

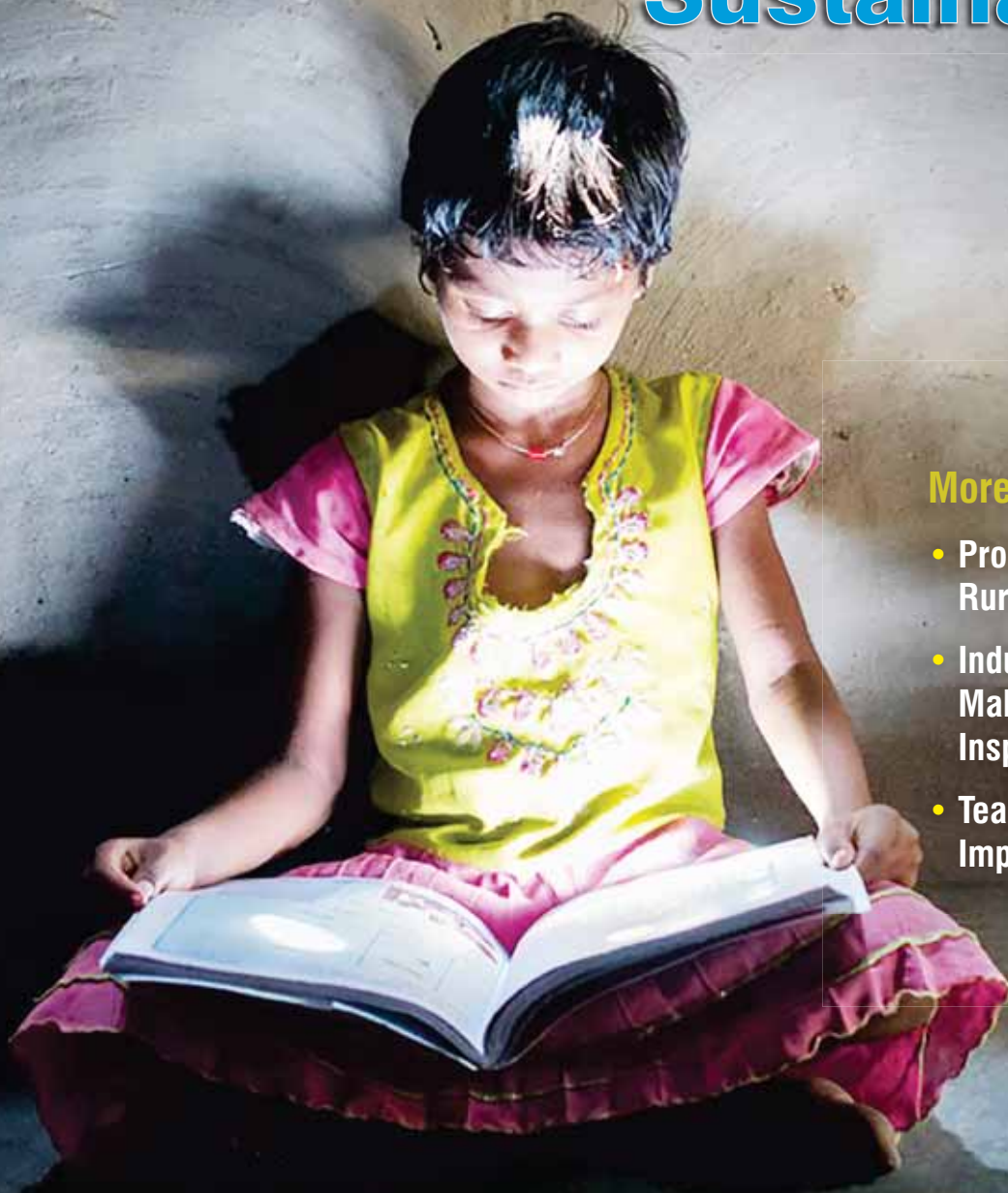
Vol. VI, Issue III, 2021



# CSR *Mandate*

Enabling Sustainability

## *Education* **The Bedrock of Sustainability**



### More Inside:

- Promoting Sports in Rural and Urban Areas
- IndusInd for Sports - Making Champions that Inspire the Nation
- Teaching Students the Importance of ISR



# Recognition

The role and contributions of CSR Mandate in bringing to the fore the initiatives of Corporate India and NGOs has resulted in the magazine being awarded the

**ICE Awards 2016 and  
CSR Community Initiative Awards 2016**





# Accolades

NARA CHANDRA PANDY



AMAPUWETI



CHIEF MINISTER  
JACCHIA PANDYA

## MESSAGE

I am happy to acknowledge the receipt of a copy of your magazine, "CSR Mandate". I am very pleased to see the effort to summarise the different CSR activities undertaken by Corporate India.

I absolutely agree that Corporate Social Responsibility acts as a catalyst in bringing about a positive societal change. All companies must do their part in contributing to the various welfare programmes, launched by the government.

This is the right path of community building, encouraging empathy and ownership of the different problems in society that can lead to a holistic growth of society.

I wish your organization all the best, and hope to see more of such good work in documenting the impact of CSR activities.

(NARA CHANDRA PANDY NAIDU)

DOC RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE

July 13, 2017



Dear Anula,

I have been following the evolution of CSR Mandate and find it into a fully developed and well referenced sectoral magazine in a relatively short period of time in its class. Its reportage especially on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability issues is most updated, latest and informative. The magazine also devotes its efforts in gathering data and analysis on businesses and provides a good approach on future pathways. Detailed and well rounded opinion that the magazine offers on key issues is too valued to be missed.

I personally leverage and benefit from the magazine to keep myself acquainted on the latest on CSR, sustainability and community engagement issues taking place in India, so necessary to shape new approaches and fresh thinking.

**Pooja Chandra Pandey**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Dialogue of Civilisations Research Institute  
Berlin, Germany

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CONSUL GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA  
MUMBAI

No. 81/35/Man/VI/2017

Mumbai, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2017

**Ms. Anula Imchen,**  
Executive Editor,  
New Media Communication Pvt. Ltd.,  
New Media House, 1 Akbar Villa,  
Marol Maroshi Road, Marol,  
Andheri East,  
Mumbai 400 029



Dear Ms. Anula Imchen,

This is to acknowledge the receipt of the CSR Mandate, a magazine published by New Media Communication Pvt. Ltd., to highlight the successful CSR activities undertaken by Corporate India.

I just go through it and find it very interesting and it is really a nice reading experience.

I take this opportunity to thank you for sending the magazine to me.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,  
  
Consul General

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SUBJECT: CSR MANDATE

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> August 2017

To,  
Anula Imchen  
CSR Mandate



## Feedback on CSR Mandate Magazine

It was a refreshing experience to read the articles on CSR Mandate magazine. All the articles are neatly written, well researched and an immense study. Topics covered by this magazine are very relevant to the development sector, agencies and workers. I found a lot from a single issue of this magazine. Presentation and printing of your magazine is also very good.

My best wishes to all team members of CSR Mandate magazine.

This is for your information and necessary action.

Respectfully,

**Dr. Anand Singh**  
Member For You  
Cell: +91 9448779002  
Email: [anand.singh@doctorsforu.org](mailto:anand.singh@doctorsforu.org)



Mumbai for all



Dear Anula Imchen,  
Please refer to your communication dated July 11, 2014 on CSR Mandate, enclosing the issue in which has been published my interview. It was only natural for me to touch specially upon the theme of sanitation because I have been doing work in this field for more than 40 years now. I feel greatly encouraged that my efforts have borne fruit in the sense that the subject of sanitation, even a discussion of which earlier was a taboo, now occupies at times a central stage of social discourse dealing with health, environment and other subjects which are matters of great concern to us. I feel like redoubling my efforts in the context of the Prime Minister saying that reconstruction of toilet should have precedence over that of temple. I now propose associating with a number of business houses which have a thrust on sanitation in their activities undertaken under the programme of discharging Corporate Social Responsibility. I am glad to inform you that there has been an awakening towards this and business houses and leaders of industry are now coming forward to implement schemes under the said programme. I am sure CSR Mandate will help us in this.

With highest regards,

Yours sincerely,

**Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak**  
Ph.D., D.Litt.  
Action Sociologist and Social Reformer  
International Expert on Cost-Effective Sanitation,  
Biogas and Rural Development  
Founder - SULABH INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE  
ORGANISATION

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June 10<sup>th</sup> 2017



**Ms. Anula Imchen**  
Executive Editor  
CSR Mandate  
New Media Communication Pvt. Ltd.  
Marol Maroshi Road  
Andheri (E) - Mumbai

Dear Anula,

Thank you very much for the amazing interview and article published in CSR Mandate magazine on Mumbai Smiles work. Our entire team loved it!

Congratulations for the good work you do through CSR magazine in highlighting the work of organisations like us.

Please keep on bringing information about our common work towards a better world. You play a very important role in this powerful fight against poverty.

Warm Regards,

**Anula Imchen**  
Founder and General Director

[www.mumbaismiles.org](http://www.mumbaismiles.org)

ISO 9001:2008 (QMS)



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Greetings Readers,

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE), enacted on August 4, 2009, stresses the importance of free and compulsory education for children aged between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21 a of the Indian Constitution. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), is the flagship programme launched by the Government of India to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education in a time-bound manner as mandated by the Constitution of India. We applaud the programme's success in implementing the mandate of enrolling children in Grade I but ensuring that children continue their education or have the opportunity to proceed beyond the elementary level is crucial for them and the country. According to a survey conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) in 2021, one out of every eight students enrolled in a school or college drops out before completing their education, and over 62 per cent of all dropouts occur at the school level.

Mahatma Gandhi said that the real India lives in its villages, yet, we see dismal neglect in improving the quality of education in the rural areas. There are varied reasons for this. Poverty, accessibility and availability are the major ones. Some vital points for high dropout rates, especially among young girls, is the lack of safe sanitary facilities and the social system of patriarchy where male members of the family decide how much a girl can study. This gendered nature thus creates a stop-point for many girls. If we can overcome all the above hurdles, we will see a leap in progress in our rural areas. Economic hardships will lessen, opportunities for a better life will not be a mirage anymore, and mindsets are changed for the better.

Another important group we need to give more attention to academically is the differently-abled. Disabled children rarely progress beyond primary school, and only 9 per cent complete secondary education. Around 45 per cent of disabled people are illiterate, and only 62.9 per cent of disabled people between the ages of 3 and 35 have ever attended regular schools. There is much inequality and misconception about them. We need to change this perception. With times, things are looking up for them, and we need to put in more effort not to exclude them as we are making education inclusive for every child.

One of the defining moments for me this year was when I read how Mirabai Chanu, who won India's first medal at the Tokyo Olympics honoured the truck drivers who gave her a lift to her training academy every day for several years. The academy was 25 km away from her village. Her village had limited transport, and she was also unable to afford the daily commute. She did not allow the hardships to put an end to her dream of winning for her country. Her tenacity, determination and consistency was well rewarded. India has a hidden talent of sportspersons just waiting to be noticed and nurtured. Sports is a powerful catalyst for social change. We need to use this vehicle to its best capacity to polish the rough diamonds and provide a platform for them to shine for India.

We hope you will enjoy the stories and thought-provoking articles we have lined up for you in this issue.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kamaljit Swaroop'.

**Kamaljit Swaroop**  
Vice Chairperson





Dear Readers,

In the latest report regarding the number of educational institutions India has, we can say that the numbers are impressive. There are 15,07,708 Government Schools (including government-aided, private unaided and other schools) in 2019-20, and over 45,000 Degree Colleges, over 1000 Universities and around 1500 top institutes as of September 2021.

If we have this impressive array of numbers, why is there still much to be desired at the grassroots level; why is education still not accessible to the most needed? We are beset with many issues at the foundational levels that are conflicting in nature, especially in the rural areas. Countless schools are still in want of the most basic needs, let alone proper resources and infrastructure. Trained teachers are still required, and maintaining a decent teacher-student ratio is still a hurdle that needs to be examined with utmost seriousness. We need to remember that we are in the 21st century, and young students, the future of our country, deserve an education and an atmosphere that motivate them to look forward to receiving and absorbing the quality education they so rightly deserve.

The past 20 months were a roller-coaster for all of us in every sense of the term. Families and societies worldwide experienced a trauma unlike any other. Taking a severe beating was education. Globally, 1.2 billion children in 186 countries were out of the classroom. It is indeed an alarming number as most of them had little or no means to access education digitally.

Though there is a sense of normalcy returning, much was lost in the almost two years of remote learning and more so for those that need education the most. As schools are reopening, we all need to take a stand and determine to lift the cause of the most deprived. We need to ensure that we start making up for the lost months as education is the only solution to lift our societies out of poverty. It is the all-encompassing tool that affects every aspect of human life, spurring them to achieve a higher quality of living, opening doors for better opportunities, empowering and giving them the fuel to stand up against biases like gender, race and caste inequality.

Another area that has not received importance much until very recently is Sports. This is why we have included it as one of the topics in this issue. Sports is a binding factor within a nation and between nations. India has potential in this arena as we witnessed in the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, and in the past years, where our sportsmen and women have risen above impossible hardships and circumstances to make the nation proud.

We welcome your feedback regarding the contents of this issue. Feel free to share your thoughts so we can improve and make your reading experience a valuable one.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Atula Imchen', written over a horizontal line.

**Atula Imchen**

Editor



# Teaching Students the Importance of Individual Social Responsibility

## A little bit of humility can always change the world

**When we see advertisements on social initiatives by big brands, what do we perceive? These are renowned companies that contribute and understand their responsibility towards society. Giving back to the people or community is indeed what fetches them glory and empathy. With millions of companies around the world expanding their social activities, CSR is inescapable.**

Students today know that to be a part of any big corporate house, they need to be an all-rounder. After all, the most notable criterion for being selected by an MNC is to be a part of multiple activities. Most renowned companies today have made it mandatory to have some form of

volunteer experience. Corporate social activities can change a student's mindset by developing a global outlook in them. Irrespective of the origin of the place, they contribute to CSR activities anywhere, be it in a remote rural area or a smart city. It is interesting to see how the world has



**Geeta Castelino**



“

CSR has been talked about for many years now, but the impact of Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) on the communities and the global corporate environment is also becoming increasingly important. ISR is about individuals becoming responsible in their actions affecting communities in their immediate circle and also beyond. It includes the engagement of each individual in the community where he/she currently lives, actively participates in its development, and work together to solve community problems. One of the main objectives of ISR is to make the community a better place

”

shrunk when it comes to communication. Someone could be helping a child or an NGO from a developed country, teaching or contributing towards health facilities or imparting training through practical-oriented courses to build their small scale



industries in a rural, remote place in India.

When students are well aware that Corporate Social Responsibility will always be a part of their life, they become more passionate about it. Many universities and colleges, especially Management Colleges, have made it mandatory to include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Student Social Responsibility (SSR) as a subject. Due to this, students are now moving towards becoming better human beings. By participating in social activities, they are also opening doors for increased global opportunities and benefits. They are aware that if they want to grow in life, being a responsible citizen is a must. By being a part of corporate social activities, the chances of economic development

increase as well. This helps them as well as the place they belong to a great extent.

In raising ethics training within university students, SSR plays a huge role in educating the younger generation about the importance of caring for the environment. It is undeniable that CSR practice and understanding are still nascent among the younger generation in our country.

Corporate Social Responsibility programmes are a given at most companies these days, but that does not necessarily mean all companies have truthfully accepted the calling to be good corporate citizens. Some CSR programmes are nothing more than a marketing game, and a poorly executed one at that. They even struggle to get employees excited to participate and give back to the community.

### **Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) Vs Student Social Responsibility (SSR)**

CSR has been talked about for many years now, but the impact of Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) on the communities and the global corporate environment is also becoming increasingly important. ISR is about individuals becoming responsible in their actions affecting communities in their immediate circle and also beyond. It includes the engagement of each individual in the community where he/she currently lives, actively





“

I firmly believe that if a child understands life skills, is inculcated values of giving to the society at an early age, the child will be more aware of its surroundings and will be a better human being in the long run. A child learns ethics through practical experience

”

participates in its development, and work together to solve community problems. One of the main objectives of ISR is to make the community a better place. ISR is driven by intrinsic altruism regardless of material incentives, social or self-esteem concerns for the individual. In addition, one finds these motives are mutually interdependent, and both policymakers and social activists must have a good understanding of these interactions to effectively influence individuals' desires to engage in socially responsible behaviours.

The relationship between Individual

Social Responsibility and the impact on Corporate Social Responsibility is a compelling topic to observe and study. Members of clubs or organisations active in charitable-giving activities are more likely to engage in positive ISR and CSR activities. This is because they learn the importance of socially responsible behaviour through classes and various seminars. Moreover, there is a sense of peer pressure to conform to acceptable social behaviours. I firmly believe that if a child understands life skills, is inculcated values of giving to the society at an early age, the child will be more aware of its surroundings and will be a better human being in the long run. A child learns ethics through practical experience. It is also observed that a student's Undergraduate Major impacts corporate social responsibility more than just business ethics alone. Management/Business students are no less ethical than non-management/business students. There is a greater need to tailor a business ethics curriculum based on student characteristics. In general, business schools are trying to find new ways to include ISR/SSR and CSR courses in the curriculum.

The most influential persons driving the CSR agenda are specific faculty members. Can Individual Social Responsibility be taught? It ideally depends on the students' beliefs about

their levels of Individual and Corporate Social Responsibility. In addition, it depends on their coursework and extracurricular activities that might have covered topics concerning social responsibility and ethics. It also depends on their demographic and psychographic characteristics.

The social responsibility of individuals and companies has been gaining attention over the last few years at both national and international levels. When individuals decide to buy one product over another, they often look at what the companies do to benefit society. Moreover, the level of Corporate and Individual Social Responsibility is shown to have a positive impact on the overall reputation of companies. Given this trend, more universities are beginning to incorporate course work into their curriculum that either emphasises social responsibility and



ethics or requires students to get out into the community for service as an essential component of the curriculum.

Many business schools have implemented community requirements into the curriculum so that students are required at some point during their studies to engage with the community as part of a course for which they receive credit. This can be fulfilled in a variety of ways and implemented across campuses and departments. The effects of incorporating this type of programme and requirement into the curriculum indicate that implementing this type of curricular programme is beneficial to the students.

Students' levels of social responsibility remain with them and impact their

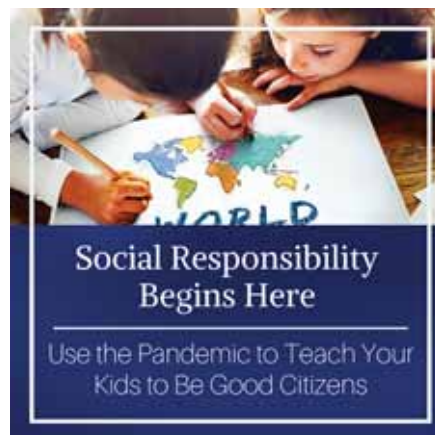


perceptions of how responsible companies should be for both societal and consumer welfare. Both dimensions have a positive effect on the perceptions of how companies should benefit consumers and society. Therefore, including this type of programme into the curriculum is beneficial to all students as they get involved with the community and learn to become good citizens while also benefiting from it as the coursework remains with them as they graduate and become a part of other communities. There is a positive impact on students' ISR and CSR levels, and these perceptions and beliefs are usually enduring. Maybe we can teach social responsibility after all.

Students who learn about CSR can become more aware of the products they use and the companies that make them. Schools/colleges can make this topic more exciting by thinking up creative ideas that change students' attitudes toward business ethics and sustainability. As a result, children will be more socially responsible adults who make better purchasing decisions.

## Ways to Teach Students about Corporate Social Responsibility

**Primary School Students:** Teach them concepts like labour conditions and giving back to the local community. Simplify complicated terms and concepts, including how HR policies are



formulated. Organise drawing competitions based on Student Social Responsibility.



students in CSR is by encouraging them to take up an internship with a local/nearby company. Interning will allow students to gauge how the company manufactures their products and gives back to the local community. They will discover how the company builds a socially responsible business that values transparency and good labour conditions.



**RESPONSIBILITY**  
starts with *me.*

## How to Create Your Own Corporate Social Responsibility Projects

Corporate Social Responsibility ensures that businesses adopt ethical standards when manufacturing and selling their products and services. These standards include sustainability, philanthropy and good labour practices. Many big brands have incorporated social responsibility into their company culture and values.

Learning about Corporate Social Responsibility should start in the classroom, and even younger students can benefit from better business education. Primary school children, for example, can learn about some of their favourite brands that support children around the world through their 'Building the Change' initiative.

**Secondary School Students:** Guide them to websites that evaluate the environmental and social impacts of consumer products from some of the world's biggest brands. Let them find out a minimum of five companies that excel when it comes to Corporate Social Responsibility.

**High School or Undergrad Students:** Let them choose a brand and ask them to evaluate their sustainability values. Let other students ask the presenter student a couple of questions at the end of each presentation to make it more interactive. By participating in such projects, students learn and understand the importance of their responsibilities towards society.

**Make Corporate Social Responsibility More Interesting:** One way to engage

Encourage students to research CSR topics that interest them. Find ways to encourage students to take action on issues that concern them. This will, in turn, foster active citizenship and build students' leadership skills. It will also provide an antidote to feelings of powerlessness or apathy.

Corporate Social Responsibility is gaining more traction in the business and consumer world. Teaching students about it will help them learn about business ethics and sustainability.

Follow the tips above to create engaging classroom lessons that students will learn from and enjoy. ■

*Geeta Catelino is an Educationist, Consulting Psychologist and CSR Advisor for Corporates and NGOs.*





# Challenges in CSR Implementation in India

India is the first country in the world to impose a statutory obligation of CSR for corporations meeting certain criteria. This provision makes India the only country that makes both the spending and reporting of CSR obligations mandatory. Furthermore, the Companies Act and subsequent amendments have expanded and clarified activities for which the two per cent funding can be used. The Government of India has made it clear that CSR spending is not charity or mere donations without any strategic benefits. There has been a concerted effort to define broad areas (Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013) under which the funding can be channelled thereby, visibly and positively impacting society. Moreover, there has been a conscious attempt to keep the CSR legislation aligned with India's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013 defines broad areas of intervention intended to be interpreted liberally, with the eventual focus being on ensuring sustainable development of the country.



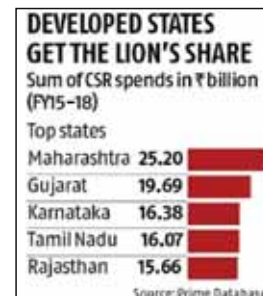
Prof. M.V. Ashok

## Challenges for CSR Spending

One of the challenges faced by both Corporates who want to spend their CSR funds is the inability to find suitable NGOs for implementation and implementing NGOs who cannot find the right type of funder for their projects. More often than not, Corporates continue with the same NGO to be on the safer side.

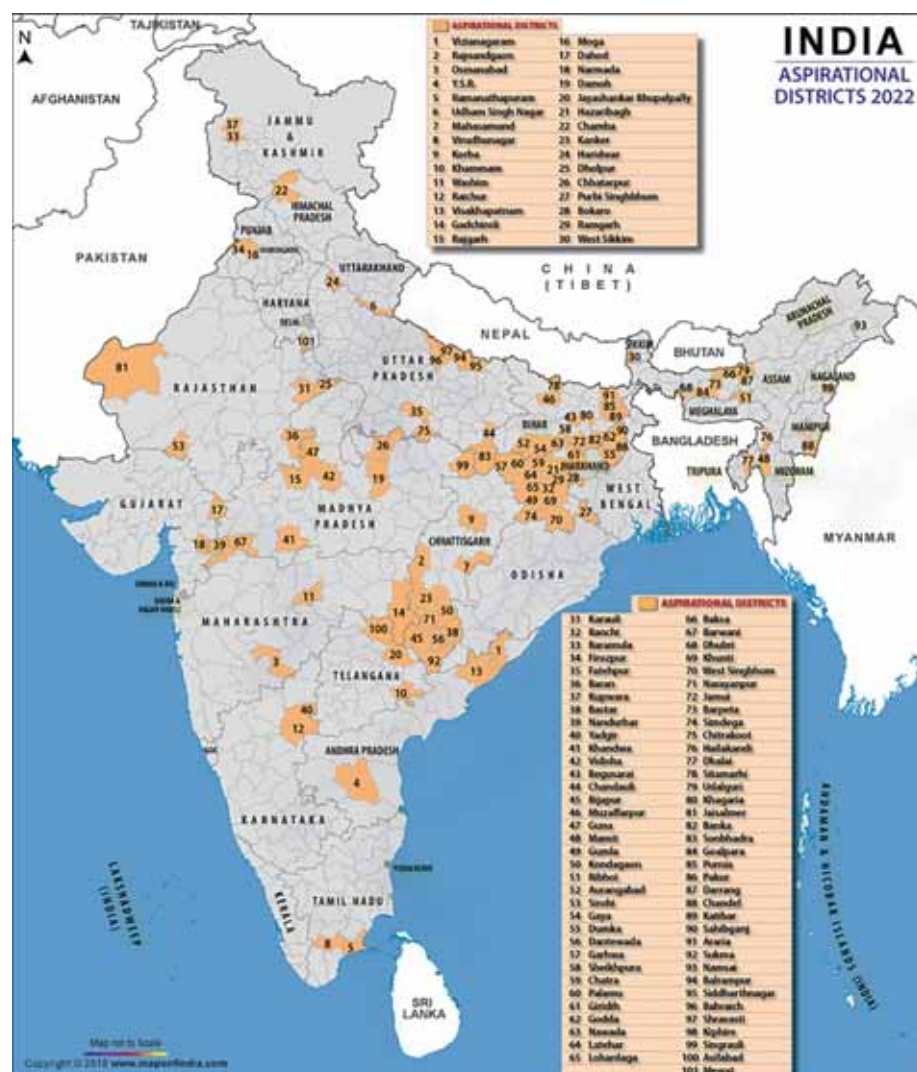
## Review of CSR Spending by Corporate

Based on an analysis of the CSR spending by Corporates during the last few years, the top three domains receiving maximum funding are education, health and rural development. Another area receiving significant funding is environmental sustainability. A significant amount of funding goes to higher industrialised States like





The concentration of spending in these States mean that States such as Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, which account for more than 55 per cent of the aspirational districts (States with poor socio-economic indicators), receive only 9 per cent of the total expenditure towards CSR. Apart from Uttar Pradesh (#9), no State from the ones listed above features in the top 10 State beneficiaries. For CSR to be truly effective, this imbalance would have to be corrected



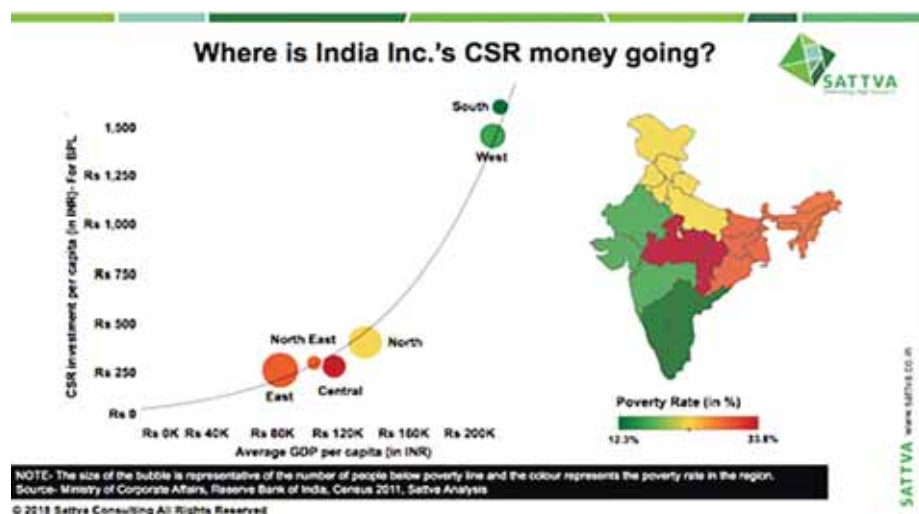
Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, who have received more than 30 per cent of the total CSR spend during 2015. This could be for multiple reasons, for example, the company is looking to have a positive social impact in their areas of operation, as well as deeper connects with social impact organisations operating in the same area. Further, CSR expenditure modes where almost 44 per cent of all spending is done by the companies themselves or via trusts/societies/Section 8 companies set up by them. Another 43 per cent is done through various implementation partners. However, the concentration of spending in these States mean that States such as Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, which account for more than 55 per cent

of the aspirational districts (States with poor socio-economic indicators), receive only 9 per cent of the total expenditure towards CSR. Apart from Uttar Pradesh (#9), no State from the ones listed above features in the top 10 State beneficiaries. For CSR to be truly effective, this imbalance would have to be corrected. Invest India's 'Corporate Social Responsibility Projects Repository' on the India Investment Grid (IIG) is an effort in this direction. It is hoped that by giving a platform to all States to list potential CSR projects at the central level, companies and their implementation partners would be able to assess where their CSR funds would be most impactful across India. Currently, the portal has over 650+ projects across eight diverse domains.

## Regional Distribution of Expenditure under CSR Funds

In 2018, as per the Ministry of Rural Development, India has 718 districts, of which, approximately 16 per cent (115 districts) were aspirational districts as per NITI Aayog. Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh account for more than 55 per cent of the aspirational districts' concentration across India, yet received only 9 per cent of the total expenditure towards CSR. States with a relatively higher level of development have the highest concentration of CSR-led activities and, they are increasing over the years. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Delhi received 40 per cent of the total





CSR expenditure from 2014-15 to 2017-18, even though they account for only 11 per cent of the total number of aspirational districts.

This bias exists not only towards relatively well-developed States but also within a State itself. An analysis of data for FY 2016-17 shows that even in Maharashtra, which received the largest volume of funding, certain districts such as Pune and Mumbai (suburban) received the highest amount in CSR funding (more than INR 200 Crore each), while those which were farther away from industrialised areas, such as Hingoli, Buldhana and Parbhani received less than INR 1 Crore of funding.

### Activities Funded under CSR Activity

Activities that are specified in Schedule VII as the activities are the activities taken up by companies in their CSR policies are as indicated below:

- Promotion of Education
- Environmental Stability
- Social Business Projects
- Eradication of Hunger and Poverty
- Employment Enhancing Vocational Skills
- Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
- Combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases
- Reducing Child Mortality and Improving Maternal Health
- Contribution to Prime Minister's Relief Fund and other funds

Based on data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, it is observed that out of the total expenditure incurred on Schedule VII areas, projects related to education and health have received the maximum CSR funds as indicated in the table below. The cumulative figure from 2014-15 to 2017-18 for total expenditure incurred on projects related to education is INR 15,612.20 Crore, followed by INR 9,020.47 Crore spent on projects related to healthcare.

Sl.No.	Sector	Proportion of Expenditure (%)
1	Education, Differently Abled & Livelihood	37
2	Health, Eradicating Hunger, Poverty and Malnutrition, Safe Drinking Water & Sanitation	29
3	Rural Development	10
4	Environment, Animal Welfare, Conservation of Resources	9
5	Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Old Age Homes, Reducing Inequalities	3
6	Heritage, Art and Culture	2
7	Encouraging Sports	1
8	Prime Ministers National Relief Funds	4
9	Slum Area Development	0
10	Technology Incubators & Benefits to Armed Forces	0

*Source: Report of the High Level Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility*

It may be seen from the above table that CSR funds can be also contributed to the PM National Relief Fund, Swachh Bharat Kosh, Clean Ganga Fund and any other funds set up by the Government of India for socio-economic development.

Contributions to these funds have been in a small proportion (approx. 5.6 per cent) of the total CSR expenditures for the years 2014-15 to 2017-18. However, Slum Area Development, Technology Incubator, and Benefits to Armed Forces did not receive any funds.

### CSR and Sustainable Development Goals

SDGs are a collection of 17 global goals designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. These 17 goals consist of 169 targets which must be achieved by 2030. India played a prominent role in the formulation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, and much of the country's National Development Agenda is linked to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). India ranks 115 out of 162 on the SDG Index. This slow progress calls for immediate action through collaboration between the corporate sector, civil society organisations and the Government. Corporates are seen as the key drivers of SDGs as they can apply their creativity and innovation to achieve

sustainable development and facilitate the implementation of these goals. CSR and SDGs together have tremendous potential to develop an interconnected model for sustainable growth. Many companies are aligning their CSR focus

areas according to SDGs to meet their CSR mandate. For example, when an organisation defines its CSR focus area on enhancing livelihoods through skill development training of women and youth, it contributes to various SDGs such as creating means to end poverty, zero hunger, provide quality education, promote gender equality and economic growth.

### Contribution by the Corporate Sector

While a substantial proportion of companies spend their CSR funds directly, NGOs are becoming the most popular channel for others. This upward trend can be attributed to implementing agencies being a more suitable model for the companies to execute CSR projects due to their presence in the target areas, local connections and knowledge-based experience in executing social projects which a company may typically lack in.

### CSR for Technology Incubators

In September 2019, the Government expanded the scope of CSR to spur the Research & Development (R&D) and innovation ecosystem in the country. Schedule VII of the Companies Act now recognises any contribution to incubators funded by the Central or State Government or any agency or Public Sector Undertaking of Central or State Government, and, making contributions to public-funded Universities, IITs, national laboratories, and autonomous bodies (established under the auspices of ICAR, ICMR, CSIR, DAE, DRDO, DST) engaged in conducting research in science, technology, engineering and medicine aimed at promoting SDGs) as falling within the ambit of CSR. It is

important to appreciate that the amendment focuses on both the pillars of the innovation ecosystem – startups, by funding support to incubators and research across science, technology, engineering and medicine. Even though funding to technology incubators, albeit under a narrower definition, has been allowed for a while, the sector has not seen significant funding. It has only received less than 0.2 per cent of total CSR spending from 2014-15 to 2017-18. This was due to ambiguity around permitted activities and institutions and a lack of information about projects requiring funding across the country. To help solve the problem of information asymmetry, the CSR repository on IIG has a dedicated section for projects from technology incubators.

### The Way Forward

The need now is to address the challenges identified in CSR spending faced by Corporates who want to spend their CSR funds but are unable to find suitable NGOs for implementation and for implementing NGOs who are unable to find the right type of funder for their projects.

The closest solution that addresses this challenge is The BSE Sammaan, an initiative of BSE, CII and IICA under the MCA, GOI, founded in 2015. The BSE Sammaan CSR platform helps Corporates find validated programmes/projects through a database of over 900+ projects across India under the ambit of Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013. It also helps them find NGOs that are credible and accountable. I understand that BSE Sammaan was handed over to MCA in

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The BSE Sammaan CSR platform helps Corporates find validated programmes/projects through a database of over 900+ projects across India under the ambit of Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013. It also helps them find NGOs that are credible and accountable

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2021. However, this platform lacks certain facilities like geographical location, projects, etc. It is, therefore, envisioned that a CSR exchange is designed, which is app-based, where both Corporates/CSR Foundations, as well as NGOs/social enterprises (both for-profit and not-for-profit entities), can register, provide information about themselves, their strengths, past projects implemented with names of funders and the operational area to enable Corporates to find the right NGO/implementing agency for funding under CSR projects, and for NGOs/implementing agency to find funding for any development project they plan to implement. ■

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**Feeding the hungry is virtuous. But what we need is greater social security for the urban poor**

Covid-19 and the lockdown have only exacerbated the pre-existing inequities and exclusion that have sadly come to define the city today. While most of the urban poor who run our cities live without any social security and safety net, the city by and large stays aloof to their day-to-day struggles.

Urbanity demands that we eradicate the daily drudgery of our fellow citizens. Feeding the hungry is virtuous. This is what the city has done during the lockdown. What we need, however, is to help the poor to a path of recovery, resilience and self-reliance. Do we see them as equal citizens or, do we treat them merely as the "commodity of labour"? How much of the annual budget of our city is targeted at rebuilding the lives of the ravaged workers?

**Is sustainable development possible without an accountable**

**Data and privacy in the times of COVID-19**

As donors seek reports on nonprofit relief efforts, questions around data and privacy are more relevant than ever.

**Are social change and scale mutually exclusive?**

As the caution call for scale increases to volume, it is worth asking what is it we want to scale? And how will it enable social change? What is it we want to scale? And how will it enable social change? What is it we want to scale? And how will it enable social change?

# Enroute to Market: Building a Robust Public Sphere

You and a friend are having a picnic by the side of a river. Suddenly you hear a shout from the direction of the water—a child is drowning. Without thinking, you both dive in, grab the child, and swim to shore. Before you can recover, you hear another child cry for help. You and your friend jump back in the river to rescue her as well. Then another struggling child drifts into sight... and another... and another. The two of you can barely keep up. Suddenly, you see your friend

wading out of the water, seeming to leave you alone. "Where are you going?" you demand. Your friend answers, "I'm going upstream to tackle the guy who's throwing all these kids in the water."

*-A public health parable (adapted from the original, which is commonly attributed to Irving Zola)*



Arun Kumar



Diksha Shriyan

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In a recent study conducted by Apnalaya, it was found that in Shivaji Nagar, M East Ward, the average family monthly income was just Rs 13,555—about Rs 2464 per person for the whole month for a family of five. Over 25 per cent of the households do not have ration cards. During the lockdown, 81 per cent of the people have struggled to have access to ration, and 70 per cent had to borrow to buy rations and water. More or less, this is the reality of most of the poor in India. If not for the aid provided by thousands of civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizen groups across the country — supported by an unprecedented philanthropic response from all sections of society — the consequences would have been even more catastrophic

”

Let us underline, right at the outset, that it is only in the post - The Great Transformation period (à la Karl Polanyi) that one can even begin to fathom the possibility of India's top billionaires increasing their wealth by 35 per cent while India's poor population more than doubled from 6 Crore to 13.4 Crore after the first wave of the pandemic. Polanyi argued that before the 19th century, the economic system had been conceived of as a part of the broader society governed by social customs and norms as much as by market principles of profit and

exchange. The rise of capitalism, however, involved political efforts to de-link the economy from this social environment. In a market society, basic aspects of social life would be treated as pure market commodities (the fictitious commodities) and humans redefined as purely economically rational (i.e., profit-maximising) actors.

Since March 24, 2020, we have been shaken by the images and stories of fellow Indians rendered jobless, hungry, separated from their families, cut off from access to services, and subjected to the most deplorable human conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown. The lockdown has made us more aware that the urban poor, especially daily wage earners face starvation if they do not earn daily. As early as May 2020, an estimated 114 million had lost their jobs. This included 91 million daily wage earners and 17 million salary earners who had been laid off across 271,000 factories. 65-70 million small and micro enterprises had come to a halt. The extent of the loss of lives and livelihoods experienced last year is becoming clear "officially" only now, with detailed data from the Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) - the latest round of which is for the April-June quarter of 2020.

Table 1: Wealth Inequality in India (Share of population groups in total wealth, in %, 1961 – 2020)				
	Top 1%	Top 10%	Middle 40%	Bottom 50%
1961	11.9	43.2	44.5	12.3
1971	11.2	42.3	46.0	11.8
1981	12.5	45.0	44.1	10.9
1991	16.1	50.5	40.7	8.8
2002	24.4	55.6	36.3	8.2
2012	30.7	62.8	30.8	6.4
2020	42.5	74.3	22.9	2.8

With no work and little means to support themselves, millions have had no choice but to defy the lockdown and return to their villages. For the urban poor, this has meant more unemployment, food insecurity, indebtedness and further marginalisation. Half of Mumbai lives in slums. The people from Shivaji Nagar

slums in the M-East Ward, where a bulk of Apnalaya's work is focused, share a similar predicament. The Ward has been home to migrants from different parts of India as well as to those who have been resettled from the erstwhile slums situated in the inner recesses of Mumbai. According to the Mumbai Human Development Report, 2009, the Ward has the lowest human development index in Mumbai (24th out of 24 Wards). The average age at death here is 39 years.



In a recent study conducted by Apnalaya, it was found that in Shivaji Nagar, M East Ward, the average family monthly income was just Rs 13,555 - about

Rs 2464 per person for the whole month for a family of five. Over 25 per cent of the households do not have ration cards. During the lockdown, 81 per cent of the people have struggled to have access to ration, and 70 per cent had to borrow to buy rations and water. More or less, this is the reality of most of the poor in India. If



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The drastic change in priorities, that too for a sustained period, as CSOs turned their focus to disaster relief, had a social cost associated with it. Many nonprofits had to suspend their on-ground programmes temporarily and pivot to relief work, and there is fear that this disruption may undo years of efforts and progress, worsened by the funding setback. Short-term suspension of programmes may have a long-lasting impact, especially among marginalised and vulnerable communities

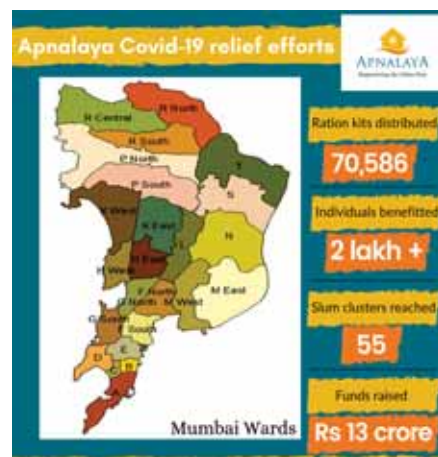
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not for the aid provided by thousands of civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizen groups across the country — supported by an unprecedented philanthropic response from all sections of society — the consequences would have been even more catastrophic.

organisations have provided millions of meals, dry ration kits, and personal protective equipment; amplified health and policy announcements; directed cash transfers and other forms of temporary income support; secured transportation for stranded workers; forged partnerships and coalitions of donors, nonprofits, volunteers, and government agencies; developed research, healthcare, and technology solutions to track, treat, and combat the coronavirus; and advocated on behalf of our democratic rights and freedoms. But has this unprecedented triple crisis — health, economic, and social — changed the approaches of CSOs in some ways?

### Changing Roles of CSOs

In the very first week that India entered the lockdown in March 2020 to curb the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)



the poor, by supplying protective gear, assisting with awareness campaigns on handwashing and physical distancing and, most importantly, reaching rations and cooked food to the unreachable. CSOs across India used their existing grassroots networks and know-how to mitigate the health, economic and social crises in the communities they serve. Several CSOs have also run camps and provided transportation for stranded and starving migrant workers. The Supreme Court has also acknowledged and applauded the role played by CSOs in these moments of the unprecedented pandemic. Development experts believe it is crucial to understand that it would not have been possible for the government alone to holistically address the pandemic — develop, implement and ensure that measures reached the needy, last-mile people. A few have also distinguished between a medical crisis, what the pandemic brought upon us, and a humanitarian crisis, primarily due to abysmal systemic planning, support and provision for the poor.

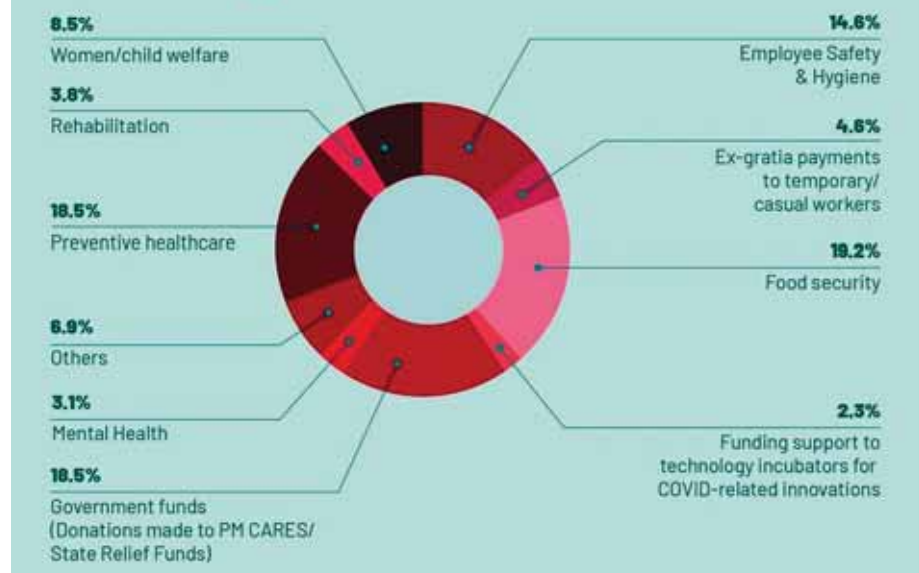
The second wave, starting in April 2021, highlighted yet another facet of the Indian CSOs. For the first time perhaps, and certainly, at this scale, the CSOs extended their support from their traditional humanitarian work to engaging directly with tasks relating to providing medical infrastructures such as arranging for medical supplies, ventilators, and oxygen cylinders.

1%	The top 10% of the Indian population holds 77% of the total national wealth. 73% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1%, while 67 million Indians who comprise the poorest half of the population saw only a 1% increase in their wealth.
70	There are 119 billionaires in India. Their number has increased from only 9 in 2000 to 101 in 2017. Between 2018 and 2022, India is estimated to produce 70 new millionaires every day.
10x	Billionaires' fortunes increased by almost 10 times over a decade and their total wealth is higher than the entire Union budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19, which was at INR 24422 billion.
63 M	Many ordinary Indians are not able to access the health care they need. 63 million of them are pushed into poverty because of healthcare costs every year - almost two people every second.
941 yrs	It would take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what the top paid executive at a leading Indian garment company earns in a year.

Indian civil society's COVID-19 response has taken myriad forms. Across the country, individuals, teams, and

pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on CSOs to help the government by providing necessities to

## Where are your key COVID-related CSR efforts aligned?



The drastic change in priorities, that too for a sustained period, as CSOs turned their focus to disaster relief, had a social cost associated with it. Many nonprofits had to suspend their on-ground programmes temporarily and pivot to relief work, and there is fear that this disruption may undo years of efforts and progress, worsened by the funding setback. Short-term suspension of programmes may have a long-lasting impact, especially among marginalised and vulnerable communities. The disruption in routine and planned programme activities has led to a regression in social development outcomes. With approximately 400 million people employed in the informal economy in India face the risk of slipping deeper into poverty, India estimates a significant impact on Sustainable Development Goals. This may undo years of efforts and progress made by these development organisations.

There seems to be a near-total regression as far as the support for entitlements and rights-based work is concerned. The pandemic has signalled the return of the direct service provision approach. The argument of tangible returns is back with most of the corporates and philanthropists. The resource-starved

CSOs have no option but to comply. The net impact of this regression is yet to be gauged. What is clear, however, is that civil society organisations have little money to work on civil society itself. The focus on staying with the symptoms is firmly in place. The root causes, working with the Sarkar on basic amenities and entitlements, marginalisation and disempowerment, will increasingly find very few takers in the market.

### Fewer Resources, More Restrictions

The resources for the CSOs have shrunk drastically in recent years. Dasra's research with 250 CSOs from India identified pathways to resilience building over April-Oct 2020. By conducting a detailed study on pre-existing stress drivers amplified by COVID-19, they found that over 40 per cent of CSOs in this period were found to have low resilience to mitigate operationally and financially through 2021. A study by PRIA International Academy, released in May 2020, also found that most grassroots organisations continue to be resource-starved, needing additional human, material and financial resources to continue serving marginalised communities. And now, with the amendments made under the Foreign

Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020, introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 20, the sector will be severely impacted as organisations receiving foreign funds will no longer be able to transfer them to small CSOs working at the grassroots level. FCRA money has been going down each year. The Union Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, said CSOs received Rs 16,940.58 Crore in 2017-18, Rs 16,525.73 Crore in 2018-19 and Rs 15,853.94 Crore in 2019-20. He said that the Bill sought to bring in transparency and stop misuse of foreign contributions by people.

This narrative may not hold water. However, the PM-CARES Fund, a charitable trust set up by the Prime Minister in response to the pandemic, also accepts contributions from international donors, is not subject to any scrutiny. Together, they account for more than Rs 15,000 Crores (\$2.03 billion), only marginally less than the Rs 16,343 Crores (\$2.21 billion) raised by FCRA registered nonprofits last year. The 2020 amendment discourages soliciting foreign contributions and collaborations, provides for stricter penal provisions against CSOs, and detrimentally affects organisations working on advocacy and capacity building.

### How Should Bazaar Respond?

In this changing context of regulations, what role does the bazaar play in social change? This past year, domestic corporations have seen a massive decline in profitability. Domestic corporate giving includes CSR donations and the contribution from Trusts and Foundations. Listed companies' profitability declined by 62 per cent in the months immediately following India's initial COVID-19 lockdowns. Therefore, the corpus available for CSR, which grew by 17 per cent from 2014 to 2019, is expected to decline by 5 per cent in 2021. Compounding this challenge, the CSR corpus has shifted away from traditional nonprofits and sectors to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES)

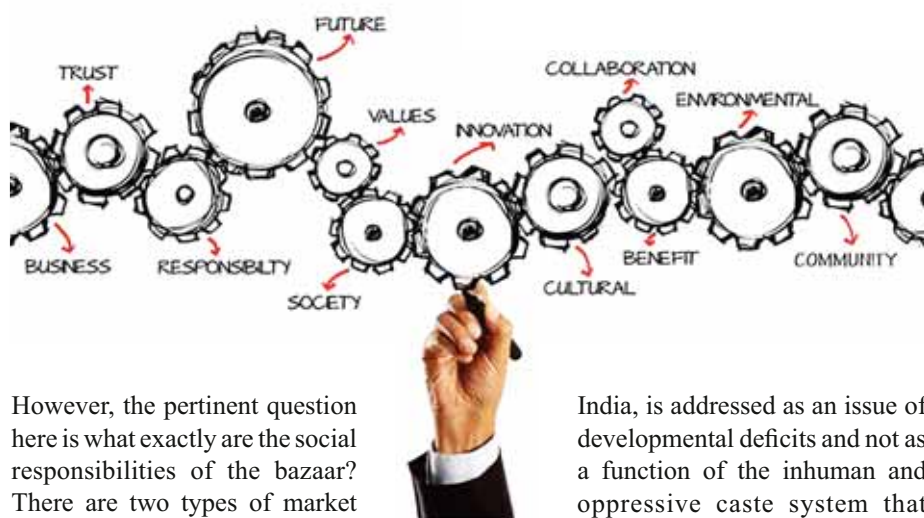


and other COVID-19 relief initiatives. According to the “ResiLens Stress Test” conducted by Dasra on 125 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), one in two NGOs have an income base that is more than 60 per cent restricted. With funding challenges and long-term CSR partners altering their funding arrangements, these NGOs—already reeling under the impact of reduced foreign funding due to stringent Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) rules—found themselves struggling to survive.

(policy) levels. It engages with four elements of everyday life: the individual and her family, the community, the government, and the market.

How many Corporate engagements do we know of where all these elements are touched upon? The bazaar's response is primarily engaged in questions of poverty and developmental deficits through a service delivery lens. Except for a few, it has not adopted a rights-based systemic approach to analysing and addressing the wicked problems of poverty, injustice and indignity. For example, the caste question, so central to

in the age-old relief where the givers' energy is primarily focused on themselves. Gifting remains unequivocally about the giver. There is perhaps little consideration of the agency or rights of the deprived and marginalised. Secondly, their penchant for relief and service provision is inextricably tied with their view on the tangibility of a result, which is fashioned by their insistence on immediate evidence on the one hand and instant gratification on the other. Many non-profits, especially those with social entitlements framework, struggle with this dilemma of Relief and Rights. Relief is not always a bad thing though. In any moment of severe crisis or calamity, relief is also a right.



However, the pertinent question here is what exactly are the social responsibilities of the bazaar? There are two types of market social responsibilities: those having to do with social impacts or what bazaar does to society, and those having to do with social problems or what bazaar can do for society. The operational responsibilities (how a market does its business: what sensitivities are shown towards labour and environmental laws, affirmative actions concerning gender, disability, and social backwardness or human rights in general, for instance) cannot be discounted no matter how significantly the social responsibilities (things that companies can do for communities and individuals in need) are cast. The overall responsibility is far greater than just its social responsibility, which, then, is reduced to sharing two per cent of its profit. Typically, social change is a complex inter-generational process<sup>[8]</sup>. It invariably includes changes at: personal (behaviour and practice), social (values and social relations) and systemic

India, is addressed as an issue of developmental deficits and not as a function of the inhuman and oppressive caste system that needs to be dismantled.

One of the leading concerns about their decision to support a social cause is that the Corporates in general do not prefer complex and long interventions. This manifests itself in Corporates expressing a special preference for non-profit organisations with a single-threaded, mono-thematic focus. A holistic intervention, which is more likely to result in sustainable change often falls short in winning their trust and support. One reason why many Corporates tend to focus on the palliative symptoms rather than the root causes would be that it has the potential to become political, and therefore, controversial.

How do we make a deeper, socio-philosophical sense of the choices Corporates tend to make? There seem to be two possibilities. First, we learn that the Corporates' worldview is still located



Today, corporates can take a step forward in rebuilding society. It involves a choice between continuing to support targeted benefits to the poor and supporting systemic changes like universal entitlements. As Richard Titmuss<sup>[9]</sup> said, benefits for the poor end up being poor benefits. The distinction between an act of disaster relief and a path to development must be made clear. Often addressing the symptom of a systemic flaw is taken as social development work, both by the CSOs and the CSR entities. As a society, we are at that critical juncture where the corporates and CSR must commit themselves to a long-term system-correction approach. And, ensuring universal entitlements could certainly be the first step in that direction.

There is an opportunity today with the pandemic for the bazaar to help organisations working on improving the system and be more flexible/open to strengthen organisations not just support

projects but to think about the social space and not just a project in the neighbourhood of their industry.

## The Way Forward: A Vibrant Public Sphere

The last year and a half have laid bare the great gaps in India's health, food, sanitation, education, housing and social protection systems. Lack of data on the most vulnerable, especially the urban poor and the informal workers, inadequate access to a job, food, health and other basic social securities, have entered national conscience like never before. In a study published by Vani, it was observed that "In a country like India, the voluntary sector bridges the gap between the government and the population of the country. It identifies the needs of the community and provides its support and services, even in the most untouched and marginalised areas where the government is not able to reach."

Today, some argue that the problem for governance is the "missing middle"—between spaces for public opinion below, and constitutional forums such as elected assemblies and courts at the top—to find democratic solutions to citizens' problems. Therefore, building a middle layer of institutions for democratic deliberations amongst citizens has become essential for democratic governance.

At Apnalaya, we are in the process of creating a development collective or Samoochik Vikas Samiti. The intent is to facilitate the formation of a more sensitive public sphere led by motivated organic leaders from the community through the formation of SVS, a public platform of disparate individuals and groups invested in a common theme. For example, an SVS on Water or Education will consist of multiple stakeholders in the city—researchers, writers, journalists, policymakers, administrators, CSOs and the local community volunteers working on Water or Education. We aim to redefine civic engagement, access to social entitlements, transparency and accountability of the duty bearers and the government bodies, in such a way that the struggle against marginalisation does not remain the sole concern of the marginalised alone. The sensitive and informed public sphere will ensure that the advocacy of those who live on the margins is shared by those who have voice and visibility as well.

The bazaar should consider strengthening efforts that seek to create and support this "middle". The pandemic has seen a rise in collaboration between funders, government, and CSOs, resulting in the co-creation of solutions to complex social issues such as hunger, migration, and vulnerable workers. Greater familiarity and trust-building efforts have resulted in greater openness to collaboration.

The crisis has also brought out in open the inequities that are reproduced and sustained by caste, gender and class underpinnings of our everyday life. Seizing this window of opportunity, we must bring back our focus on solutions long advocated by civil society. It is about time we revisited the role played by Indian industrialists and businesses during the Freedom Movements. We need nothing less than a renewed attempt at social reconstruction. All we need to do is to look around us and see how we can develop a system that will routinely and institutionally address the question of misery, marginalisation, poverty, hatred, violence, bigotry, and so on. We appear to have lost the plot of nation-building. Feeding a hungry child is necessary. However, the distribution of biscuits alone is not going to usher in a new dawn. ■

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A young girl with dark hair, wearing a yellow and pink patterned dress, is sitting cross-legged on a dark floor. She is holding an open book and looking down at it. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Child Education in India - Challenges and Solutions

At the entrance of Arti's house in Uttarakhand, accolades make up quite an impressive collection. The 16-year-old proudly holds a certificate in her hand. She has won the school level essay competition in her State. Such accolades and recognition did not come easy for Arti. Her father, Surendra Singh, who runs a small shop in the village, deterred his daughter's dream to study. With his mind set on prioritising his sons' education over hers, it became a huge roadblock for Arti to realise her dreams. World Vision India, which worked in her community, came forward to support Arti's education. Education was not always the most important for them before World Vision India's awareness programme changed his mind. "Now I pay more attention to my children's education," he said. Her parents are now supportive of her studies and extra-curricular activities, even to the extent of enrolling her in a gym, 5 kilometres away from the village, at Pauri town. Her father devoutly does the job of dropping her off and picking her up on his two-wheeler. Arti's dream is to work in a bank after completing college. Her parents are very supportive and are willing to help achieve her dreams by sending her to college in which case she will become one of the few girls in her village to attend college. Arti is a trendsetter in her own right.



**Madhav Bellamkonda**



Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Quality education is the foundation of sustainable development and is a force multiplier that enables self-reliance, boosts economic growth by enhancing skills and improve people's lives by opening up better livelihood opportunities. The Government of India has made significant progress in the last few decades in realising this goal as it achieved nearly 100 per cent of school

enrolments at the primary school level. Key initiatives like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Mid-day Meal Scheme, and many more have resulted in a rapid increment of primary school enrolment.

Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 was a landmark legal provision as it ensured access to quality education for children in the age group of 6-14 years. As a result of such policies and programmes, school dropouts in the age group of 6-14 years reduced from 13.46 million in 2006 to 6.1 million in 2014, i.e. 2.97 per cent of the total 204 million children, a significant gain compared to 2009 (4.28 per cent) and 2006 (6.94 per cent).

### School Dropouts and Learning Outcomes

Despite the progress made in the last few decades in providing quality education to all in India, several challenges remain. According to the National Sample Survey (NSS) 75th Round Household Survey 2017-2018, around 30.2 million children between 6-17 years are out of school, 31 per cent of whom have never

attended any educational institution (NSO, 2019). A recent submission in the Parliament by the Ministry of Human Resource Development states that in 2017-18, Assam (10.1) had the highest dropout rate at the primary level, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (8.1), Mizoram (8), Uttar Pradesh (8) and Tamil Nadu (5.9). At the secondary level, Assam's dropout rate was 33.7, followed by Bihar (32), Odisha (28.3), Tripura (27.2), and Karnataka (24.3).

As observed rightly by the National Achievement Survey (2017), improved enrolment is necessary but insufficient for progress. Though nearly 100 per cent enrolment has been achieved, the critical question is, are they learning? It is essential to bring learning outcomes in line with the expectations of all stakeholders. Enhanced learning outcomes in the form of improved competencies and skills are necessary to ensure sustainable quality education. However, many schools are not producing the expected results across the country. New data shows that even after five years of schooling, only about half of India's children have attained the appropriate reading or arithmetic skills expected after two or three years of learning. In addition, 50 per cent of adolescents are not completing secondary education.

### Factors Influencing Learning Outcomes Among Children

While the data on absenteeism is challenging to obtain, there is a reasonable correlation between regular attendance and learning outcomes. The question is – what motivates children to

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#### PRIMARY LEVEL (I-V), 2017-2018

State	Dropout rate	Boys	Girls
Assam	10.1	11.2	8.9
Arunachal Pradesh	8.1	10	6.1
Mizoram	8	8.6	7.4
UP	7.2	7.2	7.1
Tamil Nadu	5.9	5.9	6

#### SECONDARY LEVEL (IX-X), 2017-2018

State	Dropout rate	Boys	Girls
Assam	33.7	32.1	35.2
Bihar	32	30.3	33.7
Odisha	28.3	28.7	27.8
Tripura	27.2	27.1	27.3
Karnataka	24.3	26.4	21.9





attend school regularly? The challenges that present themselves are multi-faceted, including extrinsic and intrinsic factors. While some extrinsic factors like the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) programme is a reasonable incentive to ensure an increase in enrolment and attendance, lack of other infrastructure factors like access to schools, lack of/absence of sanitation facilities, safe drinking water, playgrounds, insufficient and under-equipped classrooms and teaching aids, etc., contribute to high dropout rates and poor learning outcomes.

### Extrinsic Factors

Pedagogical learning spaces that are inclusive, safe, healthy, and child-friendly are some extrinsic motivating factors prompting children to be regular in schools and create an environment conducive to learning. A study by the World Bank correlated how poor infrastructure could result in poor learning outcomes among children. For instance, separate toilets for boys and girls are essential. However, there is enough evidence, predominantly from rural areas, that girls would give their classes a miss if sanitary facilities were non-existent. The obstacles are even more evident in the hinterlands, with most schools having inadequate teaching staff and teaching aids. A single teacher handling a multi-level set of students is



not an uncommon sight in many schools. Furthermore, some children walk or cycle several kilometres to attend school because of the lack of schools within their villages. The long-distance exhausts the young learners and discourages many from being regular, as safety becomes a matter of concern, especially for the girls.

### Intrinsic Factors

While the extrinsic factors ensure better attendance and grade-appropriate learning, several intrinsic motivational factors are instrumental in achieving these outcomes. The socio-economic context and literacy level of parents and the social and religious beliefs of the community are some of the proven roadblocks to the quality and continuity of education in India. These intrinsic factors play a crucial role in either encouraging or discouraging children and their families to give importance to education and are present at the community level. Sometimes, access to education is a challenge for a child from a lower rung of the socially constructed caste system. Children from various religious backgrounds face a similar situation, mainly where certain religious beliefs prevent girls from being educated beyond a particular age.

According to the ASER 2020 report, girls (11 per cent) and boys (8.8 per cent) in the age group of 15-16 from the rural areas are out of school, indicating that issues such as child marriage and child labour may once again be on the rise. For a

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family under economic stress, it becomes a deterring factor if their ward does not achieve the appropriate learning outcomes. The focus shifts to engaging the child in economic activities since spending time on education would not reap any incentive. A study suggests that unless and until there is considerable improvement in the financial status of





## Charumathi

### A Young Girl's Dream of Becoming a Cardiologist



Charumathi, a 19-year-old first-year medical college student (MBBS), is the epitome of perseverance. She lives with her parents and four sisters in a 225 square feet, single bedroom home in Perumbakkam. Her parents worked hard to see that all five daughters get a good education. Her road to education was not an easy one. Due to her family's economic condition, she hesitated to ask her parents for any additional study materials. She says, "I would request my friends for the books or download the content from the internet and study from my phone."

She continues to tell us about a particularly difficult period in 2015 when the city of Chennai experienced devastating floods. Charumathi and her family had to leave their home and stay at an evacuation centre. She says, "It was a very tough time as I was in the tenth grade and had to give the board examination. I remember doing most of my preparations in a crowded campsite for evacuees. In the end, my hard work paid off, as I scored well and topped my

school in the examinations," says Charumathi proudly.

Charumathi and her family moved to Perumbakkam when she was in the 12th grade, which was another crucial year for her. She says, "I had to change my school and would spend two hours travelling back and forth to the new government school. I worked very hard and made many sacrifices. My effort bore fruit when I scored 1082 out of 1200 in my final exams and had once again topped my senior high school."

Although Charumathi's perseverance and studiousness took her through these tough times, she credits most of it to the lessons she imbibed through WV India. She says, "A lot of my determination and encouragement came from attending the Life School programme and children's Club Meetings conducted by World Vision. We were constantly encouraged and motivated to pursue our dreams. So that gave me hope to strive for more."

After scoring well in the 12th grade, Charumathi decided to pursue her dream of becoming a doctor. She took the NEET examination. She worked hard but was unable to clear it in her first attempt. In her second attempt though, she passed with a high cut off mark. She finally secured a seat in a Government Medical College. She says, "When I failed my first attempt, I thought that this is just not for me. However, World Vision encouraged me and gave me the financial support to attempt the NEET again. After clearing it, they supported me by paying a part of my medical college fees. My parents were also able to earn more than normal because of the additional livelihood support from World Vision. This took care of our educational needs. It is because of all these things that today I am pursuing my first-year MBBS," says Charumathi gratefully.

She wants to give back to society and be an example for other children in her community, who may feel dispirited by their circumstances. Many parents from these communities now use her as an example to motivate their children. She says, "I have come a long way and nothing is going to stop me from achieving my dream of becoming a cardiologist and to serve the poor and disadvantaged." Every time she gets the opportunity, Charumathi encourages girls to aspire and dream big. She graciously shares her experience and methods of studying with them. "Most of these were lessons taught to us in the Children or Youth Clubs and in the Life School trainings that World Vision had conducted," says Charumathi.

households and change in the social attitudes of parents, achieving the goal of universalisation of school education will remain a major challenge for India.

### Multi-Faceted Approach Towards Solutions

Any possible solutions to address the crisis of age-appropriate learning in India and to bring the children who dropped out back to schools should be multi-faceted

by engaging with the government (both at the State and local level), community leaders (including elected representatives and faith leaders), parents, school management committees, private/corporate entities, and CSOs/NGOs. We must recognise that it is in the environment of trust, partnership and collaboration that the solutions we provide would be most successful and sustainable.

Our India's Fragility Index 2019, which ranked the most fragile districts in the country on various contexts, showed that the 50 most fragile districts (based on literacy rates, dropout rates, school enrolment, etc.) were from States such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Several projects to enhance Child Education were implemented by us in the most fragile districts. Our approach



is to address both the extrinsic factors (such as improving infrastructure) and intrinsic factors (such as building the capacity of teachers, parents and community leaders) to bring better learning outcomes from the children. Our multi-faceted approach that partnered with corporates, government institutions, and local level community leaders have been delivering consistent results towards inclusive, equitable and quality education contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 4 – “Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All.”

### Improved Infrastructure

Enhancing school infrastructure is essential to achieve higher school enrolment, low dropout rates, and higher learning outcomes. We installed digital classrooms in 16 schools in partnership with the Lions Club of India. The project benefitted 1296 children (608 are girls and 688 are boys) by introducing them to digital learning tools and helped teachers in improving their work experience while decreasing their workload. Significant improvements in children's learning outcomes were observed wherein 75 per cent of the children showed age-appropriate local language reading skills and 71 per cent of children in arithmetic skills against the 44 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively, recorded at the beginning of the project.

The Rise Up! Daughters of India (RUDI) project implemented by us in Faridkot, Punjab, is another example of improved

infrastructure resulting in higher attendance in schools. Through upgrading the WASH facilities of government schools by setting up separate toilet blocks for boys and girls, handwashing stations, incinerators, disabled-friendly toilet units, and organising awareness campaigns on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Menstrual Hygiene Practices (MHP), a higher percentage of adolescent girls were retained in the school. An evaluation of the project revealed that the secondary level enrolment and completion rates had indeed gone up. The primary completion rate increased by 34.4 percentage points (on average), indicating a high retention rate. Girls marked remarkable progress of 38.7 percentage points (from 58.7 per cent in 2016 to 97.4 per cent in 2019) in the primary completion rate. The secondary school completion improved by 26.1 percentage points, with remarkable progress for girls from 19.2 per cent in 2016 to 51.6 per cent in 2019 and from 23.6 per cent (2016) to 44 per cent (2019) among the boys. Similarly, we were also able to construct over 250 separate toilets for girls and boys benefitting over 15,000 students through the Support My School (SMS) campaign in partnership with the Coca Cola Foundation.

### Building Capacity of Stakeholders

Building the capacity of various stakeholders (e.g., community leaders, faith leaders, parents, etc.) in child education is an important and often forgotten element in many interventions related to enhancements in children's education. While addressing the extrinsic factors is pivotal, overlooking the intrinsic factors would certainly make efforts futile.

Our Remedial Education Centre (REC) model is a community-led process that seeks to ensure learning support for all children between 6-11 years to inculcate basic reading, writing, arithmetic and life skills. Children are provided extra two hours of study in a day to help them achieve age-appropriate learning through community volunteers. The model engages with the child through active learning methods, strengthens School



Management Committees (SMCs) through capacity-building sessions, and engages parental and community participation in improving learning outcomes among children. Between 2016-20, more than 40,000 children received remedial coaching through 898 RECs, while 538 SMCs and 5423 parents were trained on providing learning support.

An example of a successful implementation is Dhemaji in Assam (in partnership with HDFC), where 322 primary level children from 10 schools were given remedial education to address poor learning outcomes. The project helped in inculcating a culture of reading in the community and the children. Trained facilitators kept the students engaged and interested in reading books



and used games, songs, stories and other activities for learning. Similarly, in collaboration with PRATHAM, we provided online capacity-building programmes for 1046 government school teachers and 635 REC facilitators in the last two years.

Our Literary Boost (LB) programme is another approach that supports the development of reading skills among young children. We involve the communities as our partners in programme implementation. We gave them the tools required to encourage their children to get excited about reading. We introduced the programme in 80 government primary schools in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. Evidence showed the effectiveness of the programme in reducing student absenteeism and enhancing the quality of reading and storytelling among students.

The Men Care programme model is another noteworthy venture of the organisation that has successfully gained recognition among the local governments in many States. Contributing to SDG 5 – Gender Equality, the model promotes the involvement of men and boys as equitable, responsible family members to achieve gender equality and positive family well-being. The model's effectiveness lies where men are intentionally included in development activities to achieve transformation at the household level. An evaluation of the project in 2018 revealed that one of the most significant transformations was that the school enrolment and retention rate improved by 50 per cent. The girls could boldly express their desire to pursue

higher studies and employment, and the families supported their dreams.

### The Way Forward

COVID-19 has only exacerbated the current challenges. The number of children who will be out of school would increase manifold in the next few years. Apart from school closure to control the spread of the virus, distance-learning facilities (online platforms, TV broadcasting, radio, etc.) that were adopted to facilitate education could not reach all students due to the massive disparity across wealth, location and gender. While there is enough uncertainty around the re-opening of schools and protecting children from any possible third wave, the issues remain relevant. As the closure of schools remains in force, there is an opportunity for collaboration among various stakeholders to enhance school infrastructure and mobilise communities, parents, and faith leaders to provide better social and emotional support to children.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' or an omni solution that adequately addresses unique challenges to overcome the barriers of Equity of Education in COVID-19 and Post-COVID 19 situation. A collective effort by various stakeholders is the key to increasing the quality of education in India, enabling every child to have an equal chance for success in the continuity of education. The Government should increase the funding for education to 6 per cent of GDP as in NEP 2020. As part of their CSR activities, the private sector can play a key role in developing school infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Using their knowledge and pre-

“Using their knowledge and pre-established connection with the communities, civil society organisations (CSO) can provide the much-needed last-mile connectivity by engaging with the teachers, SMCs, faith leaders, community leaders, parents, and children through capacity-building, awareness programmes, bridge schooling, supporting enrolment and retention-related interventions, etc.

” established connection with the communities, civil society organisations (CSO) can provide the much-needed last-mile connectivity by engaging with the teachers, SMCs, faith leaders, community leaders, parents, and children through capacity-building, awareness programmes, bridge schooling, supporting enrolment and retention-related interventions, etc. This multi-pronged approach will help address the existing gaps and enable more children to access quality education in India – together for children, for change, for life. ■

*Madhav Bellamkonda is the National Director and CEO of World Vision India.*







# Indian Dreams Foundation

## Instilling New Dreams on India's Daughters

The birth of the Indian Dreams Foundation (IDF) arose out of personal tragedy. It began its journey in 2004 when a group of like-minded people from various backgrounds decided to make a difference in the lives of those less privileged than them. The NGO's decade-long efforts in education, health and the empowerment of the deprived girl child are hugely appreciated globally. CSR Mandate spoke to **Punit Asthana**, the Founder of the Indian Dreams Foundation, to know more about the NGO's inspiring journey.



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The Indian Dreams Foundation arose out of personal tragedy. I lost my father at the young age of ten. This tragic incident turned my life upside down, but with assistance and encouragement from friends, I was able to complete my education. The help I received at that crucial juncture in my life and being able to pursue my dreams instilled a burden in me for those with no opportunity of doing so on their own. My heart was filled with compassion for the underprivileged seeking a way out of their challenging circumstances. I felt it was my duty to help provide a comprehensive education to vulnerable communities

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#### **What is the story behind IDF? What is the vision and mission of the NGO?**

The Indian Dreams Foundation (IDF) is dedicated to educating, empowering and developing underprivileged communities by creating awareness on pressing issues such as the importance of education and health. Our journey began in 2004 when a group of like-minded individuals from various backgrounds got together to make a difference in the lives of the less privileged. Since our establishment as an NGO on January 24, 2005, we have relentlessly worked in education, health, and women empowerment in underprivileged communities. We strongly believe in the power of education as a tool of empowerment that can be leveraged to break taboos and stereotypes.

We envision an empowered society where every citizen has an equal chance of leading a happy, safe and meaningful life with access to qualitative education, healthcare and vocational skills.

Our mission is to work towards achieving at the grassroots level, eradication of illiteracy and gender discrimination in underprivileged communities by making education accessible and raising awareness for the same.

#### **What are your core areas? Why focus on these areas?**

Our main focus is on Education – formal and non-formal, Girls' Education, School Development through Infrastructure and Quality Education Support, Menstrual Health and Hygiene, Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights (SRHR) for adolescent girls and married women.

Based on the data survey and demographic conditions in the communities we are involved in, gender inequality and women's health are serious concerns. There is an immediate call to action on girls' health, education and empowering communities after COVID and its impact on vulnerable communities. That is why we have been focusing on these issues for the past several years.

#### **Where is your area of operations? Do you have a specific reason for choosing this area?**

Our work is mostly concentrated in Agra, Uttar Pradesh. We choose to focus our work here. Uttar Pradesh is one of the poorest States in the country with the largest population, alarmingly low literacy rates, a plethora of pressing issues and limited awareness on health and hygiene practices. We initiated operations in Agra and extended to other districts like Barabanki and Raebareli to reach out to larger sections of vulnerable communities, specifically girls and women. We hope to empower them through education and make them aware of their rights.

#### **Take us through the work you are doing in the field of Education. Why is this field very close to your heart?**

Since founding the Indian Dreams



Foundation, I have mentored a diverse group of multi-ethnic professionals and built effective working relationships across geographic and cultural borders to further push the agenda of education for rural communities in India. I utilise my expertise in managing corporate sustainability programmes with a focus on volunteerism and community development activities to introduce our NGO to a larger audience.

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to vulnerable communities.

### According to you, what are the reasons for low literacy rates in rural India?

The abysmal literacy rate in rural India is due to a system of economic disparity and gender, race and caste discrimination.

In rural areas, the mindset of employing children for small jobs or taking care of siblings has persisted, meaning that they do not see merit in sending children to school.

The target set by the National Policy of Education in 1986 of investing a minimum of 6 per cent of the country's GDP in Education has not been met (3.5 per cent of GDP has been allocated to education as per the 2021 budget), meaning that schools are largely underfunded and do not have the resources to impart an education that is valuable in the 21st century.

There is a lack of proper infrastructure. Electricity is available in only 62.81 per cent of schools across India. The average pupil to teacher ratio was 24 in 2015-16 but, there are still schools where one teacher is responsible for as many as 150 students).

The continued existence of deep-seated patriarchal norms that centre around the idea that women are exclusively homemakers and birth givers and, therefore, require no formal education as that would be a waste of time and money.

Despite reservation policies, systemic discrimination against lower castes and Dalits in educational institutions persists, resulting in a gap between the Dalit literacy rate and average literacy rate [Dalit literacy level is only at 66.1 per cent compared to the all-India level of 73 per cent. Female literacy among them is as low as 56.5 per cent against the all-India female literacy level of 64.6 per cent (Census Report, 2011)].

### How is IDF helping to overcome these obstacles through the various education programmes?

We have direct intervention at the community level, so with decade-long operations in slums and rural pockets, we have succeeded in creating a relationship



with the slum dwellers. Initially, it was challenging for us to convince and motivate parents, especially male members of the family to send their girl children to school.

Most people had an archaic mindset with a negative approach regarding the education of girl children. They were not keen to send them to school. They felt it was a waste of money. They were more inclined on getting their daughters married as early as possible. They believed that girls must stay at home and do all the work like cooking, cleaning the house and taking care of their siblings. To combat that, our team regularly counselled parents, families and communities about the importance of education for the children, no matter their gender.

After years of continuous intervention, we succeeded in helping communities develop a positive mindset towards girls' education. We made them aware of the facilities provided by the government to empower their children.



Honhar Ladki is an education sponsorship and mentoring programme to support adolescent girls from rural and urban slums. Besides enrolment and sponsorship, the programme takes a multi-faceted approach to ensure parental commitment, achieve gender equality and reduce girls' drop-out rates by developing half-yearly progress reports, periodic parent-teacher meetings, organising monthly sessions where our staff talk with teachers about attendance and performance, providing mentors for the girls to help them become independent and develop self-confidence, organising awareness sessions for girls and their mothers, and educate them on health and hygiene, menstruation and nutrition



### Do elaborate on your flagship initiative – Honhar Ladki. What is the selection process like for girls to be sponsored and mentored under this programme?

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educate them on health and hygiene, menstruation and nutrition.

We do follow a three-tier selection procedure to integrate these girls to be a part of this programme.

**Tier 1:** We conduct community mapping in communities and perform demographic surveys using primary data from sources such as the local council, Panchayat, search engines, and secondary data through questionnaires.

**Tier 2:** This is the stage where we

shortlist the girls from the Tier 1 process. We further evaluate them against criteria like family income, academic record, number of working members in the family, etc. The shortlisted beneficiaries are then invited to fill a preliminary form.

**Tier 3:** We conduct an internal analysis on the girls who have been shortlisted. We then interview the parents. We evaluate the girls' level of understanding and learning. When we are satisfied with the outcome of the evaluation, we enrol the selected girls into private or semi-governmental schools.

### How do you evaluate the girls' progress?

Our team visits the schools and engages with teachers and girls regularly. We also routinely conduct meetings with parents and teachers so that all the stakeholders are a part of the process.

The evaluation mechanism consists of:

- **Periodic Parent-Teacher Meetings:** These are held on the 20th-25th of every month. Teachers highlight the

## A Dream Realised



### HEER

**“As a poor Muslim girl, I feel so blessed to get an opportunity to study. This is a dream come true as it is almost impossible because of social cultures and conservative mindsets.”**

Before joining the IDF's Honhar Ladki

programme, Heer was frightened and uncertain about her fate. Would she be blessed to complete her primary education from a government school or would her parents force her to marry like her elder siblings? Heer grew up in challenging conditions where she saw her sisters and brother leave school and get married at a tender age. Their early marriages planted a seed of determination in Heer that she needs to get her priorities in place - to complete her education and become an independent and empowered woman. After completing her primary education seven years ago, her burning desire for further education made her seek avenues to achieve it. She learned about IDF's girls' education sponsoring and mentoring programme. She approached the IDF team for her education support and pleaded with them to talk to her parents. The team went to meet the parents. It was a big challenge for them to counsel and try to convince her parents, especially her father, for Heer's education because her father prefer to enrol her in a traditional Muslim education centre (Madrassa) and not in the regular school system. The team was empathetic and heard him out.

The Team conducted regular meetings with Heer's father and was able to get his nod regarding her education. Heer was very excited and she said that she would always remember the day when her life turned around and a new hope sprung in her life when she was admitted in Class VI under the IDF's Girls' Education Programme. IDF has since sponsored her education.

Heer was ecstatic when she successfully crossed her first hurdle towards her dream when she passed her Class XII with flying colours with a 71 percentage. She became the first member of her family with a higher secondary school certificate. With tears of joy in her eyes, she thanked the Indian Dreams Foundation for the life-changing opportunity. She wants to be a government teacher. She pledged her commitment to giving back to society by providing education opportunities to girls like her once she has skilled and empower herself further.





programme has led to delayed marriages in the communities; has given them a clearer understanding of the value of good health and wellbeing; increased their self-confidence and self-esteem, developed their life skills; gave them a better understanding about their rights, and gave them dreams to grow as empowered women.

### How many girls have been impacted by this programme since you first started?

The Honhar Ladki programme has sponsored nearly 1000 girls as direct beneficiaries and over 3000 girls as indirect beneficiaries.

### Tell us about the Ready to School programme and its impact on the communities.

The Ready to School is a non-formal educational initiative targeting out-of-school children or girls from minority communities. Through the programme, we aim to improve the child's confidence, social skills and academic ability to ultimately enrol in formal education. The emphasis is on making studying easy, fun and interesting while simultaneously monitoring the performance of each child using specialist tools developed by experienced educational professionals.

The Centre's extra-curricular activities include regular community sessions to transform local attitudes to girl's



achievements or points of improvement to the parents.

- **School Interaction Session (SIS):** This is a monthly activity whereby our staff and volunteers visit the schools where the beneficiaries study and personally meet with their teachers regarding their performance and behaviour at school.
- **Progress Report:** Every girl's progress is monitored and evaluated half-yearly. These are some areas where progress is monitored:
  - Academic Performance
  - Behavioural Changes
  - Participation in Extra-curricular Activities
  - Social Development
  - Health Consciousness

### How have the girls been transformed by this programme? How has it helped them achieve their potential?

The Honhar Ladki programme has

allowed the girls to be exposed to a holistic education - breaking societal barriers by getting their diplomas and being introduced to different extra-curricular activities. They are taught about their sexual and reproductive rights and are given the space to dream beyond the 12th Grade.

The feedback and testimonials we have gathered from our beneficiaries, teachers and parents over the years show that the





education, monthly parent-teacher meetings to discuss each child's development, Saturday Fun Days where children learn arts and crafts, singing, dance, storytelling, etc., and celebration of Wellness Days in which children can get eye and teeth check-up.

Since its introduction, the Ready to School programme has imparted non-formal education to over 1000 students (30 per cent of whom were school drop-outs), 80 per cent belong to Scheduled Castes, and 20 per cent are from the Muslim community.

### What is the feedback from parents regarding this programme?

The Ready to School Programme is well received by parents in the communities. They come from impoverished backgrounds, and in most cases, did not have sufficient funds to educate their children (hence they dropped out). This programme allows their children to have an experiential education that teaches ethics, value systems and hands-on skills that formal education may not have. Additionally, some of these communities live in extremely remote regions and do not have schools in their locality, so the programme permits children to get a non-formal education without travelling hours on end to towns that have schools.

### You also have another project - the School Reforms Programme. What

### kinds of reforms do you undertake?

Government-run schools, especially in the rural areas, suffer from a lack of funding, infrastructure, number and quality of teachers, water and sanitation facilities.

We started this programme in 2008 with a vision to provide quality education to children from rural and urban government schools by adopting such schools. By adopting them, we aim to develop these government schools into model schools so that they are on par with the best-run schools in the area in terms of infrastructure, academic performance and healthy environment (in line with the Millennium Development Goals).

Presently, we have adopted five government schools located in the urban and rural slums of Agra. We collaborate with the schools to improve the infrastructure, improve teaching quality via training and workshops, collaborate with government authorities to introduce the mid-day meal scheme and provide

resources such as books and teaching equipment.

We aim to transform such schools from dysfunctional systems into temples of learning and motivation, creating an environment where dreams can be born.

### Are you planning to extend these programmes to other areas in North India or other regions?

Yes, we have these plans. At present, our focus is to extend these programmes to the eastern cities of Uttar Pradesh since they are home to largely impoverished communities.

### How do you sustain all these programmes since they require ample finances to keep them afloat?

We are very fortunate that our NGO has credible recognition at the global level through our partnerships. We work with different stakeholders through individual, corporate and CSR partnerships. Due to our consultative status with ECOSOC at the United Nations, there are several opportunities, apart from finance, to sustain programmes such as sharing





## Breaking the Yoke of Bondage



### MONIKA

**"I lost my father a week before my 12th Board results were declared. I was torn between celebrating my achievement or grief for my father's unexpected demise."**

Monika, the daughter of a sweeper mother and a ragpicker father, secured 67 per cent marks in Class XII Board Exams this year. It was a weird twist of fate that her biggest success thus far and an unexpected tragedy took place in the same week. It was a bittersweet moment for the family as their father was not there to bask in his daughter's success as he was excited and was looking forward to the results since Monika is the first person in the family to be able to reach such a high level of education.

Monika is a focused, confident girl who always dreamt of becoming a teacher. Her family's pitiable financial circumstances and the day-to-day challenges for survival made her hunger for change. She believed that if she did not get an education, her future would be as obscure as her parents. Her passion for education opened doors for her to be enrolled in a government primary school where her mother, Sunita, would clean the school premises. After completing her primary education, she was in a dilemma as she was unable to find a way to continue her education.

She had to drop out of school for several months. There were many instances of domestic violence in the house due to her father's dependency on alcohol. She was pained to see her father gripped by this addiction as he was a good person when not under the control of alcohol. He even had dreams of seeing his daughter complete her education. Monika would cry herself to sleep. She felt broken but the little spark of hope for further education was still flickering in her heart as her mother, Sunita, was her biggest strength and encourager. Despite being a sweeper, Sunita knew that only education can break the yoke of bondage from her daughter's life.

One day, Monika's mother contacted the IDF team and shared her daughter's dreams for further education. Destiny found Monika. The IDF team enrolled her in a school and sponsored all her educational expenses under the Honhar Ladki programme.

Today, Monika is the most promising and educated member of her family but the sudden loss of her father left a profound pain in her heart. However, she is satisfied that her father's soul is at peace with her achievement.

Monika and her mother are grateful for the support given by the Indian Dreams Foundation under the Girl's Education programme.



sector knowledge, domain expertise and volunteering.

All these resources allow us to run our programmes smoothly. Our organisation is always open to partnerships and support via corporate CSR and grants for sustaining multi-year projects.

### **How have these different programmes impacted your life?**

I have been involved in every aspect of the NGO for over a decade, and as we



introduce more programmes, expand our reach to more rural communities and evolve our goals with time, the bottom line is this: children are really at the centre of it all. I have learnt so much since I founded IDF – the experience of working with different companies via CSR, through the volunteers that have worked with us in the past decade and through the partnerships I have



developed with organisations like the ECOSOC, Google Ad Grants, Charities Aid Foundation, etc. All the hard work and time invested in getting funds to expand the NGO to reach out and teach more kids and hear the dreams they have for their future, the people they want to become, and how they want to make a difference in the world, is all worthwhile. ■

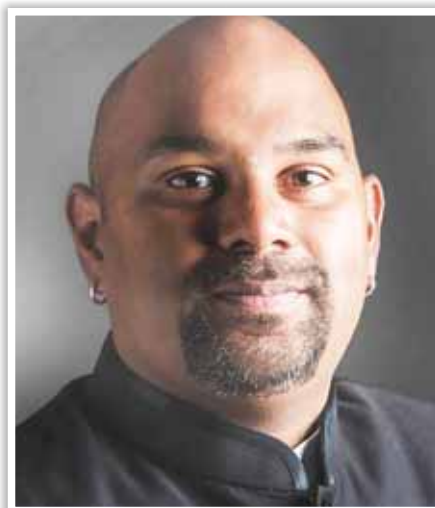
## Revitalising Government Schools to Bring Life-Changing Education to Millions of Children

**Bal Utsav is a collective of people bound by a shared passion to promote social good by making focused and sustainable interventions for children, specifically in education. We are not defined by age, borders, cultures, or socioeconomic backgrounds. We believe that the ripple effect of individual efforts can start a movement that will lead to real impact and sustainable change. Bal Utsav is now a registered trademark of Child Empowerment Foundation India (our legal entity).**

The idea of Bal Utsav germinated in 2008 when I was courting my now wife, Binu Verma. The then Planning Commission of India had published a report about the number of NGOs in India (3.3 million NGOs for one billion of the population - a whopping one NGO for every 400 people). These numbers looked unbelievable, but coming from the Planning Commission, they are a reality. And this got us thinking. We decided to give up our corporate jobs and contribute to a more purposeful life.

According to UDISE survey conducted in 780 government schools in 2017, only

56 per cent of government schools had electricity, 63 per cent of schools had no playgrounds, 60 per cent had no boundaries walls, unusable toilets in more than 25 per cent of the schools and the pupil-teacher ratio were abysmal. Despite government allocation of funds and 32 per cent of CSR funds going into education, there is less to be desired and lots to be done. CSR in education can be a game-changer in improving public education in India. However, CSR models need to address long-term issues across the systemic chain to accelerate change in the education sector.



**Ramesh Balasundaram**

Bal Utsav was born from the idea that we need to take a celebratory approach to serious problem-solving. After all, the most joyous period of our lives is our childhood days. The name of our organisation, Bal Utsav is the coming





together of two words Bal + Utsav (Children + Celebration). We promised ourselves that our work will be fuelled by the hope of the 400+ million children that India has, and we will serve them by celebrating childhood.

## Our Flagship Programmes

**Sampoorna Shaala™** is a model school designed for large schools with over ~500 children. It is innovative, inclusive, interactive, internet-powered and inspires communities.

**iShaala™** is a model school designed for small schools with under ~100 children. This model school is innovative, inclusive, interactive, internet-powered and inspiring communities.

These programmes include focused and sustainable investments in Infrastructure, Teacher Development, Scholarship and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in government schools.

Our service delivery is for children from 0 to 18 years of age (early childhood education to Class XII), with our scholarship programme alone extending beyond this age group.

## School Selection Process

1. We first secure funding and then look for schools in that specific geography that need intervention.

2. Our MoU with the Government is at the State or District level. We, therefore, have enough elbow room to choose schools that are in need and are not necessarily influenced by local interventions.

- On signing the MoU, some schools do approach us for adoption. We then spell out the intent for adoption only after due consideration (including if they can form a school cluster) and if they are part of a group of schools that can feed and interact with each other.

- We prefer to take co-educational schools, followed by gender-based schools.

3. The School Principal along with the SDMC (School Development and Monitoring Committee) then give us a formal request for adoption along with the consent to sign up for the performance-based outcome model.

## Our Sustainable Investments

### School Infrastructure

Schools without adequate infrastructure and hard infrastructure (classrooms, toilets, compound walls, etc) are an indication of the apathy that is shown to government schools. Lack of soft infrastructure (lights, fans, notebooks, etc) is a blend of apathy, lack of imagination and structural flaws that ails the system.

Our focused interventions make a huge



For the top one per cent of children in government schools, the understanding that they could devote their time and energy and make every effort to focus on academics and that their learning will not stop due to lack of resources is a huge motivation. It acts as an incentive for them to be a part of the distinguished alumni of the school while motivating their juniors to continue to give their best and that the sky is the limit where opportunities are concerned



difference to ensuring the must-haves are attended to while also making available resources that effectively help the children learn and stay in school (vending machines for sanitary pads, incinerators for safe disposal for menstrual waste, a WiFi mesh to ensure learning can happen anywhere in the school while being connected to high-quality content, school kits - comprising of bags, water bottles, notebooks, pencils, shoes and socks, examination pads). These are of immense help to the supported children and schools.



## Teacher Development

With a whopping shortage of 12 million teachers, there is a huge gap, and the challenge here is to ensure that we have adequate teachers in school. Even if that had to be corrected - the next design flaw is a student-teacher ratio and not a teacher-class ratio. Making Para-teachers available at the supported schools, empowering them with the required resources and facilitation skills helps them deliver better while also ensuring schools retain teachers.

## Scholarship

For the top one per cent of children in government schools, the understanding that they could devote their time and energy and make every effort to focus on academics and that their learning will not stop due to lack of resources is a huge motivation. It acts as an incentive for them to be a part of the distinguished alumni of the school while motivating their juniors to continue to give their best and that the sky is the limit where opportunities are concerned.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH)

By providing clean drinking water, appointing janitors at the school and equipping them with cleaning supplies, delivering menstrual hygiene supplies through custom-made coins (for the vending machines) and providing



incinerators that work even with erratic electricity supply ensures that the school is equipped with the must-haves for inculcating the best WaSH behaviour and system for optimal WaSH practices.

We run a successful menstrual hygiene programme for the girls in all our schools by providing free menstrual hygiene supplies, state-of-the-art menstrual waste disposal mechanisms (IoT-enabled), coupled with awareness sessions (inspired by the Bharatiya philosophy) to enable girls to attend school throughout the year. We provide janitors and washroom cleaning supplies to maintain clean, hygienic toilets.

We commit to a minimum of 3-5 years to transform each school. This includes physical infrastructure, teacher development, scholarship roll-out and WaSH, and facilitating the behaviour of stakeholders and adoption of interventions by the community. This results in a gradual but sustained approach of making the school an agent of change where the change brought about by the transformation is focused, sustainable and life-changing for the students and the community. This change then gets internalised and therefore becomes a natural part of living for everyone in the areas of intervention.



## Case Study

Our sustained involvement across the education value chain (infrastructure, technology, teacher training, and scholarship) has led to a transformational impact in the lives of the children in Shivamogga, Karnataka. With DXC Technology as our partner in the last two and half years, we have been able to bring a fundamental shift in perceptions about government school education within and outside the Shivamogga district.

Government High School (GHS), Kalahalli, Shivamogga, whose classrooms had tattered walls, abysmal enrolments, and high dropout, is now the pride of Badravathi, Shivamogga District. The old school building that did not even have access to clean drinking water and an unsafe playground now boasts of smart classrooms equipped with eLearning content and a well-maintained infrastructure. Children have access to clean drinking water, sanitary pads (for girls), and high-quality school kits. The locals believe that the children of Kallahali School are more confident and have improved self-esteem thanks to





the quality of education they receive. Kids in many rural areas typically travel more than 2 km to get access to school education. The only reason the students regularly travel this far irrespective of harsh weather or the poor condition of roads is the high quality of schooling facility they receive here. The great outcome of this revitalisation exercise is that the new and improved GHS, Kalahalli, is attracting students from other schools in the district. When school reopened in January 2021, it saw a 15 per cent increase in enrolment and a notable migration of children from private and convent schools.

GHS, Kalahalli is not the only school benefiting from this revitalisation. We have adopted a total of seven rural schools in Shivamogga and given them a complete facelift. We brought in interventions such as overhauling the school infrastructure, providing students with brand new school kits and study tables, equipping teachers with tablets, installing smart TVs preloaded with educational content, and creating a clean and hygienic environment for students, teachers, and staff. When there was a dilemma in the last two years regarding the reopening of schools, the smart infrastructure provided helped the students continue their education. Children whose parents had mobile phones at home were given the license to download school portions of their particular academic year, while at the same time, teachers were given tablets with preloaded content to enable community learning and facilitate remote learning.

### Volunteer Involvement

Over the last two years, we had 1218 employees from DXC volunteered who



**Soumya**, a teacher at Government Higher Primary School in Dummalli

(Shivamogga District) and her colleagues use an eLearning programme to ensure 130 students continue their education from their respective community/homes. According to Soumya, parents are relieved and happy that the kids are safe at home while they continue learning despite the lockdown. She believes it is these sustained interventions over the last two+ years has led to increased enrolment, lower dropout and made private schools nearby and parents alike sit up and take notice of the government schools in Shivamogga.

with us for 6610 hours. They have been part of activities like school painting, mentoring children, organising programmes like menstrual hygiene awareness for girls, coordinated Sports Day, etc. We have brought together people, technology, direction, resources, and determination in a healthy mix to ensure that learning continues unabated as the children battle through the pandemic. We are gearing up to bring in more interventions as the State prepares to reopen schools.

### Our Perspective and Observation on the Schools

Teachers are the ones who are most committed to bringing about a lasting change in the lives of children. When they are supported with the necessary resources, it results in long-term change

at the various supported schools.

We would not have achieved what we have without the support of the teachers and the community. They have been an integral part of bringing life-changing education to children in need.

Our own experience has been that every school needs to be provided with the best resources as they play a vital role in shaping the children of today who will make the India of tomorrow. It is thus more important than ever that we unite and supplement existing efforts through every means possible to make this happen. CSR plays an integral role in reshaping the existing narrative while also playing a collaborative role in making model schools possible through strategic public-private partnerships.

We are excited to witness the adoption of our interventions in these schools, and we invite more corporates to join us.

### Impact

We have successfully made a dent in the public education space. We have demonstrated that government schools can be model schools where students, parents and communities aspire to send their children to and where stakeholders can be proud to be a part of the success story.

The expressions, things that are said and those left unsaid of the parents regarding why we would be interested in the schools, what was in it for us was many a time relayed to us. Over the years, we have witnessed a change in the attitude of





**Sri Shekharappa Gowda**  
Village Pramukh, Kallahalli Village  
Bhadravathi Taluk, Shivamogga District

“Bal Utsav and DXC Technology (CSR Partner) have done yeoman service to this community by adopting this school. It is common to see people working to improve their own economic and social status in the community. Very few believe in giving back to society. The partnership between Bal Utsav and DXC is a testimony to this noble cause of providing education and bringing about a

change in the lives of our children. I am very thankful to you for this.

Our school, an iShaala, is an example of what an ideal rural school should be. Many schools in India need this kind of support. My wish is to see all these schools changing the way our school has.

Rich people build temples, but what can a poor man do? In our society today, the rich build schools to make more money, and in the process, destroy our language and culture. The transformation of our government schools by Bal Utsav and DXC Technology helps nurture our language and culture. We are sincerely grateful to them.”

various stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, communities, and the Education Department). We are flooded with requests for similar interventions from various schools (within Karnataka, and nationally).

We have witnessed a consistent increase in enrolment and a decrease in attrition, and better learning outcomes year on year



at both Sampoorana Shaala and iShaala. Our focused and sustainable interventions in Infrastructure, Teacher Development, Scholarships and WaSH have played a huge role in making the aforementioned possible.

For example, GHSA and GHPS Kallahalli are recognised as best

performing schools in many parameters and are adjudged as the best schools in the district. They continue to witness reverse migration (students giving up their private school education and enrolling themselves at these model government schools) and are consistently able to attract and retain students, which is quite contrary to the national trend. We are happy to share that some of our schools even demonstrate upward of 20 per cent increase in enrolment year after year.

### Our Financial Support Group

Our current sources of funding include individuals, organisations, CSR, donations from Indians settled abroad (FCRA), support from private Foundations and also through events participation, etc.

We are supported by over 60 Corporates, many of whom channelise their CSR funds through us. We have not finalised our books of accounts for the last year, but the provisional data reflects Rs ~ 5 Crore (COVID-19-affected year).

### Steps Taken to Help Beneficiaries During the Pandemic

Every child is given a unique licence mapped to their learning path. Teachers were given Tablets with preloaded content to enable community learning/facilitate remote learning. Schools are given content that can be viewed through large TV screens, enabling a continuous learning mechanism when children are physically present in school. Our supported schools



**Sri V. Hiremath**, Headmaster, Government  
Higher Primary School Kallahalli, Kallahalli  
Village, Bhadravathi Taluk, Shivamogga District

“Most of the children come from farming communities. The government mandates a school within a kilometre radius. However, some of our school children come from a distance of more than 2 km. Through sunshine, rain or cold, our children walk across fields and through narrow pathways to reach the school every day. The motivation for them to do this is the high quality of schooling facility they receive here.”





**Nagraj**  
BEO - Public Education Department  
Shivamogga Taluk

“The basic purpose of education is to ensure that every child has access to it and can continue to attend and obtain good quality education for life. In this regard, the Central and State Governments have come up with many programmes and schemes to improve the public education system in the country. Along with these programmes, many affiliated organisations have adopted government schools to provide better facilities. This partnership has helped many students from rural schools get access to better quality education. In 2019-20, in Shivamogga, DXC

Technology and NGO Bal Utsav, in collaboration with the Education Department, adopted some government high schools and government higher primary schools in Kachinakatte, Nidige and Dummalli in Karnataka. The duo has been working together to provide better infrastructure, and most importantly, they have made facilities for clean water supply and initiated sanitation and hygiene facilities. They also provide scholarships for students who plan for higher studies. They provided materials like school bags, books, pencils and skill development training sessions. Smart TVs are installed in all the schools, free eLearning apps are provided to all the children to facilitate their education and enhance their technical skills. Due to these developments, there is increased student enrolment, a reduction in the dropout rate, and quality education is provided to the children. On behalf of the Education Department, I congratulate DXC Technology and NGO Bal Utsav for their efforts.”



solutions need to be tailored to what we want to leave behind for our future generations. Young and committed hands are required for the task of nation-building. I welcome those who consider making a difference to join us and pitch in with your talent, energy, grit, entrepreneurial spirit to realise this vision of a strong and vibrant India.

We have to give up the idea that giving back to the community is a plan to be pursued after retirement. Building a better tomorrow cannot wait. We have to start TODAY!

All problems can be solved if we all pool in our efforts and resources. Keeping a mindset of collaboration, teamwork and supplementing efforts is the way forward. We have to start by solving small problems and build solutions for scale. The need on the ground is massive that there is room for everyone to contribute to the mission of nation-building. ■

**Ramesh Balasundaram** is a senior professional and organisational catalyst with a passion for driving innovation in diverse sectors, including, but not limited to, corporates, the citizen sector and the government. He is the Co-founder and Director of Bal Utsav and a former consultant to the Karnataka Knowledge Commission (Government of Karnataka).

have been doing this for six months now. Teacher-support programmes especially focused on the changing dynamics of delivery and adoption of technology. We are also keen to increase the number of supported schools. We are seeking assistance from individuals and organisations who would like to aid blended learning so we can develop the right kind of systems for India in this digital age. We need to make a significant investment in education technology and make it with much thought, creative imagination and careful planning.

## Way Forward

As an NGO, we want to continue to demonstrate what is possible in the public education space and build a positive narrative around the same while working alongside the government to adopt models to strengthen public education. We would like to start with 10 per cent coverage of each State (about three of the 31 districts in Karnataka) and expand to similar coverage in each zone (South, North, West and East). We want to serve at least 30,000

children in the next two years in approximately 100 schools.

Our goal is to be able to establish and operate at least one school complex (~1000 children) per district in India (700+ districts x 1000+ children = 7,00,000 to 10,00,000 children), through iShaala and Sampoorana Shaala. We want to expand our footprint across the country, and if India ends up playing a much larger role in the Asia Pacific Region, we would be keen to explore the possibility of serving other Asian countries and other developing nations in Africa.

The opportunity to solve various crises that have been plaguing us for decades is possible by this generation. We need more committed individuals and organisations to join in, unite and supplement existing efforts. The ability to build the future we want lies with us today, and with available resources and tools like never before, the time to become a change-maker is now. We have to build an unwavering focus on solving the problems while keeping our sights on building a strong nation. Our





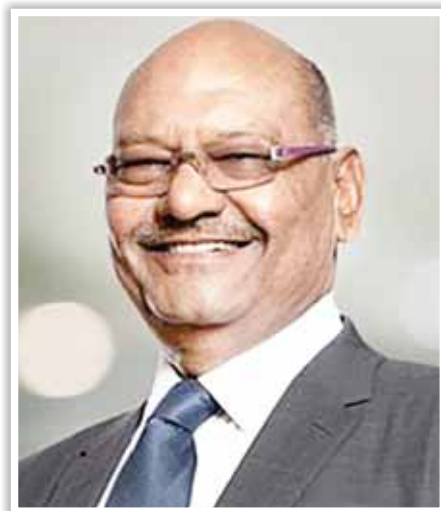
## Vedanta Transforming Rural India Through Nand Ghar

Literacy is a powerful tool for fighting poverty and the consequent adverse impacts that comes with it. Increased literacy rates have shown a positive correlation across several parameters, including infant mortality, employment, gender equality and holistic economic growth. Literacy has even impacted things like democracy, peace, quality of life. It also leads to better health and nutrition, thereby strengthening the learning capabilities of a child and significantly improving the productivity of an individual.

As per Census 2011, India's literacy rate was 74 per cent. The country has approximately 472 million children, making it one of the world's youngest countries (average population age). This is a great opportunity for the country's

economy, but only if this resource is skilled adequately towards maximising their contribution to the economy.

To bring about this transformational change, some of the largest companies have rolled out philanthropic projects



**Anil Agarwal**



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Our Nand Ghars are fast becoming a network of modern anganwadis with state-of-the-art infrastructure working towards eradicating child malnutrition, providing high-quality pre-primary education, healthcare and empowering women with skills towards supplementing their household incomes. They provide continuous handholding and capacity building for Anganwadi workers and Sahayikas (Assistants) with comprehensive training, including a combination of classroom and in-person instruction to ensure that information is delivered effectively through engaging teaching techniques

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across the country. One of the biggest among these is the Nand Ghar programme, the flagship programme run by my Foundation - Anil Agarwal Foundation. As Chairman of Vedanta, one of the world's largest mining and metals companies in the world, I have personally pledged as much as Rs 5000 Crore towards my philanthropic ventures.

Our primary focus is to start at the grassroots level with the holistic development of children and women who form the future of our nation. With this objective, we have reimagined Anganwadis as 'Nand Ghars' (The Home for a Young One) as centres of learning for children and women. These centres provide access to critical infrastructure in healthcare, education, skill development and women empowerment. As a national



project, our Nand Ghar story began in 2016. It essentially takes the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) of the government forward. We aim to create model Anganwadis not just for infrastructure or services but also for community integration. In partnership with the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, our Nand Ghar project is unmatched in its scope and geographic reach.

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providing high-quality pre-primary education, healthcare and empowering women with skills towards







supplementing their household incomes. They provide continuous handholding and capacity building for Anganwadi workers and Sahayikas (Assistants) with comprehensive training, including a combination of classroom and in-person instruction to ensure that information is delivered effectively through engaging teaching techniques.

Every Nand Ghar renders services to 40 children. We provide hot cooked nutritious meals (dry and take-home rations during the pandemic), health and referral services and early childhood education. We also provide children in the 3-6 year category with an array of interactive teaching-learning methods offering high-quality education. By recognising the regional context while creating and providing best-in-class coursework aligned with the State curriculum, we seek to be an aspirational pre-school delivering quality education and strengthening the child's foundational years.

Primary features include creative murals, Building as Learning Aid (BaLA) boards, multimedia material presented on Smart TV, and an Early Learning Activity kit;



creating a conducive atmosphere for the young learners. The curriculum is scientifically-created with early childhood development milestones in mind, is regionally tailored, including aspects of spoken and written English, and focus on instilling strong social values.

Our Nand Ghars also house Poshan Vatikas (Nutrition Gardens) to provide organic fruits and vegetables for the holistic nutrition of the beneficiaries.

We aim to transform the lives of seven crore children and two crore women across 13 lakh+ Anganwadis in India. Currently, there are 2,592 Nand Ghars across 12 States. As part of the first phase, we aim to build 4,000 Nand Ghars by December 2022. While each Nand Ghar has a lifespan of two to three decades, we aim to build community capacity for long-term sustainability and foster indigenous leadership among community members.

Recognising the strides been made by the project in transforming rural India, Smriti Zubin Irani, Union Cabinet Minister of Women and Child Development, said, "Nand Ghar project by Vedanta is one of the finest examples of CSR. An important milestone for Vedanta, which has transformed the lives of rural women and children across India through its network of Nand Ghars, a modern, state-of-the-art version of the Anganwadi model. I was there for the first Nand Ghar launch four years back. The project has indeed come a long way since then."

During the pandemic, we rolled out an IVRS initiative with the tagline 'Missed call do, Kahani Suno' to motivate children to listen to the stories from the

safety of their homes while also learning in the process. To ensure uninterrupted learning, we provided interactive content over WhatsApp, enabling parents to monitor their child's progress.

The impact of our Nand Ghars has been transformational. For example, Rekha Devi's daughter is enrolled at Palai Nand Ghar in Niwai, Tonk. As pre-school education was suspended at the Anganwadis during the lockdown, Rekha was concerned about the disruption of her daughter's education in her crucial formative years. "Like other parents in the community, I, too, was quite worried about my daughter's education during this period." To ensure continuity of early childhood education during the pandemic, our project in Rajasthan collaborated with the State Government and UNICEF to develop interactive e-learning content for children. It was





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To ensure continuity of early childhood education during the pandemic, our project in Rajasthan collaborated with the State Government and UNICEF to develop interactive eLearning content for children. It was rolled out in 62,000+ Anganwadis. We formed Nand Ghar WhatsApp groups for parents of registered children in which multimedia e-learning content was shared, daily

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rolled out in 62,000+ Anganwadis. We formed Nand Ghar WhatsApp groups for parents of registered children in which multimedia eLearning content was shared, daily. Rekha Devi was added to her Nand Ghar's WhatsApp group in June 2020. Since then, she has been receiving eLearning material like educational videos, audios, and pictures to help her conduct interactive learning activities with her daughter. “The Nand Ghar eLearning programme has lifted a huge weight off my shoulders. My daughter is now more engaged in her education as she gets to perform interactive learning activities with the family.”

This initiative of the Government of Rajasthan helped more than 12 lakh children.

In healthcare, we rolled out our telemedicine-based healthcare solution along with the Paramedic-on-Wheels project. Community members can talk to doctors, get consultations and prescriptions in their vernacular language and over-the-counter medicines. As a part of the integrated healthcare model, our Nand Ghar project has deployed mobile health vans that



provide preventative and curative healthcare services, doctor consultations, non-invasive basic tests and OTC medicines, free of cost.

As part of our ethos, we believe the right path the advancement of society begins with women being empowered. Our

Nand Ghars provide skill training for women above 18 years of age through various trade-based training programmes with employment possibilities. These programmes have market linkages to make them sustainable. During the pandemic, Nand Ghar women stitched 1.5 lakh masks, adding about Rs 4000 to their household income.

With strides being made by the Nand Ghar programme, it won't be long before India can leapfrog into the league of nations that boast of an empowered and progressive population transformed by the Nand Ghar programme. ■

*Anil Agarwal is the Chairman of Vedanta Resources Ltd.*





# EdTech Tools - A Pipeline to Quality Education for Rural Areas

In the past year, the world has faced innumerable challenges. People became familiar with jargon like masks, social distancing, work from home and online classes. Quarantine life brought some of the toughest tests, but we got through them thanks to the remote-first approach. When we talk about remote-first or digital-first options, online education comes to the fore.

A year and a half of schooling and higher education from home has caused a loss for many students. The majority of those affected are from rural areas. According to a McKinsey report, learning losses have been such that the disadvantaged students have regressed in their ability to read by four months, and their mathematical capacity has gone behind by five months. More than 50 per cent of learners from distant households have had no access to the internet, pointing to a massive loss for them on the academic front.

While most EdTech brands provide packages that are not affordable enough for all, some nationwide campaigns like EdTech for Naya Bharat (ETNB) by

ConveGenius Foundation take the alternate way to reach the bottom of the educational funnel. Rote learning, inconsistency in teaching, lack of access to technology, outdated pedagogy and lack of comprehensive assessments are issues students face in secluded settings. Some organisations have realised the importance of EdTech for rural India and are working relentlessly towards eliminating the digital divide and bringing sustainable education and technology to remedial pupils.

The potential that rural students can leverage using EdTech is manifold. The unexplored possibilities that can be discovered can only be anticipated, but EdTech needs to make its way into the



**Rahul Garg**

picture first. Since the digital education revolution is still far from its saturation point, the advantages that it brings need to be spread across the country.

Here's how EdTech can achieve the goal of bringing quality education to the masses:



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Nationwide crusades like ETNB help empower digital education in partnership with State Governments to bring top-notch content in classes, tests and study materials. The mission has been revolutionary with its impact. The movement has transformed the lives of 25 million underserved students in collaboration with multiple State Governments, CSRs, and NGOs across the country. This association will help level the playing field for students in distant areas vis-à-vis their urban counterparts as they will have access to comprehensive assessment systems

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### Partnerships to Prosper

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the country. This association will help level the playing field for students in distant areas vis-à-vis their urban counterparts as they will have access to comprehensive assessment systems.

### Interactive yet Compatible Digital Options

EdTech initiatives have brought innovative solutions to learning that are very different from the traditional methods of creating educational games or tedious modules. Device agnostic platforms have been introduced in the market, providing considerable convenience to students in outlying areas. They are easily accessible through the web and mobile applications.

Chatbots have been embedded in widely-used applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram to reach the majority. These interactive chat-based solutions help in adaptive learning with the help of customised content recommendations,



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Movements like ETNB are relentlessly working towards providing affordable and quality education to as many as 100 million underserved kids at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid in India. These campaigns help bridge the learning gap and encourage equal holistic academic development by breaking all virtual barriers in education

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accurate and dynamic assessments and doubt-solving sessions. The advantage it provides over some of the other options available is that these platform-based solutions can run at moderate internet speeds and do not shrink the space on a device.

### Initiating the Discussion

Social enterprises are exploring opportunities by launching missions like ETNB to narrow the gap that exists within the educational ecosystem.

Discussions, sharing of ideas and the creation of new ideas have always been the foundation of transformation. Regular online dialogues among companies, non-governmental organisations and the government as an association, or a consortium for change, can propel the educational environment to prosper in secluded areas.

With the growth of internet users in rural India being three times more than in the urban areas, the means to spread the education revolution is already in the offing. A consortium of socially conscious campaigns like ETNB Mission, governments and NGOs are

helping to arrange the required framework for streamlining the urban and rural education systems as one. Movements like ETNB are relentlessly working towards providing affordable and quality education to as many as 100 million underserved kids at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid in India. These campaigns help bridge the learning gap and encourage equal holistic academic development by breaking all virtual barriers in education. ■

**Rahul Garg** is the Programs Head at ETNB Mission, a nationwide campaign to empower education for Naya Bharat – an India that is digital-ready, aspirational, and Atma Nirbhar.





## iTeach Schools - Building a Community of Transformational Secondary Schools for Pune's Most Under-Resourced Students

India's education system is facing a massive crisis today. Over the past few years, we find that the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan has ensured that 98 per cent of our country's students are enrolled in a school in Grade I; hence, the issue of access to schools is largely solved. However, when we look at what happens to these students' academic careers as they get into higher grades, we find an alarming problem, i.e. the dropout rate. Only 26 per cent of these students make it to college.

As per the 2019-20 UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education) record, there are around 10,83,678 government schools in India. More than a quarter of school children in India now study in English-medium schools, though Hindi remains the biggest medium of instruction, accounting for over 42 per cent of total

enrolment.

Even before all of these statistics, we have another challenge. In Pune, out of the 1216 schools, 336 are government schools, and only 54 of them offer English as a medium of instruction. None of the 54 English medium government schools in Pune go beyond Grade VII. With students not being able to afford



**Arnab Mondal**

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iTeach Schools' solution to this massive crisis is to build a community of transformational secondary schools and a College-to-Career Programme for our alumni designed to ensure that students make it to and through college. This then gives them a chance to lift their families out of poverty by preparing them for a sustainable job and livelihood

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private schools, this leads to another crisis. Hence, children from the poorest households are left with three options - an impossible chance to get into a prohibitively expensive private school, switch to a Marathi medium secondary school (only 10 per cent capacity exists here as well) or drop out of the education system. Eventually, the majority drops out.

UDISE+ (2019-20) data released by the Department of School Education and

Literacy display the alarming dropout rate in Maharashtra.

These statistics indicate the biggest problem, leading to a crisis where students are forced to believe in the principle that it is an accident of birth; they could have been on the privileged end or the other. At iTeach Schools, we do not believe in that and want to look at it from this point of view that poverty should not dictate one's destiny. We are on a mission to wage war on this problem and are committed to levelling the playing field for all children.

iTeach Schools' solution to this massive



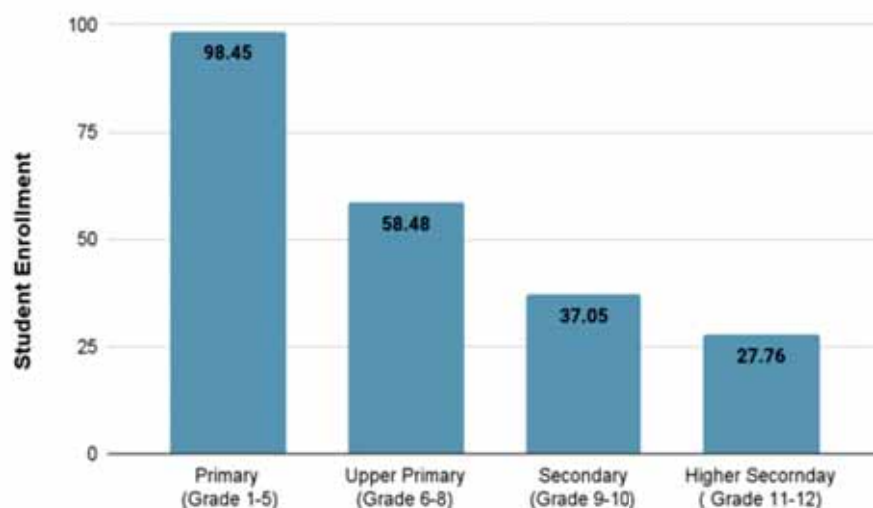
crisis is to build a community of transformational secondary schools and a College-to-Career Programme for our alumni designed to ensure that students make it to and through college. This then gives them a chance to lift their families out of poverty by preparing them for a sustainable job and livelihood.

To bring about this change, we have, since our inception in 2015, established nine free secondary schools across Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad (Aundh,



Guruwar Peth, Hadapsar, Kondhwa, Mudhwa, Yerwada, Akurdi, and Kothrud). Each school functions as a nodal school for 2-3 primary schools in the area. Students are then admitted (without any selection bias) into Grade VIII at an iTeach school. Our College to Career Programme then supports the

**Student Enrollment in Maharashtra (in Lakhs)**



As an active member of the Music Club, I learned to compose and sing my songs. I want to get on the stage one day and establish a career in music.

**Shahid Palle**

Grade IX, iTeach - SGM.



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98.2 per cent of students passed Grade X in the first attempt (cumulative of four batches)

99 per cent of our students have paid for college via scholarship or savings (sustainable and student-owned)

92 per cent of our students are still in the education system despite intense pressure to drop out (such as marriages, the rigour of college, job pressure, addictions, etc)

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students until they graduate and get a sustainable job.

For the past six years, we have been delivering strong outcomes with a pass percentage of over 98 per cent. Our students are admitted into reputed colleges such as Ashoka University, Azim Premji University, and FLAME University. Since 2015, we have impacted more than 2000 students and 1500 alumni through nine schools across multiple under-resourced communities in Pune with a team of 170 staff members.

**Our vision is that every iTeach graduate will:**

**Make it to and through college**

We have done well on the Grade X results each year - with 2020 results being our strongest ever

- 98.2 per cent of students passed Grade X in the first attempt (cumulative of four batches)
- 99 per cent of our students have paid for college via scholarship or savings



(sustainable and student-owned)

- 92 per cent of our students are still in the education system despite intense pressure to drop out (such as marriages, the rigour of college, job pressure, addictions, etc)

### Lead a healthy and balanced lifestyle

Through our five years, we have evolved our school design to include varied holistic development opportunities. About 40 per cent of a student's time in a week is solely devoted to learning experiences outside of academics such as sports, reading, music, dance, arts, etc.



We have partnered with multiple organisations that are the best in their fields to run these programmes with excellence and do it sustainably.

### Articulate their passion, ability and career choice

We desire to see students articulate their passions, abilities and career choices. This is something we hold very dear to us. We strongly believe that being from an under-resourced background should not



My family faced multiple challenges due to the lockdown, with access to essentials becoming extremely difficult. During this time, the Student Alumni Wing (the team that runs College to Career Programme) connected me to scholarships, checked up on my family constantly, and convinced my father to support my education. They had my back when everything else seemed impossible.

**Sana Sheikh**

Grade XI - Commerce,  
Abeda Inamdar.

deprive students of the destiny of their choice. Our 10-member Student Alumni Wing is building a student alumni network of support to ensure that each of our 1000 alums makes it through college to employment.

### Own India's development

While academic excellence gets high priority, we believe that drawing connections and making inferences relevant to India's context is paramount to becoming a well-informed responsible Indian citizen. Our Curriculum Team orients and equips students with the abilities to navigate their career, life and





One year into college, Ashoka feels like the perfect place for me. Because of the College to Career Programme, I came to know about the Top 10 Colleges. It was not easy for me to go through the entire process alone - complicated application forms, numerous personal essays and interviews. However, I had mentors who guided me. Programmes like SAT preparation equipped me with the linguistic and logical skills that are still useful in college.

### **Mahesh Janila**

1st Year - Political Science,  
Ashoka University.

relationships, find their true potential and own the country's development through their daily actions. Due to our students' exposure to difficult situations, they have always shown resilience and courage. During their time at iTeach Schools, we align these values so they create an alternate future for themselves and their country.

The schools are decided based on the need. We have a dedicated Government Relations Team who scouts for government-owned schools and run a need survey on them. A general thumb rule is that if government schools are ending at Grade VII and there are no government or government-aided schools nearby, we will intervene and ensure no students are dropping out due to lack of schools. First, we make sure there are provisions for classrooms to accommodate a section of Grade VIII to Grade X each, respectively. After that, we invest in the primary school to ensure that students passing out from Grade VII should get admission to iTeach Schools. Lastly, we heavily invest in the parent

community surrounding the school.

Our strength is in the diversity of our staff members. Over the past six years, we have recruited highly motivated individuals who want to contribute to our movement. They come from diverse backgrounds, ranging from recent graduates to trained B.Ed teachers with years of experience. We have a dedicated Curriculum and Training team that facilitates training for our teachers multiple times throughout the academic year – first when they were onboarded, second, when we conduct All Staff Meetings that happen every unit quarterly, and third, every month through sessions on digital pedagogy, behaviour management, effective data tracking, and content development.

We have come a long way from starting in 2015 with two schools, to nine schools in 2021. We feel this is just the beginning for us. The battle to achieve educational equity in India is a long one. For that, we need to expand to other regions beyond Pune. We have a vision of reaching out to 30 schools by the end of 2025. We are in conversation with multiple



iTeach Schools' work with needy students and parents is a lesson for other social organisations.

### **Shivaji Daundkar**

Education Officer,  
Secondary Education Department,  
Pune Municipal Corporation.

municipalities in other districts of Maharashtra, along with other cities, for us to venture. In this long journey, we will need individuals committed to our cause to come forth and take up the mantle of teaching. We want the recent graduates to understand the impending crisis of educational inequity. We want them to be a part of the solution by ensuring that more and more students see the light of the day by getting the best of opportunities despite being born into the most disadvantaged conditions. We want everyone to join our movement and nurture the change-makers of tomorrow.

*Arnab Mondal is the Recruitment Manager  
for iTeach Schools.*





# Girl Child Education - Still, A Work in Progress

Being a woman in 2021 is not easy. There is an overwhelming blanket of judgement and fear on social media or commercial cinema. Women are often objectified or are victims of various voyeuristic activities. Further aggravating these is the pandemic that has further enforced a digital shift leading to the internet becoming a dark hole, offering little to no room for kindness. In such a delicate time, it is pivotal that the girls and women, in general, know their rights; and one of them is education. From being a reserved luxury, education has now progressed to become a necessity. It ensures informed decision-making and an increased vigilance about one's rights. However, this necessity is still perceived as a luxury in the eyes of many uninformed parents.

To change this stereotypical mindset and provide a channel to discuss pressing issues surrounding women, I, Anoushka Adya, along with my team members, Jyoti Adya and Trisha De Niyogi, founded Lajja Diaries. We are focused on

creating an ecosystem that allows dialogue and awareness while also offering rehabilitation and support. "Shed the shame and share because real violence is in your silence" is what we sincerely believe in and is the concept



**Anoushka Adya**

that forms the bedrock of the organisation. We are guided by the conviction that listening to, and telling stories of women's personal battles is a

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Indian society has always questioned the premise of girl child education. Even today, young girls in many parts of the country are expected to become stay-at-home wives, are burdened by the responsibility of managing tedious household chores, followed by the pressure of birthing a boy

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small but important step in them being recognised as equals and changing the narrative of their story by giving them adequate support. India's progress will continue to be stalled till the time half of our society remains discriminated against. Therefore, in our endeavour of changing this statement, we staunchly criticise the concept of illiteracy of young girls.

Indian society has always questioned the premise of girl child education. Even today, young girls in many parts of the country are expected to become stay-at-



home wives, are burdened by the responsibility of managing tedious household chores, followed by the pressure of birthing a boy. This narrow-minded approach which is birthed by the

lack of awareness and gender-infused patriarchy acts as a major obstacle in girl child education. Poverty, too, acts as a great hurdle in a girl's educational future. In many rural settings, a boy's education gets higher priority. The girl child is either expected to help her father in the field or look after the daily household chores. Apart from this obsolete gender bias, many families still depend on daily wages for their survival. In such situations, the education of the girl child is often compromised. Even in areas where free education is offered, it can be difficult to manage the transportation cost, the minimal cost of stationery, etc. All of these add to the plight of these young girls.

Amid these serious concerns, the emergence of the deadly pandemic has only made this situation worse. COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of many families. Limited awareness and lack of a substantiate healthcare system have cost us a significant loss of human and wealth resources. Furthermore, this sudden shift towards digitalisation was an unwelcome guest for many traditional families. Due to limited smartphone penetration, the





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Today, a mere 12 per cent of girls have access to digital education compared to 35 per cent of boys. In our efforts to curb this problem and provide an impetus to girl child education, Lajja Diaries has launched #BetiProject. This programme sponsors several girls in India who need basic nutrition, medication, counselling and education

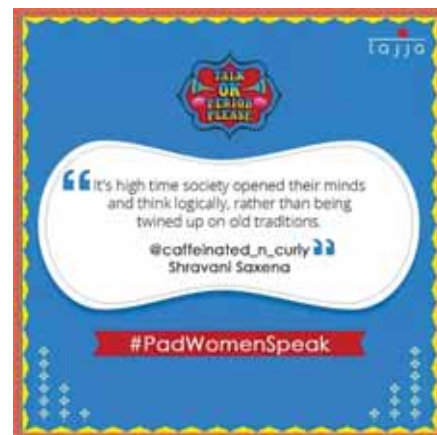
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concept of online schools was a major failure in many hamlets. People were flustered as there was little or no money to spend, and the extra expenditure of affording an internet service seemed impossible.

Apart from poverty and an inherent gender bias, the pandemic alone has created a colossal educational gap in our

society. Today, a mere 12 per cent of girls have access to digital education compared to 35 per cent of boys. In our efforts to curb this problem and provide an impetus to girl child education, Lajja Diaries has launched #BetiProject. This programme sponsors several girls in India who need basic nutrition, medication, counselling and education. It aims to help such girls by providing financial assistance so that they can complete their education. This campaign will work in tandem with the Lajja Foundation, which works with trainees to facilitate education opportunities in the lives of young girls.

Menstruation also acts as a massive obstacle in a girl's education. There is a tremendous stigma surrounding it, and the lack of proper infrastructure only worsens this issue. Menstruation is a natural process yet it is shamed by many cultures. Young girls are cornered in a small area of the house and are banished from all social activities. In small hamlets, many girls end up bunking classes because they cannot afford to buy sanitary pads or have no access to clean water and sanitation to keep themselves clean and prevent diseases. Girls with special needs and disabilities especially do not have access to the facilities and



resources for proper menstrual hygiene. To spread more awareness about this, we started a campaign called #TalkOkPeriodPlease. This campaign empowered women all across the nation to debunk societal norms that shame menstruation. It encouraged a healthy exchange of thoughts and was appreciated by a large audience. Women and girls need to share their concerns and exchange information to promote healthy practices and break myths around menstruation. We also train them about menstrual health management to help them rise above unhealthy practices, enabling them to continue to stay in school and be equipped with the right information.

Safety is another major concern standing in the way of a girl's education. Girls travelling alone cannot be guaranteed safety. The prevalent discourse surrounding recent events has brought this long-standing problem to the forefront of other issues. Gender-based violence can happen in various forms, including physical and sexual abuse, harassment, and bullying. Surviving



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When a girl is educated, she is empowered to make decisions for herself and raise the standard of living for her and her family.

Many a time, it is about convincing the girl's family to allow the girl to continue her education and to make them understand the benefits they will reap in the long term as they view it as an opportunity cost in the short term

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rape, coercion, discrimination, and other types of abuse affects girls' enrollment, lowers their participation and achievements, and increases absenteeism and dropout rates. This was an important consideration while forming the basis of the #BetiProject. Through this project, we wish to provide young girls with the opportunity to pursue an education. We would like to roll out this programme in several phases. In the first phase, our goal will be to support young girls one at a time across Delhi NCR and Mumbai by providing them with programmes/opportunities, digital facilities, counselling, basic infrastructure as well as, if required, reaching out and educating the families and monitoring their progress from time to time. We intend to provide more than just literacy or skills for survival. We aim to equip them with an education of the truest form while igniting awareness of social issues, teaching them to learn from them and make informed decisions. The aim will be to bridge any gap that stands in the way of their education.

When it comes to our future plans, we wish to expand the reach of the Beti Project so that more young girls across



India gain access to education. When a girl is educated, she is empowered to make decisions for herself and raise the standard of living for her and her family. Many a time, it is about convincing the girl's family to allow the girl to continue her education and to make them understand the benefits they will reap in the long term as they view it as an opportunity cost in the short term.

At Lajja Diaries, our constant effort is to revive a girl's life by giving her the ultimate gift of education. Each girl becomes a part of the Lajja family, and we will be happy to have made a difference in their lives and help them fulfil their dreams. Hopefully, with appropriate partner support, the Lajja family will expand tremendously and will work to include many girls who are still deprived of their best potential lives and careers.

Apart from this issue, we shall continue to raise our voices against unjust malpractices that are subjected towards women and hopefully bring about a change in people's mindset.

#### About Lajja Diaries:

Conceived on the 2nd Anniversary of the horrific Nirbhaya rape, and now in its seventh year of operation, Lajja Diaries is a community of 24,000 women who wish to create a strong network to move fast from awareness to counsel and support. This gave birth to the Lajja Foundation, an entity dedicated to gender equality and women empowerment in India. It works in India to make the vision of gender equality a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life. ■

*Anoushka Adya is the Founder of Lajja Diaries.*





# The Fallout from COVID-19 on Education

**Shinde was working as an office boy in a company in Mumbai when he lost his job during the lockdown as the company had to close down its shutters. The 40-year-old, a father of two, started doing odd jobs to support his family, but the money that came in was not enough to educate his two children. He had to take his young daughter out of school. "I will only be able to afford to educate one child with this income. It has to be my son."**



**Meera Tenguria**

Fifteen-year-old Anjali was brought up single-handedly by her mother. Her mother's income was steady, and plans were in place for Anjali to pursue further education and eventually look at career opportunities. Unfortunately, during the height of the pandemic, her mother contracted COVID-19. The medical bills skyrocketed. With no additional source of income, Anjali had to reach out to distant relatives who offered her two options - take up a job in some retail outlet or get married when she turns 18. Education is no longer an option.

Prakash and Ravi's parents were working

as labourers in some construction sites in Mumbai. The boys were studying in a Municipal school. The family had to leave Mumbai during the COVID migration. With no means to return, they remain in a remote village with no access to the internet, no phones and no means to further their education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has snowballed into a sustainable development crisis worldwide, upping the percentage of poverty and unemployment to critical levels. With countries struggling to contain the epidemic, the pandemic threatens to

reverse years of progress on poverty, hunger, healthcare and education. Corporates in India have to strike a balance between taking stock of emerging healthcare requirements and focus areas such as education. A majority

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According to a UNESCO report, about 248 million students have been deeply affected by school closures since March 2020.

While school systems have made efforts to reach students at home through various means, the impact on the learning and socio-emotional well-being of the poorest children will be hurt the most by pandemic-related school

closures

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of companies foresee a dedicated programme for COVID-19 in some capacity. The pandemic has led to companies pivoting their CSR priorities to address more pertinent social issues caused by the pandemic.

According to a UNESCO report, about 248 million students have been deeply affected by school closures since March 2020. While school systems have made efforts to reach students at home through



various means, the impact on the learning and socio-emotional well-being of the poorest children will be hurt the most by pandemic-related school closures.

The use of technology in education for teaching and learning is paramount but, a dearth of access to smartphones and computers, low internet bandwidth, lack of preparedness of teachers in the use of technology, and lack of resources in Indian languages are some of the challenges hampering smooth online learning.

With job losses and economic uncertainty in cities, people fled to their villages, pushing families into poverty, worsening distress for children from such

woes as malnutrition, loss of education, and early marriages for girls.

The worst hit were private schools that receive no government grants but where many low-income families, aspiring for better education, send their children. With the loss of income, these parents found themselves unable to pay school fees. This inability to afford school fees led many students to move from private to government schools. Attrition by students impacted the finances of these schools, leading to non-payment of salary to the teachers, and in some cases, led to these schools and institutions closing down.

Educated parents supported their children throughout the pandemic. The challenge has been for illiterate parents whose children are first-generation learners.

Some students attend school so they can





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According to official data, Indian companies have spent at least Rs 2,669 Crores of CSR funds in the education sector in 2019-20. Issues and challenges facing education are going through multiple storms. The pandemic will have a long-reaching impact for years to come - an impact that will need to be researched and addressed at the root level

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partake in the mid-day meals. The midday meal scheme has helped many children whose families are unable to provide them with proper nutrition. School closure meant that these children suffer even more from food deficiency and malnutrition during the pandemic.

According to official data, Indian companies have spent at least Rs 2,669 Crores of CSR funds in the education sector in 2019-20. Issues and challenges



facing education are going through multiple storms. The pandemic will have a long-reaching impact for years to come - an impact that will need to be researched and addressed at the root level. Education challenges are the least of the problems for many of the worst affected. Crossing income barriers, the pandemic has converted those who were relatively well-off to dire straits. The challenges faced by these children and their families are going to be tough to address.

As the country is limping towards normalcy, the new normal has left behind severe social scars.

Are the CSR programmes gearing to address these challenges? What are the

new parameters of whom to help and how, for education?

These are answers that time will reveal. For now, CSR professionals need to remember to look at education from a different lens. ■

**Meera Tenguria** is a Stakeholder Engagement Strategist and Trainer with over 20 years of experience in Corporate Communications, Crisis Communications, Stakeholder Communications, Content Strategy, Sustainability and CSR Communication. She has completed a GRI Certified Training programme on The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

## Key Findings

### Loss of Learning during the Pandemic Field Studies in Education | Azim Premji Foundation February 2021

- 92 per cent of children, on average, have lost at least one specific language ability from the previous year across all classes.
- Illustratively, these specific abilities include describing a picture or their experiences orally, reading familiar words; reading with comprehension; writing simple sentences based on a picture.



- 92 per cent of children in Class II, 89 per cent in Class III, 90 per cent in Class IV, 95 per cent in Class V, and 93 per cent in Class VI have lost at least one specific ability from the previous year. Learning loss in mathematics.
- 82 per cent of children, on average, have lost at least one specific mathematical ability from the previous year across all classes.
- Illustratively, these specific abilities include identifying single- and two-digit numbers, performing arithmetic operations, using basic arithmetic operations for solving problems, describing 2D/3D shapes, reading and drawing inferences from data.
- 67 per cent of children in Class II, 76 per cent in Class III, 85 per cent in Class IV, 89 per cent in Class V, and 89 per cent in Class VI have lost at least one specific ability from the previous year.



# Promoting Sports in Rural and Urban Areas

The Olympics this year witnessed the most successful outing in terms of medal count for India. This feat would not have been possible without the extraordinary efforts of the sportsmen and sportswomen who showed the world their mettle at the highest level of their discipline. After a 41-year wait, the Men's Hockey Team finally won an Olympic medal. Shuttler PV Sindhu proved once again that she is one of the best in the world at her craft by becoming only the second Indian to win two individual medals at the Olympics. Neeraj Chopra won India's last medal in Tokyo, and the first-ever at any track and field event at any Olympic games. However, in the excitement and jubilation of the victories, there were a few stories or rather parts of a few stories that were either omitted or overlooked by the mainstream.



**Colonel Prakash Tewari**





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The story is almost the same barring a few details; it is of a system that does its best to recognise talent but somehow fails to work optimally, and only the few that are fortunate enough to grind past their hardships make it to the top. It almost makes one wonder how many of these stories are currently playing out in our country. With a population of over one billion and 41 per cent of those under the age of eighteen, one cannot stop and wonder about the amount of talent that goes unrecognised or the potential future champions that will have to give up their dreams due to financial, personal or familial reasons

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to reach where he is now. The story is almost the same barring a few details; it is of a system that does its best to recognise talent but somehow fails to work optimally, and only the few that are fortunate enough to grind past their hardships make it to the top. It almost makes one wonder how many of these stories are currently playing out in our country. With a population of over one billion and 41 per cent of those under the age of eighteen, one cannot stop and wonder about the amount of talent that goes unrecognised or the potential future champions that will have to give up their dreams due to financial, personal or familial reasons.

In the past few decades, there have been multiple opportunities as a nation to come around the concept of an equal opportunity sports ecosystem - a system where no sport is given preference in

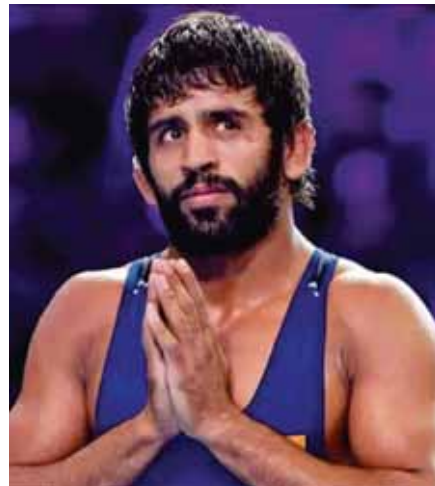
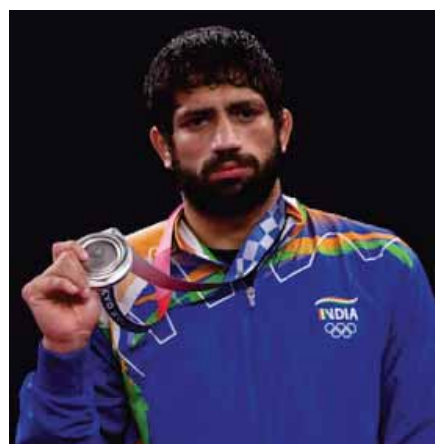


Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu opened India's medal account with a silver in the women's 49 kg category - her first medal at the Olympics, but not the first of her career. It surprises me that not much has been mentioned about her achievements in the 2017 World Weightlifting Championship where she won a gold medal in the women's 48 kg category or how she won India its first gold in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and broke the games record for the weight category. It seems that our fascination with any other sports other than cricket only lasts till a major sporting event like the Olympics is ongoing and our heroes are quickly sidelined for more mainstream stars till the next major sporting event is around the corner.

Lovlina Borgohain was another success story to come out of the North East with her bronze medal win at the women's welterweight event, becoming only the third Indian boxer to achieve a podium finish at the Olympics. Her achievements were recognised by her

State Government and other organisations with deserved rewards, but again little has been written about the struggles her family had to endure for her to reach here, with her mother taking loans from the local cooperative to secure her daughter's name in the history books.

Similarly, freestyle wrestler Ravi Kumar Dhaiya who won the silver medal in the 57 kg category did not let the financial hardships of his family get in the way of his success. Other than his struggle of helping out his family with their work and pursuing a career in wrestling, his father, a small farmer from Sonipat, Haryana, travelled 39 km every day, for more than a decade, from their village to the stadium to deliver fresh milk and fruits, which were part of his wrestling diet. Wrestler Bajrang Punia became the third Indian debutant to win a medal at the Olympics this year. Like Chanu, Borgohain and Dhaiya, Bajrang too faced many challenges and financial hardships

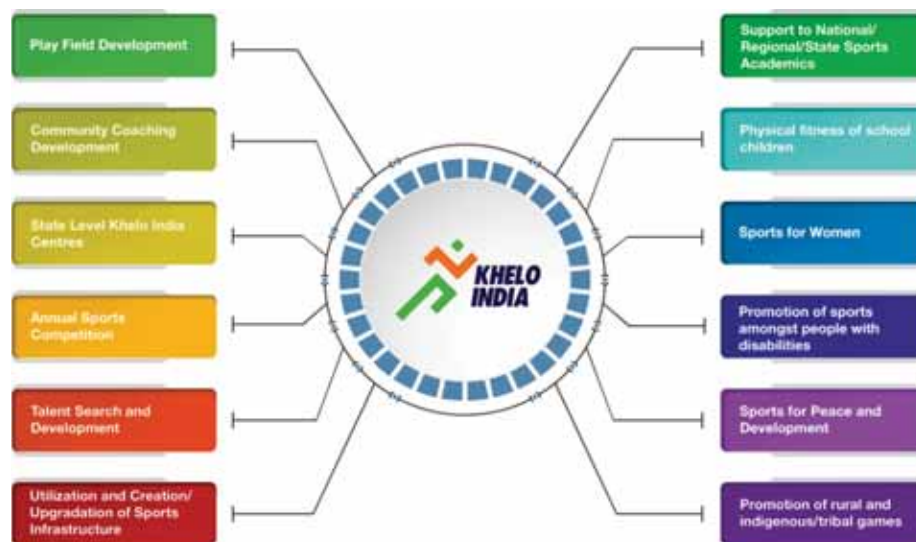


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Khelo India, one of the most extensive grassroots level initiatives by any Indian government in the past, is a multidisciplinary event for the Under-17 and Under-19 categories. Every year, 1,000 players are given an annual scholarship of Rs 5 Lakh for eight years to prepare them for international sporting events. It is also supplemented by a Training of Trainers (TOT) programme where 160 trainers are trained in four batches of 40 each, once a year

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terms of infrastructure and popularity amongst the masses; a system where talent is given its due in terms of exposure, world-class training, nutrition, and financial aid. However, lack of initiative and competent management and a structural handicap between the key stakeholders has allowed certain sports to take precedence over others. The failure to recognise talent at an early age at the grassroots level has been a crucial factor for India's lacklustre performance compared to other major countries like



the USA, China, Japan and Great Britain in the past decades. With a school and college-going population of 411 million, it is safe to say that there is ample talent in India raring for proper infrastructure and training opportunities to show their worth at the international level. Former Indian Olympian Anju Bobby George recently said in an interview that the inability to compete with the best of the best on the biggest stage in the world is due to lack of exposure to top-level competitions, hampering our chances at better performances at track and field events. It should come as a shock that the world's second-most populous nation has one of the worst Olympic records in terms of medals per head. A chronic lack of resources has undermined India's performances for decades though this is not the only reason for India's sub-par performances.

Sports is hardly the priority in a majority of Indian households. Most Indian parents would prefer their children to become engineers, doctors, lawyers, or secure government jobs compared to a career in sports. This is primarily due to a lack of means, financial gains, and job security. However, the current government has taken a keen interest in sports and has implemented several sports initiatives to curb these challenges. The Target Olympics Podium Scheme (TOPS) is one such initiative that must be credited for India's most successful Olympic campaign. To put medal

winners on the podium, TOPS engaged reputed sportspersons to identify potential medal winners by an objective process, with the selected athletes guaranteed complete support through customised programmes delivered professionally, bypassing bureaucratic delays. Khelo India, one of the most extensive grassroots level initiatives by any Indian government in the past, is a multidisciplinary event for the Under-17 and Under-19 categories. Every year, 1,000 players are given an annual scholarship of Rs 5 Lakh for eight years to prepare them for international sporting events. It is also supplemented by a Training of Trainers (TOT) programme where 160 trainers are trained in four batches of 40 each, once a year. Programmes like these not only provide potential talent with a better shot at success at the highest level, but also provide the existing talent, trainers, coaches, and support staff with employment opportunities within the sports ecosystem. However, these schemes need to be supported by private initiatives, and there should be supplementary feeder programmes that ensure the right and most deserving talent gets to make the most out of these government initiatives.

According to a BBC report, each medal Great Britain won in the 2012 Olympic Games cost the country an estimated average of 4.5 million Sterling Pounds. According to other reports, the scale of





Archery Academy in 1996, or Jamshedpur Football Club (JFC) in 2017. Tata has always led the way when it comes to sports.

The JSPL Foundation (Jindal Steel and Power) is another example of CSR impacting the sports ecosystem. Apart from providing training and nutrition, the Foundation also undertakes maintenance of stadiums and promotion of sports in rural and tribal areas. But perhaps one of the most notable initiatives in recent times is the Sports Excellence Program by JSW Foundation (JSW Group) which has been integral in Neeraj Chopra's gold medal win at the Olympics this year.

The Inspire Institute of Sports (JSW Group) is India's first high-performance training centre imparting training in five Olympic disciplines. Situated in Karnataka and spread over 42 acres, the Institute brings together 23 corporate donors, and as the name suggests, is truly an inspiring initiative. Other major corporations like Reliance, Hindustan Zinc and Central Coalfields Ltd have also taken an interest in sports. However, the efforts of these corporations may not be

China's sports sector is set to reach nearly CNY 3 trillion (62 Billion USD) by the end of this year, with the Chinese government investing 10 Billion Yuan (approx. 1.5 Billion USD) in 2019, ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. To compete with these kinds of figures, it is not only essential for the private sector to step in and lend their support to the national

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To compete with the kind of resources that other leading nations back their sports system, a more concentrated effort is needed at the grassroots level by implementing centralised training and nutrition programmes that focus on grooming talent from a young age and seeing that the said talent has all the means necessary to advance to the professional level

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cause through CSR and other initiatives but a great opportunity for sports start-ups to seek investments from bigger corporations looking to enter the untapped sports market.

Corporate India only spent INR 795 Crores out of INR 49,600 Crores towards Sports between FY 2014 and FY 2019, which amounts to a meagre 1.6 per cent of the total CSR spend. Barring a few names, a vast majority of the corporate sector has long ignored sports as a viable option in terms of CSR. Tata has been one of the leaders in promoting sports in India. Ever since the '80s, Tata has shown great interest in the development of the sports sector. Be it the inception of the Tata Football Academy in 1987, Tata



enough for us to reach our country's full potential.

To compete with the kind of resources that other leading nations back their sports system, a more concentrated effort is needed at the grassroots level by implementing centralised training and nutrition programmes that focus on grooming talent from a young age and seeing that the said talent has all the means necessary to advance to the professional level. Tailor-made curriculums and infrastructure must be available to the youth to explore sports as a viable career option from a young age and set them up for a better chance of success at higher levels of competition.

One such model that could be explored is setting up Individual School Group Leagues within a network of schools such as Army schools, various Corporate Group schools (Birlas, Jindals, Ambani, Adani), DAVs, Kendra Vidyalaya, MCD, etc. This will not only ensure regular training and participation but also provide an opportunity to identify talent at the national scale from a specific pool of participants, which in turn promotes competitiveness and holds trainers and coaches accountable to a certain extent.

Another model that has already proven to be successful is the outsourcing of the entire sports department of a specific school. By bringing in accomplished sportspersons, trainers and other support staff, the existing sports department of a school is upgraded by investing in the infrastructure and developing and deploying tailor-made sports curriculums with regular updating and training of trainers.

An alternate model worth exploring is the 'hub and spoke' model for Government/MCD schools, where one school in a specific city/district is chosen as a 'hub' where world-class infrastructure is installed with the help of CSR funds. The schools acting as 'spokes' would be trial grounds where scientifically crafted training programmes, trails/leagues and other supporting activities are held to identify talent. With the assistance of CSR, the selected talent will be allowed to pursue the remainder of their education at the



'hub' where their boarding and nutritional needs would be taken care of as part of a sports scholarship.

An additional possible CSR model could be the running of self-sustaining evening sports academies at Government/Private Schools in Tier 1 and 2 cities as most of the schools grounds are available in the evening. With an initial investment in a school's infrastructure and deployment of professional trainers/coaches, these academies would be free of charge or available at highly subsidised rates for the selected school's students while charging a standard fee for all outside students. These models should be supported with capacity building initiatives that ensure employment within the proposed programmes. Trainers must be abreast with the latest training/coaching and conditioning practices and provided with the means to implement the same, thereby increasing the chances of their pupils to perform better. Digital management systems should be employed to track the progress of players and trainers alike.

Many start-ups are willing to provide operational support for the implementation of such programmes. However, not much interest has been displayed by the corporate sector. One such start-up, SportVolt Pvt Ltd., implemented its pilot project at Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi. The project involved outsourcing the complete sports department of the school to SportVolt Pvt Ltd and running it through their Curriculum Integration Model with minor upgrades in infrastructure and focus of scientifically

designed training/coaching practices in over 35 games. This also included providing digital solutions for monitoring, assessment and tracking athletes' programmes and services. Within a year, they were able to groom 95 Zonal/Inter-Zonal players, 35 national level players and also fed five students in Khelo India and other leagues. However, with the change in school management, the programme was discontinued after the pilot project ran for a year. This is a very common challenge when schools are funding such programmes out of their own pockets.

With the success of government-funded initiatives and India's recent performance at the Tokyo Olympics, I am hopeful that the CSR sector will come together and support the sports ecosystem. It is more important than ever to invest in the potential of our country's youth and adopt a holistic approach and recognise the value of sports and the place it will hold in the future of our nation. ■

**Colonel Prakash Tewari** is an Armed Forces veteran. A UNESCO awardee, he has served as Director Policy (Ecology) in Government of India, Head of CSR - Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Tata Power Company Limited, Executive Vice President, CSR and Education - Jindal Steel and Power Limited, and Executive Director - CSR for DLF Ltd. He was responsible for mitigating social and environmental risks of large infrastructure development projects in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Australia. He is presently the Chairman of Tewari Group Pvt Ltd. Sport Volt Professional Services is one of the initiatives of Tewari Group.



# IndusInd for Sports - Making Champions that Inspire the Nation

Sports have the power to change the world in incredible ways and means. It embodies values such as respect for the opponent, teamwork, and fairness – all of which are applicable in our personal and professional lives. Building on this, we at IndusInd Bank aim at imbibing these qualities in our DNA with underlying objectives to attract, mobilise and inspire communities and bring out the best in sports, i.e. human values, inclusion, and sustainability. Hence, as a logical extension of this thought, we launched IndusInd for Sports – a non-banking sports vertical in 2016 to inspire communities inside and outside the Bank, using the unique power of sports. We drive on the philosophy of diversity, differentiation and domination through our initiatives that aim at exciting, educating, and engaging the stakeholders using Sports.

We use sports excellence as a vehicle for social change and a tool to improve the lives of differently-abled individuals, blind cricketers, rural children, women athletes, their communities, and the overall state of our nation. We support diverse initiatives with different partners under the theme of sustainability and

inclusiveness.

One of our first programmes – Para Champions Programme – is a stunning example of what diversity and inclusion through sports should look like. Launched in 2016 in partnership with GoSports Foundation, the Programme objective is to empower the differently-



Sanjeev Anand

abled community through sport, change the perceptions of the people towards people with disabilities, and create role models and inspirations who will change



the narrative around Para Sports in the country. The Programme is also in alignment with several objectives of the SDGs to ensure sustainability and a larger impact.

Beneficiaries of the Programme and elite differently-abled athletes from various sporting disciplines in para-sports are emerging. Our Programme partner maintains a robust tracking mechanism that has the next set of para-athletes as part of our Watch List Programme that tracks athletes' performances and potential at the national level. The selection process for the Para Champions Programme is assessed by an expert through a three-tier assessment process.

Year on year, we have made tremendous efforts to increase the number of athletes we support. With 18 athletes five years back, the programme is currently supporting 43 athletes. We make continuous efforts to give athletes every opportunity to grow. The kind of support each athlete may receive varies, depending on their specific needs. The support structure of the Programme includes physiotherapy, strength and conditioning, nutrition, gear, equipment and apparel, mental conditioning, medical consultations, injury rehabilitation, high-performance stints, and more. It identifies the pressing needs of the athletes, the challenges they need to overcome, the support they need to reach the top of their game, and

accordingly, facilitates the required interventions for the athletes with the right set of experts.

Over time, we have witnessed a constant growth in athlete representation at both national and international levels. Our para-athletes have won a total of 623 medals since the inception of this Programme.

The most significant proof of this was that, back in 2016, the Programme supported 18 para-athletes in their journey to Rio Paralympics 2016. In five years, the number has substantially increased to 43, out of which 21 participated in the Tokyo Paralympics 2020 – meaning that nearly 40 per cent of the entire Indian contingent is part of our Programme. The goal in year one was to support athletes to qualify for the Paralympics in 2016. That year, 11 of our 18 athletes qualified for the Games and formed the majority of the largest-ever Indian contingent of 19 athletes. Three of the four Indian Paralympic medalists in Rio 2016 were from our Programme.



As India registered its highest-ever medal tally at the recently concluded Tokyo 2020 Paralympics with a total of 19 medals, – 4 Gold, 1 Silver and 3 Bronze Medal winners were part of our Para Champions Programme.

It is a moment of great pride to witness our supported Para Champions win laurels for the country and cement their place as bonafide achievers. This year, the Indian contingent comprised 21 athletes from the Para Champions Programme compared to 11 during the





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It is a moment of great pride to witness our supported Para Champions win laurels for the country and cement their place as bonafide achievers. This year, the Indian contingent comprised 21 athletes from the Para Champions Programme compared to 11 during the Rio Games in 2016. The rise in numbers is a testament to our larger objective of expanding the pool, and more so, in the coming years. As an organisation, we are honoured to have been part of their journey thus far, and we look forward to being partners in their progress in the future

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Rio Games in 2016. The rise in numbers is a testament to our larger objective of expanding the pool, and more so, in the coming years. As an organisation, we are honoured to have been part of their journey thus far, and we look forward to being partners in their progress in the future.



Our ongoing quest is to increase the numbers for representation and performances of athletes at large sporting events, including the Para World Championships, Asian Para Games, Commonwealth Games, and Paralympic Games.

Athletes supported through the Para Champions Programme have become role models and inspirations, inspiring many young children with disabilities to take up sport and strive for excellence. Several athletes have been bestowed with national awards as well. The programme has facilitated media appearances of the athletes across various platforms, helping to raise awareness of para-sports in the country and increased the level of respect and empathy towards these athletes. Since its inception, there have been numerous learnings and findings which have come about through experience, and as the Programme continues, we aim to learn more and continue to strive for excellence. Over the next five years, we visualise the Programme providing a platform to support, enable, and showcase the incredible journeys of para-athletes across the nation.

Going forward, the narrative around disabilities in India needs to change. The medals the athletes win at international events like the Paralympics will not only inspire but will also help change the ecosystem in the country in terms of dialogue and infrastructure related to the

differently-abled community.

Through the Programme, we aim to highlight incredible stories of achievements of Paralympians to promote sport as a medium of empowerment amongst the differently-abled in India and change general perceptions towards differently-abled individuals.

We would like to share some uplifting stories from some of our athletes who braved the odds and hurdles in life to emerge victoriously and inspire millions.

### **Pramod Bhagat**

**Sport:** Badminton (SL-3)

**Nature of Disability:** Orthopaedic Polio (Left leg)



Twenty-three-year-old Pramod has been affected by polio since the age of four. This had a detrimental impact on his entire body. The doctor suggested an option of localising the negative impact by amputating either his arms or his legs. His father chose the legs solely on the basis that Pramod would need his arms to eat. Pramod started playing Badminton in 2002 after watching people in his neighbourhood play the sport. He got into the competitive para circuit in 2006 after playing with able-bodied players and beating them.

His support, both financially and morally, was his family and the people from his town. Pramod is an ITI graduate. He is currently working in a government institution. IndusInd for Sports and GoSports Foundation supported him in many important aspects of training and competing at the Asian Games 2018. He went on to win three medals at the event. In late 2018, Pramod also reached the World Number 1 ranking in his category, a testament to his dedication and hard work. 2019 was even better for the supreme para-athlete as he won two gold medals at the BWF World Para-Badminton Championships.

Pramod Bhagat was conferred with the Arjuna Award in 2019. He is an inspiration to people all over the country. He became the first Indian shuttler to win a gold medal at the Paralympics, cementing his legacy as one of India's greatest Paralympians.

### Achievements

- 2 Gold medals at the BWF World Para-Badminton Championships,



Basel, 2019

- Bronze medal at the BWF World Para-Badminton Championship, Ulsan Korea, 2017
- Bronze medal in the Singles and Doubles event at the BWF Asian Para-Badminton Championship, Beijing, 2016
- Gold medal (Doubles) and a Silver medal (Singles) at the BWF Para-Badminton World Championship, England, 2015
- Gold medal at the 2020 Summer Paralympics in Men's Singles SL-3

### Narayan Thakur

**Sport:** Para Athletics (100m, 200m)

**Nature of Disability:** Left-sided Hemiparesis (by birth)



As a child, Narayan Thakur always wanted to play cricket, but due to financial instability and low scholarship, he shifted to track. He found inspiration in Usain Bolt and Justin Gatlin. Despite his limitations, he was determined to do his utmost to succeed in athletics. To facilitate his dream, he worked as a waiter and even as a DTC bus cleaner for his livelihood. When he first started training on the track, he did so without a coach for two years due to his inability to pay for

one. This did not deter him. From 2015 onwards, he began performing well and winning medals on the national circuit, exceeding people's expectations and leaving his mark wherever he competed. The pinnacle of his career came in the 2018 Asian Para Games when he created history by becoming the first Indian Para-athlete to win a gold medal in the 100m event at the Asian Para Games.

### Achievements

- Gold medal in the 100m and 200m events at the 15th National Para Athletic Championship, Patna 2019



- Gold medal in the 100m event at the Asian Para Games 2018
- Gold medal in the 100m event at the 18th National Para Athletics Championship 2018

### Manpreet Kaur

**Sport:** Powerlifting – 41kg

**Nature of Disability:** Poliomyelitis

Manpreet was affected by Polio at six months old. After completing her B. Com and B. Ed. degrees, she got a job in a private firm to sustain herself and her family. She quit her job and started looking for options. It was then that she found her passion - Sports.

Manpreet's college Principal introduced her to Powerlifting. She encouraged and even took her to an academy. Her interest in the sport grew. Manpreet was unaware of the sporting opportunities and possibilities for para-athletes until then. Since her family income was insufficient





to support her sports requirements, her former coach, Parminder Singh, and fellow para powerlifter, Rajinder Singh Rahelu, proved to be her biggest support system. They inspire her to reach for the stars.

Manpreet is being trained by Rajinder Singh Rahelu. He knew that with the right financial support, she can achieve a lot and be an inspiration to many more women powerlifters. As it is, Powerlifting is a very niche sport for women in India, and in Para Sport, it is even rarer to see women participate. Manpreet aims to change that narrative through her success and inspire people to do the impossible.



## Achievements

- Finished 13th in the 50 kg category at the World Para Powerlifting Championship, Mexico, 2017
- Gold medal in the 50-kg Group and the 41-kg Group at the National Para Powerlifting Championship, 2016

### Rakshitha Raju

**Sport:** Athletics (400m, 1500m)

**Nature of Disability:** Visual Impairment (T11)

Rakshitha is from Chikmagalur, a small town in Karnataka. She lost her parents at a very early age. She was brought up by her grandmother, who herself is deaf and dumb. Her PT Master from Ashakirana Blind School used to take her for the national meets where she was recognised by her current guide runner Sowmya, who introduced her to Rahul Balakrishna. He brought her to Bangalore to train under him at SAI along with fellow para-athlete, Radha.

In 2017, Rakshitha was selected for the Youth Asian Para Games but



unfortunately could not attend due to passport issues. The following year at the Asian Para Games, she won gold in the 1500m event, becoming one of the first Indian female athletes in her category to do so. Rakshitha is the epitome of hard work, dedication and determination. She wishes to achieve all her ambitions on track and in life.

## Achievements

- Bronze medal in the 1500m event with a personal best of 5.29.00 at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix Paris 2019



- Gold medal in the 1500m and 800m event at the World Para Athletics Junior Championships, Nottwil, Switzerland, 2019
- Gold Medal in the 1500m event at the Asian Para Games, Jakarta, 2018
- Gold Medal in the 800m and 400m event at the 18th National Para Athletics Championships, Haryana, 2018

### Swapnil Patil

**Sport:** Swimming (S10)

**Nature of Disability:** Orthopaedic Handicapped (Deformity in one leg)

Afflicted by Polio at infancy, Swapnil started swimming when he was six years old, on the advice of doctors, as a form of hydrotherapy. Inspired by one of India's



most successful swimmers, Virdhawal Khade, young Swapnil relocated to Bangalore to train at the same swimming centre – Dolphin Aquatics – as his hero.

The tall, lanky Kolhapur boy began competing and soon started winning medals at all local swim meets. Having done well at the national level, Swapnil represented India at international events, winning his first international medal at 15 years of age. In 2014, he was selected to be part of the Indian swimming team for the Asian Para Games in Incheon, South Korea. He was part of the bronze medal-winning 4×100 medley relay team, an extremely proud moment for the young boy. Over the next few years, he continued to shine on the international stage and cemented his status as one of the best para swimmers in the country. At the 2018 Asian Games, he won a bronze medal in the 400m Freestyle event, as well as a silver medal in the 150m Freestyle event, showcasing how far he had come in the four years since his last Asian Games.

### Achievements

- Bronze and Silver medal at the Asian Para Games, 2018
- Bronze medal in the 50m Backstroke event at the IDM Berlin Swimming Championships, 2018
- Gold medal (50m Backstroke) and Bronze medal (50m Freestyle) at the 2017 NSW State Open Championship, Sydney
- Bronze medal in the 4x100m medley



relay at the 2014 Para Asian Games in Incheon (South Korea)

### Anandan Gunasekaran

**Sport:** Athletics – 100m, 200m and 400m (T44)

**Nature of Disability:** Injured in a mine blast in 2008. Amputation of his left leg below the knee



Anandan started his career with the army in 2005. He was an able-bodied athlete who competed in sprinting events. While serving at the LOC in J&K in 2008, he was injured in a mine blast resulting in the amputation of his left leg below the knee. Whilst in hospital, he started reading about sprinter and famous blade runner Oscar Pistorius. This inspired him to take up para-sports. In 2012, Anandan started competing in 100m and 200m sprint events with a wooden leg. He won gold and silver medals at the 2015 World Military Games in South Korea and also at the 2016 Asia Oceania Athletics Championships in Dubai. Anandan also represented India at the 2017 IPC World

Para Athletics Championships in London. His promising performances in 2016 and early 2017 was a platform for him to be selected for support under the GoSports Foundation Para Champions Programme 2017-18. His incredible performances are still continuing. A career-defining achievement took place at the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta when he won silver and bronze medals. In 2019, more success followed as he won three gold medals at the World Military Games held in China. Anandan is aiming to win more laurels for the nation at mega-events.

### Achievements

- Gold medal at the Paris Handisport Athletics Grand Prix, 2019
- 3 Gold medals at the World Military Games, Wuhan, China 2019



- Silver and Bronze medal at the Asian Para Games, Jakarta, Indonesia 2018
- Gold medal in the 200m and Silver in the 400m event at the 8th Sharjah International Athletics Meet, 2018

We see the Para Champions Programme becoming a meaningful platform for advocacy and becoming a voice for para-athletes to reach other prospective athletes and differently-abled individuals to inspire them to take up sports and pursue it seriously. Using the Programme as a medium for change, we intend to bring about a shift in the discourse around Disability Sport and the inclusion of the differently-abled in various spheres of life. ■

*Sanjeev Anand is the Head of Commercial & Rural Banking and the In-charge of IndusInd for Sports, IndusInd Bank.*



# GiveIndia

## Creating a Culture of Giving to Change Lives



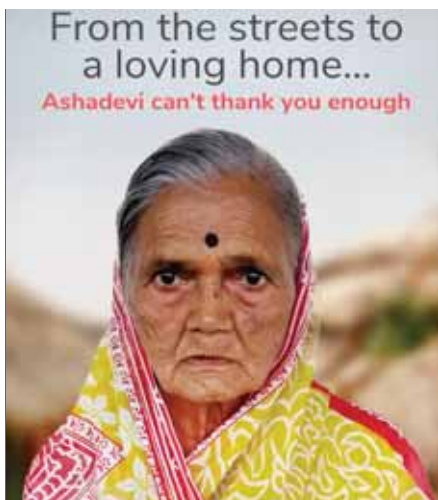
GiveIndia (Giving Impetus to Voluntary Effort) is a non-profit organisation in India. It is an online donation platform that channel and provide resources to credible non-governmental organisations across India to alleviate poverty by enabling the world - individuals and organisations - to raise and donate funds conveniently to any cause they care. GiveIndia has impacted millions of lives across India over the last two decades. The NGO works across ten causes and lists charities ranging from charity for children to charity for education, health, employment, elderly, disability, human rights, environment, youth and women's empowerment. We spoke with **Priyanka Prakash**, Director, Head - Online Giving, Marketing & Partnerships to know more about the NGO, with special highlights on its partnership with Blind Welfare Society (BWS).



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We are proud to have played a role in enabling giving across all segments of our society - everyday givers, HNI givers, corporates and foundations. Over the last 20 years, we have enabled giving through pledges, payroll giving, crowdfunding, monthly giving, CSR grant management, collective giving, etc

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### Mihote Ashadevi Vishwasrao

Mihote Ashadevi Vishwasrao lost her husband a few years back. She started living with her sons who ill-treated and physically abused her, giving her a harrowing time during the stay. She was soon pushed out of the house and was roaming the streets when a good samaritan took her to Neptune Foundation - a Mumbai based old age home and our NGO partner.

Through your monthly donations to their programme - Sponsor the Food Expenses of Poor Senior Citizens in an Old Age Home - she is now receiving nutritious food, has a place to stay and has found a new family.

### When did GiveIndia start its operations? What made you decide to take this route to make a difference?

We started our operations in 2000. The aim is to become a credible link between people willing to donate and the grassroots NGOs which work for the poorest of the poor. Our primary mission is to create a culture of giving in India. By promoting efficient and effective giving, we believe we can provide greater opportunities for the poor in India.

### How does this work? Do share in detail how you collaborate between, say, a particular NGO and donors. What is the duration given for each

### project to finalise or, does that vary according to the amount a project requires?

We begin with identifying the right NGOs that are working in the field. We have our due process to verify the NGOs we partner with which covers the legal, financial, and implementation aspects of the donations. We work to ensure that the donations are being channelled to the programme and organisation of one's choice. Currently, we partner with 2,200+ NGOs.

We ensure that every donation does what it is supposed to do - change lives. Our primary objective is to make social giving to trusted NGO projects and





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We are committed to helping both NGOs and individuals in need of funds. While fundraisers like these help NGOs take care of their live programmes and care centres, we also help individuals who wish to raise funds for a health emergency in their families through medical fundraisers on our crowdfunding platform

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verified medical causes a credible and straightforward experience. Every project is different, with its timelines.

**Is such fundraising for each NGO a one-time project or, do you help them multiple times whenever they need help?**

It depends on the NGOs. If they have multiple projects that require funds, they can list these programmes on our platform. We have many nonprofits fundraising for their programmes on our crowdfunding platform and our monthly giving platform.

**Why do NGOs need a platform like GiveIndia to raise funds for themselves? Are you confident that it is more effective to do this on their behalf rather than pursuing it on their own? Could you share facts/statistics to justify this?**

Our crowdfunding platform brings both convenience and choice for fundraisers and donors in a safe, high-trust environment. There are many reasons why NGOs should partner with us. They can raise funds for multiple causes. We have a robust but simple verification process; we charge zero per cent platform fees, giving NGOs maximum funds. All the donors get tax-deductible receipts for their donations. And we accept donations in currencies from around the world. Besides, we organise online fundraising challenges for NGOs and provide them with training and incentives to participate.

**What are the different verticals in which your organisation is involved in fundraising?**

We are proud to have played a role in enabling giving across all segments of our society - everyday givers, HNI givers, corporates and foundations. Over the last 20 years, we have enabled giving through pledges, payroll giving, crowdfunding, monthly giving, CSR grant management, collective giving, etc.

**What is your pan-India presence regarding collaborating with and raising funds for NGOs?**

We are an online platform, so there are no geographical boundaries, and neither do we restrict any fundraising collaboration based on geography. We have a robust network of 2,200+ NGOs spread across the country in almost every Indian State, Union Territory and city. These NGOs partner with us throughout the year for several fundraising opportunities.



**Garima is now a block leader who advocates girls' rights**  
Thank you for helping her find her voice



## Garima

Garima is a student of Class XII. An ambitious girl, she loves to communicate with people and educate them about relevant social issues. She has been working as a grassroots girl leader for over two years. Recognising her outstanding spirit to make a difference in her community, our NGO partner Milaan Foundation wanted to support her dreams of becoming a changemaker.

Through monthly donations to their programme - Help Create Future Women Leaders - Garima now receives support and tutoring and has even started counselling parents in her community to invest in girls' education. She also took up several important initiatives during the pandemic to help her community members by building awareness on COVID-19 through wall writing and poster making, sharing helpline numbers, etc. Garima is determined to uplift girls in her community to achieve equality.



**Turning to Blind Welfare Society, how did you come across their cause? What made you take up the project?**

Being a part of our expanding NGO network, we received stories of the interventions of the Blind Welfare Society and then started a dialogue with their team to get details about the need. On being convinced with the narrative, beneficiary stories, involvement of the founders and the leadership team and the care needed for the girls, we decided to go ahead with the fundraiser.

**Compared to other verticals, is there more response from sponsors to donate to the physically impaired? How inclined are you to raise funds for the physically impaired considering past funds raised through such initiatives?**

Stories of distress, emotions and urgent requirements augur well with potential donors. Such stories are relevant in the cause of disability and, thus, fundraisers about NGOs working for this cause have a better chance to meet their target.



**Can you tell us more about this particular fundraiser – Blind Welfare Society (BWS)?**

Blind Welfare Society strives to improve the quality of life for 40 visually challenged girls in their shelter home in Delhi through education, employment and free accommodation. BWS was founded by R.P. Bhola, a visually impaired person. It is now run by his son, Dheeraj Bhola. The Society requires roughly Rs 1.74 Lakh for each girl per year to

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We are committed to helping both NGOs and individuals in need of funds. While fundraisers like these help NGOs take care of their live programmes and care centres, we also help individuals who wish to raise funds for a health emergency in their families through medical fundraisers on our crowdfunding platform

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ensure they receive proper care, but because of the financial crisis created by COVID-19, they are struggling to meet these costs and keep their gates open for every aspiring visually challenged girl in need.

### **Do you have a specific target for BWS? What is the total amount raised so far, and what is the target?**

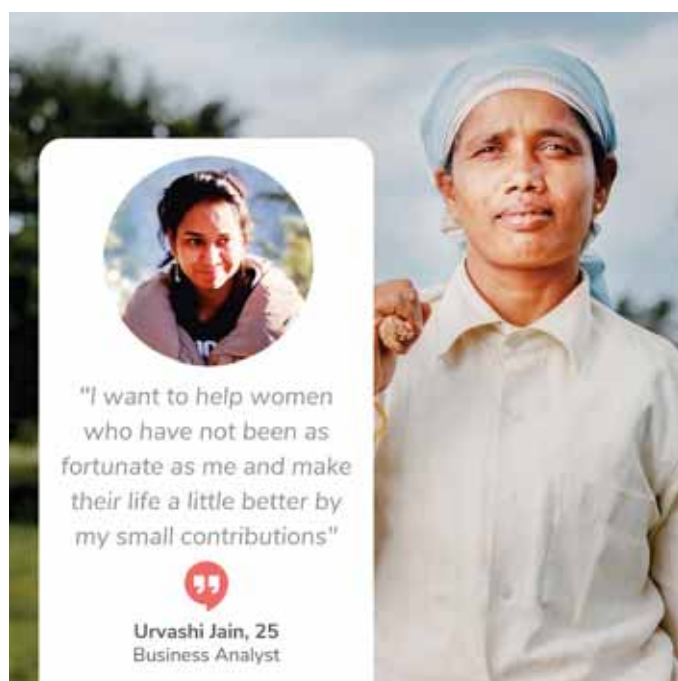
We aim to raise Rs 70 Lakhs, out of which Rs 43 Lakh has been raised so far.

### **How will the funds help BWS? Do elaborate.**

The funds will help BWS provide holistic (nutrition, education and healthcare) care to the 40 visually impaired girls residing in the shelter home. Many of the girls were abandoned by their families because of their disability and gender discrimination.

### **Do you have standalone fundraisers?**

We are committed to helping both NGOs and individuals in need of funds. While fundraisers like these help NGOs take care of their live programmes and care centres, we also help individuals who wish to raise funds for a health emergency in their families through medical fundraisers on our crowdfunding platform.



### **Are you planning to collaborate for fundraisers globally? If yes, are you in talks with any NGO or initiative?**

People donate to our fundraisers from around the world, and we launch fundraisers every month. There are a few more in the pipeline, including ones with Cheshire Homes and SOS Children's Village, among others.



### **What is GiveIndia's vision for the future?**

We are a poverty alleviation programme enabling giving back. We have set lofty goals for the future. For instance, in the next



five years, we hope to become one of the largest giving platforms in the world to support 10,000 NGOs from the current number of 2,200. We would like every Indian who is in a position to give to contribute to our mission. There is no reason for 300 million Indian citizens to continue to live below the poverty line. ■



## Good Samaritans India - A Sanctuary for Senior Citizens and the Destitute

*“ Every time you do a good deed you shine the light a little farther into the dark. And the thing is, when you're gone, that light is going to keep shining on, pushing the shadows back. ”*  
 - Charles de Lint

India is known for adhering to its traditional values and core ethics. Reverence for one's parents is deeply embedded in Indian families since childhood. Individuals see it as their moral duty to look after their parents and the elderly citizens. But in the last few decades, there have been various shortcomings reported when it comes to elderly care. As a consequence of social upgradation and evolving modern lifestyle, our society has lately witnessed a massive transformation in family structures. Mushrooming of nuclear families, especially in urban areas, has led to an increase in the demand for old age homes.



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The faith and legacy left by his father and the grief arising from Ganesh's death inspired George to set up an NGO - Good Samaritans India - in March 2011. The NGO follows this mantra: Give justice to the weak and the fatherless, maintain the right of the afflicted and destitute. Everyone wants to be loved, irrespective of their caste, creed, or colour of humanity

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Seeing this, A.I. George Rakesh Babu opened a free clinic and started helping his patients by taking them to the hospital. He initiated this in 2008. He rented a small room and took care of sick patients. The clinic slowly turned into a welfare centre and then into a destitute home.



Let us look back at the circumstances leading to this clinic becoming a fully-fledged destitute home. TAMILIAN priest, Ganesh Prabhu, dedicated his entire life to social service. Despite numerous challenges and absolutely no support

from family or relatives, he strived to give over 60 orphans a quality life. Dedicating his entire life to the cause of orphans, Ganesh Prabhu was humiliated in the last years of his life and even failed to get a dignified burial. The untimely and shocking circumstances leading to his death and burial shook George to the core and left a lasting impact on him. It changed his perspective towards life. He believes that every individual has the right to live their lives to the fullest and die in dignity. The faith and legacy left by his father and the grief arising from Ganesh's death inspired George to set up an NGO - Good Samaritans India - in March 2011. The NGO follows this mantra: "Give justice to the weak and the fatherless, maintain the right of the afflicted and destitute. Everyone wants to be loved, irrespective of their caste, creed, or colour of humanity".

The shelter home provides a roof for homeless senior citizens abandoned by their families and those who cannot afford even the bare necessities of life.

The very words - Old Age Homes - could be daunting and frightening to many elderly citizens as they give them a feeling of loneliness, detachment, abandonment, reduced care and safety. Breaking all these stereotypes and redefining the term, Good Samaritans India continuously strive to turn the tables and make a difference in the lives of the elderly. Security, health, shelter,



food, dignity, happiness, peace and harmony define a senior citizen's lifestyle at Good Samaritans India. And these are what they crave in their twilight years.

The NGO is manned by medically-trained volunteers dedicated to ensuring the safety and good health of senior citizens. They are provided top-notch living facilities with various rehabilitation programmes and medical treatments.

### Treatments Offered

**Occupational Rehabilitation:** This is for victims who have lost their skills due to a paralytic stroke or an unfortunate accident.

**Physical Rehabilitation:** The programme is for patients who have suffered bone and muscle injuries. Technological treatments strengthen their muscles and improve their posture.

**Aquatic Rehabilitation:** This is a new yet successful trend in treating arthritis and joint problems. It also helps in providing flexibility and mobility to the leg muscles.

**Cognitive Rehabilitation:** A neuropsychological approach is used to treat patients who suffer from brain injuries. They strike at the moral, social and emotional aspects of the brain to help patients get back to their normal life before the injury.

### Treatments

**Behavioural Modification:** Patients are treated and helped to focus on controlling their behaviour.

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During his rescue operations, George Rakesh Babu discovered that the feeling of separation still prevails in many senior citizens, and this horrifies them.

Most citizens are either abandoned due to their old age or physical disability, which the family feels demands way too much financial resources. He also raises a major concern that age should not be a constraint for the elderly. All they need is a home, a mattress to sleep, dignity to live and die in peace

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**Pharmaceutical Treatment:** This is used as a complementary treatment to address the primary condition.

**Cognitive Therapy:** Patients undergo this therapy to help them focus on advancing their conscious mental process.

**Holistic Treatment:** This treatment focuses on the individual as a whole.

George believes that senior citizens are not a burden to society. All they need is care and compassion in their golden, sunset years.

Moving forward with his journey of serving humanity, George shares an



emotional incident from one of his rescue operations. An elderly woman named Shanta was neglected by her only son as she was a cancer patient. George Rakesh Babu and his team rescued Shanta and sheltered and fed her. But due to linguistic barriers, they were unable to communicate and identify her serious medical condition. The team used all their resources, and after searching for a month, they were able to get in touch with Shanta's brother. But before he could take her home, Shanta, unfortunately, passed away. She craved to see her only son till her last breath. George felt a deep sense of helplessness just as he did when the priest, Ganesh Prabhu, died. Shanta's remorse of not being able to unite with her son before she died impacted

George's initiative so significantly that he amplified his rescue operation with zeal with the only intention of providing food, shelter and care to the needy and serving them with the best medical treatments.

During his rescue operations, George Rakesh Babu discovered that the feeling of separation still prevails in many senior citizens, and this horrifies them. Most citizens are either abandoned due to their old age or physical disability, which the family feels demands way too much financial resources. He also raises a major concern that age should not be a constraint for the elderly. All they need is a home, a mattress to sleep, dignity to live and die in peace.

Good Samaritans India is the next home for the homeless elderly and destitute who are considered an undeserving part of society. To date, they have successfully rescued more than 4000 destitute and reunited 1500+ migrants with their families. They have three destitute homes, with its main branch operating from Hyderabad and two others in Jangaon and Warangal, Telangana.

Ever since its inception, the NGO has made a positive impact on those that needed tender, loving care. It believes in seeking a world of hope and social justice, where all individuals live a life of dignity and security. It has been making a difference by reaching out to more people in Hyderabad and changing society's perspective on the elderly and destitute.

Good Samaritans India not only shelters the elderly but uplift the unprivileged and mentally unstable individuals. George shares another incident when he rescued an old woman who had left her house after the sudden death of her third son. She went missing for 12 years. One day, local Hyderabadis approached the NGO and requested them to rescue a woman who was wandering around their residential area. It was difficult for them to communicate with the lady as she was speaking in Odia, the language spoken by





the people of Odisha. George and his team immediately started a search mission for the lady with the help of a local news channel and on various social media platforms. The Rani Ghat Police Station was able to trace her family in Odisha and helped reunite them.

Koteshwar Amma, a 77-year-old who was rescued from Hyderabad said, “I was abandoned by my family due to my acute illness and high medical cost. I kept wandering the streets for three days. A



passerby saw my pathetic state and contacted the nearest police station who then contacted Good Samaritans India. Within a short period, the NGO volunteers came to my rescue. They took me to their shelter home and provided me with food and clothing. After providing first aid, the volunteers began asking me about my family. At first, I was hesitant, but I then shared the actual reason for my pathetic state. Mr George and some volunteers took me to my home and talked to my son. He was not ready to take me under his care. With no other option left, he took me to his shelter home and made necessary arrangements. I receive the love, respect and care I have been longing for. I am grateful to Mr George and his team, and I bless them for what they did for me and those like me.”

One of the volunteers from Good Samaritans India, Manish Kumar, shares his experience working with the NGO: “I have been a part of this NGO for more than six years now. During this period, I have been taking care of the needy and the elderly. I have also seen deep sorrow etched on their faces as their families have abandoned them. Good Samaritans India is doing a unique service of taking care of senior citizens and providing them with a life of dignity.”

The NGO has its challenges. It requires funds and donations to sustain its work.

George Rakesh Babu requests people and renowned organisations to donate generously to help them continue their mission in serving the abandoned elderly. He says, “The NGO receives donations from kind-hearted people and through fundraising programmes. We went

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George Prabhu adds that most people have families and friends who will be there through thick and thin, but these people have no one to rely on. He also raises concerns that when a person becomes old, he is considered useless. A pension of merely Rs 1000 is not enough to survive at this age. All they need is a shelter, a home where they are treated with dignity, a mattress to sleep and die in peace. He also made a mention that we have all lived our lives the way we wanted. A time comes when we should dedicate ourselves to serve those in need

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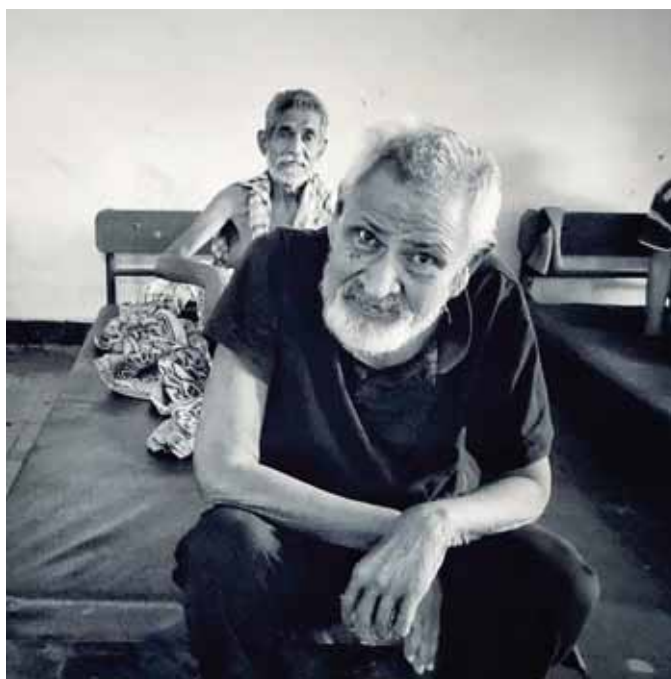


through a very tough time during the lockdown as we did not receive any kind of financial help. I used my savings to sustain the NGO.”

George is grateful to the State Government and officials, including the District Welfare Office, Welfare Department of Senior Citizens and the Disabled, City Civil Court and the State Human Rights Commission for lending a helping hand to the NGO by assisting them with all legal matters and permissions.

George Prabhu adds that most people have families and friends who will be there through thick and thin, but these people have no one to rely on. He also raises concerns that when a person becomes old, he is considered useless. A pension of merely Rs 1000 is not enough to survive at this age. All they need is a shelter, a home where they are treated with dignity, a mattress to sleep and die in peace. He also made a mention that we have all lived our lives the way we wanted. A time comes when we should dedicate ourselves to serve those in need. He urges the government and citizens to consider this matter and help NGOs like his by donating and funding so they can continue their good work of providing affection and care to the elderly.

Good Samaritans India has now become a place of solace for the poor. It has set a new norm in rehabilitating the homeless elderly, even amongst the most traditional factions of the nation's population. The NGO highlights compassion for the neglected



needy and aces in preserving the dignity and respect in the golden years of the old, aged population.

George Rakesh Babu is an inspiration to today's youth-oriented society where modernisation has overlapped the cultural ethos of the traditional Indian belief. He is living proof that though there are many hardships and challenges in life, yet, as Charles de Lint inspiring quote says, “Every time you do a good deed you shine the light a little farther into the dark. And the thing is, when you're gone, that light is going to keep shining on, pushing the shadows back.” ■





## Rahul Kelapure - On a Mission to Empower the Disabled to Make Informed Financial Choices

For many, web accessibility encompasses making a site accessible to a screen reader user. With the evolution of the web, the software we use for accessing information has become more sophisticated. Web browsers, tablets and smartphones are potent tools that make the web available to anyone. There are a billion people globally with disabilities – mainly those whose hearing, visual, speech, mobility, cognitive or neural functions are impaired. Their inclusion and empowerment are necessary and beneficial for them as well as for their family members. Such inclusion also boosts independence and a more refined sense of financial judgements. A financially sound and technically equipped batch of these one billion people can profit the entire society.

Though visually impaired since birth because of a degenerative eye disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa, Rahul has challenged every hurdle in his life with a brave face and emerged a winner all the

way through. He started by doing what was necessary, then doing what was possible. In no time, he was doing what seemed impossible.



**Rahul Kelapure**

With digital transformation, it is imperative to ensure that people with disabilities partake in the future workforce. And digital transformation connected with EdTech, FinTech, and networking can encourage the disabled towards success and most certainly help in tapping into their potential and unique skillsets.

“Know me for my abilities, not my disabilities,” said Robert M. Hensel, an advocate for the disabled, who was born with a birth defect known as Spina bifida.

If you are seeking a perfect embodiment of this quote, look no further than Rahul Gunwant Kelapure. Though visually impaired since birth because of a degenerative eye disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa, he has challenged every hurdle in his life with a brave face and emerged a winner all the way through. He started by doing what was necessary, then doing what was possible. In no time, he was doing what seemed impossible.

Humble and forever smiling, Rahul seldom reveals the hardships he had faced in his life to reach where he is right now. Serving a pivotal position as Assistant Legal Adviser in the Legal Affairs Department of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), sheer determination and tenacity saw this HSC merit holder and LLB Gold Medallist soar higher and higher in his endeavours. Having completed his MBA in Finance, he did his Post Graduation in Securities Law from the National Institute of Securities Market (NISM) with distinction. He also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Cyber Laws from the Asian School of Cyber Laws.

One might wonder about his excessive quest for learning regarding finance. He loves the subject, but there is also a higher purpose of life at play – giving back to society and helping his differently-abled friends gain financial independence. “I figured that many people out there had absolutely no awareness about something as basic as opening a DEMAT or bank account, types

of investments available and the easy accessibility of affordable financial services. People with financial knowledge can create multiple income streams, understand the value of money, and plan for emergencies. More importantly, it gives people a sense of economic independence and empowerment. However, financial literacy is low among the majority of the population, particularly among the disabled. So, I wanted to do my part in contributing to improving the situation,” says Rahul. Keeping this noble thought in mind, he began conducting workshops on money management and financial investments.

Since his commitment to SEBI keeps him busy on weekdays, he spends his weekends conducting free interactive training sessions focused on financial proficiency and investment decisions. All these workshops are designed specifically for persons with disabilities. The topics covered in these workshops range from setting financial goals to determining their risk appetite to exploring more investment avenues like equity, mutual funds and commodities. Since most of those who attend his sessions earn low income or are unemployed, Rahul ensures to present his concepts in a simple manner that can be grasped without much effort and does not require much investment.

Rahul has collaborated with various NGOs to spearhead over 100 workshops across India in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab. His workshops have benefitted around 10,000 people so far. A substantial number of attendees are now actively investing their money in avenues like fixed deposits, mutual funds and stock markets.

One common challenge he faces during such workshops is the anxiety and lack of confidence of the attendees to adopt the digital platform. With more advancement in technology, the software used to access information is becoming more sophisticated. While web browsers, smartphones and tablets make the internet available to everyone, the software used can only get us halfway towards the goal of a fully open, accessible web. To ensure disabled users enjoy a complete experience and are free from hurdles, financial organisations should keep in mind that accessibility is at the core of their website and app designs. The provision of improved web accessibility makes perfect business sense as well. Apart from being a social endeavour earning them goodwill, it also helps the company enhance their outreach with more customers getting on board.

Accessible websites enable a broader section of society to access the internet and find all the information they are seeking. If, as a company, you are interested in ensuring that knowledge is shared equally among people of all backgrounds, you could conclude that accessibility is a moral obligation – something we should all do. It is mandated by law. It is being adapted all across the world, so why should India lag behind? The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, clearly states that effective measures have to be taken to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others.







Accessibility is a key aspect of a good website/app design as it benefits both disabled and able-bodied users. Thankfully, there are plenty of web design trends that encourage responsive layouts and large fonts that adapt themselves to different output devices, whether it is a laptop, tablet computer, smartphone or a TV for that matter. The same goes for Flash-based websites. Thanks to the advent of the HTML5 mark-up language, the inaccessible Flash format is slowly disappearing. The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), which lays out accessibility solutions in line with international standards, also support such assistive technologies. The recent websites enabled with technologies like keyboard navigation, ARIA (Accessible Rich Internet Applications), CSS data presentation, and screen readers like JAWS and COBRA contribute to increasing the number of users with cognitive disabilities to independently use such websites. Even with simple tools like DIY website creators, it is possible to build an accessible website.

Rahul was able to pursue his passion for reading seamlessly and effortlessly via Optical Character Recognition (OCR) Technology which let him read any book by converting it into



text. While the books created with this technology are mostly available in English, he wanted to address the need of those speaking other Indian languages like Marathi. He partnered with several NGOs and began offering a Marathi Optical Character Recognition service, allowing people to read Marathi books in digital format. He fondly recalls his early days of struggle when he had to rely on a family member to read the lessons to him before progressing to braille textbooks and, later, listening to audio books recorded in NAB's talking book library while in college.

He is currently pursuing a Company Secretary Course. His grit and determination did not go unnoticed. He was recently awarded the AOF Young Achievers Award for excellence in educational and professional qualifications, distinctive skills, and achievements attained at a young age.

Rahul says, "While in law college, as law books were not commonly available, my friends and other volunteers would read the textbooks and record it for me. It was undoubtedly a



cumbersome procedure. The introduction of screen readers on computers with the start of Y2K revolutionised the way I studied. I used the services of a scribe to help me with my exams."

Simply put, when designing for users with cognitive disabilities, basic usability attributes will go a long way toward ensuring that your site can and is used to improve accessibility or simply trying to make a better website.

Rahul does not only limit his interest to academics and finance. He is fond of singing and is a huge Kumar Sanu fan. He has performed in many shows and was eminently called 'Junior Kumar Sanu'. Dreams do come true with determination and will. Rahul lived his fan moment with Kumar Sanu on a television show when he sang with him on stage.

"I am proud to have helped so many in their digital transformation journey. I will continue to enable as many people with disabilities to make smart investment decisions as possible," signs off Rahul with a smile. ■





## Reynolds India - On a Mission to Educate and Empower Young India

As a brand that evokes nostalgia and has been in the lives of students and working professionals as far as memory goes, we, at Reynolds, understand our responsibility towards the citizens of India. Our social responsibility begins with our people first and then extends to all our external stakeholders. With a strong foothold and position in India's writing instruments industry, we are leveraging our reach to help the underserved and underprivileged children living in the remotest parts of our country.

We are committed to our sustainable responsibility of building and extending our support to those in need by playing a key role as an enabler of social empowerment through our continuous efforts. Our sustainability and social initiatives at Reynolds span across multiple causes. However, supporting education is of special importance for us since the category in which we operate is

closely related to this field. Access to education can create a significant impact and help our nation progress faster.

We started with our initiative of donating writing instruments and stationery products to underprivileged children in July this year with the help of our NGO partners. The initiative aims to prepare children to learn and succeed with free



**Rajat Vohra**

school supplies such as pens and stationery across the country. As we



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At Reynolds, we opt for causes we care for, and hence, we do it not as a mandate but as an initiative that creates an impact and helps in the progress of the underserved communities of our nation

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progress, the hope is to do much more by additionally supporting all that a child needs to empower themselves and be ready to fly when they enter the real world.

Assistance to the underprivileged is provided through trusted channels at Reynolds to ensure our contribution reaches those in need. We are associated with multiple prominent social organisations across India including Nepali School, Goonj, Samerth Charitable Trust, Swami Vivekanand, Udaavi School, Shiksha Bharti, Vidya Vinaya Sabha Gurukul, and Lila Poonawala Trust to contribute writing instruments for underprivileged children. Additionally, we have also partnered with NGOs including CRY, SPARSH, Lila Poonawala Foundation, Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana, Prayatna Sanstha, and Doaba Vikas



Evam Utthan Samiti - DVUS. Recently, we have also partnered with Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and made 2.5 units donations for students studying at BMC schools across Mumbai. We believe there are various ways of contributing to a student's education. Through this initiative, we can reach and tap the eagerness of the child to write using our quality products.

At Reynolds, we opt for causes we care for, and hence, we do it not as a mandate but as an initiative that creates an impact and helps in the progress of the underserved communities of our nation.

We have recently begun our donating activity, and this has been the first year for us. In a short period, we have successfully reached over 14 lakh school children. We are planning to scale it to another three to five lakhs by the end of

this year. We strongly believe that the pen is mightier than the sword as knowledge is true empowerment, and material limitations should not be a hurdle when it comes to academics. Therefore, we are working towards enabling the underserved to achieve their true potential.

As a part of our CSR responsibility, we ensure transparency for all our practices and partnerships. To cite an example, our partners Goonj are significant providers of school kits in most rural areas of our country, bridging the material gap children face in such areas. We recently donated three lakh writing instruments which would then be sorted into kits containing all required study material and handed to the children. Our donations have reached over 5000 underprivileged children in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Uttarakhand, and with our continuous efforts, we aim to reach many more in the days to come.

We want to ensure that as a brand, we are retaining respect and be known as a brand that stands for the larger purpose of educating young India. We are working towards making a significant contribution to the empowerment of young and underserved India. We are constantly looking for potential CSR partners to make a difference together. We are currently in talks with more than 75 NGOs across India to expand our





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Seeing the positive impact of our initiatives motivates us to undertake more of these activities and alleviate underserved children on an even larger scale. The ultimate reward for us would be to see these children and their families prosper, through the written word, with Reynolds being there, having played an instrumental part in being a material provider

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stationery supply and are hopeful of touching many more young lives through our initiative.



As is with our legacy, we endeavour to make a positive impact in society in any way we can through our current CSR initiatives and the ones we plan for the

future. Our journey has only just begun, and we are hopeful of successfully implementing all the activities that we undertake. Seeing the positive impact of our initiatives motivates us to undertake more of these activities and alleviate underserved children on an even larger scale. The ultimate reward for us would be to see these children and their families prosper, through the written word, with Reynolds being there, having played an instrumental part in being a material provider. ■

***Rajat Vohra** is the Country Head – India & South Asia, Reynolds Pens. He is a seasoned business leader with more than two decades of experience in business growth, strategic sales, planning and distribution. Rajat leads the India and South Asia business for Reynolds Pens, a globally recognised writing instruments' brand. He has played a key role in the company's growth over the years with a key focus on innovation and technology. Rajat has contributed to successfully scaling the India business for Reynolds and venturing into newer product categories.*





# CapitaLand Builds First Hope School in India to Provide Children with Access to Education

CapitaLand Group, through its philanthropic arm CapitaLand Hope Foundation (CHF), launched its first CapitaLand Hope School in India, contributing Rs 45 million to provide over 400 primary school children from low-income families with education. Located in Mahadevapura, Bangalore, about 6 km from CapitaLand's International Tech Park Bangalore (ITPB), the 18,000 sq ft Government Hi-Tech Kannada and English Medium Higher Primary School has eight classrooms, a staff room, a multipurpose room, a playground, assembly and dining areas. This is the 30th CapitaLand Hope School to provide children with a better start in life through education.

Vinamra Srivastava, CEO, India Business Parks, CapitaLand Investment, said: "Our first CapitaLand Hope School in India is part of our ongoing corporate responsibility efforts to support the educational needs and well-being of children from the community. Over the last ten years, we provided school necessities to children under the *My Schoolbag* programme and leveraged our expertise to build and refurbish government schools. We plan to build two more CapitaLand Hope Schools in Bangalore and Pune. As we grow our business here, we will continue to give back to the community."

Mala Sannakki, Headmistress of Government Hi-Tech Kannada and English Medium Higher Primary School, said: "On behalf of the Department Board, teachers, parents and the school development and monitoring committee, I would like to thank CapitaLand and CHF for this wonderfully constructed school with good infrastructure and amenities that come with natural lighting and ventilation. They understood the needs in the community and supported by building this school which will greatly benefit children from low-income families. We have over 400 registered students and, around 100 of them have



transferred from private schools in the neighbourhood to this school."

Mr Rajachari, a parent of seventh and eighth-grade children studying at the school, said: "The school that my children Amulya and Bhuvan were studying at previously did not have many facilities and had a common toilet for boys and girls. This school developed by CapitaLand is comparable to an international school. We are grateful to have access to the fully-equipped classrooms, a computer lab, and a safe learning environment for our children."

Tan Seng Chai, Chief Corporate and People Officer of CapitaLand Investment and Executive Director of CHF, said: "As a socially responsible company, CapitaLand is committed to contributing to the communities where we operate as this gives us a sense of purpose and a soul to our company. Since 2005, CHF has been improving children's access to education and providing a safe learning environment through our CapitaLand Hope Schools initiative." ■





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