The Licence Is the Livelihood

How a Bengaluru School Put Women Behind the Wheel

SHISHU MANDIR · BENGALURU · KR PURAM · 20 VILLAGES







A trainee at the wheel in the women-only driving school. The licence comes first, then the electric auto.

1983
working in Bengaluru East
a free English-medium school at its centre

10,278
government school children
supported through its programs in 2025

4,500
families reached
across 20 villages

₹1,000 to ₹2,000
a day for a driver
on her own hours, in her own auto (about $12 to $24)

> Shishu Mandir has run a free school in Bengaluru East since 1983. In 2022 it took five electric autos from a Rotary club and turned its driving school into something women could earn a living from.

The school is the centre of it: free, English-medium, built for children whose families could not otherwise pay. Around it sit skills training, higher education support and community work across twenty villages in KR Puram.

The driving school is now women only. An earlier cohort of 120 women learnt to drive for a women-run cab service that closed during the pandemic. The e-auto program put the first five back on the road.

HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE

Start with the school. The driving program only works because the campus already knows these families.

Go and stand in it.

Shishu Mandir

Every sheet in this set points to a place you can visit: a sorting platform, a solarised health centre, a processing floor, a driving lesson. It is real work, and all of it is open to visitors.

WHERE TO GO



The school campus, Hella Nagar

Classrooms, the childcare centre and the skills workshops in one place.



A driving lesson

The women-only school, and the test that follows it.



A village household in KR Puram

Where the twenty-village community work actually lands.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR THE ROOM

01 The program gives a woman a licence, not a job. Which of those is harder to provide, and which lasts longer?

02 An earlier cohort trained for a cab company that then closed. What does a skills program owe its graduates when the employer fails?

03 Five autos is a pilot. What would have to be true for this to reach five hundred?

WHAT WE RUN

Academic programs

Business, leadership, entrepreneurship, healthcare, technology, sustainability and culture. Immersions of 12 to 15 days built around one of them.

Faculty and dean cohorts

Site-based curriculum development with Indian universities, industry and state agencies.

Executive programs

Company visits, policy briefings and operator conversations, tailored to a sector.

Service learning programs

Working visits with non-profits, social enterprises and CSR partners, tailored to your group.

READS WELL WITH: CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK

18 Women & Work **13** Electric Mobility

SOURCES Shishu Mandir, “Shishu Mandir launches Women E-Auto Drivers Programme”, 11 September 2022, and the organisation’s own site (2025 figures).