

## Stormy Skies to Bright Futures: Empowering Change in Ranchi

After experiencing the most turbulent flight of my life, I landed in the serene city of Ranchi in late March. As I exited the airport, the cloudy and stormy sky vividly reminded me of the harrowing scenes during the flight, with passengers chanting mantras for survival. After waiting for about ten minutes, I met my colleagues at Ranchi Airport, who were extremely sweet to welcome me to their city.

Without much delay, we set off for the nearby village of Nadi Toli in the Ratu block, in the city's suburb. The wild wind was blowing strongly as my colleagues and I entered the village, battling the elements. What immediately caught my eye was that almost every house was under construction. After exploring four different lanes, my curiosity was piqued by how the entire village was building pukka houses.

This phenomenon could be attributed to two reasons: either the houses were constructed under Jharkhand's Abua Awas Yojna or Centre's PM Awas Yojna on a large scale, or due to the successful harvest of the Rabi season, agrarian families had enough money to invest in assets like house construction.



Feeling happy and delighted, we swiftly moved to meet our alumni student, Rahul. Rahul had completed his training in Pratham's Automotive 4W course at the Chaibasa center, supported by the District Administration of West Singhbhum. We call this initiative "Ashirwad Campaign," where Pratham engages with its alumni to learn about their current endeavours, support them, and in turn, receive blessings "Ashirwad" from their families, ensuring continuous community engagement and welfare efforts.

Rahul's house, surrounded by tall banana trees, exuded a rustic charm. Upon reaching, we called out to him, but unfortunately, Rahul couldn't come home for the harvest season as he was working at an automotive firm as a technical motor mechanic. Instead, a voice from inside beckoned us, "Aao, aao, andar aao" (Come, come inside). A middle-aged, short, sleek, and tidy woman in a simple saree, Rahul's mother, came outside to greet us.

With the house under construction, there were only two plastic chairs, and we all adjusted ourselves around them and began our conversation. Rahul had informed his mother beforehand about our visit. She brought us water and started chatting politely. I asked her if she knew who we were and how we were related to Rahul. With a beautiful smile, she replied, "Hume pata hai aap Pratham se hain" (We know you are from Pratham), "Pratham ne humare bache ka bhagya badal diya" (Pratham has changed our child's fate).

She explained how Rahul's training was free of cost and that Pratham also helped him secure a reputable job. Rahul's father is a farmer, and it had been very difficult to continue farming as they did not have sufficient money to buy agricultural fertilizers, and their land fields solely depended on natural rains for irrigation. However, since Rahul started earning, they have been able to buy necessities and save money as well. She mentioned that Rahul is even helping them buy furniture for their new house.

When asked if she wants Rahul to come back and pursue agriculture, she expressed her desire for him to follow his dreams and hustle for his goals.

After a while, she called someone from the inside room, and it was Rahul's younger brother, a shy 17-year-old. He sat down, and his mother said, "Iska bhi aap kuch karvaaiye" (Please find something for him too). When asked, he said he wants to be like his brother and earn his own money. He seemed indecisive about his choices, so we helped him explore career options by leading him to Pratham Youth Net's website, where he could seek vocational skills knowledge and decide what was best for him. He seemed delighted and started surfing the website. We also made Rahul's little brother familiar with Pratham Alumni's Instagram page. He was quick to scan the code and follow the page, allowing him to see what other youths like his brother are doing and engaging in at workplaces.



At last, we politely asked for her Ashirwad for Pratham so we could continue supporting many more youths like Rahul. With this brief conversation, we continued our journey, taking Ashirwad from the communities we inspired.

**Author:** Diksha Patial, Pratham