



**NON TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS NETWORK**

## **NTLN LEARNING VISIT**

**A report of experience sharing and reflections  
by member organisations**

**5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

**New Delhi**

## Context

The Non-Traditional Livelihoods Network (NTLN) is a collaboration of individuals and organisations that believe in the need to promote the entry of more women into occupations/trades that have traditionally been closed to women as arenas of paid work. The Network was set up in 2016 to provide a platform for organisations working on Non-Traditional Livelihoods (NTL) to come together, share experiences, and harvest learning's around NTL issues; make relevant field level interventions in mobilising and skilling women workers in this area; and advocate for women's rights to work in non-traditional livelihoods at the community and policy level.

The network aims to contribute towards knowledge building around the existing understanding of women and work; to develop the capacity of organisations involved in NTL work at the ground to strengthen their practice and enable them to advocate effectively towards a more favorable ecosystem for women in NTLs. It also aims to be a platform for collective advocacy on non-traditional livelihoods with key stakeholders. The objective of the network is to make non-traditional livelihood training accessible and affordable to resource-poor girls and women and to challenge the beliefs, practices, and policies that contribute to the exclusion of women from certain livelihoods.

The NTL network is coordinated by a small secretariat team based out of Azad Foundation in New Delhi. The network is constituted of 25 organisations and 7 individuals who form a General Body and a Steering Committee of six members who work closely with the secretariat in defining and charting the network's learning activities and learning needs. All members have some history of work or interest in non-traditional livelihoods of women including, grassroots interventions, mobilisation/ capacity building/ skilling of women in NTL, research, advocacy, etc. The network thus provides a one-of-its-kind possibility of rich exchange and learning on NTL as well as identifying challenges and charting the way forward on this important issue of women and work.

Earlier this year, a process of documenting and strengthening the network was initiated, based on previous suggestions by network members. This includes the collation of a genesis document on the network, a needs assessment of NTLN members and ongoing process documentation of network activities.

One of the needs identified by network members was to build capacities on understanding the concept and practice of non-traditional livelihoods from their respective experiences in the field. In January 2019, an International Conference on Non-Traditional Livelihoods organised by Azad Foundation, became an external opportunity for network members to learn from NTL experiences across the work and energised them to take their learning's forward at the national level as well. A series of three learning visits were thus planned across India, to create opportunities for exchanging field-based knowledge and experiences on NTL. The aim of this exercise is to create spaces for peer to peer learning on the issue and interventions around NTL. The first of these learning visits was organised in New Delhi from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019. Seven members of the NTL network participated in this learning visit which was hosted by five Delhi-based network organisations.

## Objectives

- To understand the nature and extent of work on non-traditional livelihoods organised and promoted by Delhi based NTL network members.
- To share needs and challenges faced by member organisations in NTL work.

- To have an opportunity for inputs from each other as peers in defining and refining the NTL focus and strategies.
- To identify common areas of collective work on NTL as a network.

## Methodology

The planning of the learning visit was participatory, with Delhi based network members volunteering to play host to the exchange in their organisational and work spaces. Network members from Delhi and other states interested in participating in this learning visit volunteered to attend the same—thus making the methodology open and transparent, as a principle of network co-ownership.

The learning visit spanned five days (5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2019) and its design was based on participant expectations. The NTLN secretariat sent out a format with questions for members to share their expectations from the learning visit. The compiled information was subsequently shared with the hosting members to structure the learning visit to their organisational or community spaces and plan their inputs<sup>1</sup>.

Members visited one organisation daily and had a detailed interaction to understand its work. The host organisations included Azad Foundation, Sakha Cabs, Etasha, Quest Alliance and Nirantar. Across the different organisational visits, network members met with leaders of the organisation, programme staff, community workers, members and learners.

The learning visit was helpful both, to the host and participant organisations in different ways. It enabled a fruitful engagement of host members in achieving their respective organisational objectives around non-traditional livelihoods. It provided participating organisations with useful insights into the actual planning, implementation and monitoring aspects of the NTL work at the field level.

The learning visit was also seen a process that would help the network identify strengths and gaps at the level of conceptual understanding, programme strategies and organisational capacities in fulfilling the goal of promoting non-traditional livelihoods of women, locally and nationally. Going forward, the network's gains will contribute to international agendas around NTL, which are gaining ground across countries.

## Learning Process

### Day One: 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019

*Host member organisation:* **Azad Foundation**

*Venue:* A-6, Block a Red Light, Jagatpuri, Delhi - 110051

*Participant member organisations:* Abhivyakti, Archana Women's Centre (AWC), CARMDAKSH and Open Eyes Project

The learning visit hosted by Azad Foundation helped participating NTLN members understand its various projects to achieve the objective of empowering women both, socially and economically. A special session on mobilisation and the training module used by Azad, was included in the sharing process, as also information on the programme with young girls and



In conversation at Azad Foundation office

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<sup>1</sup> See Annexure for collation expectations

men. Testimonies by some of the women trained by Azad Foundation as professional chauffeurs, made the visit most inspiring for the participants.

Shrinivas Rao, Chief Operating Officer, Azad Foundation, took the NTLN members through an introductory presentation on the organisation. Azad Foundation is a decade-old, professional feminist organisation, working across religious and social divides to enable resource-poor women empower themselves. Azad Foundation’s mission is to equip women with knowledge and skills so that they excel as professionals and entrepreneurs, and earn “livelihoods with dignity” in jobs and markets that have traditionally been closed to them.

Azad’s flagship programme, ‘*Women on Wheels*’ trains and prepares women with low economic and social capital to become professional and commercial drivers, enhances their awareness of rights, and provides them with opportunities of self-empowerment. Qualified women drivers are provided employment opportunities in partnership with Sakha Consulting Wings Pvt. Ltd., the for-profit strategic partner of Azad Foundation. Sakha, based on the social enterprise model, provides safe and professional chauffeur and cab services for women by women.

The Women on Wheels programme started in 2008 in Delhi. Since then, it has expanded directly to Jaipur and Kolkata, and through partners in Ahmedabad and Indore. Recently, the programme has also found its way through like-minded partners in Bhubaneswar and Lucknow. Azad Foundation has the capacity to train 850 women and aims to extend its work in other cities and states of India. In the recent past, Azad Foundation also collaborated with a women’s group in Ghana, Africa and mentored them to train women to become drivers there.

The vision of Azad Foundation is to empower women from resource-poor backgrounds and help them become financially and personally independent and capable to contribute to the social and political economy of India. Azad Foundation has since its inception, focused on promoting non-traditional livelihoods—identifying ‘commercial driving’ as the ‘new’, ‘unexplored’ or ‘socially excluded’ occupation of women.

Azad Foundation believes that non-traditional livelihoods smash the basic premise of patriarchy. By enabling unrestricted mobility for women in public places, Azad Foundation aims to assist women who dare to stand up against social norms that discriminate and oppress women socially, economically and politically. It challenges the mainstream thought of women’s labour as limited to occupations associated with their reproductive or ‘unpaid’ productive work—those that are ‘traditional’ or often ‘home-bound’ jobs.

The learning visit session hosted by Azad Foundation began with the sharing of a few success stories. These gave insight into the journey of transformation and agency that many women associated with Azad Foundation have in their lives today.



A day well spent

*“I got to know about Azad Foundation through a pamphlet. Earlier, I did not even have the courage to travel by bus alone. I decided to take a stand for myself and joined Azad. Even after joining Azad, I faced multiple hurdles. My family didn’t approve of my decision, instead they wanted to get me remarried. Through the self-development class provided at Azad, I was able to stand on my own feet and become self-dependent.” - Deepa, Professional Chauffer, New Delhi*

*"I joined Azad in 2015. I belong to a Dalit family. My family was against most of the decisions I took in her life. I joined Azad despite facing a lot of resistance from my family. I didn't get much support from any of the family members in this decision. Now I earn Rs.11000/- per month, am self-dependent and moving on with my life."* - Rinky, Professional Chauffer, New Delhi

Through 'Women on Wheels', Azad has been able to help several resource-poor women achieve a life and livelihood of dignity. It was shared that almost forty percent of the women who enroll themselves with Azad Foundation come from violent families.

To be able to apply for the training programme, a woman should have completed her high school (class eight) and be 18 years or above. By the end of the 'Women on Wheels' training, most women have a great sense of self-confidence and empowerment to take their next big steps. From the time they enroll themselves in the programme to the finish, almost all the women face multiple restrictions by their families to prevent them from continuing the training. Most of them are pressured to get married at a young age, and those who are married face domestic violence at the hands of their husbands or in-laws. Azad Foundation tries its best to help the women resist or resolve their personal and/ or domestic challenges and focus on their self-development. Sixty percent of the training curriculum is focused on personal empowerment which includes subjects like personal grooming, speaking English, gender and knowledge about women's rights. The other forty percent of the training curriculum is focused on skill development. Access to information, according to Azad, is one of the crucial elements to empower women. The foundation therefore considers it important to counter the 'Digital Purdah' (or veil) that Indian society enforces on women and limits them from reaching up to the sky.

Through the 'Badlav ka Safarnama' (Journey of Change)<sup>2</sup> tool, Azad Foundation has been able to document the journey of transformation of the women who have been trained by the organisation.



The Journey of Change

Azad Foundation hopes that the knowledge that it has been able to build over a decade of its hard work on non-traditional livelihoods is accessed by other organisations, especially those in the NTL network.

Early on its organisational journey, Azad Foundation recognised the need to work on gender as a lens for perspective building and organising communities in order to achieve the expected

<sup>2</sup> Badlav ka Safarnama is a participatory mapping tool that helps trainees at Azad Foundation map their own journey of empowerment through the Women on Wheels (WoW) training they undergo. Each trainee is represented in the map with the help of a card bearing her name, picture and batch number. The visual depicts the journey of a trainee along a winding road, which represents the training time. The road is divided into 10 training months. The road has three colours that help trainees map their position in the training, what they learnt in technical training (learning to drive), non-technical training (self-development and empowerment) and how they have been able to exercise their empowerment (speaking against violence, greater mobility, etc.) as a result of the learning process. The curves on the road mark the different twists, breaks, convergences and divergences that occur along the path to empowerment. The road also has many exit and entry points to mark possibilities of 'walking out' (choosing to stop training midway) and 'walking in' (making a choice to rejoin training). This embodies the understanding that no matter whether or not a trainee completes her full journey from enrolment to employability (passing the employability test), the walk on the road initiates a process of empowerment that gains a life of its own. (Source: Azad Foundation <http://azadfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Azad-Annual-Report-2016-for-web-3.pdf>)

impact it was looking to create through its NTL focus. One critical focus thus has been to work with men and boys. Azad strategised to create opportunities for this engagement in different ways—initiating dialogues on patriarchy and masculinity with men and boys at the local level.

Another important focus comes in the form of the ‘Azad Kishori’ programme that aims to educate and make young adolescent girls in its targeted communities aware of various gender related issues. This programme encourages young girls to understand the contours of gender and pursue non-traditional work, both as they explore their education and find livelihoods. Sexuality is one crucial element of this curriculum.

Azad Foundation has been able to tap the potential of women to become leaders in their own communities. Through a programme called ‘Feminist Leaders’, Azad has enabled women become catalysts of change in their respective communities. The women who are interested in making a ‘difference’ in society are selected into this programme and then trained to tackle the local issues that they think they can or want to work upon.

Building and nurturing diverse partnerships is an important aspect of growth that Azad aspires to achieve. In the past, Azad Foundation has partnered with Delhi Police, Red Cross and other local organisations both, to reach out to these service providers as well as the general public. On occasions, partner organisations such as Jagori are called in, to help handle difficult situations that the women face almost regularly especially, domestic abuse. Azad Foundation often supports the women to get their ‘identification papers’ sorted, while also bridging the gaps between women’s needs and the policies that cater to them. With a view to expand outreach and share its experiences and gains, Azad Foundation reaches out to various partners such as Action Aid and Jagori in order to create a dialogue in the areas that these organisations work in.

During this learning day, the network participants also interacted with the community mobilisers associated with Azad’s work. This session was based on the learning expectations listed by NTLN members, who were interested in understanding Azad Foundation’s mobilisation approach at the field level.

The community mobilisers reach out to marginalised members in their communities to spread awareness about the interventions of Azad Foundation. They also gather information on the issues and problems faced by the women at the grassroots level. The community mobilisers visit various homes in the vicinity and interact with the women in those households to inspire them to join Azad. Their strategies are flexible and vary from area to area. They use surveys as a tool to collect information about general social perceptions and other public notions. While conducting their survey’s, the community mobilisers identify the girls/ women who seem interested or inclined towards Azad’s work and invite them to visit the organisations’ training offices. Among the many mobilisational strategies, the community mobilisers employ *nukkad natak* (street theatre) to make the community aware of women’s issues and how they can be addressed.



Community mobilisers at Azad Foundation

### ***Reflections of the day***

At the end of the presentations and testimonies shared during this day, there was a detailed discussion on the takeaways of the participants. Shiny and Kuchurani, representatives from Archana Women Centre (AWC) complemented Azad Foundation for the training ideas

showcased during the presentation and shared that they found the survey method as a useful and innovative methodology for community mapping. Anna Tores, a representative of Open Eyes Project complimented the mobilisation strategy in place at Azad Foundation and spoke about the successful partnership between the two organisations wherein Open Eyes Project is training Sakha drivers to become city-tour guides.

Dip Banerjee, a representative from CARMDAKSH was quite impressed by the partnerships that Azad has been able to build over the years. He complimented Azad for mapping the women's empowerment journey through Badlav ka Safarnama. He acknowledged that CARMDAKSH training is not as structured as Azad's and is more focused on technological skills rather than life skills.

Nitin Pranjape, a representative from Abhivyakti commented on the positive implications of the multi-layered approach employed by Azad in its Women on Wheels training. According to him, the different layers (technical, non-technical and others) make the curriculum quite inclusive and revolutionary.

### Day Two: 6<sup>th</sup> August 2019

*Host member organisation:* **Azad Foundation and Sakha Consulting Wings**

*Venue:* B-7, Third floor, Shankar Garden, Victoria Banquet Hall, Vikaspuri, Delhi

*Participant member organisations:* Abhivyakti, AWC, Azad Foundation, CARMDAKSH, ETASHA and Open Eyes Project

The learning visit hosted by Sakha Consulting Wings provided the participants with insights into the organisations' objectives, strategies, and challenges as well future plans. The visit was interactive and the motivational as two of the women drivers employed by Sakha shared their life-changing stories.

Sakha Consulting Wings is a 'for-profit' organisation that aims to provide employment opportunities to resource-poor women who have been trained by Azad Foundation or other similar partners, in the domain of "driving". Currently, Sakha employs almost 35 women commercial drivers and around 250 drivers have been placed by it as private chauffeurs.

After a round of introductions, two drivers (Savita and Suman), trained by Azad Foundation and employed by Sakha narrated their life stories. Both women talked about the struggles they had faced in their respective families and the violence they suffered at the hands of their own family members. They spoke of how this life journey changed for the better since being trained as commercial drivers; they are now able to pursue their dreams and also inspire other women in their communities. Savita and Suman have been able to take charge of their own lives and this is only the beginning.

When asked about the challenges that Sakha faced in the initial years of its inception, especially being a 'for-profit' organisation Meenu Vadera, the founder of Sakha said that they faced multiple hardships such as scarcity of employers, lack of profitable income and social benefits available to the drivers, among others. Sakha addressed these challenges slowly and gradually over the years. It abided by its motto of transforming the lives of women through remunerative employment with dignity,



Network members in learning mode at Sakha office

together with a sense of empowerment and strengthened agency irrespective of additional costs<sup>3</sup> incurred in keeping the process sensitive and empowering for the women.

As a social enterprise, Sakha is competing with several multinational and commercial travel companies like 'Ola' and 'Uber' who are not concerned about the social benefits of their employees. *"We have multiple norms in place unlike these companies, which might not be profitable in the long run. While we push our drivers to become professionals, we have also put in place certain non-negotiable terms for the employers to safeguard our drivers' interests. Therefore, our business model may not go down well with many players in the market."* Vadera added. From provisioning counseling services to opening the women drivers to other profitable employment opportunities, Sakha applies an integrated perspective to its work. In order to inculcate professionalism among the women drivers, Sakha provides multiple incentives such as 'mock cheques' which they can redeem after a year. For better coordination, the organisation also elects certain team leaders who are held responsible for their respective teams.



Women Chauffeurs of Sakha

Sakha focuses on 'livelihoods with dignity' and believes in creating a safer world for women, both, as workers and as customers. It places the women drivers trained by Azad Foundation under three verticals:

- placements (for individual employers)
- taxi service
- chauffeur on-call service.

These services are currently operational in four Indian cities: Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata and Indore. It now also provides cabs for longer duration (8 hours or more) and intercity cab services. Recently, Sakha has started providing one-day tours for tourists to major cities in North India: Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. In partnership with the Open Eyes Project, Sakha has trained the women drivers to serve as tour guides as well—once again expanding the space from traditional to non-traditional livelihoods for women.

Currently, Sakha has a small fleet of 30 cars and is aiming to increase this number through various partnerships. It has been able to successfully tap multiple sources of funding and other facilitators in order to expand the business. Sakha also plans to launch app-based services soon.

For Sakha, the safety of its employees is of utmost priority. Therefore, Sakha has installed 'panic buttons' in all its vehicles. Other than an ever-running GPRS system, every driver has been provided with a pepper spray. Sakha has established collaborations with other cab services and the police force so that the women drivers can contact them in times of emergency. While employing its drivers with individual contractors, Sakha screens the employer beforehand.

Sakha believes in letting women decide their own futures. The women are encouraged to complete their education, which they couldn't do previously due to family problems or restrictions. Almost ninety percent of Sakha drivers have now completed their graduation.

<sup>3</sup> The additional costs are incurred on counselling services, loss of clients, resources spent for the betterment of women drivers and others.



## **Reflections of the day**

Anna, a representative of the Open Eyes Project expressed her admiration for Sakha as a partner organisation for the growth that it has been able to achieve over the years. She added that the expansion of Sakha’s business is well-aligned with the objectives it set out for itself and *“Partnerships are quite essential to achieve many of these objectives”*.

Shiny, from Archana Women Centre pointed out the stark contrast in the social setting of Kerala and North India (in this context, referring to Delhi). According to her, the idea of women driving cars commercially might not go well in Kerala as women are more literate and aspire to earn more and do jobs that may be of higher social value as well. However, there are some examples of women being employed as drivers in educational institutions due to the increasing incidence of violence against women and girls. Anindita Kar Gupta, a representative of Etasha, commended the continuous hand-holding support provided by Sakha to all its women drivers. She drew inspiration from Sakha’s effort to partner with the Airport authorities in order to create better and more commercial avenues for women trained by them. She added that Etasha may also pursue something similar.

Dip, from CARMDAKSH was inspired by all the new initiatives and future plans that Sakha members spoke of during the day and shared that he would be more than happy to use these learning’s while devising CARMDAKSH’s plan of action on NTL.

Nitin, from Abhivyakti, emphasised upon the need to prioritise social action over business models which other social enterprises usually do. He expressed concern about the possible change that Sakha’s business model might undergo after the planned expansion—referring to the commercial angle taking over the social imprints it can and is making in women’s lives.

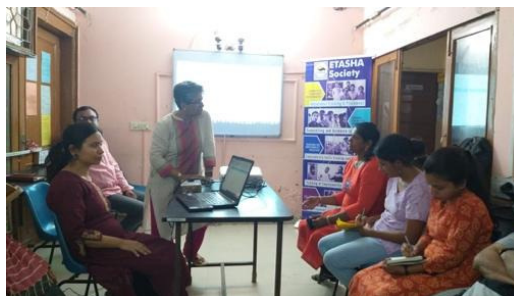
## **Day Three: 7<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

*Host Member Organisation:* **ETASHA**

*Venue:* Career Development Centre 2; B-195, Ground Floor, Duggal Colony (Entry Gate No.2), Devli Road, Khanpur, New Delhi-110062

*Participating member organisations:* Abhivyakti, AWC, Azad Foundation, CARMDAKSH, Nirantar and Open Eyes Project

The learning visit hosted by ETASHA enabled participating members to acquaint themselves with the various verticals of the organisation which includes the vocational training, placement and women entrepreneurs’ programme. The participants also observed the activities at one of its centres and interact with the women whose lives have been transformed after aligning with ETASHA.



Sharing the work of Etasha

ETASHA works with disadvantaged communities with the objective of empowering adolescents, youth and women through skills training and mentoring for mindset and behavioural change. The end-goal is to develop an ecosystem where skills are valued and respected, and people work with dignity and self-respect. It employs a range of strategies to achieve its mission.

Among its activities are vocational training courses for young people from resource-poor backgrounds; training in ITIs and helping women become entrepreneurs.

*Vocational Training:* The training course designed by ETASHA spans four months. The members at each centre may differ, but every batch has 160 women and the programme runs for six hours each, on three-days every week. The eligibility criterion is 12<sup>th</sup> standard pass and the young person has to pay an amount of Rs.350/ per month for the course. If a student is unable to pay the course fee, Etasha tries to facilitate a sponsorship for the same. While the course curriculum is focused on imparting basic employment skills to women from resource poor backgrounds, a module on gender and rights has-been added for creating awareness on this issue among the youth. In every batch, three girls enroll for every two boys. Currently, ETASHA runs five centres across the city of Delhi. The organisation also lends some seats for partners in order to reach out to more youth.

The participants at the learning visit observed the English Language training class in order to understand the training module of ETASHA. This module aims to prepare 12th pass girls and boys from low resource settings for modern-day work environments with industry-relevant skills training as also supporting them in job placements. ETASHA believes in providing experiential, participative and interactive learning sessions to the students and this was observed by the NTLN members. The training module is divided according to the skills. Some of the skills specific modules are: Confidence in Computers and Customer Service (CCCS) and Confidence in Accounts, Tally and Taxation (CATT). On completion of training, the trainees are assisted with placement at appropriate jobs in established companies, after due diligence of the working environment, and as per the sectoral and location preference of the trainees.

Among the values professed in the trainings, professionalism is deemed as an important value in ETASHA, therefore they encourage the students to wear formal clothes. In case, the students are unable to buy such clothing, ETASHA organises donation drives to collect the same for its students.

Almost 70 percent of the total students enrolled with ETASHA are placed into jobs by the end of the course. ETASHA has partnered with multiple enterprises that ensure employment for its students. It also supports several students until they are stable in their professional lives. ETASHA encourages women students to take up non-conventional jobs, and break the social barriers that restrict such choices. In order to incentivise students and their parents, ETASHA organises events such as Alumni mela, Farewell party, Certificate ceremonies, Job Fairs and Family Day. On the day of the Alumni mela, the organisation invites women professionals to inspire and motivate the girls in their communities to aspire to fulfill their dreams and challenge social norms that restrict their mobility, as well as personal and work choices.

*“People in my village think that the only work for girls is to stay at home, get married and reproduce. But I want to show them that this is not the only thing that girls are supposed to do. There was a time when I would hesitate to communicate with the boys, but after coming to Etasha I have gathered enough courage to speak my mind out.” - Haseena*

Etasha also organises *nukkad nataks* (street theatre) in order to spread gender based awareness in the communities where it’s a taboo for girls to step out of their houses. Often, the members at ETASHA visit the homes of their students to engage with, and convince their



At the end of a fruitful day

families to encourage their daughters to step out of their homes and make life and work decisions that are not binding them within patriarchal structures.

One of the challenges that ETASHA faces from time to time relates to the fluctuating demands of the market which makes employment difficult for its students. The sexist nature of the job market is another area of concern for the organisation.

During the learning visit, ETASHA invited suggestions and other support from the participating NTL network members. It also expressed interest in collaborating with organisations to build a gender based consciousness among their students.

*Women's Entrepreneurship:* ETASHA works with resource-poor women to enable them to become entrepreneurs. It creates an enabling environment for entrepreneurship development amongst women, facilitates setting up of enterprises by groups of women, and handholds them in running these enterprises—including connecting with suppliers for raw materials and sales channels till they become quality-oriented, profitable and self-sustaining.

ETASHA organises regular mobilisation drives in order make the women from resource poor backgrounds aware of sustainable employment opportunities. Interested women go through a training process that skills them to manufacture and market their products. Through case studies and videos, ETASHA helps the women learn basic entrepreneurial skills such as spoken English and accounting. Market visits are also facilitated for the women as also outreach with other partners to expand their businesses.

### ***Reflections of the day***

A representative from Nirantar expressed interest in collaborating with ETASHA as the women who are educated at Nirantar need employment opportunities. There is also a potential of the more literate women to gain from ETASHA's entrepreneurship programme. Anna, from the Open Eyes Project was impressed by the placement rate shared by ETASHA. The struggle faced by Etasha around funding also resonated with her experience. Nitin, from Abhivyakti, pointed out the importance of the environment that an organisation processes within itself. According to him, results are an important part of any social action project. Having met some of the women who have completed their training with Etasha, he was happy to see the transformation that they have undergone.

A representative from CARMDAKSH pointed out that the learning process designed by Etasha is critical for youth today especially issues related to child sexual abuse and violence which the organisation has incorporated in its curriculum. Shiny, from Archana Women Centre talked about the multiple models of empowering women that she had learned about in the past three days of the NTLN learning visit. Amrita Gupta, from Azad Foundation said that it was quite impressive to see a different methodology being used by Etasha, and the mainstream model that it works on is quite important. She suggested that the organisation documents its work through case studies of the women reached and empowered.

### **Day Four: 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

*Host member organisation:* **Quest Alliance**

*Venue:* 2nd Floor, Kalinga Chowk, 5/7 Balraj Khanna Marg, Block 5, West Patel Nagar, Patel Nagar, New Delhi

*Participant member organisations:* Abhivyakti, AWC, Azad Foundation, ETASHA and Open Eyes Project



Quest Alliance brochure's display

The visit hosted by Quest Alliance gave the NTLN members a glimpse into the projects undertaken in various parts of the country. Anandshala, Bal Sansad (Youth Parliament), My Quest Programme and Master Coach programme were some of the initiatives discussed in detail. The participants had an interactive dialogue with the Director of Quest Alliance, over a Skype call. They were also guided through the Quest App which has been launched by the organisation to enable self-learning among the youth.

Quest Alliance is a 'not-for-profit' trust that equips young people with 21st century skills by enabling self-learning. Quest designs scalable solutions that enable educators to address critical gaps for quality education and skills training. It is currently operational in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Haryana, Assam, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

Since its inception, Quest Alliance has, through various initiatives trained multiple sections of society. Through its blended learning approach, Quest has been able to impart knowledge on Digital Literacy, Life Skills, Communicative English and other Professional skills. In collaboration with various partners it has also published two research papers based on the experience of working with these populations.

The ecosystem that Quest works with includes, Government Schools, Vocational centres, ITIs and various non-governmental organisations. It has also signed MoU's with seven state governments in order to bring government schools and graduate colleges into the loop of its model.

One of its initiatives, *Anandshala*, aims to enhance language abilities and ownership for schooling by building stronger relationships between students, teachers and parents. This approach has resulted in higher attendance, deeper engagement, learning for life, more trust and better relationships between the government, its schools and the community. Quest Alliance's work in Samastipur, Bihar has resulted in various positive outcomes. Other than an increased attendance ratio, the students have scored much higher in subjects like communicative English. Quest has also successfully engaged with the parents of these students for better outcomes.

Through the *Bal Sansad* (Youth Parliament) initiative, Quest has incentivised young leaders to solve problems in their respective communities.

Under the programme, *My Quest*, the organisation helps youth to enhance their career skills, digital skills and entrepreneurial skills. Through 300 hours of digital content developed by Quest, the students are now able to strive for multiple and new opportunities which seemed out-of-reach before. The organisation has added a section on gender in this curriculum.

The *Master Coach Programme* prepares trainers and coaches to impart skill rich education to various groups. Quest has partnered with various engineering schools, ITIs and vocational centres in this regard.

Through its boot camps, Quest makes the youth, especially girls, aware of the multiple vocations that they can pursue. Under the *scratch project*, girls learn about the latest technologies and open their minds to STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Maths).



The engagement continues...at Quest Alliance office

Through constant efforts, many girl students are now opting for subjects which were conventionally known to be male domains.

In Delhi, the Quest team exclusively works with girls. In order to give them a glimpse of the kind of career options that are available for them, it organises human resource roundtables and helps negotiate discussions around non-traditional livelihood options. It encourages market scans to help the students understand available market opportunities. In order to make them aware of the non-conventional jobs, Quest invites alumna and other professionals (like professional drivers and tour guides) to have an open discussion regarding the same with the students.

Once these students are placed, Quest maintains contacts with them and helps them deal with the hardships they might face in their respective workplaces. Quest also has tele-callers in place to register student complaints and worries.

### ***Reflections of the day***

Anna, from the Open Eyes Project commented that one could clearly see the huge potential in terms of using technology for social impact at Quest Alliance. She added that *“It would be great if the same kind of technology is used to spread awareness about gender.”* She spoke of the need for NGOs to change their model of work in order to face up to the current challenges in available funding for their programmes.

Shiny, from Archana Women Centre expressed a sense of gratitude on being able to come in contact with the network member organisations who are tapping diverse avenues for social change.

Anindita from Etasha shared that even though Quest Alliance does similar work as their organisation, there are stark differences in the approach being followed and areas of learning for their organisation. She complimented Quest for the powerful use of communicative tools in its training and mobilisational efforts.

Amrita, from Azad Foundation found the content creation done by Quest quite laudable. She observed that the ‘Gender just education model’ which is quite central to Azad’s curriculum is very different from Quest Alliance’s curriculum. In the long run perhaps both the organisations can blend their curriculums in the best interest of promoting NTL for women. She added that, *“Even though we, as individual organisations work in silos, there are a lot of points which bring us together. We need to come together as a collective in order to work towards our common goal.”*

### **Day Five: 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

*Host member organisation:* **Nirantar**

*Venue:* B-64, Second Floor, Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi 110017 (India)

*Participant member organisations:* Abhivyakti, AWC, Azad Foundation and Open Eyes Project.

The learning visit hosted by Nirantar enabled the participating members’ interaction with the young women that Nirantar is currently working with at the community level. The Nirantar team also made a presentation of the various footprints made by the organisation around gender, sexuality and education, with reflections on the social impacts at the grassroots.



Students at the Nirantar centre

Nirantar enables empowerment through education, seeing and shaping education processes from a critical gender and sexuality perspective. It promotes transformative, formal and non-formal learning processes that enable girls and women to better understand and address their lived realities. Nirantar has four core areas of interventions: grassroots interventions; research and advocacy; training; and creation of educational material. Over 25 years since its inception, Nirantar has worked on women's literacy in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Haryana, Assam, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

The organisation develops educational material for the larger community of NGOs, activists and government organisations. It also organises capacity building programmes for them. The content developed by Nirantar is the outcome of a constant engagement with resource-poor women around the country. The innovative curriculum has components keeping in mind the expectations and aspirations of these women.

Nirantar assesses its students and maps their development throughout the year. Unlike conventional methods of evaluation, Nirantar believes in qualitative methods of comprehensive assessment. Regular interventions enable tutors to give reviews and comments to the learners so that they can improve their levels of learning.

In Delhi, Nirantar also runs the Parvaaz Adolescent Centre for Education (PACE) project. For the first time, Nirantar is working with the urban resource-poor groups.



At the Nirantar office

Through a session at one of Nirantar's centres' in Dakshinpuri, New Delhi, the participants of the learning visit got a chance to understand the local work and the impact it is creating. This was an interactive exchange with the women who are currently enrolled with Nirantar.

*"My brother used to be apprehensive about me coming to attend classes at Nirantar. I then made him meet the tutors and others at the office. Since that day, he has been supporting me. He even attends all my parent-teacher engagement meetings."* - A girl at the Nirantar centre, Dakshinpuri, New Delhi

Other than aiding women to become literate and educated, Nirantar has been making efforts to spread digital literacy. The organisation has made easy-to-use modules for this purpose. It believes that digital literacy is as important to make women independent and self confident.

Nirantar has also designed a module from the lens of gender and sexuality. Content around consent, marriage and reproductive health is included in this module, much of which has emerged from action research and theatre workshops to document reflections and discussions around these subjects. Nirantar has published various booklets that cater to issues faced by women in their day to day lives. These consist of stories which reflect the concerns of women as well as their aspirations. Letters by women enrolled at Nirantar have also been documented by Nirantar in an effort to understand and respond to their daily struggles and what they strive for.

Other than the women's literacy programme, Nirantar conducts training and capacity building workshops in collaboration with the government and NGOs. One such partner is the Delhi Commission for Women. On the question of employment opportunities for the women

educated by Nirantar, the organisational representative responded that various partners like Quest Alliance take over those tasks of providing skill training and outreach for meaningful employment—as this is not an area of Nirantar’s focus.

### **Reflections of the day**

Shiny from Archana Women’s Centre was deeply inspired by Nirantar’s work with marginalised women. She recommended that the organisation should organise public award giving ceremonies to incentivise girls in the community. Kuchurani from Archana Women Centre found the teaching method at Nirantar very effective. She complemented the organisation for an adaptive curriculum and one that is designed on the basis of adult learning principles. Anna from Open Eyes Project found Nirantar’s work quite gender focused and this reflected in the personalities of women at its centre, she said. According to Nitin from Abhivyakti, Nirantar has been able to maintain the dignity of the learners throughout their journey, which is highly commendable.

The participants found the whole gender focus of Nirantar’s work very inspiring as also the spirit of making learning child-centred and respectful. The visit to the PACE centre was extremely meaningful for the NTLN members as well.

### **Concluding points**

The five days’ long learning visit concluded with a commitment by the participating NTLN members to formulate models of mutual collaboration and partnerships that could be forged to further the interests of all the organisations in the NTL network. The participating organisations were also tasked with presenting their learning’s from this visit in the upcoming network meeting.

During the reflection sessions conducted at the end of the daily field visits, several member organisations put forth their interest in assimilating together the interesting ideas and needs expressed in their individual working models. For example, Open Eyes Project learnt about the possible routes it could take in order to procure funding. Nirantar talked about a possibility of partnering with Etasha to link employment opportunities for the students trained under the PACE project. The participating members were able to connect to the work carried out by the host organisations and takeaway learning’s that could be used in their organisational or community spaces. The interactive engagement between network members enabled them to build bridges and strive for a collective intent on non-traditional livelihoods for women. They also spoke about articulating a way ahead at the upcoming Annual General Body Meeting of the NTL network.

All participant members agreed that the engagement during the learning visit in Delhi was in accordance with the idea behind the creation of the NTL network. As Amrita Gupta from Azad Foundation put it, *“The idea with which the network was conceived was to advocate for non-traditional livelihood spaces and learn about the issue by building partnerships. All the organisations are doing great work in their respective spaces but instead of working in silos it is recommended that peer learning processes aid our overall objective to strive for a gender just world.”*



An engaging discussion

**MORE GLIMPSES OF THE LEARNING VISIT...**





### Reflections on the Learning visit during the AGM, September 2019

Reflecting on the Delhi learning visit, members shared that they got a fair understanding of the functioning and NTL models of the organisations visited; were impressed by the diverse strategies used to reach the most vulnerable girls and women and found the training modules used by different partners very innovative. They were particularly impressed by the various mobilisation strategies undertaken by Azad Foundation. The efforts made by Etasha to find requisite job placements for their students made a mark among the NTLN members. They were also inspired by the way in Nirantar stitches the concept of dignity in its educational initiatives. Members requested further clarity and understanding on the concept of '21st century skills' which Quest Alliance is focusing on.

Some concerns were expressed about the overall logistics, process and content of the learning visit in New Delhi:

- low participation rate of members
- language barriers for non-English and non-Hindi speaking participants.
- long and tiring schedules especially due to distance, weather and design of the visits
- problems related to food availability for members with special needs and at night
- lack of meaningful conversations and interactions among the participants after each days' visit
- lack of any politically driven discussions in terms of transforming the present societal model

Interestingly, some of these issues had already been flagged in the participant expectations from the learning visit, but could not be managed while designing and conducting the visit on the ground and should be considered in advance for future NTLN learning visits.

Members reflected on some areas that could be looked into going forward. For example, more clarity on concepts like 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills from Quest Alliance; the need for an elaborate dialogue on employability by organisations that offer vocational training and also whether we need more than just talk on employment; an understanding of other and innovative ways of learning that are central to us as humans and the need for identifying some common areas of collective work on NTL as a network.

**ANNEXURE**

**NTLN Learning Visit Expectations of Members**

The NTLN secretariat sent out an expectations sheet to participating members before planning the learning visit. These were shared with the host organisations to enable them to design and incorporate the expectations as far as possible. The responses from the participants are collated below.

<i>Host organisation</i>	<i>Expectations from different participants</i>				
<b>Azad Foundation</b>	What is Azad's mobilization approach (philosophy and examples) and how does Azad provide support to the women in training?	What are the different types of capacity building programs needed to build confidence among participants?	What are Azad's partnership engagement strategies?	What is Azad's vision for the next 5 years?	Some interesting stories of impact.
<b>ETASHA</b>	Your vocational training programme, placement programme and women entrepreneurs programme.	Understanding the 'community centric' approach you are taking.	Examples of positive mindset change in the community and successes.	How do you inculcate organizational and professional values in youth?	What is your work on NTL in Delhi?
<b>Nirantar</b>	How do you measure the success of your interventions?	How do you work for developing feminist leadership at the grassroots level and what are the kinds of trainings you do for this?	What are the income generation activities you facilitate for women?	What is your education philosophy and how is it translated into learning in your team and the community? The historical walks to understand your interactive teaching-learning pedagogy.	What advocacy has Nirantar initiated in the space of adult education?
<b>Quest Alliance</b>	New and innovative learning models for training and what are the challenges in training in different regions.	What kind of technologies can be used with rural women with low levels of education for their training?	How does the 21st century workplace look like and how does it align with the aspirations of girls/young women?	What are you doing in the education-training space with the government training institutes and what is the possible advocacy at this level? What is	How do you use a digital platform to deliver vocational training?

				happening in the TVET space?	
<b>Sakha</b>	How does Sakha operate? (employment opportunities, identifying potential learners, services offered, RISKS)	What is Sakha's biggest challenge (market, funding, etc) and how do you overcome them?	How do you balance business with development goals? What are the financial implications?	What is Sakha's vision for the next 5 years and future strategies?	

*Members also shared the following inputs:*

**I can contribute:**

- my experiences on NTL
- alternative perspectives of using tourism as a tool for development and women's access to the market
- help in facilitation
- sharing methodologies

**I want to learn:**

- how women overcome challenges in non-traditional field
- how women come together to challenge patriarchal norms in their life
- about systems setup to provide support to those who take on non-traditional roles in their daily life
- new ways of partnerships and engagements
- effective women's leadership programmes
- how different NTLs are functioning
- about innovative NTL
- funding and government linkages
- about sustaining groups how objectives are turned into learnings by different organisations how organisational cultures are developed
- how the mission is monitored
- about other NTL's in Delhi
- best practices
- how to mobilize in a better way

**My participation may be limited by:**

- language problem
- lack of thorough knowledge about NTL
- prior commitments
- time constraints
- visits should not be beyond six pm