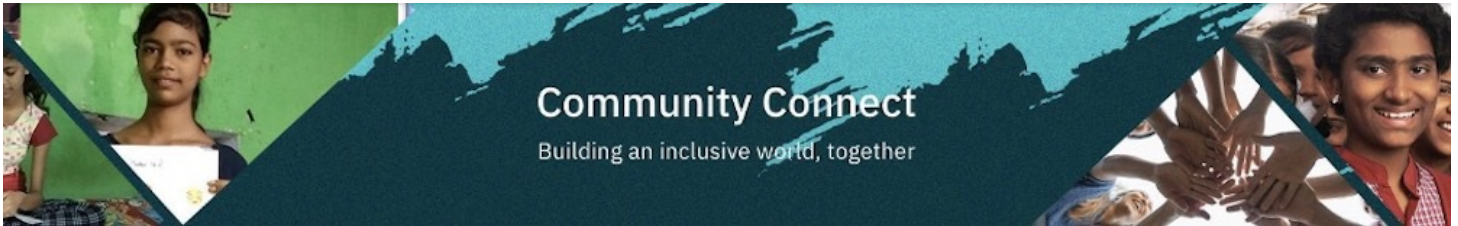


# Stemming the Social Stigma

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*Among the many qualities that unite IBMers, one attribute is our desire to be essential. In the Community Connect series, you will read stories on how IBM is helping the society take on challenges with the power of our technology and people.*

Muskan, a teenager from Daultabad village in Haryana, is a seemingly quiet girl. A bright student, she aspires to make it big in life and travel the world one day. Muskan, however, has bigger goals in life.

*"I want to see more and more girls in our country taking higher education. I have seen many girls dropping out of school and getting married at an early age. Only a few girls in our neighbourhood go to college. They were good in studies and deserved a better life",* said a visibly disappointed Muskan.



Higher education among girls is not very common or encouraged in the area Muskan lives in. She considers herself lucky that way. For her parents, who struggle to make ends meet, education of their children is the top priority.

*"I wanted to create awareness about the importance of education, especially for girls. But I didn't know how to do it,"* said Muskan.

## The Breakthrough

Muskan was introduced to [IBM's STEM for Girls](#) at school, GSSS, Daultabad, Gurugram about a year ago. She has a deep interest in science and technology and when this program was introduced at her school, she immediately grabbed the opportunity.

STEM for Girls is an IBM initiative aimed at improving education and career pathways for girls who are studying in Government schools. The program includes imparting training in digital literacy, coding and technology skills like AI and Cloud, new age competencies and career development.



As part of this program, Muskan learnt coding and the basics of animation. She developed short animation videos on the importance of girls' education and circulated them using social messaging platforms.

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*"There are many girls like Muskan who are very bright and have big aspirations to change not only their own lives, but that of others around them. Each one of us can play a role by being a part of the IBM STEM for Girls program and helping them attain their goals,"* said **Kuldeep Cherukupally**, an IBM Mentor.

The [IBM STEM for Girls](#) program plans to prepare 200,000 girls across 10 states from tier 2 and tier 3 cities over a three year period to pursue and understand their potential in "New Collar" careers.

### A long road ahead



Recent national data reveals that only one in every three girls in India completes school education. Three million girls below the age of 14 get married every year. The dropout rate for girls at the elementary level is around 4% which rises to nearly 17% at the secondary level.

*"It's great to see that a young mind like Muskan is using coding to help transform the society,"* said **Shinni**

**Aggarwal**, Facilitator, American India Foundation (AIF), IBM's partner for the program.

The videos created by Muskan are already drawing significant attention, as people noticed her simple yet effective messages. With this new-found confidence, she approached a few of her friends, showed them her own works on coding, and encouraged them to pursue their education in STEM subjects and build their technical skills. Besides, during the pandemic, Muskan is teaching coding and Maths to her brother and other kids in her family and locality.

*"The STEM for Girls program has opened up a new world for me. I hope, I can use this knowledge to bring some changes around us,"* concluded Muskan.

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[Click Here to know more about  
IBM STEM for Girls](#)

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