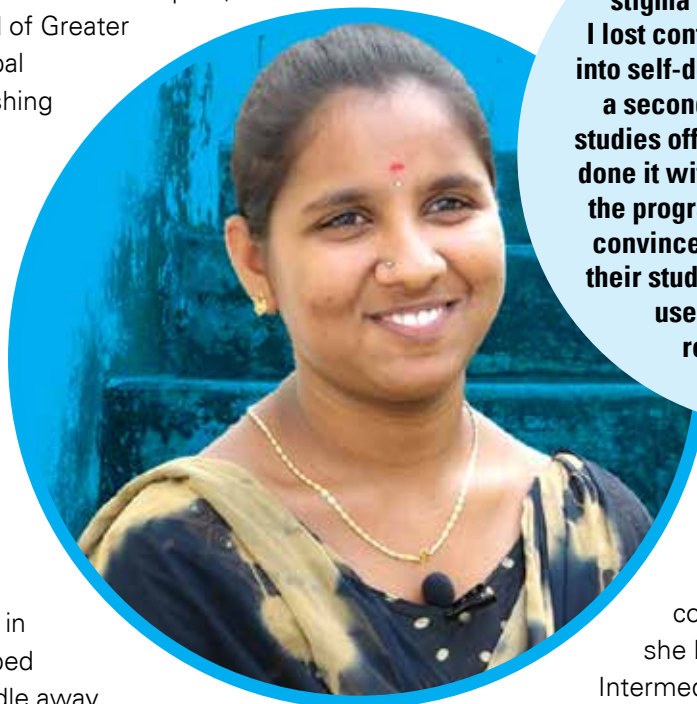


# Emerging from the Shadows

## A second chance at education followed by skill development alters the life script of numerous adolescents

**2**1-year-old Mounika lives in Peda Jalaripeta, a dense neighbourhood of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation. She is from a fishing community. Life is tough for families and alcohol and substance use is rampant. Children are forced to work in daily wage jobs and are also married off at an early age. Mounika was one of the brightest students in her class at Narayana College. However, increasing family pressure and constant stress at home affected her studies and she failed her Intermediate exam in 2017. Losing heart she dropped out of college and began to idle away her time.

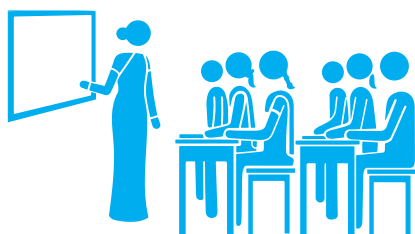


**“After facing the stigma of failing my inter exam, I lost confidence and started falling into self-destructive patterns. Getting a second chance to complete my studies offered hope. I could not have done it without the handholding from the programme staff. Now, I try and convince all adolescents who quit their studies to return to school and use every opportunity to rebuild their lives.”**

identified as a potential beneficiary in a local survey done by the implementing partner. After some convincing and motivation, she began to prepare for her Intermediate exam and fared well.

The implementing partner NGO in her area helps adolescents re-enrol in subjects/trades of interest as part of the Adolescent Empowerment Programme. Targeting 18 to 22-year-olds through open schooling followed by skill development trainings, many drop outs are given the opportunity to complete their Class 10. Mounika was

To express her gratitude, she volunteered to counsel other girls. Her regular presence at the local Children’s Club and honest experience sharing were big motivators. She worked to step up messaging on child marriage, dowry, girl child discrimination and sexual abuse which were issues related to girls dropping out of school. She also accompanied programme staff to convince parents to let their daughters complete their studies. This resulted in more than a dozen boys and girls returning to school in 2018-19 and many families agreeing to let their daughters decide their age of marriage.



**Targeting 18 to 22-year-olds through open schooling followed by skill development trainings, many drop outs are given the opportunity to complete their Class 10.**

Inspired by these developments, Mounika embarked on a career in healthcare. The NGO helped her identify an appropriate skill development course and connected her to prospective employers. Today, she is an assistant in an Ayurveda clinic and earnestly working to develop her experience and skills.

