

# IMERIT TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

## BARUIPUR, THE NEWEST ADDITION TO IMERIT

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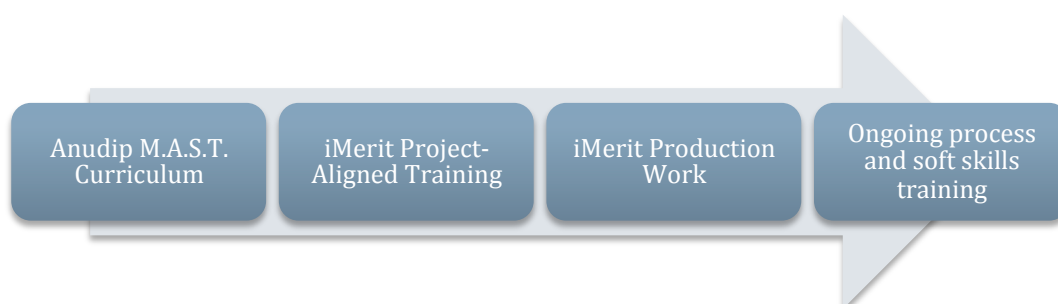
## Introduction to Anudip and iMerit

India has become an integral part of the global economy, and with such a large populace the country will undoubtedly continue to shape both the economics and politics of the modern age. However, the boom of the IT sector and the accompanying wealth has primarily benefited those who live in urban areas and have access to higher education. Those living in rural and marginalized communities remain separated from these economic developments and have few educational and career opportunities, which hurts the country as a whole and delays overall development.

In response to this need, a team of dedicated social entrepreneurs created Anudip Foundation with the goal of providing IT, life skills, and livelihood training for the rural poor in India, focusing primarily on women and youth. Since 2005 Anudip has provided Market Aligned Skills Training (M.A.S.T.) courses, which focus on teaching the English language, workplace readiness skills, and general IT skills. Through M.A.S.T. the students gain transferable skills and the potential to become employable members of society. Since Anudip's inception in 2005 the organization has trained over 15,000 people who have been placed with over 400 different employers, with approximately 80% of Anudip graduates being placed in permanent positions upon completion of training.

Following the success of M.A.S.T. and recognizing the need for increased job opportunities in Anudip's target areas, the founders expanded the nonprofit by creating iMerit, a for-profit counterpart that contracts with domestic and international companies on IT projects. iMerit currently has four IT delivery centers located across the Indian states of West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha, with each location having been chosen based on the location of Anudip training centers as well as the economic need present in these communities. Each iMerit center is capable of performing a number of different IT services to clients, including data management, image tagging, e-book publishing, data mining, and Global Service Desk.

The unique model and partnership of Anudip and iMerit is an immersive and comprehensive approach to employer readiness that ensures each iMerit employee is capable of completing various IT projects in a timely manner and at a high level of quality. This training to employment pipeline also creates a supportive work environment, which helps employees take pride in the work they do, ultimately leading to low attrition rates and a high level of professionalism. The following case study will focus on iMerit's newest center, located south of Kolkata in the city of Baruipur.



## The Development of the Baruipur Center

Baruipur, is located south of metropolitan Kolkata and can easily be reached by train or car. In 2011 the Baruipur municipality was home to approximately 53,000 people distributed across 13,000 households,<sup>1</sup> and it is projected that the area will be home to 58,000 people by 2016. Although Baruipur is fairly close to Kolkata and the community has a literacy rate of approximately 87% there remains a severe lack of formal employment opportunities and many educated students are unable to find work that allows them to be financially independent.

Part of the iMerit advantage is the company's model of bringing jobs to peri-urban and rural communities so that employees can remain closer to home and do not have to migrate into congested and expensive urban areas. The location of Baruipur, combined with the area's lack of employment opportunities, made it an ideal location for a new iMerit center. The creation of the Baruipur center represented a large expansion for the organization and required management to start from the ground up, locating an office space, choosing which iMerit employees would oversee the new center, and hiring new employees to work as data entry operators.

In the course of just one year the center has grown to a staff of 76 full time employees and all those hired for data entry operator positions are graduates of the Anudip M.A.S.T. program. The staff is capable of completing projects that entail data entry, data mining, and photo editing, but as the center grows the employees will have many opportunities to up-skill and take on more challenging projects. This ongoing process of employee development helps individuals develop their careers while allowing iMerit to take on more complex projects for clients.

Baruipur is a prime example of the integrated model of Anudip and iMerit represents the way that iMerit can scale to future areas. As both Anudip graduates as well iMerit employees, those in the Baruipur center feel camaraderie with their coworkers and take a vested interest in the success of the organizations. This unique dedication leads to low attrition rates and high employee satisfaction, which benefits employees and also helps iMerit maintain high quality business practices. The integrated model of Anudip and iMerit therefore produces an integrated result of good business as well as social impact in the form of human capital development.

iMerit employees are provided with opportunities to learn new IT skills and software applications such as Adobe Suite, CRM Platforms, XML and HTML.

Five years ago, only 10% of iMerit employees and their families had a stable income. Now, iMerit employees work an average of 25 days per month as members of India's formal employment sector.

<sup>1</sup> "Demographic and Social Profile." *Baruipur Municipality*. Office of the Councillors, Baruipur Municipality, 2014. Web. 19 Oct. 2014.

## Getting to know the Baruipur Team Leads

To ensure that the new delivery center would be on par with existing centers iMerit selected two employees from the company's Salt Lake office to serve as Team Leads at the new center, allowing them to develop their careers by taking on greater responsibility within the company.

**Rajat** completed M.A.S.T. training in 2010 but worked in the Salt Lake office until he was selected to join the new Baruipur team. Working with managers and fellow team lead Barnali, Rajat has helped train new hires on a variety of projects and has worked conscientiously to ensure that targets are met and clients are satisfied with quality of delivered projects.

M.A.S.T. equipped Rajat with the skills he needed to join the workforce, including English language proficiency, computer training, and workplace readiness. Rajat is originally from a smaller community south of Baruipur in which there are few opportunities for employment or professional growth. Working in Baruipur allows him to be closer to his family and through his position at iMerit he is able to use his salary to support his parents and pay for his ongoing education.

Before completing M.A.S.T. and joining iMerit Rajat explained that he was “just a student,” but now he helps to oversee the Baruipur center, training employees and helping to complete projects in a timely manner. He is a confident and determined young man and attributes much of his current success to his M.A.S.T. course, an opportunity he hopes will become available to even more people in the area.

**Barnali** is an Anudip graduate and began working for iMerit in 2010 in the company's Salt Lake office. Barnali is originally from a small village in which there are few employment opportunities and most women grow up to be either teachers or homemakers. However, Barnali's choice to continue her education and enter the workforce allows her to support both herself and her parents, who still live in her village. Her position in Baruipur allows her to be close to home while also living in an area that offers increased opportunities for employment and education. Several girls from Barnali's village have even witnessed her success and have enrolled in M.A.S.T. courses, hoping to follow a similar path.

As a Team Lead Barnali is in charge of making sure that employees are equipped with the skills they need to complete various projects in a timely and accurate manner. Barnali's patient and professional demeanor has served her well in this role, and she believes she has become much more confident over the years as she has developed as a leader and has learned new IT skills. She also believes that iMerit's strength lies in the talents of its employees and she hopes to help her team improve their skills so that they can handle more complex projects.

## Social Impact and Quality Results

The Anudip trained employees of the Baruipur center are relatively new to the formal workforce yet many have already benefited greatly from their positions within the company. In order to understand how iMerit employment has impacted Baruipur team members since the inception of the center, iMerit conducted internal surveys and interviews with employees, focusing on the financial and social gains associated with reliable and dignified employment.

The majority, or 82%, of those employed in the Baruipur center had never held a job before beginning work with iMerit. Rather than seeing this as an impediment to company development, iMerit sees this as an opportunity to create jobs and bring youth into the workforce who would otherwise be left with few career opportunities. Additionally, many of the employees come from families in which the father is a farmer and the mother is a housewife, meaning that they are immensely proud to acquire an office job in the formal sector of the economy. This process of financial inclusion provides employees with stable incomes and the ability to contribute to their household incomes, with their parents and siblings becoming iMerit's secondary beneficiaries. On average, each Baruipur employee supports him or herself as well as two to three family members.

The financial benefits gained from iMerit employment allow employees to be financially independent, continue their studies, and develop a sense of pride in both their personal and professional lives. Women who do not partake in Anudip training tend to become housewives or school teachers, and men tend to become small business-owners concentrated in the informal sector of the economy.

In contrast, iMerit employees develop the ability to dream of increased opportunity, whether it be in the form of a promotion, a new skill to learn, or the idea of receiving a higher education. Anudip and iMerit equip youth with the skills they need to succeed professionally, which ultimately paves the way for individuals to dream and develop into capable and confident members of society.

***"My goal is to buy a house with my own money and continue my education."***

*– Female employee in the Baruipur center*

**76**

Total number of employees in the Baruipur center

**22**

Average age of an employee in the Baruipur center

**82%**

Of those who work in the center had never held a job before beginning work at iMerit

**89%**

Of employees use part of all of their income to help support family members

## Moving Forward

In just a few short years iMerit has grown from a 15-person delivery center in Salt Lake to a successful IT services company employing over 375 people across four different centers in three different Indian states. The company's recent expansion into Baruipur has brought employment opportunities to a traditionally marginalized area and has set the groundwork for the growth of the IT sector in a peri-urban community.

From a business standpoint the Baruipur center has the potential to handle an array of different IT projects at a lower cost than what is available in highly congested metropolitan areas. However, the greatest value and impact created by the new center has come in the form of human capital development and personal empowerment. Employees enter iMerit with a solid set of transferable skills but are able to learn new skills by working on diverse projects and interacting with fellow data entry operators as well as managers.

The jobs that iMerit has created and the salaries that it provides its employees allow individuals to achieve financial independence, support their family members, and set money aside for things such as pursuing an education or building a larger house. Over time employees gain intangibles such as feelings of personal achievement, confidence, and the ability to look forward to the future and set individual goals. By combining sound business practices with human capital development iMerit is helping to narrow the divide between historically disadvantaged populations and the growing IT sector, using a training to career pipeline to encourage both economic progress as well as community development.

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