



# SDG 1: NO POVERTY

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## END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE

Societal impact is one of the cornerstones of IIT Gandhinagar's research, outreach, and community engagement programmes. The institute offers several scholarships and initiatives to support economically underprivileged students and runs various programmes to support its neighboring communities. The institute developed several initiatives to address financial and health challenges faced by members (staff, students, faculty) and nearby villages during the pandemic.

## Research

Research at Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGN) is focused on technology transfer programmes that aid society in addressing problems in the field. Several research projects are aimed at low-income groups, vulnerable communities, and low-cost technologies, among others. A few examples of such projects include:

- Low-cost and non-electric water filter for Point-of-Use (POU) water disinfection and Micro-components quantification of end uses of water consumption in low-income settings supported by WIN Foundation
- Development of low-cost novel biomaterials for in-situ groundwater/ soil remediation: A safe drinking water production perspective supported by Science and Engineering Research Board
- Effects of reverse migration among the indigenous communities following India's Covid-19 induced lockdown supported by the Social Science Research Council

## Operations

IITGN financially supports students from economically backward classes, children of staff members, and construction workers involved in various development activities on campus. The institute also ensures the welfare of neighbouring villages. Some of the major activities in this area are listed below.

### ***Student admissions and financial support***

IITGN believes that financial constraints should not hinder any student's academic pursuit. The institute has extremely liberal financial aid and scholarship programmes to ensure that no student feels disadvantaged due to their financial situation. Donors have established nearly 40 scholarships, ranging from INR 20,000 to INR 2,00,000 per year, to provide financial support to IITGN students.

The institute follows government norms for admitting students from socially/economically backward classes and the proportion of undergraduate admissions includes: Economically Weaker Section (EWS) - 10%, Other Backward Classes - Non-Creamy Layer (OBC-NCL) - 27%, Scheduled Caste (SC) - 15% and Scheduled Tribe (ST) - 7.5%.

The institute also offers tuition fee waivers and financial aid for economically backward students and Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/Physically Handicapped students. This is supported through the Student Benevolent and Welfare Fund and from the Endowment of the institute. In addition, interest-free loans and financial grants are also provided to deserving students for their needs towards expenditures such as books, computers, pocket expenses, internships, and education loans, etc.

Approximately 55% of undergraduate students and 15% of postgraduate students received financial support during 2019-20. All students, except a few, reside in hostels, where food and accommodation are significantly discounted. Merit-cum-means scholarship scheme provides free meals and a pocket allowance to SC/ ST students whose parental income is less than INR 4.5 lakh.

From the academic year 2020-21, all undergraduate and postgraduate students at IITGN having an annual parental income of less than Rs 2.5 lakhs are provided full tuition fee support by the institute.

### ***Successful completion of courses***

The institute has a few programmes in place, to assist all students, including those from economically weaker backgrounds to successfully complete their courses. The institute introduced the Guided Progress Scheme (GPS) in 2014 to help academically weak undergraduate students develop and follow a plan for graduation from the institute. The GPS primarily involves the restriction of the

number of credits a student can register during a semester, and the mapping of students to an advisor, who advises them on the academic trajectory that should be followed.

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programme is another academic support scheme for undergraduate students launched by IITGN in October 2012. This programme is designed on the philosophy that peer groups of students play an extremely influential role in determining their learning behaviour. Students are known to actively seek advice from their peer group as they share the same generational perspective. The PAL programme at IITGN was initiated with a specific aim to assist those first-year students who face difficulties in adapting to English as the medium of instruction in their coursework. These students are identified by counsellors during one-on-one interaction sessions that are held with the incoming batch of students during their first month on campus. The senior students who serve as peer educators are selected by a faculty in charge of the PAL programme by inviting applications and conducting personal interviews in August every year. In a model PAL session, a senior student (second or third-year) assists two first-year students by sharing their knowledge and experience that helps them adapt to the new learning environment. The first-year students and their peer educators meet for four hours every week for PAL sessions, usually in the evenings. The peer educators are compensated for their service through the Earn While You Learn (EWYL) scheme at IITGN.

### **Covid-19**

Our community receives services and support from many workers employed by individuals (such as maids, cooks, car cleaners and others) and employed by other agencies

(such as courier delivery persons, food delivery persons and others). A system was developed by the institute to enable medical support during Covid-19 for such individuals. It was encouraged to channelise this support to the needy workers, who can directly go to the Out Patient Department (at institute's medical centre) for consultation and seeking medical help.

We are proud of the collective response and support for the most vulnerable members of our community and neighboring villages. The Shramik Kalyan Samiti, established on 1 April, 2020, collaborated with the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of construction workers during the pandemic. The Padosi Gaam Sahayog Samiti, set up on 7 May, 2020, strengthened our relationship with the neighbouring villages by organising the distribution of rations and safety-related supplies.

During the unprecedented crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, a charitable trust under the name of 'Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund' (PM CARES Fund) has been created by the Government of India to provide help to the affected in emergency or distress situations like posed by Covid-19 pandemic. The institute facilitated and streamlined monetary donations from employees of IIT Gandhinagar. The institute appealed to the IITGN community to donate any amount as per their choice, as a contribution to this cause.

IITGN has created an Empathy Fund with strong support from the IITGN Foundation in the United States, in order to show empathy and support to numerous individuals attached to IITGN who have been adversely affected economically and psychologically. This Fund is being



utilised to provide financial support for online learning and subsistence to students undergoing difficulties due to their current family circumstances; to extend livelihood support for essential service staff, housekeeping personnel, daycare personnel, dining hall workers, and construction workers from challenging socio-economic backgrounds; and to provide medical care to individuals affected by Covid-19.

IITGN has always adopted a liberal policy for financial aid to needy students, and more so during the pandemic. With the help of the IITGN Foundation in the United States, we raised nearly INR 1.4 crores in Empathy Funds to benefit students and community members severely affected by the pandemic. The support enabled the institute to provide liberal aid to 160 financially impacted students, including grants for the purchase of laptops, and tuition fee waivers. Due to the prevailing situation of COVID-19, there was a need to carry out the online classes. Many students from economically backward classes did not have a laptop of their own, which would have become an obstacle in continuing or completing their studies. Laptop grants were provided to the students.

### **Children Education Scholarship**

The institute provides Children Education Scholarship for the children of the institute's staff up to INR 10,000 per annum per child which is restricted up to INR 20,000 for a family.

## **Education**

The institute has introduced some courses relating to poverty reduction and sociology understanding, such as HS 644 - Critical Perspectives in Sociology and Anthropology, HS 424 – Indian Systems of Ethics, and HS 327 - Anthropology, Citizenship, and Human Rights. The following short courses and lectures were organised at the institute relating to SDG 1:

- 'Anthropology and Human Rights' by Dr Rosa Maria Perez, IITGN on 26-30 August, 2019
- 'Universal Basic Income and Land Rights for Women: An Anti-Capitalist Critique' by Prof Nivedita Menon, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on 4 November, 2019
- 'Why Include Humanities in Educating Engineers and Other Professionals as Leaders?' by Prof Shyam Sunder, Yale University on 7 January, 2020.

## **Community outreach**

The institute has been actively involved in empowering the grassroots communities, including youth and women from rural and urban localities from the surrounding areas through workforce development. A community outreach programme named NEEV works to bridge the knowledge



and communication gap by offering comprehensive training and mentoring to the nearby villagers. The IITGN community is also encouraged to consider donating to the neighbouring villages. The institute also established various support groups during Covid-19 for the welfare of the staff and students, including migrant construction workers engaged at the institute and the neighbouring villagers.

### **Training and skill development programmes**

NEEV conducts various programmes including entrepreneurship development workshops, entrepreneurship awareness sessions, vocational skills training courses, stitching skills training courses, training courses on spoken English and computer skills, which are all aimed to enhance the employability and entrepreneurship mindset of the nearby communities. More than 2000 beneficiaries in about 15 villages have been supported through 50 projects and activities.

More than 100 participants from nearby villages were trained by NEEV from May to July 2019, through various Skill Development Courses. Smt. Mona Khandhar (IAS), Secretary and Commissioner, Rural Development, Government of Gujarat, encouraged the trainees to put their training to immediate use so that they do not forget it over time. She also recognised the efforts of village women towards completing the sewing course while managing their home chores.

25 participants in vocational skill courses of wiring and CNC machining, 33 participants in a basic computer course, 19 participants in spoken English course, 7 participants in hardware and networking course, and 26 participants in stitching course were given course certificates on completion of this event.

### **Local small-scale business assistance**

NEEV in collaboration with NYASA also offers guidance on how to form self-help groups and open up small-scale businesses with skills the community members already

possess. A few examples of it include engaging the local village ladies in making cloth masks (during the pandemic) and stitching hostel curtains for the new hostel blocks. The masks were supplied to the IITGN community and also to outside people through a company. This project has contributed towards a new kind of capacity-building of rural women and has opened up livelihood opportunities for them, at the same time making them more confident.

### **Programme for service access**

The institute is involved in the 'Unnat Bharat Abhiyan' (UBA) programme and is a Regional Coordinating Institute (RCI) for 32 participating institutes under UBA II. The UBA programme aims to improve basic services for all. UBA focuses on village development including economic development, infrastructure development, and other aspects of human development i.e., education, health, drinking water supply, etc.

### **Support groups during Covid-19**

At the peak of the first lockdown, the institute established a Shramik Kalyan Samiti (Labour Welfare Committee), in collaboration with CPWD, to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of over 800 migrant construction workers, who were involved in various campus development projects at the institute before the coronavirus-induced lockdown was announced. This was followed by the constitution of the Padosi Gram Sahyog Samiti to assist neighbouring villages of Palaj and Basan. These committees provided very critical support in the form of medical screening, supplying

of food items and cooked food, distributing sanitary napkins, recharging mobile phones, and such others, which helped face the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The institute provides free medical support and consultation to construction workers in its medical centre. A free screening test of all workers was done in the workers' housing colony. Institute also provides ambulance services to workers needing medical examination or treatment.

The institute launched a fundraising drive to provide support for construction workers and their families, while they were confined in the labour colonies due to sudden discontinuity of work. For every rupee of donation, IITGN matched the amount to double the funds raised for workers' welfare. The volunteer groups involved regularly sensitised the workers and created awareness about preventive measures against Covid-19, such as frequent hand washing and social distancing. Breathing techniques were explained to labourers. All the workers' colonies were equipped with a first aid box.

The welfare of construction workers on the IITGN campus is among the most far-reaching community outreach activities of the institute. It ensures that they get pukka housing units with water supply, electricity, LPG connection and clean sanitation facilities. The impetus for the creation of various support groups and facilities was driven in large part by one of IITGN's grounding principles of societal engagement and shared concern for the welfare of the community.

### **Donations**

NYASA organised two donation drives for the institute's construction workers. The first donation drive was organised on 1 September, 2019, for more than 1,000 construction workers residing in the construction colony in Basan. Under this drive, clothes were donated to the residents of the colony. The second donation drive was organised on 23-24 February, 2020, for the institute's construction workers residing in the construction colony in Palaj. The colony is home to over 1,000 workers who work dedicatedly for the development of our campus. Clothes,

shoes, and school bags were donated to the residents of the colony.

The Padosi Gram Sahyog Samiti (committee formed for the welfare of the neighbouring villages Palaj and Basan during the national lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic) members carefully identified 152 financially weak families from Palaj and Basan villages and conducted a drive to distribute kits containing daily essentials like oil, rice, flour, pulses, salt, red chilli powder, turmeric powder, sugar, and soap along with a handout of safety precautions to be followed.



**IIT GANDHINAGAR  
EMPATHY FUND**

