

Forging Unusual Partnerships

How corporates can partner with grassroots women change agents to build an inclusive and progressive India



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“ The CII Foundation, JCB India and Start Up! have harnessed their collective belief in grassroots women change agents to design, develop and present this handbook. This handbook explores how industries can create meaningful bridges with grassroots women change agents to take inclusion, progress and growth to the last-mile of India. ”







CONTENTS

Foreword	01
Introduction	03
Why this Handbook?	05
Barriers and Enablers	09
The Architecture for Success	18
Get Set, Ready, Go!	31

My Community

Local Funders

Local Government

Parent NGOs

Thought Leaders

FOREWORD



Chandrajit Banerjee

Managing Trustee,
CII Foundation and
Director General,
CII

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works towards creating and sustaining an environment conducive to the development of India by partnering with the industry, government and civil society. CII promotes inclusion of women to achieve sustainable economic growth and enhance social development.

The CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program is a celebration of the indefatigable spirit of women leaders at the grassroots. The program identifies and recognizes unsung women achievers who decided to look beyond their limitations and contribute to society in a significant way. They not only overcome personal challenges but moved beyond, to establish leadership and promote welfare in their communities. These extraordinary women are 'nation-builders' in every way, driving progress and change in the fields of education, health and livelihoods.

Over the years, this program has been implemented with the support of all our members. Through this unique initiative, CII has been building capacity of these exemplary change makers and mentoring them to upscale their initiatives and expand their outreach. While these women have taken the first step towards change and empowerment, we can together help them reach new heights.

This handbook has been drafted with the aim to showcase the work of some of these outstanding women and provide an opportunity for the industry to invest in them and join them in the journey of transforming their communities, society and the nation.

I would especially like to thank JCB India for their support and acknowledge the contribution of StartUp! in curating this handbook.

Foreword by head of CII Foundation

FOREWORD



Vipin Sondhi

Managing Director and
Chief Executive Officer
JCB India

The engagement of businesses towards societal development is not a recent phenomenon. Businesses are an equal partner and contributor to this journey. While over the years the development narrative has evolved in many different ways, having women at the centre of development has never been more important than what it is now. The economy of the future demands complete participation of women across all sectors.

Over the past few years, JCB has remained committed to the society through its CSR interventions. At the heart of our initiative lies our mission of uplifting disadvantaged communities. The empowerment of women has always been one of our focus areas through supporting women leaders at the grassroots and providing them with opportunities to scale and strengthen.

Through our CSR initiatives we today work with over 17,000 families. We facilitate quality education, employable skills and production systems with access to markets in the communities around our five factories at Ballabgarh, Pune and Jaipur. We are also working closely with artisan households from the traditional Indigo dyeing and block printing sector at Baghru near our Jaipur factory.

With interventions around difficult and resource challenged communities, women leaders need ideas, skills and support for their initiatives to take a larger shape. The industry has many of these competencies which can be shared with women change makers to scale and strengthen their work.

We partnered with the CII Foundation to create opportunities of collaborations and present frameworks and templates through which businesses and women leaders at the community level can co-create positive change. This has taken shape in the form of this Handbook, 'Forging Unusual Partnership'.

I congratulate the CII Foundation team for bringing it out and hope it leads to creation of many successful partnerships to bring about a lasting change.

INTRODUCTION

About CII Foundation

The CII Foundation was set up by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) in 2011 to enable Industry to infuse inclusive development. CII Foundation builds meaningful bridges between marginalised communities and donors, especially corporates, through strategic guidance on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and developing and managing high impact programs. It has undertaken various projects with corporate sector support in the areas such as skill development, child development and maternal health, water conservation, disaster relief and rehabilitation.

About the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program

The Woman Exemplar Program is a flagship initiative of CII Foundation. It recognizes exemplary grassroots women who are working to transform excluded and disadvantaged communities of India.

Since its inception in 2005, the Woman Exemplar Program has promoted grassroots women's empowerment by discovering, recognizing and supporting women who have excelled against all odds, to contribute to the development process in India.

About the Women Exemplars

The women who are selected to this initiative are called EXEMPLARS because they demonstrate vision, resilience and role model leadership. They emerge from marginal communities and overcome deep social and economic exclusion. They build their own agency and voice and go on to transform their own lives and that of their societies. In the process, they set an example for others, and ignite the belief among other grassroots women that they too can be change agents. The CII Foundation endeavours to celebrate such 'nation-builders' whose efforts have so far gone unnoticed and unrecognized.

The benefits of being A Woman Exemplar

Every year, the CII Foundation announces the call for nominations for the Woman Exemplar Program. The Finalists and Winners (from the categories of Education, Health and Micro-Enterprise) are identified after a rigorous due diligence process by an illustrious jury. Winners receive a citation, a trophy and a cash prize of Rupees three lakhs each. All winners and finalists also participate in a year-long leadership building and mentorship program. They become part of the national Woman Exemplar Network.

Today, more than 45 grassroots women change agents are part of CII Foundation's National Woman Exemplar Network. They are silently, but surely, transforming India through their initiatives in education, health and micro-entrepreneurship.

The Exemplars are now seeking to partner actively with corporate India through a skills-based volunteering initiative to multiply and grow their efforts towards putting the country on the path of inclusion, progress and growth.

CII FOUNDATION

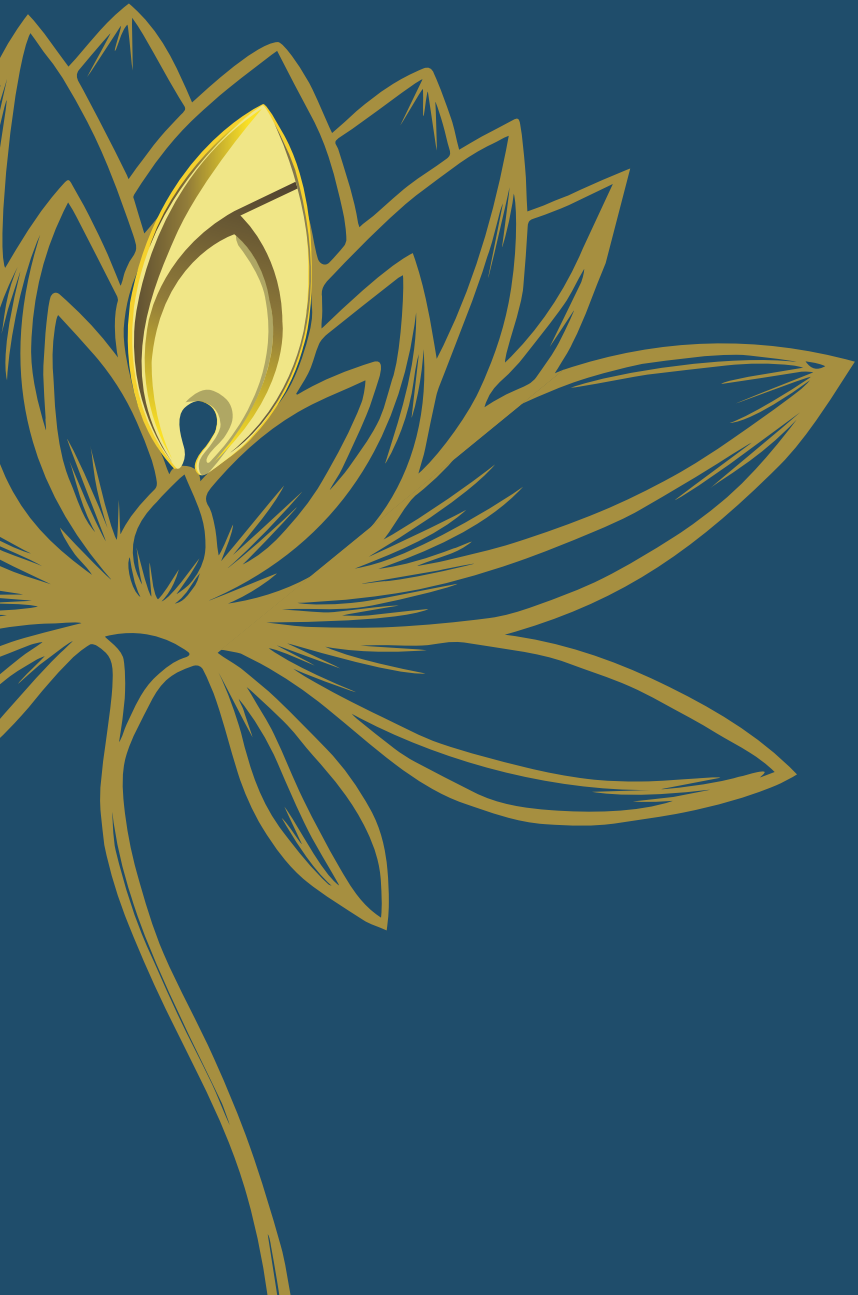
**CREATING
IMPACTFUL
CSR INITIATIVES**



Thought Leaders

Local Government

Independent NGOs



WHY THIS HANDBOOK?



Confederation of Indian Industry
Since 1895

Conference and Annual Session

Forging Unusual Partnerships for Inclusive Growth and Development



Dipali Pramanik, below, receiving the Woman Exemplar Program Award

Dipali Pramanik is an unusual business woman. Growing up in Kolaghat, a rural pocket of West Bengal, she fought poverty, lack of education and socio-economic exclusion. As a young woman, she understood poverty and discrimination to be structural and systematic. She realised that her life would not transform, if she did not step out to transform the lives of other women of her village.

Dipali launched her change-making journey as an under-confident tailoring trainer for five unlettered women of her village. She went on to become proprietor of a textile exports company. Starting with a turnover of Rupees 300, Dipali's company has today clocked revenues of Rupees 26 Lakhs, giving employment to hundreds of women in her village.

Dipali is now looking for advice in strategy, market expansion, business plan development and product design. She believes that being coached and mentored by corporate professionals in these areas would enable her to take her venture to its next growth curve.

Dipali is impatient to scale. Scale will secure sustained incomes and dignity to the women of her village. This she believes will have a force-multiplying impact on their families and communities.

Purpose

Dipali's story holds within it the belief and values that are central to this handbook. Indeed, her story encapsulates the purpose of this handbook.

- We believe that nurturing grassroots women leaders like Dipali can seed and sustain vibrant community change initiatives across India.
- Grassroots women change agents are last-mile deliverers of education, health and micro-entrepreneurship. Investing in them can lead to overall progress in the education, health and micro-enterprise sectors of India.
- Grassroots women create change by taking everyone along. We believe that businesses can draw insights on inclusive and adaptive leadership by learning how women build allies in resource-poor and difficult communities. Working with women change agents can also yield new ideas for enhancing the inclusion and diversity quotient of businesses.
- We believe that industry professionals are repositories of technical skills and market insights. They know the how-tos of scale. They hold the competencies for leadership development and multi-stakeholder management. Grassroots women change agents are in urgent need of these skills to strengthen their projects/ideas/movements/organizations/ventures.

There is an opportunity, then, before corporate India - the opportunity to propel unusual change leaders who have as yet gone unrecognized; an opportunity that would in turn advance its own footprint in nation-building.

For this opportunity to bear fruit, what is required is a bridge – a set of ideas, tools and intermediaries - that facilitates partnerships of learning and skill-exchange between corporate India and grassroots women transformers.

This handbook makes a humble attempt at being that bridge. It presents practical ideas and concrete opportunities for corporates and CSR initiatives to engage with grassroots women change agents through non-financial models; models that focus on transfer of skills and knowledge; models such as mentoring and skills-based volunteering program.

People

This handbook has been designed for CSR and corporate leaders. It can be used by a company, a group of professionals or even an individual from a business house who wishes to strengthen and scale the work of grassroots women change agents.

We understand that corporate skills-based volunteering for grassroots women leaders are few and nascent in India. The domain does not as yet have established best practices, case studies or experts. What we need, therefore, are the first adopters, evangelists and champions inside business houses who will take the leap of faith and demonstrate the possibilities of industry-grassroots women collaborations.

This handbook has been developed especially for such champions–
i.e. individuals who will initiate, energize, equip and enable their teams to contribute to the work of women who are transforming excluded communities of India.

Process

The process of developing this handbook has been collaborative.

We undertook an extensive 'listening journey' with the following stakeholders:

- Women Exemplars across India
- Relevant funders
- CSR heads
- Business leaders
- Social entrepreneurs who are building networks of grassroots women leaders
- Intermediary platforms that are forging industry-civil society collaborations

The objective of this listening exercise was to:

- Map the current nature, perceptions and trends of corporate partnerships with grassroots women change agents;
- Identify the barriers and enablers to seeding and scaling multiple such partnerships;
- Collect practical and realistic ideas, tools and opportunities for businesses and grassroots women leaders to build meaningful collaborations.

The social entrepreneurs, CSR and industry leaders we spoke to included:

► **Rumjhum Chatterjee**
Managing Director,
Feedback Infra Private
Limited

► **Ajit Chaudhuri**
General Manager,
Tata Sons

► **Seema Tiwari**
Head CSR,
Godrej

► **Ashesh Ambasta**
Executive Vice President and
Head of Social Investment, ITC

► **Ashoke Joshi**
Sundaram Clayton Limited

► **Mary Rupa**
Assistant Vice President,
JCB

► **Rukmini Datta**
Operations Head, CSR,
Cipla Foundation

► **Malini Gupta**
General Manager, CSR,
RBS Foundation

► **Sumitra Mishra**
Country Director,
Ipartner

► **Anita Bala Sharad**
Director- Resource
Mobilisation, CRY

► **Naseem Shaikh**
Swayam Shikshan
Prayog

► **Prema Gopalan**
Director,
Swayam Shikshan Prayog

► **Mukti Bosco**
Secretary General,
Healing Fields Foundation

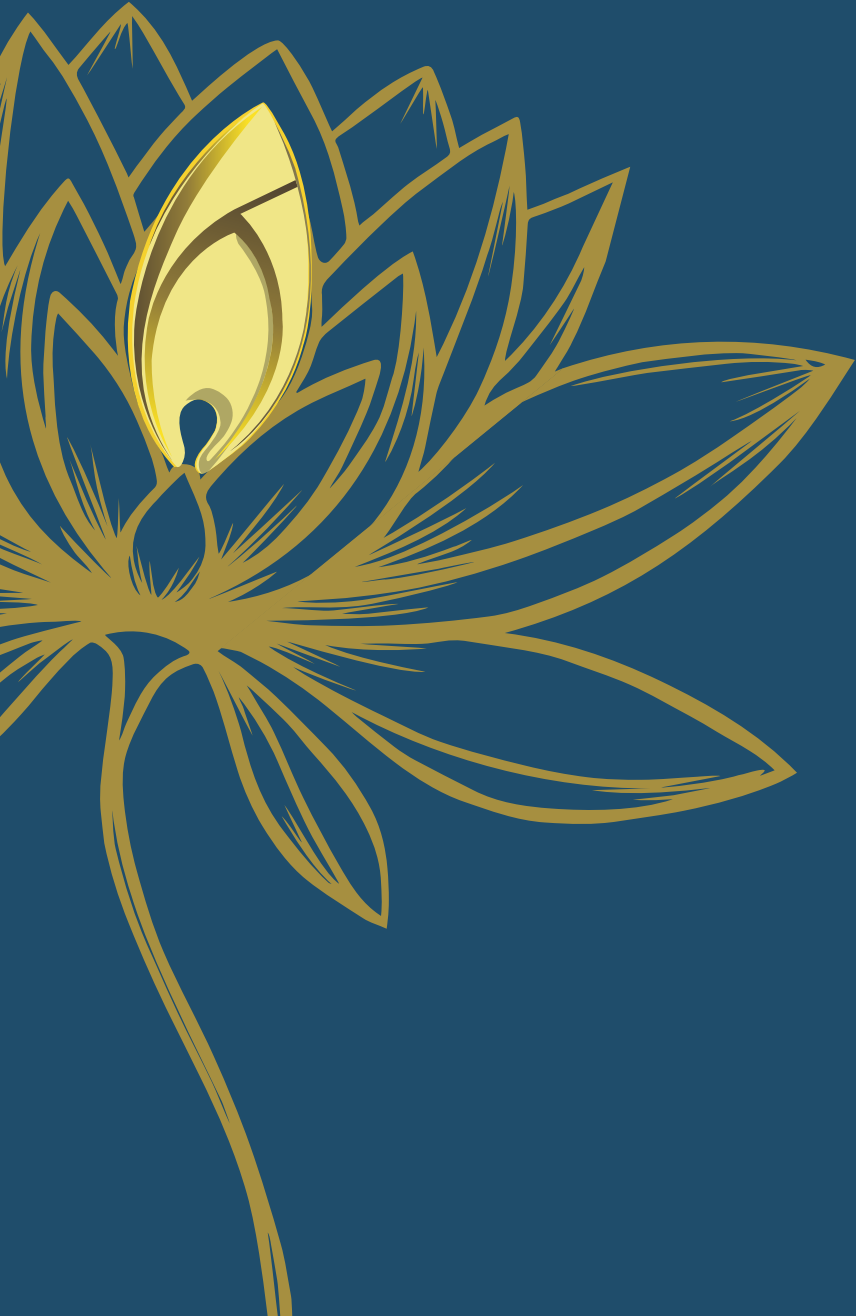
This handbook is a synthesis of the ideas, analysis and call to action that was shared by the participants of our listening journey.

Project

We believe that actions speak louder than words. Where there are few best practices, it is urgent for the first set of practitioners to go out into the field, experiment actively, launch pilots and then establish the practice.

This handbook, therefore, focuses on simple and practical projects that industries can undertake to rapidly build a skills and learning bridge with grassroots women leaders.

We invite you to identify, adopt and pilot one or more projects that have been presented in this handbook. This small step at your end could create a larger momentum for collaborations between business and grassroots women who are transforming India.



BARRIERS AND ENABLERS



Jayamma Bandari below, receiving the Woman Exemplar Program Award 2017

Jayamma Bandari was orphaned at three. Her education was truncated at grade ten. Desperate poverty compelled her extended family to marry her to a man in Hyderabad. After years of spousal torture, her husband forced her into sex work.

After many years of enduring violence and penury, Jayamma managed to move out of sex work with the support of a few development sector workers. She set up Chaithanya Mahila Mandali (CMM) – an organization that promotes education and child protection for children of sex workers. It also offers alternative channels of livelihoods with dignity for women in sex work.

Since its inception, CMM has trained more than 4500 sex workers in alternative livelihoods, connected them with social security schemes and enabled them to view themselves as active citizens. 1000 among them have quit sex work to earn more and experience dignity. More than 3500 vulnerable children in 100 government schools participate in campaigns on the importance of education. They are equipped with strategies to stay out of harm and not fall into the trafficking net. CMM also runs a home for the children of sex workers. This home ensures that 45 children are extricated from high risk environments, given access to high quality education and standards of living, and given a chance at happy and productive lives.

Using her own story to powerfully humanize the issue, Jayamma tirelessly campaigns to make the public aware of trafficking and to create empathy for sex workers establishing them as survivors needing the community's support not criminals deserving social and legal censure.

She is now seeking strategic advice from business coaches to scale and sustain her organization.

The Barriers

In her journey of personal and social transformation, Jayamma has taken multiple stakeholders along on a shared path of impact. These stakeholders have included state agencies, UN agencies, police, media and public officials. But, Jayamma has yet to partner with business houses of Hyderabad.

Jayamma's experience reflects a larger trend where businesses are engaging minimally with grassroots women and their organization. Consider these factors¹:

- CSR spending witnessed a growth of 28% in the financial year 2015-2016, amounting to total CSR outflow of Rs 83.45 billion in various programs.
- However, programs for women's empowerment accounted for less than 3% of this spend.



¹ <http://www.india-briefing.com/news/corporate-social-responsibility-india-5511.html/>
http://iqragyan.org/img/associate/VI_Reserach_Study_on_CSR_by_AZS.pdf

- Rural development (an arena where a large number of grassroots women are deployed) accounted for 7% of this spend.

Further, participants of our listening survey reported that:

- Most businesses are uninformed and unaware of grassroots women's organizations and their ability to create impact.
- The above is less an indication of lack of interest; and more an indicator of lack of prior engagement, or experience with grassroots women leaders.
- Businesses, therefore, do not have a vision of how they can partner with grassroots women change agents, because they have yet to open their doors and windows out into this world.

But there is good news around the bend. A segment of corporates are feeling the need to open the long-shut windows and let in fresh air.

The Enablers

Despite the information, experience and vision gap (mentioned above), when we presented the possibility of a corporate skill-based volunteerism program for grassroots women organizations, the respondents were immediately sold on the idea. They could see high potential for impact. A majority of our respondents expressed enthusiasm and interest in partnering with grassroots women organizations.

However they were unanimous that such partnerships would succeed only if anchored and managed by a professional intermediary or platform. They listed the role of this intermediary as:

- Making the connection between businesses and grassroots women leaders;
- Designing and facilitating customized partnerships between the two players; and
- Serving as translators and interpreters for the two camps that have yet to get acquainted with each other.

The Enabling Intermediary

The role of an intermediary cannot be over-emphasized in any corporate skill-based volunteering program. An intermediary is a facilitating organization that brings inside knowledge and understanding of how non-profits (in our case, grassroots women leaders) function. They also possess sharp project management and facilitating skills and are equipped to respond to and deliver on project metrics and systems that are familiar to corporates.

We list below a set of compelling benefits for working with an intermediary²:

BENEFIT TO COMPANIES

Program Strategy

- An intermediary can align the core talent and competencies of your business with the need of the grassroots women's organizations.
- It can design your skill-based volunteering program in a strategic and mission-specific manner.
- It can also specifically prescribe how company talent can be best deployed to address the challenges of the organization, and of the broader social sector —from light-touch training opportunities, one-service day, project consulting, learning journeys, sabbatical and immersion models.

BENEFITS TO GRASSROOT WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Project Selection and Readiness

- While a grassroots women's organization may have a host of critical gaps that it wishes to be plugged, it may not be able to communicate its problem statement in a cohesive manner. An intermediary can conduct a detailed audit of gaps and needs of the organization and align the skill-based volunteering program to the specific problem statements.
- If a company has presented multiple project ideas to a grassroots women's organization, the intermediary can support the organization to select the most relevant projects.

Partnership Management (Applicable to both parties)

- Intermediaries bring excellence in project management, a deep understanding of how both parties function, and the acumen for making skill-based volunteerism work.
- They can conduct the needs and competency assessment across the two

parties; and then go on to structure and define the partnership modalities and project details between corporates and grassroots women's organizations. This includes defining goals and objectives of the partnerships as well as laying down the roles, accountabilities and expectations of both parties.

- Intermediaries also define the 7Ss of the partnership and the project where the 7Ss represent:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| • Shared values | • Skills |
| • Strategy | • Staff/team |
| • Structure | • Style of Leadership |
| • Systems | |

²Adapted from the framework presented in https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_promise_of_skills_based_volunteering

- Through excellence in project and partnership management, intermediaries ensure that the project is neither too vague nor too micro; and not too transactional.
- Intermediaries frequently take on the primary relationship with each of the two parties, engaging directly with grassroots women's organizations and, separately, with companies when negotiating program and project opportunities. The above creates a more consistent and balanced partnership.

- The intermediaries assist in small and large mid-course corrections and encourage both sides to stay flexible and open about conflict resolution.
- In times of crises or low morale or depleting enthusiasm, intermediaries can play a significant role to reconnect both sides to the larger mission of their collaboration and refuel their commitment to seeing the partnership through.

MEASURING IMPACT (APPLICABLE TO BOTH PARTIES)

- Intermediaries can generate strong impact reports covering both the business return and the breadth and depth of social impact of a skill-based volunteering (SBV) program.
- Detailing outcomes such as the talent development of individual employees, the increase in overall brand effectiveness, and the ability of nonprofits to better deliver on their mission promise can help a company refine and build its SBV program.

If your company wishes to partner with Women Exemplars, the CII Foundation would be willing to play the role of an intermediary for you.

Getting Started – Essential Questions

Consider a situation where the leadership of your company has approved a skill-based volunteering program with grassroots women change agents. Your company has also identified an intermediary organization to prep, design, implement and manage the program.

Are you ready to start? Not yet.

Working with grassroots women change agents is new ground for most of your managers. Their heads would be abuzz with multiple questions on the nature and shape of these partnerships. A majority of these questions would meander around the

challenges of working with grassroots women's organizations. It's critical that these questions are answered timely and clearly.

Based on our conversations with donors, CSR and corporate leaders, we created a list of such questions and curated responses to them. Here they are:



Critical Questions

Q. Would working with grassroots women change agents comply with CSR norms?

A. Yes.

Grassroots women change agents either run their own registered no-profits, or lead programs of other non-profits. If you wish to contribute financially to their initiatives, you could take two routes:

- You could make a grant donation to their organizations; or
- You could fund the organization that has employed the woman change leader, channelling your contribution specifically to her program.

If needed, the CII Foundation could facilitate your grant-making due diligence on organizations run by Women Exemplars.

³ https://ssir.org/images/articles/2007FA_feature_mcleod_grant_crutchfield.pdf

⁴ https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_promise_of_skills_based_volunteering

However, the focus of this handbook is to explore non-financial routes of enhancing the impact of grassroots women change agents. These could include corporate skills-based volunteerism, mentoring, coaching and consulting with grassroots women's organizations. The thrust is on capacity building, which is well established within the CSR Law.

You will also agree that hundreds of grassroots women leaders are engaged in delivering and taking forward the categories of work that have been approved by Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013.

Q. Our employees have limited time. Why should we engage in time-intensive volunteering and mentoring programs when we can write a cheque?

- #### A.
- Cheques are welcome. But going beyond a cheque will enable you to create disproportionate impact

How?

First, through leveraged impact. To paraphrase Archimedes, 'Give me a lever long enough and I alone can move the world.' Like a man lifting a boulder three times his weight with a lever and fulcrum³, grassroots women's organizations can leverage the mentoring, coaching and strategic advice from business houses to achieve greater social change than what their mere size or structure would suggest.

Second, through leadership development. Your investments of time and skills will create strategic, resilient and confident grassroots women leaders. This will yield impact over a much longer term than compared to a one-off grant focused on annual outputs.

Third, by creating change within. There is enough evidence to demonstrate that meaningful skills-based volunteering with non-profits enhances talent retention and recruitment for businesses, especially for a workforce that is looking for purpose. It also measurably enhances the skills and talents that employees bring back to their desks⁴.

Q. I am convinced about skills based volunteering. But why should I work with grassroots women's organizations when there are professional, structured and mature non-profits that can better utilize our mentoring and advice?

A. It is not about either/or.

If you are already running a skills-based volunteering program with a non-profit, we suggest that you add to the mix. You could adapt and make the same program available to grassroots women change agents in your region. This would expand the range and choice of pro-bono projects available to your employees.

Further, we are looking for corporate champions who are keen to build unusual non-profit partnerships. We believe that you are that champion; that there is an opportunity for you to do something different; that you can partner and succeed with 'off-the-grid' change agents – or grassroots women leaders who do not have access and reach to business resources. By doing so, you will make your practice more inclusive and evangelize the issue.

You will of course not be alone in this journey. The CII Foundation will structure and facilitate your engagements to ensure that there is maximum uptake and impact by grassroots women's organization; that both camps learn and apply insights back into their work effectively.

Q. Our businesses are based in urban locations. How will we work with grassroots women change agents, who work mostly in rural areas?

A. Grassroots women change agents work in rural and urban areas.

Take the example of Kalpana Mistry. Growing up in an orphanage, Kalpana Mistry turned her attention to urban 'at-risk' women and children. She saw her past play out in their present.

Kalpana joined Aangan, a Mumbai-based non-profit organization. As a leader, Kalpana has worked with vulnerable children and their parents to connect them to schools, keep them there, ensure their access to social security schemes and prevent them from harm. Kalpana's work has directly impacted 6000 children in one ward of Mumbai.

Kalpana is now seeking mentoring from business professionals in sharpening her communication, stakeholder management and team building skills.

Like Kalpana, there are several impactful Women Exemplars who are working in Indian cities. The CII Foundation will be happy to connect you to them.

Also you may not want to shut down the option of working with rural grassroots change agents.

Because they are willing to travel to cities to work with your teams. They are open to optimizing enabling technologies, such as skype, to engage in mentoring sessions with you. Of course you would definitely need to make a visit or two to their areas of work to get a deeper context of their interventions.

Most Women Exemplars see the transformative possibilities of corporate skills based volunteering; and if they find partners, they will not allow geographical distance to be a spoiler. They believe that if the intent is in place, the rest can be designed adequately.

Q. What are the critical skill gaps and needs of these grassroots women leaders? Do they fall within the radar of competencies that our teams can offer?

We conducted a needs assessment with Women Exemplars and arrived at the following critical needs and skills gaps:

SKILL GAPS	DETAILS
Strategy Gap	Grassroots women leaders are not proficient in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning • Financial modeling • Sustainability planning • People Processes • Risk management • Governance
Knowledge Gap	Grassroots women leaders need knowledge and information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational management and operation systems • Technology and its uses • Use of business English • Stakeholder management
Social Capital Gap	Grassroots women leaders are deficient in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks and contacts with the business and media worlds

We believe that the above are well within the range of most corporate professionals to address.

Q. What would be the most critical skill that would be expected from us business employees?

A. Of the many soft skills that your team would be required to bring to a skill-based volunteering engagement, the following would be the most critical: learning and active listening. Being a learner and active listener would instil a spirit of inquiry and openness in both the corporate and the grassroots team.

It helps to 'empty your cup of knowledge' when you step into the grassroots. Only then can you learn and absorb the rules of a very different domain. Be excited to know everything possible about the grassroots woman's organization, the sector in which she operates and the geography in which she is located. Do remember that all management strategies may not apply at the grassroots. You may need to co-create and develop fresh strategies with your partner. You and your grassroots partner may speak different languages. Terms like output, outcomes and impact may hold very different connotations for the two.

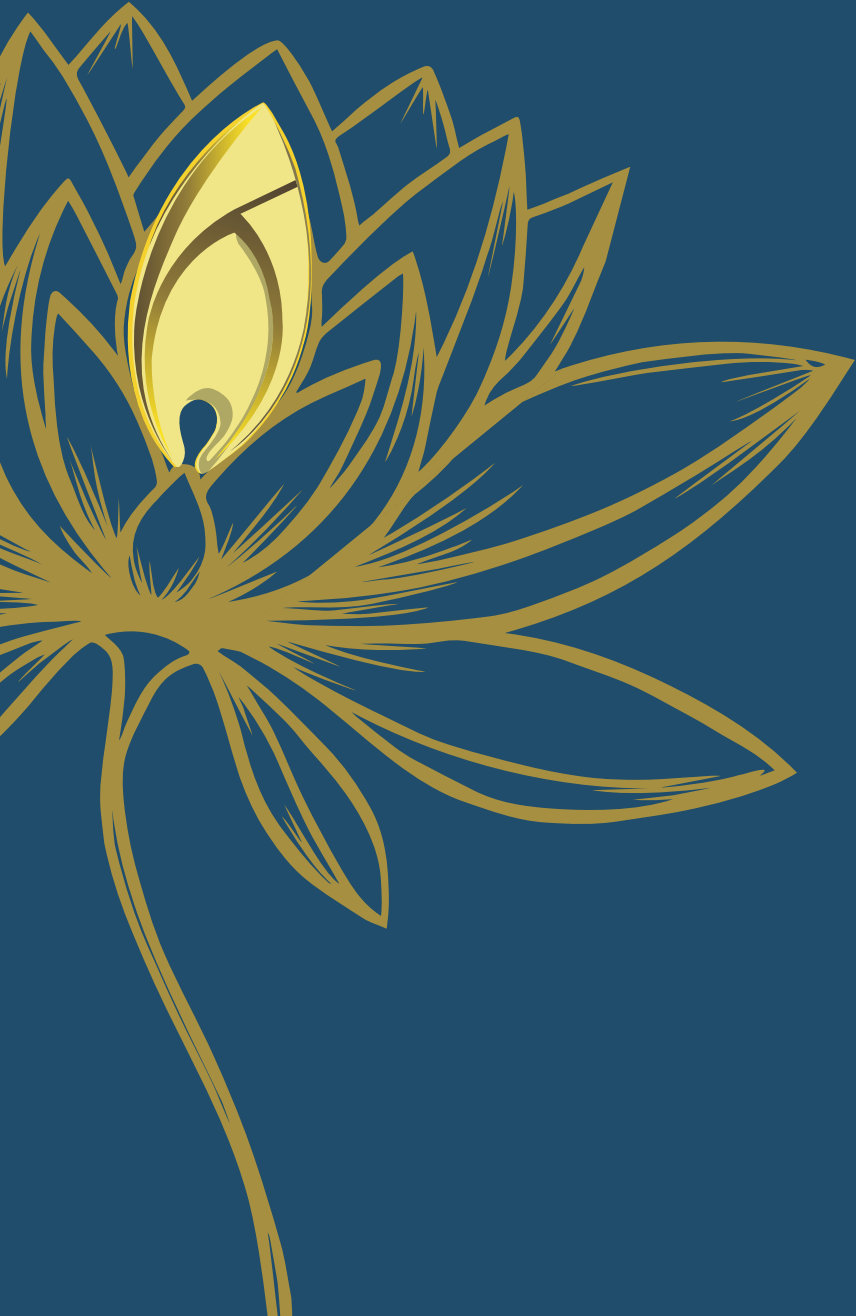
Learning and active listening will eventually build enduring trust-based relationships between you and your partner grassroots organization.

Q. I am ready to start. But where can I read more about grassroots women change agents in our vicinity and how can we connect with them?

A. This is terrific! You may want to identify intermediaries to furnish this information for you. The CII Foundation too can create a customized list of Women Exemplars and their organizations in your relevant geographical areas. There are several bio blurbs on leading Women Exemplars that you can read in the last chapter of this handbook.

We are closing this segment with brief stories of two inspiring grassroots change agents, who you may wish to collaborate with.





THE ARCHITECTURE FOR SUCCESS



Kamal Kumbhar, below, receiving the Woman Exemplar Program Award 2017

Daughter of a daily-wage labourer, Kamal Kumbhar is today a role model grassroots social entrepreneur.

Kamal walked out of poverty and a failed marriage to set up Kamal Poultry and EktaSakhi Producer Company. Her ventures have enabled 3000 women to run successful poultry businesses. Additionally, she has mentored more than 5000 women in the drought – prone region of Osmanabad to set up their micro-businesses. As a business mentor, Kamal promotes government schemes, business partnership opportunities and funding linkages for village business women.

A serial entrepreneur, Kamal today owns six different businesses. She has enabled women from across 40 villages to set up supply chains for each of the businesses that she runs. This has created a vibrant village enterprise network of women producers, transporters, suppliers and distributors. Driven by her own experience, Kamal believes that grassroots women entrepreneurs can play a key role in revitalizing rural markets and economies.

Kamal was trained in grassroots entrepreneurship by SwayamShikshanPrayog (SSP), an NGO based in Maharashtra. Today, she views entrepreneurship as a vehicle for building disaster- resilient societies. She is also building bridges between grassroots women entrepreneurs on the one hand; and city markets, IAS officers and global companies on the other. **Kamal was recently conferred the Women Transforming India Award by NITI Aayog.**

One Change Agent, Many Opportunities

Kamal Kumbhar can partner with business houses in multiple ways. Here is a list of feasible collaboration opportunities (created in consultation with her and SSP) that could be forged between businesses and her ventures.

Shared Value Chain

- Companies in the food industry could integrate Kamal's poultry venture into its shared value chain program.
- Businesses in WASH, clean energy, nutrition and health could partner with Kamal and her network of micro-entrepreneurs to set up a rural distribution chain for their products.

Market Research and Data

- FMCG initiatives seeking to understand rural markets could partner with Kamal and her network of 5000 micro-entrepreneurs for critical market data and rural market insights.

This is a versatile array of skill-based volunteering opportunities to emerge from one grassroots woman changemaker. However, Kamal is not unique in serving up this range of collaboration possibilities to businesses. A majority of grassroots women leaders, especially those that are part of CII Foundation's Woman Exemplar Network, can scope out a similar breadth and depth of project options for businesses.

But before we dive into specific project ideas, it would be useful to unpack the scope and critical processes that are necessary for corporate skills-based volunteerism to succeed with grassroots women change agents.

Skill Based Volunteering (Consulting Project)

- Businesses in the finance and banking sectors could partner with Kamal and SSP to pilot new financial products for rural women entrepreneurs, for uptake by banks and other rural finance institutions.
- Technology companies could design mobile tools to enhance market information and business effectiveness for Kamal and her network of 5000 micro-entrepreneurs.
- Supply chain experts could train Kamal and her network in robust supply chain management; they could re-engineer and extend their existing supply chain of critical products from the Panchayat to the block and district levels (an urgent need).
- Consulting and advisory service companies could work specifically with Kamal to strengthen the four critical business pillars of her enterprises: Strategy, Finance, Operations, People.

Mentoring/Coaching

- Kamal is seeking mentoring from corporate professionals to bolster her own knowledge, leadership and social capital.
- Business professionals could also offer Kamal training in business English and presentation skills.

Skill-Based Volunteering (SBV): Putting Skin in the Game

SBV is gaining traction across the world. Its advantages for both businesses and grassroots women change agents have been detailed in the previous chapter (In the section: Critical Questions)

While the trend has yet to mature in India, there are a variety of corporate SBV models that are being deployed by businesses. They range from a day-long training to non-profits on specific skills; to longer-duration consulting projects; to engaged mentoring offered to NGOs; to immersive learning journeys; to long-term secondment of professionals to a civil society organization.

This handbook focuses on:

- The longer-term project consulting style of SBV and
- Structured mentoring of grassroots women change agents by corporates.

Our conversations with grassroots women change agents have reinforced that these two routes would be the most effective for businesses to multiply the impact of grassroots women leaders.

Unpacking Volunteer Project Consulting: Critical Questions

We have detailed the unique features of skills-based volunteering in a question-answer format. The questions have been curated from those that were posed to us by the respondents of our listening survey:

- **Is project consulting very different from general volunteerism and pro bono consulting?**

Yes.

General corporate volunteerism can be one-off or very short-term. It can be very transactional in nature. Pro bono consulting by professional firms can contribute to non-profits without necessarily building critical skills among their team members (for example, a legal firm fighting a human rights case for a non-profit, without charging a professional fee).

In contrast, the project consulting mode of skill-based volunteerism is longer term (six weeks to six months). It bakes in the needs of both sides – businesses and the non-profits. It is results driven and demands a more 'skin-in-the game' approach from both parties.

Overall, this mode of consulting relies heavily on an investment that both sides need to make to learning from each other. It also demands transparency from both sides.

- **What does 'skin-in-the-game' imply for both sides?**

For corporates: A SBV consulting project is usually integrated into a company's talent and leadership development initiatives, where employees participate to enhance a specific set of executive, leadership, or functional skills. In this model, teams of 5 or more employees typically spend a few hours a week, which is clocked into their workday, to address a defined nonprofit challenge. A senior manager is usually deputed to anchor and lead these projects. The outcomes (both for businesses and for the non-profit- in this case the grassroots woman leader) are rigorously mapped. The consulting team is not viewed as a 'cost centre' by the company, but an investment.

For grassroots women's organization:

This is an intensive engagement where grassroots women's organizations have to commit personal leadership time to work in tandem with corporate teams. Most may not have the wherewithal to scope a project that would tap fully into the potential of their business partners. Most grassroots women leaders would also be unfamiliar with business language, technical terms and the 'business view of the world'. To negotiate through this uncharted territory, they would have to commit to prior preparatory work and partner intensively with the facilitating partner or intermediary through this journey.

- **What are the critical components of a successful SBV project?**

Five R's determine the success of a SBV consulting project:

- **Readiness** : of both businesses and grassroots women's organization.
- **Resource** : of people and talent. People are the most critical component of volunteer project consulting.
- **Rigour** : of project and partnership management.
- **Resilience** : of both sides, as well as of the intermediary, as each struggles to take the other along. This is especially true for businesses as they engage with the dynamics of the grassroots that is out of their comfort zone, almost like a 'black box'- a word used by one of our respondents to describe the complexity of that world.
- **Results-Orientation** : of meeting the goals and objectives defined of the project and the partnership; of measuring learning and growth for those engaged on both sides; of developing a business case for this mode of collaboration.

These five R's can be best managed through an effective intermediary.



The 7E Framework

For project consulting style of SBV to succeed, businesses, grassroots woman change agent and the intermediary (the CII Foundation, if businesses wish to engage with a Woman Exemplar) need to walk together through the 7E Framework.

The 7E Framework is a step-by-step process where each E stands for a critical set of activities in the chain of creating impact. We present the 7E framework below:

Explore

The stage when you are mapping the possibilities of doing consulting projects with grassroots women change agents

CRITICAL STEPS TO SUCCESS

For Businesses

- Identify an intermediary organization. Assess its proposal for a project consulting program with grassroots women change agents.
- Connect with grassroots women change agents in your vicinity through the intermediary.
- Engage with the women. Understand their approach to change-making. Inspired? If yes, then proceed to the next step.
- Scout for the champions/ first adopters within your company.
- Research previous experience within the company of corporate skills-based volunteering programs. List what went well and what did not. Make a case of how previous pitfalls can be mitigated.
- If your company has had no previous experience, do a rapid dipstick with other businesses that have engaged in a similar program to anticipate enablers, barriers and risks.
- Present the program to the business leadership. Explore the orientation and approach of the business leadership towards the program. Gauge alignment with the company's strategic goals.
- Get leadership buy-in.

For Grassroots Women Change Agents

- Connect with the intermediary organization. Assess its proposal for a corporate volunteer project consulting program. Understand the promise, demands and challenges of such a program. If convinced, then sign up.
- Have informal meetings with potential corporate partners. Check your feelings/intuition barometer. Is there a basic confidence and comfort with him/her/them? Is the chemistry right?
- Assess how feasible it would be for you to invest your time. Are you ready for the deep dive?
- Identify a team from within your organization that could support you in this program.
- Get team and board buy-in.

Envision

The stage when you are designing the strategy, structure and systems of delivering consulting projects with grassroots women change agents

For Businesses

- Design and develop a program keeping the following questions in mind:
 - How does the program align with the strategic goals of the company?
 - How sharply are the program goals catering to talent development for your company? Differentiate these goals from employee engagement goals.
 - How will the SBV program fit into employee's workday and business priorities?
 - Do team members have sufficient control and flexibility over their schedule to meet the demands of the projects and team dynamics?
 - What are the business cycles, logistics, and product or scheduling issues that will need to be aligned?
 - What social or organizational challenge is the company best positioned to address?
 - What employees' capabilities best align with the support that nonprofits most need⁵?

For Grassroots Women Change Agents

- Get ready for working with business professionals. Work with your intermediary to energize and prepare yourself and your team.
- Enhance your confidence levels. Remember the project will succeed only if both sides come to it as equals.
- Engage in preliminary sessions to share and inspire your business partners with your journey.

⁵https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_promise_of_skills_based_volunteering

Energize

The stage when you are motivating and enlisting teams to deliver consulting projects with grassroots women change agents

For Businesses

- Host rapid and high-energy meet ups with grassroots women change agents to create a buzz in your office. These could include:
 - Story-telling sessions or 'solve-a-problem' sessions with the women change agents
 - A brief visit to the site of the change agents
 - Coverage of grassroots women change agents in internal newsletters on themes such as: 'How grassroots leaders create change, differently'.
- Identify and on-board your champion team.

For Grassroots Women Change Agents

- Get ready for working with business professionals. Work with your intermediary to energize and prepare yourself and your team.
- Enhance your confidence levels. Remember the project will succeed only if both sides come to it as equals.
- Engage in preliminary sessions to share and inspire your business partners with your journey.

Enable

The stage when you are detailing the how-tos of an identified consulting project with grassroots women change agents.

This is also the stage when you are preparing and on-boarding teams

For Businesses and Grassroots Women Change Agents

- Work closely with your intermediary partner to create an enabling project with
 - Clear goals and partner expectations
 - A clear strategic approach
 - Structure, systems and broad milestones for the project
 - A month-by-month list of activities and partner action points
 - An inbuilt phase-by-phase evaluation system.
 - Identification of risks and risk mitigants
- Define the skills and style of leadership required; and create an orientation plan and relevant toolkits.
- Ensure proper on-boarding and orientation of team members.

Execute

The stage when you are delivering the consulting projects with grassroots women change agents

For Businesses and Grassroots Women Change Agents

- Start the program and keep it on track
- Be open to adapt and iterate
- Ensure regular assessment and course correction (when needed)
- Seek the intermediary support, especially to resolve conflicts on time
- If energy wanes, ensure that both sides reconnect to the larger mission of the program and re-commit to seeing the partnership through.

Evaluate

The stage when you are evaluating the outcomes of the consulting projects with grassroots women change agents

For Businesses and Grassroots Women Change Agents

- Work with the intermediary to conduct the evaluations as per outputs, outcomes and changes outlined in the proposal.

Establish

The stage when you are embedding consulting projects with grassroots women change agents as an established practice in your company

For Businesses and Grassroots Women Change Agents

- Basis the findings of the evaluation, make a business case and convert the program into an on-going practice.



Women Exemplars At A Mentoring Workshop in Pune in 2016

Getting Mentoring Right

While project consulting can be game-changing for partnerships between corporates and grassroots women change agents, corporate mentoring can also move the needle for both camps. An intimate, trust-based process that is anchored in learning and exchange, mentoring can strengthen the personhood and leadership of grassroots women change agents. It can enable grassroots women leaders (who have had minimal opportunities for self-acknowledgement) to “feel like fuller versions of themselves” and focus on creating leaders rather than followers⁶.

Opening Doors: A Mentoring Pilot with Grassroots Women Change Agents

In 2017, CII Foundation and Start Up! designed and piloted a mentoring program that engaged 25 Women Exemplars (or grassroots women change agents) and 18 Mentors across 10 states.

The mentors who participated in this engagement were not from the business sector. They were leading CSR and development sector experts. However, the design and process flow of this initiative is relevant and adaptive to the context of mentors from the business sector.

Goals of the Mentoring Program

The goals of the Mentoring Program were to:

GOAL	INDICATOR/S
Enable the Exemplars to design & implement their own leadership, learning and growth towards significant enhancement of self-awareness and leadership skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness and quality of leadership, learning and growth goals and plans; • Numbers of new leadership and change management skills acquired and practiced; Enhancement of entrepreneurship • Quality and timeliness of learning action project completed; Growth in learning quotient.
Equip the Exemplars to strengthen their existing ventures and launch new change initiatives towards reporting significant impact increase (quantitative and qualitative) in their communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness and quality of SMART strategic roadmaps and annual operating plans developed for projects/ventures; • Number of new ideas and improvements introduced; number of new initiative launched • Projected and evidenced increase in impact (qualitative and quantitative); • Significant increase in strategic planning, execution, people management and financial management skills.
Expand the networks, contacts and linkages of the Exemplars across sectors and stakeholders towards accelerating their social capital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers and effectiveness of new sectoral and cross-sectors contacts forged; • Numbers and effectiveness of new contacts forged in government, media and business houses; • Numbers and effectiveness of formal and informal gatherings convened; • Numbers of next generation leaders mentored

The Mentoring Framework

The Mentoring Initiative was designed on the Self Determination Theory (SDT)– a framework for the study of human motivation and personality. SDT focuses on people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs. It is concerned with the motivation behind choices people make without external influence and interference. SDT focuses on the degree to which an individual's behaviour is self-motivated and self-determined⁷.

STD stands on three pillars called ARC, where the acronym stands for:

- **Autonomy** – Or the universal urge to be causal agents of one's own life and act in harmony with one's integrated self. This also entails the ability to twin independence with interdependence.
- **Relatedness** – Or belongingness and the need to “interact with, be connected to, and experience caring for other people⁸”.
- **Competency**- Or the desire to control outcomes and experience mastery.

Objectives of the Mentor

The Mentoring Program broke up the ARC model into measurable objectives and outcomes. It tasked the mentors to achieve these objectives and outcomes with their mentees. The objectives were as follows:

⁷<http://selfdeterminationtheory.org/>

⁸<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/self-determination-theory/>

ARC	THRUST AREA	MENTOR OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Autonomy	Building Personhood and Resilient Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate self-growth and leadership of the Woman Exemplar through a co-created plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the mentee reports significant increase in leadership and learning skills.
Competence	Building knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable Women Exemplars to enhance their knowledge and skills in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational development and strengthening Domain expertise External stakeholder management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the mentee reports significant increase in strategic planning, execution, people and financial management skills Ensure that mentee reports 50% increase in domain knowledge (eg: in health, education, livelihoods)
Relatedness	Building social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect Woman Exemplar to new resources, people, organizations in her sector and outside her sector. Spur communication, 'friend-raising' and networking skills to enhance the ability of Women Exemplars to build alliances & expand their radar of influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that mentee reports 75% increase in networks and fundraising capacities.

The Mentoring Process

The Mentoring Process was designed on the 7E framework (also shared above in the context of the project consulting framework). The table below details how the 7E framework was used to design and execute the mentoring initiative for the Exemplars:

7E FRAMEWORK	CRITICAL STEPS TO SUCCESS
ENVISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, development and roll out of two-and-a-half day preparatory /introductory workshops where Exemplars engaged in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership building and self-reflection - Planning growth for their change ideas - Understanding the dynamics of Mentoring • Introduction of Mentor-Mentee pairs (at the introductory workshops) • Development of Self and Organization Strengthening Goals and one-year plans for Mentees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goals and plans co-designed and co-created by the Mentors and the Exemplars at the workshop • Development and finalization of mentoring process and tools
ENERGIZE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalizing the mentor-mentee match making post the workshop • Identification of new mentors, in case of drop outs • Formal communication, expectation setting & on-boarding of mentors, Exemplars and Parent NGOs • Official sign-ups • Agreement on the mentoring non-negotiables and timelines
ENABLE & ENHANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed Orientation and walk-through of the mentoring process and tools to all stakeholders
EXECUTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out of the 6 month mentoring process (Detailed in the Table Below)
EVALUATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process evaluation • Outputs and Outcome Evaluation
ESTABLISH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basis the findings of the Evaluation, CII Foundation to integrate Mentoring as an essential component of the Woman Exemplar Program

The Mentoring Process (In Detail)

The mentoring process was a 20-22 hour engagement spread over 6 months with 4-6 touch-points between the mentor and mentees. It comprised::

- A one-day engagement (estimated to be 7-8 hours) with a Woman Exemplar at the Introductory Leadership Workshop.
- A Half-day field visit to the site of the Mentee's work (estimated to be 4-5 hours)
- 4 shorter duration (two-hour) engagement with the Mentee over four months
- One concluding session with the Mentee (estimated to be of one hour)

We present the details of the sessions:

MENTOR-MENTEE SESSIONS	ROLE OF THE MENTOR
Leadership Workshop One day engagement (organized by CII Foundation/the Intermediary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-creating the Self and Organizational Development Goals and One-Year Plans for Mentees
Mentoring Kick Off Meeting (Half-Day Field Visit to the site of the mentee's work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting the Context; Calibrating the expectations and goals of the mentoring process. • Review and refinement of the mentee goals and plans created at the workshop. • Rapid SWOT to identify the 'snakes' and 'ladders' (risks and enablers) in internal and external environments. • Identifying, prioritizing and building agreement on mentorship thrust areas. • Identifying one-to-two learning projects. • Co-creating mentoring objectives and plan and calendar for 4 sessions. • Building agreement and setting the boundaries of access and informal contact between mentor and mentee - beyond the 4-5 mandatory formal mentoring sessions. • Sharing contacts and insights with mentee. • Assessing the session and sending the session report (as per tools shared). • Telephonic conversation with the intermediary organization.
Mentoring sessions 1, 2,3, and 4 (Scheduled within 4-6 weeks duration; Duration of 2 Hours; In-Person meeting or telephonic meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing, preparing and facilitating the sessions as per session objectives, plans and outputs created at the kick-off meeting • Sharing contacts and insights with mentee. • Maintaining a sharp eye on the learning project. • Assessing the session and sending the session report (as per tools shared). • Telephonic conversation with the intermediary within a week of each session • Escalating challenges/ conflict/ discomfort to the intermediary
Concluding Session (Could be the last of the 4 sessions detailed above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final assessment of how the mentoring process went; what could have been done better. • Validation of the mentee's efforts. • Wrap up

A detailed manual was developed for mentors and mentees to ensure process and quality rigour. It can be shared with readers, on request.

The Mentoring Process- Outputs and Outcomes

We received early and high-level evaluation results of the mentoring program at the time of closing the first draft of this handbook. Overall, the data validated that the mentoring program had been a success.

The outcomes have been shared below:

Outcomes related to Grassroots Women Change Agents:

- 95% of the Exemplars (or grassroots women change agents) reported that the mentoring process had infused in them a new drive and energy to take charge and re-direct the growth of their organizations in fresh directions.
- All the Exemplars had set clear annual goals and objectives for their leadership development.
 - 61% reported to having achieved one objective within 6 months of the mentoring program.
 - 16% reported to having achieved two or more objectives within 4-5 months of the mentoring program.

- 68% of the Exemplars reported a significant increase in management knowledge and skills. The most reported domains of skills and knowledge increase included:
 - Operations Management
 - Financial Planning
 - Communication
 - Problem-solving and risk mitigation.
- 47% of the Exemplars reported that the mentoring process had given them new insights and tactics on how to hold teams accountable and how to engage with them in an assertive, yet democratic way.
- 68% of the Exemplars reported to envisioning and conducting first level research for new ideas

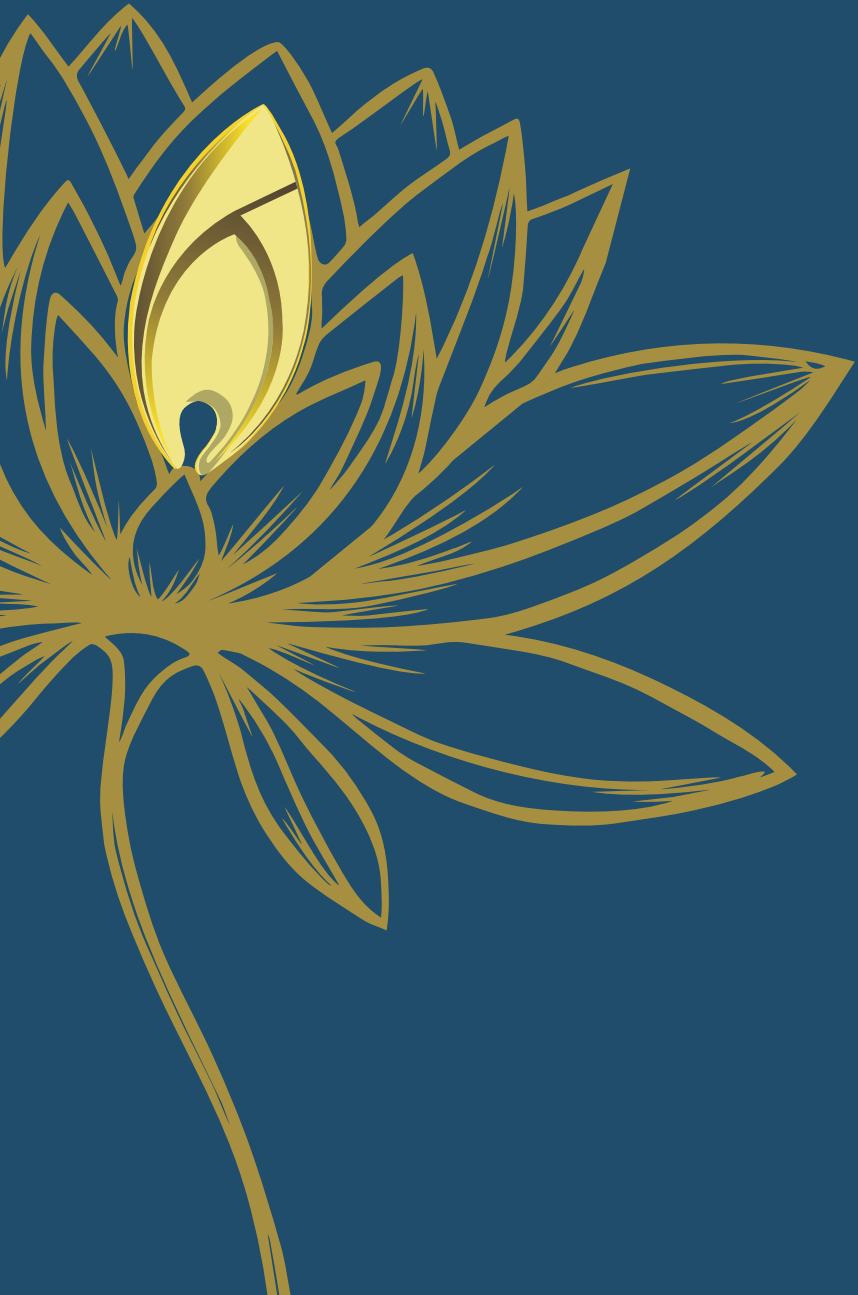
Outcomes related to Mentors:

- 92% of the mentors said they found purpose and fulfillment in being part of the mentoring program.
- 75% of the mentors would be willing to re-engage with this program.
- 54% found the mentoring toolkit useful; More than 30% used the mentoring toolkit for other grassroots women entrepreneurs in their network and for their own teams.

Knitting it Together

As is evident then, bridges between industry and grassroots women leaders can be set up in an enduring manner, only if partners on both sides are willing to knit together. Overall, long-term volunteer- based project consulting and mentoring both have the potential to knit together the skills and resources of businesses and grassroots women change agents to create strengthened sustainable solutions that don't come undone when partners part ways⁹.

⁹https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_promise_of_skills_based_volunteering



GET SET, READY, GO!

Starting up

Are you now ready to start your engagement with grassroots women change agents? Are you ready to identify an intermediary? Are you ready to engage in the 7E journey with them?

If yes, then the members of the Woman Exemplar Network that are showcased in this chapter would be of interest to you. Each one of them has expressed her interest in partnering with relevant business houses for mentoring. They are also well-positioned to scope out consulting projects for your teams. The CII Foundation has visited their work sites and engaged with them intensively. We believe that they would bring their 'skin-in-the-game' and would 'knit together' with you well.

Areas of Engagement

Broadly, here are the areas of potential engagement with the Women Exemplars that you could consider. The list has been created in consultation with them:

Nature of Engagement

Strategy Consulting

Details

The Women Exemplars could engage with you on consulting projects in the realms of:

- Strategic planning
- Financial modelling
- Marketing
- Sustainability planning
- People Processes
- Operations
- Governance

Knowledge Training

The Women Exemplars would benefit from trainings from you on:

- Organizational management
- Designing and implementing core operation systems
- Risk and risk mitigation
- Supply chain management
- Technology and its uses
- Use of business English
- Communication to inspire

Mentoring

The Women Exemplars would value being mentored by you on:

- Leadership Skills
- Communication and stakeholder management
- Conflict resolution
- Time management

The Enbaling Intermediary

CII Foundation will facilitate your explorations, engagements and subsequent consulting and mentoring engagements with Women Exemplars within your zone of work.





Bharathi Srinivasan

Organization: AMBA

State: Bangalore/ Karnataka

Sector: Education/Disability/Skilling

AMBA works for economic empowerment of intellectually disabled adults through information technology. Associated with AMBA since 2005, Bharathi trains peers like herself for back end data entry jobs.

She has trained 290 AMBA Certified Partner centres till now.

Problem

Intellectual disability¹⁰ is a part of broader disability of development. Intellectual disability is signified by limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour. The problem is also accompanied by several adaptive functioning. It can be categorised in three parts namely, conceptual skills, social skills and practical skills

Key Activities

AMBA is a Training & Business Hub for adults with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities using Information Technology, Peer Training & Peer Supervision. The key training modules are

- Basic computer based training
- MS-Word
- MS-Excel
- Internet access

Future Plans

AMBA has a current target to reach 399 ACPC's by 31st March 2017 and 1500 ACPC's by 2025 with 100% work to these ACPC's by 2030. Each ACPC will select 20 adults with moderate to severe intellectual disability to undergo this training at their respective centre and scale to 100/150 within 3-5 years.

Impact

- Her team has enabled training of over

750 peers

at the AMBA Core Centre. 290 are currently working in the mainstream job market.

- She has completed training Special Educators from

298 ACPCs (AMBA Certified Partner Centres) in 23 states to date.

- AMBA now has

247 centers

across 24 states

¹⁰As defined by American Psychiatric Association



Dalimba Sabar

Organization: Gram Vikas (Intrapreneur)

State: Koinpur, Odisha

Sector: Education

One of six girls to be born into a poor tribal farmer's family, Dalimba Sabar is the first woman Sarpanch of Koinpur, a remote village of Odisha. This school drop-out is changing the local mind-set and building the infrastructure to make quality education and overall development a reality for the Lanjia Saora tribe. By ensuring road connectivity across 12 villages, introducing mobile telephony, ramping up PDS and ICDS, Dalimba has enrolled more than 300 students in schools and trained her community to become champions of education.

Problem

The Lanjia Saora, a backward indigenous tribe, lags behind in critical development markers like securing health and education, access to drinking water and basic sanitation.

Malnutrition and anemia are rampant, leaving children and adolescents unable to pursue an education.

The tribe lives in remote villages on hilly terrain that are devoid of basic infrastructure; As a result, government and civil society services are unable to reach this community.

Key Activities

Dalimba is raising awareness in the community about education and woman empowerment by changing local mindsets, building infrastructure that is critical for development, and connecting the villagers to government schemes.

She is opening up her village to engagements with various government and non government institutions.

By mobilizing her entire village, Dalimba is converting them into change makers and leading community campaigns against trafficking, child marriage and alcoholism.

Future Plans

Dalimba aims to launch vocational training for women and adolescent girls of her tribe, and train women in political leadership through participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

To optimize the abundant green resources of her region, Dalimba plans to launch village education programs on sustainable forest management.

Impact

- Dalimba has ensured that **300 students** continue their schooling, of which **80 are girls.**
- As Sarpanch, she has facilitated the construction of roads across 72 kilometers connecting **12 villages**, and brought mobile telephony.
- More than **16 farm** ponds have been revitalized through community labor.
- The Public Distribution System and Integrated Child Development Scheme are being regularly monitored by community platforms in her Panchayat.



Jayamma Bandhari

Organization: Chaitanya Mahila Mandali

State: Hyderabad/ Telengana

Sector: Education/Child Protection

Jayamma has founded Chaithanya Mahila Mandali (CMM) to help women in sex work find livelihood alternatives. She helps connect these women to child care facilities, finances, livelihoods trainings, and awareness drives. She also runs a home for the children of sex workers. This home ensures that these children are extricated from high risk environments, given access to high quality education and standards of living

Problem

- The public continue to resist acknowledging sex workers as victims although an overwhelming number of them are trafficked into the profession.
- The children of sex workers are an extremely high risk section of society. They are not taught about sexual health or sexual rights and are easy targets to lure and force into the trade.

Key Activities

- Assisting victims of human trafficking through awareness drives and peer educators.
- Protect second generation children from becoming easy targets to traffic by running a home for these high risk children
- Building up awareness and resilience within children in government schools and slums to protect them from becoming easy victims to human trafficking
- Sensitization and awareness of the media and public through storytelling

Impact

- More than **1000 women** rehabilitated from sex work
- **3428** sex workers being supported
- **3332** government school children benefitted
- **3415** students have received vocational training
- **43 children** supported in the home

Future Plans

- Continue to propagate and replicate the Chaithanya Mahila Mandali way in different states
- Broaden impact and reach in terms of education and awareness



Uma Singh

Organization: Nabadisha

State: Kolkata / West Bengal

Sector: Education/Child Protection

A resident of the Gobindopur slum of South Kolkata, Uma is the founder of Nabadisha, an organization that works with 'at-risk' youth from resource-poor urban slums of the city. In addition to heading Nabadisha, Uma also works at the Thoughtshop Foundation, a leading youth development organization. She conducts sessions on self-exploration, human rights and gender rights with the youth of her area.

Problem

- The urban slums of Gobindopur, Babubagan and 95 Pally are located within the thriving middle-class residential areas of South Kolkata.
- Livelihoods options for the residents of these slums include daily-wage work in construction, rickshaw-pulling, work as domestic help and drivers, and income through small tea/cigarette shops.
- The average monthly income of families range from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000.
- The absence of supportive spaces for adolescents and youth in the community foments a cycle of negative activities. The youth get misguided into a future that is equally vulnerable and abusive.

Key Activities

- Advocacy of child rights and gender rights led by youth from the community
- Providing a safe space for at-risk youth through weekly sessions
- Providing opportunities for learning through study support, art classes, computer classes
- Rights protection interventions led by youth
- Community mobilisation

Impact

- Prevented **6 child** marriages
- Rescued **2 girls** who were trafficked
- Engages **112 youth** able to understand and articulate gendered discrimination and its impact on self and society
- Created a group of empathetic youth who are able to provide support and guidance to others in the community.

Future Plans

- Start regular classes on dance, art, computer, self-defence and language (English and Bengali)
- Expand work area to more slums across south Kolkata



C. Lalthanzami

Organization: Grassroots Development Network (Entrepreneur)

State: Zemapawk, Mizoram

Sector: Health

Lalthanzami overcame spousal torture and forced heroin addiction, to launch the Grassroots Development Network (GDN) – a one-stop support centre for women survivors of violence. GDN has rehabilitated 150 women survivors of violence and provided shelter to 87 women and their children. She is also building active and sensitized communities to support families of undocumented Burmese migrants. Lalthanzami is the founding member of the National Burma Democratic Party, which is part of Aung San Suu Ki's coalition of democratic parties.

Problem

- Most tribes of Mizoram earn through agriculture or daily wage work and have no access to literacy or education.
- Large numbers of undocumented Burmese migrants flock to Mizoram and are forced to work as bonded labour.
- These socio-economic disadvantages, combined with rampant alcohol and substance abuse, place an increased burden on Mizo tribal and Burmese women.
- The state remains inert and apathetic to women survivors of violence.

Key Activities

- Lalthanzami runs Grassroots Development Network - a safe home for survivors of domestic violence.
- GDN's safe home conducts rescue operations, provides legal aid and guides the survivor through judicial processes.
- It provides in house access to health check-ups, relationship counselling, livelihood courses (House Nurse Training and Artificial Flower Making), domestic financial management and leadership training to ensure self reliance of survivors of violence.
- GDN conducts participatory awareness building with church leaders, citizen journalists and youth leaders on gender and child rights.

Impact

- **150 women** from the Lai and Mamit tribes have been supported to move out of their violent homes and settle in Aizwal with livelihoods support.
- **87 survivors** of domestic violence have been rescued and provided shelter at the Safe House.
- **113 families** of undocumented Burmese migrants are being rehabilitated through sensitized local communities.
- **23 women** and youth have gained employment through a skill development training.

Future Plans

- With proof of concept established, GDN aims to reach 500 communities and 15000 people in five years. It will actively engage men in its advocacy and awareness programs.
- GDN will scale its model by training vision-aligned, similar models in the North-east.
- Lalthanzami aims to focus on livelihoods for women survivors of violence by starting embroidery, tailoring and beauty parlour courses.
- She has plans of launching a social business run by unemployed single mothers to manufacture beverages and home cleaning products.



Jasodha Bhil

Organization: Swati

State: Gujarat

Sector: Health

Jasoda Bhil is empowering tribal women to break their silence in the face of continuing domestic violence. On the one hand she is making them aware that this violence is not acceptable and educating them on the laws designed to protect survivors; on the other she is putting in place institutions of support that will reinforce their confidence.

Problem

- Girls from the adivasi tribes in Radhanpur Gujarat are confined to their house, married by the age of 13 – 14 years after which they have to follow the practice of the veil.
- All acts of violence against women (VAW) within and outside of marriage are considered a norm.
- Women are afraid of formally reporting acts of violence to the police. Their first stop after an incident is the government health system that is unable to screen women and identify injuries.

Key Activities

- Counselling survivors of domestic violence
- Facilitating required legal support for the survivors
- Training nurses on early detection of domestic violence

Impact

- Trained 786 ASHA workers from **30 villages** and **60 Paralegal** workers on early detection of domestic violence and the process of referring them to counselling centres for legal support.
- Number of cases reported at the counselling centres has increased from 6- 7 cases per month in 2012 to 17 per month in 2016.
- Formed **6** Mahila Nyaya Panchayats.
- Impacted **395 women's** lives of which 70 have been survivors of domestic violence in just four years (2012- 2016).
- She has organized **22 women** into a Self Help Group and got them to open a bank account and start monetary savings.

Future Plans

- Develop her Radhanpur Counselling cell as the role model for 10 more hospitals government hospitals in the adjoining villages.
- Set up a safe house for women survivors of violence in her own village.
- Along with Society for Women's action and Training Initiatives (SWATI) she is documenting and planning advocacy to replicate the model of training and set up of counselling centres across government hospitals pan India.
- Pursue a LLB degree and become a certified professional lawyer



Jhulan Mondal

Organization: Kolkata Sanved

State: Kolkata / West Bengal

Sector: Health/ Mental Health/Well-Being

JhulanMondal is using Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) to transform women and girls who are survivors of trafficking, sexual abuse and violence into empowered individuals and grassroots leaders. Jhulan co-founded Kolkata Sanved in 2004 with Sohini Chakravarty (a globally-renowned DMT practitioner). Kolkata Sanved is India's first non-profit dedicated to DMT. Believing that 'survivors can be healers', Jhulan's work at Kolkata Sanved is creating a groundswell of community grassroots change agents who are deploying DMT to move survivors of violence from victimhood to active citizenship.

Problem

- Violence and abuse stamps the lives of millions of India's vulnerable adolescents and children. Children of women in sex work, often cannot come to terms with their past. The same holds true for the victims of sexual abuse and violence.
- While NGOs and state-run homes for rescued children exist, their services tend to follow a stale routine
- Moreover, these existing programs provide little opportunity for the girls to interact with society as human beings rather than as victims.

Key Activities

- Setting up DMT trainers and leaders from marginalized communities.
- Running DMT sessions for healing and agency-building of girls and women living with violence, abuse, mental illnesses, HIV/AIDs etc.
- Running sessions in a diploma course at TISS for DMT.

Impact

- **10,000** individuals impacted
- **50 professional** DMT trainers launched

Future Plans

- Incubate and scale three DMT-based organizations that are led by women leaders from marginalized communities.
- Train world-class DMT professionals



Manisha Ghule

Organization: Janvikas Samajik Sanstha (Intrapreneur)

State: Kaej District, Maharashtra

Sector: Health

Daughter of a sugar cane cutter and survivor of violence, Manisha leads the all womens federation, Mahila Vikas Manch, in the backward district of Kaej. Under her leadership, Kaej has become one of the first districts of Maharashtra to ensure joint property ownership for more than 20,000 women. Mahila Vikas Manch has also addressed 2000 domestic violence cases in Kaej District.

Problem

- In areas suffering from extreme drought, women are more at risk of destitution and violence due to lack of access to material assets, financial literacy, self employment and legal recourse.
- Infamous for farmer suicides owing to crop failure, it is common to see wives left with large debts and very little or no family support in the Kaej district.
- Lack of identity documentation, government apathy and tedious bureaucracy further impede women's access to schemes and services.

Key Activities

- Manisha has connected women with a government scheme that guarantees joint home ownership (Ghar Doghaanche Abhiyan) to husband and wife, thereby protecting women from forcible eviction from their marital homes.
- She has established a group of 30 women professionals including lawyers and doctors who provide pro bono services needed by women.
- A legal counsellor, advocate and Manisha run a counselling centre in the premises of the Kaej District Police Station providing domestic violence survivors with all the support they need to get justice.
- Manisha Ghule has launched a matrix of initiatives to support women learn basic financial literacy to help them become self-employed.

Impact

- Under her leadership **20,000 women** have got their right to become joint owners of their house through the Ghar Doghaanche Abhiyan.
- Manisha currently works with **5000 women** in six blocks in the Beed region through 500 SHGs.
- She has enrolled **5020 women** in a Community Based Mutual Aid Scheme provided by the Micro Insurance Academy.
- Since 2008, Manisha and the legal team have successfully counselled 1034 cases of which 288 have got justice.
- Through a revolving fund as available at Janvikas Samajik Sanstha (JVSS) Manisha has introduced close to **2000 women** to the possibilities of self-employment.

Future Plans

- Towards building a strong foundation to advocate with the government on actions relating to women's empowerment Manisha would like to ensure that all SHGs in the district are organized into Federation.
- Manisha would like to build a well-equipped hostel for children from the sugarcane cutter community to help them continue their education during the harvest season.
- She is organizing a local campaign on female foeticide that is currently seeing a resurgence in the communities in and around Kaej District.



Monika Majumdar

Organization: Anjali

State: Kolkata / West Bengal

Sector: Mental Health

Monica is among West Bengal's first barefoot community mental health counsellors. She leads a group of other community mental health professionals who are making basic mental health services and referrals accessible and affordable for marginalized communities of the Rajarhat- Gopalpur (RG) Municipality in West Bengal. Monica is a leader of the Janamanas program - a pioneering community mental health initiative of Anjali, which works for the rights of persons living with psycho-social disorders.

Problem

- Mental health is an unacknowledged and invisible malaise that affects the health and well-being of large segments of the population.
- Seeking mental health services continues to be taboo for fear of being branded as being 'mad'. Yet, there are increasing number of suicides, desertions, and other human rights violations stemming from undiagnosed mental health conditions.
- Stress, anxiety and emotional distress are often accelerated in communities dealing with livelihood challenges, the absence of basic services and the on-going cycle of physical and emotional harm that plays out between individuals and families.

Key Activities

- As West Bengal's first barefoot mental health counsellor, Monika has partnered with urban local bodies to set up the state's first mental health kiosk in the Rajarhat-Gopalpur area.
- She and her team of six provide de-stigmatized, affordable and accessible mental health care to individuals and families living with stress, anxiety and exhaustion.
- Through wide outreach, counselling, and referral services, Monika and her team are building safe community spaces for the healing and recovery of persons living with psycho-social disabilities.

Impact

- More than **800 persons** living with mental health disorders have been directly impacted by Monika and her team.
- **3000 persons** in the Rajarhat-Gopalpur municipality have participated in awareness programs and are emerging as community mental health champions.

Future Plans

- With the vision that one day mental illnesses will be viewed in the same way as physical illnesses, Monika is planning to deepen the impact of her work across all wards of the R-G Municipality.
- She and her team plan to start a mobile mental health kiosk to expand their scope of work and impact.
- Eventually, Monika hopes to hive off the mental health kiosk as an independent organization, which is led by her and several community women leaders.



Kamal Kumbhar

Organization: Swayam Shikshan Prayog

State: Pune / Maharashtra

Sector: Microenterprise

In the small village of Hinglajwadi in Maharashtra, Kamal has started a total of six businesses with the skill and tenacity of a business school graduate. She is passionate about creating decentralised networks for all her businesses and the businesses of the women she mentors. Over the years, she has developed a reliable network of suppliers, wholesalers, government officials and NGO's.

Problem

- Osmanabad in Maharashtra is a severely drought-prone region which experiences rainfall about once every three years.
- Unpredictable rainfall and extreme weather have pushed the mainly agricultural community of this region into debilitating poverty.
- Kamal works in Hinglajwadi, a small village where almost 80 per cent of the population depend on farming activities for their livelihood.
- The remote location of the village makes it challenging for farmer producers to connect with the market. Several women spend hours in commuting to the nearest market.

Key Activities

- Kamal views entrepreneurship as a vehicle for building resilient and hopeful societies, where communities are knitted into a web of production, inter-dependence and value-creation.
- A serial entrepreneur, she runs six different businesses. Kamal has further built women-led supply chains for each business. This has created a vibrant village enterprise eco-system of women producers, transporters, suppliers, distributors etc.
- She has created active linkages between grassroots women entrepreneurs and city markets, IAS officers and global companies like Godrej, to open up rural markets for their socially-relevant products (such as clean energy products).
- As a local mentor and business trainer for grassroots women entrepreneurs, Kamal promotes government schemes, business partnership opportunities and funding linkages for village business women

Impact

- Mentored more than **5000 women** in a premium poultry business, leading to doubling of households incomes
- Has helped **3000 women** set up chicken rearing business
- Has helped set up **20 individual** businesses in her village
- Got Rs. **18 lakhs** worth of business from the electricity distribution scheme

Future Plans

- Kamal aims to scale her business networks and launch more women entrepreneurs, leading to a decentralised and active supply chains.



Kana Mondol

Organization: Hasta Udyog

State: Barasat (near Kolkata) / West Bengal

Sector: Microenterprise

Kana developed close links with the district administration to avail training and marketing opportunities from the Government for hand stitched and jute based diversified products. As a true entrepreneur Kana seized every opportunity to increase her business, expand the range of products and grow her market. In 2016 Hasta Udyog recorded an annual turnover of Rs37 lakhs and it has been designated as the government recognized training agency for North 24 Parganas district providing vocational training under government schemes such as NRLM, Sarva Siksha Mission Cell and Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Problem

- North 24 Parganas district in West Bengal shares its border with Bangladesh and some of the most notorious trafficking routes from Bangladesh into India are through this district.
- The remoteness of villages, especially in the Sunderbans, makes it impossible for the poor to access government services and schemes.
- Livelihood is dependent upon agriculture; however, with very small land size (average 3 bighas) most of it is subsistence farming. There are few employment opportunities for young people, especially for women.
- Early marriage, domestic abuse and desertion are common.

Key Activities

- Operating small scale industrial unit called Hasta Udyog
- Design, production and marketing of Jute based diversified products to local, state, national markets and supplying to export houses
- Training women SHG members in hand embroidery and jute products
- Government designated Master Trainer and Training agency for North 24 Pargana District
- Partner to National Jute Board
- Mentoring and training women entrepreneurs

Impact

- Kana has directly impacted **2500 women** through her business.
- She has trained and linked **3000 girls** and women to markets, enabling them to set up rewarding handicrafts-based channels of income.
- **200** of them have received Udyog Aadhar cards – thereby being recognized by the government as entrepreneurs.
- Kana runs two production centres and has set up a Common Facility Centre for the National Jute Board in West Bengal

Future Plans

- On the verge of securing export orders, Kana plans to grow her business turnover to INR 1 crore in the next five years.
- Her priorities include enhancing capacity of Master Trainers, securing a larger loan to meet export orders, increase range of products, start a website and publicise the business.



Krishna Sahu

Organization: BAIF (Intrapreneur)

State: Betul, Madhya Pradesh

Sector: Microenterprise/Livelihoods

Krishna Sahu, daughter of a fruit seller and one of a family of 10, has lit up India's heartlands by introducing 17,029 rural families to solar lamps. By extending solar energy into agriculture, she has also enabled 2861 farmers to practice multi-cropping, including gum and lac cultivation. Krishna has thus demonstrated how solar power can enable tribal farmers to overcome debt and bonded labour.

Problem

- The tribal village communities in Baitul practice low yielding traditional forms of agriculture, which do not sustain farmers. Further, there are no facilities available to process agricultural produce (For example converting wheat into flour)
- Migration, child marriage and bonded labour continue to be followed generationally.
- Many communities are isolated due to lack of basic infrastructure, further resulting in corruption, lack of access of government schemes and government apathy.

Key Activities

- Krishna Sahu ensures effective implementation of BAIF's services that cover agriculture, animal husbandry, education, smokeless stove distribution and sanitation projects.
- She has been a passionate advocate of solar energy products, recognizing solar power as the catalyst for agriculture.
- The success of the solar energy products has led her to set up community-led assembling and distribution plants for solar lights.
- She has passionately promoted lac cultivation in villages outside of BAIF's area of influence, thereby promoting higher yielding agricultural practices.

Impact

- Krishna has introduced

17,029 rural

families to solar lamps.

- She has equipped 2861 small farmers with information and technical skills to practice multi-cropping, including gum and lac cultivation. She has imparted financial literacy trainings to 110 SHGs.
- More than 95 individuals have sold 1.95 lakh solar lanterns to rural markets around Nasik, Pune and Ranchi, leading to higher livelihoods and education outcomes.

Future Plans

- Krishna aims set up food processing units (pickling, juice pulp making etc) in her villages to incur better incomes and engage with diverse markets.
- She is advocating with the Vice Presidents of all village Bhaadi Vikas Samitis to form a Farmer Federation with representation from each Samiti. This could serve as an supportive platform for the manufacturing units- enabling various units to learn from each other, access raw materials at better rates, and advocate with local governments.



Krishnaben Yadav

Organization: Mahila Housing Trust

State: Ahmedabad / Gujarat

Sector: Microenterprise

Krishnaben Yadav is creating savings for poor slum dwellers in Ahmedabad by educating them on energy efficiency and introducing them to practical everyday solutions that provide the concrete benefits of saving energy. She is also helping them to regularize their electricity connections so that they no longer need to pay the exorbitant rates of illegal connections and, moreover, get linked to a public utility.

Problem

- Slum dwellers are engaged in textile and steel utensils factories, bead work, stitching, selling snacks in nearby markets. Their income is around 200 rupees per day. Due to high power consuming energy appliances, they end up paying 1000-1500 rupees per month on electricity
- Currently, there are 710 slums housing around nine lakh people, located on both private and public land.
- Typically the identity of owners of the private property housing slums is unknown and so even those migrants living there for over 30 years have no proper tenancy papers and cannot get individual water connections or electricity.

Key Activities

- Energy auditor and entrepreneur who sells energy efficient equipment to her community members.
- Community mobiliser and excellent liaison skills with local Government.
- Helping slum dwellers get access to a proof of residency documents like an electricity bill

Impact

- Done energy audits for **15000 urban** slums households
- Mobilised **200 women** to work as Vikasini under Parivartan
- Reached **100000 people** indirectly with energy audit trainings.

Future Plans

- Set up a small shop of clean energy products in the slum.
- To take this training to rural areas where houses are made of mud thereby inducing higher power consumption.
- To seek an identity from local Government to take up energy audit in commercial places.



Nilu Paul

Organization: Seven Sister Development Assistance (Intrapreneur)

State: Chirang, Assam

Sector: Microenterprise/Livelihoods

A feisty 60-year old from Kashikotra village with a single machine tailoring shop, Nilu emerged from an impoverished childhood and severe personal hardships to become an influential community leader and role model for women. She has mobilized 450 women into 37 Self Help groups and 2 Village Organizations facilitating members to avail loan amounts totalling to 15 lakhs from formal banks.

Problem

- Most community members are either landless or own very small landholdings.
- Community members are largely dependent on petty businesses or daily wage labor for their income.
- Educated youth lack local employment opportunities.

Key Activities

- Helps women organize themselves into groups in villages where these are needed to be formed and mentors them for the first two or three months.
- Leads a forum of SHGs called 'Village Organizations' (VO) through which women can avail loans at a much cheaper rate than traditional money lenders at only 2% interest.
- Through the VO she is mobilizing the community towards fighting against corruption.

Impact

- She has formed 37 SHGs and mobilized **450 women** to join these SHGs.
- Through the SHGs she has facilitated loan amounts totaling to 15 lakh.
- Group members have started their own micro-enterprises because they are accessing loans at a far lower rate of interest.

Future Plans

- Nilu would like to continue organizing and creating impact through SHGs
- She is working to expand her tailoring shop.
- Start a computer center for women who were unable to gain formal education.
- She would like to open an art school for children where they can develop their creative talents.
- She would like to start an enterprise dealing in steel and plastic furniture.



Sunita Kamble

Organization: Mann Deshi foundation

State: Pune/Maharashtra

Sector: Microenterprise

With no formal education and the additional disadvantage of being a woman in a profoundly patriarchal environment, Sunita Kamble has successfully pioneered an innovative, biotechnology based solution to address the lack of sustainable livelihoods in drought prone Mhasvad. Sunita is a trained expert in artificial insemination of goats and the first goat doctor in the region without formal education. Her methodology, passion and dynamism have resulted in high success rates of insemination as well as goats being cared for better. The result: women are quadrupling their incomes by selling larger, heavier and healthier goats.

Problem

- Mhaswad, Maharashtra is an extremely drought prone region with rainfall occurring once every three years. Consequently, the mainly agricultural local community live in severe poverty
- Although this community has been traditionally rearing goats, they have failed to make it a steady, robust source of income.
- This is primarily because of poor health and high mortality of goats brought on by limited awareness about proper feeding practices; lack of regular vaccinations; and multiple matings and early pregnancies leading to weak offspring and early deaths.
- Lack of adequate and timely veterinarian support further compounded the problem.

Key Activities

- Creating awareness and implementing best practices
- Initiated goat rearing camps
- Training women in a goat rearing course through Mann Deshi Foundation
- Skilling slum girls
- Target setting, documentation and team management on a weekly basis

Impact

- Perform artificial insemination on **2267 goats**
- Trained **375 women** in goat rearing
- Created a team of **7 goat** doctors

Future Plans

- In the coming years, Sunita aims to set up an independent, fully-equipped laboratory within Mann Deshi for goat insemination.
- She plans to set up an organization exclusively for women goat doctors, who will train 100 community women goat doctors (with 1-2 doctors in every district of Maharashtra).
- Sunita is exploring bank linkages for goat doctors to get loans for the purchase of insemination kits.
- She is also keen to learn how to artificially inseminate larger cattle, such as cows – to further multiply incomes of women-headed households.



Zahida Amin

Organization: Nayi Kiran

State: Delhi and Baramulla/ Jammu and Kashmir

Sector: Microenterprise

Living in the heart of the Kashmir conflict, bearing witness to the harassment of paramilitary forces, Zahida Amin believes implicitly that entrepreneurship can be a route to peace-building. A grassroots entrepreneur and change agent, Zahida has not let strikes, demonstrations and curfew upset the rhythm of business. Zahida's venture takes the spirit and crafts of Kashmiri women out of isolated villages into domestic and global markets. This has doubled their incomes and given them new identities. Entrepreneurship has also re-framed the mental boundaries of the women of her area: from passive dreams of becoming teachers to active business leadership.

Problem

- Raids by military forces, attacks by militants, snow storms: every day in Kashmir is a red alert day. Markets can be shut on any given day, resources required to live everyday life are not available
- Most craftsmen are unable to go to fairs or deliver material due to these conditions. Even getting raw materials through a courier service is a huge challenge.
- When young girls grow up in a community without role models, their ability to imagine possibilities for themselves is severely limited. Most are married off at a young age, their education never given priority
- Some women work as daily wage labourers; they are overworked and underpaid because of their gender. It is frowned upon for women to leave the house to travel and be entrepreneurial

Future Plans

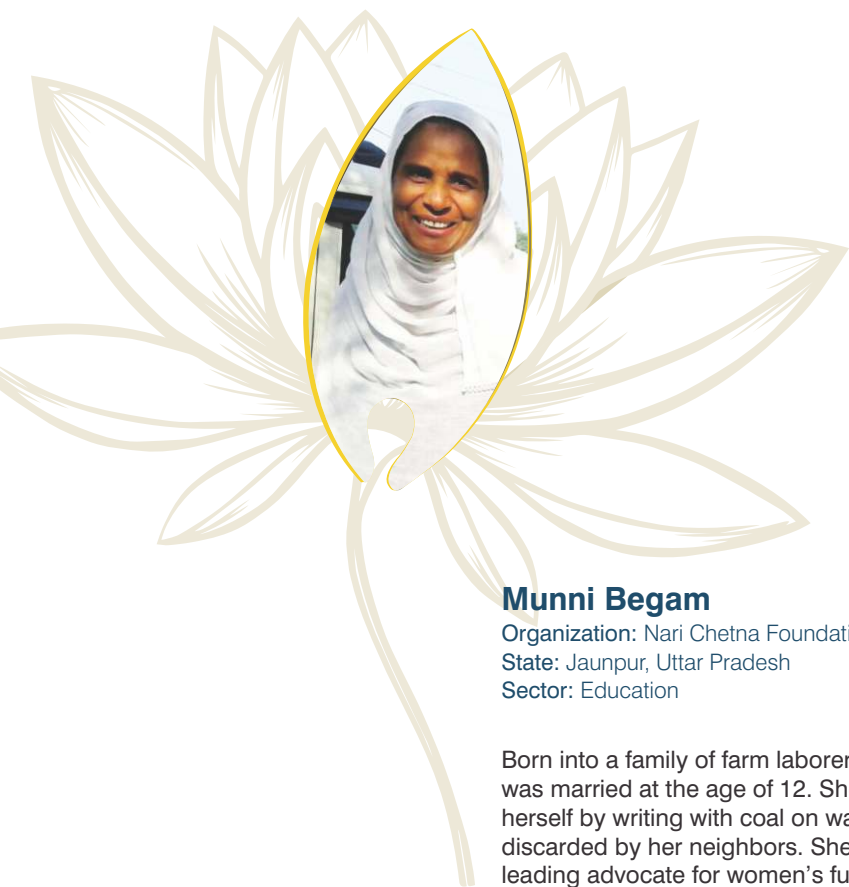
- Grow her business acumen and continue to learn
- Further her English speaking abilities to interact with global clients
- Further invest in design and product innovation

Key Activities

- Working with craftsmen from all over the country to procure raw materials
- Decoding colour motifs and getting the printing of the pattern done
- Explaining work to the women employed and providing them with the raw materials needed
- Travelling across the country to build partnerships and sell her products at the various fairs.

Impact

- Employs **40 girls**
- 1 secondary leader who is in charge of work distribution in Pathan
- Able to pay **Rs. 5000** per month to every woman working with her



Munni Begam

Organization: Nari Chetna Foundation

State: Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh

Sector: Education

Born into a family of farm laborers, Munni was married at the age of 12. She schooled herself by writing with coal on waste paper discarded by her neighbors. She is today a leading advocate for women's functional literacy, campaigner for women's education and advisor to the Gram Panchayat.

This 'Malala of Eastern UP' has transformed the lives of 5,770 illiterate rural women through functional literacy classes and organized them in collectives to access government schemes and entitlements.

Problem

- Eastern UP (Jaunpur and Pratapgarh) is a hotbed of poverty and patriarchy.
- Largely agricultural districts, the vast majority of Muslim, Dalit and Adivasi families are landless, with annual incomes of less than Rs. 50,000 for a family of five.
- Caste domination has perpetuated intense social and gender discrimination. Child marriage, nominal mobility, child labour, domestic violence and sexual harassment are deeply embedded into the lives of the women of this region.
- A vast majority of women from the rural landless families are illiterate.

Key Activities

- Twinning her role as a tailoring instructor and educator, Munni set up stitching centers in 5 villages where she ran free basic adult literacy classes.
- Upon joining Tarun Chetna, she set up literacy centers across 5 Gram Sabhas for adult women, using audio-visual aids and computers as a teaching tool. Literacy centers are the dynamic entry point for Munni to collectivize women on issues of health, sanitation, rights, access to livelihoods.
- As a once-Zilla Parishad member and advisor to the Gram Panchayat and local government bodies, Munni is building an enabling eco-system to push for women's education and literacy and open up their access to basic entitlements.
- Munni has founded Nari Chetna Foundation which is working with 5000 ultra poor and marginal women for their empowerment through education.

Impact

- Munni has equipped the following numbers of women with functional literacy and basic education
- **500 women** through her work with Tarun Chetna; 270 women in her personal capacity.
- **400 women** have now accessed MGNREGA and PDS distribution has been regularized. Muslim women are being included in education programs in the districts.
- 5000 women are engaged in Munni's organization to access empowerment by accessing education.

Future Plans

Focusing on the last-mile, invisible communities of women, Munni aims to consolidate her work with women Beedi workers.



Nita Dhar

Organization: PRISM

State: Alipurduar, West Bengal

Sector: Education

Thrust into poverty and thrown out of her home after her father's demise, Nita found purpose in building a grassroots volunteer movement in the forested tribal belts of North Bengal. She has launched 4,500 youth and women change agents who have set up 61 self-sustaining volunteer groups in villages around remote and impoverished tea plantations. The change agents design and run several action projects to address access to education, health, sanitation, trafficking, rights abuse, and environmental resilience. More than 8,500 individuals have been impacted by their activities.

Problem

- Alipurduar, in North Bengal, has the largest concentration of tribal communities working as laborers in tea plantations, amidst densely forested areas.
- Large-scale bankruptcy of tea gardens has led to massive job losses, accelerating economic and social distress in the region. Families that have stayed back are the most dispossessed, without the basic resources to even migrate. They are vulnerable targets for trafficking networks
- The isolation of the communities living in remote villages, followed by environmental hazards has further impacted development indicators – especially education.

Key Activities

- Nita is building a ground-up movement of adolescent and youth change agents to exercise active citizenship and leadership. They identify their local problems and design and implement solutions for change.
- Using art, music, theater and other creative methodologies, Nita and her team have mobilized 1600 adolescents and youth to run 61 Green Scout clubs that are running action projects to address access to quality education, trafficking, WASH and environmental resilience.
- The Green Scout groups are sustainable – mobilizing resources from local communities to run their local campaigns. They are supported by women's groups, thereby creating an inter-generational network of local change agents.
- From mobilizing their villages to set up nutrition gardens, to preventing trafficking and child marriage, to building linkages with government schemes, to construction of toilets and WASH awareness, Nita's change agents are demonstrating the possibilities of educating youth for social change.

Impact

- Nita has impacted **3500 youth** and women (1600 youth and 2900 women) to become catalysts for change and address the full spectrum of challenges faced by their communities.
- The youth groups have generated the following impact:
 - **3000 nutrition** gardens set up; 3000 toilets constructed.
 - Right to Menstruation Campaigns run across 8 schools.
 - **4500 individuals** linked to MGNREGA and 4000 to additional schemes.
 - **250 cases** of child rights violations handled.

Future Plans

- Strengthening her catalytic model of change, Nita aims to launch an incubator for young entrepreneurs with social business ideas.



Arshi Fatma

Organization: Grameen Vikas Sansthan

State: Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh

Sector: Education

A survivor of domestic violence and financial crisis, Arshi Fatma has launched a movement against early marriage and trafficking in deep, interior pockets of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Through life skills and vocational trainings, she is encouraging 5,000 vulnerable girls to stay in school, delay their marriage, and prepare for viable livelihoods.

Arshi has also galvanized 13,000 members of women's collectives and trained 250 women to take up leadership roles in the government to create a conducive policy environment for girls' education.

Problem

- The Purvanchal region is dominated by the land-owning upper caste with nominal education or basic rights for the women.
- The Purdah system is widely prevalent here; illiteracy among women is rampant.
- Iron deficiency and low health indicators among women is a pressing problem.
- Women are invisible in all matters of panchayat and local governance.

Key Activities

- Arshi has provided a wide spectrum of education support to girls and women of her area – from functional literacy to life skills and vocational education to leadership training and political education.
- Working with 5000 adolescent girls across 5 blocks of Mau district, Arshi is curbing child marriage and trafficking among them through life-skills and vocational training.
- In remote villages with no access to roads, Arshi has engaged with 13,000 women across 40 Gram Panchayats through the Nari Sangh collectives that are managed by her. The role of these collectives is to push for higher gender representation in local governance and to center-stage the issues of girls and women.
- As a Trainer for Elected Women Representatives, Arshi has provided leadership and political education to community women, leading to more than 250 women being elected into their Gram Panchayats.

Impact

- Arshi is currently working with **5000** adolescent and young girls to curb early marriage and trafficking through lifeskills, vocational training and access to livelihoods.
- She has impacted **13,000 women** across Nari Sangha collectives in 40 Gram Panchayats, from where 250 ERPs and one MLA has emerged.
- The innovative 'marker' system developed by her (to track the health of pregnant women and anemia among adolescent girls) has been adopted by the District Chief Medical Officer and the local ICDS officer.

Future Plans

- Arshi's future plans include setting up a vocational training center in her area with non-gender-stereotypical vocations.
- She is also focusing on building her skills as a trainer.



Moni Kannaujia

Organization: Digital Study Hall

State: Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Sector: Education

Daughter of a Dhobi, Moni Kannaujia funded her education by working as a domestic help. She has channeled her passion for the camera to lead a first-of-its-kind technology-and-media education initiative. Moni and her team at Digital Study Hall have produced more than 2,000 videos of classroom sessions conducted by model teachers on joyful learning and gender empowerment. Uploaded on YouTube and distributed offline, these films have impacted 100,000 teachers and girls of government schools across Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Moni is also creating video-based learning content for the UP state government and the MHRD.

Problem

- Girls drop out of schools, because they are girls. Education gives girls textbook knowledge, but does not tell them that they are equal persons. As a result:
 - 1/3rd of all the child brides of the world live in India, most of whom will not continue their education post marriage.
 - Uttar Pradesh has the highest drop out rate of girl children.
 - School environments do not foster, nor are teachers trained to provide students a universe of care that enables girl students to continue their engagement with the education system.
- In violent and discriminatory environments, girls who have completed their school education do not graduate with the same sense of agency as exhibited by boys.

Key Activities

- Moni is using technology and media to spread a model of gender empowerment education (or feminist pedagogy) and joyful learning to girls in remote government schools and KGBVs across UP and Rajasthan. She records videos of live classes by the best grassroots teachers, collects and manages them in a large distributed database, and disseminates them via YouTube and other off-line channels to resource-poor rural and slum schools.
 - The videos cover joyful learning sessions (across the K-12 curriculum) and 'Critical Dialogue' sessions.
 - Teachers and school principals use these films for self-training and as a dynamic tool of new teaching-learning methodologies.
- Funded by the UP and Rajasthan governments, teachers of 764 KGBVs are being trained to use and implement the Critical Dialogue films produced by Moni in their schools.
- Moni's films are being widely-used by the UP Education Board, CBSE and the National Teacher's Platform, set up by the MHRD.

Impact

- Moni's videos are being directly used by 1,00,000 teachers and students across **800 KGBV schools.** The DHS YouTube channel, initiated by Moni, has a subscriber base of 17,252 and the videos have been viewed 2,962,851 times.
- Moni's leadership has sustained strong partnerships with the UP Education Board, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and shaalaa.com (an on-line resource of video tutorials).
- Moni is training grassroots community groups (Virangana) and a leading education organization Bodh in her methodology. As a result, Bodh has been able to expand its reach and impact to an additional **2000 schools.**



Nasreen Meetai

Organization: Sakhi Trust, BMMA

State: Hospet, Karnataka

Sector: Education

Daughter of a sugarcane juice vendor, Nasreen has ignited a movement for education and empowerment among girls of the poorest Muslim, Dalit, Devdasi, and Maadiga communities of North Karnataka. She has organized 854 children and young women in civic action and advocacy groups, where they experience self-transformation and access scholarships, tuition, and counselling supports to pursue higher education. These groups have built their agency and voice to play a key advocacy role against Triple Talaq and other discriminatory religious practices.

Problem

- 25% of the population in Hospet constitute of the poor Muslim community. There is a significant mix of SC, ST, Devdasi and Maadiga population.
- Gender and caste based discrimination is rife. Most families practice very rigid religious tenants that further place girls and women at risk of discontinued higher education, early marriage, commercial sex work and economic destitution. Less than 53% of the women in the area are literate. Young girls face a wall of cultural resistance in accessing education.
- With large-scale migration, the youth who are left behind have to bear full responsibility for providing for their families, with no pursuit of skilling, strengthening their employability and accessing better education.

Key Activities

- To ensure higher education for girls from marginalized communities, Nasreen has taken a three-pronged approach:
 - Kindergartens: To give young mothers an affordable child care option and a strategic opportunity to engage with the importance of education as a means to dignity and empowerment.
 - Drop-in centers: To offer after-school tuitions to ensure that high-risk children and young people remain motivated to continue their studies.
 - Youth groups: Safe spaces, where the youth create a roadmap for their academic and non-academic endeavors. Members are referred to scholarships, temporary accommodation to aid their transition into government residential education institutions, and skills training. Nasreen actively links young women to the local livelihoods opportunities to curb trafficking.
- Through government college partners, Nasreen conducts campaigns on career counselling (What Next Campaign), elimination of child marriage (Hold On Campaign), ensuring equal opportunities and termination of ragging in colleges (Dhvani Campaign). Her campaign against Triple Talaq has generated wide-spread momentum.

Impact

- **854 women** and young girls have been directly impacted through the Sakhi youth clubs, college campaigns and BMMA activities executed by Nasreen. 49 girls from the most socially-excluded groups have completed their post-graduate studies.
- 11 government colleges and **15 schools** have been converted into active champions of girl and women education.
- For the first time, young Muslim women are accessing livelihoods in stationery shops, food production units, animal husbandry operations, and tailoring shops.

Future Plans

- Nasreen plans to mentor 40 to 50 girls in every district to lead BMMA groups in their communities and who in turn will additionally mentor another 50 girls.
- She seeks to expand income generation, continued sponsorships for higher education, and fellowships that will provide young girls from minority communities a platform from which they can start their own initiatives across several thematic areas.



Srijita Chakraborty

Organization: Anjali

State: Kolkata, West Bengal

Sector: Health

Living with poverty, dealing with chronic mental illness and being lesbian led Srijita to find her life's mission. She has shaped Janamanas, a community mental health program in deprived municipal wards and panchayats of West Bengal.

Srijita is building a movement of barefoot, community women mental health counselors in partnership with the government. The counselors have directly impacted 4,000 persons with psychosocial disabilities and reached 300,000 individuals through dialogues for breaking the stigma around mental illness.

Problem

- Mental illness is an unacknowledged and invisible malaise that affects the health and well-being of large segments of the population. The stigma and silence around it is more debilitating than the disease.
- The treatment gap leads to large numbers of undiagnosed cases of mental illness resulting in an increasing number of suicides, desertions, and other human rights violations.
- In deep urban slums and remote districts, the combination of financial stress, violence, geographical isolation exacerbate mental illnesses and the lack of enabling family and community eco-systems can compound the problem.

Key Activities

- To create safe and empowered healing spaces for persons living with mental illnesses, Srijita and her small team train 'barefoot' women mental health care givers and counsellors in under-served communities of West Bengal.
- In partnership with local government bodies, she sets up local mental health centers or mental health kiosks in spaces provided by the government. From here, the community women barefoot counsellors fan out to create large scale awareness, provide information and counselling, and linkages to government mental hospitals and other services.
- Srijita's work entails collaborating closely with the government officials at all levels to ensure the smooth running of all centers and that mental health is center-stage in its programs and policy agenda.
- As a result, Janamanas – the program shaped and scaled by Srijita – has been acknowledged as a model program and best practice.

Impact

- Srijita is building a force-multiplying network of change agents:
 - She has trained **200 community** women into barefoot mental health counsellors, care givers and service providers;
 - of these, 60 are seasoned community mental health professionals who operate 9 local mental health centers.
- More than **4000 persons** with severe psycho-social disabilities have been served through the community women and 300,000 persons been engaged in awareness campaigns.
- Additionally, more than **80** recovered patients of mental hospitals have been re-integrated back into their families by Srijita.

Future Plans

- Srijita aims to play a key role in integrating the Janamanas program into the government system.
- Additionally, she wants to decentralize the delivery of mental health services from a single center, building collaborations with Panchayats and local leaders in the villages around Coochbehar to open up weekly clinics run by the Janamanas team.



Gowamma

Organization: Samruddhi
State: Bengaluru, Karnataka
Sector: Health

Gowamma's world crashed with the news that her husband was HIV positive. But she pivoted quickly to convert this adversity into an opportunity for entrepreneurship. Unable to afford the nutritional supplements that her husband required, Gowamma developed and produced an affordable alternative-Samruddhi, a FSSAI certified supplement. Distributed through NGOs, hospitals, and clinics, Samruddhi has revived 5,500 individuals back to health. The product has earned a cumulative seven-year turnover of Rs. 25,60,800.

Problem

- As per the National Family Health Survey IV of 2015-16, the awareness of HIV is extremely low:
 - Only 10 percent of women and 26 percent of men in Karnataka have comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS.
 - 82 percent of women in Karnataka have heard of HIV or AIDS.
 - In urban areas, 88 percent of women know about HIV or AIDS, compared with 76 percent in rural areas.
- Hospitals do not have the bandwidth to provide comprehensive information, counselling, care and the full range of well-being supports (nutrition, support to care givers) to PLHIVs and their families.
- For low-income families with nominal education and resources, the advent of HIV can lead to job losses and insecurity at all levels.

Key Activities

- Gowamma manufactures a low-cost nutritional supplement called Samruddhi. It is a health mixture and can be used by children above six years of age and adults. The supplement has 21 hand-picked ingredients and can also be used by those who are pregnant, lactating, the elderly and people with prolonged illness.
- Gowamma single-handedly manages the end to end production, pricing and marketing of Samruddhi that has seen its demand grow across diverse networks and socio-economic groups.
- Distributed through a network of NGOs and credible hospitals – St Johns and KMIS – Gowamma produces and markets 4800 kgs of Samruddhi across Bengaluru in a year.

Impact

- Samruddhi has provided PLHIV and other chronic illness patients with limited financial and educational means a high quality, locally palatable and affordable nutrition supplement.
- **5500 PLHIV** have reported improved management of ARV side effects and gained back their well being through their consistent use of Samruddhi.
- Gowamma has built her market and business completely on the strength of her networks with peer support groups (Milana, Vihaan, KNP Plus) and their representatives in the country's leading hospitals (St John's and Rajeev Gandhi Hospital for Children) who refer new clients

Future Plans

- To introduce new customers to use Samruddhi, Gowamma is working towards the following:
 - Improved packaging- transitioning from packets to bottles
 - Expanding the diversity of products - specifically, to include flavours that will help children consume Samruddhi with ease.
- Gowamma is also planning to launch an organic phenyl business.



Asha

Organization: Saksham

State: Ajmer, Rajasthan

Sector: Health

Married by the age of 9, a daily wage laborer at the age of 11, and widowed by AIDS at the age of 15, Asha founded Saksham, the Ajmer chapter of the Positive Women's Network. Saksham opens up access to government health services and welfare schemes for people living with HIV. Working in Nasirabad, Rajasthan's most high-prevalence HIV belt, Saksham has ensured de-stigmatized counselling, free treatment, and nutritional supplements to 6,011 women, children and men living with HIV. She has also opened up livelihood opportunities for 50 women survivors of HIV.

Problem

- Rajasthan remains one of eight states in India with continued high HIV prevalence. Nasirabad, a truckers belt, has the highest rate of HIV infection.
- A range of factors places women in Nasirabad at increased risk of undetected and untreated HIV such as:
 - Child marriage
 - Low literacy rate
 - Lack of any information

Key Activities

- Asha is organizing women affected and infected by HIV into peer support groups and connecting them to the national public health system, care services and government welfare schemes.
- With a team of 3 full-time staff and 30 volunteers, she conducts community awareness sessions and door-to-door counseling in 'at risk' villages along with government officials.
- Asha extensively trains government service providers on the specifics of welfare schemes and provision of stigma free services.
- In the deep interiors of Ajmer where behavior is governed by rigid mindsets, Asha is opening up livelihood opportunities for women living with, or affected by HIV – through collective enterprises such as papad and pickle making; and opening up local job opportunities – a step forward is de-stigmatizing PLHIVs.

Future Plans

- Asha's future plans are focused on:
 - Ensuring steady growth and steady fundraising for Saksham.
 - Consolidation and training for her team.
 - Expanding the physical space for Saksham's activities.

Impact

- Asha's efforts have yielded the following impact:
 - **6011 HIV** positive persons (women + men + children) have been linked to the ART Centre.
 - **336 women** from the general population have been reached through HIV awareness programs.
 - **50 women** provided livelihoods by Saksham.
 - **85 women** who access nutrition supplements in Saksham's office.
- As a result of Asha's advocacy and referrals, maternity ward nurses and midwives at Nasirabad Government Hospital were able to demand for HIV test kits in their labor rooms and now actively screen and test all expectant mothers.



Deepa Pawar

Organization: Anubhuti Trust

State: Mumbai, Maharashtra

Sector: Health

Born into a family of iron smiths, Deepa won over poverty, abuse, early marriage, domestic violence, and work place discrimination to emerge as a young change agent. Her organization is building transformative youth leaders, youth organizations, and youth networks that are led by Dalit, Adivasi, and Muslim men and women. They are mentored to galvanize local governments and communities on issues of sexual health, gender, rights, mental health, and wellness. Deepa's work has directly impacted 15,800 youth leaders and their communities. More than four youth groups nurtured by her have evolved into formal organizations, in turn impacting 15,000 women and children.

Problem

- India views its youth as a consumer segment, as an economic and political workforce and as a recipient of development programs. But it does not seriously view its youth as nation-builders, change agents, policy makers.
- Other factors that seriously erode the role that the youth can play in nation-building include lack of education, health and well-being supports:
 - 31 percent of young women and 14 percent of young men are illiterate.
 - 44 percent of young women and 47 percent of young men are abnormally thin and malnourished.
 - About 25 percent of married adolescent and young women have unmet family planning needs.
- For disadvantaged youth, there are few spaces to connect with their own selves and access their leadership.

Key Activities

- Deepa views herself as an incubator and springboard for grassroots health leaders and civic change activists. She has trained youth from migrant Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim and other minority communities in health, sexuality, wellness and rights-based approaches – to launch first generation changemakers from excluded groups.
- Her organization, Anubhuti follows a three-pronged model of launching young change agents:
 - It first sets up youth centers and networks in under-served areas.
 - It then conducts capacity building and convergence between local government bodies and other stakeholders to the youth.
 - It also designs campaigns and advocacy that are youth-led for large-scale systems change.
- Deepa's approach to youth leadership development is routed through health work – empowering youth to connect with their physical, sexual, mental and reproductive health issues; access their inner agency and leadership; and then go on to enable their communities.

Impact

- Over a **17 year** journey, Deepa has directly impacted **15,800 individuals** in difficult communities.
 - This is inclusive of the impact that she has created in two years of setting up Anubhuti (where 500 youth and community leaders have been created, who have gone on to impact 3000 individuals)
 - Through advocacy efforts, Deepa has built strong partnerships with the Kalyan Dombivili Municipal Corporation to partner with their youth groups.
- Four youth groups seeded by Deepa are today stable community organizations and in turn have impacted 15,000 individuals in their communities.

Future Plans

- Deepa's future plans include
 - The establishment of five successful community youth groups in Mumbai and Thane Districts, which together impact 25,000 people.
 - Incubation of three additional youth networks (like Raahi) that are led by grassroots women across five wards of Mumbai and Thane districts, impacting 15,000 people.



Hajera Unnisa

Organization: My Choices Foundation

State: Hyderabad, Telangana

Sector: Health

Growing up with abuse, violence, and poverty, Hajera is working to end domestic violence and child sex abuse in the poorest pockets of Hyderabad, dominated by religious conservatism. Hajera and her team of 'peacemakers' are opening up safe spaces in bastis for women and children to access psychological and legal relief. Awareness sessions, counseling and legal redressal have given courage to 1,382 women and 4,593 children to break their silence around abuse and take urgent action.

Problem

- The Old City of Hyderabad is dominated by religious conservatism which systematically subjects women to violence, abuse, and inequity. There is rampant normalization of violence against women.
- Women are denied access to education, leaving them completely dependent on their husbands and male relatives. The women in this community have neither voice nor a spokesperson to champion their cause.
- Community members refuse to accept organizational interventions or government schemes that do not align with their religious views.

Key Activities

- Hajera and her team of 'peacemakers' have created safe spaces in bastis for women and children to access psychological and legal assistance.
- She and her team of 16 peacemakers have deployed the following strategies to break through generations of silence on domestic violence and child sexual abuse:
 - Conducting intimate basti meetings with women to engage in discussions on domestic violence
 - Organizing sessions on child sex abuse in government and private schools
 - Managing a counselling center for individual case work
 - Ensuring private, home-based counselling
 - Managing a local helpline
- Working in volatile areas, Hajera and her team have to engage in active conflict resolution with angry community leaders and school authorities – they view these as opportunities for alliance building.

Impact

- Hajera and her team of peacemakers have directly impacted **1382 women** and **4593 children.**

Future Plans

- Hajera aims to train herself as a counsellor and expand the breadth and depth of her work at My Choices Foundation.



Eliza Boro

Organization: Mahila Shakti Kendra

State: Sonitpur, Assam

Sector: Micro Enterprise

Financial independence from a micro enterprise enabled Eliza to overcome domestic violence. With this conviction, she grew from being a SHG group member to leading an organization that pioneered the SHG movement in Assam. MASK has impacted 2,550 women and their families through SHGs, micro entrepreneurship, animal husbandry, and other allied activities, ending indebtedness and stemming forced migration. By engaging women from all ethnic and linguistic groups in livelihoods generation, MASK has broken the isolation and strengthened the unity between diverse tribes.

Problem

- The district of Sonitpur, part of Bodoland, is the meeting point of several disruptive forces:
 - Disruptive floods that have led to large-scale migration and indebtedness.
 - Uneasy co-habitation of several ethnic, language and identity groups, including Bangladeshi refugees, who live in isolation and fear.
 - Violent clashes between the Bodo and Muslim community.
- Most communities in the district survive on loans against their lands from Kabulis or the moneylenders who charge interest rates ranging from 120 – 480 percent.
- The delayed entry of SHGs and MFIs in the region have kept rural communities unaware of, and untouched by, financial inclusion programs.

Key Activities

- Eliza's organization, MASK, is a SHG pioneer in the region. Under Eliza's leadership, it has introduced a range of agriculture and animal husbandry-based micro-enterprises which are stemming the tide of migration in the district and ending indebtedness.
- The micro enterprises have been hoisted on the foundation of 110 SHGs set up by Eliza and her team. They range from:
 - Commercial vegetable farming, mushroom cultivation, organic farming and vermi composting, horticulture, pulses and oil seeds production
 - Pig rearing and Pisciculture
 - Weaving
- A key player in MGNREGA and NRLM, Eliza and her team are also making a huge push for literacy for women – to enable their full and equal participation in markets.

Impact

- Eliza has created the first livelihoods eco-system in **57 villages** of the Balipara block of Sonitpur, impacting **2,550 people**.
 - 1,500 women in SHGs.
 - 1,050 women enrolled in night school and Adult Literacy Program.
 - 800 families report increased family incomes of Rs. 20,000 annually. Rs. 94,30,000 in loans has been raised for women.
- By engaging women of all tribes, ethnic and language identities (including single women and widows) into the SHG platforms, Eliza has been successful in building bridges of trust, mutual accountability and collaboration between different groups in her region.
- By introducing micro entrepreneurship to **800 families**, she has moved them from helplessness to problem-solving; demonstrating the economic solutions lie in their own hands.

Future Plans

- Eliza plans to expand her micro enterprise ventures and strengthen the convergence for rural communities with government schemes.



Vechulou Kanuo

Organization: Chakhesang Women Welfare

State: Phek, Nagaland

Sector: Micro Enterprise

Vechulou grew up in an isolated village on the Indo-Burmese border, managing farm work and domestic chores. Her capacity for back-breaking work enabled her to transform a bankrupt organization to one of the most successful livelihoods ventures in the state. Vechulou has introduced modern agriculture and animal husbandry to 10,586 women, farmers and youth, seeding thousands of small entrepreneurs in the deep rural interiors of Nagaland. The only woman to be invited to traditional Naga tribal council meetings, Vechulou represents the voice of Naga women in the state.

Problem

- Several factors have blocked Nagaland from moving from a forest-based economy to one that engages with modern markets. These include:
 - Generations of inter-tribal conflict and a difficult history with 'mainland India'.
 - Large-scale dependence on the center for subsidies, leading to the virtual absence of a local vibrant economy.
 - Dependence on government jobs – leading to a negative mindset towards small entrepreneurship.
 - Mountainous and densely forested terrain with abysmal road infrastructure – leading to a total collapse of any effort to link interior villages to markets.
 - Land ownership patterns and the unwillingness of banks to provide locals with small loans.
- Despite women holding up the farm economy on their shoulders, the patriarchy of the Naga culture has put multiple burdens on its women.

Key Activities

- Vechulou is putting women at the center of micro entrepreneurship and livelihoods creation in Phek – a rural and remote district of Nagaland. She is engaging them in SHGs and modern agriculture and animal-husbandry based entrepreneurship.
- Not to leave the youth behind, Vechulou has trained drop outs and educated unemployed youth in weaving and tailoring, putting them on the path of self-employment.
- To build legitimacy for entrepreneurship and embed it into the Naga social fabric, Vechulou has created a unique network of allies: local churches, village women societies, and village women boards. This social network understands and promotes entrepreneurship as a route to creative problem-solving, economic security, and peace.
- Her organization was the first to set up a food processing unit in the state to benefit farmers and the first to partner with NABARD.

Impact

- Vechulou's organization has directly impacted 10,586 individuals.
 - **3,965 women** impacted in 305 SHGs.
 - **4,395 agriculture** and piggery farmers impacted – raising their incomes by 2.5 lakhs annually.
 - **1,500 youth** provided employment.
 - **726** women linked to night classes.
- Phek has experienced the following critical shifts: rigid, low-yielding agricultural incomes have been overcome; women's rights have been strengthened and new attitudes towards employment (beyond government jobs) are being built among the youth.

Future Plans

- Vechulou aims to take forward the eco-system building work for entrepreneurship in Nagaland, through more advocacy and government and business partnerships.



Nancy Pushpam

Organization: Vizhuthukal Trust

State: Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

Sector: Micro Enterprise

Daughter of a Dalit school headmaster, Nancy Pushpam has tackled severe backlash and threats for challenging caste and gender-based discrimination. Vizhuthukal Trust (VT) has organized 11,980 ultra-poor, Dalit women and children into SHGs, domestic workers unions, and children's collectives. It has incubated more than 450 Dalit women entrepreneurs and opened up credit linkages of up to 3 crores for them. Powered by an all-Dalit women Board, VT has also provided survival supports to elderly Dalit house helps who are abandoned and too emaciated to fend for themselves.

Problem

- The Shakliyas and Kuravars of Tamil Nadu are the Dalit sub castes who were traditionally involved in manual scavenging, domestic work, piggery and clearing of food waste.
 - They work for long hours without a holiday, and get paid meager incomes of INR 100 per month for any chore they take up in a house. The others engage in hospital waste and plastic scavenging, washing dead bodies for Hindu rites, and disposal of unclaimed human and animal bodies.
 - They live in small, cramped, rented spaces, infested with insects and generally near water accumulation points, garbage dumping grounds, or public urinals. Alcoholism and domestic violence are rampant, compounding with the prevalence of women abandonment or single-income families.
- The lack of opportunities for a dignified livelihood compounded by a lack of access to education and awareness has ensured that these communities remain trapped in a cycle of poverty and discrimination.

Key Activities

- Nancy Pushpam is collectivizing these ultra-poor Dalit women and their children into SHGs, domestic workers' unions and children's groups to ensure social security, livelihoods, access to education, and, most critically, their agency and voice.
- By connecting them to social security schemes, labor welfare acts, setting up district-level domestic worker units, engaging them in leadership trainings and launching Dalit women entrepreneurs, Nancy is opening up a world that until now did not exist for them.
- Nancy's organization is also providing children and senior citizens (most abandoned, starving and too frail to survive) basic entitlements and protection – thus creating a cross-generational movement.

Impact

- Nancy's organization has directly impacted **11,980 domestic** workers and their children across 121 villages. Her primary stakeholders have been:
 - **4657 women** impacted through 250 SHGs.
 - 1560 women trained in entrepreneurship.
 - **540 women** entrepreneurs, reporting monthly income increases of Rs **11,000** launched.
 - **504 children** currently engaged in support groups and tuition centers.
 - 150+ elderly women supported every year.

Future Plans

- In addition to strengthening her current work, Nancy aims to begin work with the transgender community and increase the pool of accessible and available loans for Dalit women entrepreneurs.



Sumitra Shiral

Organization: Jiyo Green

State: Osmanabad, Maharashtra

Sector: Micro Enterprise

At 15, Sumitra was abandoned and left penniless by her husband. Today she is a master at seeding and strengthening grassroots business ventures. Working in the drought-affected areas of Osmanabad, Sumitra has organized 3,000 women into SHGs with an asset pool of Rs. 5.3 crores. Owner of two businesses and a producer company, this barefoot business coach has also mentored 2,000 women entrepreneurs, of which 700 are running successful businesses with annual income increases of more than 40 percent.

Problem

- Osmanabad is severely drought-hit, pushing the mostly-agricultural communities of this region into extreme poverty and migration.
 - Daily wage work is often the only resort for families here.
 - The area records high numbers of farmer suicides caused by crop failure.
 - Alcoholism is a huge problem amongst local men, leaving the business of livelihoods and survival entirely on the women of the community.
- While rural women are inherently entrepreneurial, they do not have enabling eco-systems; banks generally turn their backs on grassroots women entrepreneurs. Limited starting capital, non-emphasis on savings, and social constraints have made the entrepreneurship ecosystem challenging, particularly for women.
- Additionally, a lack of entrepreneurial skills, information, and market exposure inhibits women from sustaining their businesses beyond one or two cycles

Key Activities

- Sumitra views entrepreneurship as a vehicle for building resilient women and societies, where communities are knitted into a web of production, inter-dependence and value-creation.
- A serial entrepreneur, she runs two ventures and is promoter of a Producer Company. She is building larger supply chains, (especially for Prasad shops and organic vegetable stalls) to enable women to get into distribution chains and go beyond their immediate village.
- As a local mentor and business trainer for grassroots women entrepreneurs, Sumitra has organized women into vibrant SHGs and is coaching women entrepreneurs in emerging markets; including those in the sphere of health and WASH.

Impact

- Sumitra has directly impacted 5,000 rural women :
 - **3,000 through** SHGs and 2,000 through business coaching and facilitation.
 - The total asset pool created by SHGs is Rs. 5.3 crore.
- **700 women** received training and have launched ventures, increasing their incomes by 40 percent.

Future Plans

- Sumitra plans to become an established wholesaler and expand her business to other areas of Maharashtra.
- She plans to help an additional 1,000 women farmers develop and implement organic farming business plans.



Sangita Tumade

Organization: Amhi Amchya Arogyasaathi

State: Gadchiroli, Maharashtra

Sector: Micro Enterprise

Sangita fought against the stigma of Leukoderma by setting up a livelihoods eco-system for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Working in 132 villages, she has organized 954 PwDs in Peer Support Groups and SHGs and encouraged savings, access to social security, and small business ownership among them. Through entrepreneurship trainings and market linkages, 50 PwDs have launched their ventures. By bringing home annual incomes of Rs. 60,000, they have upended the conventional understanding of 'ability' in this backward region.

Problem

- 13.4 million people with disabilities in India are in the employable age group of 15-59 years (Census 2011).
- 9.9 million are non-workers or marginal workers; a majority dependent on social security/ family/ caregivers
- Leaving people with disability outside the economy translates into a foregone GDP of about 5 to 7 percent. (World Bank)
- 45 percent of all households in Gadchiroli fall below the poverty line. It is a high-priority district for healthcare services. However, very little has been done to support PwDs due to their relatively small population size and remoteness.

Future Plans

- Sangita plans to expand her work to six additional districts of Gadchiroli.
- She plans to form a co-operative society in which 150 PwDs play an active role in goods production and business management.

Key Activities

- Working across 132 villages in three districts of Maharashtra, Sangita has established a mechanism to identify PwDs, pull them out of their invisible existence, leading to higher levels of PwD inclusion and therefore, greater awareness of livelihood opportunities.
- They are then collectivized into peer-support groups (PSGs) in which PwD members have further organized themselves into self-help groups (SHGs) and are encouraged to save and inter-lend amongst themselves.
- Access to government schemes – especially the disability certificate, public transportation benefits, monthly stipends, etc. have opened the understanding for PwDs of their citizenship entitlements.
- Sangita's efforts to link PwDs to skilling and employability training centers and train them in entrepreneurship has opened up the world of livelihoods and dignity – which had so far been unimaginable for them.

Impact

Sangita has organized **954 PwDs** in PSGs.

- 175 PwDs have been connected to a vocational training center.

50 PwDs

have been provided training to start small businesses enabling them to earn up to

Rs. **5,000 per** month.

132 Sarpanchs

have been sensitized about PwDs.



Conclusion

We hope that you have found this handbook useful; that it has awakened the evangelist, first adopter and pioneer in you. Please share your feedback on how we can make this handbook more effective.

We are closing with a quote from **Rumi** that has continued to inspire us in our work with grassroots women change agents:

“ You are a
wave on quest
You scatter
when you
come to rest ”

JCB entered India in 1979 and introduced the iconic Backhoe Loader which has contributed to building India's infrastructure ever since. A fully owned subsidiary of J C Bamford Excavators, UK, it has five World Class factories at Delhi-NCR, Jaipur and Pune and manufactures over 50 products in eight categories. While the Delhi-NCR factory is the world's largest factory for Backhoe Loaders, the Pune facility also has a state-of-the-art Design Centre. JCB India has exported to over 90 countries today. Committed to CSR through the Lady Bamford Charitable Trust, it focuses on communities around its factories and works with Government schools and Vocational Centres, reaching out over 12,500 students on Skills.

Start Up! is an incubator, impact accelerator and leadership springboard for social entrepreneurs, non-profits and CSR initiatives. It launches and scales ventures that create lasting impact in under-served communities. Over eight years, Start Up! has incubated and scaled 60 social change organizations across 15 states. It has trained more than 350 leaders of grassroots and medium-scale organizations in strategic planning and leadership building.

Start Up! believes that grassroots women change agents will rapidly fuel growth, inclusion and development in forgotten communities of India. However, for the transformative capacities of grassroots women to grow, what is needed is that corporates and government acknowledge and partner with them as change makers, wealth creators, knowledge bearers and champions of building a progressive India.



CII Foundation (CIIF) was set up by CII in 2011 to undertake a wide range of developmental and charitable activities pan India by enabling industry for infusing inclusive development.

CIIF works towards inclusive development by providing a meaningful bridge between marginalized communities and donors, especially corporates by providing strategic guidance on CSR and developing and managing high impact programmes.

The thematic areas of CIIF include: Education; Public Health and Sanitation; Skilling, Employment and Livelihoods; Gender Equality, Women Empowerment and Safety; Environmental Sustainability, including water; Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation.

In this effort, the Foundation works together with corporates, governments, communities, and civil society institutions to channelize their collective resources towards social and community development.

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