

THE STEP BULLETIN

Quarterly Newsletter



From the Editor's Desk

Dear reader,

Welcome to our latest issue! We are thrilled to share the latest developments in the work of STEP Academy.

In this issue, entrepreneurship takes the front seat. This edition highlights our commitment to fostering rural entrepreneurship through *Swyam Sarathi* and *Vridhi 2.0*, celebrating the resilience and success of our entrepreneurs.

With the Union Budget 2024 emphasizing entrepreneurship, NGOs like STEP play a pivotal role in implementing these initiatives at the grassroots level. The transformational journey of Gajendra exemplifies the power of skilling in changing lives. Additionally, Deputy CM Premchand Bairwa's support for women's empowerment through skilling.

The engagement of corporate leaders, including Tech Mahindra Foundation and Angel One,

further strengthens our skilling initiatives, ensuring industry-aligned training and employment pathways.

Our partnership with TATA IIS opens doors to high-tech careers, while our collaboration with *Shram Sarathi* enhances financial literacy among youth—a crucial step towards sustainable livelihoods. We also celebrate the remarkable achievements of our trainees, recognized at the AngelOne-CSR felicitation ceremony along with *Humkadam* workshops, reinforces our commitment to continuous learning and capacity-building for our team.

As we move forward, these stories serve as a testament to our collective efforts in driving change and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. Thank you for being part of this journey!

Happy Reading!

Mona Agrawal
STEP Academy, Udaipur

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Deputy CM Champions Women's Empowerment

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Humkadam: Strengthening STEP's Capacity Through Knowledge and Collaboration

The Enterprising Ecosystem: Promoting Rural Entrepreneurship



Swam Sarathi: Celebrating STEP Entrepreneurs & Strengthening Support for Self-Employment

On January 8, more than 350 STEP entrepreneur alumni, stakeholders, and public representatives met at the Swam Sarathi event to showcase and recognize the achievements of the entrepreneurs of STEP Academy in Dungarpur district. India's entrepreneurs have driven the economy to new heights, and this conference was held to honor them, as well as to discuss how government, NGOs, and the community can better support this spirit.



Joined by public officials including the Honorable MP Mr. Rajkumar Roat (pictured above) a Rajasthan Skill and Livelihoods Development Corporation Officer, and the Dungarpur Social Welfare Officer, 20 STEP entrepreneurs had their success stories recognized and showcased, offering inspiration for other aspiring entrepreneurs.

After this ceremony, the public officials, entrepreneurs, labor organizations held detailed

discussion about their experiences, including successes and challenges, migrant labor rights, and self-employment. MP Rajkumar Roat offered words of encouragement, while Employment Officer Manju Mali presented about government schemes and loan facilities. By connecting a group of ambitious and accomplished youth and giving them a chance to showcase their skill, STEP Academy continues to grow a network of talented entrepreneurs and mentors.

Seeds for Growing Dreams: Vridhi 2.0

After completing STEP training, a major roadblock that many aspiring entrepreneurs face is a lack of initial funding. Traditional banks and NBFCs have demanding credit and collateral criteria that make securing investments difficult for trainees.

To address this, STEP Academy has partnered with Shram Sarathi to pilot Vridhi, an initiative that will provide funding for 100 STEP entrepreneurs. The aim is to increase the number of new startups by 20%. With investors and seed money, trainees will be able to put their newly developed skills to use and build their own future.

वृद्धि ऋण

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STEP का प्रमाण पत्र है

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Empowering Entrepreneurs: Union Budget 2024 and the Role of NGOs in Driving Change"

Entrepreneurship is more than just a buzzword - it's the driving force behind much of the Indian economy's success over the past two decades. During her recent Union Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman echoed this, introducing several new government initiatives aiming to spur entrepreneurship and enterprise. These included tax cuts for those making less than ₹12 lakh annually to schemes, improved credit access for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) for investments, and a scheme to provide loans up to ₹5 lakh for first-time entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds. NGOs like STEP Academy and Aajeevika Bureau come into the picture during implementation. The connections and framework that many civil society organizations have been developing for years play a crucial role in bridging the gap between policy and practice on a grassroots level. When it comes to awareness about these government schemes, it often falls to the nonprofit sector to connect the entrepreneurs with the programs that benefit them. Beyond that, NGOs also fill community gaps with capacity building. At STEP, the ultimate goal is to give rural youth control over their own lives. Beyond skill development,

the capacity building and soft-skill training that trainees are engaged in gives them the confidence, problem-solving skills, and network to succeed as entrepreneurs. An incredibly valuable part of STEP training is gaining access to the network of other aspiring entrepreneurs, as well as experienced mentors who are willing to guide them in technical aspects. In the Dungarpur event, for example, where a panel of entrepreneurs shared the successes and challenges they faced, that information can be taken and applied to the endeavors of other trainees aspiring to entrepreneurial success.

"We wanted this Budget to speak for the next 25 years", said Minister Sitharaman. It is clear that the youth have the passion and drive to excel in today's world. Combined with STEP's guidance in business planning, financial management, and market analysis, as well as opportunities and resources from the government sector, their dreams can become a reality. With continued collaboration between the public, private, and NGO sectors, we are sowing the seeds for future entrepreneurs.

~Toby Chang
Princeton University



Transforming Lives Through Skilling: Gajendra's Journey with STEP

Gajendra Vaishnav, a 26-year-old from Desuri (Pali), had spent 17 years working at a medical store in Mumbai. When a business partnership fell through, he lost his job and struggled to find new opportunities. Feeling disheartened, he returned to his hometown with his family, uncertain about his future. During a youth outreach campaign, STEP Academy's team connected with Gajendra's brother, who introduced him to STEP's Mobile Repairing Training Program at the Desuri Center. Through counseling, Gajendra understood the training process and enrolled in a 1.5-month course in August 2024.

Equipped with Gajendra lakhs his own business—Madhav Mobile & Stationery Shop in Chanerao (Desuri). He now envisions expanding his enterprise. Gajendra credits STEP Academy for transforming his career, helping him regain his confidence, and opening new doors of opportunity. His journey reflects in empowering youth and fostering self-empowerment of skill training

~Shoeb Seikh
STEP Academy, Udaipur

Under the District-Level Work Progress Program, Honorable Deputy Chief Minister Mr. Premchand Bairwa, in collaboration with STEP Academy Trust and Pahal Foundation, launched an E-Mitra Operator Training Program.

This training has opened new employment avenues for

women, enabling them to secure spacs at the Gram Panchayat level. By becoming E-Mitra Operators, these women are now empowered to support their families financially while bridging the digital gap in rural areas. This initiative highlights the impact of skill-based training in creating sustainable livelihoods and fostering women's entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.



Deputy CM Champions Women's Empowerment

Driving Impact: Corporate Leaders Engage with STEP to Shape the Future of Skilling



Tech Mahindra Foundation CEO Visits STEP Academy: Strengthening Partnerships for Skilling and Employment

On January 7th, STEP Academy, Aajeevika Bureau, hosted Mr. Chetan, CEO of Tech Mahindra Foundation, at our Udaipur campus. His visit provided valuable insights into our training programs and placement strategies. He interacted with trainees, ex-trainees, and trainers and explored the implementation of STEP-Mavli with our partners.

Key Takeaways:

Mr. Chetan shared innovative ideas to enhance STEP's skilling programs, including:
Leveraging AR/VR in Training;
LMS Implementation; Designing
**Hybrid Training Model;
Exploring Global Placements.

Future Collaboration:

STEP Academy looks forward to working with Tech Mahindra Foundation in the following areas:

Trainer Workshops; Expanding Overseas Placements; Life Skills Assessment among others

STEP Academy thanks Mr. Chetan and Tech Mahindra Foundation for their support and guidance. This collaboration marks a significant step toward empowering individuals with industry-relevant skills.

Visit by Angel One CFO to STEP Academy

Angel One Team Visits STEP Academy: Strengthening Engagement and Collaboration

STEP Academy had the privilege of hosting the senior leadership team from Angel One. The visit aimed to deepen their understanding of our skilling initiatives and impact. We were delighted to see their keen interest in our programs, and their interaction with our trainees was both engaging and insightful.

Key Highlights of the Visit:

- Understanding STEP's Work: The team explored our initiatives through an exhibition showcasing our training models and success stories.
- Trainee Interactions: They engaged in discussions with trainees, listening to their experiences and learning about their journeys.



- Stakeholder Engagement: Angel One representatives met with teams from STEP Bhilwara, Jodhpur, Rajsamand, Banswara, and Udaipur to understand our approach and objectives.
- Community Dialogues: They also interacted with employers, parents, and alumni, gaining valuable perspectives on the impact of our programs.

The visit provided an opportunity for meaningful discussions on potential collaboration. We believe this engagement will strengthen our relationship with Angel One, paving the way for greater support in achieving our mission of empowering individuals through skill development.



STEP-TATA IIS Partnership Unlocks High-Tech Career Opportunities

Kishor Singh, a young man from Rajsamand, Rajasthan, completed his ITI course in electrician training but struggled to find employment due to limited local opportunities and a lack of exposure to the technical job market. Determined to build a career, Kishor joined the EV Electrician Training program at TATA Indian Institute of Skills (IIS) with the support of STEP Academy. The specialized program transformed his career path, and today, he is employed at OLA Electric. STEP Academy, in collaboration with TATA IIS, has launched specialized training programs. These programs focus on high-end skill training in advanced manufacturing, EV technology, robotics,

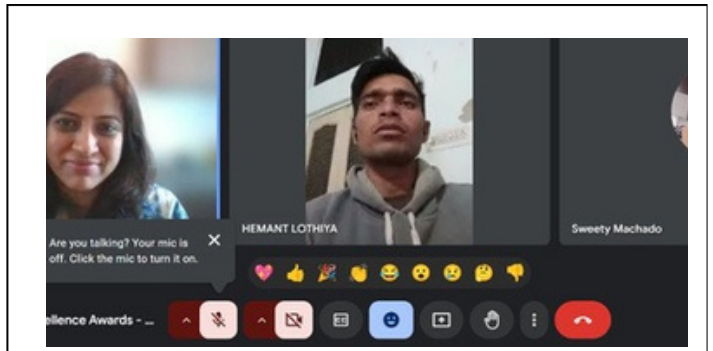
additive manufacturing, among others. So far, 55 candidates like Kishor from Aajeevika Bureau-supported regions are already undergoing intensive training. After three months of rigorous training, participants have secured job offers from leading companies such as OLA Electric, Jyoti CNC Automation, SKF, Titan Engineering, Lollo Roso, and Rangoli Foods. This partnership serves as a crucial bridge for technically trained but unemployed youth, especially from remote backgrounds. Through continuous monitoring and guidance, STEP Academy ensures candidates successfully transition into well-paying jobs, contributing to India's growing high-tech workforce.



upLIFT: Collaboration with Shram Sarathi to improve financial literacy among youths

STEP Academy is partnering with Shram Sarathi to run the Livelihood Improvement Through Financial and Skilling Transformation (LIFT Program) aims to provide personal and business financial education to rural youth.

This training program will cover a wide range of topics, including digital banking, taxes, fraud prevention, and debt management. The curriculum seeks to teach skills like building credit and financial planning, helping trainees develop skills that will help them access financial freedom.



STEP Trainees Shine at AngelOne-CSR Felicitation Ceremony

In a virtual felicitation ceremony by AngelOne-CSR, six STEP Academy trainees were honored across categories like Placement Star, Community Contributor, and Education Excellence. The awardees included Rekha (Kumbhalgarh), Avina & Krishna (Rajsamand), Mahesh & Hemant (Jodhpur), and Farida (Beawar-Ajmer).

Notably, out of 16 winners from 7 AngelOne partners nationwide, six were from STEP Academy—a testament to its impactful training programs. The awards were presented by Mr. Vineet Agarwal, CFO, AngelOne. This recognition reinforces STEP's commitment to empowering youth through skilling and career development.



Humkadam: Strengthening STEP's Capacity Through Knowledge and Collaboration

At STEP Academy, continuous learning and capacity building are at the heart of our mission. As part of the Humkadam initiative, regular virtual and offline workshops are organized to empower the STEP Academy team and enhance their understanding of key industries and entrepreneurship. In this series, a Virtual Humkadam workshop was conducted with the STEP field team and engagement partners, led by Swati Ji (STEP Consultant). The session provided an in-depth exploration of the logistics and automobile sectors, equipping team members with valuable insights into emerging

industry trends and opportunities. The Offline Humkadam workshop, held at STEP Udaipur, focused on enterprise development and entrepreneurship. Ravi Ji (Social Activist & Founder of Manzil) led an engaging session on the challenges faced by entrepreneurs and shared practical strategies to overcome them. The Humkadam workshops continue to serve as a platform for knowledge exchange and strategic planning, reinforcing STEP's commitment to empowering its team and driving impactful change in the skilling ecosystem.

Thank you for reading!

STEP Academy	+91 7023666094
https://www.stepacademy.org.in/	STEP Academy, Gattani Research Center, New Krishnapura, Pulan, Udaipur, Rajasthan