

YAMUNA'S
DAUGHTERS
-JANHVI





**YAMUNA, LIKE ANY OTHER RIVER,
BRINGS ORDER AND DISORDER TO LIFE.**

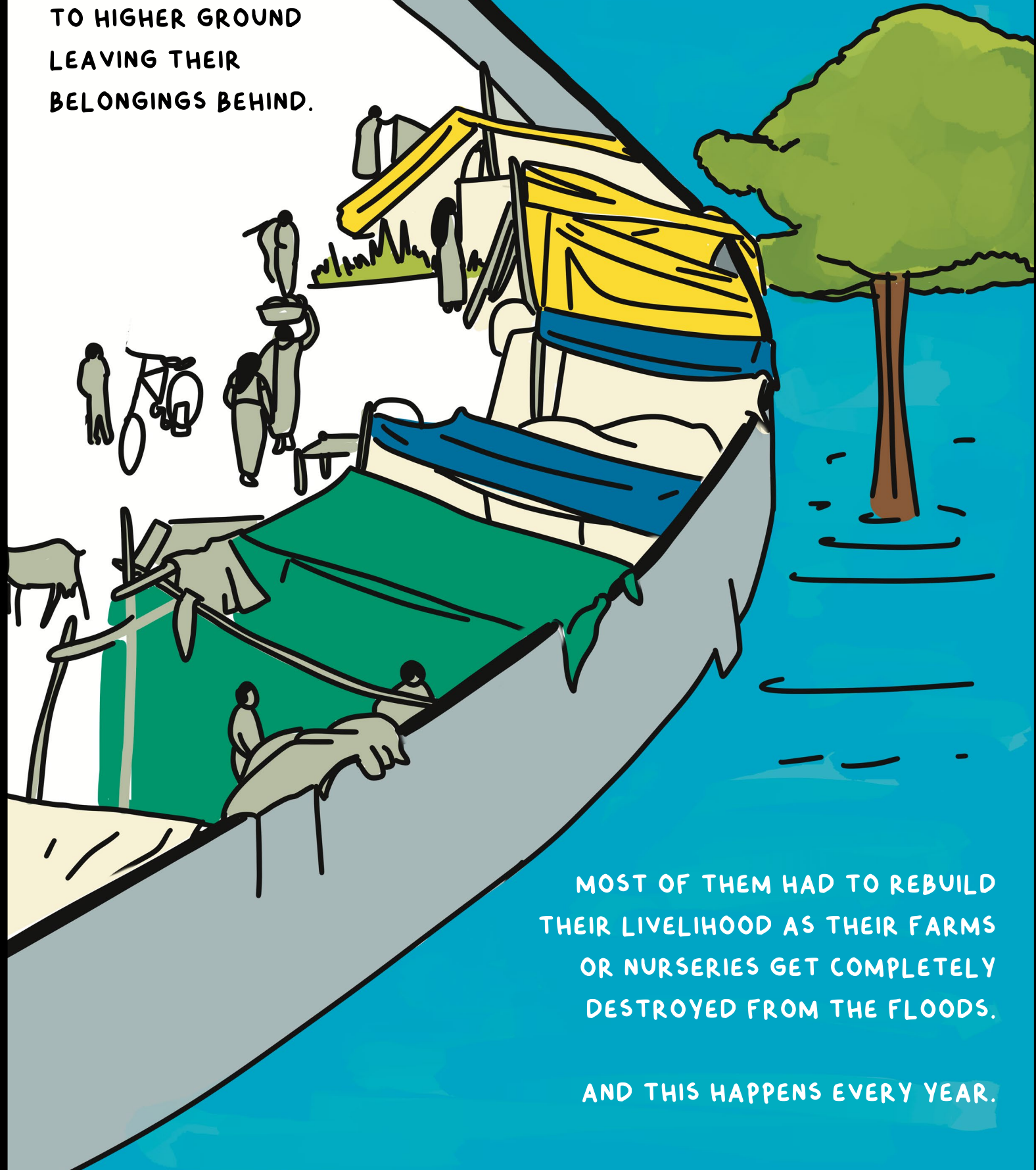
**IT ENABLES LIVELIHOODS BUT CAN
JUST AS EASILY DESTROY THEM.**

COMMUNITIES LIVING NEAR THE RIVER FACE ANNUAL FLOODS AND THEIR INTENSITY HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE LAST FEW YEARS



BACK IN 2022, WHILE WORKING FOR AN NGO, I HAD A CHANCE TO HELP THESE COMMUNITIES WITH FOOD AND SHELTER.

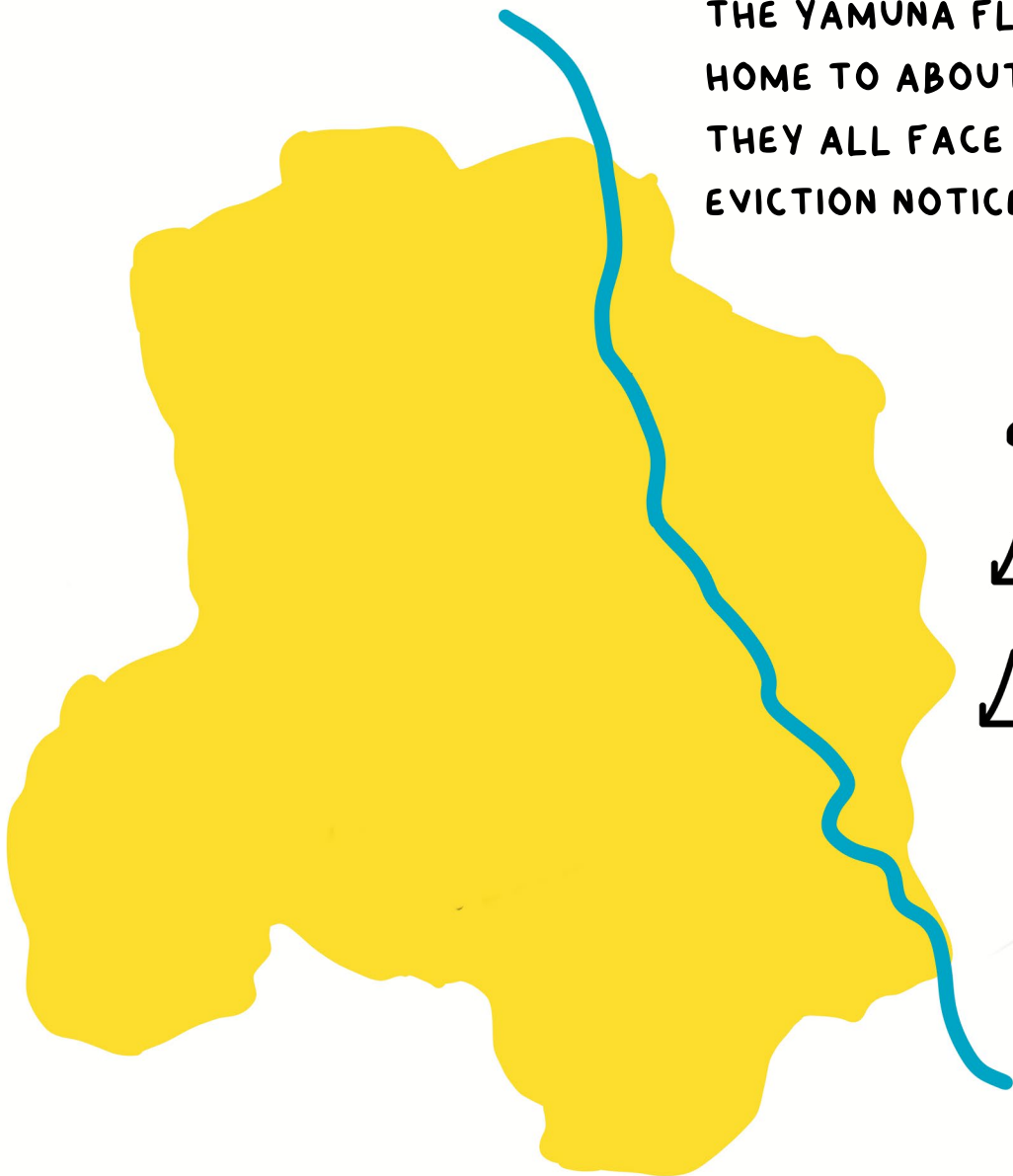
THEY HAD EVACUATED TO HIGHER GROUND LEAVING THEIR BELONGINGS BEHIND.



MOST OF THEM HAD TO REBUILD THEIR LIVELIHOOD AS THEIR FARMS OR NURSERIES GET COMPLETELY DESTROYED FROM THE FLOODS.

AND THIS HAPPENS EVERY YEAR.

THE YAMUNA FLOODPLAINS ARE HOME TO ABOUT 47,000 PEOPLE. THEY ALL FACE ANNUAL FLOOD, EVICTION NOTICES REGULARLY.¹



47,000

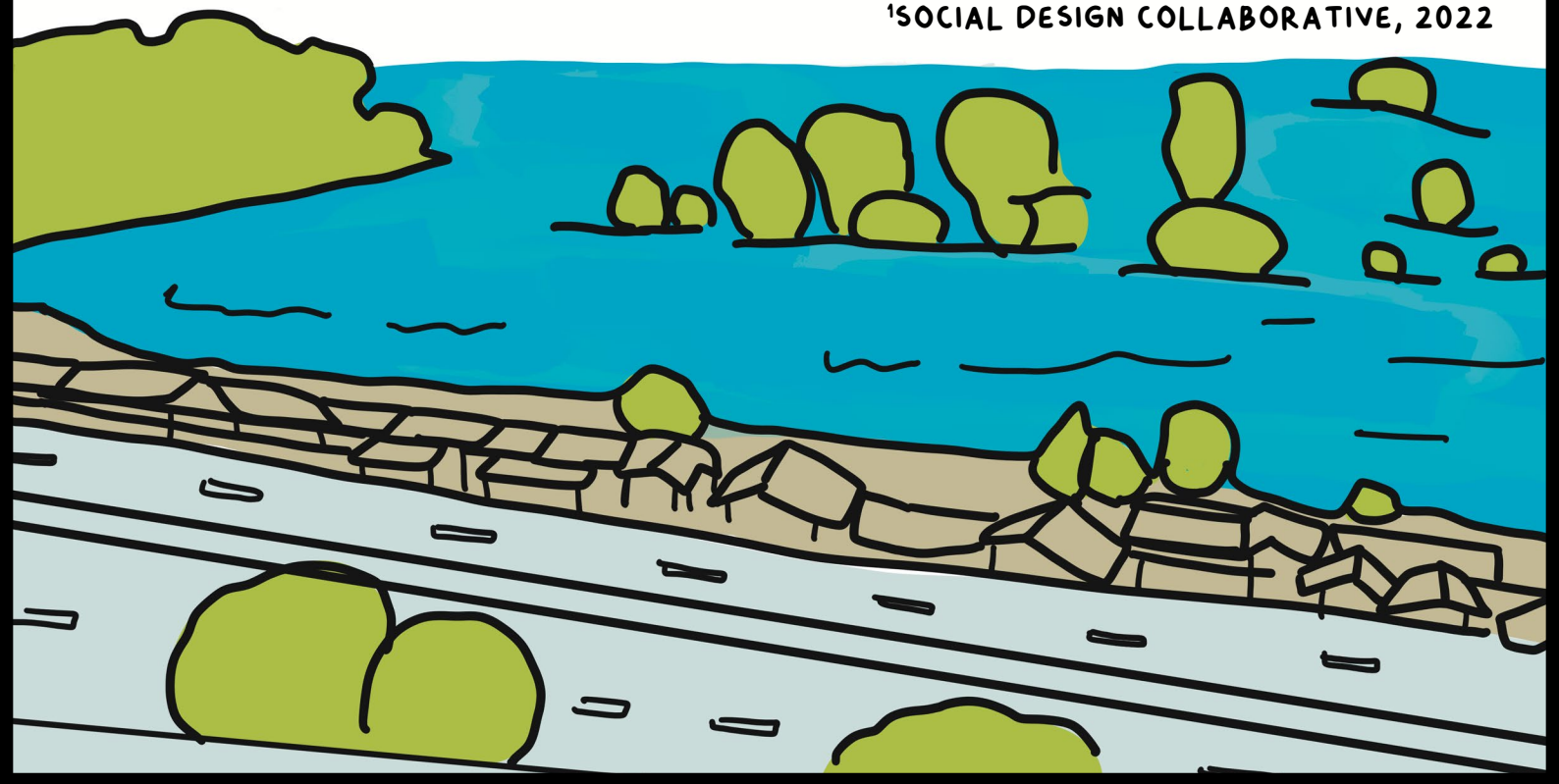


9,350



56 BASTIS

¹SOCIAL DESIGN COLLABORATIVE, 2022



**DISASTERS ARE
NOT EXPERIENCED
UNIFORMLY BY
EVERYONE.**

**ACCORDING TO A STUDY BY UNDP,
WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE
FOUR TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE
WHEN A DISASTER STRIKES.²**

**UNEQUAL AND RESTRICTED ACCESS
TO ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL
RESOURCES—SUCH AS DECISION-MAKING
POWER WITHIN FAMILIES AND GOVERNING
BODIES—INFLUENCES THEIR LIFE EXPECTANCY
AND ACCESS TO POST-DISASTER ASSISTANCE,
COMPENSATION AND RECOVERY.³**

**WOMEN AND GIRLS ALSO FACE HEIGHTENED RISK
OF SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.**

**HOW DO WOMEN AND GIRLS MANAGE TO
LEAD 'NORMAL' LIVES HERE?**

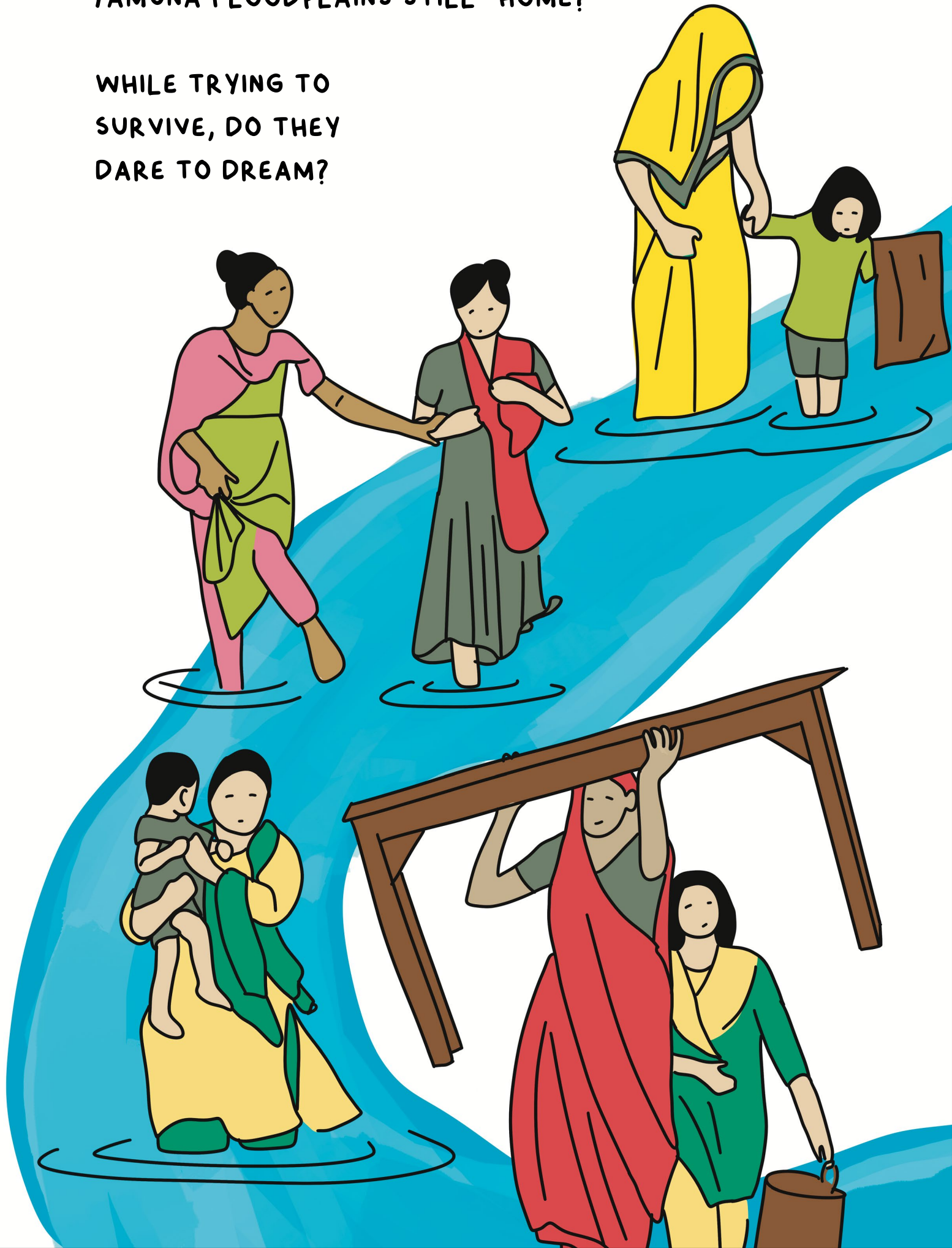
**DOES ROUTINE DISRUPTION FOSTER
GREATER RESILIENCE?**

²UN WOMEN, SDG 13: TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS.

³UN ACCELERATING ACTION FOR GENDER RESPONSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, UN WOMEN, 2023

AMIDST ALL THESE DISRUPTIONS, ARE THE
YAMUNA FLOODPLAINS STILL "HOME?"

WHILE TRYING TO
SURVIVE, DO THEY
DARE TO DREAM?



I ARRIVE AT YAMUNA KHADAR⁴ TO LOOK FOR THESE ANSWERS. THE AUTO DRIVER LOOKS CONFUSED. THE DROP LOCATION IS BETWEEN TWO FLYOVERS.



⁴KHADIR OR KHADAR ARE THE LOW-LYING AREAS, ALSO CALLED NALI OR NAILI. KHADAR AREAS ARE VULNERABLE TO FLOODS AND OFTEN HAVE PARTS OF FORMER RIVER BEDS THAT WERE MADE AVAILABLE FOR CULTIVATION WHEN THE COURSE OF A RIVER CHANGES.

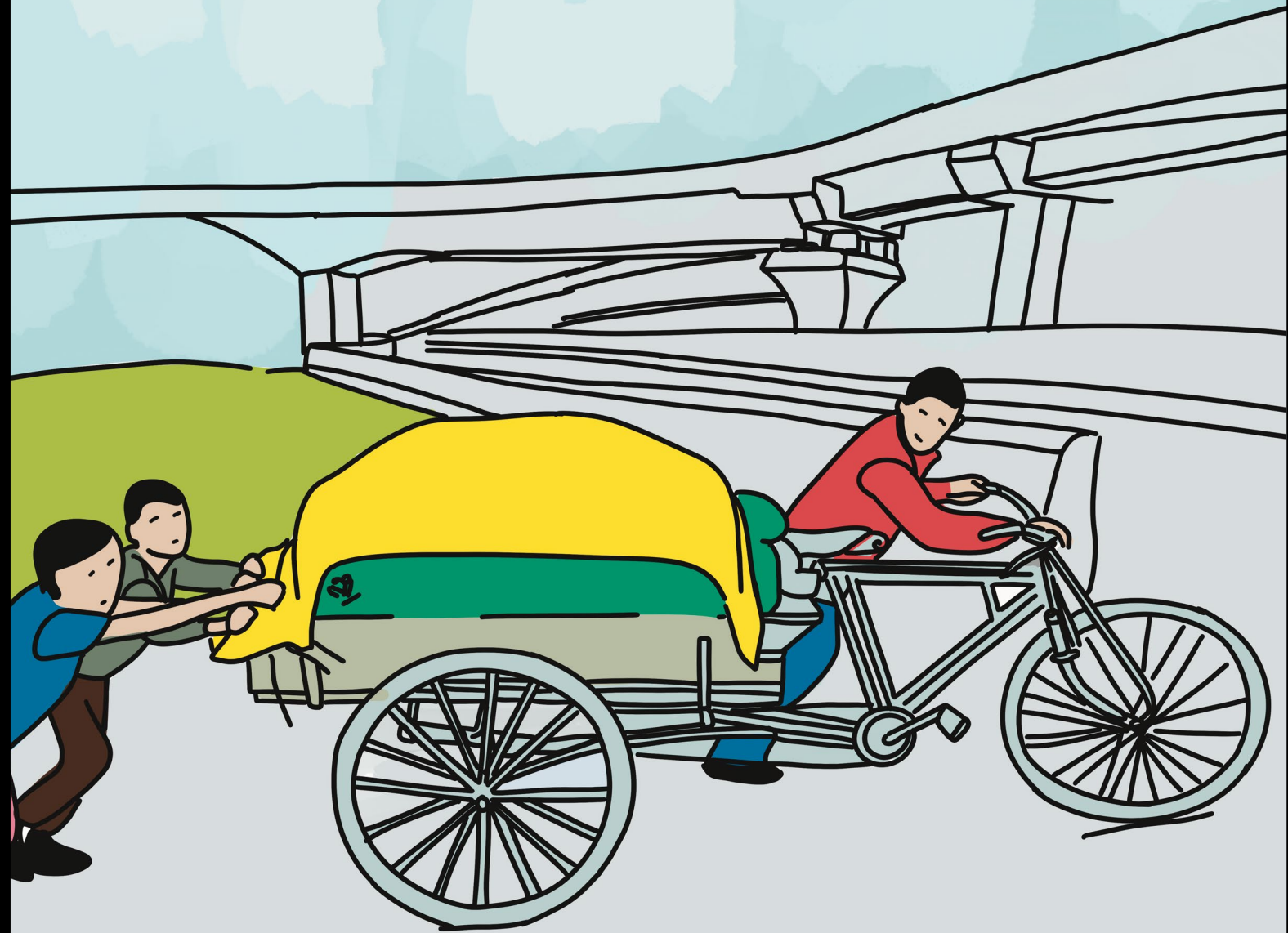





"ARE YOU SURE THIS IS THE DROP?"

NO BUILDINGS, NO INSTITUTIONS, NO
PEOPLE, JUST A TINY ROAD THAT LEADS
SOMEWHERE UNDER THE HUGE MAYUR
VIHAR FLYOVER. I SAY YES.

I GET OFF AT THE MAIN ROAD AND MAKE MY WAY TO THE SETTLEMENT, TUCKED AWAY UNDER THE FLYOVERS.



A SABZIWALA WAS ON HIS WAY OUT, PUSHING A CART PILED WITH VEGETABLES UPHILL. HIS LITTLE SON HELPED HEAVE THE CART ALONG.


A girl with a braid, wearing a green dress and a pink shawl, is walking on a muddy path. She is carrying books under her arm. The path is flanked by simple buildings with grey roofs and blue walls. There are green trees in the background. The ground is brown and muddy, with some puddles reflecting light.

FURTHER ALONG, I
SEE A GIRL WALKING
WITH BOOKS IN HER
HAND, AND I ASK HER
IF SHE WAS GOING TO
SCHOOL.

"TUITION", SHE SAID. "BOARDS
AA RAHE HAI, ABHI KAAFI
ZAROORAT HAI, VIMLA DIDI HI
PASS KARVA SAKTI HAI."⁵

I HAVE HEARD VIMLA DIDI'S NAME
SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE. I SET
OUT TO MEET VIMLA DIDI...

IT RAINED A FEW DAYS AGO, WHICH EXPLAINED WHY
EVERYTHING WAS MUDDY. MY SHOES WERE CAKED WITH
MUD AS I WALKED INSIDE THE COMMUNITY.

A small illustration of a girl's face, looking upwards with a concerned expression. She has dark hair and is wearing a green headscarf.

⁵BOARD EXAMS ARE COMING
UP AND ONLY VIMLA DIDI
CAN HELP ME NOW.

BEHIND A FEW FARMS, THERE IT WAS. THE
'TUITION' LOOKED LIKE A COMMUNITY SCHOOL.



THERE WERE SWINGS, PLAYGROUNDS,
OPEN CLASSROOMS FOR EVERY AGE
GROUPS AND THREE TEACHERS.



THIS IS VIMLA'S STORY.

AT 27, SHE RUNS THESE CLASSES FOR EVERY CHILD IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. BUT THEY AREN'T REGULAR TUTORINGS, THEY'RE ALMOST CONSIDERED A SECOND SCHOOL FOR ALL THE KIDS OF YAMUNA KHADAR.

IT IS UNIQUE IN THE COMMUNITY. I ASK HER HOW SHE MANAGED TO DO THIS. HER EYES LIGHT UP AND SHE PROUDLY TELLS ME HER STORY, HER STRUGGLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS.

GIRLS IN MY COMMUNITY DON'T GET TO STUDY AFTER 12TH CLASS. MY NEIGHBOURS TRIED TO CONVINCING MY PARENTS TO NOT LET ME STUDY FURTHER.

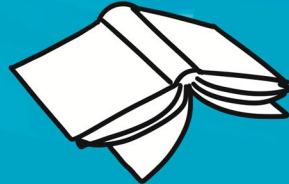
BUT I DIDN'T LOSE HOPE AND KEPT GOING. WITH TIME, MY PARENTS WERE ONBOARD.

"SHE SHOULD HELP OUT WITH THE FARM, IT WILL BOOST YOUR LIVELIHOOD"

इसकी शादी की उम्र ही गई है" 6

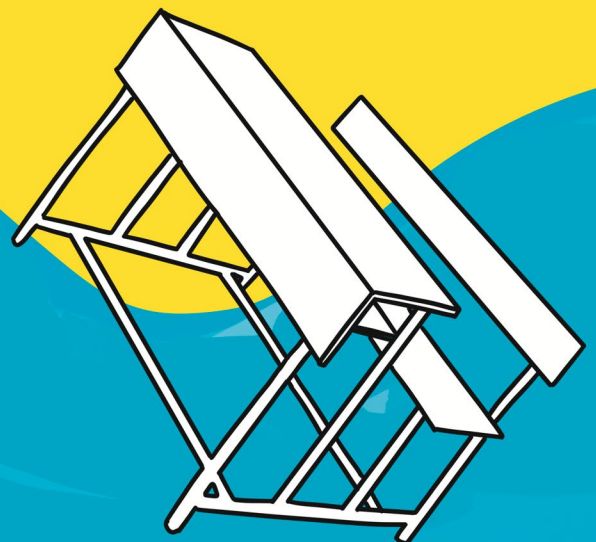
IT IS TIME FOR HER TO GET MARRIED.

THE CLASSES WERE BORN OUT OF NECESSITY AS THE CHILDREN WEREN'T ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH STUDIES AT THEIR GOVERNMENT SCHOOL.



MOST OF THEM ALSO HELP OUT THEIR FAMILIES WITH FARMING, HOUSEHOLD CHORES, NURSERIES OR KIRANA SHOPS.

VIMLA'S SCHOOL ALSO FACES DISRUPTION FROM THE FLOODS AS THE CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS TO BE MOVED.



BUT, BECAUSE OF VIMLA, CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO TAKE IMPORTANT EXAMS LIKE BOARDS, CATCH UP LOST STUDY TIME DURING THE FLOODS AND COMPLETE THEIR SCHOOL.

I GOT MARRIED LAST YEAR, MY HUSBAND IS A TEACHER LIKE ME.



VIMLA HOLDS A MASTER'S DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTENDS TO EARN ANOTHER MASTER'S, IN EDUCATION.



I GOT MARRIED AND MOVED
HERE FROM BELLANDUR (A
VILLAGE IN UTTAR PRADESH)
ABOUT 20 YEARS AGO.

I FOLLOWED A STUDENT OF VIMLA,
AARTI (16) TO HER HOME.

HER SINGLE MOTHER, SAVITRI (45),
LOST HER HUSBAND A FEW YEARS
AGO TO DIABETES AND BECAME THE
SOLE EARNER OF HER FAMILY.

SHE PRIMARILY EARNS FROM HER NURSERY BUT SHE HAS TO REBUILD IT FROM SCRATCH AFTER THE FLOODS EVERY YEAR.

FOR SAVITRI, RESILIENCE MEANT TAKING CARE OF HER CHILDREN. GETTING THEM EDUCATED, MARRIED AND INDEPENDENT.



THREE OF HER FOUR DAUGHTERS ARE MARRIED AND LIVING IN OTHER PARTS OF EAST DELHI.

ONE OF HER MARRIED DAUGHTERS HAS BEEN PREPARING FOR HER BACHELOR'S IN ARTS ADMISSIONS THIS YEAR. I ASKED HER WHAT SHE WANTS TO DO WITH LIFE. SHE SAID,



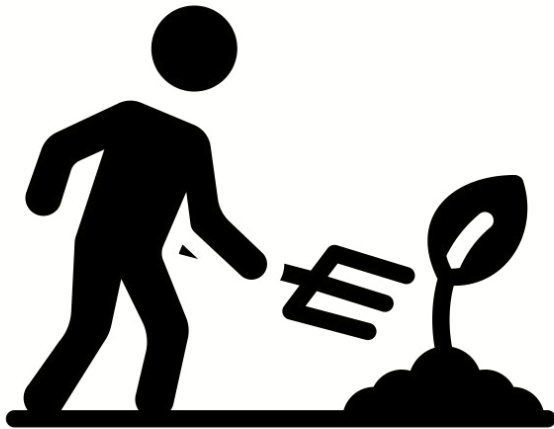
I WANT TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER, I WANT TO DO SOME GOOD IN THE WORLD.

LIKE SAVITRI, THERE ARE SEVERAL WOMEN WHO MOVED HERE AFTER MARRIAGE OR MIGRATED HERE AS A FAMILY IN SEARCH OF WORK.⁷



⁷SOCIAL DESIGN COLLABORATIVE, 2022

THEY ARE ENGAGED IN DIFFERENT KINDS OF WORK:



FARMING

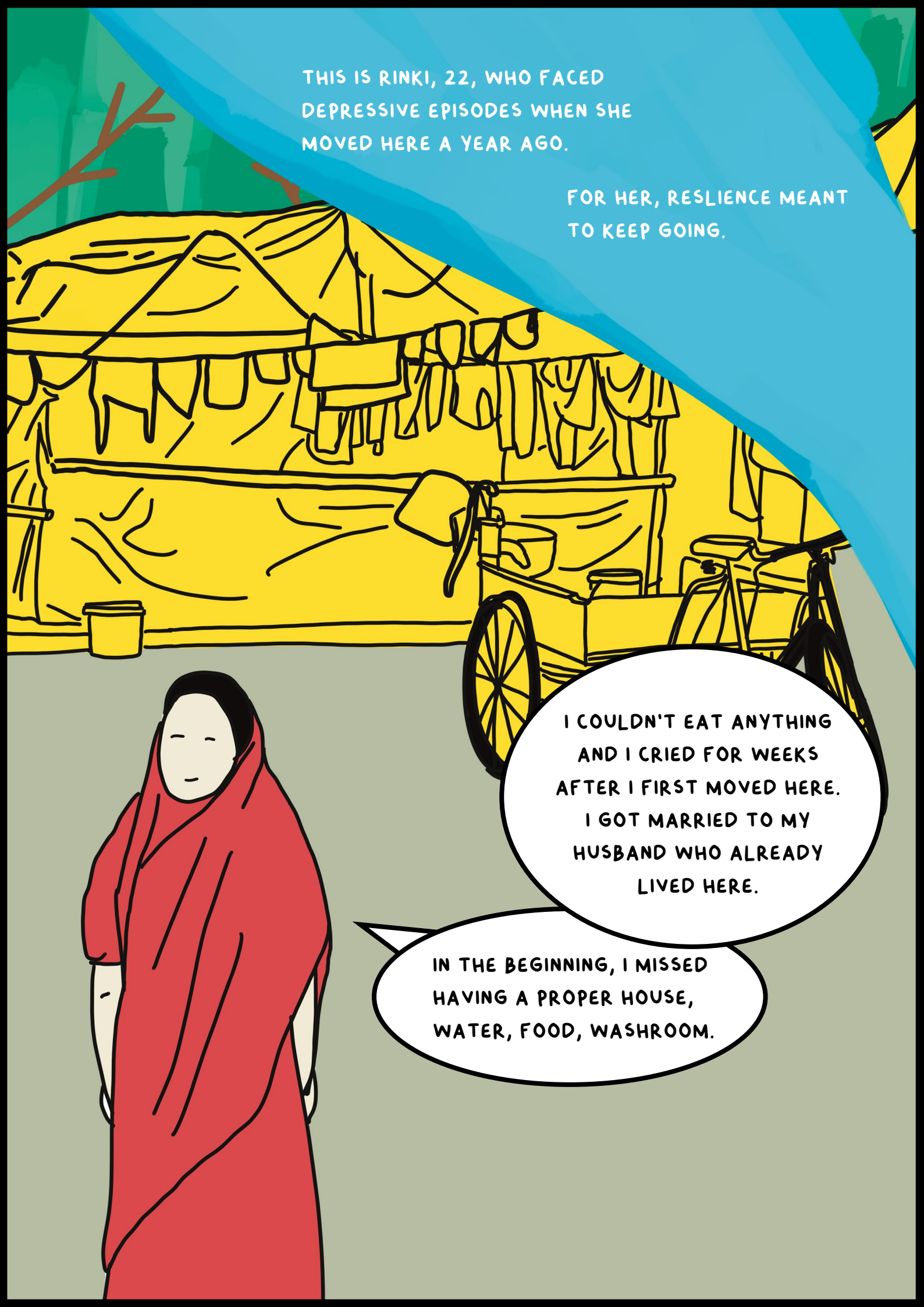


NURSERIES



DAILY WAGE LABOURERS

AMONG OTHER THINGS...




THIS IS RINKI, 22, WHO FACED
DEPRESSIVE EPISODES WHEN SHE
MOVED HERE A YEAR AGO.

FOR HER, RESLIENCE MEANT
TO KEEP GOING.

I COULDN'T EAT ANYTHING
AND I CRIED FOR WEEKS
AFTER I FIRST MOVED HERE.
I GOT MARRIED TO MY
HUSBAND WHO ALREADY
LIVED HERE.

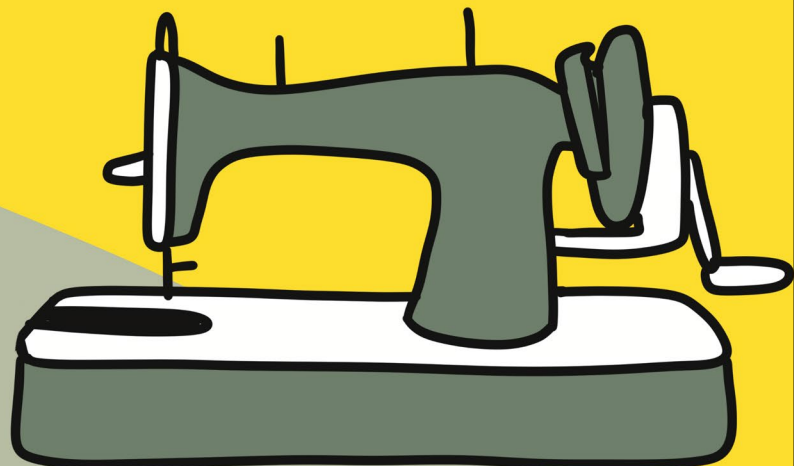
IN THE BEGINNING, I MISSED
HAVING A PROPER HOUSE,
WATER, FOOD, WASHROOM.



लोग काम के लिए
आते रहते हैं तो मेरा
मन लगा रहता है।⁸

SHE'S A SKILLED TAILOR AND
ONE OF THE EARNERS OF THE
FAMILY. WITH TIME, SHE FOUND
A COMMUNITY BECAUSE OF HER
TAILORING BUSINESS.

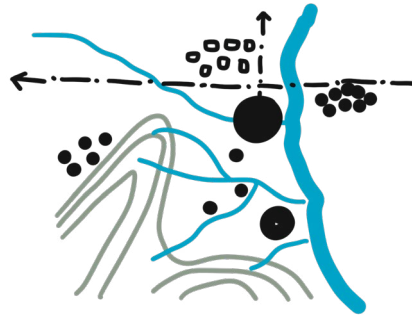
SHE HAS FOUND A HOME,
FRIENDSHIP AND JOY
THROUGH HER WORK.



⁸I LIKE IT WHEN PEOPLE COME TO ME
FOR WORK, IT GIVES ME PURPOSE.

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CALLING
FLOODPLAINS HOME FOR CENTURIES...⁹

1714



EARLY COLONIAL
SETTLEMENT CAME AT THE
NORTH OF THE WALLED
CITY. RIDGE & THE OPEN
SPACE ACTED AS A BUFFER
BETWEEN WALLED CITY.

1881

WATER SUPPLY, DRAINAGE
INFRASTRUCTURE WAS BUILT.

THE FLOODPLAINS WERE
CONSIDERED A SWAMPY
WASTELAND, WHICH WAS
TO BE DEVELOPED.

1857

FLOODPLAIN LABELLED AS
'TO BE DEVELOPED'.

CLASSIFIED AS NAZUL
LAND, JURISDICTION OF
THE KHADAR WAS VESTED
WITH THE DELHI MUNICIPAL
COMMISSION.



⁹ DELHI URBAN ART COMMISSION;
NEHA LAL AND ANUBHAV
PRADHAN, 2019

1949

LAND LEASED TO FARMERS.

DELHI IMPROVEMENT TRUST
LEASED OUT LAND TO SEVEN
VILLAGES BY THE YAMUNA
FOR AGRICULTURE UNDER THE
AEGIS OF THE DELHI PEASANTS'
COOPERATIVE MULTIPURPOSE
SOCIETY (DPCMS).

1957

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
(DDA) WAS INSTITUTED.

1966

LEASE EXPIRED AND DDA DECIDED
TO TERMINATE IT ALTOGETHER.

DPCMS FAILED TO COMMUNICATE
THIS TO FARMERS AND CONTINUED
TO COLLECT RENT AND ALLOT
PLOTS.

1994

EVICION
NOTICES BEGAN.

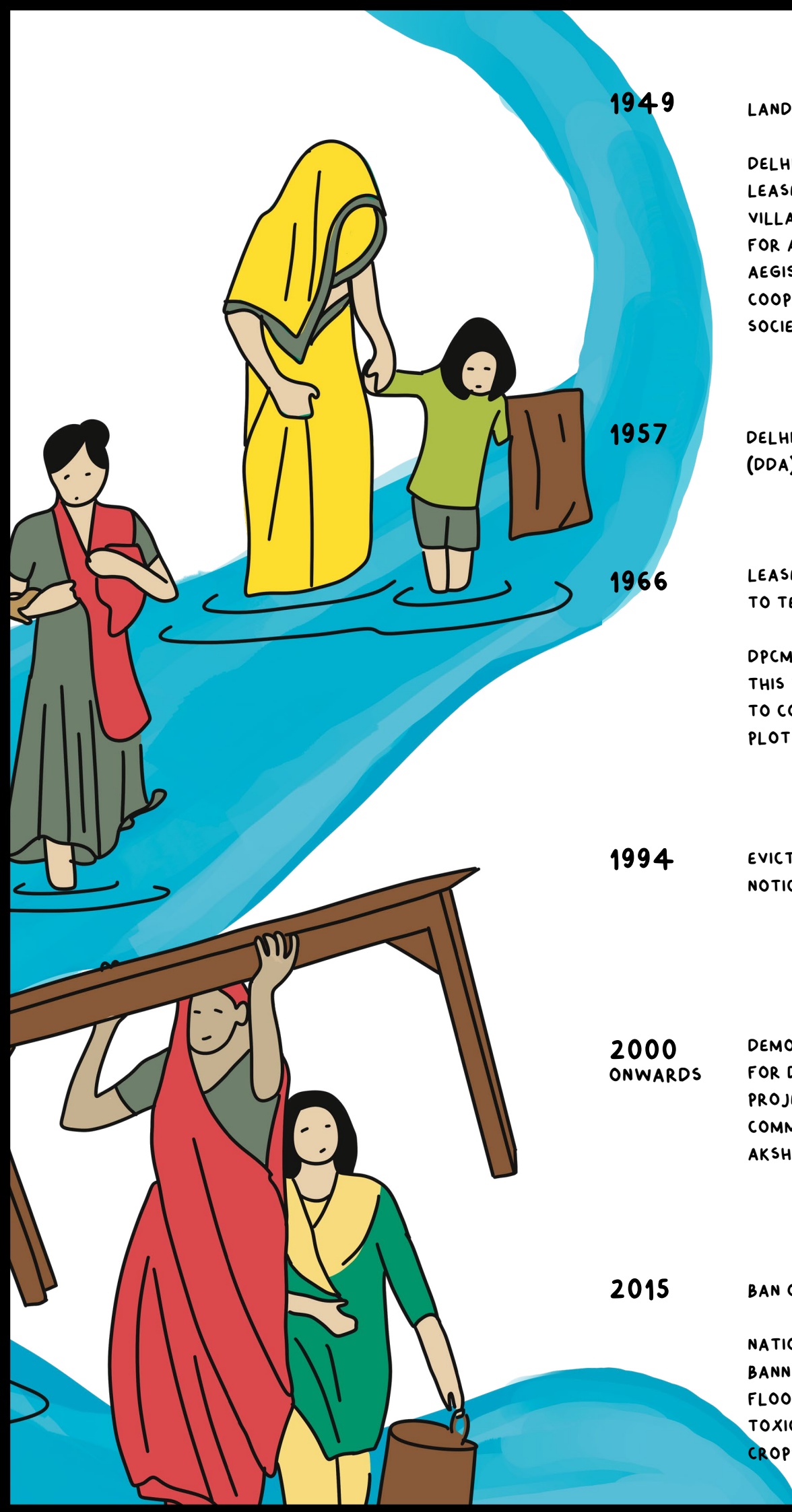
**2000
ONWARDS**

DEMOLITIONS STARTED
FOR DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS LIKE
COMMONWEALTH GAMES,
AKSHARDHAM TEMPLE.

2015

BAN ON CULTIVATION.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
BANNED CULTIVATION ON THE
FLOODPLAIN CLAIMING IT IS
TOXIC FOR THE RIVER AND THE
CROPS GROWN.

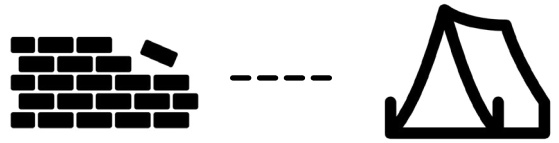


2019

YAMUNA RIVERFRONT
PLAN RELEASED BY DDA

2023

THE NATIONAL GREEN
TRIBUNAL (NGT) FORMED A
HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE FOR
THE DEMARCATION OF THE
YAMUNA FLOODPLAIN.



APART FROM THE DEMARCATION,
THE COMMITTEE WILL ALSO SUGGEST
MEASURES TO PREVENT AND REMOVE
ENCROACHMENTS ALONG WITH
UNAUTHORISED CONSTRUCTION.

A FEW DECADES AGO, PEOPLE HAD
PAKKA HOUSES BUT DUE TO REGULAR
DISPLACEMENT AND EVICTION NOTICES,
THEY NOW LIVE IN TENTS AND
TEMPORARY HOMES (KACHHA HOUSES).

2024

THE DELHI HIGH COURT DIRECTED THE REMOVAL OF ENCROACHMENTS
FROM THE YAMUNA FLOODPLAINS AND SOUGHT A REPORT FROM THE
DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIODIVERSITY
PARKS/WETLAND ON THE SITE, SAYING GREEN DEVELOPMENT OF THE
BANKS IS NECESSARY.



ON THE OTHER HAND, KIDS ARE DOING WHAT THEY DO, MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD DEAL. I WALKED OVER TO THE GIRLS AND THEY SURROUNDED ME EXCITEDLY. THEY WERE HAPPY TO SHOW ME AROUND AND TELL ME THEIR NAMES.

I ASKED THEM WHAT THEY LOVED TO DO.

DANCE!!

PLAY!!

GO TO SCHOOL!!

RADHA, 9

POOJA, 6

NISHU, 11



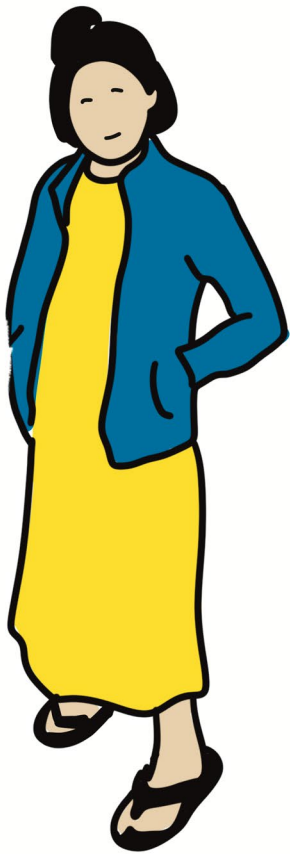
I ASKED THEM HOW THEY FELT ABOUT THE FLOODS.

मम्मी मना करती है पर हमें पानी में नहाने में बहुत मजा जाता है।¹⁰

¹⁰MUMMY DOESN'T LET US BUT WE ENJOY PLAYING IN THE WATER.

THEY HAVE FOUND A WAY TO RELATE TO THE RIVER. I SEE HOW THEIR WAY OF SEEING IS TINTED WITH PLAY AND FUN. THAT'S HOW THEY PROCESS GOING THROUGH WITH FLOODS, HOUSEHOLD CHORES OR FARMS.

हम डांस में
अच्छे हैं पर
पढ़ाई में कमजोर
इसलिए हमें
ट्यूशन की जरूरत है¹¹



THEY ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY MIGHT LAG IN STUDIES BECAUSE OF THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS.

THEY JUST WANTED A TUTOR AROUND TO HELP THEM CATCH UP WITH THE REST OF THE CLASS.

I ASKED THEM WHAT THEY WANTED TO BE WHEN THEY GREW UP...

¹¹I'M GOOD AT MY HOBBIES LIKE DANCING BUT NOT SO MUCH AT STUDIES.





WHILE TRYING TO SURVIVE, THESE WOMEN AND GIRLS
HAVE FOUND A WAY TO DREAM.

VIMLA'S DREAMS HAVE CHANGED HER LIFE AND THE
LIVES OF THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM.

SAVITRI'S DREAMS HAVE LED HER DAUGHTERS TO LIVE A
COMFORTABLE LIFE.

RINKI HAS FOUND A COMMUNITY THROUGH HER PASSION
FOR TAILORING.

THE LITTLE GIRLS' DREAMS ARE ONGOING ARE ON-GOING
FOR ALL OF THEM, DREAMS HAVE MADE THEM MUCH
MORE RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF DISASTERS.

