

# Initiative to equip rural schoolkids with key skills meets with success

## Has A Marked Positive Impact On Students' Confidence

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**Hubballi:** Lack of adequate libraries and an equal lack of books in existing ones often stunt the growth of students, and in government schools, this rings truer. However, access to internet in many state-run institutions is looking to offset this limitation.

"Google is my best friend," gushed Jyoti Bennur, a class VIII student at the Government Higher Primary School in Ballarwad village in Navalgund taluk. Jyoti has a tablet and is well-acquainted with all the apps on the device. "I get all the answers I need, and additional information along with it using the tablet," said Jyoti in fluent English, who also shared her aptitude in the use of Email. The tablet helps her stay abreast of current affairs.

Jyoti is one of the many beneficiaries of an initiative, 'Skill-in-Village' undertaken by the Deshpande Foundation to enhance skills of

### 'CONFIDENT IN ENGLISH'

“Until a few months ago, we were so afraid of speaking in English that we ran home when someone started conversing to us in the language. Now we can speak fluently in English, and interact easily with foreign delegates who visit our schools.

- **Sushma Katkar** | CLASS VIII STUDENT IN AMARGOL

“I have learnt the use of apps, how to send mails and using Google search. Also, I can speak confidently in English now.

- **Basavaraj Iti** | CLASS VII STUDENT IN BALLARWAD

### GROWING DEMAND IN VILLAGES

“We are receiving requests from people in other villages to roll out the 'Skill-in-Village' initiative in government schools there. In Ballarwad, we have given 16 tablets to children as part of our trial. It was a huge success, and we are now planning on distributing tabs to schools in all the 42 villages where the initiative has been implemented. Our teachers will stay in the village to sustain the development of students.

- **PN Nayak** | CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, DESHPANDE FOUNDATION SKILLING CENTRE

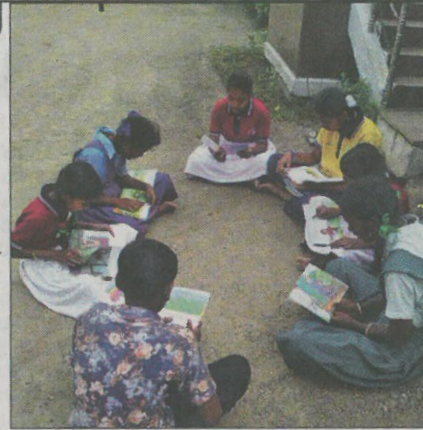
schoolchildren in Dharwad, Haveri and Gadag districts. The programme envisages equipping students in rural areas with all the skills their urban counterparts are presently being trained in, in addition to which efforts are being made to turn them into effective, and more important, confident speakers.

Manager for the 'Skill-in-

Village' project Harish MH said that improving communication skills of rural students was one of the primary objectives of the initiative. "Improving their English was the key to building their confidence. Our project also focuses on improving skills in computer and overall digital literacy. We have been working in 42 villages since

the launch of the initiative in 2017. Some of the villages we have worked in are Karadigudda, Honnapur, Chabbi, Abbigeri and Bannikoppa. The initiative has yielded desired results with many students in these villages now seeming at ease in English, and very comfortable with operating tablets and computers," said Harish.

Photographs: TOI



**COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT:** The children are provided tablets, using which they access the exhaustive resources on the internet to supplement what they learn in schools, while they are also being trained in soft skills, including improving proficiency in English

The foundation has roped in 42 teachers, who are deployed to rural schools in the three districts, where they first conduct a survey, following which confer with the elders in the village and parents, before hitting the ground. "We roll out the initiative in those villages where we are guaranteed of maximum support from the local governing bodies such as the gram panchayat," added Harish.

One of the teachers working in the villages is Laxmi Bhovivaddar, presently working with students of a government school in Ballarwad. "We focus on teaching the kids English grammar and other communication techniques. We train them in essential skills such as introducing themselves, deliberating on subjects among others. We also teach them how to use computers, using Google, etc.," she said.

Manjunath Baligar, another teacher working with the Deshpande Foundation on the project, said that the children were being taught other skills that help them in life before and after school. "We hold a workshop each month wherein students are called on to make a presentation to help us assess their skills. We also teach them lessons from their syllabus," said Baligar.