SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGN) believes in the diversity of the workforce, thus there is a considerable balance in its male and female staff members. It conducts several community engagement programmes and events at the institute for women empowerment and gender equality. The institute has undertaken several research projects and outreach activities to promote actions in this area. Campus facilities and community services also amplify equity of opportunity for all genders to achieve and execute their best potential.

Research

Research is underway at the institute, in particular, in the Humanities and Social Science discipline to assess gender norms related attitudes among Indian children, social context and health, maternal empowerment, paternal gender-equitable attitudes, and the like.

Little research has explored the influence of social context on the health of Indian adolescents. One of the research groups in the Humanities and Social Sciences discipline conceptualised community-level women's education (a proxy for the value placed on women's wellbeing) as

exerting contextual influence on adolescent haemoglobin level and body mass index (BMI). We fitted multilevel random intercepts, linear regression models, to test the association of village- and urban-ward-level women's education with haemoglobin level and BMI of adolescents, accounting for their own and their mother's education; as well as relevant covariates. Our fully adjusted model estimated that if the 52% of communities with less than 20 per cent of women having a tenth-grade education in our sample were to achieve 100 per cent tenth-grade completion in women, haemoglobin would be 0·2 g/dl higher (p<0·001) and BMI would be 0·62 kg/m2 higher on average among all adolescents in such communities. Integrating our empirical findings with theoretically plausible pathways connecting community-level women's education with adolescent undernutrition, we suggest that enhancing community-level women's education beyond high school is necessary to facilitate these processes.

Another research group in the Humanities and Social Sciences discipline at the institute investigated the role of the intersection of maternal empowerment, paternal gender-equitable attitudes, and household wealth in stunting and severe stunting among under-fives in India. The survey-adjusted logistic regression models revealed that even among children from poorer households, those with either an empowered mother or a father with gender-equitable attitudes versus those with none such parents had a lower odds of stunting and severe stunting, independent of all covariates. We also found substantially lower odds of severe stunting in groups with parental concordance in a woman-friendly outlook, whether affluent or non-affluent. The research argues that while women's autonomy could reduce the risk of child undernutrition, focusing on men's attitudes towards gender equity also holds promise for reducing undernutrition. Our findings not only underscore how patriarchy is embodied in undernourished children but also suggest programmatic interventions to address this deep-rooted scourge in India.

In one of the studies involving Nutrition Promotion among Indian Children and Youth, our quantitative findings suggested an increase in knowledge scores among the mothers and complementary feeding practices among the children in the intervention group as compared to the comparison group at the endline. Our qualitative findings revealed a complex interplay of multiple factors related to the social context of the participants, as well as intervention design and delivery, which facilitated or hampered the mother's engagement. While the mother was the principal agent involved with carrying out child-feeding and child-care responsibilities, they had limited agency and power in hierarchical familial structure to be able to navigate barriers imposed by the socio-cultural

context in exercising her choices. Rather, we identified the central role of the family in facilitating the mother's participation as well as initiation and sustenance of recommended behaviour change. We identified certain intervention design features that facilitated the mother's participation and initiation of recommended practices, by minimising the limiting effects of several socio-cultural contextual factors. However, the intervention could not adequately address socio-cultural contextual barriers that limited the sustenance of behaviour change efforts.

Operations

Daycare learning centre

The IITGN Day Care Centre was started in March 2014 as a community initiative to provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment to the children from IITGN families. Our centre caters to children between the ages of six months to 10 years, and operates from Monday to Friday from 9 am to 6 pm. Our centre has adopted an open admission policy with a fee structure that is accessible to all sections of the IITGN community.

One unique feature of the daycare at IITGN is that we take pride in meeting the needs of our children in-house. Passionate community members who have had some prior experience in child care help with designing the curriculum and facilitating the day-to-day operations.

The everyday routine in the daycare incorporates music and movement activities, art and craft sessions, basics of yoga and gymnastics, storytime, classroom teaching through play and exploration, and also sand and water play sessions. Together these activities hone the children's concentration, imagination, problem-solving and motor

skills. In summary, our unique curriculum focuses on holistic development to bring out the best in the little children and thereby promote their progress. Our activities thus function as vital tools for developing key physical, social and intellectual skills in our children.

Education

Courses and research work at the institute, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences discipline address gender data gaps, poverty, etc. Examples of related invited lectures and short courses are as follows:

- Upakāra: The Theory of Spiritual Service and Women's Inheritance in the Dāyabhāga by Dr Manomohini Dutta, Ahmedabad University, on 21 August, 2019
- Indianising Goa: Women and the Nationalist Movement by Prof Rosa Maria Perez, ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon, on 3 September, 2019
- Reshaping Adolescents' Gender Attitudes: Evidence from a School-based Experiment in India by Prof Tarun Jain, IIM Ahmedabad, on 16 October, 2019

Community outreach

IITGN understands that girls and women have an extraordinarily positive impact on the growth and development of a nation. Hence, the institute is an active promoter of educating and motivating them in a manner that they can confidently take the initiative and step up to conquer diverse domains.

NEEV activities

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. An example of a women empowerment initiative

includes engaging the local village ladies in making cloth masks (during the pandemic) and earning some money. These masks are supplied to the IITGN community and also to outside people through a company.

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. Different events focused on women, their achievements, and their experiences are organised at the institute. This provides encouragement to other women and motivates them to take steps forward in order to realise their goals and dreams. Examples of events conducted by IITGN include:

Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)
Summer School on Algorithmic Game Theory
IITGN in partnership with ACM-India and ACM-Women India, and with support from Oracle, organised a two-week summer school on Algorithmic Game Theory from 2-14 July, 2019. The school had over 50 participants from all over the country. The summer school was coordinated by Prof Neeldhara Misra.

AICWiC 2019
The institute hosted ACM India Celebrations of Women in Computing (AICWiC 2019) on 13 July, 2019, by inviting Dr Gargi Das Gupta, Director of IBM Research India and the CTO of IBM India and South Asia; and Prof Joycee Mekie, Assistant Professor, Electrical Engineering, IITGN for two keynote lectures. This was followed by a panel discussion on 'Soft Computing for Global Development / Women in Computing'.

ACM-W India Event on Women in Computer Science and Research
Working in this direction, IITGN collaborated with the Association for Computing Machinery's Council on Women in Computing (ACM-W) on 14 February, 2020, to organise the ACM-W India Event on Women in Computer Science and Research. Co-located with IRISS (13 and 14 February, 2020) and the ACM India Annual Event (5 February, 2020), it featured several engaging sessions highlighting the research opportunities for women in the field of Computer Science.

The objective of ACM-W is to celebrate, support, and advocate for the effective engagement of women in computing internationally. It facilitates the academic and professional journey of girls and women in the branch of computing through mentoring. Together with the ACM community of computer scientists, teachers, employers, and policymakers, it seeks to improve learning and working environments for females.

With 36,000+ members and 25+ events annually, it strives to strengthen and enhance the contributions of technical women across the globe. The ACM-W team believes that the connection of professional women with ACM-W will be a great source of social and professional support for them as well as future generations.

ACM-W Grad Cohort 2020
The third edition of the ACM India Grad Cohort, a pan-India virtual workshop for women in computing, was hosted by IITGN from 24 to 26 July, 2020. This first-ever virtual ACM-W Grad Cohort aimed to reach out to Indian women graduate students in the field of computing to help them deal with various situations through their graduate years and beyond. The workshop was co-organised by IITGN, ACM-W India Council, and ACM India Council, and was supported by Google and TCS. The three-day online event received an enthusiastic response, as over 200 women graduate students registered for the workshop, and more than one hundred participants attended each of the 16 sessions. Prof Neeldhara Misra coordinated the workshop.