

Beyond the Score

The holistic impact of the Teach For India Fellowship

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AGENDA

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Test scores measure what students learned. TFI's real impact is who they became.

SCOPE

We examined the holistic impact of the TFI Fellowship on students, Fellows, and communities — beyond academic outcomes — across three threads that surfaced repeatedly in the field: gender equity, wellness & safety, and career readiness.

PROCESS

100+ field conversations: 70+ voices across students, alumni, and Fellows; 45+ focus-group participants; 25+ 1:1 interviews — across Dharavi, Govandi, Geeta Vikas School, and a Boston immersion with HBS TFI alumni.

INSIGHTS

Three threads kept surfacing — each one a story the test scores miss.

1. — GENDER EQUITY & AGENCY

Where the world tells girls to be quiet, TFI teaches them to be heard.

The Fellowship is doing gender work no metric currently captures: classrooms designed for equality from day one, girls renegotiating marriage and education with their families, and boys becoming allies through structured conversation rather than lectures. Alumni now build the gender-equity infrastructure India needs — from 60-girl football leagues in Govandi to training 200+ school leaders on what gender-equitable schools look like in practice.

2. — WELLNESS, HEALTH & SAFETY

Mental health, nutrition, and safety have a place on the agenda — not the referral list.

In a context where 44% of children are stunted or undernourished and substance abuse is the community's #1 problem, TFI classrooms are calm, ritualized, and protective. Fellows visit homes when students stop showing up, shift junk food to home food in two months, and open conversations about menstruation, grooming, and emotional safety that the rest of the system avoids.

3. — CAREER READINESS & FUTURE PATHWAYS

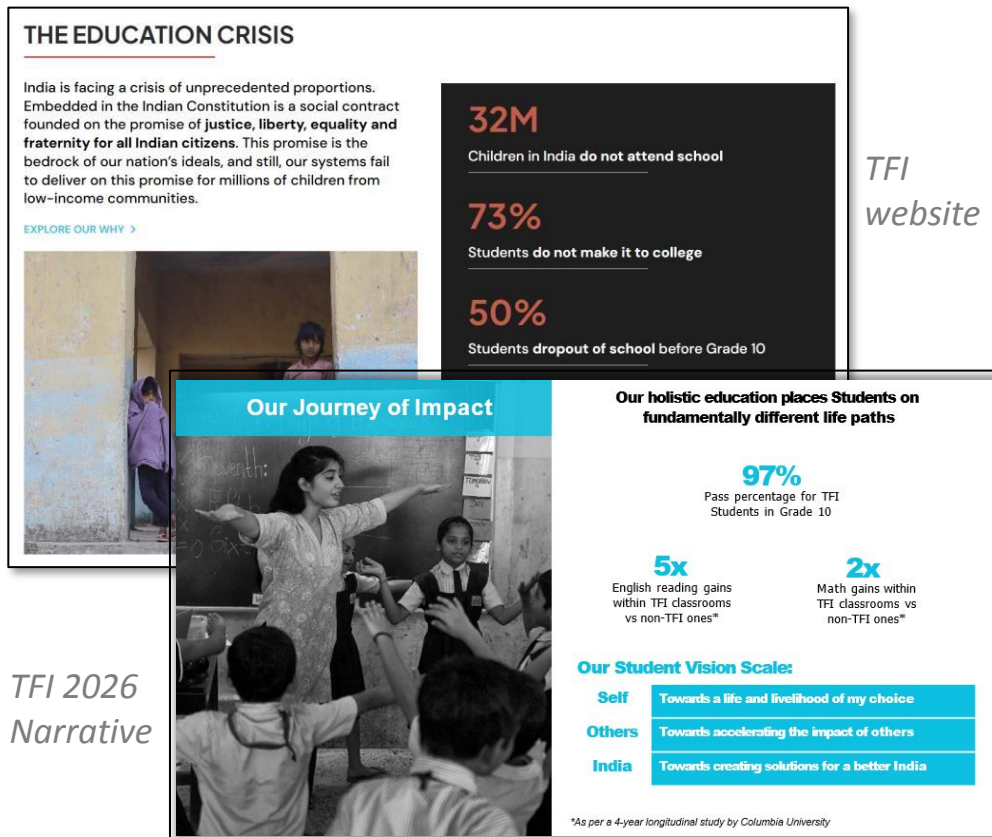
Students name the lives they would have had without TFI — and the ones they have because of it.

Alumni told us, without prompting, what TFI replaced: call-center jobs, marriage at 18, smoking on the corner, never speaking English. Instead they describe English fluency, financial literacy, sports licenses, college in Pennsylvania, and the confidence to speak in rooms like ours. Each Fellow seeds a multiplier effect: students become coaches, founders, government officers, and Fellows themselves.

Together, these threads form a virtuous cycle: Fellows seed transformation, students become builders, and the cycle multiplies across families, peers, and communities.

TFI's impact expands well beyond academic impact

TFI has been exceptional at capturing the need for its work and its impact on academics ...



... but the story of each child is so much more

A student opening up about menstruation for the first time, in a classroom her mother never had.

A boy who would have been “smoking on the corner” - now a licensed football coach.

A girl convincing her father to let her finish 11th grade.

A fellow who left finance to lead gender-equity work across 200 schools.

A community whose Hindu and Muslim children now can sit on the same bench.

Focus group
participants
from across
India

1:1 field interviews

Students we talked to

Other groups we talked to

Locations we visited

[illegible]

What is one word that best describes the TFI experience for students?



Plus Boston immersion: We also visited a Teach For America intervention in Boston, and interviewed TFI Fellow Alumni who currently study in Harvard Business School

WHAT WE DID



Computer class in school in Dharavi



Classroom in school in Dharavi



Computer class in school in Dharavi

WHAT WE DID



Classroom in school in Govandi



Soccer field of school in Govandi



Community center in Govandi

Test scores measure *what students learned*, TFI's real impact is **who they became**

Across 100+ conversations, three threads kept surfacing:



GENDER EQUITY & AGENCY

- Voice, Confidence, and Participation
- Gender Norm Disruption
- Educational and Career Agency
- Health, Safety, and Bodily Autonomy
- Representation and Identity



WELLNESS & SAFE SPACES

- Emotional Safety and Mental Wellbeing
- Physical Health and Basic Needs
- Preventative Health and Awareness
- Sports, Belonging, and Positive Identity
- Stability, Routine, and Protective Structures



CAREER READINESS & FUTURE PATHWAYS

- Aspiration and Future Orientation
- Confidence, Communication, and Leadership
- Experiential and Applied Learning
- Professional and Life Skills
- Purpose, Agency, and Civic Responsibility

These are the stories that don't fit on a report — and they're the ones donors, recruits, and policymakers remember.

PILLAR 01



GENDER EQUITY & AGENCY

**Where the world
tells girls to be
quiet, TFI teaches
them to be heard**

We expected to hear about classrooms. We heard about the home instead — daughters negotiating with fathers, fellows challenging marriage timelines, and boys learning about the types of challenges their sisters may face.

The Fellowship is doing gender work that no metric in TFI's reporting currently captures.

What you'll see in the next slides:

- Classrooms designed for equality from day one
- Girls renegotiating their futures with their families
- Boys becoming allies through education, not lectures

Girls finding their voice, inside the classroom and out

VOICE • CONFIDENCE

From silent sticky note to class president

"She came from a family where girls aren't allowed to speak at home. After months of 1:1 lunches she wrote a song — 'thank you for being for me' — performed for the class, and was later elected class president. Now she's top of her grade."

— Varisha Reyaz, 2024-26 Fellow, Delhi

AGENCY

Convincing the father, one text at a time

"She scored well in 10th, but her family wanted her married. She kept texting me — 'can you please talk to my dad?' I told her: trust your marks, be patient. Her father finally agreed."

— Avani Kulkarni, 2022-24 Fellow, Ahmedabad

ALLIES • BOYS

Gender equity doesn't just benefit girls

"I sat the boys down and explained this is what happens, this is why it matters, this is how you can help your friends. After that, the misogynistic comments stopped. The friendships between boys and girls changed."

— Atreyee Das, 2024-26 Fellow, Delhi

EARLY INTERVENTION

Project Mindshift: rewriting aspirations in Grade 1

"Every boy wanted to be an engineer or police officer. A girl said she wanted to be a 'business man.' I switched to gender-neutral language — 'entrepreneur,' 'police officer' — and put pictures of female army officers and male teachers on the wall. By year-end, my students' dreams no longer matched the stereotypes."

— Sohini Samanta, 2025-27 Fellow, Kolkata

Scale story: from 4 girls to 60, on the football pitch in Govandi

We visited The Next Page community center in Govandi, run by Anoop Parikh (Teach For India Alum, 2011-13 cohort)

THEN

4

girls playing
In Govandi football the league

NOW

50–60

girls playing in the
league

"My mom said: stop football, your fair skin is becoming dark, who will marry you? I refused. I have my license now. I coach the boys."

— Kulsoom, 23, student alumna

Alumni are building the gender-equity infrastructure India needs

Devika Anand (2020-22 Fellow)

MSc in Gender, Development and Globalisation, LSE

Researching how 'empowerment' translates across caste, class, and religion to make development programs less colonial in design.

Chandrava Pathak (2018-20 Fellow)

Program Lead, Alokkit

Trains 200+ government school leaders on what gender-equitable school structures actually look like from policy to seating chart.

Gauri Chadha (2013-15 Fellow)

Co-Founder & CEO, Umeed

Women's empowerment organization working at the individual, family, and institutional levels across Hyderabad.

PILLAR 02



WELLNESS, HEALTH & SAFETY

**TFI fellows
see students
holistically and
address more than
their academic
needs**

In stark contrast to the rest of Govandi, the classrooms we observed were calm, color-coded, and ritualized. Students told us about teachers who came to their homes when they stopped showing up.

In India's larger education system, mental health is taboo and physical health is invisible. In TFI classrooms, both have a place on the agenda.

What you'll see in the next slides:

- Mental health treated as part of the school day, not a referral
- Nutrition, sleep, and menstrual health worked into the curriculum
- Safe spaces as protection against substance abuse, violence, and isolation

Care that shows up where the system doesn't

MENTAL HEALTH

"It's okay if being not okay is okay"

"I was bullied, I cried, my academics were going down. My fellow would sit with me, ask about the personal problems, and tell me — it's okay if being not okay is okay. She visited my home when something looked wrong."

— Student Alumna, Focus Group Participants, Mumbai

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Junk food → home food in 2 months

"Six years of eating chips every day. Children missing school from indigestion. I tracked it: who brought packaged vs. home food. I worked with parents and the government meal program. Two-three months later, everyone was bringing home-cooked food."

— Samriddhi Mani, 2025-27 Fellow, Kolkata

MENSTRUAL HEALTH

From 'no one talks about it' to open conversation

"Yesterday in our football program 15-year-old girls were openly discussing pregnancy and menstrual hygiene. Ten years ago that was unthinkable here. TFI brings that into the classroom — even non-TFI teachers in the school come to fellows to ask how to do it."

— Anoop Parik, Founder and Director, The Next Page, 2011-13 Fellow

PROTECTION

Catching exploitation before it deepens

"Through our program, 15 girls came and told me they had 'boyfriends' — older working men, grooming them. Most students didn't know what menstruation was or how to talk about it. Until we created the space, no one was asking."

— Ash, Current Fellow

What 'safe space' actually means in a TFI classroom

Four practices we heard, again and again:

01 Daily agenda on the board

A predictable structure — especially essential for neurodivergent students. One boy with ADHD asked, 'why didn't you put the agenda up today?'

02 Co-created classroom rules

Discipline as partnership, not corporal punishment. Students help write the rules and the consequences.

03 Honest 1:1 conversations

Fellows notice when a student is off and ask. They share their own stories so students feel safe sharing theirs.

04 External experts brought in

When fellows can't help alone, they pull in counselors, NGOs, even funder employees. They know what they don't know.

FIELD CONTEXT — GOVANDI

Why the safe space is the intervention.

44%

of children in the community are stunted or undernourished

#1

Substance abuse is named as the community's biggest problem

55

kids per classroom on average in local government schools

In this environment, a calm classroom with an agenda on the wall is not 'nice to have' — it is the difference between school and the street.

PILLAR 03



CAREER READINESS | LIFE SKILLS

TFI creates elevated life paths for students

Student alumni told us, without prompting, what they would have been doing without TFI: smoking on the street, married at 18, working a call center, never speaking English.

Instead they are multimedia graduates, college students in Pennsylvania, licensed coaches, and fellows themselves, teaching the next generation.

How TFI improves student trajectories through:

Opportunities: jobs, further education, and English fluency that open doors they couldn't before

Soft skills: communication, confidence, drive, and values built into every lesson

Life and hard skills: financial literacy, technology, and digital tools

Network: connections that become a career pipeline

The careers students would never have had without TFI

ENGLISH FLUENCY

"My brother went to the same school. We didn't speak the same English."

"He didn't have TFI fellows. I did. The opportunities we got through sports, debates, competitions — he didn't get any of that. If TFI wasn't there I'd be in a BPO call center, getting married at 25. Instead I have a Bachelor's, I'm finishing my B.Ed., and I coach football."

— Shraddha, Student Alumna

CAREER PIPELINE

From troublemaker to licensed referee

"He'd make the other teacher cry. Right now he's coaching youth boys and girls in a different club, refereeing for the MFA. Football was the secret weapon — 'finish your homework, then you play.' Two to three of his cohort became TFI fellows themselves."

— Anoop Parik, Fellow Alum (2011 Fellow) on his former student

CONFIDENCE & SOFT SKILLS

I used to hide from answering questions

"If you saw me in school, I would never raise my hand. I hid. Now I'm sitting here speaking in front of you. Communication, confidence — that came from the TFI classroom."

— Sudeep, Student Alumna

LIFE SKILLS

"Nobody taught me this at home"

"My TFI fellow was the first adult who sat with me and said: here's how you save money, here's what a bank does, here's how to think before you spend. I'm a first-generation learner. Nobody taught me this at home. Now I explain it to my parents."

— Student Alumna, Focus Group Participants, Mumbai

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT:

Fellows impact students who become builders

FELLOWS

Create an engaging learning environment that improves student capabilities



STUDENTS

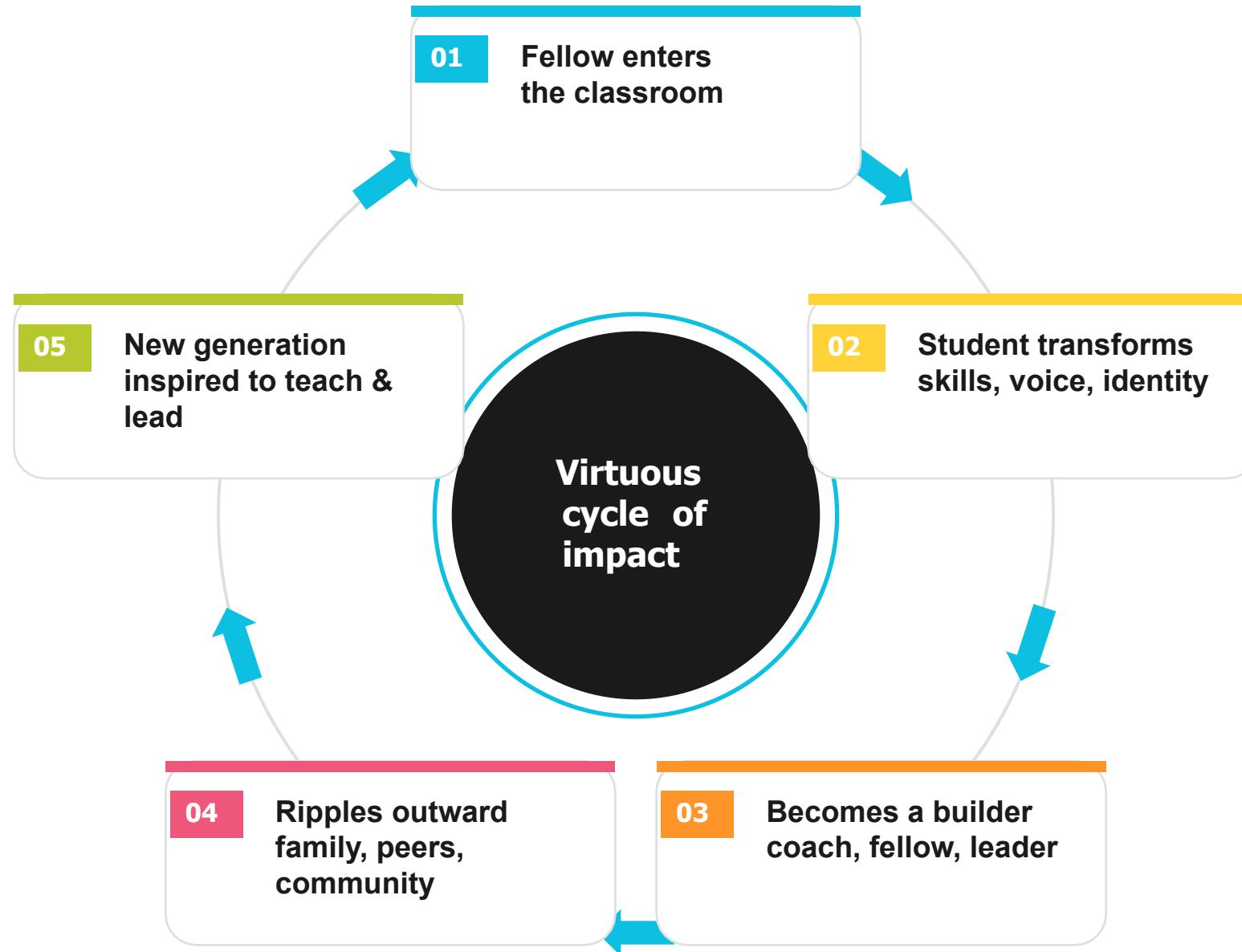
Graduate with soft skills, life skills, English, and network



BUILDER / FELLOW

Students impact their community by becoming coaches, founders, govt. officers, and often TFI fellows

Every Fellow seeds a multi-generational chain reaction



What we observed in the context of TFI classrooms

THE BASELINE

Government vs. private schools

Students in government schools start from a structurally disadvantaged position relative to their private-school peers.

- Greater out-of-school challenges affecting attendance and focus
- Lower household income and resource access
- Less parental engagement in formal education — but higher student dedication for those who care

THE TFI LIFT

TFI vs. non-TFI classrooms

Within government schools, TFI classrooms consistently outperform peers on four dimensions.

- Teachers invest more time, attention, and care per student
Greater use of 1:1 instruction and home visits
- Stronger relationships with parents and the community
- Explicit focus on student life-skills beyond academics



Thank you!