

Engg student-led body incubates at NITK-STEP

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Mangaluru: A student-led organisation founded by a budding engineer at NITK Surathkal, that is incubated at NITK-STEP, aims to promote the holistic welfare of society. Prashraya Welfare Foundation was started by a third-year metallurgical and materials engineering student, Priyanshu Khemariya, in 2019. It was incubated last month at NITK Science and Technology Entrepreneurs' Park (NITK-STEP). It is registered under section-8 as a non-profit organisation.

Khemariya, who earlier started 'Team Aashraya', on explaining why his organisation was incubated at NITK-STEP, said that it was for guidance and mentorship, and also to attract more volunteers. The organisation focuses on five principal fields: Environmental conservation (pariyavaran), healthcare (chikitsa), education and awareness (shiksha), provision of basic amenities (vastra), and women's empowerment (shakti). "Our emphasis is on education and women's empowerment. Over the years, we have done a lot of things for the cause on which we are working, and have many more projects in the pipeline,"

How it started

Khemariya hails from the remote village of Tumda in Madhya Pradesh. During the pandemic, when he returned to his village, he noticed the lack of educational resources and awareness among students about available opportunities. This led him to conceive the idea of establishing a free library for the students in his village. To begin, a book donation drive was organised, and a free library was established in his village.

Over time, they have established many free libraries across the country, and started free learning sessions for students.



said Khemariya.
Under shiksha or educa-

tion, the organisation is working on scaling up the Aashraya Vidyalaya project, to other districts across the country. AV is a free schooling model, to provide quality education for underprivileged students, and creates awareness about the importance of education. Along with that, we are planning to launch an online AV, to help students' access quality education from their homes.

In Shakti, the organisation for spreading awareness about menstrual health and providing opportunities for women to become financially independent. "As a part of our Shakti Week 2.0, which was organised for a week in March 2023, we conducted menstrual health awareness programmes in more than 45 districts across India, reaching out to more than 10,000 women through sessions, and distributing sanitary pads," said Shilpashree V, vice-president, Prashraya Welfare Foundation, and a final-year mechanical engineering student.

The organisation is currently working on extending the menstrual health awareness programme to more underprivileged women, and setting up a sanitary pad bank in collaboration with the NITK Sneha Trust.