

# IT TAKES ALL OF US

AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH  
TO CHANGE

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NOTE FROM THE  
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP  
TEAM



**BUILDING A GENDER-JUST SOCIETY**  
**together**

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Similarly, building a gender-just society requires the active participation of all community stakeholders. Too often, gender issues are framed as women’s issues alone. This narrow perspective overlooks the essential role that every individual—regardless of social or economic background—must play in creating equitable homes, communities, and institutions.

We live in a world shaped by geopolitical tensions, institutional conflicts, and deepening inequalities. Globally, 44% of people live below the World Bank’s poverty line of \$6.85 per day, while the richest 1% hold 45% of

global wealth (Oxfam, Davos 2025 Report). In India, women’s workforce participation in urban areas remains at 25.8%, compared to 75.6% for men (PLFS 2024) - well below the global average of 48.7% for women.

These disparities are rooted in a deeply gendered and exclusionary ecosystem—reinforced by patriarchal norms, restricted choices and opportunities, and a lack of gender-inclusive infrastructure. Addressing these issues calls for more than vocational training. It requires promoting **Non-Traditional Livelihoods** (NTLs) in sectors historically dominated by men, and building a supportive ecosystem that empowers women to assert

their rights not only at the workplace but also within homes, communities, and public spaces. This approach enables women to confront and transform the structural and systemic barriers they face at every stage of life.

At Azad, our work goes beyond skill-building. We are committed to creating gender-just ecosystems that enable women to break patriarchal barriers, build professional identities, exercise agency, and become changemakers in their communities.

In 2024–25, we continued to walk alongside women as they stepped into NTLs, accessed and controlled resources, and assumed professional roles long denied to them. Through our feminist leadership programme, young women helped others secure citizenship rights and welfare entitlements, challenge Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and collaborate with local governments and civil society to promote gender-inclusive infrastructure.

This journey is not just about women. Young men are questioning toxic masculinity and sharing unpaid care work. Adolescent girls are pursuing STEM<sup>1</sup> education and non-traditional skills, navigating delayed marriages, and making informed and empowered life choices. Together, these collective efforts are reshaping our communities.

We are inspired every day by the stories of professional women trained by Azad—driving cabs and e-rickshaws across Indian cities, piloting trailers in Europe, riding bikes and working as delivery executives, and navigating Delhi's streets as bus drivers. These are not just personal victories—they are collective, historic milestones.

<sup>1</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Our commitment to ecosystem-building also led us to study Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus depots, where women are now employed as drivers and conductors. While DTC's gender inclusion efforts are commendable, our findings revealed critical gaps in infrastructure—particularly in gender-inclusive facilities and safety measures. We deeply value DTC's commitment to addressing these challenges, and we remain dedicated to working together to create safer and more inclusive environments for women employees.

At Azad, we are anchored in collective leadership, empathy, and a culture of care. Our team embodies these values with resilience and grace. We are profoundly grateful to our Board for their wisdom and guidance, and to our collaborators and communities for their unwavering support and belief in our shared mission.

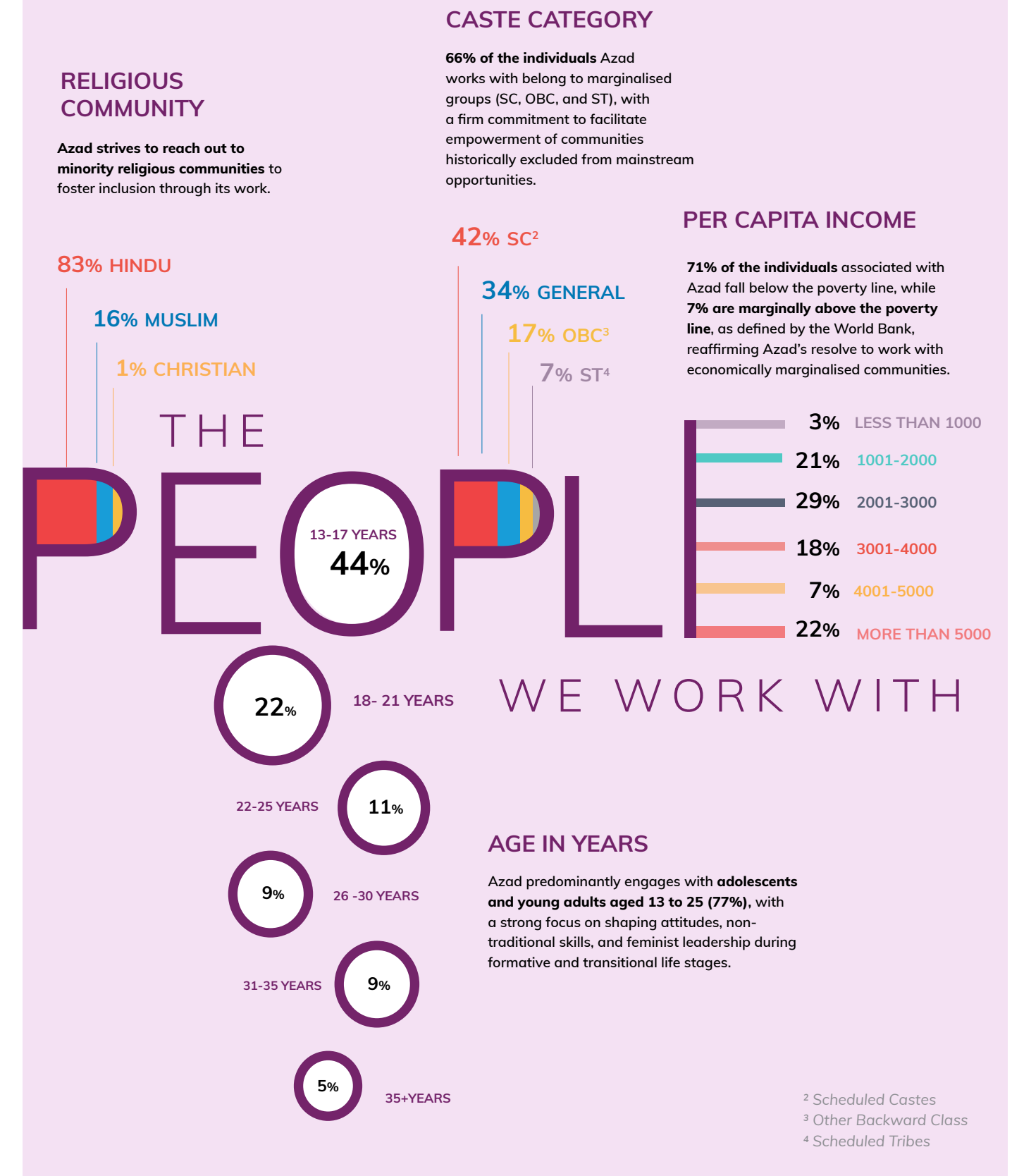
We invite you to explore our **Annual Report 2024–25** and read Noor's story—a powerful narrative of courage, transformation, and hope that echoes the journeys of many.

With love and gratitude,

**Dolon and Shrinivas**  
National Leadership Team  
Azad Foundation

**Azad works with marginalised women and men across all intersections of class, caste, religion, sexual and gender identities in Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata and Chennai directly and with partners in Indore and Ahmedabad.**

This section presents a snapshot of the people we engaged with in 2024–25, including adolescent girls, young women feminist leaders, men & boys from Azad Kishori, Men for Gender Justice and Feminist Leadership Programmes; and trainees in the Women with Wheels (WWW) programme.





# WHAT IS THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH?

Women's lives are shaped by their diverse experiences and intersectional identities like gender, caste, class, race, religion, sexuality and ability. An ecosystem approach recognises these diversities, grounded in the belief that facilitating women's journey from their homes to the public spaces requires every system along the way to become enabling and inclusive.

Azad's work does not just focus on training women with skills to become a driver, but dismantling social, cultural and economic barriers, like patriarchal norms, GBV and limited access to non-traditional skill education, market and public spaces.



With this, we strive to build a supportive ecosystem with:

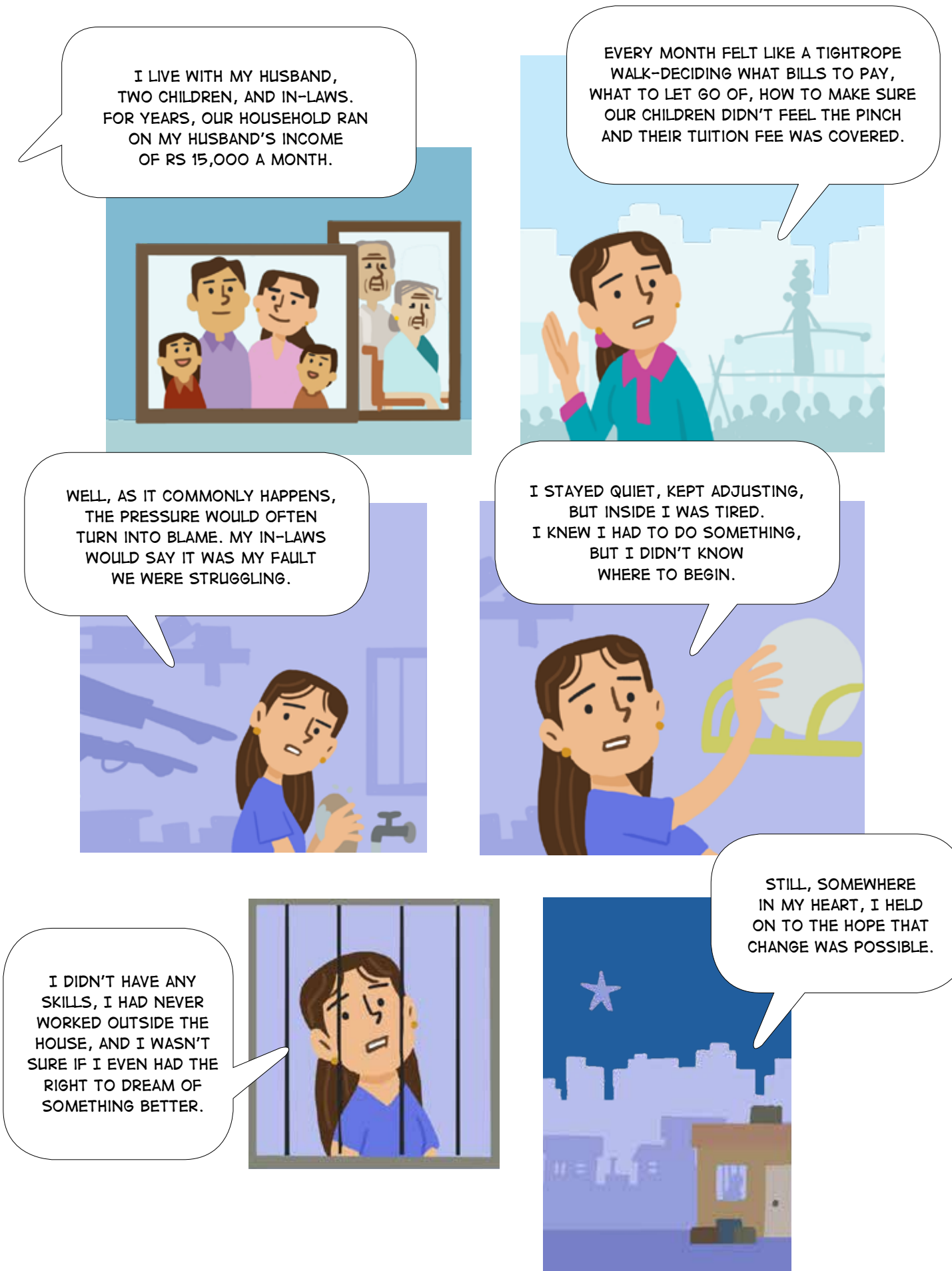
- ▲ Supportive **families and communities** that enable women to become independent agents of change, exercising control over decisions affecting their lives; and men to embrace positive masculinity
- **Skill training** which transforms its trainees to excel in fields traditionally occupied by men and challenge violence & patriarchal gendered norms
- **Infrastructure and policies** that facilitate their sustenance in the non-traditional workforce

As they move through this ecosystem, women begin taking charge of their lives, challenge discriminatory norms, create inter-generational impact, demand dignity in personal and public lives and invest in resources for a better future; while men begin embracing positive masculinity.

Noor's journey mirrors and echoes that of thousands of women who have walked through Azad's doors—seeking not just livelihood but dignity, identity, and freedom. Noor is the voice of all women from marginalised communities of urban India, living with limited access to everyday essential needs.



Azad Foundation's approach to ecosystem change is rooted in transforming not just individual lives but the larger structures that confine women's choices. This year, we bring you our Annual Report through the lens of Noor - a professional driver, a mother, a resilient woman who broke through deeply entrenched social and economic boundaries to reclaim her life.





# ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Based on Noor's journey and the experiences of many women like her, Azad recognises that true transformation doesn't happen in isolation. That is why we actively engage with not just the women, but also their families and communities—including men—so that change takes root in the spaces where these women live, work, and dream, helping to shift mindsets and create supportive environments.

## THE LEVELS WE WORK AT

Azad follows a multi-layered approach to community engagement, grounded in the belief that it takes entire communities to reshape norms and bring real transformation.

### ENABLING



#### YOUNG MEN & BOYS

to embrace positive masculinity and become allies for gender equality



#### ADOLESCENT GIRLS

to build agency, exercise decision-making and positively influence their peer networks



#### YOUNG WOMEN

to become feminist leaders and resources for their community



#### FAMILY

to transform perceptions on gender roles and fostering support for women's choices



#### COMMUNITY

to support women's mobility, safety, and participation in public spaces

# OUTREACH & MOBILISATION

LOOKING BACK NOW, IT ALL BEGAN WITH A SMALL CANOPY SET UP IN OUR COMMUNITY.



OUT OF CURIOSITY, I WALKED CLOSER TO THE SET UP AND SOMEONE FROM AZAD CALLED OUT "DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?"



THAT FIRST CONVERSATION - A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT MY LIFE, MY STRUGGLES, AND MY HOPES - STAYED WITH ME. UNTIL THEN, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS EVEN EXISTED FOR WOMEN LIKE ME.



IT PLANTED A THOUGHT IN MY MIND: MAYBE I COULD DO SOMETHING TOO, MAYBE I DIDN'T HAVE TO STAY STUCK. THAT DAY WAS THE FIRST TIME I ALLOWED MYSELF TO IMAGINE A DIFFERENT LIFE. THERE WAS HOPE BUT ALSO SOME DOUBTS.



This is the first step towards cultivating an ecosystem that empowers women to lead dignified lives and claim their rightful identities. Through a range of activities such as surveys, community meetings, rallies, household visits, Azad reaches out in communities with information for women to access skill training for NTL, prevent and combat GBV and negotiate unpaid care work.



## THE CONTEXT WE WORK IN

- ▲ Only 48% of the women in urban India are allowed to step out of their houses alone. (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF, 2021)
- 39% and 31% of currently married women aged 15-19 and 20-24 respectively, do not have any say in decisions about their own health care. (NFHS-4)
- Women spent 19.7% of the time in a day on unpaid domestic and care work compared to 2.6% by men. (Time Use Survey, 2024)



Canopy in Jaipur

## REACH

**47,064 individuals** reached directly, who influenced **289,574** people in their communities

**209 bastis<sup>5</sup>** reached, with an expansion to **46 new bastis**

**Creating awareness** on NTL for women and citizenship rights with:

- 6031 home visits
- 266 community meetings
- 24169 surveys
- 354 canopies



Community Meeting, Delhi



Canopy in Chennai

## IMPACT

**772 women** enrolled in the transformative skill training programme, 'Women with Wheels'

**96 women** in the community supported in combatting violence through referrals to police station, legal aid, shelter home; counselling with the family; support in filing a case; information about redressal mechanisms and helplines

**47,064 women** received information about GBV and redressal mechanisms

<sup>5</sup>settlements

## TRAINING CHANGE AGENTS

# AZAD KISHORI<sup>6</sup> PROGRAMME

I OFTEN THINK HOW DIFFERENT MY LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN IF I HAD KNOWN MY RIGHTS WHILE I WAS GROWING UP. IF SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME THAT I COULD SAY NO, THAT I COULD HAVE A DREAM OF MY OWN.



WHEN I SEE YOUNG GIRLS AND LEADERS AT AZAD NOW  
- BOLDLY QUESTIONING TRADITIONS, SPEAKING UP IN COMMUNITY MEETINGS, GUIDING OTHERS  
- I FEEL A DEEP SENSE OF PRIDE!!



IT IS NOT JUST ABOUT DRIVING OR EARNING; IT IS ABOUT BECOMING SOMEONE WHO CAN CHANGE THINGS, NOT JUST FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR THE COMMUNITY THEY LIVE IN.



THAT IS THE POWER I SEE AZAD BUILDING  
- ONE GIRL, ONE YOUNG MAN,  
ONE WOMAN, ONE VOICE AT A TIME.



<sup>6</sup>adolescent

**Azad Kishori Programme** engages adolescent girls from classes 9th to 12th to build their leadership capacity and enable them to influence peer groups in their communities. They are equipped with the agency to negotiate the age of marriage, challenge menstrual taboos & GBV, choose non-traditional or STEM careers and achieve their dreams.



Kishori Adda, Kolkata



Neha Advani, Kishori Leader, Jaipur

During her Draughtsman (Mechanical) course at ITI<sup>8</sup>, she and her group designed a unique model that makes it easier to apply the main stand on a two-wheeler



Chaupal Meeting, Delhi

## THE CONTEXT WE WORK IN

- ▲ 23% women (aged 20-24) in India were married as girls (before 18). (UNICEF 2020)
- Indian women are 30% less likely than men to use mobile internet. (The Mobile Gender Gap Report, 2024)
- 50% of adolescent girls use cloth during menstruation. (NFHS-5)
- ▶ Three in five girls aged 16 to 18 years are out of school. (UDISE, 2022)

## REACH

- ▲ **170 kishori leaders** were engaged in the year through leadership training on digital literacy, gender, patriarchy, GBV, legal rights and building negotiation skills for decisions regarding higher education, marriage, sexual and reproductive health
- **1028 peer members** were reached by kishori leaders through **634 adda<sup>7</sup>** meetings with information and support to make decisions regarding their life

<sup>7</sup>peer group

## IMPACT

- ▲ **Jaipur**  
94% of Batch 3 kishoris passed the 10th grade and enrolled in 11th grade
- All kishoris from Batch 4 have passed the 10th grade
- **Delhi**  
50 kishoris are attending secondary and high school
- ▶ **Kolkata**  
18 kishoris are pursuing high school education, with 1 pursuing graduation

<sup>8</sup>Industrial Training Institute

**81 alumni kishoris** have collectivised into the Alumni Association of Young Girls (AAG) in Jaipur, reporting their transformation:

- ▲ **69%** have completed higher education and 24% are supporting their peers in education by helping them get into STEM and ITI, and complete school.
- **41%** are negotiating their own marriage to pursue education.
- **83%** are comfortable travelling alone for work, education or sports training, even during late evenings.

### Building a Supportive Ecosystem for Adolescent Girls

Activities aimed at enhancing family support and encouraging their active participation in the well-being and lives of adolescent girls:

- ▲ **1806** meetings with parents
- **47 chaupal** meetings with **431** parents of Kishori leaders and their peer members



Self Defence Training, Jaipur



Exposure visit to ITI, Jaipur



# FEMINIST LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Azad's **Feminist Leadership Programme** trains young women in feminist principles through a year-long capacity building to create a gender-just environment at the community level. These women emerge as dynamic young leaders who empower themselves and other women by building gender-inclusive infrastructure in communities and supporting women to access citizenship entitlements and social security benefits, join non-traditional skill building and livelihood opportunities, prevent and combat GBV and lead their lives with dignity.



Camp organised in Delhi for opening bank accounts



Community Meeting by Feminist Leader, Jaipur

## THE CONTEXT WE WORK IN

- ▲ 41.4% of the population in Asia do not have access to safely managed sanitation, poorly impacting women. (Toilets Board Coalition, 2024)
- Domestic violence accounts for 31% of all crimes against women. (NCRB, 2022)
- There has been a 45% rise in cases of rapes against Dalit women from 2015 to 2020, with 10 incidents of rape against Dalit women and girls reported daily. (NCRB, 2022)
- ▶ Only 10% of women in India could make independent decisions about their health, compared to 33% of men. (NFHS-5)

## REACH

- ▲ **112 feminist leaders** engaged across Kolkata (49), Delhi (29), Jaipur (21) and Chennai (13)<sup>9</sup>.
- **Expansion of the programme to Chennai**, further strengthening the feminist leadership network across urban resource-poor communities.
- **3.7 lakh people** in the community and 80,000+ women reached with support to access citizenship documents, social security schemes, combat GBV and access NTLs.
- ▶ **219 bastis** covered for the creation of gender inclusive infrastructure through engaging with local governments.



FLP Leaders Internship, Kolkata



## IMPACT

- ▲ **12,426 women assisted** to obtain citizenship documents and access social security schemes
- **337 women assisted** to open their bank accounts
- **165 women supported to access** skill development through Women with Wheels Programme (**21%** of the total women enrolled by the feminist leaders)
- ▶ **140 women received critical support** to combat GBV<sup>10</sup>:
  - a. 53 women linked with counsellors/ Mahila Suraksha Evam Salah Kendra (MSSK)
  - b. 31 women supported through reconciliation
  - c. 27 women received legal advice
  - d. 21 women assisted in filing police complaints
  - e. 12 women provided with continuous handholding throughout the case
- **30 community action projects** spearheaded by the leaders including installation and maintenance of public washrooms, water and drainage facilities, waste collection systems, street lights and health, documentation and self-defence camps by lobbying with local governments.



Bus stand facilitated by FLP leader Tashneem in Delhi



Tashneem, FLP Leader from Delhi



Ruksaar, FLP Leader from Kolkata

## MEN FOR GENDER JUSTICE PROGRAMME



<sup>10</sup>Some women received more than one type of support





Pakhwada session, Jaipur

**Men for Gender Justice Programme** engages with young men and boys in the age-group of 14 to 20 years with the aim of strengthening the gender-just ecosystem. It empowers men and boys to embrace positive masculinity, equally share the responsibility of household work, support women to adopt NTL, and prevent and challenge GBV.

## THE CONTEXT WE WORK IN

- ▲ Women spend nearly 3 times more time (389 minutes) on unpaid care and domestic responsibilities than men (88 minutes). *Time Use Survey, 2024*
- 45.4% of women and 44% of men believe a husband is justified in beating his wife for reasons like going out without telling him, neglecting the house or children, arguing, refusing sex, or not cooking properly. *NFHS-5*
- Cruelty by husband or his relatives accounted for 31.4% of all reported crimes against women. *NCRB 2022*
- Men make up 72.5% of suicide victims (*NCRB, 2021*), often linked to unaddressed mental health issues, societal pressures to adhere to traditional masculinity, and a lack of support systems.



Leadership Training, Delhi

## REACH

- ▲ **923 young men and boys** were engaged in perspective building sessions on masculinity, gender, patriarchy, unpaid care work, and GBV.
- **168 men and boys** underwent advanced leadership training and have initiated efforts to create a gender-just ecosystem within their communities.

## IMPACT ON PERCEPTION<sup>11</sup>

- ▲ **52% more members** now believe in positive notions of masculinity
- **56% members** now believe that **consent is important** to touch, kiss or have sex with a woman
- **37% members** now have improved understanding of what violence against women entails and that it is not justified in any circumstance



Demonstration during Ghar Ka Kaam Sabka Kaam Campaign, Jaipur

<sup>11</sup>Based on midline survey with 333 members

<sup>12</sup>Based on action tracking survey with 152 leaders

Community action project by MGJ leaders to raise awareness on harmful effects of substance abuse and the importance of gender equality in Kolkata



## IMPACT ON ACTION<sup>12</sup>

- ▲ **65% engage** in preparation of meals for the family
- **74% fetch water** for the household
- **60% engage** in washing clothes
- **43% engage** in washing utensils
- **48% engage** in caring for the elderly
- **40% raise awareness** on violence, gender and unpaid care work among their peers and community



Sohom Shee, MGJ Leader, Kolkata



# CHAMPIONING CHANGE

## THROUGH CAMPAIGNS & ALUMNI NETWORKS

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS REALLY INTERESTING ABOUT AZAD?? THERE ARE SEVERAL CAMPAIGNS THAT AZAD'S LEADERS ORGANISE AND I HAVE PARTICIPATED IN SOME OF THE MOST EXCITING AND MEANINGFUL CAMPAIGNS.



YOU ALL MUST BE THINKING THAT THESE CAMPAIGNS ARE ONLY ABOUT TAKING OUT RALLIES.



HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME EYE-OPENING ACTIVITIES ORGANISED IN THESE CAMPAIGNS, LIKE ON UNPAID CARE WORK, WHERE MEN COOK AND SERVE FOOD TO EVERYONE.



I FEEL AMAZING GOING BACK TO THE SAME PEOPLE THAT ONCE PLACED BARRIERS ON ME AND WITNESSING THE SHIFT IN THEIR PERSPECTIVE. I BELIEVE, CHANGE IS POSSIBLE!!



Azad's change agents collectivise through the alumni network and lead impactful campaigns to share knowledge and information on NTL, GBV, citizenship rights and entitlements, promote male involvement in caregiving responsibilities, and foster supportive environments for women to make empowered choices.

Through activities like **street plays, puppet shows, rallies, fairs, gender role reversal games, signature campaigns, poster-making workshops, film screenings, podcasts and through social media**, we reached:

- a. **96,500 individuals**
- b. **30 partner organisations**
- c. **10 states in India**

### ONE BILLION RISING CAMPAIGN

Young feminist leaders from Azad rose in solidarity with the Global One Billion Rising Campaign to end violence against women and people with diverse gender identities and promote their inclusion in non-traditional livelihoods.



Chennai



Delhi

### GHAR KA KAAM SABKA KAAM CAMPAIGN

Pioneered by Azad in 2022, the national Ghar Ka Kaam Sabka Kaam campaign is led in collaboration with the MenEngage India Alliance and the Non-Traditional Livelihoods (NTL) Network. This year, Azad strengthened its coalition of partners, continuing to promote recognition of unpaid care work and encourage men and boys to share equal responsibility in caregiving roles.



Jaipur



Chennai



Kolkata



Delhi



## SAMANTA BANDHAN CAMPAIGN

This campaign reimagines the festival of Raksha Bandhan by challenging patriarchal control over women's choices and mobility. This year, Samanta Bandhan was taken into the communities as a celebration of equality, unity and harmony, transcending barriers of gender, caste, class, community, religion, sexuality and disability.



Jaipur



Kolkata



## MARCHING FOR DIGNITY, SAFETY & FAIR PAY!

On International Working Women's Day, women & trans-queer workers from the unorganised sector including domestic workers, gig workers, street vendors, waste pickers, construction workers, and women cab drivers, took to the streets of Kolkata to demand fair remuneration, social security, gender-inclusive infrastructure and workplace safety. The rally was organised by NDUM (Nari Dibos Udjapon Mancha), a collective formed by Anjali Trust, Azad Foundation and South Asian Women in Media.



Kolkata

## ALUMNI MEETS

**1,163 alumni trainees, drivers, and feminist leaders** from Azad's programmes came together across locations for vibrant gatherings to build solidarity and share experiences. Together, they reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring dignified lives for women, girls and people with diverse gender identities. These gatherings marked significant days like the International Women's Day, Indian Constitution Day and Human Rights Day.



Delhi



Kolkata

## WOMEN WITH WHEELS PROGRAMME

# TRANSFORMATION THROUGH NON-TRADITIONAL SKILLING AND EMPLOYMENT



**Women with Wheels Programme** enables young women from resource poor communities to choose careers as professional chauffeurs and riders through transformative capacity building training encompassing technical and professional driving skills and self-empowerment skills.

I WANT TO TELL ALL OF YOU THAT LEARNING TO DRIVE, ACQUIRING A PERMANENT LICENCE AND THEN BEING EMPLOYED AS A PROFESSIONAL DRIVER IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS HAS BEEN SO MUCH MORE THAN LEARNING A SKILL AND EARNING MONEY.



ABOVE ALL, I AM ABLE TO GIVE MY CHILDREN A BETTER LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION AND SAVING FOR THEIR AND MY FUTURE.



THIS WHOLE JOURNEY HAS GIVEN ME SO MUCH MORE!! I AM NOW A MORE CONFIDENT PERSON, I CAN MOVE FREELY EVERYWHERE, EARN A LIVELIHOOD WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY.



HAVING WITNESSED MY JOURNEY, I SEE THE OTHER WOMEN IN MY COMMUNITY WANTING TO BE MORE LIKE ME. I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD BE A ROLE MODEL FOR SOMEONE, BUT HERE I AM!!





## THE CONTEXT WE WORK IN

- ▶ Gender-based discrimination is the reason for 98% of the employment gap between salaried males and females in urban areas. *Oxfam, 2022*
- 29% of the ever-married women aged 18-49 years have experienced spousal violence. *NFHS-5*
- Over 50% of Indian women aged 15-29 are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). 90% of NEET women cite unpaid care work as its primary reason. *NSSO, 2023*
- ▲ Cases of workplace sexual harassment against women rose from 402 in 2018 to 422 in 2022 (*NCRB, 2022*). This is concerning, especially as women often under-report cases due to fear, lack of awareness, and societal bias.



2 Wheeler Training, Delhi



Family Faculty Meeting, Kolkata



11 drivers from Kolkata earned their Heavy Motor Vehicle licences

## IMPACT

- ▲ 772 women accessed transformative skill training by enrolling in the Women with Wheels programme across Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, and Chennai
- 532 women successfully acquired technical and employability skills, securing driving licences and becoming job-ready
- 278 women were placed as professional chauffeurs and riders in e-commerce and transportation industry

## TRANSFORMATION

- ▶ 100% women became primary breadwinners in the family
- Out of the 86% trainees who were survivors of GBV, 41% spoke out against it
- 72% trainees increased their mobility by moving independently in public places, at any time of the day
- ▲ 52% began making decisions independently, gaining control over their lives
- ▶ 38% claimed their identity with dignity



Suganya &amp; Vanishree joined Lithium as e-cab drivers in Chennai

# STEERING FORWARD THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Azad has always recognised the strength that lies in collaboration and collective action. We work in partnership with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and social enterprises that share our commitment to breaking barriers and creating dignified livelihood opportunities for women in the non-traditional transport sector.

In 2024-25, we continued to strengthen these partnerships by facilitating knowledge exchange and expanding access to opportunities in transport for resource-poor women.



Samaan deepened its collaboration with the Women with Wheels four-wheeler driving training programme in Indore. Aimed at breaking barriers and steering women towards economic independence, Samaan started the year with an ambitious goal: to train 40 women and secure job placements for 35 of them. All women who enrolled successfully earned a permanent driving licence, while **23 of them** have already driven their way into new careers, entering roles at International Waste Management Limited, leading automobile sector companies, and other diverse workplaces. This initiative goes beyond skill-building to pave the way for women to access dignified livelihoods, strengthen their identities, and move towards lasting impact.



Basera trained **239 women** across four driving segments, namely e-rickshaw, four-wheeler, two-wheeler and heavy commercial vehicle, diversifying avenues for women in transport. **58 women** became employable by obtaining their driving licences. **43 women** were successfully placed in decent jobs as professional drivers. Basera's commitment to inclusion of historically marginalised groups is reflected in the profile of its participants, including **42% Muslim women** and **58% women belonging to Scheduled Castes**.

Basera set up a permanent exhibition this year called, **"From Work to Wages,"** exploring the link between women's economic participation and their right to the city. Through a collaboration with Jhankar Mahila Mandal in Nagpur, it trained **19 women in electric auto driving**, creating new pathways for women's employment in emerging green sectors.



18 drivers are now breaking barriers globally, through a strategic partnership between Azad, Sakha, Basera and Baton Transport. Working as trailer drivers in Europe, they earn competitive salaries, have access to safe accommodation and social security, with monthly earnings ranging from 822 to 1,463 Euros. The company invests in their training, equipping them to adapt and sustain in their roles.

Sakha, Azad's strategic employment partner, actively promotes dignified livelihood opportunities for women in the transport and e-commerce sectors as two-wheeler, four-wheeler and heavy vehicle drivers. It negotiates with the market to ensure these opportunities are safe and remunerative.

In 2024-25, Sakha expanded the presence of women in diverse roles, including public bus drivers, EV operators, trailer truck drivers, delivery riders, and chauffeurs across locations. It formed strategic partnerships and enabled market negotiations with employers such as Rapido, Snap-E Cabs, Lithium, Delhi Transport Corporation, Baton Transport, Porter, Big Basket, ShadowFax, Even Cargo and Delhivery.

- ▶ **318 women's employment was facilitated by Sakha** as professional drivers and riders in the transport industry
- **\$535,000 cumulative income** has been generated by these women
- **92% chauffeurs and 67% riders sustained their employment**

Together, these women are transforming their lives and those of their families by establishing their identity, gaining access and control over their earnings, building assets and investing in their children's futures.



Sakha drivers in Jaipur holding Driving Licence

RESEARCH, POLICY ANALYSIS & COMMUNICATIONS

# FACILITATING

## INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES, POLICIES & MARKETS

I WANT TO POSE A QUESTION - WHAT IS A DECENT JOB?

IS IT JUST ENOUGH TO HAVE A MONTHLY SALARY, GET ENOUGH LEAVE ETC.? AND I CAN NOW TELL YOU ALL FROM EXPERIENCE THAT ALL THIS IS NOT WHAT HELPS ANYONE AND ESPECIALLY A WOMAN TO CONTINUE IN A JOB.

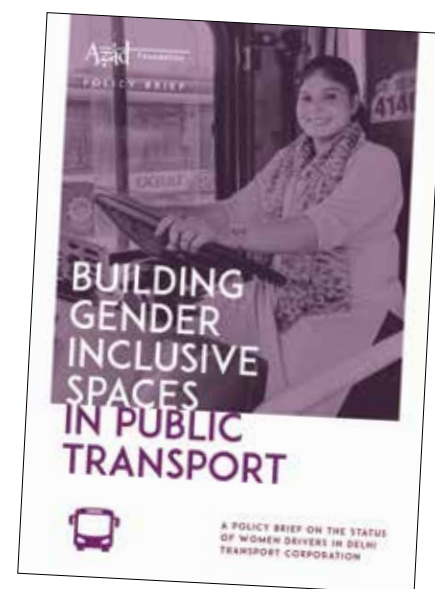
LET ME EXPLAIN: "WILL YOU GO TO A WORKPLACE WHERE EVEN A BASIC FACILITY LIKE A CLEAN WASHROOM IS NOT ACCESSIBLE OR AVAILABLE?" NO, RIGHT? THE SAME APPLIES TO US DRIVERS.

THEREFORE, HAVING THESE BASIC NEEDS MET ALONG WITH EQUAL PAY, MEDICAL INSURANCE, RETIREMENT BENEFITS ETC. IS A MUST TO CONTINUE IN A JOB.

I UNDERSTOOD THROUGH AN EVENT ORGANISED BY AZAD THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL TO HOLD DIALOGUE AND TALKS WITH THE GOVERNMENT, EMPLOYERS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS TO ENSURE THAT WOMEN DRIVERS LIKE ME CONTINUE WORKING.



Azad's Research, Policy, and Communications initiatives focus on conducting evidence-based research and effectively communicating findings to inform policy recommendations, engage with decision makers, markets, networks and various forums for promoting the inclusion of women in non-traditional livelihoods in transport. Azad also holds the Secretariat for the Non-Traditional Livelihoods (NTL) Network, generating awareness and resources for advancing NTL for women across India.



READ THE  
POLICY BRIEF  
HERE



[https://www.azadfoundation.com/publications\\_reports/building-gender-inclusive-spaces-in-public-transport/](https://www.azadfoundation.com/publications_reports/building-gender-inclusive-spaces-in-public-transport/)

## RESEARCH

### ARE OUR CITIES GENDER-INCLUSIVE?

#### ***Building Gender Inclusive Spaces in Public Transport: A Study on the Status of Women Drivers in DTC***



An audit of 8 Bus Depots of DTC was done to scope their level of gender inclusivity

With Azad's decade-long engagement with the Transport Ministry and the government's significant steps towards inclusion, 93 women are riding Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) buses in Delhi today. In 2024-25, Azad completed a study to understand the opportunities, challenges and systemic barriers faced by women bus drivers pursuing their job, including their working conditions, nature of job, payment terms, services and infrastructural facilities availed. Azad also conducted an audit of 8 Bus Depots of DTC to scope their level of gender inclusivity.

A key finding was the lack of well-maintained, safe, and hygienic washrooms and rest areas for women employees. The study recommends creating model depots with clean, functional toilets; rest and recreation spaces; women-friendly facilities; and gender sensitive complaints and redressal mechanisms. The study recommends conducting gender-sensitisation training for all staff, particularly with male staff.

## POLICY ENGAGEMENT FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION



Release of Policy Brief - Building Gender Inclusive Spaces in Public Transport

### ***Engaging With the Government and Industry for Change***

Building on the findings of the study on status of women drivers in DTC, Azad continued its engagement with the government and industry. A meeting was held with concerned authorities at the Delhi Transport Corporation, to present the policy brief and key recommendations, including the urgent need for gender-sensitive infrastructure. Additionally, Azad initiated engagement with Tata Motors, to explore opportunities for fostering inclusive hiring practices in the private transport sector and identify areas where Azad could support implementation.

To further drive policy dialogue, Azad organised a stakeholders' consultation on 29 January, 2025 to disseminate the study findings and co-create actionable strategies for a gender-inclusive public transport system. The consultation brought together 86 participants, including representatives from Tata Motors, The Gig Workers Association (GigWA), civil society organisations, women drivers, and sector experts. A short film, '[Delhi](#)



WATCH  
THE  
SHORT  
FILM  
HERE



<https://youtu.be/IHJ1KFzWS5s?si=d0FY7tTpWtvMERGy>

***Rides with Her'***, capturing the lived experiences of DTC women drivers, was screened to ground the discussion in real voices and lived realities.

Following these efforts, Azad has begun working closely with DTC to conduct gender-sensitisation workshops for its male staff and to facilitate development of gender-inclusive infrastructure at depots, paving the way for a more equitable and supportive workplace for all.



## PROMOTING WOMEN'S INCLUSION IN NTL IN REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL FORUMS



CSW 69 Parallel Event

### 69th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-69)

Azad organised an in-person parallel event, in collaboration with Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and Non-Traditional Livelihoods Network, in New York. The session highlighted the strategies to promote Gender Transformative Education and Skill Development for women's entry and sustenance in non-traditional livelihoods, particularly green economy. The session was moderated by Joanne Sandler, Senior Associate at Gender at Work.

### NCAER Gender Conclave

Azad contributed to a panel discussion on "Creating Economic Opportunities for Women" in the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) Gender Conclave organised by the World Bank. The discussion explored strategies for expanding women's economic participation, particularly through non-traditional livelihoods.



NCAER Gender Conclave



### Regional Dialogue on Engaging Men & Boys for Gender Equality

Azad contributed to the Regional Dialogue on "Strengthening Movement in Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality", co-organised by Saathi Sanstha and MenEngage South Asia in Kathmandu, Nepal. The importance & strategies for men's involvement in unpaid care work, and their impact on family dynamics were shared.



12th APFSD Side Event

### 12th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

Azad co-organised an in-person side-event held in Bangkok, with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Embassy of Bangladesh in Bangkok, South Asian Women's Development Forum and Non-Traditional Livelihoods Network. The session focused on "Addressing the Digital Gender Divide for Transformative Education and Economic Empowerment", and proposed policy recommendations to bridge this gap.



Workshop on Evidence-Based Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

### Workshop on Evidence-Based Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

Azad contributed to the South and South-West Asia Workshop on Evidence-Based Voluntary National Reviews in New Delhi. Azad's inputs drew from its grassroots work on the SDGs 5, 8 and 11, focusing on gender equality, decent work, and sustainable cities.

### Market Engagement: Pathways for Sustenance

Policy engagement with industry led to a strategic partnership with Rapido's Pink Mobility Initiative, through which 30 women riders trained by Azad and Sakha have been onboarded as two-wheeler captains on Rapido's platform. The partnership provides women access to e-bikes on a rental basis, creating new opportunities in the urban mobility sector. The collaboration was officially launched at 'EmpowHer', an event organised by Rapido, which also marked the signing of an MoU between Rapido, Azad, and Sakha Consulting Wings to strengthen and expand this initiative.



Women riders from Azad and Sakha onboarded by Rapido



Redesigned Website

### Embracing Digital Transformation for Greater Impact

This year, Azad embraced digital transformation to deepen its impact. A major milestone was the successful pilot of the digitised Programme-Based Monitoring System (PDMS) for the Women with Wheels programme, introducing a new dashboard designed to visualise impact and identify areas for improvement.

In addition to this, Azad's re-designed website was launched in 2024-25, providing a more engaging and user-friendly experience and featuring updated content, resources and improved compatibility across mobile and desktop platforms. The new website has strengthened Azad's ability to communicate its mission, stories, and impact to diverse stakeholders more effectively.

**14,000 new users have visited the website since its launch, with an engagement rate of 59%.**





### Non-Traditional Livelihoods (NTL) Network- Advancing NTL Across India

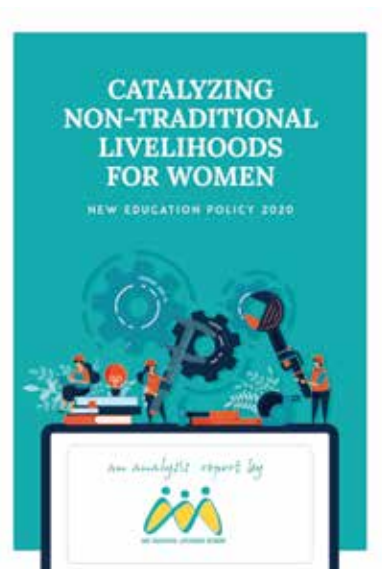
NTL Network is a collaboration of 32 organisations and 13 individual members, across 13 states who engage with policy-makers, markets, and other stakeholders to bring marginalised women in urban and rural India into livelihoods which have traditionally been closed to them.

## RESEARCH

### “Gender Transformative Meta-analysis of New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and its Implementation”

The Network, led by Azad Foundation and ISST<sup>13</sup>, conducted a study reviewing the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 across 10 states to assess how it supports non-traditional skill education for women and girls. The study found that while the NEP has commendably created opportunities for vocational education and gender inclusion, it still needs to develop clear measures to address gender and socio-economic barriers, ensuring its implementation does not reinforce traditional norms.

The study recommends curriculum reforms through CSO partnerships; gender-sensitisation training for educators, trainers and policymakers; engaging communities to add non-traditional skill building under the scope of vocational training; resource allocation for promoting non-traditional careers for women and girls. Following this, the Network has initiated policy engagement in 2 states including Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, with plans to continue next year.



READ THE  
EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY  
HERE



<https://www.azadfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/WEB-Catalyzing-Non-Traditional-Livelihoods-for-Women-Report.pdf>

### National Consultation on “Meta-Analysis of NEP 2020 and its Implementation Through a Gender Transformative Lens”

The Network organised a national-level consultation to explore the scope of incorporating NTL within the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, based on the recent research findings. The discussions focused on gender perspectives on non-traditional skilling, inclusive infrastructure in public places and opportunities & barriers for women in the market. Held on 10-11 March 2025, the consultation brought together 37 participants including the network members and resource-persons with expertise in the areas of gender, skilling and fundraising for non-profit organisations.

The event concluded with the Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of the Network, during which members proposed a roadmap for the coming year across four core areas: Research, Policy Engagement, Learning Exchange, and Governance.

### Growing Stronger, Together

This year, the NTL Network expanded its membership with the addition of five new members: i-Saksham Education and Learning Foundation, Nirman, Anjali Mental Health Rights Organisation, Avira Foundation, and Basera. These organisations bring deep and intersectional experience of working with a wide range of communities including resource-poor women and girls, Dalits, de-notified tribes, survivors of psychosocial disabilities; and addressing issues such as gender, caste, mental health, economic empowerment, leadership building, and so on. The Network is now a strong collective of 45 members, representing 13 states, with Bihar being the latest addition.



### Exposure Visits

As part of the learning exchange, the Network facilitated two key exposure visits in 2024-25:

#### Visit by i-Saksham to West Bengal 10–11 June 2024

A 20-member team from i-Saksham, a new member of the Network, visited two NTL Network organisations - Azad Foundation and Nari-o-Sishu Kalyan Kendra in West Bengal. The visit aimed to provide hands-on exposure to organisations promoting NTL for women and girls.

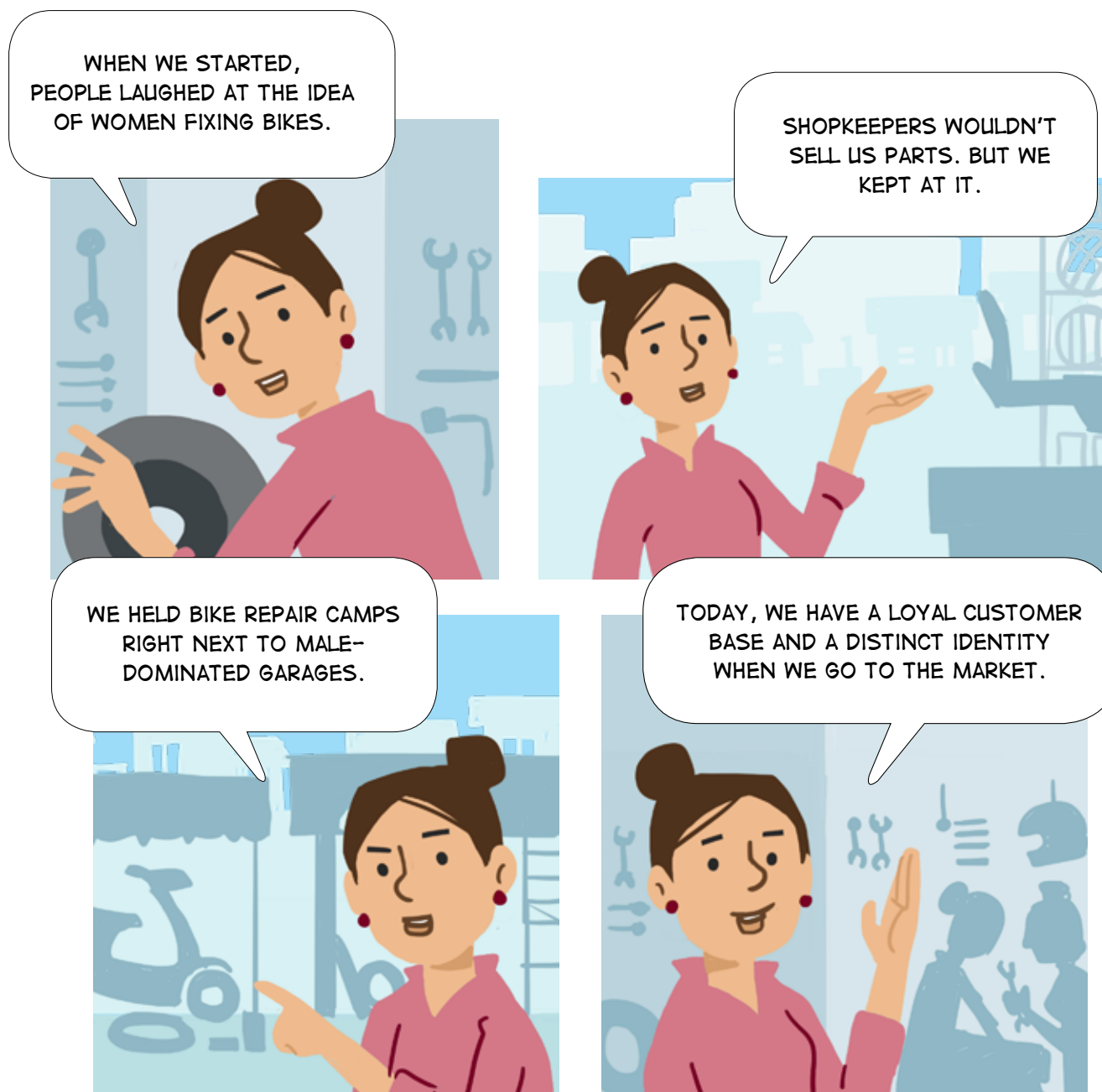


#### Visit to Yantrika, Indore 29–30 August 2024

As part of the Steering Group meeting in August, Network members visited Yantrika, a bike repair shop run entirely by women mechanics trained by Samaan Society. The visit included an experience-sharing session where the women mechanics shared stories of breaking gender norms in a male-dominated profession.

<sup>13</sup> Institute of Social Studies Trust

## INSIDE YANTRIKA: FIXING BIKES, SMASHING STEREOTYPES



## ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We have all heard Noor's story and the challenges and triumphs on her path to claim her identity. Azad worked across multiple layers of the ecosystem at every stage to ensure that Noor and many others like her could empower themselves through skills and employment. But to truly make an impact in the world outside, Azad must build strength from within. Let us now take a look at how this inner transformation took place- through strengthening governance, building team capacities, forming networks, and growing financial resources.

**STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE**

At Azad, our engagement extends beyond communities and stakeholders—we believe that a truly soulful institution must also look inward to nurture collective well-being and growth. Through an approach to build collective leadership at all levels, we work to strengthen our team and governance systems—building an organisation that is not only effective, but also self-aware. We are committed to questioning, learning, reflecting, evolving, and breaking through our own limitations.

**GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS**

During the year, Azad's Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) received and handled two cases falling under the scope of workplace sexual harassment. Following a thorough inquiry, strict disciplinary actions were taken, including termination of the respondent in one case and withholding of increment in another. The committee also recommended counselling support for the complainants involved.

The management took a firm stance, reinforcing a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment—both within and outside the workplace.

## TRAININGS ON ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES

**Introduction to POSH**

Team members across Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, and Chennai participated in training sessions on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and Azad's sexual harassment policy. These sessions aimed to build awareness around what constitutes sexual harassment at the workplace, the process for filing complaints, available redressal mechanisms, and the principles necessary for maintaining a safe and respectful work environment. It has also been made mandatory to orient every new employee to the POSH Act and Azad's policy during the induction process.

**Orientation to Institutional & HR policies**

A session was conducted with the Chennai team in October, 2024 focusing on orienting the team to Azad's policies, addressing their doubts and concerns and fostering better understanding and communication within the team.



## STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING



Training of Trainers- Driving Faculty



### TRAINING OF TRAINERS DRIVING FACULTY

**PARTICIPANTS**  
28 Driving Training  
Faculty

**FOCUS AREAS**  
Adult learning principles,  
empowerment and  
technical training  
methodologies, emotional  
management and self-care



### FEMINIST LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME PERSPECTIVE BUILDING

**PARTICIPANTS**  
8 Pls & DLs

**FOCUS AREAS**  
Sharing cross-location experiences  
and collective reflections,  
contextualising and strengthening  
planning across locations



### TRAINING OF TRAINERS PARTICIPATORY TRAINING METHODOLOGY

**PARTICIPANTS**  
18 District Leads (DL) & Programme  
Implementers (PI)

**FOCUS AREAS**  
Enhancing participatory training  
methodologies



### AZAD KISHORI PROGRAMME PERSPECTIVE BUILDING

**PARTICIPANTS**  
8 Pls, DLs, Mobilisers

**FOCUS AREAS**  
Deepening understanding of programme  
vision and approach, reflections  
on challenges, contextualising and  
strengthening planning across locations



### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

**PARTICIPANTS**  
30 Pls, DLs & Mobilisers

**FOCUS AREAS**  
Strengthening mobilisation activities,  
conceptual clarity on GBV and  
intervention strategies, team  
engagement and interpersonal skills

Feminist Leadership,  
Movement Building,  
and Rights Institute  
(FLMBARI) organised  
by CREA



Basic Laboratory  
on Human Process  
(BLHP) by ISABS

### INDIVIDUAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

7 Azad team members across programmes and locations were nominated for capacity building training to build their leadership skills, domain knowledge, and deepen their understanding on issues of gender, patriarchy, masculinity, and intersectionality. The trainings included:

- ▶ Feminist Leadership, Movement Building, and Rights Institute (FLMBARI) organised by CREA
- Basic Laboratory on Human Process (BLHP) by Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS)
- South Asian Feminist Capacity Building Course on Gender, Sustainable Livelihoods, Human Rights, and Peace by SANGAT Network
- ▲ FCRA Crash Course by CPA Services
- Mentorship on Strategic Communication and Fundraising by AVPN



## CELEBRATING KAMLA AND THE CHANGEMAKERS IN SOUTH ASIA

## STRENGTH IN SOLIDARITY



Hope Chigudu,  
Chief Guest for  
the day



Lalitha Ranjani won  
under Category 1,  
felicitated by Khushi  
Kabir, Award Jury  
member

Kamla Bhasin's life has been an embodiment of love, equality and feminist solidarity transcending borders. With a shared belief in these values, Azad Foundation, in collaboration with the National Foundation for India (NFI) and iPartner India, hosted the third Kamla Bhasin Awards as a united collective.

This year, the award received an overwhelming 90 applications from across the region including India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—each echoing stories of resistance, hope, and transformation.

The award ceremony took place on 30th November, 2024 at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, with a heartfelt tribute to Kamla Bhasin's fearless and joyous spirit. The gathering was graced by Hope Chigudu, a celebrated feminist activist with decades of experience in movement-building and leadership development. The Jury members Bindu Pandey, Khushi Kabir and Namita Bhandare honoured the 4 outstanding winners of the award.



Musical Performance by Usha Uthup ji



Sunil Mohan won under  
Category 2, felicitated  
by Bindu Pandey,  
Award Jury member

BREAKING BARRIERS, REWRITING  
POSSIBILITIES

Category 1 celebrated cis and trans women who have claimed space in non-traditional livelihoods. Lalitha Ranjani from Sri Lanka was honoured for her pioneering work as a trade union activist. She leads the Textile Garment and Clothing Workers Union (TGCWU), Sri Lanka's first women-led union for garment workers. Jaya Chakma from Bangladesh received the Special Jury Award for her pathbreaking leadership as a woman football coach from Chakma tribe and its only female FIFA-accredited referee.



Jaya Chakma received the  
Special Jury Award under  
Category 1, felicitated  
by Alka Sharma, Board  
member of Azad



Nikhil Taneja received the Special  
Jury Award under Category 2,  
felicitated by Dr. Sanjay Patra,  
Board member of iPartner India

WORKING WITH MEN AND BOYS FOR A  
GENDER-JUST WORLD

Category 2 honoured cis and trans men who have challenged patriarchy and built gender-just ecosystems. Sunil Mohan from India was recognised for his work on challenging patriarchy and impacting 3,000+ lives over the last 2 decades. Nikhil Taneja from India received the Special Jury Award for fostering powerful conversations on gender and mental health, reaching over 150 million young people.

The ceremony brought together more than 300 people—activists, media professionals, donors, partners, Azad's women drivers, and young feminist leaders. The event ended on a stirring note with a soul-filled musical tribute by the legendary Usha Uthup.

The Kamla Bhasin Awards 2024 were widely featured across 16 major media platforms in South Asia, amplifying these powerful stories of change and reminding us that feminist futures are already in the making.



The award will be hosted by TEWA in Nepal in 2025



## OUR BOARD

Guided by our visionary Board members, Azad continues to grow as a dynamic and value-driven organisation.



**Anuvinda Varkey**  
CHAIR



**Meenu Vadera**  
SECRETARY



**Rohit Bhasin**  
TREASURER



**Alka Sharma**  
TRUSTEE



**Nandini Narula**  
TRUSTEE



**Dr. G Venkat Raman**  
TRUSTEE



**Ritu Mal**  
TRUSTEE

## INSTITUTIONAL DONORS



## CSR DONORS



We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of LYRA NETWORK PVT. LTD, AUTHENTIKA VENTURE, and Virasat Foundation to Azad Foundation.

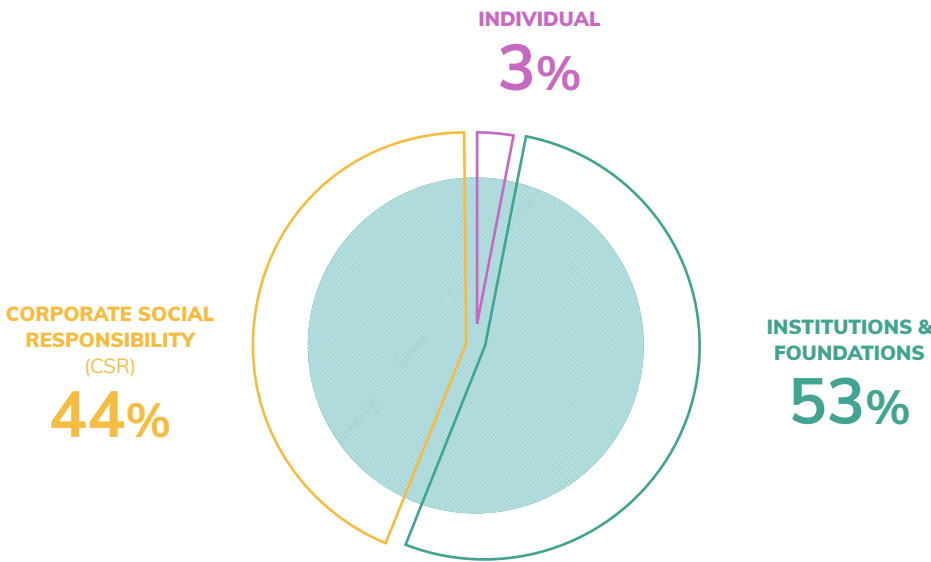
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MALTE PRILL  
MUGDHA KARWA  
NADEEM ASIF  
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RITA SARIN  
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ROHIT BHASIN  
ROMINA BRUCH  
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We are deeply grateful to all our donors for walking with us on this powerful journey towards empowerment and equality. Your unwavering support has enabled us to stand beside resource-poor women as they pursue their dreams and transform their lives.

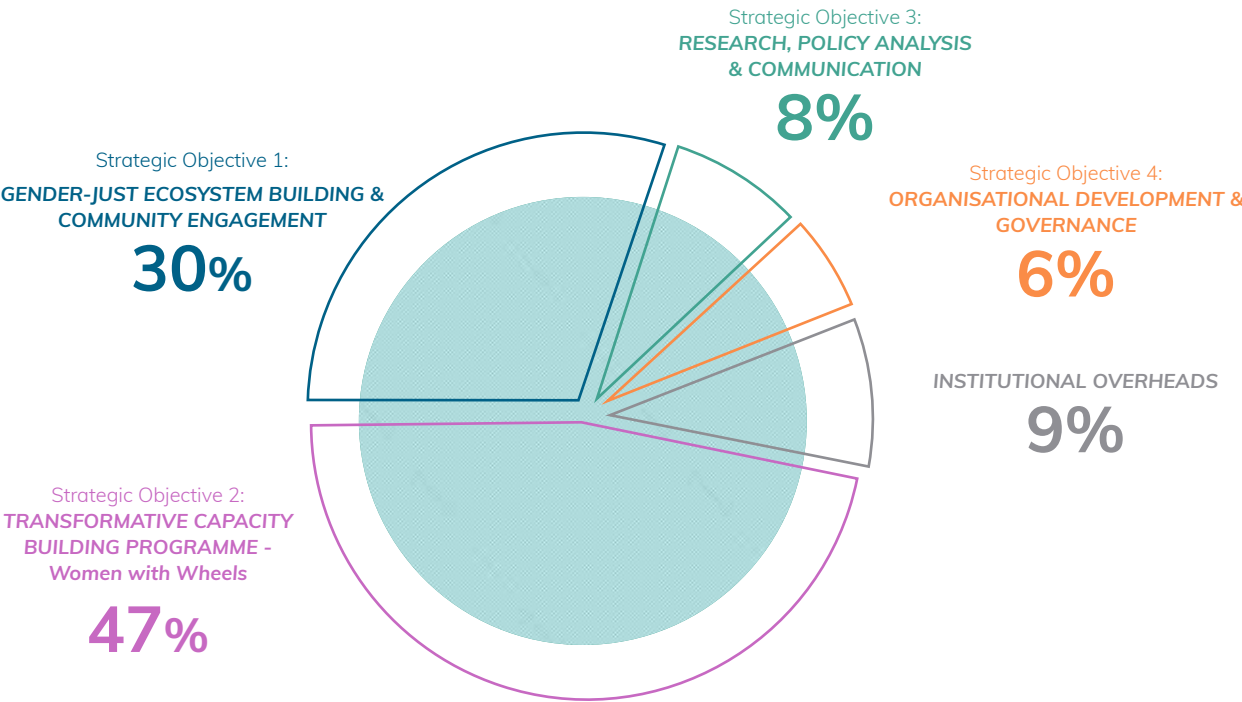


WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM



Total income of Azad Foundation in 2024-25 was INR 12.39 crores

HOW THE MONEY WAS USED



Total utilisation of Azad Foundation in 2024-25 was INR 12.16 crores

MEDIA FEATURES & AWARDS

<https://energetica-india.net/news/rapido-expands-pink-mobility-initiative-nationwide-to-promote-women-empowerment>

<https://www.motoring-trends.com/cover-story/rapido-expands-pink-mobility-nationwide-signs-mou-with-azad-foundation-and-sakha-consulting-wings>

<https://www.ndtv.com/auto/rapido-expands-pink-mobility-initiative-to-create-fleet-of-over-2-lakh-women-captains-8029345>

<https://www.businessworld.in/article/driving-is-an-opportunity-women-must-see-it-as-a-livelihood-rapidos-shrivya-reddy-551988>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/bike-taxi-service-for-women-by-women/articleshow/117991647.cms>



## WOMEN ACHIEVERS AWARD 2025 BY NISHTHA

Awarded to Dolon Ganguly, Chief Functionary of Azad, for her valuable contribution in the field of social work.



## CHAMPION OF THE YOUTH AWARD 2024 BY EMPOWER

Awarded to Meenu Vadera, Founder of Sakha and Azad, for Azad's work on empowering young women through the non-traditional profession of driving.



## KAMLA BHASIN AWARDS 2024

Covered in 16 media channels across South Asia



The Hindu story featuring a rally by women drivers and riders in Chennai.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/chennai-women-take-the-wheel-in-empowerment-rally/article69397506.ece>



Coverage of the culmination of partnership between Azad, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) in Delhi and Jaipur, for facilitating the employment of 200 women in the transport sector.



## COORDINATION OFFICE

93, Nehru Apartments  
Kalkaji, New Delhi 110019

## SOUTH DELHI

R-10, Flat No. 7, Second Floor,  
Nehru Enclave, Kalkaji,  
New Delhi, 110019

## NORTH DELHI

B 5/2, Model Town-1, Near Model Town  
Metro Station  
New Delhi 110009

## EAST DELHI

A-6, Lane Number 1, Near Jagatpuri  
Main Red Light  
New Delhi 110051

## JAIPUR

5-D, Jhalana Institutional Area,  
Jhalana Doongri, Jaipur 302004,  
Rajasthan

## NORTH KOLKATA

P 282/A, CIT Road, Scheme-IV,  
Phoolbagan,  
Kolkata 700054

## SOUTH KOLKATA

11 A/3, North Road, Jadavpur  
Kolkata 700032

## CHENNAI

2, Srigeet Apartments, 11, Jamalia Nagar  
Main Road, Perambur, Chennai 600012

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR WORK

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## DELHI RIDES WITH HER

WATCH THE SHORT FILM HERE



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