



THE BRIDGE INDIA

Facilitating Social Partners

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2026

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7th Edition: Pathways to 2030



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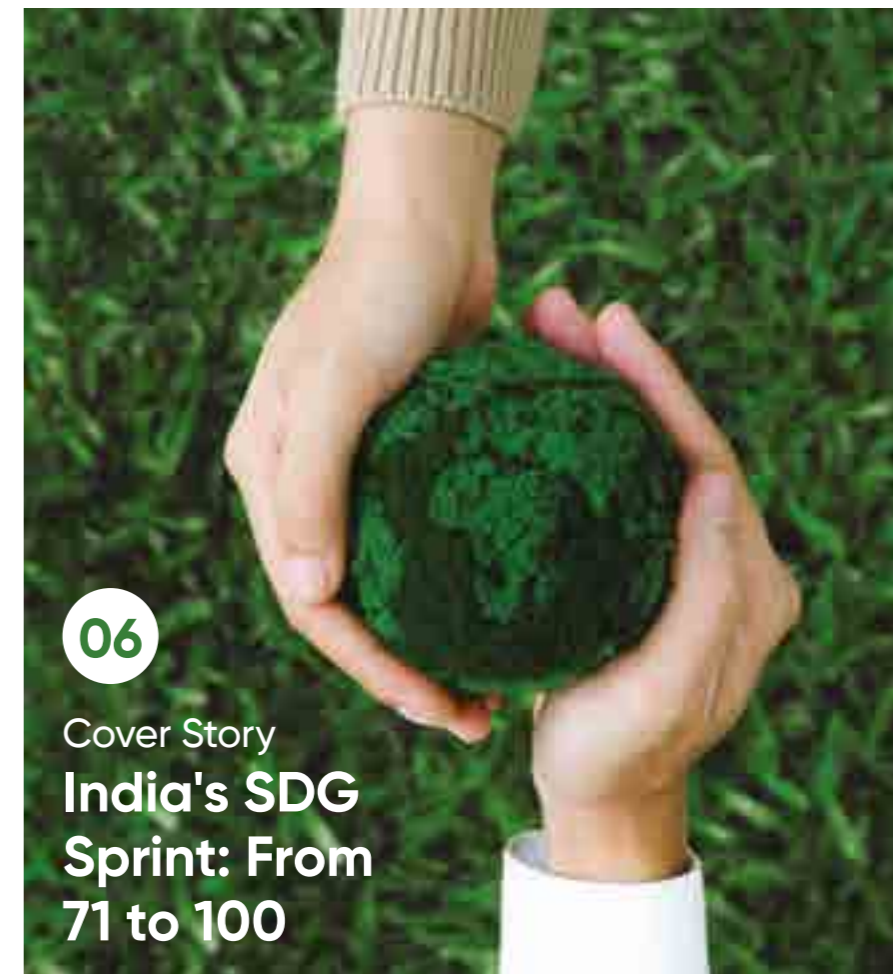
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From The Desk of Editor-in-Chief: Igniting SDG Action at Our 7-Year Milestone

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Special SDG Edition of The Bridge India Magazine, marking seven years of connecting corporates, NGOs, policymakers, and social leaders to advance meaningful social change in India.

Why an SDG Edition now? With just four years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda, India stands at a critical moment. The nation's SDG score has risen to 71, reflecting a 14-point increase since 2018 as per NITI Aayog. Progress is visible in poverty reduction, universal village electrification, renewable energy expansion, and infrastructure development.

At the same time, persistent challenges demand urgent attention. Inter-state disparities, rising climate risks, malnutrition (SDG 2), and gender inequality (SDG 5) continue to slow progress, particularly in a country of 1.4 billion people facing increasing environmental and social stress.

This Special Edition responds to that urgency by showcasing scalable and replicable SDG practices, cross-sector partnerships, and grounded innovations that can bridge gaps and accelerate impact. It reflects our belief that collaboration, evidence, and action must move together.

Over the years, The Bridge India has amplified impactful CSR initiatives, celebrated changemakers and Heroes of Humanity, unpacked key development debates, and opened pathways for social-sector talent through our recruitment platform. The launch of this edition and its accompanying dialogue have already engaged over 50,000 readers worldwide, reinforcing the power of shared learning. In this seventh edition of our SDG Review, we bring readers much more than a thematic compilation. Drawing from tribal wisdom and climate-resilient education models to integrative medicine, inclusive technologies, and SDG-aligned business strategies, this issue curates concrete pathways that can be adopted, adapted, and scaled by practitioners across India. It documents how NGOs and corporates are jointly shifting outcomes in health, education, employability, gender equality, urban resilience, and food security, while our Heroes of Humanity section foregrounds the leadership of individuals who translate policy intent into lived change. For students, CSR teams, philanthropies, and policymakers alike, this edition is designed as a working resource: a set of tested ideas, partnership blueprints, and field insights that can inform decisions, shape programmes, and inspire bolder SDG commitments in the crucial years to 2030.

A Call to Action

As we mark our seventh year, we invite corporates, donors, NGOs, and readers to move from intention to action. Partner with us to scale proven models, support grassroots innovations, share knowledge across sectors, and champion solutions that deliver measurable SDG outcomes.

The journey to 2030 calls for urgency, collaboration, and leadership. The bridge to that future begins here, and it begins with you.

Happy Reading



As The Bridge India Magazine marks seven years of impact, this editorial reflects on the progress made toward the Sustainable Development Goals and the partnerships that made it possible. It underscores why collaboration across sectors will be the defining force in accelerating change as we move closer to 2030.



SEEMA JAIRATH

Editor in-Chief





From 71 to 100: INDIA'S SDG SPRINT

Delivering on India's Promise by 2030

• Seema Jairath, Editor-in -Chief

India's pursuit of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) tells a story of remarkable progress, bold policy innovations, and collaborative momentum as 2026 unfolds—just four years from the 2030 deadline. NITI Aayog's SDG India Index shows a national score of 71 out of 100, up 14 points since 2018, with transformative wins like lifting 250 million from multidimensional poverty and electrifying every village. While gaps persist in areas like child stunting at 35% and climate impacts costing 2.5% of GDP, this snapshot highlights verified achievements, grassroots synergies, and strategic bridges to elevate India from 71 to 100.

Powerhouse Breakthroughs: Where Policy Innovation Meets Massive Scale

India's SDG victories explode from the fusion of bold government

schemes, corporate CSR firepower, cutting-edge digital infrastructure, and grassroots wisdom.

SDG 1 (No Poverty) commands the forefront:

PM Jan Dhan Yojana, the world's largest financial inclusion drive, opened 500 million bank accounts, channeling \$400 billion through Direct Benefit Transfers that slashed multidimensional poverty from 24.8% in 2015-16 to 11.3% by 2023. Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR) across Punjab and Haryana reduced methane emissions by 30% while elevating farmer incomes by 15%. Ayushman Bharat health insurance now covers 500 million citizens, dramatically cutting out-of-pocket health expenditures from 62% to 47%.

SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) establishes global leadership standards:

Saubhagya Mission achieved 99.9% household electrification; renewable energy capacity rocketed to 200 GW solar,





positioning India as the world's fourth-largest solar producer. PM-KUSUM scheme solarized 1 million agricultural tubewells, empowering 2 million farmers with reliable irrigation. UJALA's LED distribution program delivered ₹1 lakh crore in energy cost savings nationwide.

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) surges forward: Startup India spawned 1.2 lakh DPIIT-recognized ventures, up from just 453 in 2016, including over 100 SDG-aligned unicorns revolutionizing agritech, healthtech, and climate solutions. Digital India's 954 million internet subscribers power Aadhaar-linked welfare

delivery to all 1.4 billion citizens with unprecedented efficiency.

SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) nears completion: Jal Jeevan Mission delivered piped drinking water to 99.6% of rural households, up from a mere 17% in 2019. Swachh Bharat Mission constructed 120 million toilets, declaring over 600,000 villages open-defecation free and saving 300,000 lives annually through improved sanitation.

Corporate Social Responsibility provides rocket fuel: ₹30,000 crore invested annually by conglomerates like Tata, Reliance, and Infosys connects with 50,000 NGOs, funding

water purification plants serving 20 million people and skill development hubs training 5 million youth for sustainable employment.

Persistent Challenges: The Battles Yet to Be Won

India's SDG journey reflects substantial progress, including a decline in child stunting from 38% to 35% and notable gains in poverty alleviation, as highlighted in official reports like NITI Aayog's SDG India Index. While the government has addressed concerns raised by reports such as the Global Hunger Index through initiatives like POSHAN Abhiyaan, opportunities remain to bridge persistent gaps in nutrition, climate resilience, and

inequality. This section examines these areas constructively, focusing on deeper analysis and collaborative pathways forward.

Key Areas for Continued Focus

- SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): Despite reaching 10 million anganwadi centers, child stunting persists at 35% nationally (48% in Bihar), underscoring the need for enhanced nutrition interventions alongside existing successes.
- SDG 13 (Climate Action): Extreme weather events impact 2.5% of GDP annually, even as emissions intensity has dropped 36% since 2005; integrated resilience strategies can build on forest cover gains.
- SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): Interstate variations (e.g., Kerala at 85 vs. Bihar at 57) and urban-rural divides highlight scaling best practices through federal collaboration.

• SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities): With 500 million urban dwellers, advancing waste management and air quality solutions can leverage ongoing electrification and sanitation wins.

Positioning for Impact

This balanced framing positions The Bridge India as a constructive sectoral voice, prioritizing scale-aware analysis over exclusion-focused narratives, much like government communications. It invites stronger cross-sector partnerships -NGOs, corporates, and policymakers to accelerate from the current national score of 71 to 100 by 2030.

Unsung Architects: Grassroots-Corporate Synergies Powering Real Change

True transformation ignites at the community level. Odisha's National



Rural Livelihoods Mission SHGs, comprising 70 million women, have regenerated 1 million hectares through climate-resilient millet cultivation, doubling household incomes while advancing SDG 13 and SDG 1 simultaneously. Rajasthan's 10,000 solar saathis, women micro-entrepreneurs, have installed 50,000 rooftop solar systems, powering SDG 7 and SDG 5 convergence. In Jharkhand, PRIA partnered with JSW to revive water bodies across 200 tribal villages, achieving SDG 6 and SDG 13 synergy. Assam's tea tribes are scaling organic farming practices for SDG 1 and SDG 12 advancement.

CSR-NGO powerhouses deliver exponential impact: Infosys Foundation's 1,000 Amrut water purification plants serve 5 million people daily; Ambuja Cement's skill development hubs have trained 100,000 youth for sustainable SDG 8 employment opportunities. The

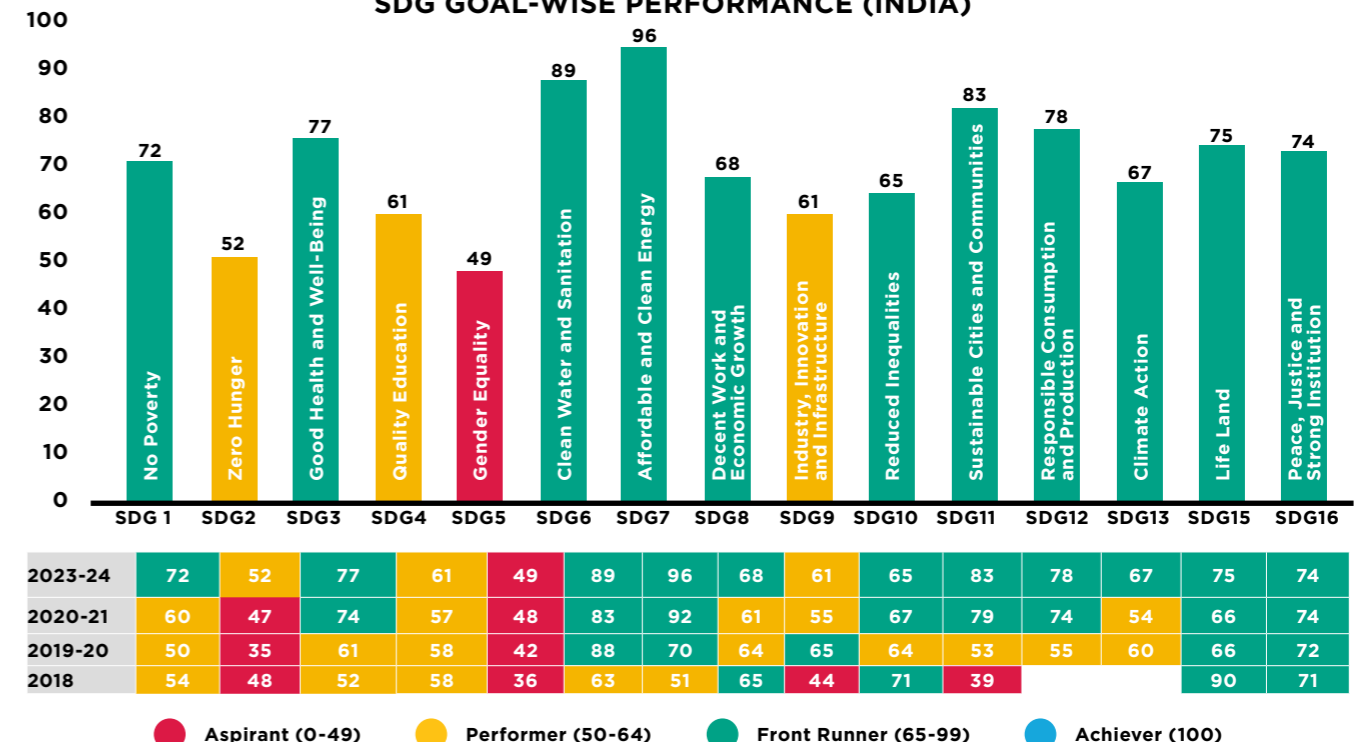
THE DEFINITIVE SDG SCORECARD

Extend your existing "Definitive SDG Scorecard" table (post-Breakthroughs) to absorb descriptive content:



SDG Goal	1 No Poverty	2 Zero Hunger	6 Clean Water	7 Clean Energy	9 Innovation
Score 2025	77	52	82	92	75
Key Win	250M lifted via DBT ₹400B	Millet Mission (108 varieties)	99.6% rural piped water	200GW solar, 99.9% electrification	1.2L startups, 954M internet
Remaining Gap	Rural Distress (24 states <60)	35% Stunting (Bihar 48%)	Arsenic (20 states)	Battery Storage Gaps	Rural digital divide (40%)
Source	NITI Aayog 2024	MoSPI 2025, NFHS-5	MoSPI 2025	NITI Aayog 2024	MoSPI 2025

SDG GOAL-WISE PERFORMANCE (INDIA)





Bridge India's Kaun Banega Social Sector Champion Season 6 competition spotlights these transformative partnerships, reaching 50,000 readers worldwide.

Blueprint for 2030 Victory: Strategic Cross-Sector Bridges

India's winning strategy centers on hyper-localization: The Aspirational Districts Programme is revolutionizing 1,000+ underperforming districts, with 112 districts successfully exiting the bottom 100 through AI-powered dashboards integrated with participatory Gram Sabha decision-making. CSR 2.0 mandates allocate 10% of corporate social responsibility budgets specifically to SDG initiatives; G20 green bonds target unlocking \$1 trillion in climate finance.

Critical game-changers include green hydrogen deployment to decarbonize energy-intensive steel and cement industries (responsible for 40% of emissions), Skill India 2.0 to reskill 400 million workers for AI-driven green economy jobs, and Viksit Bharat@2047 federal frameworks to bridge North-South development divides. Digital Public Infrastructure like UPI and ONDC scales SDG 9 and SDG 17 solutions globally.

The Collective Imperative: India's SDG Destiny Beckons

India's SDG pulse beats with unstoppable momentum, though unevenly distributed. From Kerala's pioneering innovators to Bihar's determined reformers, cross-sector bridges are forging ahead: corporates funding scalable NGO pilots, grassroots heroes influencing national policy frameworks, and digital platforms amplifying impact at population scale. The Bridge India's Special SDG Edition illuminates this vibrant ecosystem where data validates progress, and human stories ignite revolutionary action.

The question echoes, Can India elevate from 71 to 85 by 2030? The verified evidence thunders an unequivocal YES, provided institutional silos crumble and collaborative bridges strengthen. India is not merely pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals; it is architecting a transformative blueprint for the Global South and beyond. The revolution begins with the bridges we build today.



DR. RABI RAJ,
(Senior Program Officer (Research), Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA))

TRIBAL WISDOM MEETS GLOBAL GOALS

How India's Indigenous Communities Power the SDG Revolution

Goals. While India celebrates a national SDG score of 71/100 (NITI Aayog 2023-24), tribal districts limp at 57-65, exposing gaping disparities. Jharkhand scores 62, Odisha 65—ST poverty clings at 45% versus 21% national, child stunting hits 43.5%.

Yet tribal wisdom isn't weakness, it's weaponized resilience. Apatani wet rice systems yield 20% more than modern irrigation (SDG 6+13); Adi agroforestry feeds 50+ species (SDG 2+15). From Jharkhand's bamboo SHGs earning ₹2-5 lakh annually to Odisha PVTGs slashing stunting 15% via millets, these aren't anecdotes,

they're scalable blueprints. Forest guardians on 8.2% land protecting 15% cover, tribes offer epistemic solutions for national crises. The Bridge India's Special SDG Edition spotlights this truth: India's SDG finish line runs through tribal heartlands.

The Data Tells a Stark Story

NITI Aayog's latest SDG India Index reveals troubling gaps in tribal-heavy states. Jharkhand scores 62, Odisha 65, and Madhya Pradesh 64—well below national averages. Scheduled Tribe (ST) poverty remains at 45%

India's 104 million Scheduled Tribes, 8.6% of our population guard indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) that hold the key to cracking the Sustainable Development





TRIBAL SDG SNAPSHOT (2023-24)

SDG Goal	ST Score	National Score	Critical Gap
No Poverty (SDG 1)	58	77	MPI 0.214 (2x non-ST)
Zero Hunger (SDG 2)	48	52	43.5% stunting
Decent Work (SDG 8)	55	67	NTFP incomes <₹20k/year
Climate Action (SDG 13)	54	59	70% Forest Dependency

versus 21% for the general population, with child stunting at 43.5% among ST children (NFHS-5).

Over 70% of tribal districts fall below national medians, with Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) like Chenchu and Birhor showing 80% pre-intervention poverty rates.

Indigenous Knowledge: Nature's SDG Blueprint

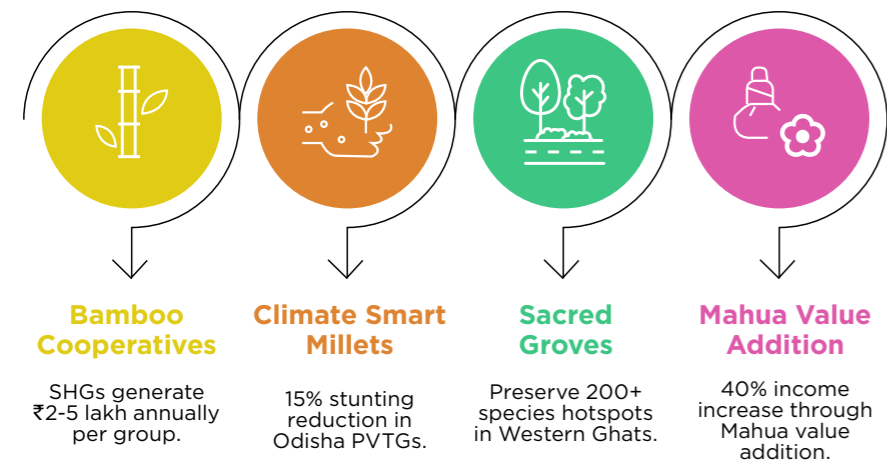
Tribal practices aren't folklore, they're time-tested solutions. The Apatani

tribe's paddy-fish wet rice cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh yields 20% higher productivity than modern systems while conserving water (SDG 6+13). Adi and Monpa communities cultivate 50+ agroforestry species, ensuring nutrition security (SDG 2) and biodiversity (SDG 15).

Tribal Transformations: Success Stories

Chenchu Special Project: From Forest Shadows to Market Leaders

TRIBAL INNOVATIONS POWERING SDGS



Research confirms traditional forecasting reduces crop losses by 25% among Odisha's Dongria Kondh.

In Andhra Pradesh, 11,000 Chenchus (PVTG) transformed through MGNREGS-NRLM convergence since 2009. NTFP processing units and nutrition gardens delivered 60% income growth, 80% school enrollment, and 40% poverty reduction—a blueprint for SDG 1+2 synergy.

Odisha PVTG Nutrition Revolution
The Odisha PVTG Nutrition Improvement Programme targets 13 communities (Juang, Paudi Bhuyan) during first 1,000 days. SHG-led interventions cut stunting 15% and boosted maternal health 25% (SDG 2+3).

Jharkhand's Van Dhan Boom
Van Dhan Vikas Yojana established 50,000+ centers processing mahua, tamarind, and karanj. Jharkhand alone generated ₹100+ crore, creating 1 lakh jobs with 40% women in leadership roles (SDG 1+5+8).

Tata Steel's Bamboo Bridge
Birhor and Savar tribes in Jharkhand produce bamboo artifacts through Tata CSR-linked SHGs. Over 200 households now earn ₹50,000/year, slashing migration 70% while restoring 100+ hectares (SDG 8+13).

The Barriers Holding Progress Hostage

Despite inspiring breakthroughs, tribal SDG progress faces formidable structural barriers. Land alienation affects 30% of cases despite PESA/FRA protections—Jharkhand lost 40% tribal forest rights, driving migration. Minor Forest Produce (MFP) taps just 10% of ₹2,000 crore potential; Dongria Kondh women earn ₹20/kg while urban markets pay ₹200/kg due to trader exploitation.

Climate vulnerability hits 70% forest-dependent families 1.5x

harder—2025 floods submerged 200 PVTG hamlets; heatwaves destroyed 40% mahua crops. ST women, leading 70% SHGs, face double marginalization: 40% lower wages, 18% banking access, 35% higher domestic violence despite cultural protections.

FRA claims face 80% rejection rates, PESA implementation lags in 6/10 states, and MFP funds remain 30% undisbursed. Without urgent fixes digitized land rights, FPO-led MFP exchanges, tribal climate corps these barriers threaten SDG regression for 104 million citizens by 2030.

Five Bold Solutions Forward

- IKS in Classrooms: NEP 2020 must integrate tribal knowledge in SDG curricula across 250+ Aspirational tribal blocks.
- NTFP Market Revolution: Scale Van Dhan with FPOs and ₹5,000 crore MFP Fund for national value chains.
- PVTG Climate Shield: Dedicated MGNREGS-NRLM funds for 75 PVTGs most vulnerable to climate shocks.
- Tribal SDG Dashboard: Mandatory ST-disaggregated data in NITI Aayog reporting.
- CSR-IKS Partnerships: Corporates documenting and scaling tribal innovations (Tata-PRIA model).

Why Tribes Hold India's SDG Future

India's 104 million Scheduled Tribes don't merely need SDGs. they are living embodiments of sustainable development. Stewarding 15% of India's forest cover across just 8.2% of landmass, practicing zero-waste agroforestry, and pioneering women-led forest enterprises, ST communities offer epistemic solutions for the nation's toughest challenges from climate resilience to



food security.[MoEFCC 2023]

The evidence paints an irrefutable picture:

- Chenchu incomes doubled through NTFP processing, lifting 40% from poverty
- Odisha PVTGs slashed stunting 15% via millet revival and first-1,000-day interventions
- Jharkhand's Van Dhan Yojana created 1 lakh green jobs, generating

From Chenchu income in Andhra Pradesh to Jharkhand's Van Dhan boom, to bamboo innovations in the Birhor & Savar tribes - India's 104 million Scheduled Tribes are living embodiments of sustainable development, advancing climate resilience and livelihoods. This feature explores how indigenous communities offer epistemic solutions for the tough challenges - from climate resilience to food security

- ₹100+ crore with 40% women leaders
- Tata Steel SHGs turned 200 Birhor households into ₹50,000/year earners, restoring 100+ hectares

When tribal wisdom meets modern markets, SDGs don't incrementally improve, they transform exponentially. Apatani wet rice systems outyield modern irrigation by 20%; sacred groves preserve 200+ species hotspots; Dongria Kondh forecasting cuts crop losses 25%.

NITI Aayog's 250+ tribal Aspirational Districts represent ground zero for India's SDG sprint. Success demands elevating indigenous voices from margins to mainstream from policy tables to CSR boardrooms. PESA 2.0, digitized FRA claims, FPO-led MFP exchanges aren't options; they're imperatives.

India's SDG finish line doesn't lie in Delhi summits or global photo-ops. It's woven into bamboo baskets from Jharkhand, millet fields of Odisha, sacred groves of Western Ghats. The bridge from tribal 57 to national 71 indeed to 85+ runs straight through indigenous heartlands.

Tribal India isn't India's SDG past. It's the future.



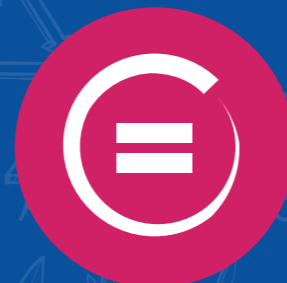
FOUNDATIONS FOR EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY MAKING FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE PRACTICE IN INDIA



GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



GENDER EQUALITY



REDUCE INEQUALITY

India is amidst an ‘outbreak’ of transitions, including, epidemiological, demographic, nutritional & urbanisation transitions with the country’s health system tested to manage the dual burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), hence, it is prudent that policy bearers & other invested stakeholders should ensure stratification of data collected through large scale surveys like NFHS (National Family Health Survey), DLHS (District Level Health Survey), AHS (Annual Health Survey), RHS (Rural Health Statistics) and NSS (National Sample Survey) for correlating intricate interfaces with respect to status of NCDs in India. Stratification with respect to political boundaries (different states), age, social determinants of health

Biomedicine has been the cornerstone for healthcare services across the globe and India is no exception. Despite, traditionally low public health funding by the Government, public health services remain the backbone for India’s health system across the country. While communicable diseases

have been diligently managed by a robust Public healthcare delivery system and have been witness to successful implementation with respect to positive health outcomes, including, programmes being run under the National Health Mission umbrella, the programmes being run under Non-communicable diseases umbrella, including, National Programme on Prevention and Control of Diabetes, CVD and Stroke, Mental Health and National Cancer Control Programme and National Programme for Healthcare

▲ **DR. K. RANJU ANTHONY,** Transdisciplinary Research Foundation, Delhi

of the Elderly etc. are the ones, where biomedicine, despite of doing a commendable job, understandably need sustained collaboration from centuries old and proven systems of healthcare, now known as Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy or AYUSH systems. There is still limited research work that focuses on uptake of AYUSH systems of medicine in the backdrop of catastrophic upsurge of chronic NCDs through emerging practices in the subcontinent like ‘Integrative Medicine’ that actually has the wherewithal to provide an opportunity for ‘actual integration’ and ‘collaboration’ between biomedicine and AYUSH system. The system in question, however, challenges the older perceptions about how AYUSH and biomedicine practitioners envision each other and above all how challenges with respect to ‘integrated thinking’, ‘integrated pedagogy’ and ‘integrated implementation with scalability’ would be achieved in the context

As India confronts a rising burden of non-communicable diseases, the limitations of siloed healthcare systems are becoming increasingly evident. This article examines why evidence-informed policymaking is essential to meaningfully integrate biomedicine with AYUSH systems—and how such integration could redefine affordable, equitable care.



of 'evidence based medicine', 'pure sciences', 'pseudo-sciences', and 'mind-body-spiritual wellness'; all having direct implications for both patients and practitioners alike.

Mainstreaming Integrative Medicine

The National Health Policy (NHP, 2017) has strongly promoted an idea to mainstream the potential of AYUSH within the pluralistic system of integrative medicine backed healthcare model with a focus on preventing and managing NCDs. What makes this policy interesting is the thrust and need for collating 'scientific evidences' to meet international/national protocols and compliances for AYUSH medicines, practices and education. So even though the Government of India may recognise many different systems of healthcare, when it comes to health governance and regulatory systems, there's a lot more to be desired for their functioning. The work in hand for integrative services at present is pretty exhaustive, while considering the fact that all the seven systems of healthcare, duly recognised by the Government (Allopathy, Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa and Homeopathy) operate under different silos spearheaded by different Ministries, Departments and Research Councils. There are many key NCDs that grapple population across the globe and wherein AYUSH practices have been contributing in curtailing NCDs, either from a preventive aspect or therapeutic.

However, the million dollar question still remains; "Is it justified to require AYUSH use to be evidence based?" when clearly even the so called conventional science backed biomedicine is merely 25-30% evidence based, with all the world's

finances at its disposal.

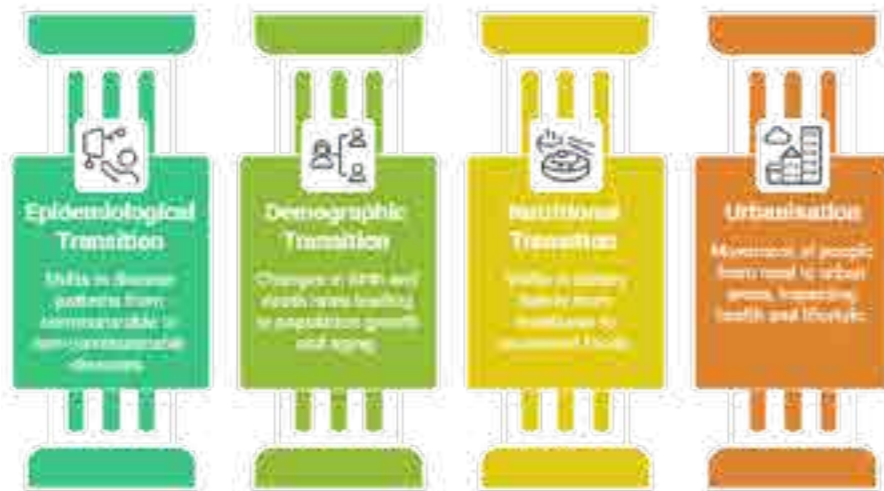
Methodologically, there is an urgent and crying need for a health systems research that should focus on identifying the key elements from both biomedicine and AYUSH system of medicine, while making sure that this intervention should be cheaper than the conventional practice of medicine. However, apart from the 'potential barriers to integration' as stated above, there'll be more methodological challenges with respect to research in integrative medicine that'll include; understanding philosophical differences about how

for any intervention led research in integrative medicine and finally, treatment modalities are very individualized in AYUSH systems of medicine for which study protocols would be difficult to formulate

Integrative Models Conceivable for practice in India

The first model would be to keep a consistent focus on community needs, interdisciplinary teams, and the use of modern tools to inform decision-making. (a) As in India's case, with a large migrant population in many tier 1 to 2 cities, improving access for vulnerable migrant populations,

Foundations of India's Health Transition



a human body works to differences in diagnostic practice and treatment approach; assessing effectiveness; standardisation of interventions (drugs), study methodologies for evaluating an intervention (outside an RCT framework); economics, even though, there are now large private firms like 'Patanjali, Dabur, Hamdard etc.' which may have funding capacities but irrespective, funding would remain a challenge

with practitioners co-designing interventions directly with community representatives could be modelled as the first model. This process automatically removes intrinsic insecurities w.r.t. local language, local community hurdles or discrimination of any types. An Indian model health and wellness centre (or HWC) should be ideally designed in sync with the local communities mirroring the core principal of creating patient-

India's Plural Healthcare Landscape



centred care, ensuring that services are not only provided but also readily accessible, as well as accepted by the commune.

The Second Model encompasses the role of information communication technology (ICT) that allows policymakers to build data driven, authenticated and scalable public health models. For instance, India's National Digital Health Mission propels creation of an integrated evidence informed policy making structure connecting policy goals of reducing NCDs ridden mortalities or morbidities with measurable indicators, all while analysing big data from HWCs, HMIS (Hospital Management Information System) and populations surveys conducted by different agencies, thereby creating a more quantifiable & rigours of ensuring policies reaching and affecting the masses in its intended way.

Evidence - Informed Policymaking for Integrative Medicine

Any framework designed to integrate diverse, quantitative as well as qualitative from both biomedicine

and AYUSH system of medicine needs to imbibe a transparent and structured approach while maintaining all relevant stakeholder consensus with applicability at national level. The framework for this policy needs to actively / dynamically align with regional & diverse requirements with respect to burden as well as kinds of NCDs, or issues related to maternal health or even communicable diseases. For instance, while obesity maybe a nationwide problem, diabetes or CVDs may be regional / state specific issues, requiring different policy-centred paradigms. To be considered a totem of success, the HWCs should follow a community centred approach to healthcare services with focus on regional health issues while spearheading cost effectiveness and equity and most importantly process legitimacy, i.e. research and evidence laden approach to solutions.

The Way Forward

The term 'way forward' maybe too early for a services design that is still at a nascent stage in India, however, with respect to evidence-informed

policy making for integrative medicine, India, needs to follow a planned / controlled and multi-faceted approach connecting & converging research outcomes, data and its wide-ranging and all-encompassing implementation. However, integrative medicine as a concept will only work once all existing data encircling gender, age, region and social determinants are mapped for specific NCDs along with appropriate integrative medicine protocols that could work together in controlling / managing the same. Simultaneously, both dedicated public and private funded health systems based research focusing on designing feasible study protocols based on efficacy and cost effectiveness involving both AYUSH's individualistic style support system and biomedicine's inherent scientific rigor, a standard beyond the traditional randomised controlled trials (RCTs). In an ideal scenario, existing digital infrastructure like the National Digital Health Mission would support newer initiatives like these through real-time data-driven decisions while prioritising community centred models





FROM CARE TO CAREERS: WHAT IT TAKES TO CHANGE A LIFE THROUGH INCLUSION?

• The Bridge India Correspondent

In development conversations, progress is often measured through numbers - better health outcomes, more girls in school, and higher participation of women in the workforce. These priorities are reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 3 focuses on health, SDG 5 on gender equality, and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities. While these

goals are often addressed separately, they are closely linked in real life. A child's health affects their ability to learn. Education shapes their chances of finding work. And financial independence influences whether they can live with dignity and confidence. When one of these breaks early, the effects can last for years.

This is especially true for children born with cleft conditions in India.

Every year, thousands of children are born with a condition that is fully treatable. But in many underserved communities, access to timely care is limited. What starts as a medical issue slowly becomes a social and economic one.

In the early months, feeding can be difficult, which affects nutrition and growth. As the child grows, speech may develop differently. By the time school begins, these

differences can lead to teasing or isolation. Some children lose confidence. Some drop out.

For girls, these challenges can be even harder. A condition that could have been treated early begins to shape their future. The real question, then, is not just about treatment. This raises an important question - how do we ensure that a child's life is not defined by something that can be corrected?

Restoring Health and Confidence: The Work of Akila Bharatha Mahila Seva Samaj

The first step in this journey is access to the right care, at the right time.

Since 1993, Akila Bharatha Mahila Seva Samaj (ABMSS) has worked to bring healthcare to children in underserved communities. In its early years, the organisation focused on providing surgeries through outreach camps and partner hospitals. Over time, this approach evolved into a more structured system that focuses not just on treatment, but on long-term outcomes.

A major shift came in 2013, when ABMSS made comprehensive cleft care its flagship program. The reason was clear. Cleft conditions are common, treatable, and if left untreated, can lead to lifelong challenges in speech, nutrition, and social inclusion. At the same time, timely treatment can lead to visible improvements within a short period, making it a high-impact intervention.

Today, ABMSS works through a network of Smile Hubs, Smile Pods, and partner hospitals. This model brings care closer to communities, reducing the need for long travel and lowering costs for families.

The process begins before surgery.



Many children need nutritional support to become strong enough for the procedure. ABMSS works with families to improve feeding and overall health, ensuring that children are ready for safe surgery.

Surgery is an important step, but it is not the only one.

After the operation, children continue to receive support. This includes speech therapy, hearing checks, dental care, and counselling. These services help children speak clearly, return to school, and rebuild confidence.

Family support is also a key part of the process. ABMSS guides parents through each stage, which improves follow-up care and helps reduce stigma. When families understand the journey, they are more likely to stay engaged.

ABMSS also focuses on building

local capacity. By training surgeons and healthcare workers in different regions, it ensures that care is available closer to home. This makes the system stronger and more sustainable over time.

Through this approach, ABMSS is not just treating a condition. It is reducing inequality in access to healthcare. Children who would otherwise not receive treatment are able to access the same quality of care as others.

Over time, the change is clear. Children who once struggled to eat become healthier. Those who avoided speaking begin to express themselves. Many return to school with confidence.

At its core, this work restores something essential - the chance to grow up without being held back by a correctable condition.





**From Recovery to Opportunity:
The Role of Unisys**

Restoring health is a critical first step, but it does not automatically lead to opportunity.

As children grow older, many, especially young women from underserved backgrounds - face a different set of challenges. Gaps in education, limited access to technology, and little exposure to formal workplaces begin to shape what comes next. Even when the early barriers are addressed, the path to independence is not always clear.

This is where Unisys, through its Sugam program, plays an important role.

Sugam focuses on helping young women move from readiness to employment. It works with those from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds and supports them in building the skills needed to enter the workforce.

The program begins with the basics. Participants are introduced to digital literacy - learning how to use computers and navigate tools that are essential in most jobs today. From there, the focus shifts to communication, helping them speak clearly and confidently in professional settings.

Workplace readiness is another key part of the training. Participants learn about professional behaviour, teamwork, and how to function in structured work environments. For many, this is their first real exposure to such spaces, so the learning is gradual and practical.

What makes Sugam effective is its approach. It does not expect participants to already be prepared. Instead, it builds step by step, creating a supportive environment where learning feels possible.

Confidence-building is central to this process. Many participants begin with hesitation, unsure of how



to present themselves or engage in new environments. Through regular practice, mentorship, and guidance, this begins to change.

Mentors and trainers play a key role in easing this transition. They help participants adjust not just to a job, but to a new way of life. One that may include working in a city, interacting with new people, and managing their own income.

The impact extends beyond the individual. A steady income supports households, allows siblings to continue their education, and reduces financial uncertainty. Over time, it also changes how young women see themselves, from dependents to contributors.

Unisys views this work as a long-term investment in inclusive growth. Its CSR initiatives focus on education, skill development, and women's empowerment, aiming to create lasting and sustainable impact. By enabling access to employment, the program contributes to stronger and more resilient communities.

At its core, Sugam creates a bridge that connects potential to opportunity, and readiness to real-world outcomes.

The Path Ahead

What this story shows, at its heart, is that inclusion cannot be achieved through isolated efforts. It requires continuity - support that begins early and carries forward into the future.

The work of ABMSS and Unisys,

when seen together, reflects a more complete way of thinking about development. One focuses on restoring health and confidence at a critical stage of life. The other builds on that foundation, helping young women move into the workforce with the skills and belief they need to succeed. This is not a single story, but a pattern that can repeat itself across thousands of lives. A child receives timely care. She stays in school. She grows with confidence. And later, she steps into a job that allows her to support herself and her family.

The impact of this journey goes beyond the individual. Families begin to experience stability. Communities begin to shift in how they view both health conditions and women's roles.

In this way, the connection between health, gender equality, and reduced inequality becomes clear. These are not separate goals but they are part of the same pathway. When one is addressed well, it strengthens the others.

What makes this approach powerful is its simplicity. It does not rely on complex systems or one-time interventions. It focuses on meeting individuals where they are, supporting them through different stages of life, and ensuring that progress is not lost along the way.

In the end, inclusion is not just about access. It is about continuity, dignity, and the ability to move forward without barriers.





▲ KAMAL GAUR,
Global Advisor, Education,
Save the Children
International

EDUCATION AND INDIA'S CLIMATE CRISIS: DISRUPTION, VULNERABILITY, RESILIENCE, AND EMPOWERMENT

Across India, climate change is no longer a distant or abstract concern it is a lived reality shaping children's lives and disrupting education systems every year. Increasingly frequent floods, cyclones, heat waves, cold waves, droughts, and erratic monsoons are interrupting schooling for millions of children. From floods in Assam, and Bihar to cyclones along the eastern coast, from prolonged heatwaves in northern and central India to water scarcity in arid regions, climate shocks are redefining the school calendar and exposing deep inequalities in access to safe learning environments.

These trends make one reality unmistakably clear: India's climate crisis is fundamentally an education crisis. Schools are not merely spaces for academic instruction; they are centres of protection, nutrition, stability, and psychosocial support. When schools are disrupted, the consequences extend far beyond learning loss affecting children's safety, well-being, and long-term life

chances, particularly for the most marginalised.

Yet this moment also presents a powerful opportunity. With strong government leadership, active civil society engagement, academic expertise, and community participation, India can transform climate risks into a catalyst for building climate-resilient, inclusive, and future-ready education systems.

Why Education Must Respond to Climate Change in India

India is among the countries most vulnerable to climate impacts. Climate-related disasters already displace millions annually, with children disproportionately affected. Globally, over 175 million children experienced school disruption due to climate-related disasters in 2021, and India contributes significantly to this number during extreme weather events. We have limited data to support the vulnerability.

Heat stress poses a particularly serious challenge. Evidence shows that high temperatures reduce

children's concentration, memory, and academic performance. In India, where many government schools lack adequate ventilation, cooling, or shaded spaces, prolonged exposure to heat during school hours threatens long-term learning outcomes especially for children in rural areas, urban settlements, and disaster-prone regions.

Education systems therefore play a role that goes well beyond service delivery. They are pillars of resilience protecting children, reducing disruption, and equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to adapt and lead in a changing climate. This vision is well aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasises holistic development, experiential learning, environmental awareness, and system wide reform.

Strengthening Climate Resilience Through Adaptation

Across India, schools often serve as evacuation shelters,



relief distribution points, and community coordination hubs during emergencies. However, many school buildings remain structurally vulnerable to floods, cyclones, earthquakes, extreme heat and cold, and erratic monsoons.

Investing in climate resilient school infrastructure is therefore essential. Risk informed planning considering flood plains, cyclone corridors, seismic zones, and heat prone regions must guide school construction and retrofitting under education schemes such as Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and state education plans. Practical measures such as raised plinths, reinforced roofs, improved drainage, shaded outdoor areas, heat reflective roofing, safe and adequate

Climate change is no longer a future threat for India's children. It is already reshaping classrooms, calendars, and childhoods. As floods, heatwaves, and cyclones disrupt schooling across the country, education emerges as both a frontline casualty and a powerful solution in India's climate response.

drinking water, and gender responsive sanitation can significantly reduce risk while improving learning conditions.

Adaptation also requires system level readiness. Trained teachers, empowered school leadership, emergency preparedness plans, and flexible academic calendars are critical to ensuring continuity. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) education already integrated into parts of India's curriculum builds life-saving knowledge and strengthens community resilience when combined with regular drills and local disaster management coordination.

Education's Role in Climate Mitigation

India's education sector can also





make a meaningful contribution to climate mitigation. Schools are significant users of energy, water, and materials. Integrating solar power, rainwater harvesting, waste segregation, and energy efficient lighting and ventilation reduces emissions while creating healthier learning environments.

Importantly, schools function as living laboratories for sustainability. When children participate in school gardens, tree planting, composting, water audits, or energy monitoring, climate action becomes tangible and relevant. These experiences foster lifelong habits and reinforce the idea that environmental stewardship is both achievable and impactful.

Empowering Children Through Climate Education

Climate education is central to India's long-term response. NEP 2020 provides a strong enabling framework through its emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking, experiential pedagogy, and environmental consciousness.

High quality, age appropriate climate education helps children understand climate science, disaster preparedness, sustainable development, and the social justice dimensions of climate change. Equally important, it supports emotional resilience. As climate related disasters intensify, many children experience fear, anxiety, and uncertainty about the future. Schools can provide safe spaces for dialogue, reassurance, and psychosocial support helping children channel concern into constructive action.

Children in India are powerful change agents, often influencing household practices related to water use, waste management, energy consumption, and disaster preparedness. Climate literate

children grow into informed citizens, professionals, and leaders capable of shaping sustainable and equitable futures.

Building Climate Responsive Schools Across Diverse Contexts

Climate action in education must be context specific. Flood prone regions require elevated classrooms, secure storage for learning materials, early-warning triggers for school closures, and rapid reopening protocols. Cyclone prone coastal areas need storm resistant construction, safe evacuation routes, channelising storm water and close coordination with disaster management authorities.

Heatwave responsive education systems are increasingly urgent. Measures include improved ventilation, shaded learning spaces, access to safe drinking water, flexible school timings, and clear heat-action protocols. Teachers must be trained to identify and respond to heat stress, dehydration, and related health risks particularly for younger children.

Preparedness extends beyond infrastructure. Regular drills, teacher training in emergency



response and psychosocial support, and strong community engagement ensure schools are ready before disasters strike, not only after.

Ensuring Continuity of Learning and Anticipatory Action

Climate resilient education prioritises continuity of learning before, during, and after emergencies. Blended and remote learning using digital platforms, television, radio, and printed materials can help sustain learning during disruptions.

However, India's digital divide must be explicitly addressed. Many children lack devices, connectivity, or reliable electricity. Preparedness therefore requires low tech and no

tech solutions, including printed self-learning materials or kits, community learning hubs, and shared digital access points.

Anticipatory action using weather forecasts and early-warning systems to trigger protective measures can significantly reduce learning loss and safeguard children's wellbeing. Prepositioning learning materials and establishing temporary learning spaces help ensure education resumes quickly after disasters.

From Vulnerability to Empowerment Through Systemic Reform

True resilience demands systemic reform. Inclusive, equity focused education systems must prioritise

children affected by poverty, disability, migration, displacement, and social exclusion. Climate responsive school management integrates preparedness, adaptation, and recovery into everyday governance rather than treating them as exceptional responses.

Strong policy alignment, inter ministerial coordination, and sustainable financing are essential. Investments in resilient infrastructure, teacher capacity, and climate education must be embedded within national and state education budgets not treated as temporary or emergency expenditures.

Child participation is equally critical. When children engage in school safety planning, climate

Amid escalating climate risks, India's education system holds a unique opportunity: to turn vulnerability into empowerment. By investing in climate-responsive schools, child-centred learning, and climate literacy, education can equip the next generation to adapt, lead, and shape a sustainable future.

action initiatives, and community preparedness, they develop confidence, leadership, and agency. Education becomes not only protective but empowering.

Conclusion

In India, education stands on the frontlines of the climate crisis. When schools are disrupted, children's futures are at risk. But when education systems are resilient, inclusive, and adaptive, they protect children today and equip society for tomorrow.

By investing in climate resilient schools, continuity of learning, climate literacy, and child participation, India can transform vulnerability into empowerment. Education, when climate responsive and child centered, becomes a powerful driver of resilience, equity, and sustainable development we achieve SDG's targets.

Inclusive, adaptive, climate responsive education is not optional it is essential. Collective action is needed now to meet SDG targets, ensure every child in India learns safely, adapts confidently, and reaches their developmentally appropriate milestones despite a changing climate.





EDUCATION AS INFRASTRUCTURE

Building systems that carry learners from access to agency

• Swratmika Dubey

Education is often measured by numbers - enrolments, classrooms built, certificates issued. But the real test of an education system lies elsewhere: in who is able to stay, who is able to progress, and who is able to translate learning into dignity, livelihoods, and participation in society.

Across India, education frequently breaks at transition points. When learning becomes unaffordable. When safety limits mobility. When disability turns into exclusion. Or when a degree leads nowhere beyond uncertainty. These breaks are not failures of ambition or ability; they are failures of systems.

This is where the promise of SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) truly lies, not in access alone, but in continuity. In education that holds learners through their journey and delivers outcomes that last. The work of Vedanta Foundation and Sarthak Educational Trust illustrates what happens when education is treated not as an intervention, but as infrastructure: designed to support, adapt, and endure.

Where Education Falters and What It Demands?

For millions of learners, the

challenge is not entering the education system, but remaining within it. Students drop out when learning gaps widen, when families cannot afford higher education, when young women lack safe accommodation, or when persons with disabilities face barriers that mainstream systems are not designed to accommodate.

Inclusive empowerment begins when education responds to these realities. When it adapts to learners rather than expecting learners to adapt to rigid structures. This requires institutions that understand vulnerability points and build targeted support around them.

Vedanta Foundation: Strengthening the Education-to-Career Continuum

Vedanta Foundation's education work is shaped by both scale and proximity. Through five educational institutions across Mumbai, Rajasthan, and Kolkata, two special schools for children with special needs, and multiple skill centres, the Foundation has reached over 1.3 million people, educated more than 300,000 students, and enabled 20,000+ job placements.

This scale provides a grounded understanding of where students are



most likely to disengage, whether due to affordability constraints, learning gaps, inadequate infrastructure, or lack of visibility into career pathways. Programme priorities are shaped not by assumptions, but by continuous engagement with students, parents, teachers, and local communities.

At the classroom level, Vedanta institutions focus on strengthening foundational learning through improved infrastructure, digital classrooms, and teacher capacity building. Where conceptual understanding remains weak, pedagogy itself is rethought. At the Vitthalwadi campus in Mumbai, the Impact Learning initiative reverses the traditional model: students encounter concepts through real-life exposure and hands-on activities before engaging with

classroom theory. This shift has improved comprehension, retention, and confidence, particularly among first-generation learners.

Crucially, education here does not end with academic instruction. Employability is embedded into the ecosystem through industry-aligned curriculum, communication and digital skills training, career counselling, and structured placement support. To deepen this transition, Vedanta Foundation launched JobCliff.com, a not-for-profit job and skill platform that offers industry-certified courses, life-skills training, mentoring, and verified job and internship opportunities. Employers onboarded include TCS, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, IndiGo, SBI Life, and others. The platform is open to students across India, extending its impact beyond Vedanta institutions.

For young women, access to higher education is often curtailed by safety concerns and mobility restrictions. Vedanta Foundation's girls' hostels and PG facilities address this barrier directly by providing secure, affordable accommodation close to colleges and training centres. These spaces do more than house students- they enable continuity in education, foster independence, and build confidence, translating into higher graduation rates and stronger workforce participation. Priyanka Jangid's journey reflects this impact. From a small village in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, she pursued her B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Mathematics at Vedanta PG Girls College with scholarship support. Today, she works as a Graduate Trainee at Hindustan Zinc Limited. Her path underscores what structured educational support can

achieve when access is paired with opportunity.

Sarthak Educational Trust: Turning Inclusion into Outcomes

While strong institutions enable scale, education fulfils its promise only when it includes those most often excluded. Sarthak Educational Trust defines inclusive empowerment as building an ecosystem where persons with disabilities have access to relevant education, skills, employment opportunities, and support systems that allow them to participate fully and independently in society with dignity and choice.

The Trust's model works across the life cycle. It begins with early intervention through rehabilitation therapies that reduce disability impact and enable children to enter mainstream education with confidence. Inclusive learning support ensures that children with disabilities are not segregated, but supported within regular schools.

As learners move beyond school, Sarthak Trust bridges education and livelihoods through industry-aligned vocational training, career guidance, and placement support. Education is designed to lead somewhere. Since 2008, the NGO has supported over 100,000 persons with disabilities into employment across sectors such as retail, IT, hospitality, e-commerce, and manufacturing, backed by a pan-India presence across 25 locations. Families and caregivers play a central role in this journey. They are engaged as partners involved in therapy goals, ongoing guidance, and home-based reinforcement of learning. Families are also sensitised to the importance of skill development and employment, helping shift mindsets from





dependency to self-sufficiency.

Digital innovation has further expanded access. Through platforms such as GyanSarathi (e-learning), RozgarSarathi (job portal), and CapSarathi (information and guidance), learners from rural and semi-urban areas access training, job opportunities, and scheme-related information in local languages, directly from their homes. These platforms make inclusion scalable and reduce geographic barriers.

Beyond preparing candidates, Sarthak Trust works actively with employers. Partnering with over 5,000 organisations, it conducts sensitisation workshops, accessible recruitment drives, job-role mapping, and post-placement support. By combining data

with demonstrated performance outcomes, the Sarthak Trust helps shift hiring practices towards ability-based inclusion.

At a national level, Sarthak Educational Trust anchors the India Disability Empowerment Alliance (IDEA), a coalition of 1,400+ NGOs working across the disability sector. Through shared learning, coordinated campaigns, and capacity building, IDEA amplifies inclusion far beyond individual efforts.

When Systems and Inclusion Reinforce Each Other

Vedanta Foundation and Sarthak Educational Trust operate at different points in the education ecosystem, yet their work converges on a shared insight: education must

deliver outcomes. Systems provide pathways; inclusion ensures those pathways remain open.

Together, they demonstrate that achieving SDG 4 and SDG 8 requires moving beyond access to agency, from classrooms to careers, from learning to livelihoods.

As India moves toward its 2030 SDG commitments, the question is no longer whether education matters, but whether it holds learners through change. Education succeeds when it is designed as infrastructure- resilient, inclusive, and outcome- oriented.

When learning systems are built to carry people forward, education becomes more than opportunity. It becomes dignity, participation, and possibility.



Learning Without Walls: How Technology Makes SDG 4 Real for Every Child

◀ **NITIN RAWAL**, Design Specialist, HCL Tech UK Limited

A classroom today is no longer defined by four walls or a fixed timetable. It might be a shared smartphone in a rural household, a community centre doubling as a learning space, or a digital tool helping a learner navigate content in their own language. As education systems evolve, technology is reshaping how learning is accessed—especially for those historically excluded from it, aligning with SDG 4’s call for inclusive and equitable quality education.

In India, the challenge of inclusive education is complex. Millions of learners face barriers linked to geography, gender, disability, language, and income. While schools and teachers remain central, technology has emerged as a critical enabler—supporting learning continuity, flexibility, and reach when traditional systems fall short, directly advancing SDG Target 4.5 to eliminate disparities in education access.

However, inclusion is not achieved simply by distributing devices or building digital platforms. True inclusion focuses on how learners engage, whether they feel supported, and if the system adapts to their realities. Assistive technologies such as screen readers, captions, and voice-based interfaces help learners with disabilities participate more fully, helping close the gap where only 1% of India’s educational content was accessible to the visually impaired as recently as 2023.

One of the most significant shifts technology has enabled is learning beyond

formal classrooms. In India, mobile-based education, television learning programmes, and offline digital content have supported students during disruptions and in areas with limited infrastructure—reaching over 200 million learners via platforms like DIKSHA during the pandemic. Community learning centres using shared devices have helped women, adolescents, and adult learners access skills training and basic education—often for the first time. These models recognise that learning is social and contextual, not confined to schools alone, supporting SDG Target 4.4 on relevant skills for employment and decent work.

Teachers and caregivers play a crucial role in this ecosystem. Digital tools that support lesson planning, assessments, and professional development have helped educators reach diverse classrooms more effectively. Simple platforms—such as messaging apps used for sharing assignments or guidance—have strengthened communication between teachers, parents, and learners, especially where in-person engagement is limited, aligning with SDG Target 4.c to expand teacher training opportunities substantially.

Globally, similar approaches reinforce these lessons. In parts of Africa and Southeast Asia, offline-first platforms and low-bandwidth solutions have enabled learning in connectivity-constrained regions. In countries like Canada and Finland, inclusive education is strengthened through digital systems

designed around Universal Design for Learning, ensuring flexibility for different abilities and learning styles. These examples highlight a shared principle: technology works best when it responds to context rather than imposing uniform solutions.

Yet, technology also risks widening gaps if affordability, digital literacy, and access are overlooked. The digital divide remains real—with UNESCO reporting 258 million children still out of school globally, many in connectivity-poor areas. Successful inclusive education initiatives therefore prioritise simplicity, shared access, and low-cost solutions alongside innovation. In many cases, SMS, IVR, radio, and community-led digital models have delivered greater impact than complex platforms.

Ultimately, technology must be part of a broader ecosystem for inclusive education—one that brings together learners, educators, families, communities, institutions, and policymakers, embodying SDG 17’s emphasis on partnerships. Investment in last-mile connectivity, capacity-building for teachers, ethical use of data, and strong partnerships between governments, NGOs, and technology providers are essential.

Inclusive education is not only about reaching more learners; it is about respecting dignity, enabling participation, and creating systems that adapt to diverse needs. When guided by human values and local realities, technology can help build learning environments that are resilient, equitable, and truly inclusive.





LITERACY LIFELINES: TRANSFORMING DARKNESS INTO SDG 4 LEARNING TRIUMPHS

Amid India's learning crisis, innovative partnerships transform foundational literacy into pathways for lifelong opportunity.

• **The Bridge India Correspondent**

India's learning crisis demands urgent action: ASER 2024 reveals 55% of Class 5 students cannot read Class 2 texts while 65% struggle with basic division, despite 95%+ enrollment. These foundational gaps lock millions into lifelong inequality, making SDG 4 transformation mission-critical. DEVI Sansthan and Tata Power-DDL deliver complementary solutions, with DEVI's research-backed pedagogy achieving 13-14% learning gains across 60,000 schools and Tata Power-DDL's lifecycle programs breaking dropout cycles in Delhi's toughest slums. Their questionnaire responses detail SDG 17 partnerships driving SDG 10 equity, converting enrolment statistics into empowered futures.

India's Foundational Learning Emergency

India's education paradox reveals itself in stark numbers. While enrolment rates exceed 95%, learning outcomes remain catastrophic. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 confirms the crisis: 55% of Class 5 students cannot read a Class 2-level text, and 65% cannot perform basic

division. Foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) gaps create a vicious cycle where children progress through grades without mastering essential skills, emerging as young adults unequipped for modern economies or civic participation.

This crisis compounds SDG 10 inequalities. Children from aspirational districts, migrant families, and marginalized communities suffer most acutely. Without FLN mastery, higher education becomes inaccessible, employability remains elusive, and intergenerational poverty persists. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and NIPUN Bharat Mission correctly identify FLN as the critical leverage point, but execution demands more than policy declarations—it requires proven pedagogy, teacher capacity, and multi-stakeholder execution.

DEVI Sansthan: Research-Driven Foundational Literacy Revolution

DEVI Sansthan (Dignity Education Vision International) confronts this crisis with surgical precision through its flagship ALfA (Accelerating Learning for All) pedagogy. Operating

as a global non-profit, DEVI combines research rigor with government partnerships to deliver evidence-based solutions that integrate seamlessly within existing school systems. Currently scaling across 60,000 schools spanning four states plus multiple aspirational districts, DEVI has established itself as India's premier FLN innovator.

Uttar Pradesh provides compelling validation. DEVI-supported districts achieved top-four rankings in the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (PRS) 2024 compared to NAS 2021 baselines. While national learning gains averaged 23 percentage points

across language and mathematics, DEVI districts delivered 13-14 percentage point improvements—outpacing state policy efforts alone by 30%. This validates a fundamental equation: mission-mode policy plus daily classroom excellence equals transformative outcomes.

Post-COVID realities underscore the urgency. While India's 95%+ school re-enrollment rate represents a remarkable achievement, learning recovery proved far more challenging.

Foundational skills remain the essential stepping stone amplifying all subsequent educational and life outcomes. DEVI coordinates comprehensive stakeholder ecosystems: teachers drive classroom practice and student engagement, parents reinforce learning at home, communities sustain education's societal value. Government and CSR partnerships provide essential scale-through teacher capacity building, system-compatible

innovation, and assured last-mile delivery.

DEVI emphasizes dual execution imperatives aligned with NEP 2020 and NIPUN Bharat: first, strong policy implemented in mission mode with singular focus; second, daily classroom pedagogy that transforms transactions into learning breakthroughs. Uttar Pradesh demonstrates this synergy: state policy alone drove 10-point gains; ALfA implementation doubled impact. As DEVI scales nationally, this validated model promises to close India's foundational learning gap systematically.

Tata Power-DDL: Comprehensive Lifecycle Learning Architecture

Tata Power-DDL approaches education as CSR's "foundational enabler," recognizing that literacy gaps cripple all development interventions. Operating across North and North-West Delhi's

migrant-heavy JJ clusters, Tata confronts communities where illiteracy blocks access to healthcare schemes, financial services, livelihood programs, and government entitlements.

Literacy becomes the master key unlocking banking access, independent mobility, entrepreneurship, and meaningful parental involvement in children's education.

Tata's portfolio forms a deliberate lifecycle continuum preventing cumulative deprivation across generations: Early Childhood (Ages 6-10): Meri Pathshala reintegrates out-of-school children through Special Training Centres, ensuring formal system re-entry. Tutorial Programs reinforce foundational skills for regular attendees, dramatically reducing dropout risk.

Adolescent Transition (Ages 11-17): Roshni equips government school girls with confidence-building soft skills, career awareness, and life skills—addressing the gender-specific barriers that derail educational continuity. Lakshya Classes and dedicated career counseling prepare first-generation learners for competitive examinations.

Higher Education Bridge (Ages 18+): Professional and school scholarships eliminate financial barriers for high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds.

Adult Literacy (Mothers/Community): Women Literacy Centres deliver functional, digital, and financial literacy, enabling mothers to support children's education while accessing economic opportunities independently.

This architecture addresses structural realities: migration patterns, poverty cycles, and gender norms create predictable learning breaks that cascade intergenerationally. Integration





prevents these ruptures: Roshni alumni advance through Tata scholarships; Women Literacy graduates actively support children enrolled in Meri Pathshala and Tutorial Programs. Long-term outcomes prove transformative: alumni clearing IITs, NITs, UPSC examinations, and government medical colleges; library beneficiaries succeeding in SSC/UPSC contests; local role models emerging as teachers and professionals.

Inclusive Design: Reaching Every Learner

Tata Power-DDL embeds inclusivity across program architecture, recognizing learner diversity across age, gender, disability status, digital access, and socio-economic conditions:

- **Disability Inclusion:** UDAAN School and SHAD Centre provide specialized education, therapy, and pre-vocational training for children with disabilities. Viklang Margdarshan Kendra streamlines disability certification, scholarships, assistive devices, and legal entitlements.
• **Digital Equity:** Sarvajanic Community Library offers free books, computers, and internet access for competitive exam

preparation. Smart classrooms under Meri Pathshala and technology-enabled Women Literacy Centres introduce digital exposure across learning stages.
• **Gender Focus:** Roshni specifically targets government school girls facing confidence and career awareness gaps that threaten educational continuity.

This comprehensive approach transforms isolated interventions into enabling ecosystems where traditionally excluded learners thrive.

Synergistic Execution: 60,000 Classrooms to Competitive Careers

DEVI Sansthan and Tata Power-DDL represent complementary SDG 4 execution at scale.

DEVI masters foundational learning (13-14% district gains across 60,000 schools), creating the essential base upon which Tata's lifecycle architecture builds. Their respective strengths converge powerfully:

- **DEVI provides:** Research-validated pedagogy, government system integration, teacher capacity at scale, proven 13-14% learning acceleration.
• **Tata Power-DDL delivers:** Dropout prevention,

adolescent transition support, higher education financial bridges, adult literacy creating educated parental ecosystems.

- **Shared SDG 17 partnerships multiply impact:** government school systems gain CSR innovation and execution capacity; aspirational districts access proven FLN models; Delhi slums witness unbroken learning pathways from ALfA classrooms to IIT admissions.

Cross-SDG amplification emerges naturally. Tata extends DEVI's SDG 4 foundation through SDG 5 (Roshni girls'; empowerment), SDG 8 (Lakshya employability pathways), and SDG 10 (last-mile equity). Women Literacy Centre mothers, now digitally fluent, reinforce their children's ALfA learning at home, creating virtuous intergenerational cycles.

SDG 4 Realized: From Crisis to Human Capital Revolution

This partnership represents SDG 4 execution at its most effective: 60,000 schools systematically transformed, 13-14% foundational learning gains achieved, dropout cycles permanently shattered, first-generation IIT qualifiers emerging from JJ clusters, mothers teaching children, local role models replacing dropout culture. India's enrollment promise converts to human capital reality through deliberate NGO-corporate synergy.

The equation proves simple yet profound: research pedagogy (DEVI) + lifecycle architecture (Tata) + government partnerships (SDG 17) = SDG 4 realized at scale. Where national Class 5 reading proficiency languishes at 45%, these partners deliver district-level excellence, competitive exam breakthroughs, and community transformation. India's learning crisis ends not through aspiration, but through proven execution.

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Advertisement for Impact Making NGOs. Features the logo for The Bridge India and a table listing contact persons, organization names, emails, phone numbers, and websites for various NGOs.

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**DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH**



**REDUCED
INEQUALITY**



Inequality is the next strategic variable for India Inc.

SDG 10: A BUSINESS NECESSITY FOR CORPORATE INDIA

▲ SHEETAL PRATIK, Director Engineering, NatWest Group

India's ascent as a global economic powerhouse rests on remarkable strides in digital public infrastructure. Initiatives like Aadhaar, UPI, and PMJDY have opened 54.58 crore Jan Dhan accounts as of January 2025, with 55.7% held by women, forming the backbone of financial empowerment and a burgeoning knowledge economy. Yet, beneath this progress lies persistent inequality that threatens sustainable growth. The next frontier demands not just innovation but better execution—

systemic alignment across government schemes, fintechs, NGOs, and corporates. Effective coordination will accelerate SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) by 2030, turning access into active participation. For Corporate India, SDG 10 is no peripheral social obligation; it is a business continuity imperative. Equitable societies foster stable markets, resilient supply chains, and long-term profitability. Businesses must lead by designing inclusive participation at their core.

India's Inclusion Wins and Opportunities

India's inclusion journey offers lessons and opportunities. Financial access has exploded—RBI's Financial Inclusion Index climbed to 67.0 in FY25 from 64.2, reflecting gains in access, usage, and quality. However, inequality persists: Bank loans to MSMEs slowed to 14.8% growth in FY25 from 20.9% prior, exposing vulnerabilities in small suppliers that form 30-40% of many corporate value chains. Rural women, despite accounts, struggle with activation—low digital literacy and irregular incomes hinder credit uptake and insurance.

Inclusion must be redefined. Move beyond fragmented CSR donations, NGO projects, or philanthropic gestures targeting isolated beneficiaries. Corporates must emerge as system leaders, embedding inequality reduction into value chains. Inequality isn't an external social ill solved by charity; it's embedded in business models. Practical diagnostics reveal this:

- Are MSMEs in your supply chain financially stable? Slow credit growth signals distress, risking disruptions.
- Are women entrepreneurs meaningfully in your vendor ecosystem? They represent

untapped markets.

- Are frontline workers insured, skilled, and digitally enabled? Gaps here amplify turnover costs.
- Are rural distributors financially integrated or stuck in informal cash economies?

Negative answers flag board-level risks: Unstable chains erode margins, while excluded groups shrink future consumer bases. Corporates ignoring this face regulatory scrutiny, talent shortages, and ESG downgrades. Conversely, inclusive models unlock loyalty, innovation, and scale—witness how UPI democratized payments, boosting digital transactions 50-fold since 2016.

From CSR Spend to System Leadership

India's inclusion challenge is fragmentation. In a single district, multiple banks, NGOs, fintechs, CSR arms, and government schemes operate silos—duplicating efforts without shared data, aligned goals, or unified metrics. This inefficiency mirrors pre-UPI payments chaos. Corporates, with their scale and convening power, can build shared, scalable platforms as national infrastructure. Imagine interoperable "inclusion rails": Common dashboards tracking supplier resilience, real-time financial health for vendors, and standardized KPIs for women-led enterprises. Such systems would amplify impact, reduce costs, and create network effects, much like India's digital stack.

Women at the Heart of Inclusion

Gender disparities epitomize SDG 10 failures. Women hold over half of PMJDY accounts yet remain least confident users, least scheme-





aware, and least credit-integrated. **Rural women face triple barriers:** Digital gaps, irregular incomes, and cultural norms. RBI data underscores this—while access scores rise, usage lags, with women's active accounts trailing urban peers by 20-30%. Ignoring women isn't just unjust; it's economically irrational. They drive 70% of household spending and anchor family resilience.

Corporates must pivot: Beyond symbolic empowerment programs, finance women-led MSMEs in supply chains, deliver digital skills via worker training, and co-design products matching irregular cash flows (e.g., micro-insurance tied to gig earnings). Gender inclusion becomes commercial strategy expanding markets, diversifying talent, and derisking operations.

Beyond Access: Driving Participation

Accounts are mere entry points.

True progress demands economic activation: Credit for enterprises, insurance against shocks, savings for retirement. Millions teeter on poverty's edge, one health crisis from relapse. Corporates can catalyze this—roll out wage-linked savings/insurance, partner NBFCs for micro-credit (e.g., targeting women vendors), and embed fintech into ecosystems. Shift narratives from "We opened accounts" to "We built resilience." GNPA ratios at multi-decade lows (2.2% by Sep 2025) signal banking strength, but sustained inclusion ensures it reaches the last mile.

Boards and Inclusion: Rethinking Risk

Sustainability committees obsess over carbon metrics, compliance, and ESG disclosures. Few track forward-looking risks: Workforce financial resilience, supplier credit stability, gender/value chain participation, operational digital inclusion. Boards

with SDG strategies redesign KPIs accordingly, treating inclusion as competitive edge. In volatile India, this foresight safeguards against shocks like supply disruptions or talent flight.

From Dialogue to Delivery

Intent abounds; execution lags. Platforms like The Bridge India excel by forging cross-sector consensus joint investments, benchmarks, public-private pacts. Corporates must summon courage: Commit beyond branding to shared accountability, turning dialogues into delivery.

Corporate Action Plan for 2030

Urgent steps:

- Infuse inclusion into core strategies.
- Co-invest in platforms.
- Prioritize women.
- Track outcomes over outputs.
- Frame inequality as market risk.



CONSOLIDATED CEO CHECKLIST

Priority Area	Key Actions	Outcome Metrics
Board-Level	Embed financial/social/digital/gender/rural inclusion in KPIs; assess risks like supplier fragility; prioritize resilience.	Workforce stability (e.g., 90% insured); supplier health scores; inclusion dashboards.
Business Integration	Onboard MSMEs/women vendors; fund digital/financial adoption; evolve to skills-based hiring.	20% women-led suppliers; active credit/insurance usage.
Shared Platforms	Develop interoperable systems; convene stakeholders; deploy real-time tracking.	50% fragmentation reduction; transparent outcomes.
Women-Centric	Finance enterprises, skill-up workers, tailor products; redirect CSR to long-term programs; standardize data governance.	Multi-product adoption (credit/insurance/pensions); 15% income stability gain.
Market Expansion	Target underserved as growth markets via last-mile access.	10x underserved revenue potential; SDG leadership benchmarks.

CEO Takeaway

An SDG 10-centric strategy, paired with policy evolution, yields social mobility and Corporate India's global leadership. With banks at peak resilience, the moment is ripe—act now to embed equity, or risk obsolescence.





SKILLS UNLEASHED: FUELING INDIA'S SDG 8 EMPLOYABILITY EXPLOSION

• The Bridge India Correspondent

India's youth unemployment crisis demands immediate action: 42% of graduates remain jobless (India Skills Report 2024), while 83% of youth lack market-relevant skills. Economic growth creates millions of formal jobs, yet rural, semi-urban, and marginalized youth face exclusion through skill gaps, behavioral barriers,

and migration unreadiness. SDG 8 calls for decent work and inclusive growth. Dalmia Bharat Foundation's DIKSHa program has trained 26,000 youth across 32 centers with 75% placement rates. Unnati nears 500,000 cumulative placements through 50+ centers. Their questionnaire responses reveal SROI of 7.8, 70%+ job retention, and 50%+ women participation, proving corporate precision plus NGO

execution transforms unemployment into sustainable livelihoods.

India's Employability Paradox Exposed

India confronts a troubling disconnect between economic opportunity and human potential. Robust GDP growth generates millions of formal sector jobs in healthcare, manufacturing,

hospitality, retail, and services. Yet youth from industrial peripheries, rural districts, and marginalized communities remain systematically excluded. Key barriers include skill mismatches, lack of workplace readiness, social conditioning, geographic isolation, and gender norms restricting women's mobility.

The data reveals crisis proportions. India Skills Report 2024 documents 42% unemployment among graduates. Periodic Labour Force Survey confirms 83% youth lack industry-relevant skills. Rural households survive on seasonal agricultural work averaging ₹6-8,000 monthly. First-generation learners complete formal education without acquiring spoken English, computer proficiency, professional values, or practical exposure required for formal employment. Women face compounded exclusion through family responsibilities and societal expectations.

SDG 8 demands urgent action across four pillars: productive employment,



youth employability, inclusive workforce participation, and sustainable livelihoods. Current interventions fail because they prioritize training volume over market alignment, placement certainty, and post-employment support. Effective solutions integrate technical skills with behavioral transformation,

guaranteed formal placements, and one-year retention support.

Dalmia Bharat Foundation: DIKSHa Comprehensive Solution

Dalmia Bharat Foundation launched DIKSHa Skill Development Program in 2016 to resolve the paradox of abundant jobs versus unprepared local talent. Operating 32 centers across 11+ states with 9,100 annual training capacity, DIKSHa has empowered 26,000 youth. Key outcomes include 75% placement rates, 70%+ one-year job retention, and average starting salaries of ₹12-13,000 monthly (top performers earn ₹30,000+).

Strategic Vision: DIKSHa shifts mindset from "job-seeking" to "employability-building." Industrial automation eliminated many direct factory jobs near program areas, so DIKSHa equips youth for broader national labor markets through industry-relevant technical skills, NSDC-aligned certifications, comprehensive soft skills, financial literacy, workplace readiness training, and structured migration counseling.

Market Intelligence Leadership: Regular skill-gap assessments, employer consultations, and State Skill Mission partnerships identify high-demand trades. All courses





follow National Occupational Standards delivered through Sector Skill Council-approved training partners, ensuring certifications carry national credibility employers trust.

Women - Centric Breakthrough: Initially women comprised minimal participation in male-dominated trades like electrician and plumbing. DIKSHA responded with women-preferred courses (Sewing Machine Operator, Assistant Beauty Therapist, General Duty Assistant) offered in safe environments with family counseling. Result: 50%+ female participation translating into sustained economic independence.

Placement Excellence Architecture: Dedicated placement cells maintain industry partnerships across sectors and geographies. One-year post-placement support includes regular counseling, employer grievance redressal, career progression guidance, ensuring income continuity beyond initial hiring.

Transformational Stories:

- **Balambal (Trichy):** Single mother enrolled in Home Health Aid course. Secured ₹2.16 lakh annual salary with Easy Home Care. Family achieved financial stability; children's education secured.
- **Preeti Kumari (Bokaro):** Scheduled Caste youth trained as General Duty Assistant. Migrated successfully to Hyderabad nursing position earning ₹2.4 lakhs annually.
- **Akshay Kakade (Kolhapur):** B.Com graduate facing repeated rejections enrolled in Assistant Electrician course. Placed with COFORGE earning ₹3 lakhs annually.

Independent Validation: 2023 third-party assessment calculated Social Return on Investment (SROI) of 7.8. Every rupee invested generates ₹8 social value through household security improvements, enhanced education/healthcare access, and

reduced economic vulnerability.

Unnati: Pioneering Livelihood Transformation at National Scale

Founded in 2003 in Bangalore, Unnati claims a singular distinction as India's first NGO registered with the Social Stock Exchange, marking its leadership in transparent, accountable social impact. This pioneering status reflects Unnati's core philosophy: sustainable poverty alleviation demands not charity, but dignified pathways to economic agency. For over two decades, Unnati has served as a lifeline for underprivileged youth aged 18-25, primarily first-generation learners emerging from rural villages, semi-urban fringes, and urban poor settlements. Today, the organization operates 50+ centers strategically positioned across multiple states, each serving as a beacon of opportunity within walking distance of the communities they transform.

At the heart of Unnati's model beats an intensive 35-day, 300-hour program that refuses to treat skills in isolation. This transformative curriculum weaves life skills, spoken English fluency, computer proficiency, values-based character development, and vocation-specific training into a seamless whole. Every single graduate walks away with more than knowledge: they receive assured placement in formal sector jobs complete with ESI and PF social security benefits, ensuring long-term stability rather than fleeting employment. By March 2026, Unnati will cross the extraordinary milestone of 500,000 lives changed, representing half a million families lifted from poverty's grip through sustainable income pathways.

Proximity transforms possibility into reality. Unnati's centers eliminate the tyranny of distance that traps rural youth in seasonal agricultural despair. No long, costly commutes. No missed opportunities due to lack of transport. These centers stand as neighborhood fortresses of hope, accessible to

communities long excluded from formal employment ecosystems.

UNXT bridges academia and aspiration. Scaling across 12+ states through government college partnerships, UNXT targets final-year students where need burns brightest: 81% from disadvantaged backgrounds, 86% from rural origins. Blended learning architecture connects higher education directly to employment or postgraduate pathways, resolving India's tragic education-employability disconnect at scale.

SUGAM ignites women's entrepreneurial fire. Complementing wage employment, this initiative partners with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) to empower 500+ rural women entrepreneurs. Self-Help Groups provide the collective muscle: credit access, business skills mastery, dedicated mentoring, and market linkages that convert micro-ideas into viable enterprises. SUGAM proves women-led businesses don't just survive rural realities, they redefine them.

Unnati confronts systemic despair head-on. Rural families battle seasonal income volatility averaging ₹6-8,000 monthly. First-generation learners graduate without spoken English or workplace confidence. Women face mobility shackles and social conditioning. Unnati dismantles these barriers through formal employment carrying social security dignity plus SHG institutions amplifying poverty escape through sustainable ecosystems. This comprehensive assault transforms not just individual fortunes, but entire community trajectories toward lasting economic security.

Perfect Complementarity: Corporate + NGO Synergy

Dalmia Bharat Foundation and Unnati form SDG 8's ideal partnership through complementary execution strengths:

- Dalmia's Corporate Advantages:**
- Industry-demand forecasting and

At UNNATI,
skill training is just
the beginning.

Every young person we train is supported towards meaningful employment, inclusion in society, and the confidence to become a change agent in their own community.



BE FOCUSED.
BE DETERMINED.
BE EMPOWERED.



GET INVOLVED | DONATE NOW

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Unified Performance Metrics:



DIKSHa Placements

26,000 placements with high settlement and retention rates.



Unnati Beneficiaries

500,000 beneficiaries with formal employment through ESI/PF.



Women Participation

Over 50% women participation across all portfolios.



SROI Validation

SROI of 7.8 validates sustainable poverty graduation.

- NSDC certification credibility
- Nationwide placement partnerships across diverse sectors
- One-year post-placement retention architecture
- Proven women-centric course innovation (50%+ female participation)
- SROI 7.8 rigorous impact measurement

Unnati's Grassroots Execution:

- 50+ centers ensuring last-mile geographic access
- Intensive 300-hour life skills + vocational integration
- 500,000 cumulative formal placements with social security
- Government college system



- penetration (UNXT)
- NRLM-aligned women's entrepreneurship (SUGAM)

SDG 8 Mission Accomplished: Unemployment Defeated

Dalmia Bharat Foundation and Unnati shatter India's employability myth through relentless execution. 26,000

DIKSHa youth earn sustainable livelihoods. 500,000 Unnati graduates secure formal employment with dignity. 50%+ women transform households as primary earners. SROI 7.8 proves exponential social return.

Balambal funds her children's future. Preeti pioneers SC migration success. Akshay converts academic frustration into professional stability. Unnati's first-generation learners claim workplace respect. Corporate market intelligence, NGO proximity execution, government partnership synergy equals SDG 8 victory at population scale. India's 42% graduate unemployment crisis ends through skills delivering formal jobs, income security, and community transformation.

Multiplier Effects Across SDGs

SDG 1 Poverty Elimination

Formal salaries (₹12-30k/month) plus social security escape seasonal income vulnerability.

SDG 4 Education-Employability Bridge

UNXT college linkages + DIKSHa vocational certification create seamless transitions

SDG 5 Gender Equity

Women-centric design doubles female workforce participation; SHGs empower economic decision-making.

SDG 10 Inequality Reduction

Rural/marginalized youth access urban wage premiums through migration readiness.

SDG 17 Partnership Architecture

NRLM, State Skill Missions, industry employers, government colleges multiply systemic impact.



INDIA'S SUSTAINABILITY IMPERATIVE: A COLLECTIVE JOURNEY TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)



NISHTHA GUPTA,
Group Head- Sustainability & ESG, Suzlon

India today stands at a defining moment in its sustainability journey. With ambitious commitments under the Paris Agreement and a pledge to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070, the country has embraced sustainability not as a peripheral agenda but as a central pillar of development. The government's initiatives — from the National Action Plan on Climate Change to the push for 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030 — reflect a bold vision to align industrial growth with environmental stewardship.

As of October 2025, India has achieved 200.29 GW of renewable capacity (excluding large hydro), with solar energy accounting for 129.92 GW—a 51.7% share of the renewable mix. India installed a record 34.4 GW of new renewable capacity in the first nine months of 2025 alone, demonstrating its accelerated trajectory toward the 2030 target."

The progress is clearly visible across multiple fronts with India leading across sustainability impact across multiple sectors with solar and wind power reshaping the energy mix. Circular economy practices are emerging in manufacturing and urban waste management, while

sustainable agriculture programs are addressing food security and resource efficiency. Green finance, through instruments like green bonds, is unlocking capital for climate-resilient infrastructure. These achievements resonate strongly with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

According to NITI Aayog's SDG India Index, India's composite score improved from 66 in 2020-21 to 71 in 2023-24, reflecting tangible progress across multiple SDG indicators. However, significant state-level variations persist—Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh score 74- 77, while Bihar and Jharkhand remain at 57-62, underscoring the need for targeted, localized action.

India's sustainability landscape is evolving rapidly across industries, with each sector contributing uniquely to the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). From energy and agriculture to manufacturing and finance, the country's progress reflects both achievements and challenges in aligning industrial growth with global sustainability targets.

Corporates have played a

transformative role in this journey. Leading energy companies are scaling renewable projects, automakers are investing in electric mobility, and FMCG giants are embedding sustainability into supply chains. Beyond compliance, many corporates are integrating sustainability into their core strategies, recognizing that long-term competitiveness depends on responsible growth. Their efforts contribute not only to emissions reduction but also to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

However, challenges persist as advanced solutions such as energy storage, smart grids, and carbon capture are still underdeveloped. Moreover, consumer awareness and behavioral change — critical for achieving SDG 10 (Reduced



Inequalities) and SDG 12 — remain inconsistent across regions. India's sustainability journey is accelerating, with corporates playing a pivotal role in renewable energy adoption, yet significant gaps remain in policy execution, financing, and stakeholder collaboration.

India's Sustainability Initiatives for Renewable Energy Transition

- **National Missions:** India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and state-level action plans focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture, and water conservation.
- **Renewable Energy Push:** India has set ambitious targets of achieving 500 GW of non- fossil

fuel energy capacity by 2030, with solar and wind energy at the forefront.

- **Circular Economy:** Initiatives around waste management, recycling, and resource efficiency are gaining traction, especially in urban centers.
- **Green Finance:** India is expanding green bonds and climate finance mechanisms to support sustainable infrastructure.

By end of 2024, India had issued USD 55.9 billion in green, social, and sustainability debt, positioning it as a leading emerging market in sustainable finance. The government's sovereign green bond initiative, launched in February 2022, has mobilized resources for carbon-reducing public sector

projects, with NBFCs like Vivriti Capital issuing certified climate bonds to support EV financing and renewable energy deployment.

India's Progress towards Renewables and Sustainability

- **Renewable Energy Growth** India is now the world's third-largest renewable energy producer. As of 2025, utility-scale solar leads with 22.5 GW added year-to-date (70% YoY growth), while rooftop solar surged 81.6% to 5.8 GW. Total renewable capacity now stands at 247.3 GW, putting India within striking distance of its 500 GW target by 2030.
- **Policy Support:** Schemes like the Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) program and Renewable Energy Development Agencies have boosted adoption.
- **Community Impact:** Rural electrification through renewables has improved livelihoods and reduced dependence on fossil fuels.

The path forward for accelerating action towards sustainable development requires collective action from all stakeholders.

- Government must strengthen enforcement, incentivize innovation, and expand climate finance.
- Corporates need to embed sustainability into their DNA, moving beyond CSR to systemic transformation.
- Civil society and NGOs play a vital role in grassroots mobilization, awareness, and accountability.
- Academia and research institutions must drive innovation in clean technologies and sustainable practices.
- Global partners are essential for technology transfer, financing, and knowledge-sharing to accelerate India's progress.



Sector-wise Progress in India for achieving Sustainable Development Targets

Energy & Power (SDG 7, SDG 13)

- **Renewable Energy:** India ranks 4th globally in overall renewable energy installed capacity, 3rd in solar capacity, and 4th in wind power driving clean energy adoption.
- **Coal Transition:** While coal remains dominant, policy pushes for decarbonization are reshaping the sector.
- **Impact:** Directly supports Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7) and Climate Action (SDG 13) by reducing emissions.

Agriculture & Food (SDG 2, SDG 12, SDG 15)

- **Sustainable Farming:** Programs promoting organic farming, crop diversification, and water-efficient irrigation.
- **Food Security:** Public distribution systems and agri-tech startups address hunger and nutrition gaps.
- **Impact:** Advances Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), and Life on Land (SDG 15).

Manufacturing & Industry (SDG 9, SDG 12)

- **Green Manufacturing:** Adoption of energy-efficient processes, waste reduction, and circular economy practices.
- **Textiles & Automobiles:** Shifts toward eco-friendly fabrics and electric vehicles.
- **Impact:** Supports Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG 9) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12).

Urban Development & Infrastructure (SDG 11)

- **Smart Cities Mission:** Focus on sustainable housing, clean transport, and waste management.
- **Public Transport:** Metro expansions and EV adoption reduce urban pollution.
- **Impact:** Aligns with Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11).

Finance & Investment (SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 17)

- **Green Bonds:** India is among the top emerging markets issuing green finance instruments.
- **Inclusive Growth:** Microfinance and digital banking expand access to underserved communities.
- **Impact:** Promotes Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals (SDG 3)

- **Affordable Healthcare:** Expansion of telemedicine and generic drugs.
- **Public Health Programs:** Focus on maternal health, vaccination, and sanitation.
- **Impact:** Advances Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3).





Education & Technology (SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 9)

- Digital Learning: EdTech platforms democratize access to quality education.
- Gender Inclusion: Programs encouraging women in STEM fields.
- Impact: Supports Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), and Innovation (SDG 9).

Environment & Natural Resources (SDG 6, SDG 14, SDG 15)

- Water Management: Jal Jeevan Mission aims for universal access to clean drinking water.
- Marine & Forest Conservation: Efforts to protect biodiversity and reduce deforestation.
- Impact: Strengthens Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Life Below Water (SDG 14), and Life on Land (SDG 15).



India's sustainability landscape is industry-agnostic yet deeply interconnected with the SDGs. Each sector contributes uniquely — energy drives decarbonization, agriculture ensures food security, finance enables green growth, and urban development fosters livable cities. The challenge lies in bridging gaps in policy execution, financing, and technology adoption. With stronger collaboration among government, industry, civil

society, and global partners, India can accelerate its path toward achieving all 17 SDGs by 2030.

The journey indeed is promising but requires collective action. Sustainable Business demonstrate how business can drive renewable energy adoption and community development. However, bridging gaps in policy, finance, and technology will be critical. The future of sustainability in India depends on synergistic efforts

among government, industry, civil society, and global stakeholders. The race is not just about meeting targets; it is about redefining growth itself. By aligning national initiatives with the 17 SDGs, India can create a future that is inclusive, resilient, and equitable. The collective will of government, industry, civil society, and global stakeholders will determine whether India can truly lead the world in building a greener tomorrow.



GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

QUALITY EDUCATION

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



FROM CARE TO CAPABILITY: HOW PARTNERSHIPS ARE EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY FOR VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

• The Bridge India Correspondent

In any given day at Khushboo in Gurugram, progress is measured in moments. A young adult learning to use public transport independently. A child communicating needs through speech therapy after months of effort. A family slowly regaining hope after years of uncertainty about their child's future.

Across India, similar stories are also unfolding in rural and peri-urban communities where young people

are gaining access to skills, jobs, and financial independence through structured livelihood programmes. When institutions working on disability inclusion and economic empowerment intersect with corporate social responsibility commitments, the result is a more layered and sustainable pathway toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This convergence is reflected in the broader ecosystem shaped by

organisations like Khushboo and corporate partners such as MUFG Bank India.

Corporate Commitment to Inclusive and Sustainable Development

At MUFG Bank India, CSR is guided by the purpose of contributing to a brighter and more inclusive future. The bank's India CSR strategy aligns with its global sustainability commitments while responding to



India's social and environmental priorities.

The CSR work is built around three key pillars:

- **Climate-resilient communities**
- **Youth skilling and career readiness**
- **Health and disaster response**

The focus is not only on immediate support but on building long-term resilience by strengthening communities and equipping the next generation with relevant skills and opportunities.

The Human Reality: From Care to Capability

Khushboo addresses one of the most overlooked dimensions of development, disability inclusion. Since 1995, it has supported children, adolescents, and adults with intellectual and multiple disabilities through therapy, education, and life-skills training.

For families, this is often life changing. Access to therapy and structured education helps children develop communication, mobility, and daily living skills. At the same time, caregivers gain time and emotional stability, which often translates into improved household resilience.

Together, disability inclusion and livelihood security create a more complete development pathway, one that recognises that dignity, economic security, and social participation are interconnected.

Youth, Livelihoods, and the Pathway out of Poverty

MUFG's partnership with livelihood organisations such as SGBS Unnati Foundation reflects its focus on youth empowerment through market-linked skill development and employment pathways.

The programme focuses on:

- **Communication and workplace**

readiness Digital literacy

- **Soft skills and confidence building**
- **Market-relevant vocational training**

These programmes are particularly important because many vulnerable communities face structural barriers such as seasonal employment, skill mismatch with market demand, and lack of awareness about livelihood opportunities.

When implemented effectively, such programmes help reduce dependency on unstable wage work, improve employability, and support entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Women, Communities, and Collective Resilience

Evidence from livelihood programmes shows that women's collectives, self-help groups, and community institutions are





critical in reducing poverty and strengthening local economies.

Partnerships between community institutions, government programmes, and CSR initiatives help scale these impacts sustainably.

This aligns with the broader understanding that poverty reduction works best when income stability is combined with social protection, education, health services, and community support systems.

Policy Linkages: Translating Commitments into Ground Reality

NGO and CSR partnerships play an important role in strengthening the implementation of key national policy frameworks that promote inclusion, education, and livelihoods. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 provides a strong legal foundation for rights-based inclusion by guaranteeing equality, non-discrimination, accessibility in public spaces and services, and inclusive education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The law also promotes reasonable accommodation, barrier-free infrastructure, and equal participation across social and economic life.

These efforts are further supported by the National Education

Policy (NEP) 2020 and inclusive education frameworks, which emphasise early identification of disabilities, individualised learning support, teacher capacity building, assistive technologies, and accessible infrastructure to ensure that children with disabilities can participate meaningfully in mainstream education systems.

At the livelihood level, national skill development and livelihood missions focus on improving employability, building market-relevant skills, and creating pathways to sustainable employment for youth and vulnerable communities, supporting India's broader economic inclusion agenda.

Complementing these policy frameworks, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandate under the Companies Act, 2013 encourages eligible companies to invest at least 2 percent of their average net profits into social development sectors such as education, poverty reduction, healthcare, and environmental sustainability, creating opportunities for corporate participation in inclusive development initiatives.

Together, these policy frameworks and multi-sector partnerships help translate national commitments into tangible outcomes at the community level, strengthening

access to services, livelihoods, and social inclusion.

Looking Ahead: From Impact to Systems Change

The most visible outcomes of integrated livelihood and inclusion programmes are improved income stability, reduced distress migration, and better household planning. But equally important are intangible outcomes such as confidence, aspirations, and dignity.

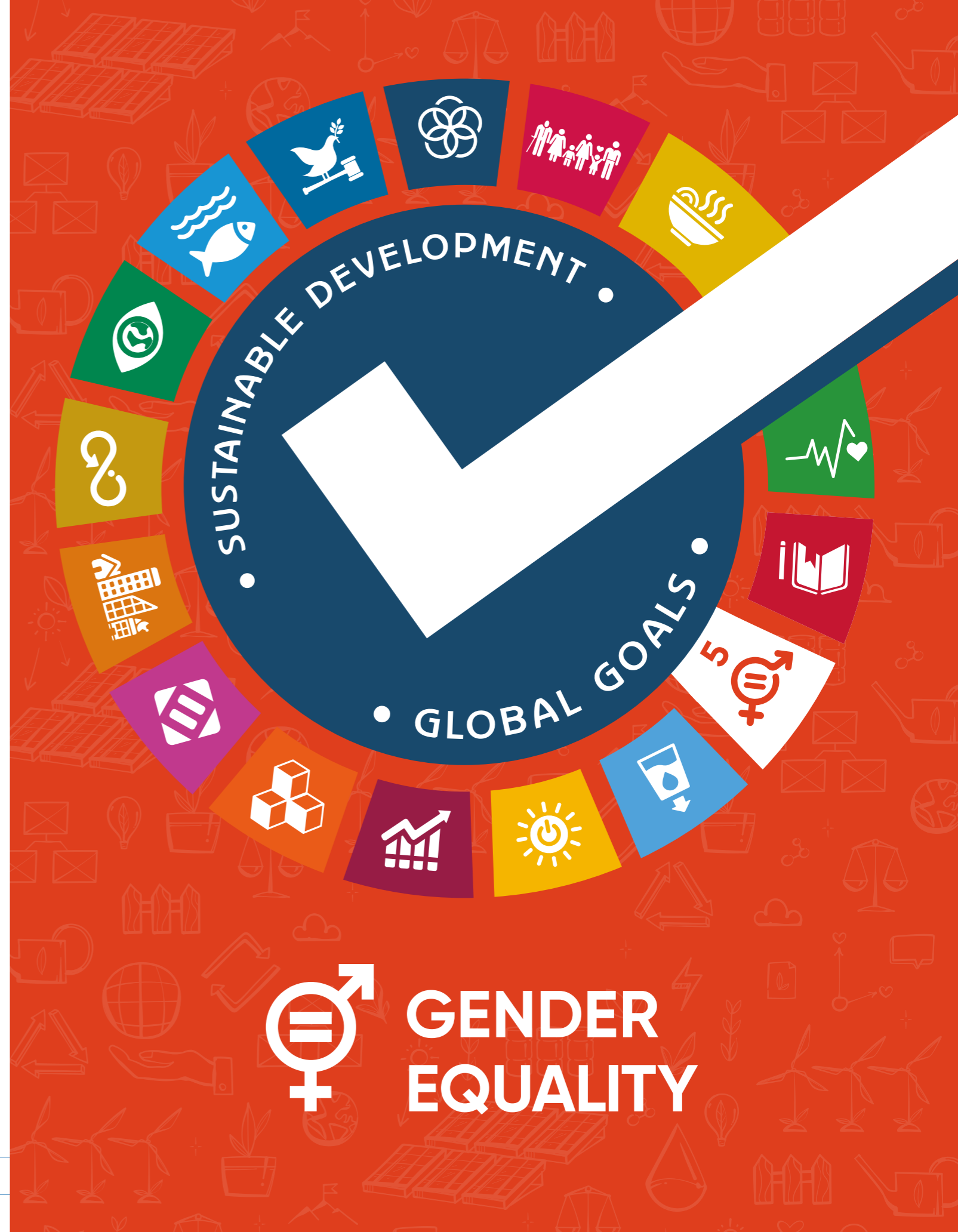
The future of inclusive development lies in partnerships where community organisations bring trust and ground knowledge, and corporate partners bring scale, resources, and systems thinking. Such collaborations also help strengthen last-mile delivery by connecting communities to social protection systems, skilling ecosystems, and local economic opportunities.

Together, these efforts help move development from project-based impact to long-term systemic change. When livelihoods, social security, education, and community support are strengthened together, the pathway to poverty reduction and social inclusion becomes more sustainable and resilient.

Together, such collaborations move India closer to a development model where no one is left behind, not in classrooms, not in workplaces, and not in communities.

SDG Alignment

<p>SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being</p> <p>Therapy, rehabilitation, and community care services improve physical and mental well-being.</p>	<p>SDG 4: Quality Education</p> <p>Inclusive education and skill development ensure learning continuity for vulnerable groups.</p>	<p>SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth</p> <p>Market-linked skilling and vocational training enable economic independence.</p>	<p>SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities</p> <p>Disability inclusion and livelihood access reduce structural marginalisation.</p>	<p>SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals</p> <p>CSR-NGO collaborations strengthen scale, resources, and sustainability.</p>
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HER FULL POTENTIAL UNLEASHED: IGNITING SDG 5 GENDER EQUALITY REVOLUTIONS

India's gender equality journey stands at a decisive crossroads – where progress meets persistent barriers. From workforce gaps and menstrual stigma to health and education challenges, SDG 5 demands bold, integrated action. Through ecosystem-driven initiatives and cultural transformation, changemakers are unlocking pathways for women to lead, learn, and thrive.

• The Bridge India Correspondent

India's women confront systemic exclusion. Female labor force participation reached 35.3% by December 2025 (PLFS), a historic high yet barely half men's rate. Meanwhile 27% of adolescent girls face menstrual stigma (NFHS-5), driving 23% puberty dropouts. Health vulnerabilities persist with maternal mortality at 97 per 100,000 live births and 39% reproductive misinformation. SDG 5 demands holistic breakthroughs. Evalueserve builds skills-health-infrastructure ecosystems serving 800+ villagers. Sachhi Saheli transforms silence into confidence revolution across 2,000-student schools. Questionnaire responses detail SDG 5 advancement plus SDG 3, 4, 8, 10 through comprehensive women's empowerment.

India's Multidimensional Gender Crisis

Gender inequality manifests through interlocking barriers. Economic

exclusion cripples potential: women comprise 48% population but only 35.3% workforce (PLFS 2025)—versus 82% men—trapping talent in unpaid care/domestic work. Cultural silence compounds damage: 27% adolescents endure menstrual stigma; 23% girls dropout during puberty (NFHS-5). Health gaps persist: maternal mortality 97/100,000; 39% women navigate reproductive misinformation. Infrastructure burdens fall heaviest on women: 68% rural households lose 2+ hours daily to water collection; inadequate sanitation drives absenteeism.

Single-issue interventions fail catastrophically. Skill programs falter without health stability; health camps ignore economic desperation; infrastructure alone cannot overcome stigma silencing girls. SDG 5 requires ecosystem transformation simultaneously addressing health burdens, cultural taboos, skill deficits, and daily drudgeries preventing women's economic agency.

Evalueserve: Comprehensive Women's Enablement Platform

Evalueserve rejects siloed CSR for integrated women's ecosystems recognizing economic independence demands health access, education continuity, infrastructure relief, skill acquisition. Vision extends beyond corporate walls to informal workforces, third-party support staff families, excluded communities.

Pehchan Economic Engine delivers scholarships, vocational training breaking intergenerational dependency. Targets third-party women, local communities with market-relevant employability creating income stability, self-reliance.

- **Inclusive Skilling:** Sarthak Foundation partnership trains women with disabilities confronting compounded exclusion through accessible job linkages, financial independence pathways.
- **Future-Proofing Girls:** STEAM laboratories with Max Vision

Foundation build analytical capacity among adolescent girls, strengthening STEM pipeline, economic prospects from primary level.

- **Health Architecture:** Arogya Program, One Stage mobile health units deliver maternal/pediatric care eliminating health-driven dropouts. Khushboo/Ekam Foundation collaborations provide therapeutic/medical support for children, reducing women's caregiving burdens enabling work/education participation.
- **Infrastructure Liberation:** Sehgal Foundation community drinking water facility serves 800 Aurangabad villagers, eliminating 2+ hour daily collection duties disproportionately burdening women/girls. Government school infrastructure upgrades create safe learning environments preventing dropout cascades.
- **Sustainability Framework:** NGO partnerships leverage grassroots execution; capacity-building prioritizes enduring skills over temporary aid; ESG/CSR governance ensures funding continuity; environmental initiatives (3,000+ NSG Campus tree plantations, water stewardship, CREATE Foundation farmer upliftment) enhance community resilience where women reside/work.

Sachhi Saheli: Cultural Permission Revolution

• **Sachhi Saheli attacks SDG 5's deepest root:** menstruation silence weaponizing biology against 27% adolescent girls. Founder Priya rejects confrontation for "true friend" storytelling methodology drawing lived experience, mythology, relatable vignettes. Audiences

laugh, connect, reflect defenses dissolve.

- **Attitude Transformation:** Initial sessions reveal discomfort (downcast eyes, nervous giggles) evolving to upright postures, cascading questions: "Is it okay to discuss? Ma'am, my issue..." Principals report "magic"; across 2,000-student schools demanding permanent Sachhi Saheli presence.

• **Systemic Ripples:** Mixed-gender workshops convert boys into allies. One session prompted onstage apologies: "We mocked out of ignorance; didn't grasp uncontrollable struggles". Home transformations profound: sons embrace mothers pledging daily support versus temple-cooking judgment.

• **Ecosystem Recalibration:** Student-only





sessions triggered teacher backlash ("not proper"). Strategic pivot prioritized educators: "It's safe to voice; world evolves." Parental "sanskaar" complaints yielded to "Sharam nahi, samajh chahiye" mantra (understanding over shame).

- **Experiential Disproof:** Pickle jar experiments (anonymous menstrual touch, nothing spoils); Mahawari Bhoj (28 menstruating women publicly cook wearing "Main Maahvaari Mein Hoon" aprons). Lived evidence dismantles "periods harm family" mythology rooted in misinterpreted Draupadi narratives.
- **Agency Architecture:** Attitude shift → accurate knowledge → informed choices. Girls author menstrual product decisions, health boundaries, personal narratives. Period Fest/ Pad Yatra transforms whisperers into stage leaders publicly celebrating cycles through dance, cake-cutting, cycle-day chants.

Strategic Complementarity: Ecosystem + Cultural Permission

- **Evalueserve liberates time/capacity:** Water facilities reclaim 2+ hours daily; mobile health prevents medical dropouts; STEAM labs await confident participants. Sachhi Saheli delivers cultural permission ensuring girls claim these opportunities.
- **Economic Synergy:** Pehchan scholarships gain traction when Sachhi Saheli confidence revolution motivates participation. Stigma-free women reject exploitative informal work for formal vocational pathways.
- **Health Multiplier:** Sachhi Saheli knowledge reduces Arogya no-shows; informed girls sustain

Evalueserve-enabled school attendance.

- **Norm Acceleration:** Sachhi Saheli converts male family members into Pehchan training supporters; teacher buy-in amplifies upgraded school utilization.
- **Scale Convergence:** Evalueserve infrastructure serves 800+ villagers; Sachhi Saheli transforms thousands across schools/communities. Combined reach creates virtuous cycles amplifying SDG 5 impact exponentially.

SDG 5 Realized Through Comprehensive Execution

Evalueserve and Sachhi Saheli shatter India's 27% stigma and 35.3% participation crisis through integrated action. Evalueserve infrastructure liberates 1200+ hours monthly from water collection. Sachhi Saheli converts

fearful silence into confident stage leadership.

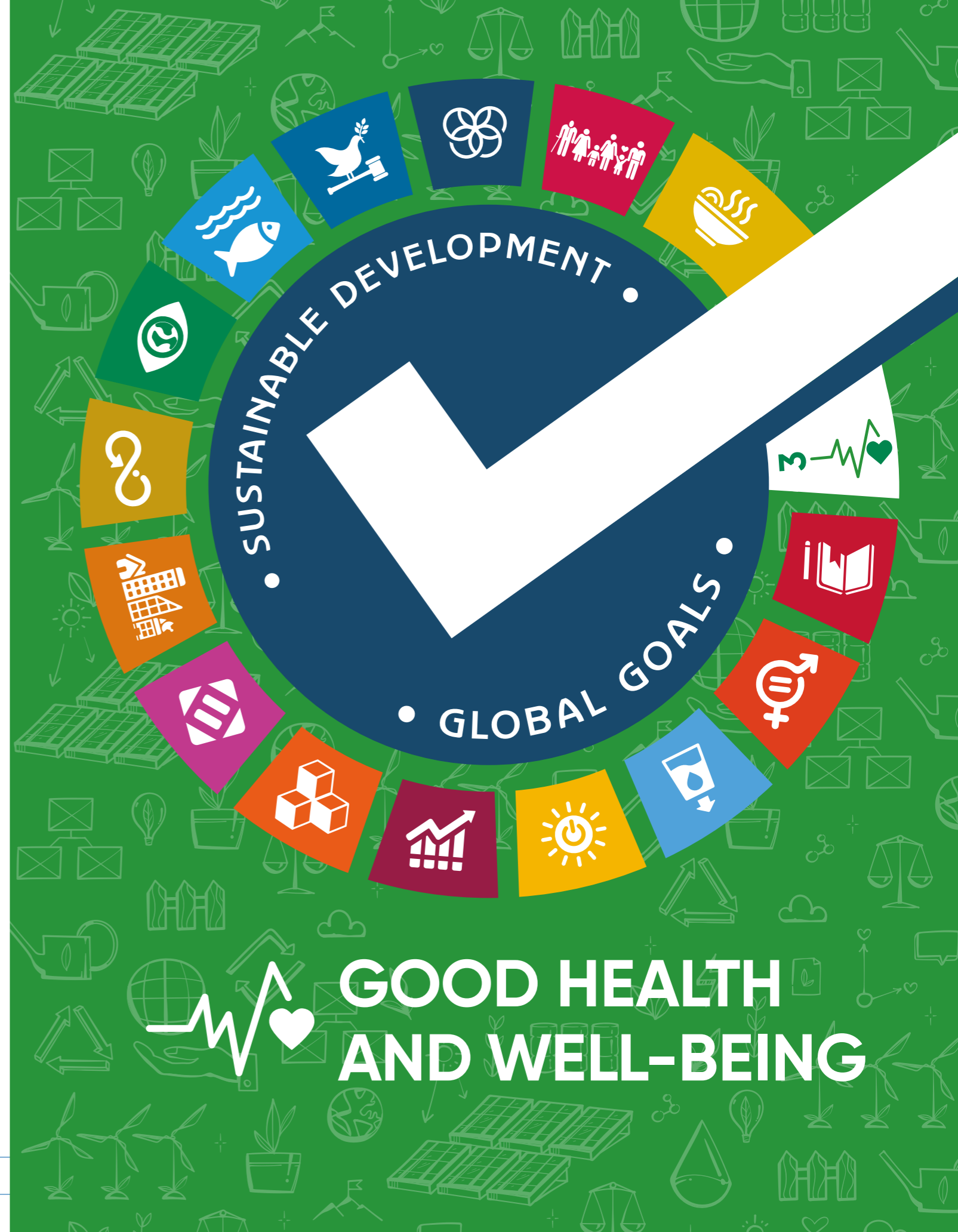
Pehchan scholarship recipients arrive empowered. STEAM laboratories welcome stigma-free analytical minds. Boys transform from mockers to family allies.

Mahawari Bhoj cooks replace water-fetching exhaustion. Period Fest dancers replace downcast classroom eyes. Third-party mothers emerge as first-generation earners. 800 Aurangabad villagers gain hydration while thousands gain dignity. Corporate ecosystem engineering combines with empathetic cultural disruption to deliver SDG 5 triumph.

Healthy bodies, skilled hands, and liberated voices mark true gender equality. India's women transition from silenced endurance to authored futures, proving comprehensive execution converts exclusion into empowerment at scale.

Cross-SDG Force Multiplier Effects

<p>SDG 3 Health Convergence:</p> <p>Mobile units + reproductive literacy reduce maternal morbidity 20-30%; informed choices prevent health crises.</p>	<p>SDG 4 Education Continuity:</p> <p>Infrastructure + stigma elimination cuts puberty dropouts 50%+; STEAM capacity builds future workforce.</p>	<p>SDG 8 Economic Agency:</p> <p>Pehchan skills convert 35.3% participation into dignified livelihoods with progression pathways.</p>
<p>SDG 6 Infrastructure:</p> <p>Water facilities serving 800 liberate women from drudgery; sanitation improvements reduce absenteeism.</p>	<p>SDG 10 Deepest Exclusion:</p> <p>Disability skilling + rural scholarships + migrant family support targets compounded vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>SDG 17 Partnership Architecture:</p> <p>Corporate funding + NGO execution + government school systems create sustainable scale.</p>



GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



HEALTHCARE AS EQUITY

A grounded look at SDG 3 through global responsibility and community-rooted action

• Swratmika Dubey

In many parts of the world, health is not a question of hospitals or doctors. It is a question of distance. Of whether clean water is available. Of whether information reaches people in time. Of whether systems are designed to notice those who live at the edges.

For families in remote villages, tribal belts, informal settlements, and disaster-prone regions, healthcare is often experienced as absence — a service too far away, too expensive, or too fragmented to rely on. This unevenness is not accidental. It is shaped by geography, infrastructure, social vulnerability, and the long shadow of neglect.

SDG 3 — Good Health and Well-Being — raises a difficult but important question: how can health outcomes stop depending on where a person is born or how visible they are to public systems? The answer lies not only in policy documents, but in how responsibility is shared and trust is built at the community level. The work of Sagility and the Northeast Centre for Equity Action on Integrated Development



(NEAID) shows two different, yet complementary, ways of moving toward this goal.

Health Inequality Is Rarely Just About Medicine

Health challenges in underserved communities rarely exist in isolation. Illness is often tied to unsafe water, poor sanitation, weak disaster preparedness, lack of awareness, and interrupted education. When systems fail to address these intersections, health becomes episodic — treated when it breaks down, rather than protected continuously.

This is particularly visible in regions where public infrastructure struggles to reach scale, and where communities face layered vulnerabilities. SDG 3, therefore, cannot be delivered through clinical care alone. It requires integrated approaches that understand health

as a lived experience, shaped by daily realities.

Sagility: Carrying Global Responsibility into Local Realities

Sagility's approach to healthcare-focused CSR begins with a simple but demanding principle: responsibility must be Global. Operating across India, the United States, Jamaica, the Philippines, and Colombia, the company recognises that global presence brings with it an obligation to respond meaningfully to local needs.

Inclusive access to healthcare is one of Sagility's core CSR pillars, and its initiatives are designed to support communities that sit beyond the easy reach of services — remote rural areas, underserved urban pockets, and populations with limited institutional visibility. Sagility anchors its work in local

partnerships with nonprofit organisations that understand community contexts deeply.

In India, this has translated into initiatives that support healthcare access and clean drinking water — two foundations without which health outcomes cannot improve. In the Philippines, Sagility's efforts have focused on elderly care and blood donation drives, responding to demographic and healthcare pressures. In the United States and Colombia, food insecurity has been addressed through food drives and sustained volunteering with food banks. In Jamaica, education, inclusion, and environmental initiatives reflect local priorities.

What holds these diverse efforts together is governance. Sagility's CSR is guided by a dedicated Sustainability Committee, strong ethical standards, and alignment

with SDGs and ESG frameworks. This ensures that initiatives are not reactive or symbolic, but designed for long-term impact.

Employee volunteering plays a crucial role here. When employees engage directly with communities, CSR moves beyond funding into relationship-building. Over time, this sustained engagement strengthens trust and ensures continuity — a critical factor in improving health outcomes in underserved settings.

Sagility's model shows that corporate responsibility, when anchored in local partnerships and accountability, can become a steady contributor to community well-being rather than a series of disconnected interventions.

NEAID: Health, Equity, and the Power of Being Present

Thousands of kilometres away from

corporate boardrooms, NEAID's work begins in classrooms, village meetings, sanitation drives, and disaster-prone communities across Northeast India. Founded in 2014 in Guwahati by Neeladri Bora and Merajuddin Ahmed, NEAID grew out of lived experience — of growing up amid gaps in education, healthcare, and sanitation that shaped life chances across the region.

Since 2017, NEAID has expanded its presence across tribal and rural areas of the Northeast, focusing on health determinants, WASH, quality education, STEM education for girls, disaster resilience, and whole-school transformation. For NEAID, health is inseparable from equity. It is not enough to deliver services; systems must respond differently to those starting from unequal positions.

The Northeast presents a unique development challenge. Geographic isolation, ethnic diversity, fragile infrastructure, and historically low donor attention have amplified vulnerabilities, particularly for women, children, and remote tribal communities. NEAID's integrated approach recognises that health outcomes improve only when education, sanitation, and resilience are addressed together.

Community trust is central to this work. NEAID builds relationships through consistent field presence and participatory programmes that place communities at the centre of decision-making. Initiatives such as STEM for girls, whole-school transformation, and community-led disaster preparedness are designed not just to deliver services, but to shift ownership.

The results are visible over time. Improved sanitation infrastructure and health awareness have reduced illness-related school dropouts. Girls' retention in schools has strengthened





where education and health interventions reinforce each other. In disaster-prone areas, preparedness has protected both health and livelihoods, preventing crises from cascading into long-term setbacks.

NEAID's partnerships further strengthen impact. Collaborations with government institutions — including the Jal Jeevan Mission, Bureau of Indian Standards, district education departments, and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan — help reinforce public systems. Partnerships with PSUs such as ONGC and Oil India, along with development agencies like UNICEF, allow proven models to scale without losing local relevance.

Two Approaches, One Shared Responsibility

Sagility and NEAID work in very different settings, but they share a common belief: real health equity comes from long-term, continuous

support, not one-off efforts. While Sagility contributes structure, strong systems, and global standards, NEAID brings deep local knowledge, community trust, and integrated action on the ground.

Across remote regions and underserved communities, healthcare often today depends on visibility, infrastructure, and trust. Through Sagility's globally governed CSR and NEAID's deeply rooted community action, this story explores how integrated, locally responsive systems advance SDG 3 by transforming access into lasting, more equitable real well-being.

Together, they illustrate what SDG 3 looks like when responsibility flows in both directions — from global to local, and from community to system.

Why SDG 3 Depends on Trust

Health systems succeed when people believe they will be there when needed. Trust is built when communities are seen, heard, and supported consistently. Whether through global corporations aligning responsibility with local needs, or grassroots organisations embedding health within everyday life, SDG 3 advances when care becomes reliable.

As 2030 approaches, progress cannot be judged by numbers alone, but by whether healthcare becomes more accessible and reliable for those who have long been left out.

When healthcare is treated as a basic right rather than a privilege, it strengthens dignity, stability, and opportunity.



PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS



FROM ₹50 TOILETS TO ENGINEERING GLORY: REDEFINING CHILD PROTECTION FUTURES

• The Bridge India Correspondent

India's 45,000 children lose parental care yearly, equivalent to 123 daily tragedies. Meanwhile 70,000 vulnerable families survive on ₹6-8K monthly incomes, one medical emergency from complete separation. By 2030, 40% urban population reaches 600 million people generating 70% new

jobs in cities completely unprepared for orphan influxes. Sustainable development fails when policies ignore Rani's reality. Does she complete 10th standard or clean toilets for ₹50 daily? Does she earn ₹25K corporate salary or face marriage rejection? Does her village celebrate her achievements or mourn her abandonment? Rapid

urbanization collides with median age 28 demographic dividend. Two-thirds working-age population demands skilled youth but safe childhoods remain in critically short supply. Orphanages destroy futures completely. 80% suffer permanent mental damage. 65% dropout before 10th standard. Zero belonging creates lifelong exclusion. SOS



Children's Villages builds 440 family homes across 22 states nurturing 5,000 children with SOS Mothers. KEI Industries constructs education-health-livelihood ecosystems around operational geographies. Civil society prevents family separation through protection systems. Industry creates destination jobs through capacity building. Their partnership converts 45K vulnerable childhoods into 70K resilient adulthood, proving SDG 16 institutional resilience emerges when family-based care systems connect to corporate opportunity pipelines. ₹25K livelihoods replace ₹50 despair when child safety nets feed directly into job creation ecosystems.

Strengthening Child Protection and Family-Based Care Systems

For over six decades, SOS Children's

Villages India has worked to ensure that children without parental care, or those at risk of losing it, grow up in safe and nurturing family environments. The organisation provides family-based alternative care, family strengthening, education, healthcare and youth development, creating a long-term continuum of care that supports children into independent adulthood.

Children today face multiple and interconnected protection risks including neglect, abuse, trafficking and family separation, often linked to poverty and crisis situations. Evidence shows that children grow best in family environments that provide emotional stability, belonging and consistent care. Community-based protection further strengthens local safety systems by enabling early risk identification and family support.

The organisation's focus goes beyond immediate protection to long-term life outcomes. Through education support, life skills and youth development pathways, children are supported to transition confidently into adulthood and economic participation.

Responsible Industry and the Role of Sustainable Corporate Citizenship

Alongside social sector leadership, responsible industry is playing an expanding role in enabling inclusive development. KEI Industries Ltd. integrates Sustainable Development Goals into its Corporate Social Responsibility strategy to ensure focused and sustainable social impact. CSR initiatives are aligned with priority development areas such as education, healthcare, livelihoods, water and sanitation, and environmental sustainability.

The company's CSR approach is guided by local need assessments, stakeholder consultations and long-term impact objectives. Special focus is placed on underserved communities, particularly those located around operational geographies, ensuring that interventions respond to real local development needs.

Across education, healthcare and livelihoods, CSR programmes focus on strengthening local capacities. By supporting access to education, preventive healthcare and skill development, these initiatives contribute to improved employability, health outcomes and economic stability, helping build resilient and self-reliant communities.

Complementary Roles in the SDG Ecosystem

Child protection lays the human foundation. SOS Children's Villages delivers family-based





Advancing SDGs Through Multi-Sector Contributions

The work reflected across these models aligns with several SDGs:

SDG 4 - Quality Education
Supporting continuous learning and future readiness.



SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth
Strengthening pathways for youth employability and economic participation.



SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities
Addressing structural vulnerabilities faced by children and underserved communities.



SDG 13 - Climate and Environmental Responsibility
Supporting environmental sustainability and resource conservation.



SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals
Highlighting the importance of multi-sector contributions to development outcomes.

care through 440 homes across 22 states, preventing the 80% mental damage and 65% dropouts typical of orphanages. This creates emotionally stable youth ready for education and employment - the essential starting point no economy can bypass.

Education and skills build opportunity pipelines. KEI Industries' classrooms, scholarships, and vocational programs target care leavers directly, converting protected childhoods into ₹25K corporate careers. When Rani chooses 10th standard over ₹50 toilet cleaning, these interventions make her engineering degree possible.

Responsible industry powers economic destinations. KEI's clinics prevent medical separations that orphan 123 children daily. Livelihood programs create factory team leader roles for once-neglected 12-year-olds. Water systems eliminate health crises that trigger abandonment. These aren't add-ons - they're the job ecosystems that give family care real meaning.

The multiplier effect scales nationally. 45K safe childhoods become 70K resilient adults when protection systems connect to corporate capacity. Civil society stops family breakdown; industry creates skilled employment. This SDG 16 architecture - Target 16.2 (end violence) + Target 16.6 (effective institutions) - converts daily tragedies into institutional triumph across India' urbanizing 600 million.

Independent efforts achieve scale only through deliberate connection. One sector cannot deliver what the ecosystem demands.

Embedding Sustainability Across Systems

As sustainability becomes central to long-term growth, responsible industry is integrating

environmental responsibility into operations and community initiatives. Efforts around energy efficiency, resource conservation and environmental awareness contribute to climate resilience and sustainable development pathways.

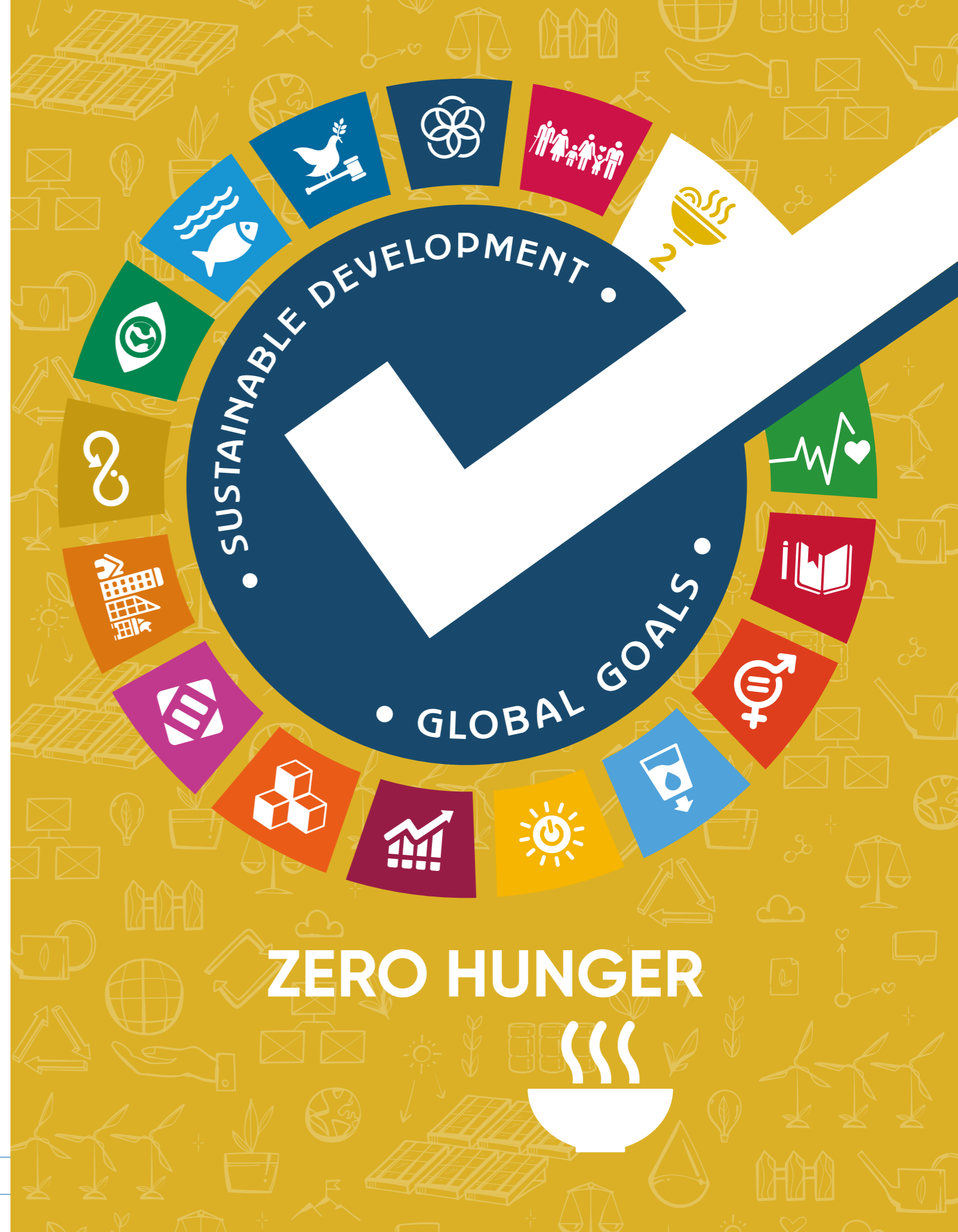
Innovation, digital tools and multi-stakeholder engagement further support scalable and sustainable development interventions aligned with SDG priorities.

45K Safe Childhoods ₹70K Resilient Adults

SOS Children's Villages and KEI Industries convert India's family breakdown crisis into institutional triumph. 440 SOS family homes nurture tomorrow's engineers across 22 states. KEI classrooms educate care leavers who once cleaned toilets for ₹50 daily. Corporate clinics prevent medical separations. Livelihood programs create job pipelines for transitioning youth. Water systems eliminate health crises triggering abandonment.

Transformation validated by SOS data: improved mental wellbeing through family-based support, youth skilling reaching 272 annually. Orphaned 8-year-olds graduate engineering college. Neglected 12-year-olds lead factory teams. Rural mothers witness SOS sons purchase family farmland. 22 states celebrate "Family Care to Foreman" success stories.

45K protected childhoods create 70K resilient adults. Child protection architecture plus corporate capacity building equals SDG 16 victory—Target 16.2 (end child violence) + Target 16.6 (accountable institutions) achieved at national scale. India's institutional revolution succeeds when family-based care feeds job ecosystems: one safe childhood becomes one skilled professional becomes one resilient community.





HUNGER'S ENDGAME: TECH MUSCLE POWERS INDIA'S SDG 2 SCHOOL MEAL REVOLUTION

• The Bridge India Correspondent



India's child malnutrition crisis remains stubborn despite decades of policy focus. Nearly 35 million children arrive at school hungry each day, faces drawn and minds dulled, setting off a chain reaction of absenteeism and failure. NFHS-5 data lays it bare: 43% of under-5s stunted from chronic undernutrition, 21% wasted by acute hunger—key drivers of dropout rates

that drain India's economy of \$46 billion yearly in lost productivity and human potential. Rural tribal belts like Jharkhand's forests and urban slums from Mumbai to Delhi bear the heaviest load, where household poverty traps families in brutal trade-offs: one square meal or a shot at schooling. Girls suffer most, pulled from class to fetch water or sibling-sit while brothers get priority. This vicious cycle locks entire communities

out of upward mobility, threatening the demographic dividend as 250 million youth hit working age by 2030. Enter a leading tech corporation and Akshaya Patra Foundation with their 12-year partnership, funding over 40,000 daily mid-day meals through PM POSHAN. They turn corporate operational muscle into tangible SDG 2 Zero Hunger wins, proving scale can rewrite national nutrition outcomes.

The Crisis in Sharp Focus

Akshaya Patra operates as the government's key implementing partner for PM POSHAN, the world's largest school feeding program. From 78 centralized kitchens across 16 states and 3 union territories, they deliver 2.35 million freshly cooked, nutritious meals daily to government and aided schools—reaching urban low-income zones, remote tribal hamlets, and everything in between. Their vision cuts clean: no child in India deprived of education because of hunger. Beyond mid-day meals, a Morning Nutrition Programme tackles early hunger with ready-to-eat snacks, ensuring kids arrive ready to learn rather than faint from empty stomachs.

The tech partner entered in 2013 with focused CSR commitment. They now sponsor meals for more than 40,000 children every school day, funding kitchen infrastructure that scales output while driving down costs—recent renewals support expansions hitting Asia Book of Records standards for meal volume and reliability. This isn't episodic giving. It's strategic investment in supply chains that mirror the corporation's core expertise in high-volume, high-precision operations.

Synergy That Scales Nationally

Picture the operation: massive centralized kitchens produce standardized, regionally adapted menus—pulses, millets, fortified rice, and vegetables aligned to ICMR nutritional guidelines—then dispatch via GPS-routed electric vehicles to 16,000+ schools. The corporate contribution brings enterprise-grade tools: predictive analytics for demand forecasting, real-time quality monitoring via IoT sensors, and zero-waste protocols that minimize spoilage to under 1%. Akshaya Patra layers on ground truths—menu tweaks for tribal preferences like

ragi or regional greens, crisis-resilient supply during monsoons or pandemics.

Outcomes stack up fast. School attendance rises 15-20% in covered districts; retention improves, especially for girls and first-generation learners who otherwise drop out to work. Over 5 billion lifetime meals served now correlate to better micronutrient intake, reduced stunting, and sharper classroom focus—-independent studies peg social return on investment at 4:1 when you factor lifelong health and earnings gains. In Assam kitchens funded by similar partners, classroom hunger

India's fight against classroom hunger is gaining momentum through a powerful partnership between technology and large-scale nutrition delivery. Corporate innovation and Akshaya Patra's kitchen model are transforming PM POSHAN, improving attendance, health outcomes, and learning readiness nationwide.

vanished, boosting learning readiness by double digits.

This model thinks long-term. Akshaya Patra's "TAPF Way" standardizes operations toward 80% FSMS-certified kitchens by 2030, with 100% smart facilities connected via IIoT. The tech angle accelerates it—solar-powered plants cut energy costs 30%, water recycling hits 50% reduction targets, and EV fleets aim for zero tailpipe emissions by 2033. Sustainability isn't bolted on; it's engineered in, ticking SDG 13 boxes alongside hunger eradication.

Metrics That Prove the Model

The numbers tell an undeniable story of impact and efficiency. The corporate partner funds over 40,000 child meals daily, enabling Akshaya Patra to reach 2.35 million children across 78 locations—an SDG 2 win that eliminates classroom hunger at scale. Infrastructure contributions drive sustainability through solar-powered kitchens and EV delivery fleets, targeting 50% water reduction by 2030 and zero tailpipe emissions, directly advancing SDG 13. Education outcomes shine brightest: nutrition funding translates to 15-20% attendance gains, cutting dropouts among marginalized girls and keeping first-generation learners in school for SDG 4 continuity. Cost efficiencies impress—meals delivered at just ₹1-2 per portion through optimized supply chains—making the model scalable to 3 million kids by 2030, while micronutrient fortification lays groundwork for SDG 3 health gains over time.

A Blueprint for Corporate India

This partnership redefines impact CSR. The tech firm's global toolkit—data analytics, process rigor, scalability—meets Akshaya Patra's lived expertise in Indian contexts: regional tastes, community trust, government sync. Others follow: Gemini Edibles upgrades EV fleets, Green panel funds Andhra districts, Cargill sets records. But this duo's decade-plus track record sets the pace—renewed commitments signal confidence in results.

For The Bridge India readers, the takeaway hits home. India's demographic dividend hinges on nourished kids. When corporates apply P&L discipline to social problems—iterative improvements, hard KPIs, relentless execution—hunger loses. Five billion meals served. A generation primed to build, not just survive. This isn't hope. This is hunger's endgame, won through tech muscle and kitchen grit.





**CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION**



**SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES**



WHERE WATER, PEOPLE AND CITIES MEET: EMERGING SDG PATHWAYS FROM AJMER AND JODHPUR

• **Dr. Rabi Raj, Dr. Anshuman Karol & Sowmia Philip**
Participatory Research in Asia, New Delhi

Sustainable development is often judged through policies, investments, and infrastructure. But its true value lies in whether it improves everyday life. It shows in whether children grow up healthy and safe, whether young people find opportunities, and whether communities can withstand climate and economic stress.

In India, achieving these outcomes requires strong institutions working together. Civil society organisations help strengthen inclusion and community capability. Public systems ensure service delivery and governance continuity. When these systems work in partnership, development outcomes become more durable and equitable.

This need is becoming more urgent as India undergoes rapid urban transformation. Cities are expanding quickly, driven by economic growth and a large working-age population moving into urban areas. While this creates opportunity, it also increases pressure on water systems, public spaces, and ecological resources. At the same time, climate risks such as extreme heat, flooding, and water

scarcity are intensifying. Sustainable urban futures therefore depend not only on infrastructure but also on collaborative governance and shared stewardship.

Within this changing landscape, an important question emerges: what happens when cities stop treating water bodies only as engineering structures and begin seeing them as shared urban commons?

In many cities, traditional water bodies once supported daily life, climate balance, and community identity. During a community interaction in Ajmer, an elderly resident shared, “Water here was not just water, it was part of our way of life”.

This reflects a broader reality. Rebuilding urban water systems today requires partnerships between communities, local governments, and knowledge institutions. At the centre of this approach is SDG 17, enabling progress across water security, resilient cities, climate action, and ecosystem restoration.

When Urban Planning Forgets Commons

Across Ajmer and Jodhpur,



AMC, PHED, WRD officials, residents, students, and volunteers join a clean-up drive at Malusar Bawdi, marking the start of community-led rejuvenation efforts.

communities described living with water paradoxes. Seasonal water scarcity during peak summers. Localised flooding during heavy rainfall. Loss of usable ecological public spaces. Gradual disconnection between people and shared natural resources.

These realities directly link to:

- **SDG 11.3 – Inclusive and participatory urban planning**
- **SDG 6.6 – Protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems**

Historically, water bodies were treated as technical assets managed by urban local bodies. While this approach focused on infrastructure, it often overlooked local ecological knowledge and community relationships with these spaces.

Over time, this resulted in ecological decline, reduced social ownership and increased maintenance challenges.

Partnerships as the Turning Point

The initiative, supported through partnerships facilitated by PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia), India, under the IIED collaboration framework, was designed as a partnership-led process rather than a conventional infrastructure project. Instead of beginning with engineering solutions, the work began by building relationships across institutions and communities. The approach recognised that sustainable urban water outcomes depend as much on trust, shared knowledge, and collective ownership as on technical design.

Three partnership pillars shaped the process. Communities were positioned as knowledge holders, carriers of cultural memory, and long-term stewards of water bodies. Urban Local Bodies functioned as planning and implementation systems, ensuring

alignment with city development priorities and public service delivery. Civil society organisations, particularly PRIA and its local partners, acted as connectors, facilitators, and knowledge translators, helping different stakeholders work together through a shared process.

This partnership model directly advances SDG 17.16 by strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration and advances the spirit of SDG 17.17 through operational partnerships. Within this framework, the mapping of 88 water bodies evolved beyond a technical documentation exercise. It became a shared language across stakeholders. The process enabled communities to articulate local ecological, cultural, and social realities, while also helping city systems recognise water bodies not just as physical assets, but as living urban ecosystems with social value

When Knowledge Translates into Action

As partnerships strengthened, knowledge gradually translated into collective action across multiple SDG areas. Community-led mapping processes brought forward the ecological, historical and cultural significance of urban water bodies, helping recognise them as part of the city’s natural and cultural heritage, aligning with SDG 11.4. At the same time, the active participation of youth and women in mapping exercises and basic water quality understanding strengthened local capacities and ownership, Supports capacity strengthening aligned with SDG 6.a intent.

Pilot rejuvenation efforts began through joint action between communities and Urban Local Bodies, demonstrating how collaborative governance can move from planning to implementation. As this work progressed, climate resilience outcomes began to emerge organically. Traditional water bodies started being recognised for their role as natural flood buffers and local temperature regulators, supporting SDG 13.1 by strengthening local adaptive capacity to climate risks. Simultaneously, efforts to restore water ecosystems contributed to improving local biodiversity and ecological balance, aligning with SDG 15.1 on ecosystem protection and restoration. Together, these actions showed how partnership-led local processes can generate interconnected development outcomes across water, climate, cities and ecosystems.

From Assets to Commons: The Real Transformation and Pathways to Scaled Urban Change

One of the most important shifts emerging from this process has





Meer Shah Bawdi (stepwell) TT College, Ajmer

been both institutional and social. Earlier, urban water bodies were largely seen as assets managed only by Urban Local Bodies. Through the partnership-led approach, this is gradually shifting towards shared stewardship, where communities, local groups and city systems together take responsibility for protection and upkeep. This shift is changing not only management practices but also how citizens relate to water bodies as

shared urban ecological spaces. The formation of Water Body Neighbourhood Groups is emerging as a potential long-term stewardship mechanism, supporting local monitoring, dialogue and awareness. This strengthens integrated urban resilience planning, aligning with SDG 11.b, while also Contributing to local evidence systems aligned with SDG 17.18 intent. During a mapping activity, a youth

volunteer captured this transition simply: *“Development becomes sustainable when people begin to see it as their own.”*

This shift reflects a deeper transformation, where urban water bodies are gradually being reimagined not just as infrastructure, but as shared commons sustained by people and institutions together.

At a broader level, these local processes are also supporting India’s national urban development priorities. India’s urban pathway is being shaped by missions such as AMRUT 2.0 and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban). While AMRUT 2.0 focuses on water security, water supply and water body rejuvenation, SBM (Urban) focuses on sanitation, waste management and behaviour change. Community-led ecological restoration complements these missions by strengthening long-term sustainability through local ownership, continuous monitoring and behavioural engagement, helping ensure that infrastructure investments translate into durable outcomes.

Ultimately, this journey reinforces the central role of SDG 17 as the enabling SDG. Urban water resilience is not built through projects alone. It is built through partnerships that reconnect people, place and policy. Ajmer and Jodhpur are emerging as living laboratories demonstrating how partnership-led approaches can accelerate progress across SDG 6 (Water), SDG 11 (Cities), SDG 13 (Climate) and SDG 15 (Ecosystems).

Because sustainable cities are not built only through infrastructure. They are built through shared responsibility, collective stewardship and long-term partnerships that make development both inclusive and resilient.

DISABILITY AND DIFFICULTY

A few take birth
Differently only to face troubles,
Only to run a race against
Will of their destiny
For them life is not a bliss
But a tough challenge
And they have to swim
Against the fast current
Of a deadly river ever and ever.
They are the martyrs of
The natural happiness
Which the mankind is
Bestowed with in general.
They are the ones
Who are not given a way,
But have to make their way.
Their determination and
Their pursuit is so honest
And so strong that
Even the negative will of
The Society proves to be insignificant.
Such super instances are Helen Keller
And that of Prof. Hawking.
There is no denial
As disability and difficulty
Are like hands and gloves,
But ardent flame of aspiration and struggle
Takes one to the highest success
Where there is no
Disability and no difficulty.

Writer: Sagar Parasri



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INCLUSION'S QUIET REVOLUTION: CORPORATE PRECISION, COMMUNITY DEPTH

• The Bridge India Correspondent

India's disability-employment gap runs deep and silent. Just 36% of persons with disabilities hold jobs amid 23% youth unemployment, per recent NSSO data. This traps talent in poverty cycles that cost billions in lost potential. Rural women and girls with disabilities face the cruelest barriers: crumbling rural clinics miles away, stigma-shuttered schools where teachers lack training, work worlds built without ramps or sign interpreters. Urban inaccessibility compounds it. Metro stations lack tactile

paths. BPOs remain blind to screen readers. This is not just exclusion. It is a national talent haemorrhage, sidelining 2.68 crore PwDs when India needs every mind for its 2030 leap. Amid this, Societe Generale Global Solution Centre channels CSR into professional inclusion, while CBM India Trust rebuilds systems from health to livelihoods. Together they illuminate SDG 4, 8, and 10 with clarity and resolve.

Barriers That Bind, Solutions That Free
CBM India Trust meets exclusion at

its roots, person by person, village by village. Their work spans eye and ear care, clubfoot correction, rehabilitation, assistive devices under SDG 3. Teacher training and community learning centers advance SDG 4. Self-help groups turn PwDs into livelihood leaders for SDG 8. Village adoptions create ownership. Local PwDs map barriers and lead clean energy installs (SDG 7). They form disaster response teams (SDG 13). Government Programme Management Units reshape schools and health posts. OPDs advocate at

Grama Sabhas. From SDG 1 poverty breaks via income collectives to SDG 11 barrier-free public spaces, they ensure PwDs shape their futures. PwDs act not as aid recipients, but community anchors who train peers and influence policy.

Across India's diverse landscape, Societe Generale Global Solution Centre anchors "Professional Inclusion" in its CSR core. They back vocational pathways through partners like SGBS Unnati: market-relevant trades from retail to ITES, digital literacy, soft skills, placement pipelines targeting marginalized youth. This includes PwDs, women, rural voices. Safe learning spaces with assistive support and mentoring transition trainees to stable jobs. Internal DEI includes employee volunteering and sensitization workshops. This extends equity from Bengaluru campuses to remote districts. Retention follow-ups cement gains with post-placement counseling. Skills turn into lasting dignity and ₹15-25k monthly realities.

Impact in Parallel Motion

Both approaches converge on transformation, each amplifying the other's reach. CBM restores health first. Clubfoot correction frees mobility. Vision centers integrated into PHCs catch issues early. They then build education bridges with inclusive curriculums and livelihood collectives where PwDs secure market access. Societe Generale scales employability: structured curriculums with employer tie-ups, life skills that land jobs, digital tools for low-vision users. A visually impaired youth gains CBM rehab, enters trained teacher classrooms, then corporate-backed BPO training with JAWS software. Another, hearing-impaired, builds tailoring skills through Unnati models and joins CBM self-help networks for bulk orders. This brings ₹20k

monthly and lifts families.

Results speak volumes. CBM schools see 25% retention jumps for disabled children. Their groups sustain post-project leadership, training 500+ peers yearly. Societe Generale programs deliver holistic readiness. They achieve 70% placement rates and confidence that endures beyond first pay checks. SROI compounds at 5:1: health restored, wages flowing, welfare eased as families climb out. Stigma retreats through joint awareness camps. Accessibility rises via barrier-free audits, retrofitted training halls, tactile signage. Together, these threads weave equity. SDG 10 inequalities reduce. SDG 5 gender gaps narrow for PwD women heading enterprises. SDG 11 sustainable communities emerge where ramps become standard.

Economically, each PwD employed adds ₹3-5 lakh to GDP annually. Communities gain self-sustaining groups that negotiate loans and market produce. Nationally, this honors 2.68 crore PwDs under RPWD Act. It accelerates SDGs through ASSOCHAM dialogues, Grama Sabha advocacy, CSR platforms where metrics persuade funders. Challenges like persistent stigma, remoteness, skill mismatch yield to layered responses: community camps blending awareness with mock interviews, organic farming collectives for rural PwDs, policy nudges embedding inclusion in state skilling missions.

Metrics That Echo Progress

Impact reveals itself clearly across fronts. CBM tailors livelihood skills to disabilities. Examples include prosthetics training and sign-led enterprises. They build self-help leadership, driving SDG 8 growth while slashing SDG 1 poverty through collective incomes. Their

rehab and teacher programs lift SDG 4 retention 25% and SDG 10 equity for the vulnerable. Societe Generale's vocational streams secure 70% job placements with six-month follow-ups. They pair inclusive learning environments for SDG 4 and reduced inequalities via SDG 10 access for 500+ batches yearly. Over 1,000 PwDs lead groups annually. Sustainable incomes replace aid dependency. Health gains come under SDG 3 via integrated PHCs. Gender progress shows in SDG 5 as women access clean energy livelihoods. Return metrics shine: ₹4-6 earned per CSR rupee, villages with 30% PwD employment vs national 36%, scalable models adopted by five state governments.

A Shared Horizon

Societe Generale's global rigor includes data-driven KPIs and scalable training ecosystems. It stands shoulder-to-shoulder with CBM's grassroots mastery: OPD-led models, multi-sector depth, systemic change rooted in lived experience. Like skilling stories that activated youth potential, these initiatives turn exclusion into vital contribution. They prove inclusion multiplies when precision meets purpose.

The truth lands simply yet powerfully. India's rise demands every voice, every hand. When corporate clarity meets community wisdom, precise yet profound, vast yet intimate, barriers fade to memory. Thousands thrive with purpose. Villages awaken to shared strength. Dignity becomes default, not exception. Here, inclusion emerges not as effort, but as the natural order restored. Equity stands proven, not promised. Families heal across generations. A nation's potential unlocks fully. Youth step forward as leaders. Communities stand resilient together.





WHEN IDENTITY BECOMES OPPORTUNITY: LESSONS FROM IRA SINGHAL'S INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Ira Singhal, IAS officer in conversation with Neilam R Jyneil reflects on what inclusion truly looks like beyond policies and promises – not as a distant development goal, but as a lived, everyday practice shaped by empathy, ethics, and action. Sharing stories from her years in public service, she reminds us that real change often begins with small, human decisions that quietly transform lives and systems alike

For Ira Singhal, inclusion has never been a distant idea. It is real, personal, and visible in everyday life. For her, inclusion is not built only in government files; it is built in offices, schools, streets, and human relationships. It is shaped by small decisions that carry deep meaning.

When Singhal reflects on her years in public service, she does not talk in heavy policy language. Instead, she remembers moments - simple actions that changed lives.

One such moment came in 2018, when she organised special Aadhaar enrolment camps for transgender persons. This community had been excluded for years, not just socially, but also administratively. Without identity documents, many transgender individuals could not access basic services like healthcare, education, or welfare schemes.

Singhal explains that many transgender persons are forced to leave their homes early in life due to rejection and discrimination. Without family support, they often lose proof of address, schooling records, or official identification. In such

situations, identity itself becomes a barrier to dignity and survival.

What stayed with Singhal was not just the success of the Aadhaar camps, but what happened years later. At an inclusion event, some members of the transgender community recognised her and thanked her. They told her that the Aadhaar camp had given them more than just documents — it had given them a sense of belonging. For the first time, they felt seen by the state as citizens, not outsiders.

This deeply moved Singhal. It led her to take a stronger step - she decided to employ transgender persons in her own office. But she made a thoughtful choice about their placement. Instead of assigning them to back-end jobs where people would not notice them, she placed them at the front desk.

This was a quiet but powerful change.

In society, transgender persons are often treated as vulnerable- people who must ask for help or charity. Singhal wanted to change this narrative. By placing them at the front desk of an SDM office, she put them in a position of authority

and respect. Citizens coming in for important documents had to interact with them professionally and politely.

For many people, this was their first experience meeting a transgender person in an official role. Without lectures or speeches, prejudice was challenged simply through presence.

For Singhal, inclusion could not be symbolic. It had to be real, visible, and structural.

Her thoughts on development go beyond gender. She believes that while governments create policies and big plans, they cannot reach every family, every child, or every small community need. This is where civil society and the corporate sector must step in- not as outsiders, but as partners in development.

She often says that development is not always about massive projects. Sometimes, it is about simple things, like identifying fifty children who need a dance teacher, or arranging self-defence training in schools so girls feel safer and more confident. These small efforts may not make headlines, but they shape lives.

At the heart of Singhal's vision is



education. She believes education is the foundation of everything like opportunity, equality, confidence, and growth. When children learn, societies grow stronger.

But she also stresses that education cannot succeed without empowering women. If women are held back, entire generations suffer. Mothers are the first teachers of children, and when mothers are denied opportunities, their children also lose out.

Above all, Singhal believes in ethics.

For her, leadership is meaningless without integrity. Power must be

A reflection by Ira Singhal on ethical governance, transgender dignity, and why real inclusion is built through everyday institutional choices that shift power, respect, and opportunity.

guided by honesty, compassion, and responsibility. True leadership is not about authority, it is about

doing what is right, even when it is difficult.

Through her work, Ira Singhal reminds us that the Sustainable Development Goals are not just global promises made in big conferences. They come alive in everyday places - in government offices, classrooms, neighbourhoods, and human interactions.

Inclusion happens in small choices: who we respect, who we listen to, who we give a chance, and who we leave behind. And in those choices, we shape the future of our society.





JYOTI MHAPSEKAR AND THE MAKING OF A QUIET URBAN REVOLUTION



How one woman turned invisible labour into collective power, and reshaped the future of urban inclusion.

• **Swaratmika Dubey**

Jyoti Mhapsekar is always smiling. It is not a smile meant to soften difficult truths. It is the steady, unassuming smile of someone who has spent a lifetime believing in the power of people — especially women — to shape their

own futures. It carries patience, resilience, and the quiet confidence of work that has endured.

Long before “inclusive cities,” “circular economies,” and “climate justice” entered policy vocabulary, Jyoti was already organising women at the margins of urban life — waste pickers whose labour kept cities running even as society chose not to see them. She understood early on that cities function not only through infrastructure, but through invisible hands that sort, clean, recycle, and sustain daily life.

By training, Jyoti is a professional librarian. By instinct, she is a cultural activist and an internationally recognised playwright. In 1975, she co-founded Stree Mukti Sanghatana

(SMS), a women’s organisation that would go on to shape feminist thought and grassroots organising across Maharashtra and beyond. For Jyoti, culture was never separate from change; it was a doorway into deeper social transformation.

Her play *Mulgi Zali Ho* (A Girl Is Born) became one of the most influential feminist productions of its time. Performed across India and internationally, and translated into multiple languages, it confronted gender violence, discrimination, and women’s rights with urgency. The play seeded awareness and solidarity — but for Jyoti, the stage was only the beginning. The real work had to unfold in neighbourhoods, streets, and workplaces.



That belief took concrete form in 2001, when she took voluntary retirement from a reputed college library and devoted herself fully to grassroots organising. Under her leadership, SMS launched *Parisar Vikas*, a neighbourhood development programme that would go on to redefine dignity as livelihood.

Parisar Vikas began with listening. SMS workers met women where they worked — near garbage bins, along streets, inside housing colonies — learning not only about hardship, but about knowledge. Waste pickers understood their cities intimately: what was discarded, how it moved, what could be reused. What they lacked was recognition, security,

and collective strength.

Over time, more than 5,000 waste pickers, most of them women, were organised into self-help groups, cooperatives, and federations. This was not charity. It was transformation through structure.

Through *Parisar Vikas*, over 1,000 women were trained in composting, biomethanation, and alternative livelihood skills, shifting waste work from informal survival to organised, community-led enterprise. The programme has since grown into three federations and ten cooperatives, demonstrating that environmental responsibility and women’s empowerment can grow together.

These women were no longer

isolated workers navigating hostile systems alone. They became *Parisar Bhaginis* — organised collectives negotiating with housing societies and municipalities, running decentralised waste management systems, and advocating for segregation and composting long before policy caught up.

At the heart of Jyoti’s approach lies a belief both simple and radical: visibility creates power. Once labour is seen, it can be valued. Once women are organised, they can negotiate. Once systems exist, dignity follows.

Her work aligns naturally with multiple Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) becomes real when women gain economic agency and collective voice. SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) takes shape through decentralised, community-led waste systems. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is realised when labour once dismissed is organised, protected, and respected.

Recognition has followed impact. Jyoti Mhapsekar is an Ashoka Fellow and a recipient of the *Nari Shakti Puraskar*, India’s highest civilian honour for women. Yet these accolades do not define her legacy.

Her impact is visible in practical change — in women who now earn a stable income, participate confidently in public life, and are recognized for their work in the city. It is also visible in systems that continue to operate long after individual projects conclude.

Jyoti Mhapsekar did not focus on individual success alone. She built collectives and institutions that made every day work more secure and visible.

And she did it with a smile — and an unshakeable belief that no woman should ever remain unseen.





THE RIGHT TO BELONG: SUNITA SANCHETI AND NEENU KEWLANI REWRITE INDIA'S ACCESSIBILITY STORY

From hostile streets to shared spaces, two women insist that inclusion must be built into India's blueprint

• Swaratmika Dubey

In India, disability is often discussed in two familiar tones - sympathy or inspiration. What is spoken about far less is access: who can enter a building without help, who can cross a road safely, who can take public transport without planning every step-in advance. For Sunita Sancheti and Neenu Kewlani, disability has never been about personal limitation. It has always been about how cities, systems, and public spaces are designed - and who they quietly leave out.

Sunita Sancheti was sixteen when a spinal injury changed how she moved through the world. What followed was not a struggle to adjust to her body, but a long confrontation with her surroundings. Streets ended without pavements. Government buildings had stairs but no ramps. Buses passed by without space to board. Daily reminders that the world had been built with a narrow idea of who belonged.

For Sunita, this was never a personal tragedy. It was a design failure. Over time, this understanding shaped her work as an accessibility expert and disability rights advocate. She began asking a simple question that most planners never do: who are our cities designed for? And just as importantly, who is missing from that design?

Her answer has remained consistent. Accessibility is not charity. It is infrastructure. A ramp added as an afterthought does not mean inclusion. True access exists only when people with disabilities are considered at the planning stage - when buildings, transport systems, workplaces, and public spaces are designed to be used by everyone from the start.

Neenu Kewlani's life reflects this truth from another angle. She contracted polio when she was just nine months old and has lived with a locomotor disability all her life. For her, barriers appeared early and stayed constant. School was difficult, not because learning was hard, but because reaching classrooms was. Work meant constant negotiation - which offices could she access, which opportunities were realistically open to her?

Healthcare, something most people take for granted, was also shaped by access. Clinics with narrow entrances. Hospitals with steps but no alternatives. Medical visits that required planning around architecture rather than health. Over time, Neenu understood something deeply: in India, disability is rarely just about the body. It is about the world outside the body.

Her daily life, like that of millions of Indians with disabilities, was shaped by one quiet question - will this place allow me in?

This is where Sunita and Neenu's work meet. Not in motivational storytelling, but in firm insistence. Both are part of a growing movement that reframes accessibility as a matter of rights and citizenship. India has laws and guidelines. Public buildings are meant to be accessible. But on the ground, ramps are too steep, elevators don't work, and accessible toilets are locked or unusable. Inclusion exists

more comfortably on paper than in practice.

What they challenge most strongly is the idea of "special access." A different entrance. A separate arrangement. A workaround. Their vision is simpler and far more powerful - shared spaces. Cities where everyone enters through the same door. Systems where participation does not require explanation, assistance, or permission.

Sunita Sancheti and Neenu Kewlani are redefining accessibility in India – not as charity, but as infrastructure and citizenship. Through advocacy, design thinking, and lived experience, they challenge hostile streets, inaccessible buildings, and exclusionary systems that limit freedom. From adaptive fashion to inclusive urban planning, their work pushes cities toward shared spaces where everyone belongs, moves freely, and participates with dignity – reshaping India's blueprint for truly inclusive growth.

They ask questions that expose the problem clearly. Can you attend a public event without mapping every step beforehand? Can you take a cab without paying extra because only a few vehicles are accessible? Can you enter a workplace, a college, a mall, or a hospital without depending on someone else? These are not symbolic questions. They define freedom.

Sunita's advocacy also extends

into areas people rarely associate with accessibility, such as clothing. Fashion systems assume only one kind of body. Buttons, zippers, tight fits - these designs often make dressing impossible without help. Adaptive clothing challenges that assumption. Magnetic closures, seated-friendly tailoring, and functional designs allow people to dress independently. This is not about appearance. It is about autonomy, the ability to step out into the world on one's own terms.

Neenu's work highlights how access directly affects livelihoods and participation. Jobs are lost not because skills are missing, but because offices are unreachable. Medical care is delayed because hospitals are inaccessible. Social life shrinks because public spaces exclude. These are not isolated problems. They are patterns created by neglect.

Through platforms such as ADAPT & EKANSI and broader disability rights networks, voices like Sunita's and Neenu's are steadily changing the conversation. Accessibility is not about kindness. It is about fairness. It is about recognising that cities, economies, and public systems fail when they work only for some.

Their work speaks directly to the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals -SDG 10 on reducing inequality, SDG 11 on inclusive cities, and SDG 8 on decent work. Not as distant frameworks, but as everyday realities that must be built into how India functions.

Because this fight was never just about ramps.

It was always about freedom - freedom to move, to work, to participate, to belong without negotiation.

And until that freedom becomes ordinary, the work of redesigning India remains unfinished.





WATER, DIGNITY, AND THE SYSTEMS THAT SUSTAIN US

A grounded look at sanitation, forests, and shared responsibility

• Swratmika Dubey

In many parts of India, water is not just a resource. It is a question of access, safety, dignity, and survival. It moves through public toilets in crowded tourist cities, through rivers that sustain villages, and through forests that recharge groundwater. Whether water protects people or harms them depends less on nature alone and more on how systems are designed, who is included, and who is left out.

For families in urban settlements, heritage towns, remote villages, and forest fringes, water is often experienced as uncertainty. It may be unavailable, unsafe, or poorly managed. This unevenness is shaped by weak infrastructure, environmental degradation, and long-standing neglect rather than chance.

Global development goals place water and sanitation at the centre of human wellbeing. Yet their success does not rest only on policy or targets. It depends on how responsibility is shared between governments, companies, communities, and environmental organisations. The work of iRam Technologies, known as Spire, and the conservation group FORREST illustrates two distinct but deeply connected ways of protecting water, dignity, and the future.

Spire and the idea of sanitation as social infrastructure

Spire - a social infrastructure company believes public toilets are not merely utilities. They shape who feels safe in public spaces, who can travel freely, and who is treated with respect.

Across India's tourist sites, bus terminals, and heritage monuments, sanitation has long been treated as secondary. Dirty or broken toilets push women, elderly people, and children away from public spaces. When people avoid these places, local vendors lose business, cities feel unwelcoming, and inequality deepens.

Spire built its model around this reality. Its Clean Safe Reliable toilets are designed to reduce disease through touchless systems, better ventilation, and constant monitoring of hygiene.

Ammonia sensors keep air quality within safe limits, and clean drinking water is integrated into facilities, recognising that sanitation and safe water must go together.

Water efficiency is central to their design. While conventional toilets use around eight litres per flush, Spire uses about three and a half litres. Across thousands of daily users, this saves millions of litres of water at crowded sites. Small bio-digesters convert waste into nutrient-rich slurry that can nourish gardens around monuments instead of polluting the soil.

Technology makes the system dependable. Sensors track footfall, odour levels, and water availability in real time. Cleaning happens only when needed, ending what Spire calls "blind cleaning." Water tanks are monitored so taps do not run dry, a problem many people have experienced in public toilets.

Spire also makes a strong economic case for sanitation. According to the World Bank, every ninety rupees spent on sanitation returns about four hundred and ninety-five rupees in avoided health costs and productivity losses. In simple terms, clean toilets save lives, money, and working days. Their model treats sanitation as both a health investment and an economic one.

Their work recognises that sanitation is closely tied to gender and accessibility. Lack of clean menstrual hygiene spaces keeps many women away from public places. Spire estimates that providing safe facilities can increase female participation in tourism spaces by up to fifteen percent.

For elderly and differently abled visitors, accessible washrooms with ramps, handrails, and emergency systems make public spaces usable again. Spire suggests this could increase senior citizen participation in tourism by five to eight percent, a group that represents significant spending power.

In tourist hubs, better sanitation quietly strengthens local economies.

When visitors stay longer because facilities are clean, small shopkeepers benefit from additional sales of water, snacks, souvenirs, and guide services. In this way, water management inside a toilet connects directly to livelihoods outside it.

Spire is now targeting major tourism clusters such as the Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Konark, Charminar, and Goa's forts, which together receive more than two and a half crore visitors every year. Their argument is simple. Poor toilets damage India's global image, while clean, smart sanitation strengthens the "Incredible India" brand.

FORREST and water at its source

If Spire works where water is used, FORREST works where water is born. FORREST does not see forests as collections of trees. They see them as living water systems. Healthy forests absorb rain, recharge groundwater, prevent floods, and stabilise rivers. When forests are degraded, droughts intensify, wells run dry, and villages struggle.

Every restoration project begins with careful study of soil, water flow, plant species, habitat connectivity, and local community dependence on natural resources. FORREST avoids blanket tree planting. Instead, they restore forests that truly belong to each region's ecology.

Even with the popular Miyawaki method, they insist that forests are not gardens. A real forest must support birds, insects, pollinators, reptiles, and mammals that depend on stable water and soil conditions. Planting without understanding water cycles can harm more than it heals.

Their impact is visible in revived watersheds, healthier soils, and stronger biodiversity. Where forests recover, water retention improves, local streams become more reliable, and wildlife corridors reconnect fragmented landscapes.

Community participation lies at the

heart of their work. Villagers are treated as guardians, not labourers. Youth and women are trained in monitoring, nurseries, seed collection, and conservation. Over time, people begin to see restored forests as part of their own future rather than as an outside project.

Restoration is slow. It can take five to seven years or more before visible change appears. Many funders want quick results, but FORREST believes patience is essential to ecological healing. Nature does not follow quarterly timelines.

As climate pressures grow, their focus is increasingly on reviving watersheds, improving soil moisture, and connecting fragmented forest patches. They believe that isolated green patches cannot sustain water or wildlife, but connected landscapes can.

Their future plans include deeper ecological monitoring of soil, water, and biodiversity, along with stronger community stewardship through youth and women-led conservation groups and local livelihood links such as eco-tourism and native plant nurseries.

Trust, care, and shared responsibility

Water systems succeed when people trust them. Trust is built when communities feel seen, when infrastructure works reliably, and when forests are protected rather than exploited.

Whether through smart sanitation in cities or ecological restoration in forests, real progress happens when responsibility flows in both directions. From companies to communities. From communities to landscapes. From governments to citizens.

As the world moves toward 2030, success will not be measured only in statistics. It will be measured by whether water becomes safer, more reliable, and more equitable for those who have long been left out.

When water is treated as a shared lifeline rather than a utility, it strengthens dignity, health, and opportunity for everyone.





CSR SECTOR DIGEST INDIA (2025–2026)

Development Happenings chronicles the pulse of the sector—grassroots NGO action, evolving CSR commitments, and policy decisions shaping India’s development narrative.

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India is entering a maturity phase. The year 2025, and so far in 2026, marked a decisive phase for India’s CSR ecosystem. Beyond incremental spending trends, this period saw judicial interventions and policy signals converge, redefining CSR from a compliance obligation into a rights-

aligned, development-oriented responsibility, closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The question is no longer whether companies spend 2%, but how strategically, equitably, and responsibly that 2% is deployed. With courts reinforcing social and environmental duties, and policy incentivising alignment with national priorities, CSR is increasingly becoming a force multiplier for India’s SDG journey.

CSR Sector Digest | India (2025–2026)

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Here’s a Snapshot of milestone judgements and policy changes that are redefining India’s 2030 journey:

Judicial

- “Menstrual health is a matter of dignity and a constitutional obligation of the State.” **Supreme Court judgment (2026)**
- “Punishment for acid attacks must

reflect the gravity of the crime and the dignity of survivors.”

Supreme Court stance on victim justice (2026)

- “Corporate Social Responsibility is not charity. It carries constitutional and environmental duties.” **Supreme Court of India (2025)**

- “Environmental protection and ecology are inseparable from corporate responsibility.” **Supreme Court observation linking CSR to climate and biodiversity (2025)**

- “Protection from the adverse effects of climate change is part of the right to life.” **Supreme Court, recognising climate justice as a fundamental right (2025)**

- “Mental health is integral to the right to life and dignity.” **Supreme Court ruling (2025)**

- “True equality at the workplace is impossible without disability inclusion.” **Supreme Court, disability rights and corporate responsibility (2025)**

Policy & Budget

- “CSR must move from cheque-writing to capability-building.” **Policy signal emerging from Budget 2026–27**
- “Skilling and vocational training are national priorities, and CSR has a critical role to play.” **Union Budget 2026–27 direction**
- “CSR is increasingly positioned as a partner to public policy, not a parallel effort.” **Post-Budget 2026–27 policy discourse**

KEY DATA POINTS

CSR spending by Central Public Sector Enterprises rose over 30% in FY 2024-25, reaching a record high.

183 CPSEs collectively spent over ₹6,400 crore on CSR in FY 2024-25.

Skilling and employability emerged as priority CSR sectors post Budget 2026-27, supported by proposed tax incentives.

Environmental sustainability and biodiversity are now judicially linked to CSR obligations, not optional focus areas.

Health-focused CSR now extends beyond infrastructure to dignity-based concerns - mental health and menstrual health included



Our Past Issues

These issues reflect the evolution of our magazine, featuring pivotal stories and insights.



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eMagazine Volume 6 Issue 2



eMagazine Volume 5 Issue 4



eMagazine Volume 5 Issue 3



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



OUR DELIVERABLES

Empowering Social Impact Through Tailored Solutions

For Responsible Business Houses

-  Identification & Partnership with credible NGOs
-  Need Assessment
-  Baseline and Endline Surveys
-  Monitoring & Evaluation of CSR Projects
-  Impact Study

For NGOs

-  Identification of Corporates
-  Proposal Development
-  NGO Empanelment
-  Capacity Building
-  Develop & Implement Fundraising Strategy
-  Need Assessment


**Driving Impactful CSR,
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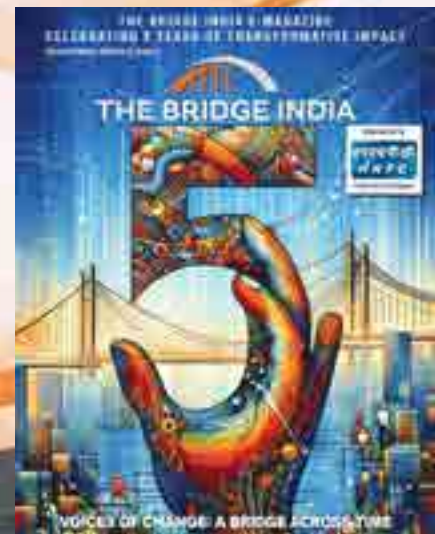
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