



CREATING OPPORTUNITIES 2021 and 2022

(A multi-year report)

A Multi-Year Report 2021 and 2022 | www.ekakanya.org

A photograph of four women walking along a dirt path in a rural, wooded area. They are wearing matching khaki uniforms consisting of a long tunic and dark trousers, with black shawls draped over their shoulders. The woman in the foreground on the right is smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman next to her is also smiling and looking slightly to the side. Two other women are walking behind them, further down the path. The background shows trees and a fence. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent magenta/pink filter.

ekakanya

Action that transforms lives

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LETTER FROM THE BOARD LEADERSHIP

The story of Ekakanya started in 2016, at village Kishanpura in Block Bassi with Project Parinati, conceptualized and designed for making young girls of 17 to 22 years to Change Leaders. It was started with a cohort of 30 girls in a rented room with a limited budget and funding. In 2019, Parinati batch 1 girls graduated as our first batch of Change Leaders, showing significant behavioural and attitudinal change.

The passing out of the first batch at Kishanpura combined with the dream of creating multipliers, with clear guard rails (quality above quantity) that Ekakanya would roll out batches of cohorts consisting of not more than 30 girls and moving from one village to another every 2 years. So, in 2019, it came to the creation of Parinati Batch 2 at village Akhaipura for making of Parinati Change Leaders (PCL). These girls accomplished in multiple fields and by the time they graduated in December 2021, the new Batch 3 was ready to start off in the beginning of 2022, in village Kalyanpura.

The baseline research we do before starting a new batch in a new intervention site, systematically collects, analyses data on young girls and boys, illustrating how attitude, knowledge and practice affects development of young girls differently and providing crucial data to form a set of effective intervention program. From our recent baseline research, it is observed that young girls are lagging young boys in all the dimensions examined. The disparity is most glaring in the fields of engagement in household chores, remunerative activity, spending empowerment, travel decision, and awareness on health, and others. Even when there is awareness, females are lagging in terms of empowerment. Therefore, for Parinati batch 3, which started in February 2022, we are determined to channel our passion into bringing positive changes in their life by giving the girls the space and opportunity to develop, learn new skills, bring community specific issues to light, generate strategies and actions to proactively address them including training them to negotiate with their parents for their own future and education

In response to COVID (2020-2021), we connected our girls with and through technology. The project girls got access to gadgets, which gave them access to information, devices, tools that brought communication and information at the hands of the girls.

The leadership program of the girls continuing to drive change in girls, making them able to think and act scientifically and logically. Hence, learning leadership including aspects of managing change is translated into confidence and resulting in a silent breakthrough.

Dr. Chandana Bhattacharya
Managing Trustee





Creating Opportunities for University Education

Although access to education has been considered a basic right in India since 2009, many girls in rural India are not attending higher education. In Rajasthan, girls are three times more likely to not attend school and colleges compared to their male counterparts (UNICEF Report 2019). As of 2018, Rajasthan, still has the lowest literacy rate for women at 46 percent and the research has shown that almost 37 percent of literate women had dropped out of school before completing eighth grade.

University education has been a distant dream of life for the girls in the villages. Access to school or college; school and college infrastructure; responsibility of household chores; lack of transportation; parents fear for safety of the girls; and their fear of girls getting into any intimate relationship with boys, are a few of the reasons that prevents the young girls from obtaining higher education in Colleges and Universities away from their village or block. Therefore, without intervention either from Government or NGOs, these issues will continue to prevent girls living in rural areas, from obtaining education and empowered.

We, at Ekakanya, tried to make a difference by playing an important role first, by identifying the girls with aptitude for higher education; second, by counselling the parents for allowing their girls to study in good Colleges and Universities in the nearby city; third, identifying the girls' subject of interest and selecting the University; and fourth, finding out different ways of commuting to the Colleges and Universities every day by the available means of transportation. Besides, the parents were counselled not to marry their daughters for at least 2 to 3 years, so that they can complete their degree course. Out of 100, 12 girls of Parinati project from the intervention villages have been enrolled in different Colleges and Universities in the city of Jaipur (40 to 50 kms). 6 girls opted for Master's in Social Work, MSW (2 years course), 2 girls took admission in Master of Business Administration, MBA (2 years course) with specialization in Human Resource, and 4 girls got enrolled in Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Applications, PGDCA (1 year course). This is the first generation in these remote villages that the girls are going to the Universities and Colleges in the nearby city, commuting by train and bus to go to their colleges every day. This helped amplify and strengthen the confidence and aspiration of the young girls of the project. Ekakanya is proud to see the girls realize their full potential.

Our Community Development initiatives with the village elders and particularly with the mothers of our project girls are helping us to convince them to support girls' education and overall development. Thus, "mobilizing communities" in support of girls' education in rural areas is key to bring in a mind-set change and supportive attitude. This requires a great deal of bravery to disrupt old customs that have been followed for generations at the remote villages, where we work.



Creating Opportunities for Employment

Rural India is home to more than 65 percent of its total population, and rural to urban migration has been a growing trend in the past few decades due to better education and employment opportunities (World Bank, 2023). The rural Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sectors are offering a significant opportunity to fill this crucial gap. While the BPO in metro cities addresses the high-end knowledge based operational needs, the low-end services segment is taking a shift in smaller towns and villages which involves projects for native language translations/ transcriptions, data entry, scanning, formatting, and others.

The establishment of BPO in villages is expected to result in the development of rural infrastructure, increase in standard of living, and generation of sufficient employment opportunities at the village level. But rural areas are dogged by problems such as under-developed infrastructure, lack of basic amenities, and low-skilled workforce. The Government of India has launched the India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS) to promote BPO operations across the country. The objective of this scheme is to generate rural employment in remote locations across India.

In July 2022, Ekakanya in partnership with IndiVillage (a tech-solutions organization) created a platform for employment by opening a BPO center in Parinati Project office in village Akhaipura. The centre operates in a two-room rented space of about 350 sq. ft. The BPO centre, with 15 laptops, is the only one of its kind in the village and looks different in the surroundings. This is the first initiative of this kind in district Jaipur in Rajasthan. We started with a group of 15 girls (from Parinati batch 1 and 2) with computer operating skills. The job platform is designed to cater e-commerce, which includes skill-building, technical training on product description and others. This has created a special mark in the community.

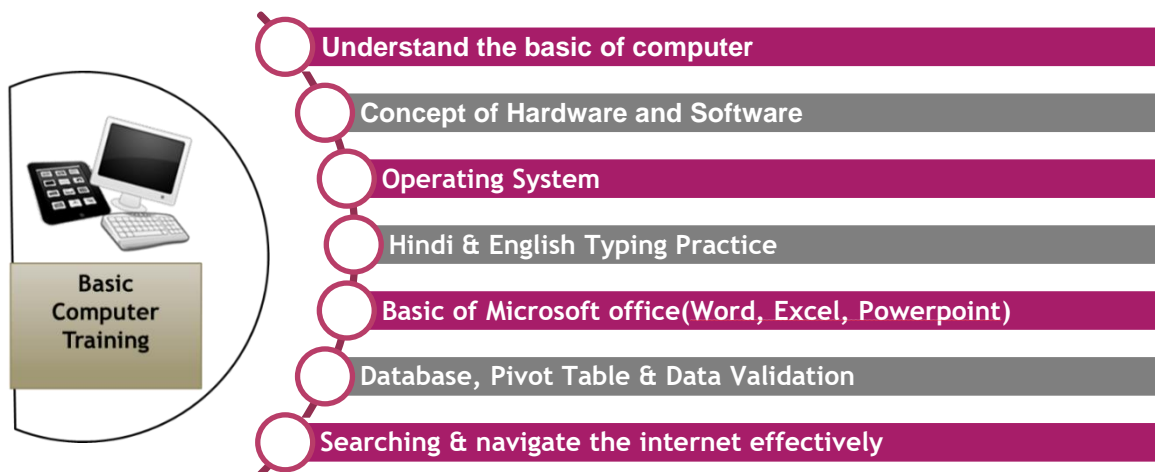
Our aim is to increase the value of education of girls in the larger community by giving the educated and trained girls in the village to get employed and to earn and be empowered both socially and financially. Prior to the setting up of the BPO, these girls with some education and skills were engaged in household chores, farming and were waiting to get married.

In six months, a direct outcome on the socio-economic well-being of the households of these young girls working at BPO is visible. They are earning Rs 6500/- as a trainee since August 2022, which will increase to Rs. 9500/- salary per month after the training period. There is also a sense of dignity and pride which has come in these 15 young girls. The very fact that the girls today can interact with their end office using their phone and laptop, troubleshoot and manage transcription speaks of the impact created. The employed girls and their parents are extremely proud to secure a dignified living and to improve their livelihoods. These girls are examples of women's empowerment. Their computer training, work and financial empowerment have inspired many in their villages to educate their daughters. They are seen as "Role Models" by working in this BPO centre.

The keenness of our girls to learn and work in this environment has motivated us to target for employing 100 young women from the intervention villages. For this, we are renting a new place to create an office with a capacity of 100, in in the Block Headquarters Bassi.



Creating Opportunities for Computer Literacy



The digital gap between rural and urban is huge in India, including digital gender gap. As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS), over 60 percent women in 12 states and union territories in India have never used the internet. In comparison, 50 percent of men have used the internet. In the new world order, education without digital literacy is not complete as technology becomes the inevitable part of everyday life. Even though computer literacy programs have been around for few years within India's government-run schools, several states do not teach computer skills in school. According to a recent report published by the District Information for School Education, only 28.60 percent schools in Rajasthan have access to computers. Even in Secondary Education only 37.37 percent schools in the state have access to computers. Additionally, only 55.28 percent schools in the state have the basic requirement for electricity connection necessary to run computers.

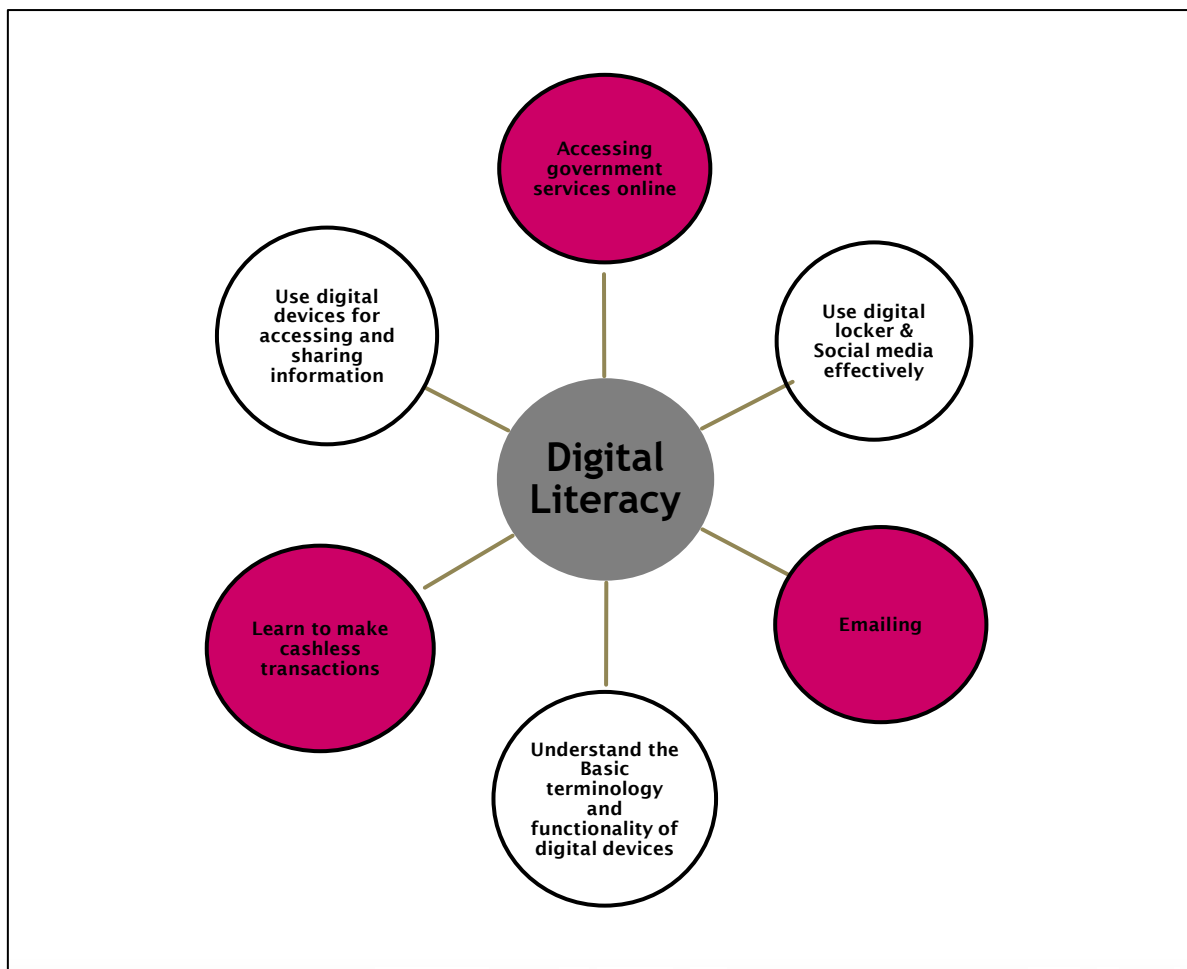
This leaves students in the villages to go to private computer learning centers for the basic courses in their block headquarters, which is only possible if their parents are willing to spend money for their computer learning program. The cost of computer courses often puts the classes out of reach of many rural girls.

The pandemic also increased the use of digital technology and opened new platforms for e-commerce and online learning, enabling access to markets that were previously out of reach for women and girls. Hence, digital empowerment is crucial for women as it is an opportunity for them to change the traditional learning opportunities that have been favorable to men in a patriarchal society.

At Ekakanya, we opened our first Computer Centre in August 2021 for Parinati batch 2 in village Akhaipura. Here we trained 18 girls for one year. Our objective was to equip our girls with basic computer and digital literacy skills and prepare them well for the digital world. In July 2022, we started another Computer Center for Parinati batch 3 in village Kalyanpura, with better computers and accessories including camera, sound box, battery, and invertors.

to support electricity connection, and a trained Computer Teacher. There is a training curriculum which covers basics of computers, parts of computers, computer vocabulary, basics of Microsoft office (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) and navigating internet. The girls are also trained step-by-step on how to use mobile phone for internet, and for online classes through zoom or google meet and others. The sincerity and dedication among Parinati girls, is making them adaptive learner and their parents are slowly realizing the opportunities created by computer knowledge.

After completing the basic course of computer at our center, 4 of our Parinati batch 2 girls have enrolled in Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Application (PGDCA) course in Gyan Vihar University in Jaipur.





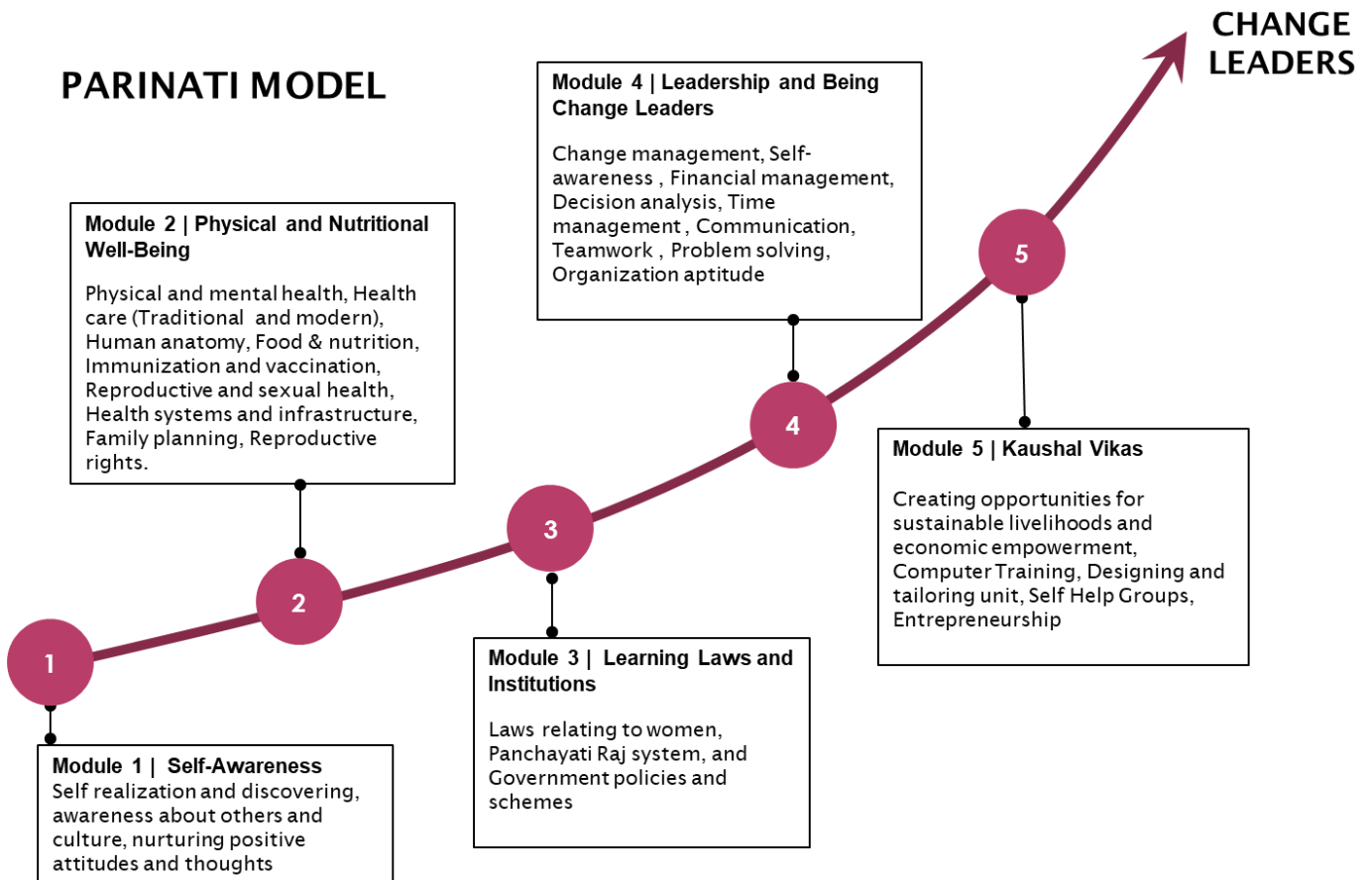
Creating Opportunities for Making of Change Leaders

In a world of uncertainties and unknown, instilling change in the young girls must be anchored deep to create their own potential, design their dreams and aid to make them a reality. At Ekakanya, we strive to transform the lives of girls through educational empowerment and attitudinal changes. Our projects demonstrate evidence-based design and content that give girls the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential and take part as change leaders to create positive change in their own lives and in their communities.

The core of the Parinati Project is making of Change Leaders of the girls. Since 2016 we have been able to train 90 girls in 3 batches of 2 years each. We are instilling change in them, making them able to think and act logically; through our 5 module Parinati model.



PARINATI MODEL



Through these modules we train our girls to:

- Develop personal goals
- Negotiate for delaying marriage and pregnancy – 32 percent of the Parinati batch 1 and 2 girls have been able to negotiate with their parents about delaying their marriage (they are between 23-24 years of age), and they are pursuing their education, and a few started working.
- Protect themselves from Exploitations and Abuses - In the module on 'Learning Laws and Institutions,' girls were given training on the various laws to protect women. For example, domestic violence; dowry prohibition; prohibition of sexual harassment of women; immoral human traffic (prevention) Act; Hindu marriage act; medical termination of pregnancy act; prohibition of child marriage act; protection of children from sexual offenses Act (POSCO); married women's property act and more.
- Raise their knowledge and awareness on Local Governance (Panchayati Raj Institutions)
- Bring positive shift in their attitudes towards overall development
- Translate attitudinal change to behavioral change
- Communication skills
- Manage Finance
- Develop problem solving mindset

Creating Opportunities by Giving Exposures

We believe that exposure visits enable girls from the villages to interact and learn by meeting different people, allowing them to view practical examples in various fields. Therefore, Exposure visits are an integral part of the Parinati model across all the modules, for sensitizing the girls for making them Change Leaders. In Parinati, the project organizes 6 to 8 exposure visits in a year. The visits include visits to the health care infrastructure (primary, secondary, and tertiary hospitals), police stations, courts, banks, panchayat office (gram panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad office) and Universities. Besides, at least once a year, Ekakanya organizes excursion trips to any historical sites and cities for the project girls. These visits create a sense of purpose and enthusiasm among girls.

In March 2022, 30 Parinati project girls and the Project team from Rajasthan visited Bangalore for a week on an exposure visit. It was a visit with many “Firsts” like First flight, First time being at the airport, First time staying in a hotel, and First time travelling long distance and being away from home for 7 days (with support from Air Asia and IHCL Ltd). In Bangalore, the girls visited the manufacturing unit, historical sites, all the places to see in Bengaluru including horticulture trip, Planetarium for a show on Solar System and others. The girls got a lifetime opportunity to interact with Senior Government Officers, Industry CEOs, Academicians, NGO including a session with 20 young software engineers. In this visit, a special educational tour was organized by the Bangalore Airport team, where the girls got to learn every aspect of functioning of an airport.



Looking Ahead



2023 is Ekakanya's 8th year in action. Looking back there is much to celebrate the step-by-step accomplishments over last 7 years by seeking evidence-based solutions. Ekakanya will be there with you as we continuously discover what we can do together next.

2023 will see a growth of Parinati girls towards economic empowerment as we target for employing 100 young women from the intervention villages to work in the BPO center we have started. For this, we are renting a new place to create an office with a capacity of 100, in in the Block Headquarters Bassi. 2023 brings new opportunities, new partnerships, and new growth

Our 8th year will be met with steadfast resolve to push boundaries and find new paths forward. But we know we cannot do this alone. Through our partnerships and with our stalwart supporters by our side, we will take the next step together with an eye towards the success.

A few of our accomplishments, as we complete our 7 years journey..

Description	Number	Percent
<i>32 percent of the girls (Parinati batch1 and 2) are not married at age 24 years</i>	19	32
<i>20 girls (from Parinati batch 1 and 2) working and earning their livelihood</i>	20	33
<i>13 girls (Parinati batch 1 and 2) are enrolled in university for higher education, in Jaipur City</i>	13	22
<i>All the Parinati girls (batch1, 2 and 3) are trained as "Suraksha Sakhi" squad at the block level Police Station</i>	90	100
<i>60 girls (Parinati batch 1 and 2) have their own bank account and are banking for their needs</i>	60	100
<i>90 girls in the intervention village got training in computer applications</i>	90	100
<i>30 girls experienced travelling by flight for the first time in their life</i>	30	50

EKAKANYA TEAM

PARINATI PROJECT TEAM

Ms. Ranjeeta Parikh (Project Coordinator)
Ms. Sunita Sharma (Assistant Project Coordinator)
Ms. Rachna Bairwa (Assistant Project Coordinator)
Mr. Pavan Sharma (Computer Teacher)

EKAKANYA LEADERSHIP TEAM

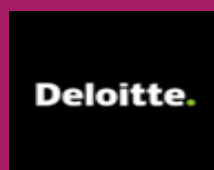
Dr. Chandana Bhattacharya
Dr. Rima Ghosh Patranabish
Mr. Balakrishnan Natarajan

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNER

We thank 'PURE India Trust' for their support towards their administrative assistance to Parinati team.

OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

Thank you for your support in helping Ekakanya build a gender inclusive future for the rural girls and for your contribution throughout this exceptional journey of achieving milestones. Through the support of individual donors and corporations, we strive and achieve small improvements to remarkable results.



Information

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