



ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15



AZAD
FOUNDATION



annual report
2014-15

the journey



ऐसे बनी शब्बो ड्राइवर
आम - अमित मधु - शिवाजी उद्योग काला



of a lifetime



begins with



a single step



>> foreword



DEAR FRIENDS,

It gives me great pleasure to bring our annual report for 2014-15 to you.

The year that was, has seen Azad grow in multiple ways. We expanded our presence to Indore, Madhya Pradesh and as I write this, the first batch of women are undergoing training in Kolkata as well. We initiated a pilot residential Women on Wheels Academy in Jaipur – in collaboration with partners from Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat & Rajasthan. In Delhi, we piloted Azad Kishori 9 se (to) 12 programme. We have also built on the learnings of our previous experience of engaging with men, and initiated a long term programme with groups of men in the communities we work with. Through our 'Learning Journeys' initiative, teams of staff, women drivers and trainees reached out to more than 20 organisations across Kerala, Chennai, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh to connect with and learn about other institutions also working with women in non-traditional livelihood domains.

We continue to collaborate and actively participate in collective processes such as the One Billion rising campaign in Delhi & Jaipur, and the 2nd Global Men Engage Symposium that was held in Delhi. An action research project was undertaken to understand better the aspirations of young women living in the slums and 'bastis' of Delhi. Our Research & Documentation team, which was set up in 2014, published creative communication materials to be used by communities. We have also hosted several groups of students and professionals from different countries as part of their learning journeys, and shared with them our experience.

The work of Azad has continued to receive recognition from other stakeholders. We were honoured by the appreciation and award we received from the Embassy of United States, from Shivaji College, New Delhi. One of our woman drivers, Omkari, was felicitated by SRL Diagnostics on the occasion of Women's Day.

All this action and concomitant reflection has enabled us to harvest learning as we move along. It has also fed into the strategic plan, which the end of 2014-15 saw us embarking on. Many of you have been part of the planning process, and have actively contributed through MANTHAN, organized in March 2015. The process has been intense and informative, with the participation of and consultations with our large group of stakeholders. As I write this, our strategic plan is in the process of getting finalized. We are looking forward to honing our craft better – doing more, and better of what we have been doing.

It is an exciting juncture for us. The external context has changed rapidly over the last few years. Today, there are new markets that have opened up for women chauffeurs. Several State Governments have publicly expressed the need to have more women in the public transport sector. Women as 'professional chauffeurs' is a concept that has been established firmly – not just in the 'industry' but more importantly, in the minds of the women themselves. Azad and all the women trainees, drivers and their families have contributed significantly to this change, by boldly experimenting, persevering and staying on course. There is still a long way to go to ensure that women occupy a strategic space in the public transport sector and, while engaging with it, also enrich it with their own experience, wisdom and perspective.

The journey has not been simple. Perhaps no journey worth taking is ever simple! We – the Azad team, the women

drivers, women trainees and all those who have been part of this, have had our share of ups and downs. We have made mistakes, taken the wrong turns, jumped the red light and sometimes found ourselves at a dead-end!! But through it all, we have kept our faith, held ourselves mutually accountable and tried to distil learning that could help build our next steps. The enclosed pages- some from the diary of a woman driver and others containing institutional narrative- provide a glimpse of this eventful journey.

We are grateful at having had, at all times – friends of Azad – who have supported us, critiqued us, ideated with us and given us strength. We have learnt from our peer organisations, and thank our partners for graciously sharing their wisdom and knowledge with us. We could not have travelled this far without the confidence and faith reposed in us by all our donors – Human Dignity Foundation, Oak Foundation, American Jewish World Service, EMpower and many other individuals who have contributed... the entire team of Azad, which has also learnt to break some boundaries within, while helping the women break boundaries around them...the Board, that has always stood by the organisation, guiding, advising, questioning and always supporting.

The power of "collective energy" is immense, and we hope that this energy will be further galvanized to see many more resource poor women being able to exercise their choice to 'livelihoods with dignity'.

MEENU VADERA



Azad Foundation works towards a world where all women, in particular women from underprivileged backgrounds, enjoy full citizenship, earn a livelihood with dignity and generate wealth and value for all.



Azad's flagship programme, Women on Wheels (WOW), equips resource-poor women with knowledge and skills to enable them to earn livelihoods with dignity. The programme empowers women to become professional chauffeurs and independent and confident individuals.

Female participation rate in India's labour force remains low at only 27%¹. That means less than one in three women engage in the formal labour market.

Professional driving— a remunerative and growing sector- has traditionally been closed for women. We at Azad Foundation believe in disrupting the status quo to create more equal and remunerative livelihood options for resource-poor women. We have always believed, and have had the privilege to witness, that when women are socially and economically empowered, they become catalysts of change, not just in their own lives but also in their families and communities.

¹World Bank 2013



Azad works with resource-poor women to enable them to:

- » **Imagine new roles for themselves**
- » **Get opportunities to work in safe and respectful environments**
- » **Enhance their economic status, self-respect and dignity**
- » **Build social capital as they transform their own lives and of those around them**

Seema

1 April 2014

My name is Seema. I live in Delhi's Jahangirpuri area. I have studied in a government school up to Class 12. Most of the people in my area live in one room tenements with the bare minimum facilities. Almost all the families are hard up on money and can just about manage to sustain themselves. Most of the menfolk do casual jobs as labourers, masons, painters and drivers. Some of the women virtually run the house by working as housemaids in the big colonies nearby. They don't have a choice, as their husbands fritter away whatever little they earn on buying alcohol. Although the boys in the area have their share of struggle, I would say the going is not too bad for them. They have relatively more freedom to do whatever they want do. But in most households, we young girls are not allowed to step out of the house without permission. My friends Geeta, Mala, Meena and me wanted to study further but our families would not allow us because, "girls have to manage the



house ultimately" and "there is not enough money". Our brothers hardly did anything in the house and whiled away their time. They had the opportunity to study, while I remember how I would read my brother's books on the sly.

We are five siblings. I wanted to earn some money and contribute to the family income but my father and elder brother would hear none of it. They wanted me to marry the boy to whom I had been engaged since childhood. But I wanted to unshackle myself from the drunken brawls and violence at home. I wanted to do something in life but I didn't know what would that be.

>> outreach AND MOBILISATION



A woman's journey with Azad begins by meeting our Outreach & Mobilisation team in her basti. The team organises public campaigns and programmes as well as individual and small group meetings. It interacts with the women individually and also engages with their families. Azad team is often seen putting up a canopy in a basti or going around on an auto-rickshaw telling people about the Women on Wheels programme on a loudspeaker, with songs and messages about women's rights and importance of gender equality. Last year, Azad worked across 131 bastis in South, North and East Delhi, Gurgaon and Jaipur.

Once a woman shows interest, the team puts in a concerted effort to follow up with her and enrol her for the programme. It also works with her family to address concerns related to driving as a profession for women.

*Azad helps a woman gain a formal identity by helping her establish her citizenship. Some basic documents required for a license are:
Proof of address – can be a Ration Card/voter ID Card/Pass Book of a nationalised bank/ Aadhar Card/ Passport*



One of the biggest challenges is helping the trainees in procuring documents that establish their identity. The basic documents required for a learner's license are proof of address and proof of age. Many women do not have a birth certificate. Proof of address is not available as all household arrangements are set under names of the men in the households. Young girls who attend schools are rarely encouraged to keep their documents safely, as families do not have professional aspirations for them. Thus, no mark sheet or school certificate may be available, even if the girls have studied in schools.



3 April 2014

One day, I heard a woman talking over a loudspeaker in my area. She was inviting people to come to an information stall at our open ground. The small kids of the neighbourhood were running towards the sound. It made me curious. I sneaked out with my sister to check out the stall. A group of women were sitting under colourful umbrellas and there were lots of posters with pictures of women driving cars. I had never seen anything like this before.

They gave him a story book "Aise Bani Shabbo Driver" with lots of illustrations and asked him to read it. The story was about a woman's journey to becoming a driver. They told him that many women were already working as drivers.



7 April 2014

The day two women from Azad Foundation came home, my father and elder brother refused to even listen to them, but my mother surprised me with her courage! She implored my father to at least listen to what they have to say, which he agreed to do.

After they left, I requested my father to allow me to enrol myself for the training. I assured him that I would comply with all his wishes if he gave me permission. My mother supported me. Surprisingly, he agreed. My brother was still not convinced. But I decided to strike when the iron is hot. The very next day, I went with a friend to the Azad Foundation office.

MOBLIZATION & OUTREACH ACHIEVEMENTS 2014-15

- » Approximately 67,000 people participated in our mass outreach activities in Delhi and 8,000 in Jaipur.
- » The team held 75 individual meetings in Delhi and Jaipur engaging with about 5000 women
- » Activities used to reach out to these individuals and communities included – street theatre, community level camps, film shows, exhibitions, small group discussions and house to house meetings.



>> profile



The written material for mobilization in the community that Azad works with is prepared by the Research, Documentation and Publication team in Azad.

In the last year, the team published a FAQ booklet which answers all the queries that women trainees may have and Teen Kahaniyan - a set of three inspirational fact based stories.

It has also conducted a research study on Urban, Resource poor, Young Women's Livelihood Aspirations and Opportunities to help us develop our programme and how we reach out to and engage with young women.

THE WOMEN WHO ARE MOST LIKELY TO GO ON TO BECOME DRIVERS ARE USUALLY:

In the age group 18 to 32 years

Have undertaken formal schooling between classes VIII to XII

Come from families whose average monthly family incomes are in the range of INR 5000 – 7000

Would either be working as a domestic help, or doing some part time factory work based at home, be in patient care work or be primarily working at home.

Living in slums and bastis, or resettlement colonies

Facing or having faced violence and abuse within their homes



11 April 2014

As we were registering ourselves, we all exchanged our personal stories. Pushpa, a woman from Madanpur Khadar, said her husband had died and there was no one to support her and her three daughters. Uma had come in the hope that by learning how to drive, she could get a well-paying job. Her alcoholic father had died recently and she had three siblings. Komal used to stitch clothes for women and children, but the job was boring



and she didn't earn well. She wanted to do something, which would give her a sense of freedom and of course be better paying. So, when she heard about driving, she felt that she had been waiting for something like this. On hearing the stories of their struggle, I realised there are many other women in similar circumstances and that we share similar dreams.



>> training



Azad's training programme provides the women with a platform to achieve technical and everyday practical skills, self-empowerment and personal growth.

The training takes between 6-8 months, depending on the individual's pace of learning. There are 14 training modules. Seven of these relate to driving practice. The rest are non-driving modules focussing on empowerment, specifically on financial literacy, women's rights, first aid, self-defence, self-development, spoken English and communications skills.

A key part of Azad's curriculum is training in driving related skills. Women trainees with learner's license are sent to a driving school to acquire formal training over a period of a month. Following this, they get rigorous training and practice by Azad faculty in cars. Beginning from practice on the ground, they

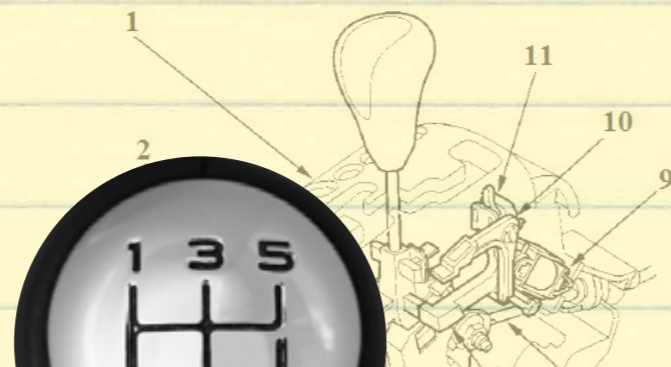


MODULES CONDUCTED BY AZAD

- Induction module
- Learner's module for learner's license
- Driving skill training
- Driving training for permanent license
- Map reading
- Practice for employability (self driving)
- First aid
- Gender and domestic violence, legal aspects
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Self defence training
- Communication skills
- Spoken English
- Counselling and personal growth



eventually learn to navigate the complex and difficult traffic of the city through small lanes - during the day and at night - and to handle various emergencies on the road. The trainees are given practice in handling flat tyres, car maintenance and managing log books. They also learn about key routes and roads of the city.



14 April 2014

Finally, the D-Day arrived. I was at the Azad Foundation office. My training kicked off with a learners' license course. We were taught how to recognise all the traffic signs. Frankly, not all of them make sense to me even now but I tried to learn how to recognise them. Then there were the road maps. They were such a maze! The trainer tried so hard to make me understand. How could I, when I didn't know any of the roads except the one in front of my house? One day, those of us who had our mark sheet and address proof were taken to the Road Transport Authority office for getting a learner's license made. I thought it would be a proper card but it turned out to be a stamped paper with my photo on it.

17 April 2014

After a couple of days, we were all divided into groups, to be taken to the Maruti Driving School (MDS) at Sarai Kale Khan for training in driving. We were all a jumble of emotions.

There was tension, excitement and nervousness.

I had never even sat in a car before. Thankfully, we were only made to sit on a simulator, which just gives you the feel of sitting in a car. So, I got to know how to start a car, how to move the steering wheel. I also got to learn about the functions of the clutch, brake, gear and accelerator. We were also familiarised with the road signs. After a few days, it was time to sit in a real car and go on the road with a trainer. I came to know that the car has a double brake, accelerator and a clutch. My hands were actually sweating when I first put my hands on the steering wheel. The trainer was saying so many things. It was all going over my head. All of us learnt at a different pace. Pushpa was the most mature of us all and understood faster. Uma was so- so. I was perhaps the slowest in grasping. I remember how I would tremble just when the ignition had to be turned on. The car would jerk, splutter and turn off again. Everything would go wrong right from the word 'go'. Often, I would be tempted to just leave everything and go home but my friends would egg me on to continue. I came to know that many other girls had got their permanent license this year.

TRAINING >> curriculum



The training curriculum at Azad has, at its core, three basic tenets.

One, that the learning processes are aimed at building a 'collective of women chauffeurs', to facilitate the formation of critical social support networks which get eroded in times of economic crisis and violence at home.

The second important tenet is the understanding that for resource poor women, skill acquisition of any kind has to be supported by other empowering processes that will enable the women to retain and effectively use the newly gained skills.

The third tenet is about flexibility in the pace of learning, where, the learning processes allow the trainees to move at their own pace. The domestic situation of several trainees often disrupts their learning processes. Azad provides counselling and support services – both at a group level and also at an individual level.



WOMEN TRAINEES WHO TOOK THE VARIOUS MODULES 2014-15

Courses Held	Delhi & NCR	Jaipur
English Speaking	109	43
Communication & Work Readiness	117	48
Gender & Legal rights	138	72
Self Defence	94	38
First Aid	80	30
Sexual & Reproductive Health	109	24
Map Reading	92	44

L

>> In 2014-15, Azad enabled 212 women to acquire their learner licenses. 135 women were able to successfully complete their driving tests and acquired a permanent license. 63 women completed their training and were referred to Sakha for employment. Apart from these, 15 women who were employed got back to Azad to get their training and acquire commercial licenses.

8 July 2014

The technical training was interspersed with a lot of classes, which I really enjoyed. We were told that we would be trained in what they called "soft skills that will empower us". At first I didn't understand what this means. Gradually, as I moved from one class to another, I started noticing the change in myself and in my other friends too. I noticed that my body language had also changed. I was feeling less fear and had not had as much fun for a long time.

Thanks to the communication skills class, I can now speak a smattering of English. Earlier, I would never go beyond, "Hello, how are you?" And the only other sentence I understood was "I love you", which I had heard in many Hindi movies. It was real fun. All of us women would try to speak to each other in Hinglish. But it worked. The self-defence classes were the most exciting. We were taken to the Nanakpura Police Station, where the Crime Against Women Cell runs a training centre. I couldn't believe that I was actually standing in front of women officers from Delhi Police. They taught us how to punch, kick, jab, push and throw a person off balance. Uma said now

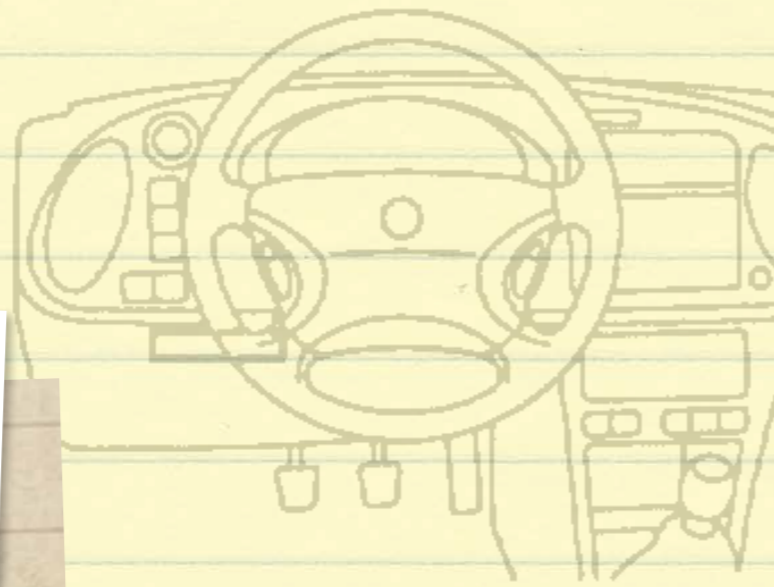


she knew what to do when that lecher in her area followed her the next time. And can you believe it, she tried all the defence mechanisms on me!

As for the sessions on reproductive and sexual health, we did not even know what that was. Most of the women were very embarrassed because they were talking about their body and their "very personal" problems and feelings so openly for the first time. But once all of us got over the initial embarrassment, we asked our madam questions about irregular menstruation, having babies, getting boyfriends, family planning, infatuation and also about love.

The gender sensitisation and legal rights classes were real eye openers as well.

>> license TO DRIVE



Azad has worked constantly to increase the pool of skilled women chauffeurs in the society. It is not without its set of problems, both at the level of policy and practice. The gendered practice of RTOs is experienced as threatening and unhelpful by women drivers, often leading to delay and difficulty in obtaining licenses. The socio-economic realities within which the women live pose a challenge. For instance, the licenses are sent by post. Women often live in rented quarters, and the post man does not necessarily ensure the license is given in their hands.

Azad has submitted a 'white paper' to the State, suggesting ways by which the system could be friendlier to women who aspire to be professional chauffeurs. While the Delhi State (as per the Radio Taxi Policy) has stated a need for encouraging women chauffeurs and so has the DTC and other private players, there still needs to be a lot more done by the State to encourage women and to ensure that they are not penalized for their gender or their social and economic status. Azad will continue to advocate and lobby for changes in policy and practice to ensure a more favorable ecosystem for professional women drivers.

Azad has made a total of 441 PLs upto 31st March, 2015.

Office	Learner's License	Permanent License
Delhi, South	64	45
Delhi, North	59	30
Delhi, East	11	6 in process
Jaipur	62	39
Gurgaon	9	16
Total	205	136



30 August 2014

1 Sept 2014

Eventually, the time came to have a permanent licence made. On a fixed day, a group of us were taken to the road transport authority office for a test drive. There were anxious moments here too. I had butterflies in my stomach. Will I pass? I had put every effort for this moment and now that it had come, I was a bundle of nerves.



At the RT0, I was among the five women candidates to be taken for the test. The others were all men. When my turn came, I kept calm, listened to the instructor and did exactly as I was told. Thank God, everything went smoothly! No one used the word 'pass'. I was just told curtly that I would get my licence by post. What a relief! For them, it was just another licence but to me, it meant the whole world! All the girls who had come for the test had also passed. We went straight back home to give the good news to our respective family members. We were so excited that we had passed the test on our merit! It made me feel very confident and proud. I could actually drive a car, unlike most people in my entire neighbourhood. I had heard so much about the concept of women empowerment, but now, I finally understood it and felt what it means!

Little did I know that my joy was short-lived! The next day my father told me, "Go to Azad and tell them you have a licence and they should find you a job." I did as I was told. I had a long talk with my training coordinator in the Azad office, who explained to me that I wasn't ready for a job yet. I had to learn to drive independently on the roads of Delhi. She told me that once I gain some experience of driving alone, I would be called for an employment test. This was the self-drive stage. It meant that we had to take the vehicle out on the road all by ourselves without any trainer, but with other women like myself. We had to do at least 15 hours of self-drive before taking the Sakha panel test, which was the final milestone for getting a placement.

I went back home and shared the news with my family. Suddenly everything changed. The earlier day's pleasantries turned into angry grunts. "There is no need. All this is just a sham. I am going to speak to the boy's parents in a few days and within a month, you should be ready for marriage." My father passed his verdict and went for work. This time around, my mother also did not utter a word.

15 Sept 2014



I had to slip out of home with my mother's help so that I could take further training. I continued training for about 1 month after which I became fairly confident. Another woman, Uma took longer than me.

The pressure for marriage from my father was mounting day by day. Arguing with him every day drained me of all the energy but I stuck to my guns. Eyes on my goal, I continued to struggle. Slowly and steadily, I did it.

10 Oct 2014



After many days of self drive, once the trainers at Azad said I was ready, I was sent for the Sakha Panel Test, together with two other women from my batch.

I was nervous and the car engine sputtered to a halt at least twice during the test. It turned out to be a disaster. I knew that I had failed the test and placement would be a far-fetched dream. I went back home dejected. As expected, my father would not even listen to me. I sat at home for a week feeling low and uncertain. Meanwhile the talk of marriage continued in my home and they found a boy for me. I felt tremendous pressure from my family and their constant questioning, and doubted whether I would be able to handle it. But the trainer in-charge did not give up on me.

So I thought of another plan. I got in touch with my fiancé and told him about my aspirations. Since he was also unemployed, I convinced him to take computer training and find a job before we get married. He agreed, and I could continue to improve my driving.

>> lessons LEARNT



With relentless perseverance, Azad has been able to bring about the acceptance of the concept of a "professional woman driver". It has been a journey of many realizations for the organization, foremost of which are the following:



• **TEACHING A WOMAN** - or anyone for that matter to drive may take few weeks. But, imparting transformative training requires time and much more investments, from the trainees themselves and from a range of stakeholders.



• **IT IS SIGNIFICANT** to understand that those women who could not complete their WOW training should not be seen as "drop outs". These women would still have undertaken their learning journey by recognizing the options before them, by realizing their interests and needs and/or by deciding their own learning trajectory and pace of how they want to move forward. In any case, all training inputs and experience would have amounted to learning, regardless of which point these women leave the programme.



• **IN ORDER** for a woman to be able to go through the training programme, she puts in a lot of time being away from home, from her children. She has no income for the duration of the training, and she puts in more time afterwards to work on her qualifying exams and for employment. This may be seen as her investment into a training programme which promises to be life-changing, but it is necessary to understand that she and her children, maybe even the entire family, would have existential requirements, which, if not met, would hinder her progress in completion of training. A practical support arrangement has to be made available, where and when required. This might increase the need for investment towards training, but when working with resource poor women, it is a critical support.



• **EMPOWERING A WOMAN** requires for us to understand and locate her needs within the broad context of family, community and society, and to engage with all of them along the journey to gender consciousness and action for gender-equality.



• **THE ROLE OF WOMEN** in public transport has clearly emerged. This has opened up space for women professional drivers beyond Sakha and into the mainstream via commercial taxi services, DTC bus and hotel car services. While this is being celebrated, we would like the space opening up for more women and in more gender sensitive ways.



• **PROJECTS** and programmes can help people empower themselves. However, once people realize their inner power, it works its own way, quite apart from the ways that might have been expected by organisations and donors. The trajectory of empowerment can be initiated but then it moves with a power and will of its own.



• **DRIVING** has proven to be a 'vehicle' for genuine change for resource poor women, providing them remunerative income and also mobility, agency, a 'position of power' in the family and community, among others.

>> Women IN EMPLOYMENT



While Azad Foundation empowers and prepares the women drivers through training, Sakha secures them a job and supports their further professional development. Sakha Consulting Wings Pvt. Ltd. is a social enterprise, which aims to provide safe transport solutions for women by women in urban India. It employs the women trained by Azad Foundation by initially finding them placements as private chauffeurs for women and families in Delhi and Jaipur. A minimum of one year after the acquisition of a private license can a driver apply for a commercial driver's license. The women who choose this option are prepared for the commercial license test and once they pass it, they are hired by Sakha as full time cab drivers.

*Sakha expanded its commercial fleet to 15 cars that work 24*7. It added new institutional clients such as G-Adventures and British High Commission amongst other. March 2015 saw Sakha gross its highest revenues ever!*

Sakha has offered employment to more than 200 women chauffeurs over the years. Currently almost 150 women continue to be employed as chauffeurs. One third of them are working with corporates or institutions other than Azad and Sakha. In 2014-15, Azad has been able to offer new (private) placements to 24 chauffeurs, and had another 15 in the process of being placed. The average number of drivers in private placements in the financial year 2014-2015 stood at 45. Fifteen chauffeurs moved from private to commercial services over the year. Sakha also recommended 5 drivers for DTC. While most of them could not meet the height criterion, one was able to qualify through all and is currently employed as a Delhi Transport Corporation bus driver. On an average, women chauffeurs undertook a total of 2-3 test drives in the period. While the demand for women chauffeurs has been increasing, it is nuanced. Some geographies have higher demand making it challenging for women to travel long distances. However, over the last year, we have been able to place women with not just families but also with car showrooms, driving schools and offices.

30 Oct 2014



31 Oct 2014

I was called for my first test drive with a potential client. They were a middle aged working couple. Both of them sat in their Honda City along with me. I was nervous because this was my first drive in a big car and with potential clients. I really thought that everything went well but the "sir" thought that my turns were not neat and I was rejected. He said they needed someone more experienced.

There has to be a first time, I thought. But if this continues in every test drive, I will never get a job. I just really wanted a job! I wanted to prove to my family and some people in my area who have been mocking me that I made it!

This was the most difficult period of my life. I wanted to give up everything. I spent a week at home sulking and considered to give in to my father's wish of getting me married. But soon I got another call from Sakha's placement officer. I had to go for another test drive. This time it was a schoolteacher. She owned a medium segment car, which was easy to handle. They liked my driving and told me that I would get the job if I could come early in the morning at 7 am to drop her and her children off at school. I knew it would be challenging because I live rather far from ma'am's residence, but I was not willing to let an opportunity go. I took the chance!

I broke the news at home. My father would have none of it. The idea of leaving so early in the morning and coming back late in the evening did not appeal to him at all. "What would the neighbours say?" he asked, "you know, girls are not supposed to be out at night like that, who knows who you might meet". "Nothing but marriage," he said. He made me meet the boy he had selected for me and told me to ask for his consent. I didn't know what to expect, but I was not ready to let go of this chance. I met my fiancé again and we agreed to speak to my father together. My father was reluctant, but agreed to let me go ahead when he learnt that my fiancé was supportive of the idea. Today, I work for the same teacher. Everything seems to have fallen into place now. I feel that I am setting a new benchmark for myself. I want to be a commercial driver and drive a Sakha cab just like Khushi, Shanti, Meena and many other women. I could even drive a Delhi Transport Corporation bus like V. Sarita, who is the first woman bus driver in the Delhi. She too, is from Azad. I think that is pretty awesome.

>> our new initiatives IN 2014-15



WORKING WITH MEN TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY



Gender plays an important role in shaping the social, political, economic and cultural sphere of modern life. The understanding of gender and how it unfolds for men, women and transgenders in all spheres is an important determinant of any positive social action. The current momentum, particularly in India and around the world offers a unique opportunity to advance the common goal of realising gender equality. Now when the women's movement is accepting and encouraging the idea of men's involvement, the "masculinities agenda" is striding forward with innovative work on men and masculinities - even though it is at times often flawed in its understanding of power and does not focus on working with men "for their sake". The idea is to engage men and work at a personal level to create a broad understanding among young men. It encourages young men to question traditional gender norms and promote gender-equitable behaviours and attitudes and challenge dominant masculinity.

Azad Foundation is aware of the fact and has had to deal with a significant number of cases of violence committed by male family members of women drivers and trainees. The opposition or non-cooperation from male members of the families of these women trainees and drivers has got us thinking about engaging men in their family to reduce the obstacles faced by them. With lot of internal deliberation and our experience of engaging with men of the families of these women on a yearly basis, it was realised that Azad needs to engage with the men, not just on case to case basis, but work with them strategically to bring about a change in their thinking process. Reforming men is not only for the women's sake but also for men to change and reconsider dominant masculine behaviour to be more humane and productive. This is not just with the immediate male members of the family of Azad women trainees but also young men and boys from the community at large to change the mindset of the men and the dominant masculine behaviour. In 2012-13, Azad Foundation engaged with men from various communities during OBR(One Billion Rising) and facilitated a discussion around masculinity with some community men. With some learnings from the past, Azad Foundation started building its own capacity and understanding on issues of masculinity.



During the year 2013-14, Azad Foundation organized Gender Sensitization Training for the male staff of the organization in collaboration with Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ). It participated in various discussions and debates on engaging men in Delhi and NCR. In 2014-15, it worked closely with various organizations working with men in India and was invited to be a part of the India Organizing Committee for the 2nd Men Engage Global Symposium on Men and Masculinity organized in New Delhi from November 10-13, 2014. Azad did a focused campaign on issues of masculinity in various bastis of Delhi during OBR 2015. It co-created a street play, 'Mard' in collaboration with Asmita Theatre Group, organized 14 street plays and 9 film shows in the community.

Azad Foundation was able to build a data base of more than 150 men from various communities who volunteered and showed their interest to work on issues of masculinity and violence against women. On February 14, 2015 Azad organized a one day discussion with 120 community men who were keen to take the work forward in their own community. In the coming years, these young men will form community groups to actively work towards creating a cadre of men who are practicing alternative masculinity and promoting norms and behaviour in personal and public life that condemn violence against women, gender discrimination and promote equality.

IX TO XII AZAD KISHORI PROGRAMME



Another new programme piloted in 2014-15 was work with young adolescent girls aged 14 – 17, studying in Classes IX-XII. It was undertaken in one Government school in a Muslim dominated neighbourhood and two non-formal schools- one in a Hindu and the other in a Muslim dominated neighbourhood. The objective of the pilot was to reach out to young girls who are still in their formative years and help them build an alternative perspective on women's rights, on gathering information about their body and also to stake a claim on aspiring for a working life. The programme aimed to help young girls understand that it is possible for them to aspire to gain greater control over their bodies, and begin to recognize the possibility of considering options to seek livelihoods.



We discovered that although the girls have aspirations and ambitions, they have little "information" about how to realize their dreams. Many do not even realize that they are missing this important

possibility and even if they do, they are unsure of how they should go about getting to it. The sessions sparked an interest in them to know more. They interacted freely once they got over their initial shyness, after which the Azad team was left responding to questions and concerns, almost till they exited the gate.

They were pleasantly surprised and curious to know about our Women on Wheels programme.

Azad intends to upscale the pilot in the coming years in an effort to reach out to more numbers of young women in the adolescent age group – a time when they begin to think about their future life, personal and professional. We see this as an opportunity to make a timely impact on the decision making strengths of these young women and hope to use this opportunity to help young women see their own lives somewhat differently. At the same time, begin to value their bodies and experience a sense of freedom that enables them to exercise control over their personal and professional lives.

WOMEN ON WHEELS ACADEMY



To spread further the idea of Women on Wheels, and to make the driving profession available to resource poor women in smaller cities, Azad initiated a residential Women on Wheels Academy in its Jaipur office.

The academy makes available the WOW training to resource poor women from areas in which Azad Foundation does not currently operate. The women are sponsored by partner NGOs from the woman's area, which are interested in piloting the concept of WOW in their areas but who may not have the capacity to start a full programme on their own, or who would be interested in piloting it at a smaller scale to begin with, before taking it on as an independent programme. The partner makes a commitment to provide all necessary support during the training period and to ensure that the woman will be employed as a driver upon completion of the training.

At the end of the financial year 2014-15, the first eight women trainees were studying in the academy – one from Himachal (sponsored by JAGORI Rural); five from Ajmer in Rajasthan (sponsored by Mahila Jagriti Adhikar Samiti); two from Kota and Bundi in Rajasthan (sponsored by Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan). More women are expected to join from Ahmedabad through our partners SAATH and Janvikas.



HELLO INDORE



In March 2015, we brought the WOW programme to Indore as we have identified a need for and strong interest in non-traditional livelihood options for women in this city. We're working closely with Samaan Society, a local NGO with a strong on the ground experience in working with communities. Over the last few years, Samaan's small team has been helping women access their legal rights and citizenship documents. It is well connected to other civil society movements and has good relations with a variety of local stakeholders. Azad will support Samaan to develop its institutional capacity to enable them to run WoW independently. Until then, the Azad team will run the programme in this location.

LEARNING JOURNEYS

TOWARDS A COLLECTIVE OF INSTITUTIONS WORKING ON NON TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS



Learning Journeys was a very exciting, energizing new initiative undertaken last year. Our objective was to reach out to other organisations – be it NGOs, corporates or government initiatives – that also work with women in non-traditional livelihood domains. Sharing and learning from each other helps build collectives that further strengthen the practice on the ground. Learning Journeys was the first step towards such a collective, meant to facilitate learning for the women practitioners of non-traditional livelihoods and well as the organisations that work with them and support them in this endeavour.

Five learning journeys were undertaken last year. Learning groups comprising women trainees, drivers, and Azad and Sakha staff members visited organizations in Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai, Nashik & Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Chitrakoot during January-February. The women trainees and drivers had an opportunity to share with and learn from experiences of women engaged in other non-traditional professions. The Azad and Sakha staff discussed issues, exchanged ideas and learning with colleagues from the other organisations to improve and further develop their empowerment and livelihood programmes.

The teams came back hugely energised and the learnings from each visit were harvested through several reflective discussions. These have been carefully documented in



independent reports (with photos, videos and memoirs) as well as a final synthesis report.

As the next step, Azad plans to bring together these and other interested partners for a reflective national level workshop to discuss the best practice and devise recommendations for policy makers, donors and other key players working in the women empowerment and secure livelihood field.



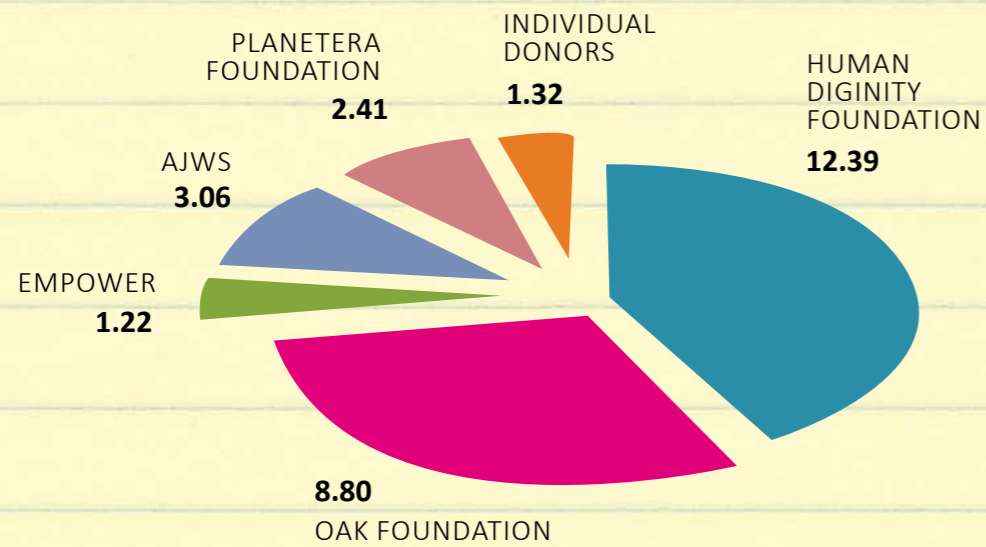
REFLECTIONS FROM THE JOURNEYS

“Bina prashan pooche ham kuch nahi seekh sakte” (*we cannot learn anything without asking questions*)- stated as a reflection on the learning journey

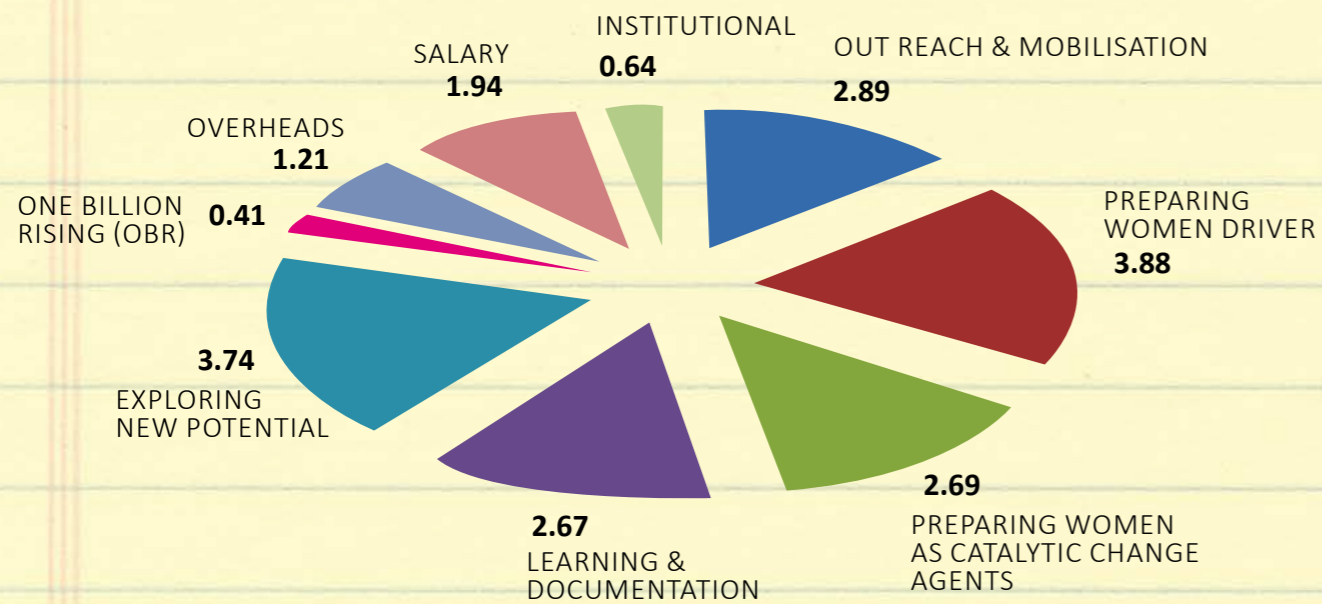
“In he dekh kar lagta hai ki kaam karne ki koi umar nahi hoti” (*seeing her we feel like age is no limit to work*)- about a woman driver the team met at She Taxi.

“Apne ghar ki neev ko mazboot karne ke saath saath doosre ki neev ko mazboot karti dekhi gayi mahilaen” (*along with strengthening the foundation of their own house, women were seen to be doing the same for others too*)- about a woman mason the team met at Archana Woman Centre

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MANTHAN
LISTENING TO OUR
STAKEHOLDERS

Sketching the discussion- with two skilled graphic designers



The working groups presented their ideas which reflected their deep involvement with Azad



The session being facilitated by Mr. Gagan Sethi



The groups at work



The meeting formed a space for rich discussion in which our partners took active part



Sakha commercial driver, Khushi, engages in discussion with the stakeholders



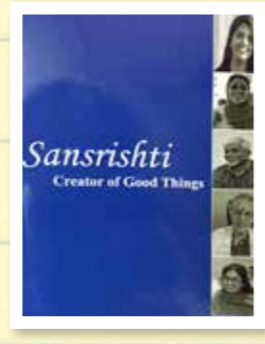
We are grateful to our stakeholders for being a part of this process

>> RECOGNITION FOR AZAD FOUNDATION



▲ The Azad-Sakha team receiving a 'Certificate of Appreciation' from the US Ambassador to India, Mr. Richard R. Verma at the US Embassy. March 2015

Omkari, a woman chauffeur trained by Azad Foundation and employed with Sakha, received an award on the international Women's Day organized by SRL Diagnostics



▲ Meenu Vadera, Executive Director of Azad Foundation, receives the Jija Bai Award given by Shivaji College, Delhi University, for her exemplary work

>> WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR PARTNERS AND DONORS



- | | | |
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For more details on Azad Foundation and its work, please refer to

www.azadfoundation.com