

QUARTERLY ACTIVITY UPDATE

GUFTAGOO



*Chalo, Sab Milkar is
Guftagoo ko Dilkash Banaye*

FOREWORD

The humdrum of the festive season of lights was in ebb, when we got together in Chhattisgarh to celebrate pure radiance and innovation flowing within our Adivasi communities especially the Baigas by holding together an event named Anjor.

Anjor means light, radiance, luminance which it truly was as we partnered with the local communities of the Kabirdham landscape and celebrated perseverance of the human spirit, creativity and resilience, scintillating culture and rhythms of the drums paving the way for the endeavors of the communities to soar even higher. Anjor event celebrated pure joyfulness and presented the myriad possibilities that divulge infinite opportunities. The CHiRP Coalition members along with the local communities laid down and marked a valuable milestone through the Anjor event in the journey of ecological, social, financial and inspirational transformation.



We further share stories that remind us of the quiet yet profound transformations taking place in our communities. The current Guftagoo reflects journeys of courage, innovation, dignity, and resilience—children discovering confidence through digital learning, adolescent girls embracing health and agency, women accessing financial empowerment through self-help groups, and persons with disabilities celebrating inclusion through art and sport.

Panning over to Chhattisgarh, we share tales of integrated farming models and community nurseries that demonstrate how livelihoods, ecology, and governance can converge to reshape futures. Each initiative—whether in classrooms, libraries, self-help groups, or village nurseries—underscores the power of collective action and patient stewardship by our communities.

Together, these stories form a tapestry of hope: communities rising with creativity, women leading with strength, and children stepping forward with confidence. They remind us that sustainable change is nurtured through participation, inclusion, and trust.

Guftagoo is not just a record of activities—it is a living dialogue of transformation, equity, and resilience.

Aaiye, guftagu jaari rakhein...

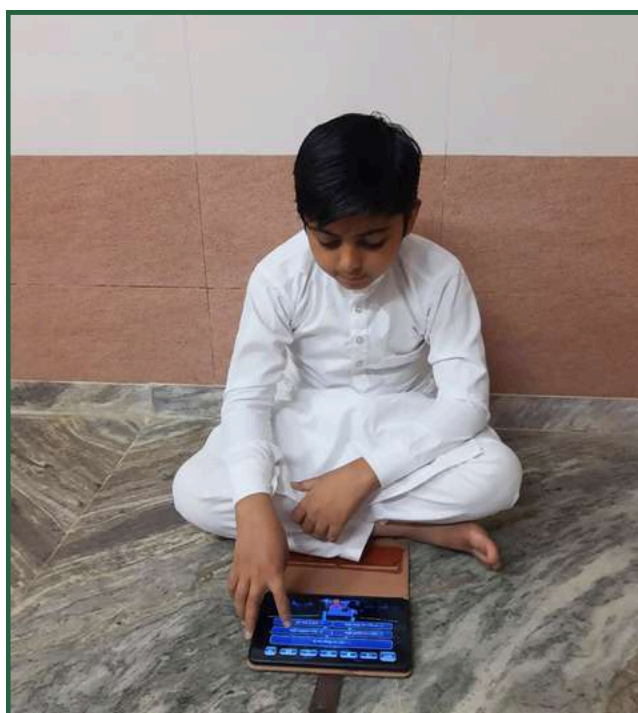
Krishna Srinivasan

State Lead Chhattisgarh

SAMERTH INNOVATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Success Story: *Dayma Farhan — From Hesitation to Leadership*

When Dayma Farhan first stepped into the Digital Library as a Class 1 pupil, he was a shrinking presence at the edge of activity—silent, intimidated by older children, and unable to read or write. His mother had enrolled him after noticing the centre’s programs; on his second day she found him tucked into a corner, watching but not joining. The Digital librarian began to engage him gently, inviting observation and small tasks. A turning point came when Farhan’s curiosity was piqued by art-and-craft sessions. Drawn to peers who were confidently creating, he tentatively joined in. Each small success built his confidence: a completed drawing, a practiced letter, a cooperative group task. Gradually the timid observer became an enthusiastic participant.



Now a Class 9 student, Farhan has embraced digital learning. He uses YouTube for homework support, creates posters on Canva and studies English on Duolingo. His skills in reading, writing and visual storytelling have grown markedly, and he regularly helps classmates as a peer mentor. He also represents his school in presentations and quiz competitions. Teachers and his mother credit the library’s supportive environment for his turnaround. Farhan’s story—of curiosity leading to capability, and quietness evolving into leadership—illustrates how accessible digital resources and patient mentorship can change a child’s trajectory.

Key outcomes

- Academic engagement: Actively uses digital resources beyond textbooks.
- Language development: Notable improvement in English reading and writing.
- Creative expression: Stronger drawing and storytelling skills through digital tools.
- Confidence & leadership: Regular participant in presentations, quizzes, and group initiatives.



SUCCESS STORY: ADOLESCENT GIRL “FROM SHAME TO STRENGTH – THE TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY OF DIWAN MARIA BANU”



Problem Statement:

Diwan Maria Banu, a 14-year-old student of F.D. School, has been attending the Shastri Nagar Community Center since the age of 5. When she experienced her first period at 12, Maria adopted unhygienic practices, felt ashamed, and avoided speaking about menstruation. Due to ignorance about nutritious food, she frequently fell sick, suffered weakness, and lacked concentration. Like many adolescent girls in her community, she faced challenges of limited knowledge about menstrual hygiene, misconceptions about nutrition, and the social pressure of early marriage.

Efforts at the Community Center:

To address these issues, Samerth initiated a special health and life-skills training program for adolescent girls at the Shastri Nagar Community Center. Maria attended multiple sessions:

- **Menstrual Hygiene Session:** She learned how to use safe pads, maintain hygiene during periods, and dispel misconceptions.
- **Early Marriage Awareness Session:** Discussions on the risks of early marriage, the legal age, and the importance of education inspired her to prioritize schooling.
- **Health and Hygiene Session:** She understood the role of daily hygiene, water, toilets, and sanitation, and began practicing these routines at home.
- **Nutrition Session:** She learned about essential nutrients for strength, bones, and blood, and started adopting a diet rich in pulses, green vegetables, and protein.

Result:

Maria’s transformation has been remarkable. She now uses clean and safe pads, maintains proper hygiene, and speaks openly about menstruation, even guiding her friends. She firmly decided against early marriage and convinced her family to support her education until adulthood. Her health improved significantly—weakness reduced, concentration increased, and illness became less frequent. By adopting a nutritious diet, she not only improved her own well-being but also inspired other family members to follow healthier practices.

Maria’s Message:

“The training gave me the courage to understand my body, maintain hygiene, and take decisions about my life. I now also explain to my friends how important it is not to get married early and to take care of our health.”

By Diwan Maria Banu, adolescent girl, Shastri Nagar Community Center.



SAVING WITH DIGNITY: RANJANBEN'S INTERLOAN JOURNEY THROUGH NARI SHAKTI SELF HELP GROUP

SHG Association: Nari Shakti Mahila Savings Group (5 years)



Patadiya Ranjanben Gautambhai, a dedicated member of the Nari Shakti Self-Help Group (SHG), began her savings journey with just ₹100. Over five years, through consistent deposits, she built up ₹5,500 in her savings account. When her son's wedding was approaching, Ranjanben found herself in urgent need of financial support. Though she explored options from two or three sources, the high interest rates made it difficult to manage without burdening her family.

During a regular SHG meeting, Ranjanben shared her situation and expressed interest in taking an interloan against her savings in the Nari Shakti Mahila Savings Account. Her family supported the idea, agreeing to repay the minimal interest. The very next day, Ranjanben approached the SHG facilitator to initiate the process. A meeting was held with all group members, and women unanimously agreed to support her.

With the help of the SHG president and vice president, a loan of ₹20,000 was sanctioned and disbursed from the bank. Ranjanben was guided on repayment terms and supported throughout the process. This timely financial assistance helped her manage the wedding expenses with dignity and without external debt pressure.

Receiving a loan at just 1% interest against her own savings not only eased her financial stress but also elevated her standing within the family. Her voice began to be heard in household decisions—both big and small—and she was recognized for her foresight and commitment to saving. Ranjanben's joy knew no bounds as she experienced both financial empowerment and newfound respect at home.



Her story is a testament to the strength of women's collectives and the transformative power of community-led financial systems

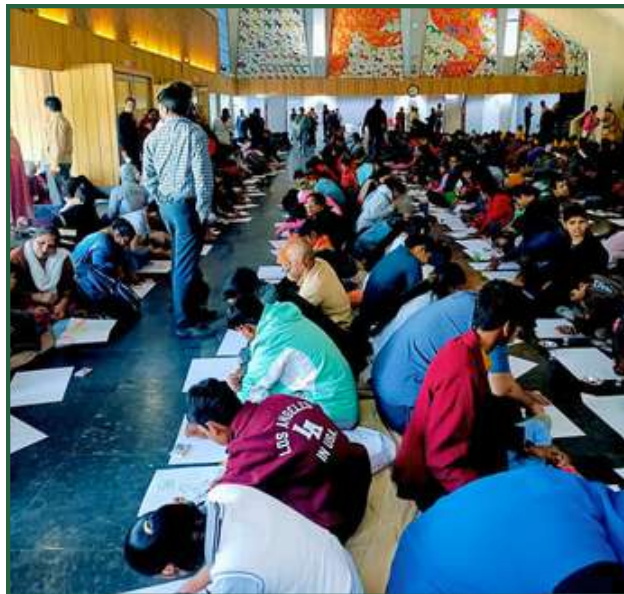
SAMERTH TALIM KENDRA:

SWMR Activity: Drawing Competition 2025

The Society for the Welfare of the Mentally Retarded (SWMR) organized a Drawing Competition on 6 December 2025 at Tagore Hall, Paldi, Ahmedabad. The event ran from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM and brought together participants for a creative and inclusive celebration.

Participation

The Samerth Talim Kendra contributed significantly to the event with 20 students and 2 teachers. In total, 40 organizations from Ahmedabad and the Ahmedabad district joined the competition, with more than 500 children showcasing their creativity.



Purpose

The competition was held to celebrate World Mental Retardation Day and to encourage creativity among children with disabilities, along with their teachers and parents.

Categories

To ensure inclusivity, the competition was divided into five groups: Group A for children with Cerebral Palsy (CP), Group B for children with intellectual disabilities below 16 years, Group C for those above 17 years, Group T for teachers, and Group P for parents.



Outcome

Children, teachers, and parents created beautiful drawings that reflected imagination and talent. Their active participation made the event inclusive and successful.

SWMR Activity: Drawing Competition 2025 Participation in Special Khel Mahakumbh – Gujarat Government

The Government of Gujarat organized the Special Khel Mahakumbh from 26 to 28 November 2025. Registration was conducted online through Google Forms, ensuring wide accessibility and participation.



Participation

Samerth Talim Kendra had 24 student participants across three different games. On 26 November, 7 children aged 8–15 years competed. On 27 November, 9 children aged 16–21 years took part, while on 28 November, 8 children aged 21 years and above joined the competitions.

Achievements

Two children from Samerth Talim Kendra achieved notable success:

- **Memon Sahil** – 3rd place in Bocce
- **Diwan Sohil** – 3rd place in 200m Run

Conclusion

These activities reflect the strong commitment of SWMR and Samerth Talim Kendra towards inclusion, empowerment, and holistic development of children with disabilities. By encouraging creativity through art and fostering participation in sports, both institutions continue to build confidence, celebrate talent, and promote equity within the community.



Green Hub Fellows

Frames of Transformation: Documenting Samerth's Urban Program

From 10 November – 11 December 2025, Green Hub Fellows partnered with Samerth Charitable Trust to film the Urban Program, capturing its impact across education, disability inclusion, and community engagement. The documentary showcases how grassroots innovation is reshaping urban communities with creativity, resilience, and inclusion.



Education

The film highlights creative pedagogy in government, low-fee schools, and community centers, engaging children through teaching-learning materials (TLM). Digital libraries extend tablet-based learning to grades 4–12, while early childhood centers nurture ages 3–6. Teacher training and parent meetings further strengthen the education ecosystem.

Disability Inclusion

Therapies such as physiotherapy, speech, sensory, and animal-assisted approaches were documented, alongside classroom interventions and community-based rehabilitation. Parents' voices emphasized the importance of inclusive environments for children with diverse needs.

Community Engagement

Balwadi Centres showcased grassroots early learning. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) shared stories of resilience, financial independence, and cultural traditions like Garba. Adolescent girls' training focused on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), health, and hygiene. Local discussions reflected collective dialogue driving sustainable progress.



Voices & Perspectives

Interviews with leaders, specialists, and community members shed light on water issues, SHG dynamics, adolescent empowerment, special education, and therapeutic practices—offering a holistic view of the program's impact.

Heritage & Culture

Filming also embraced Ahmedabad's heritage, featuring Sidi Syed Ni Jali, Jama Masjid, Bhadra Fort, Teen Darwaza, Jamalpur Darwaza, and the Riverfront, symbolizing the cultural backdrop of community life.

This documentary is a living narrative of inclusion, creativity, and resilience—showing how the Quarterly Activity Update is building a brighter, equitable future.

सबिता ओटी दीदी की सफलता की खेती एकीकृत कृषि मॉडल से बदली जीवन और आमदनी

समर्थ चेरिटेबल ट्रस्ट कबीरधाम (HIGH IMPACT MEGA WATERSHED PROJECT 2.0)



मैकाल पर्वत श्रृंखला के दुर्गम पहाड़ी क्षेत्र में स्थित ग्राम पंचायत खाम्ही के ग्राम सेमारहा (विकासखंड पंडरिया) की महिला किसान श्रीमती सबिता ओटी ने सीमित संसाधनों के बावजूद एकीकृत कृषि प्रणाली को अपनाकर आत्मनिर्भरता की मिसाल पेश की है। आज वे कृषि, मत्स्य पालन और पशुपालन के माध्यम से न केवल अपने परिवार की आर्थिक स्थिति सुदृढ़ कर रही हैं, बल्कि अन्य ग्रामीण महिलाओं के लिए भी प्रेरणा बन गई हैं।

पूर्व में सबिता ओटी का परिवार केवल वर्षा आधारित धान की खेती पर निर्भर था, जिससे आमदनी बेहद सीमित रहती थी। स्थायी जलस्रोत और वैकल्पिक आजीविका साधनों के अभाव में परिवार को वर्षभर आर्थिक असुरक्षा का सामना करना पड़ता था।

समर्थ चेरिटेबल ट्रस्ट (BRLF – HIMWSP 2.0) परियोजना के टीम द्वारा मिले तकनीकी मार्गदर्शन एवं विभागीय अभिसरण से सबिता दीदी ने अपनी 2.5 एकड़ भूमि में एकीकृत कृषि प्रणाली (IFS) मॉडल को अपनाया। मनरेगा से अभिसरण टीम के सहयोग से खेत में चोटी से घाटी के अवधारणा से 10 डिसमिल जगह पर डबरी का निर्माण किया गया, जिसमें (रोहू कतला मृगल) मत्स्य पालन शुरू हुआ। डबरी से वर्षभर पानी उपलब्ध होने लगा, जिससे खेती में स्थायित्व आया तथा भू जल स्तर रिचार्ज भी होने लगा साथ ही मेड़ों पर केला एवं आम जैसे फलदार पौधे लगाए गए जिससे दीदी को अतिरिक्त आय प्राप्त होने लगी।



सिंचाई व्यवस्था को सुदृढ़ करने के लिए CREDA विभाग के सहयोग से सौर ऊर्जा चालित मोटर पंप एवं सोलर पैनल की स्थापना की गई, जिससे सिंचाई लागत में उल्लेखनीय कमी आई। इसके अतिरिक्त सबिता दीदी ने 15 बकरियों का बकरी पालन, मुर्गी एवं बतख पालन भी प्रारंभ किया। पशुपालन संरचना के लिए मनरेगा से बकरी शेड निर्माण का प्रस्ताव भी तैयार किया गया।



खेती में विविधता लाते हुए उन्होंने खरीफ में 1.5 एकड़ में धान, 50 डिसमिल में अरहर तथा रबी मौसम में 1.5 एकड़ में चना और सब्जी उत्पादन किया। इन सभी गतिविधियों से उन्हें लगभग ₹2.88 लाख की वार्षिक सकल आय प्राप्त हुई, जिसमें से खर्च निकालने के बाद करीब ₹2 लाख की शुद्ध आय अर्जित हुई है।

सबिता दीदी कहती हैं,

“पहले हमारी खेती केवल बारिश पर निर्भर थी और आमदनी इतनी कम थी कि परिवार चलाना मुश्किल हो जाता था। समर्थ ट्रस्ट के सहयोग से मैंने नई तकनीकें अपनाईं। आज मेरे खेत से सालभर उत्पादन होता है और मैं अपने बच्चों के भविष्य को लेकर निश्चित हूँ।”

सबिता ओटी द्वारा अपनाए गए इस सफल आजीविका मॉडल का अवलोकन करने हेतु छत्तीसगढ़ शासन के संचालक PMAY-G एवं आयुक्त मनरेगा श्री तारन प्रकाश सिन्हा, जिला पंचायत CEO श्री अजय कुमार त्रिपाठी सहित जिला एवं विकासखंड स्तर के प्रशासनिक अधिकारियों द्वारा मैदानी भ्रमण भी किया गया। अधिकारियों ने इस मॉडल को ग्रामीण आजीविका सशक्तिकरण का उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण बताया।

आज सबिता ओटी की सफलता यह सिद्ध करती है कि सही मार्गदर्शन, विभागीय अभिसरण और मेहनत के माध्यम से ग्रामीण महिलाएँ भी आत्मनिर्भर बन सकती हैं और समग्र ग्रामीण विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा सकती हैं।

-by Prasant Gupta

Convergence & Community Nursery redefining the Pendri Village

By- Ritesh Shende



Pendri, a small village of just 33 tribal households resides within the forest periphery and reflects both the beauty and challenges of life in remote landscapes. To an outsider, Pendri may appear pleasant surrounded by forests, rich in traditional practices, and sustained by rituals that celebrate harmony with nature. Yet beneath this image lies a reality of limited infrastructure, fragile livelihoods, and interrupted educational opportunities.

For years, Pendri's connectivity to the nearest town has been defined by a narrow kachha road cutting through forest terrain. During monsoon, the road becomes pathetic with water channels running through it, making it difficult for school children and adults to cross. This results serious implications most visibly on education of children and transportation on accessing schools, healthcare and market. Though the village has an anganwadi and a primary school where the children studies, but after their primary school they have to go the Bodla which is 8km away.



The unreliable road, coupled with financial and habitat barriers, has led to widespread school dropouts as per the Kuntibai Saiyaam, a resident of Pendri. Many children, unable to pursue higher education, end up working with their parents in agriculture and forest-based livelihoods.



In Pendri, initially we focused on landscape restoration a critical need in the region given increasing deforestation pressures. The focus was not just on planting trees, but on reconnecting people with their landscape socially, economically, and ecologically. Hence, a community nursery was established, managed by local Self-Help Groups (SHGs) Adivasi Mahila Swayam Sahayata Samuh. The aim behind nursery development was to produce native saplings for the plantation drive for reforestation and agroforestry activities while creating livelihood opportunities for the community members.

The Samerth technical led nursery development was not just a project activity but an entry point of the Pendri's women into a collective decision-making and local leadership.

The idea was simple yet strategic by empowering the community to grow, manage, and sell saplings to evolve into a self-sustaining economic unit. It generated seasonal employment, built local technical knowledge in nursery management, and created a shared sense of purpose around restoring the local ecology. The process of planting, watering, and nurturing trees began to symbolize a deeper form of regeneration of land, community, and confidence.

While the nursery offered initial momentum, sustainable transformation required deeper systemic support. Here, convergence with government departments became the turning point. Samerth recognized that without the engagement of line departments particularly the Forest Department, the community's efforts would remain limited in scale and impact.

Through continuous dialogue, field demonstrations, and evidence-building, Samerth developed an operational strategy to engage the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) and his team. The approach was rooted in transparency and ground-level exposure rather than confining discussions to official reports. The team actively facilitated field visits where the DFO and other government officers could witness the challenges and potential first-hand.



During these visits, officers observed the degraded forest patches, interacted directly with SHG members managing the nursery, and heard from villagers about their struggles with road access, education, and livelihoods. This strategy proved crucial in shifting bureaucratic perception instead of seeing Pendri as a distant small village. Officers began to recognize it as a helping hand to the larger ecological challenges in Pendri.



The most transformative impact came when the Forest Department, after its field exposure visit, prioritized the long-pending kachha murum road under forest jurisdiction. Within a year, the road was widened and upgraded, a demand pending for more than three decades was solved. The improved road has now drastically reduced isolation, enabling easier access to schools, markets, and healthcare. The another impact I see, once the registration of nursery is completed under the MGNREGA the community nursery will be at wage labour and will provide saplings for plantation and afforestation drives thus will create a consistent demand for saplings, turning the nursery into a revenue-generating activity for SHGs.



The Pendri's experience underscores a critical insight in tribal and forest-periphery areas where the education, livelihoods, infrastructure, and ecology are deeply interconnected. By bringing government officers to the field, empowering SHGs, and aligning ecological restoration with social development, Samerth has demonstrated a replicable model. The model demonstrated in Pendri & Kabaripathra Nursery has now inspired the district administration of Kabirdham to replicate such 48 nurseries in the district while adopting similar convergence strategies using nurseries as entry points for ecological and institutional regeneration. The story of Pendri is not just about trees, forest or roads it's about redefining governance through grassroots action. Through convergence, participation, and trust-building, the people of Pendri have transformed from beneficiaries to partners in development. What was once a just a forest village is now a symbol of what can be achieved when ecological restoration and community well-being move hand in hand.



In this way, the Pendri village is being shaped by its people, by their partnerships with Samerth & government, and by the growing recognition that ecological restoration and community well-being must go hand in hand.

Community-Led Planning and Convergence for Strengthening Education and ECCE Services in Gram Panchayat: Kachanda, Beladula–Kharwani Block: Jaijaipur District: Sakti, Chhattisgarh.

Context and Situational Analysis:

At the outset, a detailed situational analysis was conducted across institutions under the Kachanda Cluster. This included the New Primary School Basti Kachanda, Middle School Kachanda, Anganwadi Centre Kachanda, and institutions under Gram Panchayat Beladula—Upgraded Primary School Chandipara Beladula, Primary School Kharwani, and Anganwadi Centres Beladula & Kharwani.

The Samerth team along with Panchayat representatives of the respective Gram Panchayat systematically studied existing gaps, challenges, and infrastructure deficiencies. Based on this assessment, a structured plan was developed to present all identified issues during convergence group meetings, Gram Sabha discussions, and coordination forums involving PRI members and School Management Committees (SMCs).



Key Gaps and Needs Identified



Several critical issues affecting schools and Anganwadi centres were identified by community members in SMC meetings, convergence group meetings and with discussion with Sarapanch.

In Gram Panchayats Kachanda, Beladula, and Kharwani, multiple infrastructure gaps were identified in schools and Anganwadi centres, including damaged buildings, lack of toilets, water scarcity, faulty electrical wiring, absence of boundary walls, and painting requirements.

Several Anganwadi centres were operating from residential houses due to the non-availability of dedicated buildings, and demands were raised for new centres in high child population areas. Issues related to nutrition services, menu-based meal distribution, shortage of teachers, and irregular classroom practices were highlighted. Safety concerns, especially due to roadside schools without boundary walls, were also raised. Formal applications, SMC meetings, Gram Sabha discussions, and continuous follow-ups were undertaken to address these issues through concerned departments and government schemes by the community members with the support of Samerth Team.

Meetings, Capacity and Awareness Building:

From these months regular meetings were conducted with PRI representatives, convergence groups, and SMC members across Gram Panchayats Beladula, Kachanda, and Kharwani to review school and Anganwadi conditions. Issues raised in Gram Sabha, gaps in government scheme implementation, and local education and nutrition challenges were jointly discussed. SMC members were supported to understand their roles and responsibilities, plan school-level improvements, and review monthly agendas. Active involvement of SMCs and community members strengthened local ownership, accountability, and timely problem resolution.

Outcomes:

- In continuous SMC meeting, the SMC Chairperson, Shri Budhram Karsh, facilitated school cleaning, painting, installation of gates using MMC funds, and completion of electrical wiring.
- Issues related to toilet facilities and water supply at New Primary School Basti Kachanda was addressed, and improvement work was initiated following convergence and PRI meetings.
- Applications for Anganwadi construction resulted in progress of building construction, enabling Anganwadi operations to shift from residential houses to dedicated buildings.
- In Beladula, cleaning and painting of the Upgraded Primary School Chandipara were completed under the leadership of SMC members.
- Ward-level issues related to water supply, Anganwadi premises, and toilets were addressed through PRI discussions, leading to the construction of boundary walls for Anganwadi Centre No. 3 in Beladula and installation of borewells in Wards 20–21.
- Gram Sabha-approved funds of ₹3 lakh were utilized to improve village solar street light systems.
- In the August meeting, boundary wall and toilet issues of Upgraded Primary School Chandipara Beladula and Primary School Kharwani were raised, and construction work was initiated by October.

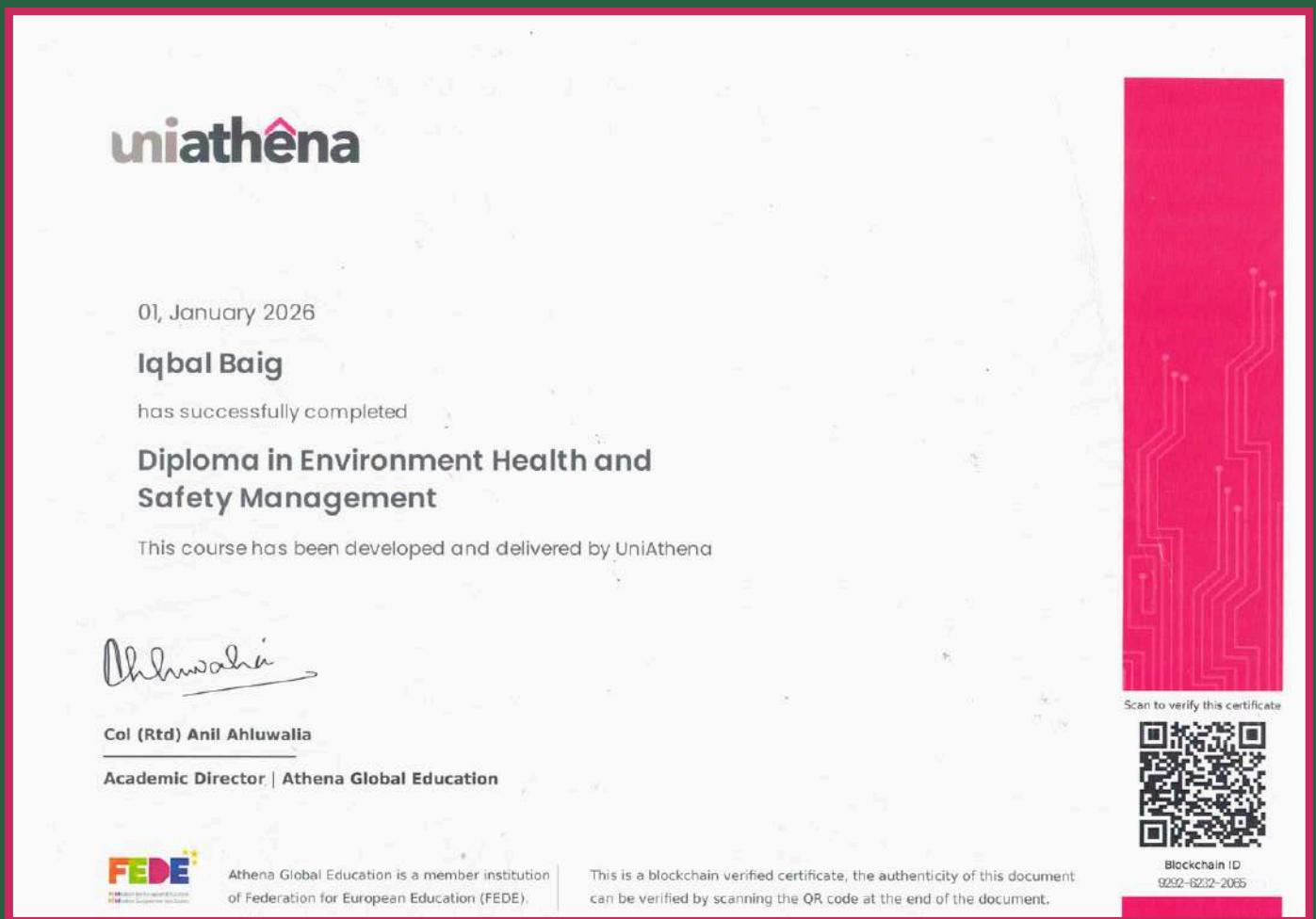


Conclusion:

This case study highlights how systematic assessment, strengthening of School Development and Management Committees, active involvement of PRI members, awareness generation through Gram Sabha platforms, and continuous facilitation by the Samerth team led to tangible improvements in school and Anganwadi infrastructure, governance, and service delivery. The intervention demonstrates the importance of community-led planning and institutional strengthening in ensuring sustainable improvements in education and early childhood care services.

CERTIFICATION

Iqbal Baig has successfully completed the Diploma in Environment Health and Safety Management from UniAthena (Athena Global Education). The programme focused on strengthening knowledge and competencies related to environmental health, safety standards, and management practices.



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