Action Village India

Educating Girls, Transforming Lives

NBJK Stories of Impact

(April 2025 - March 2026)

Partner Organisation

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Understanding Contextual Terms

The Indian education system uses terms that differ from those commonly used in the UK. The following explanations provide context for the stories in this report:

- **Class 10 Board Examinations** → These are exams taken at the end of secondary school (typically age 15–16). They are broadly comparable to GCSEs in the UK. Performance in these exams plays an important role in determining a student's future academic pathway.

- **Streams (Arts and Science)** → After completing Class 10, students choose a "stream" of study for the next stage of education:
  - Arts (actually Humanities): subjects such as Economics, History, Political Science, and Geography
  - Science: subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics
  - The stream a student chooses shapes the subjects they study and can influence their future university options and career pathways.

- **Plus Two (Classes 11 and 12)** → Also known as "Intermediate," this refers to the next stage of education after Class 10. It is broadly comparable to sixth form in the UK, though students specialise earlier by selecting a stream.

Programme co-ordinator Asha Devi conducting a group session

Rupa Kumari Rebuilds Through Education After Loss

Rupa Kumari is 17 years old and studies in Class 10 at Plus Two High School in Sahara, Sahibganj district. She lives with her mother in Village Pathri after a difficult period in their lives.

Rupa's life changed in February 2021, when her father was tragically killed. His death left the family devastated, both emotionally and financially. Since then, Rupa and her mother have been navigating life on their own.

Survival became a daily struggle. Rupa's mother began working as a daily-wage labourer, but with little support from her marital home, she moved with Rupa to her brother's house. Today, they live in a small brick house built with support from government schemes such as the widow pension and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, though basic facilities like a toilet and a hand pump are still missing.

Despite these challenges, Rupa remained determined to continue her education. She was enrolled in the programme after being identified as a student in need and now receives support for tuition fees, notebooks, and study materials. Regular meetings with the gender coordinator, Asha Devi, guides both Rupa and her mother, creating a

system of support around her education.

This support has made a visible difference. She attends school and coaching classes regularly, keeps up with her studies, and follows a disciplined routine. More importantly, her confidence has grown as she actively participates in meetings and expresses herself more freely.

For her mother, this support has brought relief, especially where many girls are forced to leave school. Rupa hopes to become self-reliant, support her mother, and one day help girls like her, ensuring that no girl is left behind because of poverty or discrimination.

Her journey is a reminder that with the right sustained educational and career guidance at the right time, even the most difficult circumstances can be overcome.

Priyanshu Kumari: From Limited Means to School Topper

Priyanshu Kumari is a 15-year-old student from Harijan Tola, Village Gurhet, in Sadar block of Hazaribagh district, Jharkhand. She studies in Class 10 at Gyan Darshan School, Gurhet. In the 2025–26 board examinations, she scored 369 marks (73.8%), becoming the school topper.

Priyanshu lives in a family of six. Her parents work as daily wage labourers—her mother at a brick kiln in the village and her father in Hazaribagh town. She has three sisters and one elder brother and is the youngest among the sisters. With irregular and seasonal income, meeting household and education expenses is a constant challenge.

She was selected under the AVI programme in 2021 when she was in Class 6. Before that, she studied in a government school, as her parents could not afford better-quality education. With support from the programme, she has continued her studies at Gyan Darshan School and performed consistently well.

Priyanshu also has a twin sister, Sudhanshu, who studies in the same class and school. In the Class 10 board exams, Sudhanshu scored 334 marks (66.8%). Both sisters are determined to continue their studies, with different but equally inspiring aspirations.

Priyanshu hopes to pursue Sciences further and dreams of joining the Air Force, while Sudhanshu wishes to study Arts and become a teacher.

Despite financial hardship and the uncertainty of daily wage work, their parents are making continued efforts to educate their children. Support from the AVI programme, along with guidance from facilitators like Chandan Kumar from Stree Shakti, has helped both sisters stay in school.

Priyanshu's story shows how academic support, timely intervention, and encouragement can enable girls from marginalised communities to excel in education and aspire to professional careers that were once beyond their imagination.

Kumkum Kumari: From Learning Gaps to Top of the Class

Kumkum Kumari, born in 2009, lives in Kanchanpur village in Katkamsandi block of Hazaribagh district. Her father works as a plumber on a daily wage, while her mother manages the household. The family depends on his limited income to support six members, including four children.

Her elder sister is pursuing a BA degree, her younger sister studies in Class 9, and her younger brother is in Class 7. Supporting the education of four children on a single income has been a constant challenge.

In 2023, Kumkum enrolled in Class 8 at the Remedial Coaching Centre (RCC) in Kanchanpur under the AVI-supported Girls' Education Programme. At the time, she struggled with Mathematics, Science, and English. However, she took her studies seriously, attended classes regularly, completed her homework, and made full use of the support provided by her RCC teacher.

With consistent effort, her performance significantly improved in Classes 8 and 9. By Class 10 (in 2025), she was performing strongly in weekly tests and continued to build on her progress. Her dedication was reflected in her board results, where she scored 454 marks (90.8%),

including 100 in Mathematics and 97 in Science, and was the highest scorer among 172 girls across 14 RCC centres.

Inspired by her success, Kumkum now plans to pursue further studies and continue her education up to graduation. She dreams of becoming a police officer and serving the country. Her outstanding achievement has become a source of pride for her family, community, and the RCC team.

Her journey reflects how focused remedial coaching, regular assessments and mentorship at RCCs can help rural girls overcome learning gaps and emerge as toppers, even in highly constrained economic conditions.

Kajal Kumari Pushes Through Hardship to Stay in School

Kajal Kumari is a 15-year-old girl from Harijan Tola, Gurhet, in Sadar block of Hazaribagh district, Jharkhand. She recently passed her Class 10 board examinations with first division, scoring 304 marks (60.8%), and now hopes to pursue Arts in intermediate. She dreams of becoming a police officer.

Kajal's mother works as a daily wage labourer, while her father passed away in 2022 after a long illness. She has one elder sister and one younger brother. Even before his death, the family lived in extreme poverty. He had been bedridden for a long time, and during this period, her mother took on whatever work she could to support the family. At times, they struggled to manage even their next meal.

In 2021, during a door-to-door campaign by Stree Shakti, a field supervisor visited Kajal's home and saw her situation firsthand. At the time, Kajal had studied only up to Class 5 in a government school. Recognising her risk of dropping out, she was selected under the AVI Girls' Education Programme and admitted to Gyan Darshan School, Gurhet, in Class 6.

After enrolling, Kajal became regular in her studies and attendance. Over the next four years, she received

consistent support, including tuition fees and learning materials, which eased the financial burden on her family. She went on to pass her Class 10 board exams with first division, a significant achievement given her circumstances.

Alongside this, her family benefited from government schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, improving their living conditions.

Kajal now looks ahead with confidence. She wants to continue her studies in the Arts stream and is determined to become a police officer so she can support her family and serve society. Her journey reflects how timely educational support, community outreach, and access to government schemes can change the course of a girl's life from a highly vulnerable background.

Rekindling Education for Kranti Kumari

Kranti Kumari is a 14-year-old girl from Pahridih village in the Jarmundi block of Dumka district, Jharkhand.

She is the eldest of 3 sisters in a family of 5. They live in a basic mud house with very few facilities. There is no access to safe drinking water, and the family practices open defecation. Kranti's father works as a daily wage labourer, but his earnings are spent on alcohol, causing serious financial trouble for the family.

Poverty and lack of support at home meant Kranti had to stop studying after completing Class 8.

During a Panchayat community meeting, Kranti expressed her wish to continue her studies. After hearing this, community leader Asha Devi stood up for her and spoke to the Headmaster of High School Jarmundi. Even though all seats at the school were taken, the Headmaster reconsider her case. With this support, Kranti was admitted to Class 9.

This timely support helped Kranti restart her education. Her story shows her strength and the importance of community help in supporting girls from disadvantaged families. Kranti's courage combined with the efforts of local leaders proves that strong advocacy can break barriers and bring new hope to girls who want to study.

Kranti's story highlights how local partnerships, caring leaders, and community support can bring real change. Helping girls like Kranti continue their education not only changes their lives but also creates stronger, more empowered communities.

Sudha Kumari Breaks Barriers to Continue her Education

Sudha Kumari, born in 2008, comes from a financially vulnerable family where both her parents work as daily wage labourers. Her father works as a gardener, while her mother also earns through daily labour. Due to irregular income, even basic household expenses are difficult to manage.

Sudha was a student at St. Xavier's High School, Dhawaiya, where she completed Class 10 (equivalent to GCSEs) in 2025. However, despite her academic progress, she faced a major setback after her board exams. Due to unpaid school fees from the previous year, the school withheld her clearance certificate, preventing her from taking admission into intermediate studies, where the certificate was necessary. For a time, her education was at risk of discontinuation.

At this critical juncture, the intervention of Community Leader Rajni Kumari Sinha proved transformative. After learning about Sudha's situation, she accompanied her to the school and spoke with the Principal. Through persistent dialogue, she explained Sudha's financial condition and requested a waiver of the pending fees. The school authorities responded positively, allowing Sudha to obtain her clearance certificate.

She also further supported Sudha in securing admission to Gulmohar College, Chanho, in February 2026, ensuring that her education could continue without further interruption.

Today, Sudha is happily pursuing her studies with renewed hope for her future. Her journey shows how timely support and empathetic local leadership can prevent school dropout and enable girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to continue their education.

Her story highlights the critical importance of financial support and guidance at key transition points in a student's academic journey.

Against All Odds: The Inspiring Journey of Sumanti Soren

Sumanti Soren's story shows how strong determination and the right support can transform a girl's life.

At 15 years old, Sumanti - a tribal girl from Gobardaha village in the Churchu block of Hazaribagh district - lost both her parents when she was in Class 3. Her education came to a sudden stop.
Her elder siblings were already married with families of their own, and her brother had travelled to the faraway city of Bengaluru for work.

Sumanti was left alone to manage the household and support the family. Despite her desire to continue her education, she had to stay out of school for two years out of necessity.

However, things began to change when 2 village girls studying at Gyandarshan Vidyalaya under the Stri Shakti–AVI Sponsorship Program reported Sumanti's situation to a field advisor.
He visited her home several times, convincing her guardian brother to allow her to return to school.

She joined the sponsorship programme, allowing her to rejoin in Class 6 and restart her education. The programme covered her school expenses and provided a bicycle for her 4 km journey.

With hard work and perseverance, Sumanti recently passed her Class 10 board exams with a second division.

She dreams of learning computers and getting a government job — a dream that once felt impossible. She is deeply thankful to Stri Shakti and Action Village India for supporting her education and giving her confidence and hope.

Sumanti's journey shows how community support, sponsorship, and a girl's own courage can help overcome even the toughest obstacles, inspiring many other girls who face similar struggles.

Manshi Kumari Cares for her Family While Striving to Succeed

Manshi Kumari is a Class 10 student at Birsa Public High School, Deokuli, in Ichak block of Hazaribagh district, a rural area. She lives in Village Bakshidih (Lundru) with both her parents. Her father works as a daily wage labourer, but has been unable to work due to illness and a serious ear-related disease, which has made him physically weaker, putting the family under severe financial stress.

With the main breadwinner unwell, the family's condition became increasingly dire. Her mother began working as a labourer to earn income, while Manshi often stayed home to care for her ailing father, impacting her school attendance. Given their poor economic condition, continuing her education in a private school was growing difficult, and there was a real risk of her discontinuing it and dropping out.

Under the AVI Girls' Education Programme, Manshi received crucial support for school fees and learning materials, allowing her to continue studying at the same school. With this support, she became more regular in school and focused on her studies. In the 2025–26 Class 10 board examinations, she excelled, scoring 414 marks (82.8%), securing first division. Teachers describe her as disciplined, polite, and serious about her education.

Manshi dreams of becoming a teacher. She not only wants to support her family financially but also teach children who cannot afford quality education, free of cost. She feels that no child should have to struggle the way she did just to continue their education.

Her journey shows how educational support, combined with family effort and her own determination, can help a girl overcome severe hardship and work towards a future where she can uplift others, too.

Sonia Kumari Stays in School While Holding Her Family Together

Sonia is a 16-year-old student in Class 10 at Plus Two High School, Sahara, in Dumka district, Jharkhand. She lives with her father and three younger siblings. Despite owning a modest brick house with a tiled roof, the family lacks basic facilities like a toilet and a hand pump.

Life changed for Sonia in 2021 when her mother passed away after an illness. Overnight, she had to take on responsibilities far beyond her age.

As the eldest child, Sonia became the primary caregiver for her siblings —managing the household and looking after their well-being. Her father's struggle with alcoholism has made things more difficult, placing financial and emotional strain on the family. With limited and unstable income, the household continues to face hardship.

Despite these challenges, Sonia has remained committed to her education. With support from AVI, she receives help with tuition fees and study materials, along with regular guidance through meetings with the project team.

This support has made a clear difference. Sonia attends school and coaching classes regularly, keeps up with her studies, and maintains a disciplined routine.

Alongside this, she continues to care for her siblings, showing maturity and resilience.
For her family, this support has brought reassurance that an organisation is dedicated to supporting her education. In situations like hers, many girls are forced to abandon school, taking on full-time domestic responsibilities; however, she has been able to continue her education and hold on to her aspirations.

Sonia is determined to build a better future. She believes that with continued support, she can become self-reliant through education or self-employment and support her family. She aspires to create her own identity, become a role model in her community, and one day help other vulnerable families like hers. Sonia is on a path toward transforming not only her own life but also inspiring change in her community.

Manisha Kumari Balances Responsibilities and Education

Manisha Kumari is a Class 10 student at Birsa Public High School, Deokuli, an institution serving rural children in Ichak block of Hazaribagh district. She lives in Punai village with her parents, and her father works both in agriculture and as a seasonal labourer to support the family.

Manisha's mother has been suffering from a prolonged illness and remains unwell most of the time. With her father often away for work and her mother frequently sick, Manisha had to manage household and caregiving responsibilities. Her school attendance was falling, and her education was at risk.

Through the programme, Manisha received support in the form of tuition fees and learning materials, reducing the financial burden on her family and encouraging her to continue her studies. She also received a bicycle from the school's bicycle bank, which reduced her travel commute time, helping her attend school more regularly. Studies have proven that this type of intervention significantly improves girls' school attendance in rural India.

Despite these challenges at home, Manisha completed her Class 10 board examinations with a second division. She dreams of becoming a nurse so she can earn an income and serve all people in need, including those who cannot afford medical care free of cost.

Her story shows how targeted educational support, even through simple but practical resources like bicycles, can help girls like Manisha stay in school and pursue their aspirations.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Each of the girls featured in this report has faced challenges that could have easily ended her education. Loss, poverty, and responsibility are recurring realities in their lives. Yet, each story is also one of persistence. A common thread runs through them all: with early and sustained support at the right time, these girls have been able to stay in school, rebuild their confidence, and hold on to their aspirations.

Their journeys remind us that education is often the turning point. When girls are supported to stay in school, they gain not only education but also confidence, independence, and aspirations for the future. These changes extend beyond the individual, shaping families and communities over time.

These stories reflect the impact of the AVI–NBJK Girls' Education Programme, demonstrating the importance of supporting girls to remain in education, particularly in contexts where poverty, loss, and responsibility are recurring realities in their lives, placing them at risk of dropping out. While the programme reaches hundreds of girls across Jharkhand and Bihar, the stories in this report highlight what that support looks like in practice.

Ensuring that girls can continue their education is not just an investment in their future; it is an investment in lasting change and a symbol of hope for others.

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