WAY OTHERS PERCEIVE YOU. IF A WOMAN GIVES HOPES TO OTHERS, SHE EARNS THEIR RESPECT IN RETURN.

Rikatchi’s Aspirations

She understands the value of education. She has seen the villagers’ way of living and believes that education can improve their condition. She’d like to obtain a bank job and support her parents financially. She feels grateful towards her parents’ support for her education.
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Age 36; separated, 1 daughter; 2 brothers; Education level Class 12; Background Marsilla’s parents are illiterate but they are very hardworking. They look after their children well. Whatever the children need, the parents try to provide. Masrilla’s father is a labourer who works at construction sites. The mother never asks her children to help her in the house but manages all the household chores herself. Yet, her children, often help a little in cleaning or watering the plants.
MY PARENTS TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD STUDY AND NOT ROAM AROUND IN THE VILLAGE. IF SHE DOESN’T WANT TO STUDY, SHE SHOULD WORK IN THE KITCHEN. SHE SHOULD DRESS PROPERLY AND NOT SPEAK ILL OF OTHERS.

It she scolds her daughter, her grandparents question her. She gives singing lessons to her daughter in the evening.

When the daughter performs in front of the neighbours, she tells them, “I’ll sing what I learnt in school. When I finish, all of you will clap.” If someone doesn’t clap, she gets upset.

Her daughter is a talkative girl. She describes her day as the mother-daughter do the homework together during the day.

When her daughter feels lazy, Marsilla suggests to do the homework herself but her daughter feels scared that the teacher might recognise the difference in handwriting and scold her.

When the school ends, she picks up her daughter, feeds her lunch, bathes her and helps her practice writing.

Her daughter is left-handed, and has difficulty in writing, so Marsilla helps her.

She wakes up at 5 am and prays before she does anything.

She makes tea, prepares food and cleans the house.

She feeds her daughter who is 4 years old; plays with her and, sometimes, spends time with her grandparents.

She drops her daughter at the nursery school by 9 am and comes home to do pending chores.

When the daughter performs in front of the neighbours, she tells them, “I’ll sing what I learnt in school. When I finish, all of you will clap.” If someone doesn’t clap, she gets upset.
Present

She wakes up at 5 am and prays. Later, she prepares tea and breakfast for her daughter.

She wakes her daughter up and asks her to study.

On days when there is no school, the daughter helps her in the kitchen.

She uses her mobile phone to send and receive emails, pay bills, and use Facebook or WhatsApp.

She sits with her daughter and they chat. She asks her daughter to study. Sometimes, she helps her with her office work too.

Between 10:30 am to 5:00 pm, Marsilla works at a cleaner’s shop where she looks after employees’ accounts. She manages the accounts on a computer.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE KIND, HUMBLE AND HONEST. SHE SHOULD TAKE CARE OF HER HEALTH. IF ONE’S HEALTH IS LOST, EVERYTHING IS LOST.

Marsilla’s Aspirations

She wants to see her daughter as a successful woman. She hopes that her daughter will take care of her when she’s old.
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Age 38; married, 2 daughters & 2 sons; 4 sisters; Sibling Rank: #2; Education level Class 10; Background Renitha’s parents sell clothes. Her mother is a hardworking woman who cooks for everyone at home. The parents are strict though, especially about attending school. She is closest to her middle sibling, who has obtained the highest education in the family — graduated from Class X. Renitha got married when she was in Class X and could not complete her education. Her husband was in Class X too at the time. Her parents were not happy about her marriage but Renitha was adamant that she wanted to marry her boyfriend. Her husband is now a driver in the medical department.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD LEARN WOMEN’S ROLES (SUCH AS BASIC HOUSEHOLD CHORES) AND BE RELIGIOUS.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 5 am, makes tea and cooks maggi for everyone’s tiffin.

She sends her daughter to a nursery school and goes for her tailoring class that go on for an hour or two.

The tailoring classes cost her Rs. 300 a month.

Sometimes, the husband drops the daughter off at the school on her scooter. Her husband is supportive because she makes clothes and school uniforms for the family.

She teaches her daughter alphabets and numbers. Her daughter likes to play more than she likes to study. The son is too young to study, so he plays with neighbourhood children.

A maid helps with cooking in the evening and takes care of the children.

She spends time with her husband, whose work schedule is not fixed. He has to drive the ambulance in the morning and evening, or when any emergency call is made.

She picks her daughter up from the school in the afternoon and returns home to do household chores.

She doesn’t have time to play with her children.
Renitha had never touched a computer before joining the CIRC. Now, she has learnt the basics of computers. She doesn’t have a mobile phone. Her husband had bought one for her once but the daughter felt jealous and took it.

Both the children have mobile phones and a computer at home. She likes that her children can use the Internet.

She often visits the community with her husband, and helps people in solving their problems. Her husband is extremely supportive of her.

Her husband pays for groceries and house utilities.

Before an ATM was set up in their area, the husband gave all the cash to Renitha to manage and take care of. Now that there is an ATM nearby, the husband doesn’t withdraw too much at one time and does not need to give her money to keep safe. She is unhappy with the ATM’s presence.

Her youngest child is 10 and her oldest is 16 now. Renitha wakes up at 7 am. The maid cooks and Renitha starts her tailoring work for orders that she receives from community members. Her customers often bring pictures of designs they want replicated in scarves and skirts.

She makes Rs. 2000 - 3000 a month. She sometimes looks up new design ideas on the Internet.

She doesn’t teach her children at home, instead asks them to take private tuitions after school.

Her second son gives her the most headache as he is very demanding. Most of the time, it’s her husband handling the son and she dealing with the daughter.

Her husband solves a lot of household problems. The couple likes to watch TV together.

She happy that her husband solves a lot of household problems. The couple likes to watch TV together.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE RELIGIOUS AND A GOOD PERSON. SHE SHOULD FOCUS ON EDUCATION AND BECOME INDEPENDENT AND SHE SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEARN AS MUCH AS SHE CAN AND AS MANY THINGS AS SHE CAN.

Renitha’s Aspirations

She wants to buy a new computer for herself and take a loan to expand her tailoring shop, besides offering tailoring lessons to others in the community. She thinks a computer will be helpful, especially if her daughter pursues the same profession and helps in the business.
ENALISHA CH. SANGMA

The Garo Hills are a part of the Garo Khasi range in Meghalaya and are mainly inhabited by the Garo tribe, who are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world. The economy of this region is agrarian in nature, with about 80% of the population dependent on agriculture. Here, in Tura district where there is limited connectivity, DEF runs a centre.

Age 36; married, 2 daughters; 3 brothers & 3 sisters; Sibling Rank: #6; Education level Class 10; Background Enalisha's father is a primary school teacher and her mother is a housewife. She is a very good cook and takes care of not just her children but others’ too; and these children have turned out to be wonderful and mature adults. As a child, Enalisha remembers her mother encouraging them a lot to study hard and become successful. Her father is a strict man but he doesn’t hit them. Everyone is treated equally in the family. If someone comes home after 8 pm, he/she is pulled up for coming late. She is close to her mom who teaches her to cook. Enalisha got married when she was 18 and moved to Arunachal Pradesh with her husband, who was a Post Master there.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE RELIGIOUS AND KIND-HEARTED. SHE SHOULD NOT QUARREL WITH THE NEIGHBOURS, BE WELL DRESSED IN THE HOUSE AND WELL MANNERED IN FRONT OF OTHERS.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 4 am and goes for a walk. There are a lot of women in the community.

She makes food and packs lunch for her husband and children, usually fried rice, fried eggs or toasted bread.

Her husband drops the children off at the bus stand before heading to work.

Her close friends from the colony, Sora, and another friend from Manipur, chit chat, cook together and share Garo dishes with each other. They also go to tourist places for picnics.

She attends vocational training for tailoring. She is learning to make and sell Indian dresses.
She wakes up at 5 am, makes breakfast for everyone. Her son helps her in the kitchen but her daughter doesn’t.

She takes vocational training in baking and learns about food preservation and beauty training. She gets orders to bake cakes sometimes.

She runs a small beauty parlour at home but her focus remains on tailoring. She earns Rs. 3000 - 5000 a month.

Earlier, she was too scared to turn on a computer, thinking she might break it. But now she types documents for community members and charges them Rs. 10 per page.

Now with Internet on her mobile phone, she looks up clothes designs, cake ideas and information about cosmetics on the Internet. She also uses Flipkart, Amazon, WhatsApp and Yepme for ideas and shopping. Her children use computer for school projects.

She misses Arunachal Pradesh, but she uses WhatsApp to connect with her friends back home every now and then.

Present
I would tell my daughter a woman should understand her kitchen. She should be independent and educated.

Renitha’s Aspirations

She wants to manage a tailoring shop with Renitha M. Marak. She believes that computers can be very useful in the future for various things. If her children learn computers, they will have access to a lot of information. Simple digital tools like Google Maps have made everyday life easy, and instant communication is extremely beneficial.
SOPHILLA CH. MARAK

Age 34; married, 1 daughters & 3 sons; 2 brothers & 7 sisters; Sibling Rank: #9; Education level Class 10;

Background Sophilla’s mother is a loving and caring housewife who teaches them to love, respect and help elders in the family and society. Her father, a primary school teacher, is very strict. The children have to follow his father’s rules and schedules. There are a lot of rules in the home. The mother, too, has to follow the same rules. They usually share their problems with the mother; then the family works together to find a solution and help each other out. Everyone helps out in the kitchen, plows vegetation, pulls the weeds and eats together. Sophilla is closest to her oldest sister who is 15 years her elder. Sophilla got married when she was 18 years old. Her husband is a lab technician at Tura hospital.
MY PARENTS TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD DRESS MODESTLY WHEN GUESTS ARE AROUND. GIRLS SHOULD BE WELL-MANNERS, SHOULD SHOW RESPECT TO GUESTS AND BE GOOD HOSTS. WOMEN SHOULD LOVE THEIR YOUNGER ONES.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 5 am, prepares breakfast and packs lunch for her children. She sings song to her children while bathing them.

She prepares food, washes clothes and does the dishes while the children are asleep.

She plays cricket with the boys, and turns on TV and dances to music with her baby girl.

She also plays with kitchen model toys with her daughter; while she and her son play with toy cars.

The sons take care of the younger sister, and the oldest intervenes if the younger ones get into a fight with each other.

Sophilla teaches her son numbers and nursery rhymes. Whatever the oldest son learns at school, he comes home to teach his siblings and enacts the role of a ‘teacher’.

They have a landline in the house.

Her husband helps her prepare food. They watch TV and cook together.

They have a landline in the house.
Present

She wakes up at 5 am, makes breakfast and packs tiffins for her children. She helps the youngest one with his homework. She makes sure the youngest is always around so that she can supervise his studies. She writes down questions for them to solve while she does household chores.

Her youngest son loves sweets and egg-based dishes. He husband likes jackfruit and dry fish.

People come to her place for facial cleaning, and she charges them Rs. 200. Sometimes, she gives free facials to her close friends.

She stitches clothes and gloves for her children. She also helps neighbourhood children with craft homework.

She charges Rs. 250 for a petticoat with lace and Rs. 180 for those without lace. She does this work at her home.

She can see the Internet as a helpful tool for her children to work on school projects or study for exams.

At CIRC, she enjoys painting.

She has a simple phone, and has 10 Facebook friends.

She is closest to her youngest son. The daughter feels closer to her father while the sons come to her with problems. Her husband drops the younger kids to school while the eldest cycles to school.

Her husband likes jackfruit and dry fish.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE EDUCATED, RESPECT ELDERS AND BE ACTIVE IN CHURCH. SHE SHOULD KNOW HER QUALITIES AND USE THEM TO EARN AND BE INDEPENDENT FROM HER HUSBAND. NOWADAYS, SINGLE EARNING IS NOT ENOUGH. WOMEN SHOULD HELP EACH OTHER.

Renitha’s Aspirations

She wants to attend more trainings to learn more. She wants to open her own tailoring business, and look up designs on the Internet to replicate. She also wants to learn to make and sell pickles. Sophilla wants to take care of her father and lead a better life.
JOLLY KAZI

Guwahati in Assam, is home to several urban slums. The city sees a constant influx of migrants, from nearby hilly villages, who leave behind their homes to seek better opportunities in the capital city. The district boasts of a high literacy rate of 91.47%, with male literacy at 94.24% and female literacy at 88.50%. DEF runs an regional administrative office here, and a literacy centre in Nagaon district.

Age 29; single; 1 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling Rank: #4; Education level PhD in Sociology of Education; Background Jolly lost her father when she was very young; so her mother single-handedly brought up four children in the house. Jolly's mother is always supportive of her decisions and motivates her to do better. She owns a little business where she sells handwoven clothes. She has created a systematic space in the house where her children learn to acquire knowledge and sustain themselves. It is because of her mother’s support that Jolly is pursuing her PhD in Sociology of Education. Jolly’s mother is not strict and is a sensitive woman. She taught her children that one needs to understand the situation around themselves and act accordingly.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE A CARRIER OF SUBSTANCE. SHE CAN THEN LEAD A SUBSTANTIAL LIFE.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 6 am and has to cover a distance of 1.5 hours by bus to attend college. A seat on the bus is not always available but if it is, she likes to grab it to get some nap on the way.

She attends college from 8:30 am to 4 pm. During lunch hour, she hangs out with her friends in the canteen.

They also go swimming or play badminton.

She returns home around 6 pm and plays cricket with neighbourhood kids.

She studies in her college library.

She has no mobile phone or computer, so she goes to a PCO when she has to make a call to anyone.

She likes to draw scenes of nature and play table tennis. She and her brother often play together.

She goes to him if she has any question about education and career. It was he who suggested her to study political science. Her brother is a little strict though.

Her brother cooks for her.
Present

She wakes up around 8.30 am and freshen up. She is taking distance education on sociology and is writing her PhD.

She helps her friends in editing chapters for PhD submissions, reads newspapers and browses the Internet.

She is the coordinator of a project that probes into framework of libraries.

Her mom cooks dinner and doesn’t like it when Jolly doesn’t help in the household chores.

She enjoys reading the newspaper thoroughly, listening to music, watching local news on the television, and looking up songs or documentaries on YouTube.

She still paints scenes of nature and flowers and goes out shopping on Sundays with her mom.

She has one computer, two laptops and a mobile phone. She connects with her friends in Delhi via mobile messaging apps.

Mom thinks she has become too habituated to living on her own in hostels. Jolly likes to eat eggplants.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT THOUGH THE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE NURTURES A WOMAN, SHE SHOULD IMBIBE VALUES OF SUBSTANCE. SHE MAY GROW UP ACCORDING TO VALUES OF PEOPLE AROUND HER, BUT SHE CAN HAVE HER OWN VALUES WHEN SHE GROWS UP. AND HER MOTHER WOULD ALWAYS BE THERE TO GUIDE HER.

Jolly’s Aspirations

She wants to engage in more social activities and carve her own place in the academic field. She wants to continue writing journals and presenting papers. She hopes to start her own family one day.
NABANITA DUTTA

Guwahati in Assam, is home to several urban slums. The city sees a constant influx of migrants, from nearby hilly villages, who leave behind their homes to seek better opportunities in the capital city. The district boasts of a high literacy rate of 91.47%, with male literacy at 94.24% and female literacy at 88.50%. DEF runs a regional administrative office here, and a literacy centre in Nagaon district.

Age 24; single; 1 brothers; Sibling Rank: #1; Education level Master in Social Work; Background Nabanita’s mother is a friendly and supportive housewife; her father works as a junior engineer at a construction field. Her father is a quiet person who’s moody and short-tempered but together, they’re a loving set of parents. When the father is against a decision that Nabanita and her brother make, their mother supports the children. Being a girl, Nabanita does not go out much or play with boys. She comes home before 6 pm as her father is protective about her, but her brother can come home late. Nabanita doesn’t like cooking.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN COOKING AS IT IS HELPFUL IN FUTURE.

MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT AND CONCERNED ABOUT HER CAREER.

They visit her dad in Jorhat once a month for a week to spend time with him.

Both her parents have mobile phones, which she uses sometimes too.

She likes to doodle and sketch on the last page of her school notebook. Drawing dolls are her favourite.

She plays fighting games with her brother.

After studying, they watch some daily soaps. The brother does not like watching these soaps but he rarely has control over the remote.

She plays fighting games with her brother.

When she returns home, she studies a little more and prepares tea. She spends some time with her brother and his friends. But often, when her mom finds them not studying, she gets angry.

Her mother prepares the dinner.

Nabanita enjoys the bus journey. She sings and gossips with her friends.

She wakes up at 5:30 am to help her mom with cleaning, making tea and preparing food.

She takes a 1.5-hour-long bus to her school in a town called Lichubari. There are at least 50 people travelling in the same bus everyday so there is rarely space to sit.

Her school starts at 10 am. Her favourite subject is sociology.

10 years ago

She makes the dinner.
She lives with two roommates in Guwahati. She wakes up at 8 am, prepares breakfast and gets ready for work.

Her experience with technology started in Class VIII. By the time she reached Class XI, the school had got Internet. Earlier, she used to visit an Internet cafe to use Orkut, the first social networking website for her.

She uses Facebook, YouTube and Google on her phone.

She now has a proper sketchbook to draw in.

She enjoys watching comedy movies and series.

She reads both English and Assamese newspapers.

She works at the CIRC from 10 am - 5.30 pm. When she is free at work, she reads the newspaper, finds news about development issues, cuts it out and stores it in a file.

She looks after communication and manages a database of North East-based entrepreneurs.

Now she enjoys cooking, because she misses the Assamese home cook food.

Her experience with technology started in Class VIII. By the time she reached Class XI, the school had got Internet. Earlier, she used to visit an Internet cafe to use Orkut, the first social networking website for her.

She and her roommate cook and eat together.

She enjoys cooking, because she misses the Assamese home cook food.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE STRONG, INDEPENDENT AND BE ABLE TO MAKE HER OWN DECISIONS TO PURSUE WHATEVER SHE WANTS.

Nabanita’s Aspirations
She would like to work with children and women in her community to reduce discrimination against women and empower children with education.
Guwahati in Assam, is home to several urban slums. The city sees a constant influx of migrants, from nearby hilly villages, who leave behind their homes to seek better opportunities in the capital city. The district boasts of a high literacy rate of 91.47%, with male literacy at 94.24% and female literacy at 88.50%. DEF runs an regional administrative office here, and a literacy centre in Nagaon district.

**Age 27; single; 1 brother; Sibling Rank: #2; Education level Master of Arts in Psychology; Background Pravita’s father passed away and she grew up with her mother who works as a clerk in a government department. Her mother is a simple, self-regulated woman who believes that one should learn as much as one can; and failure should be seen as a learning. There weren’t too many restrictions while growing up for Prativa but she could not hang out with her friends after school every day. Her grandmother passed away when she was in Class VI.**
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT TO MANAGE THINGS ON HER OWN.

10 years ago

She is in Class XII and lives in a hostel. She wakes up at 6:30 am to study a little. Her favourite subjects are Geography and Economics.

She enjoys dancing, listening to music and reading.

She uses Internet at the Internet cafe. She uses Orkut, YouTube and Google.

She talks to her mom regularly on a simple phone.

She studies with her roommates, they solve problems and queries together.

After school, they often roam around in the town on the pretext of attending private tuitions before returning to the hostel later in the evening.

On special occasions, she cooks for everyone.
Present

She wakes up at 7 am and gets ready for office.

She makes her day's activities, and starts working towards them.

She travels within Assam a lot for her work. She is the communications person and has to meet clients in the state.

She works with software technology-based startup that works for grassroot development.

She has lunch and dinner at work.

She comes home around 9 pm.

She has lunch and dinner at work.

When she has time, she likes to read books.

She talks to her mom every day.

At home, she spends some time talking to her friends on Facebook or WhatsApp.

She worked as an Assistant Coordinator in Delhi for a year, working on projects like MeraApp, IT for Education and Helping Women go Online. She had a 9 to 6 job but she felt the life was not exciting enough so she moved back to Assam.

She believes that development has to be a bottom-up approach.

She has lunch and dinner at work.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN CAN BE ANYTHING SHE WANTS TO BE.

Prativa’s Aspirations

She wants to contribute for the betterment of the democratic system in her community in Assam. She believes that if we can improve the community through technology, then everyone will be able to contribute towards the betterment of the community.
RIJU BAISHY

Guwahati in Assam, is home to several urban slums. The city sees a constant influx of migrants, from nearby hilly villages, who leave behind their homes to seek better opportunities in the capital city. The district boasts of a high literacy rate of 91.47%, with male literacy at 94.24% and female literacy at 88.50%. DEF runs a regional administrative office here, and a literacy centre inNagaon district.

Age 28; married; 1 brother & 1 sister; Sibling Rank: #1; Education level Master of Arts in development studies; Background Riju’s father is a businessman who works on government tenders. Her mother is a teacher in a high school, and teaches drawings, social studies and Hindi. Riju’s mother is a strong woman who used to own a fashion store. Riju and her siblings discuss things with her mom first who then communicate it to their father, who usually supports his children in everything. In her family, everyone helps in the kitchen. The younger brother gets most attention from the family, but he is also bullied the most by his sisters. Riju grew up with a close relationship with her grandparents. She is married to an engineer.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT, SMART AND WISE ENOUGH TO MAKE HER OWN DECISIONS.

On Sundays, she and her sister visit their grandparents.

She wakes up at 6 am, reads the newspaper and gets ready for college.

From 9 am to 2:30 pm, she attends college. She is involved in a number of cultural activities, such as singing and dancing. She is a trained classical singer and dancer.

She collects poems and articles, shortlists them, edits them and then publishes them in the monthly college magazine.

She goes out on field visits to gain social awareness about grassroots communities.

The government awards computers to students who achieve 1st division. Her brother has installed some games on the computer, so she uses it the most.

She studies by herself for three hours when she gets home, has dinner with her family, and studies a little more afterwards.

From 3-4 pm, she takes tuitions for her subjects. She enjoys studying, especially economics: through diagrams, Excel sheets, projections, scores.

She finds changes in the Indian economy fascinating.
Her husband is like a friend to her. He helps out with the household chores and loves cooking. They often cook together on weekends.

She tries to provide awareness and policy information to people. She learns a lot from villagers too; everyone has his/her own stories and perspectives to share. She loves gender issues and is interested in working with women’s right in the development sector.

Later in the evening, she calls up her friends, siblings, parents and in-laws to speak to them. Father-in-law, who is 70 and translates holy books, needs a lot of attention. If she doesn’t call, he gets agitated.

She wakes up at 6 am and spends an hour reading the newspaper.

She cooks food for her husband and sister-in-law.

From 10 am to 5:30 pm, she sits at the CIRC where she manages the project budget and heads communications. She is responsible for delegating tasks to others and creating activities and programmes for people visiting the CIRC.

She travels twice a week to the Sonapur centre.

When a new project is launched, she has to figure out the logistics and assign tasks.

She mobilises people in different villages to encourage them to learn computers to access information.

She does a lot of her work on a phone now, mostly because it requires urgent attention. She has four laptops and one mini projector in the house.

She watches daily news on TV.

After office, she goes to the market and buys vegetables.

Her husband is like a friend to her. He helps out with the household chores and loves cooking. They often cook together on weekends.

She wakes up at 6 am and spends an hour reading the newspaper.

She cooks food for her husband and sister-in-law.

From 10 am to 5:30 pm, she sits at the CIRC where she manages the project budget and heads communications. She is responsible for delegating tasks to others and creating activities and programmes for people visiting the CIRC.

She travels twice a week to the Sonapur centre.

When a new project is launched, she has to figure out the logistics and assign tasks.

She mobilises people in different villages to encourage them to learn computers to access information.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT. SHE SHOULD BE HER OWN EARNER, HER OWN VOICE AND MAKE HER OWN DECISION-MAKER. IF SHE GIVES LOVE AND RESPECT, IT WILL COME BACK TO HER.

Riju’s Aspirations

She wants to be involved in her community and open her own NGO. She enjoys working with grassroots people and empowering them. She believes that education is important and one needs the Internet to access knowledge and information. Access to education provides access to digital literacy and, subsequently, empowerment.
SOMA BOSE

Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.

Age 32; unmarried; 1 brother; Sibling Rank: #2; Education level Class 12; Background Soma’s father works as a shop assistant while her mother is a supportive and inspiring housewife. She understands how to communicate with people and live her own life. Her mother is very strict, and doesn’t allow her daughter to go to the shop. Soma was mostly asked to stay indoors as a child but the same restrictions were never imposed on her brother who roamed around freely. So she had to take care of household chores while her brother ran errands outside. She didn’t do well in Class XII and couldn’t not continue her higher education due to financial constraints. Soma’s mother passed away seven years ago.
MY PARENTS TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD DRESS MODESTLY WHEN GUESTS ARE AROUND. GIRLS SHOULD BE WELL-MANNERED, SHOULD SHOW RESPECT TO GUESTS AND BE GOOD HOSTS. WOMEN SHOULD LOVE THEIR YOUNGER ONES.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 5 am and does household chores like cleaning and cooking.

She watches TV and chats with friends and neighbours.

From 1 pm to 5 pm, she provides classes in Assamese, social science and environmental education to children from Classes V to IX.

She reads magazines at night. She enjoys children’s stories, especially those about queens and kings.

Her dad comes home, and they have dinner together and discuss their day.

There is no mobile phone in the house but they have a landline.

She and her brother often visit nearby places to explore.

She enjoys cooking and knitting. She has knit tablecloths and handkerchiefs.

She is not a strict teacher and treats all students fairly.
She works at the CIRC from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm as a caretaker. She cleans the room, dusts the computer and helps organise the books. She even handles the photocopying machine.

She understands the basics of computers and can type at a moderate speed. There is no computer at home.

She wakes up at 5 am and does household chores. Sometimes, the sister-in-law helps.

She plays with her eleven-year-old son. They solve puzzles together and match colours.

The child enjoys using her brother’s smartphone.

Her nephew, who is in Class VI, uses the computer at school. She believes it’s important for him to come to CIRC every day and learn more about digital literacy. She wants to learn more through herself.

She spends a couple of hours every day to study economics, English, political science, sociology, Assamese and history.

She wakes up at 5 am and does household chores. Sometimes, the sister-in-law helps.

She plays with her eleven-year-old son. They solve puzzles together and match colours.

The child enjoys using her brother’s smartphone.

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She wakes up at 5 am and does household chores. Sometimes, the sister-in-law helps.

She plays with her eleven-year-old son. They solve puzzles together and match colours.

The child enjoys using her brother’s smartphone.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE EDUCATED.

Soma’s Aspiration

She wants to complete her education in Bachelor of Arts.
RIYA PATEL

Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.

Age 20; married, 1 son; 1 brother & 4 sisters; Sibling Rank: #3; Education level Class 6; Background Riya’s mother is a simple housewife who is committed to her housework and does not meddle in other people’s business. Riya’s father is a rice farmer and a strict man. Everyone needs to take permission from her father before making any decision in the house. Riya is closest to her brother. Riya’s husband is a mason who works at construction sites.
Her father goes to the paddy field at 3 am and returns by 10 am.

The sisters often fight among themselves but they all have friendly relations with the brother. Riya feels comfortable sharing everything with him.

On days when she can't find time to do homework, she copies her friends' work in the morning.

The siblings study together under the light of an oil lamp in the evening because of irregular power supply in the region.

After school, she plays kabaddi with her neighbours. She used to play with neighbourhood boys too.

Riya wakes up around 5 am. She and her older sisters take care of household chores while their mother cooks for the family.

She studies for an hour before going to school. Hindi is her favourite subject and English is her least favourable subject because the teacher does not take classes regularly.
Riya wakes up at 5 am. She and her mother-in-law prepare food and clean the house.

She used to have a smartphone but the baby broke the phone. Now she uses a simple feature phone.

Riya owns a tailoring shop. She stays at the shop from 10 am - 6 pm. On an average, three to four people visit the shop every day. She alters and stitches blouses, and makes other garments on order.

She plays with her son when there is no work. They play with toy cars and balls.

Her mother-in-law takes care of Riya’s son when she is at work. But if the son is not well-dressed or clean, Riya gets scolded.

Roya returns home in the evening to clean and cook for everyone.

She teaches a young girl to stitch too.

Present
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD COMPLETE HER EDUCATION AND ACHIEVE MORE IN LIFE.

Riya’s Aspiration

She wants to expand her tailoring business, hire more employees to assist her and attract more customers, perhaps even move to eCommerce.
Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.

Age 63; widow, 1 daughter & 1 son, 3 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling Rank: #1; Education level Class 6; Background Usharani used to live in Shillong with her husband who works in the police force. She was in Class X when she got married. Soon after, she got pregnant and had to drop out of school. Her father is a primary school headmaster and her mother is a housewife. Usharani grew up in an extended family with eight siblings and cousins. Usharani’s mother is a religious, motivated and respectable lady. Now in her mid-80s, her mother has always encouraged her to pursue her education and understand her tradition. It is their mother who has the right to choose the marriage partner for her children. When Usharani’s husband passed away in an accident, she was devastated. It was her mother who gave her examples of other widows who were leading happy and successful lives. She told Usharani, "If Indira Gandhi could run the country, what makes you think you can’t raise two children?" When Usharani was in her 50s, her son died too. It was then she realised she needed to complete her education. She feels education gives her a better opportunity to establish her identity and lead a good life. The coordinator at CIRC Sonapur convinced her to take up a course in digital literacy. Today, she is trained in computers and now pursuing a Bachelor Preparatory Programme (BPP) that is integrated with the course offered at the CIRC. She’s is trying to clear her exams in history, math, English, economics, Assamese and political science.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE RESPECTED IN THE SOCIETY. SHE DOESN’T HAVE TO COOK ALL THE TIME, BUT SHE NEEDS TO HAVE AN IDENTITY OF HER OWN. SHE SHOULD HAVE HER OWN SPACE.

MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT A WOMAN SHOULD SET EXAMPLES FOR OTHERS.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 4 am to pray.

She does the house chores.

The son helps more with household chores as the daughter is very studious and prefers to spend her time studying.

Usharani is active in social and cultural activities in the neighbourhood. She goes to the temple, reads and delivers religious lectures in small gatherings and religiously prays to Lord Krishna.

She eats her meals with her son.

She and her friends often sit together to share their religious beliefs. She has appeared on TV to talk about religious studies.

She has a temple in her house where she sits down to translate the Bazawari script into local language (Assamese). She writes religious books.
She wakes up at 4:30 am, cleans, cooks and does yoga. She follows Ramdev style.

Now that her son is not around, her daughter takes care of her and goes out to buy grocery for the house. But they don’t have their meals together.

She usually only steps out of her house for religious events.

She has taken a two-year computer course to learn to type in Assamese. She finds it easier to type on computer than write on paper.

She studies for 2.5 hours. English is the hardest subject for her. She enjoys understanding religious concepts, and writes them down to translate them in Assamese.

She writes religious essays, poems.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD UNDERSTAND HER CULTURE, HER TRADITION, ACHIEVE GOOD EDUCATION AND LEAD A GOOD LIFE. SHE SHOULD LEARN TO ADJUST WITH PEOPLE AND HELP THOSE IN NEED TO FIND A PLACE IN THE SOCIETY.

Usharani’s Aspiration
She believes that god will lead her forward and she’ll continue with her religious writings.
Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.

**Age** 30; widow, 2 sons; 1 brother & 1 sister; **Sibling Rank**: #2; **Education level** Class 10; **Background** While growing up, Dulumoni was closest to her grandmother, a simple and strict woman, who supported her in everything. Her mother remarried when she was young, and Dulumoni had to stay with her aunt. However, she did not enjoy living with her aunt as there were too many restrictions and discriminatory practices in the house. She is not close to her other siblings, either, who live with other relatives. When they meet, they exchange pleasantries but that’s about it. Dulumoni has been married twice. Her second husband was a pick-up driver who passed away a few years ago. When he was alive, she was engaged in a lot of activities with different NGOs.
MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE EDUCATED. NO ONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO POINT A FINGER AT A WOMAN AND SAY ILL ABOUT HER. SHE SHOULD LIVE A GOOD SUBSTANTIAL LIFE AND ENGAGE IN SOME PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, SUCH AS CYCLING.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 5 am and cleans the house. Her sister-in-law cooks for the family.

The first two years of marriage were really tough for her as her sister-in-law didn’t talk to her much. However, their relations improved over the years.

The family watches TV and dines together.

Her bond with her sister-in-law grew closer after a child was born. Her husband and sister-in-law like to play with the baby.

She takes care of the poultry.

She goes to the temple to light incense sticks and pray. Everyone in the house prays in the morning and evening.

She reads books in Hindi and Assamese, and keeps a diary.
Present

She wakes up at 5 am. She has two boys now. She wakes up her son, gives him water to drink. The younger one still needs to be pampered; so she gives him a massage every morning.

She runs a motor business of transporting goods. She checks the oil level, washes the car, serves tea to the drivers.

She interacts with her clients too.

She has a little poultry farm with 21 ducks. Eggs from the farm are sold in the market and consumed in the house.

She runs a motor business of transporting goods. She checks the oil level, washes the car, serves tea to the drivers.

She interacts with her clients too.

She and her son study together, learn from each other and teach each other.

The sister-in-law cooks for the sons and gets them ready for school.

She visits the centre every Sunday for her Bachelor’s Preparatory Programme course and a computer course that she has enrolled for.

She attends SHG meetings, twice in a week.

She does tailoring and fabric painting.

She loves talking to people. She believes that people learn from each other, hence she decided to continue her study.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE EDUCATED AND SHOULD EXPLORE HER INTEREST IN DIFFERENT FIELDS, SUCH AS SINGING AND DANCING.

Dulumoni’s Aspirations
She wants to be a good mother and raise well-mannered kids who are able to carve their own identities. She wants to expand her tailoring business too.
NOKLENWASU JAMIR

Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.

Age 27; married, 1 daughter & 1 son; 2 brothers & 2 sisters; Sibling Rank: #5; Education level BA; Background Noklenwasu’s mother is a kind, generous and gentle housewife who never gossips about others. Noklenwasu’s father is a service operator in the water supply department. Not much differential treatment was practiced in the house but her father was stricter with the boys than her. As she is the youngest in the house, she was always pampered the most. She grew up in a hostel when her older siblings were in college. She is married to a high school English teacher.
MY MOTHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE GENTLE AND HUMBLE. SHE AND HER HUSBAND SHOULD MAINTAIN AN UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIP.

MY FATHER TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD FOLLOW THE MORALS OF THE BIBLE.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 5 am and makes tea for everyone.

When she’s studying, her younger cousin sits by her side. Noklenwaas braids her hair.

She helps her aunt in the kitchen by washing and chopping vegetables as she doesn’t know how to cook.

She goes for an evening walk with her friends and catches up on community gossip.

She studies by herself and enjoys English as a subject the most. The most difficult subject for her is social studies. She has hard time understanding the topics.

In college, she plays badminton and volleyball with her friends.

After college, she washes clothes and helps her aunt with house chores.
She wakes up at 5am, prays and then starts to do the dishes. She cooks and packs a tiffin for her son and daughter.

She leaves for school with her husband. She teaches English and Political Science to children of Class VI.

As the headmistress of the school, she needs to be a little strict. She looks after the children and the staff.

In her school, students sometimes submit homework via SMS.

Her husband is very supportive of her gaining digital literacy at the CIRC. She has even completed her BA now.

Her children go to bed around 8 pm. She then studies politics and economics for an hour before going to bed. She creates questionnaires on her computer for classes, and takes print-outs for students.

Sometimes, she reads up online to help her children with their school projects.

On some days, she plays with the children while her husband cooks.

Sometimes, her husband helps her with the laundry.

When her husband plays the guitar, she likes to sit and hear him play.

Her husband is very supportive of her gaining digital literacy at the CIRC. She has even completed her BA now.

Her husband is very supportive of her gaining digital literacy at the CIRC. She has even completed her BA now.

Sometimes, her husband helps her with the laundry.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE PATIENT. WOMEN ARE EQUAL TO MEN.

Noklenwasu’s Aspirations

She wants to pursue a Master’s degree in political science. She wants to work as a social worker in the Christian community and encourage women to educate themselves.
INDIRA NEWER

Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.

Age 51; single; 3 brothers & 5 sisters; Sibling Rank: #5; Education level Pursuing BA; Background: Indira’s family is from Nepal and so her mother couldn’t speak Assamese well. Her father works as a security guard. Indira’s mother is a very simple and humble woman; and both the parents value education. But she was forced to drop out of school after Class X due to financial constraints. At home, all of them help in household chores. A few years ago, her sister and brother-in-law passed away, leaving a child behind. Indira has raised the child as her own.
MY PARENTS TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD GO OUT AND DO WHATEVER SHE WANTS TO DO.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 4 am, washes herself and takes care of the cows. She feeds them water and grass, then starts cleaning the house before she sits down to have tea with her family.

The family has tea and biscuits in the evening, and pray together.

She supervises her niece and nephew’s studies.

They sit for prayers together.

She works at the Amarabathar Anganwadi Kendra where she takes care of 30 children.

She teaches them alphabets and numbers. Every week, they pick a word and conduct activities around the word for engaging learning. She also talks to them about sanitation and hygiene.

She visits children’s home if they have been missing from classes for a few days, and also provides information about schemes to pregnant women in the community.

After the anganwadi classes end around noon, she does her paper work.

Every morning, she greets them by kissing their forehead and instructing them to place their shoes properly.

She likes to do gardening. She’s planted onions in her garden.

Sometimes, when there is too much work, she brings her papers home and works on them until midnight.

The family has tea and biscuits in the evening, and pray together.
She wakes up at 4 am and does yoga and stretching exercises.

She takes care of the poultry farm.

She teaches at the anganwadi centre.

She welcomes children and engages them in an open discussion with all of them. She teaches children alphabets, numbers and nursery rhymes. She also provides them with snacks and makes them aware about hygiene.

Now the General Secretary of Assam’s Anganwadi Corporations, Indira uses her phone for communication a lot. Phone is like her friend now.

She sleeps in the middle, between her two nieces.

At home, her brother and sister-in-law take care of grocery shopping.

She has a 19-year-old adopted daughter. Before dinner, they sit down and study together for a couple of hours.

Her nieces eagerly wait for her return from the anganwadi centre.

She has moved her paperwork to computers.

Her nieces eagerly wait for her return from the anganwadi centre.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER A WOMAN SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT AND LEARN TO ACCESS THE INTERNET FOR INFORMATION.

Indira’s Aspirations
She wants to fly a plane. She wants to improve her anganwadi centre where there is a dedicated corner for every subject, including science. She wants her centre to be connected to the Internet and act as a model centre for her community.
RAJKUMARI MAHATU

Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.

Age 49; separated, 3 sons; 2 brothers & 1 sister; Sibling Rank: #1; Education level Pursuing BPP; Background Rajkumari’s mother is a very hardworking woman who almost single-handedly raised her children by selling betel quid. Rajkumari’s father works as a cook in the railway canteen and earns a meagre salary. As a girl, she was made to learn various things. She wanted to study, but due to some political situation in the region, she was forced to drop out of school after Class VII. After a gap of a couple of years, she joined an Assamese school again and went on to finish Class X. Since both her parents were illiterate, they were even more keen that Rajkumari finish her school. Rajkumari was married to a farmer who owns a piece of land but doesn’t earn enough from it. She separated from him after he became an alcoholic and abusive husband.
MY PARENTS TOLD ME A WOMAN SHOULD BE EDUCATED ENOUGH TO STAND ON HER OWN FEET.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 3.30 am to start with household chores and her daily worship rituals.

She rests a little and wakes up again at 5 am. She helps her son with his homework. The children are scared of their father.

Later in the evening, she helps her children with their homework.

She goes to the market and buys grocery in the afternoon.

She goes to the field after dropping her children to school. In the field, the couple grows vegetables. Earlier, they used to harvest rice.

She comes back from the field in the afternoon to serve lunch to her children.
She wakes up at 3:30 am and studies for an hour. She enjoys history but not economics.

After completing her household chores, she does yoga around 8:30 am.

She has a little garden that she takes care of.

She works at the anganwadi centre where she cooks for the children.

In the evening, she provides tuition to a boy at her house.

She visits the nearby CIRC on Sundays for Bachelor’s Preparatory Programme classes. She likes her classes and enjoys studying history.

She has a computer at home that she can use, thanks to the National Digital Literacy Mission course she had enrolled for as a member of aanganwadis in the state.

Rajkumari likes to knit and often gets orders to make socks. It helps her earn a little extra money.

She owns a mobile phone, which she uses for official work and to stay in touch with her son.

When a teacher is on leave, she plays with the children and teaches them yoga.

She also keeps track of the registration account at the anganwadi centre.
Rajkumari’s Aspirations

She wants to be more actively engaged in the anganwadi community to create awareness among the community and serve them with information. She wants her children to be educated, and hopes to get a promotion in the anganwadi centre.

I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER SHE SHOULD BE EDUCATED AND A RELIABLE PERSON.
DAIRUPAMA MEDHI

Sonapur is a semi-urban region near the state capital Dispur in Assam where a large population is dependent on agricultural farming for livelihood. DEF operates one of its oldest CIRCs in Sonapur.

Age 46; unmarried; 1 brother & 4 sisters; Sibling Rank: #1; Education level BA; Background Dairupama’s father is a primary school teacher and her mother is a housewife. Her parents are like close friends to her. They don’t keep secrets from each other and share everything freely; but her father has a short temper and is stricter than her mother. When the children have problems, they usually approach the mother first but they enjoy going fishing and cycling with their father.
MY MOTHER AND FATHER TOLD ME THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE PROUD OF HERSELF AND BE INDEPENDENT. SHE SHOULD NOT CARE ABOUT ANYONE ELSE’S OPINIONS.

10 years ago

She wakes up at 4 am and does household chores. Her father, a teacher, leaves early for school.

She reaches to the anganwadi centre by 8 am. There, she prays with the children, teaches them art and craft, sings with them and uses pebbles to teach them numbers.

She looks after the registration paperwork and visits home of children if they have not been coming to the anganwadi centre for a while.

She helps her mom in the kitchen but she doesn’t enjoy cooking much.

She attends her monthly anganwadi meetings.

In her free time, she watches soaps and news on the TV and chats with her parents.

She doesn’t have a cell phone.
Present

She wakes up at 4 am, and cleans the house and cooks for the family.

She visits the CIRC on Sundays for her Bachelor’s programme classes. She’s pursuing her last year now. Every day, from 11 am to noon, she devotes an hour for her studies. Her favourite subject is sociology, but she doesn’t like English as a subject much.

She goes for a morning walk.

She reaches the Borkhet Anganwadi Centre by 8 am. Here, she does art and craft with children, she sings with them and uses pebbles to teach them numbers.

As the number of government schemes available in the state for entitlements have increased, so has her work load. So has to maintain a database of available schemes for different groups and entitlements and keep track of people who have availed the services through the centre.

Sometimes, she brings her office work home if there is too much load.

She accesses the Internet on her mobile for Facebook, WhatsApp and Google.

She is into an online business where she helps sell products online. In one case, she sold nine Ayurvedic products in two weeks.

She even looks up information for her class assignments and checks her Bachelor’s programme exam results on the Internet.
I WOULD TELL MY DAUGHTER THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE EMPOWERED AND INDEPENDENT.

Dairupama’s Aspirations

She hopes to get promoted to the post of a supervisor at the anganwadi centre. She wants to improve the condition of the centre. She wants to set up a separate kitchen, improve the quality of food, install ceiling fans and make proper seating arrangements for children.