Shaping The Future with STEM

ANNUAL
REPORT
2023 - 2024

Vigyan Shaala
COMMUNITY • SCIENCE

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Message From The Founders

Dr. Darshana Joshi
Founder and CEO

Dr. Vijay Venugopalan
Founder and COO

This year, VigyanShaala marks its fifth anniversary, celebrating a remarkable journey. What began as a shared vision among passionate global scientists—driven to make science and technology accessible to all—has grown into a **vibrant community of over 6,000 aspiring fellows, supported by 250+ global mentors and nearly a dozen industry partners**.

When we formally registered VigyanShaala**,** it was just the two of us, driven by our commitment to make a difference through science. Today, we proudly stand with 20+ team members and an international community united in the mission to reshape the **future with STEM.** This journey showcases the power of collective action and the immense potential of our fellows.

Nearly 70% of our fellows are first-generation learners from economically or socially marginalized backgrounds. Despite the odds, they continue to break barriers. Many have achieved remarkable milestones, earning prestigious international fellowships such as Mitacs, Khorana, the inaugural Quad Fellowship from Schmidt Futures, Erasmus Mundus, and the Swiss Excellence Fellowship. Others have made their mark at India's top institutions like IITs, IISERs, IISC, AIIMS, and central universities. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our funding partners, whose unwavering support fuels VigyanShaala's mission to inspire and empower.

Looking ahead, we are filled with hope and excitement. Our vision is to **build a thriving ecosystem for women in STEM with equal opportunities, relatable role models, and global connections** . We dream of a future where our fellows lead groundbreaking innovations that uplift their communities, helping thousands, if not millions, rise out of poverty.

Together, we are not just building careers; we are building a movement. And this is just the beginning.

ABOUT US

Catalysing systemic changes for democratising quality STEM education and career opportunities for the most vulnerable young people across India

Proudly supported by leading global not for profit accelerators

J360 foundation | Centre for Global Equality | THE/NUDGE INSTITUTE | IIMB नेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु | NSR CEL

Our Vision

Empowering the next generation of innovators through science and technology.

Our Mission

To make STEM education, skilling, and professions accessible to the most marginalized young people across the globe

Our Values

Scientific Temperament

Measurement, Observation, Reflection and Analysis is the heart of VigyanShaala

Community

Service is not what we do, it is who we are

Leadership

We are empathetic leaders and relatable role models

Purpose

We strive towards purposeful impact

Discovery

Curiosity and scientific temperament are at the heart of everything we do

Joy

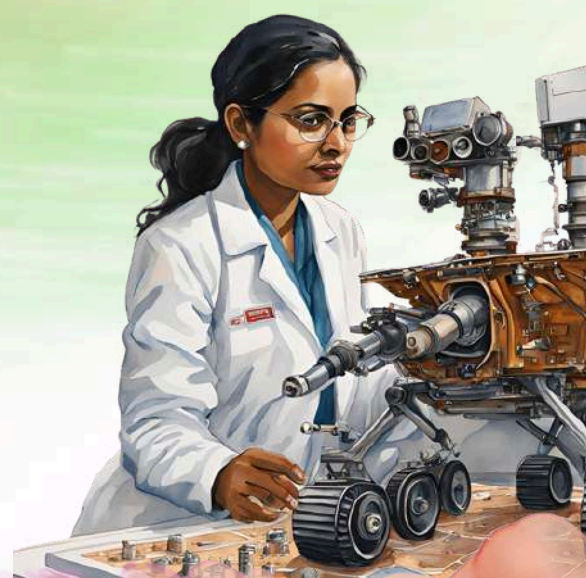We bring a smile to the faces of those we work with!

Assume Positive intent

In most cases intentions are always positive

Enact Excellence

We maintain state of the art practices and push boundaries

Introduction

At VigyanShaala, we believe that scientific curiosity, innovation, and leadership can transform lives. Yet, not everyone has the key to unlock this potential. We envision a future where every young person, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to experience the wonders of STEM.

In India, over 60% of colleges are nestled in rural areas, often under-resourced and lacking access to cutting-edge STEM fields. This disparity **creates an invisible wall, confining rural students and denying them the practical skills and job-ready experiences essential for quality STEM careers**. Women, in particular, face a double barrier, limiting their potential even further.

Despite women making up about 43% of undergraduate enrollments in STEM programs, less than 15% transition into the STEM workforce, and fewer than 1% reach leadership roles. This is a huge lost opportunity for socio-economic mobility.

Dismantling these barriers is critical to harnessing India's full potential and building a sustainable future.

Through education, mentorship, and community-driven initiatives, we are unlocking the power of STEM to advance the agency of women, uplift rural communities, and create impact at scale.

"Inspiring Innovation"

Our Beginnings

VigyanShaala began as a volunteer-driven initiative to spark curiosity and scientific thinking in classrooms across India. Our journey has taken us from bustling city classrooms to some of India's most remote corners. **From 2014 to 2019, purely as a volunteer-driven initiative,we inspired over 10,000 young minds through 50 hands-on STEM workshops in 10 states**. These experiences revealed the transformative power of experiential learning, particularly in communities with limited access to quality STEM education.

As scientists, we craft data-driven solutions to make STEM education accessible to all. After officially establishing VigyanShaala as a charitable trust in 2019, our founders embarked on an extensive year-long research journey. Visiting over 300 schools and 50 colleges, meeting with students, teachers, NGOs, and government agencies, we uncovered the pressing disparities in STEM education. Our comprehensive study in Uttarakhand highlighted the core challenges faced by state government schools and colleges.

Our extensive on-ground experiences have enabled us to **build programs that are scalable, evidence-based, and designed to address the unique challenges faced by women and rural youth in STEM.**

She for STEM

Born during the pandemic, our flagship initiative, She for STEM (formerly Kalpana – She for STEM), is an online mentoring and career-coaching fellowship aimed at placing women on a high-confidence path in STEM. It brings together global scientists, STEM professionals, and a comprehensive mentoring curriculum, focusing on technical skills, individual development plans, self-efficacy, and research-driven projects.

Since its inception, **She for STEM has reached over 6,000 women from 220 districts across India, supported by a network of 250+ global mentors.** In 2021, She for STEM was recognized as one of the top 5 global initiatives in the Nature Research Awards for Inspiring Women in STEM, and in 2023, we received the F5 STEM Education Award.

Looking ahead, we are scaling our program through **partnerships with the governments of Uttarakhand and Telangana,** aiming to reach 10,000 girls in each state while build whole state transformation models.

Our ultimate north star - **Impacting 1 million girls in STEM by 2030 and engage 10,000 mentors in the process**.

Rural STEM Champions

Piloted in three remote Himalayan colleges of Pithoragarh and Champawat districts of Uttarakhand, our Rural STEM Champions Fellowship is immersing rural youth in hands-on, locally relevant STEM projects that deepen their understanding of science and position them as change-makers in their communities.

It further builds a unique pipeline of knowledge, leadership, and inspiration in regions with limited opportunities. By empowering young people to use STEM skills to solve local problems, we are nurturing a generation of rural innovators who can drive change both locally and globally.

So far, we have **established three rural innovation spaces in these colleges and selected over 90 STEM champions** through a competitive selection process comprising of written exam, interview and home visits. Our fellows have built several frugal research projects tackling real-world challenges faced by rural communities, encouraging them to creatively apply scientific principles. They are also representing their colleges and VigyanShaala at global platforms such as Y-20 and SAGE global ambassador program.

"Empowering Knowledge"

Looking Ahead

In just five years, we have reached thousands of students building momentum for driving transformational change in STEM education across India. With recognition from global organizations like Falling Walls Engage and support from Indian and state government partnerships, we are laying a robust foundation for sustainable growth and innovation in STEM fields.

The future of India's STEM leadership is being shaped today, and VigyanShaala is proud to be at the forefront of this movement. With each step forward, we are committed to transforming individual lives and entire communities, ensuring that the future of STEM in India is bright, inclusive, and impactful.

Widening Inclusion

This year, the She for STEM program made remarkable strides in promoting inclusivity and diversity in STEM.

Thanks to an unrestricted investment from the Mphasis F1 foundation, we partnered with the Telangana government to scale representation of girls from the most vulnerable Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities—from a mere 12% to an impressive 50%.

70% of our participants come from families with annual incomes below INR 150,000, and 56% are first-generation learners underscoring the program's role in breaking educational barriers and creating new pathways for those historically underrepresented in STEM fields.

We firmly believe that by empowering these talented young women, we are laying the foundation for a more equitable and diverse future in STEM fields. Together, we are not just transforming lives; we are building a brighter tomorrow for everyone.

Milestone MoUs

In Telangana

FY 2023-24 marked a step forward in our mission to make STEM accessible to the most marginalized. We signed MoUs with **Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society** (TSWREIS) and **Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society** (TTWREIS) to achieve the shared goal of increasing the participation and retention of women in Science, Engineering and Technology careers in India.

In Uttarakhand
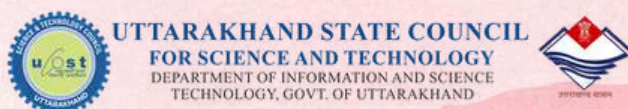
Year 2024 started with an exciting news for VigyanShaala. In February, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology (UCOST),** signed by their **DIrector General, Professor Durgesh Pant.** This collaboration represents a significant advancement in our mission for gender parity in STEM fields in Uttarakhand.

UCOST Dehradun brings unparalleled expertise, a vast network of experts, and an unwavering commitment to advancing STEM. By creating an ecosystem where women can thrive, we strive to not only bridge the gender gap but also to inspire the next generation of women scientists, engineers, and innovators.

SNAPSHOT OF
OUR IMPACT

6,000+ She for STEM fellows from 22 states

90 rural STEM champion fellows

150,000+ mentoring hours facilitated

300+ mentors and STEM leaders from 10 countries

3 rural innovation spaces set up

100+ frugal research projects

200+ hands-on STEM workshops

15,000+ students engaged with hands-on STEM

www.vigyanshaala.com

Vigyan Shaala
COMMUNITY ● SCIENCE

SHE FOR STEM

Nurturing the next generation of women engineers, technologists, scientists and innovators

Mphasis FOUNDATION
INNOVATE ● INCLUDE ● IMPACT

ATLASSIAN

suez foundation-India

Introduction

Incubated and launched during the pandemic in Oct 2020, 'She for STEM' (previously known as Kalpana: She for STEM) started as an online mentoring and career development program to successfully place every **ACT-ing (Aspiring – Committed and Talented) girl on a high confidence STEM trajectory.** This is a two-stage program offering **~25+ hrs of large group mentoring and career readiness in the Incubator** followed by **~ 100+ hours of personalized mentoring and project-based internships in the Accelerator**.

Our state-of-the-art mentoring curriculum is designed and delivered by global scientists and STEM professionals in active partnership with the mentees themselves. With a unique blend of mentoring, career coaching, self-efficacy strengthening, interactions with global women leaders in STEM, and real-world project internships, we help young girls realize their dreams of building fulfilling careers in STEM.
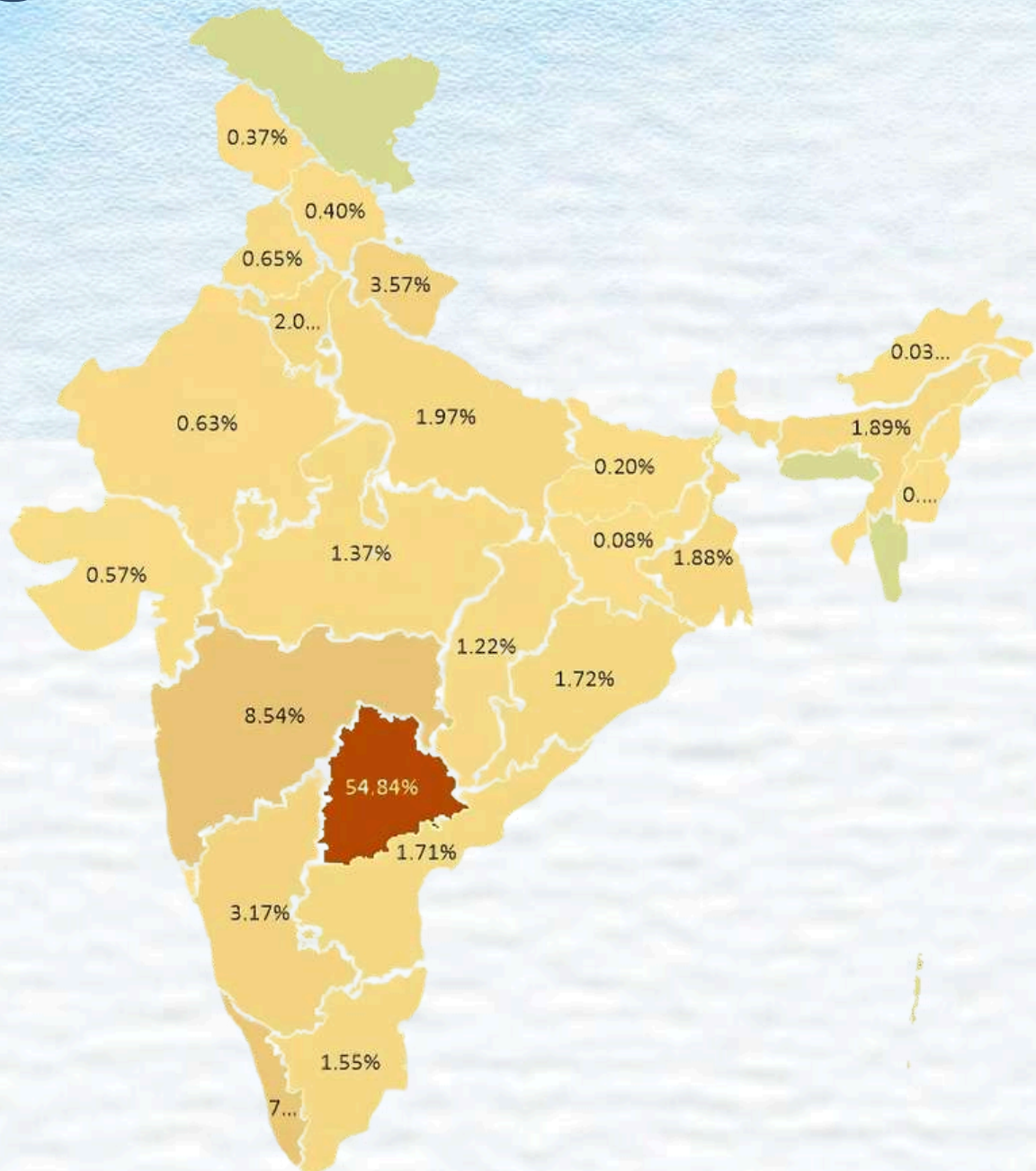
Impact Summary

Over the past four years, the She for STEM program has **impacted over 6,000 girls from more than 220 districts across 22 states in India supported by a global network of over 250 mentors.**

Our program data shows measurable improvements in career clarity and readiness. A sample of **576 girls from three cohorts** demonstrated the following:

- A **3-point increase** (on a scale of 10) in **Career and Vision Clarity**, reflecting a sharper focus on their long-term aspirations.
- A 3.5-point increase in Career Readiness, showcasing enhanced confidence in their ability to navigate the STEM landscape and build professional networks.
- The program has been pivotal in introducing girls to STEM role models for the first time, with **83% of fellows experiencing this crucial interaction,** and **97% reporting that these role models have inspired them to pursue their goals.** Beyond inspiration, 76% of fellows now recognize more diverse STEM career pathways than they did at the start of the program, and 98% discovered entirely new STEM careers they were previously unaware of.
- 87% of fellows have revisited their Career Action Plans, SMART goals, and SWOT analysis after completing the program, actively tracking their personal and professional growth.
- 78% reported a shift in their career aspirations during or after the program, reflecting a broader understanding of what is possible within STEM.

Program Reach 2023-24

0.37%
0.40%
0.65%
3.57%
2.0...
0.63%
1.97%
0.03...
1.89%
0.20%
0....
0.08%
1.88%
0.57%
1.37%
1.22%
1.72%
8.54%
54.84%
1.71%
3.17%
1.55%
7...

6000+ Girls Enrolled *from* **233** Districts *across* **28** States

Map not to scale

www.vigyanshaala.com

Programmatic Innovations for Inclusion

Phygital and Gamification Models

In January 2023, VigyanShaala launched the second open She for STEM cohort, reaching over 2,200 young women, including 1,587 from Telangana Social Welfare Residential Degree Colleges (TSWRDC). Infrastructure challenges, such as limited computer access, led to only 464 active participants from TSWRDC, with a 31% assignment completion rate compared to the overall average of 45%. No TSWRDC students received a Certificate of Excellence.

To address these specific challenges, we conducted an extensive field study at four TSWRDC colleges, and engaged with senior bureaucratic leadership to identify key areas for improvement. This resulted in a **milestone MoU with TSWREIS and TTWREIS, integrating She for STEM into the curriculum across 41 colleges, enrolling 1,894 students in the She for STEM - Telangana cohort.**

In 2023-24, we redesigned the She for STEM program with major innovations to make it more inclusive for girls with limited digital literacy and access to infrastructure. We implemented a "phygital" model, blending physical resources with digital workshops to maximize accessibility, allowing students to benefit from both in-person support and online learning experiences. To boost engagement, **we introduced gamification elements, making the learning process more interactive and enjoyable. This approach resulted in higher retention, participation, and motivation among students, keeping them committed to their STEM journey.**

By customizing the program to state-specific needs, and bridging gaps in educational infrastructure, we've been able to create a more inclusive environment that accommodates the diverse socio-economic realities of our participants, ensuring that all the girls can access and stay on STEM paths.

For instance, our partnership in Telangana presented an opportunity for us to pilot a thorough curricular intervention with 1 hr slot thrice a week within the academic calendar of girls.

Scaling with Curricular Intervention in Telangana

- **Leadership Orientation:** State secretariat members and college principals from all 41 institutions were oriented to ensure program alignment and support.
- **Faculty Mentors & Student Leaders:** Faculty Points of Contact (1 per 25 students) and two Student Leaders from each college were appointed to boost engagement.
- **Alumni Volunteers**: Sixteen TS/TT alumni were recruited as field volunteers to gather data and provide insights during college visits.
- **College Visits:** VigyanShaala's team conducted visits to ensure readiness and quality program delivery.
- **Infrastructure Solutions:** Phygital learning was introduced with printed She for STEM workbooks, and Lenovo tablets were placed in all 41 colleges to address infrastructure challenges.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** External partners were onboarded for continuous monitoring and improvement through responsive program design.
- **Bilingual Learning:** Classes were conducted in both Telugu and English, allowing students to engage comfortably in their native language.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Intra-cohort activities encouraged discussions on career options and diverse opportunities.
- **Weekly Leaderboards:** These fostered healthy competition and motivated students to excel in attendance, quizzes, and assignments.
- **Post-Graduate Decision Support:** A flowchart was developed to help students explore further education or workforce entry after graduation.

Culmination at the Hyderabad Student Conference: "Reimagining Possibilities For Women In STEM"

The cohort reached its peak with a transformative event held at Tagore Auditorium, Osmania University, in April. **For many students, especially those from rural backgrounds, this was their first opportunity to attend a live conference and connect with successful role models in STEM fields.** The atmosphere was charged with excitement and inspiration as these young women, who seldom meet professionals in action, listened to the firsthand experiences of accomplished women from various STEM careers.

We were honored to have pioneering speakers from **government, administration, academia, and industry. Dr. Nirupa Gadapa, Joint Secretary (Higher Education), TSWREIS; Prof. Ranga Reddy Burri, President, IFCAI; and Mrs. Seeta Lakshmi, Secretary IAS, TTWREIS & TSWREIS, shared their personal journeys** and offered invaluable advice.

For these young women, many of whom have never had the opportunity to engage with successful professionals in person, this experience was nothing short of life-changing.**The event concluded with an awards ceremony where we recognized the Top 10 Colleges and the Fabulous 40 Fellows, each of whom received a ₹10,000 scholarship for their outstanding achievements.** This was not just a moment of celebration but also a demonstration of what's possible when access to role models and opportunities aligns with ambition.

"Building Tomorrow's Innovators, Today"

Expanding Horizons with She for STEM - Open Cohort

We continue to open doors for young women across India through the Open She for STEM Cohort, an accessible model that allows enthusiastic STEM learners from anywhere in the country to join. This cohort exemplifies our commitment to inclusivity and reach, as we empower students who may not yet be part of our government partnerships to still benefit from the transformative experience of She for STEM.

In our last cohort, launched on 23rd September 2023, we welcomed 1,086 students from 26 states and 162 unique districts across India. By making the curriculum accessible to girls nationwide, we are furthering our mission of nurturing ambition, commitment, and talent (ACT) in future women STEM leaders, no matter their background or location.

To amplify this effort, **we partnered with Christ University to establish a chapter in Thiruvananthapuram.** At our online induction event, we gathered 250+ students and teachers from 25+ colleges across Kerala and Bangalore, along with esteemed professors from Christ University.

Participation in this open cohort exceeded our past averages by over 50%, driven by the success of our institutional partnerships and our gamified approach to assignments. Gamification, along with targeted engagement strategies, has significantly increased student retention and excitement throughout the program.

Programmatic Innovations: Sparking Joy, Engagement, and Excellence

To enhance the learning experience, we introduced gamification into the She for STEM curriculum. In the Career Exploration Assignment, students were challenged to creatively map out potential STEM career pathways, detailing the required skills, job opportunities, and salary expectations for each. **The top three submissions received cash prizes and were highlighted on our social media platforms.** A standout submission came from Arti Mehta, a participant in both the She for STEM program and our Rural STEM Champions Fellowship from Champawat, Uttarakhand.
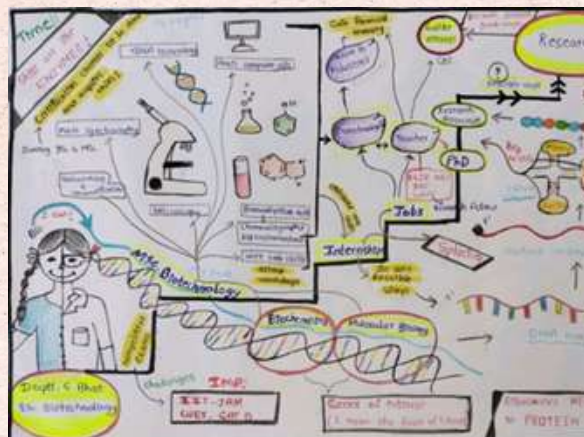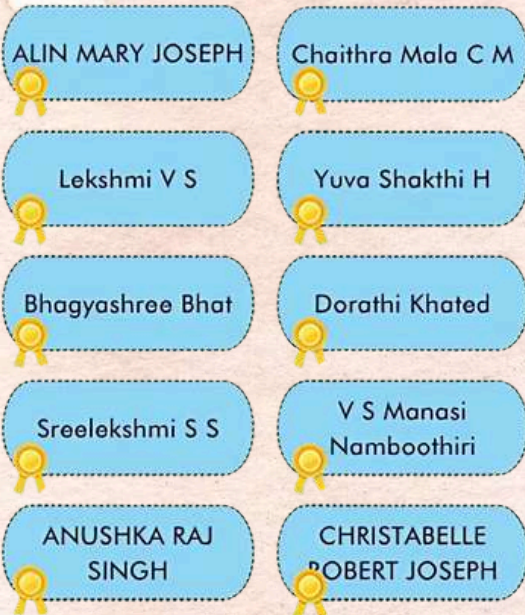
To further support our fellows' aspirations, we organized the **BeGradReady Bootcamp from November 15 to November 25, 2023**. This bootcamp was tailored for students aiming for higher education abroad, covering critical topics such as the application process, crafting a compelling Statement of Purpose (SOP), building a strong CV/resume, and succeeding in scholarship applications. It marked our first-ever bootcamp of this kind and achieved a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 57.
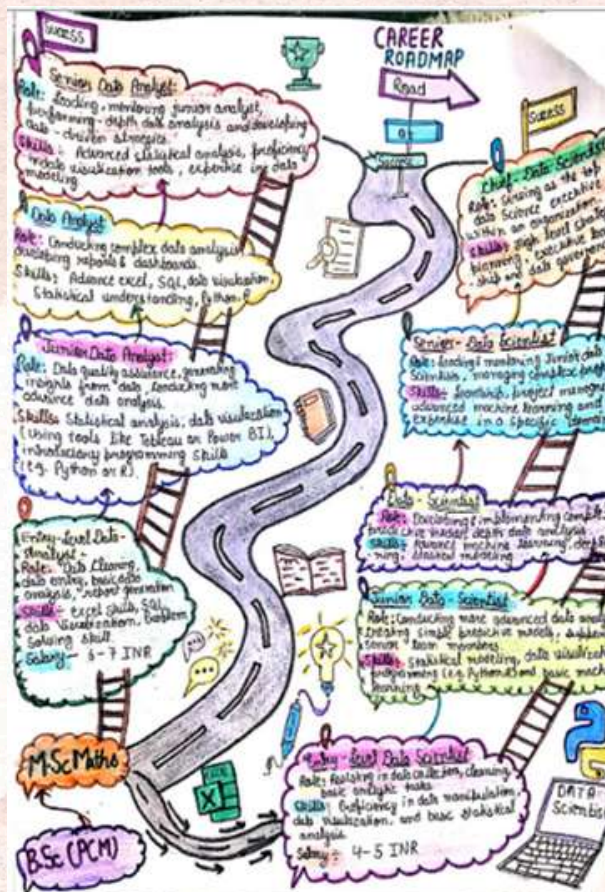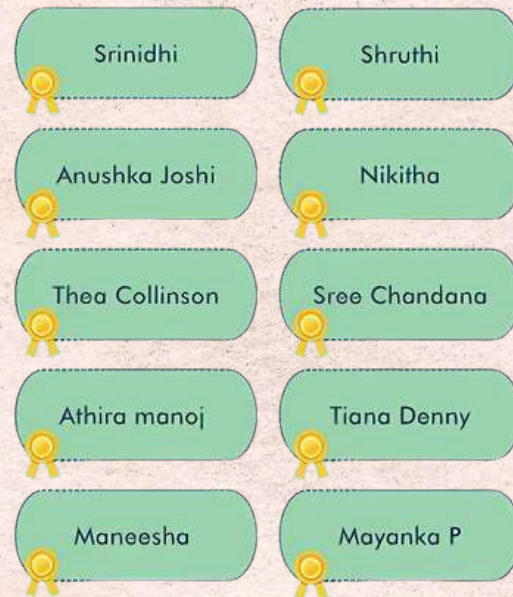
To maintain ongoing engagement, we introduced **awards like the She for STEM Top Attendance Award and the She for STEM Catalyst Award,** designed to incentivize active participation, encourage leadership, and foster a sense of community. **Leaderboards** are updated every two weeks to motivate students to excel both individually and as part of the larger cohort.

Top Attendance Award

She for STEM Catalyst Award

ALIN MARY JOSEPH	Chaithra Mala C M	Srinidhi	Shruthi
Lekshmi V S	Yuva Shakthi H	Anushka Joshi	Nikitha
Bhagyashree Bhat	Dorathi Khated	Thea Collinson	Sree Chandana
Sreelekshmi S S	V S Manasi Namboothiri	Athira manoj	Tiana Denny
ANUSHKA RAJ SINGH	CHRISTABELLE ROBERT JOSEPH	Maneesha	Mayanka P

Impact Insights

Based on our comprehensive monitoring and evaluation through baseline and endline surveys, the impact of this open cohort has been deeply rewarding. Some key insights include:

- **78%** of students reported that the **program helped them develop a 5-10 year career plan**, providing long-term clarity and direction.
- **90%** found the program's insights instrumental in helping them **build a professional CV**, enhancing their career readiness.
- **80%** gained practical skills in internet research, enabling them to find **opportunities for jobs and higher education**.
- **85%** of students expressed **increased confidence in pursuing their career paths**, an evidence to the program's ability to inspire and empower.

These results **highlight the transformative power of She for STEM in shaping the future of women in STEM.** By providing relatable role models, tangible career guidance, and the skills to succeed, VigyanShaala is not just influencing individual careers but also cultivating leaders who will inspire change in their communities.

At VigyanShaala, we remain deeply committed to our core values—community, leadership, purpose, discovery, joy—as **we continue to scale She for STEM's reach and create life-changing opportunities for young women across India.** Together, with our open cohort and innovative curricular programs, we are empowering a generation of women to dream big, lead boldly, and unlock their full potential in STEM.

Student Spotlight

Gauri Patti, a budding physicist from the remote town of Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, Gauri is currently pursuing a fully funded Master's in Physics at Université Paris-Saclay. She has also been awarded the prestigious IDEX Master's Scholarship for her program. Gauri is a former She for STEM Fellow, has achieved tremendous success in her academic and research career. She is currently working with a team on a groundbreaking project focused on modeling gravitational wave signals from proto-neutron stars in core-collapse supernovae.

Muralika, An aspiring young woman from a fishing community in Kerala, has embarked on an inspiring journey, pursuing fully funded postgraduate studies in Physics at Technion, Israel. Her path was significantly shaped by the Kalpana, She for STEM program, which provided her with official mentoring and invaluable connections. Through this program, she was introduced to mentors like Dr. Darshana and Shalini, whose expertise in soft condensed matter physics transformed her learning experience into a deeply personalized one. The mentorship extended beyond the program, offering Muralika the chance to collaborate on a project with Shalini.

Arhama Sheikh, an aspiring physicist and postgraduate student at Aligarh Muslim University, found a transformative experience in the Kalpana- She for STEM program. Beyond the acquisition of skills, the program instilled in her a profound sense of confidence, clarity, and resilience essential for her STEM journey. She highlights the invaluable practical knowledge gained, along with being part of a community of driven women, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support.

Student Spotlight

Yashaswini Ajay, began her academic journey with a BSc in Biomedical Science from NMIMS Mumbai and is now pursuing an MSc in Cognitive Science at IIT Gandhinagar, driven by her passion for understanding neurodegenerative disorders like Alzheimer's Disease. Her transformative experience with VigyanShaala began in her second year through the Kalpana Incubator program, followed by the Accelerator program, which significantly enriched her education. Yashaswini highlights the practical skills gained from VigyanShaala as essential complements to her classroom learning.

Thea Collinson, a budding scientist, pursuing her Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology, Chemistry, and Botany at CHRIST University in Bengaluru. Thea's journey with She for STEM began with the Kalpana- She for STEM Incubator, a vital stepping stone before the Accelerator. The program is a beacon of inspiration, connecting Thea with experts who have navigated the exciting waters of STEM careers and are eager to share their knowledge and experiences. This is the kind of community that ignites passion, encourages discovery, and brings a whole lot of joy to the challenging but rewarding journey in STEM.

Tejaswini Venkatramanan, a BS-MS candidate at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Tirupati. Passionate and driven, she's now at the Max Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine (MDC) Berlin, Germany, unraveling the mysteries of exosomes in cancer metastasis for her Master's thesis. A proud alumna of the Kalpana Incubator, Tejaswini's journey was enriched with practical skills like CV building, strategic planning for higher education, and optimizing LinkedIn profiles. During the Incubator, role model interaction sessions with inspiring women professionals in various STEM fields were a significant source of her motivation.

Student Spotlight

Abha Barge, is a third year Computer Engineering student at MKSSS's Cummins College of Engineering for Women, Pune. She is also a panel member for the Society of Women Engineers in her college. She is now a Software Development Engineering Intern at Visa Inc. India. Where technology meets finance, you'll find Abha, passionately exploring this fascinating intersection.
She's been a part of the Vigyanshaala's Kalpana SHE for STEM program since December 2023. This journey has been a launchpad for her growth, allowing her to explore a world of opportunities, gain industry insights, and turn her interests into tangible projects.

Lavanya Sachdev, an undergraduate student pursuing Bachelor of Science (Hons.) in Biotechnology at IMS Ghaziabad, affiliated to Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut.
She is incredibly passionate about a wide range of subjects, including biotechnology, bioinformatics, environmental biotechnology, microbiology, cancer research, and genetic engineering. Apart from her academic pursuits, she has garnered invaluable experience working as a Campus Ambassador at Paradyes and as a Fundraising Intern at Muskurahat Foundation. She is proudly contributing to making a meaningful impact in society and taking forward what VigyanShaala stands for 'Community and Science'.

Shramana Guchhait, joined us while she was in the second year of her Bachelors studies at the University of Delhi. Through her mentors support she got selected for an internship with our partners at BioXspace, USA. With her unwavering commitment and support from her mentors, she was recently selected for the prestigious inaugural cohort of The Quad Fellowship from Schmidt Futures and White house is pursuing her graduate studies at Johns Hopkins University, USA. She was amongst the top 100 candidates in the 4 Quad countries.

Nurturing Audacious Dreams !

Our vision remains clear: **to empower 1 million girls in STEM by 2030**, equipping them with the knowledge, mentorship, and skills needed to thrive in STEM careers. She for STEM is not just a program; it's a movement aimed at shaping the next generation of female scientists, engineers, and innovators who will not only excel in their fields but also uplift their communities. **By 2030, VigyanShaala aims to build a robust mentorship pipeline of 100,000 mentors, reaching 1 million girls across India, empowering them to pursue meaningful careers in STEM.**

A critical enabler of this scale will be Artificial Intelligence (AI). By integrating AI-driven solutions into our mentorship model, we will revolutionize the matching process between mentors and mentees, enhancing the personalized support provided to every She for STEM fellow. AI's ability to analyze various factors—such as academic interests, career goals, learning styles, and geographic locations—will allow us to match each mentee with a mentor who aligns perfectly with her needs.

The AI-powered system will assess each girl's aspirations and background, curating tailored, dynamic, and impactful mentorship experiences. This approach will not only increase the effectiveness of our program but also allow us to manage the mentorship process at an unprecedented scale. With real-time data analytics and feedback mechanisms, we can ensure continuous improvement in mentor-mentee engagements, optimizing the learning journey for each girl.

Leveraging AI, we aim to democratize access to quality STEM mentorship, ensuring that even the most remote and underprivileged students have access to mentors from around the globe. Our AI-enabled platform will create a supportive ecosystem where mentors can track progress, provide timely advice, and help shape personalized career action plans for each girl, making mentorship a more scalable and impactful process.

As we expand, this **AI-driven mentorship** will become the cornerstone of our strategy to prepare the next generation of female leaders in STEM, transforming not only individual lives but also the communities they serve. With a growing pool of 100,000 mentors, VigyanShaala is committed to ensuring that every girl in our program connects with inspiring role models who will help her realize her full potential.

Together, with AI and human ingenuity, we are confident that we will achieve our vision of creating a pipeline of 1 million empowered girls in STEM by 2030—equipped to lead, innovate, and inspire change across the world.

RURAL STEM CHAMPIONS

Democratizing STEM education: STEM Champions

Think science is just for labs and classrooms in big cities or metros? Think again.

At VigyanShaala, we're on a mission to bring STEM learning to the most remote corners of the world, starting with the scenic districts of Pithoragarh and Champawat in the Himalayas.

Our STEM Champions program is more than just a learning initiative. It's a catalyst for change, empowering young minds in rural Uttarakhand to become the problem solvers of tomorrow. These communities, while grappling with issues like climate change and access to education, are full of untapped potential. And we're here to unleash it.

By blending local wisdom with advanced science, our Rural STEM Champions Program equips these young learners with the tools and opportunities to lead. Because we believe that the next big scientific breakthrough can come from anywhere. And that anywhere could be here.

Nurturing Champions with Mentorship and Support

The VigyanShaala STEM Champions program features a **three-tiered peer mentoring structure centered around our Rural Innovation Labs**. At its core is the STEM Champion-Mentor relationship, which outlines the responsibilities shared between both parties. Mentors, who are Doctorates and Scientists, **guide and support the STEM Champions in developing a deeper understanding of experiential learning, career paths, and higher education in STEM fields.** To promote and democratize science and technology within local communities, STEM Champions are trained to conduct hands-on experiments with local school students.

STEM Champions are more than mere students; they represent the **future leaders of their communities**. Each selected champion receives a **monthly scholarship, a laptop, and access to an elite network of global mentors** who assist them throughout their academic and professional journeys. These mentors, coming from various parts of the world, offer not only technical guidance but also serve as relatable role models, inspiring champions to aspire beyond their immediate surroundings.

The program places a strong emphasis on practical skills, equipping our champions with training in **basic Mathematical and quantitative skills, IT skills (such as MS Office, internet research, and programming) while actively participating in science outreach initiatives with local schools.** Each outreach effort and scientific experiment they conduct creates a ripple effect of impact that extends well beyond the classroom. In this way, champions not only acquire valuable skills for their future careers but also ignite a passion for science in younger students within their villages.

Roles and Responsibilities of the STEM Champion

STEM Champions are pivotal to VigyanShaala's mission of bridging the gap in STEM education, especially in underserved and remote regions. The **role of a STEM Champion** goes beyond personal development, focusing on community engagement, fostering a scientific mindset, and contributing to meaningful societal change.

- **Aspire for Excellence in STEM**
STEM Champions are encouraged to pursue quality higher education and careers in STEM fields. This aspiration must reflect in their academic journey, their involvement in hands-on research, and their dedication to solving real-world challenges through science and technology.

- **Community Outreach and Engagement**
STEM Champions actively engage with local schools and communities, inspiring younger generations to explore STEM. Each Champion adopts 2-3 schools annually, conducting interactive experimental sessions to cultivate a scientific temperament among students.

- **Hands-On Learning and Research**
Champions develop core competencies in scientific research, computer skills, and interdisciplinary problem-solving. Under the guidance of mentors, they work on live science and technology projects during their tenure, addressing pressing community issues with innovative solutions.

- **Internships and Career Development**
During their 2nd and 3rd years, STEM Champions are guided complete internships at prestigious institutions or industries. These experiences provide exposure to advanced R&D, equipping them with career-ready skills and a global perspective.

- **Mentorship and Weekly Consultations**
Champions engage in weekly mentorship sessions, dedicating at least one hour to precise goal setting and career planning. These interactions support both their personal growth and the development of mentees, fostering a culture of guidance and knowledge-sharing.

- **Financial Responsibility**
STEM Champions are entrusted with stipends or fellowship funds, learning to manage these resources wisely. Savings are encouraged, with a focus on using these funds for career development and targeted educational purposes.

- **Life Skills Development**
VigyanShaala provides training in essential life skills, including socializing, networking, and maintaining physical and mental health. These skills ensure that Champions are well-rounded individuals ready to navigate challenges in academia and beyond.

Key Highlights of the year from STEM Champions program

Participation and Radiance in National Cohort of program She for STEM: She for STEM Matching the performances from the urban audience, notable students Arti Mehta and Anushka Joshi have been top performers in the program.

- Arti Mehta - Career exploration special prize
- Anushka Joshi - She for STEM Catalyst Award 2023 - awarded for consistent performance, inquisitive questions, engagement with peers & mentors.

Annual VigyanShaala Science Workshop at Champawat

- Guided by Dr. Vijay Venugopalan and Dr. Anushila Chatterjee.
- Sessions on conversational topics like "Appreciative Inquiry" and "Challenges faced by the Youth of Uttarakhand", and hands-on training on "The use of basic technological tools to repair devices like LEDs".
- Speakers: Cdr Deepak Adhar, Mr. Pradeep Joshi, Dr. Jaishri Sanwal, Dr. Sanjay Kumar Upadhyay.
- During the Annual Science workshop, the STEM Champions also started to build a Weather Monitoring station.

Over the various interventions like Tinkering Labs, Khan Academy (for fundamentals of mathematics and core competency enhancement), She for STEM Mentoring Curriculum, Live Masterclasses, and Outreaching to school students, our STEM champions spent approximately **5000+ hours engaging in the lab activities.**

Student Spotlight

Himani Upadhyay, a budding environmentalist is studying for a Masters in Environmental Science and Resource Management at the TERI School of Advanced Studies, she's on a mission to protect the planet. With a Bachelors in Zoology, Botany, and Chemistry from L.S.M PG Government College. After a two-month spell at the Wildlife Institute of India, her commitment to nature and wildlife is stronger than ever.

With Vigyanshaala by her side, she's grown into a leader with a purpose, fueled by curiosity and a commitment to excellence.

Himani now looks to the future with excitement and positivity. She's committed to continuing her learning journey, ever driven by the joy of discovery and the desire to make a difference.

"I've always been passionate about protecting nature and wildlife, and I'm committed to making a positive impact in this field. Vigyanshaala has played a huge role in supporting me on this path." - Himani

Anushka Joshi is an enthusiastic undergraduate student with a deep interest in neuroscience and STEM, driven by curiosity to explore the complexities of the brain and its connections to science and technology. A passionate researcher, innovator, who is highly aspired to contributing towards advancements in the STEM fields. As a She for STEM incubatee, Anushka showed her potential and zest by winning 'The Active Participation' catalyst award among hundreds of girls from different states, setting a milestone to be cherished for STEM Champions.

" For the first time in my academic journey, I had the opportunity to experience the practical workings of advanced and well-equipped laboratories through VigyanShaala STEM Labs. VigyanShaala has been a bridge for students like me, from rural areas and smaller colleges, ensuring we are not left behind and are empowered to explore the vast opportunities in STEM." - Anushka

Student Spotlight

Nikita Tiwari, a passionate physics undergraduate with a keen interest in STEM, dedicated to exploring innovative solutions and enthusiastic about hands-on experimentation, critical thinking, and contributing to transformative projects in the field. Her active participation in STEM workshops, engaging community as well as younger students through outreach has had an inspiring impact on other champions around her.

"Being a STEM Champion has equipped me with invaluable skills, confidence, and a clear direction for my future. It has truly empowered me to pursue my goals with determination and purpose. The weekly sessions with mentors have been instrumental, offering guidance and support that significantly boosted my career readiness and confidence." - Nikita

Sakshi Bora, a bright student who grew up in a remote village of Berinag block of Pithoragarh. With a deep passion for sciences, her journey of becoming a STEM Champion at Post Graduation college was not without its share of challenges. Her zest for popularization of sciences among their community has been remarkable. Walking above six kms every day to attend the college from home, diligently working on her projects and conducting workshops with younger students in schools as far as 25 kms from college has set her apart as a dedicated Champion. Sakshi's journey highlights the power of perseverance, hard work, and the importance of seizing opportunities.

The STEM Champions fellowship has been an enriching experience for me. Tackling challenges in tinkering projects and She for STEM has helped me enhance my skills and learn new things. This journey has inspired me to continue exploring and contributing to STEM field in the future." - Sakshi

Student Spotlight

Himanshu is a dedicated student currently pursuing his undergraduation from Laxman Singh Mehra Post Graduation College, Pithoragarh. His passion for programming and technology drives him to excel, exemplified through his work on various Internet of Things (IoT) and Arduino-based projects at STEM lab. He has been imperative in building working science models such as Weather station, and automatic irrigation system. Also, as a member of the Sustainability Ambassador Global Exchange (SAGE), he is gaining valuable experience in leadership, science communication, and community engagement.

"The STEM Champions fellowship has, indeed, been an eye-opening experience for me. I was exposed to opportunities that have helped me gain priceless insight. During my engagement at STEM lab, I got the opportunity to gain hands-on experience that has made a huge difference in developing my practical skills. It further gave me wonderful exposure to the dynamic world of STEM, broadened my horizons, and inspired me to pursue my passions with more determination." -Himanshu

Suhanee, a determined student from a rural area, has risen to become a shining example of perseverance and resilience. With the support of VigyanShaala and initiatives like She for STEM, Suhanee has developed vital problem-solving and teamwork skills. Through her journey, Suhanee has inspired her community by conducting workshops and promoting science awareness. The fellowship has played a pivotal role in fueling her curiosity and passion for science.

Today, Suhanee stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved with hard work, determination, and access to resources. Her story inspires students in underserved communities to chase their dreams and never give up.

"The fellowship has been an enriching experience for me. Tackling challenges in the Incubator and Accelerator programs has enhanced my skills and inspired me to continue exploring and contributing to the STEM field," - Suhanee

VigyanShaala's STEM Champions program has **56 active champions**, with **5,000+ hours** of lab work and **400+ hours** of She for STEM mentorship. It has engaged **1,500+ school students** with hands-on STEM and raised more than **INR 30 lakh for** postgraduate scholarships.

Postgraduate
STEM Scholarship
Powered by

Postgraduate STEM scholarships

Thanks to the generous support of **Jupiter 360 Foundation and Plus Trust,** 11 students from our Rural STEM Champions Fellowship and She for STEM program have been granted scholarships to pursue postgraduate degrees in leading Indian institutions and abroad. These students, hailing from the most remote Himalayan villages, are not only overcoming barriers but excelling in their respective fields. Our scholarship recipients are pursuing MSc degrees in STEM, demonstrating tremendous potential in diverse fields such as Biochemistry, Environmental Science, Geology,Physics and Electronics. These students represent the future of scientific innovation, and we are proud to share their individual achievements and the impact this program has had on their lives.

Impact at a Glance

- **11 students received postgraduate scholarships** for the academic year 2023-2024.
- **4 students (2 males, 2 females)** completed their postgraduate degrees in 2022-2024, achieving high academic scores and securing internships and jobs in prestigious companies and research institutes.
- **7 students**, currently in their second year, are pursuing internships and gaining hands-on experience to complement their academic work.

These scholarships have not only provided academic opportunities but have also nurtured a sense of leadership, purpose, and community engagement in these scholars. They serve as role models in their villages, showing younger generations that with dedication and the right support, anything is possible.

Student Spotlight

From the hills of Uttarakhand to the frontiers of science, technology and innovation, highlighting the journeys of the students supported by the scholarship program.

Mayank graduated with the second-highest rank in his class and has consistently showcased his enthusiasm for electronics and embedded systems. His impressive projects include the design of a cruise control system for electric bikes and an Automatic Room Lighting System, highlighting his expertise in energy efficiency. Through internships at Chheda Electrical and Electronics Pvt. Ltd. and IISER Pune, he gained practical experience in computer vision, automation, and energy harvesting technologies, setting him up for a thriving career that merges electronics with advanced programming. Mayank has also received a full-time job offer from Futura Apsol Pvt. Ltd.

"The fellowship has been a pivotal moment for me. The exposure to real-world electronics challenges and the chance to develop innovative solutions have fueled my passion for creating technologies that enhance convenience and sustainability." - Mayank

Garima, has demonstrated academic excellence throughout her MSc program, consistently achieving top marks. She interned at Enzene Bioscience Pvt. Ltd., a biopharmaceutical company, and contributed to various innovative projects. Her work on aldose reductase enzyme inhibition to combat cataract disease stands out among her accomplishments. Garima has also excelled in national science workshops, including the Big Data Biology workshop, and actively participated in the SAGE Junior Ambassadors Program for clinical trial analysis and reporting.

She secured the 1st rank in the International Millet Year 2023 Science Day Competition at Fergusson College and has now been offered a full-time position at Enzene Bioscience.

"This scholarship changed the course of my life. I never thought I'd get the chance to work in a hi-tech lab, contributing to real-world healthcare challenges. I am excited to continue my research and apply my knowledge to make a difference in the field of biochemistry." - Garima

Kanchan, pursuing her postgraduate degree in Biochemistry at Fergusson College, Pune. Kanchan has actively engaged in both her academic and extracurricular pursuits. She has volunteered at various science outreach events, including the 6th National Convention of Vigyan Bharti. Her academic interests include proteomics, and she has attended multiple workshops on advanced proteomics technologies at IIT Bombay and Animal taxonomy at ZSI Dehradun. Her on-job training in neuroscience at SPPU involved RNA isolation and gene expression analysis, demonstrating her growing expertise in molecular biology..

"Coming from a small village in Uttrakhand, getting an opportunity to be taught by wonderful faculties at Fergusson College and getting a chance to interact with many of the scientists who did lot of struggle in their lives and achieved their goals have inspired me alot. It wouldn't have been possible without this generous scholarship ." - Kanchan

Anjali, a determined and passionate young woman from a high altitude shepard community in Uttarakhand, has shattered societal norms and overcome incredible obstacles to pursue her dreams in STEM education. Despite the lack of support for girls' education in her village, Anjali demonstrated unwavering dedication and perseverance, traveling 25 km daily to attend college. Her unrelenting spirit and commitment to learning have inspired countless individuals in her community. She is the first girl in her village to study beyond class 5. Anjali's journey took a transformative turn when she joined VigyanShaala. As the first girl in her family and village to pursue education outside her hometown, Anjali has become a beacon of hope and empowerment. Her involvement with VigyanShaala's Kalpana- She for STEM program have equipped her with invaluable skills, charting a new course for her career. Anjali's academic pursuits led her to pursue a master's degree in Pune, where she gained comprehensive knowledge of pharmaceutical equipment and fostered connections with renowned companies and scientists through workshops and trips.

"I'm grateful to be a part of VigyanShaala, which has enabled me to fulfill my dreams and aspirations. VigyanShaala provided me with the necessary support to mentally prepare myself and also financially, by offering me a scholarship. After joining VigyanShaala, I transformed from a shy girl to a confident individual, empowered to pursue higher studies, negotiated with my family to achieve my dreams and goals. - Anjali

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Our partner organizations have shown unwavering commitment to our goal of making quality STEM education and opportunities accessible to marginalized youth in India. The mentorship, guidance, recognition, and funding provided by our partners have enabled us to expand our reach, develop innovative educational programs, and provide essential resources to students who otherwise would not have access to such opportunities.

Your contribution has enabled us to empower young minds and inspire future leaders in STEM. We recognize the importance of your partnership and the trust you have placed in Vigyan Shaala to make a meaningful difference in the lives of underserved communities. Your continued support motivates us to strive for excellence and to continually improve and enhance our programs.

OUR
ADVISORS

OUR ADVISORS

Vandana Tilak
Chairman and CEO, Jupiter 360

Archana Pillai
Resident Mentor at NSRCEL - IIM Bangalore

Amit Varshney
Board Member, The/Nudge Institute

Anjali Hegde
Executive Director - Udayan Care

C Babu Joseph
Caring Friends & ex-CEO Axis Bank Foundation

Lakshminarayan KR
Chief Endowment Officer, Azim Premji Foundation

ADVISORS - SHE FOR STEM

Prathibha Jolly
Former Principal - Miranda House, Delhi

Shobhana Narasimhan
Professor, JNCASR

Archana Sharma
Head, Engagement Office, CMS Experiment, CERN

Savi Sharma
Head of Strategy and Transformation Office - AGCO Corporation

Prof. Durgesh Pant
Director General, UCOST

Prof. Ashutosh Sharma
President, INSA, former secretary DST

www.vigyanshaala.com

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

VigyanShaala was selected for the Accelerator program of The Nudge 2023.

VigyanShaala won the prestigious F5 STEM Education grant. We were amongst 1900 applicants who competed for the grant.

Dr. Darshana Joshi was one of the winners of the coveted Echoing Green fellowships.

We got selected for the global not for profit accelerator run by J360 Foundation

Featured as a Global Case Study in UN Publication

This year we were honored to be featured as a case study in the **UNIDO report** titled **"Gender, Digital Transformation, and Artificial Intelligence."**

This publication extensively explores the profound impact of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) in promoting greater inclusivity and fostering leadership opportunities for women. It underscores the pressing necessity for robust policies aimed at preventing the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the exacerbation of social and economic disparities by these technologies.

Drawing upon an exhaustive review of over 150 initiatives spanning diverse geographical regions, the report offers specific recommendations geared towards advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women within the digitalage.

Sparking Wider Conversation on Women in STEM

VigyanShaala has extended its commitment to closing the gender gap in STEM to the global stage through active participation in G20 EMPOWER, the G20 Alliance for the Empowerment and Progression of Women's Economic Representation.

By highlighting the voices and stories of our fellows, we ensure they are included in international policy discussions. This initiative not only drives meaningful change within our program but also influences global conversations on women's empowerment in STEM.

FINANCIALS

Balance Sheet FY 2023-24

VIGYANSHAALA INTERNATIONAL

BALANCE SHEET AS ON 31.3.2024

(AMOUNT IN RS.)

LIABILITY	3/31/2024		3/31/2023		ASSET		3/31/2024		3/31/2023
Corpus Fund					**Fixed Assets**				
Opeing Balance	25,000		25,000		As per Schedule attached	3,457,762	3,457,762	955186	955,186
Add Introduction to Corpus	902,104	927,104	0	25,000					
General Fund									
Opening Balance	1,096,112		867,772						
Add : Excess of Income Over Expenditure	2,141,581	3,237,693	228,340	1,096,112					
Current Liabilities					**Current Assets**				
Audit Fee Payable	20,000		20,000		Kotak Mahindra Bank	12,612,991		312,197	
Advances Received for Projects	11,898,924		3,734,127		State Bank of India - VS	110,000		-	
Expense Payable	306,820	12,225,744	197,717	3,951,845	Loans & advances	209,788		8,574	
					Donation Receivable	-		97,000	
					Fixed Deposit	-	12,932,778	3,700,000	4,117,771
TOTAL		16,390,540		5,072,957	**TOTAL**		16,390,540		5,072,957

OUR TEAM

Building a Stronger Future: Expanding Our Team and Capacity

The strength of VigyanShaala's impact lies in our growing and **dynamic team**. Over the past year, we expanded to a **20+member organization**, integrating expertise in program delivery, product development, and operations. This growth reflects our commitment to building a robust, scalable STEM education model that can reach even the most remote areas of India.

As we evolve, we are investing in a team capable of driving innovation, scaling our impact, and ensuring that every girl and students we engage with has the best opportunity to succeed. Over the next two years, we plan to double our headcount, bringing on professionals who share our vision of a future where science and technology are accessible to all, regardless of geography, gender, or socioeconomic background. Together, we aim to reach thousands more, empowering a new generation of STEM leaders across India.

OUR TEAM

Dr. Darshana Joshi
Ph.D. Physics ,
University of Cambridge, UK
Founder & CEO

Dr. Vijay Venugopalan
Ph.D. Physics, Marie Curie Fellow
Politecnico Di Milano, Italy
Founder & COO

Dr. Anushila Chaterjee
Ph.D. Biochemistry, State University
of New York, Buffalo, USA
Chief Impact Officer

Sreejith Srinivasan
B.Tech. Mechanical Engineering
Senior Associate - Operations

Salini Senthil
B.Tech. Chemical Engineering &
Computational Chemist | Education
Specialist (STEM Careers)

Bhuwan Joshi
M.A. - JMI | BASS - TISS Mumbai
State Program Manager,
Utarakhand

Prahlad Adhikari
M.Tech, MBA Finance
Head of Strategy & Partnership

T. V. Champakalatha
B.Com., ACA, CWA
Finance Consultant

Monalisa Bandyopadhyay
XLRI Jamshedpur
Partnerships & Fundraising

Dr. Arohi Srivastava
Ph.D. Microbiology ,
University of Hertfordshire, UK
Product Development Associate

Dr. Tripti Joshi,
Ph.D. Neuroscience NBRC
Columbia University
Program Associate - Accelerator

Shubham Jaybhaye
MS Data Science
Fergusson College
Senior Operations Executive

OUR TEAM

Titly Chakraborty
MSW, Viswa-Bharti University
Executive Education Training
Specialist

Kanchan Pant
M.Sc. Zoology, Kumaun University
Senior Executive - Product
Development

Swathi Mallarapu
MA Education, APU
TTWRDC Alumna
Operations Executive

Deepak Shinde,
MBA Finance
Senior Executive : Finance
and Accounts

Nalin Sharma
M.Tech. Geoinformatics
Associate - Operations

Bharath Kumar Bandela
M.A. Social Work
Associate- Operations

Kiran Bisht
M.Sc. Botany
Chapter Co-ordinator
(Lab Coordinator Champawat)

Deepak Kumar
M.A. Social work in Rural
Development, TISS
Associate-Operations

Muskan Gupta
B.Tech Banasthali University
Senior Executive- Operations

Saurabh Joshi
M.Sc. Botany
Chapter Co-ordinator
(Lab Coordinator Champawat)

Deepmala Rawal
M.Sc. , B.Ed
Junior Associate STEM Champions
(Lab Coordinator Berinag)

Akshata Satpute
M.Sc. Applied Statistics,
Symbiosis Statistical Institute
Senior Executive, Data Operations

Our Trustees

Abhishek Jain

Abhishek has established and continues to lead the energy access, rural livelihoods, and sustainable food systems practices at The Council. He has conceptualized and is directing the multi-million-dollar initiative, Powering Livelihoods. He is a specialist in sustainable development with over a decade of experience in constructing and leading high-caliber teams and impactful initiatives. His extensive expertise encompasses energy access, decentralized energy, renewable energy, fossil fuel subsidies, power sector reforms, solar irrigation, rural livelihoods, sustainable agriculture, and green jobs.

He is a frequent contributor to leading national publications, advises senior government officials, and presents at various national and international forums. His scholarly work is published in prominent journals such as Nature Energy, and he has contributed chapters to books published by Cambridge University Press and Springer. Mr. Jain holds an MPhil in Sustainable Development from the University of Cambridge and a B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee. He is also a recipient of the Chevening Scholarship from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom and an Honorary Scholar of the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust.

Priyank Hirani

With a scientific disposition and a proven track record of leading research teams driven by curiosity, Priyank is both a strategic thinker and a meticulous implementer. His professional trajectory reflects a deep commitment to harnessing technology for social impact, particularly at the intersection of environment and climate, health, and responsible data and AI, with a focus on the Global South and within academic or philanthropic settings.

Priyank's career spans diverse fields, from space science in Europe to real-time monitoring of river water pollution in remote areas of Andhra Pradesh, where he overcame language barriers. Currently at data.org, he is spearheading efforts to advance Data Science for Social Impact.

His bold initiative involves training one million purpose driven data professionals through an IDEA (Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility) framework, aimed at enabling Social Impact Organizations (SIOs) to become data-led. Over the course of his eight-plus years in the field, Priyank has led cross-functional teams across continents and collaborated with organizations in the private, public, and social impact sectors. His leadership experience includes designing and managing large-scale programs, overseeing projects and teams, developing potential partnerships, conducting due diligence, and managing strategic relationships. With a keen eye for detail and strong problem-solving abilities, Priyank excels in collaborative environments and remains an enthusiastic learner.

Archana Sharma

Archana is a seasoned media and communication professional with a post-graduate degree and demonstrated work experience in communication-based roles particularly social media engagement, creative and digital content writing and management in different sectors such as travel and tourism, government projects, social sector.

She is a keen content writer and works on Writing creative copy content and quality audit of company's collaterals such as brochures, success stories, creatives, posters, mailers, banners, internal newsletter etc.

Her forte is preparing well-structured content for reports, presentations, social media platforms, award applications, case studies, press releases, etc.

Dr. Darshana Joshi,
Ph.D. Physics, University of Cambridge

Darshana is the founder and CEO of VigyanShaala. A passionate Physicist, mentor and social entrepreneur, Darshana is committed to recalibrating the gender balance in STEM disciplines. She is keenly interested in designing pedagogical tools to promote interdisciplinary thinking and problem solving among youth particularly addressing problems at the interface of Physics, Chemistry and Biological sciences. She holds a PhD in Physics from the Cavendish Laboratory, University of Cambridge, UK.

For her doctoral work she was awarded the prestigious Schlumberger Foundation's Faculty for the Future Fellowship for women from developing countries. Towards the end of her PhD she became the first Indian women to be elected the President of Graduate Union, the primary representative body of postgraduate students at the University of Cambridge and also served as a trustee of the University. For her work at VigyanShaala, she has been awarded with prestigious Echoing Green fellowship and the Women Transforming India Award by Niti Ayog, Govt. of India.

Dr. Vijay Venugopalan,
Ph.D. Physics, Marie Curie Fellow, Politecnico Di Milano, Italy

Vijay is the founder and COO of VigyanShaala. He has over 10 years' research experience in Devices Fabrication and Characterization and Clean Room Fabrication of Solar Cells, Field Effect Transistors, Photo-Detectors, and Chemical Sensors. He holds a B.Sc in Physics from Fergusson College, Pune and a Masters in Physics from the University of Pune. Following years of experience across leading research institutes in India, he was then awarded the Marie Curie Fellowship from European Commission to pursue his PhD in Physics at the Politechnico Di Milano and worked as a research fellow at the Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Milan.

Upon completion of his PhD, Vijay worked as a visiting researcher at the University of Cambridge and as a post-doctoral fellow at the Cambridge Display Technology. He has a keen interest in promotion of critical and design thinking among youth and implementing citizen science projects through makerspaces.

Road ahead
A Future Full of Possibilities

Reflecting on the impact of FY 2023-24, we at VigyanShaala are more inspired and determined than ever. Our mission to unlock the potential of STEM for underserved communities has brought us closer to realizing this vision. Through expanding partnerships, innovative program models, and the inspiring journeys of our fellows, we are witnessing a transformative movement that is reshaping STEM education in India.

We envision a future where every student, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to become an innovator, a scientist, an engineer, or a researcher. We see rural communities leading the way in tackling some of the world's most pressing challenges through science and innovation. Together with our partners, mentors, and students, we are making this future a reality.
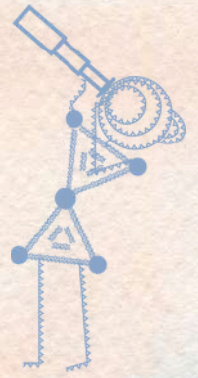
The road ahead is filled with promise, and we are ready to amplify our impact in the coming years in STEM innovation.

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