



IMPACT ASSESSMENT

OF AZAD FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

2008-2022

REPORT OF THE CONSULTANCY PROJECT

Prof. Rukmini Sen | School of Liberal Studies

Prof. Krishna Menon | School of Human Studies

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi

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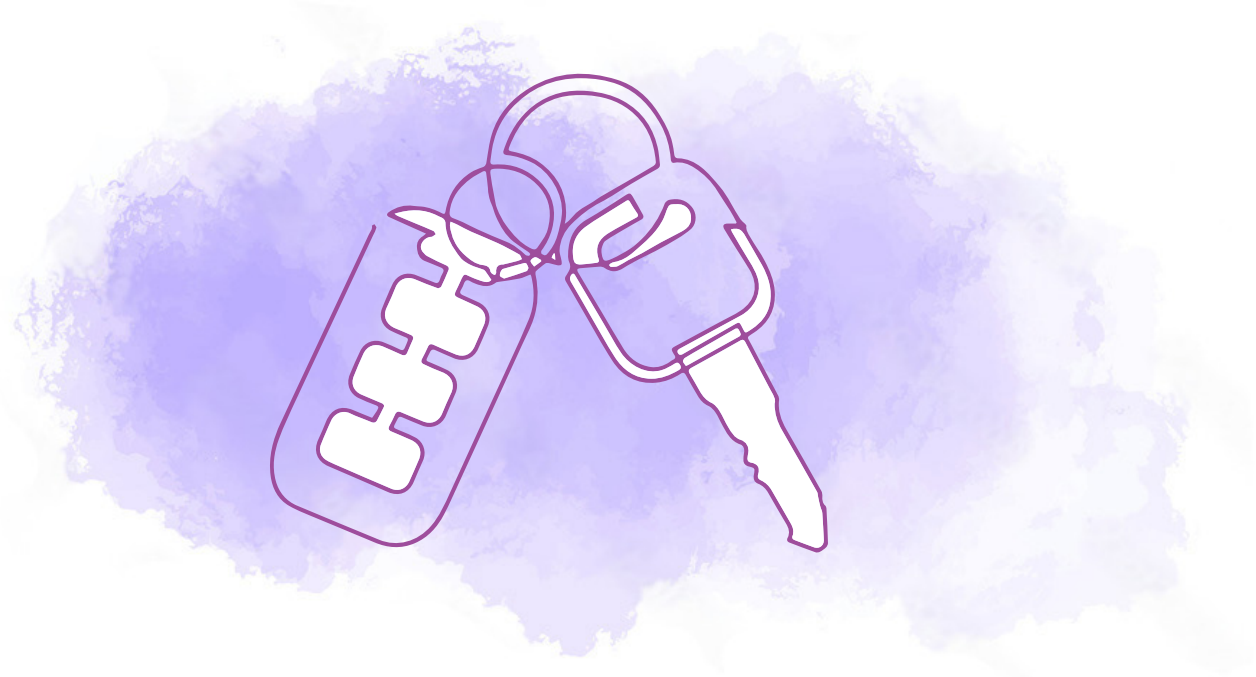
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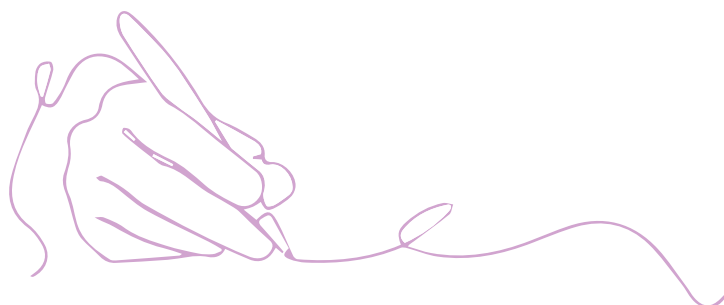
SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

What is the role of academics and researchers in evaluating the programs of a civil society organization? In this study, we positioned this question as not merely a preliminary inquiry but as the fundamental basis for our chosen methodology. Historically positioned as external observers to the nature and approaches of Azad Foundation's initiatives, we embarked on this endeavor to comprehend the shifts and evolutions within its programs and to gauge the influence on the lives of the women and men engaged in these endeavors. Undertaking this impact assessment study facilitated a closer convergence between theoretical frameworks and practical applications.

As a University, established by the Government of NCT of Delhi (Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi) and an organization that collaborates and receives support from the Government of Delhi (Azad Foundation), this impact assessment study serves as a means to unite the two entities in their shared commitment to contribute to the welfare of the city and its inhabitants. The impetus for this study stems from the inspiring endeavors of women who have courageously ventured into uncharted territories, exemplified by their choice to pursue taxi driving as a means of livelihood.

As responsible citizens committed to societal welfare, it is imperative for us to actively participate in endeavors that have a significant social impact. Through this assessment, we aim to closely examine the lived experiences of women who have attained skill-based livelihood and have been empowered through the efforts of Azad Foundation. Furthermore, we endeavor to provide recommendations for the advancement of a sustainable and dignified life, founded upon principles of social justice, for these women who have undergone training and skill development under the auspices of Azad Foundation.

This impact assessment report is the result of collaborative work between the university-based gender experts working as consultants along with research assistants, taxi drivers, participants, and all the staff and leadership from Azad Foundation. Cooperation, collaboration, and open communication defined the nature of work during the preparation of this report, aligning with the best of feminist traditions. As program evaluators, we occupied a liminal space between research and evaluation. Our research endeavors align with feminist perspectives and actively embrace our role as inheritors



of the rich legacy forged by the women's movement, both within the Indian context and beyond its borders. This motivated us to practice and contribute to the development of feminist evaluation. Hence, we find it uncomfortable when strict binaries between research and evaluation are made, and we believe that this assessment study is also a research study that focuses on the issue of women and non-traditional labor. (Saumitra Sen Gupta, 2014).

Can feminist evaluation studies help revisit the concept of development (Hay, 2014)? According to our understanding, evaluation, like research, provides opportunities to critique dominant and evolving discourses; in this case on women's role in development with specific focus on the questions related to gender, work and wages. This report will serve as an example of how an impact assessment and evaluation study can go beyond simply determining whether a given program is working or achieving its stated goal and objectives, to also explore and examine the theory and philosophy underpinning the program (Hay, 2014). This could lead us to critique the development paradigm within which the stated objectives are being implemented, the paradigm need not be accepted as inevitable. When employing a feminist perspective, evaluators have the opportunity to scrutinize policies and programs by posing the question, "Who has constructed this discourse and whose experiences are not reflected?" (Hay, 2014).

Thus, an evaluation study informed by feminist understanding would incorporate this sensibility in a) the question stage (the kind of questions to be asked of the organization and the participants), b) the design stage (the kind of research methods to be used so as to incorporate all voices that otherwise run the risk of being left out) and c) the judgment stage (where competing ideas of the success of the work done should be brought out clearly) (Hay, 2014).

An impact assessment study is different from a conventional research project and interestingly this type of study has found its way from the world of public administration and business to the development sector. Typically, the development sector, especially those working within a largely feminist framework has only very recently begun to conduct evaluative studies and impact assessments of their work. In this sense, this attempt by Azad Foundation to evaluate and conduct an impact assessment study by independent researchers from the university system is bold and creative. Methodologically, this requires bringing together the theoretical insights of feminist research practices and the actual interventionist work of Azad Foundation. It is also a fact that there is little theoretical mapping of distinctively feminist or gender-sensitive approaches to impact assessment studies. There is, however, a fledgling body of literature that is growing and we are confident that this study would soon join the ranks of this growing body of work.

A.

THE ORGANISATION THAT IS BEING ASSESSED

AZAD FOUNDATION & ITS EVOLUTION

Established in 2008, Azad Foundation is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) started in New Delhi. Its primary focus is on providing women from underprivileged backgrounds in urban areas of India with training in non-traditional livelihood skills. According to the organization's website, Azad Foundation envisions a world where all women, regardless of their social and economic background, have full citizenship, earn with dignity, and contribute to wealth and value creation for society. Operating as a professional feminist organization, Azad Foundation works across religious and social boundaries to empower resource-poor women to improve their livelihoods.

The term 'non-traditional livelihoods' refers to practices that challenge traditional gender roles and dismantle stereotypes. It emerges from the intersections of various factors such as gender, caste, class, religion, sexual orientation, identity, disability, and other forms of marginalization and oppressive structures. Within a dynamic context of space and time, non-traditional livelihoods expand women's choices by providing access to and control over skills, technology, markets, mobility, and resources. This not only creates economic stability but also fosters psychological, social, and political empowerment. In Anne Sofie Fischer's 2018 thesis conducted at Copenhagen Business School, titled, 'Negotiating Spaces of Everyday Politics', Azad Foundation is recognized as the catalyst and pioneer of the first all-women taxi service in New Delhi, India.

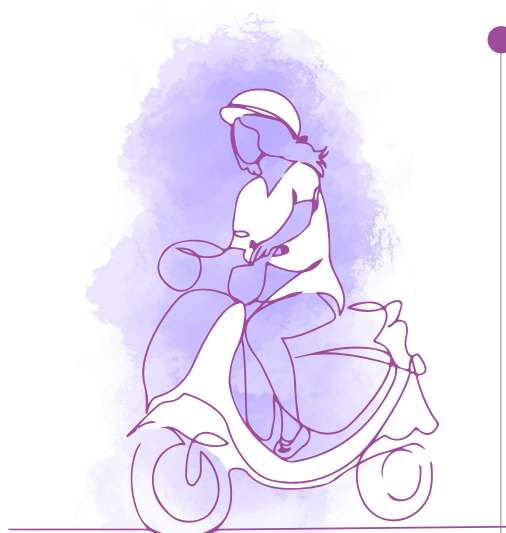
The Azad Foundation established the 'Women With Wheels' (WWW) program in 2008, pioneering the first all-women taxi service in New Delhi, India. This groundbreaking initiative has provided women with an entry point into the predominantly male-dominated profession of professional cab driving. (Gothoskar, 2016). Through this program, Azad Foundation encourages women to become forces of change, while at the same time, providing an opportunity to achieve proper remuneration and secure sustainable livelihoods (Gothoskar, 2016). It also aims to level the employment field for disadvantaged women by providing bold livelihood options that enhance women's economic and social status, dignity, and decision-making within their families.

The program spans over 6-8 months; the timeframe is negotiable depending upon the pace and situation of learning of the individual trainee (Gothoskar, 2016). The design of the program is dynamic, whereby women trainees are imparted with instructions on 9 modules. Apart from technical driving training, modules cover topics on gender and patriarchy (women, work and NTL), gender-based violence and laws and legal rights related to gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, self-defense, spoken English, GPS navigation, first-aid, communication, work-readiness (professional

etiquettes, communication and workplace decorum) (Gothoskar, 2016). The WWW program has been implemented in cities other than Delhi – it has been operational in Jaipur since 2013, in Kolkata since 2015, and in Chennai since 2019 (Oraa & Ali, 2017). Azad Foundation has collaborated with Samaan in Indore from 2015 onwards, with Janvikas in Ahmedabad from 2016 onwards, and with Neeva Foundation in Bangalore from 2016 (Oraa & Ali, 2017), as well as with CYSD in Bhubaneswar from 2018 and Humsafar in Lucknow. Depending on the city, a range of INR 60,000-65,000 per trainee is being allocated for a six to eight-month course to finance this program (Gothoskar, 2016). Since the Azad Foundation invests a good amount of resources into training women, it expects a certain commitment from the trainees when it comes to the completion of the course (Gothoskar, 2016). Therefore, the women trainees are asked to submit to the 'Commitment Fund' of INR 2,000 before the commencement of the sessions (Gothoskar, 2016). Flexibility is observed in how this amount is paid – trainees can pay this sum at once, or pay in installments over a period of a few months (Gothoskar, 2016).

The Foundation has collaborated with Sakha Consulting Wings Pvt Ltd., a body responsible for providing services pertaining to post-training placement and professional growth (Gothoskar, 2016), which is a unique model of joint functioning between a training organization and the market. It works towards developing "Safe Transport Solutions for Women by Women in Urban India" (Gothoskar, 2016, pp. 24). Therefore, in addition to their cab service, Sakha also deploys women drivers as private chauffeurs. The earnings of them range between INR 8,000- INR 25,000; furthermore, a former trainee also went on to buy two new cars, and hire a WWW graduate to drive one of the two.

Some statistics that speak about the kind of impact that Azad Foundation's work has yielded over the years are given below.



As of 2022, the WWW program has empowered 3857 marginalized women by providing them with mobility, fostering an increased sense of agency, establishing a supportive peer network, and equipping them with permanent driving license and valuable employability skills. Among these women, 2176 have worked or working as professional chauffeurs across eight cities (Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata and Chennai directly and Indore, Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar and Lucknow with partners) in India with their aggregate wealth generated annually being in the range of INR 4.80 million (Azad Foundation, 2020).

All women drivers in the program have experienced a significant transformation in their lives, as evidenced by their newfound role as the primary earners in their families. This shift has led to a remarkable increase in family incomes ranging from 100% to 200% and, in certain cases, even higher.

Over 1.5 million safe rides have been provided and more than INR 196.83 million cumulative earnings generated by women drivers working with Azad Foundation's strategic partner Sakha or placed by them in private homes, institutions.

In the pilot phase of 2020-21, a total of 205 women riders, utilizing two-wheelers, successfully obtained employment opportunities within the E-commerce sector. This strategic response by the Azad Foundation to the evolving market conditions amidst the pandemic showcases their ingenuity and adaptability.

A study on the return on investment (ROI) on WWW indicated that this model has demonstrated a 25% ROI, which is above the average ROI of 15% for capital investments. This indicates the financial viability of the model besides its intensive social gains.

86% women trainees of WWW and drivers are survivors of gender-based violence as per 2022-23 data. Many of these women have taken actions to secure lives free of violence; they have been able to renegotiate unpaid care work responsibilities at home.

These efforts have compelled the once-skeptical transport industry to open itself to women drivers. The Delhi Transport Corporation employed its first-ever female bus driver from the Azad Foundation and their partner, Sakha Consulting Wings Pvt Ltd in 2015. Since 2022, after agreeing to change the entry rules and making training for HMV more accessible, DTC has now over 35 woman drivers and several more in training. Uber, Ola, and other smaller cab operators have hired Azad Foundation graduates as their chauffeurs. UNICEF, the US Embassy and the Australian Embassy in Delhi have hired women chauffeurs for the first time.

The following quotes the experiences of Ganga and Lata whose lives had transformed after completing the driving course at Azad Foundation:



I come from a very conservative family. I have to cover my head in front of my in-laws even now. I wear my uniform – shirt and pants – and then take a scarf to cover my head. My parents also gave me dowry when I got married. But now I think differently. I have told my family, 'Never talk about me leaving my job. You will regret it.' I have also encouraged my daughter to study as much as she wants and will resist it if my in-laws or husband insist on her marriage.

Ganga (Gothoskar, 2016, pp. 35)



It has been almost four years that I have been driving a cab. I was just 18 when I began (I was ready to learn earlier, but had to wait because 18 is the rule). I come from a very poor and conservative family in rural Bihar. My mother is very supportive, but she could not do anything when my father forced my sister to get married when she was only 13. She was not allowed to even complete her education. I, too, was forcibly engaged. But I resisted, and my mother supported me. My father was initially very upset and angry that I broke my engagement, but ultimately he relented. Now that I earn so much, he does not say anything. I am not sure whether I want to get married or not. But I am sure I want to make something of my life. My elder sister was good in her studies. She is very talented. Another friend of mine's in-laws had promised that they would allow her to study after marriage. But then they did not. What could be done?

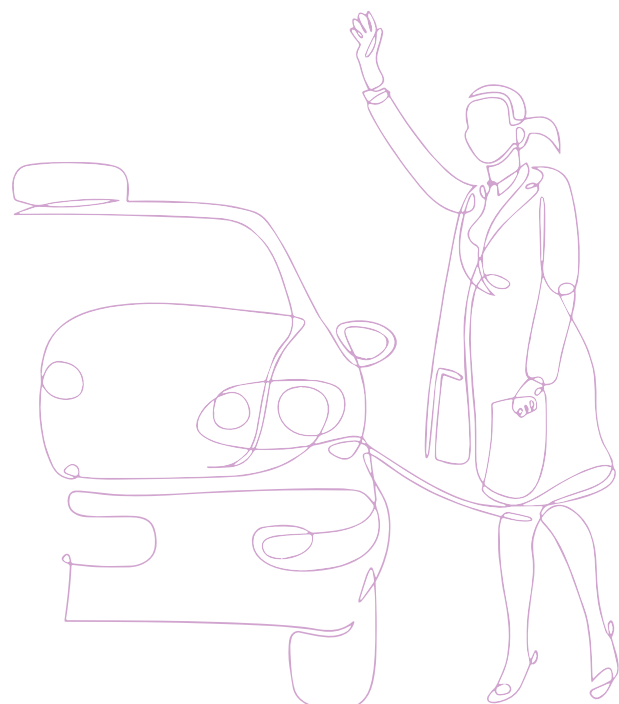
Lata (Gothoskar, 2016, pp.31-32)

Among the drivers that were trained by the Azad Foundation, 22 drivers have been employed by Delhi Commission for Women's Helpline to drive to the rescue of victims of violence who dial 181 (Azad Foundation, 2020)

The airport authorities in Delhi and Indore have invited Sakha to set up a counter at the airports, making the idea of women in transport more visible and creating wider acceptance in a male-dominated market.

Most women have become role models for their families and communities since they made investments in education of their next generation, health and asset creation, thus transforming their material reality.

Over the last fourteen years, interventions by Azad Foundation resulted in securing hundreds of jobs for women and their training in various fields.



Azad Foundation's program is designed in alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and it also engages in several SDG forums. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by world leaders at the historic United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development in 2015, carries forward and improves on the Millennium Development Goals (Arrow Brief, 2018). The ambitious set of 17 SDGs, to be achieved by 2030, is based on the principle of "leaving no one behind." Thus, the agenda calls for the recognition of the complexity and diversity of the world and its people (Arrow Brief, 2018). The SDG 8 aims to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. It calls for immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and end child labor in all its forms by 2025. It also seeks to protect labor rights and promote safe and secure work environments for all, including migrant workers, in particular, women migrants, and those in precarious employment (Arrow Brief, 2018). Azad Foundation's impactful efforts in empowering women who have overcome violence and adversity deserve recognition. Notably, these women have acquired the skills to navigate interactions with employers, law enforcement, and their families. They have also challenged societal norms regarding care work, community obligations, and other institutional roles, resulting in a remarkable sense of agency and autonomy.

Evaluation and impact assessment of the work done by the Foundation demonstrates very clearly the qualitative achievements in terms of transformation and empowerment of women. However, equally important is the hard exercise of number crunching that shows very clearly the impact of the work done by the Azad Foundation.

The process of empowerment experienced by the trainees of the WWW program is enduring and profound. This program facilitates the discovery and realization of the inherent power within these women. Once they establish this connection, there is a fundamental shift that permanently alters their trajectory, ensuring there is no regression or reversal. Furthermore, the benefits of the program reach out to their children, girl children particularly, making an inter-generational impact of far-reaching consequences. Majority of women who complete the program become principal breadwinners in their families. They are financially independent and empowered to make their own decisions. The women who are undertaking the program and those working as commercial drivers inspire other women to also take on non-traditional professions and become autonomous and economically independent (Azad Foundation, 2020). Building a gender-just ecosystem has been an objective of the Azad Foundation's work. As Nisha

Diwan comments in her PhD thesis, a very important impact of its work has undeniably been that it has succeeded in creating a new body of knowledge on non-traditional livelihoods, that is now available to others in the field who wish to emulate the same approach. The training modules, workshops and initiatives launched by Azad Foundation are also invaluable resources for the larger feminist, transformative ecosystem.

● 426 women, young men & boys and adolescent girls trained as change agents with the knowledge of feminist values and principles, across Delhi, Jaipur and Kolkata to create a gender-just ecosystem and enable women's access to skill training and livelihoods with dignity.

● 11,268 women have been supported by community change agents and mobilisers in accessing their citizenship documents and social security schemes. This is a first step towards acquiring any kind of employment, especially in the formal economy.

● 6492 adolescent girls and men & boys received information and awareness on negotiation skills for higher education, marriage, menstrual hygiene, skill training and unpaid care work and challenging harmful norms of masculinity across Delhi, Jaipur and Kolkata.

● A total of 279,372 women residing in communities across Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, and Chennai possess knowledge and awareness regarding the availability of training programs aimed at attaining dignified livelihoods in non-traditional sectors.



Azad Foundation understands the need for building and strengthening an ecosystem that supports their efforts at empowering women's lives through non-traditional livelihood options. In a bid to further this aim, Azad Foundation seeded a Non-Traditional Livelihoods Network (NTLN) in 2016 and continues to hold the secretariat for the NTLN. Facilitated by the collective efforts of Azad Foundation and its partners, the NTLN has grown to become a vibrant network of 26 organizations and 12 individuals from 11 states in India, who together harness knowledge on NTL and build collective advocacy platforms for promoting:

- **Gender-sensitive markets**
- **Skill training in NTL**
- **Gender-sensitive infrastructure**

While it is nobody's case that financial empowerment automatically leads to freedom and autonomy, there is no denying that economic and financial empowerment are at the heart of the transformation of women's lives in the Global South.

Through in-depth consultations conducted with various stakeholders including members, functionaries, staff, women drivers, and men associated with the Azad Foundation, it became evident that the organization places significant emphasis on the establishment of a supportive ecosystem. This ecosystem plays a crucial role in promoting and amplifying the core message of leading dignified lives through the acquisition of non-traditional skills, thereby fostering economic empowerment. The Azad Foundation network and community has understood and successfully translated the belief that change requires bolstering, buffering and scaffolding that is to be provided by the gender-just ecosystem erected on the foundations of the values of equality, dignity, autonomy and justice. This has been initiated through camps, workshops and other interactive settings where the participants have been diverse. Azad Foundation's endeavors to involve men and young boys are particularly commendable as they greatly enhance the effectiveness of their work. By presenting their initiatives as cooperative and collaborative endeavors aimed at fostering social equity and harmony, rather than confrontational or competitive pursuits, the foundation has successfully positioned itself to bring together diverse genders. Based on the findings of the present study's investigations, the Foundation has achieved notable and commendable success in this regard.

The impact of the work done by the Azad Foundation is clearly demonstrated in the network that the organization has built and the increasing number of partners and like-minded groups that are willing to share platforms, initiatives and ideas with the Foundation. This is clearly a feather in the Foundations' cap, as there is no doubt that the best vindication of work done is when partners and other organizations begin to value the philosophy of Azad Foundation and seek collaboration.

In January 2019, along with the NTL Network, the Foundation hosted an international conference on 'Making NTL Work for the Marginalized', where more than 200 delegates (activists, academicians, policy makers, practitioners) from across 20 countries participated. In July 2019, the Azad Foundation became accredited by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. This enabled the Foundation to contribute to reports and discussions at the UN and other regional and global conferences to influence the discourse specifically around women and work. The ability to intervene in the international discourse and be able to set the agenda on women, livelihood and work is a remarkable achievement by Azad Foundation and is surely a conclusive proof of the impact of the work undertaken by Azad Foundation. It is in this vein that Azad Foundation has been invited to be a part of various Sustainable Development forums such as High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), Commission on the Status of Women and ECOSOC Youth Forum to advocate on SDGs 4, 5 and 8. Being able to do this is a tremendous achievement and a concrete proof of the solid impact of the work done by Azad Foundation.



OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The following are the main objectives of this study

1. To understand the multiple levels at which transformation has happened, both intended and the other unintended transformative consequences
2. To comprehend the impact of NTL on women's lives, and also understanding the workings of the organization that facilitates it

B. AN OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY & APPROACH FOLLOWED IN THIS IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY

This impact assessment study has adopted a feminist approach that encompasses understanding and consideration of sociocultural factors underlying sex-based discrimination (gender sensitivity), as well as taking actions to overcome gender biases in order to improve gender equality (gender responsiveness). Thus, we seek to study and assess the impact of the work done by the Azad Foundation based on this gender sensitive and gender responsive methodology as elaborated by Bainton (Bainton, 2021). This impact assessment is a dynamic and ongoing process. Our attempt has been to not just assess the work done, but to assess the work done by factoring in and recognising the larger context within which it has been done. The current understanding suggests that utilizing gender-neutral approaches in impact assessment may inadvertently perpetuate, replicate, or exacerbate patterns of discrimination and exclusion within communities, with particular implications for vulnerable groups, including women. This approach has been chosen with careful consideration of the gendered social context in which the work is conducted. It recognizes the influence of gender power dynamics on the nature of the initiatives, the responses from different stakeholders, and the diverse strategies of resistance, negotiation, and change employed by the Azad Foundation, its staff, trainers, trainees, and the women whose lives it aims to empower through a feminist realignment of power dynamics. (Bainton, 2021). Götzmann and Bainton (Bainton, 2021) are two leading scholars who have engaged with the field of gendered impact assessment studies and have noticed the absence of gender-responsive approaches in conventional impact assessment practice which excluded the concerns of people on the margins such as people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ and others.

It is imperative to maintain a constant awareness that impacts are inherently 'gendered', meaning they manifest distinct effects on individuals belonging to different genders. In this context, the term 'gender' encompasses various social aspects, including caste, religion, ethnicity, and other pertinent factors. Gendered social relations entail that societal norms are applied differentially based on individuals' positions and relationships within the broader social fabric. (Bainton, 2021). Scholars have cautioned against an impact assessment that seeks to study the impact from a mere tokenistic perspective that involves only naming certain categories of people on the margins or of conducting assessment from a supposedly gender-neutral vantage point. Merely augmenting the representation of women in organizations does not suffice for effectuating substantial feminist transformation. (Bacchi, 2010). A comprehensive impact assessment from a gendered perspective would seek to study the intersecting nature of women's lives with other groups in society and the overall impact of the work of the organization from this perspective. The approach we have endeavored to adopt involves recognizing that while the Azad Foundation has succeeded in addressing

the underrepresentation of women in a previously male-dominated domain, our impact assessment endeavors to transcend the mere pursuit of numerical inclusivity. Rather, we have tried to determine the challenges and limitations that women have experienced due to their specific gendered lives despite being employed and empowered to a certain extent.

Azad Foundation is faced with operational challenges at different levels of training as well as placement of trained women drivers (Oraa & Ali, 2017). Despite receiving the necessary attention and assistance of the skills development providers, women trainees are met with roadblocks which are beyond their capacity to individually resolve (Oraa & Ali, 2017). The dynamic design of the Azad Foundation's WWW program allows women to deal with violence in public-private spaces and even trains them to handle situations of sexual harassment. (Oraa & Ali, 2017). However, the onus of their safety does not lie with them entirely; various societal stakeholders partake in the responsibility to build a gender-responsive society (Oraa & Ali, 2017). Along with that, these women drivers continue to bear the 'double burden' of earning a living while simultaneously fulfilling their domestic roles. Women trainees constantly juggle their roles so as to strike a work-life balance and protect themselves from the ire of the men in their families and communities (Oraa & Ali, 2017). Oraa and Ali (2017) cite the example of caste panchayats that denigrate these women who choose to opt for skills development or earn a living by assuming a role outside the realm of the household. Feminist evaluation programs aimed at changing the lives of women, the disempowered, and the 'poorest of the poor' are implemented in developed and developing countries all over the world (Podems, 2016). Housework for women is almost 'natural' and ascribed to the female sex, and hence when women work outside of the home, it is difficult to shake off the assumption that they remain primarily responsible for the work within the household – physical, emotional, sexual, and care work – in addition to the work that they might be doing outside the house for wages. As highlighted by Nisha Diwan in her thesis, the entry of women into the workforce does not replace their domestic responsibilities; instead, it adds to their existing duties. In practice, women often sacrifice leisure time rather than work time to fulfill caregiving obligations for their children, thereby incurring costs primarily on themselves rather than the entire family unit.

B1. INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

During the impact assessment study, in-depth feminist interviews and focus group discussions were utilized as essential research methods. In the context of feminist evaluation, in-depth interviews hold significant value as they aim to grasp the contextual 'lived experiences' of individuals, particularly focusing on experiences that are often concealed or overlooked (Nagy). These interviews served as a means to amplify the voices of marginalized women from underprivileged sections of Indian society, who were the primary participants in this study (Nagy). As evaluators, our main role was to actively listen, analyze, and attentively engage with the perspectives shared by the women and men involved in the assessment. We adapted our interview questions based on cues provided by the participants, tailoring the discussions to their specific experiences. To facilitate effective interviews, probing techniques were employed, encouraging respondents to elaborate on their thoughts and provide illustrative examples (Nagy), sometimes even drawing from their own personal contexts.

Feminist interviewing constituted a critical component of our impact assessment study, requiring evaluators to reflect upon their own positionalities and motivations prior to conducting interviews. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, guided by overarching themes. This flexible approach allowed for redirection and exploration of participants' unique experiences. Our objective was to uncover hidden narratives and elevate the voices of those often marginalized.

Before commencing each interview, evaluators initiated a discussion to share their own positionality and perspectives. This served as a foundation for establishing rapport and explaining the purpose and significance of the study. Following casual introductions and initial conversation, the semi-structured interviews commenced. It is important to note that we did not adhere to a rigid questionnaire; instead, we adapted the interview style based on the specificity and context of each participant's experiences.

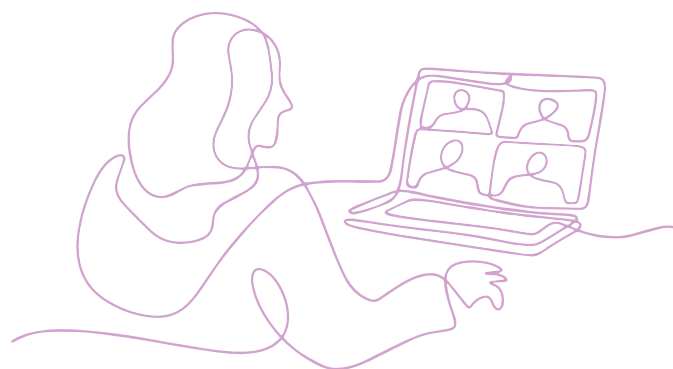


B2. USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY & ITS IMPACT ON OUR METHODOLOGY

Given the context of the pandemic during which this impact assessment took place, it was necessary to conduct the in-depth interviews primarily through virtual means. However, it is important to acknowledge that engaging in Zoom-based virtual qualitative impact assessment consulting work posed various ethical challenges that needed to be carefully considered and addressed. These challenges encompassed multiple aspects and dimensions. At the outset itself, we, the consultants in this evaluation study, familiarized ourselves with the ethical aspects of using virtual platforms in qualitative research projects and have spent a considerable amount of time reflecting upon them (Ethel Tungohan 2022). However, we found that a considerable amount of extant literature on the ethical aspects of using virtual tools for qualitative research frames the ethical considerations of virtual qualitative research as comparable to those of in-person research. It has been argued that there were no key differences between face-to-face and online as both required the usual ethical procedures (J. Kessa Roberts 2021).

The Zoom interactions conducted during the impact assessment were recorded, with prior information provided to the participants, and the recordings were made accessible to both the participants and the evaluators. Notably, the participants displayed proficiency in digital technology usage, as their respective occupations required them to be skilled in operating smartphones and utilizing the internet. The virtual nature of the interactions allowed for greater flexibility among women participants, as they were able to manage their work commitments alongside the interviews without the need for travel to distant or specific locations. The women, who frequently employ digital technology in their work, expressed satisfaction that their professional activities were not disrupted by the interactions required for the impact assessment.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this may not always be the prevailing scenario. We acknowledge that virtual methodologies offer participants and researchers enhanced privacy while ensuring physical safety. Participants have the option to abstain from using video, employ a virtual background, or, unlike in face-to-face interviews, ethically withhold information, particularly if they have tested positive for COVID-19. However, virtual approaches may introduce new privacy considerations, as researchers may inadvertently intrude into participants' personal environments, particularly when participants are situated in their own homes without virtual backgrounds or access to headphones. Nonetheless, there may be respondents who are eager to exhibit their physical surroundings as a manifestation of their empowerment. For instance, we encountered a situation where we interviewed a participant while



she awaited her customer in the parking lot of Delhi International Airport. She appeared stylishly dressed and took immense pride in her skills and demeanor. Furthermore, she expressed excitement about the contemporary and glamorous atmosphere of the airport from which she was speaking. In our specific case, since the interactions were facilitated by Azad Foundation, the customary challenges related to privacy concerns (such as access to appropriate space) and technical considerations (such as personal devices and bandwidth) were effectively addressed and did not manifest as significant obstacles.

The ethical complexities associated with conducting virtual qualitative research with communities that have endured the distressing ordeal of loss of lives and livelihoods are undeniably significant. We, too, were acutely aware of these considerations. Embracing a feminist framework, we approached the research with flexibility and accountability. Whenever participants expressed discomfort regarding timing or dates, we made concerted efforts to accommodate their requests through collaborative consultation. Additionally, we remained receptive to conducting the interactions in English, Bengali, or Hindi, based on the participants' preferences.

A key distinction sets our project apart from the studies we referenced, which grappled with ethical dilemmas in conducting qualitative research via virtual platforms. Our consultancy initiative entails greater involvement from the organization with which we are collaborating, as well as a controlled group of predetermined participants who are digital platform users employed full-time in professional capacities.

During our research, we conducted semi-structured interviews while concurrently recording the sessions and taking notes. Regular meetings were held to reflect on the recorded material and notes, facilitating data analysis and the emergence of key themes. The virtual interactions were enriched by an abundance of audio-visual materials shared with us by the organization, which provided valuable insights into the participants' lives and backgrounds. We firmly believe that virtual qualitative research and impact assessment should not be regarded merely as an alternative to in-person research but rather as a distinct approach that respects the considerations of time, health, expenses, and logistical constraints for all involved in the study.



THEMES EMERGING FROM THE INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

As consultants, we did interviews and focus group discussions with the following:

1. Cab drivers in Delhi
2. Cab drivers in Kolkata
3. Trainers from Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata
4. Azad Foudation's Feminist Leaders in Kolkata
5. Men's group from Delhi and Jaipur
6. Interviews with senior personnel of Azad Foundation

NON TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

Domestic Violence

Interface with Government and Accountability

WOMEN'S WORK/ DOUBLE BURDEN

Empowerment & Self

ROLE OF FAMILY

Masculinity

EXPERIENCES OF WORKING WITH AZAD

Self-Empowerment & Professional Training



C1. NON-TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

Our main concern in this impact assessment revolves around broad questions related to livelihoods, work, wages, and employment. This study reiterates the importance of closely engaging with the category of labor and understanding its complexities within a gendered and inherently hierarchical world. Given Azad Foundation's focus on women, the intricate issue of women's labor serves as the overarching framework for our interview inquiries. Our approach is guided by the recognition that women's labor and struggles for livelihood intersect with caste, sexuality, gender, religion, and class relations, necessitating a viable and democratic resolution. While engaging with the complexities of working-class struggles, particularly those faced by women workers in contemporary times, two key contextual factors must be considered. Firstly, it is essential to place the conversation within the larger context of historical shifts in the political economy of global South nations such as India. Secondly, the understanding of women as workers, the value attached to women's work and labor are very closely linked to debates about women's sexuality and violence against women (Mary John, 2021). Prof Neetha N's work has consistently highlighted the deepening gender-based inequality in employment using a wide range of data. She emphasizes the shortage of employment opportunities for women creating further segmentation along various groups and communities. She argues that significant economic and social differentiations exist within each social group impacting the nature of women's labor, and emphasizing the necessity for nuanced micro-level research that avoids sweeping generalizations (Neetha N, 2021). This situation inevitably impacts social cohesion and political stability, resulting in polarization and violence, which, in turn, negatively affects women's employment prospects.

Women's struggles for livelihoods ranging from tea plantations, beedi factories, to courtesans have been extensively documented in feminist economics and historical writings (Sen, 2017), (Gopal, 2018), (Thatra, 2016). These accounts highlight the temporal and physical diversity of women's struggles in pursuing sustainable livelihoods. Azad Foundation's work can be positioned within this lineage. Notably, Azad Foundation aims to broaden women's range of livelihood options by venturing into non-traditional avenues, which adds an intriguing dimension to their efforts.

Non-traditional jobs play a significant role in empowering women to redefine their professional identities and capabilities, while also reshaping the perceptions of those around them, including family, partners, children, employers, and clients. These livelihood options have various implications for the concept of women's labor. It proves women's capacity as workers is overarching and not limited within certain professions. Furthermore, it presents a challenge to the



traditional gender roles assigned to women within households, particularly in the realm of unpaid caregiving duties. Moreover, as highlighted by Mary John, women within the context of non-traditional livelihoods do not form a homogeneous group, but rather exhibit diverse dynamics of marginalization, a phenomenon also observed in the experiences of the Foundation. The transition of women from a specific caste-based occupation to becoming cab drivers disrupts the caste-based division of labor, particularly within the realm of non-traditional livelihoods specific to that caste. It is crucial to underscore this aspect in the context of the Azad Foundation's experience. The commendable work by Azad Foundation has demonstrated these admirably while increasing the representation of young women in non-traditional jobs and shaping societal norms about women's possibilities. The creation of role models and feminist mentor figures is central to fostering feminist leadership and support, thereby paving the way for more role models and pathways for younger girls.

Through our interactions, we have observed that the staff, the leadership and the individuals associated with the Azad Foundation, including men, women and others perceive their work as more than just skill training and employment generation. Their work is infused by a profound sense of engagement in a broader social and political endeavor for transformation and change, as is evident from the following excerpt cited in a PhD thesis by Nisha Dhawan.



I always say that we are a disruptive social enterprise, we have broken a lot of things around us, conceptions of what women can do, the kind of work they are skilled in, but at some level, I have also broken something within me. I realized and I learned, that when you address your fears and are disruptive, you kind of enter a free-fall gravity-less zone, because then you do not have any limits. Fear has been deciding my actions and decisions, but if the fear goes; there is a sense of freedom. Then you can do anything!

Excerpt cited in a PhD thesis by Nisha Dhawan

During our interactions with the women and men across various levels of the Azad Foundation, we observed a strong emphasis on the organization's philosophy of promoting non-traditional livelihoods. It became evident early on, following Azad Foundation's establishment, that it would not be enough to train women without also attempting to create employment for them. This is particularly significant considering that 82% of women belong to families below the poverty line, while the remaining trainees come from families who are marginally above the poverty line, from urban slums and resettlement colonies in New Delhi. The economic benefits of employment as a personal chauffeur or commercial driver are evident in this context. Meenu Vadera (the founder of Azad Foundation) pointed out very pertinently that women are unlikely to get the kind of remuneration that they get as drivers (commercial) in the traditional livelihood options that they have such as tailoring, beauty parlor work or domestic work such cooking, cleaning etc. She explains tirelessly the significance of generating non-traditional livelihood options for women in order to enable them to lead a life of dignity, as evident from her words quoted by a landmark doctoral study done by Nisha Dhawan in the Department of Sociology, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, titled 'The case for women in Non-Traditional Livelihoods: A Sociological Inquiry (2020)

At Azad, we believe our role is to help women build a momentum to generate for them an 'escape velocity' that will take them into an orbit of life that was hitherto not in their reach. That this orbit will involve its own action and reaction is a given. But what is certain is that the orbit will be bigger and wider and will offer a larger range of choices and most importantly the women will be able to take control of their speed and direction as they whizz through this orbit.

Excerpt cited in a PhD thesis by Nisha Dhawan

In this context, the selection of non-traditional livelihoods assumes significance as it not only provides women with employment and a dignified means of livelihood, but also enables their entry into domains that are conventionally considered male-dominated and offer better remuneration. Traditional forms of work for women tend to reinforce existing patriarchal structures within society, and as such, these 'traditional' roles in the Indian context are inherently shaped and influenced by factors such as caste, class, socio-economic status, and religion. Such work is typically associated with the 'private' realm, characterized by flexibility and informality. In contrast, non-traditional work for women breaks away from the confines of familial, caste, and religious structures, allowing women to operate in contexts where they can experience greater agency, autonomy, confidence, and freedom. These factors act as catalysts for disrupting deeply entrenched traditional and hierarchical social norms. Dolon, a senior member of the leadership team at Azad Foundation, asserts that non-traditional livelihoods offer value addition by opening new opportunities. This represents a significant departure from the prevailing approach of primarily offering traditional livelihood options and training for women, as adopted by both the government and NGOs.

Engaging in non-traditional livelihoods exposes women to a range of challenges on a daily basis, given their minority status in these sectors. They are often confronted with heightened levels of misogyny and targeted criticism while operating behind the wheel on public streets. However, alongside the negative experiences, they also receive admiration and appreciation for their work in public spaces.

They attribute their success to their engagement in non-traditional livelihoods such as cab driving, scooter driving, and even bus driving, which are typically perceived as male-dominated domains. The women trained by Azad Foundation as commercial drivers and chauffeurs showcase their mobility and assertive presence in public spaces through their driving skills. Their use of mobile phones helps challenge the stereotypes surrounding women and technology. Additionally, by securing meaningful employment, they effectively demonstrate their significant contributions to the city's economy, community, and family, thereby earning newfound respect.

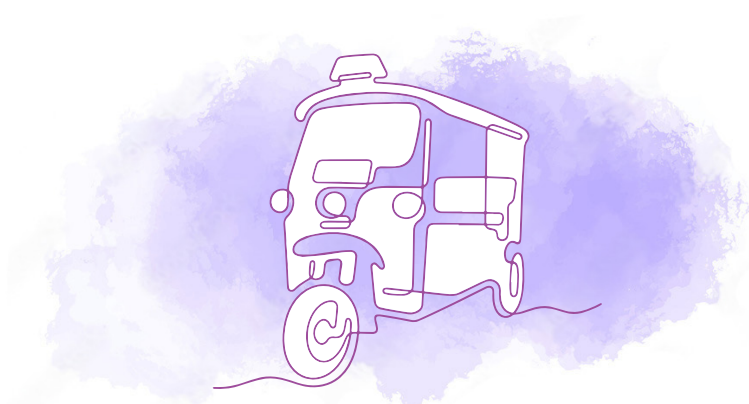
Through this impact assessment study, we aim to assess the extent to which these women have successfully navigated and challenged systemic gender norms within urban India.

To achieve this, our approach involves adopting a comprehensive perspective on the lives and agency of these women. During our interactions, we delve into various aspects such as their family dynamics, social environment, domestic responsibilities, and the nature of their personal relationships. Our objective is to gain insight into how these women have navigated, and potentially disrupted, the prevailing structures and norms pertaining to gender, work, femininity, and mobility as a result of their decision to pursue professional driving, a non-traditional skill.

Mousumi, a team member at Azad Foundation, made a significant observation regarding driving as empowerment. By increasing mobility, driving enables women to navigate the roads, interact with others, explore new places, and ensure their safety. This is particularly crucial in societies where women face restrictions in accessing public spaces independently. Under such circumstances, the ability to navigate the city, read maps, drive with confidence and also instill confidence in other women passengers enhances their self-worth and confidence – **mobility is a big issue**. In traditional women's livelihoods such as embroidery, work typically occurred within the confines of the home, resulting in limited mobility. However, by gaining mobility through driving, their confidence grows, allowing them to venture outside the household and engage with the outside world. Thus, as Mousumi said, each day, new fears are conquered – rendering these experiences valuable and emboldening. This enhances their respect within the household as well as their knowledge of the city and its streets gives them a newfound confidence. Mousumi rightly recognized this as an essential aspect of the Azad Foundation's feminist transformative objectives..

Shrinivas, an early member of the Azad Foundation's leadership team, reiterated the profound connection between non-traditional livelihoods and the empowerment and feminist transformation of women. Like others, he effectively articulated the relationship between acquiring driving skills and personal growth. He emphasized that the envisioned transformation would enable women to navigate their family, community, and the market with confidence and agency. In response to our inquiry about why driving was prioritized over other non-traditional livelihood options, Meenu Vadera highlighted that, on average, women seeking training had received only about eight years of formal education. Therefore, driving appeared to be the most feasible skill to begin with. Additionally, as Basu has noted, many of these women had never ventured alone beyond their immediate neighborhoods prior to their training and faced challenging life circumstances such as persistent poverty, violence, or the looming threat of violence.

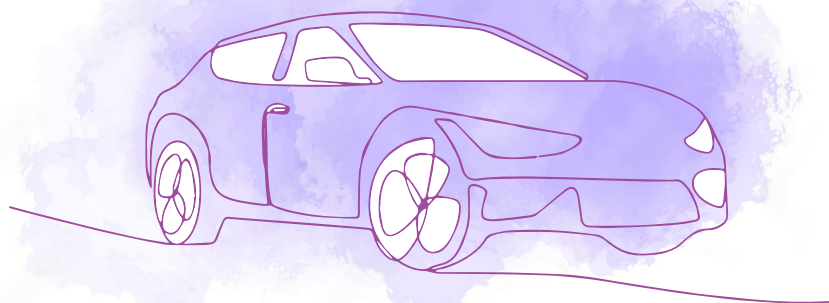
In recent years, skills development has emerged as a key focus for governments, policymakers, and civil society organizations. Many countries, including ours, have recognized the absence or inadequate provision of skill training as a major impediment to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #1, which aims to eradicate poverty. A notable study by South African scholar Ponto Moorossi underscores the urgency of implementing accelerated skills development to stimulate economic growth, generate employment opportunities, and ultimately alleviate poverty. However, the growing body of research, such as the study conducted by scholar Holger Daun in Senegal, has revealed that training in technical skills and academic qualifications alone is insufficient to bring about transformative changes in the lives of young individuals, particularly in the global South. It has become evident that the ability to effectively utilize education, training, and acquired skills to improve living conditions and life prospects necessitates the acquisition of a distinct set of skills commonly referred to as life skills. Life skills encompass a range of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal abilities that enable individuals to make informed decisions, solve problems, engage in critical and creative thinking, communicate effectively, foster healthy relationships, demonstrate empathy towards others, and manage their lives in a productive and sustainable manner. These skills can be directed towards personal actions, interactions with others, and efforts to shape the surrounding environment in ways that promote a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.



The significance of life skills arises from their ability to equip individuals, particularly women, with essential tools to navigate the myriad challenges and demands they encounter in a world characterized by emerging and formidable problems. Azad Foundation recognizes that skills alone, whether traditional or non-traditional, are insufficient, and that they must be directed towards the overarching objective of self-empowerment. This necessitates the incorporation of what can be termed as life skills, which possess a critical and transformative essence. These life skills encompass a range of competencies and knowledge that enable individuals to navigate various spheres of their lives effectively. Notably, the acquisition of non-traditional livelihood skills offers additional benefits beyond personal transformation. It provides opportunities for better remuneration, enabling women to become primary breadwinners, thereby influencing their roles and voices within their families. Within the framework of Azad Foundation's modules, several key aspects are addressed, including self-awareness, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking. Furthermore, these modules delve into socio-political dimensions such as patriarchy, gender, women and work, non-traditional livelihoods, gender-based violence, legal rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and health. By integrating these elements into their training programs, Azad Foundation aims to equip enrolled women with a comprehensive set of life skills that promote their overall development and empowerment.

Azad Foundation stands apart due to its unwavering focus on self-development and empowerment. The Foundation's executives and cab drivers alike have successfully established a strong connection between professional growth, skill acquisition, economic empowerment, and the cultivation of a new sense of self characterized by dignity, confidence, and self-respect. The acquisition of driving skills, in particular, encourages women to engage in introspection regarding their driving practices, fostering a profound sense of mindfulness. This remarkable and intriguing awareness observed among the participants reflects positively on the work undertaken by Azad Foundation. The envisioned concept of selfhood within the Foundation encompasses both professional and social skills, including effective communication, proficiency in smartphone usage, familiarity with digital payment systems, self-defense, health awareness, and financial independence. Through our impact assessment study conducted in the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, and Jaipur, we discovered that individuals we engaged with demonstrated an exceptional level of mindfulness and awareness regarding this aspect, albeit with varied articulations.

One of Azad Foundation's own case studies can prove an important example of what the skill related to non-traditional livelihood does. Preeti, a 23-year-old chauffeur in Delhi, exemplifies the impact of non-traditional livelihood skills. Despite personal challenges, she remained dedicated to her duties with Sakha and alerted her colleagues about potential contact from her ex-friend. Preeti's positive attitude and quick thinking were recognized when she was nominated to represent Delhi in the 'EMpower' training for non-traditional livelihood NGOs. During a critical incident



where a parked vehicle's petrol tank ruptured, Preeti's decisive action of siphoning the petrol prevented a catastrophe and saved lives and vehicles. Her remarkable display of courage and problem-solving reflects the transformative work of Azad Foundation.

Preeti expresses her gratitude to Azad Foundation for providing her with the opportunity to work with the EMpower Team. Together, they conducted a survey using a designed questionnaire to gather and analyze responses from seven females aged 17-24 years. Preeti selected respondents from her neighborhood, ensuring diversity by including two married women, two minors, and three individuals above 18 years of age. Additionally, she sought perspectives from rag pickers. The study aimed to explore how societal attitudes hindered girls from sharing their problems, under the theme "You are the expert of your life. Nobody knows you better than yourself." Through this study, Preeti learned that while problems and challenges are universal, only a few individuals are able to vocalize and take action to address them.

In terms of her future aspirations, Preeti seeks a permanent job, preferably in the government sector. She takes pride in her non-traditional career choice as a chauffeur and is committed to supporting her family and providing education for her siblings to help them become independent. Her personal experience of facing challenges without support has fueled her determination to support and guide others in similar situations. Preeti firmly believes that practicality and perseverance are crucial for survival, stating, "Dying is not a solution, you need to be practical and fight to stay alive." Her life story serves as an inspiration, highlighting her resilience and courage.

Azad Foundation emphasizes empowerment, which encompasses the ability to resist violence, critique patriarchal family structures, and value mobility and independent decision-making through financial resources. While assessing the impact of its work, we found that the individuals, at all levels, including trainees and female drivers have all internalized this philosophy in their own unique ways. They consistently expressed the belief that learning to drive goes beyond earning income, acquiring skills, or serving the neo-liberal economy. It is seen as a catalyst for social change within their families, neighborhood, communities, workplace and the broader social

and economic context. This leads us to the conclusion that the Foundation's work and its philosophy have fostered feminist consciousness amongst its members which permeates the training and skill development initiatives for women joining Azad Foundation to pursue driving as a career. This transformation enables them to forge a new sense of self and a better life.

Meenu Vadera is categorical about the centrality and significance of such skill training, which the Foundation christened Skill++ to begin with.

The philosophy behind this novel and innovative approach to training rests on broadly a threefold vision

Fundamental skills in driving, navigation, and automobile repair and maintenance

Awareness of legal rights and citizenship

Skills necessary for personality development, self-awareness, and critical engagement with the social context with self-confidence and awareness.

The Azad Foundation employs a distinct approach called 'Gender Just Skill Education' (GJSE) to foster skill development, setting it apart from conventional corporate and mainstream employee training programs. The concept of GJSE encompasses various dimensions. Firstly, the right to GJSE focuses on ensuring access to skill education at the community ecosystem level, a key aspect of Azad Foundation's work. Secondly, rights within GJSE involve the Skill++ training component, aiming to empower individuals with additional rights and capabilities. Thirdly, rights through GJSE emphasize the importance of decent work, while rights from GJSE address broader macro-level changes necessary for achieving gender justice.

The Azad Foundation recognizes the significance of instilling an awareness of these rights in the women who participate in their programs. To achieve this, a well-designed pedagogy, methodology, and curriculum are employed. The foundation's training aims to cultivate self-awareness, confidence in understanding one's rights and civic structures, and a determination to pursue dignity and independence through viable livelihood options. It is believed that these concepts and values should be disseminated and shared with other groups and organizations in society that share similar perspectives.

C2. THE DUAL BURDEN OF WOMEN'S WORK & HOUSEHOLD LABOR

The significant impact of the work done by Azad Foundation lies in its ability to destabilize certain standard binaries that structure and guide our social structures and practices; These binaries have traditionally upheld the view that women must work within the domestic sphere, while the outside world is reserved for men. This division has long served as the foundation for the separation between the public and the private spheres, as well as between family and work. This further reinforces the assumptions around what is women's work and what might be considered as suitable for a man to do. Azad Foundation's endeavors have challenged and undermined the presumed solidity of certain assumptions. While it is not asserted that the transformation is all-encompassing or profound, our interactions and the examination of data and statistics unequivocally indicate that the initiatives undertaken by Azad Foundation are gradually bringing about change in the lives of individuals, families, and communities. This process of change serves as a demonstration effect, inspiring and motivating others to explore similar paths of transformation.

Mousumi, along with other individuals we engaged with, aptly highlighted a significant correlation between the individual burden of domestic chores and responsibilities and women's limited capacity to pursue and sustain employment. They convincingly argued that due to this unjust distribution of labor within households, women's financial independence and autonomy are detrimentally impacted (Ghosh, 2009).

Mousumi exemplified a clear understanding of the necessity for solidarity and support for women engaged in employment outside their homes. This support must be extended both within the household and by the broader community. The participants in our study widely acknowledged that illness and medical emergencies pose significant challenges to women's consistent engagement in work. As Nisha Diwan eloquently asserts, it is undeniable that women who venture out for work often find themselves shouldering additional responsibilities, such as healthcare. However, by entering the formal workforce, they establish networks and cultivate self-reliance. While participants recognized that families often expect women to shoulder the bulk of caregiving responsibilities, they also acknowledged women's determination to pursue and sustain employment despite these obligations. As one participant aptly echoed, "Your role is not to control the steering but to hold the karai (in the kitchen)." There are various reasons why these women have chosen driving as a profession, including the husband's illness and inadequate earnings, seeking independence from family income, experiences of domestic violence in marriage, or being inspired by role models within the Azad Foundation.

While women who entered the training and profession faced taunting and experienced both appreciation and humiliation, their perseverance and determination have yielded results. The importance of driving skills in all types of families, particularly during medical emergencies, is crucial. We observed that Azad Foundation functionaries comprehended the central role of employment in women's lives and proposed creative solutions to overcome obstacles, such as taking loans or using part of their salary to hire caregivers at home, enabling women to work outside. These strategies, along with others, illustrate that the philosophy of the Azad Foundation, which places women's employment at the core of empowerment, has been internalized at various levels. As a result, the Foundation's work has had a positive and confidence-inspiring impact.

According to a 2015 report by the Azad Foundation on 'Study of Urban Resource Poor Young Women's Livelihood Aspirations and Opportunities', household work and domestic chores are shared unequally among women. When asked about decision-making power regarding jobs, financial matters, and spending, less than a third of the women claimed to have control. The majority mentioned that other family members, particularly male members, played a significant role in these decisions. Some women admitted to having no role at all in deciding how they spent their earnings or which job to take. Neighbors and relatives were also known to create obstacles in pursuing desired livelihoods. In terms of support in household and caregiving tasks, it was primarily the mother who stepped in, with unmarried women mentioning sisters and married women mentioning daughters or sisters as additional sources of support. It was evident that without someone to replace them in household duties and provide support, it became increasingly challenging for women to pursue paid work.

Women trainees and drivers understood that tying them down to the tedium and labor of household work and care work was often a strategy adopted by families to tire them out so that they would stop nursing aspirations for employment. Shampa (a trainee at Azad Foundation, who later secured employment) was able to make this connection painfully clear when she spoke of the deliberate ways in which her in-laws avoided caring for her baby.





Some of the very important recommendations that came from the above-mentioned study was:

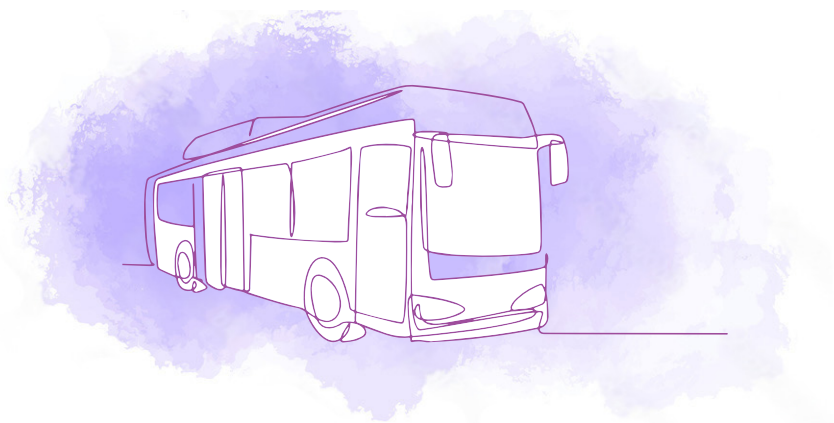
- The unpaid, unacknowledged, background support work of women in managing the household work and that of their fellow- household-work-sharers, needs to become formalized, so that it becomes part of policy making and intervention planning.
- Creating and fostering institutions and economic and social structures that promote equality is essential. This includes ensuring that all types of work, such as personal household work, childcare, and earning a livelihood, are valued equally. Both men and women should be encouraged and supported to share responsibilities equitably in each sphere and dedicate equal time to all kinds of tasks. It is crucial to eliminate the prejudice that caring for the economy undermines one's career, regardless of gender, so that everyone can have equal opportunities and be on an equitable footing with so-called mainstream work.
- Creating structures and policies that not only support women who choose to pursue livelihoods traditionally associated with men but also ensure equal recognition, remuneration, and professionalism for the work performed by women, both within and outside the household. This entails not only integrating women into traditionally male-dominated domains but also reintegrating men into traditionally female-dominated domains, thereby dignifying the traditional work performed by women. Azad Foundation's efforts in working with men aim to promote and foster these principles, which will be further elaborated on in subsequent discussions.

C3. ROLE OF THE FAMILY

The institution of the family within human society is undeniably intricate and multifaceted, encompassing both expressions of affection and nurturance, as well as dynamics of control and dominance. Recognizing this complexity, Azad Foundation's interventions with the families of their trainees and drivers are grounded in a nuanced understanding of the family unit. It is important to note that the aim is not to reject or abandon the family; on the contrary, the members of Azad Foundation recognize the immense support and emotional comfort that families can provide. This perspective has permeated the organization's functionalities, as no signs of aggression or feelings of superiority towards families were observed. In fact, there exists an understanding of the reasons why families may be reluctant to support women in their aspirations for employment and financial independence.

Initially, Shrinivas highlighted that Azad functionaries would engage in lengthy and challenging conversations with resistant family members, particularly men, during their visits to individual households. While this feminist strategy has proven effective in raising consciousness, its implementation is time-consuming and limited in scope. Consequently, the Azad Foundation decided to launch programs targeting men. This strategic shift arose from recognizing that, although empowering and transforming women's lives is pivotal, the challenges faced by men in adapting to coexist and collaborate with empowered women are substantial and should not be underestimated. Men accustomed to enjoying certain privileges, including unquestioned power within the household, control over financial matters, and dominance in parenting, often struggle to navigate the shifting power dynamics. The acquisition of driving skills and employment by women, along with their personal growth and newfound confidence, contribute to this transformation. As women redefine their identities, men are compelled to respond, with violence being the most predictable reaction. The presence of violence impedes women's progress, establishing a crucial connection that Azad Foundation workers at all levels have comprehended. In our opinion, recognizing and addressing this connection stands as one of the Foundation's most significant achievements, highlighting the profound impact of its work.

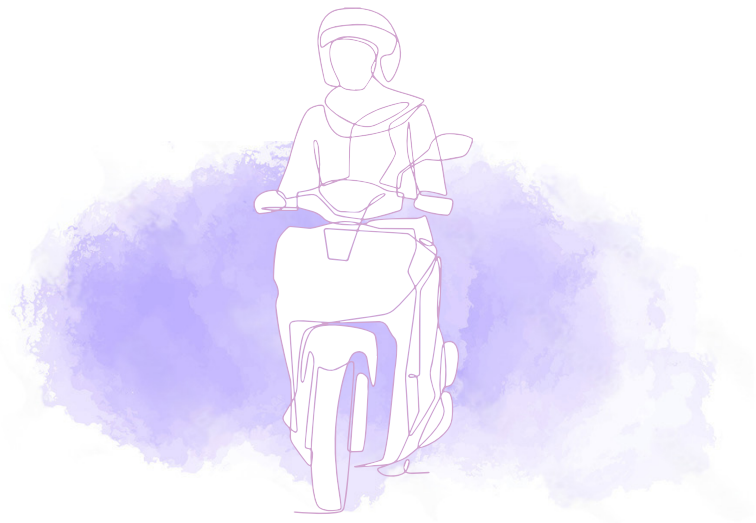




The relinquishment of control is frequently justified using rhetoric surrounding security concerns, women's safety and welfare, and cultural preservation. When women enter the workforce, which is predominantly constructed and characterized as a domain for men, certain occupations are effectively deemed inaccessible to women. In this context, the collaboration between capitalism and patriarchy serves to uphold these limitations. Nisha Dhawan, in her doctoral thesis, contends that initiatives such as that of the Azad Foundation serve as disruptive forces that question and defy these entrenched norms.

Azad Foundation workers effectively engage with both men and women within the communities they serve. Mousumi's responses revealed the Foundation's creative approaches to reaching out to families. By addressing the educational and health needs of children, women are granted some relief from the overwhelming burden of childcare and parenting. The Foundation's decision to provide accommodations for small children at the training center exemplifies this understanding and demonstrates the positive impact of the Azad Foundation's work.

Women undergoing commercial driver training face a multitude of challenges, encompassing skepticism and ridicule from their social circles, as well as deeply ingrained societal biases against women in driving professions. Surmounting these hurdles proves to be a significant obstacle. The persistence of traditional caregiving roles within their families further compounds their difficulties as they strive to balance these responsibilities with the demands of professionalism and punctuality in the workplace. The nature of driving as a profession often involves long and unpredictable hours, and the absence of a substantial network of female drivers amplifies feelings of isolation. When it comes to how they are being perceived, the drivers take immense pride and satisfaction in donning their distinctive blue uniforms, which not only identify them as drivers but also make them more conspicuous. While these uniforms expose drivers to increased hostility in certain contexts, they also command respect in others. Furthermore, the uniforms contribute to a sense of heightened esteem from their families. Despite shouldering a significant portion of childcare and household duties, the drivers observe that other family members have become more willing to share the burden of domestic chores since the women started earning higher incomes from their commercial driving endeavors. Additionally, encounters with stares and aggression from pedestrians and male drivers elicit considerable anxiety, necessitating the women's adeptness in defusing potential conflicts while



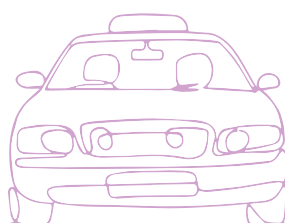
simultaneously managing confrontational or condescending behavior from parking attendants and others. Nonetheless, Azad Foundation's drivers have also encountered assistance and support from male drivers, forging fraternal and amiable relationships with them. The scarcity of public toilet facilities for women presents an additional challenge. However, the women interviewed do not perceive these difficulties as insurmountable or enduring. Their optimistic outlook, quiet self-assurance, and aspirations for personal growth and advancement undoubtedly stem from the support they receive from their families, communities, and the Azad Foundation (Basu).

On the other hand, there are also narratives that highlight instances of familial support during the transition to a non-traditional livelihood. Ashi, employed with Dunzo (a hyperlocal delivery service) in Delhi, became a successful delivery partner for Big Basket (an Indian online grocery store) with the support of her family and organizations like Sakha and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation. Despite financial challenges and siblings leaving education to support the family, Ashi completed her own education while working part-time. She joined Azad Foundation's two-wheeler training program during the COVID-19 pandemic, quickly mastering riding and obtaining her license. With support from her relatives and Sakha, Ashi overcame her fears and gained confidence in her job. She proved her abilities to colleagues at Big Basket, earning their appreciation. Azad Foundation's communication training also boosted Ashi's self-assurance and speaking skills. Grateful for her family's support, Ashi aims to advance in the transport industry, by securing a job, after completing her graduation.

C4. EXPERIENCES OF WORKING WITH AZAD FOUNDATION & SAKHA CONSULTING WINGS

In the 2019 Azad Foundation study report titled, 'Breaking New Ground: Quantitative Evaluation of the Women With Wheels Program for Resource Poor Women', the analysis highlights the significant barriers that resource poor women face when pursuing non-traditional livelihoods. However, the report also recognizes the Foundation's exceptional efforts in helping these women overcome these obstacles and make groundbreaking progress. Despite the presence of these barriers, its WWW program not only proves to be economically viable but also holds immense social relevance. The study draws several major conclusions, which include:

1. The societal barriers to women entering non-traditional livelihoods are formidable, despite Azad Foundation's nearly flawless processes in mobilization, training, and placement developed over the past decade. Enrolling, successfully training, and placing trainees remains a challenging task. However, it is important to acknowledge the significance of the driving license, which provides women with the opportunity to join the workforce whenever they desire. Possessing a license empowers them to rejoin work at any time, even after taking breaks.
2. The government's efforts to promote women in non-traditional livelihoods are insufficient, resulting in struggles for women's taxi services. Azad Foundation must make substantial investments in mobilization, research, and advocacy, as well as subsidize Sakha, which negatively impacts Sakha's economic viability.
3. The WWW program stands as an economically viable initiative, evidenced by its impressive internal rate of return of 25%, despite the relatively high unit cost per trainee. Furthermore, the overall expenditure of Azad Foundation yields a respectable internal rate of return of 10%, indicating a favorable economic outcome.
4. There is a need for improvement in the Management Information System (MIS) to gather additional data pertaining to domestic violence, domestic division of labor based on gender, and the trainees' determination to overcome social barriers. Furthermore, enhancing the quality of data collection is also essential.





The interviews and focus group discussions conducted as part of the impact assessment study can be aligned with the conclusions of the 2019 report. The presence of women drivers is distinctive, with instances where calls are abruptly ended upon hearing a woman's voice, particularly in the context of Uber driving. However, there are also occasions where women drivers are warmly received. Some female passengers express unease with women drivers, while women drivers in Kolkata generally believe they receive dignity and respect from male counterparts. Reactions to women drivers often include surprise or shock as the prevailing assumption associates drivers primarily with men. A notable experience involves using a woman driver as a wedding chauffeur, evoking a sense of pride in the driver. Female passengers at the airport share experiences of feeling safer traveling across the city at night with a woman driver, as opposed to waiting at the airport. Although it is difficult to establish direct correlations between gender, age, and the acceptance or mistreatment of women drivers, approximately 65% of the survey responses indicate positive experiences on the road, while 35% report negative encounters. However, these findings suggest the potential for a shift in perception.

In Kolkata, there are currently 18 commercial women drivers, with 13 of them trained by Azad Foundation. These women distinguish between being domestic workers and women cab drivers. The Foundation has transformed their lives, taking them from a limited perspective to a broader horizon. Support from the natal family is rare, but it can lead to a delay in the girl's marriage age. Training in self-defense, laws, and dance movement therapy is also provided.

In Kolkata, the Sakha model diverged from the conventional approach and embraced an entrepreneurial model, motivated by various factors such as recommendations from well-wishers, investors, and industry advisors. The entire industry operates on a contractual or leasing model, which is essentially entrepreneurial in nature. In this model, drivers possess ownership of their cars, while the associated companies provide them with business opportunities. A certain portion of the drivers' daily earnings is deducted as revenue for the company. Payment is received only for the duration in which the drivers are actively providing rides. However,

the women drivers had developed a strong attachment to the concept of car ownership. Nevertheless, it is not economically feasible for women to spend 12-14 hours on the road, and unless a cab is shared between two passengers and operates for more than 16 hours, it cannot generate sufficient revenue to cover costs, let alone generate profits. Consequently, the feasibility of women owning their cars does not align with the economic reality as the expenses associated with car maintenance outweigh the revenues generated.

The impact of an organization and its work can be evaluated based on the experiences of its employees in advancing the organization's message. In this impact assessment study, all participants have understood and embraced the message of the Azad Foundation, demonstrating eagerness to contribute to social change. It is crucial for them to perceive their work as meaningful and transformative, both for themselves and the communities they engage with. They are particularly attuned to the specific challenges and criticisms that arise from their involvement in non-traditional livelihoods. For example, Dolon rightly observed that initiatives aimed at transforming women's lives and livelihoods are often met with discomfort and skepticism, but non-traditional livelihood work elicits even stronger discomfort due to its direct challenge to prevailing notions of work and labor. Gender dynamics are influenced by various social and economic factors, including the division of labor.

Non-traditional livelihood challenges the conventional gender division where men earn outside the home while women engage in household work driven by emotions of love and care. It also questions the nature of women's work when they step outside the home to earn a living. Engaging with machines, navigating roads with confidence, and refining social skills are elements that disrupt gender relations and challenge established norms. Most participants in our study have gained confidence in themselves and their work by embracing the philosophy of Azad Foundation, albeit with varying levels of articulation.

Shrinivas and Mousumi share the belief that work at the Azad Foundation goes beyond imparting livelihood skills; it involves partnering with women on their journey of change, empowerment, and self-transformation. This partnership contrasts with the perception of similar work as mere service provision, facilitation, or education. The sense of partnership at the Azad Foundation gives the work a deeper significance and meaning beyond mere employment for the participants.

Poonam, who transitioned from tailoring to driving by chance, acknowledged the compassionate work environment at the Azad Foundation. She appreciated how the foundation is attentive to the medical and personal needs of the women associated with it. Poonam specifically highlighted that women have the autonomy to manage and fulfill their productivity commitments, and they receive

empathy and support from the predominantly female driving instructors. Shampa remarked about the feeling of familiarity and family ethos within the working atmosphere of Azad Foundation as distinctive. The fact that the women and men who work at Azad Foundation recognize and appreciate these aspects speaks to the highly positive impact of the Foundation's work. The non-hierarchical mode of operation was also frequently mentioned by participants, along with the pride they felt in becoming trainers of drivers after completing their own driver training at the Azad Foundation.

The role of mobilizers is crucial in motivating and encouraging women to embark on a journey of self-discovery and personal growth by joining the Azad Foundation. The non-hierarchical and collegial atmosphere that permeates their offices is one of the initial distinctions that skeptical trainees often observe. Anne Fischer, in her PhD thesis on the mobilizers of the Azad Foundation, quotes the phrase, "If you don't trust us, come to the office," highlighting the mobilizers' invitation for individuals to visit the office premises, which serve as an emotionally engaging space. The open-door policy creates a welcoming environment where individuals of diverse ages, roles, and genders freely interact, focused on their work in a cheerful atmosphere. This exposure to an alternative way of working fosters inspiration and facilitates a broader understanding of professional practices and personal growth.



C5. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Based on our interactions, we surmised that there is a heightened and strong awareness of the relationship between the experience of domestic violence and the path of economic, social and overall self-empowerment that the women experience through their association with Azad Foundation. Most of the participants in the focussed group discussions made a clear diagnosis that domestic violence tends to escalate as a consequence of the training and increased self-confidence. This observation was shared by a few others who noticed a rise in instances of domestic violence following the implementation of gender-based modules within the training program. However, there are also cases where violence diminishes or ceases altogether due to the empowerment women gain through these training. Acquiring skills and livelihood opportunities enables women to break free from abusive or violent relationships or to transform their relationships by pursuing legal and other remedies. Through the training, women learn to challenge the institutionalization of violence against women within families. Driving skills, in particular, are seen as less threatening by families compared to the confidence and resilience that women develop through the gender-based training modules. The feeling of losing control over social, economic, and sexual aspects often leads family members, especially husbands, to follow and spy on their wives, intensify surveillance, increase violence and beatings, and employ threats and intimidation. Azad Foundation's staff members often attempt to reason with the families, emphasizing the importance of women's financial independence and sharing success stories. However, the deeply rooted fear of destabilizing the supposedly stable family structure lies at the core of this heightened domestic violence, a reality acknowledged by all participants. Azad Foundation's work on building a gender-just ecosystem, including programs such as the Feminist Leadership Program, Men for Gender Justice Program, Azad Kishori, and WWW mobilization and outreach work, aims to engage with families and transform their mindsets to create a supportive environment for women.

One of Azad Foundation's women drivers' story highlights her journey from experiencing domestic violence to finding a new life through her connection with the Foundation. Born in Kolkata in 1991, Shankari Haldar faced unequal treatment from her family and was married off at a young age. Enduring abuse, she eventually escaped, but her health suffered due to poisoning. After recovering, she filed for divorce and remarried, but faced challenges with her new husband. Shankari found employment as a domestic worker and later learned driving through the Foundation's training program. Despite facing discrimination and disrespect, she persevered. Eventually, she became a Pink Cab driver through a government initiative, empowering her to drive without fear. Shankari is grateful to Azad Foundation and Sakha for

supporting her and enabling her to speak out against gender inequalities. While challenges persist, she feels empowered and is eager to pursue further training, including motor mechanics, to fulfill her dreams.

The response of Azad Foundation to the issue of domestic violence is a remarkable testament to their success in this field. Their approach is carefully calibrated, nuanced, and compassionate, ultimately empowering women. They recognize that women and their families are shaped by broader social contexts and are not inherently 'evil'. Therefore, their efforts involve reasoning, explaining, and offering creative solutions such as paid childcare or providing scooters for easier transportation. In some cases, women are encouraged to move in with other family members, such as their natal family. However, women may find this arrangement unsettling, as they are aware of its temporary nature. To address the challenge of being expelled from both marital and natal homes, it becomes crucial for women to have legal awareness and knowledge of their property rights. The training program at Azad Foundation equips women with this vital resource, recognizing that maintaining emotional, physical, and social support from family and the community is worth fighting for. However, in cases where maintaining such support is not possible, separation from the family unit may need to be considered within the framework of the law.

Another study titled 'Women With Wheels: Report of Sakha Impact Study 2020-21', was conducted among 123 private and commercial women Sakha drivers from Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata and Indore who have worked for more than a year. Our respondents said that previously they were unable to deal with domestic violence and they often did not fight back, but after joining the Foundation, they feel confident and courageous. After gaining more knowledge about their rights, our respondents have shown no tolerance towards violence against women. Also, most of them enjoyed the educational self-defense class which has given them the strength and boldness to protect themselves. In this context, the story of a 30-year old respondent, working from Delhi since 2019, is worth highlighting. Before joining Azad Foundation, her husband physically abused her due to her inability to earn money. When she expressed her desire to join Azad Foundation, her father, brothers, and husband opposed her decision, believing that driving was a man's job and that the community would gossip about her unnecessarily. However, when she started earning money as a chauffeur, her family related problems began to resolve. Her husband stopped abusing her and started helping her with household chores. Even though the reason for gaining respect in her family is unfortunate and solely dependent on her income, she felt relieved that they were finally acknowledging the positive aspects of her driving job. Similarly, many respondents were able to carve out a space within their households to demand what they deserved. They advocated for the division of household responsibilities, prioritized their own health and career, and also empowered others in terms of economic, social, and self-empowerment.

Some quotes from Sakha drivers on empowerment and overcoming challenges:

“ Self-defense classes have helped me a lot. When faced with inappropriate behavior in public transport, I now raise my voice and ensure that nobody takes advantage of the fact that I am a female. Driving has given me the confidence to find my way and go to different places, something I would not have dreamt of doing earlier .

Sakha driver, 23 years old, Delhi



“ After two months, my husband found out that I was learning to drive to become a professional driver. My husband did not want me to choose this profession. After a lot of domestic violence at home, I decided to leave my husband and stayed at YWCA till the completion of training. Since I joined Sakha as a commercial taxi driver, I've never looked back. Even today I face domestic violence at home, but I know how to handle it legally, and keep my kids safe .

Sakha driver, 37 years old, Delhi

“ I was exposed to physical and verbal violence not only by my husband but also by his abusive parents and extended family. However, even though the divorce case is still ongoing, I have found financial freedom and am working on building a career for myself. Today, I refuse to bow down to domestic violence of any sort. Wearing bangles does not make women weaker. If girls wear bangles, they also know how to take them off.

Sakha driver, 20 years old, Jaipur



The above study highlights the positive transformations observed in women after becoming chauffeurs, as they utilize their acquired skills to protect themselves and others. Notably, 31% of the women interviewed voiced opposition to violence within their households, while others demonstrated a strong stance against public violence, with 20% expressing the ability to ensure their own safety in public spaces. The implementation of non-technical classes played a pivotal role in equipping respondents with the understanding of abusive behavior and empowering them to develop strategies to counter it.

The study also sheds light on the prevailing neglect of women's health concerns within households, often treating them as private matters. Issues pertaining to women's sexual and reproductive health are frequently disregarded, leading to stigmatization. However, the women chauffeurs exhibited a heightened interest in addressing health-related issues and combating violence, thus emphasizing their significance. Although only a small proportion (6%) of respondents received assistance from male family members in domestic work, it is crucial to acknowledge that women are enhancing their economic status through employment opportunities.

However, it is important to recognize that the economic value of women and their jobs is often undervalued and downgraded due to societal, cultural, and familial expectations imposed upon them (Ozawa, 1976). Women's positions in the economic-occupational structure differ from men, as they are expected to engage in unpaid work activities (Acker, Winter 1975/1976). Consequently, economically disadvantaged "part-time housewife-workers," who are simultaneously involved in paid work, face challenges. This disadvantage is further perpetuated through occupational segregation based on gender (Acker, Winter 1975/1976). Therefore, the adoption of gender transformative policies is essential to raise awareness among family members regarding the distribution of household responsibilities and relations.

C6. EMPOWERMENT & SELF

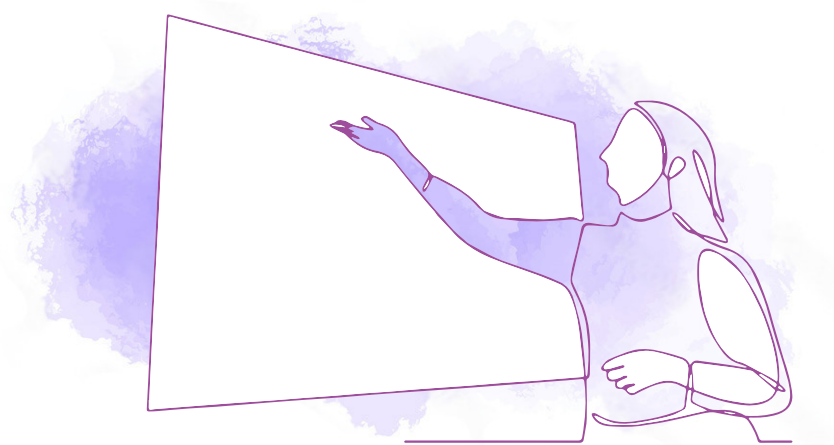
A great deal of feminist consciousness raising and mobilization rests upon the idea that working together in groups fosters a sense of solidarity and makes individual women feel confident and empowered thus marking fundamental shifts in their selfhood. It is this principle that the Azad Foundation has adopted and there is a common thread of awareness about this amongst all the respondents we interacted with.

From the very beginning, Meenu Vadera had a clear understanding of the purpose of the work she was initiating. It was not solely focused on providing technical training. Instead, she aimed for holistic development and transformative self-growth. As she expressed, Azad Foundation would have been no different from a regular driving school if it had solely focused on technical training. Thus, right from the first batch, the training process included additional components such as self-defense, gender awareness, first aid, sexuality education, English lessons, and more.

During our interactions with women drivers who have received comprehensive training, we discovered that the additional aspects of their training had a significant and influential impact on their overall experience. While the training focused on driving skills, it also empowered these women by instilling confidence in their ability to navigate the social, economic, and financial aspects of their professional journey as drivers. Including non-technical skills and focus on building the self-efficacy and core life skills of their trainees. This will mean that training programs will be longer in duration and will need a high-touch approach. It is important for program organizers and funders to recognize that this high-touch approach comes with higher costs per participant. Therefore, echoing Baruah (2017), it is imperative to move beyond assessing program success based solely on the number of participants.

Shrinivas reiterated this connection between non-traditional livelihood and sense of empowerment and feminist transformation. Thus, we were able to determine that the executives of the Foundation had completely internalized and comprehended the vision and mission of the Foundation. They do not see it merely as a skill development initiative, but as an effort that should result in empowerment and transformation of the women drivers. He, like others, was able to articulate the connection between acquisition of the skill of driving with self-development. Skills were not enough and it had to be blended with self-empowerment. So what separates Azad Foundation is the emphasis on self-development and empowerment.

Many women who have experienced marital upheaval or abandonment recognize the value of economic empowerment achieved through social and legal education. The training programs, therefore, include a focus on



professional conduct and deportment. This entails equipping women with the skills to carry themselves with dignity, such as sitting confidently in office chairs, using toilets hygienically (considering that many may not have had access to clean facilities or running water before), and communicating clearly and politely. These skills have a transformative effect, shifting women from uncertainty and hesitancy to strength and confidence. We repeatedly observed this transformation during our interactions with the trainees and drivers, who demonstrated proficiency in using digital platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp. They engaged comfortably during interviews, speaking to us in a friendly and self-assured manner, without any undue deference or timidity.

Azad Foundation has recognized the need for more than just driving skills and has therefore embraced the concept of “Skill+,” which aims to enhance various aspects of the lives and personalities of women seeking training. During our interactions, it became evident that many of these women aspired to lead lives different from those of their mothers. They expressed a strong desire to break free from the constraints imposed by societal and familial structures. Their goal was to carve out their own paths and avoid experiencing the hardships faced by their mothers or older sisters. However, these women also expressed a deep-rooted desire to please their families, fulfill their roles as wives and daughters-in-law, and maintain traditional practices during festivals and religious ceremonies. Navigating this delicate balance between newfound freedom and autonomy on one hand, and the expectations and customs associated with family and marriage on the other, requires a significant amount of dexterity, patience, and constant negotiation of their own identities.

C6.1

FRAMING THE EMPOWERMENT ISSUE

In the early women's movement, 'emancipation' was the concept that was identified as the common goal. However, after the 1960s emancipation was increasingly replaced with 'empowerment' by academics and aid workers. It was used largely in the context of social services, social psychology, public health, adult literacy, and community development. By the 1990s, United Nations agencies found resonance with 'empowerment'; the 1995 Beijing Conference adopted "an agenda for the empowerment of women." Empowerment is a fluid and multidimensional concept that is contextually and culturally determined; furthermore, it encompasses the socio-economic and political changes within a society. In practice, empowerment is often reduced to its economic dimension, while the psychological and social dimensions of power are ignored. One result has been the mushrooming of microcredit initiatives and self-help groups over the past two decades, which international development organizations have presented as the empowerment tool par excellence for women and the poor. In the early stages of the women's movement, achieving economic independence was considered a vital factor for women's emancipation. However, it became apparent that economic independence alone is not sufficient for true emancipation and empowerment. Alongside economic independence, social, political, and cultural autonomy are equally important. Autonomy plays a pivotal role in empowerment. The global policy discourse emphasizes that providing education and skill-building opportunities to girls and women not only facilitates their economic independence but also enhances their capacity to make informed choices and negotiate their paths in life.

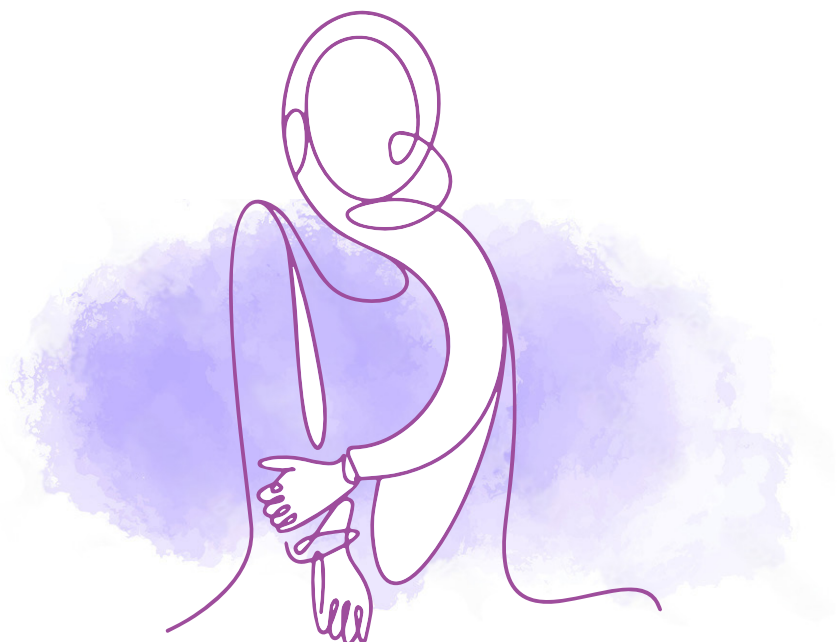
Since the early 1990s, there has been a steady decline in the world economy's capacity to generate employment opportunities. Extensive analysis conducted by the International Monetary Fund reveals that in 35 out of 102 countries, the unemployment rate exceeded 9% in 2012. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that unemployment estimates alone fail to fully depict the severity of the global employment crisis. This is particularly evident in developing countries, where the issue of "the working poor" assumes significant importance, as the majority of individuals living in poverty cannot afford to be unemployed and must engage in work for their survival. Nevertheless, the existing statistical measurements primarily capture the phenomenon of the "underemployed," thereby falling short of accurately reflecting the true extent of the working poor.

Issues relating to women's work are qualitatively different from those of male workers. Recent global trends insinuate towards a jobless growth, especially for women. Women have a higher unemployment rate than men, and the gap has widened since 2009. Across countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region, for instance, women have low labor force participation rates. The

labor market has also pronounced gender-based disparities. These disparities need to be looked at carefully in the context of women's work, which is mostly unpaid and unrecognized but hugely important for individuals, for households, for society and for an economy.

Globally, women are often seen as a flexible labor force, resulting in a significant portion of women being engaged in informal sector work. Women are disproportionately represented in precarious forms of employment, particularly as unpaid family contributors, where they work within their households but do not receive direct payment or benefit from the work they contribute. The number of vulnerable workers increased by nearly 150 million between 2000 and 2011, and a large proportion of them were women. In comparison to men, women workers continue to work in labor-intensive sectors characterized by low value-addition. Since women lack access to a certain type of training and work opportunities, they are pushed into work that is arduous and backbreaking. Even with the attainment of education and skills training, in all sectors—rural, informal, traditional, women confront more barriers than men. Various structures of patriarchy disproportionately impact women, resulting in a range of barriers they face. These barriers include the denial of permission by their families to travel long distances for educational opportunities, concerns about their safety expressed by both their families and communities, and limited access to skills training in only certain types of work considered respectable within their family or community. Families practice son-preference in a situation where there is a crunch for economic resources. They tend to deny girls and women good-quality education and deprive them of training in skills that can lead to better remuneration in the labor market. This has given rise to what is called the 'accumulation of educational disadvantage.' Another important limiting factor is the slowdown in job creation due to the capital-intensive nature of the economy that absorbs less labor. Automation is taking place at more advanced levels. In skills training, gender stereotypes circumscribe the opportunities girls and women have in the labor market. Cultural values that subordinate women are deeply embedded in the social structures that regulate social interaction in everyday life and in the economy. Consequently, employers also tend to prefer hiring men over women due to persistent gender biases. (Gothoskar, 2016).

Shrinivas exemplified great lucidity in expressing the objective of fostering a novel self, capable of adeptly navigating interactions within both familial and communal contexts, as well as effectively engaging with the market. The practice of driving, specifically, prompts women to introspect on their driving actions, thereby cultivating a form of mindfulness. We perceive this heightened consciousness to be a commendable and intriguing manifestation, which speaks favorably of the commendable efforts undertaken by Azad Foundation.



The envisioned selfhood by the Foundation encompasses the integration of essential professional and social competencies, such as effective communication, proficient utilization of smartphones, familiarity with digital payment systems, self-defense, well-being, and, naturally, financial autonomy. Through our impact assessment study conducted in the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, and Jaipur, we discovered that all individuals we engaged with exhibited exceptional mindfulness and awareness of this particular facet, albeit expressed through diverse articulations.

Azad Foundation places a strong emphasis on empowerment, which encompasses resisting violence, challenging patriarchal family structures, valuing mobility, accessing and controlling financial resources, and gaining social capital through solidarity networks and independent decision-making. Our assessment of the impact of Azad Foundation's work revealed that individuals at all levels of the organization, including trainees and women drivers, have embraced this philosophy in their own unique ways. They consistently articulated the belief that learning to drive is not solely about earning income, acquiring skills, or contributing to the neoliberal economy, but rather about initiating social change within their families, communities, workplaces, and the larger socio-economic context.

C7. MASCULINITY

Our interactions with various stakeholders of the Azad Foundation, including trainees, Sakha drivers, trainers, and other personnel, have unequivocally demonstrated a profound comprehension of the interconnection between the challenges confronted by women and the dynamics of masculinity. This realization has been instrumental in driving the Azad Foundation to actively engage with men. As highlighted by Shrinivas, it is essential to acknowledge that masculinist ideologies are not exclusive to men; they also permeate the thinking of women. Thus, the objective is to move beyond the dichotomy of men versus women and instead explore the nature of power wielded by men, its origins, and how women may either emulate or internalize this power to exert influence over individuals, including those who possess lesser power. Encouraging self-reflection and fostering self-awareness among men regarding their power and privileges constitute integral aspects of this endeavor.

During the conversation with Shrinivas, it became evident that he was able to uncover the underlying power dynamics camouflaged in notions of protectionism and love that men employ to exert control over women's lives and freedoms. While he recognized that most men appreciate the training provided by Azad Foundation, their appreciation does not necessarily extend to supporting women's pursuit of dignified employment, as it could potentially lead to autonomy and empowerment. This highlights the crucial role of trainers and key personnel within the Foundation who interact with men in the families and communities of the trainees. Shrinivas acknowledged the seismic shifts in power dynamics within families that occur as a result of women's financial and social empowerment. Consequently, women require assistance and support in navigating these power shifts and engaging with men to help them comprehend the changes. Men need reassurance that despite losing control, they stand to gain financially and socially. Azad Foundation has moved beyond a fragmented approach and incorporated this aspect into their program, thereby amplifying the impact of their work.

In the course of conducting a focus group discussion (FGD) with men who have been associated with Azad Foundation through the Men for Gender Justice initiative, which was initiated in Delhi in 2014 and subsequently expanded to Jaipur and Kolkata, one of the participants named Ansar highlighted the imperative for this undertaking. It is important to note that these men are salaried employees of Azad Foundation. Ansar, along with his comrades, acknowledged the necessity of this initiative based on two discernible factors. Firstly, it aims to establish an ecosystem that facilitates women's pursuit of non-traditional livelihood options, such as commercial driving. Secondly, it endeavors to foster self-reflection among men, compelling them to critically examine and challenge their own masculinity, which frequently incorporates the internalization of patriarchal and misogynistic beliefs that legitimize the use of



violence, aggression, and control. This program has proven instrumental in enabling men to recognize the significance of participatory decision-making both within the family unit and the workplace.

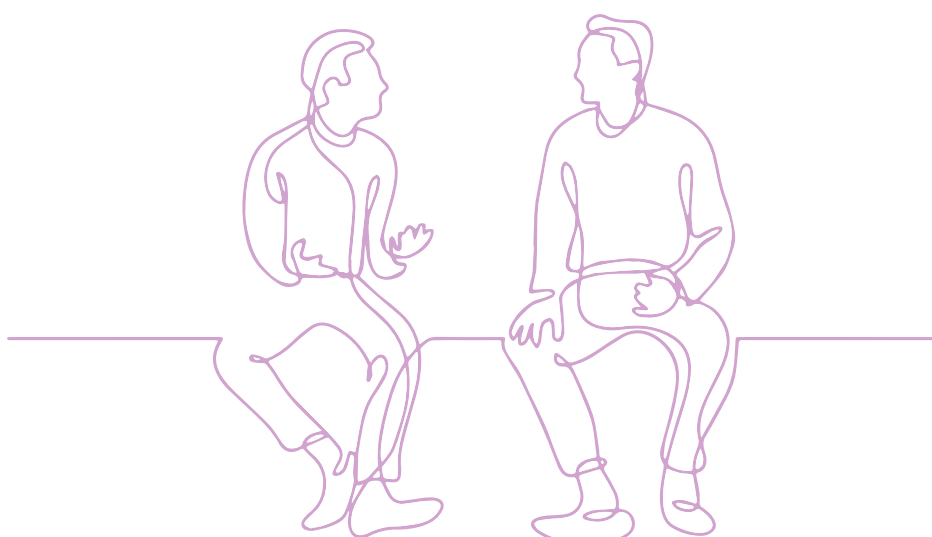
Akash, an individual employed in Jaipur, expressed his sentiments powerfully regarding the resistance faced from family, neighbors, and the wider community towards novel ideas. He recollected instances where older male family members were typically the ones exhibiting discomfort and skepticism towards these “strange” ideas that promote women’s autonomy and agency, during their attempts to engage with young men within the community. Remarkably, the men we interacted with demonstrated a clear understanding of their role as facilitators, primarily tasked with establishing a conducive ecosystem for women and their families to explore non-traditional livelihood options. In this process, they also engaged in profound self-reflection, which we consider to be one of the most significant and positive outcomes of Azad Foundation’s work. The men involved in this program acknowledged that patriarchy is not an inherent biological trait, as they correctly observed that women also internalize societal values and assumptions, driven by the fear of emasculating the men within their own families. They displayed a clear understanding of the interconnectedness between patriarchy, power dynamics within families and communities, and the prevailing division of power. Aakash, Ansar, and other participants mentioned investing considerable time in conversing with young men in the community, as they perceived their role as protectors and providers of the women in their lives to be destabilized by these transformative ideas. Notably, the men collaborating with Azad Foundation exhibited an admirable comprehension and acceptance of the necessity to engage and persuade rather than condemn or belittle deeply entrenched social and cultural assumptions, which are often influenced by long-standing patterns of property and power distribution in society.

These individuals recognized the revolutionary nature of the notion of women pursuing work outside the confines of the family, particularly in non-traditional sectors such as driving. The resistance faced by families is not solely rooted in the perception of driving as a traditionally male occupation, but also stems from concerns related to spending time away from home and interacting with strangers. Through their experiences, they have come to the realization that the most significant hurdles encountered by women aspiring for non-traditional livelihoods, such as driving, originate from the opposition and resistance exhibited by the men in their lives, including fathers, brothers, and husbands. The men associated with Azad Foundation have also acknowledged the role of violence in this opposition. It is therefore remarkable that they have been able to establish connections between the nature of economic and social power in society, power dynamics within families, the gendered nature of work, and the perpetration of violence. This indicates that their efforts to combat violence are not abstract or isolated, but rather encompass the ability to identify linkages and interconnections. Undoubtedly, this represents a crucial aspect of the impact generated by Azad Foundation's work.

For example, Irshad from North Delhi shared his experiences of engaging with young men in the community. It was reassuring to observe his mindfulness in providing background information about himself and Azad Foundation before delving into the purpose of the community meetings. Like many others, he recognizes the importance of transparently explaining the objectives and motivations of Azad's community engagement efforts in order to establish meaningful connections. Furthermore, they demonstrate a mindful approach to respect the lives, work, and struggles of the young men, ensuring that Azad Foundation's work aligns harmoniously within their existing contexts. The engagement process involves four meetings per month, focusing on sports events and gender sensitization activities. These gatherings provide a platform to discuss topics such as the Constitution, rights, freedoms, and gender-related issues. The meetings are typically organized in groups across different areas. Pertinent concerns for the young men in the community include unemployment, drug abuse, and violence. Recognizing the need to connect with these issues that resonate with the community, the men associated with Azad Foundation employ them as conduits for engagement. The effectiveness of the biweekly or "pakhwara" meetings was underscored during the focus group discussion, where a specific curriculum covering topics such as violence and masculinity was addressed. The Foundation frames the curriculum, and the men working with it receive training on these subjects. We commend the strong emphasis placed on training, as evident in the meticulous attention devoted to it. The Men for Gender Justice curriculum comprises 20 sessions, encompassing intergroup activities within three broad domains: unpaid care work, gender-based violence, and women, masculinity & sexuality.

One recurring issue that emerges frequently is that of unpaid care work, which is undeniably contentious and challenging to address in the training program initiated by Men for Gender Justice. With men, the focus lies in encouraging self-reflection on their power, privilege, and the socialization of masculine norms. Conversely, with women, the focus generally centers around reflecting on the gender roles they have been socialized into and subsequently highlighting their rights. The impact of Azad Foundation's work is genuinely impressive, as participants were able to contextualize their work within the broader framework of constitutional rights, values, and socialization. This ability to establish connections between seemingly disparate facets, such as the Constitution, secular values, rights, socialization, patriarchy, violence, and masculinity, represents a significant and commendable outcome of Azad Foundation's work.

Capacity building plays a pivotal role in fostering leadership within the community that is conscious of the need to establish and strengthen an inclusive ecosystem that supports gender equality, empowerment, and non-traditional livelihood options for women. Azad Foundation's work in this realm has had a profound impact, as evidenced by the strong conviction expressed by men in focus group discussions regarding the significance of their efforts and the imperative of liberating young men from harmful and toxic manifestations of masculinity. In fact, there is a realization that this intersection of sexuality and identity leading to the concerns of the LGBTQIA+ is connected to the question of masculinity and power and violence and thus to women's autonomy, sexuality and empowerment.



NON-TECHNICAL TRAINING (SELF-EMPOWERMENT & LIFE SKILL TRAINING)

There is a clear understanding of the comprehensive nature of training associated with the development of non-traditional livelihood skills. Mousumi emphasized the notion that the training extends beyond the immediate acquisition of skills, such as driving, and encompasses a wide range of competencies and qualities essential for transforming this training into a substantive and profound experience. A significant aspect of this non-technical training involves gaining an understanding of societal dynamics and the construction of gender norms. While the technical training focuses on driving and knowledge of vehicles and automobile mechanics, additional modules address legal literacy and property rights, ensuring that women are not only prepared for employment but also equipped to sustain it. Babli highlighted the importance of first aid training and self-defense classes based on the Wen Lido system. Dolon emphasized the goal of providing trainees with socio-psychological, sexual health, legal, and other social awareness-based training, enabling them to not only secure employment but also successfully maintain it.

The initial months of the training, as pointed out by Dolon, are dedicated to an experiential exercise aimed at understanding and connecting with oneself. Trainees are encouraged to reflect on their own lives, experiences, and the struggles they have faced in shaping their identities. Dolon emphasized the significance of imparting lessons to the trainees on how to engage with the community, navigate social structures influenced by patriarchy, and comprehend the dynamics of the market and other relevant factors. As part of the training, the Azad Foundation demonstrates commendable efforts in engaging not only the immediate family, but also the community and the neighborhood in order to create a sustainable ecosystem that supports women's pursuit of independent livelihoods with dignity. This understanding is exemplified by the Foundation's noteworthy initiative to involve men from the communities where the women trainees / drivers originate, aiming to provide them with respectable livelihood options. The beneficiaries of Azad Foundation's WWW program have experienced evident improvements in various aspects of their personal, familial, community, and financial lives. These include higher incomes, increased job security, enhanced involvement in decision-making processes, improved interactions with state agencies such as the police, and greater influence in child-rearing and improving their living conditions.

The demonstration effect created by women who have already found work as drivers and have improved their life skills and situations and opportunities has made it relatively easier today for Azad Foundation to convince women and their families to try an unconventional occupation. The increased mobility, visibility,



and confidence that these women have enjoyed also enhanced their sense of belonging and entitlement to the services and benefits offered by the city. Several women indicated that because the driver's license must include residential address information, it can enable the women to access other utilities and services such as water connections and mobile phones. Owning a license is a source of immense pride for many of them, as it not only attests to their driving skills but also affirms their identity – an accomplishment previously unimaginable for women from similar social backgrounds.

The acquisition of digital and technological skills by women, both in general and within the Azad Foundation, challenges the existing disjuncture between women and machines, and subsequently, women and technology. This disconnection has resulted in women's exclusion from sectors of work that heavily rely on technology, which constitutes a significant portion of the modern economy. Azad Foundation addresses this issue by providing training to women in driving, understanding automobile technology, and using smartphones for navigation and professional purposes. These seemingly small acts of resistance empower women to launch a broader rebellion against family constraints, caste practices, religious biases, community norms, and the intricate economic structures of the city.

Shrinivas highlighted the importance of digital technology proficiency, including internet usage, smartphone navigation, and familiarity with payment platforms, as crucial for the success of women drivers in their professional journey. This training is necessary because many of these women come from families with limited exposure to such technology.

Trainers, like Shampa, recognize the transformative potential of the non-technical components of the training, which often surpass the impact of the technical skills themselves. The development of self-awareness, understanding of social and legal



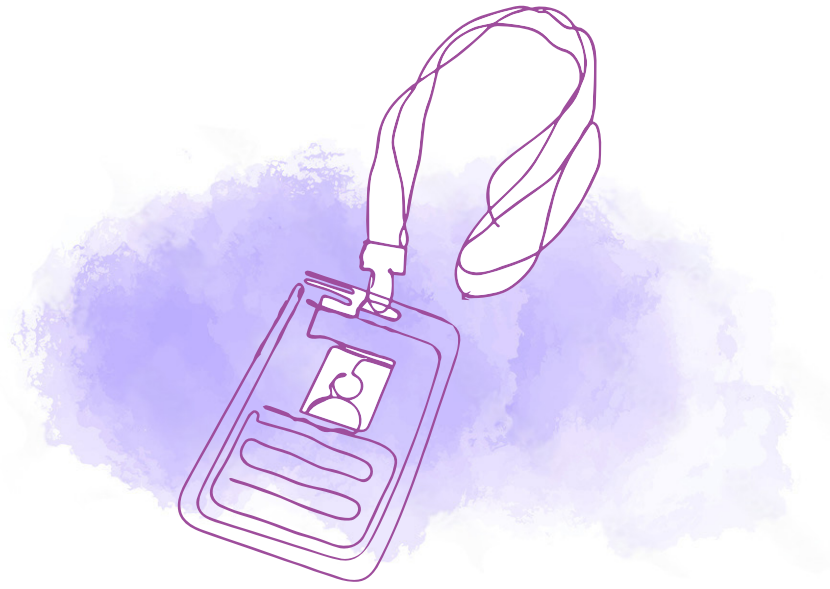
structures, and knowledge of rights instill a newfound confidence in women, which can be perceived as threatening by family members, particularly men in positions of authority and control. To enhance its impact, the Azad Foundation could benefit from collaborating with professionals in feminist psychology to address this aspect of the training more comprehensively. Given that such training leads to shifts in subjectivity, causing confusion and anxiety, these young women would greatly benefit from robust psychological support and therapy to navigate these changes within themselves. While the *badlav ka safarnama* effectively portrays this transformation, we recommend supplementing it with increased psychological counselling.

Significant victories have been won due to the development sector's engagement with gender inequality as a political project, but regressive shifts have also led to development being conceptualized as a managerial issue rather than a catalyst for social change. Nevertheless, a growing number of development actors now recognize the need to address broader structural factors contributing to women's poverty and disempowerment. They are engaging with politically sensitive issues such as property rights, political participation, and the gendered division of household labor, which were previously overlooked or approached cautiously. Achieving gender equality and reducing poverty can yield valuable outcomes even on a small scale, emphasizing the significance of quality over quantity. Further, this research underlines the importance of simultaneously addressing multiple barriers to women's employment and empowerment to optimize results. It emphasizes that providing skills and training, no matter how comprehensive, is insufficient when the obstacles to women's employment extend beyond knowledge and skills alone.

C9. INTERFACE WITH GOVERNMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

Meenu Vadera's perspective on meeting targets at Azad Foundation highlighted a shift in her understanding. Initially, she believed that the sole goal of the organization, as a non-governmental entity, was to empower women through non-traditional livelihood options. However, she soon realized that quantifiable targets and milestones were crucial in securing funding and financial support from the government and corporate sector. Azad Foundation meticulously tracks financial transactions, the number of women trained, licensed, and employed, among other metrics. This not only fosters a positive self-image among Azad Foundation staff but also motivates other young women to join the training programs and transform their lives. The Foundation's larger goal is to change the gender division of labor, introduce non-traditional skills and livelihoods, and thus, numerical data becomes important. Azad Foundation aims to demonstrate to the world, policymakers, civil society, and industry that women are equally capable in any profession, whether conventional or non-conventional. Dolon explained that governments initially show reluctance towards non-traditional livelihoods for women, requiring Azad Foundation to clarify the philosophy and purpose behind their approach. While traditional livelihoods are typically associated with women's economic activities, the Delhi government has been supportive of Azad Foundation's work since its inception in Delhi. Poonam, Shampa and Omkari, as catalysts of change, expressed that their families struggle to comprehend and fully support the extent of transformation initiated by Azad Foundation. They believe that the government should play a role in encouraging women to join the non-traditional workforce by providing loans, establishing childcare facilities, and offering access to technical and non-technical education for self-improvement. The newly established Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University has already explored possibilities of working with the experience and understanding that Azad Foundation has gained over the years.





Bipasha Barua observes in her paper that influencing government policies that are often apathetic and discriminatory towards the poor in general and women in particular is a way in which Azad Foundation attempts to connect with the community and build networks of solidarity. For instance, procuring a driver's license requires a proof of residence in the name of the licensee. This constitutes a challenge because most urban poor in India tend to live in unlisted slums or other informal settlements. For women from such backgrounds, the challenge is more complex because unlike their male counterparts, they are less likely to possess any identity-based documents or civic services bills in their names. This makes completing the paperwork for something as seemingly simple as a learner's license can be extremely challenging. Azad Foundation works with individual women to clear such hurdles and also advocates more broadly for pro-poor and pro-women policies at various levels of government. Here, it is important to point out that Dolon mentioned the intensive campaigning that they are engaged in with the Delhi government to address the problem of documents, especially proof of residence documents, given that many young women are actually migrating to Delhi in search of employment. And yet, the old mindset of normative families and their locations is hard to shake off. Getting the government to even acknowledge this fact of single women migrants seeking employment in Delhi, would be an important landmark in the work being done by Azad Foundation.

AZAD FOUNDATION & THE LARGER NON-TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOOD ECOSYSTEM

Azad Foundation is an integral part of the Non-Traditional Livelihoods Network (NTLN), a collaborative effort consisting of 34 members. Founded by Azad Foundation, the NTLN strives to enhance women's participation in the workforce, particularly in occupations and trades that have traditionally been inaccessible to them. Established in 2016, the network aims to challenge the gendered division of labor that confines women to certain 'feminized' roles characterized by low skill levels and inadequate remuneration. Its overarching vision involves dismantling occupational segregation based on the intersections of gender, caste, and class, thereby expanding economic opportunities for marginalized individuals.

NTLN recognizes that empowering marginalized women and breaking the vicious cycle of denial of their rights requires providing training and development opportunities in non-traditional, financially rewarding skills such as driving, carpentry, plumbing, and more. By enhancing their access to decent employment and advocating for transformative environments within households, workplaces, and the market, the network aims to foster positive change and create supportive ecosystems.

With a focus on addressing gender inequality that pervades private and public spaces in India, Azad Foundation has believed that the creation of non-traditional, high-return livelihood options for women is a means to challenge traditional gender roles that have restricted women's capabilities and horizons. In early 2014, a desk review was conducted by the organization to explore various initiatives involved in offering non-traditional livelihood opportunities for women across India. This process involved an extensive six to seven-month secondary research, resulting in the creation of a comprehensive directory encompassing 30 initiatives and organizations that specifically focused on non-traditional livelihoods for women. The findings obtained from this research were subsequently presented during a meeting held at Zorba The Buddha in New Delhi on October 27, 2014. This gathering provided a platform for reflection and comprehensive articulation of the concept of 'non-traditional livelihoods'. Moreover, it served as a foundation upon which Azad Foundation devised plans to engage in learning journeys and establish networks with organizations working in or showing interest in this domain of women's work. The meeting witnessed the participation of 22 individuals, including Azad Foundation's staff, consultants, board members, fellow-travelers, experts, and representatives from organizations involved in the fields of gender, livelihood, and the informal sector.



As one of the pioneering platforms to discuss non-traditional livelihoods for women, some important questions were raised to further conceptual clarity on the issue. These questions serve as crucial reflective tools to revisit, particularly considering the challenging task of persuading policy makers regarding the significance of non-traditional livelihoods, which necessitates substantial investments.

- **Are we able to challenge the practices prevalent in male-centric occupations, or are women compelled to conform to dominant norms for their survival?**
- **Is our model susceptible to the entrapment of conforming women to fit into a “men’s world”?**
- **Are we inadvertently increasing the workload of women as paid workers while their unpaid work persists?**
- **Does the work environment provide a space for women to discuss and address personal and family issues?**
- **Is the work environment conducive to helping women balance their domestic and familial responsibilities?**
- **Are women subjected to excessive negotiations as they navigate public spaces, engage in male-dominated professions, and juggle domestic obligations, aspirations, and societal ideals related to womanhood and motherhood?**
- **Can overlooking domestic and reproductive roles be considered a solution or does it contribute to the existing problem?**
- **Are we, in any way, undervaluing the importance of reproductive work?**

It is important to note the definition of non-traditional livelihood that the NTL network collectively agreed upon:

“Non traditional livelihood refers to livelihood practices that help women break stereotypes emerging from the intersections of gender, caste, class, religion, sexual orientation, disabilities and other marginalities and oppressive structures, within a dynamic context of space and time. It increases the set of viable livelihood choices available to women and gives them access and control over skills, technology, market, mobility and resources. It creates economic stability along with psychological, social and political empowerment”

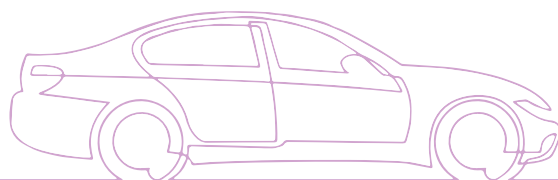
The persistent efforts and advocacy of Azad Foundation and the NTL network may have played a significant role in prompting the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) to orchestrate a National Conference on Skill Development in Non-traditional Livelihoods, specifically for girls. This initiative, titled “Betiyani Bane Kushal” (Daughters Become Skilled), is organized under the auspices of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign, coinciding with the International Day of the Girl Child on October 11, 2022. The conference aims to highlight the importance of collaboration and coordination among various ministries and departments to enable girls to acquire skills across a diverse range of platforms.

The set of professions included science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

- The event witnessed the signing of MoUs with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Ministry of Minority Affairs for the Skilling of young girls
- The project aimed to increase equality and empower the girl child
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Operational Manual for the guidance of States and Districts for the implementation of the scheme consequent to the changes made as per Mission Shakti guidelines was also launched on the occasion



TOWARDS A CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS



The primary focus of this impact assessment is to examine the broader dimensions related to livelihoods, employment, wages, and work. Within this context, the study underscores the importance of investigating the intricacies of labor, particularly within a gendered world characterized by hierarchical dynamics. Given Azad Foundation's emphasis on women, the study primarily delves into the complexities surrounding women's labor and their challenges in achieving sustainable livelihoods. The interviews conducted were guided by the understanding that women's labor and their pursuit of livelihoods are influenced by intersecting factors such as caste, sexuality, religion, gender, and class. It is within the framework of addressing these complexities, particularly the struggles faced by women workers in contemporary times, that the following observations were made:

First, it is crucial to contextualize the discourse within the larger historical shifts in the political economy of nations in the global south, including India.

Second, the understanding of women as workers and the value ascribed to women's work and labor are closely intertwined with discussions on women's sexuality and violence against women (John, 2021). The struggles of women for livelihoods, spanning various sites such as tea plantations, beedi factories, and courtesans, have been well-documented through feminist economics and historical writings (Sen, 2017; Gopal, 2018; Thatra, 2016). These accounts highlight that women's struggles for livelihoods have traversed both temporal and physical domains. In this lineage, Azad Foundation's work is noteworthy as it aims to expand women's options by exploring non-traditional livelihoods.

Third, Azad Foundation's work and its philosophy have engendered feminist consciousness among its practitioners, which permeates their efforts in training and skill development for women pursuing driving as a career. This feminist consciousness empowers women to reshape their lives and forge new identities.

Fourth, it is evident that through training and experience, these women drivers learn not only the literal skills of navigation but also metaphorically navigate, mediate, and assert control over the city and its spaces. This empowers them to claim the city of Delhi as their own, thereby strengthening their rights as citizens. The seemingly simple proposition that women can earn a living through professional driving, irrespective of their caste, religion, or class, is radical and disruptive within the communities and contexts from which the women at Azad Foundation predominantly come.

Fifth, this transformative process has prompted a critical examination of familial and socio-cultural norms, including those related to family dynamics, sexuality, domestic labor, domestic violence, care work, and women's leisure. Notably, Azad Foundation remains resilient regardless of the ruling political party and demonstrates a willingness to negotiate, strategize, and engage with any political entity that shows openness to women-friendly policies. This represents a significant effort to broaden the scope of the Foundation's work, and multiple strategies of resistance have been established over the years to continue pursuing its substantive objectives. Ultimately, women's capacity building cannot occur in a cultural vacuum; it requires an overall ethos that embraces change and transformation.

Sixth, to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within a social justice framework, Azad Foundation's future trajectory should strengthen the concept of Skill++, wherein the "pluses" signify gender-based equality and the development of a socially just consciousness. This approach will facilitate a profound transformation, shifting from individual aspirations for livelihood and dignity to a collective consciousness among groups of women who assert their rights to public spaces and sites across different cities in India.

In conclusion, initiatives such as the Azad Foundation exemplify innovative and creative approaches to feminist social transformation. As posited by Anne Fischer in her thesis, the strategy employed by the Azad Foundation encompasses a combination of corporeal, spatial, and relational catalysts. These catalysts are initiated through holistic training, active engagement with families and communities to cultivate a supportive ecosystem, professional skill training in driving and mechanics, and post-training support in job placement. The implementation of these changes introduces multifaceted challenges of emotional, physical, and relational nature into the lives of women. Additionally, specific material artifacts like uniforms, driver's licenses, taxi badges, and mobile phones play a vital role in facilitating and reinforcing these processes, as highlighted by Fischer's thesis. Through their distinct turquoise attire, these women become agents of change, role models, and catalysts for feminist transformation both within their communities and within the broader gendered context in which they operate.



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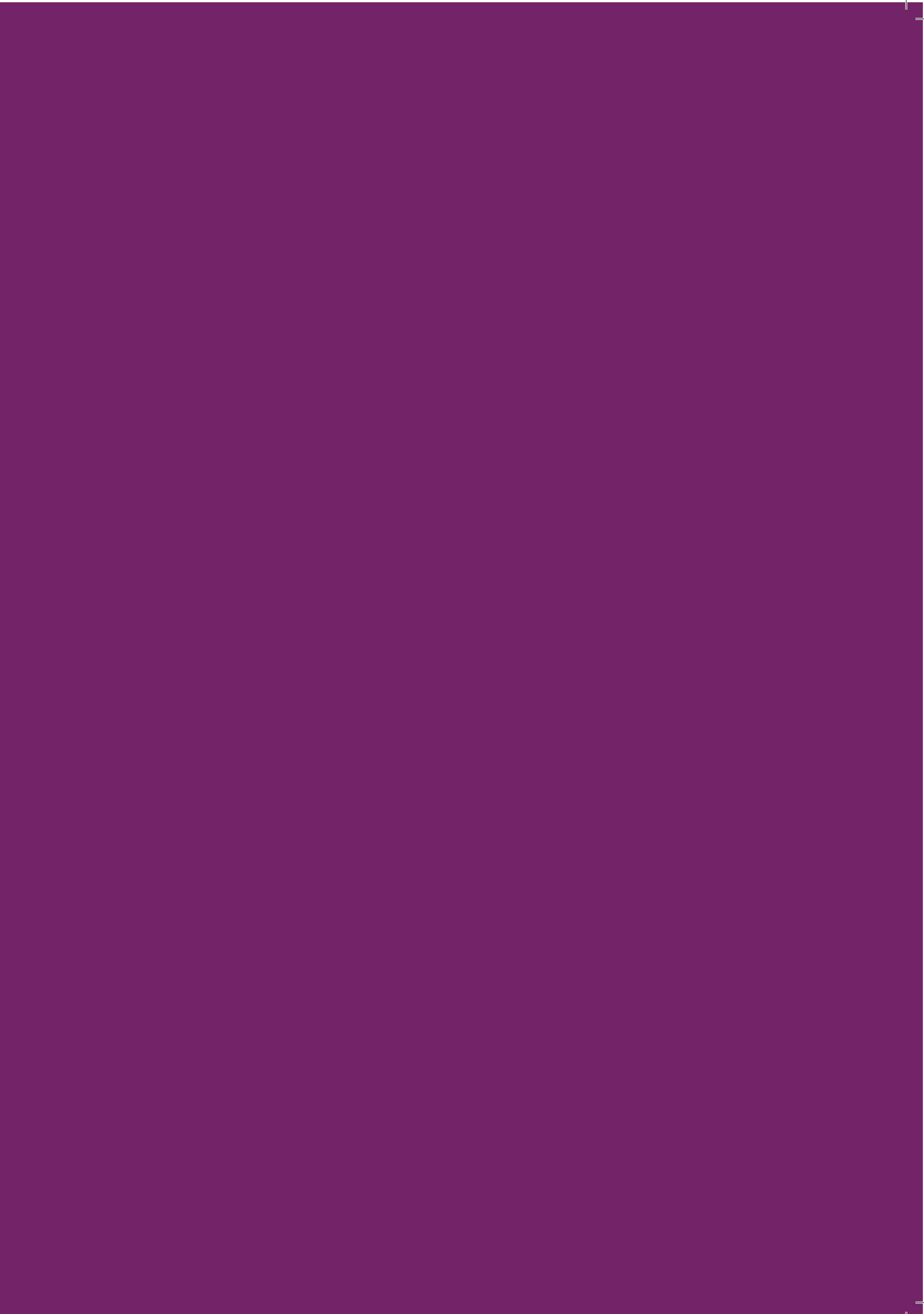
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ANNEXURE 1

List of Azad Foundation personnel with whom interviews were conducted

1. **Meenu Vadera**, *Founder & Mentor*
2. **Dolon Ganguly**, *Chief Functionary*
3. **Mousumi**, *State Lead - West Bengal*
4. **Shrinivas Rao**, *National Lead - Programme*
5. **Dolon Sen**, *State Lead - Delhi*







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