



Forging Partnerships to Empower Communities



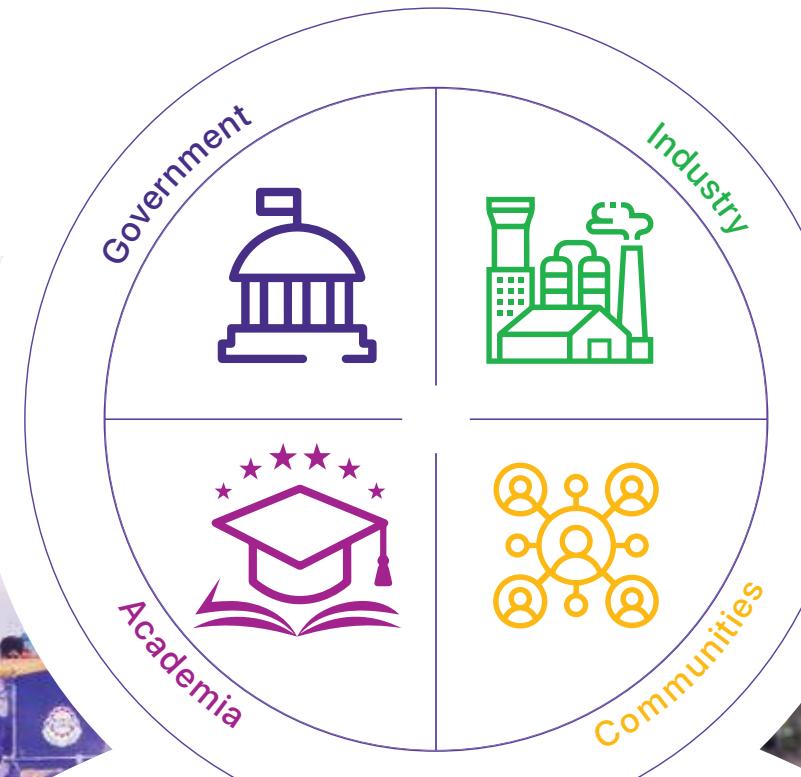
Forging Partnerships to Empower Communities

Activity Report | 2024-25

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Forging Partnerships to Empower Communities

The CII Foundation was set up by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in 2011 and works across India through a collaborative approach, partnering with Government, corporates, civil society, NGOs, academic institutions, and other key stakeholders to drive social change.

The Foundation undertakes projects in diverse areas, often on a pilot basis initially, and presents a successful model

of engagement that is replicable and scalable to amplify impact. Each initiative is led by a committed team of dedicated stakeholders who bring different expertise to the initiative for maximum impact.

The CII Foundation is uniquely placed to leverage the vast network of CII's membership to transform lives.



Every initiative at the CII Foundation is strategically aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflecting our commitment to development priorities.



Healthcare

Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages.



Early Childhood Education

Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All.



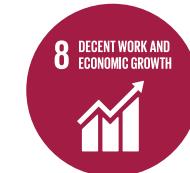
Women Empowerment

Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls.



Waste Management

Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All.



Skilling and Livelihood

Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All.



Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation

Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable.



Climate Change

Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts.

Message from the Chairperson

“

The road to Viksit Bharat requires every stakeholder to participate meaningfully. I extend my deepest gratitude to our partners, supporters, and the communities we serve. Together, let us continue to accelerate change, bridge development gaps, and co-create an India where progress is inclusive and opportunity reaches every corner. ”



Jamshyd N Godrej

Chairperson, CII Foundation and Chairman & Managing Director Godrej Enterprises Group

At the CII Foundation, 2024-25 has been a year of expansion and deeper impact. Over the last year, we have expanded our footprint, responding to evolving community needs while aligning closely with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We entered a new phase of growth, launching village initiatives in states such as Uttar Pradesh and India's tribal belts to pilot holistic rural development. This builds on our core strengths while expanding our reach to some of the country's most underserved regions. Our work focuses on improving livelihoods, enhancing healthcare access, and building community resilience—powered by rigorous baseline studies and community engagement.

Our crop residue management project aimed at mitigating stubble burning, a leading cause of air pollution in the

north-west during the onset of winter, is not only successfully addressing the issue, but is also fostering a zero-stubble burning movement with villages like Polo Majra and Jatana in Punjab achieving zero stubble burning. Last year, interventions helped save 87% of farmland from burning in the 793 intervened villages in Punjab and Haryana.

Our Woman Exemplar Program continues to empower grassroots women leaders, building a powerful network of women who are catalysing change at the grassroots level and impacting over 30 lakh people annually. In 2024-25, we added a new category for our Woman Exemplar Award —Community Strengthening—bringing in women leaders who now join a cohort of leaders working in the areas of health, education, and microenterprise sectors to drive social change.

In the Early Childhood Education space, our work across Jammu & Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu improved learning environments and built the capacity of Anganwadi Workers.

Meanwhile, our disaster rehabilitation program in Kerala modernized critical infrastructure at the North Paravur Taluk Hospital, strengthening our Kerala Rehabilitation efforts which collectively are benefitting over 8 lakh people annually.

We also strengthened our focus on environmental sustainability through waste management interventions in Leh, Kochi, and Gurugram—creating community-led solutions that are both scalable and sustainable.

While the progress is inspiring, challenges persist.

According to reports, CSR spending by NSE listed companies surged to Rs 17,967 crore, a 16% increase over the previous year while CSR spending by Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) rose by 19% to Rs 4,911 crore in FY 2024, reaching a four-year high following a dip in FY 2023.

This growth reflects not only rising profits but a growing industry-wide commitment to inclusive development and measurable impact. This shift signals a promising trajectory—one in which Indian industry is increasingly contributing to a robust and resilient future for all citizens. Indeed, CSR spending is evolving to become a strategic lever for nation-building—mirroring the aspirations of a country on the path to becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Yet, CSR spending remains concentrated in a few states and sectors. Maharashtra received the maximum spend, followed by Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, with States in the East like Assam receiving comparatively smaller amounts. Education and healthcare account for most CSR allocations, while rural livelihoods and disability support remain underfunded. Moreover, a significant proportion of projects remain short-term and fragmented.

To shift this paradigm, we need to move towards strategic, long-term, and locally relevant interventions. This requires closer collaboration between corporates, government bodies, civil society, and communities. We must promote greater transparency, better impact measurement, and inclusive planning processes that ensure that community voices shape solutions. Technology—whether through AI, blockchain, or IoT—can help us monitor, measure, and course-correct in real time, maximizing the social return on every rupee spent.

The road to Viksit Bharat requires every stakeholder to participate meaningfully. I extend my deepest gratitude to our partners, supporters, and the communities we serve. Together, let us continue to accelerate change, bridge development gaps, and co-create an India where progress is inclusive and opportunity reaches every corner.

We are proud of what we have achieved—and we are committed to doing even more.

Message from the Managing Trustee

“A large population of India resides in its villages, and going deeper into villages and underserved areas, such as East India and the tribal belts, will magnificently drive change at the grassroots level, creating ripples of transformation.”



Chandrajit Banerjee

Managing Trustee
CII Foundation and
Director General
Confederation of Indian Industry

Over the past three years, as world economic growth slowed due to geopolitical disruptions and trade tensions, India shines as a beacon of resilience and hope, propelled by robust policies and development initiatives.

CII has been at the forefront of driving collaborations to bring together diverse stakeholders for holistic growth, fortified by strong policies and impactful on-ground implementation. To facilitate the participation of Indian industry in the nation's social development, the CII Foundation was set up in 2011. CII Foundation has successfully established itself as a trusted partner for industry and the social development sector, fostering collaborations with the Government and communities to drive powerful initiatives. The Foundation works in areas such as

climate change, women empowerment, early childhood education, disaster relief and rehabilitation, healthcare, livelihood and skilling, and waste management, amongst others.

In 2024-25, guided by the theme 'Forging Partnerships, Transforming Villages, Empowering Communities' the CII Foundation expanded the breadth and depth of its initiatives to deepen social impact. By strengthening its network of industry partners and key stakeholders, the Foundation brought together diverse expertise and resources to drive more effective and sustainable changes on the ground. These strategic collaborations have played a pivotal role in empowering communities and accelerating the transformation of rural ecosystems across multiple states.

Adopting an integrated village development approach, CII Foundation launched key initiatives, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Jharkhand, aimed at bridging the gap between need and delivery of social development initiatives for underserved communities. In Uttar Pradesh, interventions are underway in Satrikh and Chainpurva villages in Barabanki district, Dhanapur block in Chandauli district, and Mohanlalganj and Sarojini Nagar blocks in Lucknow. In Jharkhand, efforts are focused on Sohna and Kulburu villages in Gumla district, while in West Bengal, initiatives span Binodpur village, Nagenbad, and the South 24 Parganas district. These initiatives empower women through skill development and livelihood opportunities via CII's Model Career Centres and Multi-Skill Training Centres, while also advancing access to quality healthcare and education in these regions.

A large population of India resides in its villages, and going deeper into villages and underserved areas, such as East India and the tribal belts, will magnificently drive change at the grassroots level, creating ripples of transformation.

While we focused on new geographies and areas of work, we continued to strengthen our commitment to ongoing initiatives.

This year, our Woman Exemplar Program, which identifies, recognizes, and empowers grassroots women leaders, was expanded with the introduction of a new category of the Award: Community Strengthening, honouring women who are building resilient communities, championing sustainability, and creating lasting impact.

We scaled up our efforts in agricultural sustainability through our Crop Residue Management (CRM) initiative, which supports farmers through in-situ and ex-situ methods to mitigate stubble burning, a leading cause of air pollution and soil degradation. From 432 villages in 2023-24, the project was scaled up to 793 villages in Punjab and Haryana in the 2024 season.

The programme saved 87% of farmland from stubble burning, and several villages achieved zero stubble burning in the 2024 season, establishing the efficacy of the project model in promoting sustainable agriculture.

Our waste management projects, running in diverse geographies like Leh in Ladakh, Kochi in Kerala, and Farrukhnagar in Haryana, gathered pace. Significant strides were also made in strengthening infrastructure with the establishment of Material Recovery Facilities capable of automatic baling and shredding.

Across multiple villages and communities, significant progress has been observed, characterized by renewed optimism and enhanced resilience. These results have been realized through the committed collaboration of our partners, whose involvement has been essential throughout each phase.

The Annual Report 2024-25 highlights the significant impact of collaborative partnerships on community empowerment. We welcome your continued engagement as we work towards advancing a more inclusive, compassionate, and resilient India.

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Vision

Enable Industry for Infusing
Inclusive Development

Mission

The CII Foundation works towards inclusive development by designing and implementing high-impact projects to cover some of the most marginalised communities, working closely with marginalised communities and donors, especially the Corporate Sector.

Areas of Intervention



Climate Change



Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation



Early Childhood Education



Healthcare



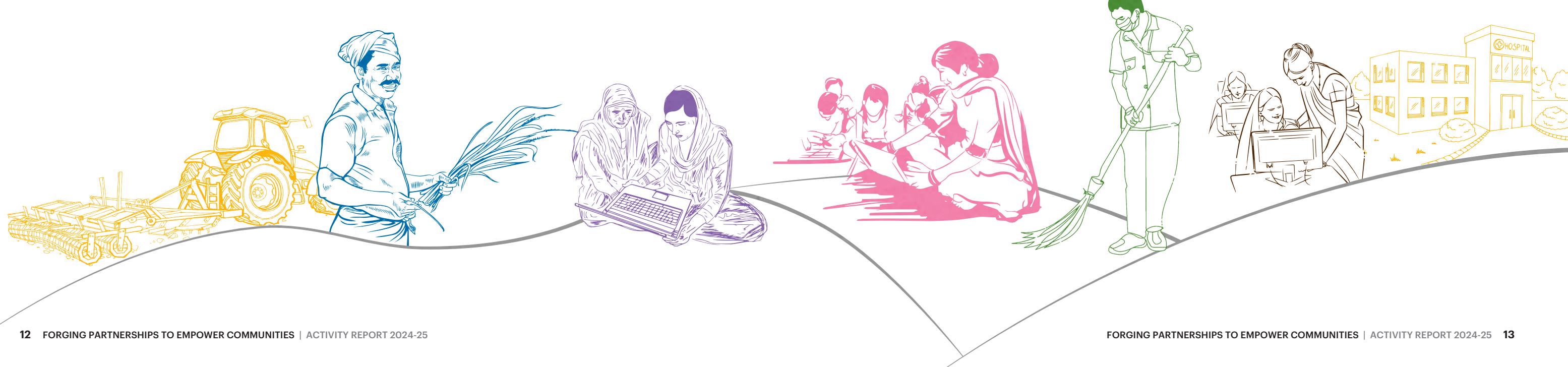
Skilling and Livelihood



Women Empowerment



Waste Management





Year in Review 2024-25

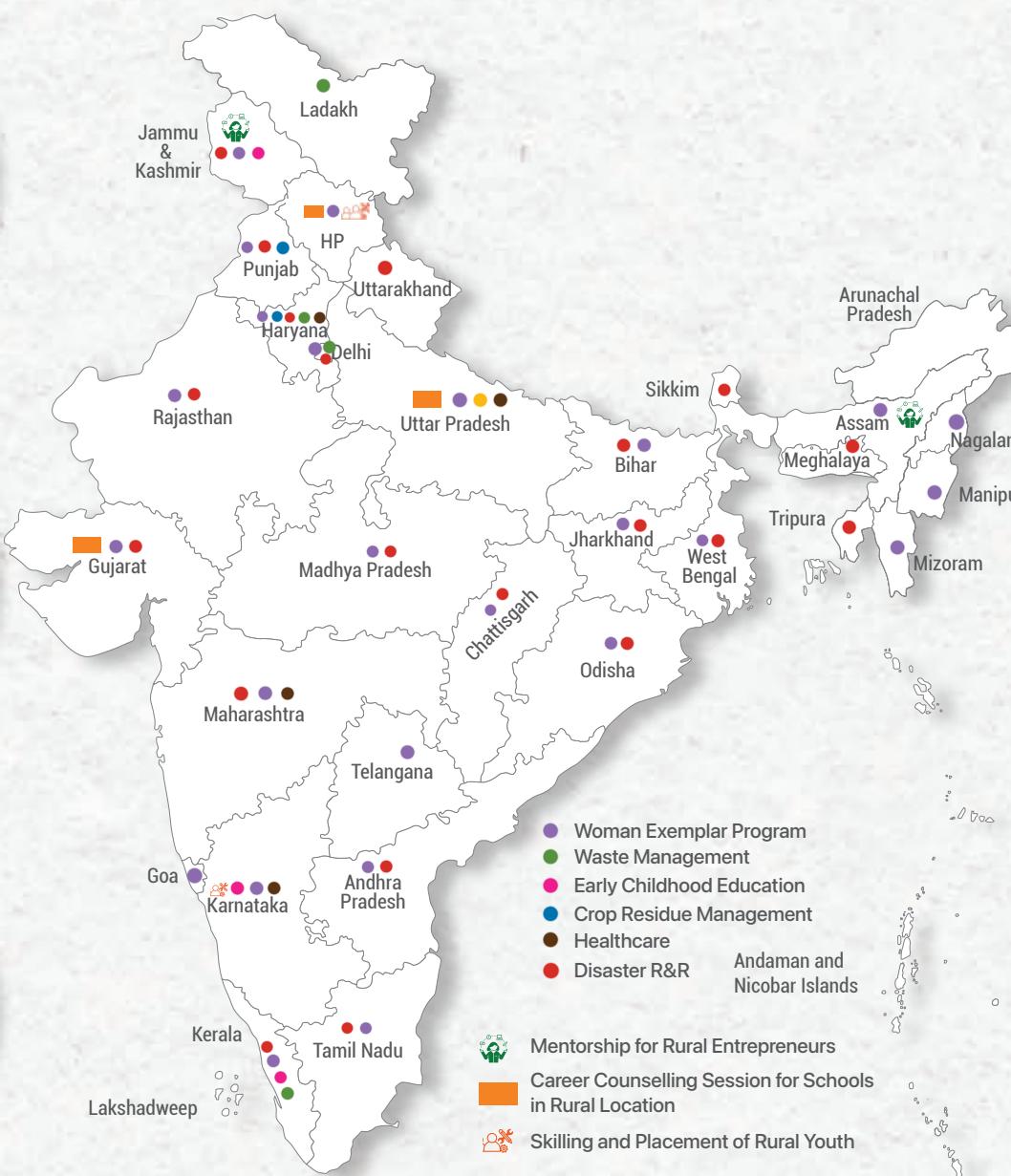
Forging Partnerships, Transforming Villages, Empowering Communities

Driving Impact Across India

30 lakh people impacted annually through the Woman Exemplars – grassroots women leaders.

8 lakh+ lives impacted annually through reconstruction of healthcare centres and government school in Kerala.

1.47 lakh farmers engaged to mitigate stubble burning across Punjab and Haryana.



Expanding Horizons: Village Initiatives

Taking small but meaningful steps to drive social change in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and India's tribal belts.

Initiated with a comprehensive scoping exercise in:

Satrikh village and Chainpurna village, Barabanki district; Dhanapur block in Chandauli district, Mohanlalganj and Sarojini Nagar block in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh

Sohna, Farrukhnagar and Pataudi blocks in Haryana

Kulburu village in Gumla district in Jharkhand

Binodpur village, Nagenbad and South 24 Parganas in West Bengal

Billakuppam, Aathupakam, Kavaraipettai, Thevorykandigai, Chittor Nattam, Panathumettu Kandagai, Kottaikarai Gummidiyoondi Block, Thiruvallur District in Tamil Nadu.

The integrated development work focuses education; healthcare; rural livelihood, and skilling leveraging CII's Model Career Centres and Multi-skill Training Centres to boost employability.

Key Highlights

Crop Residue Management

Mitigating Farm Stubble Burning in Punjab and Haryana

87% of farmland saved from burning in the 793 villages

Zero stubble burning achieved

Polo Majra village, Fatehgarh Sahib district, Punjab and Jatana village, Ludhiana district, Punjab.

Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation

Providing Relief and Rehabilitation to Help Rebuild Lives

Kerala: Upgraded North Paravur Taluk Hospital, including modernizing an eye operation theatre.

8 Lakh people impacted annually through Kerala rehabilitation efforts.

Early Childhood Education

Strengthening Anganwadi Centres to Improve Early Childhood Education

21,000 children impacted across

Jammu & Kashmir: Breng-Anantnag district; Narvav-Baramullah district Banihal and Gool-Ramban district

Karnataka: Block Hoskote and Nellamangala - Bangalore rural district; Block Dharwad - Dharwad district; Dandeli and Haliyal - Uttara Kannada district; Kollegal - Chamrajnagar district

Andhra Pradesh: Block Tada - Tirupati district

Tamil Nadu: Block Gummidiyoondi - Thiruvallur district

Woman Exemplar Program

Empowering Grassroots Women Leaders to Drive Social Transformation

30 Lakh people impacted annually | **420** nominations received for Award; **50% from new nominators**

Waste Management Initiative

Strengthening Waste Management by Empowering Communities

Leh, Ladakh: 2 Material Recovery Facilities (3-5 TPD) set up; Automated PET Bottle Vending Machines were established to reduce plastic waste in high-footfall areas.

Farrukhnagar, Haryana: Implemented door-to-door waste collection; established wet waste recycling facilities in 4 villages.

Kochi, Kerala: Expanded waste collection to 7,800 households across 21 wards, increasing incomes for Haritha Karma Sena members.

Climate Change

13 CLIMATE ACTION



Click here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>





Crop Residue Management



Climate change is exacerbating crop failure, depleting groundwater resources, and deteriorating soil health — particularly in regions such as Punjab and Haryana. Farmers face the added challenge of managing crop residue, often resorting to burning stubble to clear fields due to shrinking windows between harvest and sowing. This practice not only degrades soil health but also contributes significantly to air pollution.

To mitigate crop residue burning and reduce air pollution, CII launched a Crop Residue Management (CRM) program in 2018 under its Cleaner Air, Better Life initiative. Implemented on-ground by the CII Foundation, the program was launched in 19 villages in Punjab as a multi-stakeholder initiative, leveraging the strength and expertise of government, corporates, agricultural universities and the local farming community. The program focusses on creating awareness and supporting farmers with the tools and technology to adopt viable alternatives to stubble burning to create a zero-stubble burning movement. Building on the success of the pilot project, the project was expanded over the years.

In season 2024, the program was scaled up to 793 villages, covering 8.73 lakh acres and reaching 1.47 lakh farmers across Punjab and Haryana—up from 432 villages, 4.97 lakh acres of farmland and 88,000 farmers in 2023–24. Key interventions included strengthening in-situ (on-field) straw management and introducing ex-situ (off-field) solutions such as biopelletisation and biocomposting of straw. New donors, such as JSW Foundation and Cadence Design Systems, joined the program alongside existing partners such as Goodyear, HDFC Bank, and SBI Card. With support from Punjab and Haryana Agricultural Universities and over 100 youth volunteers, the program is empowering farmers to adopt sustainable practices and create a zero-stubble burning movement.

In season 2024, the program was scaled up to 793 villages, covering 8.73 lakh acres and reaching 1.47 lakh farmers across Punjab and Haryana, up from 432 villages, 4.97 lakh acres, and 88,000 farmers in 2023–24.

Key Components of the Program



Awareness Building



Machinery Support Through Community Tool Banks



Farmers' Training and Farm Demonstrations



Biomass Management Alternatives - Mechanised In-situ & Ex-Situ Straw Management and Composting



Location

Punjab and Haryana



Key Supporters
Apraava Energy
Cadence Design Systems
Goodyear
Fidelity International
Indian Oil Corporation Limited
PTC India Financial Services
JSW Foundation
HDFC Bank
SBI Card

Awareness Building: Engaging Farmers and Mobilizing Communities



Ongoing engagement with farmers is vital to building a zero-stubble burning movement. In project villages, outreach activities such as community meetings, door-to-door campaigns, nukkad nataks (street plays), pamphlet distribution, wall paintings, and awareness vans were used to educate farmers about the damage due to stubble burning and encourage participation in the project.

Starting July, meetings were held with farmers and other important stakeholders across multiple project sites. Volunteers from donor companies like Cadence Design Systems, visited villages such as Dullat and Buwan in Haryana, promoting awareness about stubble burning and the benefits of crop residue management technologies.

The CII Foundation team met Dr. Satbir Singh Gosal, Vice Chancellor of the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, and Dr. Vishal Bector, Associate Director (Institution Relations) and discussed collaborative efforts to promote sustainable farming. They also visited Dhamar village in Rohtak and the straw-to-biogas unit in Meghawali village, Haryana, engaging with village women about the benefits of cooking with biogas produced from crop residue. At the Jatana Multipurpose Co-operative Society in Ludhiana, they interacted with farmers and visited PDC Agro, an agricultural tool manufacturing company, to learn more about the best possible solutions for stubble management.

On 26 and 27 September 2024 the team visited key project areas in Fatehabad and Sirsa, Haryana, and interacted with experts such as Dr. Yadvika, Professor

and Head, Department of Renewable and Bio-energy Engineering, College of Agricultural Engineering & Technology, Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCS HAU), Hisar. This visit provided valuable insights into both current achievements and potential areas of growth.

A team from PTC India Financial Services Limited (PFS) visited several project villages. Mr. Sitesh Sinha, Senior Vice President at PFS, engaged with farmers in Sanghol and Kotla Masood villages, where an impressive 98% non-burning rate had been achieved. The farmers' commitment to sustainable practices was acknowledged with appreciation awards, and live demonstrations of the Super Seeder and Smart Seeder technologies highlighted their effectiveness in eliminating the need for stubble burning. The team also travelled to Barwali Khurd and Bhari villages, where Mr. Anil Singh, Mr. Deepak Kumar, Mr. Sunil Pokhrial, and Mr. Rajveer Kumar from PFS met with farmers and local stakeholders. Barwali Khurd village achieved a 95% non-burning rate, while in Bhari, farmers successfully achieved a 98% non-burning rate. A review meeting was also held to evaluate the effectiveness of machinery support and adoption of non-burning practices, with farmers sharing feedback.

On Kisan Diwas, 23 December 2024, 37 HDFC Bank staff participated in community activities in Cheema village, Ludhiana. They joined awareness rallies, street plays, painting competitions, and field demos, fostering stronger ties with farmers and supporting sustainable agriculture.





Machinery Support through Community Tool Banks



Access to specialized machinery for stubble management remains a challenge for many small and marginal farmers due to financial constraints and limited availability. To address this gap, the CII Foundation introduced 'Tool Banks', a shared economy model designed to provide affordable and accessible mechanized solutions to farmers. These Tool Banks, established in partnership with Farmer Co-operative Societies and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), house a range of advanced equipment for efficient crop residue management which are available to farmers at affordable rents.

As of 2024, 450 community Tool Banks have been set up in collaboration with 256 Co-operative Societies, with a total of 1,227 machines available across these Tool Banks. These include a diverse array of equipment such as Happy Seeders, Super Seeders, Rotavators, Straw Balers, and Mulchers, ensuring farmers have access to both in-situ and ex-situ management solutions.

This initiative has made advanced machinery easily accessible to farmers, especially small and marginal farmers, promoting environment-friendly agricultural practices.

Farmers' Training and Farm Demonstrations



To ensure the effective use of machinery for stubble management, comprehensive training sessions and on-field demonstrations were organised in collaboration with Punjab and Haryana Agricultural Universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendras. These sessions were further supported by youth volunteers and experienced farmers who conducted additional training programs.

During 2024-25, a total of 51 training sessions were conducted to help farmers adopt mechanized stubble management practices effectively.

Biomass Management Alternatives

While in-situ farm stubble management through machines continued to be the mainstay of the crop residue management program, efforts to introduce and promote ex-situ (off field) farm straw management practices were intensified this year. The CII Foundation has been actively promoting biomass management solutions such as composting and biogas production which converts agricultural waste into valuable resources, reducing environmental damage while enhancing farm efficiency.

Across Punjab and Haryana, the CII Foundation has installed:

9 Straw-based Biogas Plants – Transforming waste into clean energy, reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

3 Straw-Based Biocompost Plants – Converting crop residue into organic compost to improve soil health.

3 Bio-Pelletization Units – Producing bio-pellets as a sustainable fuel alternative.



Biogas Plant

Paddy Biogas plants can use 1.6 MT of biomass of straw and 0.4 MT of cow dung for a 3-month cycle to turn it into cooking gas sufficient for a small family.

Straw-based compost unit has a capacity of turning 16 MT of paddy straw into 32 MT of compost per month. This high-quality compost is available for use by farmers within 30-35 days.

Expanding Geographic Footprint: Strengthening Partnerships

The geographic reach of the program grew significantly during 2024-25, with new partnerships strengthening efforts to combat stubble burning and promote sustainable agriculture.

On 8 May 2024, PFS and CII Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support 50 villages in Fatehgarh Sahib district, Punjab. This initiative will cover 30,000 acres of farmland, benefiting 3,000 farmers. The MoU was signed in the presence of Mr. Sitesh Sinha, Executive Vice President, PFS; Mr. Anil Singh, Manager, CSR, PFS; Ms. Seema Arora, Deputy Director General, CII and former CEO, CII Foundation; Mr Chandrakant Pradhan, Lead - Climate Resilience, CII Foundation, and other CII Foundation team members.

Cadence Design Systems signed an MoU with CII Foundation to extend support to 10 villages in Bhuna block, Fatehabad district, Haryana. The project will span 15,000 acres of farmland, directly benefiting 1,500 farmers.

The HDFC Bank project was expanded with a new initiative launched in Bhawanigarh, Sangrur district, Punjab, on 28 October 2024. This expansion will cover 65 villages, spanning 55,935 acres of farmland and provide support to 7,095 farmers. The initiative builds on existing efforts in 134 villages in Ludhiana, Punjab, and 30 villages in Fatehabad, Haryana, increasing the total active project villages to 229.





The launch event at Gurudwara Sahib in Majhi Village was attended by over 350 farmers, students, and key dignitaries including Mrs. Narinder Kaur Bharaj, MLA, Sangrur; Mr. Sandeep Rishi, Deputy Commissioner, Sangrur; Mr. Rajwinder Kumar Bansal, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Bhawanigarh; Mr. Rajwant Singh Ghuli, In-charge of the CM Camp Office; Mr. Harbans Singh Chehal, Chief Agriculture Officer, Sangrur, and senior representatives from HDFC Bank, including Mrs. Bharti Kapoor, Zonal Head; Mr. Sumesh Grover, Cluster Head; Ms. Anjali Puri, Regional Head for Government-Sponsored Schemes and Ms. Anjali Thakur, Project Manager for CSR. Community-driven activities such as nukkad nataks (street plays) and drawing competition were a part of the project. Additionally, secretaries from 23 farmer Co-operative

Societies were felicitated for their contribution to promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

On 29 March 2025, the CII Foundation, in partnership with **JSW Foundation**, conducted a Field Workshop at Gurudwara Sahib, Banawala Village, Mansa, Punjab, marking the launch of a CRM initiative aimed at combating stubble burning in a cluster of 50 villages, impacting 8,281 farmers across 67,195 acres of farmland. Present at the occasion were Mr. Vishal from JSW Foundation, Mr Chandrakant Pradhan, Lead - Climate Resilience, CII Foundation, along with farmer Co-operative Society members and other stakeholders. With 150 farmers in attendance, the workshop provided a platform for farmers to share their experiences and highlight the need for in-situ machinery to support marginal farmers.

Farmer Outreach Events – Highlights

Throughout the year several farmer outreach events were organised to promote sustainable agricultural practices and honour champion farmers.

On 23 October 2024, in Khanna, Ludhiana, an event marked the collaboration between **HDFC Bank** and CII Foundation. Mr. Baljinder Singh, SDM Khanna, Mrs. Navjot Kaur and Mrs. Harpuneet Kaur, Agricultural Development Officers (ADOs) Mr. Kuldeep Singh, Sarpanch of Village Goh, and Mr. Baldev Singh, President of the Goh Co-operative Society, attended. Gursimran Singh, a student, presented a 3D model illustrating the harmful effects of straw burning and alternative solutions. Farmers shared their

experiences, emphasizing the positive impact of sustainable practices, and 53 new machines were distributed to small and marginal farmers, with three handed over at the event.



On 24 October 2024, another event in Bhunderwas, Fatehabad, featured Mr. Jagdish Chander, SDM of Ratia, Dr. Pawan Jayani, AAE of Fatehabad, Dr. Sandeep Kumar, Block Agriculture Officer, and Mr. Pankaj Sethi, Senior Technician from NRMFTTI, Hisar. The event included a flag-off ceremony for in-situ machines, followed by field demos, with SDM Mr. Jagdish Chander personally driving a tractor to promote machine use.



On 6 August 2024, the CII Foundation, in collaboration with **Goodyear**, held a farmer outreach event and inaugurated a bio-compost plant at the Pandher Multipurpose Co-operative Society in Barnala. The event was attended by Mrs. Anuprita Johal, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Gen.), Barnala, Dr. Jagdish Singh, Chief Agriculture Officer, Barnala, Mr. Shivam Kharbanda, Regional Business Head-North, Goodyear, Ms. Insha Fatima from KPMG, Mr. Sunil Misra, CEO of CII Foundation, and Mr. Chandrakant Pradhan, Lead - Climate Resilience, CII Foundation. Over 350 farmers participated, and Pradhans and secretaries from 28 Co-operative Societies were felicitated.

On 24 October, the CII Foundation and **PTC India Financial Services Limited (PFS)** hosted a farmer field day in Sanghol Village, Punjab, engaging over 150 farmers. Demonstrations of advanced agricultural machinery and the PUSA Decomposer showcased effective alternatives to stubble burning.



CII Foundation, in collaboration with **Cadence Design Systems** organised a Farmer Outreach Event in Bhuna, Fatehabad, at the Community Centre in Dullat village. Attended by over 150 farmers and dignitaries including Dr. Bhim Singh Kulharia, Sub Divisional Agriculture Officer (SDAO) of Fatehabad; Dr. Pawan Jayani, Assistant Agriculture Engineer (AAE); Mr. Rajesh Sain, Block Agriculture Officer (In-charge of Soil Testing); Mr. Pankaj Sethi, Senior Technician from Northern Region Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institute (NRFMTTI), Hisar and Mr. Mohammad Asim Khan, Head of CSR at Cadence Design Systems, the event provided valuable insights on CRM techniques, government schemes, and technical support for sustainable farming practices. In Season 2024, Cadence and CII Foundation supported 1,520 farmers across 15,400 acres in Fatehabad.



On 31 March 2025, an Appreciation Event for Farmers was held in Rania, Sirsa, Haryana in partnership with **Apraava Energy** which was graced by Chief Guests Sh. Shubham Sharma, Tehsildar of Rania, Sh. Ankur Garg, Sub-divisional Officer (SDO) of Panchayati Raj, and Dr. Sukhdev Kamboj, Deputy Director of Agriculture (DDA) of Sirsa. Notable attendees from CII included Sh. Prashant A. N, Regional Director, CII Northern Region, and Chandrakant Pradhan, Lead - Climate Resilience, CII Foundation. Around 650 farmers participated in the event.

350 farmers from project villages were honored with certificates, mementoes, and 50 kg of compost made from paddy stubble.



Studying the Success of the Crop Residue Management Initiative



On 14 November 2024, a high-level delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Commission for Air Quality Management visited Jatana village, Punjab, to witness the impact of CII Foundation's crop residue management initiative with HDFC Bank under its CSR brand, Parivartan. Led by Smt. S. Rukmani, Joint Secretary (M&T), Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, (M&T), and Shri Arvind Nautiyal, Member Secretary of the Commission for Air Quality Management, the team observed Jatana's transformation into a model village with zero stubble burning in 2024. Adopted in 2023, the village has seen improved soil health, reduced pollution, and higher yields through the use of Happy Seeders and Super Seeders.

Showcasing the Crop Residue Management Initiative



The CII Foundation showcased the crop residue management initiative at the 19th Sustainability Summit, held on 17 and 18 September 2024, which brought together global leaders, innovators, and policymakers to address critical issues such as climate action, ESG, responsible practices, and technological innovation.

The CII Foundation participated at AgroTech India - Krishi Bharat 2024, held from 15–18 November 2024 in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The Foundation hosted a 'Kisan Goshthee' on 16 November, bringing together over 550 farmers, experts, and innovators to discuss sustainable agriculture and CRM technologies.

Change on the Ground - From Numbers to Narratives

87% of farmland saved from burning in 793 intervened villages in Season 2024

- ▶ **Zero stubble burning achieved** in Polo Majra, Fatehgarh Sahib district, Punjab, and Jatana village in Punjab.
- ▶ **Scaled up ex-situ straw management practices** for aggregation and processing of farm biomass into value added products- biogas, biofertiliser, bio pellets.
- ▶ **A high-level delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture** and the Commission for Air Quality Management visited Jatana village, Punjab which achieved zero stubble burning to see the impact of project.

and the Commission for Air Quality Management visited Jatana village, Punjab which achieved zero stubble burning to see the impact of project.



Driving Impact: Zero Stubble Burning in Polo Majra Village in Punjab

Zero stubble burning was achieved in the village of Polo Majra, Fatehgarh Sahib district, Punjab. This remarkable milestone was the result of collaborative efforts between the District Administration, PTC India Financial Services Limited (PFS), CII Foundation, and the farmers of Polo Majra. To celebrate this milestone, an event was organised on World Soil Day, 5 December 2024. The event was graced by several key dignitaries including Mrs. Manreet Rana (PCS), Sub Divisional Magistrate, Khamanon; Mr. Dharmenderjit Singh Sidhu, Chief Agriculture Officer, Fatehgarh Sahib; Ms. Shinaaz Mittal and Ms. Suchrit Kaur Cheema, Deputy Registrars of Fatehgarh Sahib and Ropar, respectively; Mrs. Harpreet Kaur, Assistant Registrar, Khamanon; Superintendent Surpinder Kaur; Mr. Jaswinder Singh, Agriculture Officer, Khamanon and Mr. Navpreet Singh, Co-operative Inspector.



Addressing the gathering, Mrs. Manreet Rana lauded the efforts of the village, stating, "Burning stubble neither increases income nor benefits farms. Instead, it degrades soil and pollutes the environment. Polo Majra's success in achieving zero stubble burning is a step towards healthier soil and a cleaner environment." The event recognized and honoured farmers who embraced eco-friendly stubble-management practices.



Environmental Impact 2024



Area managed by adoption of sustainable practices
97%



Straw managed from being burnt
94%



Avoided Air Quality Impacts*
Fine Particulate Matter (PM 2.5)
8699.2 tonnes

Ammonia (NH3)
6202.9 tonnes

Sulphur Dioxide (SO2)
438.7 tonnes

**Avoided Global Warming Impacts***

Carbon Dioxide (CO2)
1846222.3 tonnes

Methane (CH4)
14523.8 tonnes

Ammonia (NH3)
968.3 tonnes

**Water Saving**

96.58 billion litres

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
10590.3 tonnes

Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx)
2950.2 tonnes

Urban Climate Resilience - Restoration of Water Bodies



Waterbody degradation exacerbates water scarcity and biodiversity loss. The CII Foundation has been working to restore key waterbodies, beginning in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, in 2023. In partnership with Kemin Industries, three waterbodies—Eswaran Pond, Karuperi Kullam Pond, and Panpakkam Pond—were revived in Gummudipoondi, Thiruvallur District. A fourth waterbody, SR Kandigai, was restored and handed over to the government on 25 September 2024. The project, under the CII Southern Region's Water Alliance Initiative, focused on improving water management and enhancing climate resilience by cleaning water passages, increasing water holding capacity, and preventing waste dumping.

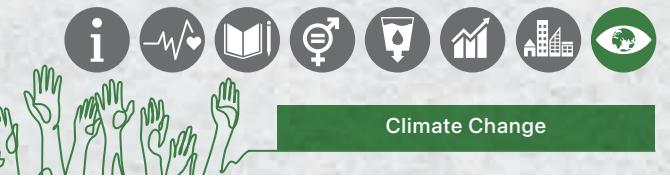
Building on this success, a new project launched in rural Gurugram, Haryana, aims to restore 10



waterbodies across five villages - Taj Nagar, Daboda, Basunda, Khandewla, and Hajipur. In partnership with PTC India Financial Services, the initiative focuses on collaboration with local Gram Panchayats. Field visits throughout the year have helped review restoration progress and gather community feedback for further strengthening the project.

In Taj Nagar, Sarpanch Sh. Shiv Taj, community members, and the Mandir Committee facilitated the site visits. Key sites visited included a restored waterbody, the designated plantation area for the coming year, and a waste management site. In Daboda village, the team reviewed a 7-acre plantation site and the waterbody along with Sarpanch Sh. Surinder, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) workers, and other beneficiaries. Key suggestions included focusing on plant care to prevent losses by ensuring water and fertilizer availability. In Basunda village, Sarpanch Sh. Pawan and members of the Mandir Committee facilitated the site visit to a 3-acre plantation area. At Khandewla village, Sarpanch Sh. Kuldeep and local residents shared their experiences, offering valuable insights into the project's impact on the 30-acre plantation site and waterbody. The visit concluded in Hajipur village, where Sarpanch Sh. Dharampal accompanied the team to the waterbody site.

* Source: CII-CESD analysis based on emission factors from Shrestha et al (2012)



Urban Climate Resilience - Tree Plantation Initiative



Trees are the lungs of the Earth and on the occasion of World Environment Day on 5 June 2024, the CII Foundation, in partnership with PTC India Financial Services Limited, launched a new project to promote tree plantation in rural Gurugram, Haryana. As part of the Community Plantation Initiative for carbon offsetting, 1,00,000 saplings will be planted across five villages in the Farrukhnagar block of Gurugram district in collaboration with local Gram Panchayats. The MoU for this project was signed on 8 May 2024,

marking a significant step towards enhancing the region's green cover.

On Teachers' Day, 5 September 2024, teachers and students from the Government Primary School in Daboda village joined forces to plant over 3,000 saplings. The event created a strong sense of community and teamwork as students and teachers planted trees together, symbolizing their shared commitment to a healthier environment.

Voices of Impact



“Farmers are now more aware and confident about the in-situ and ex-situ practices which have helped in reducing stubble burning in Assandh region and improving crop yield and soil health.”



“Burning stubble offers no benefits—it neither increases income nor improves farms. Instead, it degrades soil health and contributes to pollution. The farmers of Polo Majra recognized this and successfully achieved Zero Stubble Burning. By adopting sustainable practices, they have taken a crucial step toward protecting the environment and improving soil health.”

Dr. Baldev Singh

Block Agriculture officer, Assandh, Karnal District, Haryana

Mrs. Manreet Rana (PCS)

Sub Divisional Magistrate, Khamanon, Fatehgarh Sahib District, Punjab



“Prior to the initiative, we would burn the stubble because it was the quickest way to clear the field. However, this practice was detrimental to both the field and the farmers' finances over time. After the project's intervention, we received the necessary training and equipment, which reduces the overall input of fertilisers, urea, etc. while also increasing the yield over time and contributing to the surrounding area's clean air.”

Farmer Satnam Singh

Khizrabad village, Assandh, Karnal District, Haryana



“After installing a biogas plant at home, I haven't had to purchase a single LPG cylinder, saving me over ₹10,000. The plant is highly efficient, hassle-free, and produces no unpleasant odour. It has made cooking more sustainable while also reducing my household expenses significantly.”

Farmer Raju Dharnia

Village Dholu, Fatehabad District, Haryana

Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES



Click here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>





Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation



Natural disasters such as cyclones and floods can strike anytime, without warning, leaving behind a trail of immense loss and damage. Roads are washed away cutting off access, buildings are broken or rendered unsafe, disrupting everyday life and fields are submerged, destroying crops and impacting livelihoods.

India's diverse topography and the increasing impact of climate change make it especially vulnerable to natural disasters.

Over the last decade, the country has witnessed several disasters such as the devastating Kerala floods in 2018, Assam floods in 2022, Cyclone Michaung in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in 2023, and the landslides in Wayanad, Kerala, in 2024. Each of these disasters has impacted countless lives, pushing already underprivileged communities into deeper hardship, worsening the humanitarian crisis.

The CII Foundation has been at the forefront of disaster response, working with governments, industry, medical institutions, and civil society to provide immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation. Leveraging a multi-stakeholder approach, the Foundation ensures swift relief—food, medical supplies, and other essentials—while also leading reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts for schools, health centres, and livelihoods.

In 2024-25, the CII Foundation undertook several initiatives to provide succour to disaster-affected communities, helping them re-build their lives.

The CII Foundation has been at the forefront of disaster response, working closely with government, industry, medical institutions and civil society to provide immediate relief and help rebuild lives.

Key Components of the Program



Establishing a Robust Disaster Response System

Utilizing the extensive CII network to effectively execute disaster relief efforts and facilitating a comprehensive relief and rehabilitation process.



Distribution of Relief Material

Providing essential aid such as food, ration, and medicine to affected regions.



Rehabilitation Initiatives

Undertaking the reconstruction of impacted infrastructure like schools and health centres, coupled with livelihood programs for affected communities.



Location

Pan India



Key Supporters

Pool-funded project supported by multiple CII members

Kerala Relief & Rehabilitation

Following the devastating 2018 Kerala floods, the CII Foundation, with support from CII, played a crucial role in both immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation efforts. While initial interventions focused on distributing essentials such as medicines and ration kits, the Foundation undertook a more long-term approach to rebuild critical infrastructure to restore normalcy to affected communities.

As part of this initiative, CII Foundation reconstructed and renovated the Government Lower Primary School (GLPS), Kayanad, five Public Health Centres (Moothakunnam, Chittattukara, Puthuvyppu, Mulavukadu, and Avoly) and the North Paravur Taluk Headquarters Hospital.

By February 2024, all newly constructed and renovated buildings were officially handed over to the government, marking a significant milestone in the rehabilitation process. However, CII Foundation's commitment extends beyond just reconstruction.

In 2024-25, the Foundation remained actively involved in the maintenance and upkeep of these facilities. From infrastructure patchwork to additional support as the buildings became operational, the efforts reinforced a long-term vision of resilience rather than one-time aid.



BEFORE INTERVENTION
Government Lower Primary School (GLPS), Kayanad



AFTER INTERVENTION
Government Lower Primary School (GLPS), Kayanad



Upgrading Infrastructure at North Paravur Taluk Headquarters Hospital

As part of the Kerala Flood rehabilitation initiative, additional upgrades were carried out at North Paravur Taluk Headquarters Hospital.

The key improvements included upgrades to the Eye Operation Theatre, installation of scrub units, and air conditioning in the Labour Room and Newborn Stabilization Unit (NBSU) along with a power backup facility.

The installation of scrub units has enhanced hand hygiene, particularly for surgeons and medical staff, reducing cross-contamination and optimizing preparation time before procedures.

The addition of air conditioning with backup ensures a stable and comfortable environment for mothers and newborns while supporting neonatal care.

In 2024-25, CII Foundation supported critical upgrades at the North Paravur Taluk Headquarters Hospital which included the modernization of the eye operation theatre.





Maintaining an ideal temperature in the NBSU is crucial in preventing hypothermia in newborns. Additionally, stabilizers protect air conditioning units from voltage fluctuations, ensuring uninterrupted operation.

Furthermore, the controlled environment in the preparation area helps maintain sterility, enhances surgical efficiency, and prevents equipment overheating, thereby improving the performance of sterilization and preparation equipment.

Overall, these enhancements have significantly improved the working conditions for doctors and nurses, leading to enhanced patient care and satisfaction.

Expanding Rehabilitation Efforts- Wayanad District

Following the devastating floods and landslides in Wayanad, Kerala in July 2024, the CII Foundation in collaboration with the Wayanad District Administration and Orkla India has undertaken comprehensive rehabilitation initiatives to restore essential infrastructure, strengthen early childhood education, and support sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable tribal communities.

Refurbishing Anganwadis in Flood-Affected Areas

In the flood-affected areas of Pozhuthana and Moopianadu Panchayats, 15 Anganwadi Centres were deeply impacted. The Centres provide early childhood education and care to pre-school children, upto age 6.

Recognising the critical role of early childhood education and care for children, the CII Foundation initiated work on the refurbishment of the Centres.

This intervention aimed to restore child-friendly learning environments with infrastructure enhancements based on the Building as Learning Aid (BaLA) concept, fostering interactive and experiential

learning environments. To further strengthen early childhood care, a capacity-building program was conducted for Anganwadi teachers and helpers across Wayanad district. The training focused on key areas such as early childhood education, nutrition and growth monitoring, ensuring that caregivers were well-equipped to support young children's holistic development.

Support for Tribal Communities

An integral part of the rehabilitation strategy was the support to tribal communities, particularly the bonded labour. A kitchen and recreation centre were reconstructed for the Paniya tribal workers of Priyadarshini Tea Estate in Wayanad District. The tribal kitchen and centre plays a vital role in promoting the well-being, cultural and empowerment of tribal communities.

These rehabilitation initiatives have had a positive impact on the communities of Wayanad, ensuring better educational facilities, improved livelihoods, and enhanced social infrastructure.



A kitchen and recreation centre for the Paniya tribal workers at Priyadarshini Tea Estate were reconstructed to preserve cultural heritage and empower the tribal community.

Change on the Ground - From Numbers to Narratives

8 Lakh people impacted annually through Kerala rehabilitation efforts.

- ▶ Early childhood education strengthened in Wayanad District by refurbishing Anganwadis
- ▶ Tribal communities supported and empowered through the reconstruction of a kitchen and recreation centre.

Voices of Impact



“ The new facilities at the Eye Ward have given a new face to Government Hospital. The old place was crowded and had minimal facilities, but the new ward and Eye Operation Theatre gives us a feeling of Private hospital facilities. ”

Mr Damodharan

Patient, North Paravur Taluk Headquarters Hospital



“ Initially my family was reluctant to have the operation here thinking that the facilities would not be good enough. However, after visiting for a consultation and seeing the state-of-the-art infrastructure, I was convinced to proceed with my surgery at this hospital. ”

Mr Krishnan

Patient, North Paravur Taluk Headquarters Hospital

Early Childhood Education

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Click here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>





Early Childhood Education



The future of any nation rests in the hands of its children—and the foundation for their growth is laid in the earliest years of life. Quality early childhood education (ECE), supported by adequate nutrition, care, and a stimulating environment, is critical for cognitive, emotional, and physical development. These formative years significantly influence a child's learning journey and overall life outcomes.

In India, Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme serve as the primary platform for delivering ECE to children under six, as well as support to pregnant and lactating women. However, many of these centres face significant challenges, ranging from inadequate infrastructure to the need for continuous capacity building of Anganwadi workers to deliver age-appropriate, engaging learning experiences.

To address these gaps, the CII Foundation is working to transform AWCs into vibrant learning spaces. Through a collaborative model that brings together government, industry and local NGOs, the Foundation supports the holistic development of children by enhancing learning environments, training frontline workers, and promoting community engagement.

During 2024-25, the CII Foundation was working in Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, where model AWCs are being developed to demonstrate the potential of high-quality learning centres. By strengthening the ECE ecosystem, the Foundation aims to improve school readiness, reduce dropout rates, and encourage a culture of lifelong learning from the very start.

The CII Foundation is working to transform Anganwadi Centres into vibrant, child-friendly learning spaces using the Building as a Learning aid (BaLa) approach.

Key Components of the Program

Infrastructure Support to Develop Model Anganwadi Centres

Capacity Building of Anganwadi Workers

Developing Age-Appropriate Curriculum

Engaging the Community

Location
Jammu & Kashmir
Andhra Pradesh
Karnataka
Tamil Nadu

Key Supporters
Blue Star Limited
Volvo Group Trust
Kemin Industries South Asia

Strengthening Early Childhood Education in Jammu & Kashmir

Since 2019, the CII Foundation has been actively working to strengthen Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Jammu and Kashmir. The initiative, implemented in partnership with the Mission Directorate, POSHAN, J&K, aims to enhance the quality of education, improve school readiness, and promote nutritional awareness in communities.

Phase I of the project focused on infrastructure development, using the BaLA (Building as a Learning Aid) approach to create child-friendly Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). In Phase II, the scope of the initiative was expanded to improve learning outcomes and community engagement across 80 AWCs in four blocks across three districts: Banihal and Gool (Ramban), Breng (Anantnag), and Narwah (Baramulla).

Capacity Building of Anganwadi Workers



To strengthen cognitive learning and school preparedness, the project adopted a cascading training model. Master Trainers are trained in ECE practices, nutrition, and growth monitoring, and they, in turn, train Anganwadi Workers (AWWs). These sessions use a combination of presentations, short films, documentaries, and group activities, ensuring interactive and practical learning.

A key element of the program is the development and distribution of age- and culturally-appropriate Teaching Learning Material (TLM) kits. These kits are

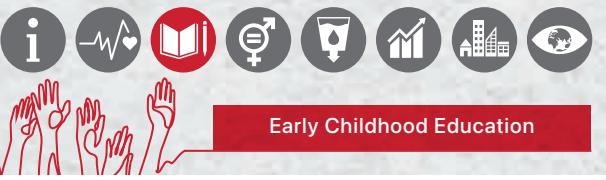
designed to support the implementation of Nanhe Kadam, a foundational learning program for children aged 3–6. The TLM Handbook equips AWWs with tools to foster foundational literacy and numeracy, while also addressing the diverse developmental needs of young children.

To strengthen the delivery of ECE, regular training sessions were conducted during the year focussing on:

- Health and hygiene
- Growth monitoring and child nutrition
- Developmental milestones
- Nutrition for pregnant and lactating women
- Importance of exclusive breastfeeding

A key element of the program is the development and distribution of age and culturally-appropriate Teaching Learning Material (TLM) kits.





Engaging the Community

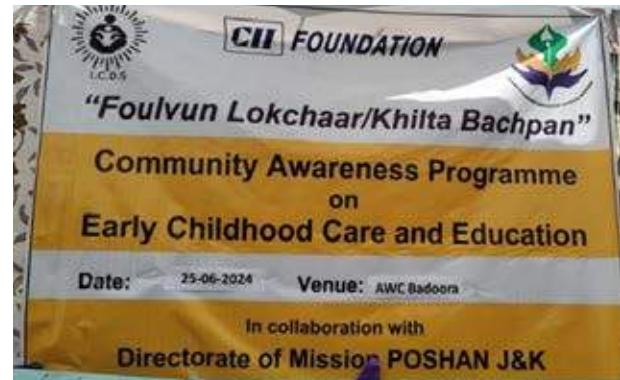


In 2024-25, efforts to strengthen Anganwadi Centres were intensified with a series of activities designed to raise awareness and strengthen community participation. Two ECCE Melas were organized under the 'Fulvun Lokchaar / Khilta Bachpan' initiative. The first event was held in Block Narwah, Baramulla, followed by a second in Block Breng, Anantnag during June-July 2024.

These vibrant Melas served as an excellent platform for:

- **Raising Awareness:** Community members were sensitized to the significance of early education and the objectives of the ECCE program.
- **Promoting Community Engagement:** Parents and community stakeholders were encouraged to support Anganwadi activities.
- **Showcasing Educational Resources:** Teaching and learning materials were displayed to demonstrate how children are being prepared for school.
- **Highlighting Child Development:** Information was shared on developmental milestones and how the project supports holistic growth.
- **Strengthening ALMSC Involvement:** The role of Anganwadi Level Monitoring and Support Committees (ALMSCs) in maintaining the quality of services was reinforced.

A special highlight of the Melas was the preparation of nutritious meals by AWWs and parents, using recipes from the Nutrition Awareness Package developed under the project.



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These initiatives reflect the CII Foundation's commitment to improving early childhood outcomes through a collaborative, community-driven model that brings lasting change to young learners and their families in Jammu & Kashmir.



Strengthening Early Childhood Education in Karnataka

The CII Foundation, in collaboration with Volvo Group Trust, has been actively working to enhance the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Karnataka. The program aims to improve both learning environments and the capacity of Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), ensuring a strong foundation for children's early development.

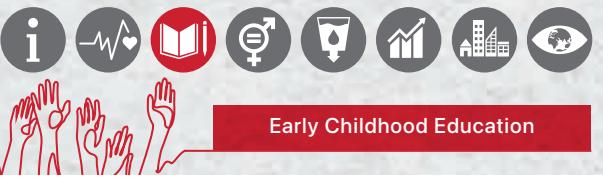
Capacity Building of Anganwadi Workers

During the July–August 2024 period, a series of workshops were conducted across Anganwadi Centres to build the capacities of frontline educators. In July, six batches of a three-day workshop were held in Hoskote, reaching over 300 AWWs. The sessions focused on the creation and use of locally available Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs), encouraging educators to make learning more engaging using accessible, culturally relevant tools. Each participant received a TLM handbook to support their continued learning efforts.

In August, the initiative reached 200+ Anganwadi Workers in Karwar through a similar TLM training workshop. The training incorporated storytelling sessions and highlighted how simple, handmade TLMs can make a meaningful difference in classroom engagement. The workshops reinforced the vital role AWWs play in shaping young minds and improving the effectiveness of ECCE delivery.



The initiative reached 200+ Anganwadi Workers in Karwar through a Teacher Learning Material (TLM) training workshop. The training incorporated storytelling sessions and highlighted how simple, handmade TLMs can make a meaningful difference in classroom engagement.



Infrastructure Development

During October to December 2024, the program expanded to include four additional Anganwadi Centres in Chamarajanagar, bringing the total number of centres supported under this initiative in Karnataka to 27. These centres were upgraded using the Building as a Learning Aid (BaLA) approach, which integrates interactive and educational elements into the physical infrastructure—such as wall paintings and sensory visuals—to promote cognitive development in children.

The momentum continued from January–March 2025 with further infrastructure upgrades in Chamarajanagar. These included waterproofing, roof patch work, kitchen repairs, and restoration of water and electricity connections. The BaLA concept remained central, with vibrant wall art and visual tools further enhancing the learning experience.

Alongside physical improvements, the initiative has encouraged strong community participation, promoting ownership and collaboration among various stakeholders. This collective approach ensures better delivery of ICDS services and supports the school-readiness of children by creating engaging, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate learning environments.

Through sustained training, infrastructure transformation and community involvement, the CII Foundation's ECCE initiative in Karnataka is laying the groundwork for a more effective and equitable early education system.



Strengthening Early Childhood Education in Andhra Pradesh

The CII Foundation, in partnership with Blue Star Limited, has launched an Anganwadi strengthening initiative in Tada Mandal, Andhra Pradesh, aimed at improving the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) through infrastructure upgrades, training, and community engagement.

Infrastructure Development

As part of this initiative, five Anganwadi Centres have been adopted and transformed using the Building as a Learning Aid (BaLA) approach. These centres have been redesigned to offer vibrant, interactive learning environments, promoting holistic development among children in their foundational years.



Special emphasis was placed on the use of locally sourced, culturally relevant Teaching Learning Material (TLM) to support the implementation of play-based learning techniques. Storytelling sessions were particularly well-received, with participants discovering how simple, everyday material can be transformed into engaging classroom resources.

Building Capacity of Anganwadi Workers

In December 2024, a three-day Skill Training Workshop was conducted in two batches for 60 Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) from Tada Mandal. The training focused on foundational domains of child development and practical strategies for making learning more effective. Special emphasis was placed on the use of locally sourced, culturally relevant Teaching Learning Material (TLM) to support the implementation of play-based learning techniques. Storytelling sessions were particularly well-received, with participants discovering how simple, everyday material can be transformed into engaging classroom resources. The training sessions fostered enthusiasm among AWWs to integrate these creative approaches in their daily routines.

The workshop was attended and appreciated by Smt. D. Saradamba, Child Development Project Officer, Sullurpetta and representatives from Blue Star ClimaTech Limited, who acknowledged the CII Foundation's efforts to improve early childhood education in the region.

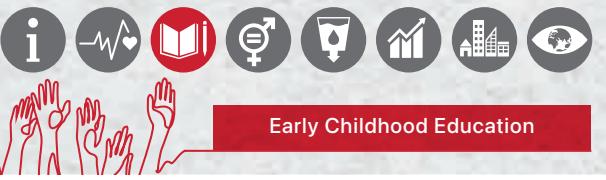


Developing Age-Appropriate Curriculum

Continuing its momentum, the initiative moved into the next phase in January 2025, with the distribution of Teaching Learning Materials to support Anganwadi Workers in initiating play-way learning methods. The distribution event was graced by ICDS officials, including Smt. D. Saradamba, along with supervisors, AWWs, local leaders, and community members. Representatives from Blue Star, including Mr. Stalin and Ms. Deepti, were also present at the occasion.

Through a combination of infrastructure development, educator training, and community involvement, the CII Foundation continues to strengthen the Anganwadi ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh, reinforcing its commitment to nurturing well-rounded, school-ready children across India.





Strengthening Early Childhood Education in Tamil Nadu

The CII Foundation, in collaboration with CII Southern Region and Kemin Industries South Asia, has launched an Anganwadi strengthening initiative in Tamil Nadu, aimed at fostering sustainable and inclusive development through a strong focus on early childhood education, nutrition, and health. The initiative was inaugurated on 25th September 2024 in Gummidiyoor, Thiruvallur District. The event was attended by key dignitaries including Mr. Ayush Gupta, IAS, Assistant Collector of Thiruvallur District; Ms. Aakriti Sethi, IAS, Assistant Collector of Salem District; Mr. Annadurai, IPS, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Gummidiyoor; and Mr. Ravi, Panchayat President of Billakuppam.

During the inaugural event, Mr. Ayush Gupta highlighted the importance of investing in early childhood development and acknowledged the contribution of the CII Foundation and Kemin Industries. He emphasised that the improved centres will benefit many children in the community and called upon local panchayats to take responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of these facilities. He noted that Anganwadi Centres play a vital role as key delivery agents for nutrition, health, and education.

Dr. Sureshkumar, President of Kemin Industries South Asia Pvt. Ltd., also expressed his appreciation for the support extended by government officials and the local community in making the initiative a success.



Change on the Ground - From Numbers to Narratives

21,000 children impacted across intervened areas.



Infrastructure Development

As part of the initiative, three Anganwadi Centres in the region were revitalized through essential infrastructure upgrades. These included roof waterproofing, fencing, renovation of toilets and kitchens, tile work, creation of play areas, development of pathways, and plantation activities. These enhancements have significantly improved the physical condition of the centres, transforming them into safe, engaging, and child-friendly learning environments.

Building Capacity of Anganwadi Workers

In addition to the infrastructural improvements, Anganwadi Workers were provided training focused on early childhood education and nutrition.

- ▶ **Community participation and engagement** was enhanced through Melas organised in Jammu and Kashmir under the 'Fulvun Lokchaar / Khulta Bachpan' initiative.
- ▶ **Created sustainable Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs)** using locally available resources.

Voices of Impact



“ The trainings provided to us were really helpful. We learned about the kind of growth children experience when they are taught and engaged in the right way. One activity I especially enjoyed was storytelling through paper cutting—creating stories using simple cutouts. It was a wonderful and creative experience. ”

Abha Shinde

Anganwadi Worker, Haliyal, Karnataka



“ I have been working as an Anganwadi Worker for the past six years. Through the training provided by CII Foundation and Volvo, I have learned so much about how to teach children effectively using materials available in our surroundings. I've learned how to involve every child, how to tell stories in an engaging way, and how to create teaching-learning materials (TLM) that make learning fun and meaningful. ”

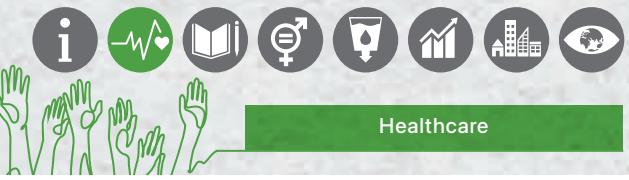
Asha Rani

Anganwadi Worker, Hoskote, Karnataka

Healthcare

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING





Strengthening Healthcare



Improving health awareness, enhancing healthcare infrastructure, and building capacity of healthcare professionals are crucial steps towards creating healthy and resilient communities. These initiatives yield significant positive outcomes by reducing the disease burden, enhancing individual productivity, and promoting economic growth. The CII Foundation was at the forefront of strengthening healthcare systems during Covid-19, procuring and deploying medical equipment, setting up Tele-ICUs, and facilitating and supporting critically important vaccination drives.

In 2023-24, the CII Foundation took up healthcare as a key thematic area of work. Leveraging the strengths of different stakeholders, it launched several projects to enhance healthcare delivery.

The CII Foundation is committed to strengthening healthcare systems across the country. These efforts aim to enhance the availability and quality of healthcare services, improve health outcomes, and promote better health and nutrition practices at the community level.

In 2023-24, the CII Foundation took up healthcare as a key thematic area of work to strengthen healthcare delivery across India.

Key Components of the Program

 **Strengthening Community Access to Public Healthcare and Nutrition**

 **Raising Health Awareness and Good Practices amongst Children and Adolescents**

 **Strengthening Infrastructure**

 **Capacity Building**

Promoting Health Awareness in Schools in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana

The Health Awareness Program, an initiative by the CII Foundation in partnership with the HOPE Initiative, focuses on enhancing health awareness and promoting positive behavioural change among school children. Through a series of interactive sessions, the program aims to foster a culture of health consciousness within the community, encouraging students to adopt healthier lifestyles.

The program is being implemented across 50 government schools in rural districts of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, covering locations such as Sohna, Pataudi, Manesar, Farrukhnagar, and Wazirabad (Haryana) and Mohanlalganj (Bindauwa, Bhaundari, Jabrauli) and Sarojini Nagar (Bani, Benti) (Uttar Pradesh). Targeting students from grades 6 to 8, the sessions address critical health themes including sanitation and hygiene, screen addiction, mental health, bullying, and menstrual hygiene. The program employs engaging methods such as skits, debates, quizzes, and videos to make learning interactive and impactful.

To enhance practical health monitoring skills, BMI kits were distributed to all 25 schools in Lucknow. Demonstrative sessions on using the kits were conducted, helping teachers and students understand how to measure Body Mass Index and monitor physical health regularly. This initiative empowers schools to track students' health and implement preventive measures effectively.

Throughout the year, the program has conducted special discussions on menstrual health, creating a safe space for adolescent girls to discuss biological changes, menstrual hygiene products, while dispelling myths. Additionally, workshops on healthy lifestyle habits promoted balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, yoga, and physical activity, encouraging children to adopt holistic wellness practices.

Health Systems Strengthening Program in Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh

The Health Systems Strengthening Program in Dhanapur Block, Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh, marks a pioneering effort by the CII Foundation, in partnership with the Pirojsha Godrej Foundation and implementing partner DigiSwasthya Foundation, to build resilient and accessible healthcare systems in rural communities.

As part of its commitment to strengthening the primary health and nutrition ecosystem, this pilot project aims to bridge gaps in healthcare delivery, enhance community engagement, and promote sustainable health practices. By adopting a holistic approach that integrates capacity building, infrastructure enhancement, and community mobilization, the program seeks to ensure that essential health services reach even the most underserved populations.

The program is being implemented across eight Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) in the block, covering villages such as Sisaura Kala, Murali Pur, Mahuji, Medhana, Jigana, Visunpur Khurd, Avahi, and Vira Saray. At its core, the program focuses on building the capacities of healthcare workers through comprehensive training sessions that enhance their skills in delivering quality care. Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Anganwadi Workers, Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANMs), and Community Health Officers receive practical training on maternal and child health, nutrition, sanitation, and early childhood development, equipping them to better respond to local health challenges. On-the-job mentoring further supports their professional growth, fostering a community of well-trained, proactive health workers.

To address infrastructural challenges, the program is revitalizing AWCs to make them more functional and child-friendly, incorporating BaLA (Building as Learning Aid) designs to create safe, engaging, and hygienic environments. These enhancements not only support better health and educational outcomes but also foster a sense of ownership among community members.

The program also prioritizes community mobilization by actively engaging local residents in health awareness and behavior change initiatives. Outreach efforts include door-to-door campaigns, interactive sessions like Nukkad Nataks, and collaborations with local leaders and community influencers. This grassroots involvement ensures that health practices are integrated into daily routines, leading to lasting improvements in community well-being.

Through its multifaceted approach, the Health Systems Strengthening Program is laying the groundwork for a more resilient healthcare infrastructure while fostering community ownership and active participation. As the program continues to evolve, it remains committed to building a healthier future for the people of Chandauli.

Skilling and Livelihood

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH





Skilling and Livelihood



To drive holistic rural development, a comprehensive scoping exercise was undertaken to design and pilot integrated village development initiatives focusing on skilling and livelihood. The exercise was conducted across Barabanki and Chandauli Districts (Uttar Pradesh), Gumla District (Jharkhand), the Sundarbans (West Bengal), and Gummidiyooni (Tamil Nadu) to identify key areas of intervention and tailor impactful programs for communities.

Last year, with a focus on empowering rural women, pilot initiatives were launched in selected villages to provide soft skills training for youth and support livelihood opportunities for women.



The CII Foundation has been undertaking skilling of youth across India following the Recruit-Train-Deploy model. In 2024, to intensify the efforts with a focus on rural women, CII Foundation piloted sustainable livelihood programs in select villages of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jharkhand.

Key Components of the Program



Skilling of Youth

Equipping rural and underserved youth with industry-relevant, market-driven skills to enhance their employability by leveraging CII Model Career Centres and CII Multi-skill Training Centres.



Rural Livelihood

Supporting rural women through livelihood initiatives that build on local strengths—such as bee keeping, tamarind processing, and poultry farming.



Location

Pan-India



Key Supporters

Multi-donor

Launch of Social Development Initiatives in Uttar Pradesh



On 21 February 2025, the CII Foundation launched a new chapter in its commitment to inclusive development by unveiling a series of social interventions at the Social Development Initiatives for Uttar Pradesh program. At this platform, the Foundation announced strategic partnerships with NGOs and key stakeholders to roll out impactful, community-based projects across the state. The program also served as an opportunity to engage companies based in Uttar Pradesh, encouraging their participation and support through CSR, and laying the groundwork for collaborative, scalable solutions to pressing rural challenges.

A Soft Skills Training initiative was introduced for adolescent girls from Satrikh village, Barabanki District. This project aims at equipping the young girls with the necessary skillset to enable access to better employability opportunities and boost their confidence.

A beekeeping livelihood initiative for women was launched in Chainpurva village, Uttar Pradesh, and Gumla, Jharkhand. This project entails technical training on beekeeping, distribution of beekeeping boxes, and establishing market linkages to ensure a sustainable income source for women.

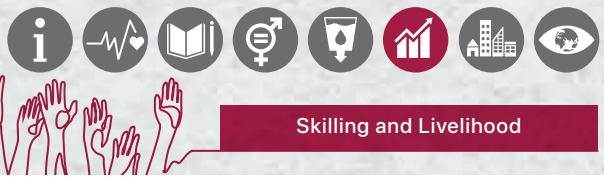
Partner representatives and stakeholders presented their program plans at the program in the presence of senior government officials, including Mr. Partha Sarthi Sen Sharma, Principal Secretary, Department of Health & Family Welfare, and Mr. L. Venkateshwarlu, Principal Secretary, Department of Social Welfare.

During the program, CII Foundation also handed over medical equipment to the Combined Tuberculosis Hospital (Government), Thakurganj, Lucknow, further reinforcing its commitment to strengthening healthcare infrastructure.



Ms. Smita Agarwal, Chairperson, CII Uttar Pradesh State Council and Director & CFO, PTC Industries, emphasized the industry's role as a development partner and highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts to bridge gaps that exist for the rural communities. Both Mr. Sharma and Mr. Venkateshwarlu encouraged industry stakeholders to engage in long-term partnerships with a sensitive and sustained approach to addressing critical development challenges.

The program was attended by industry leaders, NGO representatives, and development institutions, facilitating discussions on collective action for sustainable development in Uttar Pradesh.



Skilling of Youth: Training on 21st Century Skills



CII Foundation, in collaboration with TaraSri Foundation, conducted a 3-day capacity building workshop on '21st Century Skills' for adolescent girls of Satrikh village, Barabanki, Lucknow, from 18-20 February, 2025.

The sessions covered a range of essential skills, including personality development, critical thinking, communication skills, digital skills and problem-solving.

Day 1 focused on the importance of soft skills, highlighting its differences from hard skills. Through interactive activities, the participants enhanced their strategic thinking and storytelling abilities.

On Day 2, the focus shifted to creativity, imagination, and personality development. The participants learned about originality, phonics, and table manners, followed by an interactive session on life skills education, where they explored the significance of core soft skills required for personal and professional growth.

The participants learned about originality, phonics, and table manners, followed by an interactive session on life skills education, where they explored the significance of core soft skills required for personal and professional growth.

Day 3 emphasized mental health and stress management, providing the girls with tools to cope with challenges effectively. The day also included hands-on training in computer basics, from MS Word and Powerpoint to AI tools like ChatGPT. The workshop concluded with a feedback session, certificate distribution, and a closing ceremony led by the TaraSri and CII Foundation teams. The sessions encouraged them to think critically, solve non-routine problems, develop self-awareness and refine their social and digital skills, equipping them to navigate both professional and personal challenges with ease.



Skilling of Women Prisoners in Tamil Nadu



Rehabilitation and sustainable livelihoods play a vital role in enabling women prisoners to adopt positive behavioural changes, helping them cope with and recover from stress and shocks. To address the difficulties faced by women prisoners and support their personal development and reintegration in mainstream society, the CII Foundation has launched transformative program in Special Women's Prison of Trichy, Coimbatore and Vellore in Tamil Nadu. This initiative focuses on equipping 150+ women prisoners with vocational skills and aims to establish a model progressive correctional facility striving for the welfare of all. The interventions are currently focussed on:

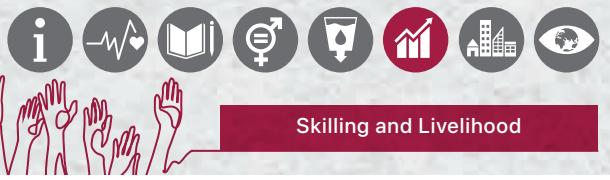
Skill Training: Deliver six months of skill development and personality enhancement training to prisoners,



focusing on both long-term inmates and those with at least one year remaining in their sentence, ensuring meaningful engagement and future readiness.

Resource Provision for Self-Sustenance: Provide necessary machinery and raw materials following the skill training, enabling prisoners to achieve self-sustenance and effectively apply their newly acquired skills.

Capacity Building: Conduct sessions on marketing, financial management, and resource mobilization, while engaging inmates in personality development workshops and awareness programs about available schemes to support successful reintegration into society.



Promoting Rural Livelihoods through Tamarind Processing



In April 2025, the CII Foundation, in collaboration with the Shoshan Surin Foundation launched a tamarind processing initiative in Kulburu village, Gumla district, Jharkhand, aimed at empowering tribal women by harnessing the economic potential of locally available resources. Under this initiative, women have begun processing tamarind, a widely available forest produce, into value-added products such as tamarind candies and pickles.

This intervention is designed not only to generate income but also to encourage community participation, boost self-confidence, and entrepreneurial thinking among rural women.

This effort is expected to enhance household earnings and build the collective agency of women, enabling them to take greater ownership of financial decisions and actively participate in local economic development.

Promoting Rural Livelihoods through Beekeeping

Beekeeping is emerging as a promising livelihood opportunity for widowed women of Chainpurwa village of Barabanki district in Uttar Pradesh, thanks to a collaborative effort by the CII Foundation and the Chainpurwa Kayakalp Foundation.

CII Foundation has initiated a structured intervention to empower women through beekeeping as a sustainable livelihood option. Through this intervention, women are being equipped with skills to

leverage the region's rich natural biodiversity and generate a sustainable source of income.

As part of the program, a two-day technical training on beekeeping was conducted for 70 women in Chainpurwa on 19th and 20th March 2025. The training covered key aspects such as beekeeping techniques, hive management, and honey harvesting, equipping the participants with practical skills to turn beekeeping into a viable income source.

Following the training, 70 beekeeping boxes were distributed to the women, marking the start of honey production. Currently, the honey is being produced, and given the market linkages established under the project, the women aim to sell the honey at the current market rate, thus generating an income for the potential produce of up to 30kg of honey seasonally.

With continued support and monitoring, the program seeks to establish a self-sustaining beekeeping community in Chainpurwa.

In a parallel initiative in Gumla, Jharkhand, the CII Foundation, in partnership with the Shoshan Surin Foundation (SSF), is also working to empower rural communities through beekeeping. On 3rd and 4th April 2025, 100 bee boxes with active colonies were distributed to 38 households after a sensitization process. The distribution was followed by hands-on training, where participants were taught bee care, colony maintenance, and honey harvesting techniques.

To support the post-production process, SSF is establishing a system for honey extraction, bottling, packaging, and market linkage, enabling the community to be actively involved in the entire value chain. This ensures that the villagers are not only producers but also active participants in marketing and sales, leading to long-term economic resilience.



Project Sundarbans: Livelihood Generation & Mangrove Restoration



The CII Foundation, in partnership with Joynagar Viewtech Educational Society, implemented the Sundarbans Livelihood Generation and Mangrove Restoration Project to address the critical challenges of rural livelihood insecurity and eco-restoration.

Executed in the villages of Binodpur and Nagenabad in Kultali Block, South 24 Parganas (West Bengal), one of the program focus was to create sustainable economic opportunities for the local communities.

This promoted livelihood through poultry farming training, chick distribution, and market linkage support. Directly benefiting 120 households, the programme prioritized capacity building, skill development, and long-term economic resilience.

The project also advanced ecological restoration by engaging the community in Mangrove Plantation.



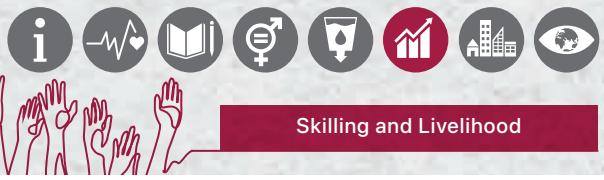
Strengthening Farmer Producer Organisations in Himachal Pradesh



Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) drive transformation by scaling interventions, leveraging collective action, enhancing supply chains, and fostering sustainable solutions for rural communities.

In 2019, CII- Food and Agriculture Centre of Excellence (FACE), CII Foundation and Blue Star partnered for an industry-led initiative to increase farmer incomes. This program was initiated with 3 FPOs from Shimla, Kullu, and Mandi districts in 2023 and was scaled to 6 FPOs in 2024, covering a membership base of around 700 farmers.

In 2024, the FPO program focused on building resilience in 2 horticulture value chains – Apples in Himachal Pradesh and Mangoes in Andhra Pradesh.



Value Addition and Branding



Post Harvest Management of Apples

A one-day training program was conducted for member farmers of Thunag Snowvalley Farmers Producers Company and Janjehli Farmers Producers Company in Thunag, Mandi District on post-harvest management of apples. Officials from State Horticulture Department, and experts from Dr. Y.S. Parmar University, Nauni conducted the session which was attended by around 40 farmers.

The training sessions improved knowledge of post-harvest management, including optimal harvest timing, proper plucking techniques, and farm-level handling to maintain apple quality while also increasing awareness of the importance of pre-cooling and its role in preserving freshness and minimizing losses.



Post-Harvest Management of Fruit Trees

Around 126 farmers attended a training session led by three experts in Fruit Science, and Food Science and Technology from Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry at Nauni.

The training session helped develop expertise in soil and nutrient management techniques and effective management of orchards with a focus on post-harvest activities.

Value Addition and Branding



A two-day training program on Apple Value Chain for representatives from the five FPCs of Kullu, Mandi and Shimla Districts was conducted at the National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM), Kundli, Haryana. Fifteen members participated in this residential training program.

Farmers gained valuable insights on strategic crop planning combined with branding and market differentiation to maximize profitability.

Promoting Adoption of Technology

Soil testing infrastructure for FPOs deployed advanced soil testing machines, across 6 FPOs, enabling approximately 500 farmers to access this technology to assess soil conditions, optimize fertilizer use, and improve crop quality. Moving forward, CII FACE will monitor the adoption of this technology, changes in soil health management practices, and the long-term impacts on apple productivity.

Digitalization Solution for FPOs

Introduced Varuna Star with 9 FPOs, a digital platform designed to empower farmers through tailored solutions. The platform features a knowledge bank offering insights on agronomy, post-harvest management, FPO operations, and government policies. It also serves as an input marketplace that connects farmers directly with suppliers for essential inputs like fertilizers and pesticides.



Change on the Ground - From Numbers to Narratives

200+ farmers attended training sessions.

- ▶ Deployed advanced soil testing machines across 6 FPOs, expected to reach 500 farmers.
- ▶ Digitalization empowered 9 FPOs with e-marketplace, training, and advisory access.



Promoting Skill Development in Collaboration with CII Model Career Centres



The CII Foundation, in collaboration with the CII Model Career Centre (MCC), executed several impactful projects in FY 2024–25 aimed at strengthening skills, enhancing employability, and promoting inclusive development. These initiatives were aligned with national priorities of workforce readiness and focused on underrepresented groups including women, tribal youth, and individuals from rural and underserved areas.



The CII Foundation, in collaboration with the CII Model Career Centre (MCC), executed several impactful projects in FY 2024–25 aimed at strengthening skills, enhancing employability, and promoting inclusive development.

Key Components of the Program



Skill Development & Capacity Building



Women Empowerment



Community Upliftment



Employment & Livelihood Creation

Project Rhino and Project Kafal



Project Rhino was implemented across Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Tripura, while Project Kafal was implemented in Uttarakhand in partnership with PwC Acceleration Centres. Project Rhino was carried out in two phases: Phase 1 from November 30, 2023, to March 31, 2024, and Phase 2 from April 2024 to March 2025. The second phase of Project Kafal ran from October 2024 to March 2025. Both projects focused on mobilizing, counselling, and skilling local youth in high-growth sectors such as IT, retail, hospitality, healthcare, and manufacturing.

By leveraging CII's industry networks and National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) aligned curriculum, the initiatives provided structured pathways to employment and economic empowerment.



Impact Phase 2- Project Rhino

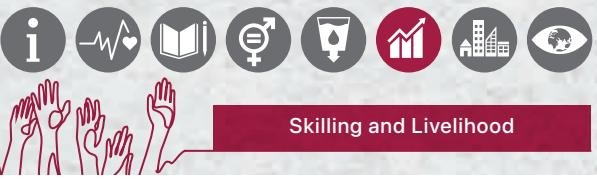
Counselled and trained over 5000 candidates

2,500+ candidates placed

Impact Phase 2- Project Kafal

Counselled and trained over 1,500 candidates

1000+ candidates placed



Bridging the Rural Skill Gap Through Digital and Employability Training in Himachal Pradesh



Supported by Blue Star Ltd., this project was launched in December 2023 and entered its second phase in October 2024. It trained 500 rural youth in Sirmaur District, Himachal Pradesh, across two phases on soft skills, employability, digital marketing, etc. A large number of trainees secured placements, strengthening local employment ecosystems.

Impact

100+ candidates
placed in Phase 2

Project Sampann



Project Sampann, supported by Infosys Foundation, was implemented across 11 states and 16 locations, providing Excel and soft skills training to over 30,000 individuals. It aims to expand to 22 states, with a target to place 20,000 trained candidates in industries by March 2026.

Improving Community Employability Through Targeted Training Interventions



A focused skill development initiative supported by Eveready India was launched in Gurugram, Kolkata and Mumbai to youth to access structured training for employment readiness, career counselling, and sales and marketing.

Key Achievements of Projects Led by CII Foundation and Executed by CII Model Career Centres

5 major CSR projects
executed by CII MCC in 2024-25

50,000+
beneficiaries trained

Corporate Partnerships
with leading organizations

Economic Empowerment:
Participants have gained skills that improve their job prospects and financial stability.

Women's Participation:
Notable increase in female employment, particularly in PwC & Blue Star initiatives.

Sustainability & Growth:

- Digital marketing training enabling entrepreneurship.
- Skilling programs aligning with industry demand.
- Community-led job fairs ensuring long-term impact.

Women Empowerment

5 GENDER EQUALITY


Click here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>





Woman Exemplar Program



Women at the grassroots face deep-rooted poverty and gender-based discrimination, often lacking access to nutrition, education, and economic opportunities. In rural and resource-poor areas, generations of women remain trapped in cycles of deprivation. However, when given the right support, they can break these barriers, uplift their communities, and inspire change.

To recognize and empower such women leaders, CII launched the Woman Exemplar Award in 2005. Over the years, it has evolved into the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program (WEP)—a transformative initiative that not only honours exceptional grassroots leaders but also strengthens their capacity, amplifies their impact, and integrates them into a powerful network of changemakers.

Each year, a rigorous multi-step process is undertaken to identify 15 grassroots leaders for their leadership and impactful work in the areas of Health, Education and Micro-enterprise. From these 15, three outstanding women are selected by an eminent jury drawn from industry, social development sector organisations and academia for the Woman Exemplar Award.

In 2024-25, encouraged by the response to the program and the on-ground impact of the grassroots women leaders, the program was expanded by introducing a new award category—Community Strengthening—to honour and support women strengthening communities.

Through a multi-stakeholder approach and CII's industry connect, the program continues to drive sustainable, women-led change across India.

In 2024-25, encouraged by the response to the program and the on-ground impact of the grassroots women leaders, the program was expanded by introducing a new CII Woman Exemplar Award category—Community Strengthening—to honour and support women strengthening communities.

Key Components of the Program



Identification and Recognition



Capacity Building and Mentoring



Amplifying Stories of Change



Strengthening the Woman Exemplar Network



Location

Pan India



Key Supporters

Apraava Energy

Identification and Recognition

The CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program follows a rigorous, multi-step selection process to identify and honour grassroots women leaders. The journey begins with a Call for Nominations, inviting NGOs and development sector organizations to nominate exemplary women driving change in their communities.

Each nomination undergoes a thorough evaluation, starting with desk reviews and telephonic interviews, followed by on-ground field visits, where the team meets the nominees, their communities, proposers, and government officials to assess their impact. The final selection is made by a distinguished jury comprising leaders from industry, media, and the social sector.

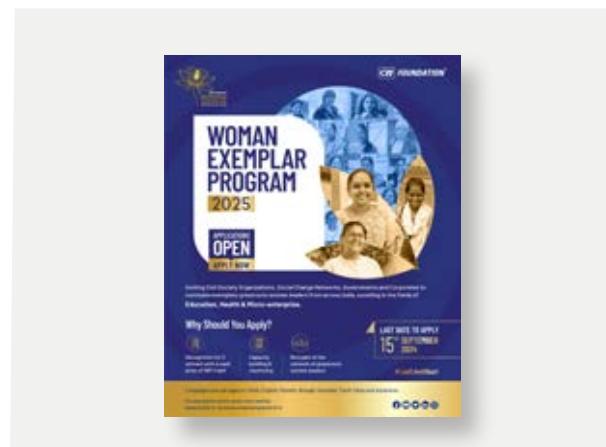
Call for Nominations and Outreach

The Call for Nominations for the CII Woman Exemplar Award 2025 was launched on 16th August 2024, inviting grassroots women leaders to apply.

The eligibility criteria included:

- Minimum three years of experience in their field.
- No prior state or national-level awards.
- Demonstrated leadership and impact, overcoming personal and social challenges.

To maximize reach, an extensive social media campaign was launched, featuring multilingual content in Marathi, Bengali, Tamil, and Assamese, English, Hindi, Odia, Gujarati, and Kannada, with a targeted hashtag #LeadLikeAaNaari. Paid promotions were undertaken on social media to boost outreach,



and the campaign successfully reached over 9 lakh people across India.

To further strengthen outreach, Vencap Social Ventures was engaged as the Due Diligence Partner, and multiple webinars were held to guide nominators through the application process.

Over 1,100 registrations were received, culminating in 420 applications, with over 50% from new nominators - a testament to the program's expanding influence.

Screening and Selection Process

From October to December 2024, the CII Foundation team conducted telephonic interviews with over 300 applicants, gaining deeper insights into their journey.

Following these interviews, 20 semi-finalists were shortlisted. Between January and March 2025, the team conducted due diligence field visits, meeting the nominees in person and witnessing firsthand the impact of their work. A jury of eminent leaders then selected 4 winners for the CII Woman Exemplar Award.

Jury Members

Ms. Shobana Kamineni

Executive Vice Chairperson, Apollo Hospitals

Ms. Chetna Gala Sinha

Founder, MannDeshi Bank

Ms. Rumjhum Chaterjee

Co-Founder & Managing Trustee, The Infravision Foundation and Chairperson Feedback Foundation

Ms. Kaveree Bamzai

Independent Journalist

Ms. Radhika Bharat Ram

Joint Vice Chairperson, Shri Ram Schools

Ms. Archna Vyas

Director of Policy and Communications
Gates Foundation

Mr. Kamal Bali

President and Managing Director
Volvo Group, India



Award Ceremony and Recognition

The CII Woman Exemplar Award 2025 was presented to the winners by Smt. Annpurna Devi, Minister of Women and Child Development, Government of India, at the session on 'Women Leading the Charge for Social Change: CII Woman Exemplar Awards' at the CII Annual Business Summit 2025 held on 30 May 2025.

Speaking on the occasion, Smt. Annpurna Devi said, "These grassroots women have emerged out of small villages, overcome many challenges to emerge as champions of change and are shaping India." Appreciating the role of industry in supporting and promoting women, she urged everyone to step forward to support women to meet India's goal of being 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Alamelu V from Salem, Tamil Nadu, received the CII Woman Exemplar Award in the Community Strengthening category; Farheen Hussain from Mewat, Haryana, in the Health category; Varsha Ankush Patil from Kolhapur, Maharashtra, in the Education category; and Narmada Jha from Madhubani, Bihar, in the Micro-enterprise category. Each winner received a trophy, a certificate, and a cash prize of ₹3 lakh.

Appreciating the determination and resilience of the woman exemplars who have emerged as community leaders despite their challenges, Mr. Sanjiv Puri, President, CII, said, "These women represent the spirit of India that never gives up."

Mr. Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, said that CII has been recognising grassroots women leaders since 2005. He mentioned that the women have done tremendous work to drive social change and are capable of doing so much more with the right support.

Such recognition on a national platform, in the presence of leaders from government, industry, media, and the social sector, helps gain more support from various stakeholders, especially from Indian industry.

Meet the Winners of the CII Woman Exemplar Award 2025

Community Strengthening



Alamelu V
Salem, Tamil Nadu
Age: 47

Born into bonded labor, Alamelu's childhood was shaped by exploitation and injustice. Forced to work at 10, a teacher's intervention changed her path—and ignited her lifelong fight for justice. In 2005, she founded the Rural Women Development Trust, rescuing 10,000 bonded labourers and empowering 30,000 people through legal rights education. She's built 180 women-led Self-Help Groups, enabling financial independence through microloans and skill training. Despite threats, assaults, and the murder of her brother, Alamelu remains a fearless voice for Arunthathiyar women—leading a movement to end caste slavery and reclaim dignity, livelihoods, and freedom for her community.

Health



Farheen Hussain
Mewat, Haryana
Age: 28

In the male-dominated landscape of Nuh, Farheen Hussain has boldly carved out a space for women's empowerment, bringing healthcare to the forefront. Through Radio Mewat, she has reached over 50,000 women across 60 villages, transforming maternal health, menstrual hygiene, family planning, and domestic violence awareness. Her efforts have connected over 80% of women to essential healthcare services, impacting 250,000 people in total. By advocating for women's autonomy over their health and lives, Farheen is not just changing mindsets but reshaping the future of Mewati women, empowering them to take control of their destinies.

Micro-enterprise



Narmada Jha
Madhubani district, Bihar
Age: 68

At 68, Narmada Jha is a symbol of strength and transformation. Born into poverty, she overcame financial struggles and built Shilp Gram, empowering over 4,000 women through the art of Madhubani painting. With no formal business education, she turned her passion into a thriving movement, providing sustainable income and fostering independence. Her work has reduced domestic violence and reshaped futures, proving the transformative power of economic empowerment. Narmada's journey—from artist to visionary leader—embodies the strength to change lives.

Education



Varsha Ankush Patil
Kolhapur District, Maharashtra
Age: 31

Varsha Patil, a 31-year-old trailblazing educator from Abdullat village, is transforming rural education through experiential STEM learning. Growing up in a resource-poor environment, she witnessed how textbook-heavy learning stifled curiosity and problem-solving. Determined to change this, she co-founded Vidyoday Muktangan Parivar Foundation in 2016 to bring hands-on, activity-based science education to underserved communities, especially children of migrant workers. Her initiatives—Chote Kalam, Chote Scientist, Sevankur, and Vidyankur—have reached over 6,700 students and 40 teachers, nurturing critical thinking and a scientific mindset.



Meet the 2025 Cohort of Woman Exemplars



Community Strengthening Category



Anisfatima Jafar Shaikh
Mumbai, Maharashtra
Age: 39



Anita Soni
Barmer, Rajasthan
Age: 42



Khushi Rajput
Bhopal,
Madhya Pradesh
Age: 24

Anisfatima Jafar Shaikh is transforming the lives of Mumbai's street vendors. As the force behind Azad Hawkers Union, she has organized and empowered over 17,000 vendors, securing their rights and financial stability. Jailed at 17 for defending her community, she now leads legal and policy reforms that have redefined street vending in India. She pioneered the country's first Clean Street Food Hubs, turning a marginalized workforce into a recognized economic force. Her work proves that empowerment is not just about survival—but about building dignity, security, and lasting change.

Anita Soni's story is one of strength born from struggle. Married early and subjected to violence, she overcame deep personal trauma to become a fearless advocate for women's rights. In 2014, she founded Mahila Sangathan, tackling issues like domestic violence, child marriage, and girls' education. Her work has directly impacted 13,466 women and children—empowering 5,000 women with livelihoods, rescuing 20 children from labor, and helping 1,100 girls return to school. Through her Pakki Saheli network, she's mobilized 2,500 women and mentored 100 grassroots leaders. Anita leads with compassion and courage, transforming 35 villages into hubs of hope and resilience.



Monica Paikra
Jagarnathpur,
Chhattisgarh
Age: 55

Monika Paikra is a trailblazing Adivasi leader driving change in Chhattisgarh's tribal and PVTG communities. With over 35 years of grassroots work, she has directly impacted 15,536 lives through governance, healthcare, and financial inclusion. As Janpad Adhyaksh since 2018, she's secured pensions for 2,100 elders, ration cards for 90 families, and trained 488 ASHA workers to expand health access. Monika has challenged menstrual and postnatal taboos, mobilized thousands of women, and championed economic independence. Now contesting Jila Sadasya elections, she aims to integrate 10,000+ women into financial systems and scale healthcare and childcare for lasting impact.



Parveennisa Shaikh
Mumbai, Maharashtra
Age: 46

Born on the footpaths of Mumbai, Parveennisa (Parveen) Shaikh has transformed a life of poverty and displacement into a powerful force for change. Over two decades, she has impacted over 25,000 lives—educating 18,000 children, empowering 6,000 women, and resolving 1,000+ domestic disputes. In Govandi's Natwar Parekh Colony, she has led community-driven solutions tackling violence, exclusion, and inadequate housing. Her initiatives—like Kitab Mahal, the Govandi Art Festival, and safe spaces for women—have redefined dignity and self-reliance. Parveen's leadership is shifting mindsets and building a future rooted in equity, resilience, and community power.



Health Category



Annapurna Dhore
Aurangabad,
Maharashtra
Age: 40



Bulti Dey
Cooch Behar,
West Bengal
Age: 36

Annapurna's journey from overcoming personal hardships to becoming a formidable leader is a testament to her resilience. Despite facing challenges from inter-caste marriage and domestic struggles, she has spearheaded MGVS' 'Prevention and Control of STD and HIV/AIDS' program since 2012. Her efforts have reduced the HIV rate from 7% in 2003 to just 0.41% today, impacting over 17,000 people. Expanding the program to 100 villages, Annapurna's unwavering dedication and leadership are driving transformative change, ensuring no one is left behind in the fight against HIV.

Bulti Dey from Cooch Behar has turned her personal struggles into a mission to empower women through mental health awareness. In a community where mental health is often sidelined, Bulti has spearheaded efforts to make mental health care accessible, partnering with authorities to bridge gaps in healthcare. Her work has impacted over 18,200 women, driving change by removing the stigma around mental health. Bulti's unwavering dedication ensures that every woman in Cooch Behar has access to support, fostering confidence, independence, and empowerment.



Lalki Meena
Salumbar District,
Rajasthan
Age: 38



Payal Kakate
Nanded district,
Maharashtra
Age: 27

Lalki Meena's journey from clinic attendant to Senior Health Worker in rural Rajasthan is a powerful story of resilience and leadership. Overcoming poverty, domestic violence, and a near-fatal HIV diagnosis, she has become a beacon of hope for marginalized women and children. Lalki has spearheaded initiatives that provide accessible healthcare, promote gender equality, and empower women economically. Through her work, she has directly impacted over 14,000 women, 4,000 children, and 9,000 villagers, improving nutrition, family planning, and healthcare access. Her unwavering commitment is reshaping healthcare in rural Rajasthan and driving lasting social change.

Payal Kakate is a trailblazer in Nanded, revolutionizing community health and empowering women to take control of their well-being. Focused on tackling anemia, malnutrition, and maternal health, she founded Arogya Gaths—community health funds that provide life-saving medical aid through women's collective contributions. Leading a movement of 8,000 women, Payal has nurtured the rise of Arogya Sakhis, community health workers who are transforming healthcare access across villages. With her unwavering dedication, she is reshaping the future of healthcare and empowering women to rewrite their destinies, one community at a time.



Micro-enterprise



Goutami Arika
Seethampetha,
Andhra Pradesh
Age: 31



**Kashavva
Dasharath
Kurne**
Belgaum District,
Karnataka
Age: 51



**Revati Shivaji
Kangule**
Nanded district,
Maharashtra
Age: 40



**Vimla
Kharakwal**
Champawat,
Uttarakhand
Age: 31

Goutami Arika is a passionate advocate for the empowerment of tribal farmers and women in Seethampetha, Andhra Pradesh. Born into poverty and shaped by personal tragedy, including the loss of five siblings due to inadequate healthcare, Goutami's resolve to uplift her community became her driving force. As CEO of the Adivasi Mahila Farmer Producer Company, she has empowered 750 farmers, eliminated middlemen, and secured fair trade partnerships with major buyers, significantly boosting incomes. Through sustainable agriculture, financial inclusion, and community-driven models, Goutami is reshaping rural livelihoods.

Kashavva Kurni, a survivor of the Devadasi system, has transformed the lives of over 4,000 marginalized women in Karnataka. Co-founding Mahila Abhivruddhi Mattu Samrakshna Samsthe (MASS), she empowered women through 200+ Self-Help Groups, enabling livelihoods in tailoring, food processing, and farming. Her efforts have played a pivotal role in nearly eradicating the Devadasi system in Belgaum. Kashavva's vision is to scale these initiatives into cooperatives and expand support for HIV-positive women and children, driving lasting economic and social change.

Revati Kangule, who overcame significant personal struggles, including financial hardship and family challenges, is now empowering women in Nanded, Maharashtra, through financial independence and entrepreneurship. As a leader with Swayam Shikshan Prayog, she has helped establish women-led micro-enterprises, focusing on health awareness, income generation, and improving access to better medical care. By facilitating access to funding, ensuring fair pricing, and mentoring women, Revati has transformed the economic landscape for thousands. Today, her work directly impacts 6,750 people, creating sustainable, women-driven businesses that uplift families and communities.

Capacity Building and Mentoring



Under the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program, capacity-building initiatives play a crucial role in equipping woman exemplars with essential skills, expanding their perspectives, and enabling them to scale their impact. Through training sessions, leadership development programs, and peer-learning exchanges, the program nurtures their personal and professional growth.

Training and Leadership Development

In May 2024, a two-day training program at the CII Gurugram office provided woman exemplars with immersive sessions on leadership development, reflective thinking, and effective communication. The engaging and thought-provoking exercises fostered open discussions, where exemplars shared their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. These interactions helped build strong bonds among participants, strengthening their collective efforts for social change.

From 23rd to 25th October 2024, the 2nd Leadership Training brought together woman exemplars for three days of intensive learning focused on personal and community leadership. Key sessions included Narrative Building for Change, Digital Communication Training, Legal Literacy, Self-Defense Techniques – Learning practical safety measures using home-based tools, Financial Literacy, Personal Branding etc.

Peer Learning Exchange Program – A New Learning Model

A new peer learning exchange program was introduced in 2024, replacing the earlier Mentorship Program. This innovative peer-to-peer learning model draws upon shared challenges and experiences, connecting Woman Exemplars with host organizations led by their peers for immersive learning.

Each host exemplar curates a two-day program, combining field visits and stakeholder interactions to facilitate hands-on learning experiences. Small groups (3-5 exemplars) from similar fields—Education, Health, or Micro-Enterprise—visit the host's organization, gaining insights and best practices to apply in their own work.

The first exchange program was hosted by Ranjita Pawar, the 2024 Woman Exemplar (Education Category), who leads an organization dedicated to foundational literacy for tribal children in Maharashtra. During the visit, participants explored the history and marginalization of the DNT Laman Banjara Tribe, implementation of foundational literacy and remedial classes, infrastructure, resources, and community engagement strategies as well as interactions with parents, government school officials, and stakeholders, gaining comprehensive insights into educational challenges and successes.



Education Category



Priyanka
Gurgaon, Haryana
Age: 21



Puja Dixit
Deoria, Uttar Pradesh
Age: 24



Reena Shakya
Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh
Age: 40

Priyanka, a 31-year-old educator from Palra, Haryana, defied deep-rooted gender norms to become a powerful advocate for education. Overcoming early pressure to marry, she pursued her studies and turned her journey into a mission to transform her community. As a founding member of Anubhuti's Bridge Fellowship Program, she has taught 3,807 students and reintegrated 2,263 out-of-school children into formal education. Her "Chaupal Project" has reshaped parental attitudes toward learning, and her preschool initiative builds strong early foundations. With a direct impact on 6,156 lives, Priyanka is redefining education as a tool for empowerment and systemic change.

Puja Dixit, 24, is redefining rural education and skilling through bold, ground-up action. Confronting poverty and gender bias, she launched a vocational training center in Deoria, U.P., offering low-cost, certified courses in computers, accounting, and nursing. Focused on empowering young women, her initiative has trained over 2,000 students—900 have secured jobs, 42 launched businesses, and 288 are pursuing higher education. Puja's model is not just creating livelihoods—it's shifting mindsets, building agency, and proving that meaningful change can begin with a clear vision and commitment to transforming futures.

Reena Shakya, a passionate educator and advocate from Gwalior's SC Kori tribe, is reshaping education for marginalized communities. Inspired by Ambedkar and Savitribai Phule, she founded NEEV Shiksha Jan Kalyan Samiti in 2015 to address systemic barriers to learning. Through her Learning Centres, she has provided foundational education to over 3,500 underserved children, helping integrate them into formal schools. Her child-first, inclusive approach prioritizes individual learning needs and builds constitutional awareness. Undeterred by challenges, Reena continues to drive change at the grassroots, ensuring every child receives the dignity and opportunity that education brings.



By encouraging collaboration and peer-driven knowledge exchange, the Woman Exemplar Program ensures that these grassroots leaders not only refine their skills but also empower each other to drive greater impact in their communities.



Amplifying Stories of Change

The CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program not only identifies and nurtures grassroots women leaders but also amplifies their stories, ensuring their voices inspire and drive broader social change. Through various platforms and engagements, Woman Exemplars share their journeys, advocate for change, and demonstrate the transformative power of investing in women.

As they break barriers and redefine possibilities for themselves and their communities.



Woman Exemplars Meet Mercedes Soria at US Consulate Event in Pune

On 1 August 2024, CII Foundation Woman Exemplars had the unique opportunity to engage with Mercedes Soria, Executive Vice President and Chief Intelligence Officer at Knightscope, at an event hosted by the US Consulate in Pune, Maharashtra.

Ms. Soria, a global speaker on technology and women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), shared her insights on bridging the gender gap in STEM and the career opportunities available for women, the importance of mentorship and cross-border learning in empowering women and encouraging girls to explore STEM fields and breaking stereotypes.

The event was a powerful exchange of experiences and ideas. Woman Exemplars representing Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh shared their impactful work—ranging from providing quality education and safe learning environments for girls to empowering tribal children through foundational literacy and integrating marginalized girls into the formal education system.

Championing Grassroots Change: Woman Exemplars Inspire at the WomeNation Summit

At the 9th Edition of the CII Western Region Indian Women Network's flagship event, the WomeNation Summit, held on 20 September 2024 in Mumbai, CII Foundation Woman Exemplars Ranjita Pawar, Sunita Chauhan, and Saraswathi M took center stage to share their remarkable journeys of resilience, leadership, and transformation.

Themed "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress", the summit provided a platform for these grassroots leaders to advocate for investment in women-led grassroots initiatives to drive inclusive growth, highlight their work in Education, Micro-Enterprise, and Health, demonstrating its transformative impact on marginalized communities and urge industry leaders to support women changemakers working at the grassroots level.



Their powerful narratives reinforced the urgent need to support women leaders who are driving change in the most vulnerable sections of society. They emphasized that true national development must include those often pushed to the fringes, and partnerships between industry and grassroots leaders are essential for lasting social impact.

The WomeNation Summit served as an influential platform to reinforce the message that empowering grassroots women leaders is key to sustainable development and community resilience.

Manu Mandlekar and Her Team Triumph with 29 Medals at the 8th National Martial Arts Games

Manu Mandlekar, a CII Foundation Woman Exemplar (2019 Cohort), along with her team of students,

secured 29 medals at the 8th National Martial Arts Games in New Delhi in July 2024.

Manu has been a trailblazer in promoting sports among young girls in her community.



The CII Foundation is proud to be a part of her journey and continues to support grassroots women leaders.

Celebrating the Power of Women on International Women's Day

This year, International Women's Day resonated globally with the theme "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment." This year's theme calls for action that can unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all and a feminist future where no one is left behind. Central to this vision is empowering the next generation—youth, particularly young women and adolescent girls—as catalysts for lasting change. Through a special social media post, we showcased the milestones achieved by our Woman Exemplar program and Empowering Champions of Change, Assam.

perspectives

A Quarterly Newsletter Vol 3 | Issue 2 | March 2025

Role of Industry in Promoting Women-Led Development

W
oman-led development is emerging as a powerful movement globally and especially in India. As we work towards the vision of *Vikas Bharat - 2047*, there is growing emphasis on the role of women as leaders, innovators, and key contributors to economic and social progress.

With over three decades of experience in the corporate space, I have witnessed how industry has, over the years, played a pivotal role in fostering an ecosystem that supports and accelerates women's development. Today, corporates are not only devising and implementing policies that ensure equal opportunities, but they are also creating inclusive work environments and supporting women entrepreneurs.

As we work towards the vision of *Vikas Bharat - 2047*, there is growing emphasis on the role of women as leaders and key contributors to economic and social progress.

Industry has been, and can be, an immensely powerful catalyst in this transformative journey of advancing gender equality.

One of the critical ways in which industry can accelerate this transformation is by increasing female workforce participation.

By promoting gender diversity in the workplace, companies can enhance productivity, creativity, and innovation. Companies that prioritize gender-inclusive policies witness higher employee satisfaction and financial performance.

Some of the key measures which have helped increase female workforce participation include:

- Flexible work policies that support work-life balance.
- Equal pay and transparent career progression opportunities.
- Mentorship and leadership programs for women.
- Encouraging women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as engineering, technology, and manufacturing.

Going forward, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the following areas to accelerate the shift towards gender balance in the workplace, leading to greater productivity and a truly inclusive India.

Through robust HR policies, implementing robust policies along with assessment and sensitization programs, can foster a culture of respect and equality, where women can realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully.

Key steps include:

- Establishing and enforcing zero-tolerance policies for harassment and discrimination.
- Conducting regular gender-sensitivity training for employees.
- Investing in and promoting women-friendly infrastructure, such as safe transport and childcare facilities.
- Encouraging men to support and advocate for gender equality.



Watch this space as we share our journey on Women Exemplar Program 2025

0:11 1x

CII Foundation

1,245 followers

This International Women's Day, we honour the inspiring spirit of women driving change in their communities.

From the Woman Exemplar Program to the Empowering Champions of Change initiative in Assam, the CII Foundation is committed to supporting grassroots women leaders across the country.

The Woman Exemplar Program identifies, nurtures, and supports women leaders working in health, education, and micro-enterprise—women who have overcome adversity to create a lasting impact in their communities.

Empowering Champions of Change – Assam, in collaboration with Apraava Energy, is supporting 15 exceptional women leaders with comprehensive leadership training, mentorship, and opportunities to scale their initiatives and drive change at the grassroots level.

This #WOD2025, let's come together to support and celebrate these incredible change makers who are breaking barriers and leading the way toward Rights, Equality, Empowerment.

A big thanks to all our supporters—Apraava Energy, Godrej Properties, Lixitad, Birlasoft for their unwavering support!



Change on the Ground - From Numbers to Narratives

30 lakh
people impacted
annually through
the Woman
Exemplars.

- ▶ Peer Learning Exchange Program launched to promote immersive learning.
- ▶ A new category of CII Woman Exemplar Award introduced - Community Strengthening - to honour women building community resilience.

Voices of Impact



“I have been working with women in small villages of Haryana to spread awareness about health and child nutrition. I feel happy and grateful to CII Foundation for recognising my work and giving me this platform.

I come from a background where women are not allowed to step out of the house, and girls are often married off at a young age. Despite this, I moved forward and was able to reach people through community radio. This recognition by CII Foundation will help me take my work even further.”

Farheen Hussain

Winner, Woman Exemplar Award 2025
Health Category



“I have been working for many years to empower women, and today, many of them are standing on their own feet. This is the first time my work has been recognised, and I am truly grateful to CII Foundation for making my dream come true.

Their support and training have not only strengthened my work but also helped me grow as a leader. With this recognition, I now have the opportunity to take my work to national and even international platforms.”

Narmada Jha

Winner, Woman Exemplar Award 2025
Micro-Enterprise Category



“

I have been working with out-of-school children to empower them to take action and pursue their dreams. Through the training I received from CII Foundation, I've gained valuable skills in planning, understanding roles and responsibilities, and working effectively as a team.

These learnings will strengthen my work and help me reach more children in need. I am deeply grateful to CII Foundation for believing in me and supporting my journey.”

Priyanka

Woman Exemplar 2025
Education Category



“

I work with young people through the medium of sports. Through the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program, I got to meet and interact with so many diverse grassroots women leaders across the country working on different issues. Such interactions have helped me better understand the qualities of being a good leader, how different people approach their unique situations, and the issues in their communities in their own ways. This has been truly inspiring and has taught me a lot.”

Khushi Rajput

Woman Exemplar 2025
Community Strengthening Category



Empowering Champions of Change in Assam

The Empowering Champions of Change program in Assam, launched in collaboration with Apraava Energy in 2024, is a flagship initiative aimed at strengthening grassroots leadership among women and accelerating social transformation across rural communities. In its first year, the program identified and supported 15 visionary women leaders from 8 districts, equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and platforms needed to catalyse positive change in their communities.

Key Components of the Program

Identification and Recognition

Capacity Building Through Training and Networking

Initiating Community Projects to Amplify Scale and Impact of Women Leaders

Capacity building through training and networking

A Goal Setting and Inception Workshop was held on 13–14 June 2024 in Goalpara District. Participants engaged in vision-building exercises that emphasized the creation of gender-equal villages and the need to recognize and support the care economy. Activities such as Problem Tree Analysis, Stakeholder Mapping, and leadership games nurtured critical thinking, planning, and team-building skills.



Further capacity building was undertaken through a residential training program on 26–27 August, which focused on rights awareness, gender sensitivity, and legal literacy. Using interactive sessions, group activities, and film screenings (such as Pragati Sakhi and Laapata Ladies), the women deepened their understanding of gender justice and developed 45-day action plans for community engagement.

On 4 September, a leadership training in Bongaigaon saw participation from the Apraava Energy CSR team, including Dr. Priyesh Modi and Ms. Srushti Bangera, whose interactions with the women further motivated and inspired the group.

From 2–4 December, a three-day workshop at Chitrang Training Centre, Rangjuli, focused on digital literacy and cyber safety, in collaboration with Seven Sisters Development Assistance (SeSTA) and Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF). The women leaders were trained in operating digital tools, using social media responsibly, recognizing cyber threats, and promoting digital payments. The program concluded with the creation of training modules and action plans to become Soochnapreneurs—community-based information agents dedicated to spreading digital awareness.



An exposure visit from 4–6 January 2025 took the women leaders to Majuli, where they interacted with Self-Help Groups, learned about diversified livelihood practices like piggery, goat rearing, and crop cultivation, and connected with women entrepreneurs running successful poultry farms and Common Service Centers. These experiences highlighted the importance of financial autonomy, business planning, and community resilience.

The visit also included a tour of Akshaya Patra's centralized kitchen, supported by Apraava Energy, offering insights into hygienic large-scale meal preparation and food distribution systems that support school children.



Celebrating Constitution Day and Advancing Gender Equality

To commemorate India's 75th Constitution Day, a focused session on gender equality was conducted. Discussions ranged from gender and sex to societal stereotypes and role expectations. These sessions empowered the women leaders to become champions of gender justice in their villages by sharing these critical learnings within their communities.



A Year of Growth and Transformation

The program culminated in a closure training session on 26–27 March 2025, where the women reflected on their journeys through storytelling, poetry, and artwork. The two-day session focused on charting sustainable roadmaps for future action, and included fun, team-building activities. A cultural night and visit to Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary provided opportunities for learning about biodiversity conservation and alternative livelihood avenues through rural trade and crafts.

Tokens of appreciation were awarded to each woman leader, honouring their dedication, growth, and leadership. The program has not only equipped these women with the tools for transformative leadership but has also ignited a lifelong commitment to community empowerment and social equity.





Voices of Impact



“Before receiving support through the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA), many of us had ideas and the drive to start our own businesses but lacked the financial means. With the help of the CII Foundation, which actively connected us to these government schemes, we finally had the support we needed. Today, we've started our own small businesses and are earning independently—bringing not just income, but a sense of stability and confidence to our families.”

Lokhmoni Hembrom
Woman Leader, Kokrajhar



Promila Roy
Woman Leader, Goalpara

“Earlier, most families in our community were unaware that affordable insurance options even existed. We didn't think financial protection was possible for people like us. With the CII Foundation helping us understand and access the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), we now feel more secure. Knowing that we have some financial support in case of emergencies has brought peace of mind to many families.”

“We used to struggle to arrange even one proper meal a day. Feeding our families was a constant worry. With support from the CII Foundation in accessing the Ration Card Scheme, we now receive food grains regularly. It has eased our burden and brought a sense of relief, knowing that our children will not go to bed hungry.”

Morjina Yesmin
Woman Leader, Dhubri

“We used to struggle to arrange even one proper meal a day. Feeding our families was a constant worry. With support from the CII Foundation in accessing the Ration Card Scheme, we now receive food grains regularly. It has eased our burden and brought a sense of relief, knowing that our children will not go to bed hungry.”

Nur Yesminara Begum
Woman Leader, Dhubri

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Apraava Energy & CII Acknowledge 15 Women Changemakers in Assam

By: WE Staff | Wednesday, 17 April 2024



Apraava Energy, an eminent integrated energy solutions provider from India has collaborated with CII Foundation, one of the reputed non-profit agencies that promote inclusive growth, and honoring the award to 15 remarkable women and women changemakers from Assam. These extraordinary leaders have been honored for their excellent work and for lifting more than 1000 women in impoverished regions within the state.

The program, named the 'Empowering Champions of Change', is managed by Apraava Smart Meter Private Limited which is the subsidiary of Apraava Energy and it has been conceptualized to celebrate and empower women community leaders who are involved in grassroots initiatives that are bringing about the desired transformation.

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Apraava Energy Partners with CII Foundation to Honour 15 Women Changemakers from Assam

Under the 'Empowering Champions of Change' initiative led by Apraava Smart Meter Private Limited, a subsidiary of Apraava Energy, these women were recognized for their contribution in bringing grassroots-level transformation to society.

April 10, 2024 By Naren Bhattacharya



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Waste Management



<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6>





Waste Management



India faces a mounting challenge in waste management, threatening environmental sustainability and public health, especially in densely populated urban areas. Improper disposal practices lead to piles of garbage along roadsides, plastic-clogged drains, and untreated waste contaminating water bodies which continue to degrade natural ecosystems and increase the risk of disease outbreaks. The ripple effects include polluted air and water, rising greenhouse gas emissions, and deteriorating urban living conditions.

To strengthen waste management, the CII Foundation adopted a collaborative, community-driven approach to build scalable and sustainable waste management solutions.

In June 2021, in partnership with PTC Foundation and PTC India Financial Services Limited, CII Foundation launched its first intervention in Abul Fazal- a high density urban settlement in Okhla, New Delhi. The initiative aimed to transform the locality into a zero-waste neighbourhood through focused efforts on creating awareness, promoting waste segregation, recycling, and processing waste to save it from landfills.

Building on the success of the Okhla intervention, the CII Foundation launched waste management initiatives in: Leh, Ladakh, Farrukhnagar, Haryana and Kochi in Kerala.

Tailored to regional needs, the initiatives focus on strengthening existing municipal systems by engaging with Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), industry and local communities as key stakeholders.

To strengthen waste management, the CII Foundation adopted a collaborative, community-driven approach to build scalable and sustainable waste management solutions.

Key Components of the Program



Creating Awareness and Catalysing Civic Engagement



Strengthening Waste Management Infrastructure



Building Skills of Waste Workers and Enhancing their Safety



Location

Farrukhnagar, Gurugram
Leh, Ladakh
Kochi, Kerala



Key Supporters

HDFC Bank Parivartan
General Insurance
Corporation of India (GIC Re)

Waste Management Initiative, Leh

The Himalayan ecosystem is facing mounting challenges due to improper waste accelerated by increasing tourism and urban growth.

Preliminary field visits and discussions with diverse stakeholders brought the following challenges related to waste management to the forefront:

Key Problems

- Limited transport and accessibility impacting waste collection.
- Inadequate waste collection infrastructure, recycling facilities, and landfill sites for a population of approximately 60,000.
- Tourist influx which leads to a spike in non-biodegradable waste.
- Improper disposal which harms Ladakh's fragile ecosystems, water bodies, and wildlife.

To address these challenges, the CII Foundation, in partnership with HDFC Bank Parivartan, devised and launched a Community Waste Management Initiative in Leh on 28 March 2024. The project, spanning 25 villages across two blocks, aligns with local government efforts to promote sustainable waste management and environmental conservation.

Creating Awareness and Catalysing Civic Engagement

In the initial phase of the intervention, a series of stakeholder meetings were held to understand ground realities and devise strategies for behaviour change and stronger waste management systems.

On 16 April 2024 a brainstorming meeting was held with key stakeholders such as government officials and community leaders to review the region's waste management challenges. Discussions highlighted the critical need to raise awareness on waste segregation practices and to implement penalties for improper disposal. Subsequently, on 27 May 2024, another stakeholder consultation brought together representatives from local governance bodies, security forces, and community leaders to deliberate on issues such as manpower shortages and waste transportation inefficiencies.



The discussions also underscored the importance of initiating training programs for waste workers and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to build capacities and enhance community participation in waste management.

On 27 April 2024, a cleanliness drive was conducted in Kharu Main Market, with active participation from community members, local merchants, and officials. The drive aimed to clear waste and reinforce the importance of sustainable waste disposal practices. As part of the initiative, 19 dustbins were distributed to market vendors to promote long-term commitment to cleanliness. The momentum continued with an awareness session at Imamia Mission School on 3 June 2024 where students showcased their understanding of waste management through an engaging drama performance. Simultaneously, a feasibility study was conducted to evaluate existing waste management strategies and identify areas for improvement. The findings culminated in a comprehensive Feasibility Report on Waste Management in Leh, providing a roadmap for future interventions.

On World Environment Day, 5 June 2024, a special cleanliness drive was organized in the Chuchot market area, where students from Government High School, Chuchot-Yokma, actively participated. Their dedication to environmental responsibility was recognized with prizes, reinforcing the importance of youth involvement in sustainability efforts.





A key milestone was the Stakeholder Workshop held in Leh on 11 July 2024, attended by representatives from HDFC Bank, government officials, school leaders, and SHG members. The workshop provided a platform for collaborative discussions and witnessed the release of the Feasibility Report on Waste Management in Leh. As part of the initiative, E-carts were distributed to shops, residents, and Block Development Officers, and a plastic bottle vending machine was donated to Hemis Monastery to encourage recycling.

The CII Foundation and HDFC Bank Parivartan team also met with Mr. Pawan Kotwal, Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh, to discuss progress and explore opportunities to further strengthen the waste management framework.



On 23 July 2024, a cleanliness drive was conducted at Upshi Market in collaboration with the Sub Divisional Magistrate's office in Kharu. With over 75 participants, including local authorities, labourers, shopkeepers, and restaurant owners, the event reinforced the importance of community-led waste



management. To sustain these efforts, 25 dustbins were distributed to the market association, further encouraging responsible waste disposal.

As part of the Swachhata Hi Seva 2024 campaign under the Swachh Bharat Mission, students from the Imamia Mission School in Chuchot, Leh participated in a Swachhata Pledge on 25 September 2024, where they enthusiastically took a pledge to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to a cleaner environment, reinforcing the importance of cleanliness in daily life. A successful clean-up drive was also organised on 30 September in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation of Leh, Ladakh, where volunteers and officials came together to clean the Industrial Area and Skampari.



Strengthening Waste Management Infrastructure

A key intervention under the project was the installation of an Automated PET Bottle Vending Machine at Thiksey Monastery and Hemis Monastery. Designed to efficiently crush plastic bottles for recycling, this initiative aligns with the broader goal of reducing plastic waste in the region.



A defining moment for the initiative came on November 30, 2024, with the inauguration of the Solid Resource Management Centre in Chuchot Block, Leh. The event was graced by the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Brig. (Dr.) B.D. Mishra (Retd.), who highlighted the environmental risks posed by improper waste disposal and urged collective action to safeguard the region's fragile ecosystem. Senior officials from the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), HDFC Bank, and community representatives reaffirmed their commitment to making Ladakh a model for sustainable waste management. During the event, outstanding waste management champions were recognized for their contributions, and HDFC Bank reaffirmed its long-term commitment to environmental sustainability through continued CSR efforts.



The journey towards effective waste management is ongoing, but with the continued dedication of all stakeholders, a lasting impact is being created, ensuring that the pristine beauty of Ladakh is preserved for future generations.

Currently, two Solid Resource Management Centres—one in Chuchot and another in Kharu Block—are operational, providing critical waste processing infrastructure for the region.

Building Skills of Waste Workers and Enhancing their Safety

To build capacity among frontline waste workers, a two-day training workshop was conducted on 10–11 February 2025 at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) Centre in Chuchot. Led by Dr. Shafia Wani, a sanitation changemaker from Institute of Management, Public Administration and Rural Development (IMPARD), Kashmir, and facilitated by the CII Foundation team.

The training covered:

- Roles and responsibilities of sanitation workers
- Classification and management of different types of waste
- Techniques for converting waste into valuable resource
- Technical and economic aspect of waste management

Sessions were delivered through audio-visual presentations, documentaries, and discussions. To ensure better engagement, the team facilitated translations into Ladakhi, making the content accessible and participative.

A total of 19 participants—including two supervisors, fifteen waste workers, and two drivers from the Chuchot and Kharu SRMC units—attended the training.





Change on the Ground - From Numbers to Narratives

2 Material Recovery Facilities (3-5 TPD) set up in Kharu & Chuchot Block

► Automated PET Bottle Vending Machines

were established at Thiksey and Hemis Monasteries as part of efforts to reduce plastic waste in high-footfall areas. These machines enable efficient collection and crushing of used plastic bottles for recycling, while also promoting environmentally responsible behaviour among both locals and tourists.

Waste Management Initiative in Kochi, Kerala

Chellanam, a coastal village near Kochi in Kerala's Ernakulam district, is known for its scenic beauty and traditional fishing communities. However, the area faces growing challenges from coastal erosion, flooding, and unmanaged waste.

Narrow roads, densely packed houses, and lack of infrastructure have made waste collection and disposal particularly difficult.

Preliminary field visits and discussions with diverse stakeholders brought the following challenges related to waste management to the forefront:

Key Problems

- No proper waste management system
- Lack of infrastructure for waste storage and treatment
- Low community awareness and participation
- Waste dumped in water bodies harming marine life and affecting livelihoods since main source of employment is fisheries in the region

CII Foundation, in partnership with the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re), launched the



Creating Awareness and Catalysing Civic Engagement

To engage local stakeholders in a community-wide cleanliness and tree plantation drive, CII Foundation, along with members of the Haritha Karma Sena, a women-led self-help group, and students from Puthenthode Government Higher Secondary School, undertook a cleaning dive on 5 June 2024, clearing bushes and accumulated waste along roadsides, followed by the planting of fruit saplings to promote environmental awareness and greenery. The event, inaugurated by Mr. K. L. Joseph, Panchayat President of Chellanam Grama Panchayat, saw participation from over 40 Haritha Karma Sena members, school students, ward members, and officials from the Chellanam Agriculture Office, demonstrating a strong commitment to environmental sustainability.

As part of the Swachhata Hi Sewa 2024 campaign, a clean-up drive was organized at Chellanam Harbour and its adjoining beach area on 21 September 2024. Haritha Karma Sena members and local harbour workers actively participated in removing accumulated plastic waste from the shoreline, which was then responsibly transported to a recycling centre.

Furthering these efforts, a large-scale clean-up drive was held on 2 October 2024 at Puthenthode Beach, also inaugurated by Mr. Joseph.

Over 90 participants, including Haritha Karma Sena members and local officials, collected plastic bottles, slippers, and other waste materials for proper recycling and disposal.

The initiative also focused on engaging students through awareness programs on waste management, emphasizing the 3Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Over six sessions, more than 500 students participated, learning responsible waste disposal practices and receiving cloth bags for segregating plastic waste, which was later collected by the Haritha Karma Sena.

A key feature of this engagement was the formation of a Students' Parliament in partnership with the Panchayat and Ward Councillors. This platform enabled students from different schools to discuss key waste management challenges affecting their communities, propose actionable solutions, and urge local authorities to take concrete steps toward implementation.



Strengthening Waste Management Infrastructure

On 27 February 2025, the Ernakulam District Collector, N. S. K. Umesh, inaugurated the new Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Chellanam. The facility will aggregate, sort, grade, and process plastic waste collected from households and market areas before it is sent to recyclers. The event was attended by Mr. Vinod Manjila, Chairman, CII Kerala State Council; Mr. K.J. Maxi, MLA, Mr. K.L. Joseph, President, Chellanam Grama Panchayat, Mr. Aju Jacob, Former Chairman, CII Kerala State Council & Managing Director, Synthite Industries; Mr. Sunil Misra, CEO, CII Foundation; Ms. Mary Simla, Vice-President, Chellanam Grama Panchayat; Mr. Baby Thampi, President, Block Panchayat; Ms. Ranjini S, District Coordinator, Haritha Kerala Mission; Mr. Simal Antony, Chairman, Health Standing Committee;



Ms. Sreelatha, Secretary, Chellanam Grama Panchayat, and Mr. Zakariya Joy, Co-convenor, CII Clean Kerala and Waste Management Panel. During the event, District Collector N. S. K. Umesh emphasized the significant role of CII Foundation in addressing Chellanam's waste management challenges through a long-term solution.

To further boost awareness and community participation, the first-ever Green Run for Chellanam marathon was organized. This 5-kilometre event brought together over 160 participants, including Haritha Karma Sena members, Residents' Associations, and schoolchildren, reinforcing the community's collective commitment to a cleaner, more sustainable future.



Change on the Ground - From Numbers to Narratives

Expanded waste collection to
7,800 households
out of 8,500 across 21 wards

- ▶ **450 households** have adopted the practise of home composting.
- ▶ A Material Recovery Facility (MRF) has been set up to aggregate, sort, and process plastic waste—operated by members of the women-led Haritha Karma Sena.
- ▶ Improved livelihoods by increasing revenue for Haritha Karma Sena.



Building Skills of Waste Workers and Enhancing Their Safety

Recognizing the health risks associated with waste management work, a health camp was organized for the Haritha Karma Sena members on 29 July 2024. Participants underwent blood tests and received follow-up medical consultations, including prescriptions for necessary medications. The camp also provided dental and eye care check-ups, ensuring comprehensive healthcare support for waste workers.

A capacity-building workshop was conducted for Haritha Karma Sena members, providing them with a platform to discuss field challenges and collaborate with ward members to develop actionable waste management solutions.

Adarsh Village Waste Management Initiative Farrukhnagar, Gurugram

Farrukhnagar, a town in Gurugram district, Haryana, faces significant challenges in managing solid waste. A substantial portion of waste remains uncollected, leading to accumulation in public spaces and illegal dumping in vacant plots. Open burning of waste is a common practice, contributing to air pollution and health hazards. Limited public awareness also hinders waste segregation at the household level.

Preliminary field visits and discussions with diverse stakeholders brought the following challenges related to waste management to the forefront:

Key Problems

- No waste collection from households and shops
- Open dumping/burning of waste on roadsides
- Lack of Infrastructure to transport, store & treat waste
- Choked drains and polluted water bodies due to plastic waste

To address these issues, the Adarsh Village Waste Management Initiative was launched in July 2023. Since its launch, the project has focused on field assessments, community engagement, and awareness campaigns to promote sustainable waste management.

To commemorate World Environment Day on June 5, 2024 the CII Foundation undertook various activities in the project areas to create awareness and ensure community participation for improving surroundings and contributing to sustainable development.

Drawing Competition in Farrukhnagar Students from Govt. Girls Middle School, Patli in Farrukhnagar participated in a drawing competition organized by the CII Foundation. These young eco-warriors showcased their vision for a clean and green future, learning the importance of taking care of our planet.

So far, under the project, E-carts, dustbins for households, and community dustbins, along with waste composting machines, have been distributed to enhance waste management practices across Farrukhnagar.



Change on the Ground - From Numbers to Narratives

Implemented door-to-door waste collection in all 4 intervened villages.

- ▶ Established waste recycling facilities in all four villages to process wet waste and promote the production of organic fertilizer.

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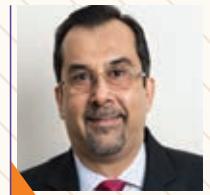
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The CII Foundation was set up by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in 2011 and works across India through a collaborative approach, partnering with the government, corporates, civil society, and NGOs, academic institutions, and other key stakeholders to drive social change. The Foundation undertakes projects in diverse areas, often on a pilot basis initially, and presents a successful model of engagement that is replicable and scalable to amplify impact.

The CII Foundation works in the areas of Climate Change, Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation, Early Childhood Education, Healthcare, Skilling and Livelihood, Women Empowerment, and Waste Management adopting a multistakeholder approach and leveraging the expertise of each stakeholder to channelize their collective resources towards social and community development.

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