

Strengthening the career path of tribal girls through Nursing and Paramedic education

For nearly a decade Voltas has been supporting the Bethany Society, an NGO that operates in 20 villages near Panvel in the Raigad district of Maharashtra, by providing 55 midday meals for tribal students studying from nursery to the 10th standard.

Through interactions with the Katkari and Thakur tribal communities in the area, Sister Violet of the Bethany Society realized that most of their employment came by way of daily labour. Also, even with NGO and government intervention, the health and nutrition status of children, especially girls was extremely poor within these communities.

In keeping in line with our overarching CSR philosophy to address issues of National Importance, Voltas wanted to support the Bethany Society in improving the conditions of the tribal communities, especially that of the women, by increasing their employability. We identified the NGO, Women's India Trust (WIT) as a potential technical partner in providing the necessary employability skills.

A realization that occurred during joint discussion between the two NGO's was that the girls in the communities who had completed their 10th standard could be mobilized to take short term courses in Nursing and Paramedic studies as it could offer them promising employment opportunities.

A number of girls responded well to the idea and showed a strong willingness to do something for themselves and their families. Bethany Society identified 10 tribal girls eligible for the nursing course out of which 7 seemed interested and were enrolled at WIT's School of nursing which is affiliated to the Indian Nursing Council and Maharashtra Nursing Council.

The girls faced many challenges acclimatizing to this residency course away from their homes. The language, food and customs were all barriers that they had to overcome. While 5 girls found the challenges difficult and dropped out, the remaining 2 Sharmila and Pragathi passed the 10 month course with 73% and 79% respectively, making their families extremely proud.