

“Now, we look forward to share and express . . .”

In this issue of *Connect*, we again bring you some conversations with young impressionable minds who have been impacted by the Transform Lives *one school at a time* initiative launched in 2016 by Sehgal Foundation. Aimed at a better environment for education in rural schools, the initiative works to improve school infrastructure, impart the much-needed digital and life skills to students, and increase awareness about their rights and entitlements.



We interacted with the trainers and a group of students enrolled in the digital literacy and life skills education centers in villages Bhandwada and Inragarh in district Alwar, Rajasthan. These schoolchildren in grades nine and onward were enthusiastic to talk about the school’s transformation as well as their own.

Rohit from grade 11 from Indragarh School hails from village Moreda, some two kilometers away from Indragarh. His village did not have a senior school so he joined the school in grade 9. Many boys from his village come to this school, which they consider better than a private school after the renovation work. Rohit says, “I had heard about techniques of conserving water but saw rainwater harvesting being done for the first time in the school. If we all do this, then water availability will never be a problem.” Every school renovated under the initiative has a rainwater-harvesting system that fulfils drinking and sanitary water needs. Rohit’s father is a farmer, and his mother is a homemaker. He now makes it a point to share all the new things he learns at the center with his family members, as many of these things are helpful in their daily lives as well.

Seema, a student of class 12, loves the subject of history and has many stories to tell us of the school before and after. She and many girls like her find a lot of respite after the toilets were constructed and there was water in them. Earlier it was a nightmarish experience for girls, especially on the days they had periods. Girls had to skip school, which resulted in loss of their studies. Seema says, "I don't take leave now."

Gopi's fascination for computers introduced him to the digital literacy center operating in his village school in Bhandwada, where he stays after school hours to learn. He shares that he wants to learn computers, following which he could do many things such as online bookings, bill payments, getting to know government programs, etc. "It was for the first time I handled a computer at the center. It was so empowering. I felt as if I had caught hold of a rocket to success." Gopi has a keen inclination toward sports and wants to join the army one day. He shares that the playground is improved in terms of facilities and play equipment. The newly built stage is being used regularly for morning prayers and performances that build confidence and presentation skills.

While interacting with the trainer of the Digital Literacy and Life Skills Education Center at village Bhandwada, like the students; she had lots to share. Manisha, age twenty-three, from village Dalalpur, Alwar, had completed her MA but did not have a suitable job. The family did not want her to go far for a job, so she stayed and waited for an opportunity to come her way. One of her relatives working with a local NGO in Alwar told her about Sehgal Foundation and an opening for a trainer at the Digital Literacy Center. Manisha decided to give it a shot. She has never looked back after that day. Manisha recalls her journey and the extensive Training of Trainer's she underwent before starting classes for students. "The life skills modules, such as knowing myself, were special as they helped me regain my belief and confidence. These modules gave a new perspective and meaning to my life; there was so much to learn. I feel I would not have been able to do justice to my role as a trainer had I not been trained myself on these aspects," she says.

Manisha and the students are ambassadors of change. They stand prepared and confident to take the message to others in their family and communities, transforming the many lives they come across with their newfound knowledge.

(Compiled by Communications team at S M Sehgal Foundation)