At Pratham we know that learning changes lives.

But today, millions of people are held back from the learning opportunities that will prepare them for life, and for work.

People like Pritidhara, Majidul, Madhusudan, Antony, Wahid, and Sangeeta.

That’s why we deliver learning opportunities that meet the individual needs of children and young people, from the early years right through to adulthood. Both inside and outside formal educational settings. At home, in the community and online.

We give mothers like Pritidhara the tools they need to give their children the best possible start. We make sure that kids like Majidul are not just in school, but are learning to read and to count. We equip teenagers like Madhusudan to pursue their passions and inspire others to follow suit. We offer youth like Antony the chance to upskill for better job prospects. We fight for the right to education for all young people, including those like Wahid who are forced into labor when they are still just children. And when women like Sangeeta drop out of the system, we help them find their way back.

We are honored that they have chosen to share their stories with us.

Their stories are our stories.
Pritidhara Swain
Khandesi village, Ranpur block, Nayagarh district, Odisha

Pritidhara Swain is 32 years old. Pritidhara was unable to finish school because of her own family’s financial situation. Her husband works long hours on their small farm, so all household responsibilities fall on her. Her children, Tapas and Ashish, used to spend their days playing in the street and often fell ill. Thanks to Pratham’s Readiness Program, Pritidhara now helps her children to learn at home, while she carries out her chores. Often she helps them to learn using simple household items like vegetables and grains. Now the children are healthy and Ashish dreams of becoming a policeman! Pritidhara was selected to lead a mothers’ group in her community, where they share ideas to support their children’s learning and development. She borrows a neighbor’s phone everyday to access Pratham’s digital materials, and even uses Whatsapp and Zoom to support other mothers in neighboring communities.

“Pratham has woken me from my slumber. Now I know that I can give my children what I was not given myself. By investing in our children we will make sure they are successful in life.”
Syed Majidul Islam is ten years old. His father is a tailor and his mother is a homemaker. They struggle to make ends meet. A few years ago, Majidul was very shy and was unable to read even simple words. This was made worse by school closures resulting from coronavirus. When school reopened, Majidul rarely attended and, when he did, he was largely unresponsive. The Pratham Hamara Gaon team in his community started frequent home visits, working directly with Majidul and his parents. They focused on learning through play and provided him with extra support in the classroom too. Now Majidul attends school regularly. He enjoys reading stories and has grown in confidence, making friends and actively participating in his lessons. He dreams of becoming a doctor or an engineer.

“I used to skip school because I felt stupid. Now I can read and do sums. Now I’m smart so I love to go!”
Madhusudan is 16 years old. His father, a carpenter, is the sole breadwinner of the family. Madhusudan was always an enthusiastic student and, aged nine, he joined a Pratham children’s group in his community. That’s how he fell in love with science. Now Madhusudan coaches children’s groups himself. Using resources from the PraDigi program, he helps them to share his love of learning.

Each weekend Madhusudan visits the Pratham Science Center to continue his own learning about practical applications of science. He makes his own inventions and models, which he shares online through his YouTube channel: “Madhu Experiments”, Madhusudan wants to be an inventor, and to work on new innovations that will improve the lives of communities like his.

“Even when we turn old, we continue to learn. We will never be perfect, which means that we keep learning something or the other, every passing minute!”

Madhusudan
Kumar Sonwane
Sonkheda village,
Aurangabad district,
Maharashtra
Wahid Reza
Parihar block, Sitamarhi district, Bihar

Wahid Reza is 17 years old. When he was just twelve, he was forced to work with a local tailor to financially support his family. He dropped out of school and worked day and night, in poor conditions. Fortunately, Wahid was found and rescued by the Pratham Council for Vulnerable Children, who coordinated a raid alongside the local police and labor department. He was registered in the Child Labor Tracking System, and given a bank account with a starter deposit under a government scheme to uphold the rights of the child. The Pratham team supported Wahid’s family and made regular home visits to ensure Wahid was safe, well, and learning back at school. Wahid is skilled at math and is now preparing for entrance to the Indian Institute of Technology in Patna.

“Before I had no self-confidence, but now I can speak in a crowd. Once I have my engineering degree, I will prepare for my civil service examinations.”
Antony Francis is 22 years old. His parents are farmers and he is an only child, so he has a lot of responsibility on his shoulders. Antony completed his Diploma in Mechanical Engineering but could not afford to move to Chennai to be placed with a good company. He was expected to join his friends in a daily wage job. Everything changed when Antony met a Pratham mentor who helped him enrol in the skilling program’s two-wheeler automotive course. Free to attend and with free accommodation, nothing was holding him back. After completing the course, Antony was placed as a technician at a SBM TVS showroom in Chennai. He supports his family financially and hopes to open his own two-wheeler mechanic shop in his community.

“I didn’t know anything when I came here. Now I’m much more focused than before and I get compliments about how far I’ve come. But I still have a lot to learn!”
Sangeeta Malviya
Shyampur village, Sehore district, Madhya Pradesh

Sangeeta Malviya is 27 years old. She has two young children - a son, Anshu, and a daughter called Princess. Sangeeta left school in the eighth standard because her family did not have enough money to support her studies. She did not have the qualifications to secure paid work. When Sangeeta’s husband sadly died of coronavirus, her in-laws encouraged her to go back to school. Thanks to the Second Chance program, Sangeeta now goes to school every day. She is able to fit her classes around childcare. Sangeeta has passed her tenth standard, and she is still learning. Her dream is to become a nurse, while supporting her children in their own learning and development. She hopes that her experience will inspire other women in her community to pursue their education.

“Now I can get a job. Now I can do something for my children. Now I feel that I can do anything.”
Thank you for sharing our stories
At Pratham we have a vision of a world where every child has the chance to live a good life and go on to support themselves and their family — no matter where they are born and raised. This vision is in reach, when everyone everywhere is given the opportunity to learn, and keep learning.

Learning changes lives. Change a life with Pratham.
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