



MAITRAYANA



## Heena

19-year-old | Community Sports Coach  
Bengaluru



Heena is a 19-year-old Community Sports Coach in Maitrayana's Bengaluru team. She lives in a nuclear family in the outskirts of the city. As a young girl in a family struggling to make ends meet, Heena had found comfort in playing Football. However, she had to drop sports to focus on education.

Heena was faced with the difficult choice of completing her studies or letting her younger sibling complete theirs due to financial constraints. Heena being a strong young woman with vision, decided to take the high road. She expressed her need to become financially independent which would be easier with a well-paying job and for that, she needed a degree. She convinced her mother to start part-time work along with her college to financially support her education.

With a strong connection with sports, she started the Community Sports Coach internship at Maitrayana. She was intrigued by the opportunity to teach life skills through sport to adolescent girls and was eager to learn new skills on the go. However, the YPI session timings clashed with her college schedule. She struggled at first but with her passion for sport and girls' empowerment, she was able to prioritise and strike the right balance between college and internship.

Heena was trained in life and leadership and netball skills and delivering the same to girls became a learning journey for her. She recounts learning about the menstrual cycle for the first time and that menstrual blood is not impure. She went back home and narrated the session to her mother and older sister. She explained to them why girls get periods and broke the silence on periods and its myths.

Heena also shares how she would reenact the sessions for her mother and sister back home. She taught them about Women's Rights, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and Gender-based Violence. She started conversations around a woman's right to wear what they want, complete their education, have a job of their choice, and the right to be safe and free from harm.

**Gender Equality Through Sport**



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## Sarita

22-year-old | EJP Alumni  
Delhi



Sarita is a 22-year-old young woman from Delhi's Harkesh Nagar community. She belongs to an economically disadvantaged family and has two younger sisters. She participated in the Young People's Initiative (YPI) in school during which she learned about menstruation, peer pressure and gender in the community. In 2023, Sarita participated in Maitrayana's Economic Justice Program (EJP) during which she also completed her bachelor's degree from the School of Open Learning at IGNOU.

During EJP, Sarita learned hard and soft employable skills like teamwork, effective communication, and computer skills. She was soon selected for the Decathlon internship. During one of the mentoring sessions, she shared that her family wanted her to get married. They believed marrying off daughters was their duty and that it would lessen the financial strain. However, Sarita had other plans, she wanted to build a career. She knew her choices would also impact her younger sisters' futures.

After the mentoring sessions at Maitrayana, Sarita had an honest conversation with her parents. She told her parents that she aspires to pursue a career that grants her financial independence so she doesn't have to depend on anyone. She expressed her desire to work so she could financially support her family. She realised that she needed time to achieve her goals and that the marriage decision had to be postponed until she was ready. She shared inspiring stories of other YPI and EJP alumni who transformed their lives for the better. She focused on how financial autonomy empowers women to make sound decisions.

Sarita's family then understood that it was best for her to focus on her career and not marriage.

During her 2.5-month Decathlon internship, she learned valuable skills such as stocking and restocking, maintaining customer relationships and time management. Sarita applied for a job at a Decathlon store and secured a part-time job. Sarita's unwavering dedication and successful job acquisition not only strengthened her resolve but also won over her family, who now fully support her choices.

Sarita's family is proud of her for taking the first step. Her parents acknowledged that their initial decision to get Sarita married instead of supporting her was unfair. Sarita proved her parent's assumptions wrong by not only becoming self-sufficient but also by contributing to the family's financial well-being.

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