

**International Student House, London**

**Sadanand Ugale**

*Achieving Peace with PACE: A Digital Lab for Peace, Awareness, Collaboration and Empowerment for rural India*

**Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Nandurbar, Maharashtra, India**

**Background and Objectives:** This project is designed to empower students of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), Nandurbar, Maharashtra, India. It is a government school with nearly 500 students, of which more than 80% are from a disadvantaged tribal background. These students belong to a region where more than half of the population is living on less than \$0.50 per day and where the literacy rate is 64.38%<sup>[1]</sup>. On top of this, COVID-19 disruptions have resulted in pronounced digital exclusion for these students, leaving a long-term impairment in their learning process which will worsen without intervention. We believe that peace is not just the opposite of conflict but speaks to a broader context of equality, access to basic human needs, and prosperity, which is challenged by socio-economic deprivation in this region. Even though there is no one-dimensional solution, we strongly believe that quality education has the power to level the playing field. These students are some of the brightest in the region but have extremely limited access to basic information technology (IT) infrastructure, and opportunities to learn 21st-century skills such as English Language, digital literacy, communication and career awareness. Their future success can be significantly increased through improved infrastructure and skills-based learning opportunities.

**Why JNV Nandurbar:** There are two main reasons which align with a vision for bridging the gap between talent and opportunity. Firstly, the school is inherently in a disadvantaged position due to its remote location and years of socio-economic deprivation. This has resulted in students' extremely limited access to advanced facilities like IT and computer infrastructure leading to inadequate training in 21st-century skills. Secondly, the school is selective, enrolling students from rural backgrounds based on their academic merit. Despite these students being highly academically talented, they often fail to access leading opportunities due to the aforementioned barriers. This project will help rectify this inequality. Moreover, the students hail from diverse social backgrounds, making this project extremely relevant as it has the potential to reach the bottom of the Indian societal hierarchy. Personally, our project team members have studied in the same school system (JNV) and will engage our personal and professional networks to support the successful execution of this project.

**Proposed Solution-A Digital Lab and an Inspiration Workshop Series:** This project will be implemented in two parts. First, to establish a digital lab that will improve IT infrastructure and assist the skill development process initiated through the workshop series. The digital lab will have 20 laptops with reliable WiFi connectivity to be used by students for developing 21st-century skills, completing various online courses, as well as connecting with mentors from the school alumni network. These labs would also be a hub for a mini hackathon and other workshops as proposed in the series. The second part of the solution is to organise a series of skills workshops to raise career awareness, inspire 21st-century skill-building and support open forums where a resource person<sup>[2]</sup> could share experiences and expertise with the students.

**Short Term Goals:** The primary short-term goal is to eliminate the digital infrastructure barrier by providing advanced learning facilities. Once these technological needs are met, we will utilise these new digital tools throughout our workshop series to support skill development among the students and provide a roadmap for their continued independent self-development. Additionally, mentorship opportunities will be delivered to afford students proper guidance about the diverse study and career options and provide the opportunity to expand their professional network.

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[1] Obtained the data from the district administrative website- <https://nandurbar.gov.in/>

**Long Term Goals:** The major long term goal is to enable students to access a wider range of careers and reach positions of influence so that they become ladder-builders for their communities. This will support peace by creating opportunities for the youth in the region, leading to a more prosperous future. In order to achieve large-scale impact, we have partnered with the Karta Initiative, a social mobility movement which empowers rural youth to dismantle barriers to educational and professional opportunities. With their support, we plan to replicate this model across the Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti school system, to over 600 JNV schools.

#### Proposed Activities:

PHASE	DETAILS		Timeline											PROJECT END
			May			June								
	Steps	Activities	16	23	31	1	6	7	8	9	10	11		
1	Logistics and Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Procuring laptops and accessories</li><li>- Recruiting mentors from JNV Network</li><li>- Reaching out to speakers for Inspiration forums</li></ul>												
2	Installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Setting up the digital lab with the help of the computer teacher and volunteers</li></ul>												
3	Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- English language workshop, Teachers Training and Inspiration forum</li><li>- Communication skills workshop, Inspiration forum</li><li>- Digital skills workshop, Inspiration forum</li><li>- Mini Hackathon, Inspiration forum</li><li>- Career awareness workshop, Inspiration forum</li></ul>												

**Maintenance and Operation:** The digital lab will be run by the computer teacher. To make the best use of this facility, professional IT training will be provided to teachers. The school has approved to allow at-least two digital lab sessions per week for every class. The principal has agreed to let students use these facilities for their fortnightly/monthly mentoring call with mentors from the JNV alumni network.

**Sustainability:** The school has committed to using their development grant for the future sustenance of the project and is firm on taking the responsibility of the project in the future. A committee comprising the Principal, a teacher, two student representatives will be established to monitor the project progress and ensure the continuity of the project. Moreover, students will be provided with access to online courses so that they may continue to hone skills learnt during the workshop series.

**Indicators of Success:** To ensure the effectiveness of the workshop series as a successful intervention addressing the skills deficit, pre and post-self-assessments will be completed by all participating students. Additionally, interviews will be conducted before and after the workshop series with a random sample of participating students.

[2] The speakers would be from the network of the Karta Initiative as well as JNV alumni.