



Education in Action

Stories of Impact and Empowerment



Case Stories from Project Kadam+ UP



HUMANA
PEOPLE TO PEOPLE INDIA



RIST
RURAL INDIAN SUPPORTING TRUST



Foreword

- Shweta Rawat

Education in Action: Stories of Impact and Empowerment

Dear Reader,

Within this booklet, you will find more than stories—you will encounter living proof of transformation. The collection of narratives brings to life the journeys ignited by the people within a handful of educational projects implemented by Humana People to People India (HPPI), and made possible through partnership grants from the foundation my family and I started almost 20 years ago. We are the Rural India Supporting Trust (RIST).

Our collective journey with HPPI started in 2018 with realization of the Kadam+UP project in Uttar Pradesh. Kadam—meaning “step up” in Hindi—embodies its mission to lift learning levels for hundreds of thousands of children in India.

In 2019, I had an opportunity to visit the project. I recall walking through a classroom in Meerut - feeling the energy of change. I watched as children, grouped in dynamic TRIOs, solving challenges together, supporting one another, and bridging gaps in understanding - not through traditional lessons, but with active engagement amongst everyone in the classroom. A classroom buzzing with energy and a zest for learning. Later that same day, I met passionate trainees at HPPI's Necessary Teacher Training Program — young women and men dedicating two years of their lives to the training for becoming the teachers their communities deserve.

That visit made the impact tangible. It moved RIST to deepen our commitment. With a second grant, the Kadam Learning Enhancement Program expanded into new districts, this time integrating teacher training directly into six Government of Uttar Pradesh run District Institutes for Education and Training (DIETs).

The result? An efficient partnership between Civil Society and the Government of Uttar Pradesh, and a powerful cycle of empowerment: skilled teachers engaged with confident learners.

To date, our partnership with HPPI has touched the lives of over 150,000 children and prepared more than 4,000 new teachers. Yet behind these numbers are human stories. Stories of struggle, perseverance, and hope. In this booklet, we share six of them.

Three stories illuminate the extraordinary dedication of HPPI/DIET-trained teachers. They are not only educators but community leaders—reimagining schools, inspiring students, and planting seeds of change.

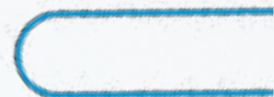
The other three stories follow children who, just a few years ago, were out of school. Through the Kadam Program, they rediscovered learning. Today, they are not just attending school—they are excelling, dreaming, and forging futures full of possibility. Together, these narratives remind us that education is not a static gift, but an active force. It moves, builds, and liberates. It turns uncertainty into opportunity and potential into progress.

We invite you to read, reflect, and join us in believing—in the power of learning, the strength of partnership, and the boundless impact of education in action.

With gratitude to the learners, teachers, the Department of Education of Uttar Pradesh and to Humana People to People and Planet Aid for their unwavering commitment to participatory learning for life.



(Shweta Rawat)
Managing Director and Co-founder
Rural India Supporting Trust



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Introduction

Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, has the largest government school system in the country, accounting for over 258,000 schools, of which around 56% are government-operated or aided schools. This is more than double the number of schools in any of the other states in India. A schooling system this large has its own complexities and challenges. The efforts have been made to improve the level of education in the state; still, the challenges exist at the levels of low enrolment ratio and drop-outs as well as low learning levels despite some progress seen in the last few years (MOE, 2024; MOE, 2023; ASER, 2024).

The Project Kadam+ (UP) worked to bring positive change in the elementary education and bridge the learning level gaps of the students by providing quality education accessible to 33,600 children. The Project worked with the children within grades first to fifth, aiming to reach out 240 Government Primary Schools (GPS) over a period of three years (June 2018 to June 2021) across six districts of Uttar Pradesh (i.e. Meerut, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Jhansi, Bahraich and Shravasti). Project Kadam+ was executed in collaboration between the Government of UP and Humana People to People India (HPPI) with the support of the Rural India Supporting Trust (RIST).

Currently, Project Kadam+UP25 is carrying forward the overarching goal to achieve impact at scale, by improving learning levels of the students in government primary schools in India in a sustainable and replicable manner. The Project aims to enable teachers in the public schooling system to become effective change agents and impact drivers for students in their learning and holistic development, inculcating foundation skills in knowledge and well-being in students, a pathway towards sustainable and progressive lifelong learning. Project Kadam+UP25 is supporting the learning enhancement of 72,000 primary school children, building capacity of 2,400 government primary school teachers and building a network of 1,500 DIET alumni working as primary school teachers.

This compendium encapsulates the success stories of teachers and students who aligned and carried forward the goal of equitable education under the Project Kadam+ (UP).



About HPPI's Education Programmes

Kadam Programme

The efficacy of government primary school teachers is enhanced by the Kadam Programme. It is a school-based educational intervention that is designed to enhance the learning levels of primary school children through a structured, self-navigated process while building the capacity of the teachers in facilitating the learning process, learning assessment and value-building activities.

Necessary Teacher Training (NeTT) Programme

The NeTT program equips the to-be teachers with a deep understanding of the children and the communities they come from. The program builds attitudes and values in the student-teachers that equips them well to introduce innovative methods such as scaffolding, self-driven and self-paced learning, that are more effective in facilitating learning, representing a new crop of teachers as envisioned in the NEP 2020.

Kadam students working Trio



Transformative Road to Education



"I consider my students as my second family," chirps Rizwana happily. Rizwana Paween is a teacher at Hajipura* Primary School in Baragaon block, Jhansi district, Uttar Pradesh, India. She teaches 26 students in grades one and two, out of a total of 69 students in the school. Posted there in March 2019, Rizwana has been teaching for nearly six years. Initially, she and the principal managed all the classes, but two years ago a third teacher joined, easing the workload. Rizwana loves living in Jhansi, especially the local Bundelkhandi language and the area's spirit of humanity and courage.

After Rizwana earned her bachelor degree, she was selected to do her Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) at the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) in the small town of Baruasagar in Jhansi, where she joined the Necessary Teacher Training (NeTT) Programme. Rizwana states, "the activities and training methods we experienced were truly mind-blowing."

Rizwana narrates with nostalgia, "At NeTT Jhansi, we were a group of 150 students. We often worked in functional groups of six for various study tasks. We also engaged in debates and Common Meetings, discussing a wide range of topics—not just those from the syllabus. Every student had the chance to speak up for themselves, developing a personality that reflected both the realities of the world and strong moral and ethical principles. While exploring these social issues, we became more aware of our surroundings and the challenges facing our society.

* Hajipura village has a population of 544 people according to the 2011 census of India.

It dawned upon us that a teacher is not only responsible for the students in their classroom but also plays an important role in benefiting the larger community around the school.”

Rizwana carried the warmth and values from her NeTT Jhansi training into her teaching practice at Hajipura Primary School. She prioritises giving them love, care, and support, creating a comfortable environment where they can express themselves freely. This mutual understanding helps make daily teaching and learning more effective and meaningful.

The Roadblocks

When Rizwana Paween first joined Hajipura Primary School, she was shocked by the extremely poor conditions. According to her, “The school had not been maintained for 20 years and lacked basic facilities like drinking water, working toilets, furniture, and a proper building structure. The roof leaked during rains, classrooms were flooded, and students sat on old mats. One classroom was filled with junk, and the damaged floors and broken windows allowed dangerous animals to enter. There were no toilets, no sweeper, and the school had no main gate, so animals roamed in and out freely. The road to the school was also in terrible condition, making daily access difficult.”

She further details, “Another major issue at Hajipura Primary School was the frequent loss of electricity, as villagers often cut and rerouted the wires for personal use.” Despite repeated repairs, the problem persisted, leaving students and teachers without fans in the heat. Many parents also used to complain about the lack of basic amenities for their children. The only pleasant spot was a large banyan tree in the yard, where students and staff could sit and cool off. Rizwana hoped to create a sitting area around it for the students.

Stepping Stones for Change

Resolute to find a solution, Rizwana began engaging with the village Pradhan*, a woman who also led nearby villages. Through regular visits—some along with the school principal and others on her own—Rizwana shared the school's problems, especially the lack of drinking water and toilets. Over 4–5 months, she persistently communicated the students’ struggles, eventually prompting the Pradhan to promise that she would do her best to solve the problems.

The village Pradhan kept her promise and took action to improve Hajipura Primary School. She coordinated with the village secretary and development officer to secure government funds, which were used for major renovations.

Rizwana narrating her surprise tells, “As I arrived on my motorbike on the first day of school after the summer vacations, I observed that the 200-meter road to the school was no longer the old muddy path. It was paved with cement slabs. As I came closer to the school, I could hardly believe my eyes. The whole school and its surroundings was being transformed into a better version of itself!”

* Pradhan is the elected head of a Gram Panchayat, the basic unit of local self-government in rural India.

During the summer vacation of 2020, the school underwent a remarkable transformation: the muddy road was paved, a new main gate and school sign were installed, the schoolyard was leveled and cleaned, and a proper drainage system was built. Toilets were constructed, the roof and floors were repaired, tiles were laid, and a water system with a submersible pump and storage tank was installed. Furthermore, in November 2020, the school received 16 desks and benches donated by the nearby Heidelberg Cement Factory, which had also supported other local schools.

"I called and thanked Heidelberg Cement Factory for donating desks and benches to their school and invited them to visit," Rizwana explains. A month later, the factory's HR manager visited and initiated further support. The factory installed a hand pump in the village, raised the school boundary wall, repainted classrooms and walls, provided new windows with mosquito netting, and supplied a proper blackboard, whiteboards with markers, an LCD TV, and school bags with supplies for each student. Strengthened by the infrastructure improvement, Rizwana and the school staff organised support from villagers in regularly cleaning the school campus and the toilets.

Towards Quality Education

"Every day, I take some time out of my subject classes to talk to my students and give each of them a place to express whatever they want," narrates Rizwana while explaining her teaching methods. She further explains, "When I teach the class, I always talk to the students about what they already know before introducing something new. Since their mother tongue is not the Hindi language (the language the curriculum is in) but the Bundelkhandi language, I use pictures to help them understand better. Teaching in a language different from a student's mother tongue makes learning difficult, as it hinders understanding of complex concepts. The use of colouring books also supports the students' learning. I try to inspire my students to be creative, so I have learnt to draw letters of the English alphabet and then transform them into animals. I have also adapted the Ludo game with the Hindi alphabets so that the students can learn while playing."



Rizwana attempts to include fun in teaching and learning and at times use role plays to understand stories. "Sometimes, I am a friend to my students, enjoying myself and playing with them. At other times, I share inspiring stories on my tablet, which the students listen to through our Bluetooth speaker, or I play music from my phone to engage them better," explains Rizwana.

"To challenge the students and evaluate their progress, I give them surprise tests, and I always make sure to reward and appreciate their efforts. When I really want to make them feel special, I serve

Maggi (bouillon) or make Kheer, an Indian dessert made of sweet milk pudding,” shares Rizwana.

With improved basic facilities like clean toilets, drinking water, furniture, a smart TV, games, and a safe, clean environment, students now learn in a more comfortable and supportive setting. A friendly teaching method and approachable attitude has helped students become more expressive, confident, and emotionally connected. Over time, once-shy students have grown into attentive, thoughtful and talkative learners. Daily yoga, morning assemblies with positive messages, and a focus on oral learning methods support their development. Rizwana highlights, “Since the students’ mother tongue is Bundelkhandi, they are more active in numeracy than in literacy, so right now I am focusing on improving their literacy.”

Rizwana holds parent meetings on Saturdays when needed to discuss student issues and work together on solutions. Detailing further, Rizwana narrates, “To encourage parents, I share videos of their children’s progress.” Parents also support extracurricular activities, such as providing materials like mud for toy-making. Most importantly, parents contribute by helping with homework, preparing their children for school, and ensuring regular attendance, which supports the students’ overall growth and future.

Rizwana concludes, “I strive to support students fully while encouraging them to help others and face challenges with courage. I am also learning and growing as an educator and as an individual. I believe education leads to personal growth and has a positive impact on both the individual and the community.”



Education for Holistic Development



Geetesh Sharma graduated from the District Institute of Education and Training, Barwa Sagar, Jhansi learning through the NeTT Programme. He is a government primary school teacher in Uttar Pradesh. In September 2018, he was appointed as an Assistant Teacher at Marjha Primary School, where he also took on the role of in-charge head teacher due to the absence of permanent staff. Geetesh served in this role for four years, teaching grades 4 and 5, while two guest teachers handled grades 1 to 3.

Looking back, Geetesh narrates his experience, “Upon joining, I faced numerous challenges: broken classroom floors, unpainted walls, a leaking roof, poor toilet facilities, a low school boundary allowing outsiders in, low student attendance, poor educational quality, misused development funds, and an inactive School Management Committee. As a head teacher, I had to address these concerns.”

Boosting Enrollment and Building Better Schools

Adamant to find solutions, Geetesh held a meeting with the teachers at his school and tried to draw their attention to smaller issues. “We focused on what was within our control. Alongside academics, we also emphasised sports to make the school more engaging for students and to encourage their involvement,” he explains.



While describing his approach towards teaching Geetesh describes, “We applied the same teaching methods that our NeTT teachers had used with us. We began interacting with students in a friendlier manner and became more involved with them, which led to students staying longer and showing more interest in school.”

Subsequently, Geetesh held a meeting with the School Management Committee (SMC) and made them aware of the school's condition. He explains, “I began organising SMC meetings every month. Together with the SMC, I used the school funds to provide basic facilities. I facilitated fixing of the

toilets by installing water pipelines and taps so that students would no longer face difficulties in using them. Then, I arranged for the entire school to be whitewashed. Whiteboards were installed in every classroom. Some of the school's windows and doors also needed repair, which we carried out. We also provided sports equipment to increase students' interest in school. All of this work was done using the school funds and was made possible through the continued support and motivation of the SMC.”

A few months after my appointment, Geetesh began focusing on the other major problems of the school. These included water leakage from the classroom ceilings, the low boundary wall, and the need for proper tiling on the classroom floors.

According to Geetesh, “To address these infrastructural issues, I held a meeting with the teachers, and together we decided to involve and seek support from the villagers. We planned to raise awareness among them and motivate them by explaining that improving the school would benefit the entire village as the village children would not need to go elsewhere for their education.”

Several meetings were held with the villagers and many donated to the school, and with the funds collected, the roofs were plastered to stop water leakage in the classrooms. Also, a boundary wall was constructed to prevent anti-social elements from entering after school hours. These efforts led to the development of a cleaner and healthier school environment.

Although the school had improved significantly, installing tiles in the classrooms remained a major and costly task. After meetings with the teachers and SMC, the issue was taken to the village administrator, who arranged government funding to complete the work. Four years of dedicated work from September 2018 to July 2022 marked a major achievement, transforming the once-undeveloped school into a well-equipped, modern institution with improved facilities and education quality. The teacher then encouraged parents of children in private schools to consider enrolling them in the improved government school, resulting in increased enrollment.



Building Climate Resilience

In July 2022, Geetesh was transferred to Primary School Nandkhas in Jhansi district. Later, in September 2023, he had the opportunity to participate in a workshop held in Murewa, Zimbabwe. He explains, “During this workshop, I learnt a lot about global warming and climate change. Inspired, I decided to build a Climate Centre in my school. As soon as I returned from the workshop, I began preparing a roadmap for a Climate Centre’s development.”

A Climate Centre is envisaged to be a community hub that organises activities, events, workshops, exhibitions, talks, and assemblies to engage people from diverse backgrounds, providing evidence-based knowledge and accessible resources to inspire and enable meaningful action mitigating climate crisis.

“I presented my Climate Centre idea to the school council, which was supported by all the teachers. They agreed to cooperate in developing the Centre,” expresses Geetesh.

A group consisting of 5 teachers and 10 students was made to be a part of this centre. Geetesh details, “As our first activity under the Climate Centre, the group decided to develop an organic kitchen garden. However, there was no fertile land available in the school. With the help of the village head and the School Management Committee, we prepared a boundary and filled it with fertile soil. Then, our group worked together to dig the soil and create small beds. With support from community members, we sowed vegetable seeds for the kitchen garden.” The group

divided responsibilities and began taking care of the garden—watering it regularly, removing weeds, and performing other necessary tasks.

Through consistent effort, the vegetable plants began to grow successfully, and fresh green vegetables sourced from the kitchen garden started getting used in the mid-day meals prepared at the school. This allowed the students to receive better nutrition through the inclusion of vegetables in their diet.

Geetesh shares confidently, “After seeing our garden, teachers from nearby schools were impressed and inspired to create similar kitchen gardens in their own schools. Next, we plan to build an exhibition room at our school, which will include various displays to raise awareness about global warming and climate change.”

Empowering Education through Teacher Leadership and Community Engagement



Swati Singh, a dedicated primary school teacher from Kudla village in Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh, has been teaching for the past six years at her current school. A graduate from the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Meerut, Swati is also a participant of the Necessary Teacher Training (NeTT) Programme run by HPPI since 2013.

"Through the NeTT Programme, I learnt not just what to teach, but how to teach effectively—how to handle children with care and understand their learning needs. It completely changed the way I saw my role as a teacher."

When Swati joined the school, she faced numerous challenges. The school had over 400 enrolled students, and she was responsible for Grade 1, which alone had 72 students. Managing such a large group made it difficult to give each child individual attention.

"I realised early on that I couldn't reach every student effectively in such a crowded classroom. I spoke to my headmaster about it, and with his support, we divided the class into two sections. That made a big difference."

Another gap she noticed was the lack of parent-teacher interaction. "There were no parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) when I joined. I strongly felt that involving parents could help improve student engagement. I proposed regular PTMs, and thankfully, the headmaster supported me," narrates Swati.

The first PTM had poor attendance, but Swati persisted. She details, "Slowly, more and more parents started coming. Now, we have regular PTMs, and they've had a real impact—enrollment has increased, student attendance has improved, and there's a stronger connection between teachers and parents."

Emboldened by her early success, Swati decided to take a deep dive into the challenges faced by the school. She states, "We sat together as a team and listed down every challenge we faced. We asked ourselves: What can we do with what we already have? I shared methods I learnt from the NeTT Programme, and we decided to begin experimenting in our classrooms."

Swati introduced peer learning using student trios, encouraged group activities, and started using the local language to connect better with students.

"Once I began speaking to my students in their language, a new bond formed. They opened up. They smiled more. Learning became natural."

Strengthening Community Engagement

One of Swati's strongest contributions has been in building community trust. She and her team began conducting door-to-door surveys, parent counseling, and education rallies to raise awareness about the importance of schooling.

Swati explains, "We realised that if parents don't feel involved, education stays inside the classroom. During PTMs and SMC meetings, we started informing parents about government schemes. Slowly, they became our partners."



Infrastructure and Beautification

Infrastructure posed another serious challenge. The classroom floors were damaged, rainwater leaked from the roof, and toilets and school grounds were not cleaned regularly.

Swati explains, "During the rainy season, water would drip from the ceiling, and it was disheartening to see children struggling in such conditions. It made me more determined to push for improvements."

"We mobilised our headmaster and requested the Gram Pradhan to release funds. With that, we repaired toilets, painted walls, and beautified the school. Each teacher took ownership of one classroom for cleaning and decorating."



A small study corner was created, and the team even purchased a sports kit, ensuring each class had an hour of playtime daily—making the school a more vibrant and joyful place.

Pedagogical Tools and Innovation



Swati also embraced tools like the Kadam+ Programme toolkit and SPINE teaching materials from Humana People to People India.

"The Kadam toolkit shifted my classroom from teacher-centered to child-centered. Now, I act as a facilitator while students solve exercises on their own. It's magical to see their confidence grow."

She also introduced "trio tasks" for peer learning, and regularly uses SPINE materials for lesson planning and student engagement.

Environmental Awareness and Global Exposure



In July 2025, Swati's dedication was recognised when she was invited to Murgwi, Zimbabwe, to participate in an Action Planning Workshop on Planet Protection.

"It was life-changing. I came back with new knowledge about climate change and sustainable practices. Since then, I've started working with parents and community members on soil health, plantation drives, and promoting drip irrigation. As teachers, we can educate not just children, but entire communities," Swati expresses enthusiastically.

A School Transformed

From a neglected building to a thriving learning center, Swati's school is now a place where students arrive with excitement, teachers innovate daily, and parents participate with pride.

"Six years ago, this place was just a building without learning. Today, it's a real school—full of energy, color, and life. And though we've achieved so much, we know there's more to do. Together, we're moving forward—for our students, for our community, and for our planet."



Kindling Change - Manna Devi's Journey Through Education



In the small village of Badhai Purwa in Shravasti District, Uttar Pradesh, lives Manna Devi, a 14-year-old girl whose story reflects the transformative power of education. The eldest of four siblings, Manna once spent her days caring for her younger brothers and sisters—Ankit, Raju and Neelam—and helping her father collect firewood from the forest. Her father, Radheshyam, worked as a daily wage labourer, while her mother washed utensils in neighbouring homes to make ends meet.

“I didn’t even know what a school was like. My job was to take care of my siblings while my parents worked. That was my routine, every single day,” shares Manna Devi.

But everything changed in 2019, when a survey team from the Kadam Programme visited her village.

Reaching Out: The First Step

During a local village survey, the Kadam surveyors stopped by the Anganwadi Centre to ask about children who were not enrolled in school. That’s when they first heard about Manna.

They visited her home, where they met Manna’s mother. Understandably, she hesitated.

"I cannot send her to school," her mother said. "I wash utensils in other people's houses, and she looks after the children."

But the Kadam team didn't give up. They explained that the Kadam Centre offers free learning support, aiming to help out-of-school children rejoin mainstream education. Through regular and patient counseling, multiple visits, and reassurance, they were able to convince her mother. Most importantly, Manna wanted to learn.

"I still remember that feeling. The very next day, I walked into the Kadam Centre. I didn't know how to hold a pencil, but I was excited."

The Transformation Begins



Initially, Manna found it hard to attend regularly. She was shy and academically weak. But things started to shift when her teacher, Anurag Mishra, placed her in a Trio group with two other girls. She began participating in theme-based activities and soon started enjoying her time at the Centre.

"In my Trio group, I wasn't alone anymore. We helped each other. Slowly, I began to love learning," expresses Manna.

Manna's personal hygiene improved, she started arriving on time, and she took interest in classroom activities. She also looked forward to school celebrations, exposure visits and parent-teacher meetings.

"For the first time, I saw life beyond my home and the forest. It felt like the world was opening up."

Back to School: A New Chapter

Thanks to her progress at the Kadam Centre, Manna was soon mainstreamed into Grade 3 at Primary School Badhai Purwa. She received a uniform, textbooks, and mid-day meals from the school—facilities she had never imagined having before. Manna reiterates, "Wearing that uniform feels like wearing hope. I am finally a student."

Her transformation didn't stop there. Manna began encouraging her siblings to attend school. She also started motivating her friends and Trio members, often checking on them if they were absent.

Where She Stands Today

Now studying in Grade 8 at UPS Junior High School, Babraipur, Manna has blossomed into a confident, enthusiastic learner. She actively participates in class, even in subjects she once feared—like Maths and English.

"Earlier, I was afraid to speak. Now, I answer questions in class, dance during events, and even play kho-kho with my classmates," elucidates Manna.

Manna also supports her mother with household chores and teaches her younger siblings at home. She's no longer the girl who only watched others live their lives—she is living hers.

Dreams for the Future

With education has come a new vision. Manna now dreams of becoming a doctor—a goal rooted in the everyday health challenges she sees in her village. She explains, "Many people in our village fall ill because they don't know how to keep themselves healthy. I want to change that. I want to treat them, guide them and make them aware."

Manna's dreams go beyond herself. She wants to raise awareness about education in her community and ensure that no child is left behind.

A Role Model in Her Village

Through her hard work, support from the Kadam Centre, and determination, Manna has become a beacon of hope in her village. Once confined to chores and caregiving, she now leads by example, inspiring others to pursue education.

"I may have started late, but I'm not stopping now. My journey has just begun—and I want others to walk with me," beams Manna self-assuredly.

Manna's story reminds us that when education reaches a child, it doesn't just change a life—it transforms a community.



Catching Dreams, Changing Lives: The Power of Education



Raqib's Journey of Learning and Leadership

In the quiet village of Akbarpur, nestled in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, lives Raqib, a bright and determined 15-year-old boy. Born into a large family of nine siblings, Raqib is the youngest. His father, Khalil, is a vegetable farmer, and his mother, Rahnuma, passed away when he was still very young. Raqib lives with his siblings.

Raqib "I am currently studying in Grade 10 at Sunbeam Inter College, Meerut. I have six brothers and three sisters, and I am the youngest in the family. We didn't have a school in our village, so I had never stepped into one before I joined the Kadam Centre."

For years, education was out of reach for Raqib and other children in his village. The nearest school was more than two kilometers away, and none of the children from Akbarpur attended school.

"Before the Kadam Centre, I didn't study at all. We just roamed around the streets and played all day. That was the norm," explains Raqib.

That changed when Nishant Sir, a Kadam teacher, came to Akbarpur as part of a door-to-door survey. He visited Raqib's home, spoke to his elder brother, and registered Raqib and two of his brothers for the Kadam Centre.

A New Beginning at the Kadam Centre

Reflecting on his journey, Raqib narrates, "When I first came to the Centre, I didn't even know how to hold a pencil properly. Sir took a baseline test and gave me a Grade 1 book. At first, it didn't feel interesting. But soon, things began to change."



The teacher used engaging teaching methods, real-life learning experiences, and peer group learning through Trio groups, where three students worked and learned together.

"I really liked the Trio group. We helped each other. Slowly, I became interested in the activities, and I started enjoying learning. The book had fun things to do, like painting and drawing. That kept me going," explains Raqib.

Raqib initially struggled with Maths and English, but his teacher noticed and provided him extra support.

He explains, "Maths was my biggest fear. But Sir kept asking me questions in a playful way. Slowly, I began to understand—and now, Maths is my favourite subject!"

He actively took part in theme-based projects, crafts using household items, and environmental activities like drawing with leaves and participating in rallies and street plays. He eagerly awaited Children's Day events, where he proudly presented his projects.

Inspired by a Role Model

A key influence in Raqib's life has been his eldest brother, Gulam Hasan, who became the first graduate from their village and secured a government job through the Multi-Tasking Staff exam.

"Bhaiya is my hero. He helped our Kadam teacher with village surveys and awareness rallies. He gave motivational speeches, and I watched him inspire people. I want to be like him," expresses Raqib.

After the Kadam Centre: A Journey of Confidence

After spending a year at the Centre, Raqib was mainstreamed into Grade 3 at Government Primary School Number 1, and continued up to Grade 5. The foundational learning he acquired at the Kadam Centre helped him to adjust quickly.

In his own words, “I wasn’t afraid anymore. I could speak up, answer questions, and even help others in class. I used the Trio method with my new friends. We learned better together.”

Raqib participated in school sports, cultural activities, and maintained a balance between studies and play. With the support of his elder brother, he enrolled in an Inter College for Grade 6 and steadily moved forward in his education. Currently, Raqib is in Grade 10, a confident student who takes active part in academic and extracurricular activities.

“I never thought I would come this far. From never going to school, to now solving math problems, helping friends, and planning for the future—it feels amazing,” gushes Raqib.

Looking Ahead: Dreams of Engineering

Education has not only given Raqib knowledge but also a vision for the future. “I want to become a good engineer. I want to build things, solve problems, and do something meaningful. I know the path won’t be easy, but I am ready to work hard,” Raqib quips.

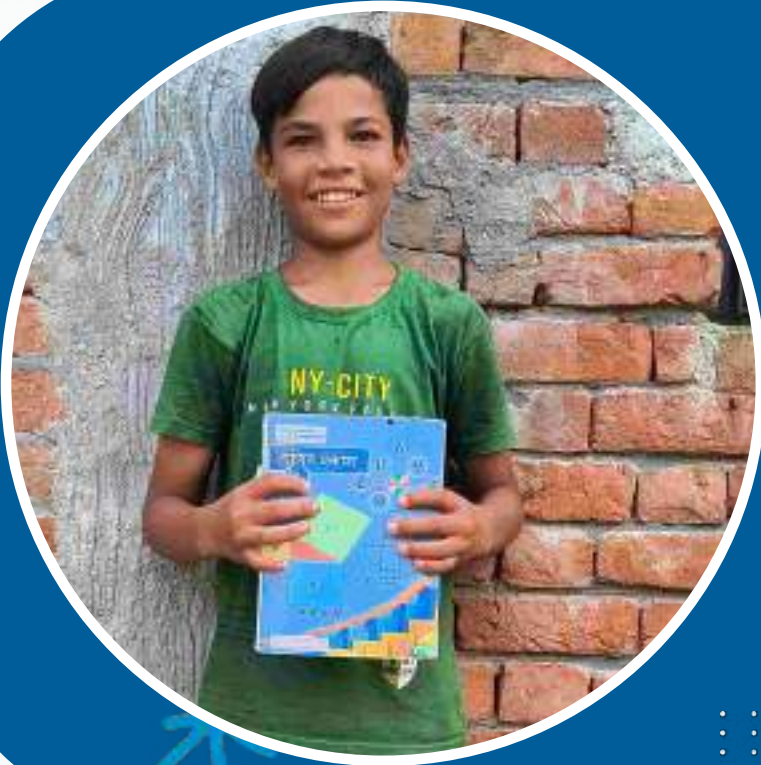
A Life Transformed through Learning

Raqib’s journey reflects the power of access, support and belief. From a child who had never stepped into a school to a high-school student with dreams and direction, Raqib represents what is possible when education reaches the unreachable. Through the Kadam Centre, a committed teacher, and family support, Raqib has discovered his potential—and now works each day to turn his dreams into reality.

Raqib concludes, “Education changed my life. Now, I want to change the lives of others around me”



Step by Step How Kadam Led Talib to the School Bench and Beyond



In Akbarpur Aurangabad village in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, 13-year-old Talib once lived a life typical for many children around him—far removed from books, classrooms, or the idea of formal education. Born into a family of daily-wage labourers, Talib's father, Noshad, worked in nearby fields, while his mother, Nashrin, managed the household.

In Talib's words, "There was no school in our village. We just played in the fields or near the graveyard. School was something we'd only heard of."

Without access to a school nearby, Talib, like many other children, spent his days helping in the fields or playing aimlessly. His life seemed to follow the same path as his parents—until something changed.

Steps in a New Direction

In 2019, the Kadam Programme of HPPI arrived in Talib's village. Education Volunteers Nishant Kumar and Adesh Kumar began visiting households to identify out-of-school children and build awareness about the importance of education.

"We were playing near the graveyard when Nishant Sir and Adesh Sir came and asked us why we weren't in school," Talib recalls, "I told them there was no school here."

The volunteers later met Talib's grandfather, who listened attentively as they explained the Kadam approach—activity-based, child-friendly education that helps children bridge the learning gap and eventually mainstream into government schools. Encouraged by their words, his grandfather agreed to enroll Talib and his younger brother in the newly set-up Kadam Centre near their home.

Finding His Footing

Talib's early days at the centre weren't easy. He was irregular in attendance, often skipping class to accompany his parents to the fields. "Sometimes the teachers would come to the fields and bring me back to class," Talib says with a smile. He continues, "I didn't understand the value of school at first."

But the Centre's interactive activities, Kadam Step Books, and peer group learning began to spark his interest. Through songs, games, and real-life learning, Talib was introduced to subjects like Math, Hindi, English and Environmental Studies.

"I couldn't even do simple addition. Now I've learned multiplication tables up to 25! I actually enjoy solving math problems now," Talib beams confidently.

Gaining Confidence and Skills

The Saturday theme-based activities, monthly presentations, and group projects helped Talib build not just academic skills, but also confidence.

"At first, I was very shy. But performing in front of my classmates and parents made me confident. I even took part in rallies, cultural events, and cleaning drives," narrates Talib.

The Centre became more than just a place of learning—it became a space for self-expression, teamwork and community participation.

Mainstreamed and Moving Ahead

After a year at the Kadam Centre, Talib was mainstreamed into Grade 2 at Government Primary School Aurangabad No 1, according to his age. With the strong foundation he built at the Kadam Centre, he successfully completed Grades 3, 4, and 5, and currently he is a Grade 7 student at Junior High School, Aurangabad.



According to Talib, "Kadam Centre gave me a start. It made school easy to understand and fun to be part of."

A Vision for the Future

Talib now dreams of a different future—one where he can give back to his community in uniform. He poignantly expresses, “I want to become a policeman. I want to protect and help my village.”

Impact Beyond One Child

Talib’s transformation did not happen in isolation. His journey has become a source of inspiration for other families in Akbarpur Aurangabad. Before the Kadam intervention, most children were out of school. Today, school enrolment has significantly increased, and families are more aware of the importance of education.

A Life Redirected by Learning

Talib’s story reflects how timely intervention, engaging teaching, and community support can change the course of a child’s life. From a boy wandering fields to a student with ambition, Talib embodies the spirit of the Kadam Programme—bridging gaps, catching dreams, and building brighter futures through education.

“Before Kadam, I didn’t know what I could become. Now I know—and I’m working for it,” concludes Talib.





Trio Group



Education Volunteer
with students

About the Organisations



Established in 2007, Rural India Supporting Trust (RIST) was born from a simple yet powerful idea – the idea of equity. We believe that access to high quality services is a right for everyone, not a privilege for a few. We work with value aligned publicly supported organizations to realize our vision of creating an equitable India which provides a physically and mentally healthy environment for all.



Humana People to People India is a development organisation registered since 21st May 1998 as a not-for-profit company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956. It is a non-political, non-religious body that works as part of civil society to strengthen the capacities of underprivileged people and groups to create better lives.



HUMANA
PEOPLE TO PEOPLE INDIA

- 📍 111/9-Z, Kishangarh, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110070
- ☎ 011-47462222
- ✉ info@humana-india.org
- 🌐 www.humana-india.org

