

Delhi School of Social Work Alumni Association

Newsletter

Issue 13 | July 2026



Editorial

Dear Alumni,



This July issue arrives at a special moment for the DSSW community. As the Department marks 80 years of social work education, we celebrate an institutional milestone and the values, relationships and purpose that have carried its legacy across generations. The pages that follow show this legacy in motion.

We welcome Prof. Neena Pandey who assumed the office of Head of the Department of Social Work. Prof Pandey has worked very closely with the Alumni Association right from the beginning when it was set up. We look forward to her leadership over the next three years. We take this opportunity to thank Prof Sanjoy Roy, the previous Head of the Department for consolidating our work and strengthening the bond between the Association and the Department. We also welcome our new members of the Alumni Association's Executive Committee. The scholarship programme continues to grow through the generosity of alumni, while heritage and nature walks have created spaces for learning and companionship across batches.

There is much to celebrate within the Department. DSSW's recognition among India's leading social work institutions, the reopening of the renovated auditorium, and the establishment of the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) Resource Utilisation Cell point to a campus that honours its history while widening opportunities for the future.

This issue engages with questions shaping contemporary social work like reflections on how digitalisation affects women in informal employment, and why India's schools need fairer and more meaningful assessment. In the Students' Corner, members of the Placement Cell invite students, faculty and alumni to build stronger pathways from the classroom to professional practice.

I hope these pages renew our sense of belonging and encourage each of us to contribute - through mentorship, opportunity-sharing, scholarship support or simply by staying connected.

Kind Regards,
Arpan Tulsyan, Editor
(2004-06)

"The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life." — Jane Addams

MESSAGE FROM PROF. NEENA PANDEY,
Head of the Department of Social Work



Dear Alumni,

I feel honoured to write the message for the newsletter. First of all, I salute the great educational institution Delhi School of Social Work which has shaped all of us. I congratulate the Delhi School of Social Work on completing its grand 80 years. In the journey of all these years, the institute has shaped many lives and I am one amongst them. My humble gratitude to all my teachers and fellow mates for the journey I have undertaken.

On behalf of the Department of Social Work, I heartily congratulate the DSSW Alumni Association for making the bond stronger amongst all of us through this newsletter. Indeed, the initiatives and efforts keep us active, alert, and enthusiastic towards reaching out to people in need. The work of social workers as champions of change must be documented, and I am confident that this newsletter will connect us through our shared commitment to working with people.

Warmly,

Prof. Neena Pandey



ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT

1. Ranking among the schools of social work

The Department of Social Work was ranked among the top three Social Work institutions in India in the India Today MDRA best colleges ranking survey 2026. This reaffirms its position among the leading centres of excellence in social work education. The ranking is based on a comprehensive assessment of academic quality, governance, infrastructure, leadership development and career outcomes. The alumni can support the Department in enhancing the career outcomes by developing soft skills among the students and strengthening their placements and internships.

2. 80th Annual Day celebrated by the Department

Annual day is a highly anticipated occasion every year. This year it was special for two reasons. First, we all are very proud that the Department of Social Work (earlier called Delhi School of Social Work) completed 80 years since its inception. We are all proud of its legacy. The second reason for everyone to rejoice was that after remaining out of use for several years, the auditorium reopened following renovation with a new look. The ceiling of the auditorium had collapsed a few years ago and due to many reasons, it took a long time for it to be restored with support from the University.

Chief guest for the Annual day was **Dr Rajesh Kumar** Executive Director, Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM). The Department has a tradition of inviting chief guests from NGOs which are doing significant work in the social sector. Dr Rajesh has been working in the area of drug addiction and shared about some challenges they faced and how they overcame these and also about the impact his organisation has been able to make.



Photos: Annual Day Celebration

The Department also invites a senior faculty member to be part of the annual day. This year **Prof Aruna Bhardwaj** was invited as a guest of honour. Having taught at the Department she had many anecdotes to share about her students, other faculty members and how they contributed to the development of the Department.

In the last few years, the Department has been inviting the alumni and to be part of the Annual days as guests of honour and special guests. This year, **Mr DS Kohli** was invited as a guest of honour and **Ms Sagari Chhabra** as a special guest. Mr Kohli has worked in HR for many years with Air India and

superannuated as Executive Director. He shared his views about how the Department should align with the current requirements in the HR space. Ms Sagari is a poet, playwright, filmmaker and journalist. She has won several national and international awards for her work. A significant one being the documentation of freedom fighters including women. A part of her work in the form of a documentary film was also shown on the occasion.

It was also our pleasure to award Anant-Santosh scholarship to **Sumit Kumar** and Alumni scholarships to **Pooja Ghugtyal and Srijeeta Banerjee**. On behalf of the Alumni Association we wish them all the very best for their future.

3. DSSW Establishes PwD Resource Utilisation Cell to Widen Access for Students with Disabilities

The Department of Social Work has set up a PwD (Persons with Disabilities) Resource Utilisation Cell to support students with disabilities. Professor Sanjoy Roy, who inaugurated the Cell welcomed the initiative. “This Cell is a reflection of our commitment to equality and inclusive education, ensuring that no student is left behind in academic life,” he said.

Dr. Abhishek Thakur, who led this initiative and serves as Nodal Officer for the Cell, said disability is often not a matter of impairment alone. “It arises from the gap between a person’s functional limitations and the barriers around them, and technology has the power to close that gap. It restores function and becomes an equaliser, giving our students an equitable opportunity to learn and grow,” he said. He added that the Cell would be strengthened over time through partnerships with organisations working in the disability sector.



Photo: Resource Centre, DSSW

The Cell was inaugurated in partnership with the Blind Relief Association, Delhi, whose long experience in disability services was central to shaping the facility. It has been established within the Department at no additional cost to the institution, and will serve as a dedicated space for students to access assistive technology and academic support.

STUDENTS' CORNER

- DSSW Placement Cell

From classroom to professional practice

For students of the Delhi School of Social Work (DSSW), professional preparation begins long before the final interview. The Placement Cell helps connect academic learning, fieldwork experience and the world of employment. Established as a student-led and faculty-guided initiative, it has grown into an institutional platform that brings together students, faculty members, alumni and recruiting organisations.

The Cell works throughout the academic year to identify suitable opportunities, communicate with employers, circulate information among students and coordinate recruitment processes. It also supports students in understanding different career pathways and preparing themselves for professional roles. Its purpose is not simply to help students secure a first job, but to build a transparent and sustainable system of career support for successive batches.

THE PLACEMENT CELL AT A GLANCE

Opportunities Jobs, internships, fellowships, consultancy assignments and project-based roles.	Career readiness CV reviews, mock interviews, pre-placement talks and professional networking sessions.
Employer engagement Outreach to organisations, recruitment coordination and long-term institutional partnerships.	Alumni support Mentoring, referrals, sectoral insights and introductions to professional networks.

How does the Cell function?

Each year, a Placement Committee is constituted under the guidance of the Head of the Department, the Placement Director and the Additional Placement Director. Student committee members help identify prospective employers, maintain recruiter and alumni databases, circulate opportunities, follow up with organisations and coordinate placement drives. They also organise Skill Lab sessions and other career-development activities.

This collaborative structure is important because placements cannot be built through one annual recruitment drive alone. They depend on relationships developed over time, the credibility of the Department, active student participation and the willingness of alumni and organisations to remain engaged.

WHERE CAN A DSSW DEGREE TAKE YOU?

Development and civil society	Education, health, livelihoods, gender, child rights, disability, environment and community development.
Corporate social responsibility	Social impact, sustainability, stakeholder engagement and community programmes.
Government and public institutions	Social welfare departments, missions, public sector bodies and development programmes.
Research, policy and consulting	Think tanks, research institutions, monitoring and evaluation agencies and consulting organisations.
International and philanthropic organisations	Development agencies, foundations, humanitarian organisations and international NGOs.

The value of the alumni network

DSSW alumni work as practitioners, researchers, policymakers, consultants, entrepreneurs and leaders across diverse sectors. Their experience makes them an essential part of the placement ecosystem. Alumni can alert the Cell to vacancies and internships, introduce it to recruiters, refer suitable candidates where organisational rules permit and help students understand workplace expectations.

Their contribution is equally valuable beyond recruitment. Mentoring conversations, CV feedback, mock interviews, guest lectures and discussions on emerging sectoral trends can help students make more informed career choices. Alumni also strengthen the visibility of DSSW by representing the Department's values and professional standards in their workplaces.

What can students do?

The Placement Cell is a shared institutional resource, and students have an important role in making it effective. They should read circulated opportunities carefully, meet deadlines, keep their CVs updated and prepare seriously for every interaction with an employer. Students can also attend career-readiness sessions, seek guidance from alumni and faculty members, and communicate promptly with the committee.

It is equally important to approach placements with openness. Social work graduates now contribute across a wide range of sectors and roles, many of which may not fit traditional ideas of social work employment. Exploring these pathways can reveal opportunities to apply social work knowledge in research, policy, programme management, sustainability, consulting and public systems.

Building the DSSW community

Every opportunity shared, professional connection made and mentoring conversation offered strengthens the prospects of current students and future batches. The Placement Cell is therefore more than a recruitment mechanism: it is a collective effort to help DSSW students move from academic life into meaningful professional practice while sustaining the Department's long-standing legacy.

ACTIVITIES OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

1. Introducing the new members of the Executive Committee

There have been a few changes in the Executive Committee in the last few months. We welcome all the new members. Their presence will energise the EC.

Mr. Nandish Agarwal took charge as the General Secretary in April from Ms Anjana Anand who had to step back for personal reasons. Nandish has been a very active member of the Association especially in providing visibility to the Association on social platforms and holding sessions with the students at the Department. He is currently employed with KPMG as an Assistant Manager.



Prof Neena Pandey had been part of the Executive Committee as the Joint Secretary. After becoming Head of the Department, she will now be the Patron of the Association. We are very happy that **Prof Seema Sharma** will step into her shoes and now be our Joint Secretary. She has been extremely supportive of the Association for the past few years.



Mr. Brajesh Pandey was co-opted as a member of the Executive Committee. He has recently graduated from the Department and is working with BAIF Development Research Foundation as a senior project officer. Having both these young members in the Executive Committee has fulfilled our longstanding intent to include younger alumni in decision making positions.



Alumni Lectures

Two Alumni lectures have been organised since January 2026. These sessions are held online. It has always been our endeavour to select topics which may be of interest to the alumni as well as the students. The following topics were selected for the series:

1. “Loneliness in the age of Hyper connectivity” which was co-facilitated by **Ms Anindita Pattanaik and Ms. Seema Taneja**. Both of them, alumni of the Department have been working in the mental health space for many decades. Drawing from their experience they steered the discussion making it very participatory. They highlighted the difference between solitude and loneliness, two terms which people often use interchangeably.
2. “Embracing the silver years: Shared experiences, reflections and realities” was led by **Prof Archana Kaushik** and facilitated by Mr Rajeev Varma. Prof Kaushik teaches the Social Work with the elderly. Therefore, she was able to articulate the issues relating to elderly in a very structured manner highlighting both the challenges and positive aspects too.

Scholarship Scheme

The Alumni Association started a scholarship scheme in the year 2023-24. Till 2025, 11 students were awarded scholarships. Selection of students for the scholarships is done using the criteria of need-cum-merit. A decision was taken in the General Body meeting in 2024 that the Association should create a corpus and the interest accruing on it should be used to extend scholarships to students. With the support of our members and some non-members also, we were able to collect Rs. 4,72,000/-. This amount was put in a fixed deposit and its interest is being used to extend scholarships. One of our alumnae, who wants to contribute anonymously, instituted Anant-Santosh scholarship in the memory of his late parents.

This year an additional amount was raised taking the total corpus amount to Rs. 6,93,600/-. This year we received a generous contribution of Rs. 2 lakhs from Mr Pramod Gupta who instituted a scholarship in the memory of his late father. In addition to this Mr Chiranjiv Singh and Mr Yogesh Chandra, our regular donors also contributed to the corpus.

Heritage and Nature Walks

We are fortunate to be staying in Delhi that has an array of old monuments and places which have a deep imprint of history. For over a year we have been conducting walks to different historical monuments and places of common interest. Apart from getting to know our history and culture, these walks provide a good opportunity for interaction amongst alumni across batches and help in bonding. We have had alumni participants from very senior batches (1971 batch) to young alumni who have passed a year or two back. Some of the faculty members are also regular participants. Since January we have organised three events which were very well attended and gave an opportunity to participants to explore both nature and the history of Delhi.

The visit to **Tughlakabad fort** was probably the most enjoyable one. It's the largest fort of Delhi with a perimeter of 6 km. It dates back to the 13th century and our historian friend, Swapna Liddle brought alive the entire history and ups and downs of the Delhi Sultanate. After continuous attacks by Mongols on the Mehrauli capital, Ghiyasuddin Tughlak, the then Sultan realised the need to build a safe and strong fort.





Photos: Heritage Walk to Tughlakabad Fort

The rocky terrain of Tughlakabad was ideally suited to create a secure fort. The outer walls were made with huge stone blocks of Delhi quartzite and were sloping inwards which made it difficult for attackers to climb. There were stores for ammunition, stepwells and granaries to stock adequate supplies for the whole population. When Mohammad Bin Tughlak came to power he moved back and constructed Jahanpanah, closer to the old settlement and this fort was abandoned. Many of us just drive past this fort feeling curious as to what lies behind these sturdy walls. Spending almost three hours brought it alive.

The second walk was to the **Hauz Khas monument**, which was again guided by Swapna Liddle. Behind the bustling village of cafes and winding paths is the monument that was once a prestigious 'Madrassa', and Mosque around a huge water reservoir. The Madrassa was a royal seat of higher learning for mathematics, astronomy and arts. It was built by Firoz Shah Tughlak around the water tank, originally constructed by Khilji as a source of water supply for the city of 'Siri', one of the seven Sultanates of Delhi. The complex also has a tomb where Firoz Shah is buried. All participants on this walk had this common feeling *'What a wonderful place to study'!*

The third walk was organised at the **Sanjay Van**, an 800-acre area in the Aravalli hills which was once home to a well-organised human settlement. We can still find some remains of the settlement. There are a Baoli (stepwell) and an old wall that could have been part of a fort. During excavations, multiple rooms, chambers and pieces of pottery were uncovered showing proof of habitation thousands of years ago.

The wall dates back to the 10th century fort of the Chauhan dynasty.





Photos: Walk to Sanjay Van

The walk was led by Nikhil John, an expert naturalist who is associated with the WWF. He shared a lot of interesting facts about the flora and fauna of the forest, which is a world of its own. We saw huge termite hills which are an intricate eco-system, sustaining forest life. They recycle the dead trees into soil and manure, used by the new trees. He showed us marks and signs which tell stories of all nocturnal visitors. Scratch marks made by porcupines on amaltaas trees which help Civets feed on the bark. The droppings of Nilgai which are clustered in one place to mark territory and attract mates. Nikhil also showed us cup shaped depressions carved into rock surfaces called Cupule petroglyphs. These are believed to be rock art dating back to the Neolithic era, (approximately 3800 BC to 1500 BC).

Nikhil shared a lot of information about birds too. He identified the sweet call of the Asian Koel, the 'tuk-tuk' of the brown-headed Barbet and many more. The climb up the hillock was a little difficult for some because of the slippery rocks. Nonetheless it was worth the effort as we could see the remnants of old wall of fort belonging to the Chauhan dynasty. We could even get a glimpse of the Qutab minar in the far horizon. The view from the top was exhilarating.

These walks provide an excellent opportunity to relive and share our experiences, values and ethos imbibed during our association with our alma-mater. We have a lot of activities lined up for the coming season and invite all of you to join.

Acknowledgement: Lot of inputs for this article are drawn from the write-ups of our alumni and regular participants, Sonia Singla and Nandish Agarwal. Those interested can read more detailed write-up on LinkedIn.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/delhi-school-of-social-work-alumini-association-delhi-chapter_dssw-dsswalumni-sultanpurbirdsantuary-activity-7417949341534924800-houg?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android&rcm=ACoAAEHOFjMBnDXmdQ5L3o_55-OAplQhn26pvYM

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REFLECTIONS

WHY INDIA'S SCHOOLING NEEDS ASSESSMENT REFORMS :

Arpan Tulsyan, Batch 2004-2006

Assessment reform is central to the future of Indian education because examinations shape what students learn, how teachers teach, and what society values as “achievement.” For decades, India’s school system has relied heavily on high-stakes, end-of-year examinations that reward memory, speed, and reproduction of textbook content. This has created a classroom culture where success is often measured by marks rather than understanding. For social work scholars, this is not only an education issue; it is also an equity issue. Assessment systems decide who progresses, who is labelled weak, and whose potential remains invisible.



India’s history of assessment reform has been uneven. The National Policy on Education, 1986, introduced the idea of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation to reduce rote learning and make assessment more child-centred. The Right to Education Act later carried forward a no-detention approach, under which children were not to be held back during elementary schooling. The original intent was progressive: schools were expected to identify learning gaps early and support children instead of punishing them through failure. However, in many places, the support system did not develop. Continuous assessment often became a paperwork exercise, while automatic promotion was misunderstood as promotion without learning. This created unintended consequences: learning gaps accumulated, teachers felt less institutional pressure to remediate, and children from poorer or first-generation learner backgrounds were often promoted through grades without acquiring basic competencies.



Photo: Need for assessment reforms in India

The later reversal of the no-detention policy reflected these concerns, but it also showed the danger of swinging from one extreme to another. The 2019 amendment to the RTE framework allowed regular examinations in Classes 5 and 8, followed by additional instruction, re-examination and possible detention if the child still failed. It also retained the protection that no child should be expelled until completion of elementary education. The lesson is clear: neither automatic promotion nor simple detention can solve India’s learning crisis. Detention without academic and social support may further harm disadvantaged children; promotion without learning may silently abandon them.

Recent moves such as competency-based assessment and open-book examinations should be seen in this context. CBSE's reported decision to introduce open-book assessments for Class 9 from the 2026–27 academic session is significant because it signals a shift from memory-based testing to application, interpretation and analytical thinking. But open-book exams will help only if questions are genuinely analytical. If teachers continue to ask textbook-based questions, students will simply copy from books instead of thinking with them.

The direction of reform, therefore, must be balanced. India needs assessments that identify learning gaps early, give feedback to students and teachers, reduce fear, and test real understanding. Classroom assessments should include projects, portfolios, oral presentations, observation, problem-solving tasks and community-linked assignments. Board exams and entrance tests should gradually move away from pure recall and include case-based, analytical and application-oriented questions. Parents must also be brought into the conversation so that assessment reform is not misunderstood as lowering standards.

India needs an assessment system that recognises learning, supports weaker students early, reduces unfair dependence on coaching, and prepares young people for life, work, and citizenship. Done well, assessment reform can become a foundation for stronger human capital, higher productivity, and India's long-term national growth.

The Gardener 85

By Rabindranath Tagore

Who are you, reader, reading my poems an hundred years hence?

I cannot send you a single flower from this wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold from yonder clouds.

Open your doors and look abroad

From your blossoming garden gather fragrant memories of the vanished flowers of an hundred years before

In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring morning, sending its glad voice across an hundred years.

MEET AN ALUMNA

Adapting Digitalisation to Women's Lived Experiences of Work : Anweshaa Ghosh (Batch 2004-2006)



Anweshaa Ghosh is currently serving as Assistant Director – Womens' Economic Empowerment at International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Asia

Across India, women engaged in informal work, including home-based production, domestic work, tailoring, beauty services, food processing and handicrafts—are increasingly using smartphones, digital payments and online platforms to reach customers and manage their livelihoods. Women artisans and self-help groups, for example, sell through platforms such as Amazon Saheli and Etsy, gaining access to markets beyond their immediate communities. Domestic and care workers use apps to find employment, while street vendors, farmers and micro-entrepreneurs rely on digital tools for payments, training, financial services and information about government schemes.

However, digitalisation does not affect all workers equally. The Time Use Surveys of 2019 and 2024 demonstrate that women continue to spend substantially more time than men on unpaid domestic and care work. This time poverty often compels them to seek supposedly “flexible” employment, which is frequently low-paid, low-skilled and insecure. Environmental pressures associated with digital infrastructure, including the high water consumption of large data centres, may also intensify women's care responsibilities in resource-constrained communities.



Photo: Young Girls learning about digitisation

India's rapid digital expansion is usually presented as a means of improving efficiency and reducing duplication. Yet digital systems are often designed through top-down and gender-blind processes. Unequal smartphone ownership, restrictive social norms, information gaps, limited resources and unpaid care responsibilities prevent many women from accessing digital opportunities or developing relevant skills.

The digitalisation of the work of ASHAs and Anganwadi workers illustrates these tensions. Constant data entry and reporting requirements can take them away from their primary responsibility of interacting with and supporting communities. Digital monitoring may also increase surveillance, stress and the risk of online harassment.

Other workers encounter similar barriers. Fisherwomen in Tamil Nadu may struggle to expand their businesses because they lack smartphones or digital access, even when adequate fish stocks are available. App-based attendance systems such as the National Mobile Monitoring System can delay or deny wages because of poor connectivity, unavailable devices or technical failures. Aadhaar mismatches, banking errors, distant bank branches and limited financial literacy can further exclude women from biometric authentication and digital payments.

Platform work, although presented as neutral, is controlled by algorithms that rarely account for women's care responsibilities, mobility constraints or safety concerns. This can reproduce gender-based wage inequalities. Women from marginalised communities are also increasingly employed in poorly paid artificial intelligence data-labelling and content-moderation work, often without social security or mental-health support despite exposure to disturbing material. In manufacturing, women may be required to wear devices that collect data to train robots, sometimes without informed consent or acknowledgement of their contribution.

These examples reveal unequal power relations between technology systems and women informal worker, intensified by inadequate social protection. Digital and financial literacy programmes are necessary, but they are not sufficient. Sustained investment in care services, safe transport, workplace protection and accessible grievance mechanisms is equally important. Above all, technology must be designed through a bottom-up, gender-intentional approach that recognises women's lived realities. Embedding inclusion, justice and ethical artificial intelligence in policies and programmes is essential if digital transformation is to create more secure and empowering futures for women workers.

We invite our seniors, juniors and contemporaries to make this Alumni Association of our Alma Mater even stronger. Each one of us are making a difference and have a story to share. We will be delighted to share your stories with our alumni.

Join the SSSW Alumni Association.

Membership Link –<https://dsswalumni.in/Membership>

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