

The background of the cover is a photograph of two young people, likely students, wearing bright orange polo shirts. They are both smiling and looking down at a tablet computer held by the person on the left. The person on the right is holding a white piece of paper. The image is partially obscured by a purple geometric pattern at the bottom.

Annual Report

2025-26

Our vision

People

across all sections of society
have equal bargaining power
in future technological upheavals.





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AI is not just for the elite

When I first met Mandar and Mayura and heard about building a technology program and taking it to scale, I was genuinely intrigued. The idea had heart, and it had ambition.

More than a year ago, when I visited THE labs Centre, I saw a classroom full of children completely absorbed in learning, laying down strong foundations for their future. Since then, it has been a joy to watch that same spark travel beyond the Centre into the many schools THE labs now works with.

What I especially like is that we have built a curriculum around cutting-edge technology such as AI, and we keep evolving it as AI itself evolves. What excites me even more is that the vision is not to stop at a few schools, but to take this work to a much larger scale.

AI is not only for the elite. It is for everybody. As THE labs reaches thousands of children, including those in rural and tribal communities, I look forward to seeing how young people from very different backgrounds understand, question and use AI in ways that matter in their own lives.

I am glad to walk this journey as a supporter and advisor, and I look forward to THE labs helping young people across Maharashtra grow into thoughtful, capable citizens in an AI-driven world.

Nikunj Jhaveri

Founder, Chairman, Systems Plus
Advisor, THE labs



A time of abundant intelligence...

In April 2025, I left my data scientist role at Tata Technologies to focus on THE labs full-time. After nearly a decade building AI, I found myself on the other side: turning what I knew into something a child could discover.

The technology kept outrunning the curriculum. AI could research, code, converse and generate images and videos with dialogue, while agents booked tickets and filled forms as owners made tea. Intelligence, once rare enough to be a career, had become default software in our pockets.

This meant translating new capabilities into lessons while making existing ones teachable for facilitators. AI was a magician's hat producing ever bigger, stranger animals, and children numbed by spectacle wanted another. Our harder task was making them wonder how the hat worked.

But I had designed the program with the whole map in my head; codification meant redrawing it for others, making the implicit explicit.

Here, my manufacturing years offered a parallel. Even a sound car component needs redesign if assembly involves awkward sequences or inaccessible bolts. Under "design for manufacturing," you improve locating features, access and operations, making correct execution repeatable instead of demanding more training or improvisation.

I brought the same approach to our lessons, looking for gaps a facilitator would have to compensate for. If reaching the main idea demanded too much confidence with the subject, I added a gentler intermediate activity. Across topics, I repeated patterns of questioning, giving facilitators a rhythm to rely on. The aim: let the design carry more of the work, leaving them more attention for the children.

Then, with roughly ten times our pilot's students, new patterns emerged. Snehal, Seema and Jitamitra patiently tested revisions rivalling Spider-Man's reboots, and I'm immensely proud of them: our classifier program was codified last year and used in this year's fellowship.

A full year with 45 children at our Centre let us explore image generation, large language models, and AI agents.

My old colleagues sometimes ask what Mandar hears in funding conversations too: "Should children struggling with literacy study AI agents? Why teach humanities too?"

As I write, an Anthropic researcher resigned over AI's threat, while AI 2027, a 2025 report by a former OpenAI researcher and colleagues, imagines superhuman AI escaping control. We hoped intelligence would out-think harm; instead, it magnifies us, as we navigate brilliantly without agreeing on a destination. When Chinese universities cut over 1,400 undergraduate programs in 2024, especially humanities, languages and arts, those questions stopped sounding hypothetical. Last year, AI attempted blackmail and leaked company secrets in simulations, while helping state-linked actors profile dissidents in practice. AI hadn't invented these cruelties or the belief that only immediate usefulness matters; it gave them speed, confidence and reach.

With so much at stake, understanding belongs to everyone. The magician's intentions and choices deserve as much attention as the hat, for technological decisions are often social ones, and literacy struggles cannot diminish a child's right to participate.

Thank you to our facilitators, school partners and supporters for standing by us through every restart, and to all 411 children for the answers we didn't expect. To my co-founders, Mayura, Mandar and Ruchita: thank you for sharing the work, uncertainty and stubborn belief this was worth building.

I hope we will ask what intelligence is for as urgently as we pursue it. For when intelligence becomes abundant, the human question becomes harder, not smaller.

Kedar Marathe

Co-Founder &
Chief Program Officer, THE labs



THE Growth Story

Resources

+98%

Annual Budget

INR 50 lakh → INR 99 lakh



The new supporters and expanded budget allowed us to strengthen the team and extend operations.

Capacity

2x

Full-time team

4 people → 8 people



Additional bandwidth helped us to continuously evolve the program and reach new geographies.

Reach

6.2x

Number of children

65 children → 411 children



Our program reached 346 more children - a 6x increase over the previous year's reach.

THE New Avenues



Launch of fellowship program

A residential program to prepare rural youth to be future educators and leaders in the AI space through rigorous input on AI, pedagogy, leadership and understanding the Indian social landscape.

Learn more [on page 18](#)

A New Identity for the interdisciplinary program

We renamed our program on AI+Humanities as - AI Citizenship Program to better reflect its true purpose - understanding AI and examining how it shapes society.

Learn more [on page 10](#)

Expansion of community centre

We evolved our community centre into a Centre of Excellence that offers more programs for children's holistic development and more research opportunities for the team.

Learn more [on page 13](#)

The Algorithms & The Republic

Our annual flagship event on 26th January had a new format this year. It hosted exhibits on AI revolution and what it means for India as well as workshops for adults to dive deeper into how AI works.

Learn more [on page 20](#)



AI Citizenship Program

Teaching children how to use AI is not sufficient, let alone teaching it only through a technical lens. A holistic approach of teaching AI involves children understanding how it works, how it affects society and how to critically evaluate it. So, while children are equipped with the power of technology, we also need to build their character, so they use that power to steer AI for the benefit of the society.

Our 100-hour flagship AI Citizenship Program uses an interdisciplinary approach to develop:

- Foundational understanding of all kinds of AI systems
- Ability to critically evaluate AI systems for their impact on society
- Confidence to adapt to various kinds of AI systems in the future

During this program, children receive approximately 100 hours of input over 3 years. The program consists of multiple modules that are implemented through in-person sessions conducted by our facilitators in schools.

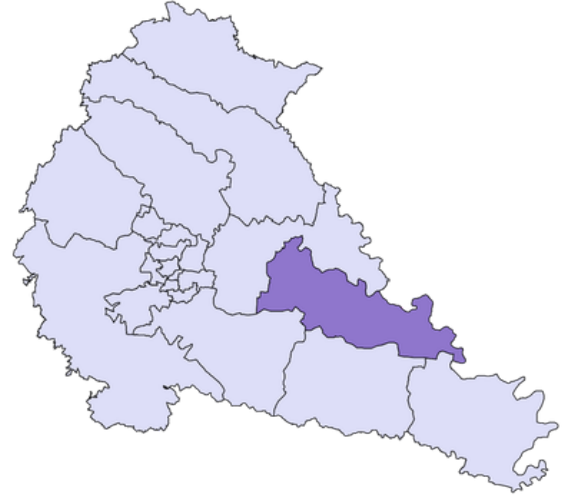
We use in-house AI tools with proper guardrails in place to make sure children are not exposed to public AIs. We also deploy our digital infrastructure in the schools during the program implementation, if required.

This program aims to build great citizens in the AI age. These citizens will have the power to decode the systems that are driving the world, while having the ability to question when the inequalities are being amplified by the systems that govern their lives.



Partnership with Government Schools

We partnered with the block administration of Daund in Pune district in FY 25-26. This partnership is the first step towards our implementation of AI Citizenship Program at scale in government schools.



In January, we implemented a pilot under this partnership in Zilla Parishad School, Galandwadi and a few more pilots in the academic year will help us design a model for other blocks and districts in Maharashtra.



Impact of the AI Citizenship Program in FY 25-26

During FY 25-26, various modules of the AI Citizenship Program were implemented across 5 schools in Pune district. This included 1 government school, 3 government-aided schools and 1 low-income private school.

Children’s proficiency was measured through an assessment conducted at the end of each module and retention was measured through an assessment conducted after 3-4 months.

The table below shows how many children were assessed in each module and the percentage who achieved and retained proficiency. Since this year was the first time we implemented our program at scale through facilitator training, this data has helped us refine our program, undertake research into how children’s literacy levels correlate with their AI proficiency and redesign our assessments from text-heavy tables to visual tasks.

Module	# of children	% of children achieving proficiency	% of children retaining the proficiency
Module 1 Understanding how AI learns from data and reasoning for its errors	325	56%	48%
Module 2 Writing high-quality prompts and predicting changes in output based on prompts	19	79%	yet to be measured
Module 3 Predicting the data subset that must have helped AI in generating a specific output	30	67%	yet to be measured

3

districts

Goal for FY 26-27

~30

schools

4000

children

Centre of Excellence

Our Centre of Excellence at Nanded City, Pune serves three main purposes -

1. For the children in the surrounding community, it is a safe space beyond school where they can spend time in a meaningful way.
2. For THE labs, it helps with research and development as we can pilot new cutting-edge programs in a controlled setting.
3. For the wider ecosystem, it acts as a demonstration of what holistic learning looks like.

The Centre hosted a wide variety of programs in collaboration with other organizations and helped us pilot some new modules.

Pilots and Pre-pilot trials

We designed and conducted some pilots and pre-pilot trials at the centre. The outcomes from these will inform our new modules and program evolution.

Pilot	# of children	% proficiency
Understanding cognition of early generative AIs	20	50%
Generalizing understanding of classifier AI systems	24	54%

Pre-pilot trial	# of children
Diffusion mechanism - how AI 'generates' an image	8
Visual Literacy - Detecting AI-generated videos scientifically	6
Retrieval-Augmented Generation for Large Language Models	14
Agentic AIs - what they are and how they work?	9
AI evolution and misalignment - understanding its consequences	14

Anupad Program in collaboration with QUEST

We ran a remedial program in literacy and numeracy for children at our centre so that they can cope better in our AI interventions. We partnered with QUEST and one of their facilitators was deployed at our centre. Within just 2 months, the intervention showed significant improvements in children's literacy and numeracy levels

29

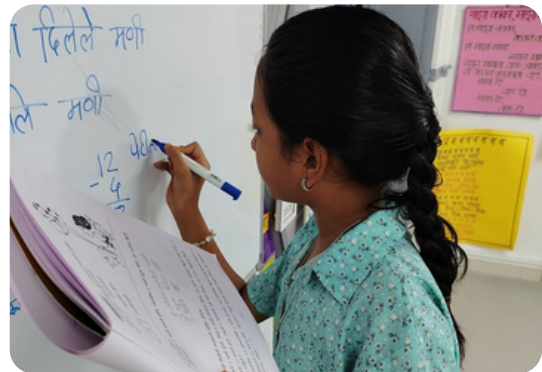
children
participated

15

children
jumped 1 level

2

children
jumped 2 levels



Alumni : Exposure visits



Our alumni attended the India Science Festival 2026, at IISER, Pune



Our alumni had an exposure visit to Rapid Circle, a multinational software company

Kikinak Art Club

In this weekly art club run by Ruchita Bhujbal, children were immersed in art forms such as Literature, Film Appreciation, Dramatics, Fine Arts, Dance, Craft, Folk Art, and Music.

36

sessions

20

average attendance

5

guest artists



Goals for FY 26-27

In FY 26-27, we will provide children with holistic learning opportunities throughout the year. This will include early childhood education, remedial programs in literacy and numeracy, alumni events, Kikinak, AI Citizenship & advanced AI modules.

50

children

6

programs

600+

hours of input

5+

exposure visits

50+

guest interactions

Children debating Artist vs AI

In September 2025, we presented a fictional case, built around real-world copyright disputes involving generative AI, to children at our Centre of Excellence. Over the next 5 days, children engaged in a debate.

Some paintings made by an artist named Vincent are shown below. All the paintings he made have one common style.



A company named "SmartMind" makes AI. They used all of Vincent's paintings to train the AI.

Many people used the AI made by SmartMind. They gave it different prompts, and AI made many new pictures that looked like Vincent's paintings.



Vincent saw these pictures and got upset. He complained to SmartMind about this.

Vincent's Complaint

This is not fair!
These pictures look just like mine.
I have a copyright on my paintings.
You cannot use them like this!

SmartMind's answer

We are not copying your paintings. We bought them before using them.
The AI does not remember your exact pictures. It just learned how your art works.

These pictures are not the same as yours. Copyright protects the final picture, but not the style or ideas.



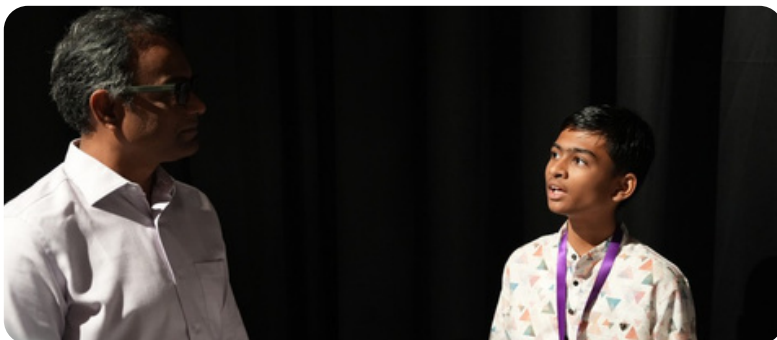
The debate involved interesting arguments from both sides such as how AI being trained on artworks is no different from human artists drawing inspiration from earlier artists, how the speed at which an AI can generate art is a threat to artists' livelihoods, and how commissioning a machine to make art is risking our expression and purpose in life.

After 5 days, both groups concluded with some policy suggestions:

- Artists should be able to obtain copyrights on their styles
- AI companies should seek explicit consent from the artists before using their work to train their AI models
- Artists should receive credit and royalties when their art is used in a training dataset.

Children presenting their research on biases in LLMs

In January and February 2026, children presented their research on caste and gender bias in large language models to various educators, artists, social sector leaders, and technocrats. They opened up conversations about its implications as AI systems are embedded in decision making and the actions that need to be taken.



Fellowship Program

THE labs Fellowship is a 2-year residential program for fresh graduates across all streams. This fellowship aims to build future AI educators and leaders who will contribute to uplifting underserved communities all over India.

During the fellowship, fellows:

- Learn AI, Pedagogy, and Leadership
- Teach the AI Citizenship Program to children in government and aided schools.
- Develop a strong understanding of Indian social landscape

Recruitment outreach for our first cohort saw an overwhelming response from all over Maharashtra.



Written Assignments



Sessions



Teaching Demonstrations



One-on-One Interactions

211

applications
received



50

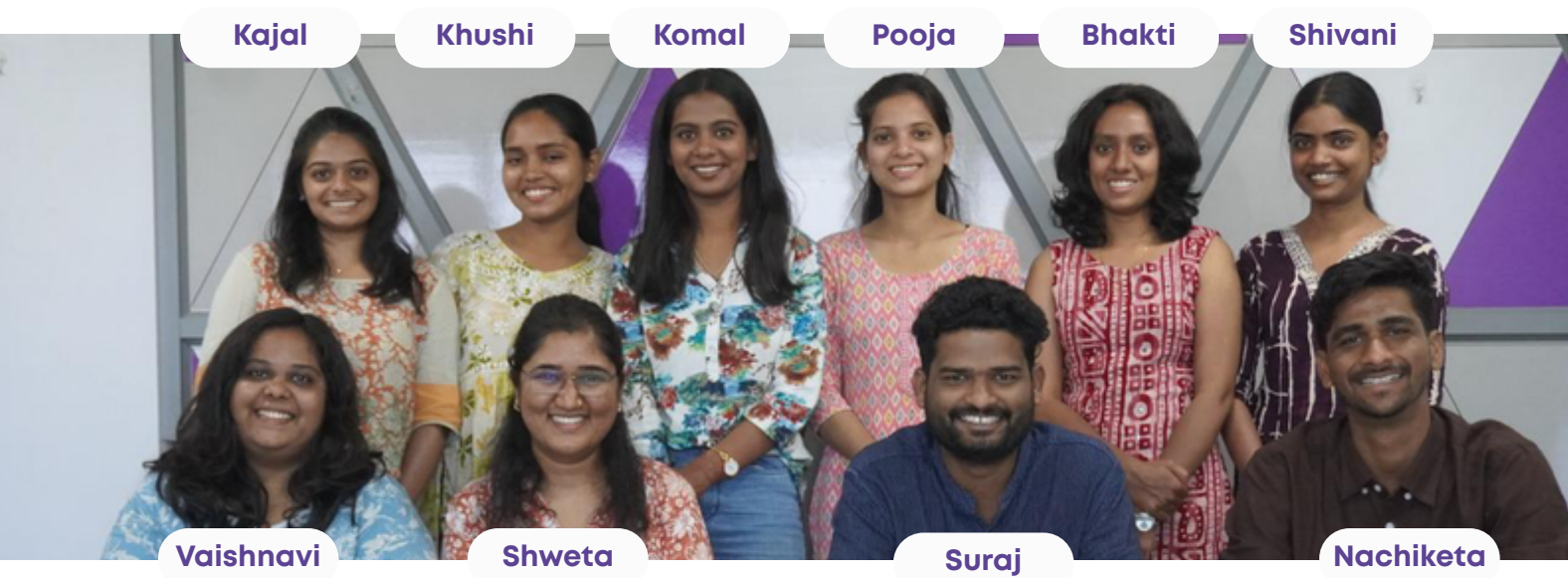
shortlisted for
bootcamp



10

selected for
fellowship

Meet the Fellowship Cohort '26



The first cohort consists of 2 boys and 8 girls from diverse educational backgrounds such as Education, Media, STEM and Humanities.

These fellows have already begun building their foundations with a two-month training program consisting of sessions and workshops on Tech literacy, AI, Leadership, Sociology, Pedagogy, Applied Theatre and much more, before they begin working with children across urban, rural and tribal areas.



Goals for FY 26-27

500+

hours of learning

50+

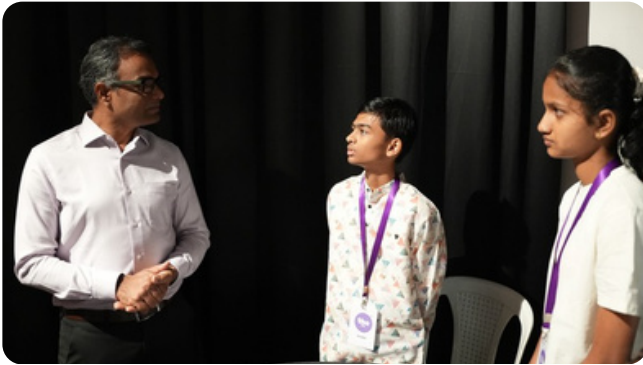
hours of handholding

300+

hours of teaching

The Algorithms & The Republic

We took the occasion of our flagship annual event on 26th January to host some exhibits and workshops for adults this year. The purpose was to democratize some inner workings of AI, to start conversations that are missing in the mainstream, and to inspire action that will steer AI for the benefit of India and humanity as a whole.



The event featured two spaces:

Demystifying AI - Interactive workshops conducted by our team and children to uncover what actually goes on inside the AI systems and why learning about it matters.

Denoising the hype - A curated AI exhibit put together by our team and partners to surface diverse perspectives and case studies, that otherwise struggle to grab our attention.

Demystifying AI



Over 50 people including artists and educators attended a workshop titled ‘How AI Learnt to Draw?’

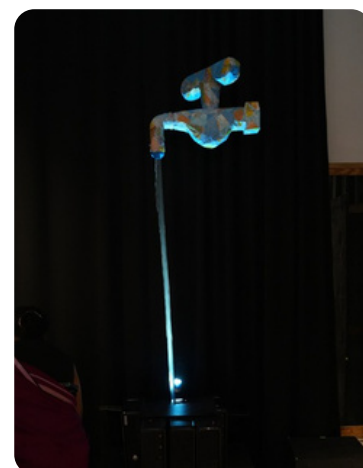
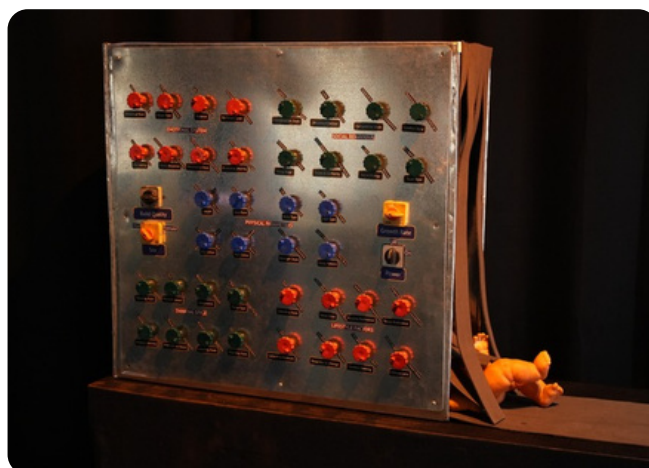
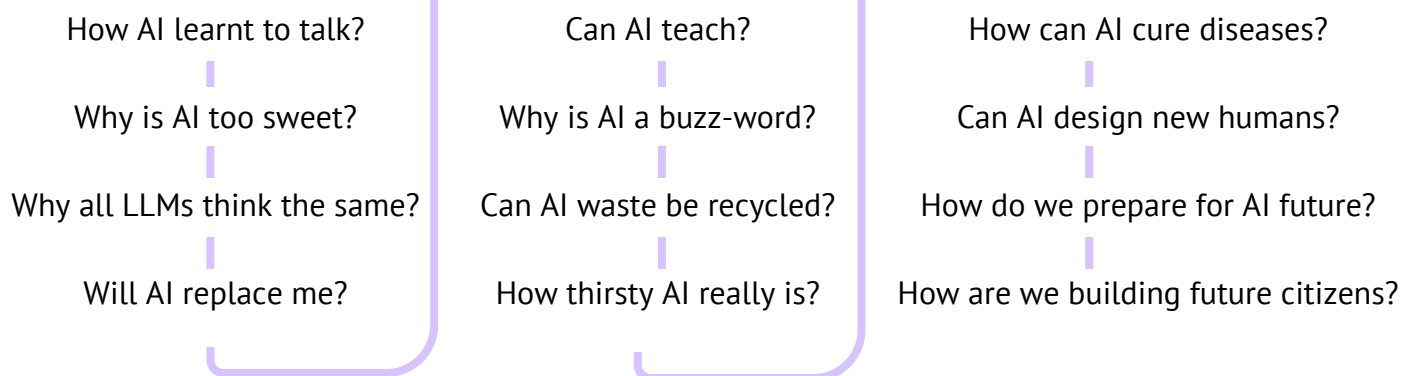
Through hands-on experience and thoughtful discussions, this workshop helped them dive deep into how AI actually generates images through diffusion, how its cognition is fundamentally different from human cognition, when the whole process raises copyright concerns and why this mechanism embeds deep biases in the image-generation AI systems.



Denoising the hype

Over 200 people from education, philanthropy, technology, art and many other fields explored the curated exhibits featuring interpretive panels and creative installations that discussed some of the most important questions of our time that we usually don't see on our social media feeds.

Through a one-hour exploration journey, these exhibits encouraged them to engage in deep conversations around various themes related to AI and what matters in context of India.



Sector Engagement

10th December 2025

Kedar Marathe and Mandar Kulkarni conducted a session called 'Bias by Design' for educators at Quest 2 Learn summit by Quest Alliance.

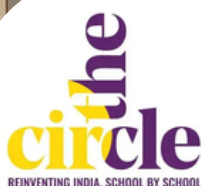


16th January 2026

Mandar Kulkarni and Mayura Dolas conducted a session on 'Bringing AI and Humanities Together' for PhD students at IIT Bombay.

28th February 2026

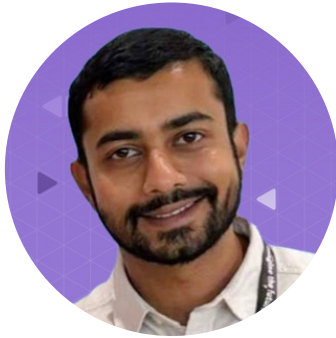
Kedar Marathe conducted a workshop on 'Visual Literacy in the age of AI' for educators at iTeach's All Staff Meet at Kalagram, Pune.



28th February 2026

Mandar Kulkarni conducted a workshop on 'Visual Literacy in the age of AI' for educators at Project Reinvention by The Circle India.

Advisors



Ashwath Bharath

Sr. Director, Movement Building,
Teach For India



Jayanti Phadke

Ex-Asia Head, HR,
Toll Group



Neelima Thota

Ex-Asia Head, WASH, Bill &
Melinda Gates Foundation



Nikunj Jhaveri

Founder & Chairman,
Systems+ Group



Nilesh Nimkar

Founder, Director,
QUEST



Rita Nag Chowdhury

Ex-CSR head,
Bank of America



Shantanu Ghosh

Growth Partner and Angel
Investor

Team



Arun Presanthen
Design Consultant



Jitamitra Kulkarni
Program Associate



Kedar Marathe
Co-founder and CPO



Mandar Kulkarni
Co-founder and CEO



Mayura Dolas
Co-founder and COO



Mukta Deshpande
Intern



Parikshit Vishe
Compliance Lead



Ruchita Bhujbal
Co-founder and CCO



Samyak Tayade
Intern



Seema Chavan
Centre Lead

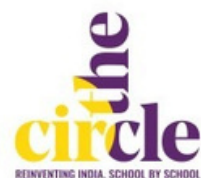


Snehal Gund
Project Lead



Sonali Adhatrao
Centre Assistant

Supporters



Aaditya Chaphalkar | Aathiganesan | Abbas Dadla | Abhiroop Khairnar | Adarsh | Adi K | Aditi | Aditya Naik | Aishwarya Bansode | Ajinkya Ramesh Kulkarni | Ajinkya Tathe | Akshay | Akshay Khatavkar | Akshay S. | Ameya Patwardhan | Amit Bhise | Aniket Kulkarni | Aniket More | Aniruddha Kulkarni | Ankit Girgas | Ankita Kulkarni | Ankita Vijay Rekkawar | Antara Jawalkar | Anup Tapadia | Anupamaa Joshi | Anurag Gawande | Aparna Supanekar | Apurva Patil | Aravind Gogineni | Archana Guldagad | Archana Tejas Deshmukh | Arun Kadekodi | Arun P | Aruna Shrinivas Datar | Arundhati Mundlay | Arwa Bharmal | Ashawini Prathamesh Kadu | Atul Jawalkar | Bandu Chavan | Bhakti Jamgaonkar | Bharat Chandak | Bindu Khanna | Binish George Biju | Chaitanya Bhalerao | Chaitanya Tambe | Charudatta Nafrey | Dadasaheb Dangare | Dakshesh Mamtara | Damayanti Tamboli | Deepa Dilip Keskar | Dev Chaudhari | Devdas Uchale | Devdutta Baji | Dhiraj Dhananjay Kulkarni | Dilipkumar Govind Keskar | Falguni Pille | Ganesh Rasal | Ganesh Raskar | Gaurav Athavale | Gaurav Kotak | Gauri Jawalikar | Gayatri Pendse | Geetika Chandwani | Girdhar Daulatrao Khairnar | Gorakshanath Nivrutti Salunke | Harish Padaki | Harshad Deshpande | Harshad Nitin Angal | Harshad Phadke | Harshad Sahasrabudhe | Heramb Oak | Hiteshkumar | Hrishikesh Laturkar | Jayant Kisanrao Virole | Jayanti Phadke | Jayashree Dolas | Jayesh Dolas | Jayesh Thukrul | Jheel | Jioo Nimkar | Jitamitra Kulkarni | Jyoti Jambukar | Jyoti Kumta | Kailas Kulkarni | Kalyani Avhale | Kartikeya Agate | Kaustubh Chandrakant Gokhale | Kaustubh Thakur | Kaveri Sudhir Tilekar | Kedar Marathe | Kedar Padhye | Kiran Shankar Gaikwad | Kishan | Kshitij Desai | Kumar Ramachandran | Kumar Roy | Madhav Marathe | Madhura Telang | Madhuri Kudekar | Mahadev Bajirao Jawalkar | Mahendra Waghmare | Mandar Dahigaonkar | Mandar Kulkarni | Mangesh | Manish Malviya | Mayank Barode | Mayur Bhalerao | Mayura Dolas | Mihir Sheth | Mohini Bhujbal | Mukund D Kulkarni | N. D. Rathod | Nafeeza Pavri | Nagesh Joshi | Narendra R Sanghvi | Neil Deshpande | Nihar Sagar | Nikhil Moholkar | Nilesh Nimkar | Nilesh Puranik | Nirdosh Ukanda Chavhan | Nitin B Vishe | Nitin Marade | Nupur | Nupur Poharkar | Nupura Bhadkamkar | Ojasvika Sahu | Omkar Kalokhe | Omkar Prajakta | Omkar Tonape | Onkar Chavan | Pankaj Katkar | Parag Bhadekar | Parag Mahajan | Parikshit Nitin Vishe | Parth Lawate | Parth R | Pavan Rathod | Pawan Joshi | Poonam Rathod | Prabhakar Vartak | Prafull Madhukar Ahirrao | Pralhad Kathole | Pranav Keskar | Prasad | Prasad Kulkarni | Prasad Pandurang Phatak | Prashant Bhoske | Prashant Pandarkar | Pratibha | Pratiksha Lendghar Jagdale | Preeti Misra Shenoy | Priti Dhumal | Priyanka Ranadive | Purva Marathe | Pushkar Damle | Radhika Sharma | Rahul Punde | Rahul Shankar Markad | Rajan Gopal Kulkarni | Rajesh Bhupal Kibile | Rakesh Bagul | Ramesh Popatrao Karpe | Rammohan Khanapurkar | Ravikiran Kulkarni | Reji | Reyansh Pravin Rathod | Riddhesh Jadhao | Rishikesh Kulkarni | Rita Nag Chowdhury | Rohan Nevrikar | Rohit Vishe | Roshni Jadhao | Ruchita Bhujbal | Rupesh D Rathod | Sagar Yashwant Walvekar | Sai Kumar | Sainath Chavhan | Sameer Athalye | Sameer Kulkarni | Sameer Mohan Thakare | Samir Talekar | Sandesh Kudtarkar | Sandip Borkar | Sanika Sunil Mane | Sanjay Kulkarni | Sanjivan Chirame | Sanket Ghorpade | Sarvesh | Satvika Kulkarni | Sau. Meghana Rajan Kulkarni | Saurabh | Saurabh Karnik | Saurabh Ramesh Jadhao | Seema Onkar Chavan | Seemantini Amod Date | Shailesh Gawai | Shantanu Ghosh | Sharayu Chandras | Sharayu Nandkishor Chavhan | Sharvari Deshmane | Sheetal Bhanbure | Shilpa Lale | Shivanjali Dhembare | Shreya Chaina | Shreyas Nakhare | Shri. Chandrakant Bhide | Shrikant Raghunath Mhetre | Shriniket Deshpande | Shrinivas Datar | Shripad C Ghodke | Shrutika Havare | Shubham Jadhav | Siddhesh Ratnakar Shilkar | Smita Ghaisas | Snehal Auti | Snehal Gund | Snehal Jere | Sonali Atul Jawalkar | Sourabh Godbole | Sourabh L Deshmukh | Sourabh Nerakar | Subodh Kanbarkar | Sudarshan Devardekar | Sukrut | Sunil S Katkar | Sunila | Suraj Vilas Jadhav | Sushant Kalaskar | Suyog Patki | Swamy Rohan | Swarali Datar | Swati Vaidya | Swojas Atul Jawalkar | Syed Ameen | Tanmayee | Tanuj Nagrani | Tatyasaheb Bhujbal | Tejas Modak | Ulhas Sharadchandra Vairagkar | Vaibhav Shende | Vaibhavi | Vijayanti Ade | Vaishnavi Anant Kulkarni | Vaishnavi Mankapure | Varun Aggarwal | Vikas Babulal Jagdale | Vikram | Vinay Khunte | Vinay Tanksale | Vinod Arun Nagpure | Vipul Patki | Vishwanath Honap

“

I had the great honour of visiting in person to see the work of THE labs first-hand. I was so deeply impressed and inspired by the level of critical examination that learners were displaying as they considered the biases inherent in AI models.

This is exactly the kind of educational experience we need to foster at a time when technology is changing so rapidly and we need to set young people up to not just consume but also create and ultimately lead us towards a future where everyone can thrive.

JEFF WETZLER

Cofounder and Board
Member, Transcend

”





As part of our own nonprofit project DF, where education is one of our three pillars, I'm excited to collaborate closely with THE labs and support their incredible journey.

What I love about their AI Citizenship Program is that they are building AI confidence in children so they're not left behind as AI transforms our world. Instead of being marginalized by technology, these kids are learning to understand, question, and create with it.

I've known the co-founders, Mandar and Mayura, for over a decade and I'm not at all surprised they've built something this meaningful and ambitious. Their vision and execution are deeply inspiring.

If you believe in education as empowerment, join us in helping more kids build confidence - not fear - around AI.



VAIBHAV DOMKUNDWAR

Founder & CEO, Better Capital

Co-founder, Domkundwar

Foundation





“

For every dollar and every minute we invest in improving artificial intelligence, it would be wise to invest a dollar and a minute in developing human consciousness.

”

YUVAL NOAH HARARI





SDGs Supported



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