

A young Indian woman gets on in life

Neetu stays in her home village after training as a teacher

Not so long ago, Neetu Singh was a pupil at the local school. Now, the 23-year-old stands in front of a class herself. Neetu has become a teacher. She has stayed in her home village of Hamirpur to give young women there the chance to improve their future prospects by gaining an education. Neetu has supported Dachser and *terre des hommes* from the very beginning. When the aid project was launched in Hamirpur, Neetu Singh was one of the first villagers to get involved in the project.

Six kilometres. By bike. In all weathers. Neetu still remembers her old way to school very well. Now, 23 years old, she smiles when she casts her mind back. "I used to like going to school, although it was a long way by Indian standards," the young woman recalls.

Neetu is Indian. She was born and grew up in Hamirpur, a small Indian village that has been supported by Dachser and *terre des hommes* since 2005. She has big dark eyes and shiny black hair, which she usually ties back in a bun. She is a young woman who has got on in life thanks to hard work and ambition.

Education as the key to success

When Dachser and *terre des hommes* launched the aid project in Uttar Pradesh, Neetu joined in from the very start. During her own time at

school, she cycled the six kilometres from Hamirpur to Kamlapur, where she completed high school, every day. Then she went on to study to become a teacher. "I like teaching," Neetu says, adding that many people in her village cannot read or write. "As a teacher I can at least help some of them."

She did not find school all that difficult herself. "My parents supported me." And she enjoyed learning. "I liked maths most." English was not one of her favourite subjects, something she shares with her own pupils.

She advises her pupils to work hard at school – after all, education is the key to a successful future. And the young girls Neetu teaches are especially aware of that. "They are highly committed: they want to learn," she says. So far she has successfully mainstreamed 22 totally illiterate girls from her village.

The two sides of India

Neetu sees the aid project as an excellent opportunity to improve the lives of people living in India. She is proud to be Indian, and she loves her country. But the poverty and illiteracy, the lack of education and healthcare, the unemployment and poor living conditions of so many people living in her country weigh on her mind.

"The project is very important for us," she says. Since it began, many villagers have decided to go to school, and people who left school prematurely have decided to return to classes. Many villagers who used to be illiterate have now learned to read, write and do arithmetic, thanks to the project. "That's a real success, and it fills me with pride." But on the other hand, Neetu is also aware that she and the project partners still have a long way to go before the goals of the aid programme are fulfilled. P.H.



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