

PARTICIPANT INSIGHTS

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S U M A N

Suman is a woman in her 40s who immigrated to Canada from India two and a half years ago. She lives in a city in Western Canada with her husband and two children. She participated in the IM&M+ program approximately one year after arriving in Canada. During that year, despite having 15 years' experience as a teacher in India, she was unable to find employment, *"for one year I was without any job. I was struggling too hard. ... I was getting, like, no kind of interviews, and not getting out of the house and so many boundaries."* By the time she was accepted into the IM&M+ program, Suman had become very discouraged by her situation and was, *"feeling that I should go back home; not staying here in Canada anymore, so I was a very low confidence person when I started IM&M+."* Suman explained that the IM&M+ program helped her to become more confident and to engage in self-exploration.

Suman described several ways that participating in IM&M+ was beneficial to her. Specifically, Suman mentioned that the program provided her with improved goal setting skills and an improved sense of agency. This helped her to counteract her

previous pattern of thinking, *"I had started blaming myself for not getting a job and I felt that I'm good for nothing."* In contrast, by the time she had finished her involvement in the program,

I started believing in myself, because somewhere I felt that I have lost everything. And then I really started gaining my strength, and was again back to the track. So that was what I feel, the goal that I had acquired and the goal that I have set, and the strength that I have gained. And there are a few more strengths I have gained ... since IM&M+, my confidence has always grown, and that, helped by family also to grow. I had started you know, helping my family financially.

In particular, Suman recalled the valuable experience she obtained through participating in the Community Project, which involved setting up a food bank in her community, which involved developing a mission and vision statement, creating a website and managing social media, and establishing procedures for distributing to community members in need.

In the months since completing the IM&M+ program, Suman obtained full-time employment as a computer facilitator at a social service agency, serving other people with high pre-employment needs. She attributes this success directly to her involvement in the IM&M+ program:

I don't know about others, but it has really worked well with me, and I really thank God. Because of IM&M+, I had explored myself, I had been into the community, and I got to know the culture here. I started, you know, having interactions and created my network. And this network helped me to gain this job, though I had done several jobs earlier. But the program supported me to get this employment.