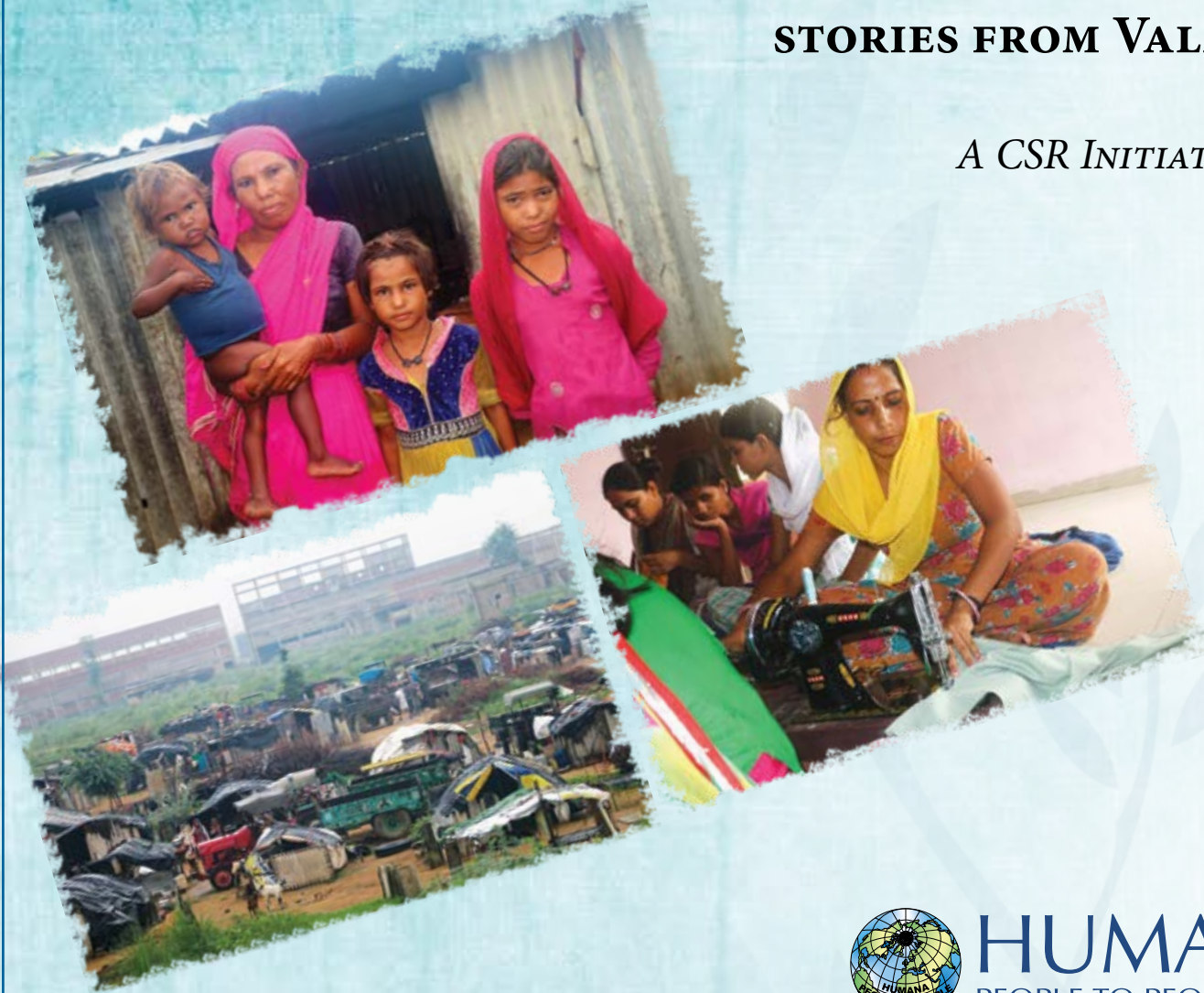


# TRANSFORMING LIVES

STORIES FROM VALMIKI COLONY, DHARUHERA

*A CSR INITIATIVE BY HERO MOTOCORP*



**HUMANA**  
PEOPLE TO PEOPLE INDIA

  
**Hero**  
**we care**  
A Hero MotoCorp CSR INITIATIVE



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*We*, at Hero MotoCorp, are working towards our vision of having an equitable world through our Hamari Pari, Educate to Empower (E<sup>2</sup>) and other community-focused programmes under the 'We Care' umbrella.

While Hamari Pari recognizes and celebrates the enormous potential that each young girl has to fulfill her dreams of a brighter future, Educate to Empower (E<sup>2</sup>) is driven by the main objective of looking beyond the obvious symptoms and finding long-term solutions related to educating students – with a major focus on girls. These community initiatives are focused at needs of the marginalized communities around our offices and facilities.

Our Hamari Pari & E<sup>2</sup> initiatives ensure that over 60,000 young underprivileged adolescent girls grow up in the right conditions, with the right support and in the right environment. From Life-skills development and school enrollment to Career Guidance to imparting science education or helping girls in their school work or regular motivational sessions with girls and their families, we try to ensure that each beneficiary would finally go on to live a dignified life.

The Step Up center initiative with HPPI focuses on girls from underprivileged backgrounds who have not had an opportunity to go to a school and are currently not at par with regular school goers. The center prepares the girls to enter the school in an appropriate grade, as per their age, and lays the foundation for their better schooling. On the other hand, Samarth center ensures that the older girls do not drop out of schools due to community pressure and other social stresses that they face on everyday basis.

We also engage with the parents of the girls to sensitize them about issues related to the girl child as well as the significance of education for girls. Currently, 350 girls are enrolled in this programme in Haryana.

With Hero MotoCorp's state-of-the-art globally benchmarked manufacturing facility located here, Dharuhera was an obvious choice for launching these socially progressive initiatives under our 'We Care' umbrella. Over the past year, these initiatives have shown marked improvements in the living conditions of the community members and continue to progressively influence the lives of all the beneficiaries.

# Preface

Tucked under the shadows of a skyline dominated by sprawling industrial complexes and high-rises of opulent neighboring suburbs, is the diminutive Valmiki Colony of Dharuhera, Haryana. This small locality gets its name from the majority of residents – belonging to the Valmiki community – who inhabit it and who have traditionally been placed at the lowest rung of the Indian society.

While across the country the members of Valmiki community are found to be employed in several vocations socially considered to be menial, it is manual scavenging that has infamously come to define their mainstay of sustenance, not only in popular imagination but also, sadly, in sociological statistics.

The residents of Valmiki Colony in Dharuhera bear the same historical burden as their counterparts in other parts of the country. Majority of women here are employed as sweepers in municipalities, hospitals and government offices, while a few of their men work as labourers in the nearby factories of this rapidly expanding industrial town. With abysmally poor levels of education among the children, and sheer lack of any gainful skills among the youth, this tragic cycle of despondency has continued here for generations.

In the past one year, however, a tide of change has begun to sweep over the residents of this area. Working in close cooperation with – and with active financial support from – Hero MotoCorp CSR initiative, Educate to Empower and Hamari Pari – being implemented by Humana People to People India (HPPI) has been able to achieve a sustainable behavioural change with regard to community perception towards girls' education and productive skill development. Educational and skill-based interventions through HPPI's four programmes, namely, Step-up Centres, Samarth Girls, Women Vocational Skills and Youth Clubs, has opened unprecedented avenues and successfully infused a new excitement among the community members and inhabitants of the nearby slums here.

Since its launch in August 2015, 33 out-of-school children enrolled in the Step-up Centres have been mainstreamed in their age-appropriate classes into nearby schools, while 30 women have successfully acquired additional vocational skills as beauticians and tailors under the Hero MotoCorp-funded projects. Today, the Programme reaches out to 125 children, 30 women and 28 youth of the area through its various components.

The 10 case studies curated here illustrate the impact of the project through the lives of a diverse range of stakeholders. This document exemplifies their challenges and achievements over the past one year of the project.

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<sup>1</sup>Please see the last section of the booklet for a brief description of the Hero MotoCorp-funded programmes.





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## Step-up Centres: Tackling the Migration Challenge

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12-year-old Neeraj's clear eyes, bright smile and loud greeting make him stand apart as one enters Step-up Centre, Dharuhera. A native of Panna district of Madhya Pradesh, it was only three years ago that Neeraj stepped out of his home state for the first time, in tow with his parents, who came to Dharuhera as migrant labourers in search of better livelihood options.

"Earlier, my older siblings used to accompany my parents when they went out of the village in search of work. But with the passing of our grandparents, no one was left to look after us in the village and my parents brought me along as well," says Neeraj.

Cases such as Neeraj's have been a perennial predicament for educationists across the country. Education for several children is disrupted due to their parents' migration to other states in search of better livelihood options. And once derailed, in most cases, the young lives often fail to get back on track.

For two years after arriving in Dharuhera, Neeraj was involved in some odd cleaning jobs in the nearby areas. With a lack of any sustained support, the impressionable child quickly fell out of an educational discipline and into a quagmire often associated with an unsettling migrant lifestyle.

"Going to school never interested me. In Panna I completed education till 4th class at the village Government Primary school, though I was never fond of the teacher's attitude or the way classes were conducted," recalls Neeraj.

“Once we came here, I got involved with some other migrant kids who lured me into earning money. After two years of doing some odd cleaning jobs, I completely lost interest in education and the habit of regular studying.”

An inherent urge, however, can lay dormant only for so long. Neeraj’s sharp responses, high conceptual understanding and education background from his village school, was spotted by the HPPI team surveying out-of-school students in the region. With active encouragement from his parents, Neeraj was enrolled in the Hero MotoCorp-sponsored Step-up Centre and in the past seven months since he has joined the Centre, the 12-year-old has not missed a single class.

“Studies at the Centre are conducted in very fascinating ways. Games and interesting teaching materials are used by the teachers here, which makes learning a lot of fun,” says Neeraj.

“On Saturdays we have special sessions where we organise and participate in all sorts of recreational activities, such as sports and dance programmes. I’ve never attended classes being conducted in such fun manner. I wish all the schools have such interesting ways of teaching.”

Neeraj’s keen understanding of the subject matter and proficient retention abilities have enabled him to achieve an optimum degree of competency in the Step-up Programme, bringing him at par with his age-appropriate Grade. With the commencement of the new academic year, Neeraj is set to join the nearby Government school as a Grade 6 student.

“I want to be a doctor when I grow up. I want to cure people’s ailments,” says Neeraj with his contagious smile.

An active interest in studies, coupled with the support they’re receiving at the Centre, ensures that several students like Neeraj are able to achieve their life’s ambitions, one step at a time.





## Education, a New Lease of Life

“I started picking garbage when I was ‘this big,’” says Sajida, lifting her right palm two feet off the classroom floor. The 8-year-old herself stands barely four feet above the ground, but the depth of her voice reveals a street-smartness that her age – and her height – clearly deceives.

“My friends who went to schools told me that at times the teachers hit students in the class. That kept me away from schools,” she says while recalling her years in her hometown.

Sajida’s father is a street magician and the family of six resides in the slums close to the HPPI-run Step-up Centre in Dharuhera, Haryana. They originally hail from Ghaziabad, in Uttar Pradesh, and came to Dharuhera in search of a better market, a better life, and a better lifestyle.

“As street magicians, we always have our tradition. But the life of an artist such as us is financially unsustainable in today’s world,” says Gafur, Sajida’s father. “Education is the cornerstone of success today, and our children should not lose out on what we did.”

Sajida was spotted picking up recyclable trash lying on the roadside by the HPPI out-of-school children survey team.

“She would hand the daily earning of 20-30 rupees over to her mother, and hence the latter never persuaded her into going to school,” says Kaleem, HPPI project Team Leader.

“It was easy to follow an older sister into the lucrative activity of garbage picking which had immediate financial gains, than study in a school,” says Sajida.

With sustained effort of the staff, seven months at the Hero MotoCorp-sponsored Step-up Centre provided Sajida with much-needed basic literacy skills, proving to be an impetus for rekindling her interest in education.

Even though she has been a regular observer of her father’s crafty tricks, the biggest magic for Sajida came to pass when her class reciprocated with a thunder of claps as she successfully wrote down her correctly spelled name on the blackboard.

“We had never entered a class where studies happened through games and where teachers paid so much attention to each student,” says Sajida. “I had never held a pencil or a chalk before. So, to be able to write my name, correctly spelled, was a feeling beyond expression”.

Inspired by the success of their sibling, Sajida’s younger brother and older sister have now started attending the Step-up Centre with an aim of joining a formal school at their age-appropriate grade.

“No one hits us at the Centre. This gives us a feeling of security and we hope that we can successfully complete our schooling and achieve our goals in life,” says Sajida.

“I would like to finish my studies in order to become a police officer who punishes the miscreants. I know it’s a hard goal to achieve, but after joining the Centre, I feel that I can achieve it”.





## The Magic that is Education

“Move away unless you want to get consumed by the magic,” announces the booming baritone of 70-year-old Shehanshah, surrounded by curious onlookers, as he spreads out the beguiling wares of his ancient, enigmatic *potli*. The chaos and pandemonium generally rampant in Town Park slums – set amidst the factories and high-rises of Dharuhera – descends into a quiet murmur as the old magician rolls up his sleeves, and his toothless, grim warning to children to keep a safe distance, echoes off the walls of this shanty settlement.

“Sleeves must be rolled up, lest one calls it a bluff. There is no bluff hidden up these sleeves that you’re going to witness now. This is pure art,” declares the seasoned veteran, with a wink.

And then, the show begins.

A solitary coin turns double, white doves appear and disappear from within a straw basket, and tens of glass marbles vanish into the septuagenarian’s mouth only to transmogrify into bigger glass balls which appear to emerge out of thin air.

Shehanshah, like many other men inhabiting this slum, is a street magician. A recreational relic of a bygone era, street magicians and their art-form, have survived over millennia through an unbroken lineage of master-disciple tradition. And Shehanshah is the undisputed grandmaster of the Town Park slums.

“He’s the one who taught us all. We’ve learnt through observing him. To be honest, he’s the one teacher we’ve all known in all our life,” says Mohd. Sartaj, another street magician who inhabits the slums, while pointing at Shehanshah.



Over the years, however, with the inroads of modernity and alluring social mobility options for the younger generation, the tradition has witnessed a continuous decline for takers.

“There’s no steady flow of income and no security. Times have changed and today’s generation seeks socially respectable means of earning livelihood. In part, it is the aspirations of our children that have brought us to this developing industrial town from rural Ghaziabad,” says Sartaj.

These young aspirations received a renewed thrust with the launch of HPPI’s Step-Up Centre in the vicinity of their slum. The Centre is supported by Hero MotoCorp. as a part of its *Educate to Empower* and *Hamari Pari* Programme. Today, 15 children – majority of whom had never even held a pencil in their fingers – from this shanty settlement attend the classes at the Centre regularly.

“I enjoy watching my father perform as much as all the other children do. I’ve learnt many of his tricks by constantly observing him. But I want to go to school and study so as to be able to get a good job in a nice office,” says nine-year-old Sajina, Sartaj’s daughter.

“We all want our children to study and we’re very fortunate to have the centre operating so near to our settlement,” says Guddo, Sajina’s mother.

“Most of the families here have been helped by the Centre workers to secure identity documents. Now there are free classes for our children with a hope of their admission into one of the local schools. I’m confident that our children will help us emerge out of this repeated cycle of poverty and lead a more purposeful life.”

But what about the allure of magic; the unbroken lineage of tradition?

“In today’s world, education is the biggest magic. What else explains hardworking youth from poor backgrounds being able to completely turn the fortunes of their families at such young age? We’re very fortunate that through these Centre our children have access to mainstream education that had eluded us,” says Sartaj.

As Shehanshah wraps up his show along with his enigmatic *potli*, a group of about a dozen children with bags loosely hanging from their shoulders are returning from the Step-Up Centre classes.

“I know the coin trick. I’ll show it to you when I come to the Centre tomorrow,” gleefully yells out one of the youngsters; a custodian of an ancient tradition, on the way to discover a new kind of magic.





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## An Impetus of Independence

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30-year-old Kamlesh is visibly beaming as she sits in the tailoring classroom of the Women Vocational Skill Centre in Dharuhera. The bright yellow, floral print *salwar kameez* she wears only accentuates her scintillating smile, as the young mother of three settles in to talk about the commencement of a new phase in her life.

But it's clear that her excitement is too much to be kept bottled up any longer, as she bursts forth: "This is my creation. I made this *salwar kameez* all by myself, barely a few days back. And I'm wearing it for the first time today," she proudly declares, before joining the entire class in a riot of laughter.

Kamlesh is one of the thirty women from the neighbouring community who have been undergoing skill development classes at the Hero Moto Corp funded Women Vocational Skill Centre in Dharuhera, being implemented by Humana People to People India.

"I was always interested in tailoring. When I heard about the course being offered here without any charge, I jumped at the opportunity," says Kamlesh.

Belonging to a region holding vastly retrograde beliefs about the degree of freedom women ought to enjoy, the launch of the Centre in Dharuhera has been a veritable blessing for many women such as Kamlesh. While for some it has proved to be a means of gaining sustainable livelihood options, for many, such as Kamlesh, it has helped substantially augment the household income.

“My husband works as a flex print maker. Over the years we’ve struggled to make ends meet, let alone being able to save for the future of our children. This added skill gives me a lot of confidence. I feel fairly confident that we’ll be able to secure a comfortable future for them now,” says Kamlesh.

In the last one and a half months that she has been at the Centre, Kamlesh has gathered skills enough to design and produce entire garments. The three-month course, conducted under the guidance of a qualified expert trainer, is designed to equip participating women with optimum tailoring skills to setup and start a small tailoring workshop of their own.

Beyond the augmented family income, however, the biggest incentive for the women under the course has been the unprecedented sense of independence that invariably accompanies mastering of a skill.

“As a woman, to be able to design and make my own clothes is a feeling of exuberance that is hard to express in words. To not depend on shops, to be able to fix and alter clothes in my own house, to be able to stitch clothes for my children, all this ushers a very strong feeling of self-reliance and freedom that is very hard to express,” says Kamlesh with a sudden seriousness.

“We’re all very grateful to the Centre and its staff for providing us this platform to gain such skills that will stay with us for the rest of our life.”

Such deeply profound feelings are indeed hard to express in words. They do, however, reveal themselves through the unbridled excitement in Kamlesh’s voice when she emphatically declared that she’s donning her own creation; the clamorous laughter that followed the announcement, clearly reflecting the collective expression of the same sentiment.





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## Parental Involvement, Key to Successful Educational Reform

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Dharuhera region of Haryana is a rapidly developing industrial town with its own demographical reality that has a direct impact on the education of children here. As is the case with any rapidly progressing region, the town witnesses a regular, voluminous influx of people from neighbouring states who come here in search of better livelihood options. As such, the town comprises a substantial migrant population from across a wide range of socio-economic profile.

This demographic setup also reflects itself in the configuration of the classrooms here. As much as 80 per cent of the students in our classrooms are not native residents of Haryana but come from other states. In such a setup, the biggest challenge remains to retain the students in the school, as parents often take their children along when they head to their hometowns. Owing to its seasonal pattern, this period of absence varies from anywhere between a few weeks to up to four months. The resultant gap in studies is almost always impossible to fill, and students are promoted to the next grade with sub-optimal learning outcomes.

Among the local residents, the biggest issue is of a sustained lack of awareness towards the significance of education. Most of the local children coming to our school belong to the Valmiki community. There are, obviously, historical reasons for a lack of motivation among the parents to send their children to school. With widely common illiteracy among the community members here, the pattern comes to repeat itself in the children as well, in spite of several progressive

initiatives by the State to improve enrolment and learning outcomes among the children belonging to the community.

Hero MotoCorp's initiatives through the Step-Up Centres and Samarth Girls Programme are vital steps to check this existing pattern among the population here. About 10 students from our school attend the Samarth Girls Programme and it is easy to see how within a few months of attending the Centre, they stand apart from the other students in their classes. During my interaction with the project staff, I learnt about the holistic approach of the programme, wherein there is active interaction with the parents as well. In my experience, this is the biggest motivating factor for the students as home environment and parents' ability to make informed decisions are vital components that shape their child's future.

This is also an issue of perception. Parents sending their children to private schools, which mostly charge exorbitant tuition fee, are found to be more involved in the education of their children. They're more participatory and try to hold teachers accountable whenever a lag is observed in their child's performance. Needless to say, they come from a relatively affluent segment of the society, and hence don't carry much of the historical burden weighing down their counterparts residing in Valmiki colony.

Though, with initiatives such as the Samarth Girls Programme, it is clear to see that this burden can be lessened. With a common will and active cooperation of the State, the corporate sector, and the NGOs, we can fulfill the educational dream of several children here.

*Mr. Lakhbir Singh is a Junior Basic Teacher (JBT) at Government Primary School, HUDA, Sector-6, Dharuhera. Having spent more than a decade in service as a teacher in different parts of Haryana, he is well aware of the challenges and opportunities that the education sector faces in the state.*





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## Samarth Girls Programme: Bringing the Goal Closer to Home

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While growing up to become a doctor, engineer or police officer are the most common of ambitions that one encounters during a conversation with young children, 13-year-old Nisha Ranga baffles many with the seriousness in her voice as she shares her specialized goal.

“I want to be an officer in the Crime Investigation Department when I grow up. I’ll catch and punish all those involved in human trafficking and perpetrate violence against women,” she says when asked about her aim in life.

Nisha is a class 8 student in Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Dharuhera. The teenager is the youngest of the four siblings, and her mother is an *Anganwadi* worker while her father works as a shopkeeper in the nearby locality.

This ability to clearly express her honest confidence and emphatic grit, however, is a relatively new acquisition for the young girl. Barely a year back, Nisha was just another shy and timid girl in her class who would avoid participating in most public functions or to voice her opinion. Coming from a humble family background, she was also painfully aware of the wide range of rigorous challenges that lie between her and her ambition.

“I’ve learnt a lot since I started coming to the Centre. It has made me realize that learning can be fun and that we don’t need to constantly focus on the challenges that lie ahead of us,” she says.

Nisha joined the Hero MotoCorp-sponsored Samarth Girls Programme around 6 months ago. The programme's prime focus is girls such as Nisha, who are predisposed to dropping out of school due to family, social or economic factors. Nearly half a year at the Centre, and Nisha's inherent qualities are beginning to come to the fore.

"When she joined the Centre, she was just like one of the other girls, displaying lack of confidence, though, she was always very good at studies," says Kaleem, HPPI project leader at the Dharuhera Centre.

"Within a few weeks, however, it was clear that Nisha has innate oratorical and leadership skills. The manner in which she led the classroom sessions and various activities conducted here at the Centre, it was clear that the programme was having a positive impact on her life. Today, she actively leads all the functions organised at the Centre and her teachers at school are equally impressed with her progress."

The Samarth Programme structure involves students through creative ways of knowledge generation and innovative, activity-based classroom transaction methods that help invigorate their interest in studies.

"At the Centre, we spend a lot of time playing games and performing activities that keeps the classes very interesting. Mathematics and English are my favourite subjects and every Saturday all the students participate in various activities of their choice. I mostly participate in speech competitions," says an excited Nisha.

And with an iron grit and a firm resolve, this young teenager is marching boldly towards her goal of making the world a safer place for women, with a gentle smile perpetually etched on her face.





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## Donning the Mantle in Dharuhera

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35-year-old Gita Devi is such a perceptible force of energy, that her enterprising streak can be felt even before she has spoken a word. A native of Panipat, Gita moved to Dharuhera 17 years ago, following her marriage, and she is eager to explain how she adjusted to her new environments.

“Life here has been a challenge, to say the least. I was raised in a relatively posh suburb of Panipat and was not used to living in such conditions. But once I was here, I decided to mold things according to my comfort. After all, how can one run away from home?” she says.

Gita dropped out of school after she failed to clear her 10th grade exams, but the innate zeal of the intrepid entrepreneur would not let her rest.

“I was never much interested in studies. But I was also confident that if I started a business of my own I’d give it my all and make it a success,” she says.

Gita’s aspirations found fertile ground when Hero MotoCorp, with HPPI as its implementing partner, launched the Women Skill Development Programme at its Centre in Dharuhera. After graduating from the three-month-long beautician course, Gita’s life has witnessed an unprecedented upswing that is nothing short of a dream-come-true.

“The beautician course here at the Centre is all that I really needed,” she recalls.

“To begin with, we are very fortunate to have this Centre running in the vicinity of our residence. Secondly, we are doubly fortunate to have such a talented,



patient and understanding instructor, who made an artist out of us in merely three months.”

Following the completion of her course, Gita and one of her batch mates at the Centre decided to set up and run their own beauty parlor in the area. It was a bold decision, considering the circumstances in Valmiki Colony where Gita resides, as almost all the women here are employed as sanitation workers in the local municipality and digressing from the norm would mean countering immense social pressure. But never to back down from such situations, the uninhibited Gita didn't only convince her husband to set up a beauty parlor in one of the floors of their home, she even convinced the family of her business partner.

“Initially, they were all against it. My family members were unsure if the enterprise would be successful, not to mention the social pressure, that they said would never let the business take off. But I was resolute. I told them how our family income would increase and how the social pressure will be countered as all the ladies will only come to me in order to look pretty,” she recalls with a laugh.

Today, Gita and her batch mate successfully run their beauty parlor, while also developing a regular clientele.

“We understand that we'll eventually have to get out of the residential area and set up something near the new mall that has come up close to the highway. We need to target the clients there in order to increase our revenue,” she says. “I have it all figured out. The next time you visit, I'll be one big salon owner of the Valmiki Colony,” she adds with a thunderous laughter.

Gita, like many other graduates of the Women Skill Development Programme, has found her calling and is progressively changing the status quo in the favor of women. And knowing her vigorous entrepreneurial zeal, the feisty woman may well be right about the big salon next to the new mall close to the highway.





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## Samarth Girls Programme: Nurturing Dreams into Reality

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Once one says ‘yes’ to positivity, the affirmation turns contagious. And 9-year old Divya Kumari is a living testimony of the dictum.

Since the three years she came to Dharuhera from her native Uttarakhand, the 9-year-old has experienced a sea change in her overall personality. From a diffident girl who would go to school only when her mother coaxed her to, Divya today attends classes regularly and is one of the toppers in her class at Government Primary School, HUDA, Sector-6, Dharuhera.

“Initially, I was a bit apprehensive of the new environment and of my classmates. It’s not that I was not interested in studies. Just that I had little trouble with the language and I found the school environment very uninspiring,” she says.

For Divya and many of her classmates, the launch of Hero MotoCorp-sponsored Samarth Girls Programme at a Centre close to their homes was an immense blessing. The programme, implemented by Humana People to People India, helps rekindle interest in studies amongst school-going girls who are at the risk of dropping out of school due to various reasons.

“She is one of the brightest students in her class. Academically, she had always been a good performer, but after joining the Centre her confidence level has improved significantly, along with further improvement in her grades,” says Manisha, HPPI instructor at the Centre.

“She actively participates in all the programmes at the Centre, and her

presentation and public speaking skills have improved notably over the months she's been here."

Divya's mother is a housewife while her father works as a tailor. In the initial days of starting at the Centre, the fourth grader was not very keen on attending another set of classes after finishing school and had to be forced by her mother to attend the same.

"At our school, games and activities occur very rarely; mostly on days when the number of students in the class is low," says Divya.

"Since the classes were being conducted without any charge at the Centre, my mother would repeatedly persuade me to go there. But after coming for the first few classes, I started finding the studying environment there more enjoyable than at the school, and even at home," she recalls.

"Even though we spend more time at the school than at the Centre, the quality of teaching is much better at the Centre and we learn things more efficiently there. Studies at the Centre are conducted through games and activities. Also, every Saturday we have special activities there, such as dance programme, drawing, painting and excursions."

And today, Divya's enthusiasm to attend the Centre after school percolated to her classmates who could perceive the dramatic change in her grades and presentation skills at the school.

"She was the one who motivated me to attend the Centre. Once I was there, I could see why she found it so interesting. The way madam and sir conduct the class and the general environment at the Centre is very fascinating, and all of us find it very interesting," says Poonam Bari, Divya's classmate.

Today, seven of her classmates – potentially on the cusp of dropping out of school due to various reasons – attend Samarth Girls Centre. Divya, owing to her inherent abilities, and guided by the Centre, has been an exponent of nurturing foundational academic aspirations. And the Samarth Girls Programme aims to continue to walk all such aspirants, all the way home.





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## “Concerted Effort Critical for Sustainable Change”

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Our community has been struggling on various parameters for several generations and it has resulted in a wide gap between the Valmikis and other communities in the society. While social and historical reasons were to be blamed in the past, today there is a clear lack of awareness amongst the community members about the significance of education that continues to pull us down from prospering as a community.

Over the years, the Government has taken several progressive steps towards improving access to education and for promoting better quality of life for everyone. However, we can still witness that our community members fair rather poorly across most indicators, be it education or sustainable and respectable livelihood options.

Within our colony as well, you’ll see rampant issues of alcoholism and subsequent domestic violence. Since young age, children are exposed to such ills within their families which severely impact their learning abilities at the schools in a negative way. This consequently leads to a bewildered youth which strays into nefarious and wrongful activities, and this cycle continues.

Most of the Valmiki community members are known to be a part of the sanitation workforce, but if you take a walk around the colony, you’ll find open drains, overflowing with sewage at every step and every turn. This is a strange irony that the people who clean the muck of the entire city will live in such filth themselves.

As a community elder, I have been able to mobilize several youth towards living a moral and healthy life and you'll notice that a section of this settlement reflects order and cleanliness that should ideally be a norm. But since the issue has continued for several generations, it has turned rather insidious and requires an external force to bring about lasting change.

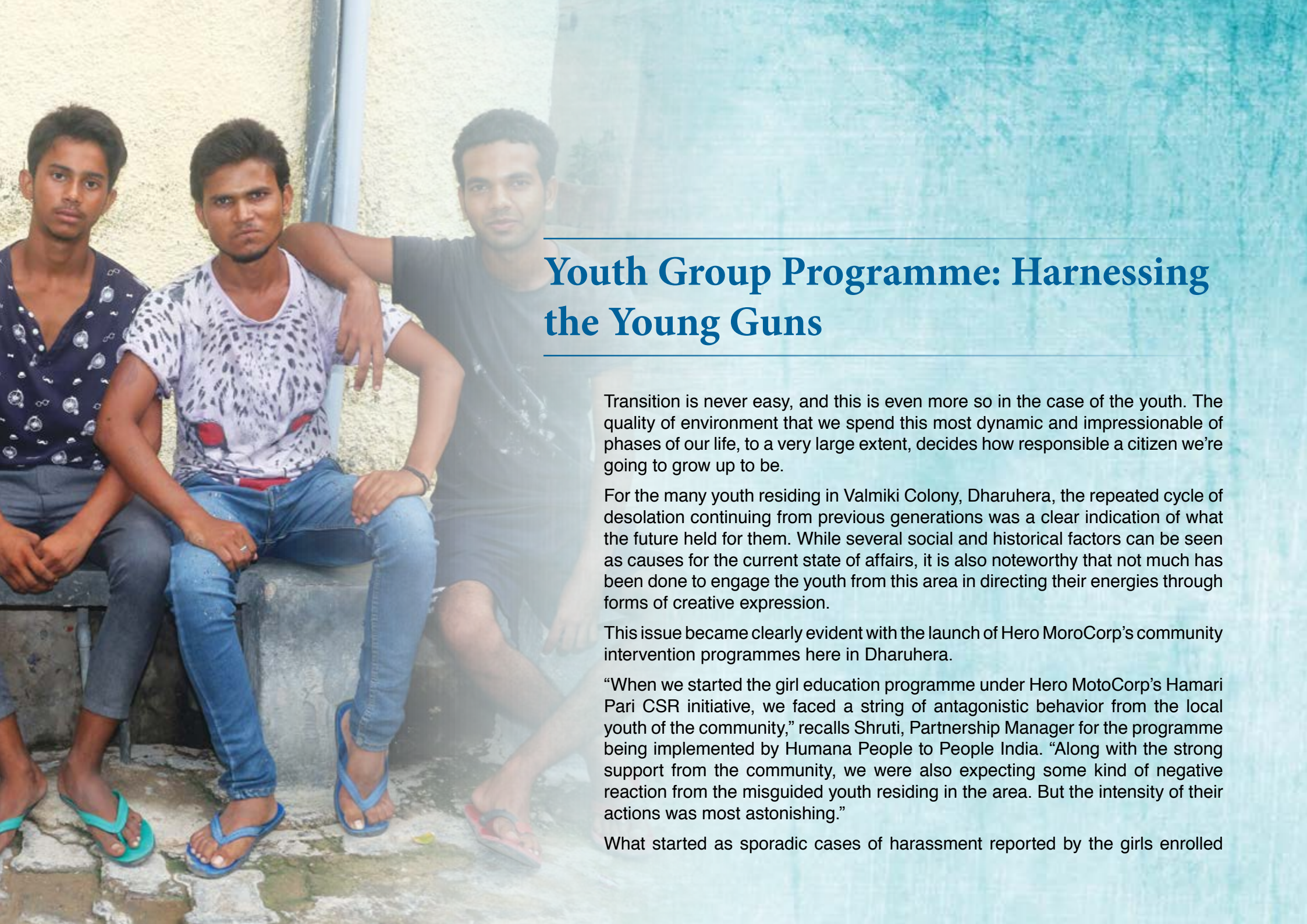
In this respect, the intervention launched by the Hero MotoCorp has been very promising. It addresses vast areas of issues such as children's education, women literacy and skilling and, most importantly, involving youth in constructive ways of living their life. I've been observing most of the programmes conducted here by Humana People to People India for nearly a year now and the transition is palpable. Under the programme, the youth has been observed to quit several bad habits such as consuming tobacco products and alcohol. They're being engaged in activities that interest them such as formally organised cricket matches and regular meetings where they discuss and try to find solutions to pestering issues faced by the community members of the settlement. This is indeed a very fruitful initiative.

It is also observed that children go to the tuition classes conducted at the Centre after returning from their schools. This is an unprecedented sight as earlier they were found to be loitering around the streets or whiling their time away after school hours. It is very interesting to see that parents are also more involved in the education of their children and can be observed to visit the Centre often while ensuring that their children attend the classes at the Centre regularly.

Our community still has a long way to go before it comes on an equal keel. It is promising to see multiple players, including the corporates and NGOs, progressively engaging in the task at hand and this will definitely be beneficial for all the different sections of the community.

*Mr Sant Lal Baudh has been living in Valmiki Colony for several years and is a respected elder and community leader actively working towards improving the conditions in the area.*





## Youth Group Programme: Harnessing the Young Guns

Transition is never easy, and this is even more so in the case of the youth. The quality of environment that we spend this most dynamic and impressionable of phases of our life, to a very large extent, decides how responsible a citizen we're going to grow up to be.

For the many youth residing in Valmiki Colony, Dharuhera, the repeated cycle of desolation continuing from previous generations was a clear indication of what the future held for them. While several social and historical factors can be seen as causes for the current state of affairs, it is also noteworthy that not much has been done to engage the youth from this area in directing their energies through forms of creative expression.

This issue became clearly evident with the launch of Hero MotoCorp's community intervention programmes here in Dharuhera.

"When we started the girl education programme under Hero MotoCorp's Hamari Pari CSR initiative, we faced a string of antagonistic behavior from the local youth of the community," recalls Shruti, Partnership Manager for the programme being implemented by Humana People to People India. "Along with the strong support from the community, we were also expecting some kind of negative reaction from the misguided youth residing in the area. But the intensity of their actions was most astonishing."

What started as sporadic cases of harassment reported by the girls enrolled

in the Samarth Programme, quickly snowballed into a repeated pattern of gross misconduct by some of the youth of the area. When the instances continued to grow unabated in spite of repeated attempts of the HPPI staff to correct the course, it was realized that a more concerted effort was needed to rectify the root cause of the problem, i.e., the misguided youth. Thus was conceived the Youth Group Programme.

“This intervention aims to provide avenues of creative expression to the adolescents of this locality so that they can be diverted towards progressive behavioral patterns from their present destructive tendencies,” says Kaleem, HPPI Project Leader. “While the programme is still in its nascent stages, we are already beginning to see its impact in the community.”

As a part of the intervention, the youth are organized into a formal group with regular meetings and activities conducted every month. The meetings have different agendas with the common thread of gender sensitization running through all of them. Recently, the collective also formed a local cricket club which is now competing against other clubs in the area.

“For the first time I feel like being a part of a larger group,” says 19-year-old Preetam Singh, a member of the Youth Group Programme. “It’s great to see so many of my friends joining the group and coming out of old habits of consuming tobacco products and drinking.”

The impact is also felt by the adolescent girls participating in other programmes being conducted under the Hero MotoCorp umbrella.

“Since the Youth Group started, we feel much safer coming to and from the Centre as most of the boys are kept involved in constructive activities,” says 14-year-old Nisha Ranga, a student of the Samarth Girls Programme. “There is a palpable change in the attitude of the boys towards girls since the group activities commenced.”

As a part of the Youth Group Programme, HPPI aims to enrol qualified youth from the community into relevant ITI courses, while simultaneously providing skill trainings to those who lack requisite academic qualifications.



# Different Components of the Programme

## ❖ Kadam-The Step-up Programme

Socio-economic background of a family compels many children from marginalized sections of our society to stay away from school. HPPI's Kadam-The Step-up Programme is designed to provide a holistic learning and mainstreaming framework for Out of School Children (OOSC) by gradually building their competencies and social skills in a structured manner, and enrolling them in formal schools. The multifaceted approach of the programme starts with mobilising identified OOSC in a particular area and nurturing the development of foundation skills (educational, social and personal skills) during the course of the programme, till they are comfortably placed in a formal school, in age-appropriate grades. The Programme is an action initiative formulated with the following objectives:

- To provide accelerated learning through an engaging process with suitable teaching learning materials
- To plug the learning deficit up to grade 5
- To build quality life foundations and catapult children into the mainstream education at an age-appropriate level

## ❖ Samarth Programme

A serious impediment to continued education, especially for the first-generation literates, is the lack of adequate hand-holding and educational support that they require in their foundational years of learning. Owing to illiteracy amongst parents, this is particularly true for marginalized sections of the society. Inability to cope up with school curriculum pulls out many – particularly girls – from the schooling regime.

HPPI's Samarth programme caters to the challenge of high dropout rate amongst marginalized adolescent girls. The organization follows a meticulously designed procedure to identify such girls from the vulnerable strata who are enrolled in schools but are susceptible to dropping out. The programme provides remedial classes to the girls during post-school hours even as they are motivated to progress on their educational trajectory. The programme also addresses the issue of parent's unwillingness to incur much expenditure for their girl child's education by extending a variety of material support like stationery and books to them to ensure their continued enrolment.



### ❖ Skills and Livelihood Programmes

HPPI is dedicated to the cause of Women Empowerment. Economic sustainability constitutes a major component of holistic women empowerment. Through its skills training programme, HPPI contributes to women empowerment by equipping women with vocational skills. Training in such skills open up numerous avenues for employment and economic independence for women.

Interested women from the community are trained in basic tailoring and beautician courses ranging for a period of 3 months. It is further followed up with a 3 month advance course for those who want to augment these skills and gain professional expertise. HPPI employs ITI-trained professionals to coach women and girls in these skill centres. Batch sizes are limited to 15 candidates per batch in order to ensure individual attention and care. Women are counseled about ways in which they can make use of these imparted skills to enhance their family savings and also generate income. Entrepreneurial opportunities are envisaged and explained wherever feasible during the course of the programme.

### ❖ Youth Groups

Due to a lack of proper education and guidance amongst the youth of Valmiki community residing in Dharuhera, large proportions of them are found to be disoriented and disconnected with the society's issues. Consequently, these youth engage in malpractices like eve-teasing and get involved in ill-habits like consuming tobacco and alcohol. Such behavior has a cascading impact on the other sections of the community. Most often the direct targets of such behaviour are adolescent girls of the community who are subjected to harassment, leading to a sense of fear amongst them and their parents. Concerns for girls' safety cause many parents to withdraw their daughters from schools.

HPPI through its youth club initiative makes efforts to give a positive direction to the lives such youth. They are counseled to be weaned away from addictions and socially condemnable activities and simultaneously engaged in constructive pursuits.

They are engaged in discussions on local social problems and motivated to propose solutions by being sensitized towards issues like gender equality, cleanliness etc. They are also attached to ITI institutions so as to gain relevant vocational skills, and engaged in recreational activities, such as forming cricket teams and contesting with other clubs at local level.



## About Hero MotoCorp

Hero MotoCorp Ltd. is the world's largest manufacturer of two wheelers based in India. Besides focusing on being the best in the world market, Hero MotoCorp, also strongly believes in the philosophy of giving back to the society. Under its Hamari Pari CSR initiative, Hero MotoCorp, aims to celebrate the enormous potential that each young girl has, to fulfill her dreams of a brighter future. Hamari Pari ensures that over 60,000 young underprivileged adolescent girls grow up in the right conditions, with the right support and in the right environment. Hamari Pari is fostering education and opportunity, and in a larger sense, ensuring a fair chance for each girl beneficiary.

## About Humana People to People India

Humana People to People India (HPPI) is a development organization registered as a not-for-profit company under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 since 21st May 1998. It is a non-political, non-religious body that works as part of civil society, to strengthen the capacities for cooperation within underprivileged groups. Actively working with the members of the local community, the organization's focus is to address issues on education, child health, financial inclusion, women empowerment, sustainable livelihoods and mitigating climate change.



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