



CII-ITC Centre of Excellence
for Sustainable Development



Confederation of Indian Industry

ACCELERATING Progress in Aspirational Districts



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Published by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), The Mantosh Sondhi Centre, 23, Institutional Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110003, India.

Foreword



Chandrajit Banerjee

Director General,
Confederation of Indian Industry

CII is pleased to present the Compendium on Accelerating Progress in Aspirational Districts. This Compendium brings together inspiring case studies of organisations undertaking development initiatives in underserved regions of India.

The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) launched by NITI Aayog in 2016 has intensified the Government's efforts for inclusive growth. In alignment with these efforts, the Indian Industry has come forward and supported the mission. These initiatives have collectively enhanced the quality of life, economic resilience, and overall well-being of the communities across aspirational districts in India.

Over the past seven years, CSR contributions in aspirational districts increased by 50%, showcasing a fivefold increase over previous years, especially in areas of environmental sustainability, education, and healthcare. These collaborative efforts have helped bridge the developmental deficit in the regions, thereby improving human development indices, reducing regional disparities, and contributing towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This publication aims to highlight a few notable examples of the commendable work undertaken by Industry across aspirational districts. The interventions primarily focus on improving health outcomes (maternal & child, primary health centres and Anganwadis), supporting literacy (digital and STEM education), promoting skilling & livelihood among youth and women, solar-based rural electrification, and reviving traditional water bodies, resulting in improved growth and development. Subsequent implementation challenges are also highlighted for further action.

We hope this will offer great insights and serve as a learning resource for organisations to create impactful social interventions to accelerate India's development growth and contribute towards an equitable society.

We extend our sincere thanks to all the member companies who contributed to this Compendium and, more importantly, to the transformation of these districts. Let this publication be both a recognition of your efforts and an inspiration for continued collaboration, because together, we can ensure that no district, and no citizen, is left behind in India's development journey.

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Reach of Aspirational Districts Programme



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At DocOnline, our mission is to deliver 'trusted healthcare for the many'. Through IRDHS, we are breaking barriers of distance, stigma, and affordability-especially for rural women who have been underserved for too long. This model is creating lasting impact by delivering care at the doorstep and empowering women as changemakers.

”

Manasije Mishra
Managing Director, DocOnline



When Care Travels Last Mile

Summary

DocOnline's Integrated Rural Digi-Physical Healthcare Services (IRDHS) is transforming access to healthcare in the aspirational districts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. This hybrid model combines technology with community-based care to bring doctors, diagnostics, and essential medicines closer to people living in rural India. The IRDHS model delivers village-level healthcare through staffed Digital Health Centres, mobile nurse-led clinics, and local health workers (Swasthya Mitras). Together, they ensure consistent, stigma-free care and follow-ups, bringing essential services within reach of even the most underserved rural communities. IRDHS is improving access, advancing gender equity and rural economic empowerment.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Launched in 2021, IRDHS is bridging healthcare inequities in aspirational districts of Fatehpur, Balrampur, Chandauli, and Gaya. Through Digital Health Centres (DHCs), Clinic-on-Two-Wheels (CoTWs), and the Swasthya Mitra program, communities receive video and audio consultations with MCI certified doctors, essential medicines & diagnostics. Regular health camps and awareness sessions further strengthen outreach. DHCs serve as permanent clinics in central villages, offering stigma-free care for women, CoTWs, provide services in remote hamlets twice a month- in public spaces like ICDS centres and panchayat bhawans. Swasthya Mitras, local women trained as General Duty Assistants provide teleconsultations and promote treatment adherence.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

In many remote villages of Uttar Pradesh, limited availability and access to women healthcare providers and specialists for pregnancy care poses a significant barrier to women's health. Distance, social stigma, and systemic gaps force many to rely on male physicians or forego care altogether. Essential services including paediatric and women's healthcare, are often hours away and financially out of reach, turning preventable conditions into chronic problems that affect lifelong well-being.

Challenges in Implementation

Our long-term vision is to strengthen the public health system, not create a parallel one. However, the enormity of the healthcare gap necessitates direct service delivery. In remote villages, nurses struggle with poor signal often conducting consultations under trees or on panchayat bhawan steps. A lightweight video solution built for low-bandwidth areas, paired with dual internet connections, transformed this challenge into seamless efficiency. Securing steady public funding remains also remains a challenge, and bureaucratic hurdles continue to slow the programme's expansion.



Impact of the Initiative

Various delivery mechanisms of IRDHS have enabled over one million consultations and **10,000** diagnostics across **2500+** villages, with women making up **85%** of all patients. Remarkably, **90%** of them avoided long-distance travel, saving precious time, daily wages, and consultation costs.

With **95%** of the workforce being women from doctors to paramedics and nearly **1,000** women trained in healthcare delivery, the programme not only improves access but also fosters gender equity and strengthens the rural economy.

Technology enabled CoTWs use real-time GPS tracking to enhance safety for women employees. AI-driven analytics support targeted interventions such as vaccinations, sanitation, and health education, making rural healthcare smarter, safer, and more responsive to community needs. This layered, community-rooted approach breaks physical, financial and cultural barriers, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals- good health, gender equality, and reduced inequalities.

While expanding access to healthcare, the IRDHS model also uplifts rural economies by creating caregiving roles for women.

Women like Nisha Yadav, who rebuilt her life after losing her husband to COVID-19, have now found purpose in serving their communities as nurses. Priyanka Tiwari, a polio survivor, found independence through her role, gaining respect in her village. These stories reflect the dual impact of the model-delivering healthcare where it's needed most, while enabling women to build sustainable livelihoods.

“

If India has to become a developed nation by 2047, our vision cannot be limited to reforms at the top. The real transformation will happen when every Village Mukhiya has both the power and the agency to act. When local leaders, citizens, and institutions work together, the path to Viksit Bharat is not just a dream; it becomes a reality.

”

**Manmohan Singh, CEO
Aspirational Bharat Collaborative &
Co-Founder, Kaivalya Education
Foundation**



Piramal Foundation

Piramal Foundation



Panchayat-Led Transformation for Inclusive and Sustainable Development

Summary

Aspirational Bharat Collaborative (Kaivalya Education Foundation) has partnered with NITI Aayog and state governments since 2018. The intervention initially started in **25** districts and now spreads across **90** aspirational districts and **160** aspirational blocks by driving interventions for sustainable transformation in education, health, gender equality and water security in seven states.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Aspirational Bharat Collaborative (Bharat Collab) partners with panchayats and sarpanches to drive a Panchayat-led model that places local communities at the centre of governance and development. By transforming local leaders into co-creators of sustainable solutions to advance India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The initiative rests on two pillars – Hyper-Local Collaboration (HLC) with youths, NGOs, local media, faith leaders & Last Mile Convergence (LMC) to build an ecosystem of local stakeholders and facilitate government departments to work in unison. We believe in government and community-driven system change, and we work across education, health & nutrition, water and gender.



Bharat Collab's Panchayat-led education model embeds learning in Gram Panchayat Development Plans, creating Child-Friendly Panchayats through early literacy, Baal Sabhas, and community libraries. Hyper-local collaboration re-enrols dropouts, ensures scholarship access, and empowers adolescent girls. Carbon-neutral schools and vocational training link education to sustainability, making it a catalyst for equity, inclusion, and a Viksit Bharat.

Bharat Collab's Swasthya Panchayat Model empowers Panchayats to lead preventive healthcare by improving maternal health, fighting diseases like LF and Kala-azar, prioritising nutrition, and strengthening health governance. Through community mobilisation, departmental convergence, and regular Gram Sabha engagement, health becomes a shared, local responsibility, shifting the focus from reactive to preventive care.

Our Panchayat-led gender model, aligned with the Women Friendly Village LSDG theme for gender equality and believes in bringing the change from nominal representation to transformational leadership.

The Jal Prabudh Panchayat initiative, aligned with the Water Sufficient Village LSDG theme, works to build **1,000** panchayats that are self-reliant and community-led in water management, to move from scarcity towards sustainability.

The programme is implemented through our operations team & Gandhi fellows, young graduates, to identify grassroots challenges and develop leadership, problem-solving and social impact skills to build Viksit Bharat.

The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

Our mission is to improve lives by elevating health, nutrition and education through direct collaboration with community leaders and integrated action across government departments, all anchored by a Panchayat-led approach.

Challenges in Implementation

Implementing Panchayat-led models at times faces barriers, such as limited community participation, entrenched gender norms. Although India has taken giant strides in many areas, the challenges persist. Building trust, institutionalising convergence and sustaining behaviour change remain critical pathways for effective grassroots transformation across education, health & nutrition, gender and water.



Impact of the Initiative

Education: Supported developing **5023** government schools as “Demonstration Schools”, wherein up to **17 %** improvement in learning outcomes across classes, enrolled **6.15 Lakh** new students and re-enrolled **1.23 Lakh** drop-out students.

Health & nutrition: Transformed VHSND by setting up **5865** model sites, organised **238** ‘Poshan Melas’, sensitised **700+** service providers and established five Model Health and Wellness Centres impacting over **41,000** beneficiaries.

Gender equality: Created **1,000** gender-neutral Panchayats that ensure safety, equity and active participation of women and girls to help create inclusive, equitable and sustainable communities.

Water security: Built **1,000** panchayats that are self-reliant and facilitate community-led water management, trained **8,000+** women, **15,000+** Paani Samiti members and mobilised **over one lakh** beneficiaries for making water security a core panchayat-led governance priority.



JK LAKSHMITM
CEMENT LTD.

JK Lakshmi Cement Limited

“

For us social responsibility is rooted in 140 years of JK Organisation legacy, and it co-exists with business priorities. The company has a strategic CSR Road Map-2030, developed from community needs assessments and stakeholder expectations.

”

Vinita Singhania CMD
JK Lakshmi Cement Ltd.



Integrated Community Development in Pindwara Block, Sirohi

Summary

In 2004, the JK Lakshmi Cement (JKLC) near its cement plant in Sirohi district implemented Integrated Community Development initiatives, across **35** villages and **82** clusters. These efforts address district's critical needs on health, education, livelihood, skill development, water and sanitation, and rural development. These projects navigate socio-economic and cultural challenges, demonstrating tangible impacts.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Integrated Community Development initiatives aim to create equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups, especially women and youth, steering their development journey.

JK Lakshmi Aajivika evam Kausal Prashikshan: Supports small farmers, youths through training in improved agricultural practices and entrepreneurship, providing quality inputs (seeds and composting materials), and veterinary services.

JK Lakshmi Arogya: The 'Naya Savera' initiative addresses high infant mortality rate (IMR) and poor maternal-child health especially among the tribal. Home visits for prenatal, postnatal, and neonatal care, doorstep medical camps, and awareness sessions on health are conducted.



JK Lakshmi Vidya: Improving learning outcomes, psychometric analysis-based career counseling, competitive exams coaching, additional teachers in government schools, learning materials and scholarship for meritorious students.

The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

The region faces limited access to quality healthcare services, traditional believes and limited scientific knowledge, contributing to poor health outcomes. Schools faced shortage of qualified subject teachers and infrastructure hindering students' chances in competitive exams and higher education. Reliance on traditional farming practices and limited exposure to modern techniques have resulted in low farm incomes. Limited access to structured, need-based vocational training, mentorship, and career counselling lead to lack of employability. While low awareness of social security schemes restricts access to benefits.

Challenges in Implementation

- The power dynamics in the community where the expectations of the powerful stakeholders and development need of the disadvantaged communities are different, puts pressure on the CSR resource allocation.
- The deep-rooted socio-economic challenges including poverty, illiteracy, existing social hierarchies and cultural practices creates challenges for vulnerable communities to participate accept and adopt new practices and project interventions.
- The inherent economic backwardness and structural bottlenecks has resulted in lack of local opportunity for job and business for trained youths.



Impact of the Initiative

The project has yielded significant and measurable impacts across all thematic areas.

JK Lakshmi Arogya: The interventions have reduced IMR to **23.43**. The awareness programme improved the knowledge and behaviour on safe delivery and childcare practices, leading to increased institutional deliveries to **89%**, and reduced mortalities and morbidities. Linkages to government schemes, and Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) improved immunisation and increased early pregnancy registration by **75%**.

JK Lakshmi Vidya: Improved education quality, provided career opportunities, increased parents' participation in children's education and convergence under Mukhyamantri Jan-Sahbhagita Yojana. The school drop-out rate reduced by **20%**, increased higher education enrolment and career planning. Over **400** out-of-school children were enrolled in government schools, and **200+** students received scholarships.

JK Lakshmi Aajivika evam Kaushal Prashikshan: Increased farmers income by **20%**, improved crop productivity, reduced in animal diseases and treatment costs by **30%**, improving cattle health and returns. It supported **80** youth with seed capital and training to launch small businesses, helping over **150** youth secure private jobs. More than **20** tribal youth gained government jobs, enhancing confidence, decision-making, along with parental sensitisation.

“

We at the Aditya Birla Group, are totally committed to our Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat and Aspirational Districts. All of our CSR projects are in sync with this dream.

”

Rajashree Birla,
Chairperson, Aditya Birla Centre for
Community Initiatives and Rural
Development



ADITYA BIRLA GROUP
A FORCE FOR GOOD

Engage. Uplift. Empower
Aditya Birla Group



Aditya Birla Group's Engagement in Selective Aspirational Districts

Summary

Aditya Birla Group embarked on a multipronged intervention on critical fronts of sustainable development that fosters livelihoods, education, healthcare and mindset change from fixed to growth mindsets. It has positively impacted the lives of villagers across various aspirational districts, empowering them to envision a brighter future. Through initiatives, communities now have access to sustainable livelihoods, secure housing, quality education for their children and improved healthcare. In every sense, company's efforts have contributed to a better, brighter and more hopeful way of life.



CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Aditya Birla Group's initiatives extend across **189 villages** in the aspirational districts of Koraput, Rayagada, and Kalahandi in Odisha. In Uttar Pradesh, CSR projects cover **240 villages** in Sonbhadra, benefiting approximately **10 lakh** people each year. A key initiative was the formation of **17 Udyan Vikash Samitis**, engaging **500 farmers** for orchard development, including **18 mango** and **54 cashew** plantations, which led to a **32%** rise in income levels. Sustainable agricultural practices such as intercropping, protective farming, solar-based technologies and the introduction of goatry units for **76** landless families further enhanced food and income security.

Education was prioritised through the strengthening of the Aditya Birla Public School, benefiting over **1,000** students-**69%** (year-after-year) from underprivileged communities -and by upgrading **72** high schools and **21** anganwadis across the district. In healthcare, a **30-bed** hospital, mobile units, and maternal and child health services reached over **55,250** people annually.

Lastly, significant investments were made in rural infrastructure, including roads, irrigation channels, community halls, solar lighting, and water facilities, all contributing to improved quality of life in the region. These activities are in continuum.

The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

The project areas were marked by deep-rooted challenges. The region lacked basic infrastructure, with poor road connectivity and limited access to quality education and healthcare. Sanitation conditions were inadequate, and a significant portion of the population suffered from visual and hearing impairments. Farm productivity remained low, compounded by erratic power supply and minimal livelihood opportunities. Digital literacy was virtually non-existent, and widespread poverty had led to social stagnation and entrenched mindsets. The tribal communities, affected by alcoholism, were largely unaware of pathways to overcome these systemic issues.

Challenges in Implementation

The projects faced several challenges rooted in deep socio-cultural and economic barriers. A key difficulty was shifting communities away from their conventional lifestyles toward unfamiliar, long-term development goals. Convincing farmers to adopt orchard-based farming was tough, as it demanded patience and delayed returns, difficult in survival-driven settings. Financial inclusion was another hurdle, with tribal beneficiaries as they were hesitant to engage with formal banking due to mistrust and fear of losing control over their finances. Implementing NABARD's technical protocols required a significant mindset shift from traditional to strategic farming, demanding sustained training and handholding. Despite socio-cultural and economic barriers, trust-building, local engagement and consistent fieldwork gradually led to community acceptance and growing participation in development projects.



Impact of the Initiative

The Group continues to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable and equitable development across India's priority regions. The significant progress had been achieved. In Odisha, the Group's initiatives have positively impacted over **four lakh** people annually, with an average investment of **₹32 crores each year** in community development.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Group companies-Hindalco, UltraTech, Grasim, and Birla Carbon-collectively invest over **₹18.5 crores** annually in Sonebhadra, benefiting a population of **5.47 lakh**. Meanwhile, in Rajasthan, through UltraTech, the Group is actively fostering inclusive growth in the aspirational district of Sirohi by focusing on education, healthcare, infrastructure and animal welfare with an annual investment of over **₹4 crores** in Sirohi. In all these districts, the Group has touched lives emotionally, meeting their basic needs. The tens of thousands of people homed here distinctively feel that the Group is a Force for Good.

“

This programme exemplifies our core value of 'One Family' and extends its impact to rural women. Empowering women through entrepreneurship is vital for their growth and the collective upliftment of all women, symbolising unity. I wholeheartedly commend all the women beneficiaries who have successfully harnessed entrepreneurship, forging a path for greater investment in gender equality.

”

Onkar Kanwar,
Chairman, Apollo Tyres Ltd.



Rural Livelihood Programme in Dahod, Gujarat

Summary

Apollo Tyres through its CSR arm Apollo Tyres Foundation (ATF) expanded the rural livelihood programme in Dahod, an aspirational district in Gujarat. The initiative supports smallholder farmers through sustainable agriculture, improved irrigation and livestock-based livelihoods. By aligning with government schemes and empowering women-led SHGs, the programme has enhanced market linkages and household incomes thereby building resilience in a resource-stressed tribal region.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

The rural farm-based livelihood programme was launched in FY2022 in collaboration with Collectives for Integrated Livelihood Initiatives, (CINI), targeting **2,250** small and marginal farmers across **25** villages, on sustainable agriculture practices by effectively utilising the available irrigated command area. The programme empowers women-led community institutions to strengthen value chain linkages and address key gaps. The primary stakeholders are small and marginal farmers with landholdings under five acres and average household sizes of five.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

The Limkheda block, in Dahod district, is predominantly tribal with Bhil community comprising **90%** of the population. Most residents are smallholder farmers with average landholding of **0.6 hectares** and average annual income below **₹50,000**. The agriculture is largely rain-fed, with only **20%** of cultivated land receiving seasonal irrigation. Key challenges include erratic rainfall, low agricultural productivity, limited market access, poor quality agricultural inputs, and inadequate reach of government schemes. The programme aimed to address these issues by enhancing irrigation access, improving cropping practices, and strengthening indigenous knowledge systems through targeted training and partnerships.

Challenges in Implementation

The region's agricultural productivity is severely constrained by its undulating terrain, water scarcity and dependence on rainfed farming, this is compounded by inadequate irrigation infrastructure. The persistent use of mono-cropping and traditional methods results in low yields and increase soil stress. The fragmented nature of landholding (mostly below two acres), along with difficult topography, and lack of organised community structures further limit access to quality inputs for farmers. These challenges hinder income generation and reduce productivity making sustainable development in the region increasingly difficult.



Impact of the Initiative

The programme improved capacity of farmers and women SHGs via training and practical demonstrations leading to improved cultivation of cereals, pulses, vegetables and floriculture. Livestock initiative empowered **800** households in goat and poultry rearing supported by breed improvement and high vaccination rates that boosted productivity. Irrigation access was secured for **169 acres** through mini lift irrigation and borewell installation, enabling year-round cultivation. Technologies like mulching, drip irrigation were adopted and polyhouse nurseries were set up for quality seedlings. Market linkages strengthened through federations, reducing dependence on intermediaries. The SHGs have grown from **50** to **79**, increasing women's leadership and collective transactions.

Convergence with government schemes especially State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM), enabled SHGs to access social and financial schemes including widow pensions, credit subsidy support for procuring cattle, Ujwala Scheme, and insurance support. Contributions from government, community, and donors, totalled **₹19.77 lakh**, constituting **32%** of the project cost, thereby reducing external dependency on donors and ensuring sustainability.

Programme's key indicators include tracking annual household income, monitoring crop area, livestock health including mortality and breed productivity, and institutional strength through SHG and federation participation, along with collective transaction and income survey for households earning over **₹1 lakh** annually. Agricultural impact is measured through improved acreage, yield data, and technology adoption, while irrigation expansion is tracked by area and water availability per crop cycle.

Entrepreneurship-driven efforts have addressed gaps in agricultural livelihoods, raising farmers' incomes by **₹40,000–50,000** through irrigation and crop diversification. Since year FY2023-24, out of 500 household engaged, **360** have earned between **₹70,000** and **₹1.2 lakh** annually, with **62** households exceeding **₹1.2 lakh**. Over **3,000 acres** of land is under improved farming practices. The intervention aligns with UNSDGs focusing on education, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.

AM/NS INDIA

ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India

ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India Limited

“

We believe that true progress is measured not just by industrial growth but by the positive impact we create in the lives of people and communities, and our contribution to nation-building. Our CSR initiatives are strategically aligned with government priorities, particularly in aspirational districts, where we have committed to catalysing socio-economic change by ensuring access to basic healthcare, sanitation, education, infrastructure and clean water supply.

At AM/NS India, we are committed to creating 'Smarter Steels, Brighter Futures' for everyone.

”

Dilip Oommen
CEO, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India



Brighter Futures

Summary

In alignment with the Government of India's Aspirational Districts Programme, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) actively contributed to the socio-economic transformation of four priority districts - Alluri Sitharamaraju (Andhra Pradesh), Dantewada and Sukma (Chhattisgarh), and Malkangiri (Odisha) to complement the government efforts. Driven by a vision to foster inclusive, collaborative, and sustainable development, AM/NS India has forged strong partnerships with government bodies, NGOs, institutions and local communities to build a resilient social ecosystem.

AM/NS India is a committed partner to the Nation, and its avid growth story will be purposeful, inclusive, and sustainable.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Launched in 2019, The interventions target vulnerable groups, including tribal communities like Koya, Mundari, Ho, Gond, and Haldi, as well as women, children, and unemployed youth. The company's multi-pronged approach addresses challenges focusing on high-impact and need-based interventions. Healthcare (**Aarogya**) access is improved via camps, eye screenings, menstrual health awareness, disability-friendly services and nutrition rehabilitation centres. **Project Trupti** enhances safe drinking water access and sustainable water management. Education initiatives like Padhega Bharat, **Digital Pathashala** and **Beti Padhao** Scholarship integrate technology, offer girls scholarships and upgrade infrastructure. Skill development and livelihood support through **Daksh** and **SAFAL** include digital skill training, sustainable agriculture and support for women entrepreneurs and SHGs.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

Healthcare systems are overstretched with few doctors, limited specialist care, poor diagnostics, and inadequate disability services, alongside high maternal and infant mortality and severe child malnutrition. Education suffers from poor infrastructure, low digital access, high dropout rates especially among girls and teacher shortages. Livelihoods depend heavily on low-yield farming, with limited skill development and market access. These challenges deepen poverty and exclusion, making targeted CSR interventions essential for sustainable change in aspirational districts.

Challenges in Implementation

Implementing meaningful CSR interventions in these aspirational districts demands navigating a landscape marked by deep-rooted challenges. Geographical isolation and poor connectivity were among the most persistent barriers. Many project locations, such as Chitrakonda and Sukma, are tucked away in dense forested terrains with limited road access, often cut off during monsoons. These logistical hurdles made the transportation of resources, deployment of skilled personnel, and routine monitoring both costly and time-consuming. Beyond the physical barriers, the socio-cultural fabric of these tribal belts adds another layer of complexity.



Impact of the Initiative

The CSR interventions have impacted over **1.66 million** lives across **260 villages** in the **four aspirational districts** creating meaningful and measurable change through targeted, locally adapted solutions. The company's interventions align with **SDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 & 17**.

Healthcare services empowered over **2500 PwDs**, while **300** individuals regained mobility with artificial limbs. **3,182** children recovered from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and eye care initiatives benefited over **14,400** people. Focussing on essential community assets and access to fundamental necessities, various developmental work like construction and renovation of government school buildings, anganwadis, community halls, tribal sacred grooves have been taken up.

Additionally, installation of **217 solar lights and high mast lights** enhanced community **safety and security**. **421 kW** solar energy systems were installed in Visakhapatnam. **Water security** was strengthened through solar-powered systems and revival of **225+** handpumps. In education, **1,540+** students in **39** schools benefited from AI-powered classrooms and infrastructure upgrades, **72** girls received Beti Padhao Scholarships, and **300** meritorious students were felicitated with Gyan Jyoti Award.

Under livelihoods, **182** youth were trained in IT and Telecom, sustainable agriculture was promoted through SAFAL project, while **260 women** from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) received capacity-building support to diversify their income sources.

“

Change is most powerful when it's owned by the community. With this core belief, Axis Bank Foundation strives to create purpose driven and collaborative partnership to support development in some of the most underserved regions in the country.

”

Dhruvi Shah
ET & CEO, Axis Bank Foundation



AXIS Bank Foundation



Empowering Aspirational India: Approach to Health & Nutrition and Skill Development

Summary

Axis Bank Foundation (ABF) is catalysing transformative change in several of India's most underserved districts, in alignment with NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP). ABF's holistic health and nutrition strategy delivers tangible gains, while targeted health initiatives and medical camps enhance family well-being and last-mile care. On the livelihoods front, ABF empowers youth and persons with disabilities through market-driven skilling, vocational training and direct job placement-creating real, measurable pathways to economic self-sufficiency.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

ABF operates in **37** aspirational districts across **16** states, reflecting a deep commitment to inclusive development. ABF adopts an ecosystem-based approach combining knowledge capacitation, access and behavior change. It partners with government bodies, local NGOs, Anganwadi, health workers and community for driving both scale and sustainability.

- **Food security:** Improving agriculture productivity and crop diversity to enhance food security.



- **Kitchen gardens:** Improving nutrition and generating income. This promotes self-reliance and empowers women.
- **Maternal & child health:** Programmes support maternal and infant well-being through health check-ups, nutrition counseling, hygiene education, and promotion of institutional deliveries.
- **Community engagement:** Women trained as health workers and nutrition champions, using storytelling and demonstrations to drive behavior change and community ownership.
- **Health camps & infrastructure:** Multi-service camps provide medical care, sanitation awareness and links to government schemes.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) practices:** Actively promoted, ensuring communities have access to clean drinking water, improved sanitation facilities and hygiene education to prevent disease and enhance overall well-being.
- **Vocational training programmes:** Designed to impart both technical and soft skills, enterprise development, blending contemporary and traditional skill sets.

The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

In majority of rural areas, malnutrition and anemia especially among women and children are widespread, impacting development and well-being. Limited awareness, access in remote areas, poor nutrition and sanitation and low awareness of preventive care worsen the situation. Unemployment and underemployment are prevalent, particularly among rural youths and people with disabilities (PwDs). Market-relevant skill training is scarce, and gender norms restrict women's workforce participation. PwDs face exclusion due to inadequate infrastructure and support. These barriers trap families in poverty and limit community progress.

Challenges in Implementation

Working in aspirational districts presents challenges like community mistrust, poor infrastructure, and cultural barriers around gender and disability. ABF's partners addressed these by engaging local workers to build trust, customising content to local languages and contexts, and maintaining feedback loops to refine strategies. A key insight has been the importance of community ownership initiatives led by locals are more sustainable and impactful.



Impact of the Initiative

ABF's interventions have led to transformative change in aspirational districts. Enhancing agriculture productivity fosters food security and household income, kitchen gardens have boosted nutrition and household income, while women health workers have driven behavioral change and community awareness. Skill development programmes have empowered youth and PwDs with employment and financial independence, improving health, education and social cohesion. Coordination with government departments ensures convergence with national schemes, enhancing the overall impact of the interventions.

ABF's interventions contribute to several **Sustainable Development Goals such as 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10.**

“

At Bayer, through our initiatives in water conservation and water management, we are working alongside farmers to introduce solutions that are both practical and climate-smart like efficient irrigation methods and community-led watershed projects. These interventions are helping farmers secure their livelihoods, strengthen resilience against climate change, and ensure that this most precious resource is preserved for future generations.

”

Rachana Panda
VP & Cluster Comms Head,
Bayer ASEAN, ANZ & South Asia,
Director–Bayer Foundation India



Bayer CropScience Limited



Water Conservation and Management for Farming Communities

Summary

Water is vital across industries, especially agriculture, which sustains 47% of rural India. 'Agriculture and Water Resources' is one of the identified key socio-economic themes for uplifting aspirational districts. Water scarcity and climate change have heightened the urgency to build resilient farming communities, prompting us to launch water conservation and management initiatives in four aspirational districts across two states. The approach combines creating diverse water storage and irrigation structures with capacity building for local communities.



CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

The foundation for CSR strategy is 'Nurturing Science & Social Innovation' for a world with 'Health for All and Hunger for None'. The focus areas are selected based on national development goals, community needs, and our strategic strengths in health, agriculture, and sustainability. The water security and management initiative focus on a 'Watershed Development Project' to enhance water availability for farming, while contributing to ecological balance.

In Rayagada district, Odisha, several structures such as diversion-based canals, stone bunds and trenches were built to divert, store, and conserve stream water for irrigation in the rabi season. Additionally, solar pump irrigation systems enable irrigation of paddy fields using renewable energy. In Jharkhand, the slopy terrain allowed construction of farm ponds, field bunds and trench-cum-bunds. These ensure efficient water harvesting and reduce the velocity of surface runoff, thereby preventing soil erosion and promoting the growth of diverse species of flora and fauna.

The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

In Rayagada district, poor water management and growing effects of climate change is causing significant water run-off, soil erosion and water wastage. As a highly climate sensitive agro-climatic zone, predominantly inhabited by tribal communities, the area relies heavily on agriculture and forest produce for livelihood. Despite the dependence, about 70% of its agricultural land remains rainfed, making the region vulnerable to water insecurity.

On the other hand, the slopy terrain of Dumka, Latehar and Lohardaga districts in Jharkhand, cause 80% water to run-off. The river, a major source of irrigation, dries up post monsoon making irrigation rainfed. This coupled with soil erosion, shallow soil depth, and limited irrigation infrastructure especially post monsoon further inhibits economic growth and forcing migration. An integrated watershed management approach has been adopted, including creation of storage and conservation structures. This ensures efficient water harvesting.

Challenges in Implementation

- **Awareness and literacy levels** - Low literacy levels and limited knowledge of techniques and technologies available and to adopt.
- **Resource limitation** - The initial infrastructure required for conservation is cost-intensive and post-construction maintenance is an added cost, that remains unaffordable for many communities.
- **Community participation** - As the focus was on supporting tribal communities, cultural barriers limits participation. To address language barriers and foster rapport, a local guide was engaged and key stakeholders, including panchayat leaders, were consulted to facilitate community engagement.



Impact of the Initiative

The initiatives complement the government programs like MGNREGA and Jal Jeevan Mission on water and soil conservation. In Jharkhand, construction of various structures led to conservation of **40 crore litres** of water, reduced runoff, and prevented erosion. Additionally, **five** new farm ponds constructed and **25** renovated, and trench-cum-bund and field bunds erected across **20 hectares** of farmland. The water conservation structures support in livelihood and duck and fish rearing and strengthens household economies.

In Odisha, three diversion-based irrigation (DBI) systems constructed are supporting **24** farmers and irrigation **28 acres** of farmland. In, addition, field bunding has been implemented across **150 running metres**. These irrigation structures are enabling farmers to take up farming in rabi season, boosting their incomes upto **₹12,000** each.



BOSCH

Bosch India Foundation

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Investing in our country's future means investing in youth, a core focus at Bosch. BRIDGE vocational training, Automotive Skills Programme, Caregiver Programme, and Learning Centers for girls reflect Bosch's belief that sustainable progress is built on empowerment, skills and opportunity, transforming not just individual livelihoods but entire communities.

”

Guruprasad Mudlapur
President Bosch Group India &
Managing Director, Bosch Ltd.



Skilling Initiatives at Aspirational Districts

Summary

Over the past decade, Bosch Limited's major focus has been on the youth of our country, especially those who come from marginalised backgrounds and have little or no access to information to seek skills that will help them in being economically self-reliant. Aligned with NITI Aayog's thematic area of financial inclusion & skill development and education, the initiatives empower youth, women and underserved communities to secure sustainable and dignified livelihood opportunities.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

The flagship programmes such as BRIDGE (Bosch's Response to India's Development and Growth through Employability Enhancement), Automotive Skills Development, Caregiver, and the programme for out-of-school girls address critical skill and education gaps, especially in the aspirational districts of India. These programmes are implemented across **24** States and four Union Territories through multiple training partners, and these include **36** aspirational districts. The programmes focus on bridging the employability gap, improving healthcare services through trained resource and motivating girls and their families to continue education.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

Aspirational districts face an even sharper skill deficit due to limited access to quality education, vocational training and employment opportunities. Youth are unfamiliar with how industries function, leaving them unprepared for the transition from education to employment due to limited industry exposure. Limited local job opportunities often force young people to migrate to cities in search of better livelihoods. Beyond academic knowledge, employability skills such as effective communication, workplace readiness, teamwork, problem-solving and confidence-building are often missing. Girls often drop out after primary or secondary school due to socio-economic pressures, early marriage or household responsibilities. This not only reduces the participation of women in the workforce but also hinders the long-term development of families and communities.

Challenges in Implementation

In aspirational districts, the challenges include high youth unemployment with limited exposure to industries and modern vocational training, a large proportion of rural youth remain unemployable despite having basic education. Limited exposure to formal training opportunities made it difficult for rural youth to view skilling as a viable pathway. While training created a pool of skilled candidates, linking them with employers was challenging. Remote geographies often lacked credible implementation partners and qualified trainers, constraining programme delivery and scalability. Dropouts were common due to financial constraints, lack of family support, and migration pressures. Many candidates prioritised immediate income over long-term skill development, making course completion difficult. Sustaining employment beyond initial placement remained a challenge.



Impact of the Initiative

These initiatives have touched **100,000** lives and have directly impacted over **2,650** beneficiaries. Through a combination of short-term, industry-relevant training and job-focused community engagement, the interventions have reduced youth migration, increased employability and strengthened local economies and have brought out hundreds of girls back to education system. The initiatives directly contribute to **SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8 & 10**.

- **BRIDGE Programme:** 1,890 enrolled; 1,346 placed or self-employed (71%)
- **Automotive Skills Development Programme:** 575 enrolled; 428 placed or self-employed (74%)
- **Caregiver Programme:** 125 enrolled; 79 placed or self-employed (63%)
- **BRIDGE, automotive skills development, and caregiver programmes** in Bijapur (Karnataka), Purbi Singhbhum (Jharkhand), and Banka (Bihar) achieved **100%** placement or self-employment rate, showing the programmes' relevance in remote geographies, enabling youth to secure stable local employment.

Crisil Foundation

Crisil Foundation

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We believe that empowering rural women is key to unlocking financial inclusion in India. Our Mein Pragati programme has shown remarkable success in building financial capability and reducing household vulnerability in Aspirational Districts, by strengthening an enabling ecosystem that fosters long-term financial resilience.

”

Maya Vengurlekar
Chief Operating Officer
Crisil Foundation



Mein Pragati – Building Household Financial Resilience in Aspirational Districts

Summary

Launched in 2015, **Mein Pragati** is Crisil Foundation's flagship programme to build financial capability and reduce household vulnerability in rural India. The programme is currently operational across **33** districts in Assam and Rajasthan, of which seven are aspirational districts. At its core is the **Crisil Sakhi**, locally recruited and trained cadre of women who provide doorstep facilitation for banking, digital payments, and government entitlements, while earning a monthly income through her services.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Mein Pragati largely covers rural women, tribal and minorities – aligning to **SDG 5 and 10**. Supported by Crisil Foundation & local NGOs, Sakhis are selected from self-help groups and trained using a blend of digital and hands-on methods. They offer doorstep services, guiding users through documentation and access to over **100** financial and government services. By bridging technology gaps, especially for women in aspirational districts, Sakhis ensure inclusive financial participation.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

The Global Findex 2025¹ report by the World Bank shows that while Indian women now own accounts at rates similar to men, challenges like high inactivity, gender gaps in digital payments, and limited mobile phone access persist, resulting in a gender gap in financial services usage. Despite rapid progress in India's financial infrastructure, a large share of rural households, especially women, remain at the periphery of formal finance. Within India, basis district-level financial inclusion data gathered through Crisil Inclusix² the North-East Region had an inclusion score of **46.5** in FY2016 - the lowest, indicating below-average financial inclusion.

Challenges in Implementation

The programme often faces geographic and infrastructural barriers in Assam and socio-cultural barriers in Rajasthan. In Assam, low banking penetration, geographic isolation and a heavy dependence on agriculture meant that households were vulnerable to shocks - whether from erratic weather, health emergencies or fluctuating commodity prices. Rajasthan presented a different challenge: deeply entrenched social norms and a male-dominated financial culture meant that women were excluded from decision-making, even in households that had access to banking services. The organisation also faced challenges like slow technology adoption, skill gaps requiring ongoing support and a one-size-fits-all approach that overlooked local and community-specific needs.



Impact of the Initiative

Through the network of Sakhi cadres in over **5,000** villages, the organisation is also creating micro-entrepreneurs who can drive change from within their communities. This approach has allowed us to reach **over 5.9 lakh** households in seven aspirational districts of Assam and Rajasthan (as of July 2025), with a significant increase in financial transactions and access to government schemes. The fee-for-service model provides them with a sustainable income of **₹1,500-2,000** monthly. This approach reduces dependency on external agents; cuts travel time and improves service delivery for communities. The community expressed satisfaction with Sakhi services, acknowledged improved knowledge, better access and increased confidence in handling financial transactions.

- The programme covered **7 districts, 32 blocks, 1,801 villages and 1,593 Sakhis** functional in the above geographies.
- **4.4 lakh linkage** applications to formal banking, financial services and government entitlements.
- **85%** of the community respondents expressed willingness to pay for the Sakhi services. Feedback from stakeholders also indicates reduced cases of people falling to fraudulent practices.

¹. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/globalfindex>

². <https://www.crisil.com/content/dam/crisil/crisil-foundation/generic-pdf/crisil-inclusix-financial-inclusion-surges-driven-by-Jan-Dhan-yojana.pdf>

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At GMR Varalakshmi Foundation, we believe empowered youth are the cornerstone of vibrant communities. By providing quality skill training, nurturing confidence, and fostering entrepreneurship, we equip young people to seize opportunities and drive change, contributing to the vision of Skill India and building the foundation of a Viksit Bharat.

”

Dr. Avanish Kumar
Director CSR
GMR Varalakshmi Foundation



GMR Varalakshmi Foundation



Employability Training to Tribal Youth in Narmada District, Gujarat

Summary

The Ekta Skill Development Centre (ESDC), established in 2021 by GMR Varalakshmi Foundation in collaboration with SSNNL and SoUADTGA, addresses the skill gap in Narmada—an aspirational district in Gujarat that is predominantly rural and tribal. With state-of-the-art infrastructure, modern laboratories, ESDC offers market-driven courses aligned with the tourism and hospitality demand around the Statue of Unity. Since inception, ESDC has trained **2,282** youth- **51.5%** women—from nearly **200** villages, achieving an average settlement rate of **81.37%**.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Established in 2021, the Ekta Skill Development Centre (ESDC) was set up to bridge the skill gap in Narmada district. The Centre provides state-of-the-art training infrastructure, free boarding and lodging, and modern laboratories that simulate real workplaces. It offers market-driven courses such as Guest Service Associate, Food & Beverage Steward, Office Executive, Assistant Electrician, Tourist Guide and E-Auto Driving, aligned to the tourism and hospitality demand around the Statue of Unity.

Implemented by GMR Varalakshmi Foundation in partnership with the Statue of Unity Area Development & Tourism Governance Authority (SoUADTGA), the programme combines technical training with soft skills, motivation and entrepreneurship support. Strong industry partnerships ensure curriculum relevance, trainer development, joint certification and robust placement linkages—creating a comprehensive ecosystem for employability and livelihoods.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

Narmada's youth, many of them school or college dropouts, have traditionally relied on seasonal agriculture and local work for livelihood. The rapid growth of tourism around the Statue of Unity created significant opportunities for service-oriented and skill-based employment in the region. However, the absence of structured vocational training meant that local youth were not fully equipped to take advantage of these prospects.

ESDC bridges this gap by offering residential, industry-aligned skilling tailored to rural and tribal communities. Its model combines technical training with soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and confidence-building, while also encouraging entrepreneurship through access to credit for micro-enterprises. By conducting awareness campaigns and counselling across nearly 200 villages, ESDC motivates and prepares young people to embrace dignified jobs or self-employment, transforming them into active contributors to the district's growing economy.

Challenges in Implementation

Operating in a restricted zone created access issues, while attracting and retaining trainers was difficult. Many aspirants, especially young women, also faced commuting costs, safety concerns, and time barriers.

To address this, the Centre offers free residential facilities and meals, along with bus services supported by the Statue of Unity Authority to ease travel from villages. Industry partnerships strengthen trainer capacity, curriculum design, and certification, helping sustain quality despite staffing and access challenges. These measures ensured continuity and equitable access for rural youth.



Impact of the Initiative

Since inception, ESDC has trained **2,282** youth from nearly **200** villages; women account for **51.5%** of participants. The average settlement rate is **81.37%**, and each settled candidate adds roughly **₹1 lakh** per year to family income-contributing to economic stability and resilience for tribal households.

The initiative has catalysed women's entry into non-traditional roles: Kevadia hosts Asia's first all-women McDonalds outlet staffed by ESDC graduates. Further, **188** tribal women trained as e-rickshaw drivers; **150** are presently employed locally earning about **₹15,000** per month, and **34** have purchased their own e-autos-building assets and autonomy. Graduates have also joined reputable employers across hospitality and allied sectors, including Taj Group, Starbucks, McDonalds and Tata Projects-strengthening the local service ecosystem and reducing unemployment.

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ITC's Social Investments purpose of Transforming Lives and Landscapes is aligned to ITC's credo of Nation First; Sab Saath Badhein, done through its flagship programme, Mission Sunehra Kal (MSK). The programmes are anchored on key tenets of designing interventions basis community needs, incorporating sustenance with focus on inclusivity and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships. The partnership with NITI Aayog to promote Climate Smart Agriculture in 27 aspirational districts is an example of this approach.

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L Prabhakar
Executive Vice President and
Head – Social Investments
ITC Limited



ITC Limited



Inspiration for Aspiration- Agricultural Transformation

Summary

The ITC–NITI Aayog partnership has transformed agricultural livelihoods in some of the nation's most underdeveloped - Aspirational Districts. Implemented under ITC's Social Investments initiative Mission Sunehra Kal, the Project focused on the thematic area of Agriculture and Water Resources, covering **27** districts across eight states - Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. At inception, these districts faced low productivity, minimal adoption of scientific practices, poor irrigation coverage, and weak institutional linkages. The interventions mitigate challenges through **Cascade Training Approach**, a multi-tiered capacity building framework designed for farmers, **Model Village Template** for holistic development and **innovative pilots** for increasing farmers income. Convergence with government schemes, strong monitoring by Project Management Committee under the chairpersonship of District Collectors, and participatory planning ensured measurable gains in crop yields, reduced cultivation costs, and higher farmer incomes. Institutionalisation within district plans has secured sustainability and scale.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

The six-year partnership spanning two phases, was initiated in April 2018. It was designed to align with two focus areas (water resources and agriculture) as per NITI Champions of Change Dashboard using a 3C approach of Collaboration, Convergence and Competition. The project focused on enhancing agricultural productivity, reducing production costs, and increasing net returns for farming households.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

It was observed that most households relied heavily on one or two crops which too had lower productivity since the farmers were not practicing recommended practices. Practices such as broadcasting seeds, excessive chemical fertilisers use, competed with newer techniques such as zero tillage, integrated nutrient management, use of organic amendments which led to scepticism, absence of visible short-term results, making demonstration-based learning essential. Limited diversification into allied activities such as horticulture, animal husbandry, or fisheries not only restricted income potential, but also heightened vulnerability to crop failure.

Infrastructure gaps especially water harvesting assets, inadequate market linkages and low convergence with schemes such as MGNREGS, eNAM, etc. entailed complex coordination across departments. This was compounded since farmers were not having access to structured, context-specific information, leading to inconsistent knowledge transfer.

Challenges in Implementation

Rolling out these interventions at this magnitude in aspirational districts involved navigating multiple and interlinked challenges. Capacity deficits and lack of resources for extension meant that before technical interventions could take hold, foundational capacity-building was required. Further, COVID-19 also affected the extension activities. ITC adopted a phased, saturation-driven approach with a district multi-stakeholder platform under the chairpersonship of District Collector. **Phase I** focused on proof of concept - developing training content for easy communication of critical practices which improve yields significantly, piloting Model Villages, and showcasing measurable results. The concept was driven by **Cascade Training Programme**-a multi-tiered capacity-building framework designed to reach large farming populations efficiently and fast-track farmers adoption. Customized training modules -designed to address the gap in package of practices in consultation with Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) scientists. The district agriculture department officials were trained as Master Trainers to use the ITC-developed modules for 14 major crops in four regional languages. These Master Trainers, in turn, trained Village Resource Persons (VRPs), who conducted Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Krishi Pathshalas with ITC's support, using physical, digital and peer-to-peer "phygital" approaches. Secondly, **demonstration Model Villages** were created implementing comprehensive intervention focusing on: (a) **Knowledge Empowerment** by training and ensuring adoption of area-specific package of practices (POP) in agriculture and other agri- allied livelihoods, along with cadre development through SRLMs. (b) **Institutional support** through increasing awareness and adoption of Government schemes and Agri-Business Centres / FPOs linkages to farmers, to ensure access to inputs including machinery. (c) **Natural Resource Management** creating infrastructure for water conservation, composting pits through leveraging schemes. (d) **Livelihood Diversification** into agro-forestry, horticulture, animal husbandry, and fisheries to de-risk incomes. Thirdly, **Pilots** were promoted to demonstrate innovative technologies, showcasing sustainable and advanced agricultural practices. These included agrovoltaic project for irrigation, nano-urea to reduce fertiliser costs and environmental load; women-led Custom Hiring Centres; integrated farm ponds through MGNREGS and fish / Makhana cultivation systems to enhance water security and income; use of toilet manure as a nutrient-rich organic amendment etc. **Phase II** shifted delivery leadership and ownership to Government departments, while playing a supportive role in technical guidance, monitoring, and convergence facilitation.

Impact of the Initiative

The ITC-NITI Aayog partnership offers a replicable blueprint for advancing SDGs in rural, agriculture-dependent economies in a Public-Private-Partnership mode. Convergence with Government schemes, robust monitoring by District Collectors, and participatory planning and demonstration ensured measurable gains: especially increase in crop yields and decrease in cost of cultivation, together resulting in significant income increase for farmers. The interventions are now institutionalised in district plans, ensuring sustenance and scale.

The programme trained over **3,450** officials, facilitated over **30 lakh** farmer engagements cumulatively across cropping seasons. Digital cascades created **6,340** WhatsApp groups in Phase I and **8,894** in Phase II, connecting over **8 lakh** farmers to seasonal advisories. By Phase II, with Government Departments taking the lead, about **12 lakh** farmers were getting trained in a single season.

The Model Village Template, piloted in **1,350** villages and subsequently expanded to over **8,000** by Government departments, Government also created **27** district agriculture plans based on the learnings. The pilots and innovation were linked to soil management, crop diversification, agro-voltaic irrigation and promoting a natural shift to organic farming, further reducing fertiliser cost, and making mechanisation services affordable.

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Mahindra's core purpose is to "drive positive change in the lives of our communities, only when we enable others to rise will we rise". Mahindra CSR Initiative on empowering girls (NANHI KALI) and integrated development (EKIKRIT VIKAS) is aimed to support NITI Aayog's aspirational district Mission.

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Sheetal Mehta
CSR Chief, Mahindra Group

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Mahindra & Mahindra Limited



Transforming Aspirational Districts: Girl Child Education & Climate Resilient Rural Development

Summary

Nanhi Kali and Ekikrit Vikas Initiatives strive to work towards meeting the developmental needs of NITI Aayog Aspirational District Mission. Project Nanhi Kali exemplifies this vision by providing quality education to underserved girls pan India. It has evolved to meet the changing educational landscape with Nanhi Kali 3.0 in FY25. The initiative covers four aspirational districts—Shravasti (UP), Moga (Punjab), Raichur (Karnataka) and Alluri Sitarama Raju (AP) and supported 39,829 girls in the past year alone, fostering empowerment through education. The Ekikrit Vikas Narsan (EVN) project was launched in 2023 and implemented by BAIF Livelihoods across six villages in Narsan block, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, EVN promotes solar-powered irrigation, sustainable farming, improved seeds, capacity building, self-help group formation and government scheme integration.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Project Nanhi Kali bridges gaps in vocational training for secondary school girls, particularly in underserved communities. Nanhi Kalis from Classes I to IX access Mindspark, an AI-driven adaptive learning platform tailored to individual learning levels. The program improves attendance, reduces dropouts, and empowers girls with education and life skills for equitable futures.

The Ekikrit Vikas Narsan project addresses systemic challenges in agriculture and rural livelihoods. By integrating education and climate-smart solutions, Mahindra ensures sustainability, empowerment, and alignment with **Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5**.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

Project Nanhi Kali addresses critical challenges faced by girls in underserved communities, such as low female literacy, limited vocational opportunities, and societal barriers like early marriage and gender inequality. The EVN project in Narsan block was conceptualised due to low agricultural productivity, rainfed agriculture, rising input costs, dependence on diesel-powered irrigation pumps and traditional seed varieties, leading to low productivity and vulnerability to climate shocks like erratic rainfall and rising temperatures.

Challenges in Implementation

EVN initiative initially faced scepticism due to complex community dynamics. Farmers doubted the effectiveness of solar pumps and improved practices like trellis farming, while women hesitated to step out of their homes or engage in agricultural and financial activities. Additionally, project Nanhi kali faced multifaceted challenges which include long distances to school, agricultural work, household chores, early marriage, and parental reluctance to invest in education contribute to high dropout rates, particularly after Class VIII. By addressing educational, agricultural, and social challenges across aspirational districts, Mahindra's initiatives showcase the importance of trust-building, community engagement, and inclusive development models for driving systemic change and empowering marginalised communities.



Impact of the Initiative

Project Nanhi Kali is designed to empower girls holistically by integrating education, sports, and community engagement to create an environment that supports their growth and potential. The program promotes unparalleled exposure, allowing girls to interact with their peers from diverse regions, thereby offering firsthand experience of diversity and inclusion. Overall, the program provides girls with a holistic schooling experience, paving the way for them to explore non-traditional career paths and empowering them to achieve their full potential in an inclusive and supportive environment. In FY25, the project has been able to impact **170,793 girls across 7 states** in India, comprising both aspirational and non-aspirational districts.

Over two years, EVN has engaged **1,233 farmers**, including **247 women** and **321 marginalised farmers**, through solar irrigation systems, trellis farming, SHG formation, and skill development. The interventions saved **₹2.66 lakh** in diesel costs, **₹31,985** in electricity, and reduced **8,207.5 kg of CO₂ emissions** annually. Farmers reported a **30–40%** increase in yields and a **25–30%** income rise per season compared to traditional methods. Convergence with government schemes unlocked **₹10.6 lakh** for polyhouses and inspired farmers to adopt solar pumps under PM-KUSUM.

“As part of Nestlé India’s vision to strengthen community-led rural development, we launched Project Vriddhi in Nuh, one of the most under-developed districts in the country. Our goal is to propel these aspirational districts toward progress. This initiative aligns with our global creating shared value commitment, empowering communities to drive their progress.”

Manish Tiwary,
Chairman and Managing Director,
Nestlé India



Nestle India Limited



Project Vriddhi: Building a Prosperous Future in Rural Areas

Summary

Project Vriddhi is a comprehensive village adoption initiative aimed at enhancing the well-being of community. The interventions have led to significant changes in the lives of villagers, due to better access to clean water & sanitation, improved access to government benefits, and increased awareness on nutrition. Additionally, the project promotes digital literacy and sustainable development practices within the community.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

In 2019, Nestlé India Ltd. and the S M Sehgal Foundation forged a strategic CSR partnership to transform rural communities in Nuh, Haryana. Since then, project has expanded to 14 villages in Nuh and five villages in Sonbhadra. Key interventions include training villagers in nutrition and sanitation practices to improve household health; demonstrating kitchen gardens to strengthen food security; upgrading government schools to create engaging learning environments; and digital literacy classes for adolescents.

The project also promotes sustainable agriculture and allied livelihoods, installation of solar lights, conducts community engagement sessions to build awareness and local ownership, and rejuvenates ponds to support water conservation. Additional outreach includes sanitation drives, nutrition, and animal health camps in collaboration with government departments.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

India is home to over **600,000** villages, where many lack essential facilities like education, healthcare, WASH, and livelihood opportunities. With more than **65%** of the population residing in these rural areas, there is a pressing need for development. In line with Nestlé's vision to enhance community-led rural development, we launched Project Vriddhi, aimed at driving progress in villages and positively impacting the lives of people in these communities.

Challenges in Implementation

In the last five years, people involved in Project Vriddhi faced several challenges such as mobility restrictions and social inequalities. To address this, training was organised encouraging women's participation in community platforms. These efforts resulted in their families recognising the value of their knowledge and also created new learning platforms which evolved into safe spaces for women to share experiences, seek solutions and challenge discriminatory practices.

Retention of nutrition related knowledge remained limited amongst villagers. In response, the project transitioned from traditional teaching method to using participatory tools and audio-visual aids, this significantly improved recall and dietary habits.

Another challenge was the difficulty in maintaining infrastructure due to lack of accountability. This led to encroachment of community spaces around water bodies, hindered pond rejuvenation and drainage. The continuous engagement with Gram Panchayats helped in building local ownership and sustaining the progress.



Impact of the Initiative

The project employs an integrated approach to address community's diverse and pressing needs. It focuses on key thematic areas of nutrition, water & sanitation, education, digital literacy, awareness of government schemes and agriculture & allied activities. Training of women encouraged participation in community platforms, as a result families recognised the value of knowledge

The initiative has positively impacted over **18,000** individuals in Nuh and around **6,000** in Sonbhadra through targeted interventions such as:

- **Nutrition camps** that provide women and children with health services and nutrition education
- **Monthly sessions** that empower participants through workshops on health and nutrition
- **Kitchen nutri-gardens** that promote home-grown produce for improved dietary practices
- **Millet revival efforts** that showcase the preparation and benefits of nutrient-rich millets
- **Pond Rejuvenation** for water conservation

Together, these efforts meet urgent local needs while advancing global **Sustainable Development Goals 4, 6, 7, and 13**.

SIEMENS

Siemens Limited

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The availability of trained and industry-relevant technical talent is an imperative ingredient for India's growth story. This is where Dual VET at government ITIs aims to bring in a systemic change in India's skilling environment. We are confident that this program will support Industry's urgent need for a workforce trained in the latest technologies relevant to support India's vision of being a global manufacturing leader.

”

Sunil Mathur
MD & CEO, Siemens Ltd.



Aligning CSR with National Priorities

Summary

Siemens Limited is committed to accelerating development in under-served regions through India's Aspirational Districts Programme. By fostering convergence, collaboration, and competition, and aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Siemens targets nine aspirational districts. These initiatives directly contribute to enhancing educational access, quality, and employability in these regions.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

In 2017, Dual VET (Vocational Education and Training) was introduced in collaboration with TATA Strive to address skill deficit and robust institute to industry talent pipeline. The Indo-German Initiative for Technical Education (IGNITE), launched in 2019 aimed to strengthen the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). Both the initiatives are spread over eight aspirational districts across four states of India. These districts are Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, & Y.S.R Kadapa in Andhra Pradesh Barpeta in Assam, Damoh and Guna in Madhya Pradesh, and Udham Singh Nagar and Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

The disaster relief response initiative focuses on providing immediate humanitarian aid during natural disasters by prepositioning essential relief kits and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WaSH) supplies at strategic locations across India. These kits are as per community needs and are deployed swiftly through partner organisations when disasters occur, ensuring timely support without procurement delays.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

India's economic growth and global ambitions are dependent on its workforce. Yet a fundamental disconnect persists between existing vocational programmes and real industry requirements. Remote ITIs, especially in aspirational districts, face challenges in facilitating in-plant training due to limited access to relevant industries. As a result, trainees often lack genuine industry readiness, practical knowledge, adaptability and problem-solving skills, contributing to under-employment. Siemens' CSR interventions, including Dual VET and IGnITE, aim to address this gap by implementing project-based learning, immersive in-plant training, and soft skills development to enhance industrial relevance and employability.

Some regions such as Assam, Manipur, West Bengal and aspirational districts such as Wayanad are highly prone to natural disasters like floods, cyclones and landslides, which are intensified by intense monsoon rains. These events cause extensive damage and displace thousands of families, many of whom lose their homes and livelihoods. The disaster relief response addresses the immediate needs of affected communities by prepositioning essential relief kits at strategic locations nationwide.

Challenges in Implementation

ITIs in aspirational districts often encounter significant challenges in facilitating in-plant training due to limited access to relevant industries. Furthermore, such interventions require active participation from industry associations, MSMEs, and public sector enterprises in curriculum design, training, and mentorship however, this robust partnership often becomes challenging, and placement is a huge issue.



Impact of the Initiative

A total of **27** ITIs and **2400+** trainees have been impacted in the aspirational districts through IGnITE and Dual VET programme. The instructors receive pedagogy training in project-based and action-oriented approaches. This effectively bridges theoretical concepts with workplace realities, expanding reach to ITIs and boosts female participation. The in-plant training allowed trainees to apply learnings in live industrial setting, enhancing their industry readiness. The programme has strengthened partnership between ITIs and industries facilitating apprenticeship and job placements establishing a sustainable talent pipeline from vocational training centre to industry.

A total of **5,206** families were supported with WaSH and shelter kits, benefiting **26,300** people in different aspirational districts. After 2018 floods in Wayanad, Siemens in collaboration with Caritas India distributed relief kits to **1000** affected families. Recently in 2024, shelter and WaSH kits were provided to **900** families across **32** villages, delivering essential supplies and empowering communities with vital hygiene knowledge, significantly enhancing their long-term resilience. These CSR interventions collectively contribute to the advancement of **SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, and 17**. These initiatives directly contribute to improving educational access, quality, and employability in aspirational districts.

“

In Mewat, education and skills are not just tools; they are the keys to transformation. By bridging learning gaps, embracing digital innovation, and equipping our youth with employable skills, we are shaping a generation that dares to dream, strives to achieve, and builds the future of their own communities.

”

Dr Y. Suresh Reddy
Director, SRF Foundation



Rural Education Programme

Summary

Aligning with the thematic areas of NITI Aayog, SRF Foundation's Rural Education Programme (REP) has been working since 2009 to improve education in Mewat, Haryana, an aspirational district facing socio-economic challenges. The programme addresses poor academic performance, limited job opportunities and lack of digital access. It runs two key initiatives: REP to enhance basic learning and Vocational Skilling Programme (VKP) to develop practical skills for better employability. By improving education quality and job readiness, the foundation empowers rural youth, helping break the cycle of poverty and promote sustainable growth in the community.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

SRF Foundation is enhancing education in Nuh, Haryana, by upgrading 20 government schools with academic support, digital tools, leadership training, and improved infrastructure. Key initiatives include the Model School Initiative, Digital Innovation Hub, SmartShikha for mobile learning, InnoSTE(A)M Labs, Anganwadi Development Programmes and Vocational Skilling Programmes that prepares youth with job-ready skills to boost employability and self-reliance. The Foundation has partnered with State Government of Haryana, Roop VK Jain Foundation, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) and Physics Wallah.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

- **Gaps in foundational learning** - Early-grade students struggle with basic literacy and numeracy due to a shortage of qualified teachers, lack of pedagogical support and limited quality learning materials, hindering academic progress.
- **Digital accessibility barriers** - Rural communities face high technology costs, poor internet connectivity and limited ICT infrastructure, creating a digital divide that restricts digital literacy and online learning opportunities.
- **Workforce readiness deficit** - Lack of structured vocational training and skill development leaves rural youth underprepared for the job market, with underdeveloped soft skills like communication, adaptability, and problem-solving.
- **Underdeveloped early childhood education** - Many Anganwadi centers lack proper facilities, trained staff and NEP 2020 aligned frameworks, resulting in inconsistent early care and missed developmental opportunities in cognitive, social, and emotional skills.

Challenges in Implementation

- **Logistical and terrain limitations** - Digital buses face difficulties navigating narrow village roads, uneven terrain, and limited parking, restricting efficient access to all target areas.
- **Limited teacher proficiency** - Many educators have minimal experience with digital teaching tools, reducing the effectiveness of ICT-based learning. Ongoing training is needed to close this skills gap.



Impact of the Initiative

In 2024-25, the CSR initiative significantly improved education and skill development in Mewat. Under the Model School Initiative, **18,509** students and **349** teachers benefitted from ICT integration, classroom upgrades, and academic support to boost foundational skills. The programme uses optimised scheduling, phased teacher training, community sensitisation campaigns and installs fixed digital labs in schools to supplement mobile units and improve access. The Digital Bus Programme provided digital access to **33,603** students, **1,244** teachers, and **96,049** community members, bridging the rural-urban tech divide.

The Basic Computer Literacy Certification trained and certified **3,116** youth, while Vocational Education in Schools reached **11,601** students with job-ready skills. The Basic Electrician Training Programme, in partnership with Schneider Electric, trained **97** youth with a **70–80%** job placement rate. A Basic Computer Training Programme equipped **180** students with digital skills, **30** of whom launched their own service centers. Lastly, the Anganwadi Development Programme enhanced **66** centers, benefiting **1,986** children with better infrastructure and age-appropriate, activity-based learning, laying strong early learning foundations.

TATA Capital Limited

“

The Green Switch Project affirms our confidence that we are progressing in the right direction towards facilitating a just transition by delivering 24x7 energy access to the most remote communities through clean and sustainable sources.

”

Rajiv Sabharwal
MD & CEO, Tata Capital Ltd.



The Green Switch Programme

Summary

In 2017, Tata Capital initiated the Green Switch project. The design inspired by the 'Power for All' scheme and **SDG 7** aim to provide reliable, clean and affordable energy access to tribal hamlets still relying on kerosene for domestic electricity consumption. So far, the project has delivered clean energy access to **4800+** homes across **99** hamlets for the first time.

Our work is driven by a singular purpose: to be a 'Responsible Financial Partner, Fulfilling India's Aspirations.' Even our CSR vision embodies the purpose to integrate social and environmental development into a unified strategy.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

The initiative driven by 'community ownership model' aims to provide clean electricity to tribal hamlets in three blocks of Simdega district, Jharkhand which is one the most underserved aspirational district. Access to electricity provides opportunities across education, healthcare, safety, economic activities, access to technology, etc.

Achieving reliable and equitable energy access for the indigenous groups is a key requirement for just development. The project uses a decentralised solar off the grid system, linking the panels to a control room with inverters, batteries and lighting arrestors from where power is distributed.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

The traditional knowledge and sustainable culture dwell in indigenous communities albeit in darkness. Although government's schemes provide unlit homes with electricity, the reach of the programme to remote hamlets have been limited due to challenges related to difficult terrain, inaccessibility of grid, unreliable electricity and challenges of servicing a small and remote cluster.

The absence of electricity is not merely an inconvenience but a barrier to progress, access to quality education, technology and economic opportunities. Moreover, Primary Health Centres are unable to operate basic medical equipment, store medicines, provide treatment and surgeries to the locals. Economic activities too are limited as business cannot thrive without reliable electricity.

Challenges in Implementation

Some of the critical challenges faced by the project were with respect to data limitations, logistical constraints and community sensitivity and resistance.

- The NGO partner sought support of the locals to identify unelectrified villages by foot.
- Post identification of the unelectrified villages, enough attention was given to drive ownership from the community through land donation, electricity service fee and bill contribution.
- During implementation, transportation and logistics proved to be a major roadblock due to literal lack of roads.

However, the continuous engagement from the NGO and the Village Electricity Committee ensured that the community was on board for a successful exit.



Impact of the Initiative

The project in Jharkhand has electrified **70+** hamlets, with **3,400+** homes powered through **765 kWp** of total installed solar capacity, providing **14,300+** individuals with much needed access to electricity for the very first time.

The first-two blocks covered under the Jharkhand Chapter have achieved **100%** electricity coverage of unelectrified communities, with **77** community buildings including PHCs and schools and **293** solar pumps were energised. Additionally, irrigated **300 acres** of land, initiated **58** solar powered enterprises by self-funded entrepreneurs.

The project has further helped in increasing monetary savings of beneficiaries by reduced expenses on kerosene and provided health benefits. This led to replacing **60,000 litres** of kerosene with clean fuel and saving **172 tons** of CO₂e each year.



TATA POWER

The Tata Power Company Limited

“

We believe that progress begins at the grassroots, where aspirations meet opportunity. By partnering with communities, we nurture potential, strengthen local capacities, and create opportunities for self-reliance. Our approach is to co-create solutions with people, enabling them to chart their own journey for inclusive growth and resilience.

”

Himal Tewari
CHRO & Chief Sustainability & CSR, Tata Power



Empowering Communities, Powering Transformations

Summary

The mission 'Powering Transformations' reflects commitment to fostering sustainable livelihoods and empowering communities. With a footprint across **100+** locations and interventions in **19** aspirational districts, the focus is on sustainable livelihoods and improving quality of life in underserved geographies from rural villages and tribal belts to urban settlements. Through partnership with institutions and grassroots organisations, the company advances socio-economic empowerment and environmental responsibility.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

The organisation is advancing socio-economic empowerment and environmental responsibility through initiatives in skilling, livelihood of women and farmers, healthcare access, and renewable energy adoption. These initiatives span across Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. In Odisha (Kalahandi Balangir and Nuapada districts) key initiatives include **Club Enerji** (energy literacy in schools), **Vocational Training Centres** (youth employability), **Bike Ambulance Model** (last-mile emergency response), **Community Learning Centres** (bridging information and service gaps) **Mobile Health Dispensary** (primary healthcare in remote areas). In Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich, **EV-powered Mobile Farm School** promote sustainable agriculture. In Kerala's Wayanad **TPSDI led skilling** initiative focusses on capacity building and upskilling initiatives to strengthen livelihoods. **Lab-on-Bike** a mobile STEM education model reaches remote schools in Jaisalmer, Gaya, and Kadapa.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

Aspirational districts face layered challenges across education, employability, healthcare, and access to information, reinforcing cycles of limited opportunity and low resilience. Schools and communities often lack platforms for practical learning and behaviour change in areas like energy, environment, and digital literacy. Youth and women remain disconnected from market-relevant skills due to poor infrastructure and weak linkages. Remote settlements struggle with timely healthcare access, as conventional transport is often impractical. Additionally, communities lack localised hubs for information on schemes, health, and skilling, leaving them uniformed and underserved. These barriers demand context-sensitive interventions that build awareness, improve access, and create sustainable pathways for growth.

Challenges in Implementation

Key implementation challenges included low community awareness, academic schedules of schools, tough terrain, limited human resources, and infrastructure constraints. This is addressed through demos and peer testimonials, flexible session timings, transport innovations like bike ambulances, local youth training, and adaptive use of community spaces. These challenges shaped operational refinements, stronger community mobilisation, flexible scheduling, capacity building of local functionaries and an emphasis on community ownership to ensure continuity.



Impact of the Initiative

Tata Power's initiatives have reached **3,39,623** beneficiaries, shaping self-reliant communities through initiatives across education, entrepreneurship and health.

■ Education

Club Enerji sensitised over **80,000** students, provided STEM education to **3,397** students across **16** rural schools through Lab-on-Bike and supported **18,345** beneficiaries with Community Learning Centres.

■ Skilling and entrepreneurship

Trained **963** individuals with skills, placement tracking, empowered **921** youth in solar energy through TPSDI Wayanad, and EV Mobile Farm engaged **1,900** farmers for cultivating high-value crop, generating **₹3 crore** in profits.

■ Health

Bike Ambulance provided critical transport for **50** emergency cases in remote terrain and Mobile Health Dispensary reached **2,34,047** beneficiaries between FY2021-25 with diagnostics, medicines, and health awareness.

“

Safety Awareness for Everyone (SAFE) started with the mission to make safety a way of life amongst the citizens, primarily the youth, by creating awareness of safe practices on roads, in school, colleges and at home which will ultimately result in a reduced rate of avoidable accidents within the community that are served by the company.

”

Ruchi Narendran
Chairperson SAFE, Tata Steel Ltd.

TATA STEEL

 **WeAlsoMakeTomorrow**

TATA Steel Limited



Systematic Approach to Enhancing Safety Awareness in School Children (SAFE Club)

Summary

The initiative started in early 2000 as community initiative as Tata Steel is committed to ensuring zero harm to its employees, contractors and the communities in which it operates. The objective of SAFE is to make youth understand that it is 'Smart to be Safe' and to make safety a way of life amongst the citizens.

SAFE leverages school engagement, community involvement, and expert-led training modules to address pressing safety issues such as road accidents, cyber safety, child sexual abuse, and emergency preparedness. The initiative has created a ripple effect in the community by making children not just recipients but also enforcers of safety culture at home and in society.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

The SAFE Club was initiated in the aspirational districts of East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, and Ramgarh in Jharkhand, aligning with NITI Aayog's focus on improving education and skill development in underserved regions. The programme covers both urban and rural schools, including Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, with a mission to make "Safety a Way of Life." The programme operates through a two-tier structure: policy oversight and content direction from the SAFE Steering Committee, and grassroots implementation by individual school SAFE Clubs, ensuring outreach and consistency. Activities are guided by annual action plans tailored to local needs and reviewed quarterly by the steering committee.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

A key challenge industries face is the gap in safety culture between controlled environments inside factories and the largely unregulated public spaces outside. While internal compliance is enforceable, instilling safety consciousness in the broader community, especially among youth is far more complex. This disparity often results in avoidable accidents and unsafe behaviours. The SAFE initiative seeks to address this by embedding safety practices in the everyday lives of school children, thereby extending the safety net beyond the workplace to the community. It transforms students into safety ambassadors who carry the message into their homes and public spheres.

Challenges in Implementation

While the initiative has seen wide adoption, scaling it uniformly across aspirational districts remains a challenge. Resource limitations, geographic dispersion, and the diversity of school management structures (including government and private schools) make universal coverage difficult. Efforts to include all schools, have shown promise but need further institutional collaboration for broader outreach. Another challenge lies in sustaining engagement and ensuring that annual plans are fully implemented despite changes in school personnel or competing academic priorities.



Impact of the Initiative

The SAFE initiative has made measurable progress in promoting safety awareness. In FY 2024 alone, more than **20,000** safety commitment leaflets were distributed and signed by parents through a unique parent engagement campaign. These leaflets included pledges on road safety, reinforcing family-level involvement.

Training modules have covered essential topics such as road safety, the Good Samaritan Law, cyber safety, risk perception, child protection, and life-saving techniques like CPR and fire safety. Schools have hosted mock drills for earthquake and fire scenarios, building real-time emergency preparedness.

SAFE now actively engages **31** schools near manufacturing units and **19** schools near mining operations. The program's effectiveness is evidenced by a significant reduction in road accidents in Jharkhand, with state-level data showing a drop in accident growth from **11.49%** in FY 2020-21 to just **2.83%** in FY 2022-23. Notably, the fatality rate saw a sharp decrease, with a negative growth of **-4.72%** in FY 2022-23.

The initiative's success lies in its comprehensive approach, combining education, skill-building, and behavioural change and its ability to generate a community-wide impact that transcends corporate boundaries. SAFE continues to embody the principle that "safety begins at home and continues everywhere".

“

At Vedanta, we firmly believe that true progress is measured not only by industrial growth but also by the well-being of the communities we serve. Through our diverse social interventions-spanning women empowerment, healthcare, skilling, education, agriculture, sports, art & culture, and entrepreneurship promotion-we are proud to touch the lives of over 1.6 lakh people across 67 villages in Kalahandi. Together, we are transforming the rural landscape by creating opportunities, building resilience, and fostering inclusive growth for generations to come.

”

Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya
CEO Alumina Business
Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh



vedanta
transforming for good

aluminium

Vedanta Aluminium



Transforming Kalahandi: Holistic CSR Model for Inclusive Growth

Summary

Once synonymous with poverty, malnutrition, and distress migration, Kalahandi in Odisha has been transformed through Vedanta Aluminium's long-term, integrated CSR interventions. Launched in 2003 and aligned with NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts Programme, the initiative covers healthcare, education, livelihoods, women's empowerment, cultural revival, and infrastructure.

CSR Initiative in Aspirational District

Vedanta Aluminium has a series of integrated initiatives in partnership with government, NGOs, and the local community. Healthcare access has expanded through Vedanta Hospital and mobile health units, reaching remote tribal areas. The awareness campaigns have fostered healthier practices around immunisation, hygiene, and nutrition. Education is provided through DAV Vedanta International School, district's first English medium institution in region. Livelihood initiatives like Project Sakhi have empowered women through SHGs, while youth skilling programs have curbed migration by offering vocational training. Cultural revival efforts under Project Adikala have rejuvenated traditional art forms, boosting artisan incomes and market access. Infrastructure development has further enhanced agricultural productivity and regional growth.



The Problems Intervention Seeks to Address

The region of Kalahandi before 2003, was marked by economic marginalisation, poor healthcare, and limited educational access. With no major industries, families relied on subsistence farming, forcing youth into distress migration for low-paying urban jobs. Healthcare infrastructure was severely lacking, with high maternal and child mortality rates and frequent outbreaks of malaria and diarrhoea. Schools lacked basic facilities and qualified teachers, and the absence of English-medium education excluded tribal children from modern career paths. Meanwhile, cultural heritage suffered as traditional art forms like Dhokra metalwork and Saura painting faded due to dwindling market demand and waning interest among younger generations. Gender inequality further compounded these issues, with women confined to unpaid agricultural labour and SHGs operating with minimal training, resources, or financial autonomy.

Challenges in Implementation

Implementing CSR in Kalahandi was not without obstacles:

- **Community trust deficit:** Decades of neglect made tribal communities wary of external interventions. This was addressed through gram sabha consultations, participatory planning, and visible quick wins such as mobile health camps.
- **Cultural sensitivities:** Modern development often risks erasing indigenous identity. Vedanta ensured cultural revival (Adikala project) ran parallel to education and skilling, proving that growth and tradition can reinforce each other.
- **Capacity gaps in SHGs and artisans:** Initial lack of training, financial literacy, and market access hindered progress. This was resolved through structured capacity-building, partnerships with government and financial institutions.
- **Sustainability concerns:** Projects risked short-term impact without systemic support. By converging with government schemes, scale and continuity were ensured.
- **Key learning:** Long-term presence, trust-building, and integrated interventions are non-negotiable for CSR success in aspirational districts.



Impact of the Initiative

Today, Kalahandi stands as a model of tribal-led growth: **60,000+** people access modern healthcare annually, and **20,000+** people in **80+** remote villages are reached by mobile health units. **1,300+** first-generation learners receive quality English-medium education, **5,000+** women earn sustainable incomes, and **120+** tribal artisans have revived fading art forms, with annual sale over ₹ 20 lakh. By converging with government schemes and anchoring development in community participation, the programme demonstrates how dignity, culture, and shared prosperity can coexist. This transformation is not statistical alone-it is visible in healthier mothers, confident students, empowered women, and artisans whose work now travels across India. The initiatives meet **SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 11**.

Conclusion

The compendium presents 20 case studies from various sectors - Pharmaceuticals, Cement, Mining, Automotive, IT, Power and Financial Services.

It has been seven years since the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) has been launched, and industry contributions in these districts through CSR investments have brought positive changes in improving healthcare access, advancing educational outcomes, enhancing skill development, supporting livelihoods, promoting water conservation, and implementing agricultural interventions have improved the living conditions and productivity.

Many of these projects have been aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and national priorities, which has helped in achieving the larger goal of National development.

The companies have implemented several initiatives pan India, to support the target groups such as women, children, youth, artisans and farmers for fostering sustainable livelihoods and empowering communities. The projects include school education, mobile health units, digital classrooms, nurse-led clinics, sustainable agriculture, disaster relief, vocational training centers, support for women's self-help groups, traditional handicraft & artwork, road safety, solar energy and water conservation. This ensures that corporate efforts contribute to broader developmental goals and maximising project impact.

The findings show that CSR initiatives complement government schemes, accelerate development and reduce regional disparities. Companies have collaborated with the state governments to support the implementation of various existing government schemes, which has led to enhancing their accessibility and effectiveness across aspirational districts. In addition to funding, corporates also offered innovation, technical and outreach support. Partnerships with NGOs, multilateral organisations, academic institutions, and social enterprises facilitate improved execution and deeper engagement at the grassroots level.

The geographical reach of these projects is diverse, covering Aspirational Districts from north (Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand) to south (Andhra Pradesh, Kerala & Tamil Nadu) and east (Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar & Meghalaya) to west (Rajasthan, Gujarat & Maharashtra) and central India (Chhattisgarh & Madhya Pradesh).

Companies have also reported several challenges in implementing projects within aspirational districts, primarily due to inadequate infrastructure, connectivity problems, language barrier, complex administrative procedures and shortage of skilled manpower in remote locations. Engaging communities and establishing trust slowed down the progress in implementation.

To further enhance progress and sustainability of the projects, companies and the government must adopt integrated, long-term strategies, community ownership and stronger partnerships. Simplifying regulations, offering incentives and fostering collaboration can also help scale impact and improve quality of life in these underserved regions.



Confederation of Indian Industry

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering Industry, Government and civil society through advisory and consultative processes.

For 130 years, CII has been engaged in shaping India's development journey and works proactively on transforming Indian Industry's engagement in national development. With its extensive network across the country and the world, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

In the journey of India's economic resurgence, CII facilitates the multifaceted contributions of the Indian Industry, charting a path towards a prosperous and sustainable future. With this backdrop, CII has identified "Accelerating Competitiveness: Globalisation, Inclusivity, Sustainability, Trust" as its theme for 2025-26, prioritising five key pillars. During the year, CII will align its initiatives to drive strategic action aimed at enhancing India's competitiveness by promoting global engagement, inclusive growth, sustainable practices, and a foundation of trust.

Confederation of Indian Industry

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**CII-ITC Centre of Excellence
for Sustainable Development**



The CII Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development (CESD), now in its 20th year, drives sustainable, environmental, inclusive and climate-friendly transformation among stakeholders. It is the ecosystem creator for sustainable development in India and builds collaborative initiatives for enhancing actions; designs data-driven digital tools and frameworks for capacity development and advocates for policy reforms to advance responsible business practices.

CESD works towards bringing local and global macro challenges to the centerstage; building policy consensus on critical issues; strengthening stakeholders' awareness and representation on policy & regulatory reforms and enabling actions that positively impact the environment, nature and communities.

With a vision to drive transformation towards sustainable development, CESD continues to play a focal role in Government-Industry dialogues on national regulations; articulating stakeholders' discourse on global policies; putting forth Indian Industry's stand on macro-economic issues and accentuating the need for sustainable and inclusive transformation.

CESD focuses on six transformational pathways: Advancing Creation of a Circular Economy; Facilitating an Enabling Ecosystem for ESG Reporting; Accelerating Nature Positive Actions; Enhancing Solutions for Clean Air; Building Climate Resilience and Low- Carbon Economy and Fostering Dialogues, Engagements & Knowledge Exchange.

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