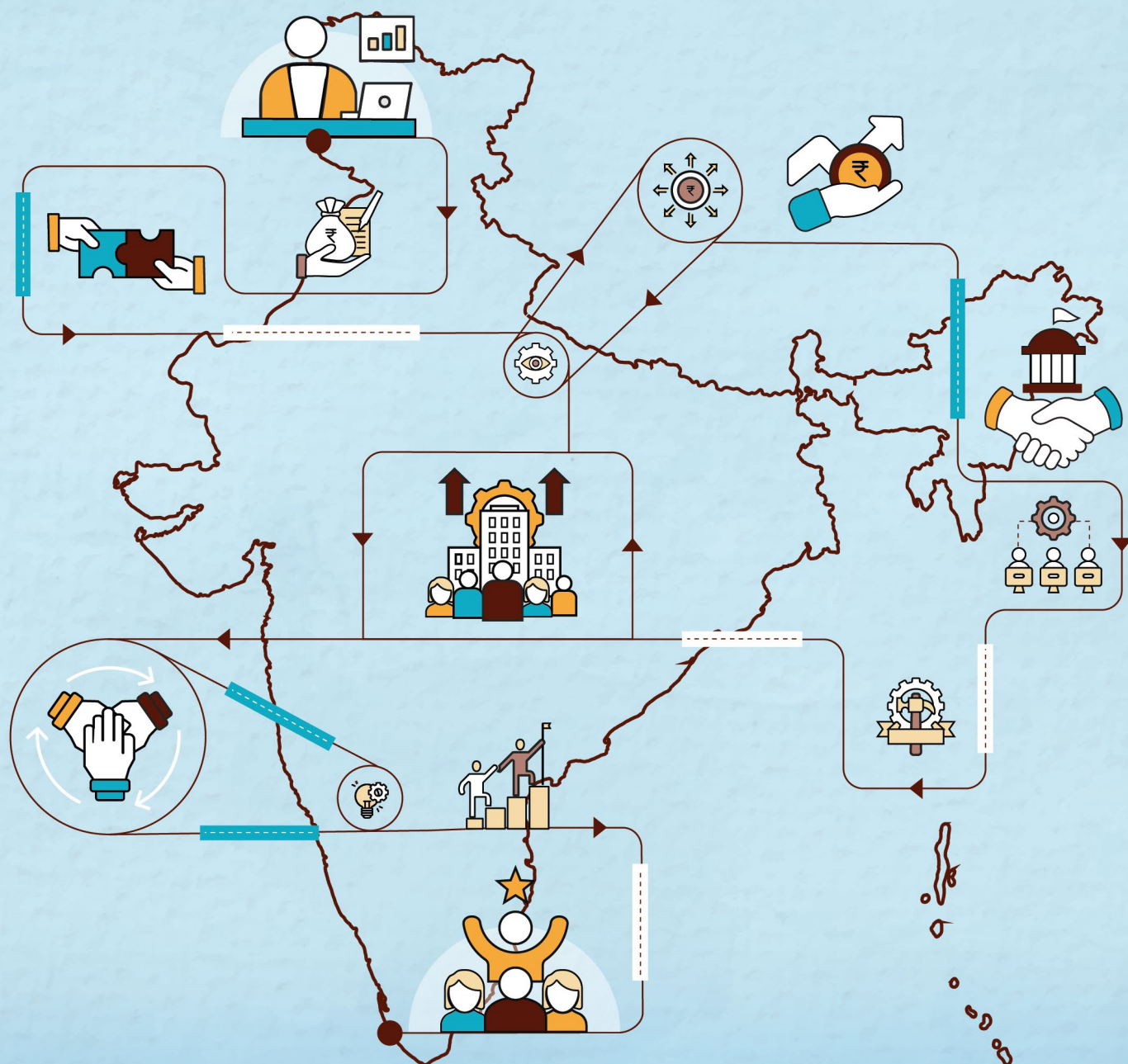


INDIA INC. FOR BUILDING BHARAT

How Systemic CSR is Building Enduring Impact for Tomorrow



INDIA INC. FOR BUILDING BHARAT:

**How systemic CSR is building enduring
impact for tomorrow**

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Introduction to the Report



Ashish Dhawan
Founder-CEO, The Convergence Foundation

India stands at a remarkable moment in its development story. We have made extraordinary progress, from expanding financial access to building world-class digital infrastructure to advancing renewable energy. Yet equally complex challenges remain in education, healthcare, skilling, and livelihoods that affect hundreds of millions.

Addressing these challenges requires more than isolated solutions. This change can take many forms. Programmatic interventions are vital as they improve lives directly and test new ideas. But for large-scale, self-perpetuating, and sustained impact, a systemic approach is essential. By tackling root causes, designing solutions for population-level scale, and strategically collaborating with the government, we can create meaningful, lasting improvements for millions. Achieving systemic change requires working with one of the most critical enablers — the government. As of 2024, the Government of India spent ₹23.2 lakh crore annually on social sector priorities. By comparison, recent research shows that annual corporate philanthropy spend stands at ₹30,000 crore.¹ These streams of capital from the government and corporate philanthropy reinforce each other, pointing to an opportunity for corporate philanthropy to be a strategic and catalytic force in driving systemic change.

My conviction in this approach evolved through my own journey in education. With the founding of Central Square Foundation (CSF), I realised that, in addition to a non-profit's direct programmatic initiatives, which immediately serve beneficiaries of a community, its true power lies in informing systemic solutions that can be embedded into government priorities. Working closely with state and central governments through CSF, I witnessed firsthand that lasting change comes from strengthening policies, institutions, and processes that operate at scale and integrate proven solutions into existing systems to reach every child. This learning shaped my belief that philanthropy, when deployed with a systemic lens, can play a catalytic role in enabling such large-scale transformation.

It was this conviction that led to the founding of The Convergence Foundation (TCF) in 2021. TCF today supports 21+ non-profits that partner with governments to co-create scalable solutions and drive population-level change. We call these mission-driven organisations System Support Organisations (SSOs), which play a crucial role in addressing the missing middle in the social sector by fostering cross-sector collaboration and enabling systemic change by embedding proven solutions into government policies, institutions, and processes that reach scale. Together, they embody the shift from isolated programmes to systemic impact, one that corporate philanthropy is uniquely positioned to champion.

Since 2013, we have witnessed a similar shift in how Indian businesses approach social responsibility. What began as compliance has steadily evolved into strategic social investment. Many companies have adopted a thoughtful portfolio approach: dedicating their CSR resources

¹ Dus Spoke India Inc India CSR: Reflections From the Last Decade, Visioning for the Next." Give Grants. Give Grants, June 24, 2025. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://give.do/givegrants/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Report-2025-Web-1.pdf>

to a mix of direct impact programmes and investments into systemic change. This balance allows them to demonstrate immediate results while also laying the foundation for deeper, longer-term change. From my own experience, I know systemic change requires patience and persistence, and it often takes years of sustained effort before results are visible. But when done strategically, these investments generate multiplier effects, unlock government resources, and ensure programmes endure well beyond the initial funding.

This report profiles 13 CSRs who are embracing this dual approach by continuing important programmatic work while also investing in strengthening systems. I am deeply grateful to the leaders of these organisations for sharing their experiences and for their commitment to systemic change. Their stories offer valuable insights into what motivated them to take a systemic approach, as well as how they navigated the challenges of working at this level. Together, their journeys reflect a broader shift underway in corporate India's approach to social responsibility. CSR is no longer only about delivering valuable programmes on the ground; it is increasingly about reinforcing the systems that touch millions of lives.

Looking ahead, India's CSR spending is projected to exceed more than ₹1.2 lakh crore by 2035. Even if a fraction of this is directed toward strengthening systems, the impact could be transformative and help shape the nation's development trajectory for decades to come. By aligning corporate capital with government priorities and civil society expertise, India has the chance to pioneer a model of development that is both inclusive and enduring. By 2047, we could become a nation where every child learns, every worker thrives in a future-ready economy, and every community is resilient in the face of change.

I invite every CEO, board member, and CSR leader to use this report as an opportunity to think bigger, and to reimagine what their CSR strategy can achieve when it looks beyond individual programmes and focuses on the systems that shape our collective future. Together, we can write a new chapter in India's development story — one where business leadership and social progress go hand in hand.



Foreword



S. Ramadorai

Chairman of the Board of Directors for Karmayogi Bharat

India's development journey has always been intertwined with the values and actions of its business community. Long before Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) became a legal mandate, Indian enterprises have contributed meaningfully to the nation's social and economic fabric. Over the years, CSR has evolved from being a matter of compliance to a powerful tool for structural change and inclusive growth.

Today, we stand at a pivotal moment in this journey. While CSR initiatives have improved lives and livelihoods across the country, the most entrenched challenges we face — such as learning poverty, public health inequity and rural livelihoods — require more than goodwill; they demand structural solutions. CSR now has the opportunity and indeed the responsibility to go further: to fund work that strengthens public systems, solves root causes, and can be scaled sustainably with the government.

Even compared to the nearly ₹30,000 crore CSR spend in FY 2024², the government remains the single largest engine for delivering social services in India, given its ₹23.3 lakh crore expenditure on social services in FY 2024.³ This is why companies must look at the government as a partner in unlocking the full potential of their CSR work.

This report, thoughtfully co-authored by The Convergence Foundation and SCALE, in partnership with India Impact Sherpas, captures such efforts from 13 inspiring companies, each of which has rallied to the challenge of systemic giving — and in doing so, reimagined what corporate philanthropy can achieve.

What stands out in these stories is not just what these companies supported, but how they did it. In every case, we see the presence of engaged leadership — corporate leaders who have personally shaped philanthropic choices, built diverse and capable CSR teams and invested in patient, catalytic capital. These organisations provided risk and innovation capital where it mattered most — seeding scalable models, supporting public policy, creating public goods, amplifying outcomes in education, health, skilling, agriculture, climate and beyond.

As we reflect on the stories in this report, I believe we are seeing the emergence of a new leadership ethos in Indian CSR — one that is bold, collaborative, and systemic. The road to solving our nation's most complex problems will not be easy. But it is a road worth taking. I urge every CEO, CSR head and board member to treat this report not just as a record of excellence, but as an invitation to reimagine what your own CSR strategy can achieve when directed towards systemic change.

My belief in collaborative ecosystems to drive lasting social impact has been shaped by direct experience. Chairing Karmayogi Bharat, working with NGOs like the Public Health Foundation of India and Childline and learning from the vital work of institutions like the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and the Centre for Asian Philanthropy have consistently reinforced that partnering with government systems is the key to scale. Through this lens, I see the immense value in the approaches highlighted here, and as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, I am particularly proud that the Axis Bank Foundation journey is part of this narrative. I am pleased to present this report as a crucial step in building a stronger future for systemic philanthropy in India.

² Dus Spoke India Inc India CSR: Reflections From the Last Decade, Visioning for the Next." Give Grants. Give Grants, June 24, 2025. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://give.do/givegrants/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Report-2025-Web-1.pdf>

³ Social Sector Witnesses significant increase in government spending", January 31, 2023 <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1894916>

Acknowledgements

We extend deep gratitude to everyone whose unwavering dedication and expertise have contributed to the completion of this report — **India Inc. for Building Bharat**.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the 13 exemplary organisations that have created systemic impact and whose relentless commitment to building a better Bharat has been the cornerstone of this report. We are grateful to their leaders who dedicated their time and energy to be interviewed exhaustively.

We are especially indebted to our advisors — Govind Iyer (Chair of CSR Committee, Infosys), Ramesh Mangaleswaran (Senior Partner Emeritus, McKinsey & Company), Vikram Bhalla (Senior Partner & Managing Director, Boston Consulting Group), and Gitanjali Gandhiok (Vice President, Development, Ashoka University) — whose guidance, challenge, and encouragement sharpened our thinking and enriched this work. We would also like to express our gratitude to the leadership of the profiled companies in taking the time to map out their journey and articulate their insights and experiences with systemic change.

We would also like to thank the International Foundation for Social Impact (IFSI) for their support as a donor.

Finally, we express our gratitude to TCF's Founder-CEO, Ashish Dhawan, for his unwavering belief in the potential of corporate philanthropy and his commitment to building a better Bharat.

We hope that this report will inspire organisations and their leaders and equip them with the knowledge and tools needed to design and implement large-scale systemic initiatives that address India's most pressing challenges.

About the Authors

The Convergence Foundation (TCF)



The Convergence Foundation (TCF), founded by Ashish and Manisha Dhawan in 2021, aims to be a catalyst for India's development by focusing on accelerating economic growth and creating momentum around pivotal ideas that have the highest potential for systemic change. TCF believes that rapid, sustained economic growth and enhancing human capital are central to accelerating all-round development of a society and nation; it is the tide that can lift all boats. To this end, TCF focuses on several key programme areas, including: creating an attractive investment climate; accelerating the export of goods and services; advancing science and technology; strengthening state capacity; improving human capital and promoting women's economic empowerment; and supporting the development of an enabling ecosystem for non-profits and philanthropy.

SCALE



SCALE, a new initiative under the Foundation for Accelerating Philanthropy, incubated by The Convergence Foundation, is working to build a platform for actors working towards systemic change. SCALE is rooted in the belief that India's next wave of impact will be catalysed by Systemic Support Organisations (SSOs) — purpose-driven entities that work closely with governments to design, validate, and scale

solutions to deep-rooted development challenges. SCALE will guide funders (CSRs and philanthropists) to identify high-impact investable opportunities, support SSOs by enabling their capacity to design systemic programmes, and help governments apply systems thinking to their policy priorities.

India Impact Sherpas



India Impact Sherpas is an advisory services firm focused on the social sector. They work with changemakers and philanthropists to accelerate and amplify development outcomes. In addition to working with individual organisations, they believe in sharing knowledge and insights on how to create systemic impact, which can have a multiplier effect on the development sector and the nation.

About the Report

Over the past decade, India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) landscape has undergone a remarkable transformation. Since the introduction of Section 135 in the Companies Act in 2013, CSR has evolved from a compliance requirement to a strategic lever for addressing India's most pressing development challenges. As we look towards the next decade, CSR leaders face both an unprecedented opportunity and a critical choice about how to deploy their resources for maximum impact.

There is widespread recognition of the vital role that programmatic CSR initiatives play in delivering immediate, tangible benefits to communities across India. These direct interventions form the backbone of corporate India's social commitment. They create visible impact, serve immediate needs, and demonstrate clear accountability to stakeholders. However, **a growing number of forward-thinking CSR leaders are pushing beyond this established approach.** This has led to an emerging focus on systemic change, an approach the root causes of social challenges, rather than just their symptoms. **Systemic change seeks to create lasting change at a population-level by shifting how systems — such as government, markets and communities — function.** It involves supporting government systems to deliver effective public services, enabling markets to become more accessible, equitable, and responsive to social needs, and engaging communities to transform the manner in which they interact and function. Rather than working around existing systems, this approach works within and alongside them, particularly government systems, to create sustainable impact at scale.

Many CSR initiatives are now contributing to systemic change either by strategically supporting System Support Organisations (SSOs) — specialised nonprofits that partner closely with the government to co-create scalable solutions for public service delivery challenges, or through corporation-built foundations themselves that are yielding sustained and scaled impact. This report highlights 13 of these systemic CSR initiatives and efforts, which have leveraged government schemes and programmes to amplify impact by making public systems more effective, efficient, and equitable. These investments have shown a non-linear impact — creating powerful multiplier effects, unlocking government resources, and sustaining programmes well beyond the initial funding.

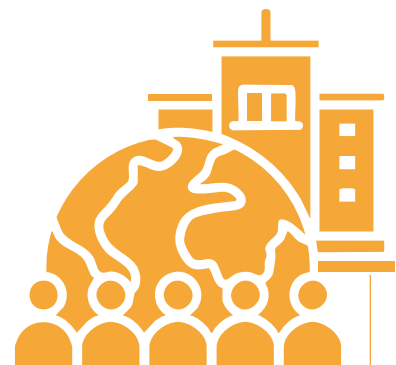
Through detailed case studies, we explore the internal factors that enabled these CSRs to think systemically — from leadership vision to organisational capabilities that made systemic thinking possible. We analyse how they structure their approach by building scalable models, creating ecosystem partnerships, establishing linkages with public systems, and developing public goods that benefit entire sectors. We also examine the remarkable multiplier effects that become possible through strategic engagement at a systemic level, demonstrating how corporate investments can unlock significantly greater government resources and create lasting change beyond traditional funding cycles.

The introduction of the Companies Act, 2013 (mandating CSR in India), corporates' growing willingness to collaborate with public institutions, and the government's openness to work with civil society creates fertile ground for such partnerships, leading to large-scale, sustainable social impact.

This report addresses the need for practical guidance by spotlighting a few CSR initiatives driving systemic impact and providing actionable insights for replication. By highlighting how select CSRs have moved beyond programmes to create transformative impact, **it aims to inspire a new wave of CSR initiatives focused on sustainable, systemic solutions.** For CSR leaders, board members, and business executives, this serves as both validation that systemic change is achievable and a roadmap for pursuing it effectively.

The profiled organisations demonstrate that maintaining strong programmatic impact while building the foundation for systemic transformation is possible—

creating a new paradigm for corporate philanthropy in India.



History and Evolution of the CSR Landscape

The introduction of the Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, was a major milestone, making India the first country globally to mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for certain categories of companies (*companies satisfying any of these criteria: net worth of more than ₹500 crore, turnover of more than ₹1000 crore, net profit of more than ₹5 crore.*⁴)

Within just 10 years of the Act, there has been a significant evolution in the CSR landscape, transitioning corporate philanthropy from just an obligation to a strategic and intentional endeavour. Preceding this shift, the number of companies engaging in CSR activities stood at 1,470 in 2012-13.⁵ Following the Act's implementation, the fiscal year 2014-15 saw 7,334 out of 10,475 responsible companies disclosing their CSR initiatives.⁶ **Over the next 10 years, CSR is projected to unlock nearly ₹7.24 lakh crore for social development. Annual spending is expected to more than triple to about ₹1.2 lakh crore by FY 2035,** based on a 13.48% CAGR observed from the earnings growth of the top 100 listed companies.⁷ What has also evolved in corporate philanthropy is a shift from giving to social returns on investment.

⁴ Srivastava, Shobhit. "General Circular No. 14 /2021." Ministry of Corporate Affairs, August 25, 2021. https://www.mca.gov.in/Ministry/pdf/FAQ_CSR.pdf

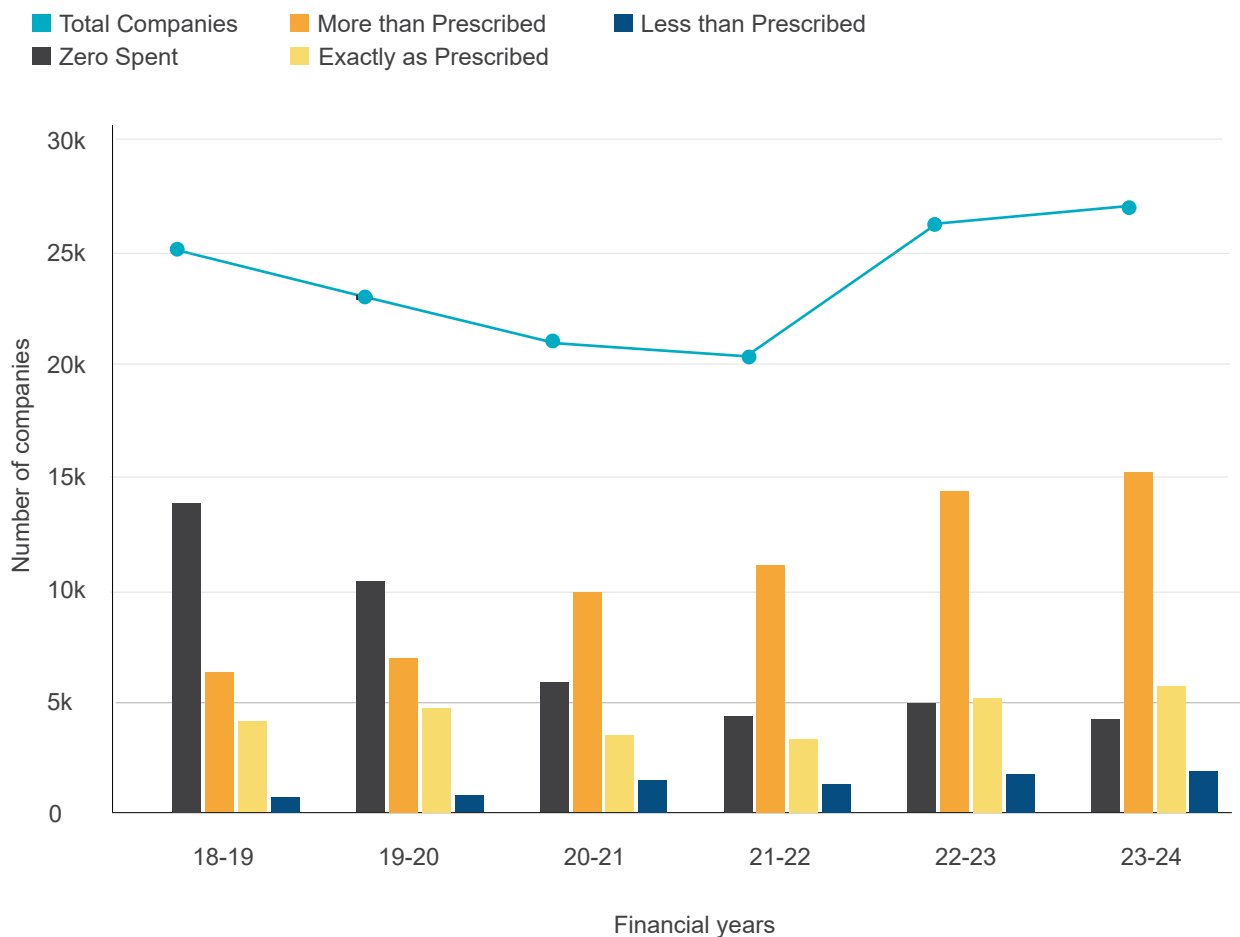
⁵ Bansal, Sangeeta. "An Analysis of Corporate Social Responsibility Expenditure in India." An-In, April 28, 2022. https://www.academia.edu/77897653/An_Analysis_of_Corporate_Social_Responsibility_Expenditure_in_India

⁶ Meghwal, Arjun Ram. "CSR Spending by companies." Rajya Sabha, March 21, 2017 <https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/242/Au2227.pdf?source=pqars>

⁷ "Dus Spoke India Inc India CSR: Reflections From the Last Decade, Visioning for the Next." Give Grants. Give Grants, June 24, 2025. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://give.do/givegrants/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Report-2025-Web-1.pdf>

Notably, in FY 2022-23, 93% of the 24,392 responsible companies reported CSR spending, and 56% surpassed the required 2%.⁸

The chart below shows the increasing trend of CSR spending since FY 2018-19 until FY 2023-24.⁹

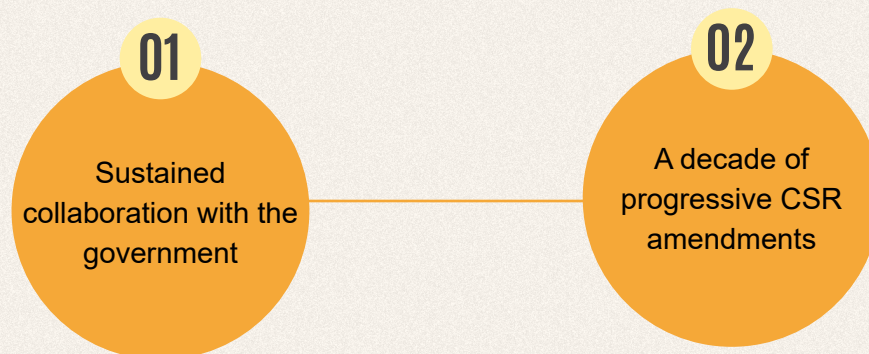


Source- <https://www.csr.gov.in/content/csr/global/master/home/home.html>

⁸ "The State of CSR in India, Data Guide 2024." Sattva Consulting. Sattva Knowledge Institute, September 27, 2024. Accessed August 20, 2025. https://www.sattva.co.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Sattva_State-of-CSR-in-India-Report-2024.pdf

⁹ National CSR Portal, Ministry of Corporate Affairs. "CSR in India: CSR Expenditure." Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://www.csr.gov.in/content/csr/global/master/home/home.html>

The evolution of CSR as a catalytic force for systemic change has been enabled by two key factors



Together, these forces have repositioned CSR in India from being a statutory obligation to becoming a catalytic lever for systemic change. The next decade will determine how effectively companies move from fragmented projects towards collective action, ecosystem strengthening, and transformative impact.



Collaboration with the government

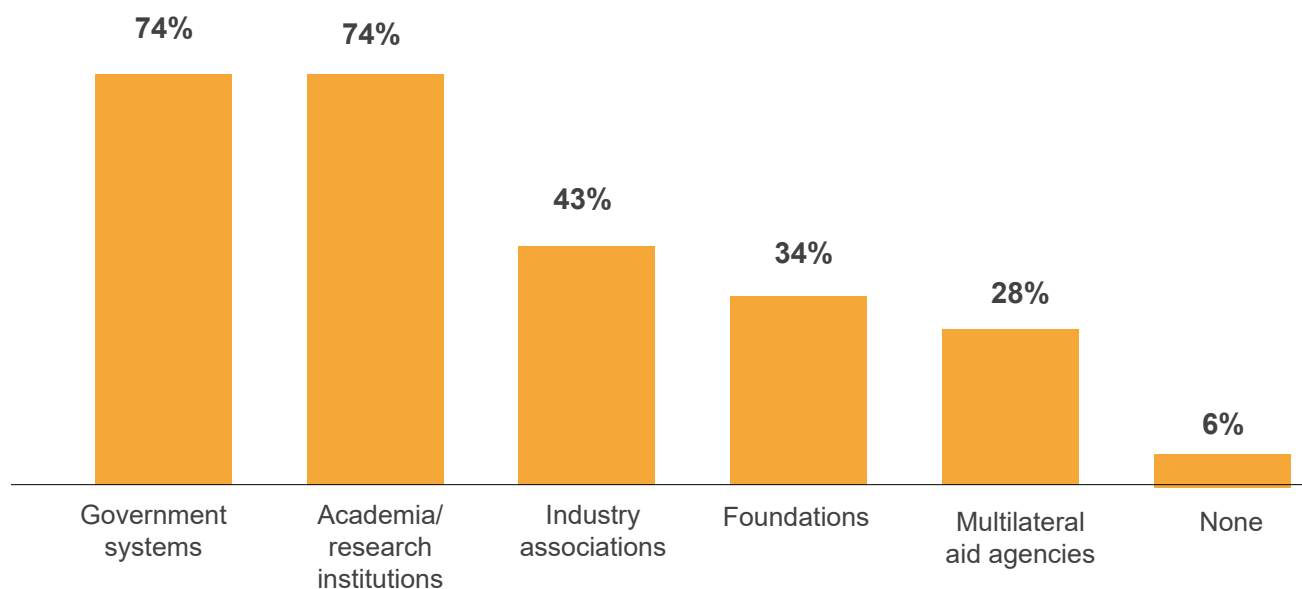
The evolving nature of CSR in India has been defined by a two-way partnership, **where both government and corporates have actively welcomed collaboration as a lever for systemic change**. Far from treating CSR as a substitute for public financing, the government has consistently emphasised its enabling role. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has clarified that CSR funds should not be seen as a direct financing source for government schemes, but rather as catalytic capital that can generate a larger multiplier effect than government programmes alone.¹⁰ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has reinforced this perspective by stressing that mandated CSR spending is “not a tax”, highlighting that the government values not just corporate resources but also the managerial capacity, technical expertise, and innovative approaches that businesses bring.¹¹ This articulation underscores an important nuance: effective CSR must combine its financial support with a company’s core competencies, thereby producing sustainable and systemic change.

¹⁰ MCA Says Don't Interpret CSR Spending as Source of Financing Resource Gaps in Govt Schemes." The Economic Times, August 26, 2021. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/mca-says-dont-interpret-csr-spending-as-source-of-financing-resource-gaps-in-govt-schemes/articleshow/85658171.cms?from=mdr>

¹¹ The CEO Magazine. "Section 135: How Is India's Mandatory CSR Spending Working Out?", February 24, 2020. <https://www.theceomagazine.com/business/philanthropy/is-indias-mandatory-csr-working-out/>

Corporates, in turn, have responded positively by professionalising their CSR portfolios and aligning them with national and state priorities. The Aspirational Districts Programme illustrates this synergy: through guidelines released by the Department of Public Enterprise (DPE advisories), Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) redirected CSR flows into underserved regions such as Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha — funding impactful initiatives like bike ambulances in Dumka (by Indian Oil), smart classrooms in government schools, and infrastructure upgrades in anganwadis and health centres.¹² Similarly, state-led collaborations demonstrate the power of joint action. The Maharashtra Village Social Transformation Foundation (VSTF), a Section 8 company co-created with the Government of Maharashtra, successfully implemented the Jalyukt Shivar initiative to enhance water security in drought-prone areas, showcasing how institutional partnerships can scale solutions¹⁴.¹³ The Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF) was established as a public-private partnership by the Indian government in 2013 to facilitate collaboration between non-profits and state governments with the purpose of addressing the challenges of tribal communities. Axis Bank Foundation's partnership with BRLF (*detailed coverage in the sections below*) is concurrent with the MNREGA cells in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.¹⁴

CSR is proactively engaging with governments and academia¹⁵



This demonstrates that collaboration is not incidental but essential: when government and corporates work as equal partners, CSR becomes a driver of long-term systemic transformation rather than fragmented interventions.

¹² "NITI AAYOG, India | Leveraging CSR to Complement India's Covid-19 Mitigation Strategy", n.d. <https://www.niti.gov.in/leveraging-csr-complement-indias-covid-19-mitigation-strategy?utm>

¹³ "About VSTF | Maharashtra Village Social Transformation Foundation", n.d. <https://www.mvstf.org/foundation/aboutvstf>

¹⁴ Iyer, Srinivasan. "Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation." Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation -, n.d. <https://www.brif.in/>

¹⁵ Dus Spoke India Inc India CSR: Reflections From the Last Decade, Visioning for the Next." Give Grants. Give Grants, June 24, 2025. Accessed August 20, 2025. <https://give.do/givegrants/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Report-2025-Web-1.pdf>



CSR Amendments (2014 - 2025)

The CSR Act, designed to foster a collaborative ecosystem with the government, has undergone multiple clarifications over the years — some of which shape how CSR is interpreted and applied in relation to driving systemic impact. It has led to three primary questions:

- ▶ What are the activities and thematic areas a company can invest in if they want their CSR to meaningfully contribute towards systemic change?
- ▶ How can CSR initiatives be structured to provide the long-term, unrestricted and patient funding that systemic change necessitates?
- ▶ Considering systemic outcomes are long-term and non-linear, how can CSRs effectively measure and report in a manner that aligns with regulatory and compliance frameworks?

Key Takeaways

▶ Activities and thematic areas:

Schedule VII of the CSR Act covers a wide range of activities and thematic areas of social development. On June 14th, 2014, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs released a clarification guideline on the CSR Act stating that while *“activities undertaken in pursuance of the CSR policy must be relatable to Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013; the entries in the said Schedule VII must be interpreted liberally so as to capture the essence of the subjects enumerated in the said Schedule. The items enlisted in the amended Schedule VII of the Act, are broad-based and are intended to cover a wide range of activities.”*¹⁶ This circular highlights the focused attention of CSR on programmes that are intentional and long-term rather than one-off events.

¹⁶ “Subject: - Clarifications With Regard to Provisions of Corporate Social Responsibility Under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013.” Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Government of India: Ministry of Corporate Affairs, June 18, 2014. Accessed August 21, 2025. <https://www.mca.gov.in/bin/ebook/dms/getdocument?doc=MTM3NzE=&docCategory=Circulars&type=open>

► Long-term spending:

The 2021 amendment introduced the implicit creation of a “3+1” framework that supports sustained, long-term CSR engagement. This refers to the ability of companies to carry forward excess CSR expenditure for three subsequent financial years (Rule 7(3)) and the requirement to utilise unspent funds for ongoing projects within three years of allocation (Section 135(6)).¹⁷ These provisions allow for a planning and implementation cycle of up to four years, effectively enabling companies to engage in multi-year programming.

By formalising a multi-year operational window, **the 2021 amendments have eased the pressure for year-end CSR spending and encouraged more deliberate project planning and pipeline development. This flexibility enables companies to adopt a portfolio approach to CSR — balancing shorter-term initiatives with longer-term, systemic commitments.**

This shift is particularly significant in the context of systemic giving, which requires sustained effort, institutional partnerships, and the ability to design and support interventions that extend beyond the constraints of a single financial year.

► Flexible monitoring and evaluation frameworks:

The final outcome and impact of systemic change takes time and requires measurement of interim outcomes. For instance, Central Square Foundation’s long-term horizon is to ensure that every child in India achieves foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) by Grade 3 — a systemic reform that requires sustained effort over many years. To track progress towards this goal, CSF embeds interim outcomes into its monitoring and evaluation frameworks, designed to capture early signals of change at multiple levels of the system. In Madhya Pradesh’s Mission Ankur, these include timely delivery of NCERT-aligned FLN materials to 85% of schools, capacity building of ~1.6 lakh teachers, governance strengthening through the MP Shiksha app enabling ~1.5 lakh classroom observations monthly, and district-level implementation fidelity supported by the NIPUN Fellowship.¹⁸ These interim outcomes provide credible, measurable proof points of system momentum while long-term student learning gains materialise.

While the Act creates space for such systemic, multi-year interventions, companies are advised to work closely with their auditors and legal advisors to ensure that their CSR portfolios and reporting frameworks remain fully compliant.

¹⁷ “General Circular No. 14 /2021.” Ministry of Corporate Affairs, August 25, 2021. https://www.mca.gov.in/Ministry/pdf/FAQ_CSR.pdf

¹⁸ Central Square Foundation. “Annual Report 2024.” Accessed August 21, 2025. <https://cms.foundationalllearning.in/reports/annual-report-2024/>

Corporate Philanthropy's Role in Systemic Change

From Ripples to Waves: Stories of systemic impact enabled by corporate philanthropic journeys in collaboration with public systems

Since India's economic liberalisation in 1991, the country has experienced remarkable GDP growth, making it one of the fastest-growing major economies. Economic reforms led to a significant surge and by 2023, **India's nominal GDP had reached approximately \$3.7 trillion, ranking it as the fifth-largest economy** in the world.

India's corporate sector has played a crucial role in driving this expansion across multiple industries. The service sector, which now accounts for more than 50% of GDP, with IT, banking and telecom leading the way, is largely driven by the corporate sector.¹⁹ Likewise, significant contributions have been made by corporates in the manufacturing sector that now contributes to 17-18% of India's GDP.²⁰ Beyond financial growth, corporate India has been a major employer, providing millions of jobs and also driven innovation in several sectors.

¹⁹ "Service contributed over 50% to GDP", Ministry of Finance, published January 31st, 2022. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1793804>. Accessed September 12th, 2025

²⁰ Kanagali, Amruta. "CapEx for India's Manufacturing Industries." ARC Advisory Group. Accessed September 12, 2025. <https://www.arcweb.com/industry-best-practices/capex-indias-manufacturing-industries>



In addition to nation-building on the economic front,

Indian businesses have also been contributing to social development.

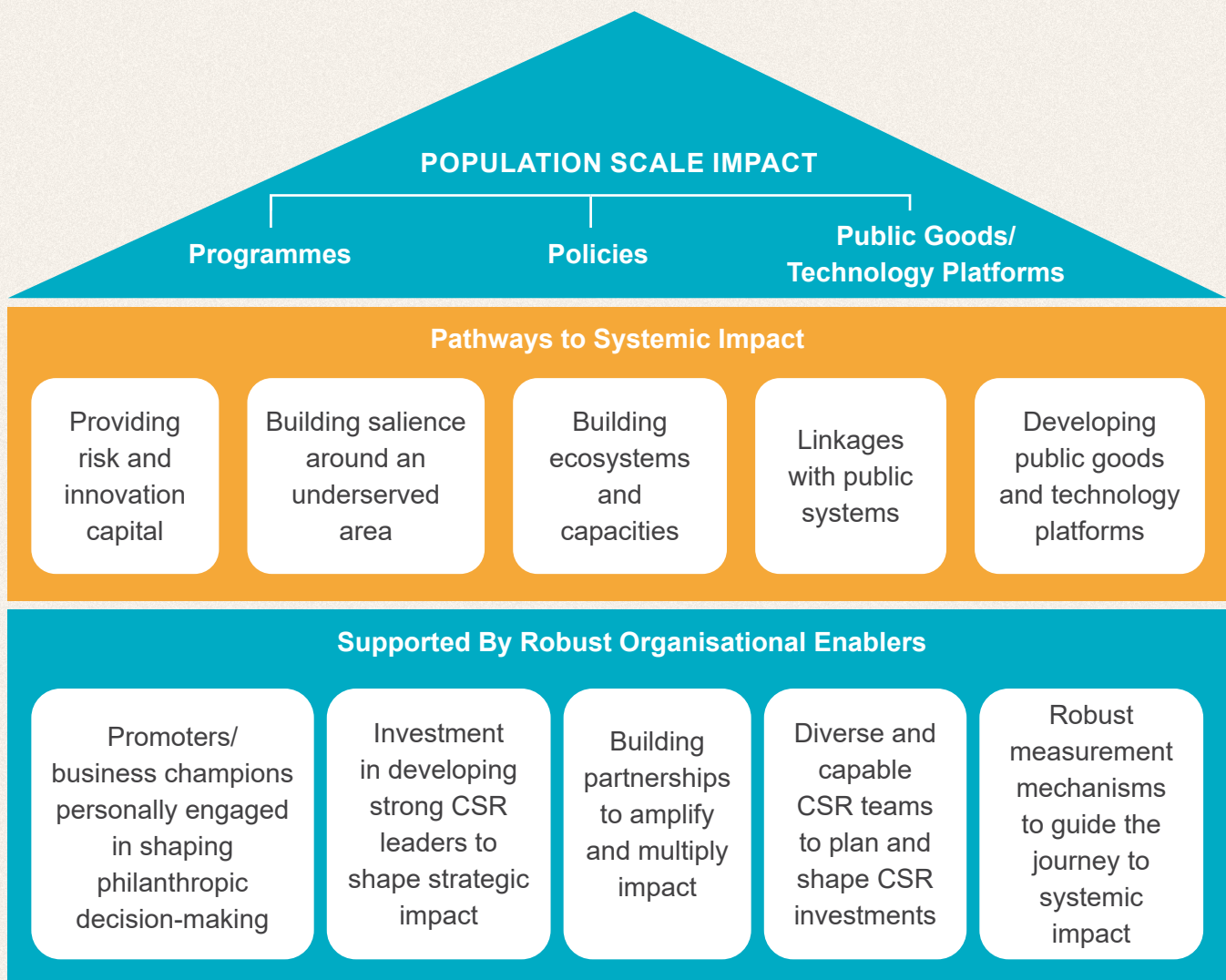
Several companies and business families have a history of contributing to social causes, since much before the mandatory CSR requirement came into existence. The CSR Act passed in 2013 was a first-of-its-kind, and **India still remains the only country to have a formalised CSR framework.**

As India marches towards its goal of a \$10 trillion economy, a lot still needs to be done on the social development front. We believe that while the government has the primary responsibility for social development, corporate India can play a significant role in nation-building. We also believe that **when corporations work in collaboration with public systems, they can have an outsized and sustainable impact, which is described as a systemic approach.**

This is also a pivotal moment with a historic opportunity to fully leverage domestic philanthropy in general and corporate philanthropic capital in particular. By 2035, CSR contributions are expected to cross an astounding ₹1.2 lakh crore annually — making it the largest pool of philanthropic capital in the country. If harnessed with vision and purpose, CSR can play an even bigger role in nation-building.

The 20 Changemakers we profiled in our [Systemic Impact Exemplars Report](#) last year demonstrated the journey to population scale impact by actively focusing on a combination of programmes, policy and public good creation. The report also highlighted the critical role funders played in their journey by providing patient and flexible philanthropic capital to enable the impact.

In this report, as we examine the journeys of 13 profiled CSRs/corporate foundations, we found them adopting one or more of 5 pathways (*see middle layer in the framework below*) to support systemic impact. Further, as we examined the factors that make these CSRs/corporate foundations supporting systemic initiatives distinct, we identified five distinct organisational enablers that they have all invested in (*see bottom layer in the framework below*).



Pathways to Systemic Impact

Corporate philanthropy's active engagement with the social sector has helped support and build these systemic models through 5 broad pathways:



Providing risk and innovation capital

Many corporate funders have moved beyond traditional CSR models of funding programmes that address localised issues to more strategic deployment of risk and innovation capital. This has involved investing in experiments, new models and technologies that create breakthroughs to unlock binding constraints and create non-linear impact. EY Foundation's support for Central Square Foundation's FLN programme and Tata Motors' support for NAAM Foundation's water programme are excellent examples of corporate philanthropy underwriting risks and innovations when scalable models are evolving.



Building salience around an underserved area

Some of these CSRs/corporate foundations have supported systemic impact by identifying an underserved area, building salience around it, and strengthening government and the ecosystem to achieve long-term, sustainable change. Cipla Foundation's work in palliative care and HUL's work in waste management are excellent examples of drawing attention to and helping build credible models for solving significant challenges.



Building ecosystems and capacities

Corporate philanthropy has acted as a force multiplier to build ecosystems. They have invested in strengthening institutional capacities of CSOs, government departments and other partners to create a network of stakeholders who can collectively own the problem, share learnings and drive change collaboratively. ITC's work in Climate Smart Agriculture, HSBC's support for skilling, Cisco's support for Future Right Skills Network and Dr. Reddy's Foundation's work in Regenerative Agriculture are excellent examples of thoughtfully nurturing ecosystems to solve significant challenges.



Linkages with public systems

All the CSRs/corporate foundations we have profiled have supported intervention design not as parallel structures, but as innovations or enhancements that can be integrated into existing government schemes, data systems, and service delivery channels. By doing so, corporate philanthropy has leveraged the immense reach and institutional permanence of the government, ensuring the model can be sustained by the public sector long after the philanthropic investment ends. Axis Bank Foundation's support for organisations like BRLF, Tata Steel's Panchayati Raj Institutions, Bharti Foundation's Quality Support Program in government schools and Reliance Foundation's Rural Transformation are great examples of corporate philanthropy linking their work with existing government footprint and policies/schemes.



Developing public goods and technology platforms

Another avenue that corporate philanthropy has explored extensively in supporting systemic impact has involved developing public goods for the sector, or democratising and increasing the accessibility of services through technology/digital solutions. Bharti Foundation's TheTeacherApp, ITC's ITCMAARS app and Bajaj Finserv's "Skillserv" Certificate Programme in Banking, Finance and Insurance (CPBFI) are all examples we have profiled below.

Through our interactions with these 13 CSRs/corporate foundations, we have tried to unpack how CSR investments have had an outsized impact when partnering with the government. Their journey and impact (*detailed in this section*) have helped us arrive at insights on how (*detailed in the next section*) they have achieved this impact.

Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF)



Foundation Journey

01

Established in 2006, prior to the CSR Act, Axis Bank Foundation (ABF) initially focused on interventions in education and highway trauma care, aiming to address social and economic exclusion.

02

In 2011, the Foundation strategically shifted its focus to enhancing sustainable income generating opportunities in rural India, which they saw as a prerequisite for achieving long-lasting impact in other crucial areas of social, economic and ecological development.

03

By partnering with some of the most respected NGOs in the rural development livelihoods space, such as PRADAN, SRIJAN, SPS, BRLF, BAIF, CINI, etc.,

ABF supported the creation of 1 million livelihoods
in the period 2012-17.

04

Building on this success, ABF launched 'Mission 2 Million' in 2018, to impact 2 million households by 2025 through diversified livelihood programmes across sectors like agriculture, livestock, and vocational training.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

05

In 2025, having worked with 2 million rural families, it launched 'Mission 4 Million', to extend support to an additional 2 million rural families by 2031, by broadening the scope to work with excluded communities and rural trades such as artisans, coastal and mountainous communities.

“

At Axis Bank Foundation, we are committed to advancing financial and economic inclusion through sustainable livelihood initiatives. Our aim is to positively impact 4 million underserved families by 2031, empowering rural communities by providing catalytic funding to grassroots NGOs. Our livelihood initiatives are designed to complement and enhance various developmental initiatives. This includes programmes run by the government, philanthropic capital and other funding sources, ensuring that every intervention is both scalable and sustainable.

— Amitabh Chaudhry, Managing Director and CEO, Axis Bank

”

Problem Addressed

Smallholder farmers, especially in rainfed regions of the country, face challenges like limited access to irrigation, appropriate know-how, quality inputs, and markets, which limit production, productivity, and therefore income. Additionally, they struggle with land tenure, poor infrastructure, and vulnerability to climate variability and limited alternative sources of income, often leading to migration.

Smallholder farmers disproportionately rely on 1 or 2 sources of income; agriculture as the primary course of income, coupled with livestock, NTFP, wage labour, migration income, etc.

Operating with several variables at a household level, the community also faces systemic and ecosystem challenges such as degrading natural resources, lack of access to capital, markets, know-how, and weak governance which augments their vulnerability.

Regionally, central India has a higher concentration of economically disadvantaged rural populations, including tribal groups, and landless families, who are highly vulnerable. Enhancing incomes in these communities requires a holistic approach to build sustainable livelihoods.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

Towards their goal of 'Mission 4 Million', ABF partners with NGOs that have direct, strong grassroots experience and work towards poverty alleviation. ABF partners with a range of NGOs across multiple approaches ranging from intensive to extensive engagement with rural communities. ABF supports these organisations by:

- ▶ Providing long-term partnerships and funding for NGOs along with capacity building to enable them to deliver impact at scale.
- ▶ Following a block/district concentration approach to achieve maximal impact.
- ▶ Seeking and securing funding for the region from a variety of sources, including government social welfare programmes, loans, other grants, and contributions from local communities' funds to expand the reach and impact of the initiatives.

An example of this partnership is with Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF). Established as a public-private partnership model by the government of India in 2013, BRLF facilitates collaboration between NGOs and state governments to address

challenges faced by tribal communities in priority regions — by developing strong affiliations with government programmes and schemes. **ABF-BRLF partnership is active in the states of Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, and is concurrent with the MNREGA cell of these states.** The goal of the project is to extensively leverage MNREGA to enhance livelihoods by creating a basket of opportunities.



Build ecosystem and capacity

Towards rural development, ABF works across a wide range encompassing well-being and income generation:

- ▶ Capacity building of local communities
- ▶ Rejuvenation of natural resources
- ▶ Improved agriculture practices
- ▶ Improved livestock management
- ▶ Initiation of micro-enterprises
- ▶ Facilitating access to rights and entitlements through Panchayati Raj mechanisms
- ▶ Improved health-seeking behaviour
- ▶ Building and strengthening collectives

BRLF specifically partners with government agencies/departments and supports NGOs through capacity building and technical help.

- ▶ Government agencies/departments – Since inception, BRLF has entered into win-win partnerships with several state governments to implement large-scale programmes through the active involvement of NGOs. Some of the states where BRLF has had a partnership include Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal, and Bodoland Territorial Council. **Additionally, at the national level, it engages with the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.**
- ▶ NGOs — Through the ABF-BRLF partnership, the capacities of 12 NGOs in Chhattisgarh and 10 NGOs in Maharashtra have been enhanced through funds, filling resource gaps, and providing technical help to improve on ground effectiveness.



Establish linkages with public systems

This is done by providing rural communities access to benefits from a range of policies/schemes such as MGNREGA, Forest Rights Act, PM Ujjwala Yojana, PM Ayushman Yojana etc. Access to these schemes helps fund BRLF's efforts in capacity building, rejuvenation of natural resources, sustainable agriculture practices etc.

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

► ABF's partnership with BRLF in:



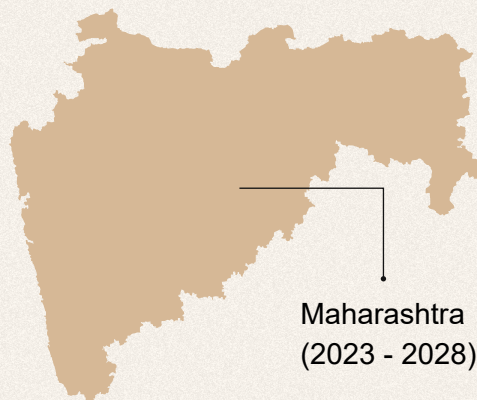
Chhattisgarh
(2018 - 2029)

In 10 years, the engagement will have supported 3 lakh+ households,

17 lakh hectares of land treatment across 35 blocks,

unlocking ₹3,000 crore

in funding from MNREGA towards creating productive assets.



Maharashtra
(2023 - 2028)

In 5 years, the engagement will have supported 1 lakh households,

4 lakh hectares of land treatment across 26 blocks by

unlocking ₹770 crore

in funding from MNREGA towards creating productive assets.

► As per BRLF's annual report for 2023-24, since its inception in 2013, BRLF has worked across more than 23,000 villages across 10 states, impacting over 1.3 million households.

As per its annual report for 2023-24,

**BRLF's ₹170 crore investment
catalysed ₹356 crore through
CSR partnerships and a
significant ₹4,687 crore
via government schemes,
achieving a 30x multiplier**

– i.e. every ₹1 invested by BRLF has led to
mobilising ₹30 from government schemes and
corporate philanthropy.



Skilling (Lend a Hand India)



CSR Journey

01

The Bajaj Group's CSR identity has been shaped by its founder Jamnalal Bajaj's "trusteeship" philosophy, emphasising ethical wealth management for societal welfare.



03

In March 2024, the Group launched "Bajaj Beyond," a new identity for the Group's CSR activities, committing

₹5,000 crore
over five years.

It is expected to benefit over 2 crore youth by enabling young aspirants to take advantage of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities offered by India's growing economy.



04

Bajaj Finserv's ongoing skilling initiatives in the financial services sector fit neatly with the Bajaj Beyond initiative and aims to bridge sector skilling gaps by linking industry with academia.

02

With 100+ years of legacy in nation-building and social welfare, the Bajaj Group has worked across a range of domains like education, healthcare, skilling, persons with disabilities, women's empowerment and rural development, etc.

“

Skilling has been at the heart of our social impact initiatives and we have seen the positive multiplier effect it has on the well-being of youth and their families.

— Sanjiv Bajaj, Chairman and Managing Director, Bajaj Finserv Limited
(Excerpt from Bajaj Auto Press Release, 2024)

”

Problem Addressed

India risks missing its demographic dividend due to an education system facing difficulties in adequately preparing adolescents for the workforce.

- ▶ Only 51.25% of Indian graduates are employable (Economic Survey 2023-24), showing a significant education-industry mismatch.
- ▶ 75% of technical graduates and over 85% of general graduates lack essential skills for high-demand sectors like IT and finance.
- ▶ Most adolescent girls are “Not in Education, Employment, or Training” (NEET), with only 5.9% actively seeking work (NSS 2019).

Bridging the gap between education and livelihoods needs focused effort to equip our youth with livelihood-oriented skills and to create pathways to employment or entrepreneurship.

Approach

Bajaj Finserv’s skilling programme is a mix of self-implemented initiatives and initiatives supported through collaboration with select NGOs. Lend a Hand India (LAHI) is a key partner in the skilling programme, focusing on equipping youth with skills needed for employment and entrepreneurship by bridging the gap between education and livelihoods.



Establish a scalable model

Project Swadheen, run by LAHI, provides:

- ▶ Multi-skill vocational education and career guidance to young boys and girls from urban and rural communities as part of secondary and higher secondary school education.
- ▶ Foundational level exposure in over 20 different skills ranging from food processing, healthcare, electrical wiring, gardening, landscaping, welding and carpentry.
 - » Grade 9-10 students are exposed to multiple skills in a gender agnostic manner.
 - In Grades 11 and 12, the student specialises in a skill of her/his choice.
- ▶ As part of the work, LAHI helps set up labs with requisite tools and equipment, recruits and trains qualified vocational trainers, arranges internship opportunities for students, gets them assessed and certified, and finally provides placement support to students.



Build ecosystem and capacity

LAHI leverages its learnings from Swadheen to scale up impact through:

- ▶ **Project Catalyst** — It deploys 75+ LAHI staff across **22+ Indian states and union territories. These teams work with government officials, offering technical and programme management support for strategic planning, funding proposals, and policy implementation.**
- ▶ Developing industry linkages for internships (80+ hours) with micro, small and medium enterprises (including retail, auto workshops, restaurants, cafes, electrical repair shops, financial services, etc.) close to their schools or homes.
- ▶ Karigar (Schools of Applied Learning) to incorporate the decade-long experience of LAHI as a “Skills Hub” to showcase a model for multi-sector vocational education that is also used for the Training of Trainers, an incubator for young entrepreneurs and an innovation lab.

Bajaj Finserv plays a key role by providing resources and specialised industry knowledge to shape the BFSI vocational education curriculum and assessment frameworks. This content has been piloted in six states, with plans to expand further.



Establish linkages with public systems

LAHI works closely with state curriculum frameworks and guidelines for implementation of the vocational education component in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

LAHI’s model has also influenced the PM Internship Scheme, which aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world experience by offering internships across the top 500 companies.



Build public goods/technology platforms

Leveraging its experience in skilling, Bajaj Finserv has launched its BFSI skilling program “Skillserv” which includes the flagship Certificate Programme in Banking, Finance and Insurance (CPBFI). It is a 120-hour programme that combines experiential learning with insights from corporate trainers and finance experts, covering technical skills and 20+ workplace skills.

- ▶ Training modules are co-designed by expert trainers and industry experts.
- ▶ Training partners connect with potential colleges and universities, which sign 3-year MoUs with Bajaj Finserv.
- ▶ Training partners mobilise “batches” of students with a cohort size of 40-45 students who are provided training under the developed modules.
- ▶ Students receive a certification at the end of the training programme.

Recently, Skillserv has expanded its range of BFSI offerings beyond CPBFI to include insurance, gold loans, and microfinance sectors, where Bajaj Finserv would take on the responsibility of placing trained youth.

Beyond centre-based programmes, Bajaj Finserv is also developing digital offerings within the BFSI sectors to support youth with enhanced opportunities to learn.

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

LAHI's direct service delivery (through Swadheen) has reached 10,000 students in 150 schools, while government partnerships (through Project Catalyst) have helped them reach over

**1.3 million students
across 15,000
schools in 12 states.**

LAHI was recognised in the Economic Survey of India 2023-24 as an exemplary model to encourage collaboration between governments and CSOs in mainstreaming vocational education and internships in school education.



Bajaj Finserv's Skillserv programme has progressively established a presence in

400 colleges across 23 states in collaboration with 6 training partners and 300+ trainers.

Collaborations with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) Skillserv offer students the ability to earn joint certifications accredited by Bajaj Finserv and Skill India.





Bharti Airtel
Foundation

Quality Support Program (QSP)



Foundation Journey

01

Bharti Airtel Foundation was established in 2000 by Sunil, Rakesh and Rajan Bharti Mittal with the aim *“to help underprivileged children and youth of our country realise their potential.”*



03

Learning from its experience of running Satya Bharti Schools, the Foundation expanded its focus in 2013 to partner with government schools through the Quality Support Program (QSP).

04

The QSP partnership helped the Foundation achieve scale and system strengthening by working closely with the government school ecosystem.



02

In 2006, the Foundation launched its flagship programme, Satya Bharti Schools, to provide free and quality education to underprivileged children in rural India.



More recently, the Foundation has embraced technology (TheTeacherApp) to empower educators to improve their classrooms and learning experiences for students.

05

“

Learnings from Satya Bharti Schools power our Quality Support Program, emphasising life skills and enhancing the overall schooling experience for over 2.2 million children through partnership with governments.

— Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Vice-Chairman, Bharti Enterprises

”

Problem Addressed

The NEP 2020 provides a framework towards a step in transforming the landscape of education in India; however, its implementation in the government school system requires support.

While educational indicators are certainly improving across the country, progress in some areas remains slow or stagnant. Attendance, dropout rates, teacher preparedness and effective use of technology are some areas that can positively impact the success of students. These are some of the areas the Foundation has attempted to address through its Quality Support Program.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

Satya Bharti Schools Program provides direct quality education by focusing on:

- ▶ Holistic development of children, including co-scholastic achievements and 21st century skills, in addition to age-appropriate learning outcomes.
- ▶ Teacher training and teachers' motivation through effective preparedness and engagement programmes.
- ▶ Working with school leaders and administrators to create a roadmap of changes.
- ▶ Parent and community programmes for greater involvement in education processes.
- ▶ Integrating technology for education, administrative efficiencies and exposure to the external world.

It has a direct coverage of over 37,000 students and 1,300 teachers across 164 schools. Approximately ₹1,030 crore have been invested in the schools since the beginning of the programme.



Build ecosystem and capacity

Bharti Airtel Foundation has invested over ₹125 crore in the Quality Support Program (QSP), since its inception in 2013, to leverage learnings from Satya Bharti Schools to create systemic impact in the government schools ecosystem.

- ▶ State and district-level teams and technical resources work closely with key government stakeholders, ecosystem partners (school leaders, administrators, teachers, students, as well as parents) to develop goals, targets, a roadmap and support implementation.



Establish linkages with public systems

Bharti Airtel Foundation's work showcases a powerful model for implementation of the NEP 2020 policy in the government school ecosystem at scale, by leveraging learnings from its Satya Bharti Schools programme delivery.



Build public goods/technology platforms

TheTeacherApp platform, developed by Bharti Airtel Foundation for teachers, school leaders and educators, has foundational literacy and numeracy/primary school content, pedagogical resources, and good practices from Satya Bharti Schools which support and foster a learning and growth mindset amongst teachers.

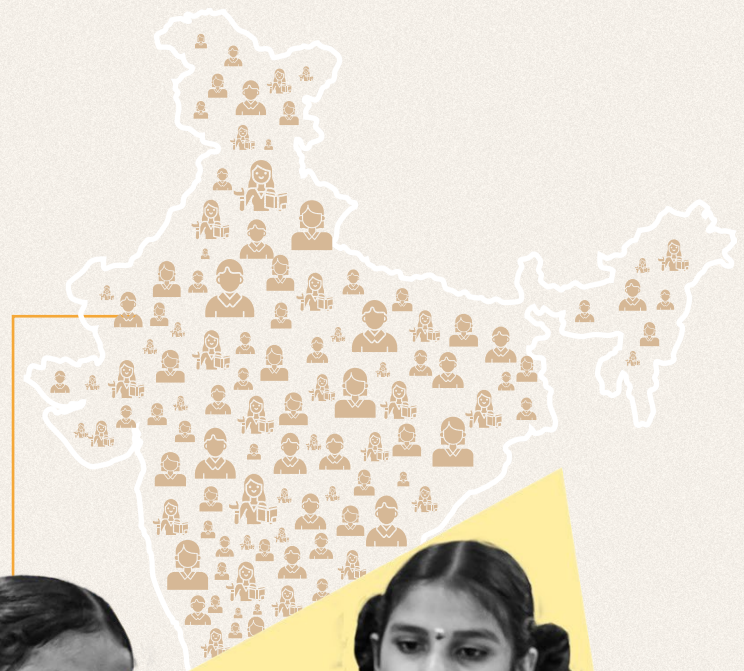
Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

The Foundation's QSP, through its partnerships with state governments, has reached over

2.8 million children and 1.3 lakh teachers

across 33,000 schools in 12 states and UTs.

This represents a significant scale-up from the direct programme reach of Satya Bharti Schools, which serves 37,000 students and 1,300 teachers across 164 schools.



Palliative Care Ecosystem



Foundation Journey

01

Cipla Foundation's journey into palliative care is driven by the promoter family's commitment and vision to make palliative care accessible to all.

The palliative care centre set up in Pune in 1997, helped design and deliver a direct intervention model for palliative care in India. This specialised medical care, accessed along with curative treatment, is focused on improving the patient's quality of life by relieving symptoms and stress associated with serious illness.



02

04

Cipla Foundation's investment of over

₹150 crore (over 10 years)

in developing a scalable model and building the ecosystem for palliative care in India is rapidly expanding with attention and commitment from the government as well as the broader healthcare ecosystem.

The palliative care protocols that have emerged from this experience are now being used to scale up the intervention through partnerships in the healthcare sector and focused policy support for the government.

03

05

While Cipla Foundation's scope has broadened to include education, skilling, disaster response, and environmental sustainability, its commitment to palliative care remains steadfast, still constituting over 50% of its annual expenditure.



“

Integrating palliative care into India's healthcare system is crucial to reach the 7-10 million Indians who require it. Based on our experience of running palliative care services in Pune, Cipla Foundation is partnering with government agencies, healthcare professionals and community organisations across India to scale up hospital, home-based and community-based models of palliative care, so that patients and caregivers do not have to suffer because of their pain and other distressing symptoms.

— Rumana Hamied, ex-Managing Trustee, Cipla Foundation

”

Problem Addressed

Palliative care deficit in India:

While 7 to 10 million Indians require palliative care, a recent FICCI report reveals only 4% receive it, significantly trailing the global average of 14%.

Systemic neglect:

Despite being essential for patients' quality of life, palliative care has always been seen as a supportive function rather than an integrated function for the healthcare sector and has, therefore, not received adequate attention.

Urgent need for integrated palliative care:

India's ageing population, fragmented healthcare system and growing incidence of serious diseases underscore the critical importance of integrating a strong palliative care system with existing disease treatment and management protocols.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

Serving over 25,000 patients directly, over the last 28 years, the Cipla Palliative Care and Training Centre, Pune adopts a holistic approach by anchoring the care in compassion and a deep respect for patient dignity – ensuring that individuals facing life-limiting illnesses receive not only appropriate clinical support but also emotional, psychological and spiritual care.

This experience of running the Cipla Palliative Care and Training Centre has informed the Foundation's strategy on increasing access to palliative care, as well as allowed them to synthesise learnings to develop protocols and quality indicators for palliative care in India.



Build ecosystem and capacity

The Foundation's work is now focused on building the Palliative Care ecosystem in India to scale impact, by supporting:

- **Collaborations and partnerships to integrate palliative care in the public health system** — working with organisations like NIMHANS, AIIMS, Tata Memorial Centre, Goa Health Directorate, among others, to train healthcare workers in providing patient-centric palliative care.
- **Establishment of new services** — home care services and outpatient clinics with an additional focus on pediatric palliative care as well.
- **Narrative building** — creating greater awareness and understanding.

- **Synergy building** — conducting annual palliative care partners meetings to cross-share models, learnings, innovations, etc. and enable avenues for cross collaborations.



Establish linkages with public systems

- Working with NGOs like Pallium India, Can Support, and Helpage India to provide integrated palliative care in line with the National Health Mission (NHM).
- Embedding palliative care models in disease management (cancer, cardiovascular, renal, Alzheimer's, as well as pediatric care).
- Removing bottlenecks for government adoption of palliative care by developing standard operating procedures, establishing guidelines and quality standards and training of staff.



Build public goods/technology platforms

The Saath-Saath helpline, a national toll-free helpline run by Cipla-trained palliative care professionals, has attended to 4,000+ calls in FY 2023-24 and is a first-of-its-kind helpline to cater to palliative care needs by connecting patients to their nearest palliative care services.

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

Pune to Pan-India:
Expanded to

27 cities

by working with 30+ partners across 42 palliative care projects.



Through this network, Cipla Foundation was able to serve over 57,000 patients in 2024-25 alone. The effort will see access and direct coverage expanding to 70,000 patients over the next 3-5 years as palliative care models get embedded in disease management protocols for major contributing illnesses in addition to cancer, like Alzheimer's, and other neurological conditions, chronic heart, kidney and liver disease, etc.

More importantly, the Foundation is now building momentum for embedding learnings into government policies/programmes.

- The **Goa State Palliative Care Policy** which the Foundation supported, is now being seen as a national best practice in palliative care.
- With the government of India including palliative care under the NHM, Cipla Foundation's focus has now moved towards expanding partnerships with governments at the rate of 20% year on year. In the next 3-5 years, the goal is to have more than 80% of their partnerships be driven through government support and resources unlocked from NHM to ensure sustainability.



Future Right Skills Network (FRSN)



CSR Journey

01

Inspired by Cisco Foundation (Cisco's Global Corporate Social Responsibility arm), Cisco's commitment to social impact in India began in 2009 with Project Samudaya, one of the first large-scale initiatives, to aid in post-disaster rehabilitation in Karnataka.



02

Given the magnitude of challenges, **Cisco in India has sought to focus on driving strategic, long-term efforts in system strengthening in three thematic areas:**

- ▶ Economic Empowerment
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Critical Human Needs and Crisis Response

03

Within these thematic areas, initiatives are selected based on clearly defined criteria:

- ▶ Clarity in problem articulation and narrative
- ▶ Government engagement and systems strengthening
- ▶ Clear role for digital technologies
- ▶ Impact measurement plan
- ▶ Credibility and experience of the implementing agency
- ▶ Viability



04

Working closely with its non-profit partners, Cisco has positively impacted over

50 million lives in India as of March 2025.

Problem Addressed

According to the Economic Survey 2023-24, only 51.25% of Indian graduates are employable. This disconnect between industry demand and education leaves many youth unemployed or underemployed.

- ▶ Studies suggest that 75% of technical graduates and over 85% of general graduates lack essential skills.
- ▶ 80% youth enter the workforce without formal training.

Further, 85 million jobs are expected to be impacted due to automation in the next 5 years.

Each year, over 2.5 million students enrol into Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) across India. However,

- ▶ There is a significant mismatch between the skills of ITI graduates and the expectations of employers.
- ▶ Students often lack a clear understanding of what their career progression will look like after completing their courses.

While these ITIs provide technical skills training to India's youth in a range of trades, there is an urgent need to make the skilling process industry-responsive and relevant to the 21st century requirements. A critical gap in the training received is "employability skills training."

Approach



Establish a scalable model

Future Right Skills Network (FRSN) is a collaboration between Cisco, Accenture, JPMorganChase, SAP Labs India and LinkedIn in partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The collaboration anchored through Quest Alliance, aims to enhance employability among India's youth by strengthening the government's ITI ecosystem through:

- ▶ **Future Skills Training** — Structured as 240 hours of training in a blended learning format that combines classroom and online training, learning modules include digital literacy, effective communication, workplace readiness, and data-backed decision-making. Through the Foundation's grant, Quest Alliance also developed the Introduction to AI training.
- ▶ **Institutional capacity building** — Through training-the-trainers (ToT) in future skills modules and leadership capacity-building for ITI principals to engage with the employer ecosystem more effectively, as well as use data and analytical tools for informed decision-making.

- **Stakeholder engagement** — with prospective employers, parents and alumni to strengthen student upskilling journeys and provide a supportive environment for career and learning decisions.

Cisco's specific focus has been on strengthening employability skills as a horizontal layer across all technical trades in ITIs. **By applying a “learning through doing” lens to their partnerships, the Foundation is able to take calculated risks on innovative models, providing long-term, patient capital, to pilot and scale initiatives.** Their partnership with Quest Alliance is now in its 9th year (renewed last year).



Build ecosystem and capacity

Future Right Skills Network (FRSN) brings together a range of ecosystem players:

- **Quest Alliance** — as the anchor partner and facilitator for FRSN, designs and delivers the Future Skills training modules focused on employability/soft skill programmes that complement the technical training in various trades that ITIs provide.
- **Funders** — starting with Accenture and Cisco in 2019, the core team expanded to include JPMC in 2021, SAP Labs in 2023 and LinkedIn in 2025.
- **Execution partners** — implementing partners who have expertise and knowledge of delivering skills training in specific states/ geographies.
- **Research and advocacy** — on sectoral trends, market opportunities, and skilling strategies to drive change and improve prospects for employability.
- **CSOs** — Quest Alliance made a strategic decision to focus on achieving depth in eight focus states rather than spreading thinly across the entire country. For all other states, Quest established a “Knowledge and Innovation Community” where it partners with other NGOs (for e.g., Medha in UP) to share its proven models, develop content (Developed an AI curriculum with Navgurukul) and placement strategies, helping them build capacity rather than duplicating efforts.



Establish linkages with public systems

FRSN works closely with

- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) at the central government level for access to ITIs/aligned institutions across India as well as shape curriculum and related policies. FRSN works closely with industries/industry bodies to ensure: **a) Skilling is in line with industry needs b) build cross-stakeholder dialogues with industry, enabling them to participate in the skilling agenda.**
 - » In May 2024 FRSN in partnership with MSDE, developed the Trainer Development Strategy for the Skilling Ecosystem to enhance the quality and effectiveness of trainers across India.
 - » The strategy addresses critical challenges in the skilling ecosystem, such as shortages of qualified trainers, gaps in training capacity, and high attrition due to irregular employment and limited career growth.

- State governments to strengthen capacities and help them build employer/placement networks for their students.



Build public goods/technology platforms

- Free of cost access to 240 hours of skilling content for students and trainers through Bharat Skills Portal and Quest App. The Employability Skills training duration is 187.5 hours — Year 1: 127.5 hours (including AI) and Year 2: 60 hours.
- All the above content is available through Skill India Digital Hub, Bharat Skills Portal, and QuestApp.
- The Employability Skills student workbook is available in 10 languages — English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu, and Odia.
- Digital content is fully available in English, Hindi and partly available in Gujarati, Tamil and Malayalam. The collaboratives aim to have 100% translated content available this year.

Creating Large-Scale Sustained Impact



- FRSN has managed to deliver 21st century skills to over

**800,000 students
across ~1,600
institutes in 20 states/
UTs across India.**

- Embedding the delivery in the government ITI ecosystem and keeping the training content modular and technology-enabled makes the FRSN skilling model scalable while ensuring future innovations and experiments can be seamlessly added through the same channels.

Cisco has worked closely with its social impact partners to positively impact 50 million people in India

**24 partners
growing economic
empowerment for 24
million people**

**22 partners
providing education
to 22 million people**

**13 partners
supporting critical
human needs of 3.4
million people**

“

The India Cash Grant Program uses digital technology to drive social impact. By aligning with government priorities and fostering collaboration, we support innovation and capacity building. This holistic approach amplifies impact, ensuring resources create lasting change for a more inclusive and prosperous society.

— Harish Krishnan, Managing Director and Chief Policy Officer, Cisco India and SAARC

”

Regenerative Agriculture (Action for Climate and Environment)



Foundation Journey

01

Dr. Reddy's Foundation (DRF) was established in 1996 with the mission to educate and skill young people to fast-track them towards better livelihood options.



02

Over time, the Foundation's focus has expanded beyond education and skilling to initiatives across healthcare, rural livelihoods, climate action and agriculture.

03

The Foundation today, with an operating budget of over ₹100 crore and a team size of over 1,500 employees, works across

20 states

in India and has impacted over

2.7 million lives.



05

The programme, **adopted across 5 states in India**, is scaling fast and is focused on interventions that increase agricultural resilience to climate change.

04

DRF initiated the Regenerative Agriculture programme in 2020, under the Action for Climate and Environment (ACE) initiative, to help climate-proof the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers to the increasingly adverse impacts of climate change.

“

Our climate-smart agricultural practices work with farmers to minimise the agricultural footprint on climate and make agriculture resilient to changing conditions is gaining scale. The focus is on interventions that impact the planet and the livelihoods of farmers sustainably.

— Satish Reddy, Chairperson, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories

”

Problem Addressed

Agricultural practices not only contribute to close to 16-18% of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but also make agricultural yield and incomes highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change (Reported by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2024).

In India, climate change disproportionately burdens the marginalised farming population with small landholdings and limited access to resources.

Further, the International Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA) reported that, with close to 59% of the country's workforce aligned to agriculture, climate impacts on agriculture can lead to up to 1.5% loss in India's GDP.

Addressing this problem requires a holistic approach that brings together community, government and private platforms that stimulate innovative thinking and solutions.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

The Regenerative Agriculture initiative is focused on deploying climate-smart agricultural practices that save costs and improve yields. By creating a community-led platform through Lead Farmers at the village level. The initiative has established a trusted platform that enables peer-led learning of key identified practices.

- **Agriculture and water-focused interventions** — Improving soil fertility through site-specific nutrient management practices, carbon sequestration, revitalising and optimising use of water, deployment of sustainable practices/technologies to improve crop productivity and incomes.
- **Afforestation and biodiversity** — Integrating scientifically proven above-ground and below-ground biodiversity initiatives, promoting agroforestry models to improve green cover, alternate livelihoods and disaster resilience.
- **Smart energy management** — Supporting farm mechanisation, enabling conversion of residue to bio-energy sources and soil health improvement media, that reduce the use of fossil fuels.



Build ecosystem and capacity

By engaging with a range of stakeholders:

- ▶ **Extension services** — Advisory support to lead farmers and the community on soil health and nutrition, as well as optimal use of inputs like water and fertiliser. Use of nudge messaging, training and posters to create a buzz in the community on climate-smart practices. Creating local evidence of proven technologies, contextualising them for scale adoption among the farmers through “seeing is believing.”
- ▶ **Evidence-led knowledge creation** — Standardised frameworks created to measure and evaluate the outcomes of regenerative practices, which effectively quantify benefits and steer future adoption. By combining real-world measurements with advanced remote sensing and digital technologies and engaging farmers in the monitoring process, DRF establishes a strong and scientifically sound M&E system to gather both cross-sectional and longitudinal data. Articles published in peer-reviewed international academic journals, such as ‘Economic Suitability of Direct Seeded Rice (DSR)’, ‘Impact of Zero Tillage Adoption on Farmers & Income’, ‘Energy Efficiency in Conservation versus Conventional Cropping Systems’, ‘Effect of Green Fodder on Livestock Health and Farmers & Welfare’ and ‘Factors Driving Crop Residue Burning’ etc. offer valuable insights into critical climate issues and the need for governmental policy reform.
- ▶ **Private partnerships** — Working with a range of agri-inputs providers, both established ones (e.g. farm mechanisation) and start-ups (such as tech start-ups aimed at building technological solutions to solve agricultural challenges) to expose farmers to potential solutions and create a platform that provides feedback from farmers to agri-input providers. DRF helps startups pivot their solutions to be more farmer-centric and is led by evidence of outcomes in real-life applications.



Establish linkages with public systems

Learnings from DRF’s Regenerative Agriculture programme are being linked to public systems at 3 levels:

- ▶ **Government ecosystem** — Actively engaging with the hierarchy of the agri-focused government functionaries. Agricultural Technology Management Agencies (ATMAs) and village extension officers at the block level, Krishi Vigyan Kendras at the district level and Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes (ATARI) at the state level.
- ▶ **Agri-research institutions** — Working with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), etc. to strengthen evidence generation and dissemination through peer-reviewed journals.
- ▶ **Government programmes** — Incorporating crop and soil productivity-linked learnings in government policies and programmes (e.g. Water Resource Group by World Bank).

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

DRF's Regenerative Agriculture program is targeting to convert from

213,000 acres in 2024-25 to 1 million acres by 2028-29,

and is hoping to create sustainable impact at multiple levels.

▶ Farmers benefited — 60,621 (2024-25) to 500,000 (2028-29)

▶ Water saved — 78.3 million kl (2024-25) to 500 million kl (2028-29)

▶ Carbon sequestered — 80,924 tons CO2 eq. (2024-25) to 300,000 tons CO2 eq. (2028-29)

DRF has developed an in-house Monitoring, Reporting & Verification (MRV) system that meticulously captures detailed information on:

- ▶ Individual farmers, farm plots and crops, all linked with geospatial tags
- ▶ Soil test results for a deeper understanding of soil health and site specific nutrient management
- ▶ Other relevant parameters like agro-ecological zone-specific soil characteristics and real-time weather data

The MRV system is then used to provide highly localised digital advisory services to empower farmers with specific, data-driven recommendations that enhance their agricultural practices and decision-making.

At a systemic level, evidence-based knowledge from DRF's RA programme is being used to

Work with agri-research institutions to publish learnings in peer-reviewed journals, and shared sector forums like the Confederation of Indian Industry's conference on digital agriculture

Inform policy and programme design at the state government level (e.g. UP A.G.R.E.E.S)

Share policy inputs emerging from their learnings in sector round tables and government forums



Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (Central Square Foundation)



Foundation Journey

01

Established in 2004 – nearly a decade before the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandate was introduced in India, EY Foundation, the not-for-profit arm of EY India, began its journey with a focus on improving access to quality education for students from underprivileged backgrounds. The Foundation's first initiative supported 150 students at a non-formal education centre in Delhi. Over the past two decades, the Foundation has expanded its focus on three core areas – **the three Es: Education, Entrepreneurship, and Environmental Sustainability**.

- ▶ **Education:** EY Foundation supports projects across the education spectrum – from improving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy to supporting higher education of students from underprivileged backgrounds – youth with knowledge, skills, creative thinking and opportunities to transition to employment to fulfil their dreams of a brighter future.
- ▶ **Entrepreneurship:** Over the last decade, EY Foundation has supported ~500,000 rural women to improve their incomes and economic resilience by building the capacity of self-help groups.
- ▶ **Environmental Sustainability:** Since 2022, EY Foundation has collaborated with communities and non-profits to support large-scale afforestation and water conservation through the creation of water harvesting structures and promoting efficient water usage.



Recognising that systemic impact requires time, the Foundation provides flexible and long-term support to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), particularly those working in collaboration with governments.

To drive lasting impact in the communities it serves, EY Foundation's CSR approach is anchored around a few core principles:

- ▶ Scalability,
- ▶ Sustainability,
- ▶ Collaboration/convergence with key stakeholders in the ecosystem and
- ▶ Measurable impact

02

03

“

EY Foundation provides long-term funding to Civil Society Organisations who can create lasting change. Our intent to strengthen foundational education in India at scale and seeing the amazing work at grand level that CSF was doing in this area led us to partner with CSF. We felt confident that improving FLN outcomes in Uttar Pradesh has potential for replication across many other states.

— Rajiv Memani, Chairman and CEO, EY India

”

Problem Addressed

India's schooling system is the largest in the world, with 250 million children enrolled in 1.5 million schools. Half of India's school-going children are in primary grades; Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) levels – that is, the basic ability to read, understand simple text, and perform everyday maths – remain low among these students.

In states like Uttar Pradesh, this problem is further exacerbated, wherein:

- The National Achievement Survey ([NAS 2021](#)) statistics for UP showed that 40% of students in Grade 3 cannot read small texts with comprehension, and 50% cannot perform three-digit addition or subtraction (one of the core expected learning outcomes for this grade).
- The Annual Status of Education Report ([ASER 2022](#)), a privately conducted grassroots-level assessment, reported that, in government schools, ~76% of children in Grade 3 cannot read a Grade 2-level text; ~74% cannot do basic subtraction.

The government of India's NIPUN (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) Bharat Mission, launched in July 2021, tries to address these challenges holistically. The mission, with an allocation of ~ ₹13,000 crore, aims to ensure that every child in India achieves targeted FLN outcomes by the end of Grade 3 by 2026-27.

Approach

To address this learning crisis during the foundational years of schooling at scale, EY Foundation has partnered with Central Square Foundation (CSF) since 2022 to support the advancement of FLN outcomes in Uttar Pradesh, working closely with the state education department.



Establish a scalable model

This partnership supports the improvement of FLN outcomes across

115,000 primary schools, ~458,000 primary teachers and ~7,600,000 students

between grades 1-3 in six districts (Agra, Aligarh, Ghaziabad, Gorakhpur, Jhansi and Sitapur) of Uttar Pradesh.

CSF teams work with key government stakeholders in these districts to develop NIPUN goals, milestones, and the mission roadmap. They also provide implementation support in the form of technical and management assistance through District Project Management Units (DPMUs), which focus on:

- ▶ **Goal-setting and assessments**— Engaging with state leadership, parents, community and leaders from the education ecosystem to build salience around FLN and thereby, setting and aligning system-wide FLN goals and metrics.
- ▶ **Structured pedagogy** — Advocating for the adoption of a pedagogically sound approach to ensure alignment of teaching and learning resources with the FLN Learning Outcomes Framework.
- ▶ **System capacity building** — Developing the capacity of teachers for effective classroom teaching as well as of the middle management in coaching, data management and planning to ensure effective FLN delivery.
- ▶ **FLN data and governance** — Providing strategic support on key governance issues and developing an assessment and monitoring system for FLN reporting, tracking, and data-based decision-making.



Linkages with the public education system

The deployment model above ensures structured, ongoing support for state governments in designing and operationalising state-owned FLN missions under NIPUN Bharat Mission.



Build public goods

To widen the reach and deepen the impact of NIPUN Bharat, building, collecting and archiving a variety of public goods has remained integral to the approach. These public goods include:

- ▶ **Toolkits** — Toolkits for parents, teachers and implementers to effectively engage and support the foundational learning of students
- ▶ **Digital courses** — Digital teacher training and professional development courses
- ▶ **FLN playbooks** — Easy-to-use, tightly connected tools that can be adapted to a state or community need to develop a robust FLN programme
- ▶ **Lesson plans** — Lesson plans for teachers and educators to adopt

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

▶ Impact on Learning Outcomes

- » ASER 2024 reported exponential improvements in learning levels, demonstrating the impact of the FLN work in UP.
- » Grade 3 students who can read at grade 2 levels have improved from 12.3% in 2018 to 27.9% in 2024.

- » Grade 3 students who can subtract have improved from 11.2% in 2018 to 31.6% in 2024.

▶ Convergence and Leverage

50x multiplier in government funds leveraged – Every ₹ invested by EYF, enabled CSF to multiply its impact by leveraging a significantly larger pool of government funds for NIPUN UP.



Skills for Life Programme



CSR Journey

01

As part of HSBC's global commitment to investing in the communities in which it operates, HSBC India focuses on two thematic areas: Education and Environment.

02

Within these two thematic areas, HSBC partners with NGOs through programmes designed around clear objectives and measurable impacts on the communities they seek to serve.



03

HSBC India's five-year
**₹100 crore initiative
— HSBC Skills for Life
programme —**
launched in 2015 was a uniquely designed
outcome-based programme focused on
livelihood-oriented skills.

Learnings led to support projects that tackle multifaceted challenges in India's skilling ecosystem, such as low female participation in the workforce, a lack of appropriate training modules and faculty, a gap between training and industry requirements, and insufficient opportunities to integrate rural youth into the workplace.

04

“

To truly unlock India's economic potential and drive systemic growth, the most critical investment we can make is in our human capital

— Hitendra Dave, CEO, HSBC India

”

Problem Addressed

Despite numerous skilling efforts in India, the continued prevalence of unemployment points to a core gap between industry requirements (demand) and skills taught (supply).

- ▶ According to the **Economic Survey 2023-24**, only **51.25% of Indian graduates are employable**, indicating a persistent gap between education and industry requirements.
- ▶ **12.8 million unskilled** youth enter the workforce every year, yet **53% of jobs are vacant** as employers are unable to find people with the right skills.

Consequently, disadvantaged young people, including women, have fewer choices and opportunities to break out of the cycle of poverty.

There is a need for a more concerted effort by the government, civil society and private sector to help disadvantaged youth access livelihood-linked skill development opportunities.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

HSBC's Skills for Life Programme was launched to focus on three areas:

- ▶ **Outcome-based livelihood-linked skills development** — Deliver training and provide related placement services across select service sectors.
- ▶ **Upskilling of teachers and trainers** — Through training-the-trainers (ToT) approach so that they deliver relevant and learner-focused content to end beneficiaries.
- ▶ **Livelihood enhancement of marginalised women** — from rural and urban areas to improve their livelihood potential through financial literacy and building entrepreneurial capabilities.



Build ecosystem and capacity

The Skills for Life programme helped youth and women find meaningful livelihoods, but more importantly, brought together 87 NGOs across 108 projects across the country to create systemic momentum in the livelihood-oriented skilling space.

- ▶ **Outcome-based livelihood-linked skills development** —

HSBC, along with anchor delivery partner Swades,

built a network of 78 NGOs across 18 states and 4 union territories

to deliver training to 37,000 youth and placing 24,000 of them across the 10 service sectors

- ▶ **Upskilling of teachers and trainers** — Worked with 4 partners across 16 states to train over 58,000 teachers, principals, cluster cadres, and anganwadi heads.
- ▶ **Livelihood enhancement of marginalised women** — Worked with 5 partners across 12 states to provide entrepreneurship support to 46,700 women.
- ▶ **Unique features of HSBC Skills for Life** —
 - » A first-of-its-kind outcome-based skilling programme by a private sector organisation covering all regions of India (north, south, east, west and the north-east)
 - » Multi-stakeholder collaborative approach involving Swades Foundation (anchor partner for employability-linked skilling vertical), KPMG Assurance and Consulting Services LLP, India (screening partner), Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited India and TISS (monitoring and evaluation partners) and an Advisory Group comprising industry leaders responsible for selecting the final recipients of the grant



Establish linkages with public systems

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), a public-private partnership established under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, aims to promote private sector involvement in India's skilling ecosystem and be the strategic implementation and knowledge partner to the Skill India Mission. HSBC's Skills for Life initiative served as a replicable model for cross-sector collaboration around outcome-based skill development, leading to the NSDC's launch of the Skill Impact Bond.

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

Leveraging the outcome-focused approach of its successful Skills for Life programme (whose learnings were synthesised by Dalberg and the British Asian Trust while developing the structure for the Bond), **HSBC became one of the outcome funders for India's first Skill Impact Bond, created by NSDC in 2021.**

The Bond is demonstrating the effectiveness of outcome-based skilling by improving job placement and retention ratios for 50,000 youth (70% of which will be women).





Hindustan Unilever Limited

Project Circular Bharat



CSR Journey

01

HUL has been driving an ambitious sustainability agenda focused on four key priorities – Climate, Nature, Plastics, and Livelihoods.

02

The underlying philosophy of “fewer things, done better, with greater impact” has helped HUL define its Growth Action Plan in each of these priority areas.

03

Key programmes target solving difficult problems by adopting a few core principles –

- ▶ **Alignment to India’s development goals and HUL priorities**
- ▶ **Public-private partnerships**
- ▶ **Operational viability**
- ▶ **Scalability and replicability**



04

HUL’s circularity initiative, **Project Circular Bharat (PCB)**, is focused on building an integrated waste management ecosystem by connecting the critical levers essential to accelerate circularity of waste and plastics.

Problem Addressed

~70 million tonnes of municipal solid waste will be generated annually in India by 2026. (As India advances towards a \$10 trillion economy, the need for waste circularity is becoming critical).

Key government interventions (Swachh Bharat Mission, Mission LiFE and policies like Extended Producer Responsibility) are establishing a foundation for strengthening circularity and waste management practices and systems.

Over 400 waste management and circular economy-focused start-ups and non-profits have come up in the past 5 years.

While several successful waste management initiatives in India are being piloted, there is a need to harness learnings to build scalable and replicable models as well as drive regulatory harmonisation for a lasting systems-level change.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

HUL, along with its partners, has helped build an integrated waste management ecosystem. The company has been fine-tuning the model over the past few years and is looking to accelerate scale over the next few years. The ecosystem has three critical levers essential to accelerate the circularity of waste and plastics:

- ▶ **Responsible citizenship** — A behaviour change programme on waste segregation habits, at source, with college students acting as ambassadors ('Start A Little Good'). The initiative has inspired over 5 lakh citizens till date.
- ▶ **Social inclusion of waste workers (Safai Mitras)** — Dignified Livelihood Programme and partnership with UNDP focuses on linking waste workers with government social protection schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, e-Shram card, and Jan Dhan account. As of today, over 23,000 Safai Mitras have been socially included in partnership with UNDP.
- ▶ **Integrated infrastructure** — 7 decentralised, end-to-end Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) set up through PPP models to enable waste collection, segregation, processing, and recycling.



Build ecosystem and capacity

HUL has built a multi-stakeholder network to ensure key voices and perspectives are included in shaping a scalable & replicable solution.

- ▶ **Grassroots NGOs and community champions** — to engage and nudge citizens towards segregating waste at source.
- ▶ **Social enterprises** — to invest in and run MRFs, formalise involvement of safai mitras and help link them to social protection schemes.
- ▶ **Recyclers and start-ups** — for efficient recycling of and value extraction from different waste streams. Innovations to improve the financial viability of the system.
- ▶ **Mission-aligned funders** — to bridge financial gaps and ensure that the system could operate sustainably until it reached a point of financial viability.
- ▶ **Knowledge and policy partners** — for programme design, capacity building, government partnership and knowledge partnerships.



Establish linkages with public systems

By engaging with:

- ▶ **Multiple central government ministries** — including the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEFCC) to provide access to learning, practical frameworks, and resources for waste management-related policy planning.
- ▶ **Local municipalities/governments** — for land identification, allotment and provision of collection vehicles, etc.
- ▶ **Social protection schemes** — such as Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, e-Shram card and Jan Dhan account to ensure that 'Safai Mitras' can access these schemes.



Build public goods

HUL, along with its programme partners (UNDP, Xynteo and SBI Foundation), has developed a toolkit called '*Awareness to Action*' Toolkit, which synthesises learnings and best practices (actionable insights) from waste management programmes across the country.

- ▶ The toolkit also has customisable, ready-to-deploy creatives that can be downloaded and adopted by anyone to drive behaviour change and build strong citizen action on source segregation.
- ▶ The toolkit is expected to inform government policy as well as serve as a catalyst to inspire like-minded corporate partners and foundations to work towards accelerating the adoption of circularity-focused initiatives.

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

HUL's work above has helped establish a model that has helped process more than 12,000 metric tons of waste from going to landfills in the last 5 years, through the pilot.

With the model established, increased convergence with government policies, enhanced private sector capacity, and improved alignment across its partner network, the project aims to multiply its impact significantly over the coming years.



Further, 'The Awareness to Action Toolkit' offers a scalable and replicable model and highlights the role India can play in accelerating towards a circular economy.

By working with 20+ partners nationwide, and with plans to expand further,

HUL is demonstrating how powerful partnerships and innovation are the engine for circular systems.



“

At HUL, we are committed to driving meaningful environmental and social progress in alignment with India's Sustainable Development Goals. We are driving more focus through actions in areas where we believe we can make the maximum impact – Climate, Nature, Plastics and Livelihoods. We plan to accelerate Project Circular Bharat through partnerships with multiple stakeholders and make a positive difference across India.

— BP Biddappa, Executive Director and Chief People, Transformation and Sustainability Officer, HUL

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Climate Smart Agriculture



CSR Journey

01

ITC's strong belief that enterprises cannot succeed if societies fail has resulted in it embracing a *"Triple Bottom Line"* approach to its business model, focusing on simultaneously creating economic, environmental, and social capital.

02

These efforts were formalised under the stewardship of then ITC Chairman Mr. Y C Deveshwar, through the setting up of a dedicated corporate function for 'Social Investments' around the year 2000, much before CSR rules, sustainability, or ESG entered the corporate lexicon. These continue to be strategically embedded in the **ITC Next Strategy** of Mr. Sanjiv Puri, current Chairman of ITC.

03

The portfolio of Social Investments today is anchored around its purpose statement –

'Transforming Lives and Landscapes' and branded as 'Mission Sunehra Kal', encompassing

150+ projects spread over 200+ districts,

including over 40 aspirational districts in 20+ states/ union territories, operationalised through a Two-Horizon strategy:

Horizon I – strengthen today's dominant sources of livelihood (natural resource management and climate smart agriculture)

Horizon II – create capabilities for tomorrow (human capability development, public health, women empowerment and livelihoods)

04

Around the time that Social Investments started its journey, **ITC e-Choupal**, launched in 2000, was another pioneering initiative that sought to transform lives for rural communities, through the use of the internet and technology access to inform, connect and empower farmers, enhancing their incomes and capabilities.

05

Climate Smart Agriculture Programme, one of the interventions under Horizon I, builds on this deep legacy to address challenges around escalating climate crises through balanced, sustainable and regenerative farming practices and integration of technological innovations to enhance resilience, yields and livelihoods in agri-communities.



Problem Addressed

Agriculture remains central to the Indian economy, but is acutely exposed to climate shocks that threaten the yields and livelihoods of farmers, such as:

- ▶ Risks from erratic monsoons, droughts, and rising temperatures threaten crop yields and the incomes of millions of smallholder farmers.
- ▶ Practices and low awareness over the years have led to significant groundwater depletion and soil degradation.

The impact of climate is significant on '*farms, farmers, and farming*' across inputs (especially natural resources), throughputs (physical impact on both soil and farmers) and outputs (yields and quality). While the direct cascading impact is on rural livelihoods, nutrition, and food security, the maximum impact is felt by the most marginal and vulnerable sections of the population.

ITC's Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) programme strives to mitigate the risks arising out of climate change, but more importantly, focuses on adaptation by building resilience among farmers, and de-risking agri value-chains through a portfolio of tested practices and interconnected interventions.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

ITC's CSA programme is focused on designing and implementing a crop-specific and region-specific bouquet of sustainable and regenerative farm practices. It has evolved through a '**layering and laddering strategy**' which progressively adds new interventions by asking the question "so what" to determine impact and "what next" to deepen impact. This is done through a **Prototype-Pilot-Scale-Amplify-Multiply** approach. As part of the programme, the endeavour is also to saturate villages with identified key components, so that they could become **Climate Smart Villages (CSV)**, wherein their resilience to impacts of climate change on agriculture gets enhanced. The key components sought to be implemented in a CSV include:

- ▶ **Natural Resource Management** — focuses on replenishing the three natural capitals – water, soil and biodiversity. For example, on water, the focus is on drought-proofing agriculture by reducing crop-water demand through efficient agronomic practices for improving soil water-holding capacity and improved irrigation techniques like drip irrigation and rain-guns; augmenting water supply through the rejuvenation and/or creation of water harvesting and recharge structures; and also exploring the potential to recycle water for agriculture.

- ▶ **Bouquet of sustainable and regenerative farm practices** — e.g. working with agri institutions to introduce climate resilient and high-yielding seed varieties, crop specific agriculture practices (Zero Till, Direct Seeding of Rice, Alternate Wetting and Drying, Broad Based Furrow, Natural and Organic farming, Raised Bed Farming, Integrated Pest Management, Integrated Nutrient Management, etc), soil-test based nutrient application, and energy smart practices (reducing diesel consumption and enhancing use of solar), etc.
- ▶ **On-farm diversification** — includes areas like agro-forestry, fruit plantations, and stubble-based biomass, to generate new income streams for farmers to build resilience to likely income losses due to climate uncertainties.
- ▶ **Off-farm diversification** — focuses on livestock for supplementary income. Expanding beyond large ruminants (cows and buffaloes) to small ruminants (goats, etc) as well as piggeries, apiaries and fisheries to have additional sources of income.
- ▶ **Institutional linkages** — connects individual farmers to collectives like Farmer Producer Organisations/Agri-Business Centres to enable better negotiation leverage. Also works closely with government functionaries at the village/block level to facilitate easier and timely access (especially for smaller farmers) to government-relevant schemes.



Build ecosystem and capacity

ITC's CSA programme has been scaled through major partnerships with a range of ecosystem players.

- ▶ Leveraging ITC's trust and presence in village communities, a cadre of '*master trainers*' or '*lead farmers*' have been trained, who act as community champions and disseminate best practices through a peer-to-peer model. This is further strengthened through Farmer Field Schools and Choupal Pradarshan Khets. In a way, farmers have been one of the most important partners in this programme.
- ▶ Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and other rural institutions have been created. FPOs serve as major facilitators of farm livelihoods enhancement by enabling both aggregation efficiencies and targeted delivery of farm solutions. They act as a crucial link between input and output markets and individual farmers, especially those with small and marginal land holdings.
- ▶ Leveraging investments in Research & Development through ITC Life Sciences and Technology Centre (LSTC)'s **science-based platforms**, resilient seed varieties for crops like wheat, potato, and pulpwood which are climate resilient and deliver enhanced yield and quality have been created.
- ▶ Collaborations with government bodies and institutions like ICAR, NITI Aayog, NABARD, the Farmer Welfare and Agriculture Development Department (in Madhya Pradesh), and TRIFED (in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha).
- ▶ In the next phase, **ITC is exploring close coordination and collaboration with other corporations and foundations to transfer knowledge on successful best practices implemented and evidenced at scale for amplification and multiplication.**



Establish linkages with public systems

ITC's CSA Programme is closely aligned with multiple national missions like Sustainable Agriculture, Natural Farming, Digital Agriculture and Mission Millets at multiple levels.

- ▶ One of the major Public Systems that ITC collaborates with **is the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, partnering with different research institutes and agricultural universities that come under its umbrella. ITC has engaged with them for identifying and disseminating climate-resilient crop-specific packages of practices, and assessing the impact of newly adopted practices on yields, income, and the environment. The programme also works closely with Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and State Agricultural Universities to leverage their infrastructure, expertise, credibility, and reach for agri-extension and farmer training.
- ▶ By enabling access to schemes such as the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Kisan Credit Card (KCC), and Soil Health Cards, as well as state government schemes aligning with the above National Missions that offer incentives for water-saving technologies, natural farming, soil health monitoring, liquid and nano fertiliser use, solar energy adoption and drone didi programmes, ITC can help farmer communities with the adoption of climate-smart practices.
- ▶ ITC's on-ground presence and relationships at the Gram Panchayat/block level help them create improved visibility and access to relevant schemes by helping improve completeness and quality of applications for farmers at one end, while also helping government functionaries by creating access to better quality applications and bundling of applications, thus supporting efficiency and effectiveness of a public system.



Build technology platforms

The **ITCMAARS** app (ITC Metamarket for Advanced Agriculture and Rural Services) provides farmers with AI/ML-driven value-added personalised and hyperlocal crop advisories. These include customised 'Crop Calendars' for scientific planning of crop cycles, a 'Crop Doctor' function for real-time resolution of crop infestation, real-time soil testing, a 'Fertiliser Calculator' to optimise nutrition, precision farming, access to good quality inputs and market linkages, and so on. It also makes available allied services such as pre-approved loans and, over time, will also provide insurance, among others. The scaling up of ITCMAARS will contribute significantly to national priorities of Digital India, doubling farmer incomes and enhancing livelihood opportunities. The ITCMAARS app contributes significantly to the government's drive to promote and strengthen FPOs by creating a 'phygital' ecosystem of the ITCMAARS app, engaging at the ground level through Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). The model already covers agri value chains such as Wheat, Soybean and Millets. The super app has onboarded several banking partners (such as State Bank of India, Axis Bank and IDFC First Bank), crop nutrition and protection majors (such as Bayer, BASF, Syngenta, Corteva Agrisciences and Coromandel) and multiple ICAR Agri Institutes.

ITCMAARS has, so far, been launched in 10 states — Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Gujarat.

It now empowers

2.1 million farmers through 2,050 FPOs.

ITCMAARS will progressively cover as many as 4,000 FPOs, empowering 10 million Indian farmers by 2030.

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

- Coverage of the ITC Climate Smart Agriculture programme has expanded to over **3 million acres, covering 1.2 million farmers,** including over 1.8 lakh women agriculturists across 19 states, in line with its target of covering 4 million acres by 2030.

The Climate Smart Village approach is being implemented in 7,000 villages, with the target of reaching 10,000 villages by 2030.

- At an agri-network level, ITC's footprint also includes
 - » 2,050 Farmer Producer Organisations to enhance farm incomes and rural livelihoods
 - » 1,850 Agri Business Centres (ABCs), including 620 ABCs exclusively for women, delivered extension services, arranged agri-credit linkages, established collective

input procurement and provided agricultural equipment for hire.

- » 13,500 Farmer Field Schools and over 17,600 Choupal Pradarshan Khets (CPKs) disseminated knowledge to farmers in 2024-25.

- At the individual farmer level, 4.2 million linkages with government schemes have been facilitated over the last few years.

- Non-farm livelihood diversification initiatives like Social Forestry have enhanced incomes and climate resilience for 1.9 lakh poor households across 7,400 villages, covering 5.28 lakh acres. Together with the Farm Forestry initiative, it has covered around 1.32 million acres.

- As part of its non-farm livelihood diversification efforts, it has carried out artificial inseminations (AIs), producing 0.47 lakh high-yielding progeny and indigenous breeds in 2024-25 alone, while supporting 38,000 animals of over 19,000 dairy farmers across 416 villages.

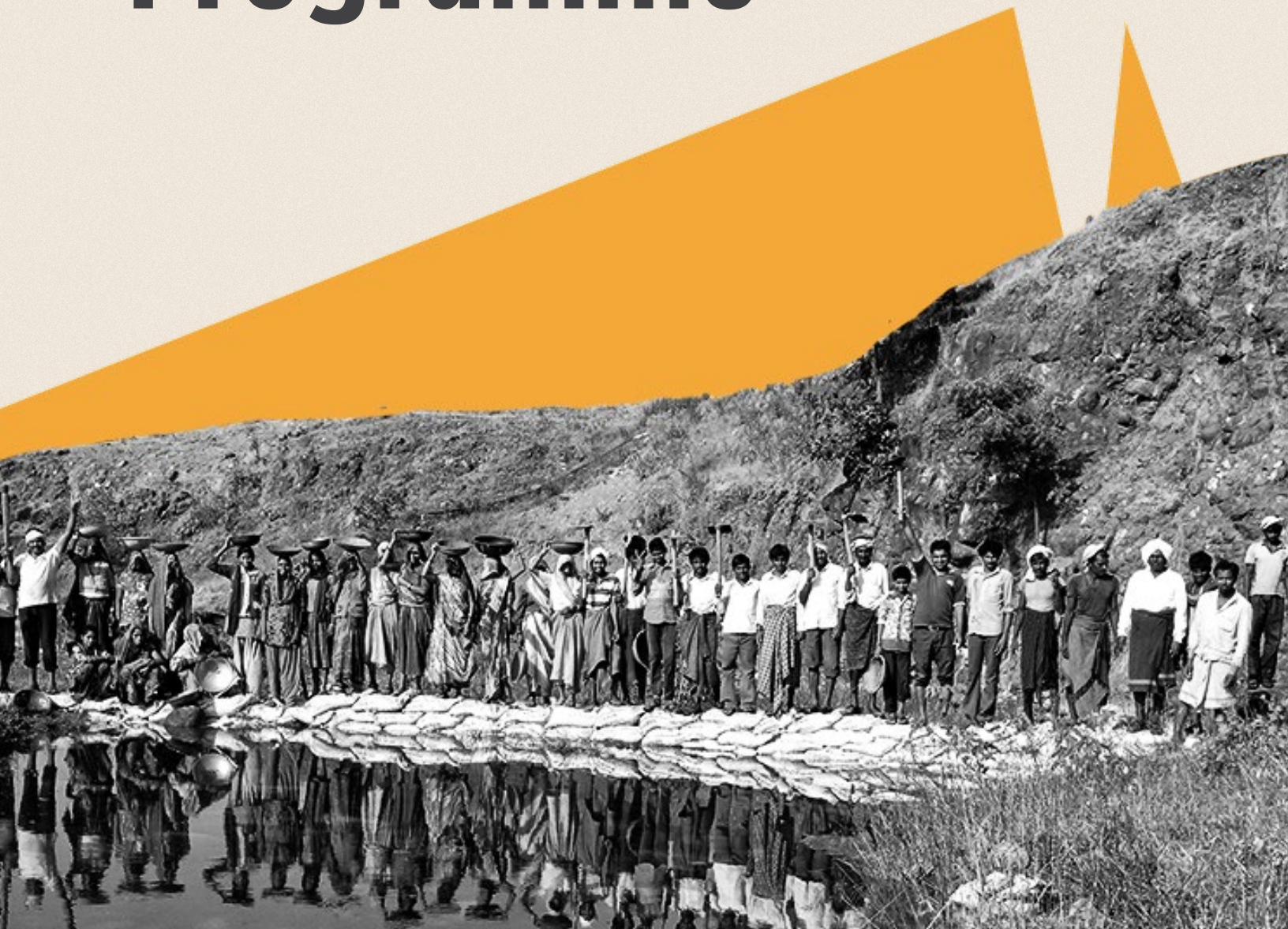


At ITC, our credo of Responsible Competitiveness has inspired every thought and action. The Company believes that corporates are best placed at the frontline of economic activity to deliver unified solutions that can innovatively deliver economic, environmental and social value. Competitive enterprises of tomorrow will be those that embed sustainability at the core of corporate strategy, and not as a bolt-on to business imperatives. The ITC Next framework, adopted by the Company a few years ago, mainstreams sustainability as an integral part of business strategy to leverage emerging opportunities, build resilience and competitiveness, whilst pursuing a bold agenda for adaptation and mitigation.

— Sanjiv Puri, Excerpt from Chairman's message in ITC Sustainability Report 2025



Rural Transformation Programme



Foundation Journey

01

Reliance Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Reliance Industries Limited, aims to play a catalytic role in addressing India's development challenges through innovative and sustainable solutions.

02

Led by Nita M. Ambani, Founder and Chairperson, Reliance Foundation is relentlessly working for overall well-being and enhanced quality of life for all. It focuses on rural transformation, education, health, sports for development, disaster management, women empowerment, urban renewal and arts, culture and heritage, and has touched the lives of over

03

Driven by its “*We care with passion and purpose*” philosophy, Reliance Foundation aims to pave the way for an equitable, inclusive, and prosperous India by empowering every individual – by working in communities, especially the marginalised, leveraging technology and enabling the ecosystem.

**87 million people
across India, in over
91,500 villages and
urban locations.**



04

The Rural Transformation (RT) programme, one of the Foundations' earliest efforts, was built to address the multifaceted needs of rural communities by building resilience, ensuring sustainability and fostering self-reliance.

“

As we enter the fifteenth year of Reliance Foundation, our resolve becomes deeper and stronger, to create even greater impact and help uplift millions of Indians towards a brighter, safer, greener, more equitable, compassionate, and prosperous future.

— Nita M. Ambani, Founder Chairperson, Reliance Foundation

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Problem Addressed

India's rural economy is increasingly shaped by deeply interconnected systemic challenges – climate change, natural resource degradation, income instability, and persistent community-level vulnerabilities.

The degradation of natural resources, including declining groundwater levels, reduced soil fertility, and unsustainable exploitation of land, water, and livestock, is a growing concern. Simultaneously, rural communities grapple with pervasive livelihood insecurity. Limited access to technology, finance, and modern agricultural inputs disproportionately impacts smallholder farmers and women, who often engage in labour-intensive work with minimal returns.

Community-level vulnerabilities further compound these structural issues. Widespread malnutrition, gender disparities, low digital and financial literacy, and inadequate access to social protection systems mechanisms leave communities vulnerable to losing their lives, livelihoods and dignity.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

Reliance Foundation's Rural Transformation (RT) Programme adopts a comprehensive Climate Resilience Framework that places community agency at the core while following a hybrid 'phygital' (physical + digital) approach. Anchored in a robust Theory of Change, the programme addresses multidimensional rural vulnerabilities through three synergistic pillars: climate resilience, value chain integration, and diversified rural incomes. The RT programme is structured around a set of interlinked models, each designed to cater to these pillars to build climate-resilient and self-reliant rural communities:

- **Village Climate Resilience Plan (VCRP)** — Community-driven Climate Resilience Plans, Gram Panchayat Development Plans, and initiatives to address gaps through community action, convergence and grassroots NGO implementation support, measured using the Climate Resilience Index (CRI).
- **Community-driven water resource management** — Participatory creation and restoration of decentralised water harvesting structures such as check dams, farm ponds, percolation tanks, and groundwater recharge systems.

- ▶ **Climate-smart agriculture and crop diversification** — Climate-resilient cropping systems, biofortified seeds, integrated pest management (IPM), water-efficient irrigation, and millet-based diversified farming. The research-driven model combines on-farm demonstrations, farmer field schools, and digital advisories focusing on local value chain development — especially for nutrition-sensitive and climate-resilient crops like millets and pulses.
- ▶ **Income diversification and value-chain development** — Supporting rural households in diversifying their income sources and strengthening their income sources, with a particular focus on promoting women’s entrepreneurship across farm, off-farm, and non-farm livelihood clusters.
- ▶ **Strengthening collectives** — Empowering Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs) by enhancing leadership capabilities, advancing business planning, conducting comprehensive value chain analysis, integrating digital technologies, and facilitating robust market linkages.
- ▶ **Digital farm initiative** — Transforming Agriculture Through Technology – Digital platforms to bridge knowledge gaps and empower farmers to make informed decisions about their crops, soil health and market linkages.
- ▶ **Social safety and financial inclusion** — Driving community engagement, especially for women, by connecting service providers such as banks, post offices, CSCs, insurance, and pension agencies — with service seekers through an integrated, outreach-focused linkage system that operates via both digital and physical channels.



Build ecosystem and capacity

The Foundation’s Rural Transformation model is characterised by its commitment to going beyond programme delivery to building long-term institutional and community capacities.

- ▶ **Strong community platforms** — At the village level, bringing together groups like Gram Panchayats, self-help groups, community-based organisations, farmer collectives, women-led enterprises, and rural youth leadership to plan and manage climate adaptation and livelihood activities.
- ▶ **FPO leadership** — ‘FPO-LEAD’ capacity building programme cultivates local youth as professional FPO CEOs and value chain managers, ensuring leadership continuity and driving long-term organisational growth through business acumen and technical know-how.
- ▶ **Livelihood diversification** — Provides market and credit access along with training to support a range of micro-enterprises focused on income generation (goatery, poultry, fisheries, vegetable farming, and women-led microenterprises).
- ▶ **Dual-engagement strategy** across ‘Intensive’ and ‘Extensive’ districts to balance depth and breadth – testing and refining models in ‘intensive’ districts while rapidly disseminating successful innovations across ‘extensive’ districts.

- » 'Intensive' districts are focal points for deep engagement spread across six states, where integrated implementation is carried out by a network of Field Implementing Partners (FIA's) engaged on an annual plan basis and supported by RF professionals. These districts focus on physical interventions, participatory planning, and locally tailored livelihood solutions, reaching 30–40 villages per block and 50–60 households per village.
- » 'Extensive' districts are digitally enabled geographies spread across another 15 states and 1 union territory, that leverage AI-driven advisories, helplines, the Digital Farm School platform, and strategic partnerships with Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), government agencies, and local academic institutions to deliver thematic interventions at scale.



Establish linkages with public systems

The Foundation's Rural Transformation model is aligned with the government of India's Viksit Bharat objectives.

- Key initiatives of the Rural Transformation model have effectively leveraged a range of existing government schemes related to agriculture. These include initiatives for drip irrigation, horticulture, improved seeds, fertilisers, MSP procurement, vermicomposting, biogas, and various cash crop cultivation schemes such as polyhouses, among others.
- Prioritised activities such as afforestation, soil health management, watershed treatment and resource conservation were integrated into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan and NREGA.
- This convergence of government schemes and RF support ensures local ownership and better coordination. **Through the programme design, RF investments have provided gap-filling and bridge funding to help communities leverage it for existing government schemes.** The broader objective is to enable 10x by tapping into additional resources — particularly from government schemes — while also recognising and encouraging substantial community contributions.



Develop public goods/technology platforms

- **Digital Farm School** — An innovative platform offering on-demand, location-specific agronomic advice to its users on crop management, pest control, weather forecasts, etc., democratising access to critical agricultural knowledge that was once limited to large commercial farms.
- **Climate Resilience Index (CRI)** — A signature measurement tool that enables data-driven decision-making across all levels, with a strong push towards digitising community engagement, planning processes and knowledge dissemination.

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

RF's Rural Transformation work has reached

21.3 million people

cumulatively, with a deep and wide impact footprint.



- ▶ More than 56,000 self-reliant and climate-resilient villages.
- ▶ Coverage of 81,000+ hectares for climate-adaptive agricultural practices that integrate regenerative farming, water harvesting, and adaptive inputs.
- ▶ Created 1,865 lakh cubic meters of additional water harvesting capacity, significantly improving irrigation security in drought- and flood-prone areas.
- ▶ Engaged 1.43 crore users in knowledge and service exchanges, disseminating climate-smart practices, digital advisories, and successful models across geographies.
- ▶ Achieved an average yearly increase of 5% to 10% in productivity in yield across 10 key crops through the adoption of digital tools, AI-enabled advisories, and improved farming systems.
- ▶ Enabled over 1.25 lakh women with improved digital and financial literacy engaged in livelihood activities. Nearly 1.8 lakh people have improved access to entitlements, schemes and financial products for financial inclusion. Based on data reported in 2024-25, 59% of the people supported are women.
- ▶ In 2024-25, 63,500+ farmers supported through an integrated value chain development approach, including smallholders and marginal producers, to achieve 12% incremental income gains through integrated value chain development, supported by strengthened Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and strategic partnerships with NABARD, NRLM, and the private sector.

TATA MOTORS
Connecting Aspirations

Water Body Rejuvenation



CSR Journey

01

Tata Motors' commitment to social responsibility is rooted in the founder Jamsetji Tata's *trusteeship* philosophy, viewing the community as the fundamental purpose of a business's existence.



03

With a history of prioritising needs of disadvantaged and marginalised communities, Tata Motors' CSR spends have centred on 5 focus areas:

- Health (Aarogya)
- Education (Vidyadhanam)
- Employability (Kaushalya)
- Environment (Vasundhara)
- Rural Development

The company's CSR strategy is driven by the philosophy of "More from Less for More", aiming to maximise social impact through efficient use of financial and human capital, leveraging strategic partnerships by creating community ownership and convergence with government priorities and schemes.

02

04

In FY 25, Tata Motors' CSR programmes reached over

1.4 million beneficiaries

across its various interventions, with more than 40% of beneficiaries being intersectionality vulnerable and spread across

94 aspirational districts in 26 states and 8 union territories.

The Water Body Rejuvenation programme is one of Tata Motors' flagship initiatives driven by the convergence of interests and roles across key stakeholders — village communities, civil society organisations and government.

05

“

Our CSR philosophy, 'More from Less for More', emphasised the convergence of strengths across the government, nongovernment, and private sectors to aspire for greater scale and impact, which otherwise could not have been achieved as an individual team.

— Jyotindran Kutty, Chief Sustainability Officer, Tata Motors

”

Problem Addressed

The acute water crisis in rural India is a challenge that directly impacts agricultural livelihoods and the quality of life for millions.

- ▶ Of the 788 districts in India, 540 struggle with immense water stress as per data released by India Meteorological Department, forcing communities to remain dependent on rain-fed agriculture.
- ▶ Maharashtra frequently faces recurring droughts, making large-scale water conservation and water body rejuvenation a critical government priority.
- ▶ Over half of the state's population is dependent on agriculture, making water scarcity an urgent concern. In drought years, crop failure rates have exceeded 70% in some areas, leading to severe economic distress, forcing families to rely on government water tankers for basic needs.
- ▶ Recognising this pressing concern, the Government of Maharashtra launched the 'Gaal Mukta Dharan, Gaal Yukta Shivar' scheme, a community-based water body rejuvenation programme aimed at ensuring water security.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

Tata Motors' approach to water conservation evolved from initial programmatic investments in infrastructure projects (wells, RO plants) to systemic initiatives linked with government of India's *Amrit Sarovar* mission. The initiative builds on its *convergence philosophy* to work closely with:

- ▶ Gram Panchayats and village communities to create ownership and involvement in decision-making and execution of the projects including responsibility for silt transportation and usage.
- ▶ NAAM Foundation, the onground implementation partner entrusted with the task of desilting through excavation and widening of existing water bodies, rivers and *nalas* to increase their storage capacities.
- ▶ Government of Maharashtra, by linking the water body rejuvenation work with the '*Gaal Mukta Dharan, Gaal Yukta Shivar*' scheme. Under the scheme, the government's MGNREGA Department paid ₹31 per cubic meter to NAAM Foundation for desiltation, and ₹35 per cubic meter to the village community for silt transportation to their farms to enhance the fertility of the soil.
- ▶ Besides seed funding to support NAAM foundation's work in water, Tata Motors also provided technical assistance, training and support through access to senior political and bureaucratic leadership in Maharashtra.



Build ecosystem and capacity

Tata Motors has strategically cultivated an ecosystem around water conservation by engaging multiple stakeholders and building their capacity to work collaboratively.

- ▶ **Engaging governments** — They actively engage with the government at all levels, from the Chief Minister's office to the district administration and Gram Panchayats, ensuring alignment and smooth execution.
- ▶ **Building institutional capacity** — To enhance the government system's own effectiveness, Tata Motors placed dedicated **"Water Fellows"** within the district headquarters of the Soil and Water Conservation Department. These Fellows act as a bridge between the community, the implementing partner, and district administration, improving coordination and **building the government's capacity to manage such large-scale public-private partnerships.**
- ▶ **Strengthening the implementation partner** — They helped build the capacity of their partner, **NAAM Foundation**, by providing **CSR Funds** which also serves as a **rolling corpus of funds**. This de-risked the foundation from the financial pressures of delayed government reimbursements, empowering them to progressively take on larger projects (1,000 water bodies in summer of 2025).

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

The programme which started with 1 water body in Palghar in 2021-22, expanded to 350 water bodies in the summer of 2024 and 1000 water bodies across 26 districts of Maharashtra in summer of 2025, with plans to further expand in Maharashtra.

- ▶ The work on 1,000 water bodies is projected to create over 7,000 million litres of storage capacity, helping raise the water table, provide access to potable water and make irrigation water available throughout the year, thus improving livelihoods for villagers.

- ▶ **Tata Motors' investment of ₹25 crore over three years has unlocked approximately**

₹100 crore in government funding
for rejuvenation of the 1,000 water bodies alone, demonstrating a powerful multiplier effect.

- ▶ The success of the model has led to referrals across various other states of India.

The partnership with Tata Motors helped NAAM Foundation scale its annual project budget from

~₹3 crore (in FY 21) to over ₹25 crore (in FY 25)
through convergence with the 'Gaal Mukta Dharan, Gaal Yukta Shivar' scheme.

Corridor of Well-Being



Foundation Journey

01

Tata Steel's culture of social responsibility has been shaped by Jamsetji Tata's words — *"In a free enterprise, the community is not just another stakeholder in business, but is in fact the very purpose of its existence."*

Tata Steel has built an enduring legacy of over 100 years in giving back to society and a commitment to inclusive growth.

02

03

Tata Steel Foundation (TSF) anchors one of the deepest and most diverse societal development efforts directly, reaching more than **6 million lives across 2,500+ Gram Panchayats of India**, focused on the states of Jharkhand and Odisha. TSF runs nationally and regionally replicable change models across domains such as education, public health, tribal identity, livelihoods, agriculture, water, grassroots governance, disability etc., which a) collectively address all aspects of multi-dimensional poverty and b) are based on a contemporary understanding of core development challenges.



04

The Foundations' **Corridor of Well-Being**, specifically, intends to bring holistic development across 72 panchayats in 16 blocks and 5 districts, spread across two states of Jharkhand and Odisha, along the 286-km road route between Tata Steel's production centres at Jamshedpur in Jharkhand and Kalinganagar in Odisha. With the outcomes being reflected, TSF has now scaled up to replicate this model in Gram Panchayats (Replication Gram Panchayats) that are proximate to their operations in the states of Jharkhand and Odisha.



“

The 'Corridor of Well-Being' collaborates with the government, local businesses and civil society to transform 72 Gram Panchayats along a 270 km stretch, creating a replicable blueprint for scalable village development.

— T.V. Narendran, CEO and Managing Director, Tata Steel

”

Problem Addressed

Odisha and Jharkhand together account for over 25% of India's 112 aspirational districts, highlighting significant socio-economic challenges in these regions. These districts face multiple challenges across key indicators such as poverty, health, nutrition, education and infrastructure.

Addressing these challenges requires development actors to transition from localised, one-off projects to collaborative interventions that are both scalable and transformational. At the same time, the resource inflow and mobilisation of capital (both private and public) to address the challenges are among the lowest in the country.

Approach



Establish a scalable model

The Corridor of Well-Being focuses on Gram Panchayats as the primary drivers of local development, harnessing people's participation through vibrant grassroots governance institutions. By strengthening delivery systems, it seeks to catalyse progress and address key developmental challenges, ultimately creating long-term impact across the following areas:

- ▶ **Social capital** — Community comes together and develops the potential to formulate and own a development agenda.
- ▶ **Human capital** — Better health and education for the community with support from other Foundations programmes.
- ▶ **Cultural capital** — Promotion and upkeep of their rich cultural heritage like traditional governance system and abridge with the Panchayati Raj System.
- ▶ **Economic development** — Enabling access to channels, facilities and access to rights and entitlements by unlocking the potential of various schemes.



Build ecosystem and capacity

The Foundation has set up a unique fellowship programme to embed dedicated support within 72 (expanding to 124) Gram Panchayats to mobilise communities, government delivery systems and Panchayati Raj Institutions. To anchor the Corridor of Well-Being, the following markers of ownership have been established:

- ▶ Sarpanches are involved in the selection of fellows to promote community ownership.

- Fellows, ideally local graduates, work on ground to support the development and implementation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) and Village Development Plans (VDPs) and also enable in unlocking the potential of various government schemes and leverage the funds by linking beneficiaries with various schemes. These Fellows also have a one-year certificate course with the Indian Institute of Management, Ranchi — “One Year Certificate Course in Grassroot Leadership for Community Development and Local Governance.”
- The establishment of a corridor collective, with the Foundation as a mobiliser and convener with all involved stakeholders (communities, government functionaries and PRI representatives), to create collective ownership for the delivery of services through a convergence model.
- The GPDPs have also been informed by a robust survey conducted in coordination with Tata Trusts in 2018-19 on various household-level indicators that had their essence from the Niti Aayog Framework to measure the gaps in various parameters.



Establish linkages with public systems

The focus on GPDPs and VDPs is driven by the mandate of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to develop comprehensive and participatory blueprints for inclusive local development. Altogether, the Foundation has been able to leverage around 50 different schemes across both the Development Corridor and the Replication Panchayats. The major schemes that were leveraged were Prime Minister's Awas Yojna, Ayushman Bharat, Abua Swasth card, MGNREGA, Maiya Samman, Subhadra Yojna and PM Jandhan Yojna among others.

Creating Large-Scale and Sustained Impact

- Gram Panchayat level convenings (Gram Sabha) across the 72 panchayats increased from 33 (baseline) to 235 (against a target of 216). Similarly, in the Replication Gram Panchayats, 48 Gram Sabhas were conducted last year, which has increased to 52 Gram Panchayats having Gram Sabhas (by the second quarter).
 - This has led to the unlocking of a significant **₹287 crore of government funding through** capacity building of Gram Panchayats to access entitlements, directly benefitting 112,672 lives. At the same time, in the new proximate replication Panchayats (52 Panchayats), the Foundation has helped unlock ₹288.53 crore since FY 25.
- **The investment of ₹9.05 crore till date by the Foundation on the Corridor of Well-Being since FY 23, has been able to create a**
 - In the first quarter of FY 26, the Foundation has been able to unlock ₹310 crore across both the Corridor of Well-Being and the proximate Panchayats.

20x multiplier effect.

The 'How' of Corporate Philanthropy for Systemic Change

The stories of supporting systemic impact through corporate philanthropy, profiled in the previous chapter, would be incomplete without understanding what made these CSR/corporate foundations distinct.

Systemic impact, by definition, requires a deep understanding of social challenges and the underlying web of root causes, as well as the complexity of institutional systems. Solving for this takes time, involves frequent iterations around solutions, and sometimes requires recalibration of direction. It also requires the ability to cede space, work with a range of partners of varying capability levels, and at times, without commensurate credit or attribution.

Our interactions with leaders in these 13 CSRs/corporate foundations showed systemic philanthropy can have a sustainable population-scale impact, but to achieve it, CSRs/corporate foundations themselves need to thoughtfully invest in certain capabilities and practices to make it happen.





We found 5 distinct organisational enablers

which have helped shape these systemic philanthropy initiatives



Promoters/business champions are personally engaged in shaping philanthropic decision-making

Systemic impact is a gradual but rewarding process. It involves regularly refining solutions and adjusting the overall direction as new insights and challenges emerge. At the same time, it calls for a strong commitment and active involvement from leadership. Their vision, persistence, and willingness to take risks provide the capability needed to tackle complex, deeply rooted challenges sustainably.



Investment in developing strong CSR leaders to shape strategic impact

Delivering systemic impact that addresses complex problems requires a deep understanding of development challenges from various lenses – technical, political, social, and economic. Strong CSR leaders bring diverse experience and a deep understanding of development challenges, enabling them to help shape effective solutions to address them. These leaders also understand the civil society organisation (CSO) ecosystem and help build deep and impactful partnerships. When corporates support them with access to key decision-making forums, it leads to smarter giving strategies and disproportionate impact.



Diverse and capable CSR teams to plan and shape CSR investments

The multi-dimensional nature of systemic impact also requires engagement on several interconnected areas – understanding government policies, budgets, and schemes, and analysing the motivations and incentives within systems to address underlying social and economic challenges. This change is often non-linear, demands constant assessment, fine-tuning, and strong programme management. To navigate this complexity, investing in strong teams with diverse and complementary skills bringing together thematic expertise, technical capabilities, research and data analysis, government liaison, and programme management is critical.



Robust measurement mechanisms to guide the journey to systemic impact

To navigate long and often non-linear journeys, these organisations use robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. These frameworks go beyond compliance, serving as strategic tools to measure progress against systemic goals and enable adaptive management.



Building partnerships to amplify and multiply impact

Recognising that no single entity can solve interconnected, complex challenges alone, CSRs/corporate foundations aiming to achieve large-scale, sustained impact must build and nurture powerful ecosystems. They can create powerful coalitions with government, civil society organisations, and other funders to drive collective action and ensure sustainability.

Promoters/business champions personally engaged in shaping philanthropic decision-making

We found most of these systemic corporate funders to be very intentional in their choice of philanthropic focus areas and pathways. The complex, evolving nature of systemic change has meant promoters and business champions have played a critical role in providing the vision, resilience, and risk capital necessary to confront entrenched challenges, and support the creation of effective and enduring impact. They have actively leveraged their expertise and networks both to shape strategy and open doors for partnerships with other stakeholders. They have used their social capital to enhance visibility around underserved areas and championed the initiatives in industry, government, and other public forums. Invested business champions also strengthen other internal enablers — they help nurture strong CSR leaders who can drive the agenda on the ground.

While every CSR/corporate foundation we interacted with demonstrates these qualities, a few select examples of promoters and business champions playing a pivotal role in shaping philanthropic journeys are highlighted below:

Cipla Foundation

At Cipla Foundation, the Hamied Family's multi-generational commitment through clarity and single-minded focus — making palliative care accessible to all — has shaped the Foundation's strategic model for philanthropy. While Dr. Y.K. Hamied and M.K. Hamied established the Cipla Palliative Care and Training Centre in Pune in 1997, Rumana Hamied has been instrumental in championing the initiative over the last decade. She has been a pivotal force in uniting the palliative care community to collectively establish sector-wide standards of care.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

Rumana's direct engagement with the Indian Association of Palliative Care and other national partners was instrumental in the formation of the IAPC Working Group on quality standards.

It has since developed guidelines for both adult and pediatric palliative care. She has advocated strongly for scaling the initiative through collaboration with public healthcare systems. Her commitment to pediatric palliative care has driven the adoption and expansion of this critical service in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Goa. Her belief in the importance of palliative care, right from diagnosis, has enabled a stronger focus on embedding palliative care within hospitals. Crucially, Rumana recognised the importance of well-trained and supported healthcare teams. This has ultimately shaped Cipla Foundation's strategy for embedding palliative care into the healthcare system, ensuring the Foundation's partners recruit qualified teams with adequate compensation and have supervisory systems to prevent staff burnout. She actively champions widespread access to palliative care, presenting at various public forums and highlighting lessons from Cipla Foundation's initiatives. She co-authored a chapter in the 2024 book, *"Reimagining Philanthropy in the Global South: From Analysis to Action in a Post-COVID World,"* demonstrating how strategic philanthropy can improve health outcomes. Rumana's chapter specifically delves into Cipla Foundation's strategy for building an ecosystem for palliative care in India. The Hamied family's long-standing commitment and active advocacy for palliative care have helped elevate visibility for the cause while laying the groundwork for the Foundation to establish partnerships across the healthcare ecosystem and exponentially increase the impact of their work.

Cisco

Cisco India Purpose Office brings together various Cisco teams working at the intersection of social impact and digital interventions. Led by Harish Krishnan, Managing Director & Chief Policy Officer for India and SAARC, the Purpose Office includes representation from multiple teams across Cisco.

In 2013, when the CSR law was mandated, Cisco's Purpose Office saw an opportunity not just to meet the mandate, but to go above and beyond.

In 2018, Cisco set a bold goal: to positively impact 50 million lives in India by 2025.



Crafting a strategy that combined innovative technology with collaborative partnerships, CISCO didn't just meet that goal — it exceeded it, reaching the milestone in March 2025.

“

India is a microcosm of Cisco worldwide. We have such a big presence in India with every major corporate function, whether it's government affairs, marketing, sales, innovation, CDA, or Networking Academy. We used to talk to each other, but not in a very structured way. So, when we created the India Purpose Office, it brought all these components together and unleashed the power of One Cisco.

— Harish Krishnan, Managing Director and Chief Policy Officer, Cisco India and SAARC

”

This Purpose Office plays a critical role in decision-making for all its social impact investments in India across its three pillar programmes: **India Cash Grant Program**, which funds innovative and tech-focused programmes addressing critical social challenges; the **Cisco Networking Academy**, a global program that has been empowering students in India with industry-relevant digital skills for over 25 years; and the **Country Digitization Acceleration Program**, which collaborates with government and private sector leaders to build sustainable, secure, and inclusive communities powered by ethical and innovative technology solutions.

The decision-making within the Purpose Office strikes a balance between a “compliance-first” mindset required for regulatory reporting and a strategic “head and heart” approach, which allows the social impact team the flexibility to invest in **long-term systemic outcomes, including “shifts in thought process” at the government level**, which are powerful but harder to quantify in traditional CSR reporting.

Dr. Reddy's Foundation

At Dr. Reddy's, the promoter family, starting with Dr. Anji Reddy in 1996, has been closely involved in shaping their social impact journey. Dr. Reddy's Foundation (DRF), which was set up within a decade of starting the parent pharmaceutical business, progressively expanded its focus areas from skilling to include healthcare, education, rural livelihoods, climate action and agriculture.

Besides direct involvement in running social impact programmes, the Foundation has consistently looked at creating leverage by engaging with relevant government systems, creating convening spaces (e.g. the first national conference on skilling in 2004) and investing in building its execution capabilities. DRF, which functions as an operating foundation today, has built expertise in each of its key portfolio areas. Its programmes attract grants from a range of corporate funders in addition to the parent company – Dr. Reddy's CSR investments.

The promoters' family continues to be very active, with Satish Reddy and Anuradha Gunupati as trustees, shaping the Foundation's vision and impact. Satish, as Chairman of both Dr. Reddy's and Dr. Reddy's Foundation, has extensive experience working with the government and various industry bodies in shaping policies across a range of areas. As the former chairman of the Life Sciences Sector Skill Development Council under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a member of the Governing Body of the Skill Council for Persons with Disabilities, Satish has been instrumental in bridging skill gaps and advocating inclusive workforce practices.

As Chairman of Dr. Reddy's Foundation, Satish plays an active role in shaping its strategy, championing innovation and experimentation with new models to create sustainable livelihoods.

Bharti Airtel Foundation

Bharti Airtel Foundation was founded by Sunil, Rakesh and Rajan Mittal with a clear vision: to achieve large-scale impact and contribute to nation-building. Recognising the critical role of school education for national uplift, the three brothers focused their efforts on strengthening India's educational system. **Rakesh has been pivotal to Bharti Airtel Foundation's work since its inception, championing a clear vision to build and demonstrate effective, scalable solutions.** He provides strategic guidance across programmes, helps build strategic partnerships, and infuses new ideas, bolstering the programmes' success. He actively fosters a culture of innovation, encouraging the piloting of new approaches that push the boundaries of the Foundation's initiatives. His drive for transformative change ensures the Foundation's efforts yield large-scale and lasting impact in school education. Beyond internal contributions, his commitment extends to enhancing the Foundations' external reach and influence. Through his advocacy for holistic education in various public forums and media, he has been instrumental in elevating the Foundation's visibility and reputation.

Crucially, Rakesh has also played a vital role in forging government partnerships for the Quality Support Program, further broadening the Foundation's collaborative efforts and operational scope.

With the launch of the Foundation's latest technology programme, TheTeacherApp, Rakesh has led from the front in initiating dialogues with the Ministry of Education, NITI Aayog, as well as many state governments to outline the role TheTeacherApp can play in teachers' capacity building.

Tata Steel Foundation

The ‘Corridor of Well-Being’ initiative emerged from a challenge put forth by the Tata Steel Board – *“We have two plants (Jamshedpur and Kalinganagar), some 250 kms apart. Can we create a ‘Corridor of Well-Being’ between the two?”* Working closely with the board, the Tata Steel Foundation team developed the initiative with the ‘polestar’ goal of making all panchayats on this route emerge among the top 20% in India.

Beyond strategic guidance, Tata Steel CEO and Managing Director, T.V. Narendran, and members of the board also actively immerse themselves in the Foundation’s programmes. Narendran personally meets community members, while Independent Directors Deepak Kapoor (former chairman of PwC) and Dr. Shekhar C. Mande (Former Director General of CSIR) had spent time with the programme’s fellows. **This direct engagement allows the board and business leaders to grasp on-ground realities, fostering long-term commitment, enabling the Foundation to pursue systemic impact through patient, strategic efforts.**

Bajaj Finserv Limited

For Bajaj Finserv, the strategic direction of philanthropic work is shaped directly by its promoters, who have championed skilling as a core pillar of their CSR efforts.

The overarching strategy is guided by Sanjiv and Shefali Bajaj through detailed annual planning sessions, and is further bolstered by the company’s external board members, whose endorsement of key initiatives has been crucial in setting the pace for the Foundation’s work.

Sanjiv Bajaj has been the visionary force behind Skillserv. **He conceptualised and championed the programme, wanting to leverage Bajaj Finserv’s position as a major BFSI player to help build India’s skilled workforce for the sector.** His commitment is not just strategic; he remains actively engaged with the programme’s progress, providing hands-on inputs to the team on a quarterly basis. Shefali Bajaj, Chairperson of the CSR Steering Committee, is more involved at an operational level, working directly with the team to drive the initiatives forward. **Shefali actively represents Bajaj Finserv’s CSR efforts, participating in external events to improve visibility and reach for partner organisations through her public championing of their cause.** She also regularly visits beneficiaries and programme sites, for example, interacting directly with teachers at LAHI’s ‘Karigar — School of Applied Learning.’ Critically, Shefali provides linkages with government functionaries that help Bajaj Finserv and partner organisations deepen their impact.

EY Foundation

Rajiv Memani, EY India Chairman and CEO, made an early commitment to the social sector by championing the setting up of EY Foundation in 2004, in the same year that he became CEO of EY India.

He has been actively involved in crafting the vision and strategic direction of the EY Foundation in India.

He is committed to building a strong foundation for community development, and actively engages in various initiatives that make a tangible difference. As the chair of EY's global committee on Corporate Responsibility, he plays a pivotal role in shaping the firm's social footprint, ensuring that the company not only thrives economically but also contributes meaningfully to society. In addition to the work that EY Foundation supports, EY, through its Ripples programme, enables its employees across the globe to devote time to SDG-focused projects, bringing together their combined skills, knowledge and experience in pursuit of a shared vision: to positively impact one billion lives by 2030.

His involvement extends beyond EY; as a dedicated member of the Board of The Convergence Foundation and other educational institutions, such as serving on the governing council of KREA University, being a board member of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Sirmaur, and the President of the Board of Him Jyoti School. Rajiv's insightful perspective on the challenges and opportunities within the social sector helps drive collaboration and various initiatives.

Recently, Rajiv has taken on the role of President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for 2025-26. In this capacity, he is focused on aligning industry priorities with the nation's broader economic growth, further solidifying his dedication to fostering a thriving community.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

Investment in developing strong CSR leaders to shape strategic impact

To complement the role of **engaged promoters and business champions**, our findings highlight a critical emphasis on investing in **strong leadership within the CSR team** – recognising their pivotal role in interacting with a range of corporate, social sector, and often government stakeholders to shape the depth and scale of impact. Some CSR leaders we spoke to have built careers that span both the business and social sectors, while others have been dedicated to the development sector from the very beginning. Despite their different paths, they share a common purpose: a strong commitment to creating meaningful social impact.

It has helped them progressively develop a deep understanding of the development sector landscape, identify persistent challenges, and uncover critical levers for enduring change and impact. Their ability to navigate both macro systems and micro realities has enabled them to bridge gaps, foster innovation, and push boundaries to help deliver sustained impact.

We also found that CSR leaders with visible access and active relationships with the board and business leaders

can amplify the strategic importance of CSR within an organisation.



This is particularly important for systemic efforts, which often manifest impact over a longer timeframe and may not yield the immediate outcomes that are typically seen in traditional programmatic work. An empowered CSR head plays a critical role in articulating the long-term value and strategic rationale of systemic initiatives to secure buy-in from the board and business leaders.

While every single leader we interacted with demonstrated these qualities, a few select examples of CSR leaders are highlighted below:

Axis Bank Foundation

Axis Bank believes in the power of its CSR efforts for social change. They have invested in strong leadership to guide their philanthropic efforts and ensure large-scale and lasting impact. This is evident in ABF's Board. Chaired by S. Ramadorai (ex-TCS, Tata Group), the board consists of

industry veterans such as Som Mittal and Rajesh Dahiya, plus senior leadership from the Bank such as Munish Sharda (Executive Director, Axis Bank) and Vijay Mulbagal (Group Executive & Head - Wholesale Bank Coverage & Sustainability) and development sector veterans such as Sheela Patel (SPARC) and Sushma Iyengar (Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan).

While the board works collaboratively to provide oversight and ensure ABF's programmes align with the bank's CSR strategy, it also facilitates complete operational autonomy for the ABF team.

Since its inception, the Foundation has had a strong operating leadership. Currently, the leadership is provided by **Vijay Mulbagal, Munish Sharda, and Dhruvi Shah** (Executive Trustee and CEO of Axis Bank Foundation). Vijay Mulbagal, with over 25 years in corporate banking, leads the bank's wholesale coverage and sustainability initiatives, while Munish Sharda, an Executive Director with over 27 years in banking and insurance, heads the Bharat Banking division. Dhruvi Shah, brings over 25 years of banking, microfinance, and development sector experience, which helps her effectively shape ABF's sustainable livelihoods portfolio of work. Dhruvi has a deep understanding of the challenges in the social sector and CSR. Her rich mix of experience has helped her shape impactful partnership journeys with multiple leading NGOs. She is supported by a team that brings diverse skills and experiences, ranging from grassroots development sector expertise, CSR knowledge, and banking and functional skills.

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ABF's strength lies in its diverse board — led by Mr. S. Ramadorai, along with development sector and corporate leaders — bringing together industry, corporate, and social insights to drive holistic, robust and balanced strategy and impactful execution.

— Dhruvi Shah, Executive Trustee and CEO, Axis Bank Foundation

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Tata Steel Foundation

An early commitment to the social sector saw Sourav Roy move from corporate finance to the Tata Sustainability Group in 2013 before taking over as CEO of Tata Steel Foundation. Over the last 12 years, having worked on a range of strategic initiatives, he has managed to build partnerships with and work closely with governments to create sustainable change.

Sourav manages a team of ~1,500 employees, who are involved in on-ground implementation of the Foundation's programmes across an extensive portfolio. This grassroots experience helps Sourav and the Foundation credibly engage and collaborate with government bodies, like Niti Aayog, to drive systemic impact.

Sourav has also been involved in working with leading management Institutes like XLRI, IIM Raipur, and IIM Ranchi to develop specialised courses for development sector professionals (TSF team as well as other development sector leaders) with the skills necessary to create lasting social change.

His deep understanding of the development sector, as well as Tata Steel's business, gives him a 'seat at the table' that allows him to work collaboratively with the board to focus on strategic questions, like:

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The true impact of CSR depends on leadership that combines deep development insight with strong business acumen to engage and influence senior stakeholders effectively.

— Sourav Roy, CEO, Tata Steel Foundation

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- ▶ How can Tata Steel Foundation be the best 'implementation' organisation in the sector in India?
- ▶ Given the paucity of capital, how does one create a culture of operational excellence?
- ▶ Given the government's fiscal deficit and programmes competing for money, how do you build resilience at the Foundation through external fundraising?
- ▶ How to manage risks, if any, for the business emerging from CSR programmes?

Reliance Foundation

Sudarshan Suchi, the Chief Development Officer at the Reliance Foundation, comes with over 38 years of multi-faceted social sector experience.

As Chief Development Officer, he drives internal convergence across programmes and forges collaborations with leading government and non-government organisations to deliver maximum value for rural communities through holistic, resource-optimised interventions.

Sudarshan's career journey includes pivotal roles in organisations like Reliance Foundation (two stints), Reliance Life Sciences, the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), and just before rejoining Reliance Foundation in 2025, he served as CEO of Save the Children India (Bal Raksha Bharat).

At Reliance Foundation in his earlier stint, Sudarshan was instrumental in developing the BIJ (Bharat-India Jodo) rural transformation initiative. Rural work in particular has been a primary passion for Sudarshan, and he has worked extensively with marginal communities, especially farming, to help organise them, establish sustainable livelihood interventions, leverage technology, and bring a participatory approach to practice.

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For me, this work and journey has fulfilled a lifetime aspiration – of establishing that de-risking villages from perennial drought conditions is possible, and rainfed farming too can become a value proposition. I am proud of being able to live and practice the Reliance core values by helping improve the quality of life for communities, especially at the grassroots level. The best part of our work is that we are focusing not just on short-term outcomes, but on building the capabilities of people and institutions to be catalysts for long-term empowerment, thus truly living the spirit of locally led change!

— Sudarshan Suchi, Chief Development Officer, Reliance Foundation

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Sudarshan has developed a reputation for transformative contributions across civil society, academia, and the corporate world. His career, rooted in participatory development, reflects a deep commitment to empowering communities through inclusive, sustainable initiatives. Besides contributing to governance boards and academic councils of institutions, Sudarshan has led initiatives from cooperative law reforms to biodiesel, rural livelihood transformation, and innovative CSR strategies.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

ITC

At ITC, Prabhakar Lingareddy, Executive Vice President and Head of Social Investments, brings a unique blend of domain knowledge of rural and agricultural communities, working with people to build their capabilities and a nuanced understanding of social development stemming from ITC's triple bottom line philosophy. Prabhakar's transition from HR to Social Investments in mid-2021 was a convergence of his extensive experience and personal goals. Having spent nearly 33 years in HR, including 18 years in ITC's agriculture-linked businesses, his background provides him with a unique perspective: seeing a direct parallel between developing human resources within the fence at ITC and building capabilities for extended communities outside the fence to strengthen capabilities, resilience, and value chains. His approach to social interventions borrows from his business experience to ensure social investments are seen as rigorous projects requiring a multi-disciplinary approach, much like a business plan with clear metrics, roles, and outcomes.

He champions the view that the approach to social interventions in ITC is not philanthropy, but rigorous social investments

that are core to ITC's ethos of responsible competitiveness and ITC's Next Strategy.



This business-like mindset is evident in how he applies core HR frameworks to social challenges. The process of selecting an implementation partner is approached with the same rigour as an executive recruitment, involving deep due diligence to ensure value alignment. Performance is managed with the clarity of a business unit, using KPIs to track internal and partner network performances facilitated by an enabling ecosystem and a learning organisation. At the heart of ITC philosophy is a belief in empowering grassroots institutions, and he sees this as an alignment with his personal belief in the "Adult-Adult" Transactional Analysis framework instead of a traditional top-down model. For creating systemic change, he believes in the power of a people-centric approach which puts the concerned stakeholder at the centre contextually, and builds trust, credibility, and ownership.

Prabhakar's multi-faceted leadership experience, which combines business-like rigour, systems orientation, and "science of HR" with the complexities of social investment, aligns with ITC's philosophy to go beyond traditional CSR and act as a true catalyst for systemic transformation.

Since the inception of Social Investments almost 25 years ago, ITC's strategy of organisation has always had the role of reporting directly to a Corporate Management Committee Member of ITC. It is seen as a strategic function, much like any other business or function, thus also providing it the locus standi to draw resources from across the company to create systemic change by leveraging domain expertise and ITC's equity with various stakeholders. This reflects the strong purpose, commitment, and mindset of the leadership team at ITC.

Tata Motors

At Tata Motors, Vinod Kulkarni, the Head of CSR, started his career as a career sales and marketing professional across a range of organisations like Voltas, Godrej, and eventually, Tata Motors. In 2009, motivated by personal reasons, Vinod opted to pivot from sales and marketing to a social impact-focused career. His personal credibility helped him approach the then Managing Director of Tata Motors (Mr. Ravi Kant) and the President of Commercial Vehicles business (Mr. Ravi Pisharody). At the time, while Tata Motors had no formal CSR function, it did have a long-standing practice of community-focused development initiatives around the company's factories and townships. On hearing Vinod's intent, both Mr. Ravi Kant and Mr. Pisharody backed Vinod's decision and enabled the creation of a CSR function for him to lead. When he went to thank Mr. Ravi Kant, he told Vinod, *"Whatever you take up, you can make it as big as you want."* **That guidance stayed with Vinod, and for 13-14 years, while there was no significant CSR spends mandated given Tata Motors' profitability levels, Vinod's personal drive and motivation helped shape the company's CSR spends.**

In 2014, as chairman of the CSR committee, Dr. R. A. Mashelkar played a pivotal role in shaping the team's philosophical framework, 'More from Less for More.' He encouraged Vinod's team to think strategically about aligning with government schemes, while also ensuring community ownership and designing clear exit plans for individual initiatives. Dr. Mashelkar continues to be a mentor for Vinod, and his guidance has shaped the strategic leverage-based approach that defines Tata Motors' CSR today. Similarly, the CSR Committee of the Board is supportive and consistently highlights Tata Motors Limited's social impact with a relatively small budget. Girish Wagh and Shailesh Chandra – current Executive Director & Managing Director of Commercial and Passenger Vehicle businesses, respectively – are strong supporters who continue to be invested in guiding the direction and impact of Tata Motors' CSR programmes.

Vinod's personal credibility, as well as strong mentorship from a range of senior leaders at the company and board level, have helped Tata Motors build strong convergence-focused systemic initiatives in Water and the Integrated Village Development Programme despite relatively modest CSR budgets.

Diverse and capable CSR teams to plan and shape CSR investments

The design and execution of systemic initiatives demand sustained, multi-stakeholder collaboration over several years. It spans a range of interconnected areas, including policy, budgets, and uncovering the incentive structures that entrenched social and economic challenges. To help address this, all the CSRs/corporate foundations we spoke to have thoughtfully invested in building capable teams. **Both grantmaking CSRs — by building and nurturing extensive partnerships and collaborations, and operating foundations — by developing strong in-house teams alongside external partners, have focused on bringing together a range of complementary skills to shape and scale impact.** Expertise within domain/thematic areas to understand persistent challenges and binding constraints is complemented by technical competence in the given thematic area. The teams are also equipped with an understanding of government systems and how to unlock that support.

Many of the CSRs featured in this report have thoughtfully built teams and invested in their growth, which has, in turn, allowed them to take on initiatives to deliver non-linear impact. A few select examples of building capable and diverse teams are highlighted below.

Bharti Airtel Foundation

At the heart of Bharti Airtel Foundation's success is the rich mix of skills that the leadership team brings together, with extensive experience across a range of roles in education.

This has enabled the organisation to not just build and scale its Satya Bharti Schools but also strategically pivot its focus from direct implementation to working with a range of government stakeholders to strengthen the public education systems through its Quality Support Program. Mamta Saikia, who served as the CEO of Bharti Airtel Foundation until August 2025, has been instrumental in driving the Foundation's expansion and focus on systemic impact. Since the inception of the Satya Bharti Schools programme, she has played a key role in conceptualising and leading new initiatives — such as the Quality Support Program and TheTeacherApp — working alongside core team members who bring complementary skills to ensure effective implementation and delivery. Binu Nair (Chief – Program and Operations) has helped develop innovative engagement models and partnerships with the public education system. Amit Taneja, who leads the latest tech initiative, TheTeacherApp, continues to play a pivotal role in shaping and distributing the app. Rakesh Grover, Head – Finance, plays a catalyst role in financial controls, monitoring, and growth projections. Praveen Arora (Head of Quality Management), Rikhi Ram Regmi (Head HR), Sameer Shah (Head Programs), and Regional Heads (Anil Bhat, Parveen Choudhary, Sandeep Sarda and Rajdeep Anand) lead the operations on the ground. All of them support the CEO in shaping the programmes as well as driving the foundation towards excellence. Diversity continues to be a strong pillar for the Foundation, as reflected in the Gender Awards, as well as Bharti Airtel Foundation's constant place in India's Top 100 companies to work for.

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As we transitioned from direct service to systemic impact through government school networks and to create a digital public good in the form of TheTeacherApp, we have expanded our team to bring in the diverse skill set, training our people to be ready for a future that requires different skill sets and to effectively engage with stakeholders across the education ecosystem. We not only want the students and teachers under our various programmes to be future-ready, but we are also focusing on all our employees to adapt to this new world led by technology.

— Mamta Saikia, CEO, Bharti Airtel Foundation (Apr 2019 – Aug 2025)

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HUL

At HUL, the team working on Project Circular Bharat brings together a rich blend of complementary skills and experiences that are required to address the complex and multi-dimensional challenge of circularity and waste management. Some members of the team come with deep knowledge of marketing and consumer behaviour, having been in multiple business roles at HUL. This has helped the team craft a strong on-ground and effective programme that gets citizens to segregate waste. **The operational and business backgrounds have also been instrumental in shaping operationally viable and sustainable projects.** The team brings extensive experience working with sustainability start-ups and projects, which can be hard-coded into replicable knowledge products that inform policy and guide focused implementation on the ground. Another key team member brings significant experience in engaging with the government on related programmes like Swachha Bharat Mission, which has, in turn, contributed to shaping HUL's engagement with central government ministries on waste management. This combination of skills gives access and visibility to key ecosystem players who are active in the domain.



Photo Credit: Reliance Foundation

Over time, this has enabled the HUL team to develop the muscle around building effective partnerships with an array of stakeholders – from government to community-led organisations to innovative start-ups and climate-focused funders.

HUL's CSR and sustainability teams have been able to leverage this diverse expertise to conceptualise and execute Project Circular Bharat in a scalable and replicable manner by shaping public-private partnerships that make the initiative operationally and financially viable.

Dr. Reddy's Foundation

Dr. Reddy's Foundation team, working on Regenerative Agriculture, brings together a varied mix of complementary skills and experiences that are required to address the multi-dimensional challenge of climate and agriculture. Shamik Trehan, CEO of DRF, has spent over 23 years in the social sector and, in his current role, is focused on helping the Foundation transition to its next stage of growth and social impact. Shamik brings extensive experience in building strategic relationships and alliances across government, civil society, social, and private sectors.

The core team working on Regenerative Agriculture has over 100 man-years of domain experience in agriculture.



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Our commitment to scale is rooted in strengthening existing public systems aimed at skill development to maximise outcomes within current constraints, while simultaneously pursuing transformative interventions through community platforms and technology that break systemic constraints. Collaborating closely with the government amplifies this dual-axis approach by accelerating outreach, influencing policy-level shifts, and mobilising critical resources, enabling population-level impact.

— Shamik Trehan, CEO, Dr. Reddy's Foundation

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Suman S, who leads the team, has spent over 13 years in the Foundation across a range of roles in agriculture, rural livelihoods and skilling. His experience of working with rural communities has helped him shape the overall direction for the Regenerative Agriculture programme by bringing together a range of ecosystem players. Additionally, DRF has invested in building a strong core team with a diverse range of specialists. This includes a soil scientist with a PhD in farming systems from IIT Kharagpur and seven years of research experience at ICRISAT, a monitoring and evaluation specialist with a PhD in Econometrics from IIT Kharagpur and seven years of research experience, and a soil chemist with a PhD from IIT Kharagpur and ten years of experience in organic farming. The team also features a farm mechanisation expert with over seven years of experience, an ecology expert with over fifteen years in agroforestry and biodiversity, a disaster and climate risk mitigation specialist with more than eight years of experience, and a marine ecosystems expert with a PhD in Hydrogeology and twelve years of experience. This exceptional mix of technical and execution capabilities has helped DRF create significant programmatic and systemic impact through its Regenerative Agriculture initiative.

Reliance Foundation

Reliance Foundation's Rural Transformation team brings together experienced professionals working at the national, state, and district levels who have decades of diverse experience spanning rural livelihoods, agriculture, climate resilience, gender inclusion, value chains, and institution building. The team has worked across government, CSR, private, and non-profit sectors, integrating multiple perspectives on pathways to impact.

This diversity has helped the Reliance Foundation team nurture self-reliant community institutions, shape innovative models, forge strategic alliances with leading research bodies, strengthen farmer institutions at scale, and enhance ecosystem sustainability.

For example, Radha Thakur (Lead – DRIWE: Diversifying Rural Income and Women Entrepreneurship) has over two decades of experience in rural development and empowerment, driving livelihood enhancement and entrepreneurship while advancing financial, gender, and digital inclusion with a strong focus on cluster development and women-led models. Ashutosh Deshpande (Lead – Integrated Value Chain Development) draws on his long career of integrating social impact within business strategies to promote agricultural modernisation, improved market access, and climate-resilient livelihoods. Nitin Sharma (Lead – Programme Operations) plays a central role in advancing rural development by shaping strategy, guiding teams, and fostering resilient community institutions. Similarly, Prabhat Kumar Jha (Lead – Climate Resilience for Sustainable Development) brings experience across corporate, government, and non-profit sectors, with a focus on strengthening water security and nutrition through holistic, technology-enabled solutions for farmers and communities.

Together, this blend of leadership capabilities enables Reliance Foundation to catalyse rural transformation that creates sustainable and enduring impact.

Robust measurement mechanisms to guide the journey to systemic impact

Achieving systemic impact requires time, sustained effort, and careful planning. While evolving CSR regulations – such as the ‘3+1’ carry-forward provision – offer greater flexibility to fund long-term programmes, they also demand more strategic and calibrated initiative design and delivery.

The corporate funders we interviewed demonstrated exemplary commitment to systemic change by investing early in aligning with public systems and establishing strong monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) frameworks. These mechanisms were used not just as compliance tools – they enabled adaptive management, provided early signals for course correction, and helped track both intermediate outcomes and long-term systemic shifts. By clearly defining impact indicators at both the programme and ecosystem levels, funders assessed progress toward broader goals, including replication by other actors, integration into government systems, and wider sectoral influence.

A few examples are highlighted below.

Cipla Foundation

Cipla Foundation’s Palliative Care programme involves partnerships with over 30 organisations across 42 projects, necessitating a robust monitoring and reporting system to track progress toward its goals.

They set annual objectives, review quarterly, and communicate monthly with partners.

The Foundation tracks both programme-level and system-level indicators. Programme-level indicators measure direct project outcomes, such as:

- ▶ **Patients:** Reduced pain, fewer hospitalisations, better quality of life
- ▶ **Family/caregivers:** Increased knowledge and caregiving skills
- ▶ **Communities:** Greater awareness and more palliative care referrals

System-level indicators assess broader impact on healthcare, government, civil society, and philanthropic systems, focusing on higher-level goals like increased palliative care awareness and collective action. These include:

- ▶ **Healthcare professionals:** Improved palliative care knowledge and skills
- ▶ **Palliative care providers:** New projects addressing service gaps
- ▶ **Government health system:** Palliative care initiatives within the system
- ▶ **Other donors:** Increased awareness and knowledge of palliative care

Bharti Airtel Foundation

Bharti Airtel Foundation, having run large-scale programmes like the Satya Bharti Schools since 2006, has developed a robust multi-level monitoring framework to capture programme performance, progress, and impact.

The foundation monitors the impact of its programmes through a dashboard of KPIs across each programme:

- ▶ **Satya Bharti Schools** are annually graded on process adherence and quality of outcomes on key parameters.
 - » **Students:** Attendance, completion rates, learning outcomes, board exam results, as well as higher education and employment journeys of alumni. There has been a significant jump in students securing seats through intensely competitive exams for Navodaya, Meritorious Schools and other similar schools of eminence.
 - » **School administration:** Teacher performance, knowledge and skills through structured annual evaluations.
- ▶ **Quality Support Program** for government schools tracks multiple outcomes:
 - » **Improving the school experience for students** – Increased enrolment and attendance in partner schools.
 - » **Inculcating life skills (confidence, communication and leadership skills)** through participation in external events and competitions. The Foundation also tracks awards received and the gender balance of participants.
- ▶ **In addition to impact, Bharti Airtel Foundation also tracks:**
 - » Programme inputs across quality, quantity, timeliness and relevance to evolving contexts.
 - » Process effectiveness and efficiency to ensure minimal deviations from design.
 - » Safety processes and practices covering child safety, teacher safety and safety of on-ground personnel, with incident reports being shared with the board.

Cisco

Cisco focus on systems strengthening helps them develop monitoring indicators, which include a range of short-term, intermediate, and long-term metrics to track impact.

For complex and long-term systemic initiatives, Cisco focuses on:

- ▶ **Defining success upfront:** Engaging through a detailed due diligence process with potential partners to gain clarity on the problem and define what success looks like in the short, medium, and long term. This ensures that both Cisco and the partner are aligned on the vision they are collectively striving to achieve.
- ▶ **Distinguishing between direct and indirect impact:** Cisco is deliberate in ascertaining what can and cannot be measured. For example, if a programme is focused on teacher training, the primary metrics are about teachers. While better student performance might be an indirect outcome, it is not seen as a core metric if the partner doesn't have the ability to directly correlate the two.

For its Future Rights to Skills Network (FRSN) initiative, Cisco and Quest Alliance have identified numerous indicators across three distinct buckets:

- **State-level programme metrics (direct impact):** For the work Cisco funds exclusively, such as the co-ed ITIs in Haryana, they track direct, attributable outcomes. A key metric here is placement data, comparing figures before and after Quest Alliance engagement. This is in addition to standard output metrics like the number of trainers trained and the knowledge gained.
- **FRSN-level ecosystem metrics (collaborative impact):** At the level of the multi-funder collaborative, they track broader, ecosystem-building activities. This includes the creation of new content modules (like AI in employability skills curriculum or the upcoming green jobs module) and the progress of the “Knowledge and Innovation Community.”
- **Digital engagement metrics:** For any digital content or platforms developed, the Foundation tracks specific usage metrics like consumption rates and user engagement to measure the reach and effectiveness of the digital public goods being created.

Cisco also employs a dedicated grant management partner – Sattva Consulting – to support its monitoring processes. All project and financial reporting is done on a SaaS-based platform called “Shift,” provided by Sattva Consulting.

Reliance Foundation

Reliance Foundation’s focus on building strong community platforms at the village level is backed by comprehensive monitoring mechanisms to help track progress regularly.

For example, the Climate Resilience Index (CRI), a cornerstone of the Foundation’s Rural Transformation programme, assesses the capacity of communities to withstand and adapt to climate impact. Its key components include climate change awareness, community preparedness, and social cohesion; adoption of climate-resilient production and agricultural practices; sustainable water resource management; strengthened producer networks, marketing, and risk management; women’s empowerment; diversification of livelihoods to ensure food availability; and protection and restoration of biophysical assets such as forests and plantations. Together, these elements provide a holistic view of resilience across social, economic, and ecological dimensions.

The CRI assessment is conducted annually in selected sample villages. It enables tracking of changes in key resilience indicators over time.

This year-on-year comparison helps capture short-term progress (e.g., increased awareness or adoption of specific practices), medium-term improvements (e.g., strengthened community networks, diversified livelihoods), and long-term impacts (e.g., restored ecosystems, sustained climate-resilient livelihoods).

This periodic tracking supports evidence-based planning and targeted interventions.

The CRI survey is administered by an external research agency using Zoho Creator, which enables efficient, standardised, and paperless data collection in the field. The collected data is analysed for trend tracking and reporting. This combination of digital data capture and analysis ensures accuracy, timely availability of results, and ease of sharing with stakeholders. Findings are shared through periodic review meetings, dashboards, and summary reports with programme teams and relevant stakeholders. This process ensures transparency, facilitates collective reflection, and informs planning for improved climate resilience interventions.

Tata Steel Foundation

Tata Steel Foundation works with a portfolio of six polestar aspirations:

- ▶ GDPs in proximate Panchayats around Tata Steel operations and the progress made on them.
- ▶ Raise capital from other corporates (₹1,000 crores by 2030) and bring to East India (rebalancing private endowment from other better endowed regions to Eastern India).
- ▶ Enable ₹1 lakh crore of public entitlement.
- ▶ Enable at least 500 blocks in the country to experience at least a transformational change from one TSF programme.
- ▶ Reach 10 million people annually.
- ▶ Create 10,000 changemakers who take the social impact agenda forward.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

The Foundation evaluates its programmes using a robust MEL framework that tracks outputs, outcomes, and impacts at scale, guided by evidence-based analysis and programme-specific Theories of Change.

For the PRI initiative, the Foundation has the polestar aspiration of making all proximate panchayats to Tata Steel operations be in the top 20% in the country. It keeps track of the following metrics to ensure alignment with the polestar aspiration:

- ▶ Value of government funds unlocked.
- ▶ Number of government schemes that are utilised.
- ▶ GP-level convenings.
- ▶ % GPDP getting achieved – e.g., if 30 gaps are identified, to what extent gaps are getting addressed.
- ▶ % representation of vulnerable communities.
- ▶ Attendance levels in Gram Sabhas.
- ▶ Number of replication GPs.

The Foundation has a robust database tracking individual beneficiaries who have been linked to various schemes through Gram Panchayats. The process for capturing, sharing, and reporting data is anchored by Tata Steel-appointed PRI fellows. All GPDPs are on a digital platform called DELTA, built with support from Tata Trusts. The online tracker gets updated jointly by the Panchayat members and PRI Fellows.

Further, recognising that not all GPDP gaps are addressable by public funds, the Foundation also syndicates support from like-minded corporates (e.g., two large banks in this instance) to help cover those gaps. The Foundation invests in the planning, governance, and syndication process to arrive at integrated development programmes that become the basis for support from like-minded corporations.

HUL

At HUL, as Project Circular Bharat moves towards greater convergence and acceleration in the next 5 years, impact tracking is evolving to measure both intermediate metrics and outcome metrics that can help shape the broader systemic impact journey for waste management.

- ▶ Behaviour change (waste segregation at source) – ~15% to ~35% segregation in Mumbai and Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. The goal is to increase the reach in focused geographies around the country where MRFs are also being set up.
- ▶ Access to social protection schemes for 20,000 Safai Mitras – covering food, health, identity, safety, education, and financial inclusion. ₹8.8 of social value is created for Safai Mitras and their families for every ₹1 of investment in the programme. The ambition for HUL and UNDP is to expand the coverage by 2030 and also bring in more partners for the programme.
- ▶ Environment – scale-up from diverting 10,000 tons of waste from going to landfills to significantly expanding the number over the next few years.

EY Foundation

Given the long-term funding support that EYF provides across all its programmes, it prioritises establishing a comprehensive impact measurement framework to track end outcomes as well as intermediate outputs. Tracking of intermediate outputs helps establish feedback loops that provide insights for course correction.

As part of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) programme in Uttar Pradesh, EY Foundation, in partnership with the Central Square Foundation (CSF), has supported the state in establishing a comprehensive, data-driven monitoring and decision-making framework. This system ensures that progress towards FLN goals is tracked with rigour, and that decision-makers at all levels — state, district, block, and cluster — have access to timely, actionable insights.

Key interventions for measuring the impact of the UP FLN programme

- ▶ **End-to-end monitoring architecture**
 - » Designed a complete framework covering key performance indicators (KPIs), data collection tools, and visualisation dashboards.
 - » Improved data reliability and compliance through systematic capacity building of data collectors.
- ▶ **Technology-enabled student assessments**
 - » Supported the design and rollout of the Perna Lakshya App and Gunvatta App to enable large-scale classroom observation and student assessment.
 - » Integrated student assessment data into state systems, allowing for targeted instructional support for students.
- ▶ **Continuous improvement of state systems**
 - » Strengthened existing platforms such as the Perna portal and facilitated integration with DIKSHA, simplifying the collection and consolidation of diverse datasets on school performance.



» Enhanced usability of platforms to reduce reporting burden and encourage greater adoption of the state portals by teachers and administrators.

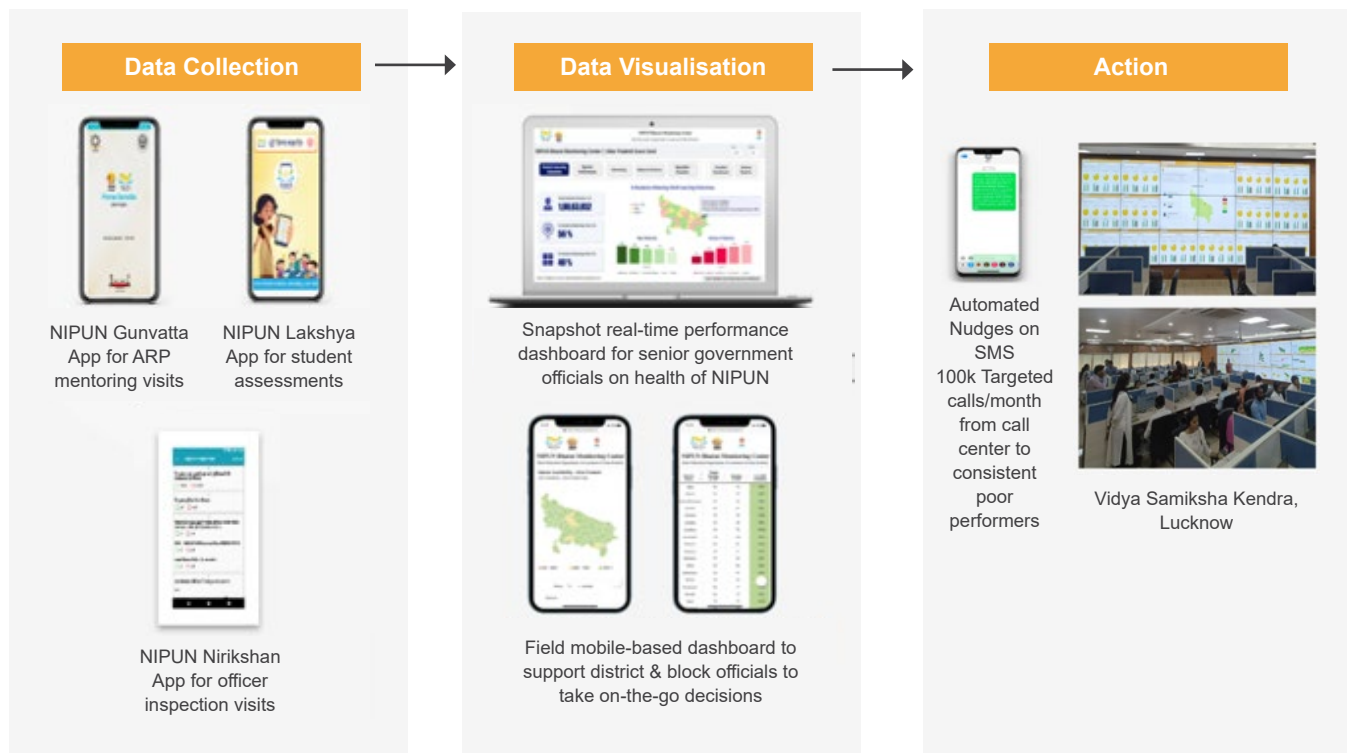
► **Multi-level dashboards for decision-making**

» Established dashboards that provide real-time insights across administrative levels on student outcomes.

» Enabled data-driven decision-making around key FLN delivery indicators, moving beyond anecdotal feedback.

► **Real-time performance monitoring of the state education cadre (Academic Resource Persons)**

» Operationalised the NIPUN Bharat Monitoring Centre (NBMC) to maintain live performance dashboards on ARPs, to generate actionable insights, enabling faster course correction and continuous improvement.



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Systemic and large-scale solutions take time to show results and impact. It is, therefore, imperative to buy into the Theory of Change, define intermediate outputs or milestones, and establish feedback loops that tell us whether we are on track to achieve the long-term outcomes or need course corrections.”

— Sourabh Anand, Head, EY Foundation India

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Bajaj Finserv Limited

Bajaj Finserv has progressively worked on establishing Skillserv (CPBFI, a Certificate Programme in Banking, Finance, and Insurance) as a systemic initiative to enhance employability in the financial services sector by providing comprehensive skills training within the BFSI domain.

Through its 8-10 year journey, it has focused on monitoring a range of indicators:

- ▶ **Choice of target segments** — 68% of participants are first-generation graduates, predominantly young aspirants from tier 2 or 3 cities, with a significant representation of women at 61%.
- ▶ **Product and delivery** — The 120-hour programme has been meticulously designed to offer a combination of experiential learning and insights from corporate trainers or finance domain experts in banking and insurance, enabling students to acquire approximately 22 skills crucial for the workplace. Furthermore, HR workshops and mock interviews, conducted by Bajaj Finserv Recruiters, enhance practical knowledge and industry readiness. CPBFI has trained 1,00,000 students since its inception and has certified 46,807 students in FY25, spanning over 161 districts and 23 states of India.
- ▶ **Accreditations** — Available from National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), these accreditations enable students to earn a joint certification accredited by both Bajaj Finserv and Skill India. Additionally, Bajaj Finserv has received recognition as a dual-awarding body. This allows for further collaborations and engagements. The NCVET dual-body awarding status has enabled the training programme to have 4 credits as part of the overall credit-based system in their college academic curriculum.
- ▶ **Collaborations** — Partnering with colleges and leveraging training partners, CPBFI delivers training modules co-designed and executed by expert trainers with extensive industry experience. With a nationwide presence across 400+ colleges and collaboration with six training partners, the programme is facilitated by over 300+ trainers. The programme has impacted the learners through employment after their graduation within the BFSI industry or by enabling access to higher education.
- ▶ **New offerings** — Skillserv is now expanding its range of BFSI offerings beyond CPBFI through centre-led training programmes in the space of insurance, gold loans and microfinance, where students are offered placement. Beyond centre-based programmes, Bajaj Finserv is also piloting digital offerings to enable wider access to the training programmes.

Building partnerships to amplify and multiply impact

A critical feature of the approach adopted by many of these organisations was their focus on building ecosystems and securing commitments from diverse stakeholders around core issues. By embedding initiatives within a broader network of committed actors, they increased the likelihood of long-term sustainability and lasting impact, ultimately enabling measurable progress toward shared goals.

This approach demanded strategic judgement from organisations – knowing when to cede space, share credit, or take none at all. The ability to navigate these nuances was often enabled by the active involvement of top leadership and strengthened by mature CSR leaders, who guided teams with clarity and perseverance to stay aligned with long-term goals.

Several CSRs profiled in this report have nurtured partnerships with governments, co-funders, CSOs, councils, and academic institutions, fostering convergence to create greater and more sustainable impact than any single entity could achieve independently. A select number of examples of these partnerships are presented below.



Photo Credit: Freepick

Axis Bank Foundation

Axis Bank Foundation's efforts in promoting sustainable livelihoods are rooted in long-term collaborations with carefully chosen grassroots NGOs and guided by processes that are deeply integrated into local communities. ABF supports the development and execution of these initiatives through capacity building for key stakeholders — including communities, community resource persons, implementation partners, and the ABF team itself.

- **NGOs** — Recognising that sustainable change takes time, a principal aspect of ABF's approach to partnerships centres around ensuring partners have access to enabling finance and resources. This principle directly informs their funding approach, leading them to collaborate with partner organisations for extended periods. This support aims to foster organisational development, strengthen the broader ecosystem, and attract additional funders to a specific cause. ABF's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) has created a pan-India impact towards a common goal by partnering with 50+ NGOs across the country. Within this partnership network, ABF has provided long-term support to multiple partners (e.g., SPS, Dhan, PRADAN, AKRSPI, Y4J for 13+ years, BRLF for 8+ years). While ensuring long-term commitment, ABF has also encouraged its partners to actively seek funding from a broader range of funding partners (e.g., ABF's commitment has progressively come down from 70% to 30% of SPS's budget, even as the budget value has increased over time).
- **Community Institutions** — Investing in strengthening community institutions (e.g., Gram Panchayats, Self Help Groups, Cluster level federations) at the grassroots level is a strong focus across all ABF projects. ABF supports its programme partners in building capacities and developing sustainable approaches to strengthening these community institutions. These community institutions, in turn, provide platforms to enable collective participation in local-level planning and governance processes while also helping them unlock rights and entitlements from applicable government schemes and programmes.

Cipla Foundation

Cipla Foundation's strategy for mainstreaming palliative care in India is built upon extensive collaborations with a range of implementation partners and stakeholders across the

government, like-minded corporate funders, sector forums, and associations.



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Our approach is rooted in collaboration and systemic change, working closely with government agencies, healthcare professionals, and community organisations. Our goal is to ensure that through our palliative partnership, no one suffers from pain or feels alone in their journey with a serious illness.

— Anurag Mishra, Head, Cipla Foundation

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- **Palliative care partnerships** — The Foundation has expanded its palliative care services footprint to work in 45 cities through 40+ partners to provide inpatient, outpatient, and home-based care through a range of training programmes.
 - » Training for healthcare workers at all levels – including doctors, nurses, allied and support staff (such as ward attendants and security guards) to better understand patient and caregiver perspectives and improve communication.
 - » AIIMS Jodhpur & Bathinda for regular Continuing Medical Education (CME) courses on pain management and symptom control for hospital staff.

- » South Goa Hospital, Hyderabad (PRPCS), Trivandrum (Pallium India), Mumbai (Romila Palliative Care), to train district-level healthcare workers and community health officers on identifying, referring, and managing seriously ill patients.
- » Pediatric partners (Sion Hospital, Kalwa, Wadia Hospital, Mumbai) to help embed pediatric palliative care, offering support in breaking difficult news to families and ensuring follow-up treatment.
- **Collaborative initiatives** — Collaborations through active engagement with other CSRs and corporate foundations like HDFC and State Bank of India to pool resources, share expertise, and implement large-scale projects.
- **Government partnerships** — Collaborated with the Goa Health Ministry and launched the Goa State Palliative Care Policy to integrate palliative care into primary healthcare. The Foundation aims to replicate this model nationwide, making palliative care a standard in Indian healthcare.
- **Galvanising funding from foundations** — Cipla Foundation’s long-standing partner, Can Support, secured 15 years of matching funds from Family Foundation (Seva Suri Foundation, based in the USA), leveraging their association with Cipla.
- **Elevating Standards with professional associations** — Cipla Foundation partners with the Indian Association of Palliative Care (IAPC) for capacity building and professional development. They run national nurse training programmes and co-host the Annual National Conference on Palliative Care.

HSBC

HSBC's Skills for Life programme helped youth and women find meaningful livelihoods, but more importantly, brought together 87 NGOs across 108 projects across the country to create systemic momentum in the livelihood-oriented skilling space. It was a first-of-its-kind outcome-based skilling programme by a private sector organisation covering all regions of India (north, south, east, west, and the north-east).

“

The Skill Impact Bond has helped us demonstrate a model for government, industry, and private philanthropy to come together to establish a proof of concept that goes beyond training to focus on placements and retention, thereby supporting thousands to earn a sustainable income.

— Aloka Majumdar, Managing Director,
Global Head of Philanthropy & Head of
Sustainability, HSBC India

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What also helped it amplify and multiply impact was the multi-stakeholder collaborative approach involving Swades Foundation (anchor partner for employability-linked skilling vertical), KPMG Assurance and Consulting Services LLP, India (screening partner), Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited India, TISS (Monitoring and Evaluation partners), and an advisory group comprising industry leaders responsible for selecting the final recipients of the grant.



HUL

The HUL CSR team has invested significant time to understand the landscape, to remove constraints, and to make the waste management system more efficient and effective. **They have been able to create distinct, complementary roles, driven by the competencies each partner brings to this collaboration. HUL has been able to orchestrate this network of partners as a catalyst to unlock the full potential of the waste value chain to deliver real, practical outcomes.**

- **Grassroot partnerships** — Community champions, such as AIESEC, a student-led volunteer group, engage and sensitise citizens on waste segregation at source. CSO partners such as Har Ghar Hara Ghar, PLAN Foundation, CARPE, and Green Communities Foundation have championed building strong citizen action on the ground. CSOs such as Hasirudala, Shree Mukti Sangathana, and SWaCH work towards social inclusion of Safai Mitras, ensuring that they have access to social protection schemes.
- **Government partnerships** — HUL has developed a robust PPP model to set up decentralised, end-to-end Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs), collaborating with local municipalities. Municipalities provide land, regulatory support, and collection vehicles to support the operations of MRFs, while MRFs are operated by HUL's implementation partners. Currently, HUL has piloted this partnership with Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Mumbai, and Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar Municipal Corporation (CSMC), Aurangabad.
- **Recyclers, social enterprises and start-ups** — HUL partnered with recyclers such as Dalmia Polypro and social enterprises such as Recircle, Ecosattva-CARPE to ensure effective



Photo Credit: Hindustan Unilever Limited

processing of different waste types. These private sector partnerships brought business acumen and innovation to the table, ensuring the financial viability of the system. In the next stage of the programme, the company is looking to partner with Saahas Zero Waste, Hasirudala Innovations, and others to scale the programmes across the country.

- ▶ **Co-funders** — To support the stabilisation of its models during the early stages, HUL brought in mission-aligned funding partners. These partners helped bridge critical financial gaps, e.g., SBI Foundation provides salaries for MRF employees for a period of 18 months until the system can reach financial viability.
- ▶ **Knowledge and governance partners** — Knowledge experts such as UNDP and Xynteo provided a holistic, 360-degree view of the system. UNDP aided with project design, capacity building, and strengthening government relations. Xynteo provided a business model to run the programme. As part of the scale-up, Sattva and PwC have been onboarded to aid with governance and auditing of the initiative.

“

By democratising our strategies and spotlighting the successes of others around India through the Project Circular Bharat toolkit, we hope to empower you to adopt, implement and scale circular waste management initiatives.

— Prashanth Venkatesh, Marketing and Sustainability Director, HUL

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ITC

ITC's Mission Sunehra Kal (MSK is the brand under which it implements all its social investment interventions), Two-Horizon strategy is built on the core belief that no single entity can solve complex developmental challenges alone. **ITC delivers systemic impact by orchestrating a multi-layered network of enduring partnerships with a range of stakeholders.** To enable this, ITC adopts a structured approach of Prototype-Pilot-Scale-Amplify-Multiply.

- ▶ **Empowered grassroots institutions (27,000+ partnerships)** — A critical aspect of transforming lives and landscapes is aligning with the innate capacities of people. Community participation is therefore at the core of MSK's development model. Major activities are undertaken through Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) formed especially for each programme and supported with training and capacity building. Participatory development, based on empowered grassroots institutions, enables communities to independently manage their resources and become change agents with minimal dependence on external agencies. Community contribution – both financial and in kind – is a key element, which, combined with a

participatory approach, generates high ownership levels, fundamental to long-term sustenance. Across interventions, ITC has nurtured about 27,170 theme-based user groups (Agri Business Centres, Water User Groups, Vanikaran Sanghas, Self Help Groups, and School Management Committees), having over 9.8 lakh members. In addition, there are community-based activity groups like Mohalla Committees, Mothers Groups, Rogi Kalyan Samitis, etc.

- **Implementation partners** — ITC works with around 90+ implementation partners for on-ground execution of projects across India, leveraging their thematic expertise and grassroots presence. ITC invests in strengthening organisational, governance, financial & internal control systems/ processes and project management skills of these partners through capacity building initiatives, including exposure visits to ITC's projects across geographies and promoting cross-fertilisation of learnings. Many of these partners have been associated with ITC now for over 10 years, with some for over 20 years.
- **Knowledge partnerships (20+ partnerships)** — ITC partners with institutions in India and abroad to ensure that programmes are evidence-based and technically sound. For the Climate Smart Village Programme, ITC had partnered with CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research), a global partnership that unites international organisations engaged in research about food security. For Climate Smart Agriculture, ITC has worked closely with ICAR and its affiliate institutions, including the Indian Institute of Rice Research, the Indian Institute of Soya Research, ATARI-Kanpur, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, and Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, to name a few. It had a partnership with IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), an international organisation working in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources to develop Sustainable Agriscapes in ITC's areas of operations. For their water stewardship initiative, ITC worked with leading bodies like the International Water Management Institute, World Wildlife Fund, Indian Institute of



Science, Bangalore, and IIT Chennai to tackle complex water security challenges. By grounding its programmes in the deep technical expertise of these knowledge partners, ITC develops innovative solutions that it can then scale through a network of implementation partners.

- **Government partnerships** — Public-private partnerships with the centre and state governments are an integral part of ITC's CSR approach to enable amplification of initiatives that have been demonstrated and implemented at scale in ITC project locations.

Over the years, ITC has forged 96 public-private partnerships with central and state governments, including Niti Ayog and SRLMs, which act as force multipliers.

For example, ITC is currently partnering with the Madhya Pradesh State Government to roll out the Climate Smart Village model across 6 Districts. Through these collaborations, ITC effectively shares its proven models with public systems, amplifying its impact exponentially.

- **Collaboratives** — To amplify and multiply successful at scale programmes and also for wider impact, ITC is now also participating and engaging with Collaboratives. It is an active partner in the India Sanitation Coalition for implementing solutions related to sanitation and waste management. ITC is also actively partnering with Ignite Life Science Foundation for inter-disciplinary collaborations.

“

Systemic transformation and sustenance of the same requires engagement in and with the contextualised ecosystem. Such engagement has to be in the spirit of partnership that provides synergistic value for the transformation based on respective strengths and capabilities. At ITC, partnerships are a key tenet for Social Investments, wherein we work with a range of partners: Implementation, Knowledge, Community, Local Administration, Government, Think Tanks, and Collaboratives; some of which could be bilateral and some multilateral. To illustrate, ITC has had 96 PPPs to date with Central and State Governments, which have helped in amplification of successful at-scale programmes. Many times, the value that ITC brings to the table is its ability to orchestrate this ecosystem of partners towards a common purpose.

— Prabhakar Lingareddy, EVP and Head of Social Investments, ITC

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In Closing: The Road Ahead

The exemplary initiatives highlighted in this report — spanning public health, climate action, education, rural livelihoods, skill development, and more — demonstrate how strategic corporate philanthropy, particularly when aligned with government priorities, can unlock systemic change. These corporates have moved beyond traditional giving and acted as catalysts by deploying risk and innovation capital to actively strengthen public systems. The success stories and systemic approaches offer key insights for developing a broader, more sustainable model of social investment. The report also identifies critical pathways to systemic change: providing patient capital, informing policy through tested insights, and strengthening capacities and ecosystems in underserved areas. By engaging with governments, other funders, civil society organisations, and academic institutions, these CSR initiatives achieve a collective impact far greater than any single entity could alone.

As India continues its trajectory toward economic prosperity, corporate philanthropy's role in addressing persistent social development gaps becomes increasingly crucial.

The time is ripe for corporate philanthropy to become the foremost private-sector force fueling India's social development. The insights from this report serve as a powerful invitation for all corporate leaders — CEOs, CXOs, board members, and CSR leaders—

**to reimagine their
philanthropic strategies
and embrace giving for
systemic change.**



As we further engage with CSRs and their endeavours supporting systemic change, a few powerful lessons emerge on ways to catalyse efforts. CSRs can:

- 

Adopt a portfolio approach that balances CSR giving towards systemic causes (10-20%) and programmatic initiatives (80-90%), thereby strengthening the thinking on corporate philanthropy.
- 

Proactively engage and involve Boards and CXOs to shape the corporate's larger vision for social impact, key focus areas, and linkages with government priorities.
- 

Invest in and empower high-performing CSR leaders who can navigate complexity, engage stakeholders, and steward long-term systemic change.
- 

Actively seek and foster partnerships with other 'systemically' inclined funders, thought partners, SSOs, and government changemakers.
- 

Re-examine success metrics to look beyond short-term outcomes and incorporate indicators of systemic change.

TCF remains committed to advancing systemic change and has

incubated a new organisation, SCALE,

to accelerate this movement and amplify its impact.



SCALE's vision is to enable a shift in the development landscape in India, by catalysing investment in a coalition of actors — Systems Support Organisations (SSOs), funders, government changemakers — who understand this dynamic and have a deep commitment to building resilient solutions. SCALE will enable systemic change by connecting patient capital from funders committed to systemic impact with high-potential SSOs, fostering a collaborative ecosystem that supports innovation and embeds it through strategic government partnerships.

Our vision is to enable this through three key levers

01



Generating interest, awareness, and action towards systemic giving

02



Strengthening the ecosystem for System Support Organisations (SSOs)

03



Partnering with the government to enable ecosystem shifts

► **Generating interest, awareness, and action towards systemic giving**

SCALE aims to mobilise significant philanthropic capital for high-potential SSOs driving systemic change. To catalyse greater investment in systemic approaches, SCALE will identify and spotlight exemplary systemic giving initiatives, and engage Corporate Social Responsibility funders and philanthropists who recognize the long-term value of patient giving toward high-impact, systems-oriented efforts. SCALE will support the philanthropic ecosystem by developing strong SSO sourcing strategies aligned with policy priorities and offering tailored advisory services to help reorient portfolios toward systemic initiatives.

► **Strengthening the ecosystem of System Support Organisations (SSOs)**

SCALE will strengthen the SSO ecosystem by spotlighting exemplar and high-impact SSOs, convening communities of practice, and providing targeted strategic and operational guidance on designing programmes for systemic change. It will support emerging SSOs with accelerator programmes and advisory support on diagnosing policy challenges, identifying appropriate North Stars, crafting systemic change strategies, building effective organisational structures, strengthening fundraising capabilities, and engaging effectively with government.

► **Partnering with the government to enable ecosystem shifts**

Recognising the government as the primary driver of social service delivery, SCALE aims to build a bridge among emerging SSOs, systemic funders, and government stakeholders. To do this, SCALE will build a network of bureaucrats and changemakers committed to solving complex challenges and driving large-scale impact in collaboration with SSOs. Through practitioner-led symposiums and demand-driven thematic advisory, SCALE will equip officers to apply systems thinking across governance domains and build lasting coalitions with SSOs.

Our discussions over the last few months with multiple corporate leaders highlight the potential social value that waits to be unlocked by collectively aligning the might of corporate capital, capabilities and innovation with government scale and civil society expertise. We invite every CEO, Board member, and business leader to reimagine what their CSR strategy can achieve when it looks beyond individual programmes and focuses on the systems that shape **this collective ambition for a Better Bharat.**

Appendix

This report draws on extensive primary interviews with CSR and corporate foundation leaders, inputs from sector experts, and secondary research. We began by analysing the spending patterns and thematic priorities of the top 50 CSR spenders. We also reviewed corporate funders of the 20 changemakers featured in the [Systemic Exemplars report](#).

Our interviews with these changemakers underscored the critical role of funders in their journeys—especially the value of patient and flexible philanthropic capital. To build our shortlist of exemplary CSR programmes, we focused on initiatives designed with a systemic lens that have helped unlock government support.

Name	Thematic Area Profiled in this Report	Total CSR Spend across all portfolios (in ₹crore) 2024-25
Axis Bank Foundation*	Rural Development & Livelihoods	200**
Bajaj Finserv (all group companies)	Includes Skilling***	352
Bharti Airtel Foundation*	Quality Support Program for Government Schools	131**
Cipla Foundation	Palliative Care	89
Cisco*	Skilling	37
Dr Reddy's Foundation*	Regenerative Agriculture	103**
EY Foundation****	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy	NA
HSBC	Skilling	144
HUL	Integrated Waste Management Ecosystem	254
ITC	Climate Smart Agriculture	462
Reliance Foundation	Rural Transformation	2156
Tata Motors	Water Body Rejuvenation	26
Tata Steel Foundation*	Panchayati Raj Institutions	524**
* Annual spend for Foundation only. Direct CSR spend could be additional to this. ** Financial Year 2023-24 figures. *** Skilling, Child Education, Child Health, Child Protection and Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities **** EY India contributes 0.5% of revenue every year to the EY Foundation NA - Not mandated		

Disclaimer:

In curating this select list of initiatives, we recognise that many others have also contributed to systemic change but are not featured here. This is not intended as a “who’s who” of funders or initiatives. Instead, it showcases a diverse set of efforts that have each helped create enduring outcomes at scale.

The experiences of these organisations offer practical lessons and inspiration. They point to clear pathways for CSRs and Corporate Foundations to back large-scale, sustained impact by directing part of their portfolio towards tackling the root causes of development challenges.

This report is jointly authored by The Convergence Foundation, SCALE, and India Impact Sherpas.

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Knowledge Partner





A philanthropic initiative that aims for rapid and sustained economic growth



A non-profit organisation that enables funders, nonprofits, and government leaders to create systemic impact



An advisory services firm focused on the social sector to accelerate development outcomes