As I sit back to reflect on the year I acknowledge it to be one of the most difficult years, both personally and organizationally. At the same time, I am deeply grateful for the privilege of a supportive network that helped me pull through and continue work where it was needed most.

COVID-19 challenged us at Milaan to rethink the very purpose of our organization. The crises forced us to explore new capacities and push boundaries to support the communities we work with, in the rebuilding process. I am proud of the way my team has risen to this challenge - with flexibility, resilience, courage and a caring heart.

Our emergency response program - COVID-19 Relief and Resilience Project ensured that families are able to put food on their table, have access to medicines and are vaccinated against COVID-19. It, therefore, became even more important for the Milaan team to know, with utmost faith, that we are right there for them. We are proud to have been able to retain each member during this trying period.

We could not have achieved this feat without the amazing network of Girl Icon alumni who individually and collectively came forward to accelerate the rebuilding process. With their support, our graduating batch of over 4000 girls in the Girl Icon Program successfully completed their leadership journey. Their resilience to continue the fight for a gender-equal and just world despite emergencies and lockdowns has been a great source of inspiration for us as Milaan.

All pre-existing inequalities affecting girls have been made worse by COVID-19. While evidence is still being collated, we know from our work with communities on the ground that progress has been pushed back by almost a decade. On one hand, technology has paved the way for normalizing lives, on the other this new way of doing things has deepened the existing gender digital divide. Millions of girls, especially from vulnerable communities, have been left far behind.

This is also a moment in time when the work Milaan is doing is it’s most critical. We are now focused on facing this dire emergency to ensure these girls are not left behind. In the year to come, we commit to expanding our work and capacities to ensure that we scale up programs that accelerate the progress in the lives of girls.

We at Milaan express our sincere gratitude to everyone who helped us and encouraged us to continue to stand on our feet, walk and at times even run. We look forward to your continued support towards our work in rebuilding the world for girls to be empowered, educated, healthy and safe.

With Gratitude,
Dhirendra
Founded in 2007, Milaan Foundation is a social impact non-profit organization that envisions an equal and inclusive world where every girl has the knowledge, skills, and a social environment to fulfill her dreams and explore her full potential. In the last 14 years, Milaan through various educational and leadership development programs has worked in underserved and vulnerable communities in three states in India, with a focus on adolescent girls.

We work with young women from socially and economically marginalized communities, irrespective of them being in-school or out-of-school, their caste, religion, sexuality, region, race, and physical abilities.

At Milaan, we are driven by our values of empathy, respect, diversity, integrity, innovation, inclusion, and excellence in execution. Over 60% of our board members are women and 90% of our program team members are women from regions we work in. Our current team members come from diverse social backgrounds including minority religions such as Islam, low-income communities, single women-led households, other backward castes, etc.

Milaan Foundation is a registered charitable organization as Milaan - Be the Change (NGO) with Registrar of Societies, New Delhi under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 since 18th October 2007. The organization is also registered under 12A, 80G under Income Act Tax 1961, has a valid CSR registration by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and is eligible to receive foreign donations under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Milaan has been awarded gold star certification by Guidestar India.

Milaan’s primary work is focused on empowering adolescent girls between 12-18 years by addressing 4 dimensions critical for their well-being:

- Completion of Secondary Education
- Adolescent Health
- Delay in Marriage beyond the legal age of 18
- Prevention of Gender-based Discrimination and Violence.
**VISION**

an inclusive and equal world

where every girl has the knowledge, skills and social environment to pursue her dreams and explore her full potential

**MISSION**

By 2030 empower 10 million girls across India and build a movement of Girl Leaders with a thriving ecosystem of change-makers and networks

**OUR VALUES**

Accelerating India’s progress to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030

Empathy Respect Diversity Integrity Innovation Inclusion Excellence in Execution
2021 HIGHLIGHTS
The COVID-19 pandemic thrust the Milaan team into the largest digital transformation the organization had ever imagined! The lockdowns compelled the team into embracing technology, making the Girl Icon program accessible online and upskilling the adolescents to learn in new ways. A residential five-day training was transformed into a 10-day online workshop. The challenge of completing the final training for the 2018-20 cohort of Girl Icons was thus successfully overcome despite the nationwide lockdowns. The core focus at Milaan was to ensure optimal engagement, learning outcomes and delivery of the curriculum in the newly learned virtual environment. Our team worked round the clock to modify the curriculum and collaborated with experts in design and training to help girls complete the program successfully.

A. BRIDGING THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

On-boarding the largest cohort of the Girl Icon Program

Determined to continue to work on the flagship program despite the nationwide shutdown and uncertainties of COVID-19, Milaan’s Girl Icon program harnessed the power of technology to reach communities and on-board adolescent girls. The largest cohort of 5000 adolescent girls in three states of India applied to the Girl Icon program to be empowered and ignite a movement of change in their communities during 2021 (January - March).

Completing the Girl Icon Program 2018-2020

The COVID-19 pandemic thrust the Milaan team into the largest digital transformation the organization had ever imagined! The lockdowns compelled the team into embracing technology, making the Girl Icon program accessible online and upskilling the adolescents to learn in new ways. A residential five-day training was transformed into a 10-day online workshop. The challenge of completing the final training for the 2018-20 cohort of Girl Icons was thus successfully overcome despite the nationwide lockdowns. The core focus at Milaan was to ensure optimal engagement, learning outcomes and delivery of the curriculum in the newly learned virtual environment. Our team worked round the clock to modify the curriculum and collaborated with experts in design and training to help girls complete the program successfully.
**IMPACT CREATED**

**EDUCATION**
- 100% girls are continuing their secondary education
- >80% girls want to pursue higher education

**AGENCY**
- 74% girls show increased participation in making decisions relating to their education, health and safety

**CHILD MARRIAGE**
- 95% girls showed a preference for delaying their age of marriage to pursue higher education
- 0% girls got married during the project duration

**GBV & DISCRIMINATION**
- 90% recognize gender based discrimination and are equipped with the knowledge and support networks to prevent and take action against violence

**HEALTH**
- 93% girls reported improved adolescent health with increased knowledge on their sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, and to menstruate hygienically and with dignity
93% girls now know the legal age of marriage, a knowledge that will prove crucial in delaying marriage, compared to 77.2% at baseline.

71% girls now have information on contraception such as contraceptive pills, condoms, and IUD.

93% girls report improved knowledge on menstrual hygiene management.

68.9% of girls are aware of the biological process of menstruation.

93% girls use sanitary napkins, a significant increase from 57.7% at the baseline.

90.3% recognized gender discrimination up from only 59.6% at the time of baseline.

Key findings

BECAUSE OF GIRL ICONS:

86 out of school girls are now enrolled in schools.

12 child marriages stopped.
Curriculum redesign and development

In a short span of three months, the Milaan team achieved the redesign and development of curriculum material, pilot testing, and team training. Investments were made to build stimulating virtual learning sessions and use new tools for optimal engagement. Each of the 24 sessions was reviewed to create interesting and interactive virtual activities using films, flashcards, infographics, presentations, etc. Sessions were planned after considering the different learning styles to obtain effective outcomes. Tracking sheets ensured timely progress in the redesign of sessions, development of educational material and managing the testing process.

The sessions were pilot tested with a group of adolescent girls not exposed to such virtual programs. The facilitators used detailed checklists to capture various parameters such as delivery timing, achievement of objectives, engagement during activities, the output of sessions etc. The sessions were recorded for in-depth analyses by them until the last glitch was ironed out.

The curriculum needed to be delivered effectively and efficiently by trainers to reinforce learning and active participation. This required in-depth training of trainers (ToT). Milaan laid down a TOT plan for each quarter that covered detailed content of each session, mock delivery and feedback. This regular training provided opportunities for trainers to work on their skills and core competencies, explore innovative ideas to engage girls and promote regular data collection to study impact.

Support by the alumni network

The young women in the Girl Icon alumni network played a crucial role in supporting the program team and leading adolescent girls on paths of learning using technology platforms. This thriving community of young women leaders met the Milaan team more than halfway to work for this initiative. Their proven leadership skills and remarkable work in communities as change agents proved invaluable to the program team. The alumni’s deep understanding of social and gender norms at the grassroots established relationships with key stakeholders, proven local solutions, and most importantly, passionate advocacy of the program were key pivots to the largest enrollment ever at Milaan.

Milaan has succeeded in considerably bridging the gender gap in the use of technology for learning and introduced the girls early to digital infrastructure in 3 states of India - Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. This small initiative will go a long way in reducing the negative trends of the pandemic and opening up opportunities for life-long learning, health and employment for these adolescent girls.

“I want to contribute in bringing change in the narrow mindsets of the people of my community who consider girls as a mere burden.”

Prerna, Madhya Pradesh
Gomti, Uttar Pradesh

Gomti left her village home and moved to the city of Lucknow to live with her brother’s family to attain a better education. She did not hesitate to work as a house help to support her education and other expenses. During the nationwide lockdown, she lost her job and faced financial difficulties. With no access to a smartphone, Gomti missed her online classes. With the scholarship she received from Milaan, Gomti invested in a smartphone and data pack to get back on track with her studies. This determined bright girl not only prepared for an advanced course without any support or guidance but also enrolled in Study Hall college for further studies.

Muskan, Uttar Pradesh

A farmer’s daughter, 15-year-old Girl Icon Muskan hails from a small village in rural Uttar Pradesh. At the age of 13, passionate to lead change, she joined the Girl Icon Program which encouraged her to explore herself and identify her goals and aspirations. She wanted to pave a path towards employment and capitalizing on her love for numbers, Muskan dedicated her time to preparing for the entrance test for the Government Polytechnic exam. Despite the lack of facilities in her village and nationwide lockdown, she cleared her exam and was selected in one of the best polytechnic colleges in the state. For Muskan, this not only means higher education but also assures her that she will be able to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty for her family.

Milaan is proud of this Girl Icon who is the FIRST GIRL in her village to secure admission to a Government Polytechnic College. Muskan has been imparting life skill-based education to her peer group girls in her village for the last two years. She is a role model for girls in her community and is working continuously to bring girls back to school, leading by her own example.

Gomti’s story was published as an example of bright and brave teens from around the world. Read her story covered by The Lily, an arm of the Washington Post here.
B. Taking Social Action against Gender-based Violence

Increasing the role of girls within communities is critical to building their voice, choice and power. This year, Milaan designed a social action project around gender-based violence (GBV) issues that were increasingly affecting girls and their communities during COVID-19. Research has indicated the two-fold increase in GBV was fueled by mandatory stay-at-home rules, social distancing, economic uncertainties and anxieties especially in Uttar Pradesh, a key geography for Milaan.

This project provided the Girl Icons with a platform to practice their newfound skills to recognize social and cultural gender norms/barriers that lead to discrimination and eventually GBV within homes. A survey was designed and 177 Girl Icons were trained to gather data, make data entries and sensitize adolescent girls and women among communities regarding GBV. This was the first time Girl Icons in Uttar Pradesh used social audits as a tool.

A total of 16,664 women were engaged through the door-to-door survey on GBV in 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh; Azamgarh, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Chandauli, Mau, Raebareli, Sitapur, Barabanki, Unnao, Lakhimpur Kheri, Lucknow, and Varanasi.

A brief was developed on the findings of the survey for dissemination to district officials of different government departments such as health, education, district development, district social welfare, ICDS, Chief Development Officer, MNREGA, Police Department, and also some media agencies. It is hoped that the findings will help build greater awareness and promote collective action among community-based partners, local governing bodies, and decision-makers to prevent GBV among communities.

The face-to-face engagement with Girl Icons during the survey helped women in communities understand and recognize GBV within their homes and also created a safe space for them to share their experiences and thoughts without any fear. It is hoped that Milaan’s social action project will help accelerate responses against GBV from community stakeholders.

Key findings

- **Incidences of GBV**

  Almost 80% of the respondents have witnessed GBV in their neighbourhood but more than half (54%) of them denied experiencing any form of GBV themselves. Respondents were comfortable in answering queries on witnessing violence rather than sharing their personal experiences.

- **Internalization of violence**

  more than 60% of the respondents stated that a woman has to face violence only because she is a woman. Nearly 10% of women believed that the traditional values, cultural practices and inequities in society justify the exploitation and normalisation of violence against women.
While conducting the survey, I came to know what the women in my community are going through when it comes to gender-based violence! I also informed them about the different kinds of violence which they were not able to understand earlier, this helped them in recognizing violence.

Prachi, Barabanki

Community members were more easily able to understand physical and verbal violence taking place against women, whereas sexual violence was mentioned least.

Lack of awareness

39% of the respondents linked illiteracy to GBV experienced by women as they are not aware about their rights and are unable to understand and identify the violence being inflicted on them.

Culture of silence

more than 50% of women reported suffering in silence as per the survey. The socialisation of women into self-silencing due to cultural pressure to uphold the dignity of the family is deep-rooted in their minds.

Hush-hush around sexual violence

Lack of awareness

39% of the respondents linked illiteracy to GBV experienced by women as they are not aware about their rights and are unable to understand and identify the violence being inflicted on them.
Milaan launched its first virtual summit - The Girl Icon Leadership Summit - Haq Hai Aur Hausla Bhi - in 2020 in the midst of the global pandemic. This leadership summit is a collaborative platform facilitated by Milaan Foundation to bring together multiple stakeholders who are committed to empowering adolescent girls in India by listening, initiating dialogues and committing action, for and with girls. By conducting the summit in Hindi, a dialogue was successfully established between the girls at the grassroots and the accomplished sector leaders. The event was attended by over 5000 girls and 100+ community-based organizations from across the country.

The Girl Icons on the panel discussions at the summit asked critical questions to the sector leaders and made sure all the girls’ concerns were heard. The theme of the summit, ‘Haq Hai Aur Hausla Bhi’ resonated in the constructive dialogues between the participants. The compelling need to weave a gender lens into the rebuilding process in the aftermath of the pandemic where girls have been left far behind echoed from every voice.

The 5 Panels

- Empowering girls to build resilient communities
  - Dr. Rukmini Banerjee, CEO Pratham
  - Vidya Shah, Chairperson, Edelgive Foundation
  - Nishtha Satyam, Deputy Country Representative and Office In-charge, UN Women

- Combating Child Marriage
  - Shipra Jha, Head of Asia Engagement, Girls not Bride
  - Praneeta Kapur, Country Director, AJWS

- Enabling technology to empower adolescent girls
  - Sairee Chahal, CEO & Founder, Sheroes
  - Manisha Raisinghani, Founder and CTO, Loginext
  - Dr. Shikha Suman, Director, Pharma Sales

- Re-imagining pathway for secondary education of girls
  - Nidhi Dubey, Head of Global Programs, Girl Rising
  - Anubhuti Patra, Country Representative, Malala Fund
  - Shabnam Aziz, Adolescent Girl Programme head, Educate Girls

- Not just personal matter: End Gender-Based Abuse and Violence
  - Sohini Bhattacharya, Chief executive officer, Breakthrough
  - Kiran Bhatia, Independent Gender Specialist

Technology has suddenly emerged as a utility rather than a luxury during COVID-19. Yet technology will remain only a tool to change the gender power dynamics, unless girls take charge of their lives - a critical component that the Girl Icon Program addresses.

Ms. Sairee, SHEROES

Watch the summit
School started construction and launched a Mid-day meal program to meet the infrastructure requirement under the RTE, 2010 mandate for nongovernmental schools and save its dream project.

The school delivered 100% pass results in grades 10th and 12th for the sixth consecutive year. Milaan acquired another acre of land for school expansion.

Milaan established Swarachna School in the Sitapur district. Located in the heart of rural Uttar Pradesh, the school was built in one of the most backward districts of India, with 84% of the population under the poverty line out of which 78% is the Dalit community.

With the belief that every child should have the chance to ‘Reclaim childhood, dream, aspire and to have a safe space to learn and grow’ Swarachna was the FIRST Senior Secondary School in the region. Our students are first-generation learners with the hope and aspiration to improve their lives and be the game changers for their families and community.

Swarachna School was awarded lifetime affiliation by the UP board, till grade 12.
Built on the pillars of equality, access and sustainability, Milaan’s Swarachna School aims to educate **1000 children** and provide modern residential facilities for **400 adolescent girls** from marginalized communities to **complete their secondary and senior secondary education by 2024**.

During the second wave of the pandemic, Milaan’s Swarachna School was **transformed into a hub supporting 18 Community Health Centres** in the Sitapur district. Our school teachers, support staff and the school principal were actively involved in the end to end processes of packaging medical supplies and hygiene kits, conducting quality checks and ensuring timely deliveries. Our logistics team carried out the procurement process and parallely supported our school staff to distribute these essentials in a timely manner. Thermal scanners and oximeters quality checks; diagnostic equipment for community health workers with thermal scanners, oximeters, N-95 masks, protective face shields and sanitisers; medicine kits to help patients under isolation - all were prepared, checked, and distributed by our school team.

Our school staff along with our COVID-19 rapid response team served the Community Health Centers by supporting the ASHA and ANM frontline health workers and conducted training sessions on the diagnostic equipment to ensure efficiency and COVID-19 safety protocols in the field. The school played an indispensable role in accelerating our COVID-19 relief operations and harnessing the power of local networks.
COVID-19 RELIEF AND RESILIENCE BUILDING PROJECT
The deadly second wave of COVID-19 in January 2021 collapsed India’s healthcare system and highlighted the sparse and fragile health facilities available in rural India where 70% of its population resides. Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh, where Milaan has been working for the past 14 years, has non-existent private healthcare with a handful of Community Health Centres (CHC). The community health care workers, namely ASHA and ANMs, are the only resilient workforce that moves from village to village providing basic services to the large population living in villages of Uttar Pradesh. While this workforce had the rigor to fight COVID-19, the lack of protective gear and medicines required to treat basic symptoms of the infection left them paralyzed and ineffective.

Fortunately for Milaan, its Swarachna School located in the heart of Sitapur served as a nodal centre for the COVID-19 rapid response team. The team supported CHCs at the cluster level and helped serve five million people in the rural areas.

RUCHI JAISWAL

Ruchi works as an ANM at the Community Health Center at Parsendi block in Sitapur. She shared her own reservations and vulnerability at the onset of the second wave of COVID-19 due to lack of detection tools and protection gear. “We did not have any thermometers and checking people for symptoms by touching them directly with our hands meant putting ourselves at risk! How could we maintain distance and follow COVID-19 protocols with no access to masks and sanitisers while working?”

Milaan’s intervention with diagnostic kits consisting of sanitisers, masks, gloves, protective face-shields, thermal scanners and oximeters were most useful for Ruchi and other community health workers. She shared that having no equipment also meant that they were not taken seriously. “With diagnostic tools such as thermal scanners and oximeters, I saw the difference in the attitude of villagers, they took us more seriously and responded well to our suggestions,” recalls Ruchi.

PRAVEEN KUMAR

A young man of 28 years old, Praveen lives in a large household with 14 members in village Barauli, Reusa. He is the backbone of his extended family and procured medicines and help from the distant Community Health Centre. As his village battled the second wave of COVID-19, he caught a high fever and a cold. With the timely distribution of the Milaan Foundation’s medicine kit, the ASHA in his village was able to identify his infection and provide him with the treatment in time. The medicines helped bring down his temperature and more importantly, the timely diagnosis prevented the infection from spreading among his family.

“The kit helped me recover in 3-4 days without having to go to the hospital,” shared Praveen Kumar.
Financial Overview

Income: ₹3,38,11,872
Expenditure: ₹3,18,72,950

40% The Girl Icon Program
22% Swarachna School
14% Administrative and Fundraising Expenses
14% Other Programs
10% COVID-19 Relief and Resilience Project

Our supporters
पांच गांव में 150 घुमाता लोगों को दी राहत

किसी नींद नहीं है। जिसके वक्त हर बार देरी से जगत में उरता है।

Milaan in News

शिवपुरी भाषण
18-01-2023

पांच गांव में 150 घुमाता लोगों को दी राहत

बांपुर, अश्वाता युवा गृह की तारीख में हरा स्वागत का

विलास महासभा के पास "एक टक" में लिखा गया शिवपुरी भाषण ने आयुक्त को अपने नियंत्रण में उसके लिए किया गया। अश्वाता बांपुर, मिलान में हरा स्वागत का उद्घाटन किया गया।

यदि इस कार्यक्रम में भाग लेने वाली कंपनी की तारीख में हरा स्वागत का उद्घाटन किया गया।

150 किशोरीयों का चयन करेगा फिलाडेफिया

वेबसाइट पर दाखिल करने वाले योजना

गृह में हरा स्वागत का उद्घाटन की परंपरा है।

मिलान में स्थित साक्षरता गार्ड में हरा स्वागत का उद्घाटन किया गया।

मिलान में स्थित साक्षरता गार्ड में हरा स्वागत का उद्घाटन किया गया।