

IAYP, India: Skilling and Preparing Youth for Society 4.0

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Abstract

It was in 1962, the Award began in India. Since then, it has placed on record, thousands of stories and testimonies of Awardees whose lives have been impacted and transformed through the Award. The International Award for Young People (IAYP) is a youth development programme that aims to engage, equip, empower and reward the youth through a framework that allows each Award Participant to work under the four mandatory sections: Service, Skills, Physical Recreation and Adventurous Journey, for the Bronze and the Silver Levels of the Award. For the Gold Level, Participants have to work for the Residential Project that makes them claim for their Gold, after completion of their Award Journey. Time duration is prescribed for each level of the Award, level of the challenge and the goal set. It is the Award Journey and its pursuit that make the youth ready through discovering and understanding their calling, sharpening their skills and interests, thus preparing them to meet challenges in their personal lives and professional fronts. Since The Award is for all, through embedded stories of Swagata Sen, Konkana Hambir, Anupama Das and Priyanka Sarkar being empowered under the Gender Diversity Project for Women, the case highlights the impact of the Award on youth. Further, in Society 4.0, which would be automated and high in the digital quotient, how the National Award Authority would outreach to the nook and corner of India, integrate and sustain this Award in the post-COVID-19 scenario, prepare and empower youth, have been asked at the end.

Keywords: IAYP, Society 4.0, Hard and Soft Skills, Gen-y, Inner Calling, Meaning Making.

IAYP: THE CASE UNVEILS

❖ **Skills** – Participants feel they now have more skills; practical skills like survival skills, and soft (life) skills like teamwork and leadership.

❖ **Confidence** – They describe feeling more confident; “I have more confidence in myself”

Global Survey Response from Participants (2017-2018)

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Academic rigor does not ascertain the proficiency and expertise that the industries demand for a specific job profile. A massive amount of time in the academic institution goes into preparing a fish, how to fly in the sky. While the example may seem far-fetched, it does proclaim the lacuna present in catering to the individual needs and interests of students in the fields of their interest. It is at this juncture, the flexible and customized attribute to focus on the individualistic needs, interests, demands and resources available; the International Award for Young People comes into play. The award participants thus can sharpen their academic rigor along with augmenting their skills set, making them equipped with the knowledge and hands-on experience to execute and perform the skills in a given setting and context, making the youth ready to meet the challenges and demands of the industries and job markets. The maxim, the real learning and pragmatic experience sharpen outside the classroom, has relevance in the context of the Award. The Award offers opportunities wherein Youth can select a skill that is meaningful to them. This pursuit becomes although relevant in society 4.0 that demands digital competence, virtual survival, machine learning, problem-solving and critical thinking skills amidst the Internet of things, where the youth have to work to earn their livelihood. Transcending the conventions of the traditional jobs and scenarios, the digi-natives are demanding a level of job that gives them meaning. This case tries to show a peep into the intricate web of interconnected and interdependent keywords mentioned in the case.

Narratives: The Beginning

14th July 2016, India International Centre, New Delhi, Occasion: Annual Gold Award Ceremony, IAYP. KankanaHambir and Swagata Sen two IAYP Gold Awardees from Sri SaradaMath, Rasik Bhita, Kolkata, draped in white silk sarees mounted up the

stage, nervous, faced the audience for the first time in their lives. They made a presentation on *Skills Development under Gender Diversity Empowerment Project for Women*. Alive they both were after their presentation was over and this was one of their biggest achievements of the day, the other was, getting their Gold Award after their hard work of 18 months.

Priyanka Sarkar, an IAYP Gold Award Aspirant lives at Chandangarh village, Hoogli, West Bengal. Her father serves tea at the station and with his meager income, he manages his family. Who says only managers manage? Even with this inadequate income, which in the words of Priyanka, 'it is difficult to meet our daily needs,' there is no crisis in terms of completing her education and learning. She has unleashed her inner potential through the IAYP Award and her engagement through the Gender Diversity Empowerment Project for Women is making her self-reliant.

After her Higher Secondary Examination, she went to take admission at Sri Sarada Math Rasik Bhita to join a basic computer course and learn communicative English. Hardly did she know about the Award at that time and how her personality and life would be transformed soon. Presently Priyanka is perusing her MIS (Masters in Social Work) from one of the leading Educational Institutions in India: Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). For her, it is like her dream come true. She believes strongly that, 'where there is a will, there is a way,' and it is her willpower and hard work which gave her wings to chase her dreams and gave her those colors which she wanted to fill in her life. Her journey from her school to TCS was not so easy.

Anupama Das, who received her Gold Award in 2015, stood against the social evil of child marriage. The custom of child marriage was prevalent in her village. Girls

were being married at a very early age and were not able to continue their studies. This problem came in her family when her elder sister was forced to get married to an unknown person against her wishes. Without fear, Anupama, stood against this evil and stopped the marriage of her sister, helping her find the job and get financially independent. Anupama is now a full-time worker of TCS and also a volunteer for the development of women through the Award at her village Baladbadh.

In the above three cases of four girls: Kankana, Swagata, Priyanka and Anupama, they have three things in common, their association with the Award, The International Award for Young People, their involvement with the Gender Diversity Empowerment Project for Women which sharpened their hard skills and soft skills and transformed their personality to a level where they can face their fears with confidence and take decisions in their lives. And third, they all have in common, a Fairy God Mother-like figure, Adrija Chaterjee, who has transformed and inspired their lives way beyond their imagination, giving them hope, care, nurturance and guidance. 'The real key to empowering these women of the village is to engage them through various skills which they can learn easily. Once they earn and will run and manage their homes more efficiently, they will feel empowered,' believes Adrija.

International Award for Young People, India (Iayp)

'The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is the world's leading youth development Programme that provides a non-formal education where the youth discover their purpose, passion and place in the world.' The Award Programme Foundation (APF) through the National Award Authority (NAA) runs

the **International Award for Young People (IAYP)** in India to promote the Award, **providing hands-on** experiences and skills set for youth to create committed global citizens and equipping them for life.

The foundation of the Award was laid in 1956 under the ingenuity of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, Lord Hunt and Dr. Kurt Hahn. In India, the Award began in 1962.

Young people between the ages of 14 and 25, irrespective of their nationalities, background, abilities or circumstances, can pursue the Award. Presently over 11 million young people from more than 130 countries have participated in the Award Programme. There are three levels of the Award as shown in Fig. 1 below: Bronze, Silver and Gold. For each level of the Award, the participant has to work in four sections: Skills, Physical Recreation, Service and Adventurous Journey. For the Gold level, a project in the residential settings is mandatory for the Award Participant to complete. The Diary and Record Book or ORB(online Record Book as per their choice)are provided to each participant when they enroll for the Award, after filling up the form or access ORBlink available at the Rupees 800/- from the Award Programme Foundation, Delhi, India. The participants then receive a set of a Diary and a record book that has all the details mentioned along with the space provided to record their progress in each section of the journey. The introduction of the Online Record Book (ORB) has facilitated checking the progress in this digital age. The Award Leaders and Mentors have to sign in to validate and ensure the quality work and credibility of the work performed. When the journey of the Award participant is completed, these diaries and record books are sent to the National Award Authority for final scrutiny. In case of any discrepancy or issues, the Award leaders are notified. Once the record books and diaries are approved, the Award

Participant qualifies for the level of the Award pursued.

Image 1 shows the hierarchy and functioning of the Award that takes place through international and national collaborations among vertical and horizontal systems and frameworks. Image 2 presents prescriptive guidelines for various sections and levels of the Award.

In India, there are 308 Schools and colleges where this Award Programme is run.

Further, there are more than 38000 young people who are pursuing this Award and more than 13000 have successfully finished the three levels of the Award including the Bronze, the Silver and the Gold. While the Award has transformed the lives of millions of Youth across the globe, through its Philanthropic practice and value addition in society, it has started many projects and The Gender Diversity Empowerment Project for Women is one such.

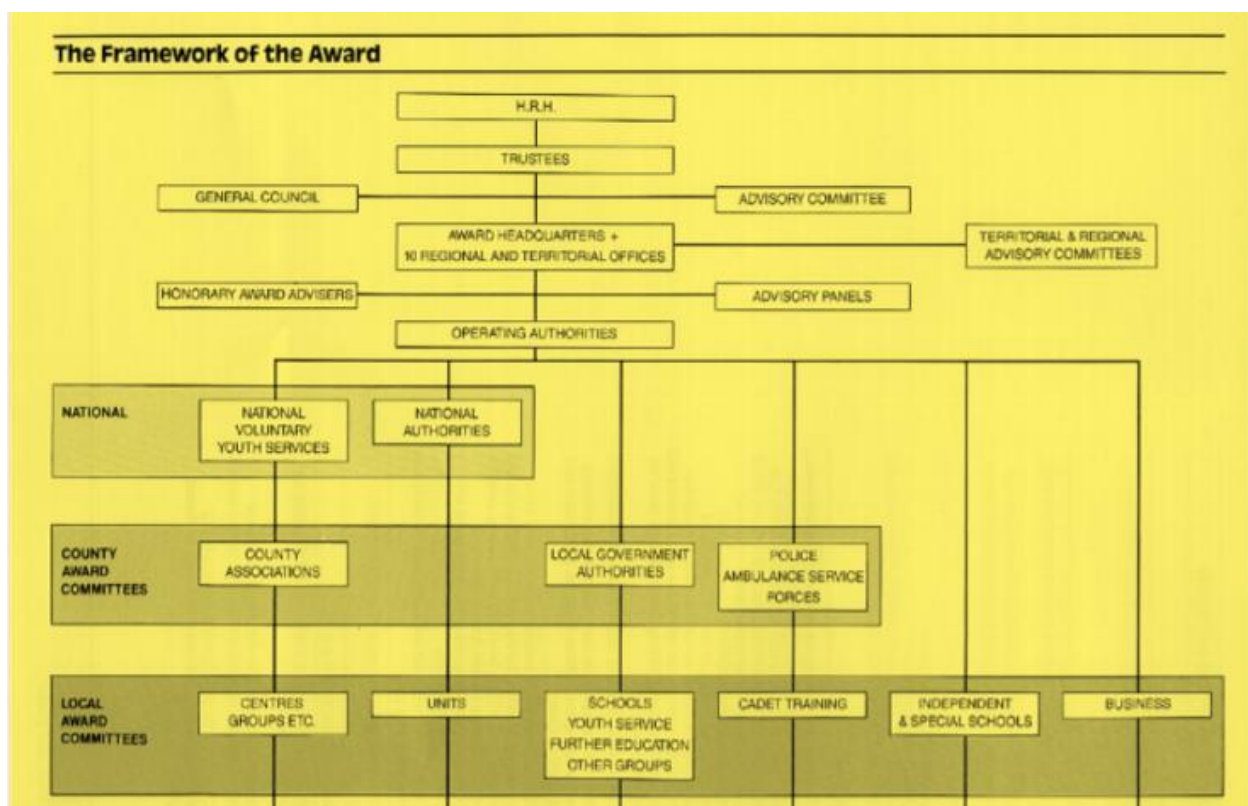


Image 1: Framework of the Award
Source: National Award Authority

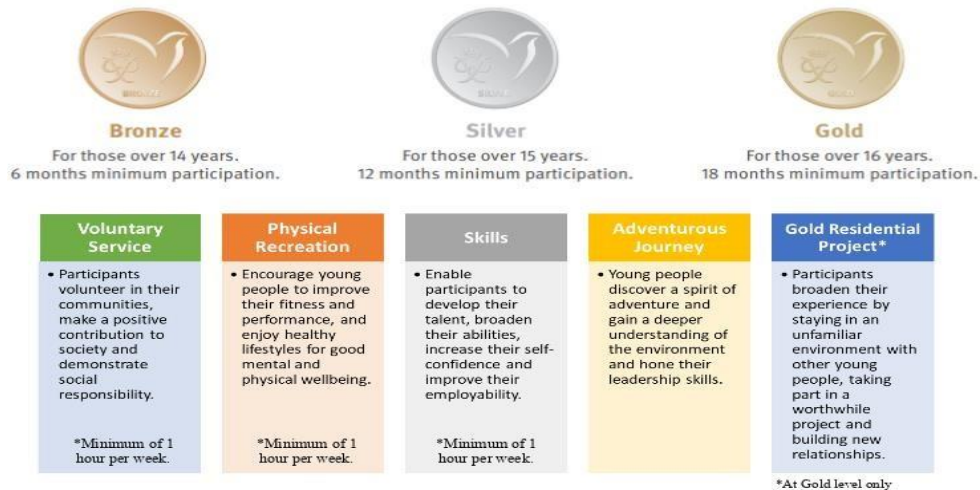


Fig-2

Source: IAYP Framework Presentation

The Gender Diversity Empowerment Project for Women

The Award Programme Foundation (APF) has been supporting skills development programme as a philanthropic practice for the progression of rural areas under the Gender Diversity Empowerment Project since 2003. Areas like: Hoogli, Singur, Baladbandh, Kumroguri of West Bengal are covered under this project. The aim is to empower young girls through skills such as making handmade pieces of jewelry (earrings, clips, bangles and necklaces) by the paper quilling method. The artifacts made are then sent to varied fairs, outlets, offices, stalls and markets for selling. The profit gained after selling these products is shared equally among the girls. As a result, financially stable girls are helping their families for a better living. Moreover, a literacy programme is also being run for teaching local children and adult women, those who could neither read nor write can now sign in their Cheque in Bank Operation. Through these initiatives many families are getting benefited not only in terms of being literate, to get financial independence but also realizing and resonating involvement, engagement, satisfaction and happiness.

Work engagement is referred as ‘an active, positive, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption’ (Sakuraya et al. 2016; Tims and Bakker, 2010). Irrespective of socio-cultural background the youth today are in search of meaningful experiences. ‘By stating meaningful experience has a connotation of authentic happiness as pleasure, involvement, and meaning’ (Martin Seligman, 2014). Through this initiative girls are learning skills and earnings while learning. This project helps these girls, in comparison with the last generations, to craft their tasks to understand themselves better, framing aspirations and making their life meaningful.

From a toddler’s phase, the project has started running on its own because the women and girls engaged in the project sell their jewelry, earn profits which allows the project to be sustainable and independent. In this tangible business of jewelry making, weaving basket and being educated; making money, there happens to be a lot of invisible or intangible transactions taking place and contributing to the community at large. Weekly Newsletter and Award India are brimful of such stories. This project of IYAP

has helped the youth to establish meaningful connections with society and made them realize self-identity and self-worth. Moreover, as Bandura (1977) opines, that there is self-efficacy which is visible among these women who now believe that their changed behavior is helping in achieving the desired outcome. Adding to this self-efficacy is an antecedent to job crafting for expected outcomes like satisfaction, engagement, enjoyment, psychological well-being, social connections and cognitive perceptions of work (Tims et al. 2014; Berg et al. 2008). To say, community, as one unit is growing and changing, is visible in terms of women who can read, write, earn, take financial decisions and run their families the way they want and envision.

Besides jewelry making, the women could also be taught other skills such as painting, knitting, stitching, candle making, cookery, embroidery etc. to name a few as per the interests, available resources and logistics. While the project has deeply impacted the community, the road to its success has not been that easy. The challenges faced include prior learning and experience of women, which sometimes converted into resistance to learning new things, more than anything else, in some families basic needs are not fulfilled thus not allowing the women to come forward and look at the bigger picture. A more aggressive and impactful counseling, constructive feedback is required so that women and girls know about the benefits of the Award, skilling, earning prospects and identify growth opportunities available to them through this project. Since the main focus of this project is the empowerment of women through skills development, a look at the definitions of Skill, both hard and soft, through review of the literature would make us understand how this training through the empowerment project engages girls and women of the villages mentioned above.

Skills-Hard and Soft: A Glance

Proctor and Dutta (1995, p.18) opine that skill is an organized behavior that is gained through practice and is always goal-directed and 'performed with economy of effort'. There are different skills and so are the perspectives, literature demarcates distinction between hard skill and soft skill in policy and practice (Klaus et al 2007; Pant and Baroudi 2008). Hard skills are rule-based, measurable, technical, scientific, calculative, industrial and mechanical; make use of tools and techniques; are specialised; procedural and methodical in nature and are replicable, tangible and predictable. On the other hand, Soft Skills are people-centric and experience-based, they focus on ones attitudinal and behavioural aspects; they are general, versatile, non-technical, context-driven and to say, unlike hard skills, intangible in nature (CIPD Report, 2010).

Soft skills complement hard skills. There is a symbiotic relationship between them. In contextual cases it has been observed that soft skills smoothly allow transference of technical skills. A distinctive feature of soft skills thus is effective facilitation and efficient application of hard skills in workplace settings (Kantrowitz 2005; Klaus et al 2007), this does not imply, however, in any way that one is superior to other, rather they go hand-in-hand with each other.

Furthermore, soft skills apply to a wide range of jobs (Kantrowitz 2005). Although there is significant differences between jobs in terms of their absolute skill requirement for some are high skilled and others are low skill; moreover, the job role also determine to an extent if a shade of hard or a hue of soft skill is needed. With the advent of globalization and digitization a significant change and demand in gaining these skills make an integral part of the job market.

From the above definitions, we can see how hard skills like jewelry making, basket weaving, computer skills and teaching skills are being imparted to these girls and women, along with these, there are another set of skills, like increase in their level of confidence, trust and empathy that come under the domain of soft skills. It goes without saying that after 18 years of running this project, success and impact of this Project can be measured by increase in number of girls and women who are coming to be a part of this project. It can be said that while engaged in this project, the girls and women, discovered their new abilities and talents which they hardly knew they had earlier. They look confident and openly discuss their problems and also try to resolve them. There is significant increase in their self-esteem, refining awareness of their own potential. These girls and women despite their studies at home, are able to take out time and plan the things for their family. They are motivated, eager to learn and ready to take new assignments and challenges in their set up. Ultimately, this project has given them new meaning and they feel a

sense of enjoyment, accomplishment and sense of pride through their involvement, engagement and satisfaction in this project (Tims et al., 2014; Sakuraya et al. 2016 & Kirkendall, 2013). In short, change is visible.

Mr Kapil Bhalla, National Director, Mr Bivujit Mukhoty, Programme Manager, IAYP, along with Adrija indicate, a new era is dawning in the villages where women and girls are experiencing concepts such as trust, confidence, empathy, adaptability and self-control. Because until recently, there had been no evidence that a project like this can make a difference. Their personality and characters have been refined and these qualities contribute in the success of the overall project. The project besides skilling and empowering the benefactor and beneficiaries both, it becomes a win-win for all.

The table below illustrates how through pursuing a skill, these women are engaged, equipped, empowered and rewarded

SKILLS			
Engage	Equip	Empower	Reward
Dedicating time to Interests, hobbies and passions	Gaining knowledge of the skills/pursuit	Increased confidence and self-esteem	Indicator of completion of the Award
Engagement through regular practice	Understanding nuances of skills/pursuit at micro and macro level	Significant increase in the level of skill expertise	Perseverance
Deep level of involvement in the pursuit	Developing auxiliary skills with the main skills (time management/resource management etc)	Ready to deliver the results in the key fields	International Recognition
Level of commitment		Increase in the level of satisfaction	
Honing the skills	Ability to face challenges and resolve issues	Derive meaning from the pursuit	

Table 1: Skills

Source: Authors

The Debate: Elaboration Follows

According to Berg et al., 2010, the baby boomers could hardly get the opportunity to follow their interests and passion, there are many unheard stories left behind in the chapters of life. Then came an era when people changed multiple jobs for a better prospect, better opportunities and quickly the conventional career path became past. With the boom of technology and service sector, preference of skills over degree people understanding others' standpoint (Sandra Harding's Standpoint Theory) has made Gen Y understand themselves and others better and listen to their passion or inner callings. It has been established by Wrzesniewski et al. 1997 that living ones meaningful work or calling or passion has positive outcomes like psychological wellbeing, better health, long life and job satisfaction. Today the Gen Y children are raised with a conviction that they can achieve and be anything they want to be (Twenge 2006, p. 72) because for them 'anything is possible: never give up on your dreams.' Callings are connoted as a passion and intensity driven work activities that absorbs ones time and energy within their proclivity (Vallerand et al. 2003). Having evidence from literature, it's imperative to pursue a passion and learn relevant skills, not just for being employable but for a contended and meaningful engagement in life.

That inner calling of gen-y can be realized when a youth is skilled and can earn through his art, talent or caliber. The Award being flexible, non-competitive, focuses on individual, unlike formal education that has a format and syllabus for everyone alike, allows the youth to craft his way on his own i.e. taking proactive steps. Each section of the Award is linked to the development of a trait and involves them in such a way, that it

enhances their hard and soft skills part depending on the activities that they select and find meaningful as illustrated in the cases above. In the case of the marginalized section, tribal areas physically challenged people, a more rigorous penetration of the Award is needed because it can empower and equip them for the new society.

While education guarantees overall growth and development of one's personality and character, the Award promises to allow them to discover themselves through the hobbies and passions that they have, in this digital age, it may become a key player. When the passions are discovered, they fuel the individual to strive and work on an everyday basis in the field of their interest and passion, thereby making them skilled and ready for the industry, market or field wherein they want to work, irrespective of their challenges and limitations. The skilled manpower makes the backbone of any organization. The level of satisfaction and meaning that one derives from work and involvement in the organization determine the overall well-being of the person as well as of the organization.

Limitations of The Case

Confined to only the skills section of the Award, this study examines its impact on the Award participants. While, there is a qualitative increase in the skills expertise, in the overall development of the personality, the other sections: service, physical recreations and adventurous journeys also have an equivalent role to play. Since authors could not delve into these sections for the scope of the research would have been exhausting, it is important to ascertain, that based on the individual passion and time devoted in each section, the overall impact on the personality of the participant must be measured. Further, the role of Award

leaders, Mentors, Award Centres and available resources also have their role in shaping the personality of the Award Participant which must be given due credits. While authors argue that participation in the Award shall bring a positive change in the personality of the Award participant and prepare them for the future, however, they also highlight that at the structural level the Award needs to be introduced in the educational system with the policies and framework so that it does not have execution hindrances in the dissemination of the information and implementation and practicing the guidelines proposed for each participant. Sometimes in the absence of the Award Leader, the monitoring and the overall journey of the Award Participant suffer while this should not be the case otherwise if the structural aspect of the Award is intricately assorted into the educational set up with rules and regulations.

Challenges

There are challenges at the level of the participants, Award Leaders and mentors, management of the organization that takes the decisions and The National Award Authority. This would require another topic for the case study, however, some of the grappling challenges may be counted such as outreach of the award, awareness about this Award Programme, availability of mentors and Award leaders, the motivation of the institute that determine the overall functioning of the Award Programme and the impact it can have on the youth. Sometimes the financial conditions does not support practicing a skill or physical recreation at higher levels. Further, when there are multitudes of issues on an everyday basis when there are good numbers of Award Participants in a YES Centre, then the National Award Authority comes as the only rescue to resolve and answer all the

queries. This sometimes overburdens them and the unanswered Award Leader or participant may lose interest or feel discouraged to continue the Award.

Scope for Further Research

At the International level, the Global surveys have been conducted that highlight the impact of the Award, however, authors have been a pioneer in writing this in-depth case study for the first time to bring forth the potential of the Award in preparing and Skilling the youth, thereby making them ready for the industry. The authors further propose to survey to quantitatively or qualitatively measure the impact of the Award in India. Explorations to be made through research in the areas of dropouts means to provide financial assistance to the potential Award aspirants, strategies to reach out to remote schools and colleges, empowering marginalized sections with digital skills such as girls and women from the Gender Diversity Project, building and facilitating structures for the successful implementation of the Award Programme and empowering the National Award Authority and its team to reach to nook and corner.

Conclusion

Authors argue thus, IAYP is a program when integrated with the academic curriculum, can skill and empower these youth and prepare them for the industry and society 4.0. There are challenges and limitations in the implementation of the Award Programme and its outreach as mentioned in the sections above and it is here, that government, academic institutes, policymakers and industries must join hands to promote and facilitate each other. This flexible and non-competitive programme has the advantage and could be an effective platform to prepare youth. Going forward,

however, an onus would also lie on the industries, employers where they must retain, engage and sustain these youth by crafting their job profiles. A pioneering way thus needs to be established in the pedagogy, wherein each: the Award leader and the participant; in academic institutes, teacher and the taught; and in the industries, wherein the employer and the employee, facilitate, participate and draw meaning in the process, thus preparing and empowering each other for the next phase of the society that demands a change in pedagogical structures, redefining learning objectives, lessons being imparted, skills sharpened, business handled, jobs crafted and meaning derived in leading a life of inner fulfillment.

Further, as embedded in this case, the Gender Diversity Empowerment Project for Women has significantly brought a transformation in the life of girls and women in the villages of Hoogli, Singur, Baladbandh and Kumroguri, and the women

of the village are proactively participating in literacy campaign and jewelry making project. The impact of the Award is visible in the stories of Kankana, Swagata, Priyanka, Anupama, Adrija and many more whose names are waiting to be mentioned and stories of success and transformation to be heard.

Questions

- 1) In this digital age, when there is a tough competition with designer jewelry, how the short-lived and perishable work of these women would survive? What new skills should be added to their profile for the sustainability of their intricate art?
- 2) How the National Award Authority could reach the remote areas and facilitate community building and skilling youth through this Award Programme?

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