IMPACT REPORT

2020

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Learning Problem Solving through art: an inquiry of evidence
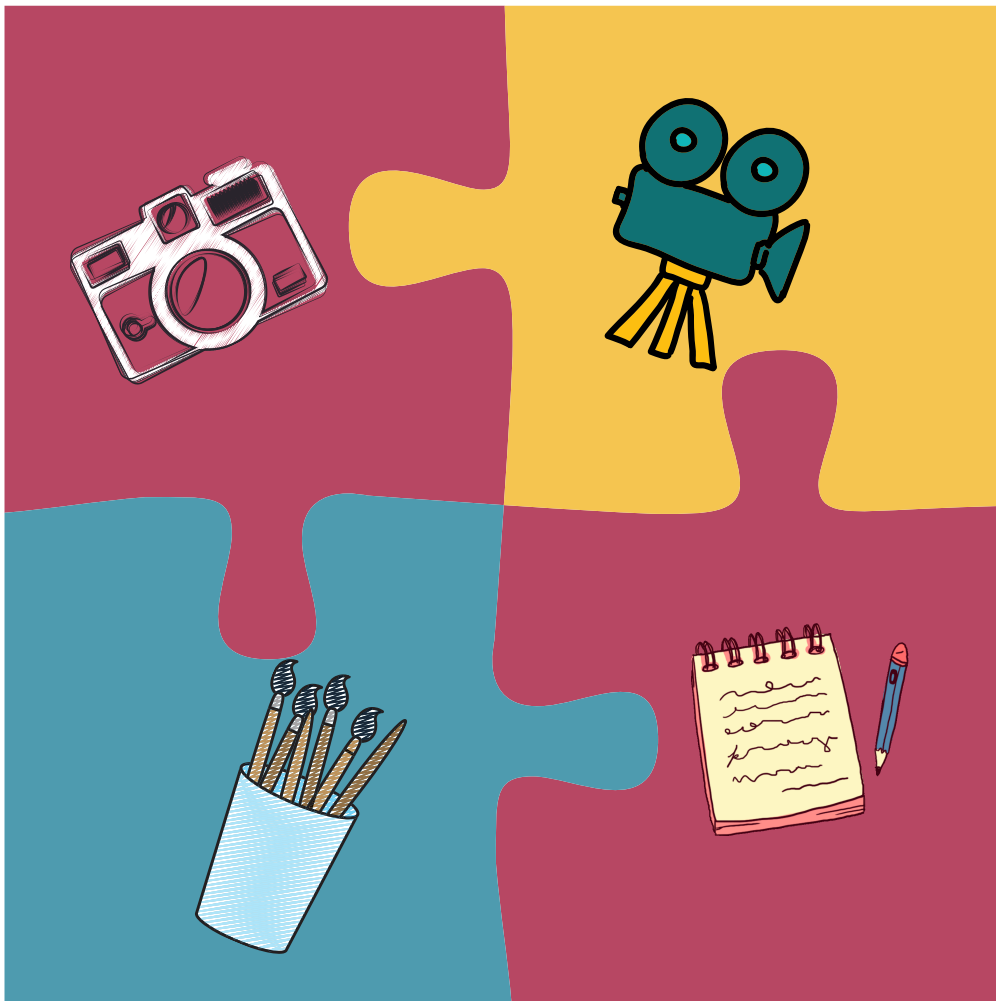
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The aim of the pencilbricks Foundation is to build a movement of problem solvers, who will be leaders in their communities bringing about a positive change around them.

THE PROBLEM

Research says 'growing up in poverty makes growing into leadership roles difficult', which means for people living in challenging communities the mere thought of leadership even in their locality or community is just a dream. This pushes people from these communities to live with their problems or wait for any governing body to provide them with a solution.
Children and adults in these communities need continuous up-skilling and a need for developing skills which are transferable and job-specific.
Indian adolescents are close to 253 million, the challenges of poverty and location continue to create barriers in their life to realise their full potential.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED

We believe that there needs to be a stronger focus on developing life skills in children and youth so that they are independent and empowered to thrive in their lives. In addition to foundational skills such as reading, writing and numeracy, transferable life skills are needed to meet the present-day requirements.

This report summarises current evidence on the role and importance of developing life skills through art, hobbies and paid internship model for disadvantaged community children and youth.

We first take into account the need for building these life skills, the role of problem-solving skill in the current situation and how it can be a change maker for humble communities. We then outline the highlights of our pilot projects, the impact, trends and findings found during the execution and future directions to achieve this.
The there spheres below summarise our insights and approach.

Problem solving Skills

Art + Hobbies

Internship Model

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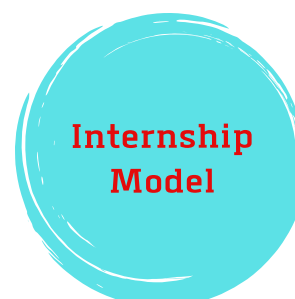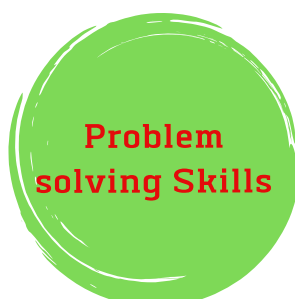
VISION

Every Individual will be equipped with essential skills to build a better world.

MISSION

To make essential skills easy, accessible & fun to learn

GOALS

Our goal is to ensure the children and youth int he challenging communities get access to life skills and opportunities to demonstrate and use them.

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pencilbricks foundation is a non-profit organisation founded in the year 2020 by 2 Teach for India Alumni.

After gaining experience as teachers in government & low-income private schools & exposure to the problems & challenges of the disadvantaged communities, we worked towards building the necessary & essential skills. Working in various organisations which focus on building transferable skills in children and adults has helped us gain knowledge about the sector in depth.

What are we trying to achieve?

Problem-solving skills are essential and are required almost everywhere, in schools, colleges, workplaces or even in our day to day household activities. Everyone has problems and are able to solve it either by coming up with a common solution or use a strategy they have already used. This becomes difficult when there is no obvious solution and the things that we have tried in the past don't work. So problem-solving requires a scaffolded way of building steps to approach a problem and build multiple and sustainable solutions. We plan to integrate these scaffolded steps in the activities people already have a habit of doing it or are interested to continue doing, like hobbies or work or day to day household chores. Our approach involves giving necessary structures which are contextualised to different age groups and have relevant problem-solving steps for a specific age.

Many years have passed, students graduate, many fail, many drop out but we see that the education system has managed to remain firmly the same. We memorise, prepare for tests and we forget. The methods we use at school are bringing down creativity. Students struggle with thinking of ideas and take the very first idea and start the project. IDEATION has become challenging for students.

Creating art boosts one's ability to analyse and solve problems in numerous ways. When we create something through art we experiment, we question, we conduct research and even evaluate our work. Making mistakes and able to experiment boots the confidence and pushes us to think in an innovative manner.

At pencilbricks we let children and youth explore their interests (hobbies or art forms) through a curriculum that is problem centred. They explore a problem and build a solution using their hobby/art. The curriculum is designed for children to learn and apply scaffolded steps of problem-solving skill and the problems are aligned with the UNSDG.

Our approach follows a progression of teaching problem-solving skills, practicing the skill, primary assessment of artefacts and solutions built, participants self-assessing their artefacts, feedback from the team, a second round of practice to build solutions based on the feedback and final assessment.

From April 2020 to November 2020, we ran online internship programmes spread across 37 days for children and youth from disadvantaged communities.

PROGRAMME BRIEF

Internships are aimed at integrating problem-solving skills in day to day activities to build awareness of the skills and apply them to solve problems around them. Interns use one of the art forms/hobbies that they love to work and create solutions to simple problems around them.

ART AND PROBLEM SOLVING

We have 4 categories (blogging, doodle art, photography & videography) as the art forms through which interns will build solutions for 4 problem statements which are aligned to UNSDGs. The interns come from economically challenging backgrounds who are studying in various fields, right from commerce, psychology, science & school students. Through 3 batches of internships, we have 108 artists as problem solvers, 432 solutions in the form of blogs, doodles, photographs and videos.

Photography as Problem solving tool by Logeshwari M

Programme

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Application and Selection: Our application process is rigorous and comprehensive. With 3 rounds of screening, we look at candidates who are from challenging economic background, have empathy for the problems around them, can dedicate time to work with us on building solutions, have an interest in one of the 4 categories – Blogging, Doodle Art, Photography or Videography.

The screening process goes for 12 days by our team members reviewing applications, conducting telephonic interviews and collecting evidences. With a selectivity rate of 12% – 14.5% we select the highest potential applicants for the programme.

Stage 1:
Intern Application

A simple google form for applicants to fill their basic details, about themselves, their understanding of the category and expectation from the internship.
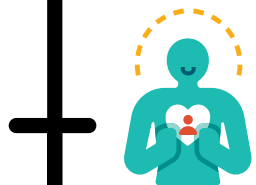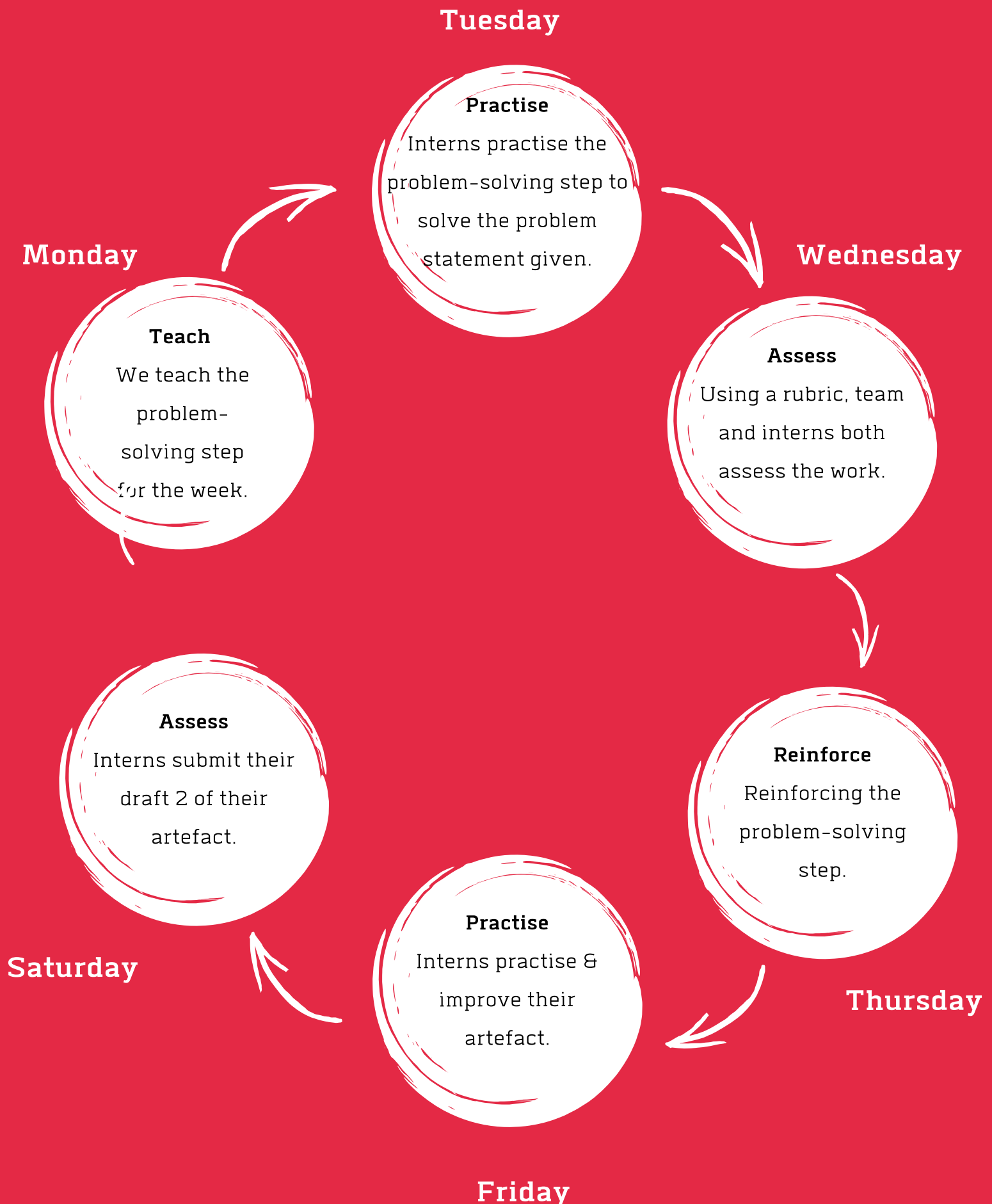
Stage 2:
Empathising with problem

If selected, interns work on simple problem statement to solve & represent their solutions through the category they have chosen.

Stage 2:
Telephonic Interview

If selected in the first 2 rounds, an interview (up to 20 mins) is conducted by pencilbricks team via phone call to understand the purpose and to make sure for authenticity.

Programme

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Tuesday

Practise
Interns practise the problem-solving step to solve the problem statement given.

Monday

Teach
We teach the problem-solving step for the week.

Wednesday

Assess
Using a rubric, team and interns both assess the work.

Assess
Interns submit their draft 2 of their artefact.

Saturday

Reinforce
Reinforcing the problem-solving step.

Thursday

Practise
Interns practise & improve their artefact.

Friday

Structures in a week

Programme

SKILLS IN FOCUS

Our programme is embedded with 4 skills (3/4 referred from the SkillsBuilderPartnership) and introduced to our interns in a scaffolded manner through Teach, Practice, Assess and Reinforce. We make sure the evidence of skill development are recorded and analysed during multiple points of the program.

But before that Have you ever wondered about Gender Disparity? From where it started? When did it start? What would be the side-effects? Is there any solution for that which we can implement in our daily life?

Let us try to figure it out!

"What's the matter? It's the same distance!"

You must have a lot of queries about the same, regarding how to identify the best solution by ourselves.

But let me tell you that in this blog we are going to explore some key solutions and its steps for job disparity/gender disparity that we can implement in our daily life.

Let us see the objective for today that we will achieve till the End of the blog!

Create the right working environment:

Gender equality starts with creating an environment free from ongoing stereotypes and Negativity around us. Creating a safe working space for everyone around us can be beneficial at the End.

Many women don't do a job because of following reasons:

Why do women don't feel comfortable in their working places?
- There is no safe space for them.
- They don't get appreciated for their work.
- A lot of workplace sufferers suffer bullying and/or discrimination on issues such as gender,age and class etc.

Now comes how?
- Create safe space. (For counselling watch this)
- Provide equal wages.
- Appreciate/Encourage/Support others.
- Give equal respect.
- Have an open discussion with your employees/people about Gender Equality and how to implement this in their life.

Pros for solution
- Life gets improved
- Better quality of work.
- Promotes Gender equality.

Blogging as problem solving tool

Problem Statement: How should boys and girls be given equal chances.

Doodle Art as problem solving tool

Problem Statement: How should boys and girls be given equal chances.

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Fist depicts that all women should come together and break all the stereotypes and black spots on hand indicate the bruises which will appear while fighting your rights but women must stand strong and together.

Photography as problem solving tool

Problem Statement: How should boys and girls be given equal chances.

Videography as problem solving tool

Problem Statement: How should boys and girls be given equal chances.

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-Photograph by Sukhvinder
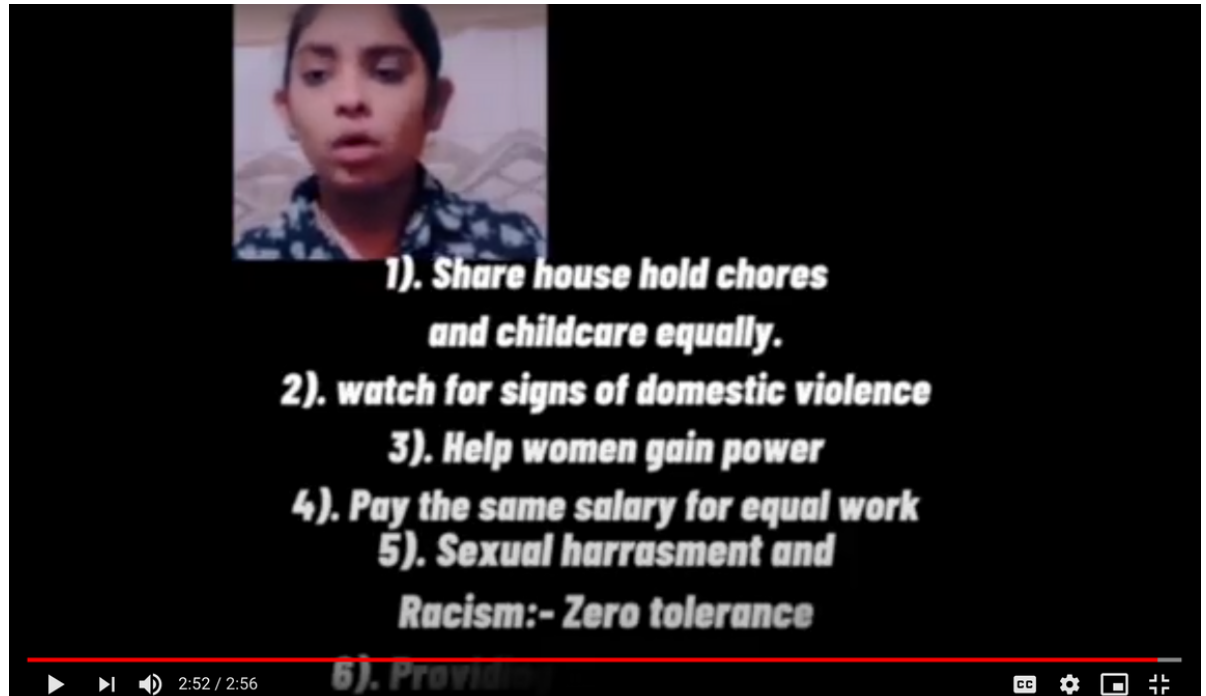
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–Photograph by Logeshwari

Percentage of interns who can demonstrate and apply Problem Solving skills

72%

Percentage of youth who built an awareness of Problem solving skills

88%

Percentage of interns who felt the support structures helped them become better

93%

Number of solutions built using art as problem solving tool

432

Applications received for internship in 2020

805

Improvement in the online session participation

60%

Total number of hours spent by interns working on building solutions

4860

Total number of problem solvers

108

Hours of support per intern

78

Percentage of youth developed Creativity and Presentation skills

70%

15

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Baseline Evaluation of Problem solving skills

Demonstrate and apply the skills — 0.9%

Aware and understand the skills — 31.5%

Unaware of the skills — 67.6%
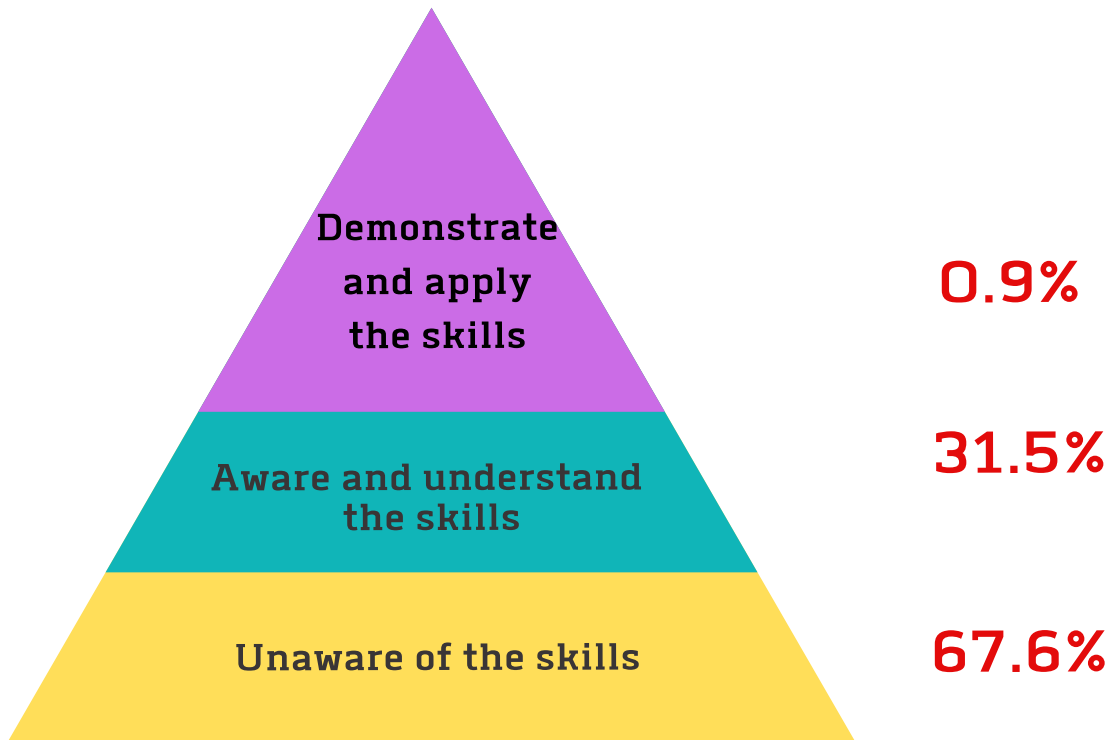
End line Evaluation of Problem solving skills shows a growth of 72%

Demonstrate and apply PS skills — 88%

Aware and understand the skills — 10%

Unaware of the skills — 2%

16

805 Applications received

Punjab

Delhi

Rajasthan

Uttar Pradesh

Bihar

Assam

Gujarat

Jharkhand

Madhya Pradesh

West Bengal

Maharashtra

Telangana

Andhra Pradesh

Karnataka

Kerala

Tamil Nadu
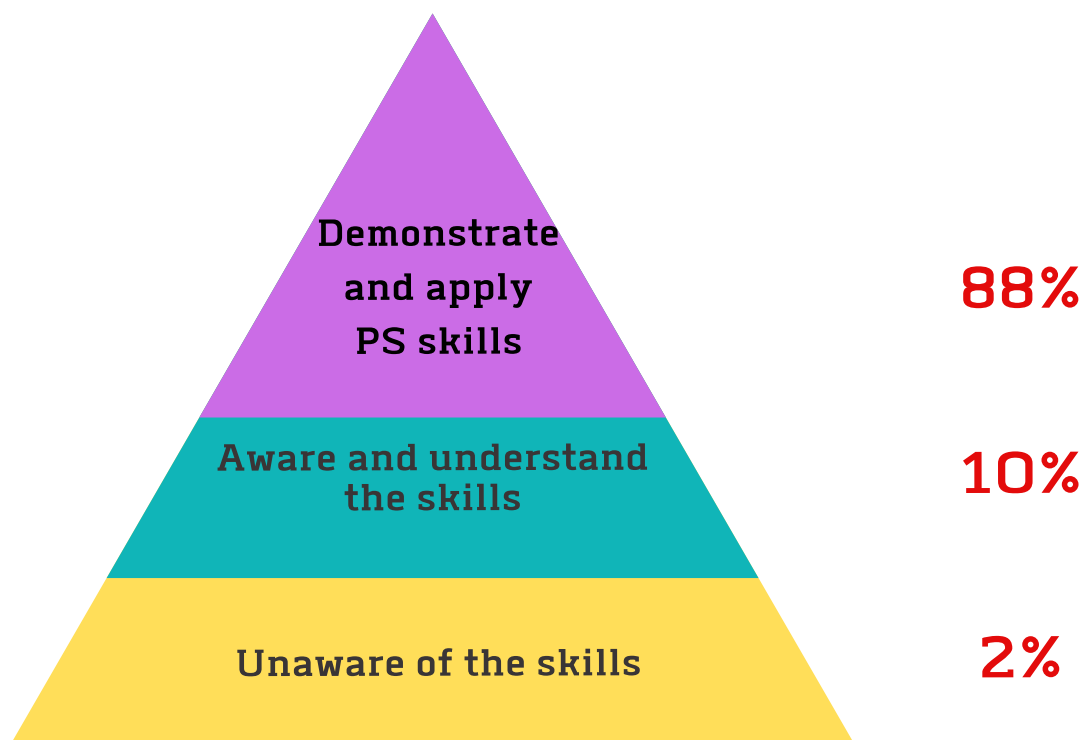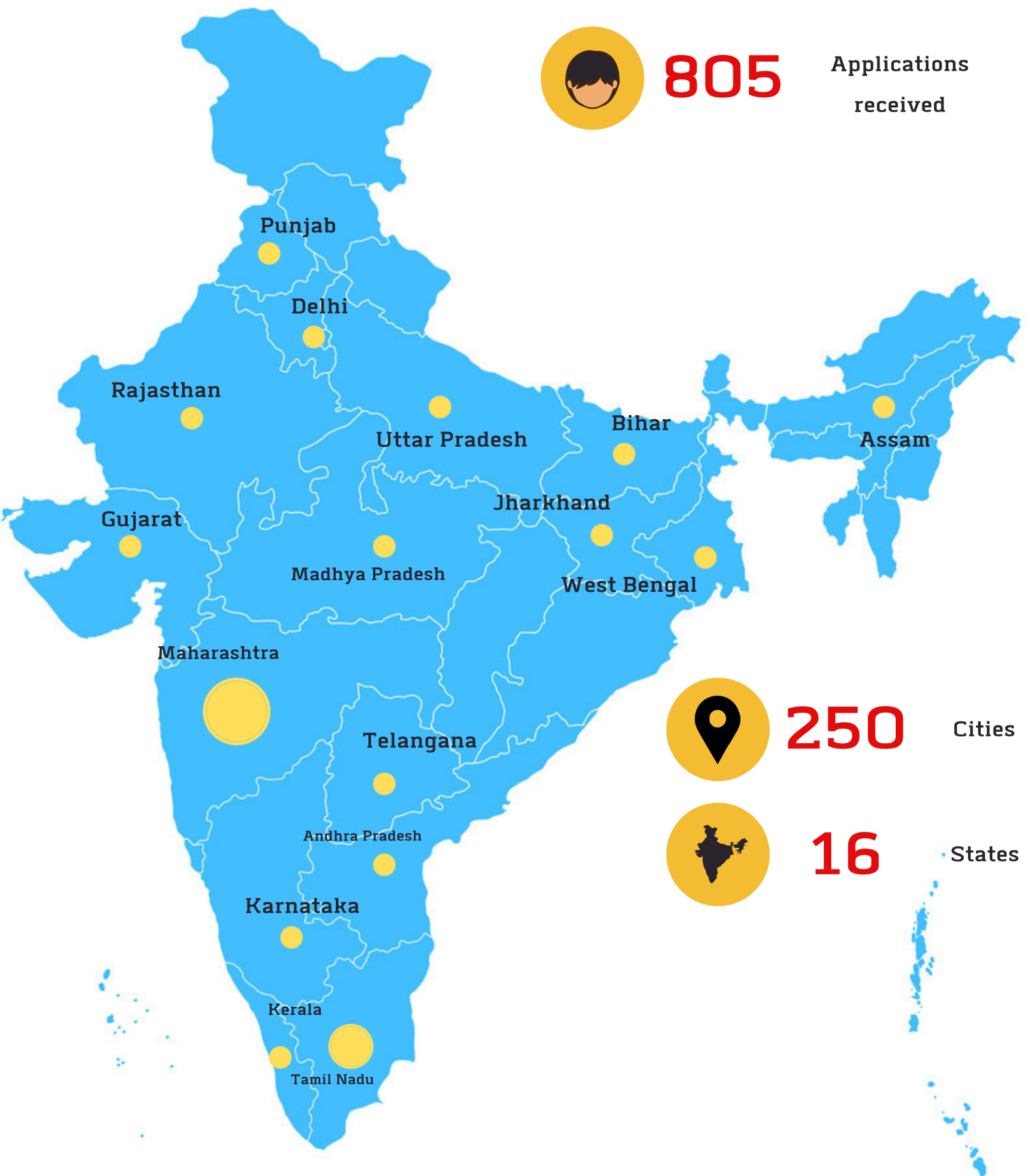
250 Cities

16 States

Recognition

Pencilbricks: Building parent and student leaders

A non-profit initiative by a group of Teach for India alumni, Pencilbricks focuses on the overall development of children

By Athul . M | Published: 18th Sep 2020 12:09 am Updated: 18th Sep 2020 1:53 pm

From (R) Huda Sultana and Saba Begum, both are students from Hyderabad who were part of Pencilbrick's "I support my Family Internship."

Telangana Today

EMPOWERMENT

Nourishing young talents

A non-profit initiative Pencilbricks focuses on learning-gap issue through effective community learning

Athul M

With 22% of India's population living below the poverty line, every child born in these communities are thrown into challenging circumstances. And even access to education is a distant dream! The team at 'Pencilbricks' works towards empowering such communities by developing a friendly learning environment.

A child tends to spend around 75% of his/her time in the community, which inspires 'Pencilbricks' to tap the potential of such spaces, to mould parent and student leaders for a better tomorrow. The Covid-19 lockdown has had a cascading effect across the population throwing life into disarray. The student community has been one among the worst hit, as the way ahead looks extremely challenging.

In these testing times, 'Pencilbricks' felt the need to engage the students in a programme which gives them the freedom to create and learn what interests them. They were quick to shift gears launching their online initiative "I support my Family Internship".

The internship is a one-month fun-filled boot camp for students from the economically weaker communities across the country. It is a paid opportunity and complete 'Work from home' (any handset with access to the internet would suffice for the work). Each student will be paid a stipend of Rs.500 at the end of the internship.

Our motto is to provide a tool to confidently thrive in their lives with ample opportunities to explore and express

Huda Sultana, Saba Begum and Lohitaksh Rao were students from different areas of Hyderabad who were part of 'Pencilbrick's online initiative. Huda and Saba study in Madina Mission High School, Jahanuma, while Lohitaksh studies in Khusbow Vidya Nikethan School, Banjara Hills. All of them are 10th grade students. While Huda's father worked as a salesman, Saba's father was a watchman in one of the firms in the city. All these students enjoyed great support from their parents as they were going ahead with their internship projects. While Huda joined to learn blogging, Saba and Lohitaksh were involved in 'problem-solving through doodle art & photography.' However Lohitaksh had to discontinue the internship due to health issues in the family. Our motto is to provide them with a tool to confidently thrive in their lives with ample opportunities to explore and express," says Hrishikesh, Co-Founder of the non-profit initiative. Susmita, who is the Program Director, stressed on the importance of belief and equipping students with the right skills to identify their true potential. To build the problem solving and leadership skills in students and adults, Pencilbricks intends to intervene in 3 different phases - Intern, Innovator and Leader.

Student Huda continued to work with Pencilbricks post her internship to learn more about blogging & reviewing. These are just few of the many examples of the engagements of Pencilbricks in marginalised communities, across the country for evolving student and parent leadership.

18/09/2020 Hyd Today Pg 03

From (R) Susmita (Program Director, Pencilbricks), Hrishikesh (Co-Founder, Pencilbricks)

Huda continued to work with 'Pencilbricks' post her internship to learn more about blogging & reviewing. At the same time time Saba made use of her 37-day long internship to be innovative and raise awareness on pressing issues like 'waste management', through doodle art, her favorite hobby.

These are just few of the many examples of the engagements of 'Pencilbricks' in marginalized communities, across the country for evolving student and parent leadership amid the Covid crisis.

In a country where utter poverty has cast shadows over aspirations of its own people, education acts a tool for social mobility. Nourishing 'the right talents' at community level will have far-reaching benefits. As a driving force of change, these young minds would transcend boundaries, breaking barriers in the fight

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ahead with their internship projects. While Huda joined to learn blogging, Saba and Lohitaksh were involved in 'problem-solving through doodle art & photography.' However Lohitaksh had to discontinue the internship due to health issues in the family.

A Painting by Saba Begum, Saba is a 10th grade student from Madina Mission High School, Jahanuma, Hyderabad.

"We at 'Pencilbricks are very well aware that children and adults in the marginalized communities go through physical, emotional and financial crises on a daily basis. Our motto is to provide them with a tool to confidently thrive in their lives with ample opportunities to explore and express.", says Hrishikesh,

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In September, pencilbricks was recognised by one of the leading daily newspaper, Telangana Today. There was an article published on the internship programme that we run with children from Hyderabad. The article spoke on the importance of nourishing the right talents and providing them with a platform to showcase it.

Case Study: Danyah Khan

Danyah Khan, age 14, is studying in grade 10. She loves to write and she strongly feels for bringing difference by using her interests to inspire the people around her! She chose Blogging as a problem-solving tool while she was a part of our second batch of the internship. During the course of the internship, she built 5 solutions to 5 problems using the SkillsBuilderFramework. She had presented her solutions as blogs as she loves to write.

Danyah has shown a tremendous improvement in her work from the first day to day 37 (*last day*) of the internship. From writing down her thoughts about the problem, solution to collecting perspectives of people who have created, who are impacted by the problem, identifying easy, long-lasting and adaptable solutions. She is aware, can demonstrate and apply the problem-solving steps learnt.

She continued to work with team pencilbricks post her internship to motivate, inspire and support the upcoming bloggers to use their Blogs to solve problems of their communities. She is the youngest team member we have at pencilbricks and is the most determined individual towards her work. How to unlock your creativity, how to uncrate your presentation skills, how to self-assess your artefacts, are some of the blogs that Danyah has built as a part of support structures for bloggers and artists.

An excerpt from Danyah's Blog where she talks about the problem, solution, pros & cons.

Problem Statement: "Every day feels the same" You wake up. You eat. You go to work. You eat. You come home. You eat. You go to bed.

Problem Solving Step followed: I explore problems by thinking about pros and cons of the possible solutions.

Arathy is pursuing Masters in Wildlife Studies. Photography is her passion, but she considers finding solutions through photographs is a bit more challenging. Which is why she joined this internship programme. She also loves to draw and write. She says "The internship gave me an opportunity to explore my problem-solving skills at which I am bad at times. After joining the internship, I am sure that I have improved a lot." She was unsure of the internship when she first applied. The pre-work of internship application made her curious and sparked an interest in her as it contained a simple problem to solve by clicking photographs.

" *I never really thought I will complete the internship, but because of the problem-solving steps, problem statements, the team and structures everything made me stay and the expectations were reached and beyond that. When I am stuck with a problem, I ask help only from close friends and If I can't find solutions, I stay with it and deal with it as it comes*".

However in the first week when the interns were introduced to the problem-solving step - I complete tasks by finding someone to help if I need, Arathy pushed herself to reach out to her neighbours to understand the problem statement better and build solutions by clicking photographs in her neighbourhood. Problem-Solving through Photography improved the way she approached a problem. In the beginning, Arathy believed that the first solution she can think of, for any problem will be the best solution. During the week 3 of internship, when the problem-solving step 4 (I explore problems by creating different possible solutions) was introduced, it was then that she found it challenging to brainstorm on multiple solutions and understood the need for having more than one solution. Arathy Madhu is now confident of solving problems that she will/may come across by following the steps learnt during the internship. She certainly has grown right from change in mindset to the approach. Arathy now wants to continue photography and use it as a problem-solving tool.
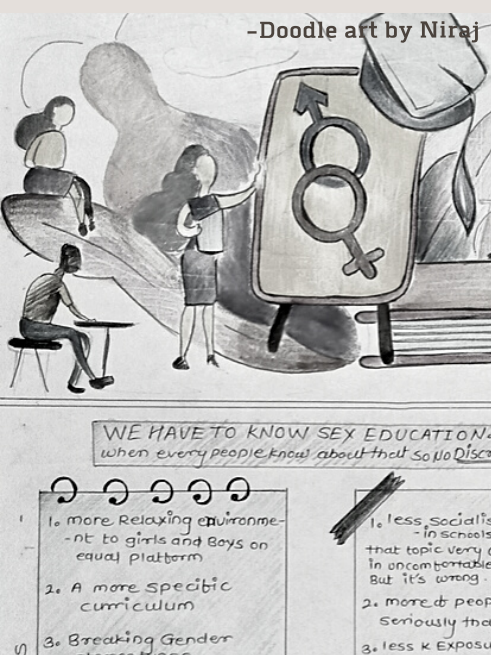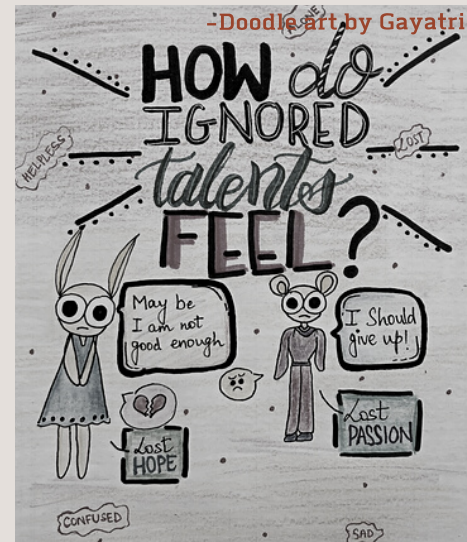
An sneak peak into Arathy's photographs
Problem Statement: How to reduce plastic waste in our houses?
Problem Solving Step followed: I complete tasks by finding information I need by myself.

A Sanitary pad is equivalent to 4 plastic bags. Say no to conventional sanitary pads. Switch to menstrual cup.

Support

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–Photograph by Nidhin

–Photograph by Shahbaz

–Doodle art by Gayatri

HOW do IGNORED talents FEEL?

HELPLESS · LOST

May be I am not good enough

I should give up!

Lost HOPE

Lost PASSION

CONFUSED · SAD

–Photograph by Logeshwari

–Photograph by Logeshwari

–Doodle art by Niraj

WE HAVE TO KNOW SEX EDUCATION. when every people know about that so no Disca

1. more Relaxing environme-nt to girls and Boys on equal platform
2. A more Specific curriculum
3. Breaking Gender stereotypes

1. less socialis -in schools that topic very in uncomfortable But it's wrong.
2. more at peop seriously tha
3. less k Exposu

Dear donors and supporters, we thank you for your kindness and support. You have been motivating us every day to make a difference in children and youth's lives from the challenging communities. With your support, we were able to provide a stipend to

108 children so far.

Shreya Ravinder Nishant Vamsi Rajanish Divya Bharat Balasrinivas Datta
Amit Manisha Anusha Sangeeta Riya Dinesh Saikiran Shubham Shweta
Ritu Varada Chandranil Mansi Veena Saikat Swapnil Karthik.R Lenin Vignesh
Ashwin Aditya Shalini Rahul Avinash Pratyk Piruthvi Ravishankar

Partners

pencilbricks

Skills Builder
PARTNERSHIP

Much gratitude to our capacity building partner – The SkillsBuilder Organisation for sharing their knowledge and experience with us to help us accelerate our work.

Their contributions to our programme planning and execution are highly valued.

PROBLEM SOLVING

CREATIVITY

AIMING HIGH

Right from the beginning, James is someone who believed in us. He was more like a mentor for us who always inspired us and motivated us to do more.

The scaffolded steps in the framework helped me overcome the misconceptions on building skills in children and pushed me to unlearn and re-learn the right way to develop skills.

- Susmita, Director

- Hrishikesh, Director

pencilbricks

HELP US DO MORE

In the coming years, we hope to invest more in the three areas to impact the children and youth:

- Design and build toys for children of age 3 years to 6 years
- Design and create Story books for children of age 8 years to 12 years
- Improve and increase our interventions with the agr group 13 and above by providing paid internships.
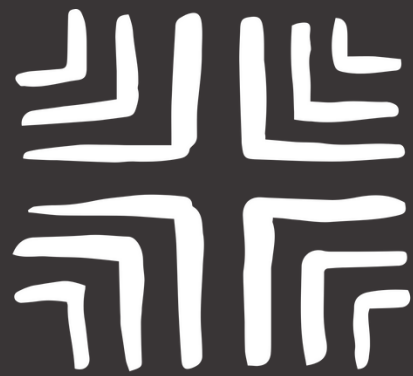
HELPS US REACH MORE

If you are a

TEACHER/ARTIST/ ART ENTHUSIAST/ NGO/ SCHOOL/COLLEGE/ STUDENT LEADER/ DONOR

We hope to evolve to reach more children and youth directly or indirectly. Your time, skills, donations, advice and partnerships will help us reach our goals and the VISION.

Connect with us

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