FINAL OUTCOMES PRE THESIS PROJECT
SEMESTER 7, **2020**

VIJJA
Planting the seed of self-reliance

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PROJECT: Human Factor - CGNet Bastar

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CONTENTS

Concept Note 03

Vijja - Community Center 05

Application on the Device in the Community Center 07

Phase Wise Plan 09

Exchange - A Self-facilitation Toolkit 10

Story Board 31

CONCEPT NOTE

Our project focuses on the Adivasi (Indigenous Tribal) Community in the District of Bastar, Chhattisgarh, India. These tribals are one of the most underrepresented groups of people in India in terms of socio-economic decisions and are isolated from the rest of society. The Adivasis of Bastar face a lack of facilities and struggle due to being largely neglected. The friction between Maoist and Security forces in the area makes life in Bastar even more difficult.

Keeping in mind insights from our research and Critical theory, we aimed to design an intervention that could help empower the people of Bastar to make them self sufficient. We used CGNet and their model of the Bultoo radio as a basis to build upon and learn from. A "Critical theory" based approach helped us consider all aspects of the complex ecosystem in Bastar. During the course of this project, we mainly considered Archaelogy and Genealogy of Knowledge, Knowledge and Power, Habitus, Communicative Action, Social, Culturaland Economic Capital . These helped us identify the hidden social structures which cause these problems in Bastar and design accordingly.

Our intervention consists of 3 major parts:

A Community Center

A physical community center that acts as a place for people to come together and share. Centrally placed within a village, it acts as a catalyst that encourages exchange and provides resources such as an information seeking and sharing application, a self-facilitation toolkit to foster self-reliance and to enable the community to play a dominant part in their learning and other resources like books and games.

It is a space for everyone in the community, from children to the elderly. We have paid attention to Young Adults and Adults as this center can enable them to exchange knowledge with could be regional, ancestral, or mainstream. Thus creating an archive and building a knowledge system that is relevant to them for their immediate necessities. This center gives them a scope to rebegin their education of various kinds. Many people within Bastar have suffered from a lack of resources and quality education. Many have not had the privilege to learn. This space can act as a choice for people to learn from when they have the time.

An application for sharing and seeking Information

An archive of traditional knowledge and system to support it: through which one can access other mainstream information that within the Community Center.

The lack of internet, literacy and language barriers limit the access people have to information from various parts of the world that may be beneficial to them. Our system tries to go the extra step to bridge barriers of language and literacy to boost accessibility. It enables people to access and contribute information while on the move or in case they are not physically present at the community center.

An information seeking and shairng Application

The self-facilitation toolkit facilitates the exchange of knowledge and skills in the community of Bastar. It enables anyone to become a facilitator and conduct sessions by using the activities laid out in the toolkit. Amongst other resources such as books, computer, games. Exchanging Ideas is a part of the multiple resources that the Community Center at Bastar provides. The product is a culmination of various ideas borrowed from critical theory. It reduces the power hierarchy in a learning system. By picking a topic of their choice, the learners build the curriculum, transferring agency, and ownership in the hands of the learners. It makes their knowledge visible.

Many values that the project entails are from deeply ingrained, pre-existing practices of the community such as the egalitarian organization, close ties with one another, coming together to support each other, and peer learning that existed in the form of Gotuls.

The community's need to preserve their disappearing culture has repeatedly emerged during our interviews with the people of Bastar and CGNet. It was critical to pay heed to this aspect through our intervention. Peoples' cultural practices such as the Gotul have been instrumental in structuring our system and support our belief that the people are capable of managing such a system and will eventually be a self-reliant organization.

While our system spans over 4 phases (Explained in the later parts of this chapter), this concept note and accompanying systems focus on the First phase.

VIJJA - COMMUNITY CENTER

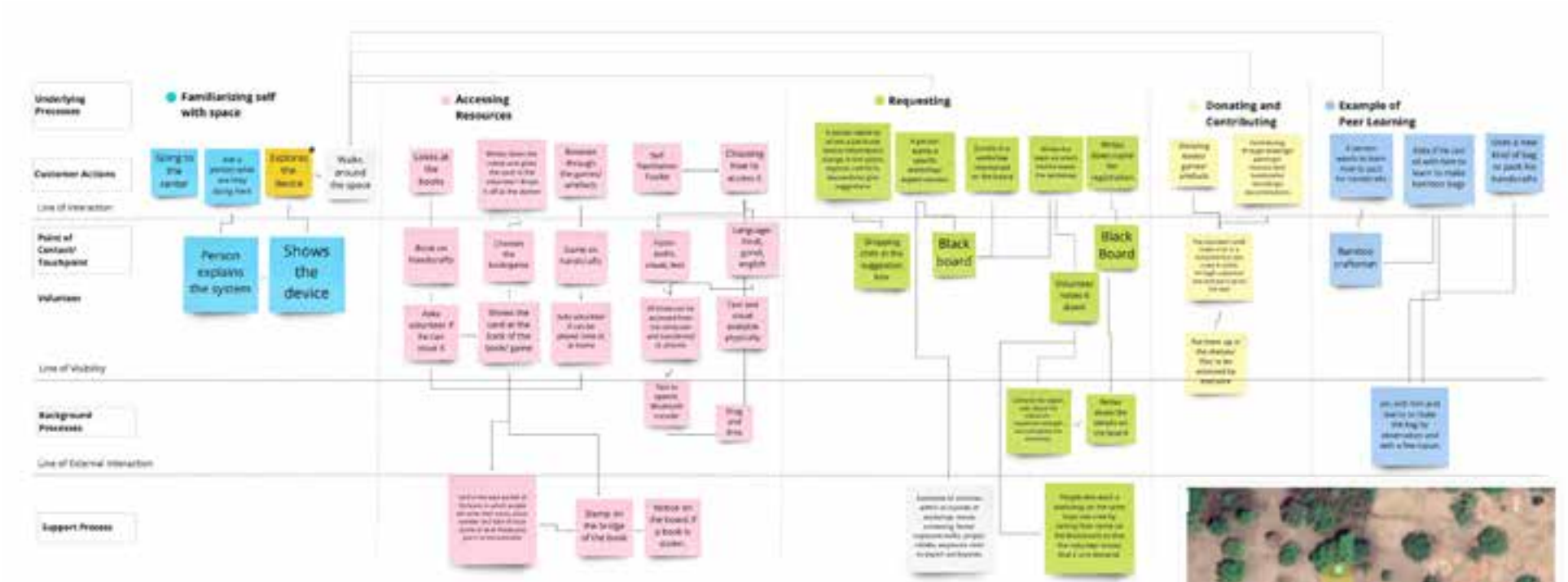
Vijja is the name of the community center we have conceptualised. Vijja in Gondi means seed, by using this name we intend to indicate that just the way a seed when planted has the power to sprout an entire tree or plant, this community center can do the same for the people of Bastar.

The community center is inspired by Gotul, which is an already existing system where the community adolescents come together and teach each other life skills and relevant knowledge. It, therefore, adapts to their existing Habitat of coming together in spaces and sharing information which, in the current age, is the Haat (Village Market). The Community Center would be located near it. The Community Center is a place in the village, which could facilitate peer to peer learning by providing them the means to achieve that. The center consists of a digital device to be used to archive traditional knowledge so that their cultural capital is not lost and is institutionalized. The information in the digital device can be mobilized and decentralized using Bluetooth or USB so that the center becomes accessible to the last person who might not have access to the center. The content demanded and put up by people depends solely on their wish thus, maintaining the relevance of knowledge, promoting contextual learning, and using their traditional knowledge as a means to provide them better income opportunities. It facilitates communicative action as participants are oriented towards mutual understanding and development. It also acts as an alternate education model for topics that are not available in the mainstream education system near them.

The Community Center has a Blackboard which acts as a learning mechanism for people and as a source of information and news. The self - facilitation kit enables them to direct their knowledge in a way that they could effectively learn from each other via exchange of thoughts and ideas, and eventually, critical thinking. The option to conduct workshops and share their knowledge with people outside the village and state increases their social capital. This exchange and added skills through different mediums will result in more efficiency, increasing employment, and business opportunities. This leads to an expansion in overall knowledge, extending their power to make them confident and self-sufficient. It leads to the emancipation of the whole community as people currently dependent on individuals, due to the current social hierarchy can also gain knowledge through this system and gain self - sufficiency. It will also promote economic development and emancipation of the community.

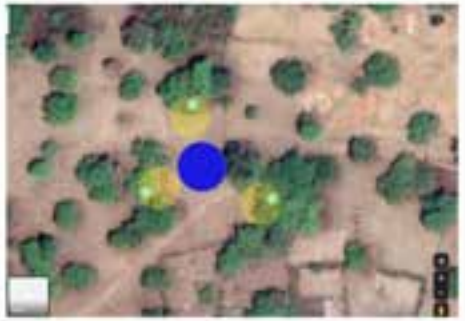
Systems diagram explaining the working of the community center:

There are four main processes at the core of the experience one would have at the Community Center- Familiarizing, Accessing, Requesting and Contributing. The diagram lays out the details (including actions, touchpoints, background processes etc) under each one of these.



Location of the Community Center

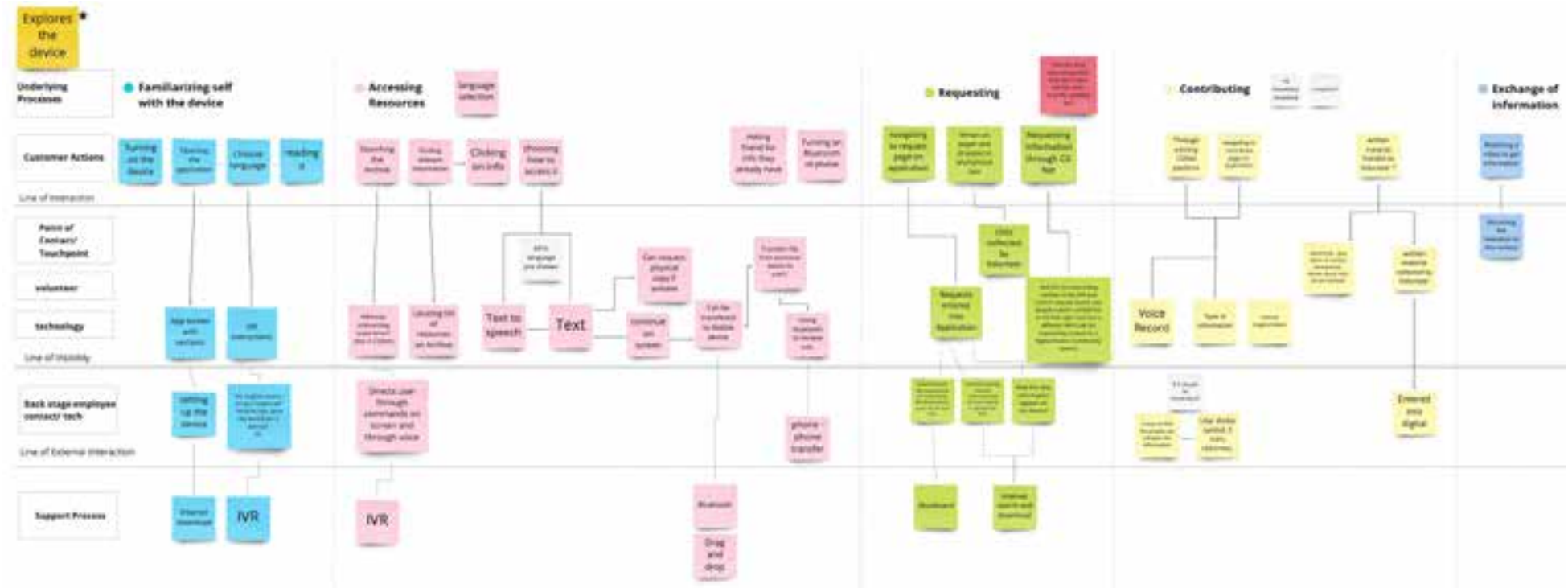
The community centers will be located near the HAATs (weekly markets visited by people from villages near and far). Making it easily noticable on peoples visits to the HAAT and increasing the accessibility of the center as well.



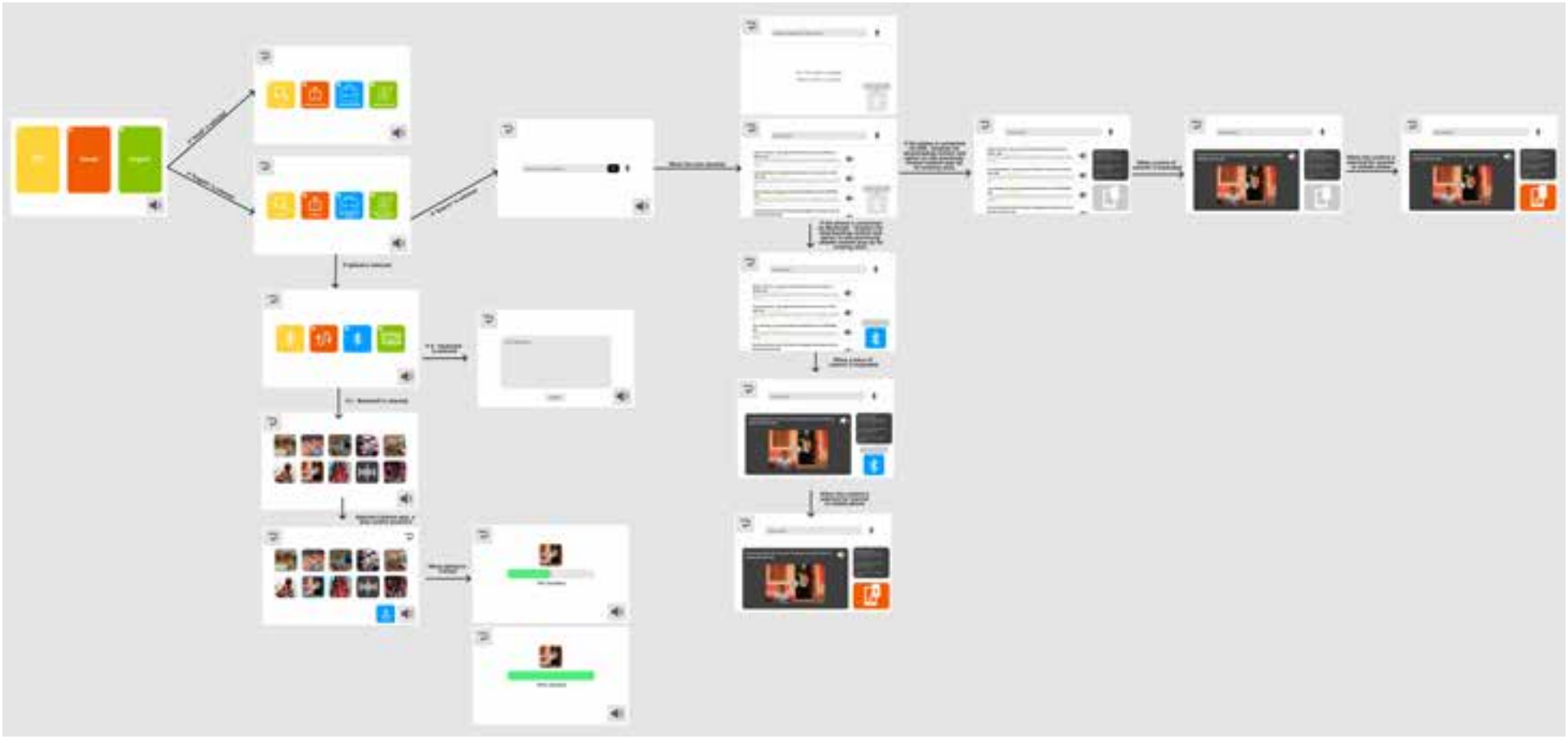
APPLICATION ON THE DEVICE IN THE COMMUNITY CENTER

A device will be located in the community which can be used by anyone, with the help of the facilitator, to access or upload information to the community archive. It acts as a tool to help the people at the center access more resources and build upon it by adding their knowledge and interacting with peers. It enables them to access these resources from other places in the world, which could complement their existing cultural capital.

Systems diagram explaining interaction with the application:



Application workflow and interface:



Detailed functioning and design considerations are in the video file, use this link to view it:

https://testportal.srishtimanipalinstitute.in/nextcloud/index.php/s/5T524FdDrXc7mC9

PHASE WISE PLAN

Phase 1

The first phase of the project involves building community centers in 20 villages of Bastar near the village Haats since it is the current place where villages gather together weekly for business and also for entertainment. Keeping it near the Haat will help the center get noticed by the villagers and would help in building connections between the resources available at the center and the events happening at the Haats. These learning and makers-spaces will initially be run by CGNet, where a volunteer will transfer the requests of the community to the backend, i.e., CGNet to facilitate workshops and fulfill requests for information in English, Hindi, and Gondi. The users can also share their experiences and contribute information by uploading it to the digital device for access to everyone in the community center, making the villagers feel that their knowledge is of importance to someone.

One of the final aims of this system is to increase tech literacy among the locals in Bastar. By getting them used to this system with limited information from the archive and a simplistic UI, our system acts like a scaled down version of the internet. This structure can help achieve tech literacy by making the learning curve gentler. We hope that the locals are better equipped and confident when they move on to personal devices and using the internet to it's full capacity in the future making them self-reliant and self-sufficient.

Phase 2

The second phase of the project will involve expansion to more remote regions, exchange of information between the existing community centers of different villages/communities, educating people to be able to use the internet to access relevant information, and to eventually use the internet as a marketplace.

Phase 3

In the third phase of the project, the community will run these centers on its own. They would access the information and utilizing the space as they see fit. It would be used for collaboration and learning from outsiders by launching workshops and teaching others as well, hence setting into motion a cultural exchange between different communities within the country.

Phase 4

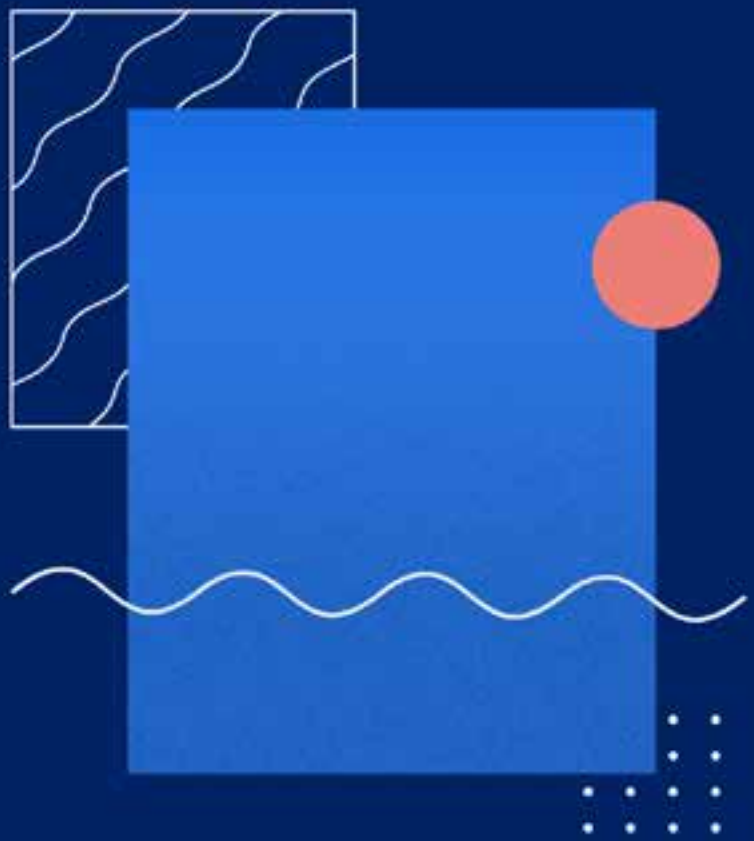
In the fourth phase, the goal will be to enable people to translate their learning etc. into economic capital. this phase would focus more on literacy that enables people to start and run businesses. By making the information truly mobile, the system would hold a chance to be used as a model for other communities facing similar issues.

EXCHANGE: A SELF FACILITATION TOOLKIT

The toolkit facilitates the exchange of knowledge and skills in the community of Bastar. It enables anyone to become a facilitator and conduct sessions by using the activities laid out in the toolkit. Amongst other resources such as books, computer, games, Exchanging Ideas is a part of the multiple resources that the Community Center at Bastar provides. The product is a culmination of various ideas borrowed from critical theory. It reduces the power hierarchy in a learning system. By picking a topic of their choice, the learners build the curriculum, transferring agency, and ownership in the hands of the learners. It makes their knowledge visible.

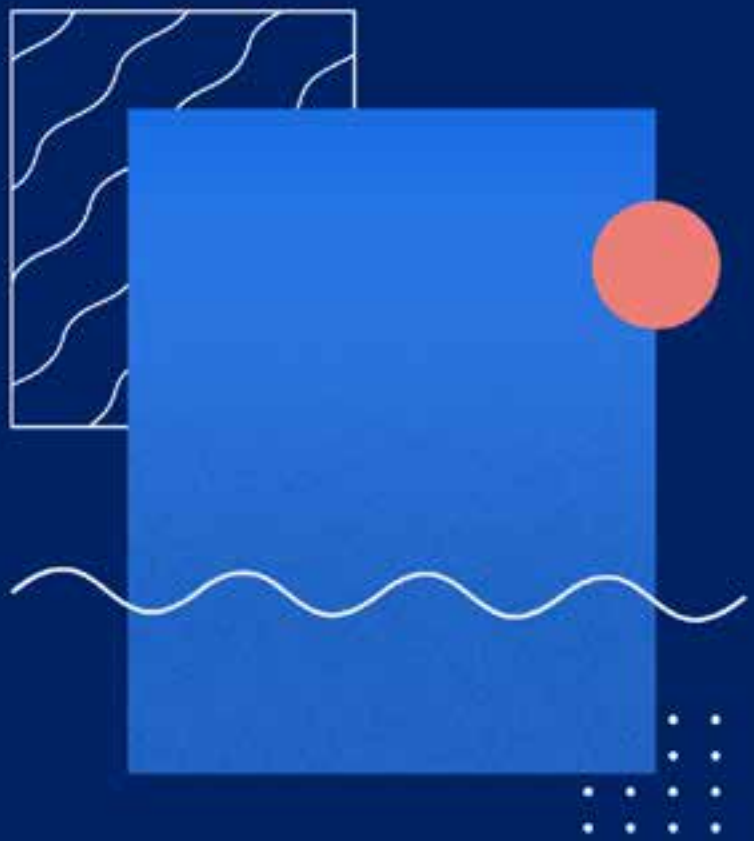
Let's Talk!

USE THIS TOOLKIT TO UNDERSTAND YOUR WORK BETTER AND USING YOUR KNOWLEDGE, SEE IF THERE ARE MORE OPPORTUNITIES!



Exchanging Ideas

A SELF FACILITATION TOOLKIT FOR THE COMMUNITY CENTER AT BASTAR



A note to the volunteer

The need for this facilitator toolkit, amongst other resources at the Community Center, arose due to three main purposes. The first is to offer an engagement that has peer learning at its core. The second is to offer a space for conversation, where one can think and reflect instead of constantly absorbing information. The third is to provide a way for the learners at the community center to walk down a directed journey so that they can eventually make use of the system in the best way possible.

A few assumptions made during the design of this toolkit are that the learners have a willingness to engage in conversations, that there is a basic level of understanding, and that eventually, they will be able to manage the facilitation on their own. However, in the initial phases, the volunteer is requested to help the facilitator understand how to conduct sessions using this toolkit. It lays out the activities for the first phase only. The volunteer could help the facilitator in numerous ways. One crucial way would be to communicate the value of this engagement to the community, which is to be able to explore work opportunities within the knowledge of the community such as Gond painting and farming. It might also help to tell them that these are simply guided conversations done through fun activities and that they are inspired by how people used to learn in Gotuls, the traditional education system of the Gond and Muria tribe.

While helping people understand and use the toolkit, the volunteer should tell them that they are capable of facilitating these sessions and be open as well as respectful towards how they feel about such an engagement. It is malleable so the facilitator can work with the activities as it suits them. It might be helpful to look at the prompts specifically.

The final outcome of this toolkit is to help the community acknowledge what they know as knowledge. The specific outcomes at the end of each session are written after the closing of each session. It would be helpful if the volunteer could try to steer conversations in directions that would lead to these outcomes.

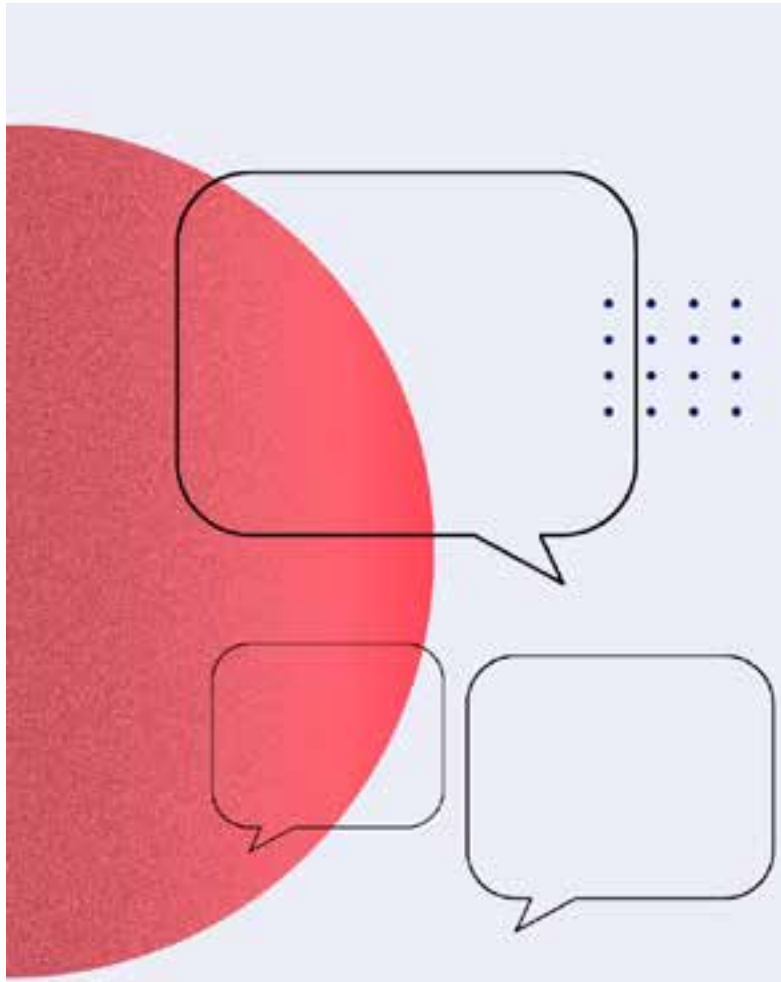
यह क्या है ?

आओ बात-चीत करें

Let's do these activities to exchange ideas with each other and have a conversation.

आप क्या सोचते हैं ?

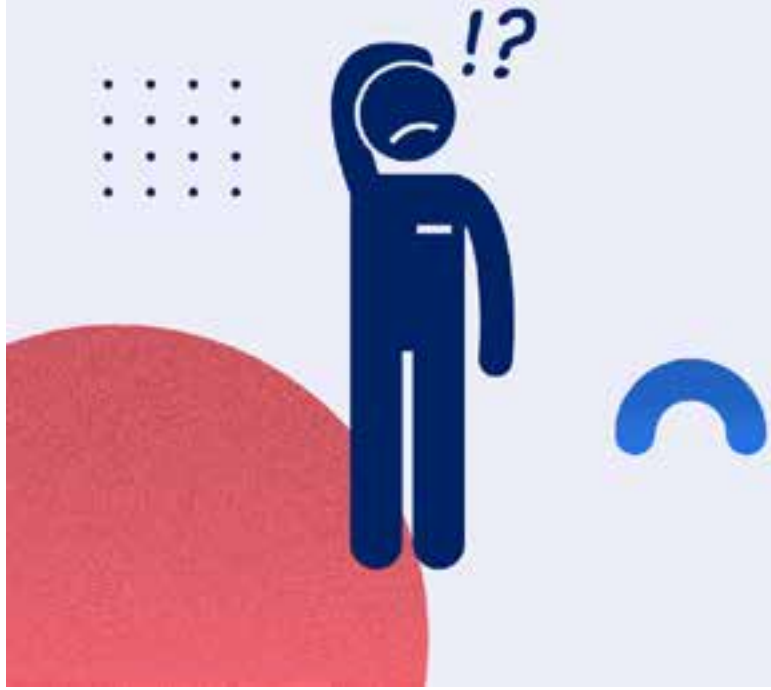
You can choose your topic of interest and engage people in a fun interaction with it.



आसान है !

Look at the activities inside and do them to see what all you know. Share it with others!

कैसे करें ?



What- Fun activities to learn about different work that people do and practice, and some fortnightly challenges as well for you to work on projects together with your friends!

When- Whenever you feel like sharing your thoughts and your work!

Where- You will always find one here, at the community center but you can do the activities anywhere in the village and bring the kit back here once you are done.

For whom- You, all people of Bastar, Age - 14+

Why- To learn from your friends about the topic of your choice!

How- Through a set of activities and conversations. There are three sessions of 30 minutes to one hour each. They all have few activities to do.

Outcomes - You'll know more about the possibilities of work that can be done using the traditional knowledge you have and you'll make new friends!

1. चलो करें !
SESSION - I

पहले एक दूसरे को जानते हैं। नीचे दी गईं चीज़ें एक - के - बाद एक करें।

Begin by asking:
How are you all? It is great to have everyone here. (Share how you are feeling about conducting this session.)

Knowing time: We are going to begin with a short introduction in a circle. As your turn comes, tell your name and a 'little known fact about yourself'.

Task: Turn to your neighbor and tell them your life's story in 10 minutes.
Second round: Turn back again to your neighbor and tell them your life's story but in a different way.

2. मैं और आप - विचार करें ?

Begin by saying: Let's all think about the things we all know and practice individually e.g. fishing or farming or painting. Think about what you practice as an individual.

You will find a yarn ball in the toolkit, take it out. A person would hold the ball (it could be you) and talk about the prompts. Another person who connects with what you say should say ,'I connect with you!'. Now, you will have to hold on to the edge of the loose thread of the yarn and then throw it to that other person. The other person would hold on to the thread from there and pass the ball to the next person who connects with them. This will go on as people connect to each other's thoughts and ideas.
Now talk about the following prompts:

a) What is your work? How are you involved in it?
b) How do you feel about this work?
c) What interests you in it?
d) How do you think it affects your life and the life of people you know?
e) How do you see yourself with your work?
f) Who are the different people connected to it?

At the end of the activity, ask everyone what was in it for them. (Share your thoughts too!)

इससे क्या होगा ?

This will help you think about your work and see how your friends think about their work. Wouldn't you like to know fun things about their work? You could get some ideas from them!

3. आप कहाँ खड़े होंगे?

For this activity, everyone will have to stand up in an open space. Imagine there to be a line on the ground. Ask the questions below and then ask people to stand on this line, where one end of the line is a 'Yes', the other a 'No', and the center is a 'Maybe'. Ask them to stand where they think their answer to the question is.

1. I think people should learn about the work that their ancestors were did. (Yes/No/Maybe)
2. I think it is important to have a city kind of life. (Yes/No/Maybe)
3. The forest has taught me a lot. (Yes/No/Maybe)
4. I like the work that my neighbors do. (Yes/No/Maybe)
5. I like the work that I do. (Yes/No/Maybe)
6. I wish my work was different from what it is. (Yes/No/Maybe)
7. I think I know my work well. (Yes/No/Maybe)
8. I think I have knowledge of things that our community practices. (Yes/No/Maybe)

क्यों करें ?

Wouldn't it be nice to know how you and your friends feel about the work that you do? Feelings are important, right? This exercise will help you know them well.

4. कुछ खास है क्या ?

Look at the photographs in the toolkit. Share them so that everybody can look at them.
Now, discuss the following three things for each one of them.

1. What do you see?
2. What do you think about that?
3. What does it make you wonder?

इससे क्या होगा ?

This exercise will help you think about the knowledge that your community already has. It would also bring out everyone's opinions on it.

5. CLOSING
The first session ends here. Ask yourself and your fellow learners how they felt about the session today. Following questions could be asked:
What are some things you had not thought about before?
What was in it for you?
LEARNING OUTCOMES: Being able to recognize that the learners have knowledge of their own and reflect on their feelings associated with the work they do.

6. और करें ?
SESSION-II

The first activity will ask you and your fellow friends to start with a poem today! So here it is below :

क्या मैं जानती हूँ?

कभी - कभी
बहुत दूरी आ जाती है
ये समझने मेंकि मैं क्या जानती हूँ , क्या जानना चाहती हूँ और क्या मुझे जानना चाहिए
मन कुछ कहता है, घर कुछ और बाज़ार कुछ और

कुछ मेरा अपना है
कहानियाँ और अनुभव
कलाएं और औज़ार

कुछ मुझे अपनाना है
कुशलता और काम
आखिर समय के साथ चलना भी तो ज़रूरी है।

क्या सीखूँ ?
क्या मैं जानती हूँ?

Now discuss the four questions below:
a) Does anything in the poem makes you relate to your own life?
b) What ideas do you think are not the same for you from the poem?
c) What key concepts do you think are important from the text?
d) What changes in thinking are needed in the text?

क्यों करें ?

Wouldn't it be amazing to think about what you know and your thoughts about it?

7. कुछ लिख के कहें ?
CHALK TALK

Take a large paper from the community center and write down the following thoughts on it:

1. Bastar offers a lot to learn.
2. The forests have work opportunities.
3. Our traditional knowledge is as important as the knowledge of the city.

Now, put the paper on a hard surface. You and your friends will have to move around it and keep writing your thoughts and opinions related to the statements above. Use the following prompts to jot down your thoughts.

- What ideas come to mind?
- What are things you relate to that others have written on the paper?
- What questions arise?

इससे क्या होगा ?

This exercise will help you explore and recognize what you know about Bastar. Sharing thoughts and opinions with each other will lead to ideas.

8. क्या काम करते हैं आप ?

Let's think about the things we all know and practice e.g. fishing or farming or painting. Choose one of these as a group.
Then discuss the following prompts:
a) What are the parts or pieces in this system?
b) Ask each person how they relate to this work and what it means to them?
c) Who are the different people who relate to this work?
d) How are you involved? What interests you?

At the end of the activity, ask everyone what was in it for them. (Share your thoughts too!)

क्यों करें ?

There is so much work you learn about in Bastar. The community knows so much. This exercise will help you understand the work and the people of the community better.

9. Closing

Before you close for the day, as people 'What was in the session for them today?' and what would they like to take away from the conversations to think about.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Understanding different stakeholders and the learner's own position in their work.

10. समय के साथ : ACROSS TIME

Ask your friends to think about a topic they know e.g. terracotta art or painting. Choose one of these as a group.

Now, take a large sheet of paper and get some crayons or sketch pens from the center. Draw your thoughts by using the following prompts.

- WRITE WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW: What do you know about the topic?
- GO BACK IN TIME: How was the topic 10, 100 and 1000 years ago? What was the form? How was it done?
- GO AHEAD IN TIME: How do you think the topic will be in next 10 and 1000 years?
- How do you view the topic now? Has anything changed?

इससे क्या होगा ?

This exercise will help you see and explore how knowledge of the topic you know has evolved with time. Imagining its future would help you think of further work opportunities.

11. कहाँ और कैसे ? : ACROSS DISTANCE

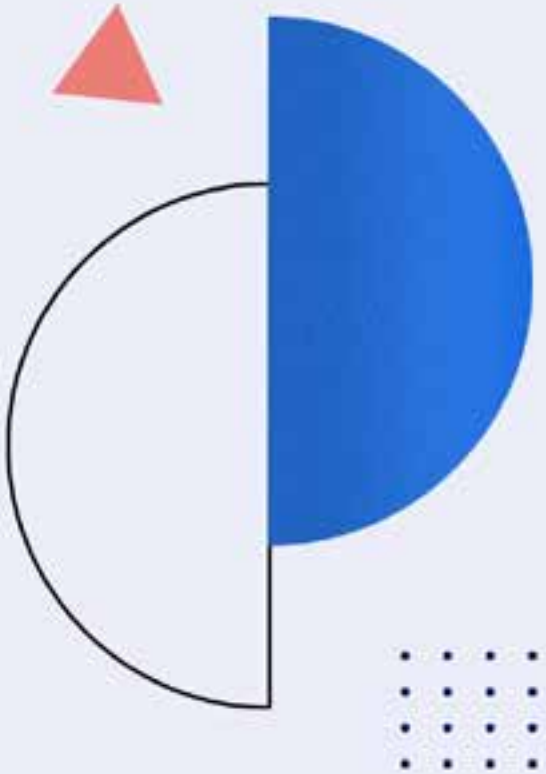
Ask your friends to think about a topic they know e.g. terracotta art or painting. Choose one of these as a group.

Now, share your thoughts and ask your friends to share theirs about the following questions:
How is this topic used/ How does it work:

a) In your community?
b) In another town or city of the country?
c) In another country, maybe?

What do you think is same or different about how it is done across these places and communities?

At the end of the activity, ask everyone what was in it for them. (Share your thoughts too!)



क्यों करें ?

Aren't you curious about how people do your work in different places and what it means to other people?

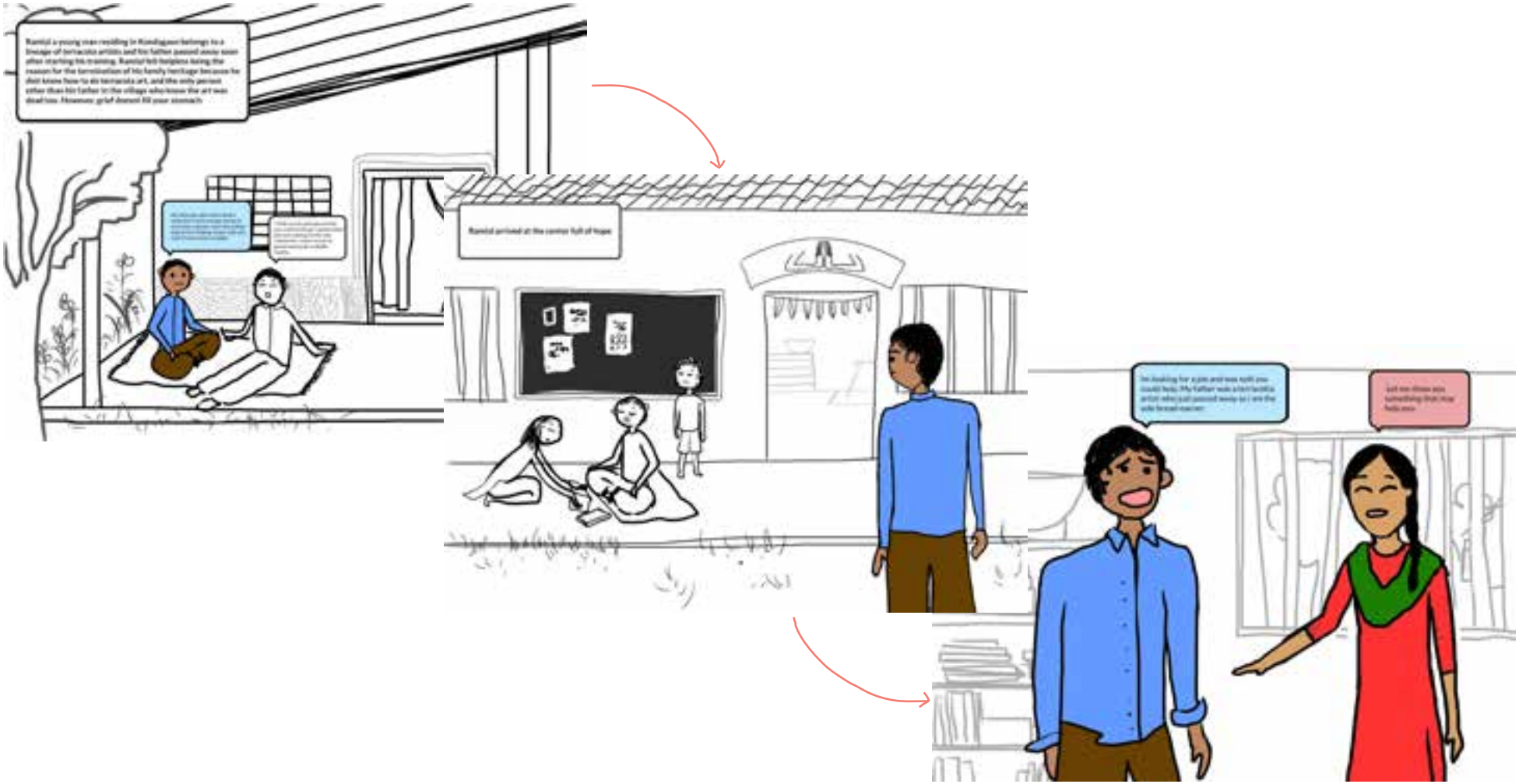
13. CLOSING AND OUTCOMES
The first session ends here. Ask yourself and your fellow learners how they felt about the session today. Following questions could be asked:
What are some things you had not thought about before?
What was in it for you?
LEARNING OUTCOMES: To imagine pathways their work and traditional practices can take. Developing an understanding of the evolution of their traditional knowledge.

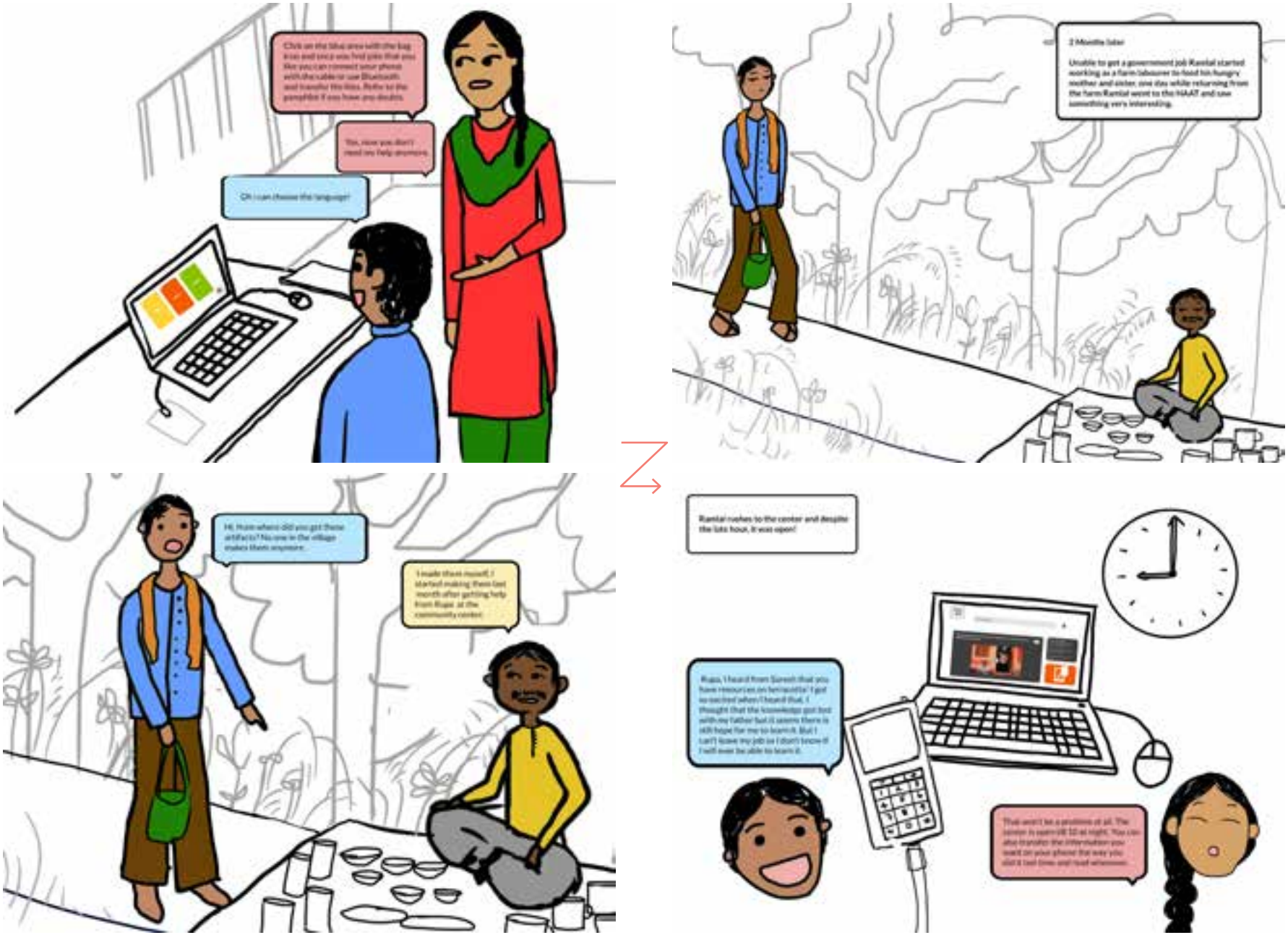
FORTNIGHTLY CHALLENGES

- Go fishing and cook a meal with your friends.
- Do you remember how the Gond Paintings were? See if you could find someone to tell you about them and paint how you feel today?
- Go for a forest walk and see if you can identify the medicinal plants. Document and archive these as drawings or podcasts!
- Who knows a lot about farming? Find them and learn some skills.
- If you were to gift a metal artifact to your friend, what would it be? Make it in these 15 days!
- Could you weave a scarf for yourself?

STORY BOARD

A hypothetical scenario of the community center in Bastar, some details are based on the lives of Adivasis we spoke to, such as - the death of a craft with the passing away of someone, the inability to get jobs reserved for them despite being qualified, the poverty and hunger which forces people to take jobs below their capabilities and interests.




2 Months later
Unable to get a government job Ramlal started working as a farm labourer to feed his hungry mother and sister, one day while returning from the farm Ramlal went to the HAAT and saw something very interesting.
Ramlal rushes to the center and despite the late hour, it was open!

A few days later he returned for some more information.
I can't remember details of this ore firing technique that my father told me about. I can't find it on the machine. Is there another way to find out?
The specific process is very difficult to find Kamlal. Give me two days I will try to find it. Till then take a book on terracotta and see if you get the information.
My artefacts were breaking in the kiln during the firing because I was doing something WRong so this is important information for me. ugh, what can I do now?
I think I will ask Suresh about it. His artefacts looks similar to my fathers'. Do you have his number?
Ramlal decided to leave his number with the Rupa at the center so that Suresh could contact him instead.
Ramlal was over joyed to get the call from Suresh later that day.
Hmm, that's a tough one. I don't know which process you are talking about but I can show you how I do it. You can see if there's something that rings a bell.
In the months that followed, they began to work together in their free time finding ways to create products that could sell.
After seeing them and their work, some Parents in the village began sending their children to Suresh and Ramlal to learn the skill.
You should record your video while making this and put it up on the device. We will help you. After doing this more people can learn and get to know about us.
Ramlal also takes this opportunity to take pictures of and record stories about some of the things his father - a master craftsman had made and taught him. It was his way of keeping his father's work alive and remembered.

As they continued to work, they picked up a self-facilitation kit which enabled them to structure community learning, exploration and exchange better.
The learning transcended age as Suresh and Ramlal learnt from their students and the students from Suresh and Ramlal.
Wanting to further their practice they organised a workshop with the help of CGNet and other NGOs. A terracotta artist from Rajasthan was the facilitator hence setting into motion a cultural exchange of techniques from different parts of the country.
It was a hit, 23 people showed up! Rupa recorded the session for those who couldnt attend.
Your artifacts are really unique you should sell it online.
Yes, now that you have the digital device you could learn more about taking your business online, be aware and increase your sales.
Yes thankyou. I have been telling Ramesh that we should atleast start taking orders over the phone. I hope we receive the payments properly when we do that.
Really? Currently we are able to sell a few to the neighboring villages.
With encouragement from their community and the NGOs that had worked with them in the past, the two men were ready to take the next step - ONLINE!
The growth of businesses villagers were starting brought prosperity not only to them but also their families. Prosperity came in all forms such as more convenient access to healthcare, money for entertainment etc.
For Ramlal, it was the happiness of finally being able to get his mother quality treatment for a knee injury she had sustained years earlier.

Through the different elements of our system, we hope for an improvement in various aspects of an individual's and the community's life. Such as:

Increase in embodied and Institutionalized cultural capital: The storage of traditional knowledge in an archive that can be accessed by and added by anyone slowly but steadily builds a repository of knowledge. There exists no such repository for the Adivasi's in central India so far. Since it will cater to those regardless of language and literacy, it levels the playing field. The eventual facilitation of exchange between different communities will build to this end.

Information brings power and the availability of relevant information to the people contributes to eventual socio-economic growth and hence social, cultural and objectified cultural capital. There will also be a significant change in an individual's Habitus.

The ability for everyone to contribute and access destroys the pre-existing symbolic violence and at the same time seeing their knowledge being of use to others it boosts the people's confidence and self-worth hence increasing an individual's social capital.

Eventual translation of knowledge into money leading to an increase in objectified cultural capital.