

Meet the Fourteen-Year-Old Phenom Changing Girls' Lives in India

Unstoppable Women

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Empowering Girls in India: Sasha Ponnam's Mission to Break Barriers Through Kaysha

A new organization to help support girls in India with various initiatives launches today. It all began with a school project. Sasha Ponnam chose to investigate why girls in India drop out of school at such high rates. Her research uncovered a shocking truth: in many rural areas, the dropout rate is closely tied to menstruation. Schools often lack the basic facilities needed to accommodate girls during their periods, feminine hygiene products are scarce, and the subject of menstruation remains taboo.



As a result, girls as young as eight years old miss up to a week of school every month, fall behind

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Kaysha, Where Every Girl's Voice Matters”

Sasha Ponnam

in their classes, and eventually drop out entirely at alarming rates. Sasha was stunned by this discovery. Education is crucial for reducing poverty, improving mental health, and establishing career paths for women and girls. The U.N. estimates that every additional year a girl spends in school correlates to a 20% increase in earnings as an

adult. Despite this, only two-thirds of girls in India complete secondary school, and just over a quarter pursue higher education.

Determined to make a difference, Sasha drew inspiration from her mother, Sindhura, who

moved to America from India alone and started her own IT company. Sasha's mother worked tirelessly, often leaving early in the morning and returning late at night, yet always ensured Sasha felt cared for and supported. This example of feminine drive and resilience taught Sasha the importance of believing in oneself and taking risks.

Moved by the challenges girls face, Sasha approached her mother with her concerns, sparking the inception of Kaysha. Founded with the mission of empowering women through sustainable, micro-community projects, Kaysha's initiatives may seem small but have profound impacts.

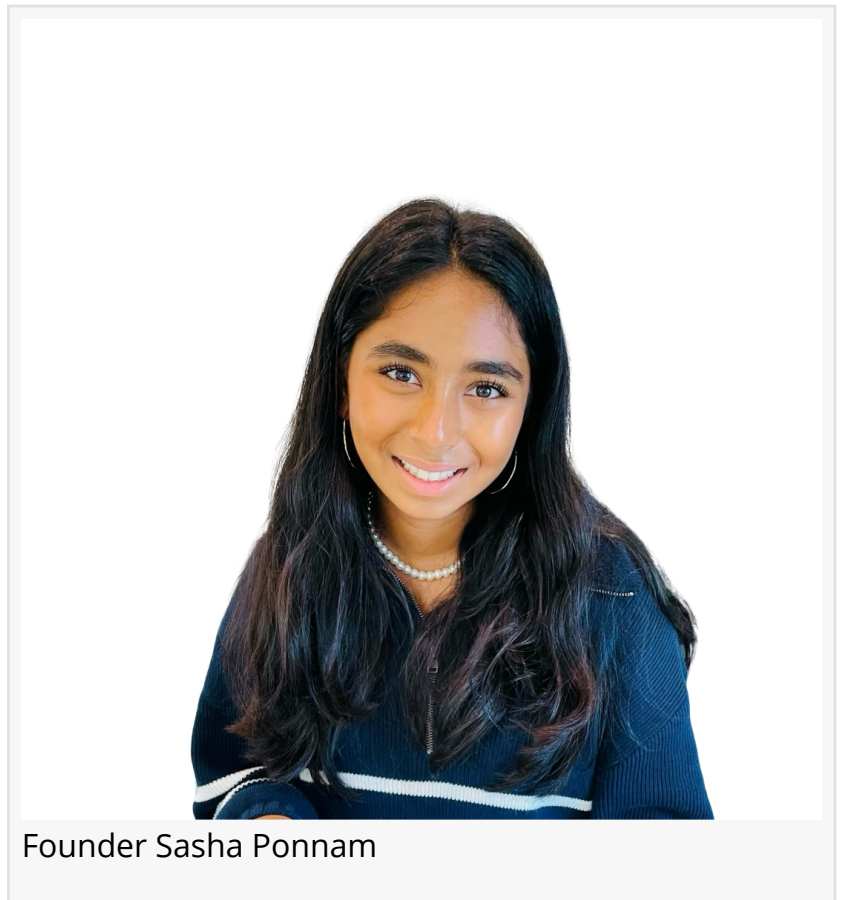
With the support of her parents, Sasha connected with stakeholders in rural areas to identify where their resources could have the greatest impact. They initiated a project to reconstruct a school bathroom in a rural village outside Hyderabad, a place close to the family's roots.

During their visit to India, Sasha and her family conducted extensive interviews with teachers and students to understand the needs of the schools. They discovered that many girls planned to marry and work at home rather than pursue higher education. This motivated Sasha to share the opportunities she had in America with the girls she met.

In addition to physical improvements to school infrastructure, Kaysha provides comprehensive menstrual health education, supplies feminine hygiene products, and offers training for teachers and the community to foster an open and supportive environment.

Kaysha has since grown, adopting a multi-faceted approach to empower girls and women in India. The organization now focuses on menstrual health, education, career guidance, community workshops on confidence building and entrepreneurship, and [empowering girls in sports](#). Through the "[Your Own Path](#)" program, Kaysha offers scholarships, mentorships, and career counseling to encourage continued education and academic excellence, especially in STEM disciplines. The program also advocates for policies supporting equal pay for women.

Sasha, a lacrosse player, recognized that girls were also dropping out of sports due to menstruation. She understood that sports not only promote physical health and positive body



Founder Sasha Ponnam

image but also teach leadership, collaboration, and community building skills. Sports can also provide scholarship opportunities for higher education.

The greatest challenge for Kaysha, according to Sasha, is gaining attention from donors and supporters. Competing with larger global organizations is tough, but Kaysha stands out for its focus on impactful, small-scale projects. Sasha is committed to her vision, passionately believing that every girl should have the power to determine her own destiny.

Looking ahead, Kaysha is poised to continue changing lives, breaking down barriers, and creating opportunities through grassroots efforts.

For those interested in volunteering or donating to support the empowerment of women and girls in India, please visit [kaysha.org](<http://kaysha.org>) for more information and to get involved today.

Kaysha is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women and girls in India through sustainable, micro-community projects. Founded by Sasha Ponnamm, Kaysha addresses critical issues such as menstrual health, education, and gender equality. The organization works on improving school infrastructure, providing menstrual health education, and distributing feminine hygiene products. Kaysha also offers scholarships, mentorship programs, career counseling, and community workshops to promote confidence, entrepreneurship, and leadership among girls. By focusing on small yet impactful initiatives, Kaysha aims to create lasting change and provide every girl with the opportunity to determine her own destiny. For more information, visit [kaysha.org](<http://kaysha.org>).

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