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Celebrating the Spirit of I CAN.

One thing that has been consistently flowing in the DNA of the entire Ambuja family is the spirit of I Can. We all live and breathe it every day, every moment. When ACF started working with the communities, it was this I Can spirit that gave us the momentum to join hands and co-create solutions, thus making the best use of limited resources to achieve larger impact. ACF's Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Institutes have been consistently making us proud through their relentless efforts in providing vocational training to rural youth. It is heartening to see how beautifully our SEDI graduates have imbibed the I Can spirit and are confidently taking the baton forward, fighting challenges, making a mark and inspiring their peers. In this issue of our newsletter, we share experiences and stories of two of the SEDI graduates who demonstrated that strong determination and trust in your abilities never go waste.

New Hope New Dreams

When 29-year old Deepa joined SEDI

(Chirawa, Rajasthan), she was going through a difficult phase in her life. Her husband Pramod, had recently passed away due to ill health.

"My husband, when alive, was very supportive. He knew that I always wanted to work and become financially independent. Respecting my decision, he even brought SEDI's admission form for

me, much against his parents' wishes " , reminisces Deepa.

Things, unfortunately, didn't turn out the way they were planned. The sudden demise of Pramod completely shattered Deepa's dreams. With two little boys (4 year and 2 year old) Deepa had lost all hopes to ever lead a normal life again.

"This was when I received a lot of support from the SEDI team. Chirawa is a small place and does not provide too many job opportunities. I didn't want to shift to any other town because of my kids", says Deepa. With the encouragement received



Deepa Swami

from SEDI, Deepa agreed to complete her training in beauty and wellness course. The training programme brought a positive shift in her focus. Soon after course completion, she started her own beauty parlour.

Deepa adds, "Had SEDI not happened, I would have been still struggling to put my life back on track. SEDI played a big role in making me believe in myself and help me regain my enthusiasm. I am finally living my dream. If my husband was alive, he'd would have been very proud of me".

In Conversation with Komal Chunarkar

Komal Ganpat Chunarkar, a 22-year old bright and confident girl, is amongst the first female welders to have completed her training from SEDI, Chandrapur. Komal is proud that she could achieve her dreams and has set an example for other girls. In a candid chat with the ACF team, Komal talks about her success journey from being 'just another girl' to an inspiration for many. Read the excerpts here:

Tell us about yourself?

Well, I belong to a simple middle class family. My father is a contract worker and I am the youngest child to my parents. I have two elder brothers, who are also working as labourers. The household income had always been insufficient and irregular. I didn't just want to complete my studies and sit at home. I wanted to get a job and help my father financially, something which is not very common in the place we live in. I had been quite lucky to have a supportive family, who never doubted my dreams and always helped me in all my endeavours.

What motivated you to join SEDI ?

Like I said, I always wanted to build my career so that in whatever small way possible, I could help my father. SEDI team conducts regular meetings with the village youth. In one such meeting, they shared details of the welding course, need and scope, which I found very interesting. The best part of the entire discussion was that even girls were invited to fill in the application. I was already a graduate and was looking for a job. The welding course was an opportunity I didn't want to miss out and immediately decided to join the 60-day training program in July 2015.



Komal Chunarkar

How was the journey? Were there any challenges?

The journey has been quite interesting. I learned the nuances of welding skill, but more importantly I learned to believe in my abilities. However, this was not easy. While my family supported me, the people around did show their disapproval. In a place where girls are married off even before they complete their schooling, I being trained as a welder was beyond people's acceptance. More so, they were apprehensive that this might impact other girls in the village and they, too, would demand the same, which in fact they later did! (laughs)

Would you like to share a few challenges?

Well, the biggest challenge was to overcome my fears and apprehensions. Although I was excited to choose something different, the training was quite detailed and overwhelming at times. In the initial phase, I had to fight the urge to quit. However, with SEDI's support and

encouragement, I could soon overcome the difficulties. Talking about people from the community, there were many instances where I had to ignore comments like 'future lady welder' and 'simply wasting time and money'. Women in the village often expressed their concern over my marriage prospects since I had chosen a different path. But I am glad I adhered to my decision. Today I am working as welder in a good company in Pune and manage everything on my own. It feels great when the same people who doubted my choice, give me example to their daughters.

Apart from skill training, how is your experience with SEDI helping you today?

For youngsters like me who live in remote villages, SEDI is a boon. Apart from learning a vocational skill, SEDI has completely changed my personality. Now changes and challenges don't scare me. I can confidently interact with people. The



Trainee welders in a training session at SEDI Chandrapur

From your experience, what message would you like to give to other girls who want to excel like you?

I still have a long way to go but from my experience I would only like to say that every girl should trust her potential. There is nothing as difficult work. If boys can do it, so can girls.
