

Connect

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Shivani Kumar

CEO
CII Foundation

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The CII Foundation aims to create knowledge, models and solutions that extend beyond individual projects, enabling stakeholders to learn, adapt and scale impact.

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Over the years, the CII Foundation has worked across some of the most complex and persistent challenges affecting communities – from climate resilience and education to healthcare, livelihoods, women's empowerment and waste management. This work has been made possible with the collective efforts of communities, civil society organisations, government, industry and many other stakeholders.

As I begin my journey with the CII Foundation, I see an important opportunity to build on this experience while continuing to learn, question, and evolve.

In the social development sector, it is natural to focus deeply on the root of the problem. We identify an issue, design an intervention and work consistently towards creating change. Persistence is essential, particularly when addressing challenges that have deep-rooted social, economic and institutional dimensions.

Yet there are times when, despite sustained effort, progress remains limited. At such moments, stepping back can be as important as moving forward. A pause allows us to examine the problem differently – to reconsider how it has been framed, whether our intervention is addressing the underlying issue, and whether there may be another way of approaching the challenge.



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This shift in perspective is particularly important when working on complex problems. Solutions are rarely linear, and the barrier to change may not always lie where we initially expect it to. It may be a missing capability, a behaviour, a link between institutions, or an enabling environment that has not yet been created.

I often think of these as 'choke points' — places where the flow of change gets blocked. Like a pipe where everything is in place for water to flow, but something prevents it from moving through, an intervention may have the necessary resources and effort behind it and yet remain unable to achieve the desired change because of one unresolved barrier.

Identifying such barriers requires us to look beyond the immediate intervention and understand the larger system in which it operates. This can lead us to redesign a solution, approach the problem through a different lens, or recognise that part of the solution may lie elsewhere in the ecosystem.

But developing a new solution is only one part of the journey. The greater opportunity lies in ensuring that what works can move beyond a single project or organisation.

The challenges we work on are rarely unique to one organisation. Government, industry, civil society organisations and communities are often addressing similar issues, sometimes encountering the same barriers and searching for similar solutions. There is, therefore, considerable value in bringing together different perspectives, experiences and capabilities to develop approaches that others can learn from, adapt and scale.

This is an approach I would like to see strengthened at the CII Foundation. Alongside continuing the work across our thematic areas, we will create greater space to step back, examine persistent challenges, learn from experience and explore solutions that can contribute to the larger development ecosystem.

Complex challenges cannot be solved by one organisation alone. Bringing together government, industry, civil society and communities can strengthen learning, unlock capabilities, address systemic barriers and create solutions with wider and lasting impact.

Our ambition should not be limited to making individual interventions more effective. It should also be to create knowledge, models and solutions that can be shared and built upon — contributing to a larger ecosystem of change.

Such an approach calls for openness: openness to question our own assumptions, learn from others, collaborate across organisational boundaries and recognise that meaningful and lasting change is rarely created by one organisation alone.

As we move forward, I look forward to working with our stakeholders across government, industry, civil society and communities to build on what has been achieved, learn from what we encounter, and find new pathways to lasting impact.

Sometimes, progress requires us to move forward with greater determination. At other times, it requires us to pause, look again and understand what is holding the flow back.

The opportunity lies in knowing the difference — and in having the courage to create a new way through.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE



CROP RESIDUE MANAGEMENT

As the kharif season approaches, efforts to promote sustainable crop residue management become increasingly important. The period leading up to paddy cultivation provides a critical opportunity to strengthen farmer awareness, facilitate access to appropriate machinery, and prepare communities to adopt alternatives to stubble burning. Early engagement during this phase helps farmers make informed decisions on residue management while supporting long-term improvements in soil health, resource efficiency, and environmental sustainability.

CII Foundation's Crop Residue Management (CRM) program continues to support farmers in sustainable crop residue management through a combination of awareness building, farmer training, machinery

access, and ex-situ biomass management solutions. Active across more than 1,000 villages and reaching over 2.5 lakh farmers, the initiative is supported by corporate partners including Cadence Design Systems, Fidelity International, Goodyear, Jhajjar Power Limited, HDFC Bank, JSW Foundation, and SBI Card.

During the April–June quarter, activities focused on community mobilization, farmer training program, machinery demonstrations, and strengthening biomass management systems. Regular field visits, stakeholder interactions, volunteer engagement activities, and capacity-building initiatives helped reinforce awareness around sustainable agricultural practices and encouraged farmers to adopt environmentally responsible alternatives to crop residue burning.

Key Components of the Program



Awareness Building



Machinery Support Through Community Tool Banks



Farmers' Training and Farm Demonstrations



Managing Biomass through Ex-situ Technology

AWARENESS BUILDING

Community Mobilization and Farmer Outreach

Extensive awareness and field-level engagement activities were carried out across project villages supported by JSW, Fidelity, and Cadence Design Systems. Community mobilizers and volunteers conducted regular farm visits, village-level meetings, and door-to-door awareness campaigns to engage directly with farmers and promote sustainable crop residue management practices.

Farmer awareness meetings were organized with the support of progressive farmers to educate participants on environmentally responsible farming methods and the benefits of adopting crop residue management practices. Community meetings also served as

platforms for open discussions, helping address farmers' concerns regarding machinery access, residue management, and alternatives to stubble burning. In Fatehabad, community mobilizers under the Cadence-supported project conducted consistent household-level outreach, while volunteers under the Fidelity-supported project sensitized farmers about avoiding stubble burning as paddy nurseries were established across project areas.

These efforts contributed to increased awareness, stronger community participation, and wider adoption of sustainable farming practices across project villages.



Volunteers Engagement Event

An HDFC Volunteer Engagement Event was successfully organized at Village Lohakhera, Sangrur aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation, and community engagement. Four HDFC volunteers from the Cheema and Longowal branches actively participated in the event and interacted with local farmers and community members.

The event commenced with a brief overview of the project, highlighting its objectives and the initiatives being implemented to support farmers through crop residue management and sustainable rural development practices.

The volunteers visited biogas plants established under the project to understand their role in promoting clean energy and reducing dependence on conventional fuels. They also interacted with beneficiary farmers to gather feedback on the project's impact and benefits.

The volunteers visited a Tool Bank and engaged with farmers and learned about the availability and utilization of agricultural machinery provided under the project for efficient crop residue management.

To encourage environmental sustainability, a plantation drive was conducted in the village with active participation from volunteers and community members.



Additionally, bird nests were installed at suitable locations, and water bowls were placed for birds and animals to support local biodiversity, especially during the summer season.

The event also featured a drawing competition for village students, providing a platform for young participants to express their creativity while spreading awareness about environmental conservation and sustainable living.

The engagement event served as a meaningful opportunity for HDFC volunteers to connect with the community, witness the project's impact on the ground, and contribute towards environmental and social development initiatives.

Agriculture Department Visit

A series of awareness sessions to promote sustainable farming practices were held in 3 villages in Mansa, Punjab, supported by JSW Foundation and in collaboration with the Agriculture Department. These sessions focused on environmentally responsible crop residue management techniques and highlighted their benefits for improving soil health, enhancing productivity, and reducing air pollution.

Representatives from the Agriculture Department, particularly Baljinder Singh, Agriculture Sub Inspector, Agriculture Department, Block Jhunir, actively contributed to these sessions. More than 200 farmers participated in the discussions.



Recognising Progressive Farmers: Clean Air Life Kisan Award

On 8 May 2026, an appreciation event was held at Punjab Agricultural University, organized by the Clean Air Punjab organization. The event recognized progressive farmers from Ludhiana and Sangrur in Punjab and Haryana for their significant contributions towards promoting sustainable agricultural practices. During the program, the organization also acknowledged and appreciated the efforts of the CII Foundation team for their impactful work in advancing sustainable agriculture initiatives across Punjab and Haryana.



Celebrating World Environment Day: Tree Plantation Drive

On World Environment Day (5 June 2026), a plantation drive was organized to promote community participation in green initiatives. The activity witnessed active involvement from various stakeholders, including members of the Cooperative Society, Panchayat representatives, and CII Foundation team. Together, they planted saplings at identified locations, contributing to enhancing the local green cover and raising awareness about the importance of trees in improving air quality and ecological balance. The drive also served as a platform to encourage community ownership of environmental protection efforts, with participants discussing the need for regular maintenance and care of the planted saplings to ensure their healthy growth and long-term impact.



Drinking Water Camp

On 19 May 2026, amid rising summer temperatures, a drinking-water point (Chhabeel) along the Ratia–Fatehabad road to serve passing travellers with cool drinking water was set up. The initiative was supported by field volunteers and project farmers, who worked together and through this effort, approximately 800 litres of water was served to travellers over the course of the day.



MACHINERY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY TOOL BANKS

Tool Bank Monitoring and Community Engagement

On 27 May 2026, the HDFC Parivartan donor team comprising Ms. Anjali and Mr. Kaval, accompanied by project team, field staff and village volunteers, visited Lohakhera Cooperative Society to review the implementation and impact of the CRM project in Sangrur district.

The donor team interacted with farmers and the Secretary of the Cooperative Society to understand the utilization and benefits of the in-situ crop residue management machinery provided under the project. Farmers shared positive feedback regarding improved residue management practices and reduced dependence on stubble burning. The Society Secretary highlighted the support extended through the project and its contribution to promoting sustainable agricultural practices in the village.

During the visit, the MB Plough was operational in the field, demonstrating active utilization of the equipment by farmers.

The donor team interacted with village volunteers involved in project implementation. Volunteers shared their experiences from the crop residue management season and explained the awareness-generation efforts undertaken in the village. Discussions focused on Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities conducted to encourage the adoption of sustainable residue management practices among farmers.

The visits concluded with field inspections of machinery and discussions on future activities aimed at promoting clean air, improved soil health, and sustainable farming practices in the region.



FARMERS' TRAINING AND FARM DEMONSTRATIONS

Direct Sowing of Rice (DSR)

Direct Sowing of Rice using DSR machines was undertaken in Block Ratia, Fatehabad under HDFC Parivartan, as a step towards promoting water-efficient and sustainable paddy cultivation practices. Unlike the traditional transplanting method, DSR involves directly sowing rice seeds into the field, eliminating the need for nursery preparation and manual transplantation.

Through this initiative, farmers were introduced to the practical use of DSR equipment, which helps in timely sowing, reduces labour requirements, and significantly saves water—an important consideration in regions facing groundwater depletion. The use of DSR also lowers cultivation costs and supports better soil health by reducing puddling.

A total of 35 farmers have used the machine in 291 acres across 9 villages. This reflects growing confidence among farmers in the technique and its benefits, including improved resource efficiency, better crop management, and potential yield stability.



NRFMTTI Training Programs and Khet Bachao Abhiyaan

Ten training camps were organized with the support of Northern Region Farm Machinery Training and Testing Institute (NRFMTTI), Hisar, across Ratia and Fatehabad in Haryana. During these sessions, experts from NRFMTTI demonstrated agricultural machinery such as the Rotavator, Super Seeder, and DSR equipment, helping farmers understand their functionality and benefits. The experts also provided information on various Government of India subsidy schemes available for agricultural machinery and specific crops. Additionally, the team showcased modern, lightweight implements used for activities like fertilizer broadcasting, power weeding, and bush cutting, promoting the adoption of efficient and improved farming practices.



From 17 to 19 June 2026, a series of farmer awareness and demonstration sessions on Crop Residue Management (CRM) were conducted in Sangrur district. The sessions were conducted in Lohakhera village (Block Sangrur) and Majhi village (Block Bhawanigarh), followed by further interactions with farmers. During these sessions, farmers were actively engaged to raise awareness about CRM practices and related technologies. Demonstrations of key machinery such as the Happy Seeder, Super Seeder, and Mulcher were carried out to showcase their practical applications. Additionally, information was disseminated on the harmful effects of crop residue burning, with strong emphasis on promoting environmentally sustainable and alternative residue management solutions.



District-Level Training of Farmers

On 7 April 2026, a district-level training on Crop Residue Management was organized by the Agriculture Department in Punjab. Farmers from approximately 40 villages across Khanna and Jagraon participated in the training program. The session focused on creating awareness about effective crop residue management practices, promoting sustainable agriculture, and discouraging stubble burning through the adoption of improved methods and technologies.



MANAGING BIOMASS THROUGH EX-SITU TECHNOLOGY

Biogas Plant Demonstration

As part of the field visit to Lohakhera, the HDFC Parivartan team visited the community biogas plant established at the village Gurudwara under the project. They were briefed on the plant's functioning, feedstock requirements, operational process, and its role in promoting renewable energy at the community level.

A live demonstration of the biogas system was conducted in the Gurudwara kitchen. The visiting team observed the utilization of biogas for cooking purposes through a functioning gas stove connected to the plant, showcasing the practical benefits of the intervention.

HDFC Parivartan team also interacted with beneficiaries and members of the Gurudwara Management Committee to understand the impact of the biogas plant on the community.

Discussions were held regarding plant maintenance, operational sustainability, and future management plans.

The visits also focused on promoting best practices for plant maintenance and encouraging beneficiaries to maximize the environmental and economic benefits of biogas technology. Feedback from community members indicated positive outcomes in terms of clean energy access, improved waste management, and reduced dependence on conventional fuels.



EXPANDING GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 7 May 2026 between Cadence Design Systems and the CII Foundation to extend the Crop Residue Management (CRM) Project in Fatehabad district for an additional year. Under this renewed collaboration, a

startup working in the field of CRM will also be supported to promote innovative and sustainable solutions. A separate budget has been allocated within the project to facilitate this initiative and ensure its effective implementation.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Education is most impactful when children and young people have access to environments that nurture curiosity, confidence, and opportunity. From strengthening early childhood learning spaces and improving school infrastructure to equipping young women with essential digital skills, creating supportive ecosystems is critical to enabling meaningful learning outcomes.

The CII Foundation works with corporate partners, government institutions, and communities to strengthen educational ecosystems that are inclusive,

engaging, and responsive to the needs of learners. Through investments in infrastructure, capacity building, digital inclusion, and community participation, these initiatives aim to create pathways for lifelong learning and development.

During the April to June quarter, the Foundation continued its efforts to enhance learning environments across schools and Anganwadi Centres, promote digital literacy among adolescent girls, and encourage volunteer engagement to create cleaner, greener, and more child-friendly educational spaces.

Key Components of the Program



Infrastructure Support to Develop Model Anganwadi Centres



Developing Age and Culturally Appropriate Curriculum



Promoting the use of Teaching Learning Material (TLM)



Capacity Building of Anganwadi Workers



Involving and Engaging the Community

ANGANWADI STRENGTHENING PROGRAM, ANDHRA PRADESH

The CII Foundation, in partnership with Blue Star Climatech Limited, is implementing an Anganwadi Strengthening Program in Tada, Andhra Pradesh, to enhance early childhood care and education through improved infrastructure and child-friendly learning environments. The initiative focuses on strengthening Anganwadi Centres to support the holistic development of young children while creating safe and engaging spaces for learning.

During the quarter, a meeting was convened by Blue Star Limited in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh, following the recent induction of Ms. Sunaina Murthy to the Board. The visit provided an opportunity for Ms. Sunaina Murthy, Member of the Board, and Ms. Annesha Mazumdar, Group CSR, to engage with the project and discuss its progress. The CII Foundation presented an overview of its key initiatives, with a detailed presentation on the Anganwadi Strengthening Program, highlighting its implementation approach, outcomes, and potential for scale.

As part of the visit, the representatives toured two Anganwadi Centres—one in its original condition and another upgraded under the project. The visit provided a first-hand understanding of the infrastructural and learning environment improvements achieved through the initiative and demonstrated the positive changes created for children and communities.



ANGANWADI STRENGTHENING PROGRAM, TAMIL NADU

The CII Foundation, in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industry Southern Region and corporate partners, is implementing initiatives to strengthen early childhood development through improved Anganwadi infrastructure and enhanced capacity of frontline workers.

During the quarter, the CII Foundation, in partnership with BorgWarner Cooling Systems India Pvt. Ltd., conducted a capacity-building program for 35 Anganwadi Workers in Sriperumbudur Block, Kanchipuram District. The training focused on key components of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, including nutrition, health, ECCE, growth monitoring, and community mobilization. Special emphasis was placed on strengthening the implementation of Poshan Abhiyaan initiatives and improving the use of digital tools for service delivery and reporting.

On the occasion of World Earth Day, a volunteer engagement program was organised at Chithornatham Anganwadi and Primary School with the participation of 20 volunteers from Kemin Industries South Asia Pvt. Ltd. The volunteers undertook cleaning and plantation activities across the campus, contributing to a cleaner, greener, and healthier environment for children while promoting environmental awareness and community responsibility.



STRENGTHENING THE EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM, TAMIL NADU

The CII Foundation, with the support of KASA India Private Limited, is implementing an initiative to strengthen the education ecosystem at the Government Model Higher Secondary School, MMDA Colony, Arumbakkam, Chennai. The project aims to improve school infrastructure and create safe, inclusive, and child-friendly learning spaces that enhance the overall educational experience for students.

The intervention included extensive renovation of classroom buildings, repair and replacement of damaged doors and windows, construction of a new side entrance gate and school arch, and the transformation of the kindergarten section through vibrant wall murals and beautification works. These improvements have enhanced the functionality and appearance of the campus while creating a more engaging learning environment.

On 06 June 2026, the school was visited by Mr. Rajmohan, Hon'ble Minister for Education, Government of Tamil Nadu, accompanied by

Mr. Chandra Mohan, Secretary, Education Department; Kannapan, Director, Education Department; and Mr. M. Kabir, Chief Education Officer, Chennai. During the visit, the dignitaries inaugurated the newly renovated kindergarten facility and reviewed the completed development works. The child-centric learning environment and colourful educational murals were appreciated for enabling spatial learning that supports early childhood care and development.



DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAM FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS, UTTAR PRADESH

The CII Foundation implemented the Digital Literacy Program for rural youth, with a focus on girls, across Barabanki, Lucknow, and Lakhimpur Kheri districts of Uttar Pradesh. Conducted across seven learning centres, the initiative equipped 600+ youth with foundational digital skills, including the use of MS Office applications, internet literacy, online safety, and social media tools to enable employability readiness.

The program has engaged more than 400 young women, many of whom are using computers for the first time. Through structured learning sessions, participants have developed practical digital competencies, including resume preparation and the responsible use of digital platforms.

During the quarter, career counselling sessions were organised for participants ahead of certificate distribution to provide guidance on

education, career pathways, and future opportunities. A felicitation ceremony was also conducted to mark the successful completion of the program. The event was attended by representatives from Kasturba Residential School, the District Sports Nodal Officer, and an Honourable Member of the Zila Panchayat, who encouraged the participants to continue their learning journeys and pursue their aspirations with confidence.



- A : Low intake of water
- B : High salt consumption
- C : Chocolates
- D : Hamburgers



HEALTHCARE



Access to quality healthcare is fundamental to human well-being and enhancing the quality of life. Yet, despite significant advancements in India's healthcare ecosystem over the last decade, ensuring equitable healthcare access for all remains a challenge. Underserved and vulnerable communities, particularly those in rural and remote areas, continue to face barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, shortages of trained healthcare personnel, limited awareness, and financial constraints. These often result in delayed treatment, poorer health outcomes, and a reduced quality of life.

Healthcare is not merely about treating illness; it is about creating resilient communities where individuals can lead healthier, more productive lives. Strengthening healthcare systems requires a holistic approach that combines robust infrastructure, skilled

human resources, preventive healthcare practices, and active community participation. As India progresses towards its development goals, bridging healthcare gaps and improving access to quality services for all sections of society must remain a national priority.

Recognising this need, the CII Foundation has been implementing healthcare initiatives aimed at strengthening healthcare delivery systems and improving health outcomes in underserved regions. Through infrastructure upgrades, capacity building of healthcare workers, community-centred interventions, and partnerships with local stakeholders, the Foundation seeks to create sustainable and lasting impact. These efforts are designed not only to enhance access to essential healthcare services but also to empower communities with the knowledge and resources needed to take charge of their health and well-being.

Key Components of the Program



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



**Strengthening
Infrastructure**



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



**Capacity
Building**

HEALTH AWARENESS PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS, UTTAR PRADESH AND HARYANA

In partnership with the HOPE Initiative, the CII Foundation implemented school-based health awareness programs across Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, aimed at nurturing healthy habits among children and adolescents.

Through interactive learning sessions, awareness drives, community outreach activities, and experiential demonstrations, the initiative addressed key health and hygiene practices while encouraging informed decision-making.

A workshop was organised for more than 100 teachers from 21 schools in Gurugram, Haryana. The workshop featured interactive sessions and mindfulness training led by Dr Gourdas Choudhuri, a Mindfulness Coach and a Nutritionist, focusing on work-life balance, creating positive classroom environments, unlocking student potential, and promoting healthy

lifestyle practices. Participants also received practical guidance on nutrition and well-being.

By strengthening the capacities of educators and promoting awareness on health and wellness, the initiative aims to create a positive ripple effect among students, contributing to improved health outcomes and healthier school communities.





SKILLING AND LIVELIHOOD



Empowering youth with industry-relevant skills and connecting them to sustainable livelihood opportunities remains central to CII Foundation's vision for inclusive economic growth. Through strategic partnerships with industry and governments, CII Foundation in collaboration with The CII – Rahul Bajaj Centre of Excellence on Skills, continues to bridge the gap between education and employment by delivering demand-driven skilling programs across the

country. The initiatives are being implemented through CII CoE's multi-pronged skill delivery vehicles - CII Model Career Centres (CII MCCs) and CII Multi Skill Training Institutes (CII MSTIs). During April–June 2026, these initiatives strengthened employability among youth from diverse socio-economic backgrounds through career counselling, technical and soft skills training, workplace readiness programs and placement support, enabling them to build meaningful and sustainable careers.

Key Components of the Program



Rural Livelihood:

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



Skilling of Youth:

Equipping rural and underserved youth with industry-relevant, market driven skills to enhance their employability by leveraging

STRENGTHENING EMPLOYABILITY THROUGH SKILLING INITIATIVES

CII Foundation, in collaboration with PwC Acceleration Centres, expanded its youth employability initiative, Project Rhino, across Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Tripura.

Through Project Kafal, the outreach was extended to Uttarakhand, while Project Sankalp expanded its presence in Bihar, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh. These initiatives focus on mobilising, counselling, training and placing youth in sectors such as IT, Retail, Hospitality, Healthcare and Manufacturing through National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF)-aligned curricula, enabling them to access sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Collectively, the programs have counselled over 41,703 youth and facilitated employment for more than 16,385 candidates. In the past quarter, over 3,900 youth were counselled, with placements facilitated for over 1,825 candidates.

Project Samarthya has been initiated in 16 states and is set to scale up to 23 states, with the goal of impacting over 49,500 beneficiaries through Excel and Soft Skills training. The initiative aims to enhance employability and workplace readiness, with a target of placing 30,000 trained candidates across diverse



industries by March 2027. During the last quarter, the project expanded its reach across multiple states, strengthening its efforts to equip youth with industry-relevant skills and connect them to sustainable employment opportunities.

Under another industry-led collaboration aiming to empower 10,000 youth across India, training programs in Soft Skills and Digital Literacy were delivered along with certification and placement support. The initiative equipped participants with essential workplace and digital competencies, improving their readiness for employment in a rapidly evolving job market.



SAKSHAM YUVA PARIYOJANA: EMPLOYMENT-ORIENTED SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH

CII Foundation, supported by HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Ltd. (HRRL) continues to provide employment-oriented skill development in Rajasthan's Balotra and Gujarat's Kutch, Patan and Banaskantha. Industry-oriented training is being imparted in high-demand sectors focusing Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance (BFSI). The program incorporates practical, hands-on learning in real workplace environments with dedicated placement assistance to connect trained youth with opportunities. In the last quarter, the program trained and placed several youth, with women accounting for 30% of participants.

Another notable initiative, the Shanti Devi Agarwal Skill Development Program in Churu, Rajasthan, delivered job-oriented training in sectors such as Hospitality, Healthcare, Retail, Sales, IT & ITeS, and employability skills. Conducted at Government Lohia College, the program trained 300 youth and enabled 200

placements in the quarter, while maintaining a strong focus on women's participation and local employment generation.



QUARTERLY UPDATE: STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE RED CHILLI VALUE CHAINS IN BALLARI

During the quarter, CII Foundation continued its efforts to strengthen sustainable and market-oriented red chilli cultivation among farmers associated with six Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in Ballari, Karnataka, under the project "Strengthening Sustainability of Spices Value Chains through Farmer Producer Organizations," supported by Orkla India.

A major focus during the period was soil health and balanced nutrient management. Soil samples were collected and processed for 1500 farmers, supporting the project's objective of building a comprehensive soil-health baseline for chilli cultivation. Soil-health reports have been distributed to more than 700 farmers, accompanied by awareness sessions on soil-test-based nutrient management. These sessions guided farmers on understanding soil nutrient status, applying fertilizers according to crop and soil requirements, reducing indiscriminate input use, and improving productivity while managing cultivation costs. Distribution of the remaining reports and follow-up farmer advisories are under progress.

The project also completed an independent third-party evaluation and baseline assessment through Samavit Vikas Private Limited. The assessment reviewed Year 1 implementation across six FPOs and 37 villages,

using a mixed-method approach that included a household survey of 308 chilli farmers, focus group discussions, stakeholder consultations and market-linkage assessment. The evaluation recognized strong progress in farmer outreach, field advisories, IPM awareness, soil testing, FPO capacity building and quality-linked market engagement.

The assessment also identified priority areas for the next phase, including deeper adoption of Integrated Pest Management practices, soil-test-based nutrient planning, improved post-harvest drying and storage, stronger FPO governance and business systems, and enhanced access to quality-conscious institutional and export markets. The findings will guide the project's future strategy to build a more sustainable, traceable and resilient red chilli value chain in Ballari.





WOMEN EMPOWERMENT



WOMAN EXEMPLAR PROGRAM

The CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program honours grassroots women leaders who are driving transformative change across Education, Health, Micro-enterprise, and Community Strengthening. These awards not only celebrate their contributions but also enhance the visibility and credibility of their work, opening avenues for greater support, collaboration, and outreach.

By building the capacities of grassroots women leaders through structured training, continuous mentorship, and a national platform for recognition, the program strengthens their ability to lead meaningful and sustainable change within their communities.

At its core, the Woman Exemplar Program identifies, nurtures, and recognises high-impact grassroots women leaders whose work demonstrates the potential to create lasting social transformation.

Currently, the initiative supports a network of over 150 women leaders across India, whose efforts collectively impact more than two million lives annually. The winners of the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2026 were announced and felicitated at the CII Annual Business Summit 2026 in May, recognising their outstanding contributions to community development and grassroots leadership.

Key Components of the Program



Scan the Ecosystem for Exemplars



Award and Recognize Women Leaders



Amplify the Impact of Work Through Leadership Trainings & Mentoring



On Ground Interventions to Create New Leaders



Broaden and Strengthen the Network

IDENTIFYING THE EXEMPLARS

For the 2026 edition, 347 nominations were received from across the country. The nominations underwent a rigorous, multi-stage evaluation process designed to assess the nominees' leadership journeys, community impact, and potential for creating sustainable change. Based on these assessments, a final shortlist of 20 grassroots women leaders was identified across the four award categories. A distinguished jury selected from various sectors such as industry, civil society, media, and the social development sector selected the winners in each category. This year the jury comprised:

- **Kamal Bali**

Committee Chair, President & Managing Director, Volvo Group, India

- **Chetna Gala Sinha**

Committee Co-Chair, Founder, Mannndeshi Bank

- **Rumjhum Chatterjee**

Co-Founder & Managing Trustee of the Infravision Foundation

- **Radhika Bharat Ram**

Joint Vice Chairperson, The Shri Ram Schools

- **Kaveree Bamzai**

Independent Journalist

- **Archana Vyas**

Director of Policy & Communication, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

- **Narayan Devanathan**

President and Chief Strategy Officer, Dentsu South Asia

MEET THE 2026 COHORT OF WOMAN EXEMPLARS

COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING CATEGORY



Anita Vishwakarma

Age : 50

Education : B. Com

Proposing Organization : Global Concord Foundation

Location : Kurla West, Mumbai



Bhavana Murlidhar Waghmare

Age : 44

Education : 12th Standard

Proposing Organization : Shakya Samajik Sanstha

Location : Kalyan and Thane, Maharashtra

“

Anita Vishwakarma from Kurla Mumbai, has spent over a decade strengthening access to justice, education, and livelihoods for marginalized women and girls. Growing up in a low-income family, she witnessed public harassment by a police officer, shaping her resolve to make public institutions more accessible and accountable. Anita has built community-led platforms that bridge gaps between communities and government systems, addressing domestic violence, school dropout, and lack of legal awareness. [Read more](#)

“

Bhavana Murlidhar Waghmare from Kalyan, Maharashtra, works to bridge critical gaps in documentation and entitlements, ensuring women are visible within systems that shape their rights and opportunities. Growing up with the dual burden of poverty and caste ostracization, her lived experiences shaped her approach. Through Shakya Samajik Sanstha, Bhavana has mobilised 9,000 women workers and has worked with them to secure identity documents. [Read more](#)



Bimla Vishwapremi

Age : 50
 Education : 10th Standard
 Proposing Organization :
 Parvatiya Mahila Vikas Trust
 Location : Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

“Bimla Vishwapremi from Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, has spent over three decades addressing caste-based discrimination. Shaped by exclusion and personal loss, she chose a path rooted in awareness, solidarity, and justice. Through her organisation Parvatiya Mahila Vikas Trust, Bimla has organized 3,200 women across 200 villages, provided legal counselling and mediation to over 2,500 women. [Read more](#)



Kanchan Jha

Age : 37
 Education : 9th Standard
 Proposing Organization : BAIF
 Location : Supaul, Bihar

“Kanchan Jha from Supaul, Bihar, enables women to engage with systems, access entitlements, and confidently participate in decision-making processes. Having experienced early marriage and disrupted education herself, she brings a deeply contextual understanding to her work. Over the last 15 years, Kanchan has mobilised women into collectives and strengthened linkages with public systems. [Read more](#)



Kranti

Age : 37
 Education : Masters Degree
 Proposing Organization : Jan Sahas Social Empowerment Society
 Location : Indore, Madhya Pradesh

“Kranti from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, grew up in a Scheduled Caste family witnessing systemic discrimination associated with caste and gender. Her turning point came with the belief that dignity and respect are core for any change to be successful, whether ending manual scavenging or addressing gender-based violence faced by women engaged in the task. Through her work, Kranti has mobilised communities in 32 villages to end manual scavenging among 230 families. [Read more](#)

EDUCATION CATEGORY



Deepali Chougule

Age : 39
 Education : Master of Social Work
 Proposing Organization : Kalidas Shinde,
 Independent Writer & Professor
 Location : Kolhapur

“Deepali Chougule from Kolhapur district, Maharashtra, works to ensure uninterrupted education for children of migrant families, particularly sugarcane workers. Her work addresses learning disruptions caused by seasonal migration and builds systems that enable continuity in education. As the first girl in her village to complete a Master's in Social Work, she brings both lived experience and professional commitment to this issue. Through her initiatives, Aas and Aarambh, Deepali has developed hyper local, context-responsive learning models for children at migration sites, supporting over 1,500 children directly. [Read more](#)



Hemlata Rajput

Age : 47
 Education : Masters of Arts (Sociology)
 Proposing Organization : Shreejan
 Location : Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh

“Hemlata Rajput from Mahasamund district, Chhattisgarh, has dedicated over two decades to ensure that girls from vulnerable backgrounds are able to enter, continue, and benefit from education systems. Navigating early personal responsibilities and social barriers, she continued her education and built a long-term commitment to community-based learning. Through her organisation Shreejan, Hemlata has identified school dropouts, counselled families, and enabled re-enrolment. Since 2002, she has helped establish 52 community-supported coaching centres supporting 271 children. [Read more](#)



Jasmeen Hussain

Age : 25
 Education : B.A., M.A; Pursuing B.Ed.
 Proposing Organization : Proposed by
 Mrs. Qurrat Mujeeb, DAJI NGO
 Location : Nuh, Haryana

“Jasmeen Hussain, from Nuh, Haryana, works on addressing deep-rooted gender norms, low female literacy and systemic barriers to girls education in orthodox religious communities. She is changing the education system by integrating mainstream education within the religious centres of learning. By working closely with religious leaders and educators, she introduces scientific thinking while building trust. She has worked across 16 villages and 8 religious centres to identify out-of-school children supporting the re-enrolment of over 4,000 children and facilitating enrolment for 2,000 new students. [Read more](#)



Nirmala Sharma

Age : 43
 Education : Bachelor of Science (Mathematics)
 Proposing Organization : Language and Learning Foundation
 Location : Pali, Chhattisgarh

“Nirmala Sharma from Pali, Chhattisgarh, is a government school teacher who has focused on strengthening foundational learning through activity-based pedagogy, teacher capacity building, and deep community engagement. Her journey began in a remote primary school with minimal infrastructure and low student attendance. Through sustained efforts, she revitalized Chowkpara Primary School, increasing student attendance from just 15 to over 100 within a year. [Read more](#)



Saba Khan

Age : 31
 Education : MA in Child Psychology; Masters in Social Work
 Proposing Organization : ATMA
 Location : Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

“Saba Khan from Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh has over 16 years of experience in addressing gaps in foundational learning in underserved urban settlements, especially among first-generation learners and adolescent girls. Her work centres on making reading and learning accessible beyond formal schooling systems. Starting with a single library in a low-income settlement, Saba has built a network of 11 community libraries and 11 school libraries across Bhopal, reaching over 30,000 community children. [Read more](#)

HEALTH CATEGORY



Babita Rathod

Age : 42
 Education : 12th Standard
 Proposing Organization : Samarthy Kalyankari Sanstha
 Location : Omerga, Osmanabad, Maharashtra

“Babita Rathod, based in Osmanabad, Maharashtra, works to strengthen menstrual and reproductive health among marginalized communities, particularly Denotified Tribe groups. Through her organisation, Samarthy Kalyankari Sanstha, Babita has designed and implemented structured school-based programmes reaching over 2,000 adolescent girls across 19 schools. [Read more](#)



Lakshmi Say

Age : 41
 Education : 12th Standard
 Proposing Organization : Ekjut
 Location : Odisha and Jharkhand

“Lakshmi Say, based in Mayurbhanj, Odisha, works with tribal communities to improve maternal, child, and adolescent health outcomes. With over 16 years of experience, she focuses on challenging harmful superstitions and building trust in scientific health practices across remote regions of Odisha and Jharkhand. Through her work with Ekjut, Lakshmi has reached over 36,000 individuals directly and more than 55,000 indirectly through community-based health interventions. [Read more](#)



Poonam Kumari

Age : 51
 Education : 12th Standard
 Proposing Organization : Ekjut
 Location : Jharkhand

“ Poonam Kumari from Jharkhand works with Ekjut and is a public health practitioner with over 13 years of experience in improving the uptake of essential health services by building the capacity of health workers and bridging the gap between communities and government systems. An early marriage, multiple pregnancies, and health challenges shaped her commitment to improving health care. Poonam has directly reached over 6,000 individuals, and indirectly more than 36,000 people across multiple states including Jharkhand. [Read more](#) ”



Shalini

Age : 27
 Education : B.Sc. Nutrition and Dietetics
 Proposing Organization : Buds of Christ
 Location : Salem, Tamil Nadu

“ Shalini from Salem, Tamil Nadu, a person living with HIV, navigated mental health struggles, and systemic exclusion to shape the lives of people living with HIV. She transformed her personal experience into leadership by launching the HEAL initiative, an integrated HIV care model that embeds structured mental health support and life skills counselling within clinical treatment for persons living with HIV. Shalini has directly supported over 5,700 individuals and indirectly reached more than 7,000 people. [Read more](#) ”



Shubhangi Bhoite

Age : 38
 Education : Master's Degree; Diploma in Sanitary Inspection
 Proposing Organization : Foundation for Mother and Child Health (FMCH)
 Location : Thane and Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra

“ Shubhangi Bhoite from Mumbai, Maharashtra, has been working since the last 20 years on improving healthcare for underserved urban communities. She has built a prevention-focused model that prioritizes early intervention, consistent counselling, and system strengthening directly impacting over 64,000 community members. She has provided nutrition counselling to over 60,000 women and trained 4,029 frontline workers. [Read more](#) ”

MICRO-ENTERPRISE CATEGORY



Arundhati Patil

Age : 50
 Education : Bachelor of Commerce
 Proposing Organization : Shruti Biotech Nursery
 Location : Kolhapur, Maharashtra

“ Arundhati Patil, based in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, is an agri innovator who has developed a nursery based income model, training women to raise saplings using full germinators. Each nursery now generates an annual income of ₹5–6 lakh. She recognised that income is the first step to agency, she organised women into collectives and anchored them in sustainable agriculture. She has organised nearly 45,000 farmers across 52 villages into collectives to pursue organic farming. [Read more](#) ”



Gitasree Das

Age : 30
 Education : BA (H) Education
 Proposing Organization : Rupantaran Foundation
 Location : Namkhana, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal

“ Gitasree Das works in the climate-vulnerable Sundarbans where communities have long depended on relief due to repeated cyclones, flooding, and salinity intrusion. To reduce this cyclical dependency, Gitasree has enabled women farmers to transition towards climate-resilient livelihoods through training in salinity reduction, rainwater harvesting, organic inputs, and integrated pond-based farming. She organised 10,000 women farmers into collectives, developed leaders across 400 groups, and promoted climate-resilient agriculture. [Read more](#) ”



Laxmipriya Parida

Age : 50
Education : Masters in Social Work
Proposing Organization : Indian Grameen Services
Location : Odisha

“Laxmipriya Parida from Kandhamal, Odisha, a single mother of two children, knew very early that financial independence was crucial for women to become decision makers. Facing rejection, isolation and mental torture in her marriage, Laxmi's work reflects her own journey. She has enabled over 3,000 women to diversify income streams across agriculture, livestock, eco-tourism, and non-farm enterprises, raising household incomes by over 50%. [Read more](#)



Nirmala

Age : 28
Education : Masters in Social Work
Proposing Organization : Educate Girls
Location : Badaun, Uttar Pradesh

“Nirmala works in rural Budaun, Uttar Pradesh, where women contribute significantly to agriculture and household labour but lack financial independence and decision making. Drawing from her own experience of early marriage, economic vulnerability, and social stigma, she views livelihood as a pathway to dignity, identity, and protection. Since 2016, she has strengthened over 500 SHGs across 15 blocks, enabling 15,000+ women to access financial literacy, savings, credit systems, and collective governance. [Read more](#)



Pushpa Oraon

Age : 36
Education : 12th Standard
Proposing Organization : PRADAN
Location : Lohardaga, Jharkhand

“Pushpa Oraon works in Lohardaga, Jharkhand, where tribal communities face chronic poverty, seasonal migration, and low agricultural productivity. Coming from a low-income Adivasi household and navigating early financial hardship herself, her journey from saving ₹20/month in a Self-Help Group (SHG) to building a livelihood ecosystem reflects the transformative power of collective action. She has strengthened 275 SHGs covering over 3,500 women, enabling access to savings, credit, and government entitlements. [Read more](#)

Recognition

The CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Award 2026 was presented by Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon'ble Minister of Education, Government of India, during the CII Annual Business Summit 2026 held in May in Delhi.

Four exceptional women leaders were honoured for their contributions across the award categories. Alongside them, 16 inspiring Woman Exemplars were honoured with certificates for their exemplary work.



Kranti

Indore, Madhya Pradesh

Community Strengthening



Jasmeen Hussain

Nuh, Haryana

Education



Shalini

Salem, Tamil Nadu

Health



Arundhati Patil

Kolhapur, Maharashtra

Micro-enterprise



Capacity Building

As part of the Woman Exemplar Program, the 2026 cohort of Exemplars came together for their first leadership training program, designed to strengthen self-awareness, peer learning, and collective leadership. The program provided a platform for women leaders from diverse geographies and sectors to reflect on their journeys, exchange experiences, and build meaningful connections with one another.

Through interactive sessions, storytelling exercises, reflective discussions, and creative activities, participants explored different dimensions of leadership and challenged conventional perceptions associated with authority and influence.

A key highlight of the program was a reflective exercise in which participants wrote letters to themselves, acknowledging their personal journeys, resilience, achievements, and impact. The activity created a space for self-appreciation and reflection, encouraging the women to recognise their strengths and celebrate their growth as community leaders.

The Exemplars also participated in a peer-learning exercise where they worked in pairs to document each other's stories through short podcast-style conversations. These interactions provided an opportunity to share experiences, celebrate achievements, and deepen understanding of the diverse pathways through which women create social change.

The program concluded with a collaborative activity symbolising the strength of the Woman Exemplar Network, highlighting how individual leadership journeys, when connected, contribute to a larger movement of grassroots women leaders working towards inclusive and sustainable development across the country.



Exemplar Spotlight

The achievements of Woman Exemplars continue to inspire communities across the country and demonstrate the transformative potential of investing in grassroots women leaders.

Mana Mandlekar, a member of the 2019 cohort of the CII Foundation Woman Exemplar Program, brought laurels to the nation by winning a Bronze Medal for India in the Senior Women Team Kumite category at the 15th Silent Night International Karate Cup 2026 held in Malaysia.

Hailing from a rural background, Mana overcame significant financial and social barriers to pursue her education. Her introduction to Karate during her college years became a turning point, helping her build confidence, resilience, and discipline. Today, she is committed to empowering young girls through sports and mentorship, encouraging them to develop self-belief and pursue their aspirations.

Mana's achievement is a testament to her perseverance and dedication, and reflects the spirit of leadership and determination embodied by the Woman Exemplar network. Her journey continues to inspire young women and girls to overcome challenges, realise their potential, and create positive change within their communities.





WASTE MANAGEMENT



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR A GREENER TOMORROW

Effective waste management is central to building cleaner, healthier and more sustainable communities. As India accelerates its transition towards a circular economy, the need for responsible waste practices, segregation at source and citizen participation has become increasingly important. Recognising this, the CII Foundation works closely with local administrations, industry partners and communities to strengthen waste management systems and promote behavioural change.

The waste management initiatives are being implemented across diverse geographies including Leh, Ladakh and Farrukhnagar, Haryana.

During the April–June quarter, efforts focussed on strengthening awareness on waste segregation and sustainable disposal practices, deepening community participation, and engaging youth and local stakeholders as champions of change. These initiatives continue to contribute towards creating cleaner public spaces and more resilient waste management ecosystems.

Key Components of the Program



**Creating
Awareness and
Catalysing Civic
Engagement**



**Strengthening
Waste
Management
Infrastructure**



**Building Skills of
Waste Workers
and Enhancing
their Safety**

WASTE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE, LEH, LADAKH

The increasing influx of tourists in Leh district has intensified the challenge of plastic waste management. To address this challenge, the CII Foundation, in partnership with HDFC Bank, is implementing a community-led waste management initiative across Kharu and Chuchot blocks.

The project focuses on driving behaviour change and strengthening waste management infrastructure.

To commemorate World Environment Day 2026, a mega clean-up drive was organized at Choglamsar under the theme 'Inspired by Nature: For Climate, For Our Future' in collaboration with the Municipal Committee, Choglamsar.

The cleanliness drive commenced from HDFC Bank Choglamsar and covered the entire Choglamsar Market area. Over 135 participants took part in the campaign, demonstrating a strong commitment towards environmental conservation and community cleanliness.

The participants included 71 students and teachers from Sindh Public School, 65 members of the Choglamsar Merchant Association, local shopkeepers, representatives of the Municipal Committee Choglamsar, and six teams from HDFC Bank Choglamsar, including the Branch Manager and staff members.



During the drive, participants collected waste from public spaces and market areas, contributing to a cleaner and healthier environment.

To encourage sustainable practices and reduce the use of single-use plastics, cloth bags were distributed to all participants. The initiative highlighted the importance of adopting eco-friendly alternatives and promoting environmentally responsible behaviour within the community.

The CII Foundation team expressed its sincere appreciation and gratitude to all participants and emphasized the need for continued environmental action and community engagement.

The clean-up drive reinforced the message that protecting nature is essential for addressing climate challenges and securing a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future for generations to come.



OUR KEY SUPPORTERS



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KEMIN



Synthite



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For feedback and suggestions please contact Priya Shirali, Head - Communication at Priya.Shirali@cii.in

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